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Never Quite Settled: Southern Plain Folk on the Move

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of History

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in History

by

Ronald J. McCall

May 2013

Dr. Steven N. Nash, Chair

Dr. Tom D. Lee

Dr. Dinah Mayo-Bobee

Keywords: Family History, Southern Plain Folk, Herder, Mississippi Territory

ABSTRACT

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by

Ronald J. McCall

This thesis explores the settlement of the Mississippi Territory through the eyes of John Hailes, a Southern yeoman farmer, from 1813 until his death in 1859. This is a family history. As such, the goal of this paper is to reconstruct John's life to better understand who he was, why he left South Carolina, how he made a living in Mississippi, and to determine a degree of upward mobility.

Local, state, and federal government records provide the general context of this study and accurately track John's movements and land purchases within the territory. John's frequent movements and the land he bought suggest that he was a herder and relied on hogs and cattle for a living. This contextual biography suggests that John was mobile, that he was sensitive to land policies and market pressures, and that he maintained a yeoman's standard of living throughout his life.

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The man most responsible for the success of this project and the person for whom I hold the deepest sense of gratitude is my Thesis Chair, Dr. Steve Nash. His steady hand, his patience, and his uncanny ability to put thoughts in my head deserve more thanks than I have words to express. I am forever in his debt.

To the members of my Thesis Committee, Drs. Tom Lee and Dinah Mayo-Bobee, I say thank you for putting books and material in front of me that I would have never thought to have read. Experience lights the pathway and the two of them held the lantern for me.

I also want to thank my wife Jan and my mother Louise Hales McCall for their unwavering support and continual encouragement while I worked on this project.

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It would be an error of omission not to recognize Dr. Mel Page and his influence on my study of history. He once said, "Historians speak for the evidence." I thank him everyday for this profound insight. And to Dr. Brian Maxson, my graduate coordinator, there could be no better trainmaster. Without his making sure that I was kept on track, all would be lost.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Doctors say that a kidney stone the size of a grain of rice can form in just three months if conditions are just right. Weather that's hot and humid. Heavy sweat and little water. And southern Mississippi was exceptionally hot that summer in 1859. The occasional sharp pain in John Hailes's lower back was but a minor annoyance. It was a pain of another sort that bothered him that hot day in July. He had just buried his son, Henry Jackson Hailes.¹ He left behind a wife and eight children, one less than two years old.

Less than three weeks later the Hailes family buried another. This time it was John, the patriarch, the man who brought the family to the Mississippi Territory from South Carolina some 50 years before. He died of gravel at the age of 73.²

This is John's story. Jack's, too. And the story of hundreds of thousands of small farmers who poured into the Mississippi Territory from 1810 to 1850 to make a fresh start. In 1810, Mississippi had but forty thousand people, twenty-three thousand whites, seventeen thousand slaves. By 1850, it was home to more than six hundred thousand residents.

This study is an attempt to reconstruct the life of John Hailes by studying the farmers around him. John was a small farmer who moved to the Mississippi Territory from Darlington District

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States 1860*, Mississippi, Smith County, Schedule 3. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. microfilm roll 3074. Henry Jackson Hailes died of inflammation of the brain on July 29, 1859. He was 44. Modern medicine identifies nineteenth century brain fever as typhus, meningitis, or encephalitis. Meningitis and encephalitis are contagious. Typhus is not. Inflammation of the brain was fatal in the mid-nineteenth century and since no one in Jack's family died immediately before or after his death, we will assume he died of typhus.

² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States 1860*, Mississippi, Smith County, Schedule 3. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. microfilm roll 3074. "Gravel" is a kidney stone. John Hailes died August 19, 1859. The author visited John's gravesite and photographed his headstone on July 27, 2012.

South Carolina in 1813 to make a better life for himself and his family. This study is an attempt to learn about him, why he moved west, and what he accomplished with such a decision.

Historians have found it difficult to characterize farmers like John. In the historiography of the Old South, there have been numerous attempts to describe this class of farmer beginning with D. R. Hundley in 1860. In his *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (1860), Hundley identifies four distinct classes of Southern society: Planters, Middle-class Planters, Yeoman farmers, and Poor Whites. In identifying the yeoman, he wrote, "As a general thing, they own no slaves; and even in the case they do, the wealthiest of them rarely possess more than from ten to fifteen."³ Hundley's definition of the yeoman farmer lasted for 70 years until Ulrich Bonnell Phillips wrote his *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929). To Phillips, Southern society had two rankings: the Planter and everybody else. In his chapter titled, "The Plain People," Phillips defined his Plain People as middle-class farmers, yeoman, and poor whites and in doing so implied that Hundley's wealthiest yeoman could be middle-class since Phillip's middle-class farmer "held from five to nineteen slaves."⁴

Herbert Weaver made a breakthrough in identifying the yeoman class when he combined land ownership with slave ownership. His monograph titled *Mississippi Farmers, 1850-1860* (1945) used statistics to establish an economic base for Southern society. Third in Weaver's ranking is the Yeoman or small farmer, who owned up to 200 acres of improved property and might or might not own slaves. At the bottom is the Poor White class, who owns no land and no slaves. For this last

³ D. R. Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (New York: Henry B. Price, 1860), 193, Google Books, http://books.google.com/books?id=xmRtTXaXtfoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=social+relations+in+our+southern+states&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ad8wUeOXHIqi8QS7_oDoDw&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=snippet&q=contents&f=false (accessed Sept. 23, 2012).

⁴ U. B. Phillips and John David Smith, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (University of South Carolina Press, 2007), xxii, 339, Google Books, http://books.google.com/books?id=R44EqSwR_0kC&printsec=frontcove&dq=life+and+labor+inthe+old+south&hl=en&sa=X&ei=hu0wUY_SM4XW9QSg7ICwAg&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=snippet&q=contents&f=false (accessed Oct. 3, 2012).

class, Weaver makes an interesting distinction. In this class he includes squatters and recent immigrants who have considerable personal property and who are waiting to gain title to the land they occupy. Some in this class are adult sons still living in their father's house and termed "farm laborers."⁵

Frank Lawrence Owsley contributed to the definition of the yeoman class with the first volume of the Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History titled, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (1949). Owsley skillfully avoided quantifying his yeoman. Instead, he simply described his "plain folk" as landowning farmers and herdsman steeped in the solid virtues of integrity, independence, self-respect, courage, love of freedom, and love of their fellow man. He offered no further description other than to flesh out their working habits of farming and herding. He left it to his readers to define this class of farmer.⁶

More recent works by Eugene D. Genovese, Forrest McDonald, Grady McWhiney, Steven Hahn, Lacy K. Ford, Stephanie McCurry, and Samuel C. Hyde, Jr. added to the historiography of the yeoman farmer with perspectives ranging from his participation in the Southern slave economy to his origins as a Celtic herder to his life as a subsistent farmer. In his "Yeoman Farmers in a Slaveholders' Democracy," Genovese argued that the yeoman farmer's access to slave labor, either through renting or owning slaves, provided a means of upward mobility and identified the small farmer with slavery whether he was a slave owner or not. "As a matter of social conscience - to ride patrol, to help discipline slaves, and to participate in the political and police aspects of the slave regime," aligned the yeoman class with the planter class.⁷

⁵ Herbert Weaver, *Mississippi Farmers, 1850-1860* (Nashville: The Vanderbilt University Press, 1945), 56-61.

⁶ Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Louisiana State University, 1949), vii.

⁷ Eugene D. Genovese, "Yeoman Farmers in a Slaveholders' Democracy," *Agricultural History* 49, no. 2 (April 1975), 338, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3741274> (accessed March 9, 2013).

Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney identified the small Southern farmer more with Scottish Highlanders than with English crop farmers. Their "Celtic theory" aligned Southerner farmers with the herding tradition of the highland Scots and their traits of fierce independence and a sensitivity to any personal slight. McDonald and McWhiney brought sharp attention to herding as a viable means of making a living in the early antebellum South and attempted an explanation for the Southern tendency to use violence to settle a question of honor.⁸

In his *Roots of Southern Populism* (1983), Hahn defined the yeoman farmer as a landowning farmer who worked less than 200 acres of improved land and who might or might not own slaves. If he owned slaves, it was no more than five.⁹ Lacy Ford supported Hahn in his *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (1988) by quantifying slave ownership at six slaves.¹⁰ In her *Masters of Small Worlds* (1995), Stephanie McCurry added the phrase "self-working farmer" to the definition of the yeoman farmer and provided a generally accepted definition of the yeoman as a self-working farmer who owned less than 150 acres of improved property and owned fewer than ten slaves.¹¹

The most recent attempt to define the yeoman farmer is by Samuel C. Hyde, Jr. Hyde's 2005 statistical survey of eight counties in southeastern Mississippi and Louisiana, found that the plain folk of this area were non-slaveholding farmers with land and farmers owning up to one hundred

⁸ Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman: A Reinterpretation," *The Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 2 (May 1975), 156, <http://www.jstor.org/stabel/2206011> (accessed May 7, 2012).

⁹ Steven Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890*, updated ed. (Oxford University Press, 2006), 25-27.

¹⁰ Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 71.

¹¹ Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 50-51.

acres of improved property and owned one to five slaves.¹² Plain folk in Hyde's sample represented 80% of all farmers "confirming Owsley's theory that the plain folk constituted majorities of the local populations across most of the South."¹³ Hyde's survey included essentially the same geography that John Hailes ranged his stock, and his refined definition of "plain folk" and certainly the generally accepted definition of "yeoman farmer" places John Hailes and his neighbors squarely in this class along with approximately 80% of all farmers in Mississippi in 1850.¹⁴

Beginning with Hundley and working its way through to Hyde, the historiography of the yeoman discounts the herding tradition of Southern farmers. Evidence suggests that John was a herder. But while I have no hard evidence to prove this claim, however, John exhibited the central traits of a herder described by Michael F. Doran. He sought extensive land that was sparsely populated so that he could use the open range for his hogs and cattle and planting crops was secondary to his livestock.¹⁵ John moved six times over a course of 31 years, each time in an effort to find cheap land that was sparsely populated so that he could range his cattle and hogs on the public domain. He consistently put a minimum of acreage under cultivation. He never owned slaves, and we have no evidence that he ever planted cotton. Historians have cast the figure of the small Southern farmer in the antebellum period as a subsistence farmer. Such a moniker conjures

¹² Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., "Plain Folk Reconsidered: Historiographical Ambiguity in Search of Definition," *The Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 4 (Nov. 2005), 819. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27648905>. (accessed November 16, 2012).

¹³ Hyde, 820.

¹⁴ John Hailes and his sons John C., Jack, and Alex owned 80 acres each in 1850. They owned two slaves between the four of them and each worked less than 50 acres of improved property. Hyde's 2005 statistical survey provides four classifications for southern farmers: Poor Whites, Plain Folk, Middling or Small Planters, and Larger Planters up to the Slaveholding Elite.

¹⁵ Michael F. Doran, "Antebellum Cattle Herding in the Indian Territory," *Geographical Review* 66, no. 1 (Jan. 1976), 52, <http://www.jstro.org/stable/213314> (accessed May 8, 2012).

up the image of a farmer who can barely get by. This study will attempt to show that subsistence, when it existed, was a temporary condition. John and herders like him could make a relatively good living by free-ranging a hundred head of cattle and planting forty acres in corn, sweet potatoes, and peas.¹⁶

If the Hailes and their neighbors were typical of the yeoman class, and evidence shows they were, the small producer in the region of my study was economically stable, held cash on hand, and although he abhorred debt, he participated in a credit system based on trust that allowed him to weather hard times. He was highly mobile, well informed, and acutely sensitive to land policies and market pressures.

Darlington District, South Carolina, 1786-1813

Every story has a beginning and this one begins with John's father, Silas. He joined the Revolution at the age of seventeen as a private in Captain James Fair's company of North Carolina Militia in 1779. Over the course of the next three years, he survived a number of battles with British regulars and Tories in the service of Generals Thomas Sumter and Francis Marion in South Carolina. For a three-month period in the spring of 1781, he was a post rider for General Sumter and carried dispatches from Sumter's headquarters on the Congaree River to General Marion at Four Holes Swamp near Orangeburg and to General Nathaniel Green, who was resting his Continentals in the High Hills of Santee. In his three years of service, he had traveled from York County in the north to the Pee Dee River in the east and finally to Wadboo Plantation near Charleston, where he mustered out of service in 1782.¹⁷ He liked the country he saw. In 1785, he

¹⁶ Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, *A History of the Mississippi Beef Cattle Industry* (Jackson: Mississippi, 1985), 12.

¹⁷ National Archives and Records Administration, *Pension Application of Silas Hailes*, Microseries M804, Roll 1154, Application #W27546, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/sc/darlington/military/revwar/pensions/haile22gmt.txt>. The author obtained a photocopy of the handwritten original application from the Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina.

married Syntha Alexander of Johnston County, North Carolina and moved his bride to the South Carolina backcountry not far from where his first skirmish with the British was at McCallum's Ferry in the far northwestern section of Darlington District. He bought two 100-acre tracts of land side by side on Beaver Dam Creek and began his life as a farmer.¹⁸ The next year, in 1786, Syntha delivered her first baby, a boy they named John.

When Silas settled on Beaver Dam Creek in 1785, the backcountry already had a long established tradition for raising livestock. In 1998, the archeology department at the University of South Carolina excavated two cowpen sites to further explore the topic of cattle herding in the South Carolina backcountry.¹⁹ The first site excavated was the Catherine Brown Cowpen at Silver Bluff in Aiken County. The second was the Thomas Howell site located on Mill Creek near present-day Columbia in lower Richland County. Both sites are on the southern boundary of the backcountry in pre-Revolutionary South Carolina. The Catherine Brown site revealed evidence of a three-acre cowpen and an abattoir. The cowpen was originally operated by George Galphin, a herder who ranged 1,500 head of cattle. He was one of the wealthiest colonists in the state in 1776. The Thomas Howell site also revealed evidence of an abattoir and an enclosure for penned cattle. Howell owned a 110 head of cattle in 1760, which placed him among the top 12% of cattle raisers in the colony.

