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Title of Proposal: The Enslaved Maritime Industry, a Family “Business”

Abstract: Maritime business in Antebellum North Carolina was often passed down through wealthy, white family members. However, equally as important to these industries were the family members who provided the labor. The Josiah Collins family of Somerset Place and Edenton were one of the wealthy, white families essential to the development of maritime North Carolina. In 1840, the Collins family owned four large maritime-focused businesses and laid legal claim to 472 enslaved people. These enslaved individuals were assigned tasks at the various Collins industries based on their age, gender, family relations, and skills. This paper will examine how and why these factors might have influenced who worked where and who was allowed to develop different skills. This paper will analyze how families were divided or allowed to continue living in “normal” family structures. This research seeks to tell a small portion of the real stories of the enslaved by analyzing the minimal details written by the enslaver.