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ROBERT HABERSHAM

(1783-1870)

FOR

HISTORY 500

CHERRI SHELNUTT

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ROBERT HABERSHAM

Robert Habersham (1783-1870) was a Georgia planter and merchant who lived from the time of the Revolution until the days of Reconstruction. He was part of the Habersham clan which had so much to do with the founding and growth of Georgia. Robert's grandfather, James, came to Georgia with George Whitfield. Robert's father, Joseph, was active in the Revolution and the early Republic, serving in the Provisional Congress and as this country's first Postmaster General.

Robert Habersham added to the family honor during his own life in Savannah. He was a merchant for some sixty years, owned several well-known Savannah plantations (Causton's Bluff, Deptford, etc.), and was a faithful, long-time vestryman for Christ Episcopal Church. He was also Treasurer for Chatham County.

Robert Habersham was extremely successful in his business, leaving an estate valued at over \$164,000 (despite his losses during and following the Civil War). He was also a family man, marrying three times. He married Mary O'Brien of Beaufort, South Carolina; Elizabeth Neyle; and his first cousin, Mary Butler Habersham. He had several children. Robert lived a full life and died of old age. He is buried in the Habersham family section of Laurel Grove Cemetery.

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Robert Habersham, wealthy Savannah merchant and planter, was born 25 December 1783 to Joseph and Isabella (Rae) Habersham.¹ Robert's father and paternal grandfather were both involved in the establishment of Georgia. James Habersham, Robert's grandfather, came over to the Colony with George Whitfield and worked at the Bethesda orphanage near Savannah until 1774.² That year, he opened a commercial house, one of the first in Georgia.³ It became very profitable and successful. James Habersham was also a planter and was one of the largest land owners and rice cultivators in Georgia between 1750 and 1775.⁴ James married Mary Bolton on 26 December 1740 in a ceremony performed by Whitfield.⁵ They had ten children, and three sons survived.⁶

¹Ettie Tidwell McCall, comp., Roster of Revolutionary Soldiers in Georgia, vol. 3 (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1969), p. 98.

²William Harden, A History of Savannah and South Georgia, vol. 1 (Atlanta: Cherokee Pub. Co., 1969), p. 93.

³Ibid., p. 97.

⁴Mary Granger, ed., Savannah River Plantations (Federal Writer's Project; reprinted in Spartanburg, South Carolina: Reprint Co.), p. 17.

⁵Harden, History of Savannah, p. 97.

⁶Ibid.

James Habersham was extensively involved in political affairs in the Georgia Colony, setting an example for his children and grandchildren. He was one of the assistants to the President of Georgia Province, Secretary of the Province, one of the Councillors in 1754, President of the Upper House of the Assembly in 1767, and served as a substitute for Royal Governor Wright when the latter was on a trip to England.⁷

Although James Habersham himself remained loyal to England, his sons, Joseph, John, and James, Junior, served on the side of the Colonists during the Revolution.⁸ James Habersham, Senior, traveled to New Brunswick, New Jersey, for his health and died there on 28 August 1775.⁹ He thus did not have to make the painful decision about returning to England without his children during or after the Revolution.

Joseph Habersham, Robert's father, was born in Savannah in 1751.¹⁰ As events in the Colonies began to turn toward rebellion, Joseph played an active part. On 11 December

⁷Ibid.

⁸Joseph Gaston Baillie Bulloch, A History and Genealogy of the Habersham Family (Columbia, South Carolina: R. L. Bryant Co., 1901), p. 3.

⁹Harden, History of Savannah, p. 97.

¹⁰McCall, Roster of Soldiers, p. 98.

1775, Joseph was appointed a member of the Council of Safety.¹¹ By 7 January 1776, he was appointed a Major in the Continental Battalion.¹² Indeed, it was Joseph Habersham who arrested the Royal Governor of Georgia, Sir James Wright (probably a family friend) in 1776.¹³

Also early in 1776, Joseph married Isabella Rae, the daughter of another wealthy merchant and plantation owner, Captain John Rae.¹⁴ (John Rae was an Indian trader and owned a grist mill/trading post in Augusta that was one of the best-known places in early Georgia.¹⁵) The wedding took place in May at 'Brampton,' an estate along the Savannah River near the city of Savannah.¹⁶ Joseph and Isabella had at least nine children.¹⁷ They were James, John, Mary, Isabella, Joseph, Robert, William, Eliza A., and Susan Ann.¹⁸

¹¹Harden, History of Savannah, p. 187.

¹²Ibid., p. 188.

¹³Ibid., p. 190.

¹⁴Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 4 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 70; see also McCall, Roster of Soldiers, p. 98.

¹⁵Granger, Savannah Plantations, p. 352.

¹⁶D.A.B., p. 70.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 70 says that there were ten children; McCall in Roster of Soldiers, p. 98 says there were nine.

¹⁸McCall, Roster of Soldiers, p. 98.

Robert Habersham was the sixth child and fourth son of Joseph and Isabella. Robert may have been named in honor of his great-grandfather, Robert Bolton. (Robert Bolton was a Warden of Christ Episcopal Church and was himself an eminent merchant.¹⁹)

Little is known of Robert Habersham's childhood days, but it is important to remember what his father was doing at the time. The power and influence Joseph Habersham had in Georgia and national affairs certainly affected his own children.

In 1785-86, Joseph Habersham was a delegate to the Continental Congress.²⁰ Robert was about two years old at that time. In 1788, when Robert was five, his father was a member of the Convention that ratified the Federal Constitution in Georgia.²¹ On 12 March 1792, Joseph was appointed Major of Savannah by the Board of Aldermen.²²

Just three years later, when Robert was about eleven, President George Washington appointed Joseph Habersham as

¹⁹Bulloch, History and Genealogy, p. 4.

²⁰D. A. B., p. 70.

²¹Ibid.

²²Thomas Gamble, Jr., comp., A History of the City Government of Savannah, Georgia, From 1790-1901 (privately printed, 1901), p. 3; see also C. C. Jones, Jr., O. F. Vedder, and Frank Weldon, History of Savannah, Georgia (Syracuse, New York: D. Mason and Co., Pubs., 1890), p. 311.

the first Postmaster General of the United States.²³ In 1801, President Thomas Jefferson asked Joseph Habersham to become the U. S. Treasurer, but Joseph declined.²⁴ Robert was about eighteen when his father left national politics and devoted himself to business in Savannah.

Robert Habersham was obviously a member of the Southern elite. His ancestors were prominent in local, state, and national affairs. The men were well-educated, with both Robert's father and his Habersham uncles attending Princeton University.²⁵ Most branches of the family were also quite wealthy. Robert's Grandfather Habersham owned nearly two hundred slaves prior to the Revolution, and his Grandfather Rae probably also had a good many.²⁶ Much of Robert Habersham's adult life is a reflection of this heritage.

²³D. A. B., p. 70.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 68; see also the Registrar's Office at Princeton University.

²⁵D. A. B., p. 68.

²⁶Ibid.

