Summer I 2024 - DS 4200 - Group 5

1775 Charlestown: Enslaved People

Urvi Bhojani, Anna Birge, Anahi Cruz, Isabella Fisch, Haley Martin, Lillian Robinson

Project Summary

In this project, we are tasked as a group to create detailed and communicative visualizations to illustrate information on the enslaved people of 1775 Charlestown. We formed this team based on our common interest in learning more about them. Our stakeholders are the archeologists in the City Archeology Program, founded in 1983, which aims to protect Boston's irreplaceable archeological resources. We plan to leverage data we've received from the City of Boston's Archeology Program to educate ourselves, the archaeologists, and the public.

Our motivation for this project is rooted in the historical significance of Charlestown, especially around the time of the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775. This battle was significant in the American Revolution, marking the lives of enslaved people affected, but their stories

were overlooked. We aim to answer critical questions such as how many enslaved people lived in Charlestown in 1775 and who they were (men, women, children). We want to understand whether households with enslaved people typically included one enslaved person or multiple and if married enslaved people or enslaved families lived together or were sold/split between multiple families. Enslaved people were also allowed to have personal assets and own property, so we will also explore whether any enslaved individuals in Charlestown in 1775 owned property. By focusing on these aspects, we suggest digging sites based on the data we were provided, contributing to a deeper understanding of their lives and experiences during 1775.

Background

While the topic of slavery in the United States often focuses on the South, slavery was found throughout the American colonies before the Revolutionary War. Massachusetts had one of the top three largest populations of enslaved people in New England[1]. However, the patterns of slavery in the North differed from those of the Southern colonies in a few key ways. Because large agricultural plantations were uncommon, most households only had 1 or 2 enslaved people[2], reflected in the distribution of enslaved people in Charlestown. Enslaved labor in the North was more diverse than in the South, with many enslaved people performing household duties or various skilled jobs[1]. Some of these jobs were the occupations of enslavers in Charlestown, such as bakers, sailmakers, and blacksmiths. Merchants and physicians were among the most common occupations of enslavers[1], seen in 1775 Charlestown. Although the North would later be seen as the birthplace of the abolitionist movement, there was not a strong antislavery sentiment in the area at the time[1]. There were free black people in New England–potentially including a black shoemaker who was a resident of Charlestown in 1775–but they were seen as inferior by white people, and their legal status barely differed from that of an enslaved person[1]. However, antislavery rhetoric grew stronger during the Revolutionary War as black people risked their lives on both sides to earn their freedom.

After a better understanding of the dynamics of slavery in the North, it can be seen that Charlestown in 1775 follows these general patterns.

Data

We are working with data in the “Enslaved People” dataset within the “Census Charlestown 1775 05-14-24” sheet because our topic pertains to researching the enslaved people of 1775 Charlestown. There are categorical and quantitative data present, including records of the number of total people enslaved in the record, demographic information of these slaves, and the enslaver’s first and last name. Our original plan was to utilize the “Census” dataset as a reference to cross-check the “Enslaved People” dataset and check for inconsistencies; however, we encountered several issues during our data exploration and clean-up process phases. To begin, most enslaved people and enslavers did not have an entry in the “Census” subset. Additionally, we encountered variability within enslaver names, which made it difficult for us to match enslavers across both subsets of data.

Overall, it may have been possible that many enslaved individuals had the same enslaver since enslaver names were repeated often throughout the dataset. However, the biggest pattern and surprise was the number of inconsistencies with the “Census” and “Enslaved People’s” data. This makes us cautious about proceeding with any insights before getting more information from the stakeholders to ensure we convey the most accurate findings. Because of this in-depth cross-check, we ultimately focused on the “Enslaved People” dataset, which focuses on categorical and quantitative data.

To address these issues with inconsistencies, we created an additional “ID” tab to distinguish between enslavers, adding additional ordinal data to this subset. We named the new dataset “overlap”. This step was important to ensure accurate analysis and interpretation. This specific challenge highlighted the importance of standardized data entry and thorough documentation to help with future analysis. The data types in our dataset include categorical data (e.g., names, demographic details) and quantitative data (e.g., age, number of enslaved individuals).

Additionally, we would like to highlight that the final data source we used to reference Unique IDs and Family Residence IDs (for the choropleth interactive graph) removes the Enslaver name “Jno. Codman” as we assume this to be a repeat of the name “John Codman”. This is a link to the original source of our analyzed data:

Census Charlestown 1775 05-14-24 and this is what the cleaned-up source looks like: Group 5 Census Charlestown 1775 05-14-24. Additionally, the final dataset that accounts for the overlap in "Unique ID" and Family Residence across the "Enslaved People" and "Census" datasets is: Overlap.

