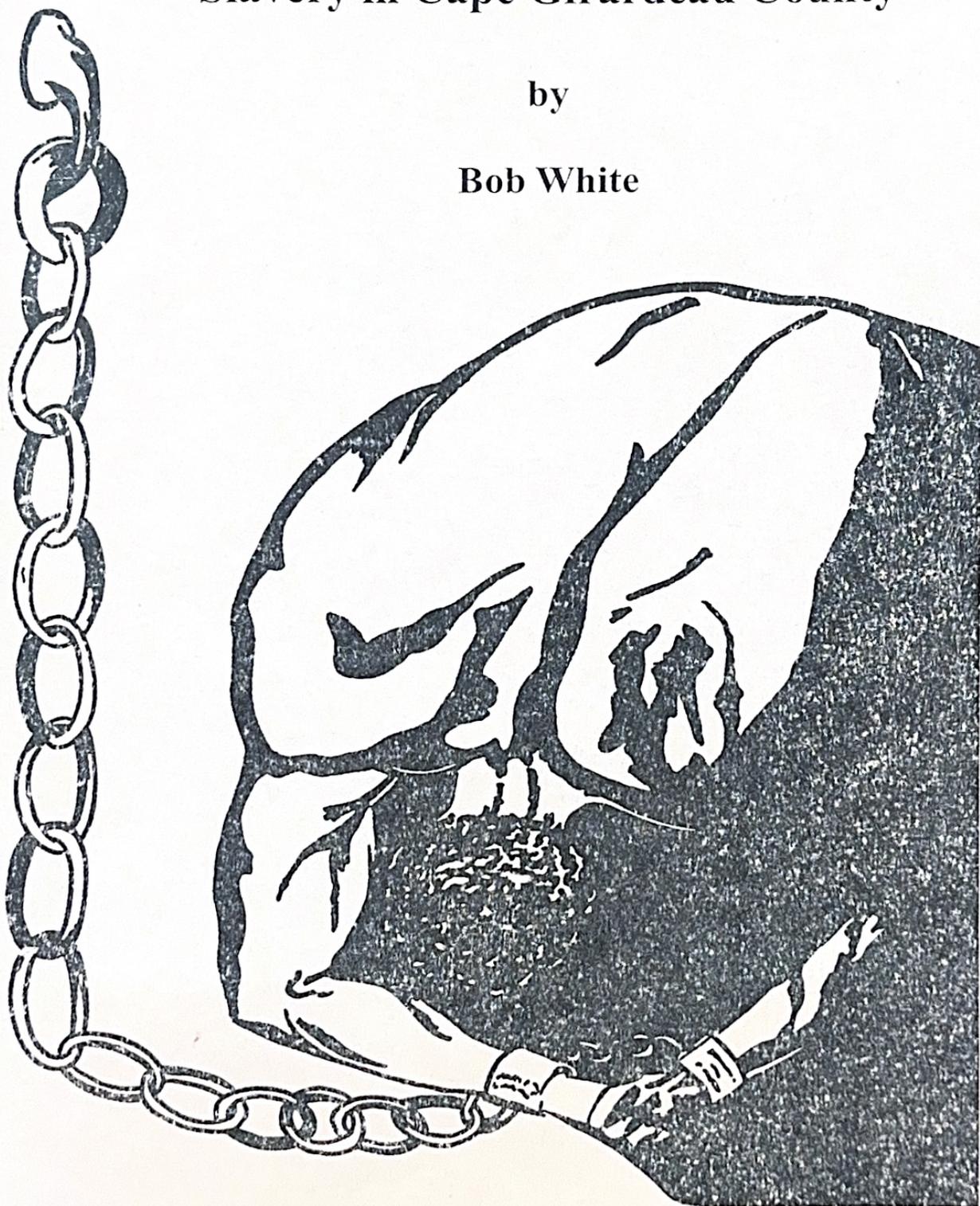


# Invisible Chains

Slavery in Cape Girardeau County

by

Bob White



Those who owned single slaves valued at nine hundred dollars were: Edwin Hines, Samuel Hitt, Ambros Linebarger, Lavers Priest, and William Penny. Two residents, William Wheeler and James Reynolds, each owned two slaves valued at \$1,800.00.

Those who owned single slaves valued at one thousand dollars were Moses Cox, Clement Freze, Thomas Haile, Francis Keen, William Lileenfeld, and F. G. Williams. The average value per slave tended to decrease when an individual held several. A person owning numerous slaves most likely held individuals with a greater age range. Children in bondage and those of advanced age were generally valued less.<sup>21</sup>

#### Slavery in Cape Girardeau County From Tax Records

Year	Number of Slaves	Total Value	Average Value
1828	775	\$182,885	\$235
1835	824	\$233,465	\$283
1846	1435	\$355,125	\$247
1859	1338	\$663,100	\$495

Total Number of Cape Girardeau County Slave Owners in 1828	175
Number who owned less than five	123
Less than ten	158
Between ten and fifteen	13
Between fifteen and twenty	2
Over twenty	2

