

ENSLAVED HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD NAMED ON ALABAMA CENSUS

By

Tony Burroughs

U.S. census records are some of the most popular records for genealogical research. They are readily accessible online, in libraries, and in archives. In addition to their accessibility one of the reasons they are so popular and useful is because census records list names of people in the household along with their ages, sex, marital status, often their relationship to the head of household and often the state where born and where their parents were born. Unfortunately, that is not the case for people researching enslaved African Americans before the Civil War.

Enslaved people were counted on every federal census schedule that was taken from 1790 to 1860. However, they were not listed by name; they were enumerated with their slave owners. In 1850 and 1860 the U.S. Census Bureau created separate enumeration schedules for free persons and enslaved persons. The age, sex and color (black or mulatto) was listed for each enslaved person under the name of their owner, but not their name. The 1820, 1830 and 1840 census listed enslaved people as hash marks in age categories along-side their owner's names.

Detailed instructions for taking the census were not given to U.S. Marshals. They were resolved to refer to guidelines within the law that established census taking for each census year. It was not until 1850 when the Census Bureau produced printed guidelines for taking the census.¹

There are a few rare exceptions to this practice of omitting enslaved person's names. At least forty-five enslaved persons were named as heads of household on the 1840 U.S. Census in Alabama.

These heads of households were likely enslaved people who were hired out by their owners and living on their own. To earn income from an idle worker, owners could hire out their excess labor. Or if a widow inherited enslaved people she didn't want to manage, she could hire them out and retain the economic benefits of her human assets. There would be an arrangement where the enslaved person would share a percentage of his or her wages with their owner. In other situations, enslaved people were hired in the settlement of an estate.

On the other side, if a person could not afford to own an enslaved person the next best thing was to hire one. They would benefit from their hired labor as well as increase their prestige. If a person did not own any enslaved people, they were sometimes considered poor.

Owners, and agents, often advertised in newspapers for enslaved persons to be hired. Hired people were employed in a myriad of occupations, including bricklayers, blacksmiths, molders, common laborers, draymen, house servants, store clerks, cooks, gardeners, weavers, steamboat

hands, stevedores, dock laborers, railroad construction, waitresses, chambermaids, factory workers and musicians.²

Heads of enslaved households are listed in census records with the words "A Slave" following their name, for example, "James A Slave." Current census indexers entered this in computer databases as an apparent surname. They often had a hard time interpreting poor handwriting. The words "A Slave" was often misread and indexed as surnames such as: Aslon, Astone, Aslane, Alane and Aslove.

In cases where one enslaved person followed another in the census the US Marshal who recorded names on census sheets wrote an abbreviation for ditto which was "Do." This was often misinterpreted in the census index as a last name and the entry would be James Do or James Da. These variations of misreading early American handwriting can help in searching enslaved people in computer databases.

Mobile County, Alabama

Cleager³

Males

1 under 10

Females

1 10-24

1 55-100

Mobile City, Mobile County, Alabama - roll 10

Robert a Slave page 134 line 29 (Robert A. Alane in index)

Males

1 10-23

2 24-35

Females

2 under 10

1 10-23

1 24-35

1 36-54

1 55-99

Mariah, page 134, line 7 (Astone in index)

Males

1 36-54

Females

1

Mariah page 136 line 22 (Aslane and Aslove in index)

Males

1 under 10

1 24-35

1 36-54

Females

1 under 10

1 24-35

Charles page 134, line 8 (Astone in index)

Males

4 under 10

1 10-23

1 24-35

Females

4 under 10

1 10-23

1 36-54

Mary page 134, line 9 (Astone & Aslove) in index

Females

1 24-35

Mary page 136 line 15 (Astone in index)

Males

2 under 10

1 36-54 24-35

Females

2 under 10
1 24-35
1 36-54

Mary page 136 line 16 (Astone in index)

Males

3 under 10
1 24-35

Females

1 10-23
1 24-35

Charles, page 135 (stamped), line 30 (Aslone)

Males

1 24-35

Female

1 under 10
1 10-23
1 36-54

Viney, page 135 (stamped), line 4 (Bing Astone and Viny Aslove in index)

Female

1 24-35

Patsey, page 135 (stamped), line 21 (Astone and Aslove in index)

Males

1 36-54

Females

1 under 10
1 10-23

Nancy page 130, line 7

Males

1 under 10

1 24-35

Females

1 10-23

Patsy, page 122, line 2

Females

1 10-21

1 24-35

1 36-54

Adaline, page 122, line 1 aslove in index

Males

2 under 10

1 10-23

1 24-35

1 55-99

Females

1 under 10

1 10-23

2 24-35

1 36-54

Charlott, page 122, line 25 Alslove in index

Males

1 10-23

1 24-35

Females

1 10-23

1 24-35

Desliva, page 122, line 26 (Desliva Pa in index)