Task Analysis

Index (ID #)	"Domain" Task	Analytic Task (Low-level, "Query")	Search Task (Mid-level)	Analyze Task (High-level)
1	How many enslaved people lived in Charlestown in 1775? Who were they?	Retrieve Value (Identify)	Lookup	Record
2	What was the average number of enslaved people per household?	Compute Derived Value (Summarize)	Lookup	Discover
3	Did married enslaved people or enslaved families live together, or were they sold/split between multiple families?	Cluster (Identify)	Explore	Discover
4	How many enslaved people owned property?	Retrieve Value (Identify)	Lookup	Record
5	What are suggested dig	Find Anomalies	Browse	Present

	sites based on the most interesting/ unique enslaved individuals/ families?	(Identify)		
6	How many enslaved people had personal assets in colonial Massachusetts? Charlestown?	Retrieve Value (Identify)	Lookup	Record
7	Is there a trend of increasing numbers of enslaved people as the families have more money?	Correlate (Compare)	Lookup	Derive
8	What family owned the most slaves?	Find extremum (Identify)	Lookup	Record
9	If there were split families, did their family members or partners still live in Charlestown?	Retrieve Value (Identify)	Lookup	Record
10	Were there any free black people in Charlestown?	Find Anomalies (Identify)	Browse	Record

Figure 1. Task analysis table.

After thorough data analysis and refinement, the families and identities of enslaved individuals in Charlestown became the main focus. More specifically, to find patterns in the data, the tasks most correlating to the enslaved people of Charlestown were selected to

work off. Initially, tasks were created to identify all enslaved individuals and learn more about their enslavers, enslavers' families, and their living conditions. However, after analyzing the data, inconsistencies were found that prevented some tasks from reaching completion due to inaccurate or missing information in the data. To address this, a decision was made to make it a priority to highlight these inconsistencies and their sources. Therefore, the main focus is on first identifying the enslaved individuals and answering related questions, followed by understanding the families who enslaved them and then addressing the data inconsistencies. The visualizations aim to give viewers a better understanding of the enslaved population, including their family relationships and their place in the wider community.

Observations & Insights

The visualizations below show the insights found through the data exploration. They pull data from the “Enslaved People” and “Census” datasets and show trends and insights across varying features such as gender, names, and geographic distribution.

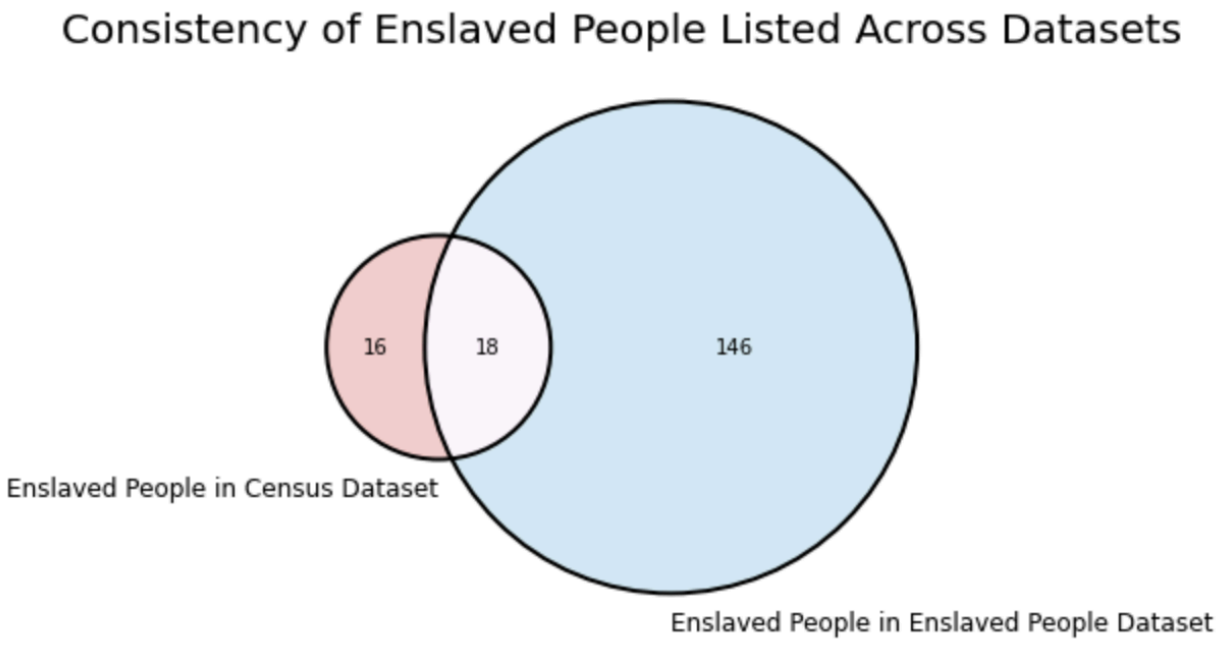


Figure 2. Consistency of Enslaved People Listed Across Datasets.