Genealogy of Joseph Habersham

(Robert's father)

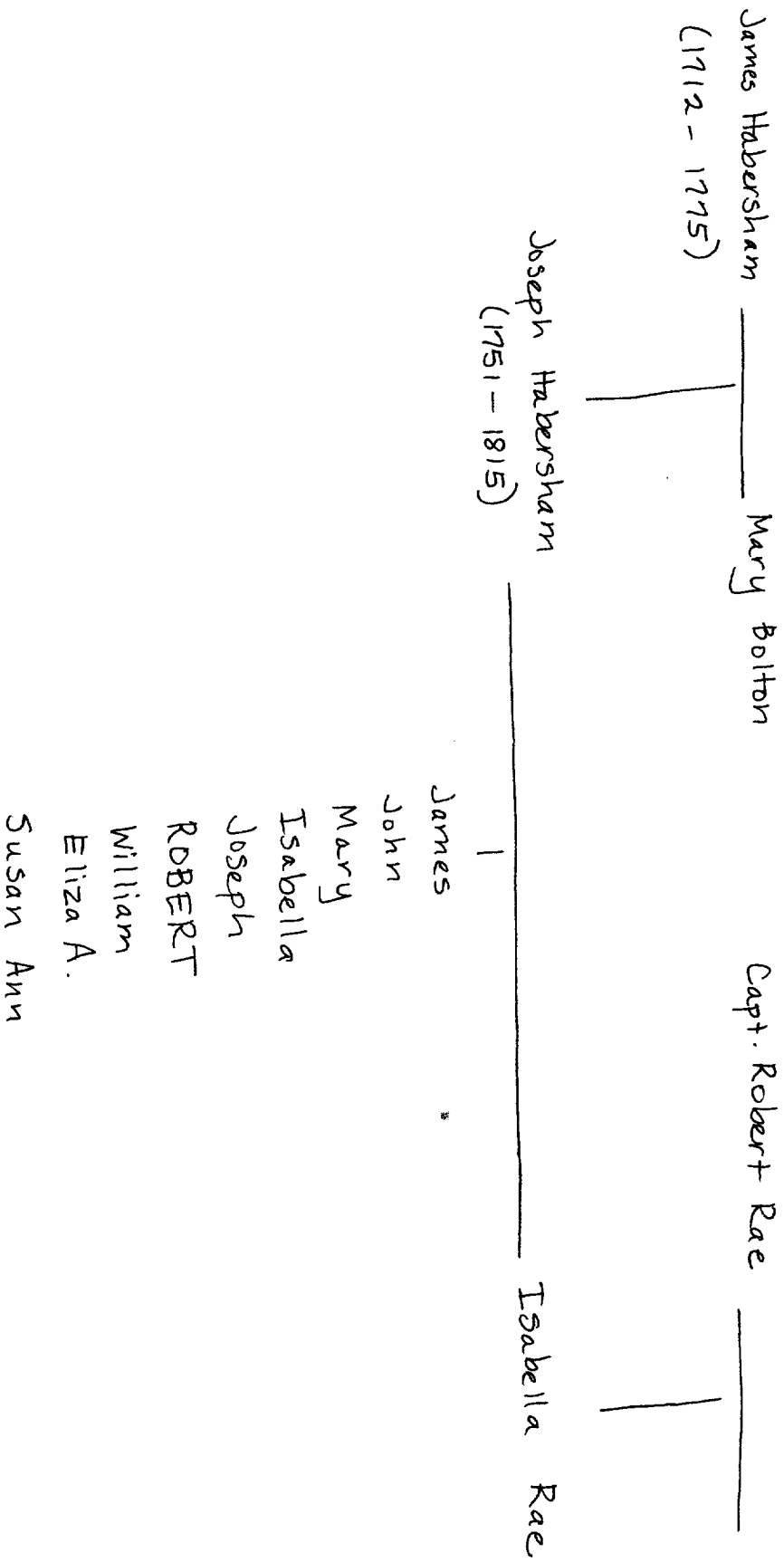
Robert Bolton m. Ann Curtis
(1723 - 1789)

James Habersham
(1712-1775)

Mary Bolton

JOSEPH HABERSHAM
John Habersham
James Habersham, Jr.

Genealogy of Robert Habersham



Family Man

Robert Habersham was married three times. First, he married Mary O'Brien of Beaufort, South Carolina. They were wed in Beaufort on 22 November 1809.²⁷ Robert was almost twenty-six. Robert and Mary had at least three children before her death. Robert named their first son in honor of his father, Joseph.²⁸

A second child, Robert, Junior, was born in 1812.²⁹ This son later attended and graduated from Harvard University.³⁰ The last child born to Robert and Mary was named Mary O'Brien Habersham in honor of her mother. She was born on 22 May 1813.³¹ Apparently soon after this child's birth, Mary Habersham herself died.

Robert Habersham next married Elizabeth Matilda Neyle,

²⁷The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 28 November 1809, page 3, column 3; see also The Colonial Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 30 November 1809, page 3, column 3; on microfilm at Georgia Historical Society (GHS).

²⁸Bulloch, History and Genealogy, p. 19.

²⁹The Georgian, 1 September 1832, page 3, column 1; on microfilm at GHS; see also Parish Registry, Christ Church; on microfilm at GHS.

³⁰Harvard University Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates, 1636-1930 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1930), p. 1306.

³¹Bulloch, History and Genealogy, p. 21; see also the Habersham Genealogy File, GHS.

daughter of William Neyle of Savannah.³² Their marriage contract was dated 21 January 1815, with the wedding to take place shortly.³³ Robert and Elizabeth had two children. Isabella Charlotte Habersham (perhaps named for her grandmother) was born in November, 1815.³⁴ Robert's fifth child (and his second with Elizabeth) was born 25 July 1817 and named William Neyle Habersham, in honor of his grandfather.³⁵ This son also later graduated from Harvard.³⁶ Unfortunately, Robert's wife, Elizabeth, died the same day that "Neyle" was born, apparently during childbirth.³⁷

On 10 June 1819, Robert Habersham married for the third and final time. His new wife was Mary Butler Habersham, his first cousin and the daughter of Major John Habersham, Robert's uncle.³⁸ They were still married when Robert died

³²Bulloch, History and Genealogy, p. 19.

³³Marriage Contract, Jones Family Papers, file 58, GHS.

³⁴Habersham Genealogy File, GHS.

³⁵Ibid., see also Bulloch, History and Genealogy, p. 21.

³⁶Harvard Graduates, p. 1306.

³⁷The Colonial Museum and Savannah Gazette, 29 July 1817, page 3, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

³⁸Habersham Genealogy File, GHS; also Robert Habersham's Will, Book H, Folio 332, App. 28, Court Records, Chatham County Court House, Savannah, Georgia; for some reason, the newspapers gave her name as "Hannah" (see The Georgian, 15 June 1819, page 3, column 3; see also The Colonial Museum and Savannah Gazette, 17 June 1819, page 3, column 1, on microfilm at GHS).

fifty years later.³⁹

Robert and Mary had a number of children. Their first (and Robert's sixth) child was John Rae Habersham, born 2 October 1822.⁴⁰ The child was probably named in honor of either Robert's maternal grandfather, John Rae, Senior, or for Robert's uncle, John Rae, Junior. Young John Rae Habersham was baptized at Christ Church in Savannah on 17 April 1823, just a few days after his own mother's confirmation.⁴¹ Like his older brothers, John Rae Habersham also graduated from Harvard.⁴² John outlived his father, not dying until 1896.⁴³

A second child, Susan Ann, was born to Robert and Mary Habersham on 17 May 1825.⁴⁴ She was Robert's seventh child and was baptized on 9 October 1825 at Christ Church. Her sponsors were her parents, as well as her uncle and aunt,

³⁹Robert Habersham's Will, Chatham County Court House; see also 1860 Federal Census, Chatham County, Georgia, number 1184.

