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## Take Them in Families: The Enslaved People of Casa Bianca Plantation, Florida

Peer-Reviewed Dataset Article

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### Description

The "Take Them in Families" project began with the objective of identifying the enslaved families who former United States president James Monroe sold to Casa Bianca, a plantation located in Jefferson County, Florida. While uncovering the story of Casa Bianca Plantation, we detected that other groups of enslaved people had been purchased for the plantation and expanded our dataset to all those enslaved at Casa Bianca. The Take Them in Families project is genealogical; therefore, this dataset records the names of all those who had been enslaved at Casa Bianca along with their descendants and traces family lines to the present. This dataset can assist researchers in exploring the geographical origins of the enslaved in Middle

Florida during its early settlement and territorial period. It also allows for the study of post-emancipation migration patterns for the region. We have made this information available on our website, [TakeThemInFamilies.com](http://TakeThemInFamilies.com).

This dataset consists of information about 163 enslaved people of Casa Bianca Plantation and their descendants, totaling 407 named people. Casa Bianca was located in Jefferson County, Florida, near the town of Monticello. Joseph M. White (1781-1839) and his business partner Richard H. Wilde (1789-1847) created Casa Bianca as a sugar cane, and then cotton, plantation around 1827. Several of the sources of the enslaved families and individuals White and Wilde used to obtain the labor force for the plantation have been identified. The first recorded group we have found was ten enslaved people White shipped from New Orleans to Florida in 1827. He then negotiated the purchase of enslaved families from former United States president James Monroe, with whom he had political connections, in 1828. Monroe was deeply in debt from expenses incurred while president, as well as the lack of income from his plantations as agricultural production moved further south. Monroe sold his Highland plantation in Albemarle County, Virginia to pay his creditors, and the sale of these enslaved families to White for \$5,000 secured the release of his debt to John Jacob Astor. Monroe wrote about this sale to his friend and former president James Madison, explaining that White would “take them in families” to Florida. In the meantime, Wilde used his professional and political clout to obtain the remaining African captives from the illegal slave ship *Antelope*, which a U.S. revenue cutter captured and took to Savannah, Georgia, in 1820. After a seven-year legal battle over the status of the illegally trafficked captives, Wilde took possession of 37 Africans at the end of 1827 and sent them to Casa Bianca Plantation.

The establishment of Casa Bianca and the accrual of its enslaved workforce highlights the political, financial, and social aspects of slaveholding and the expansion of slave-dependent regions of the United States. Others indirectly involved in Casa Bianca’s establishment include Chief Justice John Marshall, who ultimately decided the *Antelope* case, and President John Quincy Adams, who signed a bill allowing the African captives to remain in the country without any financial penalty to Wilde. The story of Casa Bianca Plantation is the direct result of American expansionism in the southeastern United States pursued by America’s Founding Fathers through the acquisition of the Florida Territory. It demonstrates that the institution of slavery touched all areas of American society, from the southern plantocracy to northern lawmakers and Constitutional rule.

During the 1830s White added to the plantation’s enslaved population by purchasing the enslaved people from his brother Everett White’s estate. Wilde sold his portion of Casa Bianca to White, and White’s death in 1839 left the nearly 3,000-acre estate and 45 enslaved people to his widow, Ellen Adair White (later Beatty), who continued to own Casa Bianca until 1860. Her nephew James Patton Anderson managed the estate for his aunt from 1856 to 1860, when Ellen Adair White Beatty sold the core of the plantation and 82 enslaved people to Tallahassee lawyer Robert W. Williams. Williams transported some of those enslaved families to his Carroll Parish, Louisiana, plantation. Anderson purchased 400 acres of Casa Bianca land and 38 enslaved people, who stayed in Jefferson County until emancipation. In the last year of Ellen Adair White Beatty’s ownership of Casa Bianca, 126 enslaved people lived and worked at the plantation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Burnett, Randy W. “Florida Bound: Casa Bianca Plantation’s Enslaved People,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 98, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 79-104.

