

SLAVE TRADERS AND PLANTERS IN THE EXPANDING SOUTH:  
ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGIES, BUSINESS NETWORKS, AND WESTERN  
MIGRATION IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD, 1787-1859

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## **ABSTRACT**

Tomoko Yagyū: Slave Traders and Planters in the Expanding South: Entrepreneurial Strategies, Business Networks, and Western Migration in the Atlantic World, 1787-1859

(Under the direction of Peter A. Coclanis)

This study attempts to analyze the economic effects of the domestic slave trade and the slave traders on the American South in a broader Atlantic context. In so doing, it interprets the trade as a sophisticated business and traders as speculative, entrepreneurial businessmen. The majority of southern planters were involved in the slave trade and relied on it to balance their financial security. They evaluated their slaves in cash terms, and made strategic decisions regarding buying and selling their property to enhance the overall productivity of their plantations in the long run. Slave traders acquired business skills in the same manner as did merchants in other trades, utilizing new forms of financial options in order to maximize their profit and taking advantage of the market revolution in transportation and communication methods in the same ways that contemporary northern entrepreneurs did. They were capable of making rational moves according to the signals of global commodity markets and financial movements. The slave trade eventually played a central role in determining the fate of the South, as a business that created a unified South under proslavery ideology and encouraged western migration to preserve the institution of slavery. In a time of western expansion and the cotton boom, some slave traders were able to accumulate great wealth from the slave-trading business and sought opportunities to acquire higher social status and financial stability. Through the case of Rice C. Ballard, who was able to make the transition from a slave trader in Virginia to a cotton planter in the West, this dissertation will show that skills and networks established from the slave-trading business enabled the traders

to acquire managerial abilities and the ethos associated with nascent global capitalism. They were able to develop awareness and knowledge of commercial networks beyond the South and operated with an expansive mindset to adapt to the increasingly integrated global economy of the early nineteenth century.

To Masaru and Teruyo Yagyu, and Akihiko Yagyu

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in U.S. history and particularly in the South originated during the 5 years of my childhood spent in Charlotte, North Carolina. So returning to the same state a decade and a half later to pursue a graduate degree was truly a blessing, and even felt like a homecoming long overdue. The University of North Carolina was the perfect place to satisfy my interests in both southern history and economic history, with its long tradition and distinguished scholars in both fields. I felt extremely fortunate to be a part of such distinguished academia.

Various grants and fellowships funded the archival research necessary for the completion of this work. The Fulbright Grant from the Japan-U.S. Educational Commission allowed me to join the circle of Japanese scholars of the past and the present who went to America to pursue their scholarly goals. The Waddell and Mowry fellowships from the Department of History at UNC helped me conduct research in the area and in Virginia. The Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship from the Virginia Historical Society funded my summer research of 2003 in Richmond. In 2004, the Gilder Lehrman Fellowship from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History allowed me to make research trips to the archives in New York, and Alfred D. Chandler Travel Fellowship from the Graduate School of Business Administration at Harvard University supported my stay in Boston.

I started my training in U.S. economic history as an undergraduate economics major at Keio University, in Tokyo, under the guidance of Professor Yasuo Okada. His admiration of American economic expansion and the Great West along the lines of Frederick Jackson Turner, and his devotion to research inherited from his mentor Paul W. Gates, were both inspiring and invigorating. I will always be grateful and proud that I began my apprenticeship under Professor Okada.

At UNC, I had the privilege to seek advice from leading historians in the course of completing this dissertation. I am extremely grateful to Professor William Barney, Professor Fitz Brundage, Professor Lisa Lindsay, and Professor Harry Watson for their advices. I was fortunate to meet Professor Paul Rhode in the economics department literally the first day I was on UNC campus in the summer of 2000. His intellect kept me reminded of my respect and admiration to economics and economists, and I truly appreciate his advices in trying to extract the economic aspects of my research.

Many colleagues in the department provided me with support and good criticism toward my work over the years. I would like to thank especially Pam Lach, Barbara Hahn, Michael Allsep, Gerardo Gurza-Lavalle, and Philipp Stelzel for being comrades as well as good friends to talk out our anxieties. Maki Takahashi and Tomomi Kaneko took on that role outside of the department, and I thank them for their support. I met Lynn Jerath as a classmate in Charlotte more than 20 years ago, and we have kept in touch ever since. She and her entire family always welcomed me like one of their own, and I thank her for the lasting friendship and kind support. I would also like to thank Ai Kato, Yuki Tanabe, and Setsuko Fukuzawa for cheering me up from Japan for all these years.

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Finally, my family had the patience to put up with my long years of graduate studies abroad, and they were in my mind every step of the way. My brother Akihiko in Tokyo usually kept up with the results of the UNC basketball team earlier and more precisely than I did. As busy as he is in the world of finance, he understood and supported my passion, and I

counted on his advice on various occasions. Discussing with him about everything from pop culture to current world affairs gave me considerable comfort, and I thank him for being so reliable. My mother must have always been frustrated and worried that her daughter was so far away, and the fact that my life has become so different from hers probably made it even harder. But she always gave me mental support and encouragement, which I truly appreciated throughout the years. My father is never easily impressed, and I have not found a way to make him proud. For him, who has successfully climbed to the top of the corporate ladder of the company he had worked for nearly forty years, my achievements would never come close to what he has accomplished. In fact, not being able to impress him was one major factor that has driven me to pursue higher goals. I hope he knows that I have been trying, and will keep trying to impress him, and this dissertation is a result of such attempt.



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## Introduction

In May 1842, Rice C. Ballard, a cotton planter in Mississippi purchased a total of 44 slaves at a commissioner's sale at the southern district court of the state, which had been advertised for sale earlier that month. Ballard stated to the marshal of the district that he would hold him responsible for any damages he might sustain involving those slaves. On another occasion his slave-trading agent C.W. Rutherford purchased 18 slaves from W. Conway for him. In such ways, Ballard would purchase slaves on his own, or rely on slave traders to gradually stock the several cotton plantations he owned in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas. By the late 1850s, Ballard had more than 500 slaves under his name.<sup>1</sup>

It was likely that some of his slaves came from Virginia, where Ballard was originally from. Richmond, with its dark alleys with the slave pens and auction houses, and with streets lined with brokerages, commission merchants, and the notorious markets in Odd Fellows' Hall and the Exchange Hotel, was the location where the young Ballard acquired the knowledge and skills in the business of the slave trade. The business flourished only a few blocks from the state Capitol and near the sites of prosperous manufacturing factories in tobacco, flour and iron. While Ballard later left this scene and relocated in the West, he never left the business of slave trading. In fact, by then the domestic slave trade had become such an indispensable business of every facet of southern economic life that it controlled the fate of southerners and the entire South.

This study attempts to analyze the domestic slave trade, the traders, and the entire

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. Ballard to the marshal of the southern district of Mississippi, May 1842, folder 49; W. Conway to R.C. Ballard, 15 December 1854, folder 220, Rice. C. Ballard Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

South in a broader, Atlantic context, both in terms of trade and commerce, and in the mindsets of those involved. Slave traders acquired business and entrepreneurial skills in the same manners as did merchants in other trades. They also operated with an expansive mindset, despite the fact that by then the slaves they traded were home-grown, contrary to the early transatlantic slave trade. Traders in the domestic slave trade were highly trained speculators who made rational moves according to the signals of the market that included various commodities, as well as financial movements around the globe. It is clear that these speculators in the South, as in any other developing economies, played a central role in increasing the efficiency of the market. They were driven by the need to spread the risks involved in the trade across time and space, redistributing slave labor into the southwest, promoting further acceleration of the plantation economy, and at times utilizing new forms of financial security options, in order to maximize their profit. They took advantage of the market revolution in transportation and communication methods, in the same ways that contemporary northern entrepreneurs did.

In fact, we can identify a linear progression and continuity in the mercantile activities of the merchants engaged in the slave trade and their commercially global outlook. The language and the practices used when a London merchant instructed a slave trader in Africa in 1700 to purchase slaves to be sent to Virginia, strikingly resembled that of a domestic slave trader in the antebellum era. African slaves were bought at “eight or nine iron bars per head, but you may give to tenn or more for very likely men,” and they were not to buy slaves over thirty years of age, and would examine that they were clear of “any sore upon them,” and take the “doctors advice upon every negro that you buy so that you may buy none but what are healthy, sound and clear limbed.” Henry Laurens, one of the largest slave traders during the colonial era, informed a merchant in St. Christopher Island in 1755 that should a war with France take place, African slaves would no longer be sent from the West Indies and that could affect the rice planters on the mainland. Laurens later stated that stopping the war would maintain good prices for slaves. The following year he was



concerned with a disease that prevailed among the slaves, fearing it would discourage sales.<sup>2</sup> The credit arrangements of slave trading, such as bills of exchange, discounting, and letters of credit, as well as insurance policies followed the same pattern as other trades. The attitude and mentality of these merchants was calculating, risk-taking and profit-maximizing. When Ballard became a cotton planter in the West, the same entrepreneurial mentality and the global outlook was required to succeed in the increasingly integrated economy.<sup>3</sup>

Domestic slave traders operated in an economic context incorporating the entire Atlantic world. The supply and demand of slaves for the domestic trade was very much shaped by the international demand of cotton. While speculation in slaves was similar to that in various commodities, the fact that slaves were humans owned by masters, and the fact that the seller held property rights and control over their lives, made a difference. As time progressed, the slave trade in the South held a peculiar meaning of its own. It is in this context, that Gavin Wright credits the slave market as functioning as the South's primary market for both labor and capital. Moreover, the trade also had an immense effect on the political direction of the South. As slaves were the primary source of wealth in the region, the slave market also affected the way people made investment choices and the business strategies and entrepreneurial styles that fit southern protocols. Politically, interests and wealth in slaves, and the ideological support of the institution were what unified and strengthened the South as a region by the time the antislavery movements became a large

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<sup>2</sup> *A London Merchant's Instructions to a Slave Trader on a Pending Voyage to the Guinea Coast and from Virginia with a Cargo of Slaves* (1700-1701), quoted in Robert Edgar Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers: Readings on Foreign and Domestic Slave Trading and the Crisis of the Union* (University Park: The Penn State University Press, 2001), 22-27; Henry Laurens to Wells, Wharton and Doran, 27 May 1755; Henry Laurens to Charles Gwynn, 12 June 1755; Henry Laurens to Law, Satterthwaite and Jones, 31 January 1756, quoted in Conrad, *Ibid.*, 34-40.

<sup>3</sup> On the impact of the transatlantic slave trade, a compiled data of 27,000 slaving voyages has been collected to create a CD database at Harvard University. David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also, Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects of Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, The Americas, and Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992).

threat both domestically and in the Atlantic rim. This unified ideological support was also what accelerated the trade as well as white migration in the antebellum era.<sup>4</sup>

After years of being outside of the mainstream of American historical research, studies on the domestic slave trade have become increasingly numerous over the past twenty years. Although historians have always been aware of the existence of the trade, it was U.B. Phillips who set the tone of the “white narrative” by only referring to the trade as a natural phenomenon in the era of westward expansion and markets functioning as modern employment bureaus. One early exception was Frederick Bancroft, who demonstrated the wide existence of slave trading by professional slave traders and argued that the trade was the dominant method to transport slaves to the West.<sup>5</sup> Bancroft’s interpretation gained much significance when Kenneth Stampp and Stanley Elkins both relied on his analysis to strengthen their arguments in pointing out the cruelty of slavery at the time when civil rights movement was gaining momentum, fueling criticism of the southern-white-paternalist view of Phillips.<sup>6</sup> Their works stimulated further scholarly work, both in favor and against their arguments. The debate generated various cultural and social approaches, with the best works revealing the intricacies of slave life, communities, and forms of resistance.<sup>7</sup> But with the rise of African-American agency in the historical works, the

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<sup>4</sup> Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> Early southern history centered on the “slavery as a benevolent institution” interpretation of Ulrich Bonnell Phillips. U.B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: D. Appleton, 1918); *Life and Labor in the Old South* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1929). Phillips did argue that planters would not have been able to “breed” slaves for selling purposes, which view is supported by many scholars today. Frederick Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (reprint 1931, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage, 1956). The “sambo” views presented by Elkins infuriated African Americans and stimulated massive work on slave culture and agency. Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

<sup>7</sup> Numerous works on cultural and social approach to slavery was seen in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, see Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family and Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York:

debate on slaves' demographic expansion and the slave trade began to slowly fade away. To counter the cultural, agency-focused historical works, economists Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman published their controversial *Time on the Cross* in 1974, which by statistical analysis refuted Bancroft's work that the domestic slave trade was smaller in volume and affected fewer slaves than was previously believed.<sup>8</sup>

Although Fogel and Engerman's interpretation did not gain support due to methodological reasons, it reinforced the trend in historical profession to keep a distance from slave-trade studies: clearly, economic and business approaches could evoke controversy.<sup>9</sup> It was not until the late 1980s that a work by British historian Michael Tadman returned to support the work of Bancroft with detailed statistical analysis of massive records of slave traders. The work drew almost unanimous agreement by historians and economists alike regarding the massive scale and scope of the domestic slave trade and its impact on the southern economy. With the post-modernist, cultural works on the inside of the slave market by Walter Johnson and others, and the publication of comprehensive works by Robert Gudmestad and Steven Deyle, most aspects of the domestic slave trade and its significance appear to have been explored. This dissertation will revisit and reexamine some of the points that were explored in these recent works, but will emphasize the commercial outlook and business practices of the traders, and the continuity and the universality of their entrepreneurial skills. It will also explore the mercantile connections that transcended the South, and attempt to "un-domesticate" the domestic slave trade.<sup>10</sup>

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Pantheon Books, 1976); John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, rev.ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Little Brown, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> Robert W. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 1989); Robert W. Fogel, *Slavery Debates, 1952-1990* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave*

Cultural work related to slave communities and “slave agency” have become more contextual and global in recent years. The works on families, customs, and religion led to works exploring the continuity of African cultural traits in slave communities. Studies documenting slaves’ participation in productive activities and black markets, and their ability to control their labor and acquire negotiating power in hiring markets reveal that contrary to early works on slaves’ submissiveness, slaves were able to negotiate and resist on a much larger scale than traditionally thought. These approaches have also broadened the scope and brought comparative perspectives on slave societies in general in the North American world.<sup>11</sup>

This dissertation respects these studies and findings, but will not center its argument on the experiences of the slaves; nor does it intend to be a “white narrative.” It is hard to deny the fact that the slave trade continued as an established business after the transatlantic slave-trading years. In order to analyze the evolving economy of this era, it is necessary to

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*Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). Also see Edward E. Baptist, “‘Cuffy,’ ‘Fancy Maids,’ and ‘One-Eyed Men’: Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States,” *American Historical Review* 106 (Dec. 2001):1619-50; Robert H. . Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Philip Troutman, “Slave Trade and Sentiment in Antebellum Virginia” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 2000). On how time and space impacted the traded slaves see for example, Walter Johnson, “Time and Revolution in African America: temporality and the History of Atlantic Slavery,” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender ed., 148-67 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); On slavery’s expansion into the Deep South, see Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Adam Rothman, “The Domestication of the Slave Trade in the United States,” in *The Chattel Principle: Internal Slave Trades in the Americas*, ed. Walter Johnson, 32-54 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> On slave’s economies studies, see for example, Robert Olwell, *Master, Slaves and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan ed., *The Slaves’ Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas* (London: Frank Cass, 1991); Joseph P. Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South: Central Georgia, 1800-1890* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). For debates on the origins of agricultural methods and skills, see for example, Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvaed University Press, 2001); Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter’s Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997). Origins of tasking in Philip D. Morgan, “Task and Gang Systems: The Organization of Labor on New World Plantations,” in *Work and Labor in Early America*, ed. Stephen Innes, 189-220 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

explore the domestic slave trade as a flourishing business, which inevitably possessed exploitative and impersonal characteristics. Commodification of slaves was an accepted reality for contemporary southerners, and the analysis here will in most cases progress as such, focusing more on business and economic aspects of the trade. While acknowledging slaves' capability to resist, negotiate, and create their own cultural spheres, it is still hard to deny that it was the masters in power who determined the fate of their lives, and the direction of the southern political economy.

Most works agree that slavery was a profitable institution, but nonetheless they have emphasized that slave-based economies had inherent elements that prevented a dynamic economic development, such as urbanization, development of a consumer market, and adopting latest technology in processing goods and transportation. This was especially apparent with the early comparisons between the developmental paths of the North. Abolitionists' attacks were based on their view that an economy based on the slave system lacked capital, efficiency, innovation, and entrepreneurial mentality.

Planters, factors and merchants have been the focus of criticism for impeding southern economic development. These Southerners were optimistic about the world demand for cotton and channeled every effort to expand its production while pursuing political measures to encourage international free trade: therefore, they should not be blamed unduly for holding back the southern economy. Their lack of attention on internal improvements and infrastructural development compared to the North can arguably be countered by the existence of the slave trade in the South. Most planters were involved in the calculated activity of the slave trade and relied on it to balance their financial security. They evaluated the profits or losses from the sales, and its effect on the overall productivity of their plantations in the long run. The price indexes of slaves in the slave markets forced planters to value their slaves in cash terms. The existence of such markets and the signals provided from them encouraged planters to pursue efficiency and make rational decisions. If the southerners lacked incentives regarding internal developments, this problem was caused by

the cosmopolitan nature of the southern economic structure. Their commodity was marketed abroad, and they were financially dependent on ties in the North. While witnessing slaves being sold in the auction rooms, the trader's mind revolved around the banks in Louisiana or New York, or on the price fluctuations in the Liverpool cotton market reflecting the production in Lancashire textile mills in England.

It has been said that the nineteenth century was a time of global market integration. While this is true in the realization of integrated commodity and capital markets, politics of free trade, and international migration, the years for the formation of integrated mercantile networks and the merchants' global mindsets should be pushed back. In recent years, the southern economy has been placed in the global context of New World slave societies and has been linked to the larger scholarly work of African history and Latin American history, with the works of scholars such as David Brion Davis, David Eltis, and above all, Stanley Engerman, connecting the process of industrialization, capitalist ethos, and labor systems in the Americas. The Atlantic rim has been revisited as a dynamic unit with intense interaction encompassing four continents. It is the works of Russell Menard and John McCusker, and Jack Greene that we see from the outset, colonial British America had been in the periphery of global commerce, and its economy should be considered in a broader context. In other words, there is continuity in the practices and worldview of those involved in trade.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of Nineteenth Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and Kenneth Sokoloff eds. *Slavery in the Development of the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Stanley L. Engerman, "The Atlantic Economy of the Eighteenth Century: Some Speculation on Economic Development in Britain, America, Africa and Elsewhere," *Journal of European Economic History* 24 (spring 1995): 145-75. John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British North America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986). Atlantic studies have become a mainstream approach in the interpretation of the colonial era, signifying a departure from the more traditional methodological approach of single empire or region to a transnational, comparative imperial perspective. The framework has been adopted in analysis of economic and commercial systems, cultural adaptation, and labor systems. While British influence on the New World has been dominant, the impact of Africa in the western world and other European empires such as French, Spanish, and the Dutch in the development of North America has brought new dimension to the study of the colonial period. To mention few recent

Rice C. Ballard provides a perfect example of an individual who took advantage of the domestic slave trade and increasingly broadened his worldview in the process. He also personified a successful antebellum southern profit-driven business man. He was involved in the slave trading business to a considerable extent, and became one of the wealthiest cotton planters in the West by the time of the Civil War. Situating him in the context of an evolving South will provide a clear view on the development of the slave trade, the meaning of western migration, and the effective strategies to become a successful plantation-businessman.

This dissertation starts in Virginia and gradually moves its focus to the southwest chronologically, while analyzing how the place and time intersected with the outside world. It attempts to situate the events and experiences in a larger historical setting in order to interpret economic dynamics, political tensions, and ideological mindsets in the South. As we shall see, southerners, especially Virginians, from the very beginning faced outwards and were open to and affected by European information and ideologies. By the eighteenth century, Virginia and the entire South had developed an intricate economic relationship with the Atlantic world.

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works, for example, see David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1992); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2000); John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan eds., *Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas eds., *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy eds., *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (New York: Routledge, 2002). One can look at the *Oxford History of the British Empire* to know that British imperial perspective is necessary to hold a comprehensive view of the Atlantic world. P.J. Marshall ed. *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol.2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). In a more cultural, but a comparative study on labor systems of the Americas, see Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan, *Cultivation and Culture; Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993). Problems and limits to the Atlantic framework can be seen in Peter A. Coclanis "Drang Nach Osten: Bernard Bailyn, the World-Island, and the Idea of Atlantic History," *Journal of World History* 13 (2002): 169-82; Peter A. Coclanis ed., Introduction to *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice and Personnel* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005).

This work also aims to bring together the various facets that contributed to the emergence and prosperity of the domestic slave trade in the antebellum South. The study begins in Virginia, since Virginia remained the main supplier of slaves to the West throughout the antebellum era. First, this process is captured from the economic path dependency of Virginia: Chapter 1 will explain that the Virginia economy was situated on the periphery of Atlantic commerce from the start, and that land characteristics and the agricultural economy eventually led to a formation of a slave-based society. The chapter will also trace the development of its trade, which was characterized by its Atlantic connections.

Once the Virginia economy is analyzed in the broader context, Chapter 2 will follow the early development of the domestic slave trade in the state, from both economic and political points of view. Also it will trace how trading and commodification of Africans became socially accepted among Virginians, which had its roots in colonial era as well. Eventually, sophisticated markets developed that would serve as hubs for such trading, a strikingly different path compared to the urban development in the North. In the latter part of the chapter we will take a close look at the development of Richmond and Alexandria.

With the findings in the first two chapters, this dissertation, beginning in Chapter 3, will evolve around interpreting and following the life of Rice C. Ballard. His early trading connections in Richmond will be closely examined. Another major element that contributed to the sophistication of the business of domestic slave trade was the rise of the Cotton Kingdom and western migration, and the experience of Ballard and other slave traders provide means to explore this dimension as well. The idea and meaning of western migration to Virginians, and its significance for the development of the trade will be explored in Chapter 4.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, will shift its focus to the West, to the Cotton Kingdom where the cotton planter Ballard continued involvement in his slave-trading activities under different circumstances. The world of cotton and marketing of the crop would further draw



Ballard and others like him into global commerce and trade. As a former slave trader, Ballard's plantation management skills and his attitude toward his own slaves will be closely examined.

The transition that Ballard made represented how slave traders and planters exhibited capitalist tendencies, and how they were taking consideration of the commercial and economic signals that evolved to make their next move. A "capitalist mentality," in this sense, consisted mainly of individualism (moving to the West, and becoming a self-made man), and calculation of self-interest, in maximizing their profits in their ventures. Ballard exhibited entrepreneurial calculations in his pursuit and accumulation of profit in both slave trading and crop producing, and invested his profits into further land acquisition and slave speculation as well as stockholding. Most scholars agree today that southern planters and merchants were commercially oriented and were risk-taking entrepreneurs in nature, but some maintain that if a true sense of capitalism is only characterized in a free labor society, southern society in their view, was non-capitalist. But despite the variation of how to characterize a capitalist society, there is no doubt that southerners were connected to the greater commercial world beyond their region.<sup>13</sup> They were very much influenced by and relied on the commercial networks and information that came from abroad and those signals were essential in shaping their economic mentality.

Although events and developments during the colonial period are dealt in depth especially in the first chapter, I set the year 1787 as a pivotal starting point for the argument for this dissertation. When the domestic slave trade in the U.S. is analyzed, the year 1808,

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<sup>13</sup> On the debate surrounding the capitalist nature of early American society, and South as capitalist or precapitalist, see Robert W. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*; Stuart Bruchey, *Enterprise: The Dynamic Economy of a Free People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Historians have argued that large planters in the Caribbean from the seventeenth century were entrepreneurial, innovative men who were willing to take risks and experiment. Although Caribbean plantations focused on sugar production which was more technologically innovative than other commodity production, a similar mentality guided planters on the mainland. For sugar production in the Caribbean, see Sydney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985); Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies* (New York: Norton, 1973); Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Sugar Island Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment: the Political Economy of the Caribbean World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

when the federal ban was passed for the transatlantic slave trade, is often used as the starting point. But the domestic trade had existed long before that date, or 1787, for that matter. The year 1787 gains significance because coincidentally, major events that shaped people's mindsets and perceptions of the slave trade took place on both sides of the Atlantic. In the U.S., at the Constitutional Convention, the greatest opportunity to ban the importation of African slaves was postponed for twenty years. This was the closest the government came to ending the slave trade prior to 1808, and it can be seen as the greatest "missed opportunity" that brought tragedy to large numbers of additional African slaves who were shipped during those years. The postponement had a huge impact on how slaveholding southerners saw their futures, and raised awareness of what would happen when the trade was abandoned. Some were able to foresee that the domestic slave trade, mostly a privately-conducted business at this time, would boom, once the international shipments stopped. The three-fifths compromise agreed at the Convention would also encourage spreading slave population geographically for political representation. Over in England, in the year 1787, the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed, taking its first step to abolish slavery and introduce free labor around the world. The event had repercussions around the Atlantic slave societies, and fostered anxiety among southern slaveholders, who sensed that they might have to emancipate their slaves and search for new sources of labor. Such events also led them to pursue political action to preserve the institution of slavery. In sum, 1787 was the year when southerners realized that the domestic slave trade would play a fundamental role in preserving the institution of slavery and the southern economy. With 1787 as a starting point, this dissertation will follow the events up to the end of the 1850s, when Ballard becomes firmly settled as a wealthy planter, and when both the domestic slave trade and the cotton trade reached their prewar peaks.

From business networks, entrepreneurial strategies, and ideological developments, this study attempts to demonstrate that the entire South, especially those engaged in various

trades including the slave trade, were expanding their scope and mindsets to a greatly integrated world of commerce from the colonial era into the early nineteenth century. The experiences of Rice C. Ballard and his network will show that slave traders and planters had an expansive, global outlook, and that the domestic slave trade can be investigated more accurately by acknowledging the mindsets of those who participated in this trade.

**Chapter 1**  
**Early Development of the Virginia Economy**  
**in Atlantic Context to 1815**

Tobacco and slave merchant James Maury in Liverpool wrote to his brother who resided and controlled the trade on the other side of the Atlantic, in Virginia. He complained that his brother had not conformed “to the system proposed,” which was a “comm[ission] business requiring engagements,” adding, “be it goods shipped or otherwise beyond value.” But according to Maury, reimbursements could not be fulfilled at the moment, which was “disagreeable and perfectly inconvenient.” His brother in Virginia had “greatly outdrawn” a draft which he cannot honor “unless adequate funds come.” Secure funds in forms of bills of exchange had to be reached before further drafts can be drawn, but his brother ignored such concerns. Maury argued against his brother that “the basis of our common business is reciprocity of advantage,” and that there were certain rules and strategies each transatlantic firm operated under, for every commodity they traded, in order to generate higher profits. This “reciprocity of advantage” was the major principle that merchants in the New World operated on. The phrase implied that a merchant in Virginia was to consider how a transaction would ultimately benefit on the British side, and vice versa, in order to profit in their business. Merchants who dealt with transatlantic commodity trade operated on an Atlantic mindset, as the “citizens of the world,” in David Hancock’s words. In the early modern era, these merchants were breaking new grounds not just geographically, but strategically and organizationally as well. The global merchant network they sought to create became an intricate web of personal connections, partnerships, firms, institutions,

and governments.<sup>1</sup>

From the time of its establishment as a colony that would pose a challenge to the dominance of Spain in the Americas, to the post-Revolutionary era when Thomas Jefferson blamed the financial indebtedness of planters on the British merchants, Virginia had always been interconnected with, at the peripheral of the expanding Atlantic world, above all under the influence of Great Britain, the focal center that became the world empire. From this perspective, it is essential for understanding the early Virginia economy to first grasp the greater Atlantic world it operated on. There are several ways to explore the Virginia economy in the Atlantic world, but this chapter will largely emphasize the “connection,” and how the elements that strengthened their connection affected the path of Virginia’s economy. What connected the peripheral economy to the wider world were commodities, finance, and personnel; and in this case, tobacco, credit, and merchants deserve special attention. In addition, what made the Atlantic world particularly distinguishable from other areas of the world was the massive volume of movement in people: the laborers from Africa who were “commodified” in the New World. The significance of the importation of Africans into Virginia was due not only to the fact that their labor was essential to Virginia’s economic growth, but also to the fact that it characterized and ultimately became the decisive factor for every political, economic, and social event to impact Virginia for decades to come.<sup>2</sup>

Virginia, while being an English colony, initially had strong connections with the Dutch economy, especially before the Dutch lost New Netherlands in 1664. Once England captured the Carolina colonies and Pennsylvania in the late seventeenth century, Virginia

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<sup>1</sup> James Maury to his brother, 28 September 1794. James Maury Letters, New York Public Library Manuscripts. David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> For a recent study on centers and peripheries of colonial empires in the Atlantic world, see Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy ed., *Negotiated Empires: Center and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (New York: Routledge, 2002), especially Elizabeth Mancke, “Negotiating an Empire; Britain and Its Overseas Peripheries, c. 1550-1780,” 235-266; Jack P. Greene, “Transatlantic Colonization and the Redefinition of Empire in the Early Modern Era: The British-American Experience,” 267-282.

was surrounded by English dominance, although conflict remained between the English, Scottish and French merchants in these areas. English, Scottish, and French merchants and mariners, and the Dutch prior to them, kept Virginians informed of various conditions in Europe, which awareness influenced their positioning within the Atlantic trading world. Although events in England had the most impact on Virginians, it was clear that they were alert about occurrences in continental Europe, as well as the West Indies, where Virginia had developed trade relations from early on. The worldview that Virginians operated in extended far beyond their locales and the part of Europe where they came from.<sup>3</sup>

Although Virginians operated with at least an Atlantic mindset, if not beyond, from early stages of their development, England undoubtedly had the ultimate control over almost every decision they made. As Menard and McCusker explained, there were “sets of colonial economies linked more closely with London than with each other, or alternatively, one grand Atlantic economy” during the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth century, and Virginia was not an exception. This was due mainly to tobacco, the staple crop that shaped Virginia’s economy, politics and societal culture. Major strategies and decisions affecting tobacco were made in London and to a certain extent to other port cities in Great Britain, instead of within the colony.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) 39, 61-2. On the struggle between English and Dutch dominance, see Hatfield, *Ibid.*, 40-42, 48-50, 102. Also see April Lee Hatfield, “Dutch and New Netherland Merchants in the Seventeenth-Century English Chesapeake,” in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 205-228; Jan de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in Coclanis, *Atlantic Economy*, 1-29. Another analysis of Dutch influence in the Americas can be found in Pieter C. Emmer, “The Dutch and the Slave Americas,” in *Slavery in the Development of the Americas*, ed. David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and Kenneth Sokoloff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70-88. On early connection of Virginia and the West Indies, see Hatfield, *Ibid.*, 42-7; Susan Westbury, “Analysing a Regional Slave Trade: The West Indies and Virginia, 1698-1775,” in *Slavery and Abolition* 7 (1986): 241-56. For a comparison of early social development pattern, see Nathalie Dessens, *Myths of a Plantation Society: Slavery in the American South and the West Indies* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 24-54. On the structural changes in the European economy from around 1650 that led to foreign expansion, see Peter A. Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 53-4.

<sup>4</sup> John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill:

Tobacco production shaped every aspect of Virginia society. The production routine fixed the required agricultural techniques, the agricultural calendar, and the layout of land, which also affected the settlement patterns in the producing areas. Labor recruitment and occupational variations were determined by the crop, as well as the networks of trade and credit with Great Britain and the pattern of local societal development.<sup>5</sup> Tobacco fortunes created wealth which determined class, and the formation of a tobacco culture, which eventually had an effect on geographical concentration of certain class or wealth group, and their movement patterns. Tobacco was also an ideal product for England's mercantilist policies, as we shall see later in this chapter. The fact that tobacco was a valuable staple crop that could be processed in the mother country and re-exported to the European continent made its production in Virginia an attractive venture for capital investment. It automatically created a market: exchange of the staple for manufactured goods and commercial services provided by England.<sup>6</sup> On each stage of progression of the Virginia society, tobacco played a crucial role, assembling the best method of labor and mercantile activities that promoted entrepreneurial and business abilities.

### **Population and Labor**

At its beginning, labor in Virginia and the Chesapeake region consisted of immigrants

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University of North Carolina Press, 1985). Commodities such as wine, unlike tobacco, did not operate from one central port and negotiated flexibly on the terms of trade, which arrangements were made in several places along the trade route by merchants. David Hancock, "Self-Organized Complexity and the Emergence of an Atlantic Market Economy, 1651-1815: The Case of Madeira," in Coclanis, *Atlantic Economy*, 30-71.

<sup>5</sup> Lorena Walsh, "Slave Life, Slave Society, and Tobacco Production in the Tidewater Chesapeake, 1620-1820," in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 170; Russell R. Menard, "The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake Colonies, 1617-1730: An Interpretation," *Research in Economic History* 5 (1980):109-77.

<sup>6</sup> McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 118.

from England, and between the period 1630 and 1680, nearly 75,000 white workers from England settled in the area. At least half of them were indentured servants, and since most white indentured servants were male, the sex ratio (men per hundred women) was heavily skewed. From available statistics, in Virginia in 1625 the male working age population outnumbered the female working age population by 7.5 to 1, and children made up less than 16 percent of the total population. By the new century, the sex ratio in Maryland had become as low as 122 in 1712, and by mid-century in 1755, the ratio was down to 113, and children made up more than half of the total population. Initially, the growth of population was slow, owing to the high morality rates and the natural limits posed on reproduction due to the sex ratio, but from around 1650, the population increased, along with growth in tobacco production which allowed those freed from servitude possibly to settle into farms. Virginia had entered the “age of the small planter.” (table 1.1, table 1.2)<sup>7</sup>

Most of the indentured servants from England were voluntary, serving for a fixed number of years under specific condition of service (table 1.3). Initially, freedmen were able to acquire land of their own. Until around 1670, servant migration kept a steady flow to the Chesapeake, due to the lack of attractiveness of service to New England or the West Indies, although there was a slight decline after its peak in the 1650s. By the 1670s, a change in the Chesapeake labor force was occurring. Fewer servants came to the region after 1680, and had been well documented by historians that planters were forced to search a substitute form of labor for the lost source.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted from Richard B. Sheridan, “The Domestic Economy,” in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 45. On the course of Chesapeake population increase, see Menard, “The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake Colonies,” 116-123. For a recent work on the overview and revision of indentured servitude to the Chesapeake, Delaware Valley, and New England, see Christopher Tomlins, “Indentured Servitude in Perspective: European Migration into North America and the Composition of the Early American Labor Force, 1600-1775,” in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions*, ed. Cathy Matson (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006), 146-82. According to Tomlins, during the seventeenth century, 80 percent of the migrants were indentured servants.

<sup>8</sup> Indentured servants were to serve for a negotiated term to the party (usually the shippers) who paid their transport debt and subsistence during the contract term, and in exchange, and were committed



**Table 1.1** Estimated Population of the Chesapeake Colonies (in thousands)

	Maryland	Virginia	Total Whites(WIS)	Total Blacks	% slave and servant	Total Population
1610		0.3	0.3			0.3
1620		0.9	0.9 (0.8)			0.9
1630		2.5	2.4 (1.07)	0.1	46.8	2.5
1640	0.6	7.6	8.0 (1.79)	0.1	23.3	8.1
1650	0.7	12.0	12.4 (2.09)	0.3	18.8	12.7
1660	4.0	20.9	24.0 (4.35)	0.9	21.1	24.9
1670	11.4	29.6	38.5 (5.02)	2.5	18.3	41.0
1680	20.0	39.9	55.6 (5.51)	4.3	16.4	59.9
1690	26.2	49.3	68.2 (3.57)	7.3	14.4	75.5
1700	34.1	64.0	85.2 (3.77)	12.9	17.0	98.1
1710	43.9	79.7	101.3	22.4	18.1	123.7
1720	57.8	100.8	128.0	30.6	19.3	158.6
1730	81.8	142.8	171.4	53.2	23.7	224.6
1740	116.1	180.4	212.5	84.0	28.3	296.5
1750	141.1	236.7	227.2	150.6	39.7	377.8
1760	162.3	339.7	312.4	189.6	37.7	502.0
1770	202.6	447.0	398.2	251.4	38.7	649.6
1780	248.0	538.0	482.4	303.6	38.6	786.0

(Source) McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 136; Tomlins, "Indentured Servitude in Perspective," 155.

