

African Americans of Washington County, Georgia: From Colonial Times through Reconstruction

Adam L. Adolphus, Sr.

**Washington County, Georgia
Historical Society**



The African American Committee

2011

Sold by John C. Hoff, Stationer, No. 10 Broad Street.

Manifest of Slaves, Passengers on board the *Sham Metamora* *Per* Master,
burthen *Tons, bound from Charleston, for Savannah*

NAMES.	SEX.	AGE.	HEIGHT.		CLASS.	OWNER OR SHIPPER.	RESIDENCE.
			Feet.	Inches.			
<i>Sarah</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>20 yrs</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>B. Tarbutton</i>	<i>2-20-51</i> <i>Georgia</i>
<i>2 children</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>3 mths</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Sarah</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>18 yrs</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Joseph</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Ann</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Charlotte</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Mulatto</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Johnny</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Thomas</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Thomas</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Benjamin</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Tom</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Emeline</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Lucy</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Smith</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Harriet</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>Mulatto</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>

13 1/2
20 1/2

Frontispiece: Slave Manifest for the ship *Metamora* out of the port of Charleston, South Carolina and arriving at the Port of Savannah, Georgia on February 19, 1851. The owner or shipper of the slaves is listed as B. Tarbutton. The only B. Tarbutton listed in the entire state of Georgia for the 1840 and 1850 US Censuses was Benja and Benjn Tarbutton of the 91st GMD and 97th GMD of Washington County, Georgia. This Manifest is emblematic of one of the many means by which African Americans made their way to Washington County, Georgia. Some of the slaves named in this manifest were still part of the Tarbutton estate holdings upon Benjamin Tarbutton's death in about 1856. There were six other slave manifests listing slaves probably destined for Washington County, Georgia indicating B., Benj, Benja and Benjm Tarbutton as owner – See page 282 for more details. (Image from National Archives and Records Administration – Southeast Region (Atlanta) (NCRAA), Morrow, GA: *Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801- 1860*: Record Group: 36, Records of the U. S. Customs Service; ARC Identifier 1151775)

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Dedication

To the memory of

ELIZA "HODGES"

1832 - 1898

My Great-Great Grandmother

"The Black Cherokee Rose"

Purchased on the block at the
Louisville, Georgia Slave Market

In 1839.

Parents unknown

Raised by Harriet and Tom

Slaves of Abel Hodges, Sr.

Died March 14, 1898

BALDWIN SHERIFF'S SALE.—Will be sold before the Court-house door in the city of Milledgeville, on the first Tuesday in March next, between the usual hours of sale, the following property, to-wit.

Thirty-five acres of land, adjoining Charles Ennis on the East, Wm. Baber on the North; levied upon as the property of Eliza Wayne, to satisfy two *fi fas* issued from Justice's Court, 115th District G. M.; levy made and returned to me by a Constable.

Also, a negro woman named Eliza, of dark complexion, about 24 years old; levied on as the property of Abel H. Hodges to satisfy a *fi fa* in favor of Bangs & Harman, vs said Hodges; property pointed out by Plaintiff.

CHARLES ENNIS, D. Sh'ff.

February 2, 1856

6 tds

Advertisement for the sale of Eliza "Hodges" to whose memory this book is dedicated and appearing in a February 1856 edition of the *Southern Recorder*.



Washington County Historical Society Genealogy Research Center and Old Jail Museum

Copies of this book can be obtained from the Washington County Historical Society's Genealogy Research Center and Old Jail Museum:

129 Jones Street
PO Box 6088
Sandersville, GA 31082
Tel 478-552-6965
E-mail genealogyresearch@att.net
Website <http://wacogrc.org>