⁴⁰Habersham Genealogy File, GHS.

⁴¹Parish Registry, Christ Church, on microfilm at GHS.

⁴²Harvard Graduates, p. 1306.

⁴³Habersham Genealogy File, GHS; see also Index to Laurel Grove Cemetery, 1852-1938 (WPA Project, 1939), s.v.

⁴⁴Parish Registry, Christ Church, on microfilm at GHS.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Habersham.⁴⁵ She was probably named for her father's sister.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, Susan Ann Habersham died less than two years later and was buried on 10 April 1827.⁴⁷

Another daughter, Marie Elliott Habersham, was the third child born to Robert and Mary Habersham. She was born 13 August 1827 and was Robert's eighth child.⁴⁸ Mrs. Susan D. Habersham (wife of Joseph) joined Robert and Mary as sponsors for Marie.⁴⁹ Marie Elliott Habersham was probably named in honor of one of her father's Elliott 'cousins.' Marie also outlived her father, dying on 9 June 1898.⁵⁰

Alexander Telfair Habersham was the fourth child born to Robert and Mary Habersham (and Robert's ninth). He was born on 23 April 1830 and was baptized 4 July 1830 at Christ Church. His sponsors were his parents and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Habersham.⁵¹ "Telfair" also graduated from Harvard.⁵²

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ McCall, Roster of Soldiers, p. 98.

⁴⁷ Parish Registry, Christ Church, on microfilm at GHS.

⁴⁸ Ibid.; see also Habersham Genealogy File, GHS; see also Bulloch, History and Genealogy, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Parish Registry, Christ Church, on microfilm at GHS.

⁵¹ Ibid.; see also Bulloch, History and Genealogy, p. 19.

⁵² Harvard Graduates, p. 1306.

He lived almost as long as his father, dying on 19 June 1868.⁵³

The year 1832 brought both sadness and joy to Robert Habersham. His son, Robert, Junior (born to Mary O'Brien Habersham in 1812), died at twenty years of age and was buried on 31 August.⁵⁴ Just three days later, the fifth child of Robert and Mary Habersham was baptized at home, several months after his birth on 4 June 1832. His sponsors were Mrs. Joseph Habersham and Miss Mary Habersham, and the baby was named Robert Habersham, Junior (probably both for his father and for his half-brother who had just died).⁵⁵ Sadly, this new young Robert also died within two years and was buried on 14 June 1834.⁵⁶

Susan Ellen Habersham was the sixth and last child of Robert and Mary Habersham (and was Robert's tenth child). She was born on 25 July 1835 and was baptized on 20 December 1835.⁵⁷ Her sponsor was 'cousin' Reverend William Habersham Elliott, the son of Bishop Stephen Elliott of Christ Church

⁵³Habersham Genealogy File, GHS; see also Laurel Grove Index, s.v.

⁵⁴Parish Registry, Christ Church, on microfilm at GHS.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.; see also Habersham Genealogy File, GHS; see also Bulloch, History and Genealogy, pp. 19 and 26.

and the husband of Susan Ellen's half-sister, Mary.⁵⁸ Susan Ellen may have been name for her father's cousin and sister-in-law, Susan Dorothy (Habersham) Habersham. Susan Ellen also outlived her father, dying on 22 April 1892 in Hyde Park, New York.⁵⁹

Robert Habersham had at least seventeen grandchildren, although not all of them lived to adulthood. His son, William Neyle Habersham, had a family of twelve children, seven of whom reached majority.⁶⁰ All but two of these children were baptized by Bishop Stephen Elliott.⁶¹ Robert's daughter, Susan Ellen (Habersham) Coleman, had at least two children.⁶² Another daughter, Marie Elliott (Habersham) White had one son.⁶³ A third daughter of Robert's, Mary O'Brien (Habersham) Elliott, also had a son.⁶⁴ At least three of Robert's seventeen grandchildren were named after

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Habersham Genealogy File, GHS.

⁶⁰Spencer Bidwell King, Jr., Ebb Tide: As Seen Through the Diary of Josephine Clay Habersham (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), p. 13.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 7; see also Parish Registry, Christ Church, on microfilm at GHS.

⁶²Parish Registry, Christ Church, on microfilm at GHS.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

him.

Mr. Habersham was not only concerned with providing for his immediate family, but he also assisted relatives. When his brother, Joseph, died of consumption in 1831, Robert took his sister-in-law and her three sons into the home and treated them as equals with his own family.⁶⁵ In addition, when another of Robert's brothers died (followed soon after by his wife), Robert Habersham assumed some responsibility for their three children.⁶⁶

⁶⁵Habersham Genealogy File, GHS; see also Will of Robert Habersham, Chatham County Court House; see also 1860 Federal Census, Chatham County, Georgia, number 1184.

⁶⁶Habersham Genealogy File, GHS.

CHART # 3

MARRIAGES AND CHILDREN OF ROBERT HABERSHAM

Marriage one: To Mary O'Brien (on 22 November 1809)

- A. Joseph Habersham
- B. Robert Habersham, Jr. (1812-August, 1832)
- C. Mary O'Brien Habersham (22 May 1813-

Marriage two: To Elizabeth Matilda Neyle (in 1815)

- D. Isabella Charlotte Habersham (November 1815-1864)
- E. Willaim Neyle Habersham (25 July 1817-20 September 1899)

Marriage three: To Mary Butler Habersham (on 10 June 1819)

- F. John Rae Habersham (2 October 1822-27 February 1896)
- G. Susan Ann Habersham (17 May 1825-10 April 1827)
- H. Marie Elliott Habersham (13 August 1827-9 June 1898)
- J. Robert Habersham, Junior (4 June 1832-June 1834)
- K. Susan Ellen Habersham (25 July 1835-22 Spril 1892)

Businessman

James Habersham, Robert's grandfather, joined with Francis Harris to found one of the first commercial houses in Georgia in 1744.⁶⁷ He was starting a tradition which continued through his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

James sent his son, Joseph (Robert's father) to Princeton University to begin his education. Afterward, he sent Joseph back to England for three years to get some training at a mercantile concern there.⁶⁸ Upon his return to Georgia, Joseph entered business with his brother, James, in 1771.⁶⁹ James, Senior, decided that his sons might both be happier if Joseph went into business separately, so he set Joseph up with his cousin, Joseph Clay, in 1773.⁷⁰ (Please see Chart # 4 for the various names of the Habersham companies.)

