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The 1850 and 1860 Census, Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants

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1. Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants: A Controversial Record

The Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants, used in the 1850 and 1860 Censuses, is one of the fundamental documents we use to research the slavery period; perhaps only probate and deed records are used more often. Yet, this part of the census is one of the most problematic, more because of what it omits than because of what it tells us. Drafted for the first US Census that originally planned to name every inhabitant in the country, Schedule 2 was altered to prevent recording slaves' names and other personal information.

This essay will examine:

- How Congress developed the 1850 Census, Schedule 2
- Enumerator's Instructions for Schedule 2
- Differences between the 1850 and 1860 Schedule 2
- Common issues and problems in interpreting Schedule 2

Besides introducing the new researcher to these frequently-misunderstood sources, I hope to stimulate discussion from all who have used Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants, for genealogical or historical research, especially on the topic of interpreting the information in these admittedly frustrating schedules.

Even professional historians have sometimes misunderstood and misrepresented Schedule 2 as a document that proves slave owners ignored the humanity of slaves. Edwin L. Ayers, on his educational documentary website, *Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War* (http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/govdoc/slave_census.html), calls Schedule 2 the "Slaveowners Census" as if this were the actual title of the schedule. In his description of Schedule 2, Ayers portrays white southerners, not as deeply conflicted and neurotic products of their own stubborn devotion to a peculiarly oppressive institution, but as cartoon-quality villains, monstrosly devoid of any human recognition of the enslaved: "So important was slavery that the census takers maintained a separate book to list all the slaveowners and their property. Chillingly enough, the census takers were not interested in the names of individual slaves but only in their age, sex, and skin shade." This false characterization of census takers fails to acknowledge that it mattered not what census takers were "interested" in, but, rather, what their instructions dictated to them to record. There is ample evidence that census takers not only knew much more about the individual slaves than they were authorized to record, but that the exclusion of slaves' names and other data from the census actually made the census taker's tasks far more difficult than if similar data had been recorded for slave and free.

The history behind the census of Slave Inhabitants suggests how representatives of the slaveocracy were fully conscious that naming each slave in the 1850 census would give public recognition to the humanity of each slave roughly on a par with the dignity afforded to whites who were all to be named in Schedule 1. By amending Schedule 2 to make it anonymous, southern senators deliberately obscured as much of the slaves' humanity as possible, for political reasons.

With all its flaws, the 1850 and 1860 Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants, is an indispensable tool for the study of American slavery and for the search for ancestors who might be enumerated therein. Although Schedule 2 seems a shabby travesty when compared with Schedule 1, it does enumerate—no matter how inefficiently and how flawed the method—the enslaved population of the United

States. Since it is the only census we have of those persons, we must overcome its limitations and use it to our best advantage by understanding how it was designed, how the data was collected, what it tells us and what it does *not* tell us.

2. Designing the Census

A. Introduction to the Congressional Debates

Thanks to the Library of Congress' *American Memory* project (homepage <http://memory.loc.gov>), we have the entire series of published Congressional debates online. The antebellum series, under the title *The Congressional Globe*, is available at the link below. Unless otherwise stated, all my references are to page numbers in the *Globe*, 31st congress, 1st Session, searchable at the following webpage:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwcglink.html#anchor31>

In the midst of an acrimonious exchange on the Senate floor between William H. Seward of New York and William R. King of Alabama, over whether the 1850 census data could show the quality of life of slaves in the South, Thomas J. Rusk of Texas complained to Seward, "It is to be regretted, sir, that we cannot do anything here without having this interminable question brought up. It must, it seems, be brought forward when we have only the census bill up for discussion." (page 675)

Rusk should not have been surprised. The first thing you notice about the debates in Congress in the 1840s and 1850s is how often the topic of slavery appeared. It permeated virtually every discussion as a few vehemently anti- and pro-slavery Congressmen used every opportunity to agitate the issue in their respective houses. Each session saw a pile of petitions from hundreds of Northern citizens for the abolition or restriction of slavery (see, just for example, on page 814, the 37 anti-slavery petitions introduced on 24 April 1850)—all of which were routinely tabled, but which, nevertheless, fanned the embers of hostility between Northern and Southern states. The 1850 sessions were particularly fiery on the subject of a fugitive slave bill which was eventually signed into law 18 September 1850. Arguments, which almost tore the nation apart over establishing slavery in western territories and new states, would be temporarily settled by the Compromise of 1850. In this environment, anyone who had expected the 1850 census—which necessarily included a count of the slaves—to be simply a rational enumeration of the nation's population would be quickly disabused of that idea as opposing teams of Northern and Southern congressmen made the census their political football.

Congressmen used existing myths and fabricated new ones to suit their own agendas. For example, the speakers for the deep South portrayed slavery only as big plantations with hundreds of slaves personally unknown to their owners. Deep South senators painted an image of slaves so grossly ignorant that they did not know their ages or birthplaces, and enslaved mothers who were unable even to count how many children they had borne. On the other hand, representatives of slaveholding Border States suggested a different vision of their slave owners as yeoman farmers who worked and lived with slaves whom they knew personally.

Neither northern abolitionists nor southern slaveocrats proposed simply gathering exactly the same data for free persons and slaves in 1850. Some abolitionists were bent on using census data to poke slaveholders in the eye on subjects like slaves' health and longevity (as explored through average ages and child mortality), the migration patterns imposed by the internal slave trade, the illegal importation of African slaves (as would be suggested by a place of birth in Africa after 1808), and the results—and future

implications—of racial amalgamation. One Southern gentleman wanted to test a pet theory that mulattoes were less fertile than blacks of “pure blood.”

Other Southerners reacted defensively to prevent any inquiry that would undermine their message that slaves were property, or would reveal slaves to be real persons with families or social structure of any kind. Both sides, embroiled in debate over the bill that would become the Fugitive Slave Act, were interested in knowing how many runaway slaves might fall under the provisions of the act. The result was the 1850 census we know today (and its virtual clone in 1860), in which the millions of slaves are presented as nameless and faceless numbers.

J. D. B. DeBow, Superintendent the 1850 Census, recommended in his report, *Statistical view of the United States* (Washington: 1854), page 15, that the next census, 1860, should combine Free, Slave and Mortality schedules into one form that used the same questions for all persons. His suggestion was ignored.

Debates in the senate on 4 February 1850 (page 282) began inauspiciously for the bill “for the taking of the seventh census of the United States.” The bill contained a set of forms and schedules prepared by a committee of senators, but Mr. Dawson of Georgia pointed out that a law of 3 March 1849 had established a Census Board, charged with preparing and printing forms and schedules for taking the 1850 census. Senators Davis of Massachusetts and Underwood of Kentucky protested they were unaware that the Census Board had produced any forms, but Dawson charged that not only did these forms exist, they had already been printed, expending most of the \$10,000 budget appropriated for the Census paperwork. The next few days of debate concerned how to save money by using less paper and who should be awarded the lucrative printing contracts. In March, the Senate was still debating printing costs, the method of paying enumerators, and whether “Beeswax and honey” should be stricken from the agricultural schedule!