(Notes) Native American Indian population not included. Parenthesis in the fourth column (Total Whites) indicate the number of White Indentured Servants (WIS), estimated by Tomlins.

There are several reasons why the immigrants stopped coming to the Chesapeake. Birthrates in England declined in the second third of the seventeenth century, which resulted in a reduction of the potential immigrant population in the age range of 15 to 25 (table 1.4). At the same time, the real wages in England had risen, which allowed potential servants the option to remain in the country. Consequently, the price of servants in the

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under a written agreement. A third to nearly a half of them were said to have been under the age of 19, 80% were under the age of 24. In the Chesapeake, the portion of servants among the population steadily decreased during the seventeenth century, and by the end of the century, they consisted fewer than 10% of the labor force, and fewer than 5 % of the population. Some have said the peak of migration was in the 1670s. Tomlins, *Ibid.*, 148, 153-4, 166- 70. Also see Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, vol.1 (1933; repr., Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1973), 342-51.

Chesapeake rose, with planters competing to acquire labor from the limited number available. Another reason was that the recently founded new colonies of South Carolina and Pennsylvania were offering servants large tracts of land after their indentured terms, which drew attention away

**Table 1.2** Sex Ratios for Adult Immigrants to the Chesapeake

Samples, years	Sex ratio
London immigrants, 1634-35 (N=1907)	603.7
Maryland headright sample, 1634-45 (N=20)	( all men)
Maryland headright sample, 1646-57 (N=99)	312.5
Virginia Headright Sample, 1648-66 (N=4272)	341.8
Bristol immigrants, 1654-1686 (N=5065)	308.1
Servants in Maryland inventories, 1658-79 (N=584)	320.1
Maryland headright sample, 1658-81 (N=625)	257.1
Servants in Maryland inventories, 1680-1705 (N=960)	295.1
London immigrants, 1682-87 (N=856)	242.4
Virginia headrights, 1695-99 (N=1094)	296.4
Liverpool immigrants, 1697-1707 (N=1394)	245.0

Source) Russell R. Menard, “Immigrants and their Increase: The Process of Population Growth in Early Colonial Maryland,” in *Law, Society, and Politics in Early Maryland*, ed. Aubrey C. Land, Lois Green Carr and Edward C. Papenfuse (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 96.

from the already heavily occupied Chesapeake region. Opportunities for land ownership in the Chesapeake after being released from servitude had become increasingly difficult after the 1660s. Land prices continued to increase while the tobacco price continued to decline, leaving many ex-servants impoverished and forced to drift to other colonies or regions. This reshaping of opportunities caused many potential immigrants to avoid the Chesapeake as their choice of settlement. European wars after 1688 added disruption to shipments and supply of labor to the New World. Finally, tobacco production and trade was showing considerable instability in the late seventeenth century with decreasing prices and export

**Table 1.3** Length of Contract of Indentured Servants from Bristol and London to America, 1654-1686 (%)

	Length of Contract in Years				Total
	0-3	4-5	6-9	10+	
Destination	From Bristol, 1654-1680				
West Indies					
Males(N=3346)	12.0	73.9	13.9	0.2	100
Females(N=914)	6.1	84.8	8.6	0.4	99.9
Chesapeake					
Males (N=3839)	4.2	81.4	13.5	0.8	99.9
Females(N=1242)	2.6	89.8	7.3	0.3	100
	From London, 1682-1686				
West Indies					
Male (N=553)	2.7	89.3	7.4	0.5	99.9
Female (N=150)	1.3	95.3	3.3	0	99.9
Chesapeake					
Male (N=596)	0	72.7	24.3	3.0	100
Female (N=242)	0	91.7	7.9	0.4	100

Source) James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 67.

volume, which did not attract the immigrants to the new challenge.<sup>9</sup> White immigrants basically tended to immigrate when times were good in the Chesapeake, or depressed in England.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 37-39. On the shift in Chesapeake labor system, see Russell R. Menard, "From Servants to Slaves: The Transformation of the Chesapeake Labor System," *Southern Studies* 16, no.4 (1977): 355-390. On comparison of transition from servants to slavery in the British colonies, see Russell R. Menard, "Transitions to African Slavery in British America, 1630-1730: Barbados, Virginia, and South Carolina," *The Indian Historical Review* 15, no.1-2 (1988-89): 33-49. After 1650, England's total population declined slowly over the next 40 years. See Anthony S. Parent Jr., *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), chap.2. On land ownership in the Chesapeake, see Russell R Menard, "From Servant to Freeholder: Status Mobility and Property Accumulation in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no.1 (1973): 37-64; Parent, *Ibid.*, 36-40.

<sup>10</sup> On the number of British immigrants to the Chesapeake and the British Atlantic world, see Russell R. Menard, "British Migration to the Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan and Jean B. Russo ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 99-132; Russell R. Menard, "Migration, Ethnicity, and the Rise of an Atlantic Economy: The Re-Peopling of British America, 1600-1790," in *A Century of European Migration*, eds. R.J. Vecoli and S.M. Sinke (Urbana and Chicago: University Illinois Press, 1991), 58-77.; Michael R. Haines and Richard H. Steckel, ed., *A Population History of North America* (New York:

With the decline of white indentured servants, Chesapeake planters at first turned to white women, then to Irish men before deciding on African slave labor, which turned out to be a price efficient choice. Menard showed that the price of permanent slaves, whose annual cost was significantly cheaper than white servants, was only 2 to 3 times higher than

**Table 1.4** Age of Indentured Servants from London and Liverpool to the Chesapeake, 1635-1707

age	% of London servants (1635)		% of London servants, 1682-1686 and 1683-1684		% of Liverpool servants, 1697-1707	
	Males (N=1740)	Females (N=271)	Males (N=414)	Females (N=159)	Males (N=518)	Females (N=284)
0-15	3.8	3.0	6.5	1.9	23.0	4.2
15-19	27.4	30.0	21.0	25.8	32.0	30.6
20-24	39.9	48.1	51.0	57.2	26.8	46.5
25-29	14.2	11.1	12.6	11.9	9.5	13.6
30-34	8.5	4.1	8.0	2.5	5.4	3.5
35-39	3.2	1.5	0.2	0.6	1.9	1.4
40-44	1.6	0.7	0.2	0	1.0	0.4
45+	1.4	1.5	0.5	0	0.4	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>99.9</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Source) James Horn, *Adapting to a New World*, 36.

the cost of gaining a temporary service of servants in the 1690s.<sup>11</sup> By the early eighteenth century, the trend became more evident, as a servant for four years would cost £ 10 to

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Cambridge University Press, 2000). For an overview of migration pattern to the Chesapeake, see Lorena S. Walsh, "The Differential Cultural Impact of Free and Coerced Migration to Colonial America," in *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspective*, ed. David Eltis (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 117-51. Detailed analysis on indentured servants can be found in the pioneering work by Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947) and David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: an Economic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>11</sup> Edwin J. Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 103-104. Menard, "From Servants to Slaves," 355-390. The case is even more evident in later years, according to Gray and Wood, in 1740s Georgia, the annual cost to keep a male servant was 9 £ (\$810) compared to only 3.45 £ (\$310) for slaves. See Ralph Gray and Betty Wood, "The Transition from Indentured to Involuntary Servitude in Colonial Georgia," *Explorations in Economic History* 13 (Oct. 1976): 353-70.

£ 15, while adult slaves for life would cost £ 18 to £ 20. The maintenance cost of slaves was also cheaper, and there was no expense for freedom dues given to servants when their term was done.<sup>12</sup> Another efficient and convenient factor in adopting African slave labor was that slaves arrived from Africa in the late spring and early summer, which coincided with the beginning of tobacco cultivation. White servants often arrived in fall and winter, after the season's tobacco had already been packed and shipped to England. Seasonal slave arrivals matched the tobacco calendar perfectly, which made the transition more manageable for the planters.<sup>13</sup>

By the turn of the century, a mere two decades after the significant decrease of white servants, African slaves had taken over the labor force in the Chesapeake tobacco region. Geographically, the transition began in the York River region where sweet-scented tobacco was grown, then spread north to the Oronoco growing region. At the beginning of the transition, as happened earlier with indentured servants, slave men outnumbered slave women by roughly two to one, which made natural increase difficult. But by 1720, the labor transition was complete and the sex ratio among slaves improved, allowing natural reproduction to take place. From then on, slave labor dominated tobacco field labor in the Chesapeake. By 1774, only 2 percent of the population consisted of white indentured servants. The creation of this large class of permanent slaves played a crucial role on the characteristics of the Chesapeake society and culture.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.1, 371. Also see Parent, *Foul Means*, 61-66. Parent argues that African slaves brought over to the new world already had the knowledge of growing tobacco in West Africa, which was also beneficial for the planters, since their quick adaptation generated early profits.

<sup>13</sup> Parent, *Ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 40-41; Perkins, *Economy of Colonial America*, 100; Walsh, "Slave Life, Slave Society," 171. Edmund Morgan argued that the distinction of race and class between whites and blacks helped unite each race, and provided an ideological, social basis for freedom and equality for the white population. The distinction lessened the tension among the increasingly hierarchical, unequal world of white Virginians after 1680. Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975). The native born white population surpassed the number of immigrants in the 1690s, which also contributed to the formation of solidarity. The Virginia slave codes of 1705 recognized the black race as legally inferior than whites. Dessens, *Myths of*

With the introduction of slave labor, slaveholding added another element to the requirements of what made the Chesapeake gentry. In England, the rank of a gentleman was guaranteed by the large-scale ownership of land, but since land in early Virginia was cheap and plentiful, the ownership of slaves became the indicator of a man's wealth. Most likely the largest property holders were of the highest rank in the society, and their large plantations inevitably required a large work force of slaves. It was often said that "if a [man] has money, negroes, and land enough he is a compleat gentleman," and a slaveowner's power over his slaves was the manifestation of societal power in the New World. The transplantation of a society that resembled the class society in England succeeded only to a limited extent, since the ownership of slaves added a totally different dimension to their power, which did not occur at home. With the change in demographic composition, this rather small group of gentlemen solidified as a slaveholding gentry class around the turn of the century.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Early Transatlantic Slave Trade to Virginia**

African slaves were imported into Virginia long before the above mentioned transition period between 1680 and 1720, mainly from British colonies in the West Indies. Barbados planters were importing slaves through English merchants, and Virginia planters entered the trade through that route, acquiring slaves that were highly in demand. But England was late to enter the transatlantic slave trade compared to other European nations. By the end of the seventeenth century, England solidified its power in Europe winning the struggle for international and colonial supremacy, which allowed her to channel excess funds toward

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*Plantation Societies*, 65-88.

<sup>15</sup> Rhys Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (New York: Norton, 1988), 118-132, 137. Also see T.H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

expanding the scope of the slave trade. By the time England had become the major shippers from West Africa around 1700, the slave trade was one of the most important trades of the world economy. By the 1730s, England dominated the entire African export trade, and cemented its leading position until the era of abolition.<sup>16</sup>

We cannot overemphasize the effect the British colonies in the West Indies had on Virginia, especially on the development of a slave-based society. The West Indies trade began decades before the mainland adopted slave labor, and became a model for the credit facilities necessary to develop a plantation economy. Before the 1670s, slaves were mainly imported from the islands. Slaveholding patterns in Virginia were influenced by early migrants from the West Indies, especially Barbados, who left the island because of declining opportunities in the late seventeenth century, numbering somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000. Barbados was the most powerful and wealthy British colony in the seventeenth century with its production of sugar, and by the mid-century the island had become a slave society with widespread absentee ownerships. The classifying of African slaves as property, so as not to dismantle estates at probate settlements, was a practice that originated in Barbados and later passed on to Virginia. This followed with the Virginia assembly passing a law in 1705, allowing planters to entail slaves as well as land. In 1727, the assembly passed another law allowing slaves and land to be passed on to one heir, likely the first son. In addition, Richard Dunn draws similar developmental patterns between the colonies of Barbados and Leeward Islands, and the Chesapeake colonies of Maryland and Virginia. The colonizing techniques, along with the fact that initially Barbados and Leeward Islands started out as tobacco colonies before finding sugar production more profitable, illustrates commonalities in their early colonization

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<sup>16</sup> Bruce A. Ragsdale, *A Planter's Republic: The Search for Economic Independence in Revolutionary Virginia* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 113-114; Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia*, 145-149. Many Virginia planters had ties with Barbados planters, and Norfolk, Virginia had a concentrated former Barbadoan planter community. On the British consolidation of power in the late seventeenth century, see Coclans, *Shadow of a Dream*, chap. 1; Mancke, "Negotiating an Empire," 235-66. For the number of Africans arriving in American regions claimed by the European nations and their ships, see David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9.

experience.<sup>17</sup>

It was in 1660 when Charles II granted a one thousand year monopoly of English trade to Africa to the Company of Royal Adventurers, which later in 1672 transferred the rights to the Royal African Company. But the Royal African Company formally was to lose its monopoly in the slave trade in 1698, which coincided with the labor transition period in the Chesapeake. The Company ceased its operation in Virginia for good in 1706, which left Virginia planters free to acquire slaves directly from Africa, although even after the monopoly ended, the Royal African Company continued to agitate and interrupt any direct trade from developing between Virginia and Africa. Despite such obstacles, about 8,000 slaves arrived in Virginia in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and by then newly arrived Africans occupied nearly 90 percent of the slave population. By 1720 when the labor transition was complete, the majority of slaves imported into Virginia came from Africa (table 1.5).<sup>18</sup>

London based slave merchants dominated the trade up to 1730. But indigenous, independent mercantile firms began to enter the trade around the turn of the century, which increased trade volume and led eventually to a rise in slave population in Virginia. These merchants were supplied mainly by Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants, with cargoes

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<sup>17</sup> Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia*, 86-92, 138, 154-162. Sheridan, "Domestic Economy," 50. Richard S. Dunn. *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (New York: Norton, 1973); Richard S. Dunn, "A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life at Mesopotamia in Jamaica and Mount Airy in Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (1977). Lorena Walsh, "New Findings about the Virginia Slave Trade," *The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter* 20 (summer 1999):19; C. Ray Keim, "Primogeniture and Entail in Colonial Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 25 (Oct. 1968): 545-86. Entail in Virginia was practiced until it was abolished after the Revolution. On the explanation of a "slave society," see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 95-108.

<sup>18</sup> On the organizational structure and activities of the Royal African Company, see David W. Galenson. *Traders, Planters and Slaves: Market Behavior in Early English America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chap.1, 4, 7. The Royal African Company flourished from 1672 to 1698, but formally ended when Parliament declared that the trade be open to all merchants in the British Empire on payment to the Company of a 10 % duty on exports to Africa. Also see Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 112-113; Parent, *Foul Means*, 67, 90-95; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 110. Susan Westbury argues that African direct import dominated slaves imported to Virginia, instead of the West Indies, although the trade was controlled by the British capital. See Susan Westbury, "Analysing a Regional Slave Trade," *Slavery and Abolition* 7 (1986): 241-55.



**Table 1.5** Black Population Growth in Virginia, 1700-1800

Period	Population increase	Surviving new immigrants	Annual rate of natural increase (%)
1700-1710	6500	6210	0.2
1710-1720	7500	5680	0.9
1720-1730	13000	10150	1.0
1730-1740	25000	12790	3.0
1740-1750	40000	9680	4.7
1750-1760	35500	7180	2.7
1760-1770	40000	7570	2.3
1770-1775	24500	3190	2.4
1775-1780	19000	0	1.8
1780-1790	69000	0	3.1
1790-1800	53000	0	1.8

Source) Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 81

consigned to the local slave factors.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Bristol merchants were active in the York River area and later moved on to the Upper James River district, while Liverpool merchants based their activity near the Rappahannock River region. Until the mid-eighteenth century, more than 80 percent of slave imports disembarked in the York River and Rappahannock River regions, where wealthy planters who could command enough credit were concentrated and commercial networks were well developed. Bristol merchants were able to efficiently deliver more slaves per ship, and were more willing to extend credit on generous terms. They also strategically concentrated on collecting African slaves from one African region in particular, the Bight of Biafra, which strategy gained advantage in the turnaround times in the Atlantic voyages. Liverpool slavers, on the other hand, operated smaller vessels which allowed more flexibility regarding their destinations. Liverpool slavers may have also benefited by the extensive bill market they held in south Lancashire, which had strong London connections; small number of acceptance houses in London served as payers of bills remitted to Liverpool for slave sales. The reputation of bills drawn on London merchants was helpful in maintaining liquidity of the capital required for

slaving in other port cities. These two ports in particular also had the geographical advantage of being located on the west coast of England.<sup>19</sup> The eighteenth century was when British slave trading was at its peak, with more than 3 million slaves carried in British vessels to the Americas, more than any other European countries involved the Atlantic trade (table 1.6, 1.7).<sup>20</sup>

Since slave investment required a large amount of capital, Virginia planters became

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<sup>19</sup> Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 114; R.C. Nash, "The Organization of Trade and Finance in the British Atlantic Economy, 1600-1830," in Coclanis, *The Atlantic Economy*, 102; Lorena Walsh, "Mercantile Strategies, Credit Networks, and Labor Supply in the Colonial Chesapeake in Trans-Atlantic Perspective," in Eltis, Lewis, and Sokoloff ed., *Slavery in the Development of the Americas*, 101-102, 107. According to Walsh, another reason for the expansion of credit based slave trading was the Colonial Debts Act of 1732, which made land and slaves liable for the debts due by bond. On the rise of Bristol and its role in the development of the slave trade, see David Richardson "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'," *Slavery and Abolition* Vol. 26 No.1 (April, 2005): 35-54; James A. Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History, Revised Edition*, with Stephen D. Behrendt (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 148-165; Lorena Walsh, "New Findings," 11-21. Walsh explains that it was likely that wealthy planters preferred to purchase additional new hands from an ethnic group of which ways they were already familiar with, which resulted in high concentration of slaves from a particular area in Africa in a particular region in Virginia. The details on the characteristics of York River area and Rappahanock River area is explained in Walsh, "New Findings," 17-18. Further on the ethnic background of Africans and their consequences, see Walsh, "The Differential Cultural Impact," 129-35. For development of Liverpool as a slaving port, see Rawley, *Ibid.*, 166-88. For a general overview of the transatlantic trade and Virginia, see Herbert S. Klein, "Slaves and Shipping in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Virginia," in Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 121-40. On efficiency and productivity changes in the Atlantic slave trade, see David Eltis and David Richardson, "Productivity in the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Explorations in Economic History* 32, (1995): 465-484; Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 75-76. Usually, slavers developed a system of remitting bills of exchange by payment "in the bottom of the ship" that delivered the cargo, in which terms were of three, six, nine or twelve months, or four, eight, twelve and sixteen months. This required specific time stated before interest became due.

<sup>20</sup> Various elements contributed as to why outport merchants were able to provide more generous credit, for example, the inflow of capital from northwest Europe, drop in the capital markets, credit from London wholesalers and provincial manufacturers, to mention a few. See Nash, "Organization of Trade," 124-7. The British Empire carried about 3.4 million slaves from Africa between 1662 and 1807, which was about half of all the slaves that were shipped from Africa to the Americas. Of them, 95 % were carried by British owned ships. Also, despite their fall from dominance, London merchants were extremely crucial for financing the British slave trade up till abolition. They accepted and guaranteed bills of exchange drawn by factors in West Indies and North America in favor of Liverpool and other slave ports. London also supplied goods on credit to merchants in other ports. See David Richardson, "The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1660-1807," in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 441, 448-9. Also see Rawley, *Ibid.*, 129-47. Although not the Chesapeake, the actual transactions of slave sales at the British North American colonial port is documented in Kenneth Morgan, "Slave Sales in Colonial Charleston," *The English Historical Review* 113 (Sept. 1998): 905-27.

increasingly in debt to the English merchants with the rise of African imports. When credit sales of slaves were made, they were usually on 60 days' credit, and often extended to 6 to

**Table 1.6** Slave Ships and Slaves Cleared in London, Bristol, and Liverpool

	London		Bristol		Liverpool	
	Number of clearances	Slaves delivered	Number of clearances	Slaves delivered	Number of clearances	Slaves delivered
1698-1709	539(545)	226592	60	10070	2	262
1709-1719	313(450)	756499	194	34490	79(75)	10349
1720-1729	435(600)	95467	332	69438	120(96)	19080
1730-1739	282	71910	405	96312	231	48510
1740-1749	81	24543	239	60378	322	78890
1750-1759	164	27716	215	49950	521	118267
1760-1769	335	72025	256	62422	725	170375
1770-1779	370	92500	154	34519	703	170126
1780-1789	190(166)	58520	112 (111)	29311	660(646)	214500
1790-1799	156(173)	46153	130(123)	29603	1042(1011)	318839
1800-1807	132(185)	36427	17	3988	896(867)	224880
Total	2997(3351)	717352	2114(2105)	48048	5301(5199)	1374078

Source) James A. Rowley, *London, Metropolis of the Slave Trade* (Columbia; University of Missouri Press, 2003), 39.

Note) Numbers in parenthesis are from Richardson, "The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade," in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 446, for comparison.

12 months' credit. It was often the case that agents or factors could not collect the debts for several years. Most of the profits of the trade went directly into these English merchants who owned the ships and carried them from Africa. Virginia planters were often caught in the vicious cycle of overproduction once tobacco prices rose, consequently buying more slaves on credit extended from the English merchants. The authorities, in order to avoid the cycle of overproduction, enforced import duties on each slave in the 1700s and attempted to raise revenue for the colonial legislature at the same time.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Parent, *Foul Means*, 76-79, 90-95; Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 113-114; Lorena Walsh, "Mercantile Strategies," 98. Slave traders consigned slaves to local agents who would sell for commissions ranging from 5 to 10 percent of the proceeds.

**Table 1.7** Origins of Virginia Africans, 1710s - 1770s (%)

Origin	1658-1713 (N=7795)	1712-1720s (N=11,211)	1730s (N=7644)	1740-1752 (N=2876)	1760-1772 (N=3557)
Senegambia	34.2	8	27	41	13
Sierra Leone	0	4	0	0	6
Windward Coast	0	4	0	0	9
Gold Coast	16.5	10	4	8	22
Bight of Benin	4.0	0	0	0	0
Bight of Biafra	44.0	57	33	30	0
Angola	1.2*	6	37	21	50
Madagascar		11	0	0	0
Total	99.9	100	101	100	100
(total number unclear)		(35)	(47)	(81)	(67)

Source) The data after 1712 (column 3-6) is from Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 63. For 1658-1713 (column 2), the data comes from David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 245.

Note) 1.2%\* of Angola is the data for “WC Africa.”

But the English merchants held financial anxieties as well. Slaving voyages were financed by partnerships of merchants, tradesmen, and seafarers, and required an investment that continued to rise in the eighteenth century. When slave trading was still an infant industry, businessmen would invest in a certain voyage and leave, and such easy entry and exit into and out of the trade made the trade highly competitive. Over time there were indications at least in the leading ports in England that the control over the slave trade gradually became concentrated in the hands of small group of leading investors. The trade, which usually took twelve to eighteen months to complete the cycle, involved exceptional risk onboard. Experience led merchants to develop strategies to eliminate such risks as much as possible, which became an essential factor in changing the organization structure of slave trading. The geographical shift of the center of slave trading from London to the outports around 1730 may have unintentionally resulted in a successful division of labor, with the outports concentrating on the actual trading process and London on its finance, which helped spread the risk geographically. The long-distance voyages and risk also gave

rise to the development of marine insurance.<sup>22</sup>

Chesapeake planters imported around 100,000 slaves from Africa from 1690 to 1770, in which during the peak years of 1700 to 1739 the number reached around 54,000. Direct imports from Africa declined in the mid-century because slaves were able to reproduce naturally. While Virginia remained the most “black” state in the North American colonies, the largest slave entrepôt had shifted to Charlestown, South Carolina by the mid-century. The Georgia port of Savannah also became a significant market for slaves from the 1750s onward.

Conditions in the slave trade in the West Indies greatly influenced the number of slaves entering the Chesapeake region. According to Walsh, the pattern of Chesapeake slave imports up to 1760 was deeply related to the sugar prices in Barbados. When sugar prices declined, British slave traders focused on sending slaves to Chesapeake destinations, which was the pattern seen in the 1720s and 1730s, despite the stagnation in Chesapeake tobacco prices. But ultimately, the number of slaves destined to the Chesapeake was affected not by one particular reason but by numerous factors, including fluctuations of sugar and tobacco prices, along with changes in British merchant communities and conditions in Africa.<sup>23</sup>

As for the carriers, at the turn of the century, almost three-fourths of British ships carrying slaves to the Chesapeake were from London, constituting 96 percent of the

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<sup>22</sup> Richardson, “British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade,” 449. The mortality rates of slaves onboard the middle passage is said to have been about 13.2 percent. Richardson, *Ibid.*, 448, 454. Also see Rawley, *Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 243-63. On the development of marine insurance, see Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 338-60. Chief private marine insurers were at Lloyd’s Coffee House in London. See Kenneth Morgan, *British Transatlantic Slave Trade* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2002), 76. Fire insurance was stimulated by the transatlantic trade as well, since sugar, a major commodity, and their refineries in London and other major ports were under the risk of fire. On concentration ratios of investors, see Morgan, *Ibid.*, 81-2.

<sup>23</sup> Lorena Walsh, “Mercantile Strategies,” 95. On the relation among sugar production, slave trade and British and colonial economic growth see David Richardson, “The Slave Trade, Sugar, and British Economic Growth, 1748-1776,” in “Caribbean Slavery and British Capitalism,” special issue, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 71, no.4 (spring, 1987): 739-769. For a general overview of British supply of slaves to the Americas, see Inikori, *Ibid.*, 215-64.

Africans. In the 1720s, Bristol surpassed London as the leading port in the trade, carrying two-thirds of all slaves and ships. But Bristol's "golden age" was short-lived with the rise of Liverpool, where slave trading entrepreneurs successfully created a complex trading network and explored new strategies, and by the mid-century Liverpool carried half of the trade. By then, Bristol's share of the slave trade of over 40 percent in 1730 fell to less than 15 percent in 1770. London recovered after 1763 after few decades of decline and surpassed Bristol again, although merchants in London focused their trade more in the West Indies than the Chesapeake.<sup>24</sup>

In the early years when London still dominated the trade, slave purchasers were high rank wealthy planters who bought slaves for their own use on their plantations. They were also connected with London tobacco merchants, who handled the sweet-scented high quality tobacco on commission, suitable for the large plantation holders. In the eighteenth century when Bristol and Liverpool merchants entered the trade, larger planters did not need additional slaves on their plantations, since they owned enough slaves that would reproduce themselves, and the new merchants were willing to extend credit to smaller, less connected planters with fewer laborers. The decline of the volume of the trade handled by London merchants in the early eighteenth century can be explained partially in this context: their customers were no longer in need of more slaves. Bristol and Liverpool merchants were able to target the right group of planters at the right time when the tidewater region was densely occupied and inland regions of Virginia were beginning to be occupied by

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<sup>24</sup> Walsh, *Ibid.*, 99.; Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'," 38. London merchants financed about 63 percent of the slaving voyages clearing British colonial ports between 1698 and 1725, Liverpool merchants financed 55 percent of British voyages in 1750-1807. Richardson, "The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade," 446-7. Rawley sees that in addition to the textile industry and geographical advantage, Liverpool was successful and outdistanced London and Bristol because it had developed the infrastructure in its early industries and trade, and could draw capital from London as well as distribute shares among the many ventures in the city. Merchants in Liverpool engaged in various trades, but slaving increasingly concentrated on few experienced, entrepreneurial business firms. Rawley, *Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 187. Also, from around 1740, Liverpool merchants were able to deliver slaves to the interior for bills of exchange with an average duration of 12 to 18 months, which was a considerably longer credit compared to the duration up to that point. Nash, "Organization of Trade," 124. Similar entrepreneurial breakthrough was taken by Glasgow tobacco merchants, and woolen merchants from Leeds.

smaller planters. Eventually by the eve of the Revolution, domestic sales and movement of slaves had increased to such an extent that the relevance and necessity of continuing African importation had become a political issue.<sup>25</sup>

The transatlantic slave trade was significant in its magnitude, and the vast geographical area it impacted. The amount of credit that poured into the trade put Virginia on the periphery of the map of worldwide financial network, which encompassed the area sketching from the East Indies, Africa, Europe and to the Americas. It is also safe to say, despite the rise of English outports in the eighteenth century, ultimately London remained the financial and operational center of this trade and was destined to remain so until the trade ceased to function.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Tobacco Trade and Mercantilism**

As mentioned earlier, tobacco agriculture shaped various aspects of seventeenth and eighteenth century Virginia. Despite the diversification and complexity of the Virginia economy in the late colonial era, tobacco continued to account for 85 percent of the value of Virginia's exports to Britain, and 60 to 70 percent of total exports. The geographical expansion of tobacco production continued throughout the colonial era and even the political decisions on the colony's western development were influenced by the location of the British merchants who provided the capital to engage in tobacco production in the west.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Walsh, *Ibid.*, 108-109.

<sup>26</sup> Credit had the ability to link rural people to a wider consumer market, and allowed flexible options in payment for goods. On risk and credit expansion, see Peter Mathias, "Risk, Credit and Kinship in Early Modern Enterprise," in *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15-35.

<sup>27</sup> Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 9. Bergstrom provides a more conservative estimate for the late colonial period, according to his calculation, tobacco constituted 76.6% of total Virginia export (£ 202,127 in Pennsylvania money) in 1733, and 60.8% in 1773 (£ 667,888). Wheat and corn combined, constituted 5.9% of total export in 1733, and 26.6% in 1773. Peter V. Bergstrom, *Markets and Merchants*:

The two main types of tobacco produced in the Chesapeake region were Oronoco and sweet-scented tobacco. Oronoco tobacco was produced mainly in Maryland's lower western and upper eastern shores, the Virginia side of the Potomac, Upper James River region, and in parts of the Rappahannock. Sweet-scented tobacco, on the other hand, was concentrated in the York basin and most of the Rappahannock, and was the more favored among the two in the British market. The area for sweet-scented tobacco was advantageous in its financial network because of its high concentration of wealthy, well-connected planters. Virginia's eastern shore and the counties of the south of the James grew poor quality Oronoco, and the soil in the lower Norfolk, Accomack, and Northampton area was not suited for tobacco production. In time, some of the sweet-scented tobacco became so narrowly specific in type that prices varied from each plantation or upon the reputation of the tobacco individual planters were marketing.<sup>28</sup>

The staple thesis is often applied to explain the early stages of tobacco production. According to this thesis, the colonies ship their resource production for exchange of manufactured goods, supplies of labor and capital, which in the case of American colonies, resources were sent to British metropolis. This would bring regional specialization in the colonies and when crops were produced on plantations, the export sector would continue to increase without opportunities for domestic development in industry or finance, and remain dependent on the imperial country. The theory focuses on exports, which can be applied adequately for the earlier colonial period in the Virginia case, but gradually loses significance once the economy began to increasingly diversify from the eighteenth century onwards.<sup>29</sup>

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*Economic Diversification in Colonial Virginia, 1700-1775* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985), 150.

<sup>28</sup> Walsh, "Slave Life, Slave Society," 180-181; Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia*, 42; Russell R. Menard, "The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake Colonies," 112.

<sup>29</sup> McCusker and Menard discusses much in detail the pros and cons of the staple theory and the Malthusian approach. See McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 26-34. The staple



According to the British Navigation Acts, planters were required to ship their tobacco to British ports before being reshipped to other parts of Europe. In order to compete with other European nations, commercial trade had to be made by British ships, built within the empire, and manned with at least three quarters of British or British American crew. This system made colonies the market for manufacturers of Britain, and an exclusive source of supply for certain commodities, and made profit generated from trade flow into Britain. It stimulated various re-export trades, including tobacco in the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

The “mercantilist” thought that supported this system swept the European nations roughly from the sixteenth century to the end of eighteenth century, and affected political, economic, and social policies as well as strategies to control and strengthen national power. Economic expansion was put in the forefront and government intervention to realize long-term strength was necessary. Ultimately, mercantilist thought emphasized increased exports that would lead to a favorable trade balance and economic growth, although in practice the system accelerated a more protectionist, economic nationalism. Eventually, establishments of colonies and their contribution to the economic strengthening of the nation became the central component and the goal of mercantilist strategy. Thus British colonies, including Virginia, were to supply raw materials to Britain in exchange for finished goods and

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theory has been pointed out that it fails to consider the diversity of capital and credit, regional differences, stages of productivity, and nonstaple production in colonial societies. See Marc Egnal, *New World Economies: The Growth of the Thirteen Colonies and Early Canada* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> Eliga Gould, “The Making of an Atlantic System: Britain and the U.S., 1795-1825,” in *Britain and America Go To War: The Impact of War and Warfare in Anglo-America, 1754-1815*, ed. Julie Flavell and Stephen Conway (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 246-250; Richard B. Sheridan, “The British Credit Crisis of 1772 and the American Colonies,” *Journal of Economic History* 20 (June 1960): 168; Perkins, *Economy of Colonial America*, 19-21. The four principal Navigation Acts were passed between 1651 and 1696. The first act passed in 1651 and reenacted in 1660 ruled that all goods brought into England to be imported by English bottoms and forced certain commodities to be imported only to England and her colonies. The second passed in 1663 forced European commodities exported to American colonies to go through approved English ports. The third, in 1673, set custom duties for the colonies, and the fourth in 1696, strengthened metropolitan control via the admiralty courts in the colonies. See further details in Perkins, *Ibid.*, 20. Although the acts went through various revisions they lasted until 1849.

services and were to be rendered dependent on this pattern of exchange. The aforesaid Navigation Acts were central to the mercantilist system, the idea being that the wealth and sea power of Britain would grow by confining the benefits of empire to the state and its own subjects. The protectionist measures were under attack by economists Adam Smith and Josiah Tucker in the late eighteenth century who advocated free trade, but most scholars view the Acts not as an economic burden to the colonies as some earlier critics had alleged.<sup>31</sup>

Tobacco production during the colonial period experienced two distinctive periods of growth, the first from 1616 to the 1680s, and the second from 1715 to the time of the Revolution. The price of tobacco continued to decline from the 1620s to 1680s, but the volume of output increased to overcome the price decline. Chesapeake planters, with confidence in the rising demand in Europe, have often been criticized for their careless strategy for overproducing tobacco, which magnified the impact at times of depression. In fact, many early tobacco farmers were forced out of cultivation during these massive depressions. But with the decline in prices, the cost of cultivating and marketing the crop decreased over the years as well. McCusker and Menard traced the accumulated effects of smaller risks, cheaper credit, falling prices for manufactured goods and food, greater output per worker, saving of distribution costs in England, efficiency and cost reduction in transportation and packaging, and customs charges. These aspects combined, contributed greatly to the expansion of market and productivity even at times of price reduction. If

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<sup>31</sup> On the theory of mercantilism, its interpretations, criticisms and revisions especially in terms of its relation with classical and neo-classical economics, see Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 16-20. Also see Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade, and the British Economy*, 14. Comprehensive summary is provided in John J. McCusker, "British Mercantilist Policies and the American Colonies," in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, vol.1, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 337-62. On the impact on the American side, see for example, William Appleman Williams, "The Age of Mercantilism: An Interpretation of the American Political Economy, 1763-1828," *William and Mary Quarterly* 15 (Oct. 1958): 419-37. Briefly put, Adam Smith's point was that the profits from the colonies benefited certain groups (merchants and planters) but not the economy as a whole, since the drain on administrative and defense costs of the empire were high. Conversely, Edmund Burke advocated the preservation of the empire. Morgan, *Ibid.*, 25.

