

THE SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 1975

VOLUME 76

NUMBER 4



COPYRIGHT © 1975 BY

THE SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CHARLESTON, S. C.

CONTENTS

Articles:	PAGE
Prelude to War: The First Battle of Ninety Six, November 19-21, 1775, by Marvin L. Cann	197
A Demographic History of Slavery: Georgetown County, South Carolina, 1850, by Sherman L. Ricards and George M. Blackburn	215
"South Carolina University—1876" of Fisk Parsons Brewer, edited by William P. Vaughn	225
Letter of William Henry Timrod, contributed by Joseph I. Waring	232
Hair Family Cemetery, contributed by Charles F. Jumper	234
Captain Florence O'Sullivan and the Origins of Carolina, by Patrick Melvin	235
The Schirmer Diary	250
Book Reviews and Notes:	
Lumpkin, <i>The Emancipation of Angelina Grimke</i> , by Edward McCrady	253
Hemphill, <i>The Papers of John C. Calhoun, Volume VIII, 1823-1824</i> , by David Rison	257
Birnie, <i>The Earles and the Birnies</i>	177
From the Society	259
From the Archives: The New State Records Center, by William F. Duncan	264
Index	269

A DEMOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF SLAVERY: GEORGETOWN COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1850

SHERMAN L. RICARDS AND GEORGE M. BLACKBURN *

The slaves of Georgetown County, South Carolina, lived in a distinctive social and economic environment in 1850. The rice plantations, the dominant economic activity of the County, were characterized by continuity of family ownership and large scale operations. As a result of the latter, slaves vastly outnumbered whites, constituting 88 percent of the population as early as 1810 (Table 1). Another feature of slavery in the County was its existence for over a century by 1850. In addition, it was virtually a closed system, because during that century there had been almost no infusion of outside slaves and few departures, and continuity of plantation ownership discouraged buying and selling of slaves. Further, manumission had been little practiced: there were but 201 free blacks, compared to over 18,000 slaves.¹

As a result of this distinctive environment, Georgetown County slaves developed distinctive demographic characteristics. Census schedules provide the best source for calculating such data. The manuscript 1850 census schedules, utilized in this study, provide information on four variables: owner, color, age, and sex. In the census schedules slaves were listed by owner, typically male workers first, female workers second, nonworking males (children and aged) third, and nonworking females (children and aged) last. Only a few identifiable family units were listed.

To determine whether the environment led to distinctive demographic characteristics, we compare Georgetown slaves in 1850 with all

* Professors in the Departments of Sociology and History, respectively, at Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

¹ Much of this paragraph is derived from George Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* (Columbia, South Carolina, 1970), particularly pp. 6-8, 343. Alberta Morel Lachiotte in *Georgetown Rice Plantations* (Columbia, South Carolina, 1955), p. 3 states that "On the whole, it was a stable life and economy." Discussion of the purchase of slaves may be found in James H. Easterby, ed., *The South Carolina Rice Plantation As Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston* (Chicago, 1946), pp. 28-29. One ex-slave in Federal Writer's Project, *Slave Narratives*, Vol. XIV, Part II, 306, remembered one colored overseer who was "straight from Africa." For free blacks, see Marina Wikramanayake, *A World in Shadow: The Free Black in Antebellum South Carolina* (Columbia, South Carolina, 1973).

TABLE 1

Free and Slave Populations, Georgetown County, South Carolina: 1810 - 1850 *

Year	Free Whites			Slaves			Total		Percent Increase
	No.	%	Percent Increase	No.	%	Percent Increase	No.	%	
1810	1812	11.56	13867	88.44	15679	100.00
1820	2114	11.97	16.67+	15546	88.03	12.11+	17660	100.00	12.63+
1830	2145	10.76	1.47+	17798	89.24	14.49+	19943	100.00	12.93+
1840	2281	12.48	6.34+	15993	87.52	10.14-	18274	100.00	8.37-
1850	2394	11.59	4.95+	18253	88.41	12.38+	20647	100.00	12.99+

* Derived from Rogers, *History of Georgetown County*, p. 343.

southern slaves and two slave populations living in markedly different environments: the slaves of Charleston, South Carolina, and of Bolivar County, Mississippi. Charleston was old and established, the nearest urban center and of great economic and social importance to the planters of Georgetown County; Bolivar County was a recently settled cotton area, suitable to large scale operation, and located on the rich bottomlands of the Mississippi River.