Confusion over the mandate of the Census Board had opened the door for Congress to micro-manage the content of each column in each schedule form. In part because of all the wrangling over the cost of paper, it was not until April that debate finally touched the manner of taking the census of slaves.

B. To Name or Not to Name

The first debates over the 1850 census of slaves were, in one sense, a struggle over what the slaveholders would allow the rest of the nation to know about slavery and slaves. The Senate committee that drew up the first plans for the 1850 census contemplated recording the names of all persons, slave and free. This led to the first controversy between senators who thought that the census could be taken most efficiently and accurately by naming the slaves, and those senators who opposed naming the slaves on ideological grounds which they disguised as practical objections.

Many southern senators surely believed that requiring a slave master to answer queries that personalized individual slaves invested slaves with a dignity that was incompatible with the institution that held them in bondage. Certainly there was never any serious thought that slaves would have an input to the census—for the census taker to enter the plantation quarters and to record personal facts from the lips of slaves would be an unthinkable trespass on the prerogative of slave masters, the same as if a census taker were to question a white child instead of speaking to the father of the household.

More pointedly, if a hard-core abolitionist like New York's William H. Seward supported enumerating the slaves by name, and even demanded more information about the condition of the South's slaves, pro-slavery senators would reactively oppose him on principle.

To argue against enumerated slaves by name, southern senators, led by South Carolina's Senator Arthur P. Butler, feigned ignorance on behalf of the slave owners. Despite the evidence in volumes of deeds, mortgages, bills of sale, and probate records that packed the shelves of every Southern courthouse—and not to speak of the record books and family Bibles in their own houses—slave owners supposedly could not identify their own slaves. Senator Butler painted a picture of plantations inhabited by hundreds of slaves, whose owners, serenely aloof from life in the slave quarters, only became aware of the identities of young slaves when they were old enough to work in the fields. In this imaginary world, plantation owners—hard-headed businessmen who each managed capital investments and annual crops worth hundreds of thousands of dollars—did not keep records of the names or ages of the slaves who were their principal investment!

In specific contrast to the Carolina and Alabama senators' portrait of a South of huge plantations peopled by anonymous slaves, Senator Joseph R. Underwood from slaveholding Kentucky excluded his own state from this model of "the South." He portrayed a land in which slave owners were personally familiar with each of their slaves. These differences between Underwood and the senators from the South may exemplify some of the different attitudes between Border States and Southern States that played out in the secession crisis ten years later.

I have silently edited the Congressional debates transcribed below to omit irrelevant remarks and repetitive arguments, but I have marked ellipses (. . .) only when splicing sentences or paragraphs. All page references are to the Congressional Globe, 31st Congress, 1st Session, available at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwcglink.html#anchor31>

On 9 April 1850, Senator John Davis of Massachusetts opened the Senate debate over which of version of the population forms would be used. Davis' opening remarks remind us how he (like other white Americans of his day) constructed categories of liberty and slavery strictly in terms of a racial dichotomy—Davis called the two population schedules the "white population" table and the "slave population" table—oblivious to the existence of free persons in the United States who were not white (pages 671 and 672).

Davis' version of the Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants, included twelve columns:

(1) Names of slave owners

(2) Names of slaves

Description: (3) Age, (4) Sex, (5) Color

(6) Place of Birth

If a female, the number of children she has had who are:

(7) No. she has had, (8) Known to be living, (9) Known to be dead

(10) Deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.

(11) Degree of removal from pure white and black races.

(12) Remarks.

The printed version of this form can be seen at

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsb&fileName=031/llsb031.db&recNum=436>

Senator Arthur P. Butler of South Carolina immediately rose with an amendment, saying: "I move to amend, so that instead of requiring the names of the slaves to be taken, the number only shall be required . . . and I now move to strike out the word 'names' and insert the word 'number.'" (page 672)

Davis: "I believe that the only thing which induced the use of the word 'names' in both of the tables [free and slave], was the supposition that a greater degree of accuracy would be thereby ascertained, and any fraud be the more readily detected. However, if gentlemen have any choice on the subject, I am not disposed to object."

Butler: "The census heretofore taken has only required the numbers of the slaves, and I see no useful information the obtaining of the names can afford. On a plantation where there are one, two, or three hundred slaves, there are perhaps several of the same name, and who are known simply by some familiar designation on the plantation. It can afford no useful information, and will make a great deal of labor."

Davis' concern was that the census bureau could validate the numbers; in previous censuses slaves had been counted among other members of each household, but if census-takers were merely to produce a separate tally of slaves, how could auditors assure that such numbers were accurate? He asked Butler, "If we are only to get the aggregate number of slaves, how are we to ascertain the owners?"

Butler: "By providing that the number of slaves owned by him shall be put opposite to the name of each owner."

David: "Then we shall lose the benefit of the classification of ages."

Butler: "Not at all. The age and sex will remain—everything but the name."

At this point, Senator Joseph R. Underwood of Kentucky rose to defend inclusion of the names. As a member of the Senate committee that had drafted the proposed census tables, he had rehearsed in his mind many times the procedures census-takers should follow to get the required information speedily and accurately. As the representative of a slaveholding state, he felt he could speak with authority on the workings of slavery in his country: "If you leave the age and sex of each slave, it will be perceived at once that the master and the census-taker must have his attention directed to each individual slave. Then, as each individual slave upon the plantation must constitute the subject of particular reference at the time, in order to ascertain the age and the sex, and other inquiries which the census table proposes to enumerate, it does seem to me that he must necessarily get the name."

Senator George E. Badger of North Carolina interjected a mockery of slaves' names: "What do you want of such names as Big Cuff or Little Cuff?"

Butler: "Or of Little Jonah and Big Jonah?"

Some senators laughed.

Underwood: "I have no particular anxiety to see these classical names that have been suggested, and whether it be Cicero or Cuff, it makes no difference to me. As it is necessary that attention must be directed to each individual, it occurred to me that the census taker could certainly make more progress by putting down the name, instead of being obliged to make a series of calculations. Then all that will be necessary will be, to put down the name, and to carry out the age and sex opposite to it; otherwise, the census taker will have, in the course of his examination, to take a child of one age and put him down, and make a memorandum, and then go on and take another child of another age, and put him down, and so on; and before he can make all the inquiries in regard to each on the plantation, he will have a whole sheet of paper covered with calculations and figures. I do believe the work can be done quicker and faster by making an entry of the names, and passing from one to the other, and thus save all of this calculation. This same process has been adopted in reference to the white population. The old system of proceeding was, to put down the population according to a classification of ages, as between five and ten; and ten and fifteen; and fifteen and twenty; and so on. The effect of that arrangement was, to require the census taker and the head of the family, in the calculation to which I have alluded, to ascertain the particular ages, and what class the particular individual should be enumerated under; and we thought . . . that it would really take more time and labor to make this classification . . . than it would merely to put down the names and ages—the simplest of all processes. I believe, therefore, that instead of imposing additional labor, it would save time and labor."