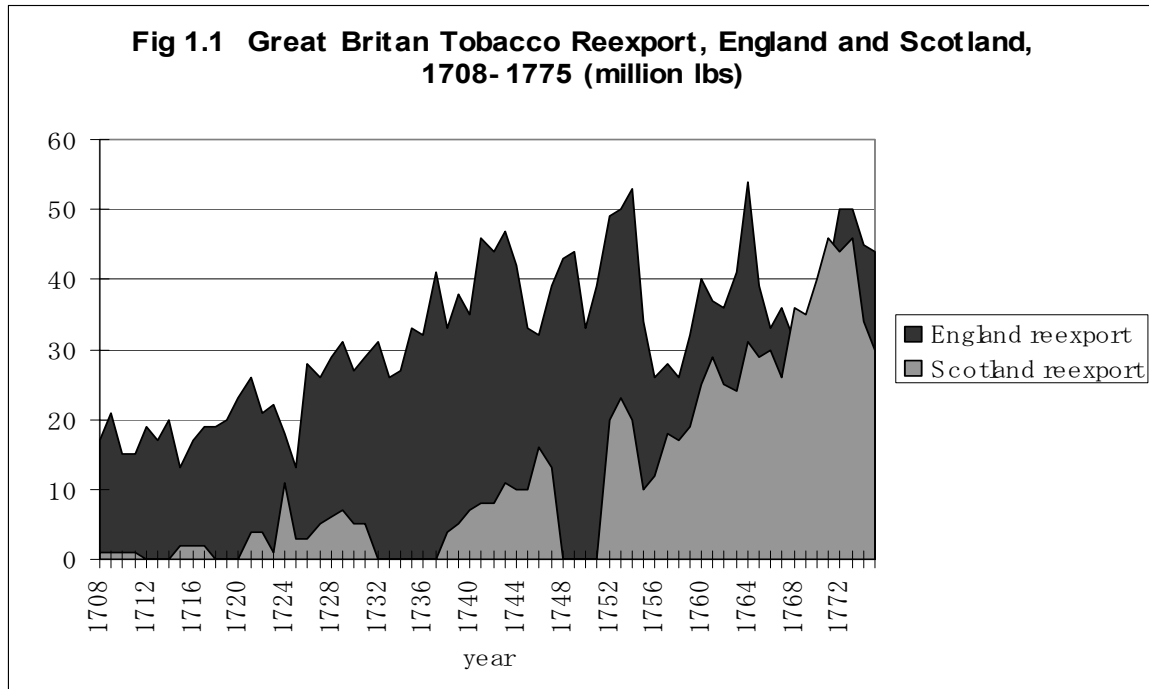
these changes had not taken place, according to their interpretation, Chesapeake tobacco would have remained a luxury item for the rich with limited market access, and the geographical expansion of tobacco production and population increase in the tobacco colonies may not have been possible or necessary.<sup>32</sup>

The export and price fluctuations were affected by conditions in Europe as well. During the years 1680 to 1715, the real price level of tobacco continued to decline, which shrunk exports. This is often explained as the result of colonial policy of placing heavy customs, and the fact that the planters had reached a point where they were no longer able to reduce their production costs. During this period, the War of the League of Augsburg (1689-1697) and War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) resulted in higher shipping costs to Europe and decreased European consumption. The tobacco price itself moved slowly upwards, and once the war ended and peace returned to Europe around 1713, exports recovered. But the domestic market for tobacco in England had been fully saturated by the 1680s and further market expansion depended on the re-export trade to continental Europe, which expanded rapidly from 1720s, as can be seen in figure 1.1. The price of tobacco in the continental market continued to decline due to the low transportation cost once tobacco reached England, which led to a higher demand. Three decades after peace was restored, the amount of tobacco re-exported to continental Europe nearly doubled compared to the first decade of the eighteenth century. By the end of the colonial era, nearly 90 percent of the tobacco exported from the Chesapeake region to Great Britain (England and Scotland) was

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<sup>32</sup> McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 120-123; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 81; Russell R. Menard, "Colonial America's Mestizo Agriculture," in Matson, *The Economy of Early America*, 121-3. Also Menard, "The Tobacco Industry," 113-128. In addition to the overproduction and fluctuation in prices, other factors such as wars, political uncertainties, epidemic outbreaks (for example, plague in London in 1625 and 1665) played a role in disruption of the trade, which brought depression to the colonies. For a detailed chronology of tobacco price fluctuations and the causes of decline in prices, see Menard, "The Tobacco Industry," 128-142, 143-55. In addition, on the cost efficiency of tobacco shipment across the Atlantic, see James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). Other factors to consider were the concentration of trade among fewer merchants, especially in London, and the efficiency associated with increasing partnerships in business and growth of marine industry insurance, all working to disperse the risk associated with the trade. See Morgan, *British Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 74-83.

re-exported to the continental market. France was the major market purchasing nearly a third of the re-export; Holland, and Germany followed close behind.<sup>33</sup>



Source) *Historical Statistics of the United States, from Colonial Times to 1940*. Series Z 449-456, p.1190.

With the long-term change in price trends and the major market shift from domestic consumption in England to re-export trade to the continent, the organizational structure of trade between Virginia and England started to change. The pattern of change was somewhat similar to the change that occurred in the transatlantic slave trade, explained earlier. The commonalities can be drawn on the emergence of new merchants from English outports that targeted new clients in Virginia with a new strategy to finance them.

Among the services that the colonies received, the role of finance needs particular

<sup>33</sup> McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British North America*, 123-4; Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States*, vol.1, 214-5, 255, 268-76. On the comprehensive study on the re-export trade to France, see Jacob M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of Its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973).

attention. Adam Smith argued that the “both of the exportation and coasting trade of America, is carried on by the capitals of merchants who reside in Great Britain,” and pointed out that Virginia and Maryland in particular of the North American colonies, were dependent on British credit for the vitality of their economy.<sup>34</sup> This dependency, of course, was a realization of an ideal relationship under the mercantilist system. From the early stages of settlement, it was necessary for the colonists to purchase goods from England on credit, due to the lack of capital for investment in the New World. Despite the abundance of land, once settled the colonists lacked a medium of exchange, forcing the planters to acquire credit in order to purchase their supplies for the coming year. Eventually a system developed where the merchants advanced supplies to planters on security of their staple crop. The routine of supplying planters was often called making “advances,” which allowed planters to draw funds prior to the sale of their tobacco, by insuring that the tobacco for the next season would become the collateral for the current loan.<sup>35</sup>

As the classification of plantation wealth became more evident, the largest and wealthiest of the planters often played the role of the factor in the area, organizing commerce, marketing tobacco, and selling goods for the smaller planters and tenant farmers. These planters were able to correspond directly with specific British merchant houses, and used the loans made on their collateral, usually on land and slaves, to improve their own plantation operation as well as lending money to area residents, increasing the dependency of smaller farmers toward them.<sup>36</sup> These so-called gentry elite of the Chesapeake lived in houses which were “built near some landing space, so that anything may be delivered to a gentleman there from London, Bristol, etc, with less trouble and cost, than to one living

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<sup>34</sup> Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations 1*, 326. Quoted in Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.1, 412-3.

<sup>35</sup> Perkins, *Economy of Colonial America*, 75; Jacob M. Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: the View from the Chesapeake, 1700-1776* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), chap. 7. In time, British merchants agreed to extend this credit usually up to six to twelve months.

<sup>36</sup> Parent, *Foul Means*, 95-98; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 125-127.

five miles in the country in England.”<sup>37</sup> Larger planters had the advantage of operating their plantations with more flexibility, having the option to market their tobacco directly or sell to an agent or factor in the area if they wished. Smaller planters had limited access to credit, and in most cases had to either market their tobacco via British factors or agents, or depend on the larger planters, whichever would offer them the best price. The larger the plantation operation, the more collateral the owner had in land, labor and in his capacity of tobacco production, and the more he was able to secure credit from the English merchant houses.<sup>38</sup>

Trading tobacco on a commission basis began to appear in the North American trade in the 1660s, and became the dominant system among large planters. The system first took form in the British West Indies trade, where sugar planters began to sell their sugar in London through commission agents. British merchants mainly from London acted as agents who sold consignments of staple goods produced by the planters on commission, and in the return vessel they supplied them with various manufactured goods and additional services in “a wide range of mercantile and quasi-banking services, including the provision of shipping, insurance, and eventually finance.” Planters began to rely on their commission agents as bankers to draw bills of exchange in return for sales, or on credit on loan for future shipments. A commission of 2.5 to 3 percent of the tobacco sales price encouraged these intermediary merchants to sell to the best purchaser in the market. But due to the speculative nature and its sensitive response to international market conditions, this system of marketing inevitably involved high risks.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 15-16.

<sup>38</sup> Parent, *Foul Means*, 95-8; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 125-131. Factors began to appear after the closing of the Virginia Company in the early seventeenth century, and their role was to develop a permanent clientele of planters who will purchase products or obtain consignments from English merchants, and were often employees of British firms, with paid annual salaries. Some were residential planters or merchants who were hired for a commission to transact business for British firms. Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.1, 422.

<sup>39</sup> Nash, “Organization and Trade,” 98; Ragsdale, *Planter’s Republic*, 5; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 137; Bergstrom, “Markets and Merchants,” 163.

This commission system began to gain footing in the Chesapeake after it had disappeared in the West Indies, in the 1690s. The system started among the large planters who generally produced sweet-scented tobacco. This type of tobacco was highly valued in British markets, and planters consigned their crops to London commission agents. This kind of personal service by the agents was especially valuable in the years between 1690 and 1720, when Chesapeake tobacco prices declined and the demand was low, due to the external struggle among European powers. Despite the setback, the high transportation cost due to the wars generated higher prices in London, and commission merchants sought to sell at the highest prices. This also came about at the time when the Chesapeake labor market experienced the transition from white indentured servants to African slaves. In order to purchase slaves, planters were required to have secure support on their bills of exchange, which these commission agents were able to provide.<sup>40</sup>

Looking more in detail of this system, the first precondition for it to be adopted in both the West Indies and the Chesapeake was the formation of a fixed group of wealthy planters. They had the resources to venture upon a prospective business and were willing to take the entrepreneurial risks of being delayed until the next season before their crops generated any returns, in addition to risking the unsettling financial conditions in the European markets. For such reasons London agents increasingly focused their transactions on large planters yielding large crops, since it was not until 1730s that the commission agents were able to provide sufficient, satisfactory financial advantages.

Over in England, most merchants became specialized in foreign trade for one locality, which was often referred to, for example, as “Virginia merchants” or “Carolina merchants,” depending on the location. There was even an “exchange of Virginia Walk” in London, suggesting a common place for the Virginia merchants to meet for discussing their trade. These Virginia commission merchants who were concentrated in London included returnees from the colonies or former owners of absentee plantations. In time, intricate

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<sup>40</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 100; Ragsdale, *Ibid.*, 5.

connections developed among these specialized merchants, by partnerships, establishments, and family relations. By strengthening their network, these merchants cultivated further expertise in selling sugar and tobacco staples. These staples required special marketing skills since the products came in various types and quality, and London market was the most complex, drawing the most diverse customers searching for a specific kind of commodity. As consumer demand became more diverse, it was crucial for the large planters in the Americas to maintain a reliable commission agent who would maximize his profits in the European market, so that they could keep their concentration on the production side of the business.<sup>41</sup>

Although the commission trade seemed to have prevailed in the Chesapeake, it was a trade method limited to large, wealthy planters who were most likely to be capable of shipment from their own wharf on their plantations. Overall, this system only accounted for about 20 percent of all the tobacco exported to England between 1689 and 1713. The wealthy planters continued this practice of buying supplies from the same merchant until the mid-eighteenth century, but the last two to three decades before the Revolution, the marketing of Virginia tobacco faced a major systematic, organizational change. From the mid eighteenth century, with the expansion of tobacco production into the western, rural parts of the colony, marketing on commission basis became increasingly less feasible, and planters began to market their tobacco via indigenous merchants in the “cargo trade,” or via the local stores operated by British and Scottish merchants who traded on independent terms.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 106-108; Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.1, 421. Also see Bergstrom, “Markets and Merchants,” 163-165. In addition to rational, clear-sighted lenders and borrowers in the commission system, Peter Mathias emphasizes that non-economic factors that were more social and political in nature, such as power relations, reputation, and family and kinship connections, had effect on decisions that appear to come out of economic rationality. Mathias, “Risk, Credit and Kinship in Early Modern Enterprise,” 15-35.

<sup>42</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 100; Jacob Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade*, 127-36. On merchants who were independent from British or Scottish firms, see Bergstrom, *Ibid.*, 184-187. Also see Gray, *Ibid.*, vol.1, 423-427.



Cargo trade also originated among planters in the British West Indies around 1730, where they began to purchase dry goods on credit from the same commission houses, but instead of making loans on their future crops in sugar, they paid for them in bills of exchange. This system spread to the mainland after 1750, where local and newly arrived London merchants, in the face of challenge from other English port cities, received cargoes of goods on their independent account. Eventually, London commission agents were facing competition from the entry of Scottish merchants, who adopted this system as well. Compared to the system that developed in the West Indies, merchants still made a portion of their payment in tobacco, but some were made in bills of exchange.<sup>43</sup> The spread of the cargo system and the rise of independent merchants associated with it, according to Price, was the most important feature in the Chesapeake economy during the mid-eighteenth century. An important development to come out of this system was that the rise in grain and tobacco prices and expansion of markets allowed these merchants to trade directly with southern Europe, and also invest in ventures outside of the conventional agricultural production. These new entrepreneurial strategies were made possible by the generous credit offered by the merchants who took aggressive steps to bypass the wealthier, influential planters.<sup>44</sup>

The cargo system reduced the role of the wealthy colonial gentry class as intermediaries

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<sup>43</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 101-102. The bill of exchange was a payment mechanism which was capable of handling disequilibrium in the balance between the importer and exporter without resort to specie payments, and hence increased the money supply. Exporters were able to draw bills against shipments of the crop, and once the bill was endorsed it became a negotiable instrument, that would guarantee payment in a limited amount of time, most commonly in 30, 60, 90 days. Morgan, *British Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 75; Edwin J. Perkins, *Financing Anglo-American Trade: The House of Brown, 1800-1880* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 5-7. On overview of merchant credit and finance, including the role of bills of exchange in Europe, see Jacob M. Price, "Transaction Costs: A Note on Merchant Credit and the Organization of Private Trade," in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 276-97.

<sup>44</sup> Perkins, *Economy of Colonial America*, 136; Price, *Capital and Credit*, chap. 3. To support Price's point, see a case study on Baltimore County, Maryland. Charles G. Steffen, "The Rise of the Independent Merchant in the Chesapeake: Baltimore County, 1660-1769," *The Journal of American History* 76 (June 1989): 9-33.

between small planters and the European market, which eventually led to a loss of planters' social power and influence on the smaller farmers who used to rely on them for credit. The backcountry Piedmont region where tobacco production had expanded was settled by small farmers who initially depended on larger planters in the tidewater region to market their small amounts of cash crops. Scottish merchants focused on these smaller producers and began to establish chains of stores in rural parts of the colony, staffing agents from both Scotland and the locale, and granting stable, liberal credit, and handled the transporting and marketing of the crop. For smaller planters, this system was beneficial since they did not have to worry about their shipment, risks of voyage, and customs procedures, once the crop was delivered to these agents' hands. London commission merchants were reluctant to reach out into the Piedmont, and with credit from Scottish merchants now available in the West, out migration from the tidewater region accelerated. These Scottish firms, which mostly consisted of merchant firms from Glasgow, traded on their own account and distanced themselves from the London merchants. They took control of the supply side of business in the colony and were essential in advancing capital for the further expansion of tobacco production in the western region.<sup>45</sup>

From around 1740 to the Revolution, economic conditions in Europe improved and tobacco prices rose with high demand in both England and in the continent. In light of this boom, planters achieved greater access to credit from Britain, and the amount of money lent from British merchants, both English and Scottish, more than doubled from the 1750s to the Revolution. On the eve of the Revolution, about £ 4 million was extended by British merchants to American tobacco planters, and around £ 9 million of credit circulated in the Atlantic trading network that involved Africa, the West Indies, and North America.<sup>46</sup>

The rise in exports from 1725 to the 1770s was, according to Jacob Price, mainly a

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<sup>45</sup> Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 137; Sheridan, "British Credit Crisis," 169, 184-185; Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.1, 423-427; Perkins, *Ibid.*, 29-30; Bergstrom, "Markets and Merchants," 179-184.

<sup>46</sup> Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 119-123; Morgan, *British Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 78.

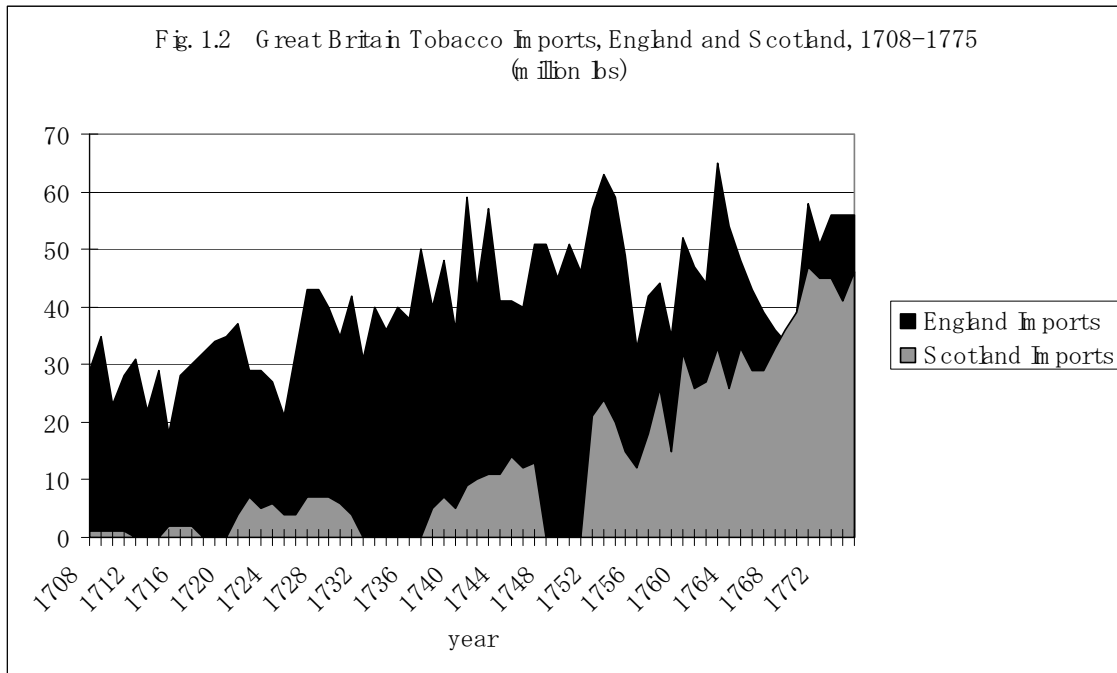
result of high demand of tobacco in the French market. The French government required the tobacco trade to operate through a state monopoly, which was a single purchaser for the nation's market, and this forced the French government to search for direct traders and a particular group of producers. The French government found its match in Scottish merchants from Glasgow, who, as explained earlier, gained strength by focusing on gathering tobacco from the remote areas of Virginia. Since many of the larger planters in the tidewater who grew high quality sweet-scented tobacco continued their commission trade, Scottish merchants dealt with the Oronoco type of tobacco, which was generally grown near the Potomac region and the Upper James River area. France happened to be the most important market for the Oronoco tobacco. Oronoco was cheaper than the sweet-scented tobacco, which made it suitable to carry the burden of heavy French duties.<sup>47</sup>

Looking in detail of the operation of these Scottish, especially Glasgow firms will illustrate the organizational change in Virginia tobacco trade. These Glasgow firms strategically established stores in inland towns near tobacco inspection warehouses, and their liberal credit was suitable and appreciated among recent migrants who had to start a new tobacco farm. Their stores were fairly scattered which were beneficial for settlers, since they did not necessarily have to reside near a river. These areas were not densely settled or matured as a society, which meant that they were free from political constraints or community relations that often worked to limit commercial activities. It was the Scots' strategy to focus on these smaller farmers from their initial settlement in order to gain loyalty on a personal level, and quickly develop a close relationship. At the same time, the firms carefully relocated agents within a matter of years, so as not to get involved in a complex network with the growing community. The Glasgow firms were also selling imported goods at their local stores, which helped to develop a favorable relationship with the customers, and these sales were important source of income for the merchants. By marketing directly without going through the hands of larger planters, small farmers were

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<sup>47</sup> For detail, see Price, *France and the Chesapeake*; Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 11-16.

suddenly opened to larger investment in their lands and slaves. These strategies were quite different in organization and in the relationship with the community or individual, from those of London commission agents. The hierarchical relationship that developed between large planters and the smaller planters was not present in the west. In other words, the planters in the west were all fairly similar in their size and wealth, and trusted their agent in handling their crop. As the Glasgow merchants began to dominate the rural scene, great tidewater planters were feeling pressured and threatened by these changes (fig.1.2).<sup>48</sup>



Source) *Historical Statistics*, Series Z 449-456. p. 1190.

One of the reasons why Glasgow merchants were able to extend generous credit was because they were able to lower the transportation cost necessary for the trade. The trade route from Scotland was a few weeks faster than from London due to currents and winds, and they shortened the turnaround time to a considerable extent. Their shipping fleets were

<sup>48</sup> Ragsdale, *Ibid.*, 13-15, 38-41; Sheridan, "British Credit Crisis," 184-5. According to Price, large part of the profit in the Chesapeake trade came from the sales made at the stores on English and European goods to the farmers. See Price, *Capital and Credit*, chap. 3.

also made quite efficiently. London commission agents often had to wait several weeks in the wharfs of the Chesapeake to accumulate a full cargo, but Scottish ships usually had a full load waiting for arrival at the wharf and could immediately depart.<sup>49</sup>

From these explanations, it can be said that it was after the French market increased its demand that the Glasgow merchants took off, purchasing the cheap, Oronoco type tobacco mainly to be re-exported to the continental market, majority to France. By 1770, more than half of the tobacco exported out of the Chesapeake was handled by Glasgow merchants, which represented a dramatic increase compared with the 10 percent share of exports handled in 1738. The firms became concentrated over the years, with the three top syndicates of Glasgow controlling 50 percent of Scotland's trade with the Chesapeake. Just prior to the Revolution, the entire Chesapeake tobacco region owed Glasgow merchants £ 1.3 million. On the eve of the Revolution, Britain re-exported approximately 85 percent of the tobacco imported from America to the European continent.<sup>50</sup>

In spite of the growth of the Glasgow tobacco trade, the larger planters in the York River region who grew higher premium sweet-scented leaf, continued to deal with the London merchants in the commission trade. As mentioned earlier, their share of tobacco export accounted for no more than 20 percent of the total export from the Chesapeake. London merchants were able to supply larger amounts and longer-term credits that were necessary for maintaining a large plantation, which was an ability the Scottish merchants did not have. Also, their leaf was especially targeted for the premium sector in the London market, where customers were more prone to and searched for taste and quality, instead of quantity, like the French market. Years of experience in handling this type of tobacco made London merchants more reliable for the larger planters. But by mid-century, those

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<sup>49</sup> Perkins, *Economy of Colonial America*, 76; Nash, "Organization and Trade," 111-112.

<sup>50</sup> Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 11, 13-14; Nash, *Ibid.*, 124. The port of destination in France for the tobacco was in the Sienne ports of Le Havre and Dieppe, and by the 1770s, Morlaix and Bordeaux also imported large amounts. Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, vol.1, 422.

dependent on the commission system increasingly faced risks from the unpredictability of the trade, which often triggered credit crisis, as we shall see later.<sup>51</sup>

We have seen so far, from the early eighteenth century, several port cities in England began to cut into the Atlantic trade, which until then was dominated by the financial strength of London. By the 1720s, Glasgow and Bristol were posting agents along waterways in Virginia, with Glasgow merchants specializing in tobacco and Bristol merchants undertaking the slave trading business. From the 1750s, the Mersey docks of Liverpool became the thriving center of the transatlantic slave trade, which dominated all other major slave ports in Europe. These provincial ports commonly had the comparative advantage especially in the area of transportation costs, since they were able to supply shipping and port facilities at a cheaper price than London.<sup>52</sup> Glasgow, Bristol, and Liverpool merchants in their respective trades, all shared the strategy to deal with agents and factors that collected cargoes prior to arrival and dispatched the ships as fast as possible, which was different from the method taken by London merchants. These provincial merchants dealt with larger geographical area and thousands of small sized clients, but were able to transport goods efficiently by staffing enough agents in stores.<sup>53</sup>

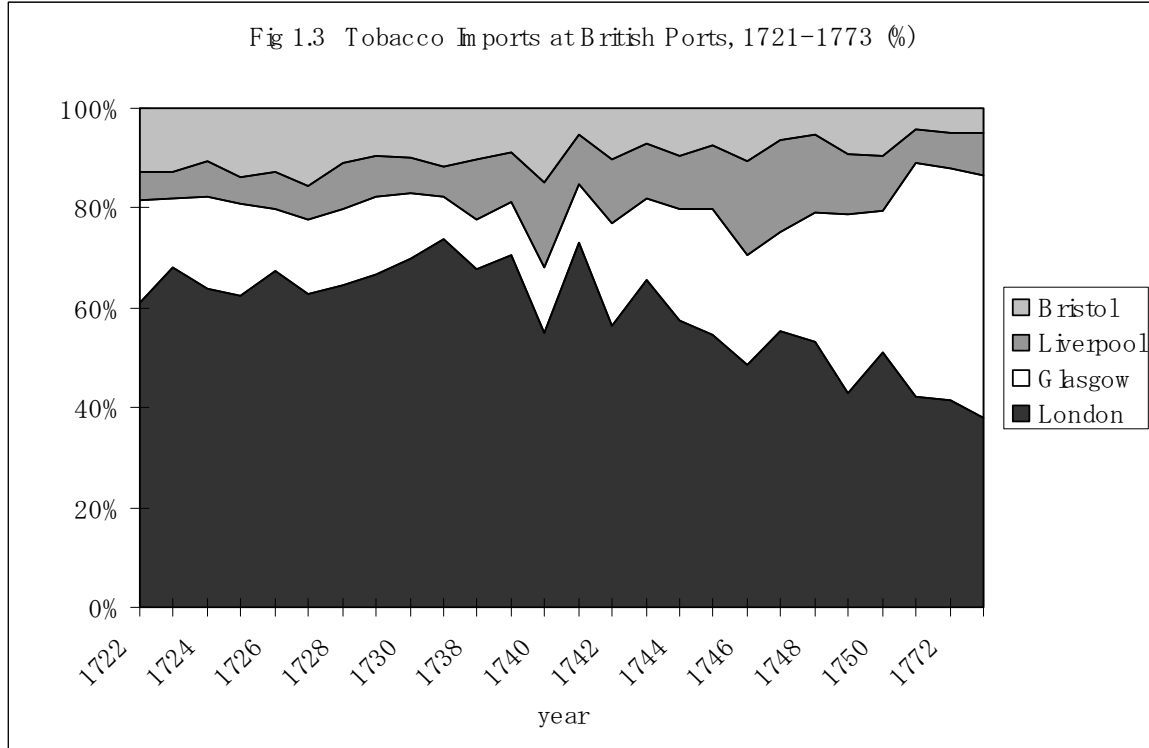
Despite these challenges that London faced, the city remained the leading tobacco port and only behind Liverpool in the slave trade on the eve of the Revolutionary War (fig. 1.3, also earlier table 1.6). As for sugar, another major staple, London controlled 75 percent of England's imports, at as late as 1770. In tobacco, while London remained the dominant center for the commission trade, many of its merchants eventually began to compete with the Glasgow merchants by entering into the direct trade system, and re-exporting tobacco to the continental market. While Bristol merchants began to lose their strength in the slave

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<sup>51</sup> Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 31-2.

<sup>52</sup> Parent, *Foul Means*, 100-101; Nash, "Organization and Trade," 110-111; Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'," 35-54.

<sup>53</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 111-112.



Source) Price, *France and the Chesapeake*, 590.

trade, London recovered from around 1750 after decades of decline. London merchants began to finance cargo trades in slaves, which was the progressive entrepreneurial strategy adopted by the Liverpool merchants, and eventually surpassed Bristol. As mentioned earlier, even during the years of decline, London remained an important center for financing the slave trade. London was the central market for distribution of major goods from the colonies which were consumed domestically, such as sugar, coffee, dyestuffs and higher grades of tobacco, and also was a wholesale center for the manufactured goods that packed the return vessels to the colonies, such as textiles, metal goods and linens.<sup>54</sup> Historically, London had an international community of merchants and had replaced Amsterdam in the early eighteenth century as the leading world center of finance and trade. In 1700, London

<sup>54</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 110-111. See also Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'"; Rawley, *Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 166-88.

controlled 80 percent of England's total import and export trade, although in some trades other provincial ports challenged its dominance, such as Bristol in the indentured servant trade. It can be said that throughout the colonial period, London never lost its grip on its leading status in the transatlantic trade.<sup>55</sup>

An important issue that remained throughout the colonial period in the tobacco trade, no matter the type of tobacco or whether dealing with English or Scottish merchants, was the problem of debt among Chesapeake planters. Most planters positively interpreted debt not as a sign of weakness or increasing dependence on English merchants, but as confidence in future production. But the planters, particularly the larger planters, were tied into the cycle of using these funds for consumption and maintaining their lifestyles, as well as investing further in land and slaves to enlarge their plantation operation. The necessity to establish credits and to clear off accumulating debts at home and abroad motivated Virginians to keep a constant production and continue further territorial expansion.<sup>56</sup>

Before the debt problem became a serious politicized issue in the mid-eighteenth century, the major problem that Virginia planters faced was how to stop the decline in tobacco prices. Policies for tobacco regulation were under heavy debate in the Virginia legislature. To centralize the tobacco trade, the assembly attempted to establish towns and warehouses, but the nature of the plant and the trade routes via the rivers where planters could load their shipments from their plantations, curtailed development of urban centers. The legislature then focused on restricting production, taking steps to establish an effective inspection system in 1712, and in 1713. The passing of the Virginia Inspection Act in 1730 was a turning point in legislative measures. This act required inspection of the crop at public

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<sup>55</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 96-97; Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, 15. For London's dominance in Atlantic trade and commerce in the eighteenth century, see C.J. French, "London's Overseas Trade with Europe, 1700-1775," *The Journal of European Economic History* 23 (1994); Henry Roseveare, "Property Versus Commerce in the Mid-Eighteenth Century London," in McCusker and Morgan ed., *Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, 65-85.

<sup>56</sup> Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 29-30.



warehouses by public officials, and only crops in good condition would pass, and be weighed afterwards and tobacco notes were given to the planters for each hogshead. The act was significant in that it improved the quality of the exported tobacco to a considerable extent, standardized tobacco as a medium of exchange and as an accepted form of payment, and also provided a framework for all similar legislation up to the Revolution. There were much opposition to this act and riots broke out to attack warehouses, but the legislature redefined and improved the inspection act repeatedly, keeping the requirement for all tobacco to be inspected.<sup>57</sup>

The Inspection Acts regulated the trade and encouraged direct trade merchants, mainly the Scottish merchants, to purchase tobacco on sight without the anxiety of getting trash tobacco sent to the European markets, and facilitated a speedy turnover. But the problem of debt remained. British merchants reported that in 1738, two thirds of planters in Virginia were so deeply in debt that they were no longer had the freedom to change their factors. Amounting debts made it difficult to determine a man's wealth. When the British economy was flourishing and tobacco prices were high, planters were able to pay off the debts, but in times of price decline, the entire region faced a severe credit crisis. When the proceeds of the crop were less than the cost of the imported goods, planters were charged this debt on open account, which was customarily granted twelve months without interest, and 5 percent interest thereafter. Those with sufficient funds to pay off their debt within twelve months, qualified for a discount from the wholesalers. These debts were secured by personal bonds for several years, but ultimately the creditor could demand a mortgage or deed of trust on it. Usually, creditors were eager to offer goods at an advanced price, as long as tobacco was secure and a promise was given to pay off the debts. Especially in the

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<sup>57</sup> Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 104-117; Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.1, 226-227. The Virginia Inspection Act of 1730 also stated that tobacco should be exported in hogsheads, casks, or cases, which eliminated bulk tobacco. Three licensed inspectors examined the tobacco. Along with the weight, the tobacco notes stated the name of the warehouse, the type of tobacco (Oronoco, sweet-scented, leaf, stemmed). These tobacco notes could be used as legal tender for debts in the surrounding counties, and payments of taxes and fees were accepted in these notes.

last two decades before the Revolution, British merchants were offering increasingly liberal credit to planters. On the eve of Revolution, around £ 4 million was extended by British merchants to tobacco planters in America.<sup>58</sup>

Major crises occurred in years 1761-1765, and in 1772. The credit crisis of 1772 was particularly damaging, resulting in the bankruptcy of several British tobacco firms and both London and Glasgow merchants demanding immediate payment of accumulated debts from Chesapeake planters. Just before the crisis, British exports had reached heights and tobacco imports into Britain reached their pre-Revolution peak. Virginia was particularly hard hit with the accumulated debt burden and was unprepared for immediate large scale liquidation, together with declining tobacco prices and curtailment of credit, which resulted in social unrest. Even the successful mercantile house of John Norton & Sons in London was forced to curtail its business and took years to recover its debts. Virginia bills were often protested since they were drafted by banks that were no longer operating.<sup>59</sup>

After the 1772 crisis, T.H. Breen argues that Virginia planters began to feel threatened and victimized, entrapped by the mounting debts, and the fear that British merchants would seize their property led them to politicize the entire problem.<sup>60</sup> It did not help that these planters took measures to delay repayment and made it difficult for merchants to collect debt, at times using political influence to delay court processes. They also prolonged credit by shifting consignments from one commission merchant to another, and eventually turning to Scottish merchants. London merchants were the hardest hit in this crisis, while the Scottish trade recovered rather quickly. But the lingering problem of debt led planters and politicians increasingly questioning about how the tobacco staple had controlled their

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<sup>58</sup> Sheridan, "British Credit Crisis," 169; Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 18; Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and British Economy*, 78-79.

<sup>59</sup> Sheridan, *Ibid.*, 171-179. With confidence lost in paper currency, the legislature called a session to authorize a new issuance of paper money to replace the compromised issues.

<sup>60</sup> Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 128-131; Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*; Sheridan, *Ibid.*, 171-185; T.H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture*.

everyday life and the economy of the colony. In fact, in addition to debt, there were various other problems Chesapeake planters faced in tobacco production that led them to pursue other possibilities in the eighteenth century. One major alternative was adopting another export crop, which we will explore in further detail.<sup>61</sup>

### **Growth of Grain Production and the Revolutionary War**

Although tobacco remained the principal export crop this region produced throughout the colonial period, several problems as well as new opportunities drove many planters to adopt a different export crop in the eighteenth century. There are various studies on how tobacco was a soil depleting crop that required cultivated land to be left undisturbed for up to twenty years for recovery. In addition to the price instability from the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century, the exhausted land and low productivity and the lack of knowledge or technology to revive the soil led many planters to abandon tobacco altogether. Beginning in the 1720s and 1730s, planters of middling to small sizes focused on the growing market for grain in Europe and the West Indies. As such, grain, especially wheat and corn, became the new export commodity of their choice. In England, the population increase in the eighteenth century made the populace more dependent on foreign imports. With the War of Austrian Succession (1742-1748), Britain officially made it a requirement for colonial grain to be sent there or to Ireland. The West Indies was also dependent on grain imports for sustenance, although West Indians were importing more corn than wheat.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Sheridan, "British Credit Crisis," 184-185; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 247.

<sup>62</sup> Lorena Walsh, "Slave Life, Slave Society," 34. On soil depletion in the Chesapeake, see Avery O. Craven, *Soil Depletion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia* (1926; repr., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965) ; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 47-48; Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol. 1, 196-199. It was said that a white man or a slave can cultivate about 3 acres of tobacco and the land could be planted with tobacco for 3 consecutive years, then it had to lie undisturbed for 20 years. A successful planter would need land for self-sufficiency production (grain and livestock), which would be about 50 acres of land for every working hand. On the other hand, Walsh argues that Chesapeake planters

Due to the tendency among planters to overproduce, depressions in tobacco were quite severe, which was the major reason alternative crop was sought, in order to reduce the dependency on an unstable crop. Grain prices tended to decline more slowly than the sudden collapse of tobacco prices, and local merchants encouraged planters to increase their grain production. Planters began to diversify their agricultural production by adopting grain crops and also continued producing tobacco, which inevitably reorganized plantation structure. Wheat required a very different cultivation practice, which needed less time and labor compared to tobacco. Most planters began to market both crops since their routines did not interrupt the other, but by the end of the colonial era, planters began to focus their production on one or the other. As a result, a wholesale shift to wheat cultivation had occurred in some places. Population density and limited availability of land made it difficult to market both crops in large amounts, because rotation required long periods of fallow.<sup>63</sup>

Historians have emphasized the importance of grain as an export commodity to different degrees. While Klingaman estimated that more than 80 percent of the wheat, and 90

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eventually abandoned the European agricultural practices that was damaging to the soil and adopted native American practices, which also had long fallows but allowed six to eight years of fertility. This limited natural depletion, and Walsh further argues that it was more the cultivation of wheat than tobacco that caused massive soil depletion. See Walsh, *Ibid.*, 194-5. On the importation of grain to England and the West Indies, see Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.1, 161-169.