Males

1 24-35

2 55-99

Females

1 10-23

2 55-99

Free females

1 36-54

1 55-99

Sally, page 129, line 25

Males

1 10-23

1 36-54

1 55-99

Females

1 10-23

1 24-35

1 36-54

Catherine, page 129, line 8 Aslove in index

Females

1 10-23

2 24-35

Free females

1 10-23

Becky page 129 line 9 Becky Da in index

Males

1 under 10

1 100 and over

Female

1 10-23
2 24-35
2 36-54
1 55-99

John, page 130, line 8 [not sure if census marshal made a mistake] John Da in index

Female

1 10-23

Aaron, page 95 (stamped) line 12 Aaron A. Have in index

Males

1 24-35
1 36-54

Females

2 under 10
1 24-35
1 36-54

Betsey, page 112 line 16

Males

1 20-32
3 24-35

Females

2 under 10
1 24-35
1 55-99

Patsey, page 116 line 2

Males

1 under 10

Females

1 24-35

Free colored

Female

1 24-35

Peter, page 106 line 10

Males

1 10-23

1 24-35

1 36-54

Females

2 10-23

1 36-54

Sally, page 106. line 24

Males

1 under 10

1 10-23

1 24-35

1 55-99

Females

1 under 10

1 24-35

1 36-54

Emily, page 136 line 11

Males

1 24-35

Females

2 24-35

Daniel, page 136 line 10 (Aslam in index)

Males

1 under 10
1 36-54

Females

1 under 10
2 10-23
1 36-54

May page 136 line 15 (Astone in index)

Males

2 under 10
1 24-35

Females

2 under 10
1 24-35
1 36-54

May page 136 line 16 (Astone in index)

Males

3 under 10
1 24-35

Females

1 10-23
1 24-35

Louisa page 136 line 17 Listed as Lamon Astone in index

Males

2 under 10

Females

1 under 10
1 24-35
1 36-54

Free white

1 15-19

1 20-29

Milly page 136, line 25 Milly Astone in index

Males

1 24-35

Female

1 1-23

May page 139 (stamped), Line 8

Males

1 under 10

1 24-35

Females

1 under 10

1 10-23

Eliza, page 13, line 21 Allore in index

Males

1 under 10

Females

1 24-35

1 36-54

Betsey page 131 line 30 Aslove in index

Males

2 under 10

1 24-35

1 36-54

Females

2 under 10

1 10-23

1 24-35
1 55-99

Majo, page 139 (stamped), line 4 May A. Stone in index

Males

1 under 10
1 24-35

Females

1 under 10
1 10-23

Clay page 139 (stamped), line 29 astone in indes

Males

1 24-35

Females

1 55-99

Gilbert page 137 line 3 Aslone in index

Males

2 under 10
1 24-35

Females

1 under 10
2 24-35

Free females

1 55-99

July page 121 line 20 Aslove in index

Females

1 24-35
1 36-54

Lary page 142 line 27

Males

2 under 10

1 36-54

2 55-99

Females

2 55-99

Nathan page 121, line 24 (Mrs Nathan Aslove in index)

Males

1 36-54

Females

1 10-23

2 24-35

William page 121 line 25 William Aslove in index

Male

1 36-54

Tishy page 124, line 11 Aslove in index

Males

3 under 10

1 24-35

Females

2 under 10

2 10-23

Hanah page 124 line 12 Hanah Da in index

Males

1 under 10

Females

3 under 10

2 10-23

Milton, page 124 line 13 Milton Da in index

Males

1 10-23

2 24-35

Females

1 under 10

2 10-25

Jenny, page 138 line 20 Juing Aslove in index

Males

2 Under 10

Females

2 under 10

1 36-54

(Tony Burroughs is a graduate of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and previous Adjunct Professor of Genealogy at Chicago State University. He is the founder of the Center for Black Genealogy, Chicago, Illinois.)

¹ U.S. Census Bureau "Census Instructions"
https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/census/instructions/

² Sellers, James. Benson, *Slavery in Alabama*. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1950, Chapter VI "Hired slave and town slave" p. 195-214

³ 1840 U.S. Census, Mobile County, Alabama, population schedule, Page 83 (stamped), line 14, Cleager a Slave; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com>; accessed 3 November 2018) NARA microfilm publication M704-9.