When Joseph Habersham returned to Savannah after his national service, he rejoined his cousin, Joseph Clay, in the mercantile business.⁷¹ Later, Joseph entered the

⁶⁷Harden, History of Savannah, p. 97.

⁶⁸D. A. B., p. 3.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Charles C. Jones, Jr., Biographic Sketches of the Delegates From Georgia to the Continental Congress (Spartangurg: Reprint Co., 1972), p. 80.

factorage and commission business with his son, Robert, and they had a counting house on Commerce Row in Savannah by 1810.⁷² In March of that year, Joseph Habersham chose to retire from the business, and Robert began to operate alone.⁷³

In his mercantile business, Robert performed all kinds of jobs. One large portion of the company's work was to receive and sell goods. For example, in 1829, Robert processed over 22,000 bushels of rought rice shipped directly to his company.⁷⁴ He also shared portions of a good many shipments with other merchants. Habersham dealt through the years with large amounts of cotton, cleaned rice, corn, bacon, flour, and other food stuffs.⁷⁵ In addition, the company obtained tobacco and various tools and implements needed for plantation life.⁷⁶

Habersham's company used a variety of ships, sloops, schooners, and steamboats to transport the goods. (Please

⁷²The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 2 January 1810, page 2, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

⁷³The Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 26 March 1910, page 2, column 2; see also The Repuglican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 24 March 1810; on microfilm at GHS.

⁷⁴Multiple newspapers; on microfilm, GHS.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶The Colonial Museum and Savannah Gazette, 30 August 1817, page 3, column 1; see also The Savannah Gazette, 28 February 1826, page 3, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

see Chart # 5 for a list of goods Robert received, both individually and with other merchants, on more than one hundred voyages in 1830.⁷⁷) The schooners generally carried corn and bacon from North Carolina, although a few transported cotton. Cotton and rice were primarily brought in on sloops from plantations around Savannah or Charleston.⁷⁹ Additional cotton was often carried by pole or steam boat from Augusta.⁸⁰

Ships from New York City and Liverpool, England, brought general merchandise.⁸¹ Some of these vessels were owned by Robert Habersham's company, and others were rented or leased. In 1817, a newspaper notice by R & J Habersham requested a "quantity of cedar for ship building."⁸²

⁷⁷The Georgian, 1 January - 31 December 1830; on microfilm at GHS.

⁷⁸The Georgian, 7 April 1823, page 2, column 5; and 10 March 1830, page 2, column 5; see also The Savannah Georgian, 14 March 1826, page 2, column 5; on microfilm at GHS.

⁷⁹The Savannah Museum, 12 January 1822, page 3, column 3; see also The Savannah Georgian, 13 January 1826, page 2, column 4, and 13 March 1826, page 2, column 6; on microfilm at GHS.

⁸⁰The Savannah Georgian, 18 February 1826, page 2 column 4; on microfilm at GHS.

⁸¹The Georgian, 18 September 1830, page 3, column 1; see also The Savannah Museum, 16 January 1822, page 3, column 4; on microfilm at GHS.

⁸²The Colonial Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 21 April 1817, page 3, column 4; on microfilm at GHS.

According to his daughter-in-law, Josephine Clay Habersham, Robert's firm owned a fleet of ships carrying Georgia goods across the Atlantic and returning with Spanish and Maderia wines.⁸³

In addition to buying and selling goods, the Habersham company performed other business services. Newspaper ads often mentioned plantations for sale or rent through the company. For example, in 1817, Vallombrosa plantation on the Ogechee River (with 1,100 acres) and three plantations on Dawfusky Island (totaling 1,900 acres) were available through R & J Habersham.⁸⁴ Also that year, Cedar Hill plantation (the "well-known one of General Jackson") was offered for rent through the Habershams.⁸⁵ In 1822, the 2,000 acre Tranquilla plantation in Bryan County was listed for sale by R & J.⁸⁶

Houses within Savannah were frequently sold or rented through the Habershams. Robert's brother's house was

⁸³King, Ebb Tide, p. 10.

⁸⁴The Colonial Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 3 February 1817, page 4, column 2; see also The Colonial Museum and Savannah Gazette, 28 August 1817, page 3, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

⁸⁵The Colonial Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 5 February 1817, page 3, column 4; on microfilm at GHS.

⁸⁶The Georgian, 24 January 1822, page 3, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

offered for sale in 1821, as were a "brick dwelling house and lots" in Jackson Ward in 1826.⁸⁷ Dwellings and stores were sometimes listed together. In 1820 and 1821, stores and tenements* on Jones' upper and lower wharfs were listed for rent.⁸⁸ Counting rooms continued to be for rent.⁸⁹

In addition to houses and buildings, the Habersham firm sometimes offered slaves for sale.⁹⁰ The company also served as a return point for captured runaway slaves, some from plantations near Savannah and others from as far away as Charleston.⁹¹ Other plantation workers such as field hands and an overseer were sought by R & J Haber-

⁸⁷The Daily Georgian, 6 February 1821, page 3, column 1; see also The Savannah Georgian, 4 January 1826, page 3 column 5; on microfilm at GHS.

⁸⁸The Georgian, 6 July 1820, page 3, column 4; see also 25 October 1821, page 4, columns 2 and 5; on microfilm at GHS.

⁸⁹Ibid, 17 July 1821, page 3, column 5; on microfilm at GHS.

⁹⁰Ibid., 24 May 1821, page 3, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

⁹¹The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 5 January 1813, page 4, column 2; see also The Colonial Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 25 April 1817, page 3, column 4; see also The Georgian and Evening Advertiser, 11 May 1821, page 3, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

sham.⁹² (It is unclear whether these were for Habersham plantations or for other owners.)

Robert and his company were often used as attorneys for people who had to be absent from Savannah for some reason.⁹³ Robert Habersham served as agent for such well-known men as George Noble Jones of Savannah and Louis Manigault of Charleston.⁹⁴ At times, R & J served as representatives/administrators for estate settlements.⁹⁵ In addition, Habersham personally managed the financial affairs of such people as his widowed daughter, Susan Ellen (Habersham) Coleman.⁹⁶

The Habersham company offered various machinery for use by rice and cotton plantations. In 1817, they sold foot

⁹²The Colonial Museum and Savannah Gazette, 10 June 1817, page 3, column 4; see also 18 November 1817, page 2 column 5; on microfilm at GHS.

⁹³The Georgian, 20 Marcy 1824, page 2, column 6; on microfilm at GHS.

⁹⁴Miscellaneous letters, George Noble Jones Papers (1838-41) and Louis Manigault Papers (1840-43), Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke Univeristy, Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁹⁵The Daily Georgian, 19 March 1821, page 3, column 2; see also The Georgian, 21 January 1822, page 4, column 1; see also The Savannah Georgian, 11 May 1825, page 1, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

⁹⁶Letters of accounts, William C. Daniell Papers (1861), Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Raleigh, North Carolina.

cotton gins "which have been highly approved."⁹⁷ A cotton packing machine at Yamacraw could be rented.⁹⁸ The Habersham Rice Mill and Flouring Mills served the Savannah in the 1850's and 1860's.⁹⁹

In addition to the work done in Georgia and South Carolina, Robert Habersham undoubtedly conducted business with his various 'cousins.' Alexander Wylly Habersham, another descendant of James Habersham, was part of the Baltimore firm of Habersham and Barrett, importers of tea and East Indian goods.¹⁰⁰ Cousin Joseph Clay continued to operate a business in Savannah.¹⁰¹

John R. and William Habersham are listed as commercial merchants in New York City city directories between 1848 and 1857.¹⁰² According to family genealogists, John Rae

⁹⁷The Colonial Museum and Savannah Gazette, 6 September 1817, page 3, column 4; on microfilm at GHS.