Of the four variables in the 1850 slave census manuscripts one of the most striking differences between Georgetown County and the South as a whole is in size of slave holdings.² Of the 339 slaveholders in Georgetown, 157 owned less than 10, and 59 owned over 100 slaves. While 73 percent of slave holdings in the South were under 10, 46 percent were under 10 in Georgetown County. At the other extreme, only 0.5 percent of all southern holdings were over 100, while 17 percent were over 100 in Georgetown County.³

On the second variable, color, Georgetown County slaves also differed from southern slaves as a whole. Approximately 240,000 slaves in the South were mulatto, compared to almost 3,000,000 black slaves, while in Georgetown County there were but 80 mulatto slaves compared to

² Our computations are based on ownership as shown in the census manuscripts. While an individual owner might have slaves listed in two or three separate locations in the manuscripts (perhaps indicating possession of more than one plantation), we considered all the slaves of one individual owner to be one holding for purposes of this study. See: Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York, 1968), p. 420.

³ Figures for slave holdings in the South as a whole are taken from J. D. B. DeBow, *Statistical View of the United States . . . being a Compendium of the Seventh Census . . .* (Washington, 1854), p. 95.

⁴ Figures for mulatto slaves in the South are taken from *ibid.*, p. 83. We found but one mention of miscegenation in Georgetown County in the *Slave Narratives*, in Vol. XIV, Part II, 305.

over 18,000 black slaves.⁴ Expressed as percentages, the number of southern mulattoes in the total slave population was 7.61; in Georgetown, less than 0.5. Ownership of Georgetown mulattoes was dispersed among 44 small slaveholders. Only three mulatto slaves were owned by masters who possessed more than 100 slaves, and the median size of groups in which the mulattoes lived was small (8.85 slaves). The 42 males (median age = 14.00) were younger than the 38 females (median age = 17.35). Only one group, possibly two, appears to have been a family.

The median age of all Georgetown slaves—18.52 for males and 18.17 for females—not only was higher than that of the mulatto slaves, but also differed from their counterparts in other parts of the South (Table 2). Southern slaves as a group were markedly young with a median age for males of 16.55 years; females, 16.34 years. In Bolivar County, Mississippi, both sexes had median ages slightly over 20 years. Charleston had a slave population considerably older, a median age of 24.53 for males and 26.53 for the females. The median age of Georgetown's slaves was actually closer to that of the United States white males (median age = 19.51) and females (median age = 18.81) in 1850⁵ than to either the cotton slaves of Bolivar County or to the urban slaves of Charleston.

The relatively high median age of Georgetown slaves, as compared to southern slaves as a whole, resulted primarily from the small number of children 10 to 14 years of age. If the number in that age cell is recalculated by extrapolation from the two age cells preceeding that group and the two following, then the median age of Georgetown slaves would be very close to that of southern slaves as a whole. Perhaps there was an epidemic sometime between 1836 and 1840 that would account for the small number of those from 10 to 14. This hypothesis is supported by data which shows that the slave population of the County as a whole declined from 1830 to 1840 (Table 1).

There was little or no difference in median age according to the size of the holding. The females in the small units were slightly older than the males but the difference was not great. Nonetheless, wide differences did occur among large slave owners. William A. Alston's slaves, for example, were very young (median age approximately 13 years for both males and females), F. M. Weston's males were much older (median age of 24.38 years), and Charles Allston's females were elderly (median age of 41.80 years).