<sup>63</sup> Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 100-101; Paul G. E. Clemens, *The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore: From Tobacco to Grain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); Lorena Walsh, "Slave Life, Slave Society," 187-197; McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 127; Perkins, *Economy of Colonial America*, 108. Wheat production did not require as much attention throughout the year, which was convenient to cultivate alongside tobacco. On wheat production and its labor requirements, see Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 170-175. Ira Berlin explains the change in slave labor and slave economies on plantation with the adoption of grain production. See Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 134-6. The change in structure of the labor force had a large impact throughout the entire region, which resulted in the development of urban centers, such as Norfolk, Alexandria, and Baltimore. See Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 187-194 on gang labor on tobacco plantations. According to Morgan, a slave spent about 113 work days tending tobacco, and cultivated no more than 1.5 to 2 acres of tobacco. Wheat, on the other hand, required a slave to tend about 10 acres but only spent 25 days work days in cultivation. Morgan, *Ibid.*, 176-178.

percent of corn produced between 1768 and 1772 was consumed within the colony, and the remainder was exported mainly to the West Indies, Bergstrom says that wheat and corn combined consisted at least 25 percent of exports from Virginia in 1773.<sup>64</sup> In the years 1738 to 1742, the ratio of average annual value of tobacco to grain exports was about 14 to 1, but the ratio falls to about 3 to 1 in thirty years, in response to the growing grain demand in foreign markets. Although there are disagreements on the degree, it is an accepted fact that grain production occupied a significant part of Virginia's export trade by the mid eighteenth century. Planters who were not capable of diversifying their production and adjusting to the changes in market conditions were the ones who became victim to hard times.<sup>65</sup>

By the time of the Revolution, tobacco was still the dominant export crop the colony offered, although many plantations were exporting grain as well. The war itself disrupted the tobacco markets severely, plummeting exports, while imports did not decrease as much. Transportation costs and shipping insurance increased dramatically and shipping tonnage was very limited, thus curtailing exports. The sudden change in the political and economic climate accelerated the transformation of the region's economy into a mixed-farming society, and many planters had to rely on self-sufficiency for necessities. The markets in England and the West Indies shut down, trading networks and partnerships were damaged, and for some smaller trades like indigo and naval stores, the war terminated the trade and never recovered afterwards. After the war, the old triangular trade, from America to Europe or Africa, then to the West Indies and back to America, had been interrupted, since the U.S. was not allowed to trade with the West Indies unless traffic was conducted on English bottoms. On the other hand, with the destruction of the traditional trading system, the war created new industries and opportunities for merchants, especially for military demands. Iron and steel production and the munitions industry were stimulated and new markets and

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<sup>64</sup> David Klingaman, "The Significance of Grain in the Development of the Tobacco Colonies," *Journal of Economic History* 29 (1969); 268-78, quoted in Perkins, *Economy of Colonial America*, 33. Bergstrom, "Market and Merchants," chap.5.

<sup>65</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 170-171.

improved domestic transportation systems were created during the war.<sup>66</sup>

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the movement of British and American merchants crossing the Atlantic progressed, which coincided with the adoption of more aggressive marketing techniques being applied in the export trade. Scottish merchants in the cargo trade constituted one such technique, but this movement was a phenomenon seen not only in the South but in northern port cities as well. The increase of direct interaction raised economic awareness of those involved in export trade, allowing them access to boarder information to build effective strategies best suited for the changing market.<sup>67</sup>

After the war economic recovery took time, although the tobacco trade eventually revived for a short period from the late 1780s. U.S. trade with France opened with the Treaty of 1778, only to be impacted by the French Revolution, which caused tobacco markets to plummet again in the 1790s, cutting Virginia's exports by more than half.<sup>68</sup> With the disruption of the tobacco market, the shift to grain trade was encouraged, since the demand for grain during the war increased and price of wheat rose after the outbreak of the French Revolution. Under such circumstances, by the end of the eighteenth century, most

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<sup>66</sup> McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*; 361-364; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 158.

<sup>67</sup> Kenneth Morgan, "Business Networks in the British Export Trade to North America, 1750-1800," in McCusker and Morgan ed., *Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, 41-46.

<sup>68</sup> Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 158; Lorena Walsh, "Slave Life, Slave Society," 190-191. The Revolution itself will not be discussed in detail here. Economic aspects played a central role, threatening British mercantilism and the Navigation Acts, but independence should not be overemphasized as a watershed in American economy. During the war, various political issues were confronted while exports plummeted, and rearrangements had to be made, but the trading organization and networks that had been in place previously were not largely disrupted. For detail, see McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 355-377; Marc Egnal and Joseph A. Ernst, "Economic Interpretation of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (Jan. 1972): 3-32.; Curtis Putnam Nettels, *The Emergence of a National Economy, 1775- 1815* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962). On British attitude and response to the Revolutionary crisis, see Stephen Conway, "Britain and the Revolutionary Crisis, 1763-1791," in P.J. Marshall, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 325-346. On slavery and capitalism in the Revolutionary era, see David Waldstreicher, "Capitalism, Slavery and Benjamin Franklin's American Revolution," in Matson, *Economy of Early America*, 183-217. Although lacks economic argument, on revolutionary Virginia in the context of cultural and class conflict, see Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

of the region in the lower James River valley turned entirely to wheat for export.<sup>69</sup> The opportunities created by the war also helped to facilitate the shift from tobacco to wheat markets after the war. The war created internal channels of trade for species, which was scarce during the war era but introduced by French and British armies and helped promote internal trade. To overcome overseas trades that were disrupted, other routes opened with the Baltic, Russia and the Far East. For the first time, large-scale trade was established with northern Europe, especially Germany, Netherlands, and Scandinavia, and trade with China developed in the 1780s.<sup>70</sup>

Another change that took place as a result of the agricultural diversification was the growth of urban centers in the remote regions. Since tobacco did not require many forward linkages in processing, or mercantile, administrative, organizational roles outside British port cities, the region did not develop a central entrepôt for the trade. Tobacco did not need elaborate storage facilities or an expansive transportation network, and most of the handling of the product was done through the hands of merchants, who were not congregated in a certain location, as seen in the case of Scottish merchants in the Piedmont. Early on, the expansion of large slave plantations also discouraged urban development, since most of the commercial transactions and necessities for sufficient operation were achieved within the plantation. The tobacco trade focused on, and functioned within the British ports, the merchants, and the individual farms. But the expansion of the grain trade reorganized market structure and commercial networks that led to the formation of larger domestic markets and rise of urban centers. The population increase in the Piedmont helped facilitate urbanization as well. Grain was produced in a much smaller sized farms compared to the tidewater tobacco plantations, and relied on additional functions outside the farm for its production. The distribution of income in the Piedmont was more even and

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<sup>69</sup> Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.2, 607; Winifred D. Losse, "The Foreign Trade of Virginia, 1789-1809," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. Vol.1, no 2 (April, 1944): 167-169.

<sup>70</sup> Gray, *Ibid.*, 613; McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 363, 370-1; Losse, *Ibid.*, 161-164.

most households were not self-sufficient, and demand among these smaller planters was stronger and more diverse. Moreover, the limited farm size encouraged them to seek diversified, strategic operations, by expanding into other entrepreneurial activities that could help their maintenance, which was a very different phenomenon compared to the high dependency on tobacco among the larger planters.<sup>71</sup>

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Norfolk and Richmond developed as principal port towns in Virginia, with Richmond leading Norfolk in value of exports. Eventually, Norfolk, expanding its hinterlands to upper regions of North Carolina, experienced a rapid growth in the last decades of the century and surpassed Richmond as the largest port in the state. Before the close of the eighteenth century, with the increasing size of sea-bound ships, Richmond and Petersburg began to lose their direct trade with Europe, and instead sent their shipments down the James River to Norfolk, which contributed to the growth of Norfolk as a leading port. Norfolk owed its growth to her strength in grain exports to the West Indies, the trade that marked a dramatic rise in the latter half of the century. Richmond merchants still kept large vessels, but consigned their foreign-destined products via the agencies of Norfolk merchants. Alexandria, a component of the District of Columbia, and Fredericksburg began to function as trading centers as well. These cities were adjacent to rivers and controlled vast hinterlands that produced both tobacco and grain, and farmers made trips to these cities several times a year to secure supplies in exchange for export production. Despite the low population, the emergence of these urban centers was a dramatic change in landscape from the prewar period, and these cities became pivotal centers for further internal improvements in the coming decades.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> McCusker and Menard, *Ibid.*, 133; Ragsdale, *Planter's Republic*, 22-23.

<sup>72</sup> McCusker and Menard, *Ibid.*, Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.1, 423-427. From early on, many immigrants from the West Indies settled in the Norfolk region. On the growth of Richmond, although mostly on the antebellum era, see Gregg Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000). With the growth of urban centers, slave hiring in those cities increased. Slave population in new cities often exceeded white population, and many engaged in new manufacturing industries and domestic and skilled labors for building projects. Free black population increased as well, in 1810 one fourth of black population was free in Richmond,



## **Structural Change in the British Financial System**

After the turmoil of the Revolution, there was a huge revival in commerce at the national level that was accompanied by a major reorganization of the financial system.<sup>73</sup> One notable change was the role of banks. The preferred remittances were bills of exchange, and the discount market for bills had increased dramatically after 1780. Bank drafts and overdrafts inevitably put banks in the center of trade efficiency. In 1780, America did not have any banks, but within twenty years there were 22 state chartered banks to discount promissory notes, bills of exchange and accommodation paper. In order to finance foreign trade, these banks became the essential institution to provide loans and to discount bills of exchange. With greater liquidity of capital via these financial instruments, circulation and mercantile transactions were made and spread out much faster than before, and commerce expanded and revived at an extraordinary pace.<sup>74</sup>

The trading system itself continued its methods for a few decades and did not dramatically change from the prewar years, but around 1810, the American market was flooded with European manufactured goods, mainly cotton textiles and woolens, that the trade system was forced to change. By 1815, manufacturers began to bypass the traditional merchant network and take different strategies such as directly exporting manufactured

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and a third of them were free in Petersburg. See Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 273-289; Midori Takagi, *“Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction”: Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999). Although on a later period, see Richard Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>73</sup> U.S. took advantage while Europe was at war in the 1790s and was able to make inroads into West Indies, central and southern America, China, India and Dutch East Indies, accompanied by the boom in shipping, until the embargoes and resurgence of European competition hit from 1808. Nash, “Organization and Trade,” 119-20.

<sup>74</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 115-116, 130-132; Lorena Walsh, “Mercantile Strategies,” 96. The new financial system with the emergence of banks played a central role for global cotton trade that takes off in the nineteenth century. For purchasing slaves, readily negotiable bills of exchange drawn on London merchants were most preferred.

goods to agents in America, or by consigning with agents who held agents in America. They also adopted the method of selling massive quantities of goods at low prices for cash payment, instead of for bills of exchange. These alternative methods exterminated the traditional British merchants that protected the trading framework for the past two centuries, and created a new merchant community in the U.S.<sup>75</sup>

After the organizational change in bypassing traditional merchant networks occurred, the financial structure made one final rearrangement to suit new circumstances. By this time the manufacturers directly exported their goods on their own accounts via Liverpool, London, or American-based commission agents. The agents who did not have sufficient capital were connected to the financiers in Liverpool and London who would accept to guarantee the payment of the bills that they signed or endorsed. Merchants in America who imported goods directly from manufacturers also paid for these goods with bills drawn on and accepted by London, Liverpool, and, rarely, American merchant bankers. These acceptance houses or merchant banks that guaranteed bills by British commission agents and American merchants would often run many millions of dollars.<sup>76</sup>

But it is important to notice that only merchants of good standing were able to get discounts from these banks, and in times of recession or lack of specie, they could be refused. Up to 1810, American banks did not accept a high proportion of foreign bills and only handled notes that come from local transactions. The foreign bills they accepted were

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<sup>75</sup> The manufactured goods were a result of the industrial revolution, mainly textiles in Lancashire and woolen from Yorkshire. Although direct trade started as early as 1770s, the shift was not completed until the postwar period, around 1815. Nash, *Ibid.*, 117-121.

<sup>76</sup> Well-known merchant banks such as London Barings or the House of Browns in Baltimore and New York started out from textile trades. See Perkins, *Financing the Anglo-American Trade*. Nash, *Ibid.*, 129-130. British capital was more generous than other European countries, which was one of the reasons why United States continued to depend on Britain for credit despite their independent status. They also found it easier to continue correspondence with merchants who they were acquainted with before the war. French usually required cash payment in delivering their goods. British merchants also became increasingly linked with agents and manufacturers to meet the specific demands of the American market after the Revolution, although this had been seen by Scottish merchants in rural stores. See Morgan, "Business Networks," in McCusker and Morgan, *Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, 52-53, 56-60.

restricted to those in cotton, a rather new export commodity at this time, and that of accommodation paper. This policy of American banks inevitably required all merchants engaged in foreign trade to have a connection with an agent in Liverpool or London, who would accept and endorse the bills and support their trade, even if the entire transaction took place domestically.

In sum, up to 1810, American financial institutions were not mature enough to support all transactions that American merchants were involved in. British agencies, although in a different system than the prewar period, still controlled and handled most of the financial transactions that America required, and American merchants were provided large, long-term credits that were needed from them, since they were not obtainable in domestic banks.<sup>77</sup> It can be said that merchants on both sides of the Atlantic made efforts to continue their dependency on each other after the Revolution at a greater intensity while restructuring business and financial networks for more efficiency. This resulted in deeper retail networks and productivity gains. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, all the reconstructing of financial relation between Britain and Virginia appeared to have settled down, and the entire South had begun to enter a new era centered around the new crop, cotton, that shaped the U.S. economy throughout the antebellum period.<sup>78</sup>

## **Conclusion**

As we have seen, from the outset Virginia's economic and social development was deeply embedded in the Atlantic world. The most important trade from the outset, the tobacco trade, saw a gradual shift from commission trade to cargo trade and the rise of Scottish merchants. But tobacco was a product whose central authority continued to be located in London throughout the colonial era and years after independence, until

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<sup>77</sup> Nash, *Ibid.*, 130-132.

<sup>78</sup> Morgan, "Business Networks," 61-2.

manufacturers began to break barriers in the traditional merchant framework. Financial arrangements for both the tobacco and slave trades were centered in London, and every Virginia merchant engaged in foreign trade was obliged to have British ties for security and stability. In labor, the transition from indentured servants to African slavery in the Chesapeake rearranged the structure of the slave trade between the West Indies, the American mainland and Britain. London, Bristol, and Liverpool competed for their shares in the trade, and the methods and strategies adopted by the outport merchants to overcome the dominance of London was to target the smaller, inland planters and increase efficiency in turnaround and finance, which was a similar strategy the Scottish merchants would take for marketing tobacco. Diversification became the trend in the eighteenth century, and those who were not able to adapt to changing circumstances were hard hit by several factors. Migration out of the coastal area became a widespread phenomenon, especially those who were unable to change. After the Revolution, commercial strategies became even more intense. Linkages between American and British merchants became stronger, hastening more aggressive mercantile strategies. Innovation in business practices emerged with the increased mobility of merchants in the Atlantic world, who became more exposed to information and knowledge about the commodity and trade.

But even before the Revolution, Virginians began to reconsider and reevaluate their economic path, and the focus naturally turned to slavery when it came to comparing their economic institutions with that of the North, and became a heavily debated issue. In April 1772, a petition was addressed to the King from the Virginia House of Burgesses that pleaded for a ban on the importation of slaves. The issue came up again in the convention in August 1774. By this time slaves were naturally increasing and many larger planters did not need to purchase additional slaves, and local trading of slaves had begun to emerge. From the late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century, America's relation with the transatlantic slave trade faced a dramatic change, which would impact and reorganize the Virginia economy. In the next chapter, the analysis will focus on the development of a new

business, the domestic slave trade, where in Virginia played a major role.

## Chapter 2

### Virginia's Ordeal: Domestic Slave Trade and Urban Markets

Slave trader Philip Thomas in Pitts County, Virginia wrote to one of his partners in 1859 discussing “money matters” for the upcoming selling season: “if we can borrow money at 7 1/2 percent in Virginia and carry negroes South and make money on them cant you afford to cash the paper you sell negroes for at 10 percent per annum and reinvest it.” He ordered the partner to cash the paper as soon as possible and send the money to the care of Robert Lumpkin, a notorious slave-jail owner and trader in Richmond, and also to telegraph Lumpkin about this situation. In eight days, Thomas promised to be in Montgomery, Alabama with a fresh lot of negroes to sell. His theory was, “the more exchange we let the banks have, the more indulgence we can get, and the more negroes we buy the more exchange we can get and the more we can let the banks have,” and this was a strategy he believed would work in favor of them to avoid financial risk. He mentioned that there was “now a sort of a panick rageing among the banks and bankers” causing the exchange to be high, “and if it goes any higher the banks must curtail and then the people will feel it.” When money matters tightened owing to market conditions, the banks required borrowers to pay up their notes just as they fell due, which in Thomas’s situation, their “hands will be locked up after Christmas,” but one way to avoid such situation was “letting them have exchange as fast as possible which if we can do, money matter never will get so tight that we cannot get money.” He reminded his partner, “suppose for instance money gets tight in New York” and “it is not there to buy cotton, the price goes down a few cents,” in which case in the South, “the Farmers [of the] South concludes to hold off for a few months to sell their cotton, where will you get exchange from then [?].” As a consequence, he feared that “what money we now

have is a dead capital unless reinvested soon,” and urged his partner to borrow from the banks, and cash in the paper he gets from selling slaves.<sup>1</sup>

This short correspondence provides a window into the world of a southern slave trader in the antebellum era. Every year, slave traders had to collect financial information of banks both in the North and the South, the supply and demand of cotton in domestic and foreign markets, the prices of cotton, consumer confidence -- all in order to analyze how to market their slaves. They relied on these variants and their years of experience to judge strategically and make the right next step. In the case of Thomas, he judged that the tight money market could result in difficulty in borrowing money from banks in the near future, which was a critical situation for traders who needed to have ready access to cash to make purchases. His strategy was to cash in and borrow as much as possible at the current exchange rate before all papers fell due, and purchase and sell his slaves at the earliest turnaround rate and make quick profits, and reinvest it when the time was right. They might reinvest in a more trustworthy bank, which for many southerners meant sending their gains to northern banks, and receiving it through Chesapeake factors and merchants when necessary. These merchants lived in a world of financial risks, crisis, and failures, and had to carefully calculate each process to continue their business. Their strategy was influenced by market conditions and events throughout the United States as well as parts of Europe, South America, and the Caribbean islands. The cotton produced and exported from the South competed against worldwide producers ranging from Brazil to India by the late antebellum era.<sup>2</sup> At the time when northern merchants and entrepreneurs demonstrated sophisticated managerial abilities in manufacturing industries, their southern counterparts were achieving similar skills in their peculiar economy. As manufacturing industries became the generator of the northern economy, the business of slave trading had become a central feature of the South's. Slave

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Thomas to Jack Finney, 6 and 8 October 1859, William A.J. Finney Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University .

<sup>2</sup> Sven Beckert, “Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War,” *American Historical Review* 109 (5) (December 2004): 1405-38.

trading and traders had every aspect and characteristic that businesses accelerated by the market revolution in America witnessed. Moreover, slave trading business carried a mission for the South: to defend the institution that stood at the core of southern society and economy. This chapter will draw partially on, but pick up and further explore the themes treated in the previous chapter, focusing on the economic path of Virginia, the Old Dominion state of the founding fathers, and how it became a slave-based economy and the leading slave supplier for the entire South. Also, a closer look at the two major slave trading cities, Richmond and Alexandria, will show how this trade developed and grounded itself in urban settings.

In the previous chapter, it was emphasized that the development of Virginia's economy was a part of a Atlantic economy generated from the financial and trading centrality of Great Britain, London in particular. Despite achieving political independence, economically Virginia was not independent from Britain; rather, most of the networks and institutions from the colonial period were still vital for the economic well-being of the state.

By the latter half of eighteenth century, the black population within the state had clearly increased, as seen in table 2.1. By the time of the Revolution, most Virginia blacks were born in America. As discussed earlier, by this time Liverpool had become the dominant slave trading center in the Atlantic world, surpassing London and Bristol, carrying thousands of slaves to the American shore. The Atlantic slave trade was one of the most important trades in the eighteenth century world economy, and despite the ideal principles of freedom and liberty and spirit of humanitarianism brought forth with the birth of the new nation, the business in slaves continued to flourish.<sup>3</sup>

Although Virginia and Maryland started out as the leading importers of African slaves, by

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to the general works on the transatlantic slave trade mentioned in the previous chapter, a study that deal with late eighteenth century and nineteenth century slave trade is James A. McMillin, *Final Victims: Foreign Slave Trade to North America, 1783-1810* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004). Also from a comparative perspective, see works on South American and Caribbean trade, Stanley L. Engerman and Barbara L. Solow ed., *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); For comparison of domestic slave trades in the Americas, see Walter Johnson ed., *The Chattel Principle: The Internal Slave Trade in the Americas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).



the mid eighteenth century, the port of Charleston, South Carolina had become the leading destination for slaves, importing three times more slaves than Virginia in the 1760s.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 2.1** Estimated Black Population of Virginia, 1740 - 1830

	Black population	Total White and Black	Black population %
1740	60,000	180,440	33.25
1750	101,452	231,033	43.9
1760	140,570	339,726	41.38
1770	187,605	447,016	42
1780	220,582	538,004	41
1790	292,627	747,550	39.14
1800	346,671	885,171	39.16
1810	392,518	974,622	40.27
1820	425,153	1,065,379	40
1830	469,757	1,211,405	38.8

Source) For 1740-1780, *Historical Statistics* (Washington D.C., 1960), 1168. For 1790-1830, U.S. Bureau of Census, Population.

**Table 2.2** Estimated Number of African Importation, 1700-1779, Virginia and South Carolina

years	Virginia	South Carolina
1700-1709	7,700	3,000
1710-1719	6,750	6,000
1720-1729	12,700	11,600
1730-1739	15,700	21,150
1740-1749	12,000	1,950
1750-1759	9,200	16,500
1760-1769	9,700	21,850
1770-1779	3,900	18,850

Source) Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 59.

This decline was mainly due to the fact that slaves were naturally increasing in tidewater Virginia by at least 1720, which meant that many large planters did not require any more slaves than the ones they already owned. Also the spread of grain production, which did not

<sup>4</sup> Steven Deyle, "By Farr the Most Profitable Trade': Slave Trading in British Colonial North America." *Slavery and Abolition* 10 (Sept. 1989): 110. Also see David Richardson, "The British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina," *Slavery and Abolition* 12 (Dec. 1991): 125-172; Kenneth Morgan, "Slave Sales in Colonial Charleston," *The English Historical Review* 113 (Sept 1998): 905-27.

require as much slave labor as tobacco, contributed to the decrease. The beginning of westward migration of the younger generation played a large role as well. When Virginia imports were not sufficient to meet the demand, slaves began to come in to Virginia from South Carolina and Georgia (table 2.2).<sup>5</sup>

Form the mid-eighteenth century, Virginia sought various ways to curtail the importation of slaves, since the black population was naturally increasing and the necessity of further importation had declined. Laying high duties on imports was the major form of regulation during the colonial era. Wealthy slaveowners with sufficient slaves sought high duties, but those who were not well stocked, fought hard to keep the duties low. In 1778, the General Assembly pushed to ban the importation of slaves, stating, “no slaves shall hereafter be imported into this commonwealth, by sea or land, nor shall any slave or slaves so imported be sold or bought by any person whatsoever.” Those who had political power in Virginia were large slaveowners who did not wish to see their investment in slave property decline by the continuing oversupply of slaves from Africa, and they were also not pleased with the trade being controlled heavily by English capital. During the colonial era, the trade was overwhelmingly controlled by the English. In the case of Virginia, English merchants owned 86 percent of the slave ships and carried 89 percent of the slaves imported into the colony before the Revolution. Although imports initially came in from the West Indies before the eighteenth century, during the overall colonial period, more than 90 percent of the slaves that landed in Virginia were directly sent from Africa (table 2.3)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Charleston continued to be the dominant slave port in the late eighteenth century, and Savannah also imported large number of African slaves. See McMillin, *The Final Victims*, chap.2. South Carolina and Georgia’s staples indigo, and especially rice required more slaves than tobacco with the adaptation of gang labor. Louisiana, still a French colony at this time, with the spread of sugar production around the turn of the century, began to import large amounts of slaves. Steven Deyle, “The Irony of Liberty: Origins of the Domestic Slave Trade,” *Journal of Economic Review* 12 (1992): 52-59.

<sup>6</sup> Deyle, “The Irony of Liberty,” 40, 44, 47; Deyle “By Farr the Most Profitable Trade,” 111. Quote from Winfield H. Collins, *The Domestic Slave Trade of the Southern States* (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1904), 109. After the act of 1778 passed, individuals moving into Virginia from other states to become Virginia citizens could bring their slaves with them upon taking an oath within ten days after their removal. Adam Rothman, “The Domestication of the Slave Trade in the United States,” in Walter Johnson, *The Chattel Principle*, 35; Deyle, “By Farr the Most Profitable Trade,” 108-112. Also see Susan Westbury,

**Table 2.3** Estimated Number of Africans Imported in Virginia, 1700-1775,  
By the Source of Slaves (Africa and West Indies)

	West Indies number	West Indies percentage	Africa number	Africa percentage
1700-1709	75	1	7203	99
1710-1719	1113	18	5162	82
1720-1729	*	--	11795	--
1730-1739	1108	7	14226	93
1740-1749	1699	16	8976	84
1750-1759	786	11	6163	89
1760-1769	284	4	7645	96
1770-1775	879	27	2420	73
Total	5944	8.55	63590	91.45

Source) Susan Westbury, "Analysing a Regional Slave Trade: The West Indies and Virginia, 1698-1775," *Slavery and Abolition* 7(Dec.1986), 249.

The Revolution brought forth a seven year suspension of trade between the United States and Great Britain. After the war, all of New England, the Middle States, Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware refused slave imports and banned them officially within a few years.<sup>7</sup> Even the ban of slave imports did not solve the naturally increasing surplus of black population. With the ban in Virginia in 1778, many other southern states followed. Although most southern states banned the trade between 1787 and 1804, these laws were merely a reflection of increasing fear regarding the high concentration of blacks, and generally were not very effective. Many loopholes allowed further importation and smuggling, but the act did accelerate the mobility of slaves within and out of the state. For example, the only state that imported slaves between 1787 and 1798 was Georgia, which during that time became a center for the network reallocating imported slaves to other states.<sup>8</sup>

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"Analysing a Regional Slave Trade: The West Indies and Virginia, 1698-1775," *Slavery and Abolition* 7 (Dec 1986): 241-56.

<sup>7</sup> McMillin, *Final Victims*, 5-7.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 1-19; Walter Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, 4. At the time black

At the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, the Lower South states South Carolina and Georgia clashed with other states on the issue of the slave trade. These two states wanted to protect the trade from federal interference since it was in their economic interest, and they made every effort to disconnect the issue from religious and humanitarian causes. Virginia, along with Maryland and the northern states, supported abolishment of the trade. But South Carolina delegate Charles Cotesworth Pickney declared that “as to Virginia, she will gain by stopping the importation [of slaves],” since they would “rise in value, and she has more than she wants,” and the surplus could be used to supply the deficiency in Georgia and South Carolina. He knew that there was already great demand for slaves in the West, and that a domestic slave trade would emerge and increase the value of the surplus Virginia slaves. Being persuaded, the delegates finally gave in to accommodate the Lower South, in order to preserve the Union, and the control of the slave trade remained under the authority of individual states for the next twenty years, until 1808. Before the compromise was voted, James Madison, a delegate from Virginia, righteously predicted that “twenty years will produce all the mischief that can be apprehended from the liberty to import slaves.”<sup>9</sup>

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population was increasing, white birth rate was declining in the tidewater region.

<sup>9</sup> On the interpretation of the “1808 clause” and the “commerce clause” discussed in the convention, see David L. Lightner, “The Founders and the Interstate Slave Trade,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (spring, 2002): 25-51. The “commerce clause” (Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3) declared that Congress had the power to “regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes,” and the “1808 clause” (Article 1, Section 9, Clause 1) declared “the migration or importation of such persons as any of the states now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person.” During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, most delegates initially supported the slave importation ban since it would raise the price of the slaves and planters can “breed and raise slaves faster than they want them for their own use” and emphasized that deporting surplus slaves out of the state was the right decision for the well-being of their economy. Virginia, along with New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware opposed to the 1808 clause until the end. On the detail of developments during the 1787 convention, see Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government’s Relations to Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 29-47. See also Deyle, “The Irony of Liberty,” 46. McMillin argues that slave importation from Africa contributed largely to the increase of slave population in the early republic era than had previously been thought, which may be the case for South Carolina but not for Virginia. See McMillin, *Final Victims*, 18-48. Pickney quoted in Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 15. Madison quoted in McMillin, *Ibid.*, 97. Madison eventually defended the decision as a temporary evil that was

Such changing circumstances and the changing view of the transatlantic slave trade among Virginian authorities led them to become some of the leading opponents of the trade, often adopting humanitarian, abolitionist causes in order to secure their own economic status, which was in fact, largely supported by the high demand and price of their slaves and the profitability of the trade. As the time limit approached, the demand for slaves in the South increased, and in fear of a federal ban, the South Carolina legislature repealed the 1792 law prohibiting the importation of slaves in 1803, and in 1804 began importing slaves again from Africa. Madison's prediction at the Convention proved to be right, since between 1783 and 1810, more than 170,000 African slaves were brought over to North America, and 100,000 of those arrived in the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

The domestic slave trade within the South had begun taking form before the southern states banned further importation from Africa. There are at least several decades of overlap with the transatlantic slave trade. Early on in the colonial era, slave sales were common methods for planters who had to settle debts and balance their accounts, and slaves were sold as part of estate sales occurring as a result of inheritance or death. When the slave population increased and slave sales of the above type became more common, colonial merchants who specialized in agricultural commodity trade began to carry out slave sales alongside their original businesses. Slave sales at this time were still conducted within nearby neighborhoods; it was not common to trade over long distances or across state borders. But by the last decades of the eighteenth century, with direct African slave importation bans by the state legislatures in effect, slaves were sent further away in distance, and the purposes of

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necessary to prevent "dismemberment of the Union."

<sup>10</sup> South Carolina banned slave importation from 1792 for concerns over slave revolts and financial situation, but the legislature voted to reopen the trade in 1803. On the process and reasons behind this reopening, see Jed Handelsman Shugerman, "The Louisiana Purchase and South Carolina's Reopening of the Slave Trade in 1803," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (summer 2002): 263-90. Shugerman sees the Louisiana Purchase as the catalyst for South Carolina to reopen its trade. For a more traditional interpretation in comparison, see Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 141-44; McMillin, *Final Victims*, 7-13. South Carolina imported more than 50,000 slaves in years 1804-1808. The numbers come from McMillin. Shugerman and others estimate the number at 39,075.

slave sales became more diverse and the process more systematic.

For planters who turned to selling their slaves, their involvement usually started out as a necessity to maintain their income, or their lifestyle. The view became increasingly common among planters that “the negro was a sure crop,” and “if the master wanted to build a new house, he sold one or two negroes.” The famous example on the purpose of selling slaves is the case of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson sold off several of his own slaves in 1793, in order to secure his lands. He justified his judgment, on the basis of his belief in “their happiness, which will render it worth their while to use extraordinary exertions for some time to enable me to put them ultimately on an easier footing.” Jefferson obtained about 800 £, equivalent to about \$2,666 in Virginia currency from the sales. Jefferson’s case was representative of a common scene in tidewater Virginia at this time. Large planters were increasingly forced to prioritize their valued property, and those at the bottom of the list were the first to be liquidated. One account recalls that with the depletion of Virginia soil and the abolition of entails after the Revolutionary War, “many of the small proprietors ... had become embarrassed in their circumstances” and hence “when they were pinched,” they were “compelled to sell a negro or two.” With uncertainty in tobacco sales in the international market, planters were always vulnerable to sudden crashes, and recovery after the Revolution was an arduous task. From an economic standpoint, the natural increase of slaves on plantations had become more of a burden than an important form of investment, and social stigma or reluctance among planters to sell their slaves faded away quickly. It had become a socially accepted method for slaveowners to sell and hire out their slaves when economic conditions and agricultural income were tight and gloomy. In time, the domestic slave trade became an integral part of economic life in Virginia, just as the transatlantic trade had been in the early colonial era. Despite the initial benevolence that Virginia delegates had shown at the Constitutional Convention, the loopholes of the Constitution allowed the domestic slave trade to develop and Virginia took the advantage of its surplus slaves to create a profitable business,

as Charles Cotesworth Pickney had predicted.<sup>11</sup>

By the antebellum era, the majority of slaveowners could not resist the opportunity to cash in on their surplus slaves in one way or another. A slave trader would be “prowling about in the neighborhood with his tempting offers of five hundred dollars for a lad or a girl, or one thousand dollars for an adult person,” which planters found the temptation “irresistible and slave after slave supplies the southern market.” Some of the leading politicians and influential figures of the day, like Bushrod Washington, a nephew of George Washington who was a Justice of the Supreme Court and later the President of the American Colonization Society, could not resist the temptation and sold 54 slaves to Louisiana for \$10,000. He justified his act claiming the sacrifice he made not to separate families and compromising the net profit at a price \$2,500 less than what would have been the case if families were broken. James Madison, who at the Constitutional Convention criticized the continuing of the transatlantic slave trade, was also not an exception, selling several of his slaves. Even small merchants who owned a slave or two for domestic purposes, often turned to selling their servants. W.J.R. Greer, in King George County, Virginia was a “tailor by trade,” but he “sold a negro to raise fund to purchase goods.”<sup>12</sup>

Although early sales occurred privately or through merchants who specialized in other trades, it did not take long for merchants who specialized just in the slave trade to appear. In the meantime, while many still sold slaves out of necessity, some began to sell for

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<sup>11</sup> Deyle, “The Irony of Liberty,” 52-59; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 17-19. Thomas Jefferson example quoted in Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 13. Slave selling at times of agricultural crisis can be found in many plantation account books, for example Posey Plantation Records in Harford County, Maryland, Maryland Historical Society.