Senator Robert M. T. Hunter of Virginia: "Is it proposed to publish the names?"

Underwood: "Not at all; there is a total mistake on that subject. The names of the white population are not proposed to be published, nor are the names of the blacks." Only the statistical tables produced by counting the names, ages, et cetera, were to be published.

Senator David L. Yulee of Florida could not see the use of recording any names: "I wish to ask the Senator what public advantage there can be in having on the files of the department the names of all the inhabitants of the United States, white or black? What advantage can there be to know that there is a John Smith in New York, another in Kentucky, and another in Georgia? It has never been done before, and will certainly be a work of great labor and expense."

Senator Underwood patiently repeated his explanation of how recording all the names would save time for census takers, and would be more accurate, because all tabulation and calculation would take place later, instead of on the spot. "I imagined myself going about with the census taker," said Underwood, "and how he would talk with the head of a family, and how he would make his memorandums as he went along, and the conclusion was irresistible that he would do the business faster by merely putting down the name and age" (pages 672-3).

Senator Jeremiah Clemens of Alabama objected: "There is not a man in the South owning a hundred negroes who knows scarcely any more of the names of the slave children than I do. He would be obliged to send the census taker to the negro quarters himself, to ascertain the information."

Underwood shot back: "If the slave owner cannot give the name of the children, how is he to give the age?"

Clemens: "He knows how many children there are, and can tell about the time they were born. Say that he has a negro woman of the name of Eliza with four children—he can state about the time each was born. As to their names, he would not know anything about that until the children had reached the age of twelve or fourteen."

Underwood: "I cannot speak for the large negro owners in the South, but I can of that description of people and the negroes in my own State. And I venture to say that there is no plantation in my quarter, although the slaves are nothing like as numerous as they are in the South, but what the owner can tell you the name of every person on the plantation, and that without hesitation. We generally keep a record of their names and ages. And I should suppose that while the farmers of the South were recording, according to the suggestion of the Senator from Alabama, the ages of their slave children, they could put down something for their names also."

Clemens: "I did not say that they had a record of their ages, but merely that they could tell very nearly what they were."

Underwood: "Well, if there was any record of their ages I should suppose it would be connected with their names. If no record is kept of the age, then it has to be guessed at, and the name may as well be guessed at also, for it is wholly immaterial. But you must describe the children in some way, or take and put them down as child number one, child number two, and give the age of each. It will do just as well to designate them by numbers as by name, provided it secures the basis of the calculation which it is necessary to make afterwards. An oath that it is the correct name of the child is not required, and if the age of a child can be given, so can a name, and if all are given the same name it makes no difference. . . . The idea suggested, that the farmer will not know the names of his slaves makes no sort of difference. He can know as much about the names as the age; and all we can expect is, to come as nearly to what is precisely correct as possible, and that by the safest and most correct means. I have nothing more, I believe, to say on this particular subject."

Butler: "I cannot see the use of taking the names; in fact, I am surprised that the idea is even entertained. My friend from Kentucky generally has my vote; but upon this matter we see so differently that I am compelled to be at issue with him."

Senator Butler's amendment, to replace slaves' names with numbers, was then put to a vote and passed.

C. Erasing a People's Past

After a heated debate on 9 April 1850 between Senator Joseph R. Underwood of Kentucky and South Carolina's Senator Arthur P. Butler, the Senate passed Butler's amendment to the census bill, an amendment that replaced slaves' names with numbers, thereby perpetuating a public anonymity for over three million persons held in bondage as chattels in the South.

Butler had argued that his constituents—plantation owners of the South, specifically those with a hundred or more slaves—knew very little about their own bondsmen and women. Butler had tacitly conceded that adult slaves had names which might be known to their owners, but after dismissing these adults' names with mockery, he had narrowed the debate to a question of whether owners of large plantations knew the names of the slave children. According to Butler's argument, the most information that a southern slave owner could be expected to know about his slaves was an estimate of their ages!

None of his colleagues challenged Senator Butler with the fact that, in the late antebellum period, less than three percent of slaveholders owned 50 or more slaves—in other words, Butler had rewritten format for the 1850 census of slaves to accommodate the alleged ignorance of a tiny minority of slaveholders.

In the next phase of the debates, Senator William R. King of Alabama continued to dismantle the draft Schedule 2 by urging the removal of information that gave any kind of history to the slaves. By the end of the debates, America's slaves would be a people—not just without names—but without a past, having no origins and no families. King based his arguments on an alleged ignorance of slaves about their own past and even about their own bodies! Butler had established a fantasy world composed entirely of big plantations ruled by owners who knew almost nothing about their slaves, and King now populated the fields and quarters of those plantations with men and women who knew nothing of themselves—too ignorant to know where they were born or to remember how many children they had birthed.

Senator William R. King of Alabama: "I see by the schedule, that that the census board is required to obtain information as to the places of birth of slaves. Now there is no southern gentleman here who does not know that it is wholly impracticable to obtain information of this description, that will be at all satisfactory or reliable. . . . The proposition which I now make is to amend schedule number two, by striking out the words 'places of birth.' It is well known that, owing to the natural course of things, a great number of slaves are taken from one State to another, and the purchasers of such slaves know nothing about their places of birth, and consequently it is utterly out of their power to give such information., and if it could be given it would be perfectly valueless. They are known to have been born within the slave States, but in which of them is not known. There may be a few [of the slaves] who can tell, but the large majority of them cannot by any possibility say where they were born, nor give such information as will lead to any beneficial result. I move therefore to strike it out, as I presume that no Senator has any idea that it is practicable to procure the information, or that, if procured, it would be of any earthly good" (pages 673-4).

The motion to strike "places of birth" from Schedule 2 was put to a vote and passed.

Before we watch Senator King demolish more of Schedule 2, let us take a closer look at his argument about slave birthplaces. Neither the owners nor the slaves themselves (according to King) could be expected to know their birthplaces—and yet, he asserts, "They are known to have been born within the slave states." Suppose, however, that some of those slaves had been born in northern states whose laws had required them to be emancipated at a certain age, but whose owners had illegally sold them South rather than lose the investment—states like New York, Massachusetts, or Pennsylvania? Thousands of slaves yet alive almost surely had been born in Africa, and how many of those had been imported illegally after the national ban effective in 1808? How many might have been born in Cuba or other Caribbean islands? Were young children routinely wrested from their parents and sold in the interstate slave trade? King's amendment ensured that no-one would be able to answer these or any such questions from the census data. King had successfully argued a contradiction: slave masters and their slaves were totally ignorant in a matter as fundamental as birthplace; but, nevertheless, all slaves were "known" to have been born within the slave South!