Compared to the other three slave populations, Georgetown County slaves had a significantly different sex ratio, expressed as the number of

TABLE 2

Age and Sex Distribution, Slave Populations of Southern States, Georgetown County, South Carolina, Bolivar County, Mississippi, and Charleston: 1850

MALES								
Age	Southern ¹ States		Bolivar ² County		Charleston ³ City		Georgetown ² County	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-4	267086	8.31	144	7.60	682	3.49	1461	7.97
5-9	239160	7.44	132	6.97	857	4.38	1027	5.60
10-14	221477	6.89	111	5.86	978	5.00	835	4.55
15-19	176163	5.48	98	5.17	935	4.78	1259	6.87
20-24	158688	4.94	105	5.54	858	4.39	811	4.42
25-29	130895	4.07	129	6.81	791	4.04	824	4.49
30-34	98926	3.08	89	4.70	733	3.75	656	3.58
35-39	76372	2.37	64	3.38	653	3.34	680	3.71
40-44	61454	1.91	53	2.79	586	3.00	357	1.94
45-49	47695	1.48	32	1.69	420	2.15	285	1.55
50-54	37058	1.15	14	.73	331	1.69	183	.99
55-59	28174	.87	14	.73	249	1.27	85	.46
60-64	22293	.69	12	.63	200	1.02	143	.78
65+	35115	1.09	11	.58	358	1.83	67	.36
Total	1600556	49.85	1008	53.24	8631	44.18	8673	47.35
Median Age		16.55		20.40		24.53		18.52

FEMALES								
Age	Southern States		Bolivar County		Charleston City		Georgetown County	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-4	273403	8.51	124	6.55	774	3.96	1827	9.97
5-9	249938	7.88	128	6.76	1127	5.77	1175	6.41
10-14	214707	6.68	112	5.91	1142	5.84	815	4.45
15-19	181109	5.64	65	3.43	1113	5.69	1365	7.45
20-24	154896	4.82	95	5.01	935	4.78	860	4.69
25-29	127714	3.97	95	5.01	883	4.52	980	5.35
30-34	99917	3.11	92	4.86	960	4.91	708	3.86
35-39	78438	2.44	59	3.11	890	4.55	744	4.06
40-44	62678	1.95	39	2.06	688	3.52	357	1.94
45-49	48098	1.49	23	1.21	572	2.92	320	1.74
50-54	35502	1.10	20	1.05	505	2.58	207	1.13
55-59	26221	.81	5	.26	422	2.16	95	.51
60-64	21268	.66	14	.73	340	1.74	117	.63
65+	35936	1.11	14	.73	550	2.81	71	.38
Total	1609825	50.14	885	46.75	10901	55.81	9641	52.64
Median Age		16.34		20.21		26.53		18.71

¹ DeBow, *Seventh Census* (Washington, 1854), pp. 88-89.

² Derived from original census returns.

³ DeBow, *Seventh Census*, p. 397.

males for each 100 females (Table 3). While all southern slaves as a group approached sexual equality (99.42), in Bolivar County the ratio was a high 113.89, in Charleston the ratio was a low 79.17, and in Georgetown County the ratio was 89.95.

It is easier to compute 1850 sex ratios than to explain them. According to Donald J. Bogue, the sex ratio of whites from 1860 to 1940 was slightly above 100, while that of the blacks was always slightly below 100. Immigrants, who included more men than women, accounted for the relatively high number of white males (105 sex ratio for whites in 1850), claimed Bogue; he inferred that underenumeration of black males, especially those between the ages of 20 and 40, helps account for the lower ratios among blacks. Bogue also stated that low sex ratios of blacks was "probably in part a reflection of the lower sex ratio at birth."⁶ His hypothesis provides a reasonable explanation for the disparity between white males and females; underenumeration of black males, however, is not a convincing explanation for the disparity among slaves. Presumably the pecuniary interest of the masters in their slaves would encourage as accurate records or memory for males as for females.

The different sex ratios of Charleston and Bolivar County slaves may have arisen from their different economic functions. No doubt many

TABLE 3

Sex Ratios by Age, Slave Populations of Southern States, Georgetown County, South Carolina, Bolivar County, Mississippi, and Charleston: 1850

Age	Southern ¹ States	Bolivar ² County	Charleston ³ City	Georgetown ² County
0-4	97.68	116.12	88.11	79.96
5-9	95.68	103.12	76.04	87.40
10-14	103.15	99.10	85.63	102.45
15-19	97.26	150.76	84.00	92.23
20-24	102.44	110.52	91.76	94.30
25-29	102.49	135.78	89.58	84.08
30-34	99.00	96.73	76.35	92.65
35-39	97.36	108.47	73.37	91.39
40-44	99.04	135.89	85.17	100.00
45-49	99.16	139.13	73.42	89.06
50-54	104.38	70.00	65.54	88.40
55-59	107.44	280.00	59.00	89.47
60-64	104.81	85.71	58.82	122.22
65+	97.71	78.57	65.09	94.36
Total	99.42	113.89	79.17	89.95

¹ Derived from DeBow, *Seventh Census*, pp. 88-89.