<sup>12</sup> Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 13, 15-16; Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 173-178, 185-189; David L. Lightner, “The Door to the Slave of Bastille: The Abolitionist Assault Upon the Interstates Slave Trade, 1833-1839,” *Civil War History*, 34, no.3 (1988): 235-52. Greer’s record is from the R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration (hereafter, HBS). For information on the credit reports recorded in the Collection, see James H. Madison, “The Credit Reports of R.G.Dun and Co. As Historical Sources,” *Historical Methods Newsletter* 8 (Sept 1975): 128-131; “The Evolution of Commercial Credit Reporting Agencies in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Business History Review* 48 (1974): 164-186. Virginia, Vol.22, [King George Co.], p.70, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

speculating purposes. These circumstances gradually affected slaveowners' perception of their slaves; in every slaveowner's mindset, whether he sold his slaves or not, his slaves had become a commodity with an explicit, relative market value. This phenomenon was accompanied by the emerging slave markets in urban centers.<sup>13</sup>

Not all planters sold their surplus slaves to maintain and improve their plantation life on the tidewater. Those with more mobile social status and less property or authority abandoned the farm altogether and moved to the expanding West. Presidents Jefferson and Monroe purchased Louisiana and Florida in 1803 and 1817, which accelerated land ownership in these new territories. By the time cotton production took off with the introduction of the cotton gin, migration spurred even further. One way to utilize slave sales was to channel the income generated from sales to purchasing land in the West. One planter planning to move from a farm in Tennessee to Mississippi had a plan to "invest my funds in negroes, and as I am informed that land can be purchased very low on the west side of the river, and negroes bearing a high price then I can make sale of some for that purpose." The lands in the West were considerably low in price compared to Virginia and younger sons who wanted to take a shot in a different place and a different commodity ventured to journey into the wilderness.<sup>14</sup>

But usually, early migrants who already owned slaves usually took their slaves with them when they left. According to Kulikoff, this form of migration, slaves migrating with their owners to the West, was dominant until around 1810, and this form was seen as ideal to realize the view of contemporary Virginian leaders, including Thomas Jefferson. Their view was to first, geographically spread the slave population toward the expanding West, in order to decrease the slave concentration ratio in the East. Spreading slaves over space would lead to a lower density of slave population, and eventually diffuse into gradual emancipation. This "diffusionist" view was supported by Virginians who were anxious about the effect of

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<sup>13</sup> Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Adam Rothman, "The Expansion of Slavery in the Deep South, 1790-1820," (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2000), 46.



increasing black population in their society. The view gained further support when a major slave insurrection occurred in the French colony of Saint Domingue in the Caribbean in 1792, and Gabriel's uprising in Richmond in 1800, triggering fear among Virginia planters of a similar scenario. They also justified this movement by arguing that the allocation of slaves to places where they were most needed economically would result in overall prosperity for the South and the well-being of slaves themselves.<sup>15</sup>

The further white farmers migrated to the West, the more intricate and extensive the domestic slave trading network developed. It was not long before the Chesapeake region, which was home to more than 45 percent of slave population in 1790 had become the chief supplier of slaves to the migrants. Virginia in particular had become a major exporter of slaves, forcing around 64,000 slaves out of the state between 1790 and 1810. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, one in four slaves living in the tidewater region of Virginia is said to have been sold out of state.<sup>16</sup> For many southerners, Virginia had become the "Guinea of the New World," a state that had "blackened half of America" by exporting slaves

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<sup>15</sup> Allan Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples: The Political Economy of Slave Migration," in *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 226-63; Deyle, "The Irony of Liberty," 45-49; Rothman, "Domestication," 33-40. On the effect of the insurrection in St. Domingue on Virginia and other parts of North America, see in particular, James Sidbury, "Saint Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slaves, 1790-1800," *Journal of Southern History* 63 (August 1997): 531-52; David P. Geggus. *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); David Brion Davis, "The Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions," in *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157-74. On the developments in the U.S Congress after the St. Domingue insurrection, see Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 111-117. The insurrection, which led to considerable amount of slaves fleeing out of the island, also had an effect in spreading sugar production into Louisiana. Sugar production, as have been mentioned earlier, demanded large number of slave gang labor, which was supplied from the eastern seaboard states. See Natalie Dessens, "From Saint Domingue to Louisiana: West Indian Refugees in the Lower Mississippi Region," in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, ed. Bradley G. Bond (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 244-264. On Gabriel's rebellion, see James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracy of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Philip Troutman, "Slave Trade and Sentiment in Antebellum Virginia" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Virginia, 2000), 24-5. Troutman calculates that 18 percent of slaves were forced out of the tidewater in the decade between 1790 and 1800, 21 percent between 1800 and 1810, and 25 percent between 1810 and 1820.

to the West. Professor Thomas R. Dew of the College of William and Mary made the famous comment in 1831 that the situation in the state of Virginia was “to attend to the negroes, to encourage breeding, and to cause the greatest number possible to be raised, Virginia is, in fact, a negro-raising state for other states.”<sup>17</sup>

But it is also important to consider the fact that between 1783 and 1810, more than 170,000 slaves were brought over to North America from Africa, and 100,000 of those arrived in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Although only a small portion of this number came to Virginia, many entered the Lower South and the western states where Virginia also happened to be sending her surplus slaves. Wars in Europe, especially the French Revolution and Napoleon’s regime stimulated America’s maritime commerce, opening up new opportunities for merchants formerly associated with the transatlantic slave trade, and North American slavers were able to step in. Despite the importation ban in most states, Africans were imported and smuggled in, contributing significantly to the number needed to fulfill the rising demand in the cotton regions.<sup>18</sup>

The federal ban on slave importation took place in 1808. State acts to ban the trade had been issued years before with little effect, and smuggling from both Africa and the West Indies was conducted in a large scale since the 1790s. The Constitutional Convention in 1787, twenty years prior to the federal ban, was the closest the nation came to halt the trade before 1808. Twenty years regrettably was long enough to determine the course Virginia would take for the coming decades. The battle to ban the domestic slave trade would continue throughout the antebellum era, with abolitionists using the “commerce clause” and “1808 clause” in the Constitution as their weapons. Although the federal ban may have triggered the development

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<sup>17</sup> George M. Weston, *The Progress of Slavery in the United States* (1857) quoted in Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 223-228.

<sup>18</sup> Spain opened their sugar colonies in the West Indies to all nations in 1789, which gave great opportunity for more than half of Rhode Island slavers to base their cargoes in Cuba. See Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 141. Smuggling was common through West Florida, Louisiana, and Amelia Island in East Florida. Philip D. Curtin estimated that perhaps 1,000 slaves per year between 1807 and 1862 were smuggled in to the United States, which is considered to be a high number. Fehrenbacher, *Ibid.*, 148-9. Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969) 74-5.

of the domestic trade, if we consider the fact that between 1810 and 1860, more than 2 million slaves were carried to Cuba and Brazil, while the estimate for the United States at the same time was less than 50,000, smuggled illegally, the federal ban and government action, despite the 20-year delay, was effective to a certain degree.

### **Estimating the Numbers**

While recent studies on the transatlantic slave trade have reconstructed the number of Africans shipped to North America using sophisticated data analysis and simulations, estimating the interstate slave trade has been an extremely difficult task. The major problem in reconstructing the number of slaves traded domestically is the lack of clear, unified records, and the difficulty of defining a sale of a slave. Slaves were sold, hired, bequeathed, and replaced at planters' will. Some sales were made by specialized traders, but others took place under private negotiations without intermediaries. Scholars will never be able to know how many sales were made without being recorded in any form.<sup>19</sup>

Estimation becomes even harder when the number of slaves smuggled into the United States is considered. Smuggling was common after state bans began to take effect, but continued to take place even after the federal ban of 1808. Many of them came from the West Indies and through Florida. According to one account, during the War of 1812, "Florida was a sort of nursery for slave-breeders, and many American citizens grew rich by trafficking in Guinea negroes and smuggling them continually, in small parties, through the southern United States," and that "the business was a lively one, owing to the war," which caused an "unsettled condition of affairs on the border." These smugglers often based their operation in the islands in the West Indies, and agents from all over the mainland, including merchants

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<sup>19</sup> Some records used to calculate domestic slave sales are custom manifests for coastwise shipments, certificate of good character for some years, and trader's records. For the transatlantic trade, David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See footnote 3 in the introduction.

from the North, visited them to purchase slaves. One collector in Georgia wrote to the Secretary of Treasury that “Africans and West Indian negroes are almost daily illicitly introduced into Georgia, for sale or settlement or passing through it to the territories of the United States for similar purposes.” The smuggling business was so profitable that one smuggler confessed “whilst there is a market, there will be traders, and the entire system is a premium on wholesale robbery and murder.”<sup>20</sup>

Another factor that makes estimation of net domestic slave trade difficult is the fact that the boundary between slave-exporting areas and slave-importing areas continued to shift westward during the antebellum period, owing to the acquisition and expansion of western territory. When the domestic trade routes began to take shape, both of the Carolinas, Kentucky, Georgia, and Tennessee were all slave-importing states, but by the 1820s, the Carolinas and Kentucky had become slave exporting states. By then, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Missouri, Florida, and Arkansas had been added as slave importing states, and this gradual shift continued its westward move until the Civil War. Even these boundaries are in fact superficial, since local private sales were said to be more common than long-distance sales. In addition, one slave could be sold several times during his or her lifetime, even moving back and forth between such boundaries.

According to Tadman, the number of slaves traded domestically was on an increasing trend from 1790 to 1830. In 1790, the number is estimated to have been around 40,000 to 50,000, and by the 1820s it reached 150,000. From the 1830s to the 1850s, which was an expansive period, the number peaked at nearly 250,000 for each decade, except a slight decrease for the 1830s, owing to the disastrous panic of 1837. If local sales and various estate and court sales are taken into account, the overall antebellum period may have seen more than 2 million

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<sup>20</sup> “Revelations of a Slave Smuggler,” (New York, 1860) in Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 63-73, and William Jay, “A View of the Action of the Federal Government, in Behalf of Slavery,” in *Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery* (New York, 1853) in Conrad, *Ibid.*, 81-92. Also quoted in Collins, *The Domestic Slave Trade*, 12-13. Florida and Georgia developed into an important base for slave trading in the early republic era when many states banned importation of foreign slaves. See McMillin, *Final Victims*, 65-6.

sales of slaves, with at least 1 million of them sold across state borders.<sup>21</sup> Tadman also estimated that slaves in their teens between 1820 and 1860 had more than a 10 percent chance of being sold to the West during their lifetimes, and those in their twenties 8 to 10 percent, in their thirties, about 5 percent. For slave children living in the Upper South states in 1820, their cumulative chance of being sold was estimated at about 30 percent.<sup>22</sup>

Although slave sales across state borders became the dominant form of slave migration in the antebellum period, Kulikoff argues that the trade was not systematically functioning before the extended trading networks and professional slave traders began to appear. He calculated that between 1790 and 1820, approximately 173,000 slaves from the Chesapeake region moved to the western states with their owners. He argued that the majority of slaves migrated West along with their planters until around 1810, which was about the time large-scale professional slave traders began to appear. These traders increased and strengthened their network, first when the federal ban on African slave importation took place in 1808, and second when Louisiana and Mississippi entered the Union officially in 1812 and 1817 respectively. Kulikoff's estimates contradicts the interpretation laid out by Tadman that even for the years around 1810 or 1820, 60 to 70 percent of the movement of slaves was conducted by slave traders.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, there has been a heated debate for years, whether western movement of slave population was dominated by those conducted under slave traders, or those who migrated with their owners. It has been difficult to determine one way or the other, since slave movements often reflected the state of the economy, and prices of crops in foreign and domestic markets, which differed year by year. With both interpretations in mind, it can be said that in the early years up to at least the turn of the century, migration with owners was

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<sup>21</sup> Tadman, *Speculator and Slaves*, 41-46, 112; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Tadman, *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Tadman, *Ibid.*; Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples," 226-263.

quite common, although that does not mean slave sales by merchants were not seen. It was often the case that early migrants were small farmers and planters who owned only a few slaves, if any. These farmers, once settled in the West, would eventually purchase more slaves for their larger plantations. During the first and second decades of the nineteenth century, both migration and slave sales were commonly seen, and slave traders as a profession began to appear. With political developments such as the federal importation ban and territorial expansion, the domestic slave trade became “big business” in the 1820s and 1830s. Cotton production boomed especially after the 1820s, the phenomenon often referred to as “King Cotton.” According to Gudmestad, this was also the time when net white migration to the West slightly declined in number and consequently the number of slaves purchased in the West increased. In the 1830s, more than 120,000 slaves were exported out of the state of Virginia alone. From then on, slave trading reached its peak, with active traders in every major city in the South.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of the antebellum era, Deyle estimates that more than 3 billion dollars worth of capital was invested in slaves in the South, which was three times larger than capital invested in the manufacturing sector nationwide, seven times the value of all the currency in the national economy, and forty eight times the federal government’s national budget. Investment in slaves was one of the most important forms of capital investment that southerners desperately protected and preserved, along with land.<sup>25</sup> The expanding network and increasing volume of trade on both the coastwise and overland route demanded professional knowledge among traders. The best lands in the West were occupied at an accelerated pace with the spread of cotton and sugar productions. These two staples demanded large slave work forces, and planters began to purchase slaves from interstate slave traders in large numbers in markets in the cities that developed into slave trading hubs, such as New Orleans,

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<sup>24</sup> Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 20.

<sup>25</sup> Steven Deyle, introduction to *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Mobile, and Natchez. It had also become clear that the development of the domestic slave trade made the slave-exporting region and the slave-importing region mutually dependent and strengthened their bond with each other as one economic region that supported the institution of slavery. In order for this trade and market to function, the role of a slave trader and his increased specialization became an essential, indispensable component for the maintenance and expansion of the plantation economy.

### **Slave Traders' Identities and their Professional Activities**

One travel account explained that slave traders were “sordid, illiterate and vulgar” men who had “nothing whatever in common with the gentlemen of the southern states,” and another account revealed that they were “considered the lowest and most degraded occupation, and none will engage in it unless they have no other means to support.” Abolitionists portrayed these traders as “usually brutal, ignorant, debauched men” who exercised “despotic control over thousands of down-trodden, and defenceless men and women.” These views toward slave traders were common during the entire antebellum era, especially the views portrayed by outsiders. But there are enough accounts and records that prove that this was not the case.<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned earlier, domestic slave trading began as a substitute, or side business among merchants who were already engaged in commodity trade. These merchants, as we saw in chapter one, were attentive to international commodity markets and traded on agricultural staples, which in the case of Virginia meant tobacco and grain, or might have handled the importation of African slaves. They were often wealthy and successful in their businesses, and had a stable social status and some would serve high political positions. One extreme

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<sup>26</sup> G.W. Featherstonehaugh, *Excursion Through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico, with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geographical Notices* (New York: 1844); David L. Lightner, “The Door to the Slave Bastille: The Abolitionist Assault upon the Interstate Slave Trade, 1833-1839,” *Civil War History* 34 (1988): 240.

example was Henry Laurens of South Carolina, who was the largest transatlantic slave trader in colonial North America. He later served as the president of the Continental Congress, and a negotiator for the United States at the Paris Peace Conference in 1782. The prominence of Laurens as a leading politician did not stop him from trading heavily and profiting in slaves. It is not surprising then, that prominent merchants would engage in the domestic slave trade, in the same way that transatlantic trade attracted merchants. Before the slave trading network became extended enough, early western settlers who needed slaves on their plantations would often launch on slave purchasing trips on their own. They were usually the large, wealthy slaveowners, and in addition to acquiring their own slaves, they would purchase some for speculative purposes. John Springs III, an entrepreneurial planter of South Carolina went to Maryland and Virginia numerous times from the 1800s to the 1820s and purchased more than a thousand slaves in total for trading purposes. Those who went to the Upper South to find their own slaves were able to avoid the transaction costs and select the best slaves available.<sup>27</sup>

With the federal ban on African importation and territorial expansion, professional slave trading had become a common profession in the South, and every major port city in the eastern states had a functioning slave market where these traders actively engaged in their “business.” These merchants adopted sophisticated mercantile strategies from early on, and ran the slave trading business as they would any other commodity trade. These specialized traders came from diverse backgrounds. Those who had established their wealth by the transatlantic slave trade, made the transition on the basis of the network and capital they had accumulated. Others from various mercantile activities with enough wealth entered the

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<sup>27</sup> Deyle, “The Irony of Liberty,” 38. On Henry Laurens, see James A. Rowley, *London, Metropolis of the Slave Trade* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003) chap. 5. On John Springs III, see Michael Tadman, “The Hidden History of Slave Trading in Antebellum South Carolina: John Springs III and Other ‘Gentlemen Dealing in Slaves,’” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 97 (January 1996):21-26. The practice of slaveowners going to the Upper South to purchase their own slaves remained even after slave trading business matured continued, as can be seen documented in David O. Whitten, “Slave Buying in 1835 Virginia as Revealed by Letters of a Louisiana Negro Sugar Planter” *Louisiana History* 11 (1970): 231-44.



domestic trade utilizing their fortunes as well. But the continuing western expansion required a new set of knowledge in the complex web of trading routes and strategic marketing, which allowed for new traders without established backgrounds or experience as colonial merchants to enter in this trade. In fact, many slave traders started out on a small scale as independent traders around the turn of the century, and increasingly after the War of 1812.<sup>28</sup>

An example of a trader who had the good fortune to enter the domestic trade was R.R. Jones of Brunswick County, Virginia who was reported as very rich with a large estate and negroes, whose occupation was a negro trader. He was given the estate, negroes and enough capital through inheritance from his father, which allowed him to commence in the domestic slave trade. He was “backed by his father who is wealthy, and has been speculating in negroes.”<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, an example of those who did not have an established route or experience in the trade was the firm of Osborne and Brashear of Rectortown, Fauquier County, Virginia. Brashear was a negro trader, but was “not a man of much capital or experience in the mercantile business,” but fortunately, he “has good credit in the neighborhood.” Brashear was an agent for the Campbells of Baltimore, a large interstate slave trading firm, and he would buy slaves in the area and send them to the Campbells. Although he had some credit, he was reported as having “little or no capital” of his own.<sup>30</sup> A travel account reveals how a slave trader who was also a farmer started out “much like other men,” but being in debt made him realize that “he can sell his slaves in Mississippi for twice their value in his own state.” He would then take the slaves West, and “finds it profitable and his inclinations prompt him to buy of his neighbors when he returns home and makes another

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<sup>28</sup> Many South Carolina transatlantic slave traders continued their business after independence, but gradually turned to other trades or professions. See McMillin, *Final Victims*, chap.4. In the case of Virginia where transatlantic trade nearly terminated after the War, former Atlantic slave merchants inevitably changed their focus, although there is not a systematic study on those merchants in this transition period.

<sup>29</sup> Virginia, Vol. 7, [Brunswick Co.], p. 579, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

<sup>30</sup> Virginia, Vol.12, [Fauquier Co.], p.130, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

trip to Mississippi, thus he gets started [in the business].”<sup>31</sup>

Slave traders are commonly categorized into three groups, according to the volume and the geographical scope of their trade. The group that traded in largest volumes engaged in the business crossing state borders and held an operating center in urban markets on both eastern states and western states. The firm Franklin & Armfield, which operated in the states of Virginia, Maryland, Louisiana and Mississippi, had its main headquarter in Alexandria, as well as operating centers in New Orleans, and Natchez, among others. Austin Woolfolk, another extensive trader operated his business between Baltimore and New Orleans, and Ziba Oakes had headquarters in Charleston and New Orleans. These large firms often hired agents in the countryside and collected their slaves in the city, where they built their own slave pens. From such collection centers, they were able to send large numbers of slaves at one time, either by land or sea, effectively employing the newly invented forms of transportation such as steamboats and railroads for distant locations. The large volume of their trade and their position in the mercantile community made it easier to obtain funds through their financial network within and out of the South.<sup>32</sup>

The second group traded on a smaller scale than the first group, not having a network that extended throughout the South. These firms incorporated their businesses primarily at a regional level. Their geographical coverage was limited, and they were unable to command funds in the same manner as the larger firms, and did not have the capacity to send off slaves to distant locations on their own. These firms would often consist of partnerships among traders, and based their operation in smaller cities, and would send the slaves they collected to urban centers such as Richmond or Baltimore where public slave pens and slave prisons

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<sup>31</sup> John Holt Ingraham. *The South-West by a Yankee*. (1835: repr.; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1966).

<sup>32</sup> On the firm of Franklin & Armfield, see Wendell Holmes Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South; with Plantation Records* (University, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1939), For Austin Woolfolk, see William Calderhead, “The Role of Professional Slave Trader in a Slave Economy: Austin Woolfolk, a Case Study,” *Civil War History* 23 (Sept 1977): 195-211. On Ziba Oakes, see Edmund Drago, *Broke By the War: Letters of a Slave Trader* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

would keep them, until large firms with transportation access sent them to the Southwest. A good example was the partnership of Ballard & Alsop in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. Rice C. Ballard was a trader active in the Richmond area, and Joseph Alsop was a planter and a part time trader who was based in Spotsylvania County. They formed a partnership to collect slaves to be sent southwest via the route established by Franklin & Armfield. Ballard and Alsop's case shows that they concentrated on supplying the slaves, and did not handle the selling part of the trade. Another case is the partnership between William A. J. Finney and Philip Thomas, conducting business under the name of Finney & Thomas. They mainly purchased slaves in the Virginia Piedmont. This firm later associated with Thomas A. Powell & Co., which was based in Montgomery, Alabama. Thomas A. Powell & Co. would sell the slaves purchased by Finney & Thomas, and the "expenses traveling board clothing doctor bills, dead negroes and taxes" would be equally divided between the two parties, although the commission would not be added to Thomas A. Powell & Co. According to the agreement, the concerns put in \$15,000 to start their partnership. All of these firms concentrated on one side of the trade, either the purchasing or the selling, and increased their mutual dependence on each other to increase efficiency and succeed in the trade.<sup>33</sup>

The largest group of traders consisted of newcomers to the trade, who did not have established backgrounds or experience, and started out as independent traders. They would purchase slaves on their own, and sell them on their way down to the West. They did not necessarily have a permanent base, as one account explains, they could "engage in this business without being located in any particular county. He is often migratory with his slaves." They could also take the slaves to the local tavern or auction sites for sales, where they would make contacts with other traders of similar conditions and exchange information or perhaps form business partnerships. But the option to sell in urban markets were left as a

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<sup>33</sup> Details on the partnership of Ballard & Alsop, and its relation with Franklin & Armfield will be discussed in the next chapter. Thomas A. Powell & Co. to Messrs. Finney and Thomas, 23 June 1859, Finney Papers.

final resort to dispose of slaves that were hard to sell, since the transaction costs and other expenditures associated with urban markets were costly.<sup>34</sup> Since the new trade did not have high barriers to entry, many traders entered and left the trade with high turnaround rate. William M. Waller of Virginia went into the business because he had to settle his debts, and in case he was not able to profit from his slave selling trip, he had to “sell everything and remove elsewhere in Amherst [County].”<sup>35</sup> Some independent traders were able to go further, and engage in the profession with high motivation and goals, and become successful. Austin Woolfolk, who began his trading on a modest scale after the War of 1812 in Baltimore, began to extend his business outside of the city by 1821, and in 1823, he shipped more than 100 slaves. From there, he was able to set up a network in New Orleans and eventually became one of the largest interstate traders from Maryland.<sup>36</sup>

In fact, establishing partnerships was a method for traders with smaller means to get connected into the larger network. Smaller traders would often seek advices on their marketing strategies from their more experienced partners. William Waller traveled down southwest with his lot of slaves and planned to meet with his partner and business advisor Colonel Dabney in Mississippi, and desired the “advice of friends that I can get to and upon my own suggestions.” He continued that he “shall do nothing now until I reach Col. Dabney and then sell or hire as he may advise,” since Dabney had “already been looking out purchasers for my negroes” in the West, to provide assurance to Waller that his venture would be successful. When a purchaser approached Waller’s negroes and objected to the high prices, Dabney advised him to not take less than they were worth. Waller then moved from Dabney’s place in Hines County, Mississippi to Natchez, ninety miles away, with the advice from another trader-planter named James Ware, “who have invited me to come to him there

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 109. From Sellers, *Slavery in Alabama*.

<sup>35</sup> William M. Waller to his wife, 27 December 1847, William M. Waller Papers, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter VHS).

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 47-48. On the career of Austin Woolfolk, see Calderhead, “The Role of Professional Slave Trader,” 195-211.

with an assurance that I can readily sell out at good prices and that he will aid me.” With Ware’s help, Waller expected to “greatly expedite my return.” These partners also offered market information to each other, which helped them build their strategy. An important mission for trading partners was to inform how active the traders were in a certain market. Joseph Meek, a trader from Tennessee advised his partner in Virginia that it was time to “purchase, as the country will be over run with traders this summer,” and that he was “certain to be in market by the first of October [to purchase].” Later in October he wrote that there were “seven traders here [in Livingston, Mississippi] but 3 or four will leave soon.” These partnerships developed throughout the South, some connections stronger than others, but in general they functioned more effectively when a wealthy businessman took the role of the backbone and commanded funds from banks and factors and offered financial security to the subordinates in the joint venture.<sup>37</sup>

These partnerships and connections also gave the largest interstate slave traders its strength. Franklin & Armfield hired numerous agents and established partnerships in cities in both eastern and western states. Austin Woolfolk had several resident agents in surrounding counties in Maryland who could make contracts and purchase on his behalf. These agents, according to Woolfolk’s records, often only served a year or two and worked on a part-time basis, and usually had other occupations. Ziba Oakes of Charleston worked closely with his principal associate A.J. McElveen, who bought slaves around the Sumner area and send them to Charleston where Oakes would take charge and sell to the West. Another partner of Oakes’ was Robert S. Adams, who belonged to the firm of Adams & Wicks in Mississippi, but would go on purchasing trips to markets in the Upper South and collect slaves to consign to Oakes.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Waller to his wife, 19 December 1847; Waller to his wife, 27 December 1847; Waller to his wife, 6 February 1848; all Waller Papers, VHS. Joseph Meek to partner, 9 April 1835; Meek to J. Logan, 11 October 1835, Joseph Meek Papers, VHS.

<sup>38</sup> See Edmund L. Drago, *Broke By the War*. Woolfolk’s agents had short contracts, but that was not the case with Franklin & Armfield who often extended agent and partnership contracts for longer periods of time.

It should also be noticed that some of the larger firms strengthened the trade through family relations, and some entered the business from family backgrounds. For example, in the case of Isaac Franklin, who later operated one of the largest slave-trading firms in the South, several members in his family, including his own brothers, were already engaged in the business before him. By the time Isaac Franklin entered the business in 1807, his older brothers James and John had a business in New Orleans which included trading in slaves. This early family engagement and western mercantile connection in New Orleans made it less troublesome for Isaac Franklin to establish an operation center for the east-west trade. As early as 1819, Isaac Franklin, a native of Tennessee, was selling slaves in the Natchez area.<sup>39</sup> John Armfield, who later became the partner of Isaac Franklin to establish the firm Franklin & Armfield and managed the operation in Alexandria, was Franklin's nephew by marriage. Although Armfield was in the trading business in a smaller scale before he met Franklin, it was his brief encounter with Franklin in Virginia in 1824 and subsequent marriage to his niece Martha Franklin that led him to become the head of the largest slave-trading firm in the antebellum era. In February 1828, they formed a partnership to run for 5 years and later it was extended and continued until it dissolved by limitation in November of 1841.

Another of Franklin's associates who advanced from a modest scale to a large trader was George Kephart, who traded locally in Maryland. He was so highly skilled in purchasing and marketing slaves that Franklin recruited him to join the business, and keep his base in Frederick, Maryland. Austin Woolfolk also had an advantage in developing an extended east-west connection. His own brother Joseph W. Woolfolk had established a permanent residence and a base in Talbot County, Maryland in 1825 to overlook the operation in that area to supply slaves to the West, and a relative, Samuel Woolfolk who was a planter in Louisiana,

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<sup>39</sup> Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 15. James Rawlings Franklin, Isaac Franklin's brother, continued to support Isaac Franklin's business, usually in stocking up slaves for sale. He purchased the entire stock of slaves at Franklin's slave pen in New Orleans in the fall of 1831, and helped him sell the stock in the same month. Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 89; Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 28-9.

resided in New Orleans and took the role of an agent to accept the shipped slaves.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding accounts that portrayed slave traders as sordid, illicit, and evil people with no respect from the society: there are some cases that appear to fit that image. For example, it was reported that Lewis H. Dix of Lancaster County, Virginia “drinks like a fish, his bus[iness] not conducted properly,” and that he was “a negro trader,” who “has bought at high prices, he may be abundantly good and responsible as may suppose, yet I doubt it very much.” Another case was J.A. Bond of King William County, Virginia, whose official occupation was a shoemaker, of whom it was said: “[his] character not good, as he traffics in a small way with the negroes,” and “is not a businessman.” Thomas Hays of Orange County, Virginia in 1849 was reported as “trading and speculative, is regarded as a nuisance by the community as he trades extensively with negroes and retails to liquors without license.”<sup>41</sup> These merchants’ attitudes in speculating in slaves were unprofessional, and perhaps helped the northerners and abolitionists create the image that traders were not respected in the community and were not regarded as equal to other merchants.

On the other hand, there were many cases where slave traders also ran plantations, and were successful in areas other than the slave trade. Francis Everod Rives appeared to be at one time an associate or an agent of Franklin & Armfield and sent slaves from Richmond to Natchez, but also raised cotton and other crops on his plantation in Virginia. He was also active in public life, serving in the Virginia House of Delegates, then the Senate, then the United States House of Representatives before eventually settling in as the mayor of the city of Petersburg. William A. Finney of Richmond produced tobacco on his plantation in Virginia and was an influential figure in local society. Floyd E. Whitehead, another planter-trader in Nelson County, Virginia who sold slaves in Natchez, later became a successful

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<sup>40</sup> Stephenson, *Ibid.*; Calderhead, “The Role of a Professional Slave Trader.”

<sup>41</sup> Virginia, Vol 23, [Lancaster Co.],p.95, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS, Virginia, Vol 22, [King William Co.], p.81, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS, Virginia, Vol 36, [Orange Co.], p.503, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

politician.<sup>42</sup> In fact, the traders and firms that operated in the largest scale, such as Franklin & Armfield or Austin Woolfolk, despite starting out as independent traders in the early nineteenth century, were eventually able to distance themselves from the “evil, money-hungry” view of the slave trader, commonly held among northerners. Their skill in their business was accepted by society, and they were regarded as professionals, commanding funds and using agents and partners to engage in the actual trade. These professionals were able to fit in with other planters or high rank politicians and officers who were also likely engaged in the slave trading business. Some sources even distinguished between the traders who engaged in slave trading as a living, and others who were involved partially, only as a substitute source of income. According to these sources, the former were called “slave traders” and the latter “slave dealers.” Those who came from wealthy backgrounds according to Theodore Weld, “did not lose caste” in the society, by engaging in the trade.<sup>43</sup>

Tadman argues that it was rare for a trader to accumulate wealth through the trade and enter the planter elite class. Rather, it was more common for planter elites who already held considerable wealth, to take the opportunity to profit from the slave trading business, in addition to plantation operations or other entrepreneurial activities they engaged in. John Springs III of South Carolina who personally traveled extensively to profit from the slave trade would fit this classification. Tadman claims that planters who did not reside near a slave-trading center would often include slave trading among their entrepreneurial practices and benefited from this lucrative side business. Planters such as John M. Shelton of New Kent County, Virginia, had considerable amount of property in land and negroes, but also

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<sup>42</sup> Tadman, *Speculator and Slaves*, 196-7.

<sup>43</sup> Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 158-160, 165-167. Theodore D. Weld, *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (New York, 1839), 173-4, quoted in Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 203-6. Libby portrayed that Franklin & Armfield were more humane among the slave traders, from the records that indicate that they did not separate slave families, and the good reputation they had in the area. But this act was likely a strategic arrangement to avoid attacks. See David J. Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720-1835* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), chap.4. Also see Donald M. Sweig, “Reassessing the Human Dimension of the Interstate Slave Trade,” *Prologue: the Journal of the National Archives* 12 (spring 1980).



speculated in “land, produce & Negroes,” and all this business he transacted “thru his agents, his farm or store received slight attention at his hands.” Shelton’s case shows that engaging in various activities was possible with stable real estate property and trustworthy agents who would work for him.<sup>44</sup>

The profit rates from slave trading differed according to trading volume and level of involvement. Those with a strong financial base benefited from the fact that they could command funds to purchase slaves in larger numbers than those who did not have the access to large amounts of capital. Tadman estimates that the earnings of these planters with sufficient income from agricultural production who also traded in slaves for additional income, slave trading may have been equivalent to about 15 to 20 percent of their total income. The profit rates for those who were professional traders who engaged in the trade full-time, according to estimation, was said to be around 20 to 30 percent. These profit rates were quite high for antebellum standards, close to the rates of southern industrial firms. They were also higher than in the transatlantic slave trade, which profit rate was said to be around 9 to 14 percent. Many planter-traders were among the wealthiest people in their community, and the overall property value of some planter-traders was as high as \$100,000 to \$200,000, which would place them in the top 0.3 percent of wealthy individuals of the South.<sup>45</sup>

Despite Tadman’s argument that it was uncommon for slave traders to elevate themselves to the planter elite class, there were some traders who appeared to have accumulated sufficient wealth to become successful planters. They did not start out from wealthy established backgrounds and did not own significant property, but were able to obtain land, seeking such opportunity in the West. Rice C. Ballard and James A. Mitchell, both active

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<sup>44</sup> Tadman, “The Interregional Slave Trade in History and Myth-Making of the United States South,” in Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, 137; Tadman, “The Hidden History,” 6-29. On John M. Shelton, Virginia, Vol 29, [New Kent Co.], p.57, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

<sup>45</sup> Tadman, “Interregional Slave Trade,” 129; Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 11; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 121. On the transatlantic slave trade, Charleston merchant Henry Laurens estimated that between 1755 and 1774 merchants and factors earned from 9 to 14 percent on sales of slave consignments, which was about double the 5 percent profit they earned from other imported goods. See McMillin, *Final Victims*, 73; Tadman, “Hidden History,” 16; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 204-7.

traders in Virginia, later migrated to the West. Ballard, as we shall see later, became a successful cotton planter with several plantations in Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas, and Mitchell became a landowner in Texas. Mitchell, who was from Pittsylvania County, Virginia, operated his slave trading from “Calland’s Old Store,” and by 1845 was “in bus[iness] 2 years made some money by negro trading and speculating and is said to be perfectly solvent.” By the following year at the age of 35, he was buying “in eastern cities, employs limited capital doing successful bus[iness],” and was considered to be of “high char[acter], entirely resp[onsible],” and his personal wealth was worth “some 20m [\$20,000] in land and slaves &c.” This accumulated wealth allowed him to relocate to Texas during the flush times in the late 1840s.<sup>46</sup>

With further sophistication in their business organizations, many large-scale traders eventually expanded into various economic activities, since the trade was a seasonal affair and was possible to operate along other businesses. R.F. Omohundro, who traded extensively from his base in Gordonsville, Orange County, Virginia, owned a tavern in the same place, and was considered “a hotel keeper and a negro trader” in 1854. Although he made money by running hotels and taverns, he profited to a “greater degree by trading in negroes and speculating,” and kept good credit terms, with personal wealth worth \$30,000 to \$40,000. As late as 1860, he “has been and [is] yet trading in negroes, owns property, considered well off and safe.” Another example would be the firm Hart & Moses of Campbell County, Virginia. This concern dealt in general store and clothing, but in 1845, it was reported that Hart’s main business was to trade in negroes. The partner Moses took the role of the salesman of the firm and was “making money in their store.” But Hart, who traded in slaves was the one who funded and controlled the financial security of this firm. He was reportedly a “man of good standing,” with “firm business qualities, sober, energetic and industrious,” and was worth

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<sup>46</sup> Tadman, *Ibid.* 198. Rice C. Ballard Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; James A. Mitchell Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University; Virginia, Vol 37 [Pittsylvania Co.], p.560 (2), R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. Annexation and flush times of Texas and its political implications will be discussed in chapter 5.

about \$100,000 in 1848, and was able to “command any amount in the purchase and sale of negroes.” Both men were keen on business, and always present “except when Hart is trading,” which indicates that Hart took purchasing and selling trips during the trading season. In this case, earnings from slave trading provided assistance to continue the general store and clothing business. A similar case would be Crabb, Bellfield & Co. of Farmers Fork, Richmond County, Virginia, in which Bellfield was a farmer and Crabb was a slave dealer and speculator. These firms are good examples of how slave traders operated along with other activities, and how partners divided their work and depended on each other’s roles for the financial security of the firm.<sup>47</sup>

As the case of Hart & Moses above shows, not all slave traders were officially identified as slave traders, even if they were trading at an extensive level. In antebellum business directories in major cities, some traders were listed under occupations such as “auctioneers,” “brokers,” “commission merchants,” “tavern keepers,” or “general agents.” In the census records, it is difficult to distinguish between a slave trader and a general merchant or a planter, and one individual could engage in all of these activities. But it can be argued that the majority of large slaveowners were involved in the slave trade in one way or another at this time in Virginia. It was possible for a rural planter to bring his own slaves to the city for selling purposes and go directly to a slave jail to sell them, without being identified as being involved in the trade. Even the small planters who only owned a few slaves could take part in the trade. Tadman has argued that most slave purchases were made with 1 or 2 slaves, and large lots of slave sales at one time was not common.<sup>48</sup>

There are several points to be summarized on slave traders and their depiction. Increasingly in the late antebellum period, northerners and especially abolitionists saw slave

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<sup>47</sup> Virginia, Vol. 9, [Campbell Co.], p.39 (23), R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS, Virginia, Vol. 41, [Richmond Co.], p.170, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

<sup>48</sup> For example, see *Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk and Portsmouth Business Directory 1859-1860* (New York: Wm. F. Bartlett, 1859). Also see Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 204; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves* 102-5.

traders as money-hungry, profit seeking people coming from humble backgrounds with no perception of humanitarianism and who would separate families if necessary at sales. These traders were regarded as being outside of the respected merchant society, and their profit-driven attitude in their speculation became the target of harsh criticism.

