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Enslaved Heads of Household Named on Tennessee Census

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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 three enslaved persons were named as heads of household on the 1830 and 1840 U.S. Census in Tennessee.

1830 US Census Jefferson Co., TN

Frank a Slave²

Males

1 5-100

1840 Knox Co., TN

Jane a Slave³

Males

1 under 10

Females

1 under 10

1 36-54

1840 Knox Co, TN

Delilia a Slave⁴

¹ U.S. Census Bureau "Census Instructions"

https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/census_instructions/

² 1830 U.S. Census, Jefferson Co., TN, population schedule, Page 287, #249, line 6, Frank a Slave; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com> ; accessed 2 November 2018) NARA microfilm publication M19-180.

³ 1840 U.S. Census, Jefferson Co., TN, population schedule, Page 51, line 28, Jane a Slave; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com>; accessed 3 November 2018) NARA microfilm publication M704-527.

Males

1 Under 10

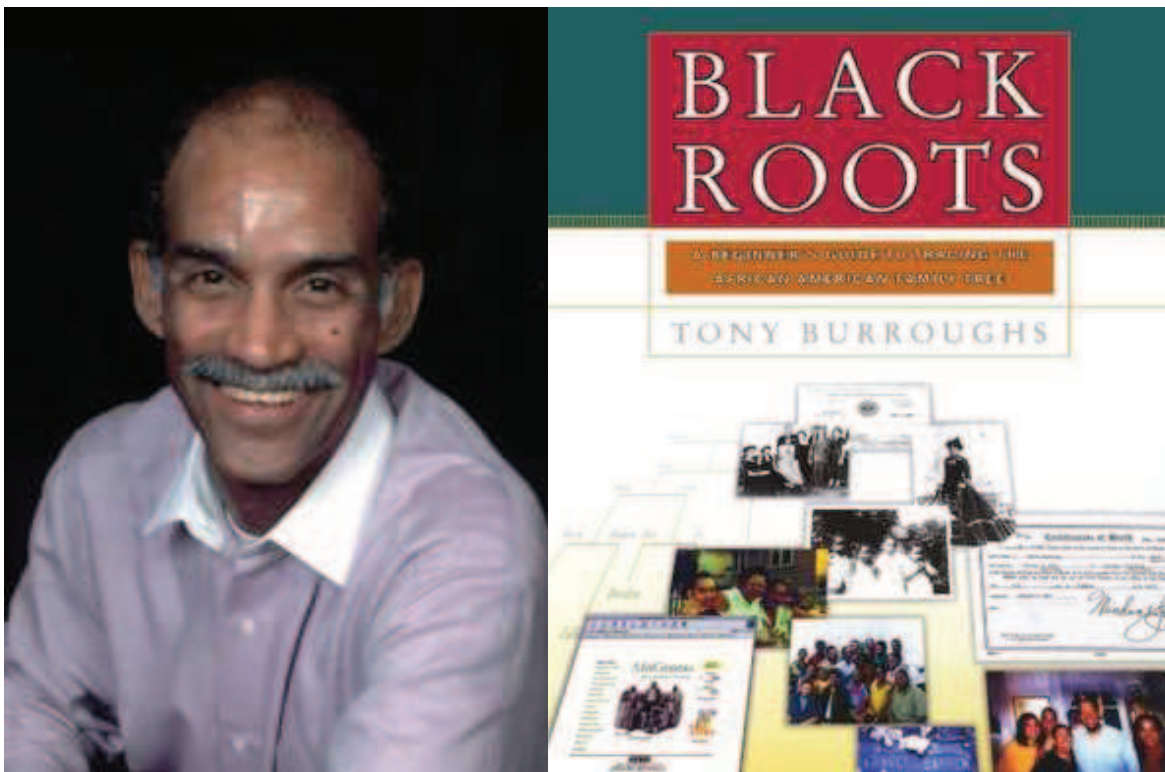
Females

3 under 10

1 24-35

It is not known who Frank, Jane or Delilia's slave owners were or why they were not enumerated with their owners.

For more information on Tony **Burroughs**, visit <http://www.tonyburroughs.com>. The GRHGC has his book, *Black Roots*, <http://www.tonyburroughs.com/black-roots.html>.



⁴ 1840 U.S. Census, Jefferson Co., TN, population schedule, Page 147, line 2, Delilia a Slave (listed in index as Detilia); digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com>; accessed 3 November 2018) NARA microfilm publication M704-527.