While creating visualizations, inconsistencies in the data were found that were related to the enslaved population. Due to these inconsistencies, the visualizations pull data from three different datasets: Census, Enslaved People, and the data form overlapping commonalities between these two datasets. However, the insights and visualizations were mainly pulled from the Enslaved People dataset to maintain consistency and accuracy throughout the report. However, several enslaved people in the Census dataset were not present in the Enslaved People dataset, resulting in their absence in the visualizations created. This inconsistency is shown in a Venn diagram in Figure 2, showing the data used in this report, the data left out, and the overlap between the two. From the Venn diagram, it can be seen that sixteen enslaved people were not included in the Enslaved People dataset and thus not included in the visualizations created, so it should be noted that their data is currently missing from this report.

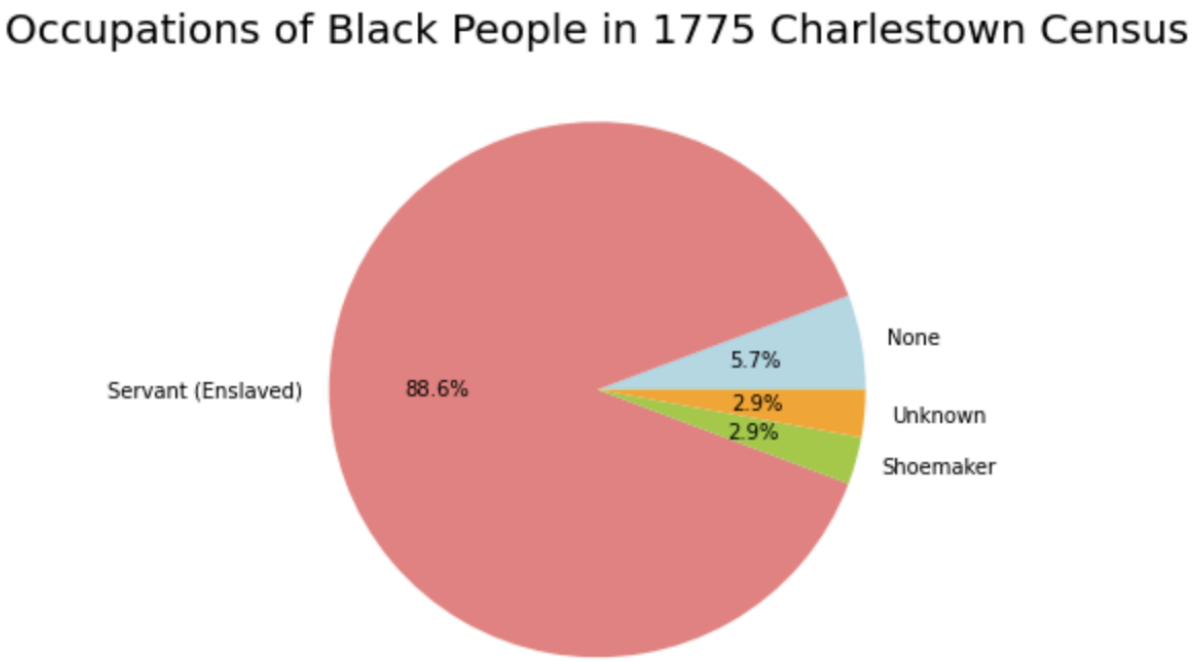


Figure 4. Occupations of Black People in 1775 Charlestown Census.

This visualization is a pie chart created from the Census dataset. There were very few occupations listed in the Census data to start with, but out of those present, it was important to find potential outliers. Some inconsistencies in the data led to enslaved individuals being categorized as “servant” or “enslaved” despite the labels having the same

meaning. Some occupations were explicitly stated as “Unknown” or not having any occupation. However, one outlier was the occupation of “shoemaker.” This occupation belonged to one individual named Cato Hanker, who was the Head of his household. This is a notable outlier in this visualization and within all the datasets because it appears that Hanker may have been a freed enslaved person, which at the time was extremely uncommon.