Immediately after winning passage of his first amendment, King re-entered the debate to propose another: "I have another proposition to make, and Senators, I think, will all perceive the propriety of it. In schedule two are the following words: 'if a female, the number of children she has had, known to be alive, known to be dead.' Now, sir, it is impossible to ascertain the number of children upon a plantation that any woman has had. The woman herself, in nine out of ten cases, when she has had ten or fifteen children, does not know how many she has actually had." This brought a laugh.

King continued, "No, sir, she cannot tell. The owner certainly does not know; the manager of the estate does not know, because managers are frequently changed. One or two children may be born while an individual is manager of an estate, and others may be born after his place is supplied by another. There is no mode by which you can ascertain except through the medium of the woman,

and she cannot tell. Where is the advantage, then, of filling up considerable space with this item, and swelling the document without getting any information at last?"

Davis of Massachusetts offered a half-hearted response: "I hope that the column will be allowed to remain, although I do not know that it is very material."

King: "Not at all. . . . I want the census to be taken with as much care as possible. I want all the people of the United States, white and black, to be enumerated. I want to throw no obstacle in the way, but I want to save unnecessary expense."

Underwood: "These tables, in reference to the slave population, which were adopted by the committee, were adopted in compliance with the wishes of southern gentlemen. . . . There are a number of philosophical inquiries which they were in pursuit of, as well as the mere basis of representation. . . . Hence it is, the action of the committee on this subject was not confined simply to an enumeration of the inhabitants, but to the effect of various localities on health and longevity; to the effect of climate, the condition of the colored race, and all matters of importance in reference to the contemplated object. You will find in these tables that we require, not only the age and sex, but the color of the person; and we find in another column the degree of removal from pure blood is required to be stated; and this inquiry, in reference to the number of children which each woman may have had, I can inform my honorable friend, was inserted, as far as I know, at the instance of a southern gentleman" (page 674). Later in the same debate (page 676), Underwood revealed that this gentleman "believed that a certain class of colored people had fewer children than a certain other class; and he believed that the average duration of the lives of the children of the darker class was longer than the that of the children of the lighter colored class, or the mixed."

Exasperated at the erosion of columns from the table he had labored so long to construct in committee, Underwood exclaimed, "If you do not intend to get the information in its ramifications, as I had suggested, you may as well strike out the whole table, and send your deputy marshal into a plantation merely to ascertain the number of slaves, so far as the basis of representation is concerned, and you will then get clear, as has been suggested by the Senator from North Carolina, of all this increase at the start; and I suppose that the Senator from Alabama voted with him" (page 674).

King: "Certainly."

Underwood: "Well, I am vastly surprised at the course he is taking now. If he succeeds in all the amendments that he is proposing, it will come down to the basis of his argument. . . . I think you that you ought to retain the name, age, number of children, and everything, if you wish to get at anything that will be practically useful hereafter, in reference to this class of population. There is one practical use to which this information may be applied, as everybody knows, and it is insurance on lives. The whole table, in regards to longevity, and everything connected with the number and age of children, will furnish information on which valuable tables may be constructed, if you continue them for a series of years. . . . This would be the commencement. If it is not proper to begin at all, strike out the whole table, and bring it to what my honorable friend from Alabama wants it to be."

Underwood, clearly losing his argument, was desperately grasping at straws—did he really expect Senators to design a national census to explore the vigor of mulattoes, or to provide actuarial data for the insurance industry?

Senator Solon Borland of Arkansas: "I think that all the remarks of the Senator from Kentucky go to show the propriety of the proposition . . . to strike out everything but the mere enumeration of the inhabitants. . . . Are we to erect ourselves into a great

college of natural science? Are the funds of this Government to be appropriated to the investigation of great natural truths? I think we have gone far enough . . .”

Underwood continued to argue unconvincingly for the value of exploring “whether an individual is a quadroon, a mulatto, or any other proportion of blood” (page 675).

Just as it seemed the fires of debate on this issue would soon to be extinguished along with Underwood’s hopes for his version of the slave schedule, Senator William H. Seward of New York threw a bucket of oil on the embers: “I hope the motion to strike out will not prevail. It appears to me that the information . . . is essential. . . . There is no woman, with great deference to the Senator from Alabama, who can have forgotten the number of children that she had borne. If it be true, as it is said, that there are women who do not know whether their children be living or dead, and even how many they have borne, I should like to ascertain the number of such that there are of all races. And I desire this information because we have all cherished a hope that the condition of African servitude in this country was a stage of transition from a state of barbarism to a state of improvement hereafter. I wish to know how rapid that progress is. I believe it cannot be possible that there are any women, even in Africa, who have forgotten the number of children they have borne. If there be any in America who have forgotten that fact, so important and interesting to themselves, I wish to know it, for the purpose of ascertaining the operation of our social system, and the success of that system as leading to the improvement of the African race. I wish to know also what is the extent of the education and instruction that prevails, so as to ascertain whether they are advancing toward that better condition which constitutes the only excuse, as I understand, that we have for holding them in servitude.”

Of course, Seward was sarcastically taunting King with one of the favorite arguments of pious pro-slavery writers, that Africans were better off as slaves in America than as savages in Africa. But, if African women could count their children, and American slaves could not, then was southern slavery actually a step below barbarism? As for measuring advances in education, Seward knew full well that state laws in the South forbade teaching slaves to read and write. That was his point.

King swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker: “I am not at all surprised to hear the senator from New York attempt to throw an imputation upon the South to answer his own purposes. Sir, what I stated was, that in many instances you could not even get from the mother any correct knowledge of the number of children she had. Go into the white settlements in many portions of the country, and you will find women in the same situation. Does the honorable Senator mean to say, that all the women of his own State are so highly intellectual, so bright in their perceptions, so acute in their understanding, that they could give similar information if it were required of them?

King continued, “Sir, I have listened to the Senator’s remarks. I will not characterize them: respect for myself and this body will prevent me. He comes forward here on all occasions, when the slightest opportunity is afforded him, to endeavor to produce a feeling of prejudice against that section of the country in which I live, in order to minister to that miserable fanatical spirit——”

The Vice President: “The honorable Senator is out of order.”

King: “Well, sir, let the Senator keep himself within the bounds usually prescribed to members of this body, and not attempt, by a sneering manner and insidious language, to produce an effect which he dare not do directly.”

Senator Thomas J. Rusk of Texas chimed in against Seward: “It is to be regretted, sir, that we cannot do anything here without having this interminable question brought up. it must, it seems, be brought forward when we have only the census bill up for discussion. Whenever the most irrelevant subject—no matter what it may be—is before the Senate, remarks of a taunting nature towards one section of the Union are sure to be made, calculated to produce irritation, and provoke reply which must have the effect to throw us wider apart. Sir, the information sought to be obtained is of no earthly use.”