Eventually, proslavery advocates of the South joined this attack, since they wanted to distinguish themselves from these traders and create their image as benevolent, paternalist masters who treated their slaves as members of their families. In addition, people portrayed these profit-seeking traders as members of the working class, which was often despised in the South. They saw it as a social disgrace to work full time to support their lives, when people in higher classes were in a position to command labor and enjoy their leisure time.<sup>49</sup> The advocates wished to create a view that there were two different types of traders, the good traders who often elevated themselves as benevolent planter-businessmen who participated in acts favorable to the society, and the bad traders that scrambled and would do any evil act to make ends meet. They pointed out that auctions and family separations were rare, and if they did occur, they involved slaves with criminal backgrounds or slaves who needed punishment, or sales made by necessity, usually when a master died with no legal inheritance or to settle their estates and debts. One account claims that auctions were “merely legal appointments to determine claims and settle estates,” with no intention to break up families. In fact, some large-scale traders tried to keep slave families together at sales in order to keep (or gain) the reputation of being “benevolent” traders, and to avoid criticism from abolitionists. They wished to create the impression that most southern plantation masters were compassionate, by referring to the extended slave family in the slave quarters and their thriving cultural and community activities. This form of defense was preferred not only to support the individuals who wanted to distinguish themselves from the portrait of evil coldhearted slave traders, but also the tactic coincidentally worked to strengthen the defense for the system of slavery and slave trade in the entire South. By placing the blame on the small group of working-class

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<sup>49</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 238-240.

traders, the entire white South thought it could avoid criticism against the trade and the institution. Many elite white southerners also argued that the surplus slave population spreading to the West was a natural phenomenon, considering the rate of population increase in the old seaboard states. Various accounts reveal that slaves were well treated in the West; as one account notes, “I repeat again, that this [Mississippi] is the country for the negroes, all in Virginia that wish to be here,” and southerners often used the analogy to compare the treatment of slaves in the South with white laborers in the North and England, and concluded that there was not much difference in their conditions, or that conditions were even better for slaves. Systematic breeding, in their view, was exaggerated, and “the surplus black population naturally flows to where their numbers are less.”<sup>50</sup>

Traders were often referred to as “Soul Drivers,” “Southern Yankee,” “Southern Shylock” or “Negro Jockey,” and were stigmatized as evils of southern society, in order to camouflage the involvement of high-class gentlemen in the trade. With such reputations, not all potential traders preferred to be in this trade; rather, many turned to this vocation out of necessity, being attracted to the high profitability. William Waller of Amherst County, Virginia wrote to his wife on his way to the West with his slave coffles that he was in the profession from “a sense of duty to them [his family],” which had led to “separation and that supports me in a trip that under any other consideration would be intolerable.” He confessed that he had “already seen and felt enough to make me loath the vocation of slave trading.”<sup>51</sup> Later he

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<sup>50</sup> Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 212-213, 203-206, 212-223, Nehemiah Adams, *South-Side View of Slavery: or Three Months at the South* (Boston, 1854). For a general view, see Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 152-168. Armfield tried to keep slaves in families when he sold in auctions after 1834, see Gudmestad, *Ibid.*, 160-2. Waller to his wife, 3 January 1848; Waller Papers, VHS.; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 212-3. An advertisement in November of 1852 in the *Baltimore Sun* emphasized that they do not separate families, saying “5000 negroes wanted, I will pay the highest prices, in cash, for 5000 negroes, with good titles, slaves for life or for a term of years, in large or small families or single negroes. I will also purchase negroes restricted to remain in the state, that sustain good characters. *Families never separated*. Persons having Slaves for sale will please call and see me, as I am always in the market with cash. John N. Denning, No. 18 S. Frederick-street, between Baltimore and Second streets, Baltimore, Maryland. Trees in front of the house.” (italics by author) from Conrad, *Ibid.*, 258. But it should be noticed that many plantations did have benevolent masters who preserved slave communities and families, and slaves were able to enjoy some freedom.

<sup>51</sup> Waller to his wife, 4 October 1847, Waller Papers, VHS.

added, "I have taken away the most valuable portion of my slave property and if now parted with without affecting my purpose what will become of our children," being forced to sell the slaves in order to save his family. Traders often demonstrated concern about the well being of their families and the education of their children.<sup>52</sup>

Eventually, traders who specialized in the trade began to develop the strategic ability to forecast the economy and to make predictions according to information on interest rates, crop yields, supply and demand of slaves, and the global economic conditions. Traders involved at all levels were driven with one common idea, which was to achieve financial gain from this business. Those who developed into large traders transformed the business into a central component of the southern economy. Their capitalistic abilities as businessmen are apparent in traders' accounts and correspondence, which overlaps with the emergence of the phenomenon referred to as the Market Revolution, after the War of 1812. In fact, these businessmen, much like their counterparts in the North, utilized the new technology in transportation and communication, and adopted modern methods of business organization and strategy for effective purchase and retail. They were willing to assume the risks associated with the business with the same attitudes as the capitalist businessmen that appeared in the North at this time, and to obtain financial gain. In sum, their marketing strategies and business structures and practices resembled those of a northern entrepreneur. They also simultaneously tried to shape their image and made an effort to have their

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<sup>52</sup> "Coffles" referred to slave lots made of slaves that were to be sold, usually consisting from about 50 to 100, that traders traveled with on their journey to the West. Waller to wife, 19 December 1847, Waller Papers, VHS. Interestingly, in Waller's case, despite his loathing of the occupation, his wife was supportive of his slave trading, even providing advice on the business at times. Apparently she had some knowledge in how the trade works, commenting on negro prices, and told her husband that leaving Colonel Dabney and following John Ware was inevitable, saying "cannot choose but must go where duty call." On John Ware, she even commented that since "he is a [professional] trader, and I expect knows all the tricks and turns of the business, and would not think it amiss to take such advantages." She even had an impression that she did not "like the credit system, it is attended with risqué, if he does lose, it won't hurt him." See Mrs. Waller to William Waller, 25 February 1848, Waller Papers, VHS. Similar examples can be found in James Mitchell Papers, Duke University, in detail see Troutman, "Slave Trade and Sentiment," 49-54.

profession accepted in the society. They learned managerial policies and the entrepreneurial skills from other trades and industries and applied them to their own business, and began to create a world of their own that the southern economy could not function without.<sup>53</sup>

### **Buying, Selling, and Finance: Inside the Slave Trading Business**

Domestic slave trading became an established business in the South after the emergence of a region-wide market for slaves. With the emergence of the cotton kingdom around the 1820s, the southeastern states became the exporters of slaves to the cotton plantations in the southwestern region. The urban centers in the Upper South were intricately linked with the urban centers in the Lower South, creating one slave market that encompassed the entire South. The creation of a single slave market functioned to stabilize slave prices to a certain extent, but gradually escalated property values across the entire South. Factors such as labor demand in the West, which was determined by annual crop production levels, the financial environment, and commodity market conditions both domestic and abroad, instantly affected slave prices in the East. This market was central to what characterized the southern economy in the antebellum period, and was a critical annual economic indicator for most southerners involved in various trades.

The leading abolitionists of the day accurately pointed out that this trade was vital to the Upper South states. Alvan Stewart claimed that if abolition of the domestic slave trade took place, it would cripple the slave economy, with the Upper South states unable to sell off their slaves, “sink[ing] under the weight of a population whom their old exhausted slave soil could never support.” If the trade came to a halt, the Lower South states, the importers, would have to “abandon slave labor and employ free colored people, in a great degree,” in order to

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<sup>53</sup> On the characteristics of a market revolution and political development in southern society, see Harry L. Watson, “Slavery and Development in a Dual Economy: The South and the Market Revolution,” in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, Melvin Stokes and Stephen Conway ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 43-73. Also see Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 96-7.

“supply the havoc created by overworking, underfeeding, and an unhealthy climate.” The trade was a fundamental prerequisite of the southern economy and an interruption to the trade could totally disintegrate the South, which by all means would lead to disruption of the national economy. As another abolitionist explained, “the internal slave trade is the great jugular vein of slavery,” and slavery was what equipped the southern economy.<sup>54</sup>

Slave sales occurred everywhere in the South. The largest slave markets were located in the cities, and sales would take place in a certain square, street, auction house, tavern, and in front of large halls and court houses. In Richmond, the main centers for sales were Franklin Street, Locust Alley, Fifteenth Street and the vicinity, and the St. Charles Hotel, Odd Fellows Hall, and the Bell Tavern gathered traders from the area. In Alexandria, Kings Street and Water Street were the centers, and the Indian Queen Tavern was a favorite hub for the surrounding traders to purchase and sell slaves. Gravier Street, Baronne Street, Magazine Street and Common Street were the four major slave trading streets in New Orleans. For large interstate slave traders like Franklin & Armfield, slave sales sometimes took place in their headquarters where they kept their slaves, which in their case was a three story brick building on Duke Street in Alexandria. The public places and gatherings at auctions were important occasions for traders to get the newest updated information about market conditions and prices, and exchange their expertise, intelligence, and plans on the next ideal move to make. Hotels and taverns were popular places for slave traders who come from a distance to become acquainted with each other, providing exclusiveness and a comfort level for them to professionally discuss their business.<sup>55</sup> Traders who operated on a smaller scale and brought their collected slaves to cities usually depended on larger traders’ slave pens, or public prisons. In the District of Columbia, the public prison was offered for those who paid the daily fees. In New Orleans, the city offered slave yards for traders traveling from other

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<sup>54</sup> Alvan Stewart and Henry Staunton quotes from Lightner, “The Door to Slave Bastille,” 241-2, 244.

<sup>55</sup> Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 52; Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 52.



areas which included room and board for the trader and the slaves for 25 cents a day plus 2.5 percent of the income generated from the business conducted in the yard.<sup>56</sup>

Although slave markets thrived in major cities and auctions took place frequently during the selling season, the majority of the slaves that were sold to the West were bought on the plantations where they belonged, collected by traders who went directly and negotiated prices on the spot. By continuing the business for years, traders usually established their own bases, or a particular area that they concentrated their buying. They would often become accustomed to the planters, and even the slaves knew when a trader was in the area looking for purchases. Familiarity with the area also allowed traders to sell locally. Local sales had various advantages, since slave prices were often lower than for those sent across state borders, and more generous credit was obtainable. Also, local sales could keep slave families in near proximity after sales, which would conform to the paternalistic image that southerners desired to create. Knowing the seller and the purchaser in the same locales also worked to lessen the risk that frequently accompanied long-distance sales.<sup>57</sup>

Once traders start out their businesses, they would often take “purchasing trips,” to an area where they can expect large collection, or a place they were well acquainted with, as seen in the case of Francis E. Rives. Rives and his partners, Peyton Mason Sr. and Jr., went on trips from their base in Richmond to the Piedmont region of Virginia to collect slaves from individual planters. From the records of the 1810s, each of them set off with their own share of stock and purchased between 15 and 30 slaves for each trip, which sales amounted to around \$10,000. For example, in 1818, the three spent a total of \$11,112 combined, to purchase 27 slaves in the Piedmont region, of which \$4,400 was bought on credit, and Mason Sr. and Mason Jr. spent \$4,375 and \$950 respectively. Rives himself spent \$1,387. The

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<sup>56</sup> Collins, *Domestic Slave Trade*, 97-8; Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 51.

<sup>57</sup> Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 50; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 161-6. In the case of long-distance sales, many states required some form of certificate to ensure that the slave did not have drawbacks. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

expense of taking this purchasing trip, which consisted of daily necessities and transportation, was \$459.73 for Mason Sr., and \$132.48 for Mason Jr.<sup>58</sup> Planters who bought slaves, on the other hand, as mentioned earlier, did not buy a huge lot at one time. According to Tadman, the average number of slaves purchased by an individual at one time fell between 1 and 4, and Stephenson calculated that 84 percent of purchasers bought no more than 3 or 4 slaves. Those who bought 20 to 30 slaves for a given consignment, constituted only 2 percent of the entire sales.<sup>59</sup>

Other than direct sales made on plantations, there were slave sales at public places, and the most common of them were judicial sales (court sales), master of equity and sheriff's sales, and probate sales (estate sales). Master of equity and sheriff's sales and judicial sales were conducted by public officials, and probate sales were usually conducted by auctioneers and dealers. Monthly auctions were held in front of the court house in most counties in the South, and all types of sales took place. These sales were made on generous terms offering payment over two or three years. In these venues most of the slaves were sold in family lots, usually at a cheaper price than those sold by traders in the market. Judicial sales were important events for traders to look for slaves, but overall, this type of sale occupied only about 4 to 5 percent of the slaves sold to the West. One explanation for this was because in most cases, traders did not prefer to buy slaves in family lots, which might include slaves that were hard to sell or did not comfort with demand. But the main reason why these sales were not preferred was because it offered generous extended credit, which was not ideal for this trade. According to one Master of equity sales book record in South Carolina, among the 800 slaves sold between 1851 and 1859, only 14 percent were sold for cash, 26 percent were paid half cash and the remainder in 12 months credit, and 60 percent were sold on credit of 2 to 3 years.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Francis E. Rives Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University.

<sup>59</sup> Tadman, *Ibid.*, 102-105.

<sup>60</sup> Tadman, *Ibid.*, 52, 113, 118-121, 136-137. In local official sales, there was a tendency to keep the families together and sell a mixed lot of various age groups, which was their strategy to dispose of slaves who were not "likely," and not as productive. But planters who wanted to advertise their slave sales would

One of the most important features of this trade was that traders preferred cash sales, which was commonly emphasized in trader's advertisements.<sup>61</sup> This was a unique feature of this particular trade, where quick resale was a necessity. Traders and firms borrowed money from banks and other intermediaries for the purchase of slaves on short terms, and selling for cash assured these financial intermediaries that a safe return from the traders was likely, compared to an extended credit sale or promises based on future crops. A quick return also meant that traders could maximize their profits without much risk. The records from the firm of Franklin & Armfield reveal that nearly 70 percent of their slave sales in Natchez and New Orleans were made in cash, and Kotlikoff examined several thousand bills of sale in New Orleans and showed that 74 percent of this trade was made in cash transactions. The majority of the remaining sales were paid by credit, not exceeding six months, or twelve months at the longest.<sup>62</sup>

In fact, many banks in the South extended short credit to traders in such huge amounts that it often generated debate in the legislature, and an extreme case was at the Bank of North Carolina which invested two thirds of its funds to loans for slave merchants. One account from Richmond comments that the "banks are loaning out all the money they can [to traders]

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often sell in families to show their paternalistic attitudes, and buyers who bought in family lots often got a bargain than buying slaves individually. Single slaves with good attributes tended to drive up prices. See Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 14; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 166- 72. Records from South Carolina showed that the prices of slaves sold in court sales were 3.8 to 8.4 percent lower than those sold commercially. Deyle, *Ibid.*, 170. Contrary to Tadman and other scholar's views, Thomas D. Russell has explored slave sales by local courts in South Carolina and concluded that these types of sales consisted between one third and one half of all slave sales in the state, indicating the significance of court sales in the domestic slave trade. See Thomas D. Russell, "Sale Day in Antebellum South Carolina: Slavery, Law, Economy and Court-Supervised Sales" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1993).

<sup>61</sup> For example, an advertisement on November 23, 1852 in *Nashville Gazette* has one posted by A.A. McLean, "Wanted to purchase immediately twenty-five likely negroes- male and female- between the ages 15 and 25 years; for which I will pay the highest prices in cash." Another example, on November 13, 1852 in *Memphis Eagle and Inquirer*, an advertisement posted by Benj. Little says "Cash for negroes. I will pay as high cash prices for a few likely young negroes as any trader in this city. Also will receive and sell on commission at Byrd's Hill's old stand, on Adams-street, Memphis." Quoted in Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 251, 255.

<sup>62</sup> Tadman, *Ibid.*, 52-55, 102-105; Johnson, *Soul By Soul*, 6. Laurence J. Kotlikoff, "The Structure of Slave Prices in New Orleans, 1807-1862," *Economic Inquiry* 17 (Oct 1979): 496-518.

all over this state [Virginia] and North Carolina.”<sup>63</sup> Traders were provided acceptance papers in most cases, which were the common form of good paper or promissory note, endorsed by banks and acceptance houses. They generally realized their values in 60 to 90 days, and were to be repaid with interest through factorage houses or via bills of exchange between the eastern region and western region. But traders were able to negotiate for a discount and convert to cash before these papers reached maturity. In fact, the main form of currency at this time consisted of discounted bank notes, and traders were keen on information on the comparative value of the drafts and how to obtain acceptability of those drafts at the best rate. This forced many traders and merchants active in the South in general to gather sufficient information on the financial market at the national level. They would usually favor papers from northern banks, which had better value at the national level compared to most of the local southern banks that continually suffered from shortage of specie. It was a methodical strategy for traders to channel their funds through northern banks, which often offered better premium. For example, S. Boyd of Washington County, Virginia was advised by his partner Joseph Meek in Nashville that the premium was “safe to remit,” even better in “Baltimore and Philadelphia.”<sup>64</sup>

Not all traders were able to make their transactions in cash, which was the case for traders operating on a smaller scale or on independent basis. William Waller was “compelled to sell mostly on credit,” although he was under the advise of his partners John Ware and Colonel Dabney.<sup>65</sup> Traders preferred purchasing the slaves on a cash basis as well, since “negroes can not be purchased on a credit as low as they can for cash.” In fact, according to one account, purchasing on credit “would be from 10 to 20 percent higher” than it could be for cash; therefore, one firm ordered the purchaser “all the advantages that the firm could arrive from

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<sup>63</sup> Philip Thomas to Finney, 1 Feb 1859, Finney Papers.

<sup>64</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 129. Joseph Meek to Samuel Boyd, March 1835, Meek Papers.

<sup>65</sup> Waller to his wife, 1 March 1848, Waller Papers.

purchasing on credit ought to be to the interest of the hole firm, and paid out the firm after sales would be made.”<sup>66</sup> The major fear of non-cash sales was that they may not be paid back. A trader wrote in Mississippi that he could sell on notes, but he found “that one half will not be paid,” which made him “afraid our credit will suffer at home and abroad.” This trader had a bill falling due in New Orleans soon but with no means to meet it, he concluded, that the only thing he could do “with our debts in Virginia is to tell the case as it really is that I can not sell for cash, that their debt is safe and good that they must indulge until I can send on monie,” as soon as he could collect them.<sup>67</sup>

With the disadvantage of being non-cash transactions, and with the heavier emphasis on family sales, judicial sales did not fit the preferences and economic goals of interstate slave traders. The Orr family of North Carolina and Georgia, which was in a slave-trading partnership with the Omohundros in Virginia, wrote to their partner John Springs III, “you are aware that it is cash transaction in purchasing negroes and it requires a considerable amount of cash capital to do business to advantage.” Cash transactions in slave trading may have helped the various businesses William Golway of Warrenton, Fauquier County, Virginia engaged in. He was engaged in numerous businesses including owning a bar, grocery, and a provision store, along with his slave trading business, dealing principally in Alexandria. He reportedly did “a thriving business, traffic with negroes and makes a good deal of money,” but the slave trade was the only business among his many ventures that was reportedly done “in cash.”<sup>68</sup>

Transportation of slaves to the West was conducted in both land and sea routes. Chesapeake ports developed an early connection with the ports in the West, especially with

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<sup>66</sup> Joseph Meek to Samuel Boyd, March 1835, Meek Papers.

<sup>67</sup> Meek to partner, 27 November 1836, Meek Papers. Detail on the financial relationship among traders will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>68</sup> Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 113, 52, Quoted in Tadman, “Hidden History,” 27; Tadman, “Interregional Slave Trade,” 128, 121. Virginia, Vol 12, [Fauquier Co.], p.142, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

New Orleans. Major departing ports in the Chesapeake were Richmond, Norfolk and Alexandria in Virginia, or Baltimore in Maryland. Shippers loaded their cargo with usually up to 150 slaves, which took less than 3 weeks for the route between Norfolk and New Orleans. Many ships were designed specifically to carry slaves on the long journey, and the larger firms would keep their slaves in their pens in the port cities until the shipment was ready. Austin Woolfolk pioneered in ocean shipments of slaves, sending all his slaves from Baltimore to New Orleans in the 1820s and 1830s. In the case of Franklin & Armfield, Alexandria was its major departing port where the firm established its headquarters and kept slaves in its yard. The firm owned several brigs, but Armfield also often accompanied slave coffles overland to the West. The overland route obviously took longer, taking up to 7 to 8 weeks, traveling perhaps about 20 to 25 miles per day, depending on the weather and ground conditions. But one travel account stated that transportation “by land is preferable, not only because attended with less expense, but by gradually advancing them into the climate, it in a measure precludes the effect which a sudden transition from one state to the other might produce.” The images of the slaves moving along the overland route, with chains to prevent runaways or attacking the white trader became a common scene in the South. The overland route had several destinations along the Ohio River; the shorter route might end in Memphis where slaves would be loaded on steamboats down the river to Natchez, a destination that developed rapidly in the 1820s. Andrew Dunford of New Orleans wrote that he was considering sending the slaves he purchased in Richmond to Guyandotte on the Ohio, and sail them down to New Orleans from there. The longer land route would go all the way down to Natchez, where they were disposed of at the notorious collecting center just outside of Natchez, the “Forks of the Road,” where slave traders congregated. Once railroads began to connect rural places of the South, they were used to transport slaves as well, which made the journey much faster.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Calderhead, “Role of Professional Traders.”; On miles per day, Waller to wife, 4 October 1847, and Waller to wife, 9 December 1847, Waller Papers. On bad conditions on the land route. John Holt Ingraham, *The South-West by a Yankee*; quoted in Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 50-51. Franklin & Armfield’s brigs

Several studies have estimated the costs of transporting slaves from the East to the West. According to one study, average cost on the entire coastwise route from Norfolk to New Orleans, including the cost of upkeep while the slaves were on board, was about \$17 per slave. For the maintenance of the slaves, the authors of the study estimated that the cost was 25 to 34 cents per day per slave, and on average, it took about 100 days from the day slaves were purchased to the day of their resale. The shipping cost for slaves was estimated to be higher than sending them in overland coffles, about \$2 higher per head for shipping. Another study estimates that transaction costs, insurance, and the cost of transferring money between regions amounted to 5.5 percent of the price of slaves. From this result, the estimated direct costs to slave traders amounted to more than 13 percent of the price. With such a large expense per slave, the traders took various measures to diminish the risk accompanied with the journey.<sup>70</sup>

The shipping season lasted from October to as long as May, and the purchasing season in the East peaked around October and November and ended in early winter. Seasonality of slave purchasing and selling was very much tied in with the crop production cycle in the West. The selling of slaves in the West occurred during winter to early spring. The amount of funds that western planters would apply for slave purchasing depended on the crop yield in

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carried 75 to 100 slaves per cargo, and coffles usually sent about 30 to 40 slaves, but sometimes the number went up to the hundreds. Armfield was once seen traveling with 300 slaves with 9 wagons of supplies. Overland route was commonly accompanied by couple of mules and wagons. See Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 146. Steamboat shipments were efficiency -maximizing as well, often "sharing deck space with horses and sheep," and slaves were "usually chained, subject to the jeers and taunts of the passengers and navigators, and often, by bribes, or threats, or the lash, made subject to abominations not to be named," quoted in Lightner, "The Door to the Slave Bastille," 240. Many travel accounts recorded sighting slaves sent away on the railroad. By rail, from Richmond to Montgomery, Alabama would take about 55 hours. See Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 79. Andrew Dunsford letter, in David O. Whitten, "Slave Buying in 1835," 236. Also see Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 22-5; Troutman, "Slave Trade and Sentiment," 91.

<sup>70</sup> Herman Freudenberger and Jonathan B. Pritchett. "The Domestic United States Slave Trade: New Evidence." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21 (winter 1991): 447-477. The authors estimated that the overland route costs an average of \$44.40 per slave including the slave's maintenance, while coastwise route costs \$46.40 on average. Robert Evans Jr., "Some Economic Aspects of the Domestic Slave Trade, 1830-1860." *Southern Economic Journal* 27 (1961): 329-337.

the previous season. Factors that planters worked in close relation with advised them on their financial management, including the size of their labor force and whether they needed to purchase more slaves or not.

Slave prices were determined by various elements, but at least up to the 1850s, they were greatly influenced by the prices of the crop, mainly cotton. Slave prices fluctuated during the course of the year. One account explained, “the demand for small negroes is not fair, in consequence of the very low price of cotton,” in 1848. An 1859 *Richmond Enquirer* article said that “the price of cotton ... is well known pretty much regulates the price of slaves in the South,” and continued that “a bale of cotton and a likely nigger are about well balances in the scale of pecuniary appreciation.” In general, slave prices responded to staple prices, indicating the larger purchasing power of the planters from the high profits from their crop sales. When cotton prices plummeted as a result of the panic of 1837, slave prices followed a dramatic decline at a similar rate as well (fig.1 in Chapter 4).<sup>71</sup> Joseph Meek wrote in 1835 that cotton was “still selling well from 18 to 20 cents and I think it will do to purchase negroes freely and now is the time as if cotton keeps up and a good prospect for a crop negroes will continue to rise.”<sup>72</sup> But later that year it turned out that “long bills will not be accepted, nothing but short bills on this years crop,” which indicated a bad season and eventually led to fears of panic in the money market.<sup>73</sup>

In fact, cotton was not the only commodity that affected the price of slaves, and market conditions abroad often shaped the strategy of slave selling in the Deep South. One correspondence explained, “peace is certainly declared in Europe, tobacco has advanced \$1.50 per hundred, wheat had fallen 10 cents for bushel, everything seems to be going

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<sup>71</sup> Ben Davis for Hugh H. Goddin to Joseph Dickinson, 23 November 1848, Joseph Dickinson Papers Perkins Library, Duke University. *Richmond Enquirer* July 29, 1859, quoted in Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 56-60.

<sup>72</sup> Joseph Meek to partner, 3 June 1835, Meek Papers.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Meek to Samuel Logan, 9 October 1836, Meek Papers.



kiting,” and with such circumstances, he predicted that although “it has not changed the prices of negroes much yet but it certainly will as all traders who have been holding back now will come immediately here [Richmond] to buy and I expect in two or three weeks they will be \$100 higher.”<sup>74</sup>

In the 1850s, slave prices rose to an unprecedented level, which increase did not correlate with the price of cotton as had been the case in the past. The speculative frenzy had pushed the limits, accompanied by the recovery of cotton demand abroad, which triggered fear among planters that the prices would move up even higher, and demand for slaves skyrocketed. Also, by this time the slave trading business had grown into a full-year affair, which was not the case in the 1830s and 1840s.

Most cargo shipments in slaves carried marine insurance, in case of a mutiny or other risks that could take place on board. The Louisiana Insurance Co. in February 1822 issued a policy for slave trader William Kenner, in which 100 slaves were valued at \$40,000 and the premium amounted to 1.25 percent. The policy stated that “the risks, specified as assumed in the printed form were those of the sea, men of war, fire, enemies, pirates, rovers, thieves, jettison, letter of mart and counter-mart, surprisals, taking at sea, arrests, restraints and detentions of all kings, princes or people of what nation, condition or quality soever, barratry of the master and mariners, and all other perils, losses and misfortunes that have or shall come to the hurt, detriment or damage of the said goods or merchandize, or any part thereof.” Traders’ correspondence showed that especially at times when the market was “sickly,” they were encouraged to insure their slaves. Philip Thomas wrote from Richmond that “one cannot conceive the amount of sickness here unless you were present” and they “die easily,” and in extreme cases “they die in some 24 hours after they are taken” to a doctor; consequently the grown slaves were insured as soon as they were bought.<sup>75</sup> By

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<sup>74</sup> Philip Thomas to Finney, 26 July 1859, Finney Papers.

<sup>75</sup> Philip Thomas to Finney, 1 February 1859, Finney Papers, also quoted in U.B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 197.

insuring the slaves, traders wished to maintain the best condition of their slaves until they were handed over to the purchaser.

Insuring slaves was one example of how slaves were treated as commodities, but such “commodification” of slaves was no more apparent than within the slave markets. Traders took various measures to provide the best appearance possible for their slaves. Slaves being traded wore the best attire, men were shaved, combed, and their hairs were blackened to give a younger outlook and impression. Since their entire bodies were often examined by the purchasers, they made sure there were no scars or physical disadvantages noticeable. Commonly, those with darker skin were preferred for field work and those with lighter skin for domestic work, and they all sought for slaves in their “prime age,” which they viewed as the most productive age range, between 15 and 25. Auctioneers and traders provided information on their birth place, age, skill and their physical features such as height and weight. An extreme case would have more than 20 categories to characterize their slaves. Taller slaves were often more expensive. Trader William Finney and his partner Philip Thomas often corresponded on the prices of their slaves, in ways such as “boys that weigh 90 to 110 [pounds] and worth from \$1000 to 1175,” or “plough boys 100 to 125 [pounds] for \$1200 to 1250.”<sup>76</sup> For women, proven fertility was valued since purchasers expected women to reproduce and expand their future slave labor force. In addition, mixed-blood women or women with fine physical appearances were often traded at higher prices. These physically attractive female slaves were often called “fancy,” a word that appeared frequently in traders’ correspondence. Jack Finney bought a fancy at \$1,325 in July, 1859 which price was among the “No.1 women,” and another trader bought a fancy at \$1,780 in December of 1859 when most No.1 women were around \$1,200, and the highest price offered for men was \$1,750.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 130-1. Philip Thomas to Finney, 24 January 1859, Finney Papers.

<sup>77</sup> Philip Thomas to Finney, 26 July 1859, and Philip Thomas to Jack Finney, 24 December 1859, both Finney Papers. On fancy, see Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 75; Edward E. Baptist, “‘Cuffy,’ ‘Fancy Maids,’ and ‘One-Eyed Men,’” 1637-49.

Fancies were traded at high prices and were more profitable for traders; for example, a “13 year old girl bright colour nearly a fancy,” was purchased by Philip Thomas at \$1,135, but he predicted that “she can be sold for \$1350,” which was more than \$200 profit for her alone. This was a very high return, considering that the same trader’s letters revealed that profits from slave sales were often counted “per head;” for example, Philip Thomas wrote that he was “of the same opinion that traders should sell when \$50 or \$100 net [per head] is offered,” and for hiring slaves, he commented “if it cost \$20 or \$30 per head ... you may hire.” But it should be reminded that these categorizations and the information on traded slaves, as revealed in later accounts and narratives, were often erroneous: false information about the age of slaves was especially common.<sup>78</sup>

The question of whether traders systematically raised slaves for sale purposes has been under heated debate in the past. Many believe that since agricultural production was generally profitable it seems unlikely that organized breeding was necessary. Virginians furiously denied that any breeding took place in the face of accusations from the North and the abolitionists, although they kept their proslavery stance and recognized the trade as an important source of income for the state’s economy. In 1829, Henry Clay addressed the Kentucky Colonization Society, stating that it was hard to believe that all plantations can be staffed with enough slaves they need, unless “the proprietor were not tempted to raise slaves by the high price of the southern market, which keeps it up in his own.” Thomas Jefferson Randolph mentioned that it was “a practice, and an increasing practice in parts of Virginia to rear slaves for market,” and John C. Reed saw that “the leading industry of the South was slave rearing,” and pointing to Virginia, continued that “many of these older sections turned, from being agricultural communities, into nurseries, rearing slaves for the younger states

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<sup>78</sup> Philip Thomas to Finney, 26 July 1859, Finney Papers. Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 119, 138; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 128; Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, “The Economics of Slavery in the Antebellum South,” *Journal of Political Economy* 66 (April 1958): 95-130. Philip Thomas to Jack Finney, 2 November 1859, and Philip Thomas to Jack Finney, 3 December 1859, both Finney Papers.

where virgin soil was abundant.”<sup>79</sup>

Evidence from travel accounts revealed this as a phenomenon common in the South, although most accounts did not point to the existence of “breeding” farms. Olmstead saw “in the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, as much attention is paid to the breeding and growth of negroes as to that of horses and mules,” although these plantations could be engaged in agricultural production as well, and not a total breeding ground for slaves. One account did explain that a respectable citizen in Fredericksburg was engaged in slave-breeding and was “getting to be the most profitable business in this quarter. Whole farms are used as nurseries to supply the market with young mulattoes of both sexes.” With such references, scholars have examined the possibility that breeding farms existed, although most analyses end in unclear results. On the other hand, numerous slave narratives remain that indicate the planters encouraged breeding; for example, a former slave born in Alabama recalled that the master would “make de woman let de big man be with her so’s dere would be big children, which dey could sell well.” Another narrative from Texas said that “a good, well-built man was hired out among a bunch of wimmen, so as to produce good, healthy chillun.” It is also undeniable that on each farm, slaves were raised in reference to their cash values in the slave markets, since plantation account books commonly recorded each slave’s price. Some planters may have encouraged accelerated reproduction with future sales in mind, since they knew that was a quick way to achieve a capital gain. But to raise a salable slave took more than a decade to reach maturity, which arguably does not make much economic sense during this period. The question should focus not on whether slaves were systematically raised on certain farms, but what is more important, on how slaveholders and slave traders viewed the trade and their slaves: as commodities and a product with value. Rational planters who operated a huge plantation would know by experience that investing totally on rearing slaves would not be a wise

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<sup>79</sup> See Johnson, *Soul By Soul*, chap.4, 5 on reading bodies and language of slaves traded in the markets. Henry Clay, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, and John C. Reed quote from Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 69-70, 75.

decision in the long run.<sup>80</sup>

Within the antebellum southern slave markets, as shown above, slaves were “commodified” by the trader, and according to their attributes, given a price after intense negotiation between the seller and the buyer, in a similar process as other traded commodities. But a valued slave and its function in the southern economy extended far beyond the slave market itself. The valued slave eventually became an important form of portable collateral, constituting more than 80 percent of the security offered in mortgages in East Feliciana Parish in Louisiana. They were also taken as collateral for shares in investment banks in Louisiana, showing that the value a slave held became an important foundation for business transactions in the entire South. The cash value that slaves carried was in the mind of every merchant, trader, and planter in the South, which transcended the urban slave markets, and controlled the every day life of southerners.<sup>81</sup>

### **The Development of Richmond and Alexandria**

In Virginia, several cities developed as trading centers for slaves especially in the post-Revolutionary era. The largest market was located in Richmond, where the James River made shipments to Norfolk and on to the Atlantic easy. The capital city was the economic and social center of the entire state. Alexandria, as part of the District of Columbia and later as an independent city of Virginia, followed Richmond in terms of trade volume and

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<sup>80</sup> On breeding, see Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861), 55, also *A Journey in the Backcountry*, (1860 ;repr., New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1907) 285-6 ; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 47-9. “Revelations of a Slave Smuggler,” in Conrad, *In he Hands of Strangers*; Conrad and Meyer, “The Economics of Slavery.” Also see Richard Sutch, “The Breeding of Slaves for Sale and the Westward Expansion of Slavery, 1850-1860,” in *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies*, Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975):173-210. Sutch concludes that the slave selling states exhibited higher rates of slave births and slave women conceived children more frequently than other areas, can be interpreted as circumstantial evidence for the existence of breeding farms.

<sup>81</sup> Johnson, *Soul By Soul*, 26-7, 116; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 158-9. Richard Holcombe Kilbourne Jr., *Debt, Investment, Slaves: Credit Relations in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 1825-1885* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

importance. Other cities such as Petersburg, Fredericksburg, Lynchburg, Norfolk and Wheeling all became central markets for their localities, but they did not hold or develop the advantages Richmond and Alexandria had as depots for Virginia's slaves. The development of these two urban sites from the post-Revolutionary era will illustrate the economic and political path of the state and its dependency on the growing business of the slave trade into the first half of nineteenth century.