These excavations add tangible evidence to Lacy Ford's work concerning a well-established herding tradition in the South Carolina backcountry counties of Abbeville and Edgefield. Open

¹⁸ Plats on file with the Darlington County Historical Commission. John's first 200 acres are now located within the city limits of present-day Hartsville, South Carolina.

¹⁹ Mark D. Grover and Richard D. Brooks, "The Catherine Brown Cowpen and Thomas Howell Site: Material Characteristics of Cattle Raisers in the South Carolina Backcountry," Savannah River Archaeological Research Program. South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, (2000), 91-110.

range grazing was essential to their success. Backcountry farmers fed their herds of hogs and cattle on the public domain and thereby saved labor and stretched their grain supplies. The almost total absence of a transportation system in the Upcountry encouraged herding over cotton farming and for this reason only 3% of all Upcountry households in 1810 owned enough slaves to call themselves planters. And 85% of all slaveholders owned fewer than ten slaves. Some 50 years later, in 1860, still only 5% of all households were planters and more than half of all slaveholders owned fewer than 10 slaves.²⁰

Nathaniel Cruthers's farm on Pond Holler near Silas Hailes's farm provides a good indication of the value small farmers in the South Carolina backcountry placed on livestock as Lacy Ford described.²¹ Cruthers's estate was probated in 1802. He had 31 head of cattle valued at \$155.00; 14 head of sheep valued at \$10.50; 14 hogs at \$35.00; 4 sides of leather at \$6.00; 2 beef hides at \$3.00; one parcel of wool at \$7.00. He left a wife and five children with 14 bushels of corn in the crib and 24 bushels of peas in the hull valued at \$7.50. His total personal estate amounted to \$443.25. Half of Cruthers's estate was wrapped up in livestock and related items like leather and wool. The other half consisted of sundry items like furniture, grinding stones, and grubbing hoes. Cruthers had worked his farm with the help of his wife, a 16-year-old son, and four other children under the age of ten. He owned no slaves.²² His accounts clearly indicate that he was a stockman first, a crop farmer second.

²⁰ Lacy K. Ford, "Self-Sufficiency, Cotton, and Economic Development in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860," *The Journal of Economic History* 45, no. 2 (June 1985), 263, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2121693> (accessed April 7, 2011).

²¹ *The Darlington Flag*, CD-ROM, Winter 1998, (Darlington, SC: Darlington County Historical Commission). In 1812, Silas sold 100 acres of his farm on Beaver Dam Creek to Jesse McClendol and used the \$150 gained from the sale as a down payment on 595 acres on the east side on Black Creek, just north of present-day Hartsville, South Carolina.

²² It's quite possible that John Hailes knew Cruthers' 16-year-old son. Both were the same age in 1802 and lived within five miles of each other.

Stock raising was about the only way a farmer could make a living in the backcountry. The reason was simple enough. There were no good roads or waterways for crop farmers to get their surplus crops to markets in Camden and Charleston.²³ Farmers relied on a product that could walk to market and Darlington was ideal for livestock. But by 1800 Darlington was getting crowded. From 1790 to 1800, Darlington District's white population almost doubled from 7,418 to 13,416 while its slave population increased by only 50%, from 3,190 to 4,877.²⁴ The 1810 census shows that the population surge had leveled off with only a 9% increase in white population compared to a 17% increase in slaves.²⁵ The open range in the backcountry was filling in and reducing the amount of good grazing land.

There is no compelling evidence that planters with their slaves pushed stock farmers like John out of Darlington District in 1813. The slave population actually declined slightly in Darlington over the ten-year period between 1810 and 1820.²⁶ Ford's area of study actually reinforces the argument that the planter elite did not force the South Carolina backcountry farmer west. Ford states that in 1810 only 3% of all upcountry households owned enough slaves to merit

²³ *The Darlington Flag*, CD-ROM, Winter 1995, (Darlington, SC: Darlington Historical Commission). Silas Hailes, John's father, along with 45 other Darlington District farmers petitioned the State of South Carolina in 1793 for funds to build a road from Camden to Charleston and have it pass through Darlington Courthouse.

²⁴ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *First Census of the United States, 1790*, South Carolina, Cheraw District, <http://archive.org/stream/populationsc17900011unit#page/n229/mode/1up>; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Second Census of the United States, 1800*, South Carolina, Cheraw District, Darlington County, <http://archive.org/details/populationsc18000047unit> (accessed June 10, 2010).

²⁵ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Third Census of the United States, 1810*, South Carolina, Darlington County, <http://archive.org/stream/populationschedu0062unix#page/n3/mode/2up> (accessed June 10, 2010).

²⁶ U.S. Censuses and Slave Schedules for Darlington for the years 1810 and 1820. The 1810 records show 6,360 whites; 2731 slaves. The 1820 records show 6,407 whites; 2,473 slaves.

classification as planters.²⁷ Clearly, 97% of all South Carolina planters and their slaves worked within 50 miles of the Atlantic Ocean, in 1810.

The push was from other small farmers who by their sheer numbers closed the range to profitable herding. David Ramsay, a period historian, lends support to the increase in population in the backcountry and its crowded conditions. In his *History of South Carolina* (1858), he stated that in 1808 the proportion of cleared land to uncleared land in the backcountry had a ratio of one acre of cleared to eight acres of uncleared and "the proportion between the number of inhabitants and the number of acres is about one to the former to thirty-six of the latter."²⁸ The population density of Darlington County was 14 people per square mile in 1800. Ten years later, it was 16 people per square mile. That's equivalent to 2 averaged-sized antebellum families of 7 every square mile and cattle need about 15 acres each of open range to find enough forage to stay healthy.²⁹ A herd of just over 40 cattle needs a full square mile of open range to survive. The increase in population density that Darlington experienced in the early 1800s simply did not leave enough free-range for stock farmers like John to maintain their herds.

On the other hand, if John's decision to move west hinged on an aspiration to quit raising livestock and raise cotton instead, he could follow the examples of Elias Dubose and Timothy Dargan, two planters in his area who owned 33 and 24 slaves respectively. While slavery was not the central reason of Darlington's population increase in 1813, it was well established in the South Carolina backcountry by that time. Of the 20 farmers in the immediate farming community where John grew up, 9 of them owned slaves in 1810. John's father was not a slave owner, but 7 of the 9

²⁷ Ford, 263.

²⁸ David Ramsay, M.D., *Ramsay's History of South Carolina: From its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808, in two volumes*, (Newberry, South Carolina: W. J. Duffie, 1858), 305.

²⁹ John Solomon Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis," *The Journal of Southern History* 51, no. 2 (May 1985), 191.

farmers surrounding his farm were.³⁰ Thomas Dyer was the largest slave owner with 18. Charles Jenkins, Silas's immediate neighbor, owned but one. However, there were 50 slaves in Silas's immediate vicinity where John grew up.

David Ramsay stated in his *History* that cotton was so valuable that a small patch and industrious work could give a small farmer in the South Carolina backcountry his land fee simple.³¹ Marjorie Mendenhall and Lacy Ford also write about the liberating affects of short staple cotton on the Upcountry yeoman.³² None of the three addressed Darlington District. Darlington was not very productive for commercial crops. In the 1850 Agriculture Census, Darlington County ranked below the state average for the value of farms and the number of bales of cotton produced, but it ranked well above average in the ratio of swine to aggregate population. In short, Darlington was livestock country.³³

Simply put, the soil type in Darlington District was not conducive to cotton farming, not even short staple cotton. Charleston planters knew that. The planters who owned 20 slave or more had been in the backcountry for at least 20 years. They weren't new arrivals.³⁴ Darlington cotton fields

³⁰ There is no explanation as to why Silas did not own slaves. He certainly had the means. According to his Will on file at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, he owned 595 acres of fertile bottomland on the east side of Black Creek, just north of present-day Hartsville, South Carolina. And according to records on file with the Darlington County Historical Commission, besides being a farmer, Silas also served as a Constable for Darlington District from 1807 to 1812, which required him to post a \$200 surety bond.

³¹ Ramsay, 220.

³² Mendenhall was a student of U. B. Phillips. In her 1940 dissertation, earned at the University of North Carolina and titled, "A History of Agriculture in South Carolina, 1790 to 1860," she claims that the cotton boom of early 1800s rescued the small South Carolina farmer from a fate of perpetual subsistence. See also Lacy K. Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

³³ Concerning cotton, Ramsey generalizes, Mendenhall's dissertation extrapolates lowcountry production to the backcountry, and Ford's study of the Upcountry focuses on the Union District in the upper piedmont section of South Carolina.

³⁴ Rachel N. Klein, *Unification of a Slave States: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 155.

in the early antebellum period produced low yields and it was not until 1845 when Dr. Robert Lide Hart introduced Peruvian guano that the area began producing good yields.³⁵

There are certainly reasons aplenty for people to drag up and leave one place and move to another. John surely had his. Perhaps he was a stockman and couldn't see a future in Darlington. Perhaps he aspired to be a planter. Or perhaps his reason was personal. We just don't know. But two significant events changed his life about this time. First, he got married to a girl named Rachael sometime between 1810 and 1812. And secondly, his mother, Syntha, died in 1812. After her death, the Hailes family in Darlington all went their separate ways.

³⁵ James Lide Coker, *Hartsville: its early settlers: the growth of the town with sketches of the institutions and enterprises* (SI:sn, 1911), 42.

CHAPTER 2

SOUTHERN PLAIN FOLK ON THE MOVE

Getting There - The Federal Road

We have no record of the route John and Rachael took to the Mississippi Territory, but it is likely that they took the overland route known as the Federal Road. Traveling by foot and wagon was supposed to be less expensive than hiring river passage on the Holston and the Cumberland. The overland route through Georgia and Alabama was shorter by some 200 miles than going through Knoxville and Nashville and then down the Natchez Trace.³⁶

Starting out from present-day Hartsville, South Carolina in the winter of 1813, John and wife Rachael traveled first to Camden then down to Belleville, then through Orangeburg to New Windsor (present-day Aiken), and from there they crossed the Savannah River to Augusta, Georgia.³⁷ From there they rolled on to Milledgeville, the capital of Georgia at the time. Milledgeville was an important stop. It was the eastern-most border of the Creek Nation and the last chance to take on provisions at a reasonable cost, make repairs, and to get their hearts right. From Milledgeville they pushed on to Columbus where they crossed the Chattahoochee into Alabama and headed due west to Fort Stephens, then Fort Stoddard, just up from Mobile. At Fort Stoddard, they took a newly opened route called Three Chopt Way to Liberty, Mississippi. That's where they stopped.

³⁶ Henry DeLeon Southerland, Jr. and Jerry Elijah Brown, *The Federal Road through Georgia, the Creek Nation, and Alabama, 1806-1836* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1989), 56. The route that John most likely took to Mississippi using the Federal Road and the river route through Knoxville was traced by the author using Google Maps to verify which was the shorter distance.

³⁷ Deolitte Newhaven, "South Carolina 1812," [http://cartweb.geography.ua.edu:9001/StyleServer/calcrn?cat=North%20America%20and%20United%20States&item=States/South%20Carolina/SouthCarolina1812a.sid&wid=500&hei=400&props=item\(Name,Description\),cat\(Name,Description\)&style=simple/view-dhtml.xsl](http://cartweb.geography.ua.edu:9001/StyleServer/calcrn?cat=North%20America%20and%20United%20States&item=States/South%20Carolina/SouthCarolina1812a.sid&wid=500&hei=400&props=item(Name,Description),cat(Name,Description)&style=simple/view-dhtml.xsl). This period map shows all the roads in South Carolina in 1812. (accessed Feb. 1, 2013).

The trip took about six weeks and they didn't travel alone.³⁸ It was simply too dangerous to go it alone at the time, not so much from bandits or Indians, both of which posed problems for travelers, but mostly from the real possibility of personal injury or a wagon breaking down. There was safety in numbers even if it was just another family.

Prior to 1810, the Federal Road was nothing more than a horse path cut four feet wide, which suited the Creeks just fine, because that was the agreement they had with the U. S. Government. It was a postal road only. But as the road grew wider and carts and wagons rolled through, settlers took advantage of it. Buried deep in the November 14, 1810, issue of the Milledgeville weekly, the *Georgia Argus*, was an easy-to-miss notice to travelers that read: "For the benefit of Travellers we state, that it now is, and has been the policy of the Creek Indians to prevent Carriages of any kind from passing through their Territory."³⁹ Just three weeks later, the *Argus* ran an above-the-fold advertisement with a banner headline, "To Travellers," that described "a good road" from Milledgeville to the Chattahoochee and from there on through Alabama and that "all travellers

³⁸ John Hailes most likely traveled with James B. Richardson of Camden. The route from Augusta to Wilkinson County, Mississippi and Three Chopped Way are described in detail in the "Memoirs of Francis Dubose Richardson," written in 1895 about his father and his early years in Mississippi. Richardson's father's first trek to the Mississippi Territory took place by horseback with two slaves in December 1807. This initial trip from Camden, S.C. to Wilkinson County Mississippi took a full month. In early November 1809, after a year in Mississippi, Richardson returned to South Carolina to marry Margaret Dubose, the daughter of Capt. Daniel Dubose, an acquaintance of John's father, Silas Hailes. Silas and Capt. Dubose had served together under Generals Sumter and Marion during the Revolution. Richardson returned to the Mississippi Territory in late November 1809. This trip took two months as he led a wagon train of almost a thousand people. It was perhaps this event, the largest and most significant exodus to date from the South Carolina backcountry to Mississippi that encouraged John Hailes to leave the backcountry. And I believe John Hailes traveled with the second wave of Richardson's moving west, led by James B. Richardson, son of the first Richardson to move there. Also in the second group was Margaret Dubose Richardson's mother. She died in Amite County, Mississippi in 1821. James B. Richardson was the same age as John and also served in the War of 1812. Flo Dubose Holt, interview by Ronald J. McCall, February 12, 2012 and March 14, 2012. Also see "Memoirs of Francis Dubose Richardson" 13-19. http://www.schlatter.org/Genealogy/Richardson%20family/F%20D%20Richardson%20memoirs/francis_dubose_richardson%20page%201.htm.

