

## Slavery in the New York State census, 1800

### Introduction

---

While numbers do not explain the everyday realities of slavery in the eighteenth century, they do provide a sense of the pervasiveness of the peculiar institution even in a northern state like New York. This broadside provides figures from the 1800 census in New York. It offers a breakdown of the free population of each county in the state as well as three-fifths of the number of enslaved people present. The US Constitution permitted 60 percent, or three-fifths, of enslaved people to be counted toward the total population of each state in a compromise designed to provide the southern states with greater representation in Congress and the Electoral College.

It is well known that the “three-fifths clause” of the Constitution enhanced southern claims to power. However, what is less known is the North’s complicity in slavery, which is illustrated through these census numbers. While New York’s leaders had passed a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery in 1799, it was not fully implemented until 1827. Therefore, New York included 60 percent of those held in bondage within its borders in the census counts of 1800, 1810, and 1820. The number of enslaved people in New York was minuscule compared to the number held in the South, however; the three-fifths of those enslaved (equaling 12,362 persons in the census) counted in New York in 1800 was not enough for even half a seat in the House of Representatives.

### Questions for Discussion

---

Read the document introduction, study the image, and apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer these questions.

1. Until recently, most textbooks linked slavery to the agrarian South and rarely mentioned the existence of slavery in northern states. How can we explain why slavery was in fact embedded in the economy of New York State?
2. How does the document illustrate the prominence of the “City and County of New York” within New York State?
3. To a foreign observer, how would this document square with the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence?

Slavery in the New York State census, 1800

Image

**A STATEMENT,**  
Shewing the Aggregate Number of PERSONS in each of the Wards of the City of New-York, and in each of the Counties in this State, including, however, no more than three-fifths of the whole number of Slaves.

City and county of New-York,	Free fons.	Per-Three fifths of Slaves.	Aggregate.
City and county of New-York,			
First Ward,	3,903	250	4,153
Second do.	4,622	327	4,949
Third do.	6,068	168	6,236
Fourth do.	9,514	252	6,766
Fifth do.	8,878	222	9,100
Sixth do.	12,779	178	12,957
Seventh do.	14,857	322	15,179
County of Richmond,	57,621	1,719	59,349
Suffolk,	3,888	405	4,293
Queens,	18,578	531	19,109
Kings,	15,365	918	16,283
Westchester,	4,261	888	5,149
Rockland,	26,169	756	26,925
Orange,	5,802	330	6,132
Ulster,	28,208	687	28,895
Dutchess,	22,598	1,353	23,951
Columbia,	46,166	966	47,132
Delaware,	22,851	882	34,733
Green,	10,212	9	10,221
Rensselaer,	12,064	312	12,376
Albany,	29,552	534	30,086
Washington,	32,235	1,086	33,321
Clinton and Essex,	35,494	48	35,542
Saratoga,	8,456	35	8,491
Schoharie,	24,125	216	24,341
Montgomery,	9,454	213	9,667
Herkemer,	21,234	279	21,513
Oncida,	14,418	36	14,454
Onondaga,	21,997	30	22,027
Otsego,	7,395	6	7,401
Chenango,	21,588	27	21,615
Tioga,	15,650	9	15,659
Cayuga,	6,862	9	6,871
Ontario,	15,818	32	15,850
Steuben,	15,161	33	15,194
Total,	1,766	12	1,778
<b>Total,</b>	<b>565,988</b>	<b>12,362</b>	<b>578,349</b>

CA 1790  
Mar 12  
Evans  
9771

17 | 578,349 | 34020  
87  
68  
34  
9

37,000 | 578,349 | 17  
33000  
248349  
231000  
17349

Census results, New York State, ca. 1800. (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC08893)

---

© 2012 The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History  
[www.gilderlehrman.org](http://www.gilderlehrman.org)