⁹⁸The Georgian, 20 November 1822, page 2, column 6; on microfilm at GHS.

⁹⁹Savannah City Directory, 1859, page 91; also 1866 issue, page 69; at GHS.

¹⁰⁰D. A. B., p. 68.

¹⁰¹Miscellaneous newspapers; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁰²Doggett's New York City Directory, Illustrated, 1848-49, s.v. through Trow's New York City Directory, 1857, s.v.; in possession of Franklin M. Garrett of the Atlanta Historical Society.

Habersham (Robert's sixth child) worked in his father's counting room in New York in 1854 and earlier.¹⁰³ A nephew of Robert's, William Habersham, Junior, lived with the family after his own father's death, so he may be the William mentioned with John R. in the city directories.¹⁰⁴ Robert Habersham, Junior, mentions in his 1831 diary visiting relatives in New York and may well have meant these two men.¹⁰⁵

Certainly Robert Habersham's business career was wide-ranging. In his obituary, the Editor of The Morning News notes that Robert was "intelligent, enterprising, and active."¹⁰⁶ Having served for sixty years, Robert was the oldest merchant in Savannah at the time of his death.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³Habersham Genealogy File, GHS.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Robert Habersham, Junior, Manuscript File, Index 346, GHS.

¹⁰⁶The Morning News, 31 January 1870, page 2, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

CHART # 4

HABERSHAM COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES

1. Harris and Habersham (Robert's grandfather)
2. James and Joseph Habersham (Robert's father and uncle)
3. Joseph Clay & Company (Robert's 'cousin' and father)
4. Joseph and Robert Habersham (Robert and his father)
5. Robert Habersham (alone)
6. R & J Habersham (Robert and his cousin)
7. Robert Habersham & Sons (Robert with various sons)

GOODS RECEIVED BY HABERSHAM'S COMPANY

1830

<u>Vessel</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Product</u>	<u>From</u>
Steamboat	William Gaston	cotton	McLaren's Mill
Sloop	George Washington	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	Swallow	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	Wave	rice, cotton	Ogechee
Sloop	Atlas	rice	Ogechee
Steamboat	Carolina	cotton, misc.	Augusta
Sloop	Othello	rice, cotton	South Carolina
Sloop	Excel	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	Excel	rice	McLaren's Mill
Sloop	Albert	cotton, rice, hides	Riceboro
Sloop	Good Intent	corn, flour	Fredericksburg, VA
Schooner	Frances	misc.	Philadelphia
Brig	Philidelphia	corn	Newbern, NC
Sloop	Ann	cotton	Sunbury
Sloop	Swallow	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	Excel	rice, cotton	Ogechee
Sloop	Atlas	rice	McLaren's Mill
Sloop	America	rice, cotton	Riceboro
Sloop	Wave	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	Othello	rice, cotton	Combahee
Sloop	Mill Maid	rice	Haig's Plantation
Sloop	Superb	corn	Elizabeth City, NC
Schooner	Albert	cotton	Riceboro
Sloop	Othello	cotton	
Sloop	George	rice, cotton, hides	
Sloop	George Washington	misc.	
Steam packet	America	cotton, rice	Charleston
Sloop	Jackson	rice	Riceboro
Sloop	Swallow	rice	McLaren's Mill
Sloop			Ogechee

GOODS RECEIVED, cont.

<u>Vessel</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Product</u>	<u>From</u>
Sloop	Wave	rice, cotton	Ogechee
Sloop	Excel	rice, cotton	Ogechee
Brig	Cartha	salt, dry goods	Liverpool, England
Sloop	Othello	rice	Combahee, SC
Sloop	Eliza	cotton, hides	Turtle River
Schooner	Mary Perry	rice	McLaren's Mill
Sloop	Robert Habersham	rice	Combahee, SC
Sloop	Portsmouth	cotton, rice	Riceboro
Sloop	Atlas	cotton	Beaufort, SC
Sloop	Ann	cotton	Sunbury
Sloop	Rosetta	sugar, cotton	Turtle River
Sloop	Pilot	cotton, hides	St. John's
Sloop	Isabella	cotton	Beaufort
Schooner	James Monroe	corn, bacon, misc.	Newbern, NC
Schooner	Excel	rice, cotton	Ogechee
Sloop	Wave	cotton, rice	Ogechee
Sloop	America	cotton, rice	Riceboro
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Sloop	Good Intent	cotton, rice	Darien
Sloop	Superb	corn, bacon	Little River, NC
Schooner	Bolivar	cotton	Darien
Sloop	Albert	cotton, rice, hides	Riceboro
Sloop	Ann	cotton	Sunbury
Sloop	Isabella	cotton	Beaufort, SC
Schooner	Excel	rice, cotton	Ogechee
Sloop	Robert Habersham	rice	Combahee, SC
Sloop	John	corn, bacon	Newbern, NC
Sloop	Wave	rice	
Steam packet	John D. Mongin		Charleston
Schooner	Fifield	misc.	Philadelphia

GOODS RECEIVED, cont.

<u>Vessel</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Product</u>	<u>From</u>
Ship	Macon	misc.	New York
Schooner	Mary Ann	corn	Edenton, NC
Sloop	Excel	rice	Ogechee
Brig	Frances	misc.	Philadelphia
Steamboat	Carolina	cotton, misc.	Augusta
Schooner	Malvina	corn	Ocracock, NC
Sloop	Albert	cotton	Riceboro
Sloop	Ann	cotton	Sunbury
Schooner	Rapid	misc.	Philadelphia
Sloop	Excel	rice, cotton	Ogechee
Sloop	America	cotton	Riceboro
Schooner	Little Plandorne	corn	Plymouth, NC
Sloop	Bolivar	cotton	St. Catherine's
Sloop	Eliza	cotton, hides	Turtle River
Schooner	James Monroe	corn, bacon, misc.	Plymouth, NC
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Schooner	Sarah Ann	corn	Ocracock, NC
Schooner	Fancy	corn	Ocracock, NC
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Schooner	Convoy	corn	Plymouth, NC
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Schooner	Excel	misc.	New York
Schooner	Eliza	misc.	Philadelphia
Ship	Statira	misc.	New York
Schooner	Wetree	corn, flour	Baltimore
Brig	Grand Turk	misc.	Liverpool, England
Ship	Don Quixotte	misc.	New York
Bark	Pallas	misc.	New York
Ship	Douglass	misc.	New York
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Poleboat	Virginia	cotton	Augusta

GOODS RECEIVED, cont.