³⁹ *Georgia Argus*, November 14, 1810, 3. <http://milledgeville.galileo.usg.edu/milledgeville/view?docId=news/gar1810/gar1810-0148.xml&query=Nov.10&brand=milledgeville-brand>. (accessed February 26, 2013).

going that road are considered protected in their persons and property, and the Indians will make good any damage (by the depredations of their people) which may occur on this road and no other."⁴⁰ Westbound settlers paid little heed and trucked through the Creek Territory with wagons loaded to the axles. Over the objections of the Creeks, a military road suitable for supply wagons and soldiers on horse and foot opened from Milledgeville to Fort Stoddard in November 1811.⁴¹

The Piney Woods of Mississippi

Like many travelers even today, John probably arrived at his destination with fewer funds than he had hoped. But the piney woods of Mississippi was good country just the same. The area known as the Piney Woods is a 13,000 square mile area that covers essentially the entire southern portion of the state, from Vicksburg to the north down to about a hundred miles above Biloxi on the Gulf of Mexico and from Natchez on the Mississippi River to the west to the Mississippi-Alabama border to the east. The topsoils are sandy clay and reddish in color on the hills and better-drained areas. The landscape consists of gently rolling hills rising between 300 and 500 feet above sea level.⁴² The long leaf pine is the dominant tree with 69% coverage west of the Pearl River and 90% coverage east of the Pearl, thus the name "piney woods." The region is generally sandy-loam. It has a ten-month growing season, an average rainfall of 50 inches, and temperate weather with low temperatures averaging 35 degrees and average highs of 82. The further away from the Mississippi River going east, the poorer the soil becomes. The area across the Pearl in the eastern

⁴⁰ "To Travellers," *Georgia Argus*, 5 December 1810, <http://milledgeville.galileo.usg.edu/milledgeville/view;jsessionid=721BD2DAA6A7762FFE058B4C4C5CB083?docId=news/gar1810/gar1810-0156.xml&query=Alabama&brand=milledgeville-brand> (accessed February 26, 2013).

⁴¹ Southerland, 36.

⁴² Arthell Kelly, "The Geography," Richard Aubrey McLemore, ed., *A History of Mississippi, Vol. 1*, (Hattiesburg: University & College Press of Mississippi, 1973), 9.

section of the southern half is called the Pine Barrens.⁴³ Land west of the Pearl was suitable for cotton, which superseded livestock. Land east of the Pearl was the other way around; it favored stock farming over cotton. And that was the rub. Small farmers who settled the more attractive cotton lands west of the Pearl were soon preyed upon by land speculators.

Amite County, Mississippi, 1813

John and Rachael arrived in Amite County Mississippi, west of the Pearl River, in the spring of 1813. Perhaps they read the following headline: "Liberal Offer."

"The subscriber, desirous of leaving this country, makes the following liberal offer." So began the advertisement posted by Abraham Green of Port Gibson, Mississippi in the *Washington Republican* on Tuesday May 11, 1813. He had simply had enough of all the Mississippi Territory had to offer. His offer to lease the property for three to five years included 75 head of cattle, 50 hogs, 20 acres of cotton, 95 acres of corn, a good horse, a mill, and a dwelling house all for the bargain price of \$1,000, one-third to be paid in cash, with the remainder due on January 1, 1814. As an additional enticement perhaps, Green included in the advertisement that the property had a good stand for selling corn to travelers.⁴⁴

Green and others "desirous of leaving this country" knew that, like them, newcomers to the territory brought with them more than a spirit of optimism. They brought cash. With such easy terms as a third down and the remainder due in six months, a leaser with adult children or a few slaves could make a stake for himself with little risk until he settled for a more permanent

⁴³ Roland M. Harper, "A Superficial Study of the Pine-Barren Vegetation of Mississippi," *Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club* 41, no. 11 (Nov., 1914), 551-557. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.etsu.edu:2048/stable/pdfplus/2479620.pdf> (accessed Feb. 15, 2012).

⁴⁴ "Liberal Offer.," *Washington Republican*, 11 May 1813, Mississippi Department of Archives and History. microfilm.

arrangement. The expectation that a leaser for Green's plantation could make a profit and clear \$666.00 plus the typical 6 percent interest for the remainder of the payment within six months gives a clear indication of a bear market in the early Territory. "Land for Sale" was a common advertisement in the *Washington Republican* and scanning ads was one way to find suitable farmland in Mississippi.⁴⁵ Another was to go to the government land office in the territorial capital, a little town called Washington in Adams County, and ask. John likely did the latter when he arrived in Liberty, Mississippi in early 1813.

The best way to gain clear title to land in Mississippi in the Territorial Period was through the government land office. Buying land from a private individual other than someone who had bought from the U.S. government was risky business. Perhaps that's why Green was willing to lease rather than to sell. And leasing was a good option. Public land opened up to white settlement by the Treaty of Fort Adams was not cheap. It had taken some seven years to get all the surveys completed and finally in 1808, some 2.5 million acres were put on the auction block. Bidding opened at the government reserve price of \$2.00 per acre, with entire sections (640 acres) and multiple sections sold at a time. If no one wanted to buy, it was not sold. The price was never reduced for quick sale. Some tracts sold for as much as \$8.00 per acre, but these were close to the Mississippi River. Over the next twelve years, public lands in Mississippi and Alabama were sold at auction for an average price of \$4.79 per acre. It wasn't until 1857 that unsold public lands in Amite County dropped to 12.5 cents per acre.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Both John and Rachael could read and write. See 1850 U.S. Census, Mississippi, Smith County.

⁴⁶ Lucille Griffith, "An Economic History of Amite County, Mississippi, 1820-1860," (master's thesis, Tulane University, 1942), 61.

When Amite was formed as a county in 1809, the entire county covering more 732 square miles had only 1500 people in it. By the time John arrived there in 1813, the population had increased more than three-fold to 4,700, but still, Liberty, the county seat, was nothing more than a village and had fewer than 150 people living there. It had no newspaper, no post office, and no land office.⁴⁷

Franklin and Amite Counties, 1816-1823

President James Madison recognized that if the federal government could not put its public lands on sale, he had to take action that would protect those lands until they could be sold. By his proclamation of December 12, 1815, Madison authorized federal marshals to use force if necessary to remove squatters from all public lands, not only in Mississippi but also throughout the public domain.⁴⁸ John moved his family, now four in all, from Amite County to Franklin County in 1816.⁴⁹ Franklin is just north of Amite County.⁵⁰ He remained in Franklin County for four years and returned to Amite County in 1820. Why he returned to Amite County is not known, but he did not return to Liberty. He settled on the East Amite River. Perhaps he returned to Amite to be

⁴⁷ Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Mississippi Territorial Census, 1810*, microfilm. Also see Griffith, 31-33. John is not listed in the 1810 Territorial Census, of course, nor is he listed on the tax rolls for 1811 or 1812. But he arrived in Amite County prior to June 1813 because he is listed on the county tax roll dated June 1813 and located in Liberty. At sometime during that year, Rachael delivered her first child, a boy they named John C.

⁴⁸ Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *The Land Office Business* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 94.

⁴⁹ Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *State Census for Franklin County, 1816*, microfilm. Also see Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Territorial Tax Rolls, Amite County, 1815*, microfilm. The enumerator for Amite County noted on his report that John Hailes had left the county owing 83 1/2 cents in taxes.

⁵⁰ See Appendix A for a map of John's movements within Mississippi and Louisiana, 1813-1859.

closer to his brother, Henry, who had arrived in Pike County in 1817, just 20 miles east. John's sister, Syntha Hailes Thomas, disappears from the narrative about this time.⁵¹

The Amite County tax rolls for 1820 show John having another male over the age of 21 living in his household. Perhaps the other man was a laborer or a boarder, or perhaps he was John's brother, Alexander, who was unmarried at this time and not accounted for in the records. In 1821, the other man, whoever he was, had moved on.⁵²

Some of the abuses in the land purchase system were corrected in 1820 and small farmers were the direct beneficiaries. Tracts smaller than 160 acres could be bought directly from the land office and not necessarily by auction. A minimum price of \$1.25 per acre was set but there was no government credit on these sales. It was cash only. However, the land speculator was still an ever-present fixture in the land-purchasing process because he had access to bank credit in New York and Philadelphia. During this period of correction, John made his first land purchase, 160 acres in Copiah County, Mississippi in 1823. He was finally a landowner.⁵³

Copiah County, Mississippi, 1823-1832

New land opened up to white settlement in Copiah County in 1820 as the result of the Treaty of Doak's Stand. John paid cash for two 80-acre tracts on Reid Creek on the Homochitto River and

⁵¹ While John was in Franklin County, his father, Silas, married Spicy Johnson on Christmas Day 1818. They were married at his house on Black Creek by David Grantham, a Baptist minister. He was 65, she 43. None of his children attended the wedding. They had all moved west by that time.

⁵² Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Amite County Tax Rolls 1820, 1821*. microfilm. These tax rolls can also be accessed through familysearch.org, https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Amite_County,_Mississippi#Taxation Search terms: 1818-1891 County Tax Rolls (1820, 60:1821, 91).

⁵³ Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office, Land Patents, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>. Search terms: "Hailes" and "Hails," (accessed May 12, 2010). See certificates 1439 and 1844. The land John bought in 1823 in Copiah County is located on Ten Mile Creek in the southwest corner of the county near the extreme northeastern border of present-day Homochitto National Forest. There are no current landmarks to designate this property other than the fact that Highway 28 runs near it.

moved his family there in 1823.⁵⁴ Surveying was still underway when new arrivals poured in. And they were apparently a restless group due to a rapid increase in population. Of the ten farms listed in the vicinity of John's farm on the 1830 Federal Census for Copiah County, only three of the original settlers remained in the area in 1840, which gives a clear indication of how mobile and fluid these settlers were at the time. No state or federal census was taken for Copiah County in 1823, but Copiah's Tax Rolls show 410 white males and 341 slaves.⁵⁵ Assuming each white male represented a family of seven, the estimated total population of Copiah County that year was 2,870 whites and 341 slaves for a total of 3,211 people in its 780 square miles, with a population density of 4 people per square mile. Just seven years later, Copiah's population more than doubled to 7,024, indicating an increase in the population density to 9 people per square mile, which proved too dense for a stock farmer like John who needed at least 15 acres of open range for each head of cattle.⁵⁶ So he moved on to Livingston Parish about 100 miles due south. The pine barren region of Livingston Parish was ideal for stock farming.⁵⁷ It had a population density ratio of only 3 people per square mile, and it was close to the sugar plantations and an ever-increasing slave population in adjacent counties along the Mississippi River.

⁵⁴ Bureau of Land Management, Land Office Records, Patents, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/results/default.aspx?searchCriteria=type=patent&lst=MS&cty029&ln=Hails&sp=truelsw=truelsadv=false> (accessed July 8, 2010). John's brother, Henry, also bought 80 acres in Copiah County in 1823 and moved his family and three slaves there from Pike County where he had been living since moving to the Territory in 1817. Copiah Tax Rolls for 1823 show 410 white males and 341 slaves. Assuming each white family is of average size of seven people, we can estimate the total population in Copiah County in 1823 at 3141 people. Copiah County contains 780 square miles and its borders have not changed since it was formed. When John moved to Copiah in 1823 the population density was four people per square mile, or per section of 640 acres, which allows enough open range for 42 head of cattle. Cattle require 15 acres each of open range to forage.

⁵⁵ Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Copiah County Tax Rolls, 1823*. microfilm.

⁵⁶ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830*, Mississippi, Copiah County. <http://archive.org/stream/populationsc18300070unit#page/n265/mode/1up> (accessed March 2, 2013).

⁵⁷ Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., *A Fierce and Fractious Frontier: The Curious Development of Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1699-2000* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 140-141.

CHAPTER 3

BUYING LAND

Buying land in the Mississippi Territory was no easy task. The early Territory was divided into Western and Eastern Districts, separated by the Pearl River. The Land Office for the district west of the Pearl was in Washington, Mississippi, just over a hundred miles from the nearest bank of the Pearl River, and the Land Office for the district east of the Pearl was in St. Stephens, Alabama, some 150 miles from the nearest bank of the river. Such distances created considerable hardship for settlers who wanted to attend land auctions. The Land Office in Washington was from the beginning under funded, under staffed, and under stress. As settlers poured in, they asked for information, which took time away from recording surveys, which in itself could take hours of talking with the surveyor. Agent Joseph Dunbar arbitrarily charged the government \$500 for an assistant due to the "excessive labour necessary for the completion of the duties prescribed." Records for the land west of the Pearl were virtually nonexistent between the years 1815 and 1820. There were three registers during this period and all were inept. Keeping qualified surveyors in the wilderness was difficult, as well. Attracting Land Office agents at low pay even more so. A day at the land office was frustrating for all involved, settlers, land office agents, and surveyors alike.⁵⁸ In frustration, settlers simply returned to the woods and made tomahawk claims.⁵⁹

If John were typical of new arrivals to the area, he looked to purchase thick forestland near clear water. Thick forest was a good indication of fertile soil, and good water was essential for

⁵⁸ Rohrbough, 30, 154, 172.

⁵⁹ This is a simple act of claiming an area of land by blazing trees as a boundary.

penned livestock like oxen and horses.⁶⁰ The first order of business was to put a roof over their heads. This first building would later become the kitchen. It would be just big enough for a small family of three to live in. After locating where the larger house would be, John dug a well. With water and shelter taken care of, his next order of business was girdling trees to kill them so that light would come through the forest. Among the trees, he planted as much corn as he could. He could have then bought cattle and hogs from his neighbors or he could have built a herd by "running cattle on shares," a common way of gaining cattle at no cost by hiring out to drive cattle to market for a share of the profits or cattle in lieu of payment.⁶¹

On his often cited trip through the piney woods, Mississippi historian J. F. H. Claiborne described how "many of the people here are herdsmen, owning large droves of cattle, surplus increase of which are annually driven to Mobile."⁶² In his "Trip Through the Piney Woods," Claiborne described the roundup and how herders used horses and dogs to collect and corral their cattle in cowpens for branding. He described a coarse grass "peculiar to the pine woods in these latitudes that grows dense and luxuriant that enables the people to subsist immense herds of cattle."⁶³

John's free-ranged cows calved once a year and so did his sows with an average of three to five pigs surviving the initial litter of eight to twelve. With this reproduction rate, it did not take long to produce cattle and hogs for market. Farmers in the antebellum period sold about one third of their livestock each year, depending on the size of their herd. It was relatively easy to distinguish

⁶⁰ Rohrbough, 93.