## **Dates of Data Collection**

2017-present

## **Dataset Languages**

English

## **Geographic Coverage**

Jefferson County, FL; Loudoun County, VA; Albemarle County, VA; Chatham County, GA; Savannah, GA; New Orleans, LA; East Carroll Parish, LA; Chicot County, AR

## **Temporal Coverage**

1823-2020

## **Documents Types**

Auction Notice; Bill of Sale or Receipt; Census or Register; Civil Lawsuit; Freedom or Emancipation Document; Sacramental or Religious Register; Ship Registry or Manifest; Tax Record; Will

## **Sources**

Albemarle County, Virginia, Deed Book, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, VA.

Broward County, Florida, Marriage Book, Broward County Clerk of Circuit Court, Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Chatham County, Georgia, Deed Book, Chatham County Courthouse, Savannah, GA.

Chicot County, Arkansas, Marriage Record Book, Chicot County Courthouse, Lake Village, AR.

Drew County, Arkansas, Marriage Record Book, Drew County Courthouse, Monticello, AR.

Florida State Census, 1885, 1935, 1945.

Gadsden County, Florida, Marriage Licenses, Gadsden County Courthouse, Quincy, FL.

"Hay, George, 1765-1830," and "White, Joseph M., 1781-1839," *O Say Can you See: Early Washington, D.C., Law & Family*, [www.earlywashingtondc.org](http://www.earlywashingtondc.org).

"Inventory of servants, stock & plantation utensils," November 25, 1823, James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library, Fredericksburg, VA.

J. Patton Anderson Papers, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

Jefferson County, Florida, Deed Record, Jefferson County Courthouse, Monticello, FL.

Jefferson County, Florida, Inventories, Appraisements and Accounts of Sales (1845-1865), 12, 49-50, Jefferson County Courthouse, Monticello, FL.

Jefferson County, Florida, Marriage Record and Marriage Licenses, Jefferson County Courthouse, Monticello, FL.

Jefferson County, Florida, Wills, Letters Testamentary and Letters of Administration, 1838-1876, Book A: 30, Jefferson County Courthouse, Monticello, FL.

"Jefferson County Freedmen's Contracts," Contract between J.M. Marvin and Thomas Harris, William Marks, et.al., Florida Memory, State Library and Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/269182>.

"Louisiana, New Orleans, Slave Manifests of Coastwise Vessels, 1807-1860," citing NARA microfilm publication M1895, RG36 (National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas: National Archives and Records Administration, 1986), database, FamilySearch, <https://FamilySearch.org>.

Madison County, Florida, Marriage Record Book, Madison County Courthouse, Madison, FL.

"Names of Africans," U.S. v. The General Ramirez, Mixed Case Files, 1790-1860, Records of the District Courts of the United States, 1685-2009, Record Group 21, Box 32, National Archives at Atlanta.

Orleans Parish Notarial Archives, New Orleans, Notarial Records of William Christy, V. 38:639.

Provine, Dorothy S., District of Columbia Free Negro Registers, 1820-1861 (Heritage Books: Bowie, MD, 1996):176, Registration No. 813.

*Polk's Lakeland City Directory* [Polk County, FL], (Richmond, VA: R.L. Polk & Co., various years, 1923-1960.).

Records of the Superior Court, Box 11, File Folder 4; Box 12, File Folder 31; Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, FL.

United States Federal Census, 1870-1940

"United States, Freedmen's Bureau Labor Contracts, Indenture and Apprenticeship Records, 1865-1872," M1905, roll 42 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration), database with images, FamilySearch, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-99G2-KHDY?cc=2475025&wc=QDRZ-15X%3A1589952409>.

"Voter Registration Rolls, 1867-68, Taylor County," Florida Memory, State Library and Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/292664>.

## Methodology

The project website [TakeThemInFamilies.com](http://TakeThemInFamilies.com) uses the open-source genealogy program *Gramps*. As the goal of this endeavor is to make the family trees of those enslaved at Casa Bianca available to the public, *Gramps* allows the creation of interactive family trees and other reports for users of the website. But as a narrowly focused genealogy-oriented program, its shortcomings include the inability to create a designation to trace a chain of slaveholders for an enslaved person or the incorporation of any other data related to the history of slavery. Another deficiency is the insufficiency to export full citations of document resources for an academic environment. To overcome these limitations, a dataset for *Enslaved.org* was produced to address these deficiencies. The portion of the dataset that deals with enslaved individuals is integrated into the *Enslaved.org* Hub.