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PREFACE

This work grew out of a search for my ancestors in Washington County, Georgia. It soon became apparent during the search that there was a severe shortage of actual data on African Americans pre Civil War that was readily available to the general public. On a visit to the Probate Clerk's Office in the Washington County Courthouse, I came across Appraisal Book "A" wherein, I found a reference to my great-great grandmother. At that point, I also saw that there were other slaves listed in the volume. I also visited the Genealogy Research Center Old Jail Library on Jones Street in Sandersville, Georgia. There, I came across several family histories in various degrees of development. Some were meticulously researched, documented and printed. Others were less elaborate. These family histories often included the wills that were part of colonial Washington County up to the present time. Many of those wills often contained the names of African Americans who were held by particular families. The data in these family histories were also part of the greater narrative of an African American family's history even though limited. I began searching through family histories in a somewhat haphazard manner. I learned that I would have to be more methodical. So I began anew in alphabetical order of the families using the Genealogy Society's Library numbering system 929.2(FAM) (for Family Name). When I was about a third of the way through them, a new volume appeared: *Washington County, Georgia Estate Records, 1822 -1885*: Published by the Brantley Association of America. The previous volume set me more directly onto the path I followed.

This work includes slave listings in the Family History volumes of the Genealogy Research Center's library, *Washington County Estate Records: 1822-1885*, the Washington County Probate records that pertain to slaves, freemen and freedmen, U. S. Census records for Washington County, Georgia from 1820 through 1880, ten different church records, Washington County records housed at the Georgia Archives in Morrow, Georgia, Georgia death records, newspapers of the period, tombstone inscriptions from a few African American cemeteries and information gleaned from several other resources. There are a total of some 30,000 + names, with some of them being repetitions or duplications. The period covered starts with Washington County's early beginning and extends through the Reconstruction Period up through the early 1880's. (The general thought in the African American community in Washington County was that all the historic records of the county had been destroyed in the two courthouse fires during the nineteenth century. This assumption turned out to be false. Some of the records were destroyed, but enough were salvaged to provide a clearer picture of what happened to some of the early African Americans of Washington County, Georgia.)

The listings are by a slave's given name, then holder's name, followed by date (when recorded), then location, then source and then by page number when available. In the case of the Sales Record, in the place of location, the buyer's or hirer's name was inserted. Some of the listings are not specifically Washington County. Where Washington County is not the location, the exact location is listed. Rather than repeating the slave holder for each slave, the first slave is associated with a holder with all subsequent slaves associated with that same

holder until a new slave holder comes into play. The same type format applies to dates, publications, and page numbers. We have attempted to index each slave and each slave holder, buyer, inheritor, hirer or guardian together to facilitate look-up possibilities. We also found that some slaves had names that were commonly shared. For given named and unnamed enslaved African Americans, recommendation is made to refer to the "Slave Holders, Buyers, Inheritors, Hirers and Others Index" for possible associations.

We used the spellings that appeared in each volume or source. These spellings often differed from one set of records to another. Most spellings were apparently a result of the original recorder's interpretation and appear to have a phonetic bent. There were some instances of no names being used, but instead of a name the terms, "woman, child, children, infant, or family" were used. There were also instances of the inability to determine exactly what spelling was intended by the original recorder. In those cases, a question mark accompanies the slave's name entry. The reader should be advised that variations in the spellings of names most certainly occurred and that variations in the spellings of names can lead to false assumptions. In addition, we used abbreviations such as "g" for girl, "b" for boy, "w" for woman or wife, "m" for man and "h" for husband. Where the information for the slave's age was given, it was recorded as, e.g. (22 yrs). In the case of the Inventory of Estates, the monetary value of the slave was recorded. Sometimes a group of slaves was bundled under a single value. In those instances, the value was recorded as, e.g. (\$1500/3) for the value of three slaves. The reason for recording the value was to provide a possible reference for the state of the slave's health or age. In going through so many listings, it is of course possible that errors or inadvertent omissions were made. The researcher should refer to the source documents for greater clarity.