In his next breath, Rusk described the use he feared would actually come from the census data: “It may be used for the purposes of agitation; it may be used in stump oratory to awaken prejudices in one section of the country against the other. . . . It is of apiece with the proceeding which took place yesterday, when a petition numerously signed was presented to this body, asking Congress to enroll the slaves in the militia of this country. Now is this not irritating?” It was fears like these that motivated Butler, King, Rusk, and many of those who voted with them, to eliminate as much data as possible from the Schedule 2, Census of Slave Inhabitants.

Butler: “I do think that the remarks of the Senator from New York, though delivered in a sort of under-tone, calls for special notice. Now sir, he proposes to acquire this information with a view to use it in Congress, of course in reference to the condition of this species of population. Does the gentleman assume that he has a right to legislate upon the social condition of slavery in the southern States?”

After further debate of the utility or futility of the data, the columns asking about each slave woman’s children, and the column asking for “the degree of removal from pure blood” were stricken from the form (page 677). Next, Florida’s Senator Yulee tried to eliminate the column asking for each slave’s age, using the argument that any owner of a plantation with 100 slaves “cannot undertake to give the particular age of each of the hundred. . . . The practical difficulty of the table as it now stands is, that you would be obliged to go over particulars in respect to each individual slave on the plantation when there is no necessity for it.” Senator Yulee’s argument seemed to support Senator Underwood’s plea to keep the names, but Yulee had a different idea. He wanted to revert to the practice in previous censuses of making categories of ages, a separate category for every five years of age, and merely entering the total number of people in each category. Yulee’s proposal was soundly rejected (pages 677-8).

In the Senate version of the 1850 Census, Schedule 2, slave owners and slaves were presumed jointly ignorant. Because of this allegedly impenetrable ignorance, slaves enumerated in the census would have no names, no birthplace, and no maternal connection to their own children. Next, the House of Representatives would take its turn at refining the Census Bill.

D. The Census Bill Becomes Law

The debates in the House of Representatives did not dwell on the details of Schedule 2 (Slave Inhabitants) as the Senate debates had, but some southern representatives echoed the same accusations that the census was designed to fuel abolitionist agitation. The House version added the columns for “Fugitives from the state” and “Number manumitted,” but the single most important amendment in the House ensured that belated, fractious debate would not endanger the 1860 census. The final version of the census bill was passed almost at the last minute, only one week before the census takers were to begin their work.

On 22 April 1850, Representative Jacob Thompson of Mississippi introduced the Census Bill by insisting that “this bill—a sort of interlude in the great contest of the day—contains nothing of the tragic interest that surrounds the question that has so long claimed the attention of this body, the *dissolution of the Union*. It regards the Union as it is, and I trust will be for ages to come” (page 809).

He then launched into a learned oration on the history of census-taking in western civilization from the days of ancient Rome to the present. After briefly describing each previous U. S. census, he introduced each section, or schedule, of the 1850 census bill. His introduction to Schedule 2 was brief: "The second schedule regards the slave population. In this one, the Judiciary Committee differ but little from the Senate Committee. The age, sex, and color, whether deaf, dumb, insane, or idiotic, and have added two columns in regard to 'fugitives from the State,' and 'the number manumitted.' Should it be the pleasure of the House to retain it, a further amendment, by confining the inquiry to the last year, must be made. The names of the slave owners are to be given, and it will not only show who owns slaves in the South, but also may how some owners in Connecticut, some, perhaps in Massachusetts, some in New York, and some, but very few, in Pennsylvania, as she was the first to abolish slavery, I believe, in the Union" (page 810).

Compared to the acrimonious Senate debates, proceedings on the Census Bill in the House were contentious but civil. Congressmen mainly debated whether the wording of the Constitutional requiring a decennial census limited Congress to collecting only the bare information necessary to allocate representation and taxation, or whether the Constitution merely specified a minimum requirement, which could be supplemented by any inquiries that Congress should desire to make. Most of the House debates on the census bill argued the constitutionality of asking more detailed personal information than any U. S. census had asked before, but the subject of slavery inevitably arose from time to time.

Representative John K. Miller of Ohio, who did not believe the Constitution authorized collecting anything but the barest information about any of the U. S. population, attempted an amendment which would have combined Free and Slave Inhabitants into one Schedule (pages 811-2). Miller's amendment was defeated, but anyone curious to see what his Census would have looked like can see the form at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsb&fileName=031/llsb031.db&recNum=470>.

Georgia Congressman Alexander H. Stephens (future Vice-president of the Confederacy) suggested that the census, in the form proposed, threatened the union: "It would be well for the members of this House who were friendly to the permanent union of these States, to recollect that it could be maintained only upon principle, and by confining it to the objects for which the Union was formed. . . . Those objects were enumerated and specified in the Constitution. . . . Would the gentleman who had reported this bill inform him under what clause of the Constitution he got the power to appropriate the money of the people of this country to seek such information?" (page 812).

Among those who rose to answer Stephens' and others' objections was Joseph M. Root from Ohio. He ridiculed Stephens' suggestion that the census endangered the Union; instead, the "more the South knew of the North, and the North of the South, the better they would like each other. . . . Each would see how labor was remunerated, and in what manner, and to what extent the means of happiness and improvement were enjoyed by the other. The South would also know how many slaves escaped to the North — a matter about which there is some difference of opinion at present" (page 821).

Charles E. Clarke of New York reminded Stephens that he had declared, in recent debates about whether or not to ban slavery from the newly-settled western territories and states, that "no government could stand or ought to stand, that brought its power in conflict with the property of the people. The property to which the gentleman referred, is property vested in slaves, which he was pleased to estimate at fifteen hundred millions of dollars. I deemed the expression indefensible, revolutionary; but since the sentiment is advanced in this House, and seems to be entertained by others than the gentleman from Georgia, it is quite desirable to know the ages as well as the numbers of the slaves, with the view of ascertaining their value, and comparing that property with other property which the same gentlemen seem to think deserves no protection, no encouragement. It is quite desirable to know the positive and

relative yield of agricultural productions in different sections of the country, in order that we may see whether it be wise to ingraft slavery upon the immense territories which we have lately acquired” (page 840).

Clarke continued: “Let there be light, was the command of Infinite Wisdom at the creation of the world. The rule seems to be reversed here, in the government of a small part of the world; and the cry of gentlemen here is, let there be darkness.” He then offered examples of where the census might shine a light: “There is in the free States a class of men entitled to all the privileges of citizenship there, who, if they set foot in certain other States of this Union, are liable to be imprisoned, and in certain contingencies to be sold as slaves, because it has pleased God not to bestow upon them quite so white a skin as some of us wear. Is it not desirable to know how numerous this class is, with the view of ascertaining the practical value of a great principle of the Constitution?” Clarke was doubtless referring to Article IV, Section 2 of the Constitution, which states, “The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States”—a section routinely violated by southern state laws targeting free persons of color.

