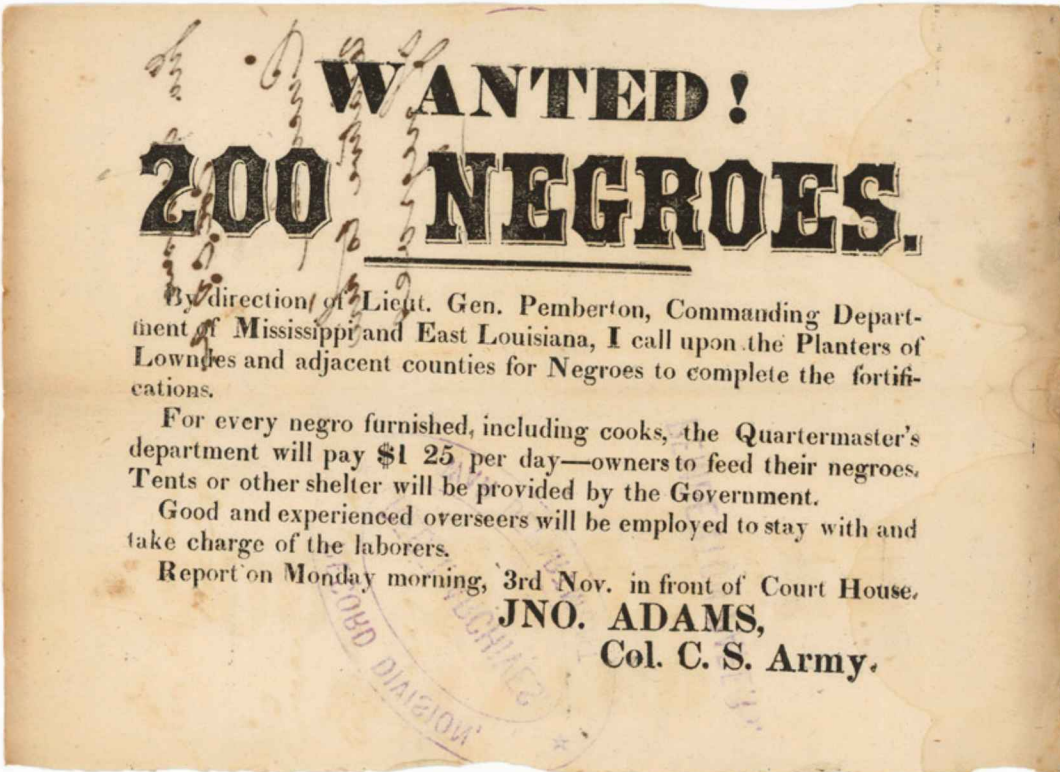


Civil War Confederate Slave Payroll Records



An 1862 broadside summons planters in Lowndes County, Mississippi, to lease out their slaves to build defensive fortifications. National Archives RG 109, War Department Collection of Confederate Records (National Archives Identifier 3854716).

During the American Civil War, the Union Army captured a variety of records from the Confederate States of America and its military units. These records are in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Record Group (RG) 109, War Department Collection of Confederate Records. This record group also has indexes and compilations that the US War Department created after the war from captured records.

The captured records include the Confederate

Slave Payrolls, 1861-1865 (National Archives Identifier 719477), which have been digitized and made available in the National Archives Catalog at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/719477>. Slave payrolls exist for Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Virginia has the most payrolls, followed by North Carolina. These records document the names and locations of thousands of slaves and slave-owners who provided slave labor to the Confederate military.

Some slave payrolls are searchable by name or geographic location. To search for geographic or personal names, click on "Search within this Series." This action will return the first twenty payrolls. To actually search, change the wildcard *:* in the search bar at the top of the page to the personal or geographic name, then click on the magnifying glass icon to the right of the search bar.

Slave impressment

The government of the Confederate States of America faced shortages of all kinds, including manpower. Because there was an

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We, the Subscribers, hereby acknowledge to have received of Capt. Theodore Moreno, C. S. Engineer, the sums set opposite our Names, respectively, being in full for the services of our Slaves at or Columbus Defenses during the month of October 1862, having signed Duplicate Receipts.

FROM WHOM HIRED.	RESIDENCE.	NAME AND OCCUPATION.	TIME EMPLOYED	WAGES	AMOUNT	AMOUNT	SIGNATURES.
				Per Day	For each Slave.	RECEIVED.	
			Sept 1				
		Amount Forwarded.			\$486	\$486	
Wm Hodge	Muscogee County	Charles - Laborer	5 1/2	" "	5 50	5 50	Wm Hodge
W. A. Jones	"	Major	2 1/2	" "	22 50		
"	"	Richard	2 1/2	" "	22 50	44	W. A. Jones
J. J. Lohry	"	Charles	2 1/2	" "	22 50	22 50	J. J. Lohry
W. M. McFarlane	"	Sack	22	" "	22		
"	"	Love	22	" "	22	46	William W McFarlane
R. J. Massey	"	Nelson	17 1/2	" "	17 50	17 50	R. J. Massey
J. G. McCrary	"	Brewell	11	" "	11	11	J. G. McCrary
F. R. Nance	"	Shade	23 1/2	" "	23 50		
"	"	Sack	23 1/2	" "	23 50		
"	"	Richard	23 1/2	" "	23 50		
"	"	Albert	23 1/2	" "	23 50		
"	"	Albert	23 1/2	" "	23 50		
"	"	Spencer	22	" "	22		
"	"	Willis	23 1/2	" "	23 50		
"	"	Tom	23 1/2	" "	23 50	184 50	W. A. Jones
John Odum	"	Henry	21 1/2	" "	21 50		

