

Mitchell, Brian K. "Free Blacks Database: New Orleans, 1840-1860." *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* 1, no. 1 (2020): 16-19. <https://doi.org/10.25335/sm75-f441>.

Free Blacks Database: New Orleans, 1840-1860

Peer-Reviewed Dataset Article

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Description

The "Free Blacks" dataset was created from *The Mayor's Register of Free Blacks in the City of New Orleans from 1840 to 1864*. The source document is located in the New Orleans City Archive as *The Mayor's Register of Free Blacks in the City of New Orleans from 1840 to 1864*. The register was a government document in which free blacks with less than 50% white ancestry (referred to as mulattoes, grifs, and negroes) were required to register themselves.

The Mayor's Register of Free Blacks in the City of New Orleans from 1840 to 1864 was created after the Louisiana state legislature passed a law prohibiting the emigration of free blacks into the state on March 16, 1830. In order to police the free black populace and to prevent the introduction of new free blacks into Louisiana, the law required "all free negroes, griffs and mulattoes of the first degree" who had entered the state after the adoption of the Constitution of 1812 and before January 1, 1825 to enroll themselves with the office of the Parish Judge of their resident parish or with the office of the Mayor of the City of New Orleans. The rolls kept by these offices were to include the person's "age, sex, colour, trade or calling, place of nativity and the

time of their arrival in the State." A fee of fifty cents was charged to the registrant at the time of enrollment.¹

Describing free black emigrants as "floating scum," the New Orleans *True American* argued that the introduction of additional free blacks into state "sowed dissention among slaves" and encouraged the flight of their enslaved population toward freedom in the north. Writing on the prohibition of free black emigration into the state, the *True American* maintained that the barring of free blacks from its borders was desired "to effect the safety of the people of the south—their happiness—their comfort."²

Dates of Data Collection

2015-2016

Dataset Languages

English, French

Geographic Coverage

New Orleans, Louisiana

Temporal Coverage

1840-1864

Documents Types

Census or Register

Sources

The Mayor's Register of Free Blacks in the City of New Orleans from 1840 to 1864. Louisiana Division/City Archives and Special Collections. New Orleans Public Library. New Orleans, LA.

¹ Register of free persons of color entitled to remain in the state, 1840-1864, AA430, Records of the Office of the Mayor, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana, <http://nutrias.org/~nopl/inv/neh/nehaa.htm#fpc>.

² "Our Free-Colored Population," *True American* (New Orleans), February 12, 1839, 2.

Methodology

The source document consists of four volumes of ledgers. The first volume is written in French and the remaining three volumes are in English. The entries from the volume written in French were translated into English for entry into the database.

The dataset has a population of 2,818 individuals and 50 variables. Registered free blacks are listed by name, sex, age, year of birth, ethnicity, color, country of origin, city of origin, state of origin, date of arrival, profession, method of manumission, date of emancipation, age at time of emancipation, notary of record, court, judges, or recorders of record, baptism church, baptism record, Emancipation record index, succession record, former owner's name, and former owner's relationship to the free person, among others.

The data was isolated into fields to lead the user to a variety of other data sources in the city relating to the individuals within. For example, a user can look at the number of manumissions from the same notary or from the same time period. The database serves as a finding aid for manumissions recorded by specific notaries and courts within the city of New Orleans. It lists specific notaries and dates of filing, specific baptism records, and has been correlated to specific emancipation records where applicable.

Date of Publication

June 2020

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Data Links

Dataset Repository: Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/9ZD83Y>

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

Acknowledgments

National Endowment for the Humanities

Matrix: Center for Digital Humanities & Social Sciences at Michigan State University

Louisiana Division/City Archives and Special Collections at the New Orleans Public Library

Cite this Article

Mitchell, Brian K. "Free Blacks Database: New Orleans, 1840-1860." *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* 1, no. 1 (2020): 16-19. <https://doi.org/10.25335/sm75-f441>.

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