

# Working With Those Pesky Tally Marks in Pre-1850 Census Records

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## Plan of Action:

- ✓ Start with what you know and work your way back. Remember: time and location are important.
- ✓ Start a Census Tracker.
- ✓ Determine an estimated birth year if you do not have a specific date.
- ✓ Pull out your calculator and determine how old s/he would be in each of the census years.
- ✓ If you have uncovered any siblings, do the same with them. Identifying a pattern with the siblings, will provide stronger evidence to support your theory.
- ✓ Check the county boundaries to see if there are changes to consider.
- ✓ Pull out the census indexes and look for potential candidates.
- ✓ Plot the candidates on a census form
- ✓ Once you identify candidates, start researching to eliminate them until you have a candidate. Use marriage records, deeds, tax lists, probate records, etc. Do the same for the siblings.
- ✓ Study/analyze as you go. Remember Mark Lowe's "Mull and Ponder" rule.
- ✓ Create a timeline.
- ✓ Consider the whole family structure.
  - Are there noticeable additions in the number of children?
  - Life was rough; not all children made it to adulthood.
  - Sometimes you may find an extra person-as in the Head of Household's mother
- ✓ Apply the FAN principle – Notice and research Friends, Acquaintances, Neighbors.

## Tax Timeline, Pre–1850

- 1790-1792 and later — white males 21 years of age and older who were considered tithable
- 1792-1795 — All males 21 and above whether tithable or not

- 1795-1797 — White males 16 years of age and older
  - Number of enslaved blacks 16 years of age and older
  - Total number of blacks
- 1797-1821 — All males 16 years of age and older
  - All enslaved females 16 years of age and older
  - Total number of blacks
- 1821-1840 — Added a request for the number of children between the ages of 4 and 14 within each School District
- 1840 — Adjusted to include children between 7 and 17 years of age

### Final Thought:

If the answer is not clearly evident in direct evidence but can be supported by indirect evidence, write an analysis to support your theory.

### Sources:

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