

Camden County, Georgia

Slave Deed Abstracts.

Compiled by
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¹ There is no Deed Book J.

² This book, created after the end of slavery, contains lists of slaves who were emancipated.

Dedication

The author was greatly aided by James V. Fields of Camden County. He created a series of programming scripts that automated the production of the abstracts and the index. Without his help, this tome would be far less useful and may have never been completed.

Introduction

In Camden County, Georgia thousands of humans were held as slaves. From the late 1700s until the 1860s, these people were bought and sold like cattle, and the deed records reflect this fact. Along-side the deeds for land, cattle, horses, hogs and boats lie the deeds for human beings. In addition, slaves were often used as collateral for loans. Even if a mortgaged slave was not actually sold, the mortgage contains valuable information about that person.

Tracing property back through time can be a confusing, time consuming and frustrating endeavor. Finding people who were held as property can be even more difficult. The deed books were indexed by the names of the grantors and grantees – that is, those who bought and sold the property. Slave names were not indexed. Sometimes, as in the case of Sheriff Sales, even the slave owner's name was not indexed.

African-American ancestry is one of the most difficult subjects to research. Tracing lines of ancestry before emancipation can be almost impossible. Deed research is not only one avenue of research, it is sometimes the *only* path to finding African-American ancestors.

The abstracted deeds in this volume are located in the courthouse in Woodbine, the seat of Camden County. Preserved by the Georgia Archives in the 1950s, little has been done to make the deeds more assessable or more useful to researchers. The books have been indexed by the grantors' and grantees' names, but the slave deeds are mixed in with deeds for other types of property and no index exists based on slave name. In addition, the deeds are hand-written, which makes them difficult to read.

Besides the standard grantor, grantee, date and slave name, included in this volume is information sometimes provided within the deed such as the age of and description of the slave, place of origin, plantation name, etc. This book not only abstracts all found slave deeds in Camden County, but this book also contains an index based on *all* names found in the deeds: grantors, grantees, witnesses and, most importantly, slaves.

Even those without African-American ancestry will find this volume useful. Many are interested in finding out if *their* ancestor ever owned another human. For others, owning another human – or many humans – is a sign of the status of their ancestor and a significant clue to the business dealings of those who are long-dead.

Using this abstract and the comprehensive index, one could conceivably trace a slave's purchase history for their entire time in Camden county. In addition, sometimes information is available on where the slave came from if from outside of the area.

For more information on slavery in Camden County, please see the list of books and other documents in the section "Recommended Readings."

Caveats

The author has attempted to transcribe all names as accurately as possible; however, archaic handwritten records can be difficult to read. All mistakes in transcription are the author's and the author's alone.

Charlton County was created from Camden County in 1854. So until that time their records are shared with Camden. What few slave deeds would have been recorded in Charlton County were lost in the devastating courthouse fire of 1877. While

land deeds were rerecorded, slave deeds were not, probably because they were worthless in 1877.

Notes

The first date listed in the deed is the *instrument* date – or the date of the original agreement. The second date listed in the deed is the *recorded* date – or the date it was recorded into official county record by the county clerk. The deeds are entered into the record by the *recorded* date.

The *grantor* is the person selling the property – in this case, the slaves. The *grantee* is the person paying for and receiving the property.

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