Surnames of African Americans after the Civil War present a rather serious problem for research purposes. Some African Americans used the surnames of their former holders, while others adopted the names of slave holders or others of the free population. There were, of course, instances of where the freedmen adopted names of their own choosing. This is evidenced in the fact that there were many slave holders listed in the censuses of 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850 and 1860 that had no freedmen use their surnames. Some African Americans actually used the given names of their fathers as their surname. Marriages of slave holder descendants also affected the name that a freedman may have chosen. It was also a general practice for freedmen to use the first name of their fathers as their surnames.

The U. S. Census Record for 1870 presents an additional problem with the spellings of some surnames. The freedmen had to choose a surname. Largely without formal schooling, their speech was impaired by the limitations of their speech patterns. African Americans in Washington County had speech patterns evidencing the elision of initial vowel sounds and a lack of distinction in expressing certain consonants within certain words, surnames included. The census taker also may have had a disadvantage if he did not know a particular family by name and had to depend upon his understanding of the freedman's dialect in recording their surname. For instance, there was a freedman family whose last name was recorded as "Curze." There is no historical reference to any surname "Curze" of any ethnicity in Washington County. Using the African American freedman's speech proclivities, the name could be interpreted as "Kirksay or Kirksey" a surname currently existing in Washington County, Georgia. If an African American has been unable to find their ancestors' surname, they should consider variant spellings of uncommon names

Ages, birthdates and years of birth oftentimes varied from one set of records to another. It appears that many of those ages and dates are approximations based on hearsay and individual recollections that had no documentary evidence of actual dates. The ages, especially of the earlier African Americans, should be considered in that light.

In the case of the Marriage Records, the oldest records had been restored. It appears there are a few double entries which may be due to errors (there are no notations to that effect) because there would have been a

number of “bigamies” that were sanctioned within a few months of each other. The restoration consisted of pasting two licenses on a single page (front and back) which were originally two licenses per page with no writing on the back. None of the licenses were numbered and the restoration probably did not follow the original sequence. It also should be noted that some if not all the African American Ministers of the Gospel (MG) were illiterate and oftentimes appeared to produce the licenses in batches representing a several weeks span of time. They probably depended upon the clerk to ensure accuracy. The Marriage Records provide information about the surnames of newly freed slaves. The writer chose to stop the recording of most data at the end of 1885 because it would provide sufficient time for adult slaves to officially record their marital status and also take into account some of the younger former slaves during the time period this study covers.

The Death Records contain entries of African Americans with birthdates after 1865 only if the certificate has information about the decedent’s parents. Death certificates are of particular genealogical value in that many of them include the names of one or both of the decedent’s parents. A large number of the certificates include the maiden name of the decedent’s mother. No death certificates were used for those decedents who had birth dates after the mid 1880’s.

As this work progressed, much was learned other than the recording of a slave’s name. It was learned that slave families were often kept together, that slaves had options to what their fate was to be, that slave families were many times separated, that as the end of the Civil War approached, the value of slaves more than doubled, and that the history of a particular slave may be traced over a number of years up to the end of the Civil War.

Our attempt was to record every slave listed in the foregoing publications and documents and to provide a single source document for African American genealogical research for Washington County, Georgia. As far as is known, this is the first document which attempts to accomplish this. This volume was intended initially to provide a source reference for African Americans in search of their heritage. However, as the work progressed, it became apparent that the information is useful for family research for all people with roots in Washington County, Georgia. The reader should be aware that these listings represent only a fraction of all the slaves that lived in Washington County, Georgia during the period of this study.

African American genealogical research in Washington County, Georgia is also problematical because of the loss of so many records during the two courthouse fires and the lack of documentation for the County’s beginnings. The reader should be aware that the 1870 Census is the single best source of information and efforts should be made to tie enslaved African Americans to their holders. Attention also should be paid to the bordering slave populations and holders of Baldwin, Hancock, Jefferson, Johnson, Laurens and Wilkinson Counties as well. The record indicates that there was generally frequent movement of freedmen into and out of the counties surrounding Washington County.

