

RACHAEL "FANNY" DEVEREAUX/MARTIN OF ALABAMA AND FLORIDA, A FREE WOMAN OF COLOR

Discovering a Name Change Through the Federal Census

By Donna R. Mills, M.A., C.G.R.S.

The decennial federal census is a cornerstone upon which modern genealogical research is laid. Yet the full potential of this popular source is often not realized. Even when researchers accept that they must do more than simply copy the data for the individual in whom they are interested, and even when neighbors are noted and included, additional steps are required for success. The data must be analyzed and correlated, of course; but they also must be carefully studied for clues that are less than obvious.

The common reliance upon censuses to solve relationship and migration problems can wreak havoc when an individual is "missing." Absences are usually explained by one of four presumptions: 1) the ancestor had not yet arrived in the area at the time of the enumeration; 2) the ancestor had already moved out of the area at the time of the enumeration; 3) the ancestor was simply missed by the enumerator; or 4) part of the census is missing. However, we cannot accept any such explanations without verification. Concluding that individuals had left an area prior to the enumeration can lead to distressing and expensive wild-goose chases if they, in fact, had not moved.

Rachael "Fanny" Devereaux/Martin poses a case in which conventional explanations for a census absence proved erroneous. The solution provides an additional reason for "missing entries." This study focuses upon a free woman of color who, as Rachael Martin, appeared on the 1850 census of Covington County, Alabama. Although that name was found only on this census, she nevertheless lived in the same geographic area, along the Alabama-Florida line, for a span of three decennial censuses and did indeed appear on all of them.

1850 ALABAMA

At the beginning of this writer's involvement with the Martin project, Rachael's only known census appearance was in 1850. Nothing was known of her prior life. Since Covington is a "burned" county, the other basic resources for identifying families and tracking them to earlier locations were not available. Thus, extracting all possible clues from her census entry was

crucial to locating her in earlier years. Those data follow:

1850 Covington County, Alabama

Federal Population Schedule, p. 129, #34/34 (26 Sept.) (National Archives Microfilm M432, roll 4):

Rachael Martin	70 F	M[ulatto]	unknown
John	" 30 M	M farmer	Georgia
Eliza	" 28 F	M	Georgia
Levina	" 25 F	M	Alabama
Lilas	" 16 F	M	Alabama
Morgan	" 14 M	M	Alabama
Nancy	" 30 F	—	North Carolina
Joseph	" 13 M	M	Alabama
Missuri	" 12 F	M	Alabama
Mary	" 10 F	M	Alabama
Caroline	" 8 F	M	Alabama
William	" 6 M	M	Alabama
John	" 4 M	M	Florida

According to these birthplaces, the Martins were in Alabama as early as 1825. Yet Rachael does not appear on the 1830 and 1840 returns. It could be argued that she was enumerated in an unidentified husband's household. However, only three Martin male heads of family were listed in these years (one in 1830 and two in 1840), and their data do not allow for Rachael and her family. (With no less than ninety-five other male Martin entries in the *statewide* census index, pursuing each in search of an appropriate household is not economical in cost or time.) It could be argued that the birthplaces for her family members were incorrect and they were actually living in another state in 1830 and 1840. However, Rachael Martin does not appear on any census index for the surrounding states of Florida, Georgia, or Mississippi or those for the Carolinas, from which so many Alabamians came.

Rachael's 1850 neighborhood proved crucial in locating her on the earlier census:

1850 neighbors, Covington County (all white except when noted):

William Wildin	Shadrick Taylor	
Seth Dixon	Rachael Martin	[mulatto]
Levi Welding	Reubin Hart	
Cassius Siles	Allin Hart	
Abram Smith	Isaac Hart	
Nancy Welding	Jane Dannelly	[mulatto; with Wm Givings & fam., mul.]
Z. Yarborough	Thomas Heathcock	[mulatto]
Wright A. Stokes	William R. Feagin	
Jacob Manning	Wiley Payett	
John Hart	William H. Campbell	
Henry Steel	Reubin C. Timond	
Archibald Stegaul	Elisha Bryan	
Lewis Taylor	Eli T. Claghorne	

1840 ALABAMA

When this neighborhood was located in 1840, a promising discovery was made: Although no Rachael Martin was found anywhere, a free woman of color named Fanny Martin was. The household and neighborhood data are as follows:

1840 Covington County, Alabama

Federal Population Schedule, p. 324, line 9 (Nat. Arch. Microfilm M704, roll 2):

Fanny Martin	1 male fpc 0-10	1 female fpc 0-10	0 slaves
	1 male fpc 24-36	2 female fpc 10-24	1 in agriculture
		1 female fpc 24-36	
		1 female fpc 55-100	

[fpc = "free person of color"]

Neighborhood (significant names are italicized):

Daniel <i>Hart</i>	James Shulds
<i>Shadrick Taylor</i>	Milton Tillery
[skip 2]	James W. Carrell
<i>Reubin Hart</i>	Thompson <i>Taylor</i> [with 1 female fpc 24-36]
<i>Isaac Hart</i>	John Teel
[skip 5]	<i>Fanny Martin</i>
Larkin <i>Hart</i>	Morgan <i>Martin</i>
[skip 7]	Richard <i>Martin</i>
James <i>Taylor</i>	Powel Smith
Jacob <i>Wilden</i>	Armstrong Smith
Morris Kirnen	<i>Lewis Taylor</i>
John I. Tyrce	Allen Woods
William <i>Payet Jr.</i>	Henry Woods
Arthur <i>Donelly</i>	Kinchen Chesnut
Alfred Tilry	

Several considerations weigh in favor of the 1840 Fanny and 1850 Rachael being the same woman: 1) the neighborhoods of both are irrefutably the same; 2) both are free women of color—an extremely small minority group in Covington County; 3) both are of the same age group; 4) the household compositions of both are compatible; 5) the given name *Morgan* can be associated with both; and 6) they do not appear simultaneously on any Alabama census.

1830 FLORIDA

The same problem existed for 1830. No woman of either name could be found in the Alabama statewide index under any conceivable variant or typographical error. Furthermore, John Martin—the sole Martin who did appear in Covington County—did not have a household that could accommodate

seven households from Rachael in 1840 with wife and children, and the widow Jane Dannelly and family who were four houses from Rachael in 1850, are of compatible ages, birthplaces, and household composition to the Georgia couple. (Regina Hines Ellison, CGRS, 158 Lafayette Circle, Ocean Springs MS 39564, is currently conducting the pre-Alabama Devereaux research.)

Such quirks as name changes were not so rare as modern genealogists may assume. These occurrences testify to the necessity of employing thorough research methods, and they remind us that success often requires the researcher to seek explanations beyond the obvious.

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