

The 1830 Census

This page from the 1830 US Census shows the number of people located at the Franklin & Armfield slave pen on June 1, 1830. Mandated by Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution, the 1830 Census was the fifth decennial federal census conducted in the United States (the recent Census conducted April 1, 2020 is the 24th). In 1830, the federal government explicitly instructed census takers to record the names of family heads and the number of free people living in each household, divided by age, sex, and race. Enslaved people were counted and recorded separately.

Highlighted here is a “family” labeled “Armfield & Franklin,” showing their Slave Pen complex on Duke Street, between Payne and West Streets in Alexandria. Listed as residing here on June 1, 1830 are two white males between the ages of 20 and 30 (probably employees of the firm and not Armfield or Franklin) and 145 enslaved people. Of these enslaved, there were 71 men (one under 10 years old, 50 between 10 and 24 years old, and 20 between 24 and 36 years old) and 74 women (four under 10 years

old, 50 between 10 and 24 years old, and 20 between 24 and 36 years old). The dealers held enslaved people here temporarily. Once the slave-trading firm had purchased enough people, they would arrange to send them south to New Orleans, Louisiana or Natchez, Mississippi.

SLAVES.										
MALES.					FEMALES.					
Under ten years of age.	Of ten and under twenty-four.	Of twenty-four and under thirty-six.	Of thirty-six and under fifty-five.	Of fifty-five and under one hundred.	Of one hundred and upwards.	Under ten years of age.	Of ten and under twenty-four.	Of twenty-four and under thirty-six.	Of thirty-six and under fifty-five.	Of fifty-five and under one hundred.
1	50	20				4	50	20		

Throughout the spring of 1830 and into the summer and fall, Franklin & Armfield advertised in the Alexandria Gazette that they wished to purchase enslaved people, both men and women, between the ages of 12 and 25. They claimed to be able to pay higher prices than any other purchaser and promised prompt communication if written to at their Alexandria offices at 1315 Duke Street. No documented slave ships are known to have departed Alexandria during the late spring, summer, or early fall of 1830, until the Brig United States sailed for New Orleans on October 19 with 171 enslaved people on board, more than four months after this census was taken. While many people were sent south by ship, during the summer months Franklin and Armfield also organized coffles, lines of people chained together and forced to march overland by foot. These coffles left from Alexandria and ended at the Forks of the Road slave market in Natchez, Mississippi.

In a series of anti-slavery letters, one traveler observed preparations being made by Franklin & Armfield for a coffle leaving Alexandria in 1834, writing:

“...they send a considerable number over land, and those which I saw were to set off in this way in a few days. A train of wagons, with the provisions, tents, and other necessaries, accompanies the expedition, and at night they all encamp. Their place of destination is Natchez, where Mr. Franklin resides, for the purpose of disposing of them on their arrival....Upon their march, also, they are usually chained together in pairs, to prevent their escape; and sometimes, when greater precaution is judged necessary, they are all attached to a long chain passing between them. Their guards and conductors are, of course, well armed.” (*Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade*, Ethan Allen Andrews, 1836, pages 142-3)

These overland trips to the American South are less documented than the ones made by ship, but the 1830 Census shown here may capture the beginnings of one in the Alexandria Slave Pen of Franklin & Armfield.