<u>Vessel</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Product</u>	<u>From</u>
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Sloop	Fair Trader	rice	Back River
Ship	Satira	misc.	New York
Ship	Martha	misc.	New York
Ship	Tybee	misc.	New York
Brig	Horizon	misc.	Providence
Sloop	Excel	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	John Chevalier	misc.	Charleston
Sloop	Othello	rice	Ogechee
Ship	Emperor	misc.	New York
Sloop	Merchant	rice	New York
Schooner	Rebecca	corn	Newbern, NC
Sloop	Ware	rice	Ogechee
Schooner	William & Mary	corn, flour	Fredericksburg, VA
Sloop	Excel	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	Good Intent	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	Pilot	rice	Darien
Sloop	Swallow	rice	Combahee
Schooner	Splendid	corn, peas	Elizabeth City, NC
Schooner	Elizabeth	cotton	South Carolina
Sloop	Wave	rice	Ogechee
Schooner	Fair Trader	rice	Screven's Plantation
Schooner	Splendid	corn	
Sloop	Excel	rice	Ogechee
Sloop	Othello	rice	Ogechee
Steam packet	John Stoney	rice	Charleston

Planter

Another important aspect of Robert Habersham was his work as a planter. Habersham bought several plantations in the Savannah area, especially during the so-called 'Golden Age of Savannah,' 1830-60.¹⁰⁸ As part of his marriage contract with Elizabeth Neyle, they were given the use of one-half (about two hundred acres) of a plantation on Hutchinson's Island.¹⁰⁹ It is not clear if or for how long they used this plantation. In 1833, Robert also bought Brewton Hill plantation from Dr. Maham Haig for a mortgage of \$5,000.¹¹⁰ Robert sold the plantation in February, 1837, to help settle what he owed Dr. Haig's estate.¹¹¹

In 1849, Robert Habersham bought Lapithowly plantation (next to Brewton Hill) for \$40,000.¹¹² He renamed the plantation Deptford.¹¹³ A few months later, Habersham

¹⁰⁸Granger, Savannah Plantations, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹Marriage Contract, Jones Family Papers, file 58, GHS.

¹¹⁰Deed Book 2R, Folio 426, App. 70, Chatham County Court House.

¹¹¹Estate Accounts, Book F, Folio 69, App. 73; and Deed Book 2V, Folio 513, App. 74; Chatham County Court House.

¹¹²Deed Book 3F, Folios 299 and 300, App. 57 and 58; Chatham County Court House.

¹¹³Granger, Savannah Plantations, p. 37.

began to purchase Causton's Bluff plantation.¹¹⁴ On 1 March 1850, he paid \$4,975 for one hundred ninety-seven acres. In 1851, Robert bought fifty more acres for an additional \$500.¹¹⁵ By January, Habersham added the rest of Causton's Bluff for \$20,000.¹¹⁶ He completed his purchases in the area by buying the fifty acre Mary Cowper tract in 1857 for \$750.¹¹⁷ Robert now owned 1,400 acres. Although some of it was marshland, it was a very valuable property. The location was so strategic that Fort Bartow was built on the Saint Augustine Creek side of Causton's Bluff plantation.¹¹⁸ Fort Jackson was on the Savannah River side of the Deptford plantation.¹¹⁹

In the manner of the Old South at the time, Robert Habersham used slave labor to work the plantations. The 1850 Chatham County Slave Census gives him as the owner of

¹¹⁴Deed Book 3G, Folio 282, App. 22; Chatham County Court House.

¹¹⁵Deed Book 3I, Folio 26, App. 24; Chatham County Court House.

¹¹⁶Deed Book 3I, Folio 212, App. 24; Chatham County Court House.

¹¹⁷Deed Book 3Q, Folio 386, App. 26; Chatham County Court House.

¹¹⁸Granger, Savannah Plantations, p. 18.

¹¹⁹Ibid., unpagged map.

two hundred eighty-one slaves.¹²⁰ (In addition, some of his children also owned slaves.) Some of Robert's slaves worked on Plantation # 1, but we do not know which of his plantations that was. About one hundred twenty-eight served there, ranging in age from one year to eighty years.¹²¹ The Census states that Plantation # 2 had one hundred slaves, varying from one year to seventy years old.¹²² (One might assume that the greater number of slaves served on the larger plantation, Causton's Bluff, but this is not proven.)

Apart from the plantation slaves, Robert Habersham also owned fifty-three slaves in 1850, falling between six months and sixty-eight years.¹²³ At least some of those probably served at the Habersham house in Savannah itself. Owning some three hundred thirty-four slaves in 1850 certainly made Habersham one of the large owners in the area. In addition, he had partial interest in the Upper Steam Rice Mill which reported sixty-six slaves in 1850.¹²⁴ The 1850 Federal

¹²⁰Slave Census, Chatham County, Georgia, 1850, District 13; on microfilm at GHS.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

Census listed Robert Habersham's property as worth about \$80,000.¹²⁵ It is difficult to know whether this amount was just for land or if it included land and slaves.

By the 1860 Federal Census, Robert listed his personal value at \$150,000 and his property value at \$100,000.¹²⁶ Others in his household had an additional personal property value over \$80,000.¹²⁷ In the Second District of Savannah, the 1860 Slave Census showed that Mr. Habersham owned fifty-five slaves, ranging from three months to seventy-five years in age.¹²⁸ His daughters and sister living in his home also owned a total of forty-nine slaves.¹²⁹ Again, some of these undoubtedly served at the house in Savannah, but the number is uncertain.

In the White Bluff Sixth District that year, Robert owned an additional two hundred twenty-three slaves.¹³⁰

¹²⁵Federal Census, Chatham County, Georgia, 1850, Entry # 162; on microfilm at GHS.

¹²⁶Federal Census, Chatham County, Georgia, 1860, Entry # 1184; on microfilm at GHS.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Slave Census, Chatham County, Georgia, 1860, District 2, page 23; on microfilm at GHS.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid.

These slaves were between one year and sixty-five years.¹³¹ Since this Slave Census is not divided between various plantations, there is little indication of how many served where. The Census does note that there were sixty slave houses.¹³² There is no breakdown of which quarters were where.

It is uncertain where Robert Habersham obtained all of these slaves. He probably inherited some of the. The use of others came through his marriage agreement with Elizabeth Matilda Neyle in 1815.¹³³ In 1851, Habersham bought eighty-nine slaves from Herman M. Blodget, the same man who had sold him Causton's Bluff plantation.¹³⁴

In addition to the house in Savannah and plantations in Chatham County, Robert also owned four hundred and five acres in Monroe County, two hundred and two acres in Dooley County, and two hundred and two acres in Cherokee County.¹³⁵ He also had an unstated amount of land in Habersham County,

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Jones Family Papers, file 58, GHS.

¹³⁴ Deed Book 3I, Folio 391; Chatham County Court House.

¹³⁵ Will of Robert Habersham, File Box H, Folio 332, App. 59; Chatham County Court House.

Georgia.¹³⁶ Clearly, Robert Habersham was as involved and successful in the plantation system as he was in the mercantile one.

¹³⁶Ibid.

