Louisiana Slave Database, 1719-1820

Peer-Reviewed Dataset Article

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Description

This dataset contains over 104,000 records, with 162 fields each containing descriptions of enslaved people found in original manuscript documents. African slave names, genders, ages, occupations, illnesses, family relationships, ethnicity, places of origin, prices paid by slave owners, slaves' testimony and emancipations, type of document(s) where they were found, and where to retrieve the original document are some of the major fields. The project included all the geographic areas now constituting the State of Louisiana through 1820 and also included some documents originating in or involving parts of what are now Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. The vast majority of the documents used are housed in Louisiana, but a few were consulted in archives in France and Spain and at the University of Texas in Austin. The project stopped with 1820 when descriptions of the African ethnicities of slaves became sparse in Louisiana at the same time as the volume of documents escalated.

Dates of Data Collection

1984-1999

Dataset Languages

English, French, Spanish

Geographic Coverage

Mobile, Alabama; Pensacola, Florida; several Louisiana parishes; several Mississippi counties

Temporal Coverage

1719-1820

Documents Types

Auction Notice, Bill of Sale or Receipt, Census or Register, Civil, Criminal, Freedom or Emancipation Document, Legislation, Membership List, Life History, Petition, Runaway Ad, Sacramental or Religious Record, Ship Registry or Manifest, Tax Record, Will

Sources

Louisiana Historical Center of Louisiana State Museum (New Orleans, Louisiana)
New Orleans Historic Notarial Archives (New Orleans, Louisiana)
Pointe Coupee Parish Courthouse (New Roads, Louisiana) and other parish courthouses in Louisiana

Full source information is present within individual rows in the dataset.

Methodology

The documents we used were housed mainly in courthouses throughout Louisiana and written in French, Spanish, and English with a few examples of Louisiana Creole. I worked with several assistants, teaching them how to read these very difficult hand-written documents and the minimum vocabulary they needed to know in each language. I supervised their work carefully until I was confident in them before allowing them to do research and data entry on their own. We used a data entry form from dBASE V. I maintained the central database and prepared it for publication.

Date of Publication

June 2020

Use Permissions

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Data Links

Dataset Repository: Harvard Dataverse https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WNOYWC
Linked Data Representation: *Enslaved.org* Summary Visualization

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