⁶¹ Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, *A History of the Mississippi Beef Cattle Industry* (1985), 8-9.

⁶² J. F. H. Claiborne, "A Trip Through the Piney Woods," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol. IX, Franklin L. Riley, ed. (Oxford: Mississippi, 1906), 521.

⁶³ Claiborne, 523.

whose herd belonged to whom even though they ranged in the open. Ear crops for hogs and brands for cattle were commonplace, and unbranded calves and unmarked pigs would always follow their mothers. And since livestock was raised at virtually no cost and there was no cost of transportation involved, all sales were clear profit. Such was the life of a young farmer just starting out in the Mississippi Territory.⁶⁴

Public lands in Amite County were sold under the provisions of the Land Act of 1804, which stated that the minimum amount of acreage purchased would be 160 acres, the minimum price would be \$2.00 per acre, with a 25% down payment in cash and the remainder due in equal annual payments of \$60 per year for the next four years, plus 6% interest.⁶⁵ The small farmer knew coming in what to expect. But what he did not expect were the speculators who gamed the system. Speculators west of the Pearl were generally land company agents representing financial interests in the East, who would outbid the small farmer and then on the same day sell smaller lots at higher prices to the same farmers they just outbid. The scam went something like this: speculators would run the price up to keep the small farmer out of the market, buy the land on credit of 25% down, sell enough land to cover the cash down payment to the government, make a huge profit, and default on the rest. In 1819, 75% of the land sold at auction in the Mississippi Territory was in default. The Cash Entry Act of 1820 leveled the playing field for the small farmer, but it was too late coming for John Hailes and thousands of others. According to the 1813 Territorial Tax Roll, squatters were the majority in Amite County. John among them. The same in 1814 and 1815. A

⁶⁴ Sam B. Hilliard, "Pork in the Ante-Bellum South: The Geography of Self-Sufficiency," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59, no. 3 (Sept. 1969), 464, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2561726> (accessed August 5, 2012). See also John Solomon Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis," *The Journal of Southern History* 51, no. 2 (May 1985), 194-195, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2208824> (accessed Feb. 21, 2013).

⁶⁵ Curtis Putnam Nettels, *The Emergence of a National Economy, 1775-1815* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 148.

sample of the tax rolls for Amite County for those years shows that 50% had no tangible property in 1814 and 75% had no tangible property in 1815.⁶⁶

High prices due to speculation wasn't the only reason why farmers didn't have land. The Creek War of 1813-1814 and the War of 1812, which really did not arrive to the Mississippi Territory until 1814, significantly disrupted the land sales process because these conflicts kept surveyors out of the field for fear of their lives. However, these conflicts had little affect on settlers. They needed a place to live. They had no choice. It was either carve out a field somewhere or starve. As a result, squatters spread throughout the district west of the Pearl staking out good land, whether surveyed or not. The Land Office was so slow in getting public land surveyed and ready for auction that squatters became almost permanently attached to land on a large scale. The Surveyor General responsible for the district west of the Pearl where John lived in 1815 said "no gentleman would be safe in that District who would bid for, or purchase any of those squatters' settlements."⁶⁷ And recognizing the pace of the Land Office, a settler could safely make two or three crops before the land he occupied would ever be put up for sale. If he wanted to buy it, he would have to deal with the speculators. If he thought the land was a bit played out, or if he could get a reasonable price for his improvements, he would simply move on ahead of the surveyors and start the clearing process all over again.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Territorial Tax Rolls, 1813-1815*. microfilm.

⁶⁷ Rohrbough, 92-93.

⁶⁸ There is evidence of squatters selling their improvements to new arrivals and then moving on even though they did not own the land. See "Memoirs of Francis Dubose Richardson," 15. Richardson's father bought improvements made by a squatter named Clarke on 160 acres he did not own. For many years thereafter the area was known as "Clarksfield" even though Richardson became the rightful owner of the land.

Buying Land East of the Pearl

The Land Office east of the Pearl River had somewhat of a different history than its counterpart in the Western District. The big difference was the land speculator. By the time John and his son Jack moved east of the Pearl, they had suffered through the worst of land speculation in Mississippi. But it's worth visiting this history to get a better understanding of the people who lived in this area.

Richard Stephen Lackey's unpublished master's thesis titled, "Credit Land Sales, 1811-1815: Mississippi Entries East of the Pearl," shows almost a complete absence of large-scale land speculation in the Pine Barrens east of the Pearl. Had John initially moved east of Amite County when he arrived in 1813 and had crossed the Pearl River, which he would eventually do, perhaps he would have been a landowner soon after his arrival instead of having to wait until 1823. John's mistake was settling on land that was attractive to his style of farming but more attractive to commercial cotton farmers.⁶⁹

Prior to September 2, 1811, the date of the first land auction for government property east of the Pearl River, the vast majority of settlers in the St. Stephens district, which covered about four million acres stretching through lower Mississippi and Alabama, had worked the land for a couple of years already, had made improvements on "their" property, and were eager to gain title to it.

They had been waiting for the government land office to get its surveys completed and approved

⁶⁹ Lackey agreed with Herbert Weaver that the planter did not push the small farmer or the herder onto poorer lands and argued that each type of settler (herder, crop farmer, commercial cotton grower) sought the kind of land most suited for his means of making a living. His "Credit Land Sales" thesis demonstrated that speculators were virtually absent east of the Pearl River in the early antebellum period because commercial cotton planters were not interested in this type of land. Richard S. Lackey was a noted genealogist and family historian. At the time of his death at the age of 41 in 1983, he was President of the Board of Certification of Genealogists and a fellow in the American Society of Genealogists. He was widely published in his field and served on several faculties including the National Institute on Genealogical Research at the National Archives. The Lackey Collections is housed at the McCain Library at the University of Southern Mississippi. See Thomas D. Clark and John D. W. Guice, *The Old Southwest, 1795-1830: Frontiers in Conflict* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 292.

and that day had now arrived. By law, the auction had to have suitable notice, which consisted mostly of broadsheets tacked up at the land office at St. Stephens and by word of mouth.⁷⁰

At the time of the auction, which was to last three weeks, there were two groups of buyers interested in the land. One group consisted of resident settlers. The other group consisted of new arrivals with new money. This isn't to say that the second group consisted of speculators. Lackey could find no evidence of any well-financed land investors or land companies making huge purchases for speculation. Quite the contrary. All the purchasers at this initial auction were local residents; just some had lived in the district longer than others. But four men, two brothers, a judge, and a planter made the largest single purchases, which amounted as much as 2,000 acres per purchase. The typical amount of land purchased was in the 220-acre range. Regardless of the size of the purchase, most buyers were prepared to sell or rent all or part of their land, which qualified every buyer, large or small, as a speculator.⁷¹

The auction process worked like this. All land was sold to the highest bidder. The starting bid was \$2.00 an acre. The standard smallest unit put up for bid was 160 acres. There was no limit to the amount of acreage that could be bid on, but nothing less than 160 acres could be bid on. Land was purchased on credit and payable in four annual installments. The buyer was required to pay one-twentieth (5%) of the purchase price at the time of the sale, with the first annual installment of 25% due within 40 days of the date of purchase. For the minimum tract of 160 acres at \$2.00 per acre, the down payment to secure the sale was \$16.00, with the first annual payment of \$64 due in forty days. The second payment of 25% of the purchase price (\$80) was due two years from the date of the sale, then 25% was due on the anniversary of the date of the sale for each of the next

⁷⁰ Richard Stephen Lackey, "Credit Land Sales, 1811-1815: Mississippi Entries East of the Pearl." (masters thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 1975), 48.

⁷¹ Lackey, 51.

two years. If the buyer could satisfy the entire purchase early, he received an 8% cash discount on the remainder owed on the purchase price. If the buyer was late in making an annual payment, he was charged a 6% late fee. Approximately 60% of all the buyers who made purchases during this September 1811 auction gained full title to their property.⁷²

Settlers quickly learned how to game the system. Land that could not attract a \$2.00 opening bid was later sold by the government at a "private sale," where there was no threshold for an opening bid. But there was nothing really "private" about a private sale. It was still a public auction to sell land that could not meet the two-dollar opening bid. Settlers would agree among themselves not to bid on certain tracts so that these already identified tracts would revert to private sale, where the opening bid was typically in the 50 cents per acre range. Lackey estimates that a great deal of the land sold at auction in September 1811 was sold at private sale at a greatly reduced price but with the same credit terms.⁷³ The opportunity for "private" sales at drastically reduced prices did not exist west of the Pearl. And the reason was that speculators would not allow it. They bought everything of value they sensed would gain them an additional dollar.

But everybody was a speculator at heart. Even enterprising small farmers quickly turned some of the land bought at private sale into profit. For example, at the 1811 auction, James Rawles bought 160 acres for 50 cents an acre and sold it in 1814 to John Applewhite, a new arrival, for \$1.875 per acre for a nice profit of \$220 and a 375% return on his investment.⁷⁴

⁷² Lackey, 49-67.

⁷³ Lackey, 79.

⁷⁴ Lackey, 66.

CHAPTER 4

MARKETS FOR HOGS AND CATTLE

The International Market

Land was a means to make a living. How the land was used made all the difference in the world as to what kind of living that would be. John chose to use his land and that of the public domain to raise livestock, and as a result, he participated in three markets for his hogs and cattle. These were: the international market, the farmer-to-farmer market, and the farmer-to-planter market. The first, and perhaps most important market for herders in the early antebellum period, was the international market through Mobile to the growing cities of London, Boston, and New York, and for provisioning navy and merchant ships that made Mobile a port of call.

Frank Lawrence Owsley was the first to suggest an outbound market for small Southern farmers selling surplus beef and pork to the West Indies and the Northeastern United States.⁷⁵ But he didn't quantify the market. Eugene D. Genovese took Owsley to task in his *Political Economy*

⁷⁵ Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Louisiana State University Press, 1949), 135. Owsley's suggestion that the West Indies was a major market for cattle and hogs is misguided. Total shipments of salted beef and pork to the West Indies from the entire United States were only 110,000 barrels in 1828, enough to fulfill the annual needs of the 82,000 slaves on Barbados, but much less than what was required to supply the entire West Indies. And too, much of the beef and pork going to the global market was supplied by Cincinnati, not only by southern herders. Recent research indicates that British Caribbean slaves, particularly those on the larger sugar plantations at Barbados, St. Kitts, and Antigua survived largely on corn, sorghum, and salted fish, not imported beef and pork. While the slave population in the West Indies lived on the edge of malnutrition, planters were reluctant to embrace a supply chain that had proven time and again to be unreliable due to the American Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars that starved tens of thousands of their slaves. For more on this market and Caribbean slave nutrition and supply see J. D. LeGare, ed., *The Southern Agriculturalist and Register of Rural Affairs*, (Charleston, S.C.: A. E. Miller, 1828), 360; Sir Robert H. Schomburgk, *Barbados: Comprising a Geographical and Statistical Description of the Island* (London: Longman Brown Green and Longmans, 1847), 146, Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=1wvT630bvH8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Barbados:+Comprising+a+Geographical+and+Statistical+Description+of+the+Island&hl=en&sa=X&ei=3uMxUfWRHZPm8wTotIC4BA&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA> (accessed Feb 11, 2013); B. W. Higman, *Slave Population of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (Kingston: The Press University of the West Indies, 1995), 207, Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=pGv5dC2hDV8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Slave+Population+of+the+British+Caribbean&hl=en&sa=X&ei=JuUxUZmEHYXe8wS9ooGQDA&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Slave%20Population%20of%20the%20British%20Caribbean&f=false> (accessed Feb 11, 2013).

of Slavery for not doing so.⁷⁶ Historians John Guice, Sam Hilliard, Forrest McDonald, and Grady McWhiney later accepted Genovese's challenge to quantify this international market, but there is a good reason for Owsley's assertion that Southern herders relied on an outbound market and that is because interior Mississippi planters were unreliable customers. The lack of hard currency in the region forced planters to use a spot market buying strategy based on absolute necessity, and as a result, they generally paid higher prices for beef and pork. In order to hold their cash as long as possible, planters might buy and they might not depending on their need at the time, their storage capacity, and available labor to slaughter and dress the animals.⁷⁷

Early history of the beef industry in Mississippi contends that the international market through Mobile was the most reliable and most important market for Piney Woods herders for two reasons. First, it was a stable market.⁷⁸ And second, staple items like sugar and salt were much cheaper in Mobile than in Natchez.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery*, (New York: Random House, 1961), 107.

⁷⁷ When it came to provisions, planters appeared to be poor planners. They would buy beef and pork only when they were about to run out and then complained about high prices.

⁷⁸ Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, 21.

⁷⁹ For example, wholesale prices for beef and pork by the barrel were relatively equal at \$12/bbl and \$16/bbl respectively in both Natchez and Mobile in 1818 and 1822. But wholesale prices for commodities ranging from bagging to sugar were consistently less in Mobile than in Natchez. Salt in particular was much cheaper in Mobile than in Natchez. Salt was needed for curing meat and essential to good health for humans and livestock alike. An indicator of the price difference was that salt was sold in Mobile by the measure but in Natchez by weight. Salt in Mobile was 45 cents per bushel; in Natchez it was 14 cents per pound. With the measured weight of a bushel of salt at 56 pounds, this commodity alone would make Mobile a more desirable market than Natchez. Additional commodity examples include: Mobile sugar, 11 cents/lb.; Natchez sugar, 14 cents/lb. Mobile soap, 8 cents/ lb.; Natchez soap, 14 cents/lb. Mobile flour, \$7.50/bbl; Natchez flour, \$9.00/bbl. For commodity prices see the *Mississippi Republican*, April 9, 1818 and the *Mobile Commercial Register* December 26, 1822. For more about salt in the Old Southwest, see Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Year's View, or A History of the Workings of the American Government for Thirty Years, from 1820 to 1850* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1856), 144-147, Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=WKI6AAAacAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=thirty+years+view&hl=en&sa=X&ei=qeExUbitBJPw8ASEyICoCw&ved=0CEkQ6AEwAw> (accessed Feb. 8, 2013).

