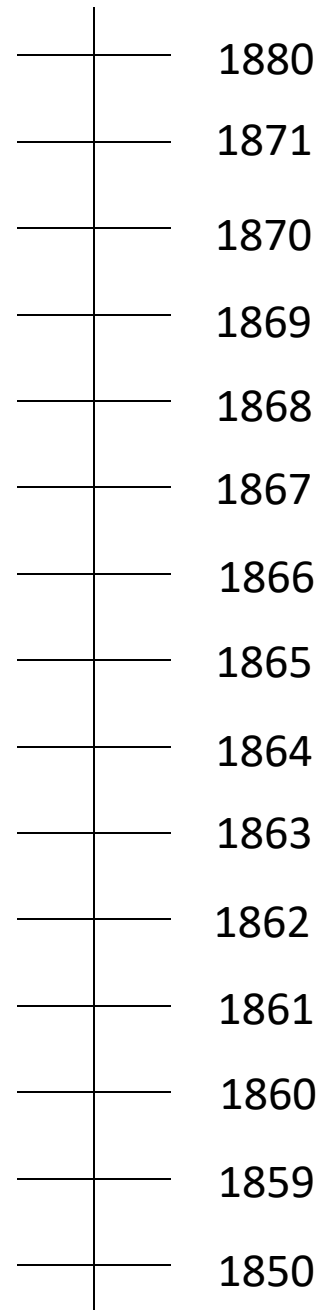


SCALING THE 1870 BRICK WALL IN AFRICAN AMERICAN RESEARCH

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- Overcoming psychological challenges
- Assessing the documentation you already have
- Studying that first generation after the Civil War
- Piecing together the Reconstruction Era
- Finding the last slave holder
- Shaping slave holder candidates
- Creating timelines
- Developing and mapping theories



COMBINING THE SOURCES

Census – The United States Federal Census counted individual people for every state, county, city and town. Taken every ten years, census records are available from 1790-1940 (excluding 1890).

Slave Schedules – The Slave Schedule enumerated enslaved African Americans separately in 1850 and 1860. Though the enslaver's name was listed, the enslaved were not named. They were described by sex, age and color.

Freedmen's Bureau – The Freedmen's Bureau Records are the most extensive sources that document former slaves following the Civil War.

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (also known as the Freedmen's Bureau) was established by the War Department in 1865 to help millions of former slaves, refugees, sick and destitute persons in Southern states. The Bureau's mission was to supervise relief efforts and help freedmen become self-sufficient.

Freedmen's Bureau field offices were located in: Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

The Freedmen's Bureau records span from 1865-1872.

Freedman's Bank – The Freedman's Savings and Trust Company was established by an act of Congress in 1865 as a banking institution in Washington, D.C. primarily for the benefit of free slaves and former African American military personnel.

The Freedman's Bank records primarily consist of registers of people who opened accounts with the bank. The registers cover the years of 1865-1874.

Voter's Registration – The fourteenth and fifteenth amendments granted African American men the right to vote. Many citizens flocked to the courthouse to register to vote starting in 1867.

Military Records – Approximately 180,000 African American men volunteered to fight for the Union Army and were known as the United States Colored Troops.

Military Service Records could provide the soldier's name, details of his birth, identify his parents, and name former slaveholder. Records could include pension and bounty records that might detail the soldier's life following the Civil War.

Plantation Records – The Ante-Bellum Southern Plantation Records are an invaluable collection of records of plantations owners and often his descendants that may connect an individual to his or her family. Manuscript collections were sometimes donated by the descendants of plantation owners. The microfilm set is comprised of manuscript records taken from several major Southern repositories.

WPA Slave Narratives – In the midst of the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (part of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal program) set out to create jobs for millions of unemployed Americans. Under the Federal Writers’ Project, writers and researchers were assigned to interview and document the testimonies of formerly enslaved people. They were also tasked with collecting local folklore.

The WPA ex-slave narratives were collected from seventeen states between 1936-1938. Comprised of about 2,300 interviews, the collection stands as the largest body of slave memories in the world. It contains typewritten manuscripts and a handful of audio recorded interviews. Many researchers consider it, “One of the most important sources ever for the study of slavery in the United States.”

Southern Claims Commission – The Southern Claims Commission was a government organization where people could apply for compensation for property loss from the U. S. Army during the Civil War. Applicants included both white and African Americans who lost property. These records can name former slave holders or formerly enslaved people.

Newspapers – Both mainstream and African American newspapers can provide great detail about the lives and whereabouts of African Americans – including marriages, deaths, migrations and even oral history.



SOURCES

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