

Hill, Kate. "Missouri Bills of Sale." *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* 2, no. 2 (2021): 44-47.
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Missouri Bills of Sale

Dataset Article

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Description

Contrary to some of the sprawling plantations of the Deep South, slavery throughout the state of Missouri often operated on a smaller, decentralized scale. Encouraged by more diverse agricultural and industrial opportunities, less than 10 percent of the state's slaveholders owned more than ten enslaved persons during the 1850s. Slavery as a system in Missouri began to collapse in the early years of the Civil War, as many slaves took advantage of the political and social upheaval, presence of Union troops, and proximity to Northern free states to gain their freedom. Slavery was officially abolished by the state's constitutional convention on January 11, 1865.¹

¹ Diane Mutti Burke, "Slavery on the Western Border: Missouri's Slave System and its Collapse during the Civil War" *Civil War on the Western Border: The Missouri-Kansas Conflict, 1854-1865*, Kansas City Public Library, <https://civilwaronthewesternborder.org/essay/slavery-western-border-miss>.

This collection contains one bill of sale for two slaves sold by Cleopatra Frazier and one copy of a bill of sale for one slave sold by Samuel McClure. It also contains a notice by Theodore Duncan announcing the auction of ten slaves. All three documents include the names and ages of the enslaved persons being sold:

A woman named Margaret (age 17) and her daughter Mary Jane (age 2) were sold by Cleopatra Frazier of Marion County, Missouri to Isaac R. Campbell for \$300.00 in 1831.

A woman named Betsy (age 28) was sold by Samuel McClure of Calloway County, Missouri to S. Cochran of St. Louis for \$162.50 on January 13, 1835.

Theodore Duncan of Clay County, Missouri was the administrator for the estate of William Duncan. He arranged for the auction of ten people, Bill (age 53), George (age 20), Johnson (age 18), Billy (age 13), John (age 8), James (age 5), Amanda (age 34), Betty (age 12), Cynene (age 4), and Alice (age 2), to be held at the Clay County Courthouse in Liberty, Missouri on April 25, 1859.

Dates of Data Collection

2021

Dataset Languages

English

Geographic Coverage

Missouri, United States

Temporal Coverage

1831-1859

Documents Types

Bills of Sale

Auction Notice

Sources

Slave Sale Papers (SC139), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Methodology

SC139 is an artificial collection consisting of documents found in the holdings of Missouri Valley Special Collections. Identifying donor information and provenance could not be located. Archivists collated these materials into a single collection to improve researcher access.

The dataset for the collection consists of twelve fields, reflecting contextual information about the documents, information contained within the document, and information inferred from the documents.

An identifier was assigned to each document, noting its numerical order in the collection folder. This is reflected in the Notes field (column 1). For context, the type of document was recorded in the Document Type field (column 2)

All three documents contain information regarding the names and ages of the enslaved persons, the names and locations of the individuals selling the enslaved persons, and the date of the transactions. The two bills of sale include the name of the individual buying the enslaved person and the monetary cost of the transaction. One of the bills of sale includes the location of the individual buying the enslaved person, and the auction notice announces the location of the upcoming sale. This prompted the creation of the following dataset fields: Name (column 3), Age (column 4), Seller's Name (column 6), Seller's Location (column 7), Buyer's Name (column 8), Buyer's Location (column 9), Date of Sale (column 10), and Purchase Price (column 11). Regarding the auction notice, the notation "NA" was used in the dataset to reflect the absence of data for Buyer's Name, Buyer's Location, and Purchase Price.

All but one of the enslaved persons are identified in the documents as "girl," "woman," "man," or "boy." Since their ages were also noted in the documents, these descriptors were translated into "Female" and "Male" in the Sex field (column 5) of the dataset. The one enslaved person without a descriptor, a "child named Mary Jane about two years of age," was inferred to be female based on their name.

The Notes field (column 12) includes additional relational and identifying information regarding the enslaved persons that does not fit in the other fields.

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Data Links

Dataset Repository: Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/37NFNH>

Linked Data Representation: *Enslaved.org* [Summary Visualization](#)

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