These two related datasets about the enslaved people at Casa Bianca and their descendants were derived from multiple sources. As this project's initial goal was to determine the fate of the enslaved people President James Monroe sold to Florida, research began with an examination of Monroe's correspondence, available from the James Monroe Papers at the University of Virginia and the James Monroe Museum (Fredericksburg, VA), along with Albemarle County deeds associated with Monroe. We extracted the names of the enslaved people from these documents, comparing them to names found in documents associated with Casa Bianca plantation in Jefferson County, Florida in order to determine which individuals Monroe sold to Joseph M. White in 1828. Only the individuals sold to White -- named Toby and Betsy, Jim Harris and Calypso, Mary Baker, and Dudley and Eve -- are included in the dataset. The names of their children included in the sale are inferred from the family grouping in the Casa Bianca plantation inventories, along with birthplace information found in post-Emancipation federal and Florida state census records.

The J. Patton Anderson Papers at the University of Florida contained three Casa Bianca plantation inventories that named the enslaved people at the plantation in family groups, which allowed the later identification of these individuals post-Emancipation. These lists do not provide further information about the people, such as age, gender, or birthplace. The genders contained in the dataset are derived from census records or, if no census data has been found for the person, gender has been assumed based on the first name.

We also compiled the records associated with Casa Bianca's white owners and managers (Joseph M. White, Ellen Adair White Beatty, Theophilus Beatty, James Patton Anderson, Everett White, and Richard Henry Wilde) from Jefferson County, Florida deed books, Florida Superior Court Cases, and wills, estates, and probate files. Most of these records listed solely the name, and sometimes the gender, of enslaved individuals. County court documents permitted the identification of the chain of ownership for some groupings of enslaved people, and plantation sale documents from 1860 included their ages. Any specified age or gender information from these documents has been included in the corresponding citation for each person.

At its core, our project is genealogical. Since our dataset includes information about the descendants of enslaved people from Casa Bianca plantation, we determined it was important to distinguish between the enslaved and descendants, and our data includes a checkbox to designate this status.

In tracing the descendants of the enslaved from Casa Bianca as families left the Jefferson County, Florida area after emancipation, it was necessary to expand geographically the record search. Information extracted from Federal Census records (1870-1940) and Florida State Census records (1885, 1935, and 1945) included each individual's name, age, and location. Complete transcriptions of census information can be found on the project's accompanying website, [TakeThemInFamilies.com](http://TakeThemInFamilies.com). We searched birth, marriage, and death records, along with Freedmen's Bureau records, for each individual in each census location they appeared. Because of the descendants' migration after Emancipation, records appear in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Illinois.

The variety of document sources for each individual warranted the creation of a dataset in which each individual may have multiple entries, each with its own citation. This means that an enslaved person found in only one plantation list will have only one entry, whereas someone listed in all three plantation lists will have three separate citation entries. This method allows a researcher to collate information based on an individual's name or document. For census records this method also enables a search for all people in a specific household.

Only two surnames are found in all the Casa Bianca associated pre-emancipation documents: that of Jim Harris and Mary Baker, found in Jefferson County, Florida, *Deed Record*, E:113. All other surnames in the dataset are culled from post-emancipation census, marriage, and death records. The surname field has been left empty for those whose surname cannot yet be identified.

The dataset presented contains the principal information about each individual and document – name, surname, age, gender, event date (the date of the record), buyer and seller (for a sale event), slaveholder name, type of document, event location, and a full citation of the document. As mentioned above, a checkbox designates whether or not the person was enslaved at Casa Bianca. Full transcriptions of documents, such as the census records, marriage records or death certificates, are found on the project's website.

## Date of Publication

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## Data Links

Dataset Repository: Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/G35HSK>

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

## Cite this Article

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