² Derived from original census returns.

³ Derived from DeBow, *Seventh Census*, p. 397.

⁴ Derived from *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, 1960), p. 10.

⁶ Donald J. Bogue, *Principles of Demography* (New York, 1969), pp. 168-69.

Charleston slaves were employed in domestic service, hence the relatively large proportion of females, while owners would prefer adult males in frontier Bolivar County.

The low sex ratio (89.95) of Georgetown County slaves seemingly defies explanation. There is no evidence of large-scale sale of males or purchase of females, and, as noted above, there seem to be no reason for a master to underenumerate his males in the federal census. Differential birth rate or mortality must be the explanation for sexual imbalance in any essentially self-contained population. Olmstead reported that the slaves did not "enjoy as good health on rice plantations as elsewhere," and that infant mortality was a particular problem. Indeed, so severe was the health hazard in the summer that one Georgetown rice planter said that he "would as soon stand fifty feet from the best Kentucky rifleman and be shot at by the hour, as to spend a night on my plantation in summer."⁷ But even if the plantations were unhealthy, both men and women worked extensively in the rice fields.

Sex ratios by size of holding also furnish scant clues for the sexual imbalance (Table 4). In general, the smaller the holding, the higher the sex ratio. Only in holdings from 1 to 9 was the ratio above 100, and among these holdings there were some groups composed largely of either men or women. Perhaps the small holdings involved yeomen farmers who purchased males to aid in farm work. A very wide range of sex

TABLE 4

Selected Demographic Measures of Slaves, Georgetown County, South Carolina, by Number of Slaves Owned: 1850

	1-9	10-24	25-49	50-74	75-99	100+	Total
Number of Slaves	990	932	788	1072	1294	13237	18314
Percent of Slaves	5.41	5.09	4.30	5.85	7.07	72.28	100.00
Number of Owners	157	65	23	18	17	59	339
Sex Ratio	104.54	90.20	97.98	100.37	79.47	88.74	89.95
Median Age							
Male	17.81	16.88	18.85	19.45	18.87	18.55	18.52
Female	18.08	18.88	17.79	19.11	17.36	18.18	18.17
Dependency Ratios							
Youth	127.46	114.84	112.73	105.03	121.89	115.92	116.07
Aged	4.93	1.39	.81	2.71	1.21	1.43	1.64
Total	132.39	116.23	113.54	107.74	123.10	117.35	117.71
Birth Rate							
Children, 0-14	39.29	43.13	39.72	38.71	38.33	38.70	38.98

⁷ Olmstead, *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, pp. 418, 419. Easterby noted that "The number of deaths among the Allston slaves does not support the general belief that Negroes enjoyed almost complete immunity from the diseases of the Rice Coast;" Easterby, *The South Carolina Rice Plantation*, p. 30.

ratios prevailed among large slaveowners: Joshua Ward's slaves, for example, had a sex ratio of 101.00 while those of Charles Allston had the very low ratio of 41.80.

Georgetown County slaves also differed from the other slave populations in the dependency ratio (Table 5), that is, the number of persons aged 21 to 64 as compared to the youth (those under 21) and the aged (those over 65). The Georgetown ratio was 117.71, compared to Bolivar's 98.42 and Charleston's 77.30. The southern slaves as a whole had the high ratio of 143.89, which was even higher than the ratio of approximately 116 for Africa, Asia, and Latin America and much higher than the ratio of 91 for the United States in 1960.⁸

The dependency ratio is principally the result of fertility rather than the survival to old age of a substantial number of people. Thus, Bolivar

TABLE 5

Dependency Ratios, Slave Populations of Southern States, Georgetown County, South Carolina, Bolivar County, Mississippi, and Charleston: 1850

Ratio	<i>Southern</i> ¹ <i>States</i>	<i>Boliver</i> ² <i>County</i>	<i>Charleston</i> ³ <i>City</i>	<i>Georgetown</i> ² <i>County</i>
Youth	138.49	95.80	69.06	116.07
Aged	5.40	2.62	8.24	1.64
Total	143.89	98.42	77.30	117.71

¹ Derived from DeBow, *Seventh Census*, pp. 88-89.

