



Federal Census Records for the District of Columbia Relating to Slavery, 1800–1860

Slavery existed in the District of Columbia when Congress created the Federal territory in 1790 from lands formerly held by the slave states of Virginia and Maryland. The Federal Government moved to the District of Columbia on December 1, 1800, making the 1800 census the first to include the District. Slavery remained legal in the District until April 16, 1862, when President Abraham Lincoln signed into law an act abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia (12 Stat. 376).

For more information, see the following reference reports:

- *Federal Census Records Relating to the District of Columbia, 1800–1930*
- *Using the Early Census Schedules for the District of Columbia, 1790–1840*

Federal Population Schedules for the District of Columbia, 1800–1840

Only the heads of free households appear in census schedules from 1800 to 1840. All other individuals, including slaves, are noted numerically under the head of household or reported owner. The 1810 Census for the District of Columbia did not survive.

Slaves in the 1800 Census

The 1800 census recorded 3,244 slaves as well as 793 free blacks living within the District of Columbia. The census schedule contains a column that provides the number of slaves in each household. It does not list slaves by sex or age.

___M32, *Second Census of the United States, 1800*. 52 rolls. Roll 5 contains population schedules for the District of Columbia.

Slaves in the 1820 to 1840 Censuses

Slaves are listed under each head of household with columns separating the number of slaves by sex and then by age range.

___M33, *Fourth Census of the United States, 1820*. 142 rolls. Roll 5 contains population schedules for the District of Columbia.

___M19, *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830*. 201 rolls. Roll 14 contains population schedules for the District of Columbia.

___M704, *Sixth Census of the United States, 1840*. 580 rolls. Roll 35 contains population schedules for the District of Columbia.

Federal Population Schedules for the District of Columbia, 1850–1860

Slaves were enumerated on a separate schedule for the 1850 and 1860 censuses. The slave schedules are arranged by owner and *rarely* record slave names. They identify the age, sex, and color (black or mulatto) for each slave and also have columns for fugitives, number manumitted, and “deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.”

Microfilm

___M432, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. 1,009 rolls. Roll 57 contains slave schedules for the District of Columbia, along with free schedules for Georgetown and Washington County.

___M653, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*. 1,483 rolls. Roll 105 contains slave schedules for Georgetown and the City of Washington.

Online

___Ancestry.com (searchable databases and digital images of the 1800–1860 censuses, free within NARA facilities), www.ancestry.com

___Footnote.com (searchable database and digital images of the 1860 census only, free within NARA facilities), www.footnote.com

Federal Mortality Schedules, 1850–1860

The mortality schedules for the District of Columbia are separate from the population censuses. They contain the names of persons who died in the 12 months preceding the date of the census. It is important to note that unlike the Federal population schedules, **the mortality schedules for 1850 and 1860 often include the names of slaves**. When searching for slaves, pay close attention to column five, “free or slave.” Be aware that slave ages and places of birth were often estimated, leading to many inaccuracies. These schedules include information such as the deceased’s age, sex, race, whether free or slave, marital status, place of birth, month of death, profession, number of days ill, and cause of death.

___T655, *Federal Mortality Census Schedules, 1850–1880*. 30 rolls. Roll 5 contains 1850, 1860 and 1870 mortality schedules and indexes for the District of Columbia.

Rev. December 2010