Clarke then suggested that the census data could measure compliance with the 1808 U. S. ban on importing slaves: “Would it not be worth while, if it were in our power, to ascertain the lineage and the place of birth of the African race, in order, amongst other things, to ascertain whether our laws excluding slaves from foreign parts are violated or observed?”

Joseph A. Woodward of South Carolina immediately jumped up to identify “the true object” of some census questions: “to procure and circulate over the country themes for abolition declamation. Who doubted that it was for that purpose? The object was to select the blemishes in the social system of the South, and harp upon these until the imagination of the country should be wholly prepossessed” or fixated on the defects of slavery (page 840).

In one of the lengthiest speeches of the debate, John W. Howe of Pennsylvania presented his long list of reasons for highly data in the census, among which was that census data as to shades of color of the “colored population” would provide clues as to whether “the whole human race originated from one common parentage.” Howe also wanted determine the “various employments” of all the African slaves—although no version of the census schedules ever included slaves’ occupation or employment, and he never introduced an amendment to add this item to Schedule 2 (page 862).

The most significant amendment made in the House of Representatives passed on 8 May 1850. The date on which the census enumeration was to begin (1 June 1850) was only three weeks away, and, despite months of debate, Congress had yet to pass a census bill! Many members feared a repeat of this ordeal in 1860, so the amendment provided that if “no other law be passed for taking providing for the taking of any subsequent census” before the first day of January of the census year, “such census shall, in all things, be taken and completed according to the provisions of this act” (page 939). This amendment (it turned out) was the basis for both the 1860 and 1870 censuses (although, of course, there were no slaves in 1870).

A joint conference of members from the House and senate met and resolved the differences between their versions of the Census, so that the bill could pass on 20 May (pages 1027-1028). Three days later, 23 May 1850, the Bill was enacted into law with the final form of each schedule, including the Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants, which can be seen at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=IISI&fileName=009/IISI009.db&recNum=461> .

3. 1850 Enumerators' Instructions

To interpret the entries in the 1850 Census, Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants, we must know what the census-taker was supposed to record. The official title for the person who collected the census data was “Assistant Marshall” but I will use the more common terms “census taker” and “enumerator” interchangeably. Lemuel Shattuck (1793-1859) drafted the instructions for enumerators. Shattuck, who had been invited to Washington in 1849 to help plan the census, was a Boston bookseller, a founder of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and the author of several historical and statistical books, including *Vital Statistics of Boston* (1841). It was Lemuel Shattuck who had proposed that the 1850 census take the name of every individual—a suggestion adopted for free persons, but amended by Congress to replace slaves’ names with numbers. Since the census bill was not made law until 23 May 1850, only eight days before the census was to begin, the instructions must have been finalized in a hurry and sent to the printer along with the approved schedule forms.

The source for the following text is from the U. S. Census Bureau publication, Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses from 1790 to 2000, available online at <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/ma.html> .

EXPLANATION OF SCHEDULE 2—SLAVE INHABITANTS

This schedule is to be filled up in the following manner:

Insert in the heading the number or name of the district, town, city and the county or parish, and of the state in which the slave inhabitants enumerated reside, and the day of the month upon which the enumeration was taken. This is to be attested on each page of each set, by the signature of the assistant marshal. The several columns are to be filled up as follows:

1. Under heading 1, entitled “*Name of slaveholders,*” insert, in proper order, the names of the owners of slaves. Where there are several owners to a slave, the name of the one only need be entered, or when owned by a corporation or trust estate, the name of the trustee or corporation.
2. Under heading 2, entitled “*Number of slaves,*” insert, in regular numerical order, the number of all the slaves of both sexes and of each age, belonging to such owners. In the case of slaves, numbers are to be substituted for names. The number of every slave who usually resides in the district enumerated is to be entered, although he may happen to be temporarily absent. The slaves of each owner are to be numbered separately, beginning at No. 1, and a separate description of each is to be given. The person in whose family, or on whose plantation, the slave is found to be employed, is to be considered the owner—the principal object being to get the number of slaves, and not that of masters or owners.
3. Under heading 3, entitled “*Age,*” insert, in figures, the specific age of each slave opposite the number of such slave. If the exact age cannot be ascertained, insert a number which shall be the nearest approximation to it. The age of every slave, either exact or estimated, is to be inserted. If the slave be a child which, on the 1st of June, was under 1 year old, the entry is to be made by the fractional parts of a year, thus: One month, one-twelfth; two months, two-twelfths; three months, three-twelfths, and so on to eleven months, eleven-twelfths; keeping ever in view, in all cases, that the age must be estimated at no later period than the 1st of June.
4. Under heading 4, entitled “*Sex,*” insert the letter M for male, and F for female, opposite the name, in all cases, as the fact may be.

5. Under heading 5, "*Color*," insert, in all cases, when the slave is black, the letter B; when he or she is mulatto, insert M. The color of all slaves should be noted.
6. Under heading 6 insert, in figures, opposite the name of the slave owner, the number of slaves who, having absconded within the year, have not been recovered.
7. In column 7, insert opposite the name of the former owner thereof, the number of slaves manumitted within the year. The name of the person is to be given, although at the time of the enumeration such person may not have held slaves on the 1st of June. In such case, no entry is to be made in column No. 2.
8. Under the heading 8 entitled "*Deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic*," the assistant should ascertain if any of these slaves be deaf and dumb, blind, insane or idiotic; and if so, insert opposite the name or number of such slave, the term deaf and dumb, blind, insane or idiotic, as the fact may be. If slaves be found imprisoned convicts, mention the crime in column 8, and the date of conviction before the number in the vacant space below the name of the owner. The convict slaves should be numbered with the other slaves of their proper owner.

My comments:

The instructions for Schedule 2 provide for a straightforward counting of slaves in the districts where they lived. The following section is one of the most important of the instructions: "The number of every slave who usually resides in the district enumerated is to be entered, although he may happen to be temporarily absent. . . . The person in whose family, or on whose plantation, the slave is found to be employed, is to be considered the owner—the principal object being to get the number of slaves, and not that of masters or owners." In other words, when the census-taker knocked on a door, the head of household was expected to give an account of all slaves who lived in that household or on that plantation. Presumably, in the case of absentee owners, the overseer would meet the census-taker.