² Derived from original census returns.

³ Derived from DeBow, *Seventh Census*, p. 397.

County and Charleston had relatively low dependency ratios because of their low number of young people. On the other hand, Charleston did have a remarkably high percentage of aged. A clear inference from the Charleston data is that slaves lived longer in urban places than on rural plantations. Georgetown's proportion of youth was clearly low when compared with the South, and its proportion of aged (1.64) was strikingly low. The dependency ratios on five large plantations in the County spanned a wide range, from 89.38 to 180.09. Again, the proportion of aged on these plantations was generally low. Such data clearly indicate that few Georgetown County slaves lived to old age.

Because of the type of enumeration employed in most 19th century American populations, it is impossible to calculate a crude birth rate or any other direct measure of fertility. The crude birth rate may, however,

⁸ The ratios for Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the United States are taken from Bogue, *Principles of Demography*, p. 156.

be inferred by indirect measures (Table 6). The indirect measure considered by Bogue and Palmore to be most closely correlated with the crude birth rate is the percent of the population 0 to 14 years of age.⁹ Application of such a measure shows that the birth rates of southern whites and slaves were almost identical: the percentage of slaves 0 to 14 was 45.65, while the percentage of whites was 45.04.¹⁰ Possible explanations for this similarity might lie in the common agricultural way of life, little or no knowledge of birth control, little desire to limit births, close physical proximity,¹¹ and similar family structures.

TABLE 6

Indirect Fertility Measures, Slave Populations of Southern States, Georgetown County, South Carolina, Bolivar County, Mississippi, and Charleston: 1850

Fertility Measure	Southern ¹ States	Bolivar ² County	Charleston ³ City	Georgetown ² County
Ratio of children 0-4 to women 15-49	717.92	572.64	241.01	616.42
Ratio of children 5-9 to women 15-49	649.66	555.55	328.42	412.82
Percent of population, 0-4	16.83	14.15	7.45	17.95
Percent of population, 5-9	15.23	13.73	10.15	12.02
Percent of population, 0-14	45.65	39.67	28.46	38.98

¹ Derived from DeBow, *Seventh Census*, pp. 88-89.

² Derived from original census returns.

³ Derived from DeBow, *Seventh Census*, p. 397.

Except for Charleston, the birth rates listed on Table 6 are high by modern standards, though none was as high as the 17th century population of New France (Quebec), which had "the highest recorded fertility of any whole population," a birth rate of 50 per thousand, which "approached closely to biological capacity."¹² Charleston's low birth rate for slaves is understandable in view of the low sex ratio and the high median age of its female population.

⁹ Donald J. Bogue and James A. Palmore, "Some Empirical and Analytic Relations among Demographic Fertility Measures, with Regression Models for Fertility Estimations," *Demography*, I (1964), 321-322.

¹⁰ Derived from *9th Census of the United States: The Vital Statistics of the United States*, II, 658-60. Reynolds Farley, *Growth of the Black Population* (Chicago, 1970), pp. 31-35, emphasizes the high fertility of slaves.

¹¹ Birth rates in 1850 of southern whites and slaves (derived from the percent of population 0 to 14 years of age) by states is significant at the .01 level. In other words, if the birthrates for whites in a particular state were low, the birthrates for slaves were low also.

¹² Frank Lorimer, *Culture and Human Fertility* (Zurich, Switzerland, 1954), pp. 33, 35.