CHART # 5

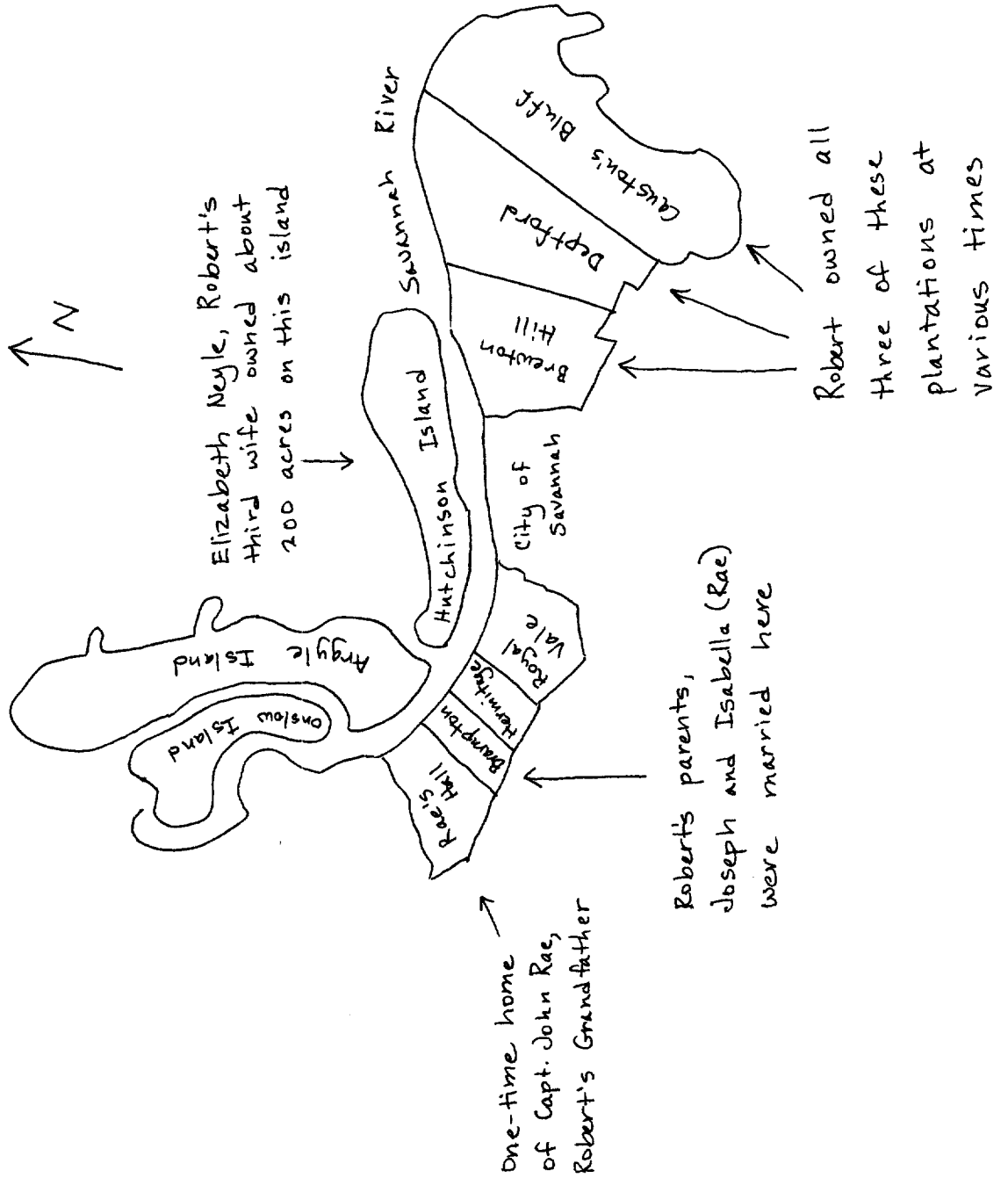
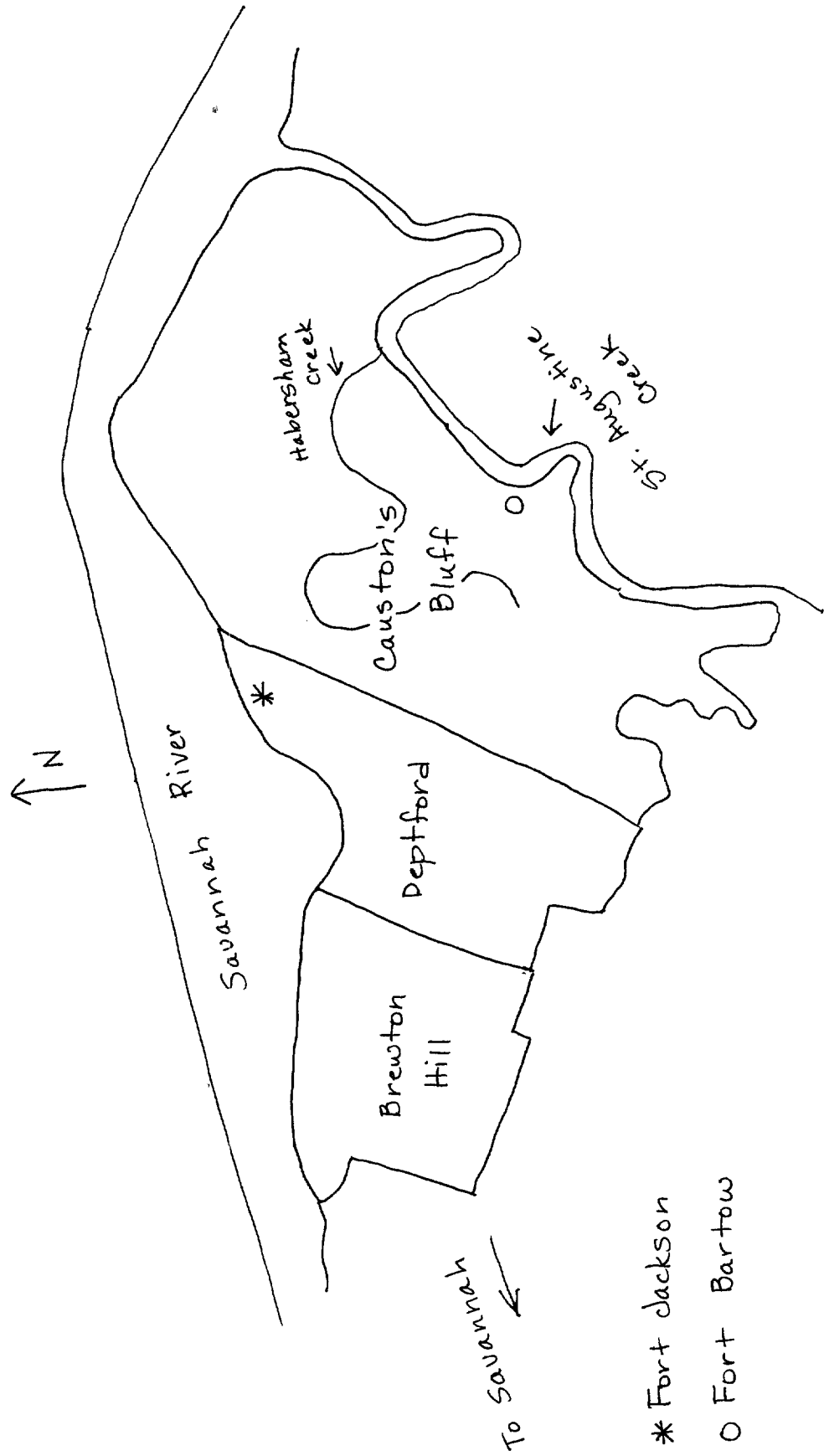