Concerning stability, when planters would not buy, herders could always drive their stock to Mobile and find a buyer. When neighboring farmers would not trade, herders could sell in Mobile. And too, there was Mobile's emerging meat processing industry that provided a market in hides and tallow. Were it not for Mobile's peculiar geography and its persistently damp and humid weather that easily spoiled meat, especially pork, the city might have competed with Cincinnati or Chicago for a greater share of the meat processing industry. In 1850, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana could boast of 704 professional butchers: 90 in Alabama, 66 in Mississippi, and 548 in Louisiana.⁸⁰ While Cincinnati specialized in salted pork, Mobile specialized in pickled beef.⁸¹

At roundup a Piney Woods stock farmer did one of three things: he drove his animals to Mobile himself; he hired a drover to take his stock to market for him; or he sold his livestock at a reduced price to a drover who was building a drive. My theory is the small producer most often chose the third option if he didn't need to buy provisions himself. There were seven drovers in Mississippi in 1850. One drover and his wife resided in Harrison County on the Mississippi side of Mobile in the late fall of 1850. He was a young free black man. It is not surprising that census enumerators could locate no more than seven drovers in Mississippi given the nature of their work. They were constantly on the move, collecting and driving herds out of the Pine Barrens to Mobile and hiring out to move herds from one county to another.⁸²

Cities and planters on the eastern seaboard relied heavily on Pine Barren beef and pork. In 1820, in that single year alone, the City of Charleston and the rice plantations in Berkeley,

⁸⁰ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *The Seventh Census of the United State, 1850*. http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical_Publications/1850/1850a-01.pdf. See Table X under Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

⁸¹ Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, 21.

⁸² Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Copiah County Probate Records, 1828*, microfilm. The estate of Hugh Erwin shows a bill due in the amount of \$34.00 to Elias Ford for driving Erwin's cattle to Copiah County.

Charleston, and Colleton counties consumed 40,000 hogs, more than could be supplied out of Kentucky, East Tennessee, and upstate South Carolina.⁸³ There is also convincing data to support considerable outbound shipments of pork to Charleston in the 1840s to supply the rice plantations in Beaufort, Colleton, Horry, Charleston, and Georgetown counties and also the plantations along coastal Georgia.⁸⁴ By 1855, New York City alone consumed 26,000 head of cattle a week or more than 1.3 million a year, much of it packed in salt or pickled.⁸⁵

Ocean going vessels calling on Mobile played a significant roll in the stability of the outbound market for beef and pork. In the eight weeks between February 21 and April 14, 1823, an average of 28 ships lay at anchor in Mobile Bay.⁸⁶ At this rate, approximately 1,100 ships provisioned at Mobile that year. Approximately 2.2 million pounds of dressed beef or pork or approximately 7,500 cattle or 31,000 hogs were required to provision just these ships in this one year alone.⁸⁷

The second reason Mobile had long been the preferred market for Pine Barren herders and interior planters alike was because it offered lower prices for staples than Natchez could offer. Over the long term, prices in Natchez for staples like salt, sugar, and soap were consistently higher than the prices for the same items in Mobile. At the same time, prices for beef and pork by the barrel were relatively equal. It just made good business sense to buy in Mobile instead of Natchez.

⁸³ Dr. Nic Butler, interview by Ronald J. McCall, June 12, 2012. Dr. Butler is Director, The Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina.

⁸⁴ Hilliard, 475.

⁸⁵ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 485.

⁸⁶ "Ship News," *Mobile Commercial Register*, February 21 through April 14, 1823.

⁸⁷ Hilliard, 473. For dressed weight of antebellum Mississippi cattle see James Taylor Carson, "Native Americans, the Market Revolution, and Culture Change: The Choctaw Cattle Economy, 1690-1830," *Agricultural History* 71, no 1 (Winter, 1997), 12 (accessed May 8, 2012); for dressed weight of southern hogs see Robert E. Gallman, "Self-Sufficiency in the Cotton Economy of the Antebellum South," *Agricultural History* 44, no. 1 (Jan. 1970), 15 (accessed August 13, 2012).

Commodity prices in Natchez were higher because of shipping costs up the Mississippi. In 1846, Mobile was still the preferred market. In reference to the people in Southeast Mississippi, "A small portion of their trading is done in Jackson, the present terminus of the Vicksburg railroad, a small portion down the Pearl river to New Orleans, and the greater portion to the city of Mobile."⁸⁸ While the vast majority of the cattle and hogs sold in Mobile ended up in the packinghouses and either salted or pickled for shipment, Mobile citizens enjoyed fresh beef, as the following advertisement in the February 19, 1833, issue of the *Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot* shows:

To the Lovers of Fat Beef

The undersigned respectfully inform the public that he has in possession three first rate stall fed Beeves which will be slaughtered on the evening of the 21st inst. and offered for sale at his stall on the 22nd. And that the public may not be deceived as regards the fineness of the Beef, he will tomorrow form a line with his fellow victuallers and exhibit them through the streets of the city. Feb. 18th Geo. McMaster⁸⁹

A fledgling leather goods industry in Mississippi and Alabama and the emergence of a meatpacking industry in New Orleans are clear indications of a robust trade in beef and the economic impact that Pine Barren stock farmers had on emerging industries. As early as 1812, the value of leather tanned in the Mississippi Territory was second only to the value of cotton.⁹⁰ Total hides commercially tanned in Mississippi in 1840 amounted to 30,425 for making saddles, harnesses, traces, and plow lines. The largest commercial tannery in the state was in Covington

⁸⁸ D. C. Glenn, "Mississippi." *Debow's Review* 7, issue 1, (July 1849), 42. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/browse/journals/debo.1849.html> (accessed Jan. 13, 2013).

⁸⁹ "To the Lovers of Fat Beef," *Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot*, 19 February 1833.

⁹⁰ John D. W. Guice, "Cattle Raisers of the Old Southwest: A Reinterpretation," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (April 1977), 185.

County, in the center of the Pine Barrens. It tanned 4,107 hides in 1840. Mississippi could boast of 128 commercial tanneries in 1840 and 42 manufacturers of leather goods. Even Smith County, where John Hailes and son Jack would move in 1844, could boast of a commercial tannery. It processed 412 hides and produced 2,494 pounds of soap and 2,637 pounds of tallow candles in 1840. By 1850, Mississippi had 259 professional saddle and harness makers in its ranks. Alabama had 142 tanneries that processed 79,423 hides in 1840.⁹¹ The three counties immediately adjacent to the Port of Mobile, Harrison and Jackson Counties in Mississippi and Mobile County in Alabama, had a concentration of 156 butchers to service a fledgling packing industry.

The Farmer-to-Farmer Market

Livestock trade between farmers was a small market in comparison to the international market and the farmer-to-planter market because most farmers practiced a safety first strategy for self-sufficiency, but this market was a viable market for Pine Barren stock farmers just the same. Examples of this market are three farms in Clarke County, a Pine Barren county where John's brothers Henry and Alexander settled in the small town of DeSoto, Clarke County in 1833 and where John himself is listed on the Clarke County Tax Rolls for a single year, 1854. The county is also representative due to its similarity in ratios for population density and slave to total population to other pine barren counties where John lived in the late 1830s and 1840s.⁹²

⁹¹ U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Compendium of the Sixth Census*, Alabama and Mississippi, 221-238, http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical_Publications/1840/1840.pdf (accessed May 13, 2012). See also *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical_Publications/1850/1850a-18.pdf. For butchers see Alabama Table X, 428; Mississippi Table X, 455 (accessed May 13, 2012).

⁹² University of Virginia Library, *Historical Census Browser*. Search terms: "1840" "All States" "Total Population" "Total Slave Population" Search Clarke, Smith, Simpson, and Newton counties, Mississippi. Search Livingston Parish, Louisiana. <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu> (accessed March 1, 2013).

A good example of this farmer-to-farmer market is the probate records of John Crosby, Sr., who passed away in Clarke County Mississippi in 1846. Crosby's estate was probated in September 1847 and it caused quite a stir. Crosby's cattle herd had been at one time as large as 800 head, but on inventory the court could count only 240. What happened to the missing 560 head? The heirs thought they knew and pointed an accusing finger at a brother-in-law, William Covington. The fact that the issue was in dispute shows that cattle were the senior Crosby's chief source of income and of considerable value to the deceased's heirs. Evidence presented by various witnesses does indeed point to Covington, who over the course of several years the plaintiffs claimed, slaughtered a number of Crosby Senior's cattle for his own personal profit and branded calves with his mark that belonged to Crosby Senior's cows, thus reducing the inheritance of the other brothers and sisters. The defense attempted to show that the herd was reduced through sale, not by theft.⁹³

The most interesting testimony comes from local farmers who were customers of Crosby Senior. William B. Williford, a local small farmer, testified that he and his mother bought "a considerable number of beeves" from Crosby throughout the previous years and paid him \$75 for them. John Johnston, also a small farmer, testified that he heard Cameron Grayson say last summer (1846) that he (Grayson, a relative of Crosby, Sr.) "used 43 or 33 head of cattle of John Crosby, Sr." and that Grayson came to his house (John Johnston's) to retrieve another three cows and calves belonging to Crosby to drive them to Mobile.⁹⁴ Testimony was also heard from the cowboys responsible for ranging, collecting, and branding Crosby's stock of cattle, which ranged as far as Jones and Jasper counties, some 20 and 40 miles respectively from Clarke County.⁹⁵

⁹³ Jean Strickland and Patricia N. Edwards, *Clarke County Mississippi Probate Court and Estate Records, 1839-1850* (Moss Point: Mississippi, 1994), 254-271.

⁹⁴ Strickland, *Clarke County Mississippi Probate Court and Estate Records, 1839-1850*, 261.

⁹⁵ Such ranging was not unusual for a large herd.

The Crosby Estate was eventually sold at three separate auctions: May 1, 1846; August 28, 1846; and September 6, 1847, the date for the land sale. The final probate of Crosby's estate came to \$21,919.78. Approximately \$15,000 of the estate was wrapped up in slaves, who were equally divided between Crosby's grown and married children.⁹⁶ The remaining \$7,000 was accumulated through sundry farm equipment valued at \$1,106; a list of accounts and notes belonging to the Estate considered "good and solvent" (\$3,359.50), his real property (200 acres, only 40 of which were improved, and one town lot for a total of \$692); and his livestock of sheep, hogs, cattle and horses amounting to \$1,842.88. No cotton was listed in the inventory. It is interesting to note that the Crosby Estate carried \$1,795.00 in notes "considered doubtful or worthless." The largest note on the "doubtful and worthless" list was a \$1000 note from the Mississippi & Alabama R.R. Bank at Brandon.⁹⁷

Crosby's probate court record suggests that raising livestock was a means of upward mobility and that the market for livestock was both local buyers and the international market through Mobile. Crosby's probate records do not indicate the number of slaves he owned, just the value of the slaves divided between his children. Each of the seven heirs received an equal value in slaves of \$2,125. Based on the value of slaves gleaned from the probate records of William Howze and Marmaduke Gardner, the approximate value of Crosby's slaves was \$500 each, for an approximate number of 30 slaves. Historian John D. Guice places a value of 50 cattle to one slave for a 50:1 ratio.⁹⁸ Using Guice's parameter and knowing that Crosby at one time had a herd of 800 cattle, his

⁹⁶ Strickland, 235.

⁹⁷ Strickland, 204.

⁹⁸ Guice, 180.

herd was equal to 16 slaves, for a total of 46 slaves, which places Crosby clearly in the planter class, indicating that stock raising as well as cotton was a pathway to upward mobility.⁹⁹

A similar story is told by the inventory of the estate of Marmaduke Gardner, whose estate was appraised by the Probate Court of Clarke County in October 1839.¹⁰⁰ Gardner is considered a yeoman farmer, using the generally accepted definition. He left an inventory worth \$7,879.67, including 11 slaves at the time of his death. His 11 slaves were valued at \$5,835.75 or approximately \$530 each.¹⁰¹ His estate suggests that Gardner was a stock farmer who gained his income from hogs, cattle, and corn. He had approximately 150 hogs valued at \$300; a herd of 100 cattle valued at \$750; "1 lot of sun cotton" valued at \$9.00 (approximately 60 pounds. Sun cotton is a garden variety used for home spinning.) No other cotton is mentioned. The remainder of Gardner's estate consists of sundry items like a lot of leather valued at \$20, shoemaker's tools, blacksmith tools, beds and furniture, and 1 lot of fodder valued at \$51.00.

In contrast, the estate of William Howze (Houze on the Clarke County Tax Rolls) was probated in April 1839 and listed the sale of five bales of cotton in Mobile for \$179.12 (.09/lb) and 17 bales of cotton in New Orleans for \$75.10 (.01/lb.), which indicates the poor quality of cotton grown in the Pine Barrens. Howze owned 80 acres, 51 slaves valued at \$25,050 and had 30,000 lbs of cotton valued at \$1,050 (.035/lb) ready to ship.¹⁰² Howze's estate was valued in excess of \$33,000 included 75 head of cattle, but no hogs and no corn. If Howze slaughtered a third of his

⁹⁹ Harry L. Watson, "Conflict and Collaboration: Yeomen, Slaveholders, and Politics in the Antebellum South," *Social History* 10, no. 3 (Oct. 1985), 274. Watson states that Planters are conventionally defined as owners of 20 slaves or more.

¹⁰⁰ Strickland, *Clarke County Mississippi Probate Court and Estate Records, 1839-1850*, 14-17.

¹⁰¹ Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Clarke County Tax Rolls, 1839*, Mississippi. microfilm. The Clarke County Tax Rolls for 1839, conducted just months before the estate inventory was done on October 4th, lists 7 slaves for Marmaduke Gardner, with a tax value of \$4.37 1/2.

