

Three Ways To Identify An Enslaver

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Leveraging Document Search Technology on Ancestry and FamilySearch

Ancestry (ancestry.com)

Step 1: Go to the catalog by clicking Card Catalog in the Search menu.

Step 2: Type your research state followed by *probate* into the title search bar. Select the result that includes *U.S., Wills and Probate Records* in the title.

Step 3: Type a county name into the **keyword** search bar and type the first name of the enslaved person in the search bar provided towards the bottom. Click “Exact” for both. Click the image icons to examine the documents matching your search.

You can also hover your cursor over “View Record” to see an alphabetized list of the indexed names. If there are many names, click “View Record” to ensure you can see all of them.

Use other names and relationships within the document to determine if your ancestor is the same person indexed.

FamilySearch (familysearch.org/search/full-text)

Step 1: Type +{ancestor’s name} and +negro into the keyword search bar. (or +slave)

Step 2: Click “Place” and narrow down your results to the county. Warning: Beware of erroneous categorizations. You can filter further, browse the excerpts, or click on each result. You can review the AI transcript alongside the document image.

Combing Through DNA Matches for Powerful Clues

Step 1: Perform a **surname** search in your DNA matches.

Step 2: Identify patterns within the matches leading to unfamiliar branches.

Analyze those patterns for clues that point to an enslaving family.

Turning Over Every Stone Because of Common Curiosity

I identified who enslaved my ancestor by accident while trying to determine the namesake of a popular road in the county. Studying important figures in your research neighborhood can often lead to impactful discoveries.