

# 2 Million Black Americans Born Prior to Emancipation in the 1900 US Census

*New dataset from FamilySearch bridges generations documented in the 1900 United States census*

SALT LAKE CITY, UT, UNITED STATES, June 18, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Michigan State University (MSU) and FamilySearch International are happy to announce an extensive expansion

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*Walter Hawthorne, MSU  
Professor of History*

to MSU's online collection Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade ([Enslaved.org](https://enslaved.org)), a project that documents the lives of formerly enslaved individuals of African descent. The newly expanded collection uses 1900 United States census data to significantly enhance the ability to discover formerly enslaved individuals and their families for genealogical and academic research. This exciting new, free resource can be accessed now at Enslaved.org and [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org).

MSU and FamilySearch determined that the 1900 census would significantly benefit MSU's Enslaved.org initiative because of its potential to identify about 2 million people named in the census who were likely enslaved before emancipation in the United States. (Enslaved individuals were not named in many historical records, including U.S. censuses. Censuses taken after 1863 are sometimes the first records to include these individuals by name.) FamilySearch then worked with Brigham Young University's Record Linking Lab to identify the individuals in the census, along with links to the original census images on FamilySearch.org and records in the FamilySearch Family Tree.

To search the 1900 U.S. Census, filtered for 2 million Black Americans born before emancipation, search the collection directly at [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org).

“FamilySearch is the premier genealogical website in the world. It has an immense amount of searchable data about individuals who appear in a great range of primary sources—from censuses to baptismal records to birth records and more. Enslaved.org is excited and honored that FamilySearch is publishing a complete dataset through our project. This is a rare collaboration between a center that caters mostly to an academic audience and a nonprofit organization that caters to the general public,” said Walter Hawthorne, MSU professor of history and head of the Enslaved.org project.

Tracing people from the era of enslavement to the generations that followed emancipation presents exceptional challenges to descendants and researchers, Hawthorne noted. Progress has been made in recent years due to a growing number of archives, databases, and collections that help organize and make sense of records of enslavement. These resources have only recently become readily accessible for scholarly and public use. Such advancements come with the unique challenges of finding and accessing these databases online and the preservation of these projects and resources. Enslaved.org is a constellation of resources built to address these challenges. Its primary focus is individuals who were enslaved, who enslaved others, or participated in the trading of enslaved persons.

“We’re honored to contribute to this important project that brings greater visibility to the lives and legacies of formerly enslaved individuals,” said Stephen Valentine, FamilySearch executive vice president for North America, Europe, Middle East and Africa. “In addition to sharing this valuable dataset, we’re excited that scholars and descendants can access original historical images and linked family records in the FamilySearch Family Tree. These connections enrich academic research and empower families to discover and preserve their heritage in deeply personal ways.”

The crowdsourcing capabilities of the free FamilySearch Family Tree have been instrumental to the development of multiple record-linking projects by Brigham Young University (BYU) and will enable the continued enhancement of MSU’s “Two Million Black Americans Born Prior to Emancipation in the 1900 United States Census” dataset as a portal to deeper research possibilities.

Professor Joe Price, director of BYU’s Record Linking Lab, explained that the new dataset, combined with Family Tree, will allow people to explore their family history and see their personal connections to any ancestors who were likely formerly enslaved. The rich data in the 1900 census will then open the possibility to link back to previous census records (1880 and 1870) and eventually to records that predate emancipation. As individuals contribute their own genealogical information and uncover new records, these contributions will strengthen scholarly research, enriching our understanding of the lives of formerly enslaved people and their families.

Search the new 1900 United States census dataset today at [Enslaved.org](https://enslaved.org) and [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org).

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- Enslaved.org’s Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation: 1900 U.S. Census Essay and Searchable Dataset
- [Tutorial to download the 1900 US Census dataset on Enslaved.org](https://enslaved.org/tutorial)

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