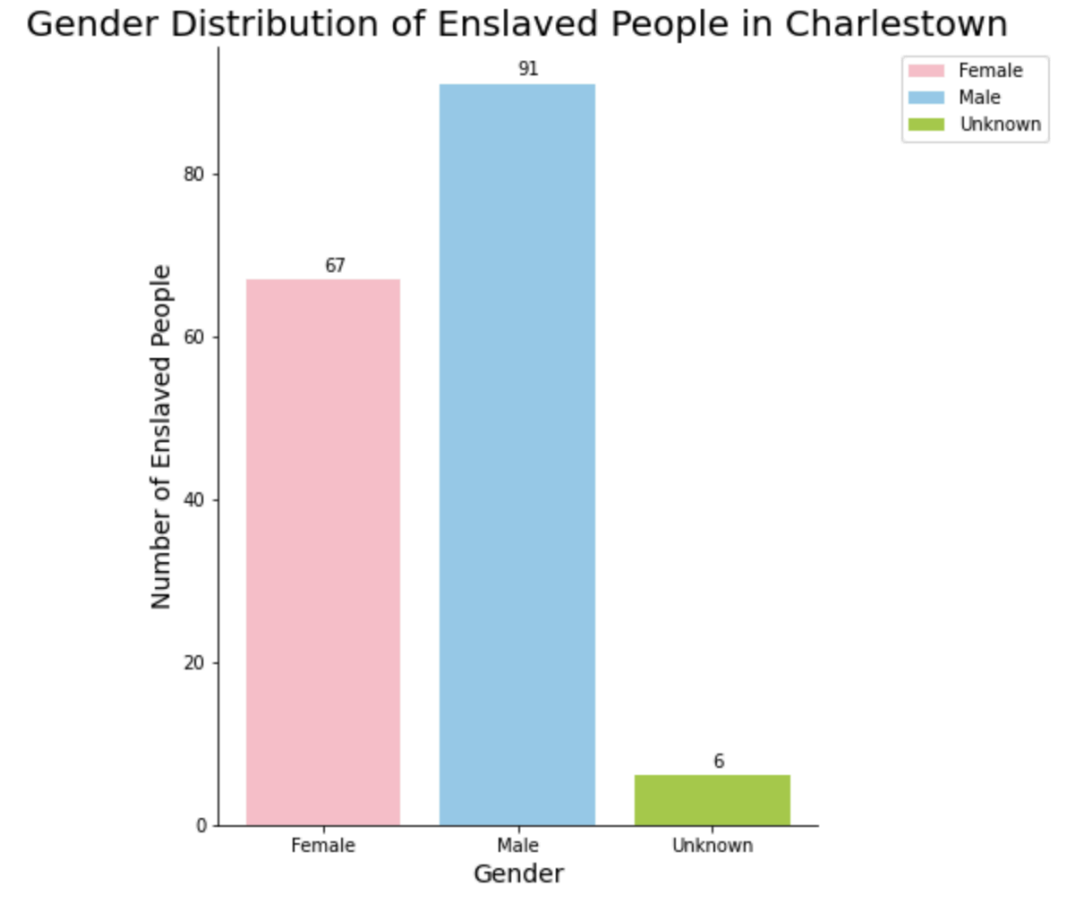


Figure 4. Gender Distribution of Enslaved People in Charlestown.

Using the Enslaved People dataset, a bar chart was created to show the number of enslaved people across genders (see Figure 4). The data was visualized in this format because of the three categorical values (female, male, and unknown) and the quantitative values on the y-axis, which show a clear comparison between the bars. It is evident from the chart that there were more enslaved men than women in Charlestown, with the number of enslaved men being around 90 individuals while the number of enslaved

women was around 70 individuals. The six individuals with an unknown gender were often given the description of “servant.”