¹⁰² The Clarke County Tax Rolls for 1839 lists only 37 slaves for William Houze. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. microfilm.

herd every year, he still could not feed his slaves, so it stands to reason that he purchased all of his pork and all of his corn from neighboring stockmen.¹⁰³ Three other Howze's ran farms immediately adjacent to William Howze's place with a total of 739 acres, included the deceased's 80 acres. But the other three Howze's owned no slaves.¹⁰⁴ It's quite possible that William Howze, the deceased, rented slaves to the other Howze's, possibly his sons, to keep them from making a heavy investment in labor. It's also quite possible that the four farms operated together as a cooperative, one supplying the labor while the other three supplied corn, hogs, and cattle.¹⁰⁵ These three records show that if Crosby and Gardner were commercial cotton farmers, their estate's inventory would reflect it, as the inventory did with Howze. Crosby and Gardner, in my opinion, were stock farmers, not cotton farmers, and they made a relatively good living at raising livestock.

The Farmer-to-Planter Market

Robert E. Gallman suggests that large commercial cotton operations in the antebellum South were self-sufficient and did not rely heavily on small farmers for much of anything.¹⁰⁶ That might be true for 1860, but until reaching that self-sufficiency threshold around 1855, there was

¹⁰³ The average consumption of meat for slaves between the years 1840 and 1860 was 150 pounds per year. Howze would have to supply 6150 pounds of meat per year to keep his slaves healthy and fit for heavy duty. For calculations see Hilliard, "Pork in the Antebellum South," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59, no. 3 (Sept. 1969), 467. The average net weight for cattle antebellum Mississippi was 300 pounds, which means Howze would have to slaughter 20 head of cattle a year to feed his slaves, if he desired to feed them on beef alone. For cattle weights see James Taylor Carson, "Native Americans, the Market Revolution, and Culture Change: The Choctaw Cattle Economy, 1690-1830," *Agricultural History* 71, no 1 (Winter, 1997), 12.

¹⁰⁴ Jean Strickland and Patricia N. Edwards, *Clarke County Mississippi Tax Rolls & Census, 1835-1866*. (Moss Point: Mississippi, 1990), 18.

¹⁰⁵ This concept is pure conjecture that cannot be verified with existing data, but it's reasonable to believe that such an arrangement could be made to work to everyone's advantage.

¹⁰⁶ Robert E. Gallman, "Self-Sufficiency in the Cotton Economy of the Antebellum South," *Agriculture History*, 44, no. 1 (Jan., 1970), 22-23.

considerable commerce between the small farmer and commercial cotton growers, particularly for pork and beef.

The sample evidence in this section represents plantations to the north, east, and west of the Mississippi Pine Barrens where John Hailes and son Jack ranged their cattle and hogs. The three plantations cited are representative of the large Mississippi and Alabama cotton plantation system that John Hailes and Pine Barren herders like him supplied with beef, pork, and corn. The end consumer of their livestock was indeed an ever-increasing slave population that increased from just over 17,000 in 1810 to more than 300,000 in 1850 in Mississippi alone.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the evidence already presented about the sugar plantations in Louisiana, letters between James K. Polk and his overseers and the diaries of planters Hugh Davis and Dr. Martin Phillips provide ample support to the claim of a robust early antebellum farmer-to-planter market. Perhaps just as importantly, they also show a distinct change in how livestock and corn were treated before, during, and after the Panic of 1837. This long-lasting depression had a significant impact on herders like John because it forced his customers, planters like Polk, Phillips, and Davis, to become more self-sufficient in beef and pork in order to keep their operations profitable.

In the early antebellum period, James K. Polk owned a plantation near Coffeerville, Mississippi in Yalobusha County on the northern edge of the Pine Barrens. In a letter to Polk dated January 23, 1836, Polk's overseer commented that he bought 200 pounds of beef. A week later, he sent notice to Polk that he butchered 95 hogs. On November 11, 1836, Polk received a letter stating that his overseer bought \$500 worth of corn. On December 29 of that year, Polk received word that his overseer bought 3500 pounds of pork. Few letters survive to show the course of operations on Polk's plantation in 1837, but one dated December 2, 1837, reveals how hogs were marketed

¹⁰⁷ Figures are approximate based on slave populations in the 1810-1850 Territorial and Federal Census data.

and the price of pork on the hoof. Polk's overseer writes: "There was no pork in market when I left Coffeeville. I left money, \$500, with Abbert McNeal to purchase it to us. The probability is that it will sell for 6 to 6 1/2 or 7 cts. It cannot sell for more, as I met a great quantity making for that market."¹⁰⁸ Polk was interested in the purchase of pork in Coffeeville and in a follow-up letter asked his overseer for more detail. On February 5, 1838, James K. Polk's brother, William, visited the plantation and reported that the pork purchased in December cost 7 cents per pound. The difference in a one-cent price meant Polk purchased 7,142 pounds of pork (or approximately 50 hogs, using Genovese's weight calculation for Southern hogs) versus 8,333 (or 59 hogs). That was a difference of almost 1,200 pounds, which was significant to the operations of his plantation.¹⁰⁹

In November 1838, Polk decided to work toward self-sufficiency and bought \$2,000 worth of "stock, hogs, corn fodder and farming implements" for his Mississippi operations. In October 1839, Polk's brother William wrote: "Trainum [the overseer] estimates your pork, which will be made on the plantation, at 4,500 and that six thousand pounds will be sufficient to furnish the whole plantation."¹¹⁰ It is interesting to note that William Polk pointed out the fact that the pork was being made on the plantation, but that his plantation was still running a meat deficit of 1500 pounds. From these letters, it appears that tending livestock and attempting to become self-sufficient was beyond the skills of many planters and their overseers, making them dependent on the local market for beef, pork, and corn.

On September 13, 1842, a good four years after Polk bought his first startup of hogs and corn, his overseer wrote: "I have a very puty stock of young hoges. I have not got more than 32 or three

¹⁰⁸ James K. Polk, et al. John Spencer Bassett, ed. *The Southern Plantation Overseer as Revealed in his Letters* (Northampton: MA, 1925), 107.

¹⁰⁹ Hilliard, 467. The average consumption of meat for slaves between the years 1840 and 1860 was 150 pounds per year. 1,200 pounds of pork would feed 8 of Polk's slaves for an entire year.

¹¹⁰ Polk, 127.

hogs of the large size. I think that it will be best for you to buy about 2000 or 3000 pounds of pork for the next year and then you will have a fine stock of young hogs on hand."¹¹¹ Polk continued to buy pork on the open market, but he did everything he could to hold down expenses, to the extent of putting up his own lard and making his own soap. In January 1843, his overseer wrote to inform him "I have made the last killing of pork. I will kill this time 3451 P of pork and I wrote you how much I kill before. I have three barrels of lard and too of soap. I am in hopes that this will please you and Mistress Polk."¹¹² In late September 1851, Polk's overseer wrote that he had 75 or 80 hogs to slaughter, which suggested that Polk's plantation in Mississippi had turned the corner on self-sufficiency in pork.¹¹³

In 1848, Hugh Davis ran a considerable cotton operation on the Cahaba Rivers in Perry County, Alabama, some 122 miles due east of Polkville, Mississippi where John Hailes lived at the time. Davis set as his first objective in running his plantation to "buy neither breads nor meat nor anything that can be made on the place."¹¹⁴ These essentials include making plow stocks, ax handles, hoe helves, harnesses, horse collars, heading lines, and well ropes. However, according to Davis's account books, he spent more money on foodstuffs than for any other item between 1848 and 1862. Meat was a particular problem. In any given year during this period he had 80 mouths to feed. Even though Davis raised a large number of hogs, he was never able to produce all the bacon and pork that was required. He even incented his overseer with an annual cash bonus of 50

¹¹¹ Polk, 166.

¹¹² Polk, 172.

¹¹³ Polk, 195.

¹¹⁴ Weymouth T. Jordon, *Hugh Davis and His Alabama Plantation*, (University of Alabama Press, 1948), 30.

cents for every 100 pounds of hog meat produced, but he still came up short every year and was forced to buy pork on the local market.¹¹⁵

The diary of Dr. Martin W. Phillips, a Mississippi physician-turned-planter doing business in the town of Edwards in Hinds County, Mississippi from 1840 to 1863, gives another good example of the farmer to planter market.¹¹⁶ An entry in Phillips's daybook on January 30, 1840, states that he bought 18 head of Durham cattle from a C. J. Blackburn of Kentucky in hopes that with good husbandry he might become self-sufficient in beef. The cattle arrived before a cowpen could be constructed and they had to be turned out to range. He quickly lost 5 of the 18. Over the next six months he had nothing but trouble with the cattle. He sold a Durham bull and heifer for \$300 to another planter to recover some of his cost, but unfortunately the bull died. Phillips's remaining cattle became sick as well. Several more died before whatever was ailing them passed through his little herd.¹¹⁷

In the meantime, Phillips experimented with raising hogs, but his sows kept eating their litters or rolling over on them. Entries in his daybook captured his frustration because he could not figure out why. In March, an exasperated Phillips wrote: "The times seem to be hard, that no one could think would be worse; the ablest man in this land cannot raise money; a vast number broke; many are running off their negroes. The State is bankrupt. Never was there a time when insolvency was more general. The Shylocks are only safe." His July 31 entry stated that he "received yesterday from depot 669 pounds of bacon." In less than a month, it was all gone. He

¹¹⁵ Jordon, 122-123.

¹¹⁶ Edwards, Mississippi is about 70 miles due west of Polkville, Mississippi where John lived during this time.

¹¹⁷ Phillips was the first to introduce Durham cattle to Mississippi. Durham is a high-grade of shorthorn cattle that proved unable to initially cope with the heat and humidity of southern Mississippi in those early years, much to Phillips' disappointment. Cooler weather in the fall of 1840 was the most likely reason the remainder of his small herd survived at all.

blamed theft by slaves and the poor management of his overseer. He tried planting sweet potatoes but found the soil too rich. On November 3, 1840, Phillips's brother-in-law bought Log Hall Plantation, its 16 slaves, and its remaining cattle, hogs, and sheep for \$4,090 and put the title in his sister's name.¹¹⁸

Obviously, it took some skill to be a stock raiser. Had Dr. Phillips relied on his farmer neighbors for advice, he might have found out how to range cattle and have them return to him when called, why his sows were killing their litters, and how to plant sweet potatoes, but apparently there was no social or professional organization available at this time to make such a knowledge transfer possible.¹¹⁹ The transition to self-sufficiency was indeed a hard turn to make for most planters, which kept the local market for beef and pork open for business well into the 1850s.

There is an abundance of contemporary evidence that leaves little doubt that the 1837-49 depression made an indelible mark on Mississippi farming. While cotton continued to be the principal source of plantation income, raising cattle, hogs, and corn received greater attention over the next twenty years and as a result the farmer-to-planter market began to subside by 1860. On most plantations in the early 1840s livestock raising, developing pasturelands, planting corn, and building orchards became as important as cotton because these foodstuffs reduced costs.

After the return of good cotton prices in 1848 and 1849, these depression era pursuits in self-sufficiency were not abandoned, as seen in the increase in livestock production compared to cotton. In 1840, Mississippi produced 623,197 cattle and just over 1 million hogs. Its cotton

¹¹⁸ Martin W. Phillips, Franklin Lafayette Riley, ed., *Diary of a Mississippi Planter, January 1, 1840 to April 1863* (1909), 72.

¹¹⁹ The evidence that I've seen does not indicate close communications between the planter class and the herder-farmer. The commercial transactions I've seen were done through middlemen such as cattle dealers, overseers, and the local marketplace.

production was 193,401,577 pounds.¹²⁰ In 1850, cotton production remained relatively the same as in 1840 at 193,716,800 pounds, but the number of cattle and hogs increased significantly to a total of 2,018,988.¹²¹ Most Mississippi cotton plantations were marginally self-sufficient in beef and pork by 1860. However, the farmer-to-planter market never went away entirely. While Mississippi farmers raised corn and beef and pork in considerable quantities before, during, and after the depression, they had always consumed more than they produced.¹²² Self-sufficiency in the plantation sector remained secondary to the cotton production, even among small slaveholders.¹²³

¹²⁰ U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Compendium of the Sixth Census, 1840*, 227-228, http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical_Publications/1840/1840.pdf (accessed May 13, 2012).

¹²¹ U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Compendium of the Sixth Census, 1850*, 457-458, http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical_Publications/1850/1850a-01.pdf (accessed May 13, 2012). Cattle production dropped by approximately 30% during this decade to 436,254 due to an anthrax epidemic in the mid-1840s, but hog production increased by more than 50% from 1 million in 1840 to 1,582,734 in 1850.

¹²² Jordan, 48.

¹²³ Harry L. Watson, "Conflict and Collaboration: Yeomen, Slaveholders, and Politics in the Antebellum South," *Social History* 10, no. 3 (Oct. 2985), 278, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4285456> (accessed Oct. 26, 2012).

CHAPTER 5
ON THE MOVE, 1832-1844

Livingston Parish, Louisiana, 1832-1841

Livingston Parish, Louisiana had just been formed into a local government when John moved there in 1832. St. Helena Parish had been divided in two. Livingston Parish was the lower half. We don't know for sure where John and Jack actually settled in Livingston Parish or how much they paid for their land. The Livingston Parish Courthouse burned to the ground in 1875 and all the probate records, conveyances, and tax rolls that might have provided an exact location were lost.¹²⁴ But if John's pattern of farming was consistent with this move, he settled in the north central part of the parish in the area of townships three, four, nine, and ten between Beaver Dam Creek and Hog Branch, where the best woodlands and pastures are located in the parish but where drainage was too poor to be considered prime farmland.¹²⁵ This north central section of the parish is pine barren country highly suitable for raising hogs and cattle for the sugar plantations along both sides of the Mississippi River, less than fifty miles to the southwest.

The prospects for a stock farmer in Livingston Parish were good indeed. Hilliard states in his "Pork in the Ante-Bellum South," "Of all the plantation records I have examined, no single group of plantations rivals those of Louisiana in their dependence upon commercial meat. Many planters

¹²⁴ Verified by the Livingston County Clerk on Nov. 12, 2012; The LSU Library and Archive in Baton Rouge; and the Louisiana State Library, also in Baton Rouge. All local government records for the parish from 1832 to 1875 were lost in the fire of 1875.