Two parts of this instruction may require interpretation. If a slave was said to be "temporarily absent," what was the length of time that enumerators considered "temporary"? If a slave were hired out to another person, what length of service would place that slave in the category of one "found to be employed" in the hiring family, as opposed to being merely "temporarily absent" from the owner? Since most hired slaves seem to have been rented on an annual basis, from January through Christmas, I suggest (as my unsupported opinion) that slaves hired by the year were probably enumerated in the household of the person who had hired them. The hiring person's name would appear in the "Names of Slave Owners" column, rather than the legal owner. Examples of enslaved persons "temporarily absent" might include those out on a short-term hire or on loan, and runaways absent for less than a year.

Any Indians who were slaves are not differentiated in this census. This is consistent with slaveholder ideology that all slaves were Negroes.

4. 1860 Census, Schedule 2, Instructions and Differences

In his report, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington: 1853), census superintendent J. D. B. DeBow critiqued the various census schedules and the common types of errors found. Of Schedule 2, he wrote: "Sometimes the names of owners of

slaves are duplicated. Slaves resident in the towns are often not distinguishable from those merely owned there and resident in the county. This should be remedied in another Census. As the same person may own slaves in different counties or States, or in several parts of one county, the actual number of slaveholders cannot easily be ascertained, though they may all be given correctly in the general population sheets" (p. iv). I do not know why DeBow thought that counting the number of slave owners should be an important outcome of the national census; in the published congressional debates of the census bill, this was not an issue. For whatever reason, this new fixation on counting slave owners had a significant effect on the next census in 1860.

The census form was modified for 1860 by adding a column for 'Number of Slave Houses', and there were differences in the instructions. What follows is a verbatim transcript of the 1860 instructions, interjected with my comparison of the 1850 instructions. The text, below, is adapted from Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek et al., Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0, Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota, 2003. The complete IPUMS website is at <http://www.ipums.org>.

SCHEDULE No. 2.-SLAVE INHABITANTS.

This Schedule 1s to be filled up in the following manner: The heading is to be filled up in all respects after the manner of Schedule No, 1, omitting only the name of post office.

[Instructions for 1860, Schedule 1, directed that page headings were to include "the lesser division, as town, township, ward, or borough; then the name of the county and State, with the date of taking; after that enter your own name and record the name of the post office of the vicinage. Every day you will change the date and on every page write your name. All the other entries are to be repeated so long as the returns apply, but the moment you enter upon another town, township, ward, borough, or county, you must change the heading to correspond."]

1. Owners of Slaves,—Under heading No. 1 insert, in proper consecutive order, the names of all owners of slaves. When slaves are the property of a corporation, enter the name of the corporation. If held in trust for persons who have attained to their majority, whose names as owners do not elsewhere appear, the names of such persons may be entered, or their number, as "John Smith and two others;" always provided that the "others" do not appear as owners in other places. If held in trust for minors, give the number of such minors. The desire is to obtain a true return of the number of owners.

[This instruction, desiring a "true return of the number of owners" contrasts with the instruction for 1850, which stated, "the principal object being to get the number of slaves, and not that of masters or owners."]

2. Number of Slaves.—Under heading 2, entitled "Number of slaves," insert, in regular numerical order, the number of all the slaves, of both sexes, and of every age, belonging to the owner whose name you have recorded. In the case of slaves, numbers are to be substituted for names. The description of every slave, as numbered, is to be recorded, and you are to enumerate such slaves as may be temporarily absent, provided they are usually held to service in your subdivision. The slaves of each owner are to be numbered separately, beginning with the older at No. 1. The person in whose charge, or on whose plantation the slave is found to be employed may return all slaves in his charge, (although they may be owned by other persons,) provided they are not returned by their proper owner. The name of the *bona fide* owner should be returned as proprietor, and the name of the person having them in charge as employer.

[This is essentially the same as for 1850, except that in the case of hired slaves, both the owners' names and the hirers' names are to be recorded.]

3. Ages.—Under heading 3, entitled “Age,” insert, in figures, the specific age of each slave opposite the number of such slave. If the exact age cannot be ascertained insert a number which shall be the nearest approximation thereto. The exact or estimated age of every slave is to be inserted. If the slave be a child which on the 1st day of June was less than one year old the entry is to be made by fractional parts of a year, as directed in Rule 7, Schedule 1. Slaves who (born previously) have died since the 1st day of June are to be entered as living, and all details respecting them to be given with as much care as if the slave were living. You are desired to give the names of all slaves whose age reaches or exceeds 100 years.

[There was no provision in the 1850 schedule for naming slaves over age 100]

4. Sex.—Under heading 4, opposite each number, insert “m” for male, and “f” for female, in all cases, as the fact may be. In the case of slaves it is very essential that the sex be specified, because of the entire omission of name. The compensation for all returns where this fact is omitted will be reduced.

5. Color.—Under heading 5, entitled “Color,” insert, in all cases where the slave is black, the letter “B.” When he or she is a mulatto insert “M.” You are to note the color of every slave. Those who are in any degree of mixed blood are to be termed mulatto, “M.”

[The 1850 instructions did not define “mulatto”]

6. Fugitives.—Under heading 6 insert, in figures, opposite the name of the owner, a mark or number designating the fugitives who, having escaped within the year, have not been returned to their owners. Such fugitives are to be described as fully as if in possession of their masters. No allusion is to be made respecting such as may have absconded subsequent to the 1st day of June; they are to be recorded as if in possession of their proper owners.

7. No. Manumitted.—In column No. 7, insert opposite the name of the former owner thereof the number of slaves manumitted within the year ending on the 1st day of June. The name of the person is to be given although at the time of the enumeration, or on the 1st day of June, such person may have held no slaves. The description of all the slaves manumitted may or may not be given at your pleasure, but the number manumitted must be clearly expressed. If you describe them separately, write “manumitted” under the name of the former owner in a line with each one described. If the former owner of slaves manumitted within the year should have died or removed, such circumstance is not to obviate the necessity of their enumeration as directed.

8. Deaf and Dumb, Blind, Insane, Idiotic.—You should be particular in every instance to inquire whether any slave comes within the above description, and, if so insert the fact in column 8, opposite the number and general description of such slave. If slaves be found imprisoned convicts, mention the crime in column 8, and the date of conviction in the vacant space No. 1. By carefully observing the following schedule, you will experience no difficulty in making proper returns:

9. Number of Slave Houses.—In column 9 you will insert the number of slave tenements or dwellings on every farm and plantation, and in every family where slaves are held you will inquire what number of separate tenements are occupied by slaves, and you will insert the number in every instance on a line with the last slave described as belonging to the person or estate whereof you are

instituting inquiry. We wish by this column to learn the number of occupied houses, the abode of slaves, belonging to each slaveholder.

5. Issues and Interpretation

A. Common Issues

Below are some issues to consider about how an enumerator carried out his instructions. The answers for each county may be as different as the individual men who enumerated the census. Schedule 2 is not as straightforward as it appears, which makes it a somewhat complex genealogical tool.