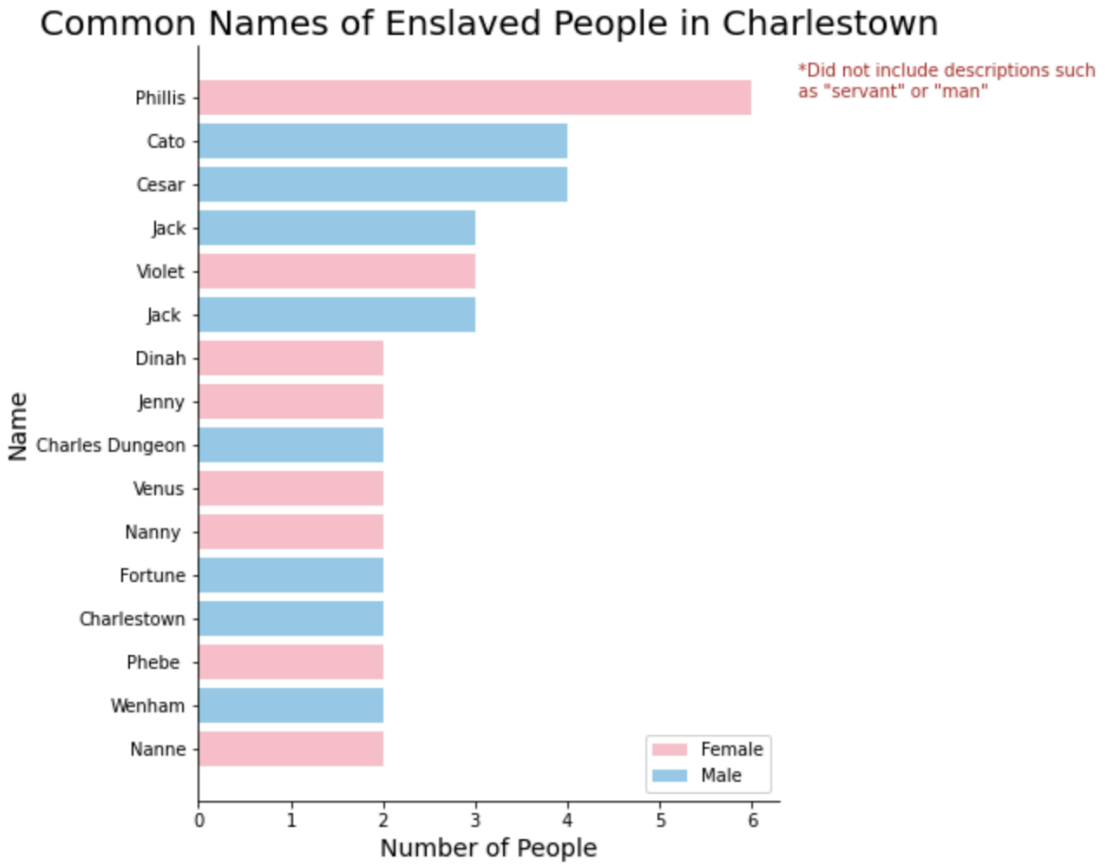


Figure 5. Common Names of Enslaved People in Charlestown.

While cleaning the data, some commonalities were found between enslaved people’s names, so this finding was represented in Figure 5 as a bar chart to show the frequency of common names. The chart shows that the most common name was “Philis” at six counts. It should be noted that this chart does not contain the total number of enslaved people since most names were not recorded in the data, which was pulled from the “Enslaved People” dataset. It should also be noted that the data was cleaned to exclude descriptions, such as “man” and “servant,” so only names were included in the data for this visualization.

