

# ***Reading Old Style Handwriting***

Presented by Sharon D Monson

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Whether you are looking at an old bible record, a census page, or a baptismal certificate, most of the time there are names, dates, places and words that are not easy to read. If you happen upon a document that is totally readable, consider yourself lucky! Transcribing a will or a deed is usually a daunting task, especially when the time period and the writing instruments were from pre-1800.

A few good reading tips will allow you to decipher that hard to read name, or a word that doesn't make sense in the context of the sentence or a troublesome abbreviation. Also take into consideration the spelling of a name and realize that more than likely, it was "phonetic".

- Read the whole page of a document
- Read SLOWLY
- Write down words/names/dates/places that aren't clear
- Look at them one at a time
- Sound out the name or word – does it make sense
- Read the sentence – what word WOULD make sense
- Look on the same page for similar words, names, combination of letters, numbers
- Look on the pages before or after for similar words, names, combination of letters, numbers
- Try variant spellings for names – many capital letters look alike
- Check for abbreviations or marks – there may be small letters up above the line
- Try all of the vowels for lower case rounded letters (A,O ,U)
- Try substituting other capital letters -- (L-T-S) (I-J) (W-M-N) (F-T) (U-V) are similar
- An older style double "s" looks like an "f" or a "p" and is sometimes transcribed incorrectly
- Double "r" looks similar to a double "n" and vice-versa; count humps on "m" and "n"
- ALWAYS LOOK at the STROKE of the letter; where does it start, where does it end
- Look at the whole document or certificate or page for pen lifts, beginning or ending flourishes
- In the 1800's and earlier, Jr and Sr did not necessarily mean father and son – it was a way to distinguish between an older and a younger person living in the same area that had the same name; it was even used for women with the same name
- Pronunciation determined spelling in many cases – try changing (D-T) (B-P-V) (W-R) (G-K)
- Some people could not write and signed their name with an "X"; that means someone else spelled their name for them on the document and it could be wrong

# 1830 United States Federal Census about Targlor F Roke

Name: **Targlor F Roke**  
**[Taylor J Ross]** ✎  
**[Taylor J Ross]**

Home in 1830 (City, County, State): York, South Carolina

Free White Persons - 1  
 Males - 20 thru 29:  
 Free White Persons - 1  
 Males - 30 thru 39:

Free White Persons	John Cookhart	1	1	1	1														
	Cornelius O Daniel				1	2													
	Isaac Bunkfield	✓				1													
	James Hogg								1										
	Jonathan Robertson				1	1	1												
	James Dickson				1	1								1					
	James Hogg	1				1													
	Rev Robert G Bonfult	1	1						1										
	James Ferguson								1										
	Thomas Hinshaw	1	2	1	1	1								1					
	Harmin Platt																		1
	Samuel Blair		1			1													1
	James Kerr	2		2					1										
	John J McNelly								1										
	William Henry			2						1									
Taylor S. Poff				1	1	1													
Robert Wilson			2															1	

James Kerr  
 John J. Henery  
 William Henry  
 Taylor J. Roff  
 Robert Wilson

	John Stephenson		
	James Stephenson		
	John Lockhart	/	/
	Cornelius O. Daniel		
	Isaiah Brookfield	✓	
	James Hogg		
	Jonathan Robertson		
	James Dickson		
	James Hogg	/	
	Rev. Robert J. Russell	/	/
Arch. Burtin			

James Vickroy  
 James Hooey  
 Rev. Robert V. Russell  
 James Ferguson  
 Thomas Stinson

	William	0
	George J	5
8973	Lindsay Lindell	37
	Elizabeth	56
	Jackson	23
	Ahram	27
	Richard	21
8974	Mr M Anderson	23

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