¹²⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Livingston Parish*, (January 1991). See General Soil Map, <http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/manuscripts/LA063/0/maps/gsm.pdf>. The location of this area is 20 miles southwest of Amite City, Louisiana and just west of Interstate 55. There are no towns in the area even today to give the reader a more accurate picture of where this area is located.

kept no hogs at all, and their records show them purchasing huge quantities of meat during January and February, the hog-killing season."¹²⁶

Mark Schmitz supports this claim. In his doctoral dissertation titled, "Economic Analysis of Antebellum Sugar Plantations in Louisiana," Schmitz shows a strong commercial relationship between small farmers producing a surplus of hogs and cattle and the sugar plantations that ran a deficit in beef and pork. The sugar plantations produced a surplus of corn, but there is no evidence that these plantations used corn as a cash crop. The small farmers produced an abundant surplus of pork and beef, but there is no evidence of a meat-intensive diet. The planters would buy cattle and hogs on the hoof, fatten them on corn in plantation stockyards, and slaughter them during the appropriate seasons. As Schmitz put it: "The opportunity to purchase swine from small farmers in the region provided the planters with two benefits. First, it gave them a use for their surplus corn production without the cost of shipping it to market. Secondly, it removed from them the burden of husbandry for most of the year. The result of the trade was both an efficient use of the labor force as well as coordination of the small farm with the plantation regime."¹²⁷

Besides being close to his customers, the 1840 census also provides another clue why John might have chosen Livingston Parish Louisiana over another county in Mississippi. In 1840, there were just 2,315 people in the entire parish that covered 730 square miles.¹²⁸ That's a population density of about 3 people per square mile, ideal for free ranging hogs and cattle. While period vital statistics do not exist to give enough data to provide a complete picture of the local economy

¹²⁶ Hilliard, 473.

¹²⁷ Mark Daniel Schmitz, "Economic Analysis of Antebellum Sugar Plantations in Louisiana," (PhD diss. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1974), 234-238.

¹²⁸ Population density calculation based on approximate square miles within the original county boundaries. See <http://usgwarchives.org/maps/louisiana/statemap/la1839s.jpg> showing Livingston Parish in 1839. The 1840 Federal Census shows a population for Livingston Parish with 1,533 whites, 739 slaves, and 43 free blacks.

in Livingston Parish for the time that John and his son, Jack, lived there, Haskel's *Complete Description and Statistical Gazetteer* (1848) shows that Livingston County produced 4,361 cattle and 10,373 hogs, or approximately two heads of cattle and five hogs for every man, woman, and child in the parish in 1840. It produced 250,000 pounds of cotton and 84,000 pounds of rice, but no sugar.¹²⁹

But it wasn't the people of Livingston that stock farmers like John were selling stock to. It was certainly the sugar plantations. These labor-intensive plantations lined the Mississippi River to the west and southwest of Livingston. There were 19 parishes in what comprised Louisiana's entire sugar region at the time; three of them bordered Livingston Parish. When John arrived in Livingston in 1832, there were 36,000 slaves in this region. When he left in 1840, there were just over 50,000.¹³⁰ Business for beef and pork must have been good. Based on the generally accepted figure that an adult slave needed a half a pound of protein daily to remain healthy and fit for hard labor, each slave in the sugar region required 183 pounds of meat per year. Pine Barren cattle dressed out at about 300 pounds and hogs at 100 pounds each. A supply of some 25,000 head of cattle or 75,000 hogs or some combination of the two was required in 1840 to feed Louisiana's sugar region slaves.¹³¹ Obviously, such a requirement far exceeded Livingston's abilities, but it indicates a captive market for whatever beef and pork John could raise.

¹²⁹ Daniel Haskel and J. Calvin Smith, *A Complete Descriptive and Statistical Gazetteer of the United State of American with an abstract of the census and statistics for 1840* (New York: Sherman & Smith, 1848), 351.

¹³⁰ E. J. Forstall, "Louisiana Sugar," *Debow's Review* 1, issue 1, (Jan 1846), 55-56. Sugar production advanced into five additional parishes in the mid-1840s, but the introduction of the steam engine reduced the rate of growth of slave labor.

¹³¹ Calculations by the author. Slaves were rationed an average of 150 pounds of beef or pork per year, per Hilliard, 466-467. 50,000 slaves X 150 lbs = 7.5 million lbs./year divided by 300 lbs. for the dressed weight of cattle and 100 lbs for the dressed weight for hogs. See also Schmitz, 230.

Business was good, so Jack moved from Copiah to Livingston and set up on a farm not far from his father's in 1835. He was 20 and a newlywed. He had just married Elizabeth Hartley, a girl from South Carolina. In 1837, he and Elizabeth had a daughter they named Mary. She was the only child of his and Elizabeth's born outside of Mississippi.¹³² The 1840 census shows that John had eight people in his family, including himself. In the same census, Jack had six. John was 54, Jack just 25.¹³³

Louisiana was good for the Hailes. They lived there for almost nine years. But in 1841, it was time to move. Why John moved from Louisiana to Simpson County, Mississippi remains a mystery.

The End of Land Speculation in Mississippi

Just before John's move back to Mississippi, President Andrew Jackson drove a stake into the heart of land speculators with his Specie Circular of 1836. It was great news for the conservative small farmer who had saved his money. The Circular required gold and silver to purchase government land, not cash, which was actually bank notes, as was customary. Speculators were unable to make good on land bought on credit prior to 1837 and tens of thousands of acres of choice land in Mississippi reverted to government ownership. In the brief period between 1833 and 1836, speculators in the rich cotton country of the Chickasaw Cession in north Mississippi managed to buy up more than eight million acres. And the vast majority of this acreage was bought with bank notes drawn on the State Bank of Mississippi. In a single district in northern Mississippi, 62 speculators bought up more than 1.5 million acres. A group of investors out of

¹³² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. Mississippi, Smith County. This census that provides name, age, and location of birth.

¹³³ About the time John and son Jack moved to Louisiana, John's eldest son John C. married and moved his family to Smith County, Mississippi, which had just been formed into a county government. Third son Alexander soon followed John C. to Smith County.

New York and Boston formed The American Land Company and carried more than 200,000 acres on its books. While much of the speculation was fueled by northern capital, local investors played the game too, like the Pontotoc and Holly Springs Land Company that purchased almost 50,000 acres with bank notes, again with notes drawn on the Bank of Mississippi.¹³⁴

But the Specie Circular put the Bank of Mississippi out of business. It went bankrupt in 1837 and left many speculators with no other choice than to declare bankruptcy along with it. Of the 8 million acres purchased in north Mississippi between 1833 and 1836, more than 2 million acres, or 25%, had been bought by speculators. The vast majority of this acreage would eventually revert to government ownership. But that left 6 million acres or 75% bought by planters and small farmers, many of whom had also bought their land with credit backed by bank notes.

The Specie Circular of 1836 was truly democratic because small farmers suffered right along with speculators and planters alike. Farmers who had not paid off their land prior to 1837 were required to pay the remainder in gold and silver. Those who couldn't lost their farms. The *Liberty Advocate*, the newspaper for Amite County, Mississippi, ran an announcement in its December 2, 1843 issue under the bold heading, "Sale in Bankruptcy," declaring Frederick Stanton bankrupt and offered his farm for sale to the highest bidder who could pay cash at the door of the Court House of Amite County on Monday, December 27. He owned only 160 acres.¹³⁵ Planters who were highly leveraged lost everything. Dr. Martin W. Phillips, a once successful planter we have already met, declared himself bankrupt in 1840 and tried to sell his plantation by auction. No one could buy it.

¹³⁴ John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi 1770 -1860* (Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 19-21.

¹³⁵ "Sale in Bankruptcy," *Liberty Advocate*, 2 December 1843.

Simpson County, Mississippi, 1841-1844

Owsley wrote that by 1840 the "better agricultural lands in the older states and in many parts of the newer ones had been sufficiently settled by farmers to interfere with grazing upon the open range, and the herdsmen had largely disappeared from such lands."¹³⁶ But Simpson County, Mississippi offered open range. Land in Simpson County opened as part of the last Choctaw cession, the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1833, but it took the land office a good seven years to complete all the surveys. John bought two 40-acre blocks in a diagonal for a total of 80 acres and received his certificate in 1841.¹³⁷ He paid \$1.25 per acre and paid in coin, as required.

Simpson County was not dominated socially and politically by large commercial crop operators like some of the older more established counties in the Upper Mississippi Valley and in the Old Natchez District, where he once lived. Rather, the social structure of this county was dominated by small farmers who owned only a few slaves or no slaves at all.¹³⁸ Settlers were attracted to Simpson for two reasons, one was cheap land and two, it had mild winters, good water, and good pastures for cattle and hogs.¹³⁹ Simpson was a bit crowded for John's style of farming, which makes this move a bit surprising. Simpson County had 590 square miles and a total population of 3,702 people in 1845, with a population density of just more than six people per square mile; almost twice as dense as the population John left in Louisiana. But his brother Henry had just bought land in Simpson County, too, and perhaps that was an incentive to move there. Henry

¹³⁶ Owsley, 34.

¹³⁷ Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office, Land Patents, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx?searchTabIndex=0&searchByTypeIndex=0>. John's 80 acres in Simpson County was located just north of Goodwater Creek currently in side the city limits of Magee, Mississippi. Recognizing the pace of the Land Office, John probably bought his land in Simpson County in 1839, but did not receive his actual certificate until 1841.

¹³⁸ James Hayes McLendon, "History of Simpson County, Mississippi, to 1865," (master's thesis, The University of Texas, 1936), 45.

¹³⁹ McLendon, 70-71.

never moved to Simpson County. He was already well established as a probate judge in Clarke County. Perhaps Henry rented his land to his nephew Jack, who is not on record so far of ever purchasing land. But it was excellent range for his cattle and hogs.

The most advanced method of transportation in Simpson County was ox teams and wagon, and the nearest markets were Natchez and Mobile, both at least 150 miles away. Naturally, the amount of agricultural products raised for the market was very small. The livestock business thrived and so did ancillary businesses. One of the first businesses established in Simpson County was a tan yard built by Nathaniel Freeman in Westville, a clear indication of the dominant presence of cattle herders. With the exceptional occasional gatherings, the people live practically alone at the time when communication with the outside world was slow and infrequent. Newspapers were practically unknown and the mail service was considered very satisfactory if the carrier came to the remote settlement every one or two weeks.¹⁴⁰

Despite the population density, Simpson County had an excellent range for John's cattle and hogs. The Simpson County Tax Rolls are missing for 1843 and John is not listed on the 1844 tax rolls, so no records reveal how many cattle John might have been taxed on, but the Mississippi State Census of 1845 shows a white population at the time of 2,839 and 863 slaves. Neat cattle (a term for horned cattle) were counted at 7,693; hogs 13, 271; corn 139,066 bushels. Cattle in herds over 20 for taxable purposes counted at 2,119. Among these sizeable herds were Robert Magee with 200 head, D. McLauren, Sr. with 130 head, and L. B. Little with 180 head of cattle.¹⁴¹ John Hailes is not listed in the 1845 assessment rolls for Simpson County. He had already moved to Smith County, the next county to the east. The move to Smith County is somewhat of a surprise

¹⁴⁰ McLendon, 77.

¹⁴¹ Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Simpson County Tax Rolls, 1844*. microfilm.

since John had been in Simpson County for less than three years, a much shorter time than his other moves. Closer examination suggests a reason. There was only one doctor in the entire county in 1844 and that year "was a very sickly year. Dr. Woodward had more than he could attend to and made considerable money." The Mortality Schedule for 1850, which records deaths in the previous year, showed 43 deaths by various types of fevers.¹⁴² Whatever was running through Simpson County apparently persisted. A second reason for moving to Smith County was that John's sons were already there.

Smith County, Mississippi, 1844-1859

In 1845, at the age of 59, John was on the move yet again, this time to the small town of Polkville in Smith County, Mississippi. John had three sons already settled in there, John C., Jack, who had moved there in 1841, and Alexander.¹⁴³ John bought 80 acres adjacent to John C.'s farm and put ten acres under cultivation. Jack moved to Polkville just before John did and bought 80 acres adjacent to his brother Alexander and put 20 acres under cultivation.

When John arrived in Smith County in 1845, his way of life as a herder was coming to a close. Cotton planters in Mississippi were well on their way to self-sufficiency in beef and pork and while the sugar mills in Louisiana and the growing cities in the East still needed tons of beef and pork every year, much of this demand was met by cattlemen in Texas and the packing houses in Cincinnati and Chicago. Railroads and refrigerated boxcars were closing in on him, but John

¹⁴² McLendon, 112. Another reason John might have relocated to Smith County so quickly was the anthrax epidemic in 1840 that virtually destroyed the cattle herds in Mississippi. See also Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, *A History of the Mississippi Beef Cattle Industry*, 9. As a result of such a loss in income, John might have moved to Smith County versus another Pine Barren county to be near his sons in his time of need.

¹⁴³ Both men were small farmers and would later become charter members of the Masonic Lodge in White Oak, Mississippi (Willis Lodge #92) in 1848. John C. lived to be 82 and died on his farm on November 11, 1898. His brother, Alexander, died in the service of his State in 1864. See Jeanne Hand Henry, *1819-1849 Abstradex of Annual Returns, Mississippi Free and Accepted Masons*, (New Market, Alabama: Southern Genealogical Services, 1969), 278. See also Thomas G. S. Wixon and Jean Strickland, *Mississippi Masonic Death Records, 1819-1919 Book 2*, (Moss Point, Mississippi, 1991), 2.

clung to what he knew best. Ten acres was all he needed to produce enough corn for his family and stock and tend a table garden for his family. And he had help. The 1850 Census shows that John and Rachael still had five children at home, two young men aged 22 and 16, two young women aged 25 and 18, and little Seaborne, just one year old.¹⁴⁴ On his ten acres, John planted corn, peas, and sweet potatoes and ranged 26 head of cattle on vacant land. He kept 20 hogs and a milk cow.¹⁴⁵ He grew 20 bushels of rice. He was one of only three farmers in his community to grow rice.