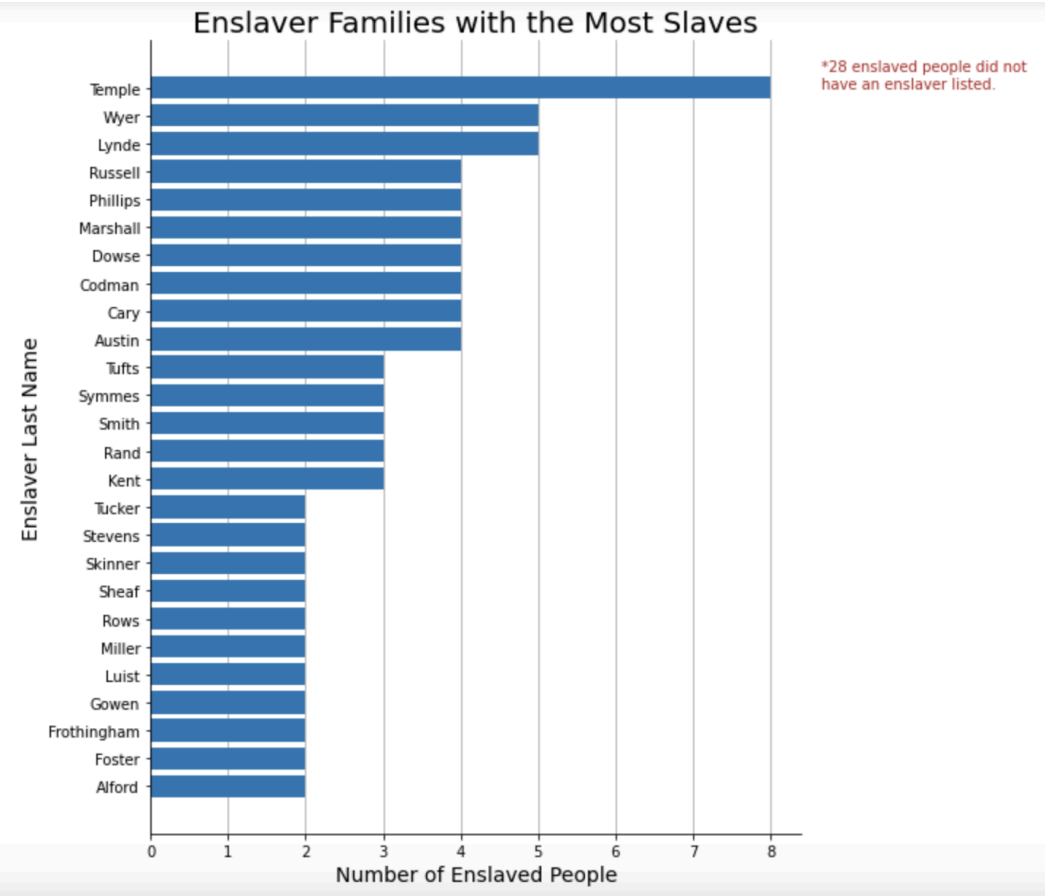
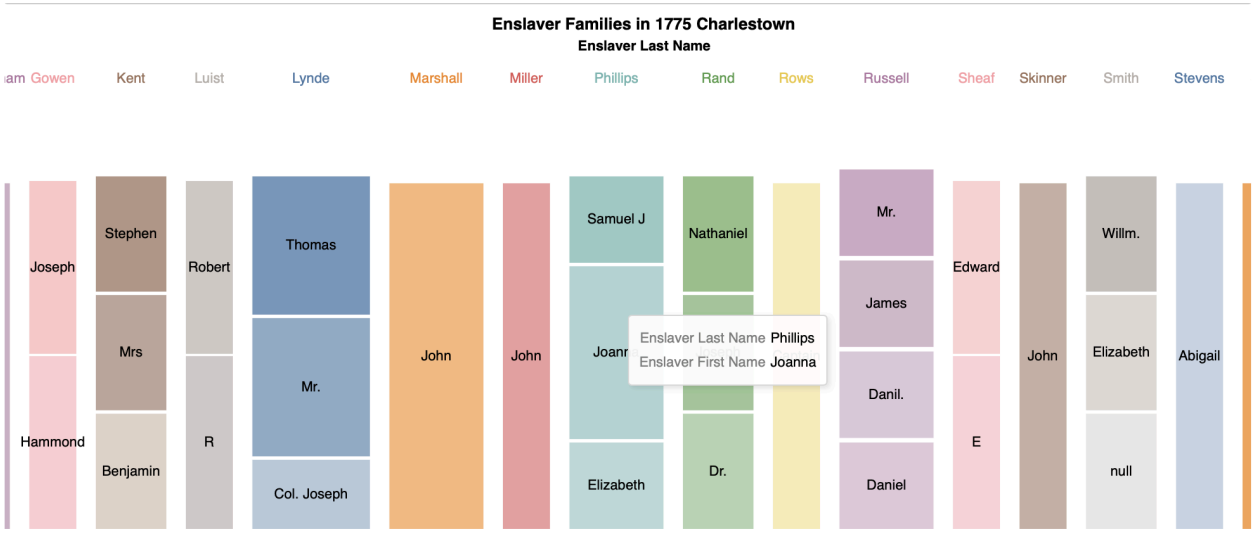


Figure 6. Enslaver Families with the Most Slaves.

During the data exploration, it was apparent that numerous enslaver families owned more than one enslaved person. To show these findings, a bar chart was created to demonstrate the number of enslaved people for each family (see Figure 6). The chart contains the families with more than one enslaved person; this data was taken from the Enslaved People dataset. The family that owned the most enslaved people was "Temple." It was also seen that many enslavers had mostly two enslaved people. It should be noted, however, that there were inconsistencies between the Census dataset and the Enslaved People dataset in regards to the combination of enslaved person to enslaver, and some enslaved people were in the same households but with different enslavers. These inconsistencies were found when comparing both tabs to each other; so, to provide consistency within the visualization, the above visualization only contains data pulled from the Enslaved People dataset without considering the households listed in the Census dataset.



