

Identifying people enslaved at Goodwood Plantation in Tallahassee, Florida

Research Methods and Statement

Two longtime Goodwood volunteer researchers compiled this list of 251 persons enslaved at Goodwood. They utilized the records for slaveholders Hardy Bryan Croom, who owned slaves in the Goodwood area c.1832 to1837, and his younger brother, Bryan Hardy Croom, who owned slaves in the area c. 1831 to 1857. (The initial purchase of the land that was to be named Goodwood in the late 1840s occurred in 1834). Also studied were the available records of slaveholder Arvah Hopkins, his wife Susan Branch Hopkins and her relatives, from 1858 to 1865.

Among the sources used were U.S., Florida, and Leon County Census records, Leon County Mortality Schedules, tax and probate records, Croom family letters, records of sale, deeds, wills, agricultural records, contemporaneously recorded legal documents regarding the dispute between Henrietta Smith et al. and Bryan Hardy Croom, a legal dispute between Bryan Croom and his mother-in-law, Freedman's Bank Records and Bryan Croom's estate records. Resources from the State Library and Archives of Florida, Family Search, and Ancestry.com were examined. Additionally, the researchers relied upon the works of various historians that include Dr. Larry Rivers, Dr. William Rogers, Erica R. Clark, Julia Floyd Smith, U. Bowdoin Marsh, and Edward E. Baptist. The work of Susan Bradford Eppes, the niece of slaveholder Arvah Hopkins' wife and a frequent visitor to Goodwood, was also consulted.

It is important to note that this list of names is not exhaustive or comprehensive and undoubtedly contains errors and omissions. For example, the researchers have not visited North Carolina to review Croom Family letters which may contain important information and have utilized only such information recently digitized.

Goodwood grew over the years, and for a time in the 1850s, Bryan Croom owned over 8,000 non-contiguous acres. Bryan Croom also "leased" many enslaved persons who were legally the property of his mother-in-law, Ann Hawks. These individuals have been included in the list.

Readers should note the practice of slaveholders who owned enslaved persons with identical names. Typically, they would be differentiated, for example, as "Old Lucy" or "Little Effie," or have an initial appended to their name or even given a last name. This practice was done for the convenience of the slaveholder.

Multiple common names were a concern for the researchers. For example, between 1831 and 1865, among over 250 enslaved people, there were eight women named Mary. An attempt was made to discern if there were eight different enslaved women named Mary or if there were fewer due to duplications among the various sources.

Some were eliminated because their sources gave ages, approximate ages or death dates, and other clues were found.

The reader should also note the records that say, "Julia and two children" or "Iamonia and 1 month old son." Sadly, we cannot know the names of these children. Child mortality rates among enslaved women were extremely high. Note that the researchers did not count the unnamed children as it could not be determined if they were elsewhere identified, or indeed, if they survived infancy. If unnamed children were counted, at least eleven human beings would be added to the total.

Variations in the spelling of names were sometimes a challenge, and discerning antique handwriting could be difficult. Gender is usually apparent, but whether Bumey, Frade, Lafey, and Lannis, for example, were men or women remains unknown to the researchers.

Finally, note that slaveholder Bryan Croom had several reasons to conceal or underrepresent the number of enslaved human beings. A lesser reason was avoiding taxation, but he was also engaged in a 20-year legal battle for Goodwood itself. Because of the lawsuit, it would often have been in his best interest to underrepresent his assets, among the most valuable of which were the human beings he owned.

The researchers dedicate their efforts to the memory of those enslaved individuals recorded, those whose identities are forever lost, and to those yet to be discovered who were bonded to Goodwood. They hope that this information will assist anyone researching their ancestors and are willing to assist individuals in their efforts.

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