The 1850 Agriculture Census reveals that several farmers in John's neighborhood produced products that might be useful for trade with their neighbors. Honey, rice, and wool, for instance. Not all farmers produced these products, but they were readily available through farmer-to-farmer trade. The Hailes were typical of the farmers in their community in respect to the average cash values of their farms and improved acreage, but below average as a family in how improved acreage was used. The average cash value of Hailes farms was \$187.00, the community's \$192.00. Average improved acreage was 30 acres.¹⁴⁶ John C. and Jack owned 80-acre farms and worked 30 improved. Neither of these men owned slaves, but John C. grew two bales of cotton and Jack three. On average the Hailes raised 115 bushels of corn and 45 bushels of sweet potatoes, below the community average for 162 bushels of corn and 66 bushels of sweet potatoes. Jack owned a team of working oxen, and most likely loaned them to his father and brothers because they didn't

¹⁴⁴ Seaborne is most likely the child of one of young women in the household. Rachael is 52 years old and beyond childbearing age.

¹⁴⁵ Mississippi Department of Archives and History *The Agriculture Census for Smith County, Mississippi, 1850*. microfilm.

¹⁴⁶ To achieve a realistic average, the extreme outliers were removed and an average taken of the remaining 14 farms. See Table I for raw data. The Agriculture Census for this county is exceedingly difficult to read due to the poor quality of the microfilm and it is not transcribed in any of Jean Strickland's books. The answers provided by the farmers to the census enumerator in terms of livestock value are also open to question.

have a team. All four of the Hailes owned more than one horse. John had two. So did Jack. Alexander kept three, and John C. had five. And they all kept hogs and cattle. Among the four of them they raised 120 hogs: Jack had 30; John, 20; John C. had 25, and Alexander had the most, with 40 head. As for the cattle, the Hailes were below the community average. Of the 12 farmers who kept cattle in Polkville, the average was 7 head per farmer but the Hailes, as a family, averaged only five.

The Puckett's owned the most slaves in the community. Jesse had 14, Ann had 9, and Nancy had 8. The other slave owners included Alexander Hailes, John Dukes, and Joseph Strong. Alexander owned a woman aged 31 and her one-year-old son. Dukes and Strong owned one slave each, also females.¹⁴⁷ Alexander Hailes owned 80 acres. He had 50 acres improved and produced 5 bales of cotton. The community on the whole appeared self-sufficient in hogs and cattle, but with little surplus.¹⁴⁸

All of the Hailes had sizable families, even the aging John, who still had 7 in his family. Jack had 10 in his family and so did John C. Alex had 9 to feed, including his 2 slaves. Such was the life of a farming community in Polkville in 1850.

In 1852, John received a warrant for 40 acres in Copiah County for his service in the War of 1812. He traveled to his warranted land and sold it to James Pleasant Anderson Harris who had a

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixth Census of the United States, 1850. Free Population and Slave Schedules*, Mississippi, Smith County. <http://archive.org/stream/populationschedu0388unix#page/n422/mode/1up> (accessed March 4, 2013).

¹⁴⁸ Total population of John's community in 1850 was 98 whites and 35 slaves. Based on Hilliard's consumption estimates of protein during the 1840-1860 period and the net weights of hogs established by Gallman and the net weight of cattle established by Carson. For free and slave populations see *Sixth Census of the United States, 1850*, Mississippi, Smith County. For consumption and weights see Hilliard, "Pork in the Ante-Bellum South," 465-467; Gallman, "Self-Sufficiency in the Cotton Economy of the Antebellum South," 15; and Carson, "Native American, the Market Revolution, and Culture Change: The Choctaw Cattle Economy," 12.

farm adjacent.¹⁴⁹ Despite the complaints of ineptitude, graft, and political patronage at the Government Land Office, it was still a rather sophisticated operation to be able to coordinate with the Census Bureau to first identify veterans and then secondly to identify untitled tracts of lands to warrant and thirdly to have notices posted at District Land Offices for communications purposes all without the aid of modern technology. Of course, it took years to complete such an operation by hand. And it wasn't that there was an absence of available land, especially in Mississippi. As of June 30, 1845, there were more than 10 million acres of government land still unsold in Mississippi. More than 4 million acres had been on the books since 1830. All were being held at a minimum price of \$1.25 per acre, but there were no takers. The price was still out of reach for many.¹⁵⁰

John is missing on the 1854 Smith County Tax Rolls but shows up on the Clarke County Rolls. John's brother, Henry, had been on the founding commission for the county, a probate judge, a member of the Mississippi State Legislature, and now he was serving as a county commissioner for Clarke. Why John was in Clarke County long enough to have a dwelling and pay taxes for that year is not known, but what is known is that Henry passed away in August 1855. After Henry's death, John went back to Polkville.

¹⁴⁹ Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office, Land Patents, <http://www.gloreords.blm.gov>. Search term: "Hales" (accessed May, 2011). See certificate 42378. John's military warrant and Harris' farm are located in the extreme northeast section of Copiah County in present-day Homochitto National Forest.

¹⁵⁰ D. C. Glenn, "Mississippi," *Debow's Review* 7, issue 1, (July 1849), 44.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

John Hailes was plain folk. He was a landowner, a herder, and a farmer. Nothing makes him unique. And as such, his story is one of hundreds of thousands who moved west in the early antebellum period to start a new life for themselves and their families. If John is a fair sample of the yeomen farmers who settled the Old Southwest in the early antebellum period, they were highly mobile and efficient with their labor.

John and his son, Jack, followed the classic migration pattern of early antebellum farmers who relied on their herds more than their crops for their principal source of income. This pattern consisted of seeking land that was cheap and sparsely populated and most often just opened to white settlement or a newly formed county. During his nearly 50 years in Mississippi and Louisiana, neither John Hailes nor Jack ever bought more than 160 acres or invested more than \$200 in real property.¹⁵¹ John consistently sought land that had a population density of fewer than 6 people per square mile and moved when the density reached 9 people per square mile.¹⁵² As a result, he always had access to rangelands where he fed his hogs and cattle at no expense to himself so that he could concentrate his limited labor on cultivating a corn crop and a garden for his table. While some of John's immediate neighbors in the counties in which he lived grew small amounts of cotton, there is no evidence that John ever grew any.

¹⁵¹ U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Land Patents, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>. Search terms: "Hailes and "Hails" (accessed May 2010). John's 80 acres in Simpson County was located just north of Goodwater Creek currently inside the city limits of Magee, Mississippi. When John purchased this land in 1841, Magee did not exist. Period maps do not show Magee or any other village nearby. However, Willis Magee had a gristmill operating on Goodwater Creek in 1840, which is also located with the present-day city limits of Magee. Magee was incorporated in 1900.

¹⁵² See Appendix B

But the question remains, did he make a good living at stock farming? According to the 1850 Agriculture Schedule for Smith County and John Hailes's place in the community, it appears not. While the cash value of his farm is within the community average, John is below average in production in almost all other categories including hogs, cattle, sweet potatoes, and corn.¹⁵³ The adjustment from herding to farming was apparently hard to make.

Did John's move from Darlington, South Carolina to the Mississippi Territory produce any positive results? Perhaps so. There is no evidence that John was a landowner in South Carolina, but he owned land in Mississippi. His sons were also landowners, which was a step forward and a foundation upon which to build.

¹⁵³ See Appendix C

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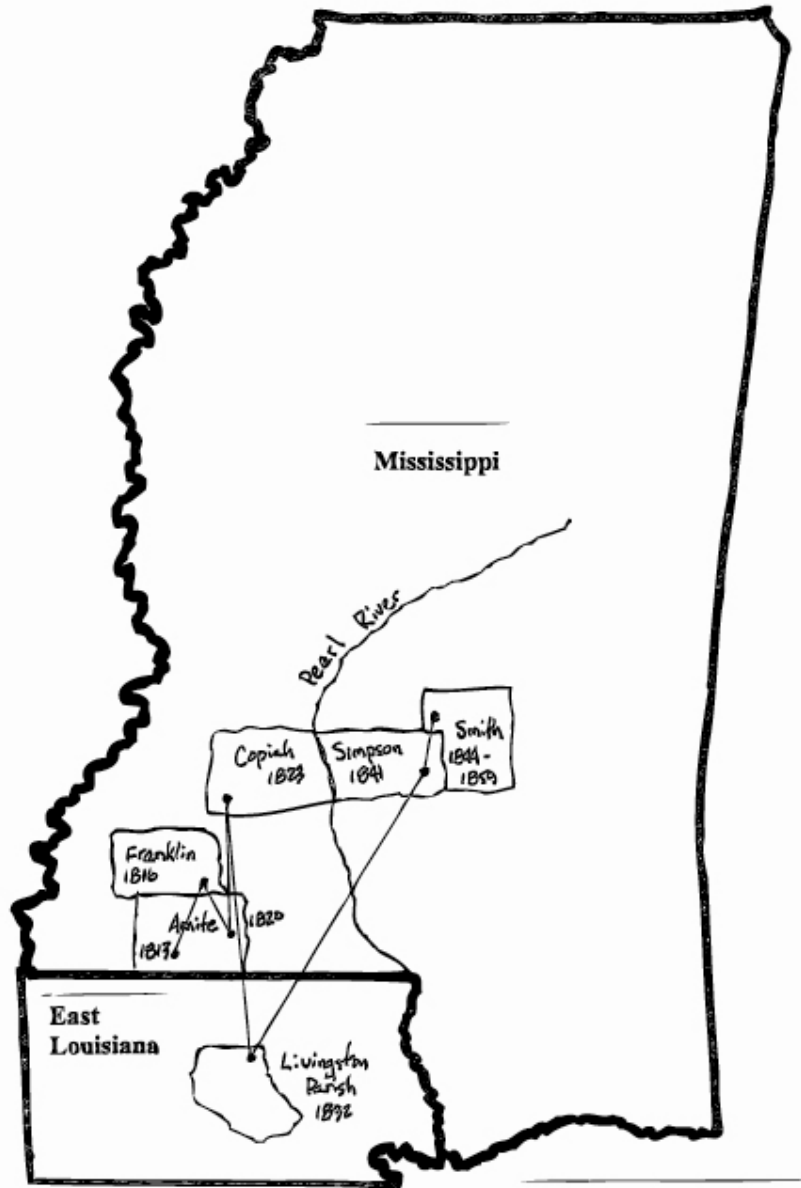
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Map Depicting John Hailes's Relocations



A

John Hailes
Mississippi and Louisiana
1813-1859

APPENDIX B

Population Densities

B

Total Population per Square Mile									
County	1810	1813	1816	1820	1823	1830	1840	1850	1860
Darlington County SC									
departed	16								
Amite County MS									
arrived		6.4							
departed			6.4						
Franklin County MS									
arrived			4.8						
departed				6.7					
Amite County MS									
arrived				9.4					
departed					9.4				
Copiah County MS									
arrived					4				
departed						8.9			
Livingston LA									
arrived						2.75			
departed							3.2		
Simpson County MS									
arrived							5.7		
departed							5.7		
Smith County MS									
							3.1	6.4	12

Calculations by the author based on total population data gathered from county tax rolls, state census records, and federal free and slave population schedules divided by the square mile area of each county on the dates John arrived and departed.

APPENDIX C

Agricultural Schedule for Polkville, Mississippi, 1850

AGRICULTURAL SCHEDULES: 1850 TO 1900.

745

Schedule 4.—PRODUCTIONS OF AGRICULTURE IN _____ IN THE COUNTY OF Smith, STATE OF Miss, DURING THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 1, 1850, ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE _____ DAY OF _____ 1850. ASSISTANT MARSHAL.

NAME OF OWNER, AGENT, OR MANAGER OF THIS FARM.	ACRES OF LAND.		CASH VALUE OF FARM.		LIVE STOCK, JUNE 1, 1850.										PRODUCTS DURING THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 1, 1850.					
	Improved.	Unimproved.	Each value of farm.	Value of live stock, including horses and mules.	Horses.	Assess'd mules.	Milk cows.	Working oxen.	Other oxen.	Sheep.	Pigs.	Value of live stock.	Wheat, bushels.	Rye, bushels.	Kentucky corn, bushels.	Oats, bushels.	Stalk, pounds.	Wool, pounds.		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
Jesse Puckett	170	570	1000	1100	7	3	5	9	20	-	20	300	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	
W. Franklin	20	60	100	15	2	-	3	2	6	5	2	25	-	-	200	-	-	-	-	
John Dukes	24	20	130	10	1	-	3	-	2	-	50	200	-	-	150	-	-	-	-	
Joseph Strong	33	45	300	70	3	-	6	4	7	35	40	400	-	-	100	20	20	-	-	
Ann Puckett	35	70	100	50	3	-	2	2	10	-	20	300	-	-	200	-	-	-	-	
Nancy Puckett	50	72	130	10	3	-	2	2	2	-	40	400	-	-	300	-	50	-	-	
Philip Shealy	15	60	100	10	2	0	2	2	2	-	20	200	-	-	150	-	-	-	-	
H. J. Hailes	31	45	150	25	2	-	4	2	6	-	30	150	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	
John Barlow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	125	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
John Hailes	10	75	100	5	1	-	1	-	3	-	20	100	-	-	150	-	30	-	-	
John C. Hailes	30	45	200	20	5	-	3	-	3	-	25	150	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	
A. Hailes	50	45	300	15	1	-	1	-	10	-	40	100	-	-	130	-	-	-	-	
W. Rhodes	40	120	200	20	5	-	4	-	17	15	6	100	-	-	250	50	-	-	-	
J. Richardson	40	120	500	12	1	-	1	-	-	-	20	95	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	
Gordon Walker	20	120	150	70	1	-	1	-	-	-	20	120	-	-	50	-	-	-	-	
N. Easterling	20	120	150	10	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	60	-	-	-	-	

VITA

RONALD J. MCCALL

- Personal Data: Date of Birth: August 4, 1948
 Place of Birth: Baytown, Texas
 Marital Status: Married
- Education: Public Schools, Aiken, South Carolina
 B.A. Economics, Clemson University, 1975
 B.A. English, Clemson University, 1975
 M.A. History, East Tennessee State University, 2013
- Experience: Speechwriter, 1975-1998
 President, Executive Communications, 1998-Present
- Honors and Awards: Research Grant, School of Graduate Studies, East Tennessee
 State University, 2012
 Graduate Assistantship, Department of History,
 East Tennessee State University, 2012-2013