CHART # 6



* Fort Jackson

O Fort Bartow

Civic Leader and Humanitarian

Another important part of Robert Habersham's life was his civic work. For example, in 1810, he was appointed as Commissioner of Loans for the state.¹³⁷ In 1811, the President nominated and the United States Senate confirmed Robert in that job for another year.¹³⁸

Mr. Habersham served on the Chatham County Grand Jury several times.¹³⁹ He was suggested as a candidate for Alderman several different years, but he generally declined that honor.¹⁴⁰ According to his obituary, Robert was the Treasurer of Chatham County for many years.¹⁴¹

When President Monroe visited Savannah in 1819, Mr.

¹³⁷The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 16 June 1810, page 3, column 2; see also 12 July 1810, page 3, column 3; on microfilm at GHS.

¹³⁸The Colonial Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 11 February 1811, page 3, column 3; see also The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 12 February 1811, page 3, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

¹³⁹The Colonial Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 19 January 1818, page 2, column 2; see also The Daily Georgian, 23 January 1819, page 3, column 1; see also 3 March 1821, page 2, column 5; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁴⁰The Colonial Museum and Savannah Gazette, 12 August 1819, page 2, column 4; see also The Georgian, 12 August 1819, page 3, column 2; see also 17 August 1819, page 3, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁴¹The Morning News, 31 January 1870, page 2, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

Habersham was on the committee to plan the event.¹⁴² Several times, Robert was chosen one of the directors of the bank of Georgia.¹⁴³ In 1822, he was on the committee to plan the Independence Day celebration and gave one of the toasts at the dinner.¹⁴⁴

In 1824, a committee asked General Lafayette to visit Savannah. The General arrived on 19 March 1825. Habersham and the other members planned a dinner at the Council Chamber, a service at Christ Church on Sunday, and the laying of a cornerstone to commemorate the Revolutionary soldiers.¹⁴⁵ That same year, Robert served on another committee which led public discussions at the Exchange about what to do with the newly acquired Creek Indian land.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴²The Daily Georgian, 17 March 1819, page 2, column 5; see also The Colonial Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 17 March 1819, page 2, column 4; on microfilm at GHS; see also Gamble, History of City Government, p. 128.

¹⁴³The Colonial Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 11 February 1817, page 2, column 1; see also The Georgian and Evening Advertiser, 8 May 1821, page 3, column 1; see also The Savannah Museum, 7 May 1822, page 3, column 1; see also The Georgian, 7 May 1822, page 2, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁴⁴The Georgian, 6 June 1822, page 2, column 1; see also The Savannah Georgian, 6 July 1822, page 3, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁴⁵Gamble, History of Savannah, pp. 161-62.

¹⁴⁶The Savannah Georgian, 10 May 1825, page 2, column 1; see also The Savannah Republican, 10 May 1825, page 2, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

In 1825, Robert Habersham served on the Savannah Board of Health for Jackson War.¹⁴⁷ By 1833, Robert was one of the representatives from Georgia to the Anti-tariff Convention in Philadelphia.¹⁴⁸ Habersham was a member of the 1836 committee that formed the Central Railroad.¹⁴⁹ He also served on the Board of Directors for the railroad.¹⁵⁰ In 1850, Mr. Habersham was one of the citizens who planned a commemoration for Zachary Taylor.¹⁵¹ Sometimes, civic activities also had a humanitarian side, as when Robert joined with other citizens and merchants to form the Insurance Company of Savannah.¹⁵²

Habersham also took part in other humanitarian groups. About 1806, Robert joined the Union Society and remained active until his death sixty-four years later.¹⁵³ In 1809,

¹⁴⁷The Savannah Republican, 14 May 1825, page 2, column 5; see also The Savannah Georgian, 16 May 1825, page 2, column 4; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁴⁸The Morning News, 31 January 1870, page 2, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁴⁹Gamble, History of City Government, p. 175.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Jones, History of Savannah, p. 352.

¹⁵²The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 24 December 1812, page 2, column 2; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁵³F. D. Lee and J. L. Agnew, Historical Record of the City of Savannah (Savannah: J. H. Estill, 1869), pl 185.

Habersham was one of the committee to collect and distribute money and provisions for "the relief of the distressed from Cuba now in this city."¹⁵⁴ By 1817, Robert was in a group chosen to erect a hospital for Negroes.¹⁵⁵ Two years later, both Robert and Joseph Habersham were commissioners for a lottery for the Savannah Poor-house and Hospital.¹⁵⁶

Robert Habersham was one of the incorporators of the Georgia Historical Society (known then as 'Library') in 1839.¹⁵⁷ He was chosen as an arbitrator in a duel between William H. Bullock, Editor of "The Georgian," and S. T. Chapman, Editor of "The Republican" in 1844.¹⁵⁸ Robert and the other arbitrator, George Sihley, were able to settle the dispute before the actual duel took place.¹⁵⁹

Mr. Habersham was also a longtime vestryman at Christ Episcopal Church.¹⁶⁰ In 1838, he was on the building

¹⁵⁴The Colonial Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 17 August 1809, page 2, column 5; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁵⁵The Colonial Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 19 February 1817, page 2, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 6 April 1819, page 3, columns 2 and 3; see also The Daily Georgian, 6 April 1819, page 3, column 1; on microfilm at GHS.

¹⁵⁷Jones, History of Savannah, p. 529.

¹⁵⁸Thomas Gamble, Savannah Duels and Duellists (Savannah: Review Publishing & Printing Co., 1923), p. 233.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Vestry Records, Christ Church; on microfilm at GHS.

committee for the new church.¹⁶¹ Robert gave \$500 toward the construction of that new building.¹⁶² When Stephen Elliott (a 'cousin') was asked to serve at Christ Church, Mr. Habersham pledged \$100 a year for life toward his support.¹⁶³ As both a vestryman and as a businessman, Habersham was sometimes called upon to sign legal documents for Christ Church.¹⁶⁴ Not long before his death, he was chosen to serve as a warden for Christ Church, but he declined due to his advanced age.¹⁶⁵

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Jones, History of Savannah, p. 495.

162

Vestry Records, Christ Church, 24 January 1838; on microfilm at Georgia Historical Society.

163

Ibid., April 1840 and 26 November 1840; on microfilm at GHS.

164

Ibid., 10 April 1841 and 23 September 1866; on microfilm at GHS.

165

Ibid., 1868; on microfilm at GHS.

In summary, Robert Habersham was an important part of Savannah, Georgia, in the 1800's. In many ways, he is representative of the antebellum Southern elite, reflecting the dichotomy between slave holding and genuine concern for his fellow man. I would like to have met him.

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