

## Footnote to the 1880 Census

Edwin Eugene Ott, 20160724

There is an interesting footnote to the US Census in 1880 concerning South Carolina.<sup>1</sup> As background, keep in mind that the US presidential and the SC gubernatorial elections of 1876 were very contentious. Rutherford B. Hayes, Republican, lost the popular vote but won a greatly disputed Electoral College vote. In SC Wade Hampton, III, won the governorship with a plurality of about 11 hundred votes. In the SC election, there were many charges made of Democratic suppression of black voting and election fraud. It is reported that in Edgefield and Laurens Counties more persons voted for Wade Hampton than were registered to vote. It is said that an informal compromise was made in the presidential election that Hayes would be the President and the Federal Government would remove federal troops from the southern states. This compromise resulted in the end of the Reconstruction Era.

When the first results of the 1880 US Census were released, the correctness of the results for South Carolina were questioned. Francis A. Walker, Superintendent of Census, wrote "...certain newspaper reports, relating to the population of the several counties of that state [SC], as ascertained in the census, began to attract public attention and excite criticism." He described the controversy as being that, "...the gain of population reported above that shown by the census of 1870 being an impossible one, transcending the known capabilities of human procreation."

Walker called upon Henry Gannett, Geographer and Special Agent Tenth Census, to investigate these questions of accuracy. Gannett visited SC and reviewed census data for a number of suspected counties, including Greenville, Edgefield (focusing upon Pickens Township), and Orangeburg. In his report submitted in September 1880 he concluded, "The results of the investigation hereinbefore detailed place beyond possible question by any fairminded man the entire fault upon the census of 1870. I know of no reason, therefore, why any further charge should be made against the enumeration recently brought to a conclusion by the commissioned and sworn officers of the government in South Carolina."

This report did not settle the issue. A subsequent study by the Census was initiated. This study was under the direction of F. O. Butterfield, Special Agent Tenth Census, and included a re-enumeration of eight townships: Due West in Abbeville County, No. 8 in Fairfield County, Waterloo in Laurens County, Williston in Barnwell County, Broad River in Lexington County, Steerpen in Chesterfield County, Cains in Marion County, and Johnson in Williamsburg.

During this second study, the enumerated populations were found to have increased almost 3% during the six months between the census and the recount. This increase was attributed to "legitimate increase from natural causes, that is, excess of births over deaths" and "a more thorough and exhaustive enumeration." Butterfield concluded, "My investigation of the census of South Carolina has led me to the conclusion that it was correctly taken. I have discovered no trace or indication of fraud whatever, and, far from being a corrupt census, I firmly believe it to have been taken carefully and honestly."

By the way, the final population estimates for SC were left unchanged from the original. Waterloo Township had a population of 4,018 in 1880 and 2,158 in 1870, a 10-year increase of 86%. In 1880, the population of Waterloo Township was lower only to Laurens and Hunter Townships.

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<sup>1</sup> Compendium of the Tenth Census, June 1880, An Act of Congress Approved August 7, 1882, Part I.; US Department of the Interior, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1883.