Richmond's history as a trading center goes back into the seventeenth century. The city traded in tobacco and developed as a center of the Native American slave trade and supplied indentured servants to the Piedmont as early as the 1670s. It was William Byrd II who laid out the initial town of Richmond, when he built a small settlement on Shockoe Creek, at the falls of the James River. He went on to build a tobacco warehouse, which after the Warehouse Act of 1730 was designated the official site for the inspection and storage of tobacco that was to be sent to European markets. The city incorporated in 1742 and established its legal status as a town. The following decades saw slow growth of the city, and planters from the hinterlands and Piedmont would send their tobacco down the James to the warehouses. Although the tobacco trade was an important factor in the development of Richmond, the city gained prominence by its role in the grain trade in the colonial period, especially the trade in wheat and corn. As we saw in the first chapter, grain became an important export commodity for Virginia in the eighteenth century, and Richmond became a central milling center.<sup>82</sup>

Before the Revolution, Richmond was a small town with a population of around 600, but functioned as an important business and resale center for the surrounding hinterlands, where farmers would come to purchase daily necessities such as cloth, metal products, and spices. When the city became the capital of the state in 1780, it gained much momentum and

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<sup>82</sup> Werner H. Steger, "'United to Support, But Not Combined to Injure': Free Workers and Immigrants in Richmond, Virginia during the Era of Sectionalism, 1847-1865" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1999) 34; Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords*, 151, 158; Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 15.

attracted more business and people. Merchant and business connections were reinforced by families and people with political and economic interests, which led to the formation of an urban elite class in the city. After becoming the capital, the city secured its place as the center for tobacco inspection, accounting for more than 46 percent of tobacco inspections of the state total in 1853, and 61 percent in 1861 (table 2.5). During the 1850s, Richmond was the largest manufacturer of tobacco in the nation. By the end of the antebellum era, Richmond had 59 tobacco factories and employed more than 3,400 black laborers. Much of this tobacco was purchased by Richmond branches of the Glasgow mercantile firms, which had advanced their interests in the mid-eighteenth century, as mentioned in the previous chapter. The town's population grew as well, as can be seen in table 2.4.<sup>83</sup> Richmond had a very different historical path compared to Charleston, the colonial slave trade capital of the South, since Richmond functioned as a manufacturing center throughout the colonial and antebellum periods. The city ranked sixth in industrial production in 1860, while Charleston never developed a strong manufacturing sector despite advantages in its location and resources.<sup>84</sup>

Richmond also benefited from the state's emphasis on internal improvement after independence. In 1784, the General Assembly first chartered the James River Navigation Company, later the James River Canal Company, to build a canal at the fall of the James, which was completed by 1800. By 1832, the need to connect the city with the Ohio River because of westward expansion and the development of the domestic trade led the assembly to charter the James River and Kanawha Canal.<sup>85</sup> In the nineteenth century, railroads added greater impetus to the city's development as well. Railroad construction boomed in the 1830s and 1840s, with the first line being the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad

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<sup>83</sup> Sidbury, *Ibid.*, 152-154; Kimball, *American City*, 16. On the development of tobacco manufacturing in Richmond, see Midori Takagi "Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction": *Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia) introduction and chap. 4; Joseph Clarke Roberts, *Tobacco Kingdom*, 187-96.

<sup>84</sup> Steger, "United to Support," 21; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 124.

<sup>85</sup> Sidbury, *Ploughshares to Swords*, 165; Steger, *Ibid.*, 37.

which eventually connected Richmond with major cities from Washington D. C. up to Boston. The Richmond and Danville Railroad, built in the 1840s, extended to the southern part of the state, while the Richmond and York railroads stretched toward the West. Western development of the railroads helped spread the area of tobacco planters bringing their products into Richmond, and helped the centralization of Richmond as the center of the slave

**Table 2.4** Estimated Population of Richmond, Virginia, 1790-1850

year	Total white	Total free black	Total slaves	Total
1790				3761
1800	2837	607	2293	5737
1810	4807	1180	3748	9785
1820	6445	1235	4387	12067
1830	7755	1960	6345	16060
1840	10718	1926	7509	20153
1850	15274	2369	9927	27570

Source) U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population, 1790-1850.

trade. On the eve of the Civil War, Virginia had the most railroad mileage in the South, which contributed largely to the development of manufacturing industries, but the political process to realize further improvements had become increasingly complex. The geographical expansion, modernization by internal improvements, and the system of slavery became heated topics that fueled southern nationalism and the defense of slavery in the years that eventually led to the Civil War.<sup>86</sup>

Richmond created a diverse and original mercantile community. From early on, Richmond had a strong connection with British merchants, and they played a significant role in the

<sup>86</sup> Kimball, *American City*, 19-21; Robert, *Tobacco Kingdom*, 67-70. On the development of railroads in western Virginia and its relation to modernization and sectional crisis, see Kenneth W. Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), chap. 1,2,5. Also see John Majewski, *A House Dividing: Economic Development in Pennsylvania and Virginia before the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).



development of such community. The dynamics of the British trade took a dramatic shift after the Revolution, and many Virginia merchants who worked for British firms “were no longer content to be junior partners” of British houses, and “began to trade for themselves, to buy land, to build up their own wealth and to marry Virginia belles.” Although some merchants were able to embark on their independent activities after the Revolution, many

**Table 2.5** Tobacco Inspection in Richmond, Virginia 1840-1860  
(hogheads, percentage)

year	Richmond	State total	Richmond %
1840	20738	58034	35.7
1841	--	--	--
1842	23129	52800	43.8
1843	22829	56492	40.4
1844	19147	4886	41.7
1845	21902	51126	42.8
1846	19572	42679	45.8
1847	19993	51726	38.6
1848	15773	36725	42.8
1849	18803	44904	41.8
1850	17086	41926	40.7
1851	--	--	--
1852	--	--	--
1853	23488	50567	46.4
1854	23739	47862	49.5
1855	29458	57872	50.9
1856	36695	65357	56.1
1857	30534	52910	57.7
1858	44616	71103	62.7
1859	41798	69069	60.5
1860	46630	76997	60.5

Source) Joseph Clarke Robert. *The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market, and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1938), 74.

still maintained financial ties with British merchants which allowed them ready access to huge amounts of capital. With open opportunities, these indigenous merchants began to invest in new businesses such as iron, coal, tobacco manufacturing and milling, which all proved successful and beneficial for the development of Richmond and other cities in

Virginia. Although manufactures in Virginia stayed under the influence of northern capital, these merchants who survived the Revolution were early entrepreneurs who shaped the economy of Richmond for years to come.<sup>87</sup> For the indigenous merchants who continued their financial ties with Britain, new opportunities to expand their business with northern merchants began to appear after the peace in 1783. There were mercantile connections to the North prior to independence, but the number of northern merchants residing in Richmond increased after the War, and it became not only advantageous but also necessary for those who depended on local networks to explore northern trade. Although Richmond merchants continued to finance the hinterlands and maintain strong relations with the planters and farmers in the area, they began to purchase more goods from northern cities such as New York and Philadelphia, particularly products they used to purchase directly from Europe. Several factors contributed to such trend: rapidly expanding tastes, the demand for more diverse product lines, and the expanding manufacturing and dry goods sector in Richmond led merchants to go directly to northern cities to buy necessary goods. Also, there were manufacturing strategies and skills that were obtained from northern entrepreneurial businessmen which played a significant role in the development of the city. Merchants spent time in the spring and fall in the North, purchasing goods, which continued up until the 1840s when Richmond finally became capable of providing the various needs of Virginians. By the late antebellum era, Richmond's merchant community increasingly resembled that of a northern city, and the extent of commercialization gave the impression to some that Richmonders were becoming "Yankees." Among the 34 Richmond dry-goods merchants in 1852, 5 were born in the North and 6 were born abroad.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> John Spencer Bassett, *Writings of William Byrd* quoted in Kimball, *American City*, 16. Almost half of the tobacco manufactured in Virginia and North Carolina in 1850 was under the control of New York capital. See Kimball, *Ibid.*, 32. The rise of New York port, although for the purpose of marketing of cotton, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>88</sup> Samuel Mordecai. *Richmond in By-Gone Days: Being Reminiscences of an Old Virginia* (Richmond: George M. West, 1856), 30-1; Kimball, *American City*, 23, 84-6, 108.

Some northern-born merchants who were noticeably active in Richmond made a large impact on the merchant community. Horace Kent, originally from Connecticut, built the successful store of Kent, Paine & Co. He started out working as an agent for larger companies such as Woolen Manufacturing Company, which position he continued even after he incorporated his own business. Later on, his main store operated under the name\_Kent, Paine & Kent, which was registered in 1855 and engaged in “dry goods, auction and commission business.” The store conducted “large business and credit out heavily, large capital, have strong friends in New York and England who will help them out of any emergency.” Kent himself was a slaveholder and was elected the first president of the Richmond Board of Trade by his peers.<sup>89</sup>

Kent’s store was located on Main Street, and the store was described as a “splendid store,” and was “the first specimen in Richmond of the Broadway style of dry goods palaces.” The location was previously the site of a tavern called the Globe, which faced the Exchange Bank, and two doors down from site, there was another tavern run by a man named Lynch. This tavern served as an important information trading spot for merchants in the area. It served as a gathering spot for domestic and international news, and rumors and scandals also circulated. Lynch held his stock auctions in this tavern as well. Kent’s store, it appeared, was built on a very convenient location to conduct mercantile activities in Richmond.<sup>90</sup>

When Kent first incorporated, his venture started out dealing in joint goods, and the auction and commission business, under the name of Kent, Kendall & Atwater. While Kent resided in Richmond, Atwater worked mainly in New York and owned property there. Kendall, who also resided in New York, was “not worth much and not too keen on business as Kent,” but with northern connections, the firm did “the largest business of any dry goods house in Richmond.” The business’s property was estimated at \$300,000 or \$400,000. In July 1845, the store was reported as “a branch of a house in Wall Street, New York, [with] ample

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<sup>89</sup> Virginia, Vol 43, [Richmond City], p.121, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

<sup>90</sup> Mordecai, *Richmond in By-Gone Days*, 45, 49.

means.” In the following year, the firm hired new partners James J. Kent and William G. Paine, who were already engaged in a “very large business,” with the support of John Enders, a prominent Richmond merchant and “a Dutchman who backs several others also.” Enders was a man of means who supported merchants in the tobacco business until they could operate on their own, and from this connection, Horace Kent was able to enter the tobacco business. By this time Kent already had a dwelling house estimated at \$20,000, and had been expanding his business by owning large amount of stock in a new wool and cotton factory.

By 1850, the firm that functioned as Kent, Paine & Kent (Kent, Paine & Co.) combined its business with the initial firm Kent, Kendall & Atwater. Their total capital amounted to no less than \$100,000, and their business was “first rate in every way.” Horace Kent was regarded as one of the most energetic men in the mercantile community, with at least \$25,000 worth of real estate, and his business was said to have handled \$500,000 per annum. The firm had many smaller dealers in the area under their control. Kent was “engaged in various money transactions and shares paper on very great scale,” and was “intimately connected to John Enders, one of our greatest money operators and capitalist,” and from Enders, Kent could “get any facility he wants.” Although Kent appeared to be successful in every business he was involved in, the credit report does warn that on some of the money transactions of Kent’s operations, there was “in the future uncertainty and hazard.”<sup>91</sup>

There are reports on many smaller dealers in Richmond who were controlled by Kent’s mercantile empire. One example was W.J.S. Swords, who engaged in dry goods business in Richmond was reported in 1850 to be very attentive to business, but of no means and “probably supported by Kent, Paine & Kent.” By the end of the antebellum period in 1858, Kent, Paine & Co and its conglomerate was the largest house in the state. Its sales reached \$800,000 per annum and it owned \$55,000 worth of property outside of business. The

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<sup>91</sup> Virginia, Vol 43, [Richmond City], p.182, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. It is not clear when the firm Kent, Paine & Co. changed its name to Kent, Paine & Kent.

estimated worth of the firm was between \$250,000 and \$300,000.<sup>92</sup>

Among the immigrant businessmen who had a strong influence in the Richmond mercantile community was the above mentioned Dutch-descent businessman, John Enders. In addition to being a tobacco manufacturer, he was a moneylender, and backed a large number of merchants and firms. Many of them were in the tobacco manufacturing business, such as the factory owners Turpin & Yarborough and William H. Grant, who entered the business with Enders' support. Enders was considered extremely "opulent" by his fellow townsmen. His extended family members were integrated into the mercantile community as well. For example, the dry goods, tobacco and palmer-jobber business firm of Wadsworth & Turner & Co, which was rated the No.1 house in September of 1848, was run by the sons-in-law of John Enders. The firm hired more than 175 hands and produced tobacco valued at more than \$150,000 per annum. The sons-in-law were both valued at least \$20,000 and the house was connected with a firm in New York, selling wholesale amounts of \$150,000 per annum.<sup>93</sup>

As previously mentioned, despite political independence and new opportunities, European markets and British influence remained important elements of the Richmond mercantile community. Even a small-scale watchmaker such as Henry Hyman had "been to Europe and has increased his stock by direct importation," indicating that Hyman was able to negotiate business agreements to import watches or his tools. Tobacco that was inspected in Richmond was mainly exported to Europe, so commission merchants "engaged mostly in shipping tobacco to the European markets," and did "a thriving business." On the eve of the Civil War, Richmond marketed half of the tobacco grown in Virginia and North Carolina. Merchants were able to find paths to prosperity via the tobacco industry, since it provided various

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<sup>92</sup> Virginia, Vol 43, [Richmond City], p.189, 397, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

<sup>93</sup> Virginia, Vol 43 [Richmond City], p.182, 102, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. One source says John Enders was born in York County, Pennsylvania. On detail of John Enders, see Roberts, *Tobacco Kingdom*, 192-3.

opportunities. James Gray & Son was a firm that failed in 1839 in both Richmond and New Orleans, but later Rogers & Gray Sr. became a contractor with Louis Phillipe for the French government's supply of tobacco and became prosperous, eventually moving on to hold large amounts of real estate and expanding its business into the cotton trade.<sup>94</sup>

By the late antebellum period, foreign merchants and domestic merchants began to collaborate even further, adding another dimension, strengthening their ties and geographically expanding their trading scope. For example, Ballanff & Co. commenced in the 1850s, to export tobacco for the European market. Ballanff resided principally in New Orleans, and his partner C. Camman, came to Richmond a few months earlier to start the business but was originally from Baltimore where he was also involved in the tobacco business. Their trade focused on the European continental market, since Camman's father resided in Germany and was in "good relation with the European houses," and was said to be very well off, which was convenient to establish trade routes there. The independence of former colonies in South America and the settlement of California in the 1840s became targets for marketing Virginia's manufacturing industry, especially flour production. Grain production in the tidewater had expanded since the late colonial era, and Richmond's abundant waterpower encouraged the growth of flour milling. In 1860, the city possessed 8 flour and corn mills. It ran the largest flour mills in the world from 1834 to 1850, producing 1,000 barrels daily and shipped 30,000 barrels monthly to the Brazilian market. Several flour manufacturing companies had strong ties with the South American market. For example, Haxall & Bro. traded in South America as well as California, and George & Robert Harvey were contractors who graded and built railroads for the Brazilian government. Others expanded their trade to the West. Dunlap & Moncure & Co, commission merchants who were considered as one of the wealthiest houses in the city, expanded their business by sending Moncure off to New Orleans, where he established a branch of the house, and left it under the control of William McCance to run the business there. Some left the city when they failed to

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<sup>94</sup> Virginia, Vol 43, [Richmond City], p. 62, 69, 101, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

succeed, like the firm of Palmer and Clopton, which reportedly failed in Richmond, but moved to New Orleans to seek new opportunities.<sup>95</sup>

These reports indicate that by the last decades of the antebellum era, the geographical map in the minds of Richmonders extended far beyond state and regional scope. Although this had been the case since the colonial era for Virginians, who had been at the peripheral of an Atlantic world of trade and commerce, being involved in direct trade with South America and the opening of the West added a new dimension. Moreover, this direction of geographical expansion of business no longer required the intermediaries of the British network. International trade had become much wider and more diverse than before, which became a noticeable characteristic of mercantile communities in the antebellum era.

Richmond had always been at the intersection of various labor markets, as mentioned earlier in our discussion on Native American slave labor and indentured servants in the colonial era. Earlier, the city was also a destination for Africans arriving via the international slave trade, and people came to Richmond to sell slaves to settle debts and on consignment for British firms. But Richmond's role as a slave market grew to prominence in accordance with the growth of specialized traders, around the turn of the century. Various travel accounts by foreigners and northerners reveal the sophistication of the slave trading business in Richmond markets. Planters and traders gathered at auctions and the slaves were often examined and walked around to check their physical capacity, and sold "just like a horse at Tattersall's, or a picture at Christie and Manson's," according to a Scottish traveler. Another account stated that there were no boats, or stage that came into the city without a slave brought into the city for sale.<sup>96</sup> These accounts reveal that the people attending auctions looked "respectful and in good standing" and the auctioneers often prepared a note to

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<sup>95</sup> Virginia, Vol 43, [Richmond City], p.163, 355, 60, 220, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. Steger, "United to Support," 37. Also see Takagi, "Rearing Wolves", chap. 4.

<sup>96</sup> *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature* (Edinburgh) no 31, August 5, 1854, 89-92, quoted in Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 164- 172; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 143.

circulate for the participants, indicating the price-current of the slaves, according to their sex, age, and perhaps additional information such as skills, height and weight. These auctions took place every morning from a certain time, with a red flag in front of the auction house attaching a piece of paper with it, describing the slaves that will be sold.<sup>97</sup>

These auction houses were all located in the center of the city on Franklin Street and near the corner of Fifteenth Street. This area was only two blocks or so away from the state capitol and governor's mansion. The St. Charles Hotel and the Exchange Hotel were notoriously large exchange places. The Exchange Hotel was on the corner of Franklin and Fourteenth streets, where many slave trading agents held their offices. The Odd Fellows Hall was the busiest slave trading site located on the block of Franklin Street between Fourteenth and Fifteenth streets. Political meetings were held in the same building, and it was also used for concerts and exhibitions. This was in fact the central and largest area of slave trading in the entire state of Virginia, particularly the vicinity around Fifteenth Street between Main, Franklin, and Broad Streets, where traders and purchasers congregated. Transactions taking place in these dark alleys affected all slaveholders and planters in the South. Fifteenth Street was often referred to as "Wall Street," where banks and brokerages concentrated, and the area was also called as "Locust Alley," "Jail Alley," or "Lumpkin's Alley," where most slave pens and jails were located. The alley seems to have developed irregularly for the purpose of harboring slaves in jails. The name "Lumpkin's Alley" comes from the name of notorious jail owner Robert Lumpkin. He ran the largest jail in the alley, which was said to have been built originally by Bacon Tait in 1825, who later became one of the most extensive slave traders in Richmond. Omohundro's jail, named after a well-known trader, was also located on this alley. Slaves waiting to be auctioned off were confined to these prisons with barred windows, and planters and traders from around the area deposited their slaves on a per diem basis, at a rate somewhere between 25 to 40 cents. These jails were situated in close proximity to the

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<sup>97</sup> *Whitlock Collections*, quoted in Kimball, *American City*, 76-7, 62-3; *Chamber's Journal*, quoted in Conrad, *Ibid.*, 165.



auction house so the slaves could not escape. The location was also convenient for the purchasers who would stay at the hotels where auctions were held, and also remain close to the slaves in which they were interested in purchasing.<sup>98</sup>

Being one of the largest slave markets in the entire South, Richmond inevitably harbored many slave traders, on both large and small scales. The city also held many auctioneers, who participated in the trade by funding other traders or engaging in business on their own account, gaining profit from commission fees. Some traders engaged in extensive interstate trade like Omohundro and Silas, and in the 1840s, the largest traders were firms ran by Hodges, Ray & Pulliam, and Sidnum Grady. Dickinson, Hill & Company was one of the large traders from the 1840s, and R.H. Dickinson conducted the trade under several firms. R. Dickinson & Bro. in July 1853 reportedly only sold “negroes at auction.” The concerns they ran did not always have the best reputations, especially on credit reports where they valued real estate property over liquid capital, and slave trading was seen as a business of speculative nature. R.H. Dickinson and traders in general was reported, “altho this class of persons are never absolutly reliable, their business is speculation and their mean being in money and not prop[erty] are at all times uncertain.” Contrary to the credit reports that judged Dickinson, Hill & Company as unreliable, they were heavily relied on by traders who sought market information. William Finney and his concerns paid attention to Richmond market information provided by Dickinson, Hill & Company. Philip Thomas read a letter in Mobile, Alabama from the company, stating he should “sell your negroes and come home for they must decline,” The company wrote to Thomas in December of 1859, reporting the price of slaves in the Richmond market as follows.

“There has been a large number of negroes selling in our market

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<sup>98</sup> Kimball, *American City*, 62-3; R.A. Brock. Esq. *Richmond as a Manufacturing and Trading Centre: Including a Historical Sketch of the City* (Richmond: Jones & Cook, 1880), 28-9. On the description of Lumpkin’s jail, see Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 115-6. Bacon Tait ran a slave jail on Fifteenth Street in Shockoe Bottom in 1850 and served on the city’s common council, while actively participating in the trade from 1820s and on. He was an important assistant and partner for slave trader Colonel Rice C. Ballard. Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 95-96; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 153.

since our last prices however are well sustained and good. No.1 are wanted. We quote below prices.  
No1 men 19 to 25 yrs old, 1400 to 1500  
No1 boys 15 to 18, 1350 to 1450, 10 to 14 yrs old, 900 to 1300  
No1 girls 16 to 22, 1200 to 1350, 10 to 15, 900 to 1150  
Women and children are selling well.”

Dickinson’s firm was also reliable and large enough to have bank notes endorsed, acting as merchant bankers, as one account stated, “I send you a blank [note] if you need it,” and get “R. Dickinson to endorse it, and get at the Farmers bank such amount as you may want.” Nathaniel B. Hill, the partner of Dickinson, Hill and Company, was an auctioneer in 1848 and reported as “not the choicest character, sell[s] negroes,” and his concern, N & C.B. Hill was in slave auctioneering which “only sells negroes” making good money in the 1840s and 1850s. Apparently, the firm had sold more than \$2 million worth of slaves in 1856, which results in \$50,000 in gross sales at a 2.5 percent commission fee.<sup>99</sup>

In fact, like that of Nathaniel B. Hill, there are various accounts that emphasize the immoral and shameful side of slave traders. One such case was S.H. Fisher, who sold shoes on Broad Street between Third and Fourth streets. He was well off in his business until 1854, when it was reported that “he does not stand well morally, and he was suspected a few years ago of being concerned in kidnapping negroes out of this state, he has made some money in this business of 6 or 7 years,” and the reporter “would not credit him without security.” There was another group of merchants which was despised because of its way of conducting business, often referred to as “shavers.” Charles Palmer wrote from out of state to his son in Richmond to “look farther for corruption, in your councils and courts made up of vulgarity swindlers, gamblers, negro traders and shavers,” pointing out to people like Bacon Tait, or N. B. Hill; the slave traders who served on the Richmond city council. Palmer also referred to Edmund & Davenport, Dabney, Miller & Divers and others as “shavers.” Another concern

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<sup>99</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 117-9, 120. Virginia, Vol 43, [Richmond City], p.109, 70, 88. 156, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. Philip Thomas to Jack Finney, 6 January 1859; Philip Thomas to Jack Finney, 24 December 1859; W. Finney to Jack Finney. 30 January 1860, all Finney Papers.

run by Isaac Davenport, Davenport & Allen & Co., was in the commission business, and referred to a “rich shaving concern.” Davenport was said to reside in “New York state to share and advance on good[s] consigned to the house here [in Richmond],” and the firm stood “highly as business men, they have the monies.” Shavers were despised because of their reputation for strict collection and they likely gained high returns from their high interest rates.<sup>100</sup>

There were many Richmond merchants who conducted slave-trading along with other businesses. For example, Joseph and Henry Stern ran a dry goods business in Richmond, but had connections with branches in New York and in Adams County, Illinois, and were “also negro traders, perfectly good for contracts.” Another case was Bridgeford & Co., which consisted of Bridgeford, N. Finsley Pate, Franklin, and Matthews, and engaged in the forwarding commission business. Matthews (Thomas E. Matthews) was also a slave trader, with a good reputation who had personal wealth worth \$20,000, while Pate held \$15,000 and Bridgeford \$4,000. The concern was quite successful commencing their business with a capital of \$15,000, with sales in 1858 amounting to \$220,000. But the concern dissolved after Matthews left the partnership in August of 1860, and he disposed of his interests to the remaining partners. Matthews, after leaving the concern and working as an independent merchant, was referred to as “a negro trader, well off and good for contracts,” and in the April of 1861, he was still very well off in his business, being “in New Orleans, makes this city [Richmond] his stopping place,” and as with most slave traders, “his means principally consists of cash.” But by May 1865, it was said with regard to Matthews that “like others (Othello), his occupation is gone.”<sup>101</sup>

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, some occupations in the city became

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<sup>100</sup> Kimball, *American City*, 111-112. Virginia, Vol.43 [Richmond City], p.59, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. On shavers, see Edward E. Baptist, “Cuffy, Fancy Maids, and One-Eyed Men;” 170.

<sup>101</sup> Virginia, Vol.43 [Richmond City], p.388, 265, 359, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. Parenthesis in the original.

increasingly dependent on the slave trade and the slave population. For example, Jewish merchant Louis B. Levy, whose shop was located in the slave trading district, produced “cheap clothing exclusively for the negro trade.” In 1854, however, it was reported that “negro stock” was dull and unprofitable for some years and Levy’s business “has been driving rather a decreasing and probably a losing business.” Some merchants, although not favorably accepted by the merchant community, often traded with the free blacks in the city. Richmond held a large population of free blacks, which increased rapidly after the Manumission Act of 1782 (table 2.4). By the nineteenth century with the rise of manufacturing industries in the city, free slaves gathered and were able to “self-hire” themselves to factories and also as domestic slaves. Thus another Jewish trader H. Brown dealt in dry goods business, and his customers were reported as “lower classes and negroes.” But in general, those who “sold to negroes” were not highly regarded in the community and were not able to obtain good credit.<sup>102</sup>

Richmond’s mercantile community was directly affected by political developments in the late antebellum era. In Virginians’ views, the advance of northern capitalism came hand in hand with abolitionism, which clashed with their pro-slavery stance. Despite some harsh views on slave traders within the mercantile community, most people knew that the slave trade was profitable for the economy of Richmond, and a necessary evil for preserving the institution of slavery and the prosperity of the entire southern economy. Although many merchants had northern connections, some Richmonders were increasingly becoming anxious about and threatened by their dependency on northern products and finance. Richmond, as the capital of the state and where the establishment of such groups as Central Southern Rights Society originated, the political tension that fueled southern nationalism

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<sup>102</sup> Virginia, Vol.43 [Richmond City], p.218, 201, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS. Steger “United to Support,” 30. On hiring markets, see Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). On urban hiring, especially in Richmond manufacturers, see Takagi, “*Rearing Wolves*”, 22, 38-52, 80-90. Selling liquor to slaves was actually illegal without a written permission from the master, but various accounts reveal that many shops in Richmond served liquor to slaves without much hesitation. Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords*, 170.

spurred a wide movement to avoid introducing or purchasing goods made in the North. The anti-northern movement did not just stop at refusing northern manufactured products, but also challenged ideas from the North, including religion, education and views on race relations.

But not all merchants were able to cut their ties, since financial advantages clearly existed in the North. The mercantile community became divided between the unionist view and economic nationalism, with the latter increasingly gaining momentum up to the Civil War. One example of a nationalist merchant was Daniel H. London, a dry goods importer and jobber in Richmond. He often went to England to purchase goods, “as he is a southern rights man and disunionist, it is supposed he does not owe or buy much at the North.” He was also reported as an “excellent eccentric man, goes in for dissolve of the union,” but was “not at all popular and only doing limited business, some think he will have to wind up unless his business increases.” Despite the disadvantages of avoiding northern goods, he kept the stance and “won’t buy in New York if he can help it, imports direct [from Europe].”<sup>103</sup> Slave traders were feeling the change as well. Philip Thomas thought that “the whole thing would die away,” but saw southern men “hold meeting[s] and resolve not to buy any more goods of northern men, not to ship them any tobacco and to cut ourselves off from them entirely.” He saw the condition “growing worse and worse,” affecting his business, stating that he would have to “actually take \$25 net profit on the head,” which was much lower than the usual profit per head on slave sales.<sup>104</sup>

By the eve of the Civil War, slave prices in the Richmond market had skyrocketed. During the fifteen years before the Civil War, the price for prime field hands in the Richmond market had nearly tripled, while the overall southern market on average doubled in price during the same period. Annual slave sales in the city totaled more than \$4 million in the late 1850s.

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<sup>103</sup> Kimball, *American City*, 100-103; Virginia, Vol.43 [Richmond City], p.93, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, HBS.

<sup>104</sup> Philip Thomas to Jack Finney, 3 December 1859, Finney Papers.

From one account, during the year 1859, the price for first-rate men in the market was around \$1,500, and for superior ones the price went up to \$1,700; and first-rate women traded for around \$1,300, with fancies and women with particular skills commanding up to \$1,600 to \$1,700. William Finney, while in Alabama on a selling trip in early 1860, taking into consideration the “prices here [Cahaba, Alabama] and in the Richmond market, the expenses of risk, and the shortness of the time we would have to sell,” and the fact that “we would have to come in competition with the closing and of all the stock now upon the market,” confessed to his partner Jack that he thought it prudent to “abandon the project,” or at least he was “unwilling to risk it,” any longer. He admitted that he was “anxious to get money out of the [slave] trade as any one and need it as much,” but he was “afraid to risk it further this season,” since “it won’t pay.” The inflated prices in Richmond and the conditions in the West led Finney to consider avoiding such high risk.<sup>105</sup>

Richmond had always been the center of attention for southern history on the political front, especially during the secession crisis and war years. But in the late antebellum years as a tobacco manufacturing center and a place of rising entrepreneurial industries, the city had become a metropolis where efficiency and strategic intelligence in business were eagerly sought and realized. In fact, the merchant community and their passion for industrial strength appeared no different from the urban centers in the North. What made a significant difference especially in the eyes of northerners was the flourishing slave selling and hiring market. It was clear that the slave trade permitted the growth of urban industries and prosperity of the city, and it was destined to control the fate of the city and the entire southern economy.

Alexandria was another slave trading center in Virginia, although from 1801 to 1847, the area was officially a component of the District of Columbia. Alexandria had a different development path than did Richmond, due mainly to the fact that the area was literally next door to the nation’s capital. From early on, the tobacco trade presided over city’s development, and the population size was similar to that of Richmond until around the 1820s

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<sup>105</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 59, 155; Finney to Jack Finney, 5 Feb 1860, Finney Papers.

(table 2.9). A large portion of tobacco shipped from Alexandria was produced in Maryland, and was sold under the commission system by English merchants. During the Revolution, the city served as a logistical supply center for the army which benefited the city. A Frenchman who visited the city in 1788 observed that Alexandria was “now indeed, smaller Baltimore, but plans to surpass her.” According to his account, the city had “natural advantages,” such as “the depth of the river channel, safety of harbor, which can accommodate the largest ships and permit them to anchor to close the wharves,” but for further development, Alexandria “must unite with the richness of the backcountry to take their town the center of a large commerce.”<sup>106</sup>

As the quote suggests, Alexandria had secured its position largely due to the geographical advantage and its excellent harbor. This was reinforced in 1784, when George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe sponsored the Virginia Port Bill whereby the Virginia General Assembly designated Alexandria as the official port of entry on the Potomac. In 1795 it was ranked at seventh largest port in the nation, and third in exporting flour. Alexandria offered warehouses and commodious wharves that were suitable for all types of vessels. Significant foreign trade was conducted between Alexandria and Portugal, Spain, and the West Indies. The West Indies was an important market for grain, lumber and other manufactured products, and the state in return imported largely sugar, rum and molasses. Domestic trade that departed the port of Alexandria centered mainly in New England, and a portion of foreign exports was sent first to New York and departed there. The inland route from Alexandria developed as well. Soon after the war in 1784, Alexandria was connected to

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<sup>106</sup> Mary G. Powell, *The History of Old Alexandria, Virginia: From July 31, 1740 to May 24, 1861* (Richmond: The William Byrd Press, 1928); J.C. Robert, *The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860*, 73. Quote from Michael Miller, *Artisan and Merchants of Alexandria, Virginia, 1784-1820* Vol.1 (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books Inc., 1991), 9, originally from Brissot De Warville, *Nouveaux Voyage dans Les Etas Unis*, 1791. In the District of Columbia, during the early decades of the nineteenth century, retained the accumulated law of Virginia and Maryland. On further details of how slaves were treated under such circumstances, see Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 60-88.

**Table 2.6** Estimated Population of Alexandria, 1790-1860

	Total white	Total free blacks	Total slaves	Total
1790	2153	52	542	2748
1800	3727	369	875	4971
1810	4903	836	1488	7227
1820	5742	1168	1435	8218
1830	5609	1371	1627	8263
1840	5758	1627	1064	8459
1850	6390	1283	1061	8752
1860	9851	1415	1386	12654

Source) U.S. Bureau of Census, Population, 1790-1860, in Miller, *Alexandria on the Potomac*, 126.

Winchester and Leeburg by a post rider, and a regular stage line operated to New York via Baltimore and Philadelphia. There was also a local passenger line between Baltimore called the Jolly Tar, and another stage line ran between Alexandria and Richmond via Fredericksburg. By the third decade of the nineteenth century, steamboats ran twice a day between Alexandria and Georgetown, both components of the District of Columbia. Steamers also ran between Alexandria and Fredericksburg, and between Washington and Norfolk.<sup>107</sup>

But by the 1820s, Alexandria's economy was on decline. Although the canals and port functions benefited the city, the Baltimore and Ohio railroad bypassed Alexandria and connected other parts of the Chesapeake with the developing West, which had disastrous consequences. Also, financial panics that occurred repeatedly in the 1810s had a severe impact on the city as did a series of epidemics, mainly cholera and yellow fever which raged in the city. Although the city was initially compared with nearby Baltimore, and at times even referred to as "Philadelphia in miniature," Alexandria failed to gain momentum in the

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<sup>107</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, 13-14. According to Miller, Portugal imported 57 % of the corn, 54 % of the wheat and 27 % of the flour, and Spain; 27 % of wheat and 24 % of corn. West Indies was the best market for flour, taking nearly half of Alexandria's exports and 35% of its corn. Powell, *Ibid.*, 265. Anne Royal, *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the Unites States* (New Haven, 1826), 8-10, quoted in Miller, *Ibid.*, 20-30.



antebellum period. According to accounts, Alexandria had the advantages of Baltimore and could have taken the role of furnishing the western part of Virginia and into Tennessee, but lacked sufficient capital accumulation and an adequate financial system.<sup>108</sup>

From early on, Alexandria was characterized as a town with a large population of slaves. Although not a common destination for the international slave trade, Congress was determined to prevent slave sales within the capital city and took several legal steps to exclude the market to the outskirts of the capital. Congress banned the exchange of slaves from Virginia and Maryland within city limits in 1794, but in 1814 allowed Alexandria residents to take slaves into the District, which eventually made Alexandria a common site for slave-trading headquarters. In 1802, one account complained about the “practice of persons coming from distant parts of the United States into this District for the purpose of purchasing slaves,” and reported that Alexandria was “a scene of wretchedness and human degradation, disgraceful to our characters as citizens of a free government.” The jurisdiction of the district made it illegal for an inhabitant of Washington to go into Alexandria to purchase slaves for the purpose of bringing them into Washington for sale or to reside, but allowed for a resident of Alexandria to bring slaves which he owned into Washington, or for a resident of Washington to take his slaves into Alexandria. To make matters even more complex, purchases had to be made in the place where the slave was brought, and the sale could not be made until after the slave had been removed from the jurisdiction of the District. Despite many legal restrictions, there were no barriers on the temporary housing of slaves in transit within the District, which made it *appear* as a thriving market. The town developed as a convenient “depot for a systematic slave market,” where slaves from around the Chesapeake could be collected and sent to the Southwest. This condition continued, and it was not until the Compromise of 1850 when the domestic slave trade was finally removed

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<sup>108</sup> *The Confessions of a Rambler: The Repository* Vol 3, No.8 (London, 1824), 278, quoted in Michael Miller, *Portrait of a Town: Alexandria District of Columbia [Virginia], 1820-1830* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1995),7-10.

from the District.<sup>109</sup>

The city had only one square; Market Square, and near the alley running along the north side of this square was a frame building called the “Indian Queen,” whose history went back to colonial times. George Washington was said to have stopped here while in town for his meals. After the Revolution this building changed its name for a short period to “Red Lion Tavern,” which was run by two men, McGuire and Reno, who offered accommodations for “fine carriages, handsome horses, and careful drivers,” along with fine private dinners. The place returned to its original name in 1797, and in 1802, Frederick Koones joined the two owners as the proprietor and opened a new house of entertainment called the Indian Queen Tavern at the corner of King and Water streets. This new tavern ran by Koones began to accept boarders and served oyster suppers just like the original, and the original building that was located on the corner of King and St. Asaph streets, was said to have turned into a stable for stages that left for Baltimore and Philadelphia. The stable license of the Indian Queen Tavern had been granted to John Hodgkin in 1801, when he was given the privilege from the city of Alexandria of holding a market for the purchase and sale of carriages and horses at this tavern.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the two “Indian Queen Taverns” in Market Square became a place for accommodations and a center for the horse and carriage market. But around the same time, there was the first indication that this tavern was

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<sup>109</sup> Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 23-4; Gudmestad, “Slave Resistance, Coffles, and the Debates over Slavery in the Nation’s Capital,” in Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, 74. Quote from *Alexandria Phoenix Gazette*, June 22, 1827. Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 225-6. According to Walsh, South Potomac region was the least documented and probably the least important destination in Virginia for African slaves. See Walsh, “New Findings.” On the jurisdiction of courts in the District and restrictions on sales and purchases, see William T. Laprade, “The Domestic Slave Trade in the District of Columbia,” *Journal of Negro History* 11 (Jan. 1926): 28-31. Residents of Washington County could only import slaves for themselves or for sale elsewhere from Maryland, and importation from other states was only permitted if the owner was becoming a resident, and those slaves could not be sold for three years, or else they will be legally free. See Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 67. Congressman John Randolph quote from Fehrenbacher, *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Powell, *History of Old Alexandria*, 125; Miller, *Artisans and Merchants*, John Hodgkin, 207-8; and Indian Queen Tavern, 225.

becoming the central place for exchanging slaves. In 1806, Hodgkins reportedly “wanted to purchase negroes,” and a slaver who frequented the tavern, Robbins, William & Co., advertised that it wanted to purchase 20 to 30 young negroes there as well. In 1809, another advertisement appeared saying that someone “will pay cash for 3 or 4 young negro fellows,” and in 1810, slave trader Giles Harding “wanted to purchase 30 or 40 negroes” at the tavern.<sup>111</sup>

In 1810, Hodgkin decided to lease or sell the tavern due to his declining health, and the ownership of the tavern became unclear for the following decade. In 1822, the ownership passed on to a man known as Elias P. Legg from the previous owner Charles L. Sears. Under Legg, the Indian Queen Tavern advertised that it would “accommodate a few genteel boarders from \$130 per annum. His bars will be stocked with best liquors.” Elias P. Legg, better known as Eli Legg, had been a tavernkeeper of the Bell Tavern since 1818, which was also on King Street. Legg was already connected to the slave trade when he was running the Bell Tavern.<sup>112</sup>

In fact, from the 1810s, newspaper advertisements indicate that King Street and Market Square was the main location of the slave market in Alexandria. Eli Legg’s tavern was one of the most active exchange places. John L. Alford, a slave dealer on Kings Street advertised in the *Alexandria Gazette* that on March 22, 1817, at Legg’s tavern, “cash will be given for a few young negroes,” and in 1820 the same trader advertised a freight headed for New Orleans to carry negroes. Another slave trader Matthew Hobson of Kings Street also advertised that he would “pay the highest price of negroes at Legg’s tavern.” William Beckham, an active trader of Alexandria who was also in a partnership of the firm Beckham & Brown, advertised that in March and September of 1820, “cash given to [for] negroes” at

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<sup>111</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, Robbins, William & Co, 80; John Hodgkins, 207-8; Indian Queen Tavern, 225; Giles Harding, 184. Robbins William & Co. advertisement originally comes from *Alexandria Gazette*, June 10, 1807, Giles Harding advertisement from *Alexandria Gazette*, July 20, 1810.