Slave Payroll 2536, listing enslaved men from Muscogee County working at the defenses of Columbus, Georgia, in October 1863, signed by Captain Theodore Moreno. Confederate Slave Payrolls, 1861-1865 (National Archives Identifier 90311646).

inadequate supply of free white males, it used slaves for some military-related tasks. Slave labor was used to fortify strategic points, such as digging entrenchments around Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia; at various forts; and to create obstructions on major navigable rivers, such as the James River in Virginia and the Neuse River in North Carolina. Slave laborers dug potassium nitrate (saltpeter) for gunpowder at "nitre works" and provided skilled and unskilled labor at harness-making shops, ordnance factories, and arsenals.

Obtaining enough slave labor when and where it was needed was a continuous challenge for the Confederacy. Many slave owners sent their slaves unwillingly due to fear that they would escape to Union military units, or receive inadequate housing, food, or medical care from Confederate authorities. (Indeed, some payrolls indicate "runaway" slaves.) The Confederate government had to balance conflicting needs that included demands for labor by different military commands, the necessity of slave

labor to produce food for troops and civilians, and the risk of losing political support by taking too many slaves at once, or for too long a period of time.

During 1861-1862, military commanders made requests for slave labor to local officials on an as-needed basis. During 1862-1864, the Confederate Congress and various southern states enacted legislation setting up specific requirements and procedures for slave owners to provide slaves. For example, Virginia established a quota system based on each county's slave population.

Arrangement and appearance of the records

After the Civil War, circa 1874-1899, the War Records Office of the Adjutant General's Office of the US War Department arranged and numbered the payrolls from 1 to 5889 and grouped them roughly by state, but not by date or specific location. Thus, there is no rhyme or reason to the numbering. Sometimes a complete payroll was assigned one number, while in other cases, pages from one payroll were scattered and assigned different numbers. In addition, 101

payroll records were not assigned a number at all. Some of the numbered and unnumbered records in the series are not actual payrolls but powers of attorney or other related records.

The original slave payrolls and related powers of attorney vary greatly in size, shape, and color. Most payrolls are normal-sized sheets of paper but many measure 24 by 18 inches or more, which affects online viewing and printing. The paper color shown in the digital images is a diverse array of blue, tan, brown, orange, yellow, green, pink, and off-white (perhaps formerly white), reflecting the Confederates' use of any materials available to produce paper.

Information in the records

The payrolls provide the name and (often) the place of residence of each slave owner. However, it can't always be assumed that the slave belonged to the person from whom they were hired. For example, payment for work done by Alex, James, and John, who were slaves at the Arsenal at Knoxville, Tennessee, went to different men each month. They probably hired these slaves from their owners, perhaps as a means to avoid providing their own slaves to Confederate authorities. Probably 90 percent of slave owners were men, but perhaps 5 to 10 percent were women, likely either widows or women who inherited a slave(s) from a parent.

For each slave, the information given usually includes his name, the month and year during which he was employed, the place at which he was employed, his occupation (laborer, blacksmith, and so forth), the number of days worked, the daily rate of pay, the total amount of pay, and the name of the Confederate officer under whom he worked or who was responsible for the accuracy of the payroll.

Most slaves are listed on the payrolls with only one name, but some had two, such as "Jim Poole" who was provided by R. F. Jackson at Williamsburg, Virginia, in October 1861 (Slave Payroll 424) or "J. Bird" who was provided by W. D. Mason of Sussex County, Virginia, at Yorktown, Virginia, in December 1861 (Slave Payroll 113). More than 99.9 percent of the slaves listed are men, but there are a few with female names as well. For example, slave women who worked at the Charleston, South Carolina, Nitre Works in October 1863 included Peggy, Malsey, Becca, Die, Scilla, Dinah, Sibby, Clary, Sarah, and Betsy (Slave Payroll 5073).

Some "slave payrolls" include free blacks (sometimes noted as FPC for free person of color) who were likely impressed (forced to work) and received payment. Some lists contain white employees, who acknowledged receipt of payment for themselves. Some lists contain both white employees and slaves. For example, a payroll for work performed under Major Sedgwick Simons at Georgetown, South Carolina, in November 1863, includes six white men, one free person of color, and one slave.