#### Slavery in Cape Girardeau County

Number of Slaves in Each Cape County Township in 1860

Largest Township Slave Owner and Number of Slave Owners in each Township

Township	Largest Owner	Number of Owners
Shawnee----136	John Oliver-----33	21
Randol----137	Jeremiah Randol----12	27
Cape Girardeau----21	Wm. L. Keen-----10	3
Hubble-----56	Anthony B. Penny----12	12
Liberty-----6	John Snider-----2	4
German-----125	Thomas English----14	22
Whitewater----116	Stephen Byrd-----22	30
Byrd-----231	William Horrell----19	41
Applecreek----230	Thomas Horrell----18	59
City of Cape----418	John Cross-----45	75

The tax records only listed those slaves over three years of age for tax purposes. The Federal Census listed all slaves by sex and age range.

Those who owned fewer slaves also tended to own less non-slave property. Thus the total value of their property was near the value of the slaves held. Cyrus Alexander owned only one slave in 1828 valued at \$300.00; his total non-slave property was valued at \$227.00. There were exceptions to the above statement: an example was Mitchell Fleming, who owned only one slave in 1828, valued at \$250.00, while his non-slave property was valued at \$811.00. Most of Fleming's wealth was based on 600 acres of land valued at \$740.00.

According to the 1828 tax records, there were 775 slaves in the county valued at \$182,885.00. Residents had claim to 121,391 acres of land valued at \$174,650.00. Three hundred seventy-four town lots were valued at \$19,115.00. The total value of real and personal property including land, cattle, horses, tanneries, distilleries, mills, watches, and pleasure carriages amounted to \$286,369.00 excluding slaves. Almost 39 percent of the total Cape Girardeau wealth in 1828 was composed of slave property.

In 1835, the value of slaves in the county was still greater than farm land claimed. However, by 1846 the value of farm land had surpassed that of slaves by over \$4,600.00. The tax listed slaves in 1859 amounted to 1,338 valued at \$663,100.00, which was only a little over 20 percent of the total worth of all property in the county. Farm land claimed had increased to 294,000 acres by 1859 and the value per acre had increased to an average of about \$6.50 per acre. Town lots' value had increased to almost \$500,000.00. Although the number of slaves had increased, their average value in 1859 was only about \$475.00.

Of the 1,338 slaves recorded by the assessor in 1859, only 40 were valued on average above \$800.00. Only two, on average were valued above one thousand dollars. They were owned by Logan Snider and were valued at \$4,500.00 for an average worth of \$2,250.00 each, which is \$1,250.00 above the next highest value placed on a single Cape Girardeau County slave. Such a figure raises perplexing questions which are difficult to answer. By law, an individual's assessment could be doubled for failure to furnish a list of property, which happened to slave owner Samuel Daugherty in 1859. However, there was no indication that double assessment had been applied to Snider. Snider's slaves may have been trained craftsmen, such as bricklayers, blacksmiths, or carpenters which would account for their inflated value. There have been misconceptions related to the value of slaves just prior to the Civil War. In the past, some sources placed the value of a mature male slave at around \$2,000.00. That, however, was not the case in Cape Girardeau County. In 1856, a 27 year old, apparently healthy slave, was sold at auction in Jackson for \$430.00. the value of most slaves in Cape Girardeau County in 1859 fell between the range of four to seven hundred dollars. Wesley Rippy and William Wilson owned the lowest valued slaves in the county in 1859. They both held one slave valued at \$100.00 each.

Those who owned single slaves valued at eight hundred dollars in 1859 included: William Hitt, Fleming Hensley, John Hutchinson, John Kinder, Martha Linch, John McLeary, Jesse Miller, Marion Prim, Jessie Proffer, Nancy Ross, William Renfroe, Henry Thompson, and James Whitelaw. Those who owned slaves whose average value equaled \$800.00 were: George M. Beattie, two, \$1,700.00; Elizabeth Lewis, two, \$1,600.00; R. G. Stockton, two, \$1,600.00; and the Thomas Smith estate, three, \$2,400.00.

## TAX AND CENSUS CHARTS

The Tax and Census Charts on the following pages list the slave holders of Cape Girardeau County and the total number of slaves enumerated in each census or taxed from 1817 to 1863. For tax purposes from 1817 through 1820 owners paid taxes on the value of slaves who were ten years of age and older. After 1820 slaves three years of age and older were taxable property.

The United State Census ("US" in the chart) counted all slaves. The census records of 1830 and 1840 recorded the number of male and female slaves within specified age groups. The names of slaves were not recorded. The census records of 1850 and 1860 have separate "Slave Schedules" for each county. These Slave Schedules show the owner (or, in some cases, the holder if the slave had been hired out and did not live with his owner) and for each slave: age, sex, color, whether or not deaf-mute, blind, insane or "idiotic." The names of slaves were not recorded. In the 1860 Census the owner also reported the number of slave houses for housing the slaves. This is indicated with the letter "H" on the Tax and Census Charts.

The Cape Girardeau District Census of 1803 and the tax records for St. Francois District for 1817 and 1818 can be found on page 206.