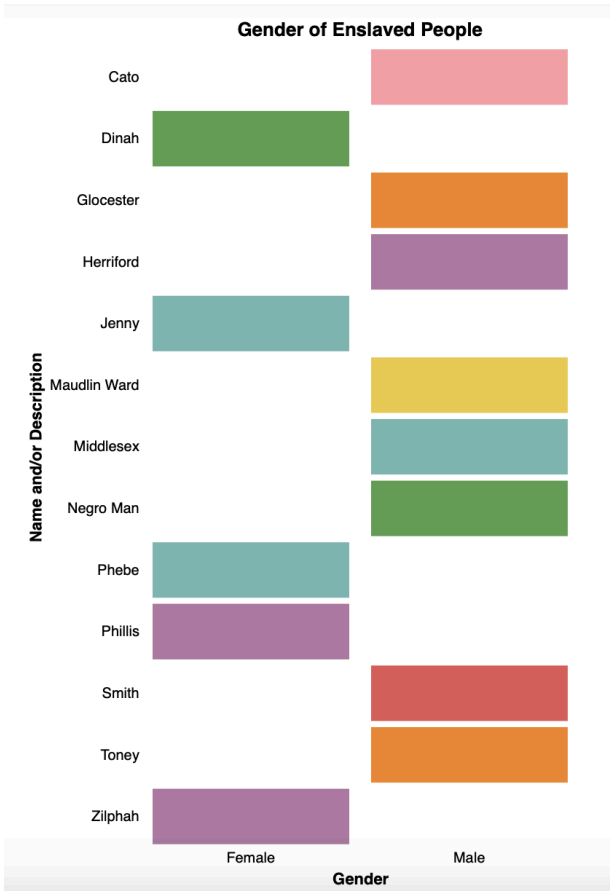


Figure 7. Enslaver Families in 1700s Charlestown with Gender Adjacency Matrix.

The first interactive visualization created, shown in Figure 7, uses a mosaic chart to illustrate the family ownership of enslaved people; mosaic charts help visualize hierarchical data, showing which families owned multiple enslaved individuals. The mosaic's gradient reflects the number of enslaved people an enslaver has. For instance, the darker the color, the more enslaved people belong to that enslaver; the lighter the color, the fewer enslaved people. This visualization clarifies that certain families, like the Russell and Temple families, had larger numbers of enslaved people. By brushing over the columns in the mosaic chart, users can see an adjacency matrix depicting enslaved individuals' gender within these households, which shows that the gender of enslaved people in these families varies.

Analyzing this mosaic chart visualization, combined with the gender distribution chart, gives some insight into the family dynamics of households where enslaved individuals resided. It shows that some families owned multiple enslaved people and that these individuals ranged widely in gender.