Payments

Slaves were not paid for their work. The slave owner had to personally go to the appropriate Confederate officer to receive payment and sign the payroll. If the owner could not personally meet with the Confederate officer, he or she could sign a power of attorney to authorize someone else to collect the money. The power of attorney was simply an authorization of someone to be the person's agent for the transaction. Thus, payrolls usually include signatures of owners and/or their agents and related powers of attorney.

Many payrolls indicate a slave owner was "unpaid" or show no payment, meaning that the payment was not recorded on that particular payroll. Most likely neither the owner nor his or her agent had gone to the Confederate officer before the payroll was submitted to a higher-level authority. Thus, the same transaction should be found on a second payroll created at a later date when the owner or agent finally went to the Confederate officer for payment.

Conclusion

The Confederate slave payrolls may prove useful to African American genealogy researchers seeking to connect an ancestor to a slave owner before 1865, although the commonness of most first names may make that linkage difficult. Historians may find the payrolls useful in studying the use of enslaved persons in the war effort. Local historians may find that these records enhance understanding of local slave ownership or the effects of war on specific counties. Persons interested in onomastics (the study of names) may find differences in slave naming patterns between states or between counties of the same state.

We, the subscribers, hereby acknowledge to have received of *F. S. Holmes, Sup't 6th Dist.* the sums set opposite our names, respectively, being in full for our services at *Charleston Nitre Works* during the month of *October 1863*, having signed duplicate receipts.

No.	NAMES	OCCUPATION	TIME EMPLOYED	RATE OF PAY		AMOUNT		DEDUCTIONS		NET AMOUNT RECEIVED		SIGNATURES	WITNESSES' NAMES	REMARKS
				Per month.	Per day.	Dollars.	Cts.	On what account.	Dollars.	Cts.	Dollars.			
1	Joseph	Carpenter	27	250		67 50				67 50				
2	Henry	"	27	250		67 50				67 50				
3	Joe	"	27	250		67 50				67 50				
4	Theodore	"	21	250		52 50				52 50				
5	Robert	"	27	200		54 00				54 00	309 00	<i>F. S. Holmes</i>		
			<u>129</u>			<u>309 00</u>				<u>309 00</u>				
6	Will	Labour	27	100		27 00				27 00				
7	Peggy	"	27	50		13 50				13 50				
8	William	"	27			0 00				0 00				
9	Becca	"	27	50		13 50				13 50				
10	Sam	"	27			0 00				0 00				
11	Dje	"	27			0 00				0 00				
12	Lilla	"	27	50		13 50				13 50				
13	Israel	"	27			0 00				0 00				
14	Pino	"	27	100		27 00				27 00				
15	Bacchus	"	27	100		27 00				27 00				
16	Dinah	"	27	50		13 50				13 50				
17	Edward	"	27			0 00				0 00				
18	Pompey	"	27			0 00				0 00				
19	Heracles	"	27	100		27 00				27 00				
20	Sibby	"	27	50		13 50				13 50				
21	Jaguary	"	27	100		27 00				27 00				
22	Clay	"	27	50		13 50				13 50				
23	Daniel	"	27	100		27 00				27 00				
24	Sarah	"	27	50		13 50				13 50				
25	Cupid	"	27	100		27 00				27 00				
26	Flann	"	27	100		27 00				27 00				
27	Betsy	"	15	50		12 50				12 50				
28	Harmond	"	27	100		27 00				27 00	340 00	<i>F. S. Holmes</i>		
			<u>599</u>			<u>340 00</u>				<u>340 00</u>				
<u>Summary</u>														
Carpenter						309 00								
Labor						340 00								
						<u>649 00</u>								

The Carpenters & Labour on this Roll were supplied daily with rations by the C.S. Commissary at Charleston S.C.

F. S. Holmes
Sup't 6th District
C.S. Nitre Mining Bureau

Slave Payroll 5073, listing enslaved men and women working at the Nitre Works in Charleston, South Carolina, in October 1863, signed by Francis S. Holmes, Sup't. 6th District, CS Nitre & Mining Bureau. Confederate Slave Payrolls, 1861-1865 (National Archives Identifier 121637685).

Resources

Information about Record Group (RG) 109, War Department Collection of Confederate Records (National Archives Identifier [NAID] 438) can be found at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/438>.

Jaime Amanda Martinez's *Confederate Slave Impressment in the Upper South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013) focuses on Virginia and North Carolina but also gives a good overall view of the slave impressment process.

State archives of southern states may hold slave payrolls created by state military authorities during the American Civil War. For example, The Library of Virginia has Virginia's Records of the Engineer

Department, 1861-1865 (bulk 1861-1862), which contain the May-October 1861 payrolls of slaves who worked on coast, harbor, and river defenses. See https://lva.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01LVA_INST:01LVA&lang=en > "records of the engineer department" > Archives and Manuscripts > search.

"Confederate Impressment During the Civil War," an article by Mary Decredico in *Encyclopedia Virginia* (https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/confederate_impressment_during_the_civil_war), has useful information about impressment. Food, fuel, and other commodities were also seized at prices set by the Confederacy to support its armies. 🌳