The indirect measure of birth rate as a percent of the population 0 to 14 years of age shows that Georgetown fertility was less than that of the South as a whole. The percent of population 0 to 4 for Georgetown, however, is higher than that of all southern slaves, while the percent of population 5 to 9 for Georgetown is lower. This suggests high childhood mortality. It has previously been noted that the number of 9 to 14 year old children in Georgetown County was abnormally low. It would be reasonable to infer from these figures that the indirect measure of birth rate as the percent of population 0 to 14 might well understate Georgetown's actual birthrate.

One reason for the comparatively low fertility, as calculated by indirect measures, is that the slave women of Georgetown County did not have as many children as their sisters throughout the South. Indeed, the percentage of women of childbearing age in Georgetown County was higher (29.09) than that among southern slaves (23.43), while the ratio of children to women aged 15 to 49 was lower than southern slaves as a whole (Table 6). If a condition of sexual license prevailed and there was little practice of birth control, there should have been a high positive correlation between the percent of women in the childbearing years and the birth rate. The fact is that the correlation is significant but negative.¹³

A possible explanation for the large number of Georgetown slave women of childbearing years and the comparatively low birth rate is that there was a pattern of family structure among the slaves and that a high percentage of females meant that some females did not reproduce because they were unable to secure partners.¹⁴ While the "surplus" females might secure partners from nearby plantations, such a selection

¹³ We analyzed Georgetown slaves in holdings over 100 and found that the percent of females in the childbearing years and the birth rate were inversely related, that is, the higher the percent of females of childbearing age, the lower was the birth rate. The correlation was higher than might have been achieved by chance (significant at the .005 level).

¹⁴ The hypothesis that Georgetown County slaves had a well developed family structure is supported by the recollections of the Georgetown County ex-slaves in the Federal Writer's Project. One former slave recalled the names of 15 of his 18 brothers and sisters; *Slave Narratives*, Vol. XIV, Part III, 217. The Allston family records contain numerous references that indicate strong family units among the slaves. A particularly striking example occurred when several slaves were fleeing during the Civil War. One person suggested that "the near relatives, parents, etc., [be held] responsible for the ill conduct of the younger members of their families;" Adele Petigru Allston to Colonel Francis Heriot, [July, 1864], in Easterby, *The South Carolina Rice Plantation*, p. 200. Upon their annual summer move from Georgetown

would consequently contribute to sexual imbalance at the males partner's plantation. It should be recalled in particular that the sex ratio on holdings over 100 slaves was 88.74. In any event, fertility would likely be depressed if partners lived on separate plantations.

Georgetown County slaves in 1850 lived in a distinctive social and economic environment. Our analysis of data of the manuscript census schedules of 1850 indicates that the Georgetown slaves had distinctive demographic characteristics. Compared to other slaves in the South, they lived in large holdings, had a high median age, a low sex ratio, a low dependency ratio, and few aged. The birthrate among Georgetown slaves appears to have been lower than in the South as a whole. Recorded statements, the small number of mulattoes, the apparent low fertility on plantations with a preponderance of women, suggest some form of stable family life.

We were encouraged to pursue this study by statements of Dr. George C. Rogers, Jr., the Department of History, University of South Carolina, that the slave schedules for Georgetown County in the 1850 census were valid and reliable source material. We are pleased to thank Dr. Robert Stewart, formerly Chairman of the Department of Sociology, University of South Carolina, for kindly furnishing secretarial assistance in transcribing the manuscript census data used in this study. The Research and Creative Endeavors Fund, Central Michigan University, also furnished financial assistance. Richard V. Dietrich, Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, Central Michigan University, carefully read the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions. Tim Shaffer, Department of Sociology, Central Michigan University, developed many of the computer programs used in the study.

County to Charleston, the Weston family had to move fifty individuals because "We cannot possibly separate husband and wife for six months; so Harry, the coachman, has to have his wife and children, and the same with the cook, and the butler, and the laundress, until we are actually moving an army every time we move." Elizabeth Allston Pringle, *Chronicals of Chicora Wood* (Boston, 1940), pp. 158-59, quoted in Lachiotte, *Georgetown Rice Plantations*, pp. 130-31. For recent scholarship supporting the existence of a stable family structure among slaves, see Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston, 1974), pp. 126-44.