- Did the enumerator consistently identify hirers, trustees and guardians as well as the slave owner, when the enslaved were employed by someone other than the owner? My own research in Upson County proves that some slaves appear to belong to someone, but were actually hired from some other unnamed person.
- How did the enumerator interpret the length of time that made a “temporary absence” when recording the number of “such slaves as may be temporarily absent, provided they are usually held to service in your subdivision”?
- Were slaves double counted? Yes, in some cases they were. Afrigeneas researcher, Melvin Collier, found his same ancestors counted in both South Carolina and Mississippi! I have found slaves in Upson County reported by both the owner’s guardian and by the person who had hired them for the year (for my analysis, I compared tax returns for the year before, during, and after 1860, and in no year did the supposed owner pay any tax on slaves; I concluded that the woman and child shown in the census were most likely hired house servants).

Perhaps about 15% of slaves in the Antebellum South were hired out. If a slave was hired out of the county for a year, was that a temporary absence or not? Might the slave unintentionally be enumerated in both places? What about slaves hired by any one slave owner to several other persons in the same county—how would the enumerator avoid double-counting of either the slaves or slave owner? To follow his instructions correctly, the census enumerator would have had to remember all slave owners that he had already named previously in the schedule to avoid recording them again (except for the allowable case of an owner of slaves employed by another—but even then he would have to know whether or not those particular slaves had already been counted).

The slaves were enumerated at the master’s house, which was not necessarily near the slaves’ homes. Slaves were enumerated not at their own dwellings (where they could have been sighted and confidently counted) but by an accounting from the lips of slave masters who might be owners, hirers, or trustees, and who might not even live in the same district as their enslaved laborers. This fact alone cautions us that the slave enumeration data requires careful interpretation.

B. Locating the Dwellings of the Enslaved

The congressional framers of the census explicitly intended to keep enumerators from knocking on the doors of slaves’ houses—and to preclude them from hearing any information from the mouths of those houses’ occupants. Information to complete Schedule 2

usually came from the same householder who gave the data on free inhabitants in Schedule 1. This makes the order of visitation in Schedule 1 critical to the interpretation of Schedule 2, but at the same time divorces Schedule 1 (slave owner data) from the geography of schedule 2, because slave masters did not necessarily live near their slaves. Many enslaved persons lived on the same farms, or in the same houses, as their owners, but many did not. Slaves could:

- Live on the same lot or farm as the owner's home
- Live on the property of the owner at some remote location
- Live on the farm or at the house of a person who hired them
- "Live out"—an illegal, but oft-tolerated, arrangement in which a slave occupied a house separate from and without supervision from any white person.

Unlike persons named in Schedule 1, who actually lived on the premises at which they were enumerated, slaves enumerated in Schedule 2 could live almost anywhere as long as they were "usually held to service" in that county. For example, some slave owners lived in town with their house servants, while their field hands worked a plantation miles away in the country.

Schedule 2 (column 9) asked for the number of slave houses on the assumption that most slaves lived in structures separate from the dwelling-house of the master, such as the familiar plantation slave quarters, built a discreet distance away from the big house. Among yeoman slave owners and townspeople, the most common slave house was probably the detached kitchen near many farms and town houses (southerners often used the terms "kitchen" and "negro house" interchangeably). The more slaves a farmer had, of course, the more slave houses he (or she) would need.

Schedule 2 does not tell who lived in each slave house—it merely reports a total number of occupied slave dwellings. The census does not say who actually lived in these "slave houses." Occupants could have included persons owned by the same slave master who owned the houses, persons held in trust, and persons hired from others. Slaves reported as an owner's property might have lived elsewhere—the common exception being slaves who were hired out at a distance to other masters; less common exceptions but more problematical to any interpretation of Schedule 2 are slaves who "lived out" apart from any master.

C. Slave Censuses with Names

Although the census instructions directed enumerators to replace slaves' names with numbers, a few enumerators recorded the names anyway, in error. Three copies of each census schedule were supposed to have been made: one for the census bureau in Washington, one for the State's secretary of state, and the third to be deposited in the local county courthouse. Counties where Schedule 2 names slaves tend to be counties in the so-called "border states," and western states, where the slave population was relatively small compared to the free population, and census takers may not have read their instructions for Schedule 2 very closely.

I have a different theory to explain the existence of the Camden County, NC, document cited below. I suggest that this copy with slave names was the census-taker's working copy, from which he copied the smooth version (without names) for submission to Washington. Since census-takers compensation was based on the quality of the copy sent to Washington, it would have been natural to give the working copy to the courthouse or to the state, rather than take unnecessary time to make out a third corrected copy. I wonder how many other census drafts may exist in state and county archives that MAY have the slaves' names.

Counties known to have slaves' names in the 1850 or 1860 Census:

1850, Bowie County, Texas

Extracts published in the *Frontier Freedman's Journal*:

<http://hometown.aol.com/angelaw859/ffj.html#VOL11>

1850, Scott County, TN

http://www.tngenweb.org/scott/census_1850_slave_schedule.htm

1860 Boyd County, KY

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~kyboyd/Census/boydcountycensusindex/slave/>

1860, Camden County, NC

<http://home.hamptonroads.com/stories/story.cfm?story=66569&ran=242410>

1860, Hampshire County, VA

<http://www.afrigeneas.com/forumd/index.cgi?noframes;read=5536>

A Note About Schedule 3, Mortality: Although slaves are not named in Schedule 2, they ARE named in Schedule 3, Mortality (all persons who had died during the year ending 1 June 1850). In some districts, both the slave master and the slave are named, but in other districts, only the slave is named, which makes identification with a slave owner (for genealogical purposes) difficult. Whenever extracting from the Mortality schedules, ALWAYS include all the names, even those of white people, because the mortality schedule usually follows the order of Schedules 1 and 2, which means you have a better chance of identifying the slave owner by comparing these three lists. For the same reason, NEVER rearrange the names in Schedule 3 in alphabetical order, because you destroy any chance of identifying the deceased with their families or slave owners.

Schedule 3 offers another example of the census taker's instructions forcing enumerators to omit vital data about slaves. Instructions told the enumerator to check a column for persons who were married at time of death, but to leave this column blank for slaves. I have seen a schedule (1860, Upson County, GA) where a census taker had started checking this block for married slaves, then, apparently realizing his mistake, going back and crossing out the marks.

About the Author: David E. Paterson, AfriGeneas [Slave Research Forum](#) manager, was born in Scotland, UK, grew up in Seattle, WA, and lives in Norfolk, VA. He is married to the former Judy L. Moody of Memphis, TN. David is completing his MA in History from University of West Florida with a concentration on the American Old South and Reconstruction. David's slavery-related work has appeared in [American Archivist](#), and Oxford University Press has commissioned him to write two biographies for the forthcoming [African-American National Biography](#). His long-term research goal is to write a history of Upson County, GA.

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