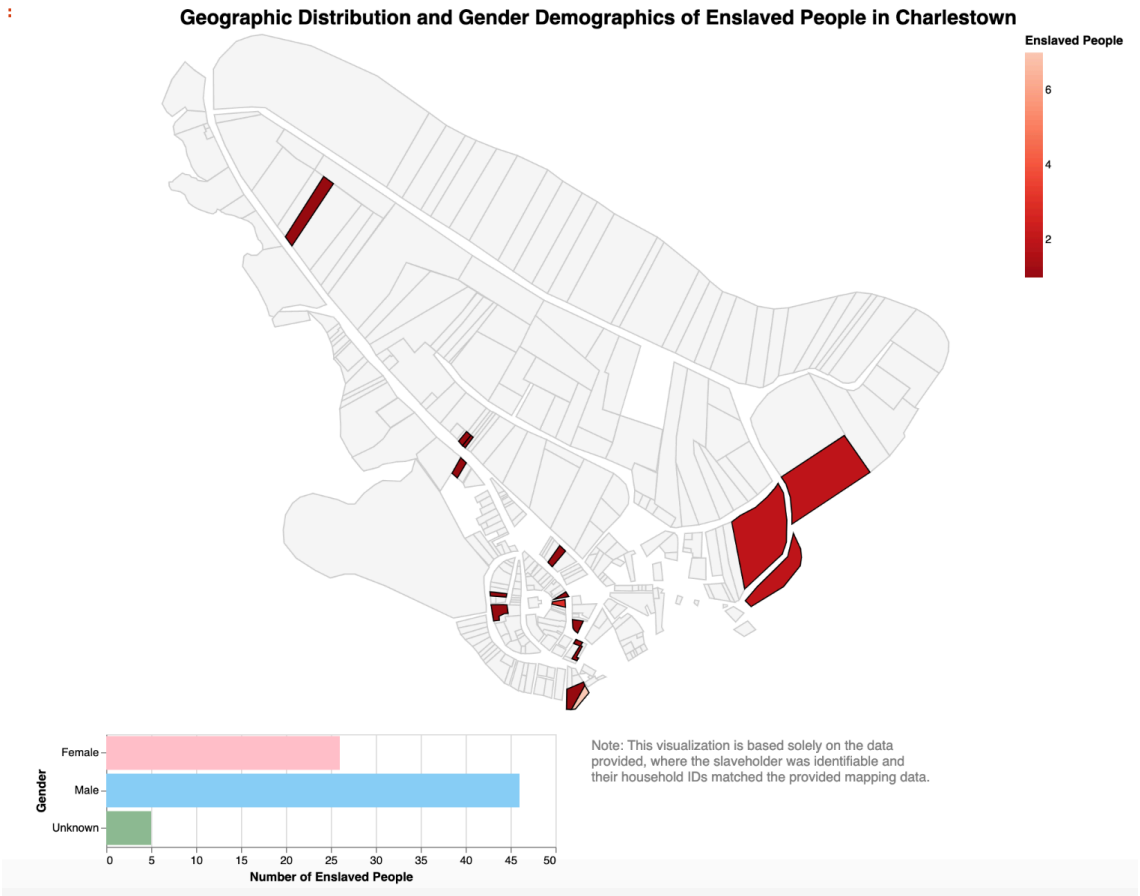


Figure 8. Geographic Distribution and Gender Demographics of Enslaved People in Charlestown.

This interactive visualization, presented in Figure 8, shows the geographic distribution of enslaved people in Charlestown through a choropleth map. The residential plots of land, varying in color, represent the number of enslaved people in different areas, giving a clear visual understanding of their distribution. The darker the color, the less enslaved individuals reside in that household, and the lighter the color, the more enslaved individuals reside there. This map is intended to reveal if specific regions in Charlestown had higher populations of enslaved people, highlighting potential areas where artifacts related to enslavement could be found. By interacting with the map, users can observe a bar graph that displays the gender distribution of enslaved people in selected households. The added gender distribution chart can potentially be used to see whether there is a gender difference based on where the enslaved individuals lived; for example, hypothetically, there might be more enslaved men living in areas where there was a higher demand for manual labor. Conversely, enslaved women might have been more commonly found in residential areas where their labor may have been used for more domestic chores and household maintenance.

Analysis of this visualization can provide several key insights into the demographics and distribution of enslaved people in Charlestown. Firstly, it highlights areas of concentrated enslavement, which could be tied to economic activities or the wealth of certain parts of the city. Secondly, the gender distribution bar chart shows potential gender differences based on the living areas of enslaved people, suggesting roles assigned to men and women depending on the labor expectations of specific locations.

It should be noted that this visualization used data from the overlapping Census and Enslaved People datasets. The overlapping data was subsetted to include the households from 1775 and the individuals whose residences existed in the geographical dataset (which was used to plot the Charlestown map). Unfortunately, there were few residential matches between the two datasets, which is evident in the visualization of the few residences of color. The minimal data may be due to errors in the identification markers used for residences and families, or it may be due to the fact that the Enslaved People dataset was compiled from years other than 1775.

Conclusion

In summary, our data analysis of the enslaved people in 1775 Charlestown has provided us with a comprehensive understanding of the enslavers' families, the gender distribution of the enslaved, demographic information, and geographic details. We also recognize that the opportunities for follow-up work are vast. For further research, we would like to focus on filling in some missing data gaps to understand the enslaved population better. Additionally, it would be interesting to learn more about the personal assets and property owned by the enslaved people. Expanding the scope in this way could help us enhance our knowledge of the daily lives of these people.

Regarding suggestions for dig sites, we recommend focusing on the former homes and workplaces of the enslaved people. Some of these sites are the John Codman residence at RES.091 and Phebe Graves residence at RES.173. These two households had the highest number of enslaved people in their household, according to Figure 8. Additionally, RES.492 may be an interesting potential dig site since, in Figure 8, that household, the S Dowe household, had the most land area and had two enslaved people in their household. Another site to explore, absent in Figure 8, is the residence RES.180. This household is Cato Hanker's household, who appears to be a free black person living in Charlestown. This is explored in Figure 4. These sites hold the potential for uncovering super interesting artifacts related to the cultural practices and livelihoods of the enslaved people. By continuing our research, we can find hidden truths about the enslaved people of 1775 Charlestown, enhance our insights, and better portray their stories accurately and respectfully.

Works Cited

(1) "Slaves in New England." *Medford Historical Society & Museum*. https://www.medfordhistorical.org/medford-history/africa-to-medford/slaves-in-new-england/#:~:text=The%20Northern%20Slave%20Economy&text=Owned%20mostly%20by%20ministers%2C%20doctors,a%20profession%20or%20a%20craft.

(2) Wilkinson, Freddie. "New England Colonies' Use of Slavery." *National Geographic*. October 19, 2023. https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/new-england-colonies-use-slaves/