In the case of the family histories, slaves are listed from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, Delaware, Florida, Alabama, and Texas. The reason for this is that many of the pioneer settlers in those family histories migrated to Washington County from the eastern seaboard colonies. Most stayed in the county, but others moved southward and westward throughout the period of this study. When they came, they often brought their slaves with them. In the course of their sojourns in Washington County, slaves were bought, sold and traded within and outside of the county and then the slave holding family moved on leaving a kind of patchwork of the slaves’ origins and eventual fates. The Census records bear out the fact that many of Washington County’s early slaves came from those places and that some also migrated southward and westward.

From a careful analysis, it should be noted that this record of slaves only comprises a small percentage of the actual slaves that lived in Washington County, Georgia from Colonial times through the end of the Civil War. Also, the Appraisement Records, the Sales Record, the Will Record, the Division of Estates Record, and the Records of Returns are close replications of each other in accordance to the reported slave data extant at the time of their execution. In the case of The Brantley Association of America publication, the slave listing are extractions from the larger record contained in those volumes.

The organization of the book, with the exception of the Mortality Schedules and Church records, should be regarded in context of where the African American slaves were during a particular time. To do so adds cohesiveness and context to all persons concerned. To simply list the slaves individually, while useful, would fail to place the slaves in the environment they occupied. To assist the reader, I have provided some data on the slave population in Washington County for 1870 (freedmen), 1860, 1850, 1840, 1830 and 1820. This data is found in Tables 1 and 2. I also included maps of Washington County for 1783, 1796, 1822, 1846 and 1864. In addition photographs of some slave plantation homes and cemeteries are included in the illustrations.

In the "Appendices" section of this work is a part designated "Anecdotes and Stories." This is a meager attempt to highlight some notable information about a few individuals of the thousands named in this volume. It would be impossible and presumptuous to attempt to tell the story of the lives of so many individuals.

The indexes of this volume are indispensable in locating individuals. All slaves were listed by their given names. Freedmen are also listed by their surnames as were free African Americans. One should also be aware that the spellings of slaves' names were often phonetically derived by the original recorders of those names and had variations from one set of documents to another. In the case of the Washington County Tax Digest for 1869, the microfilm record in some sections lacks clarity from a visual aspect. Many entries are either totally or partially illegible. Where there is partial legibility, though recorded in the main text, no attempt was made to index those entries. The reader is referred to the original document (a disk containing the Washington County Tax Digest for 1869 is available at the Genealogy Research Center).

It is hoped that this volume will provide some recognition of those African Americans in Washington County, Georgia whose existence and identity as individuals have been long shrouded in anonymity will be brought to the light of day and remembrance in the minds and eyes of their descendants and other interested parties. It is unfortunate that thousands of African Americans lived and toiled in Washington County, Georgia and will never be identified. I regret that I was not able to gain the support of the Georgia Department of Vital Statistics in extracting the names of most of the African Americans born before 1880 and who died during the period from 1928-1940. It is suspected that are at least 1,000 individuals in this group who are not included in this study.

We acknowledge the help provided by Rachel Lord and Calvin Peavy, Jr. from the Washington County Probate Office in providing extraordinary access to probate records which made the recording of names so much easier. Recognition and appreciation are also given to those African American descendants and slave holding families' descendants who provided information and photographs of their ancestors which added an essential personal touch to this volume. Appreciation is also expressed to Faye Poss and Vivian Price Saffold of the R. J. Taylor, Jr. Publication Advisory Council and to Steven W. Engerrand of the R. J. Taylor, Jr. Foundation Publication Advisory Council and Assistant Director of the Georgia Archives who provided the essential guidance for the preparation of this work for publication. A special note of appreciation is given to Mrs. Loretta Cato, the Chair of the Genealogy Committee and the Genealogy Research Center of the Washington County Historical Society who first suggested that this work should be published and provided the initial

guidance that led to its publication. Finally for my wife Mildred, a special note of appreciation for her advice and infinite patience during this endeavor.

Adam L. Adolphus, Sr.