<sup>112</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, Indian Queen Tavern, 225; Bell Tavern, 29; David House, Brown and Beckham

Mr. Legg's tavern. These numerous advertisements indicate that Legg's tavern was a common exchange site for slave sales.<sup>113</sup> Even the firm of Franklin & Armfield exchanged slaves at Eli Legg's tavern before it opened its operation in Alexandria. In May of 1828, Franklin & Armfield advertised that it "wanted 100 negroes," and to "inquire of Mr. Eli Legg's on St.A Street," the Indian Queen Tavern. This advertisement was posted only a month before Franklin & Armfield leased a large three-story brick building on 1315 Duke Street, where it established its notorious headquarters.<sup>114</sup>

Rice C. Ballard, the slave trader based in Richmond who became the partner of Franklin & Armfield in the late 1820s, had been involved in the trade in Alexandria before the headquarters of Franklin & Armfield was established in the city. An advertisement in the *Alexandria Gazette* of January 2, 1822 indicated that Ballard was at Legg's tavern to sell both horses and negroes. Ballard also had a business partnership with I.S. Graves, who was also a slave trader. On an advertisement on February 16, 1822, Graves & Ballard wanted to "purchase 15 to 20 likely negroes at Eli Legg's tavern on Kings Street." John Armfield was also exchanging slaves at the tavern as an independent trader. On June 7, 1826, he advertised that he would give cash for 40 negroes at Eli Legg's tavern on St. A Street, and again in May of 1827, asking for cash purchases. Among all the slave traders on the city's business directory, advertisements show that all but three of them had exchanged one time or more at Legg's tavern. Even Austin Woolfolk, who was based in Baltimore, advertised to "sell 8 or 10 likely negroes" at Legg's tavern.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, John L. Alford,9; *Alexandria Gazette*, March 22, 1817 and April 11, 1820. Matthew Hobson, 207, *Alexandria Gazette*, November 13, 1817, William Beckham, 27; *The Times & Alexandria Advertiser Newspaper*, March 31, 1820 and September 13, 1820.

<sup>114</sup> *Alexandria Gazette*, May 8, 1828. The following month, it was reported that the subscribers (Franklin & Armfield) leased for a term of years the large 3 story brick house on Duke St. formerly occupied by Gen. Young, and wished to purchase 10 young negroes of both sexes between the ages of 8 and 25.

<sup>115</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, R.C. Ballard,20; *Alexandria Gazette*, January 2, 1822; I.S. Graves, 145; Graves & Ballard, 145; *Alexandria Gazette*, February 16, 1822. John Armfield, 14; *Alexandria Gazette*, June 7, 1826, May 8, 1827. Austin Woolfolk, 389; *Alexandria Gazette*, December 14, 1824.

Legg himself, interestingly, was “jailed for bankruptcy” briefly in 1823, and after being released, he revamped Bell’s tavern into a hotel for the purpose of accommodating more traders who came to the market. In 1824, he showed interest in the idea of moving to the West and planned to sell his household goods and furniture at his tavern in public auction. In 1825, he advertised to purchase 50 to 60 negroes to send to a place in Tennessee, where he had planned to move. It is likely that while he may have purchased a plantation in Tennessee and sent slaves to cultivate the place, he still operated his tavern in Alexandria, since newspaper advertisements for exchanges at his tavern continued into the late 1820s.<sup>116</sup>

After Legg’s move to the West, the main exchange and auction scene in Alexandria and the entire District appear to have changed. The locations increasingly mentioned in advertisements were Lloyd’s Hotel and Lloyd’s tavern, which were located on the southeast corner of Seventh Street and northwest Penn Street; Isaac Beer’s tavern near Lloyd’s; Lafayette Tavern in Washington; George McCandless’s Tavern in Georgetown; and Gadsby’s Hotel, Robey’s Tavern, and the “yellow house,” which belonged to the trader and jailer William H. Williams. The “yellow house” was a three-story brick building that served as a private jail, with yellow painted plaster, standing between Seventh and Eighth streets close to Robey’s tavern. With huge capacity, this jail soon monopolized the jail business in the area. Williams worked with trader James H. Birch, and their firm became one of the largest operations in the area, along with Franklin & Armfield, and James W. Neal & Company.<sup>117</sup>

The city continued to be a central depot for slaves, although it never became a giant market like New Orleans or Charleston. Within Virginia, Richmond grew to be the central market for trading and hiring. Richmond had the edge, with the advantage that its slave population continued to grow at a higher rate throughout the antebellum era, due to the flourishing manufacturing industries. In the District, the slave population doubled between 1800 and

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<sup>116</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, Elias P, Legg, 219; *Alexandria Gazette*, June 19, 1823, and November 25, 1824

<sup>117</sup> Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 56-57.

1820, although it began to decline from the 1840s. Slave trading there peaked at the time slave population was at its peak in the 1830s. Abolitionists and northerners who saw the slave trade as representative of the backwardness and cruelty of southern society were critical of the traffic being conducted right before the eyes of leaders in the nation's capital. Antislavery sentiment evoked an attack on the relation between the federal government and slavery in the 1820s, and in 1828, more than 1,000 inhabitants of the District of Columbia petitioned requesting the gradual abolition of slavery in the District. By the 1830s, several speakers in Congress stated that "in the District of Columbia [there] is a vast and diabolical slave trade. The red sign of the auctioneer is stuck up under the flag which waves from the towers of the Capitol." The New England Anti-Slavery Society claimed that "the District of Columbia is a great market to which human flesh is duly sent for sale from neighboring states, and then sold again to supply the markets of the South."<sup>118</sup> Horace Mann delivered a speech in the House of Representatives in 1849, with regret and pity of how "human beings are penned like cattle, and kept like cattle, as strictly and literally so as oxen and swine are kept and sold at the Smithfield shambles of London or at the cattle fair in Brighton." He pointed out how along the Potomac "slavers come and go, bearing their freight of human souls to be vended in this market place and after they have changed hands according to the forms of commerce, they are retransported" to rice, sugar, cotton plantation in the West.<sup>119</sup>

Alexandria returned to the state of Virginia in 1846, and continued to be an important depot for slaves. This accelerated with the ban on bringing slaves into the District of Columbia in 1850, as a part of the Compromise of 1850, and traders who were centered in the Washington area resettled in Alexandria. Horace Mann compared the domestic trade to

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<sup>118</sup> Quotes from Laprade, "The Domestic Slave Trade in the District of Columbia," 27. On the development of anti-slavery agitation in Congress, see Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 68-81.

<sup>119</sup> Horace Mann, *Slavery: Letters and Speeches* (Boston, 1851), 121-128, 144-147, 150-152, quoted in Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 157-163. Speech Delivered in the House of Representatives on Slavery and the Slave Trade in the District of Columbia, on February 23, 1849. Slaves in the British West Indies were emancipated in 1834 by the Parliament, which gave much encouragement for the antislavery movement in the United States. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 121.

the international trade that was banned years before, stating that by the authority of Congress, the city of Washington was “the Congo of Africa,” and the Potomac and the Chesapeake are “the American Niger and the Bight of Benin,” while the District of Columbia was the great government barracoon, and coffles were sent to the West, and slave ships arrived just as they did across the Atlantic from Africa.<sup>120</sup>

The urban development of Richmond and Alexandria shows how the domestic slave trade and regional characteristics played out in Virginia. We can say that the urban markets in Virginia and slave prices there were determined not by the real value at home but upon markets abroad, and that slaves were mainly raised to be sold outside the state. In fact, that was a crucial component of the domestic slave trade, the constant supply from the eastern seaboard state to the West. For Virginia, being criticized as the Guinea of the New World, and her cities as the Congo of Africa, was almost a hollow or meaningless blame, as long as there was demand. Most traders and planters who took part in this trade were supported by a society that had abandoned the sense of guilt about this trade. This extended decades back in the colonial period when their dependency on slave labor became a necessity. The domestic trade became beneficial to all facets of life for the South, politically, economically and ideologically. Between 1820 and 1860, it is estimated that the domestic slave trade generated more than \$12.3 million worth of business each year, once all the occupations connected with the trade considered.<sup>121</sup> Not only was the trade vital to the well-being of the southern economy as a whole, but the trade was also necessary for the expansion of the southern frontier and for the preservation of the system of slavery, which led to territorial acquisitions and political representations at the national level. Moreover, slaves in Virginia constituted the “largest portion of wealth” in the state and the trade brought profitable revenue to the state’s economy. With all slaveowners aware of the value of their slave property, commodifying their slaves and evaluating their value in measured terms, it was impossible to eradicate the

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<sup>120</sup> Horace Mann, *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 139-141.

existence of a slave market. On the surface, they tried to create the image of benevolent, paternalistic masters who served the best interest of their slaves, arguing that the slaves were treated better than bondservants in the North, to sway the rising criticisms from the northern abolitionists. In such circumstances, the ongoing discussions at the legislatures on gradual abolition or colonization never seemed to generate fruitful results. The further the southern frontier advanced, the more unified support toward domestic slave trade became until it merged with the ideology of preserving the slave system for the South. The acquisition of new territory, as we shall see later, meant acquiring a new slave state, and an addition to federal power for the South to preserve its peculiar institution. The domestic slave trade represented multiple strands of southern society and was thus enmeshed in an endless preservation cycle.



## **Chapter 3**

### **A Slave Trader in the East:**

#### **Rice C. Ballard and his Early Business Relations**

The domestic slave trade had become a fast growing, profitable business for the South by the second decade of the nineteenth century. Professional slave traders extended their network throughout the region, and scenes of urban slave auctions and coffles moving toward the West had become an accepted part of southern life. Western territorial expansion and the rise of cotton and sugar productions further facilitated the movement, and the constant supply of slaves to the West became the precondition for the plantation system that the southern economy was based upon. Virginia played a central role in the development of this trade, and the state was the leading supplier of slaves throughout the antebellum era. Cities such as Richmond, Alexandria, Norfolk, Petersburg and Lynchburg all witnessed slaves from the hinterlands brought together and sold away to the West from their markets. This chapter will take a close look at one firm, and particularly one trader who started his slave trading business in Virginia. An in-depth analysis of how this trader operated through his network will illustrate how this trade functioned and the process of how the trade adjusted its structure and organization to continue supporting the vibrant, expanding economy of the South.

#### **Ballard, Franklin and their Beginnings**

Rice Carter Ballard, born around the turn of the century in Virginia, started his career as a

slave trader at least by the early 1820s. Although he based his trade in Richmond, records indicate that he was already expanding his business into other nearby cities. Ballard appeared in Elias P. Legg's tavern in the early 1820s, a hub of slave trading in the central part of Alexandria to sell slaves, which indicates that he depended on the coastwise route that departed from Alexandria to major port cities in the West, mainly New Orleans, and transported his slaves on other traders' brigs. He had also been on slave purchasing trips to North Carolina, and had been selling slaves in Natchez, Mississippi. In Adams County, Mississippi, where Natchez was located, a tax record of slave sales made by Ballard in the late 1820s states, "I, R.C. Ballard have sold to the amount of fifty one hundred dollars in said county, March 8, 1828."<sup>1</sup>

These activities show that from early on, Ballard was mainly purchasing slaves for the purpose of selling them in the West. Also, his records indicate that during the early stages of his career, one of the business partnerships he formed was with Samuel Alsop of Hazlewood, Spotsylvania County, Virginia. It is not clear how Ballard became acquainted with Alsop, but since Samuel Alsop was a slaveowner and a plantation owner himself, Ballard may have come across him on one of his purchasing trips. His relation with the Alsop family, especially Samuel, the father, and Joseph, the son, continued for decades after their beginnings as a business partner. Their company was called Ballard & Alsop, and in March 1828 they posted an advertisement for three weeks in the *New Orleans Louisiana Advertiser*. The advertisement read, "Negroes for sale, sixty likely negroes just arrived from Virginia, for sale at the Franklin Hotel. Among them are some first rate house servants for families also some

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<sup>1</sup> Early records of Ballard's activities appear in *Alexandria Gazette* in 1822, exchanging at Elias P. Legg's tavern in Alexandria, and also with a partner named I.S. Graves (Ballard & Graves). See Michael Miller, *Artisans and Merchants of Alexandria Virginia, 1784-1820*, Vol 1,2 (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books Inc., 1991), 20, 145. Also see Rice C. Ballard Collection catalog, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter SHC), and Wendell Holmes Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South; with Plantation Records* (University, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1938), 55-56. Adams County record from Ballard Papers, folder 1.

good blacksmiths. The above servants can be well recommended and will be sold low for cash or approved paper.”<sup>2</sup> Another early tax record from Mississippi, dated and signed on November 15, 1829 by J.B. Cobun, said “Received of Ballard & Alsop forty 25/100 dollars, at being the one percent on four thousand twenty five dollars, sales of slaves sold on my county.” There was a tax law in Mississippi to pay 1% of the profit for all slave sales made in the state at this time, the purpose of which was to limit the importation of slaves from eastern states.<sup>3</sup>

Long before Ballard entered the slave trading business, Isaac Franklin, a native of Tennessee who moved to the West following his elder brothers, had taken his first steps to become the head of the largest slave trading firm in antebellum South. While starting out as his brother’s agent for various merchandize trades, Franklin was engaged in selling slaves in Natchez as early as 1819. He and his brothers were among the number of southerners that migrated to the West and entered the trade after the War of 1812. The slaves Franklin sold early on were likely to have been brought down from his native Tennessee. It was during a slave-purchasing trip in Virginia in 1824, that Franklin met John Armfield of Alexandria, who was also a slave trader. Armfield later became Franklin’s nephew by marriage. Four years later, on February 28, 1828, they formed the interstate slave trading enterprise, Franklin & Armfield.<sup>4</sup> This firm handled the movement of slaves both coastwise and overland, and

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<sup>2</sup> Folder 1, Ballard Papers.. As we saw in the previous chapter, most slave purchases occurred on the plantations by negotiating directly with the planters, and planters were likely to become familiar with a particular trader who strolled around the area. See Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). Samuel Alsop, while being a planter- trader, he also ran a tavern in the area.

<sup>3</sup> Folder 1, Ballard Papers. On the Mississippi’s early laws and taxes on slaves, see Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 15, 23, 55-56. Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (1931: repr.; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 58-59. John Armfield married Martha Franklin, Isaac Franklin’s niece. The date February 28, 1828 comes from the renewal of the partnership agreement between Franklin & Armfield and Ballard and Alsop, 6 May 1833, folder 421, Ballard Papers.

eventually settled to launch its headquarters in Alexandria.

The headquarters was located on 1315 Duke Street, and the building was a three story brick house with the appearance of a penitentiary, consisting of an office and three spacious courts to accommodate the slaves. Accounts reveal that slaves were well fed and clothed, their food and clothing were made in the kitchen and the tailor rooms, and male and female slaves were boarded in separate parts of the building. Armfield resided there and managed the place, and one of the firm's early advertisements stated:

“Cash in Market. The subscribers having leased for a term of years the large three story brick house on Duke Street, in the town of Alexandria, DC formerly occupied by General Young, we wish to purchase one hundred and fifty likely negroes of both sexes between the ages of 8 and 25 years. Persons who wish to sell will do well to give us a call, as we are determined to give more than any other purchaser that are in market, or that may hereafter come into market. Any letters addressed to the subscribers through the Post Office at Alexandria, will be promptly attended to. For information, enquire at the above described house, as we can at all times be found there.”<sup>5</sup>

As the advertisement indicates, from the beginning of the venture, Franklin & Armfield was buying slaves in large numbers, and competed for purchasing at higher prices than other traders in the area. The volume of Franklin & Armfield's trade soon overwhelmed the surrounding rival traders, such as Austin Woolfolk of Baltimore. Woolfolk's trade volume declined dramatically after Franklin & Armfield incorporated in 1828, and by 1830, Woolfolk was losing out to their associates in Maryland. Moreover, his agent brother Samuel Woolfolk in New Orleans was also absorbed into the company, becoming its local agent.<sup>6</sup> Eventually

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<sup>5</sup> On an account by contemporary traveler to Franklin & Armfield's headquarters in Alexandria, see Ethan Allan Andrews, *Slavery and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States* (Boston: Light & Stearns, 1836), 135-43. *Alexandria Gazette*, May 17, 1828, quoted in Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 25.

<sup>6</sup> William Calderhead, “The Role of Professional Slave Trader in a Slave Economy: Austin Woolfolk, a

Austin Woolfolk himself had to acquiesce to the dominance of Franklin & Armfield, as indicated in a letter from Armfield to Rice Ballard. In March 24, 1832, Armfield wrote, “we are purchasing at Baltimore for less than there prices,” and continued, “Woolfolk’s done us a good kindness when he caused us to go into that market. We have gott all the jailors and some of his agents in our employed,” indicating that Franklin & Armfield had taken over the agents of Woolfolk. He even mentioned a plan to “establish a house” in Baltimore, and intended to “push [trade] in that market this year, his [Woolfolk’s] trading is very bad.” This correspondence clearly shows that Franklin & Armfield was aiming to push Woolfolk out of business.<sup>7</sup>

One method for the firm of Franklin & Armfield to dominate the trading business was to create a network of associates and partners in Virginia and Maryland. Although the exact years when Franklin & Armfield established these partnerships are not clear, the firm united with J.M.Saunders and Company in Warrenton, Virginia; George Kephart and Company at Frederick, Maryland; James F. Purvis and Company, which Purvis was a nephew of Isaac Franklin, at Baltimore; A. Grimm at Fredericksburg, Virginia; William Hooper at Annapolis, Maryland; John Ware at Port Tobacco, Maryland; and Thomas M. Jones, at Easton and the eastern shore of Maryland. Birch & Jones of Washington may have been their agents as well. These smaller concerns were able to collect slaves in their locales and send them to the Alexandria base, and have them shipped to the West. Franklin & Armfield usually made agreements with the concerns specifying it would sell the slaves the smaller firms collected for half the profit. Expanding their network through such partnership arrangement was one strategy that facilitated their market dominance. The network of agents strengthened Franklin

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Case Study,” *Civil War History* 23 (September 1977): 195-211.

<sup>7</sup> John Armfield to Rice C. Ballard, 24 March 1832, folder 5, Ballard Papers.

& Armfield's capacity in conducting the trade in a wider scope, allowed them to increase their market share and to monopolize locales, gain financial strength in their relation with intermediaries, and raise their reputation, which led to accelerated sales in the market.<sup>8</sup>

In 1831, three years after Franklin & Armfield established their headquarters in Alexandria, Ballard, and his company Ballard & Alsop (also known as R.C. Ballard & Co.) officially became their associate, taking control of the business in Richmond. Although Alsop's name was part of the concern, most of the business was taken care of by Ballard. As was the case with the George Kephart of Maryland who was well connected in his locale and was recruited to become a member of the firm's network, Ballard had likely created a positive reputation by the time Franklin & Armfield began its operation in Alexandria. Since Ballard had been sending slaves into Alexandria from the early 1820s, it did not take long for them to cross paths. Richmond was fast becoming the leading slave trading center of the state, and Ballard demonstrated accomplished business skills as a slave trader and was given much responsibility on his branch of the enterprise. The merging was also beneficial for Franklin & Armfield, since they did not have a fixed footing in Richmond before they joined hands with Ballard.

The partnership agreement between Franklin & Armfield and Ballard & Alsop was based on "the consideration of the trust, good opinion and confidence which each firm had," and "to improve there estates," and become "copartners and joint traders in the trade or business of buying and selling negroe slaves." Under the agreement, Ballard & Alsop were to become "branch of the firm Franklin & Armfield in the name and stile in Virginia of R.C. Ballard & Co, and in New Orleans, Franklin, Ballard & Co." This meant that Ballard became the partner of Franklin & Armfield on two levels; first, in assisting Franklin & Armfield in

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<sup>8</sup> Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 26; Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 104, 104n18. Bancroft, *Slave Trading*, 58-59; Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 30-1.

purchasing slaves, and second, in selling those slaves under the name Franklin, Ballard & Co. based in New Orleans. The agreement further explained that Ballard and Alsop “shall purchase negroe slaves for the use and benefit of the copartnership and for no other use and benefit or purchase whatever,” and “shall transmit by sea or by land” to New Orleans, where “Franklin shall representing aforesaid receive them and sell them on account.” With this partnership, Ballard was not allowed to buy or sell slaves without benefiting one of the companies he had become joint traders with.<sup>9</sup>

A major strength of Franklin & Armfield was its shipping capabilities. Alexandria was the major departure port for shipment to the West, the route circling around the Florida peninsula to the Gulf, arriving at New Orleans. Many traders sent their slaves upon this established route relying on Franklin & Armfield’s brigs. Even before Ballard became acquainted with Franklin, there were indications that he was shipping his slaves by Franklin’s brigs. Franklin & Armfield’s pen in Alexandria had commodious yards and, advantageously able to house slaves for a lengthy time before sailing them off. A large number of traders who did not have a slave pen in the city had to rely on slave prisons until enough slaves gathered, or wait until the day the ship left. From a later advertisement, Franklin reminded traders that “servants that are intended to be shipped, will at any time be received for safe keeping at 25 cents per day” at his pen.<sup>10</sup> As early as 1828, the year they incorporated, Franklin & Armfield purchased the brig *United States* and the *Tribune*. Records show that they also added the brigs *Uncas* and *Isaac Franklin*, and at times sent slaves via the brig *Ariel* and the *James Monroe* from Norfolk, and the *Shenandoah* from Georgetown. These brigs were described as “of the first class, commanded by experienced and accommodating officers,” accustomed to “promote the

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<sup>9</sup> An Agreement between Franklin & Armfield and Ballard and Alsop, (renewal), 6 May 1833. folder 421, Ballard Papers.

<sup>10</sup> *Washington Daily National Intelligencer*, Nov. 6, 1835. Quoted in Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 27.

interest of [the] shipper and the comfort of passengers.” A later advertisement revealed that these brigs “continue to leave this port [Alexandria] on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month throughout the shipping season,” which was from October to May of each year.<sup>11</sup>

Table 3.1 shows the shipments that carried slaves purchased by Franklin & Armfield in the years 1829 to 1836, and Table 3.2 shows the slaves that Ballard sent to the West, which includes both coastwise and land routes. Nearly 1,000 slaves sent under Ballard’s name can be identified from slave records from 1831 to 1834, but only a portion of them listed which brig they were shipped on. The number of slaves per brig averaged about 100, although the brigs were capable of shipping more.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 3.1** Identifiable Slave Shipments by the Concern of Franklin & Armfield

Date of shipment	Brig name	Number of slaves
Oct.22, 1828 (B)	--	201
Dec.26, 1828 (C)	Lafayette	46
Jan.26, 1829 (B)	--	110
Oct. 30, 1829 (B)	--	140
Nov.21, 1829 (B)	--	90
Dec. 24, 1829 (B, C)*	Shenandoah?	B=120, C=40
Jan. 8, 1831 (C)	Lafayette	100
March, 1831 (C)	United States	141
March 10, 1831 (C)	James Monroe (Norfolk)	112 ( 73 of F&A, 41 to Franklin)
March 10, 1831 (B)	--	111

<sup>11</sup> Bancroft, *Slave Trading*, 288-289. *Washington Daily National Intelligencer*, Nov. 6, 1835, quoted in Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 27; Donald M. Sweig, “Reassessing the Human Dimension of the Interstate Slave Trade,” *Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives* 12 (Spring, 1980), 8. The interior of the *Tribune* was divided into two apartments, with the capacity to carry about 80 women and 100 men, and they “lie as close as they can stow away,” quoted in Sweig, *Ibid.*, 8. It is also said that they started out sending slaves every 2 months, but by the early 1830s they sent a shipment either to New Orleans or Natchez once a month. Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 42-43. It should also be noticed that a federal law in 1816 required that all slaves shipped in the coastwise trade submit their name, sex, and height, and the captain of the brig was responsible for their well-being until arrival at the port of destination. See Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 102. Ethan Allan Andrews estimated that the shipment was usually less than 150 slaves. Ballard’s account shows that the captains of the brig were provided cash. Accounts show that Captain Smith of brig *Tribune* was handed \$50, \$100, \$80, and \$130 for shipments on October 21, 1833, December 9, 1833, February 20, 1834, and April 14, 1834. Captain Moore of brig *Uncas* was given \$35 and \$110 for the shipments on November 4, 1833 and January 16, 1834. Folder 463, Volume 38, Ledger, Ballard & Co. 1831-34, Ballard Papers.



March 31, 1831 (B, C)*	Lafayette?	B=59, C=89 (70 to Franklin)
Sept. 27, 1831 (A)	Tribune	25 (Ballard)
Oct. 15, 1831 (A,B)*	Lafayette	A=32, B=112
Nov. 12, 1831 (B)	--	21
----- (A)	Industry	69
Feb. 13, 1832 (A, B)*	Ajax?	A=45, B=116
March 14, 1832 (B)	--	131
March 19, 1832 (A)	Tribune	35
Nov. 2, 1832 (A)	Tribune	41
Nov. 26, 1832 (B)	--	106
Jan. 16, 1833 (C)	Lafayette	83 (40 to Franklin)
Jan. 22, 1833 (C)	Tribune	68
Jan. 25, 1833 (C)	Ariel (Norfolk)	89 (50 to Franklin)
Jan. 28, 1833 (A,C)*	Tribune	A=38, C= 43 (Ballard)
<u>March 15, 1833 (C)</u>	Tribune	26
<u>March 21, 1833 (A,C)*</u>	Tribune	A=85, C=85
May 24, 1833 (B)	--	71
<u>Oct. 16, 1833 (B,C)*</u>	Tribune	B=92, C=93 (53 to Franklin)
<u>Oct. 21, 1833 (A)</u>	Tribune	63
Oct, 1833 (A)	Ariel	1
Nov. 1, 1833 (A)	Orion	19
Nov. 4, 1833 (A)	Uncas	65
Dec. 9, 1833 (A)	Tribune	62
Jan. 5, 1834 (A)	Suzanna	30
Jan. 13, 1834 (B)	--	124
Jan. 17, 1834 (A)	Uncas	55
Feb. 20, 1834 (A)	Tribune	25
April 8, 1834 (B)	--	29
April 14, 1834 (A)	Tribune	34
April 17, 1834 (B)	--	105
Nov. 1, 1834 (C)	Orion	32 (Ballard)
Feb. 5, 1835 (B)	--	156
Feb. 26, 1835 (B)	--	162
March 26, 1835 (B)	--	201
Oct. 1, 1835 (B)	--	151
Oct. 6, 1835 (B)	--	143
Oct. 16, 1835 (C)	Tribune	140
Oct. 16, 1835 (C)	United States (Norfolk)	150
Nov. 6, 1835 (B)	--	174
Nov. 16, 1835 (B)	--	170
Dec. 1, 1835 (B)	--	171
Dec. 26, 1835 (B)	--	110
Jan. 27, 1836 (B)	--	140
Nov. 15, 1836 (B)	--	254

Source) On the first column, A= Rice C. Ballard Papers, Series 5, Volume 1-5, Folder 416-422, 463, Ledger of Ballard and Co. 1831-1834, Vol. 38. B= Donald M. Sweig, "Reassessing the Human Dimension of the Interstate Slave Trade," *Prologue* 12 (winter 1980), 21, based on the inward slave manifests of New Orleans, 1828- 1836, U.S. Customs Service, National Archives. C=Wendell Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*. Note) Sweig's account does not include information on the brig name, and the provided number of slaves onboard includes slaves that were not traded by the firm of Franklin & Armfield. Based on the information of the shipping dates, there are some that overlap, and in such case the second column lists the name of the brig identified from one of the sources and the third column shows both numbers provided. For brigs on

March 15, 1833 and March 21, 1833, since there was only one brig Tribune that is known, and the roundtrip usually took several weeks, it is very likely that they are information on the same shipment. The same can be said for October 16, 1833 and October 21, 1833.

**Table 3.2** Ballard’s Shipment Numbers from Slave Lists

<b>Years</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>women</b>
<b>1831</b>	126	71 (56.35%)	55 (43.65%)
<b>1832</b>	207	96 (46.4%)	111 (53.6%)
<b>1833</b>	551	333 (60.4%)	218 (39.6%)
<b>1834</b>	57	30 (52.63%)	27 (47.4%)
<b>unclear</b>	15	9 (60%)	6 (40%)
<b>Total</b>	956	539 (56.4%)	417 (43.6%)

Source) Series 5, Volumes, Folder 417-422, Ballard Papers.

According to the partnership agreement, each party was to “bear and pay a share of the cargos debts,” which evidence can be found in Ballard’s accounts. On November 15, 1833, an entry in Ballard’s account book lists “cost of 63 negroes for Brig Tribune, \$32684.30” which was the shipment made on October 21, 1833 in table 3.1. Along with the cost of shipment, “Amount 1/3 of Brig Tribune, \$2000” and “Amount 1/3 of Brig Uncas \$2446.87,” were added, which the remaining 2/3 was paid by the partners. He also paid “freight for 63 negroes, \$1220” for that shipment.<sup>13</sup>

The firm of Franklin & Armfield purchased up to 1200 slaves annually during the height of its career in the first half of the 1830s. Armfield may have witnessed more than 1500 slaves shipped from Alexandria in the year 1835 alone. Along with the coastwise trade, Armfield

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<sup>13</sup> Ballard Papers, Series 5, volumes. In addition to freight charges, there were often “passages” reported in the entries, possibly indicating the cost of steamboat from New Orleans to Natchez. For example, on March 17, 1832, “passage of 45 negroes in New Orleans” was \$188, and on June 1, 1832, “passage of 41 negroes from New Orleans” was \$41, although Ballard seems to have used the word “freight” and “passage” interchangeably.

annually sent an overland coffle in late summer to Natchez.<sup>14</sup> Records show that Ballard also sent slaves overland. On August 17, 1832, 85 slaves purchased by Ballard were sent by land, whose average price was \$337.43, and the average age was 18. Among the 85 sent overland, 38 were male and 47 were female. For this land trip, 1 wagon, 6 horses, 1 carryall and harness accompanied, the total cost of which amounted to \$775. Two other land trips on August 20 and 25 of 1833, carried 44 and 52 slaves each, and their total cost amounted to \$19939.50 and \$21375.50 respectively.<sup>15</sup> In a letter from Franklin on May 30, 1831, Franklin commented to Ballard about the overland traffic scheduled for later that year, saying “I think it would be well to forward fifty or sixty by land to arrive at Port Gibson by the first October but will further address you on the subject.”<sup>16</sup> James Franklin, who became a member of the enterprise, carried slaves overland on occasion as well. He wrote from White Hall, near Natchez where he based his operation, that “should you purchase a good lot for walking, I will bring them out by land this summer.” One time while in Gallatin, Tennessee, Isaac Franklin oversaw the slave coffle of one of his associates Purvis, who had lead the slaves and stopped by en route to the West.<sup>17</sup> The overland coffle, as mentioned in the pervious chapter, probably took from 6 to 8 weeks from Virginia to reach its destination.

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<sup>14</sup> Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 44-46; Sweig, “Reassessing Human Dimension,” 16-8. The number on a usual overland coffle varied, and three land trips Ballard sent consisted of 85, 44 and 52 slaves each. But according to a travel account who encountered Armfield’s coffle on their way to Natchez, said he saw “about 300 slaves with them ... they were conducting to Natchez, upon Mississippi River... about 200 male slaves manacled and chained to each other.” See George W. Featherstonehaugh, *Excursion through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico: with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1844), 36-38. Detail of the encounter also quoted in Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 46-50.

<sup>15</sup> On the cost of overland coffle of Ballard’s see Series 5, Volumes 1832, 1833, folder 421, Ballard Papers.

<sup>16</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 30 May 1831, folder 1, Ballard Papers.

<sup>17</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 16 April 1834, folder 14; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 27 September 1834, folder 15, September 27, 1834, all Ballard Papers. James Franklin is the nephew of Isaac Franklin who resided in Natchez, Mississippi. Isaac Franklin’s brother James of New Orleans, will be mentioned as James R. Franklin.

For Ballard who started out as an independent trader in Richmond, forming the partnership with Franklin provided him an opportunity to widen his views and broaden his connection in this growing business. Organizationally, Ballard was able to concentrate on the buying of slaves in Virginia and the selling in the West was taken care of by the Franklins in Natchez and New Orleans. The number of slaves bought by Ballard reached its peak in 1833, sending more than 500 slaves that year. The partnership made him financially more secure, allowing him to purchase in large numbers. The stability in their finance and being a part of a developing network of a growing business gave traders the impetus to accelerate its efficiency and apply modern business strategies in a larger geographical scope. For Ballard, becoming a part of such world turned out to be his first step toward becoming a “successful” southern businessman.

### **The Relation among Franklin, Armfield and Ballard**

As the partnership agreement indicated, Ballard became involved with Franklin’s network on two levels, with Franklin & Armfield and with Franklin, Ballard & Co., based in Alexandria and New Orleans respectively. The partnership was expected to benefit both sides by dividing their labor upon their specialized location, and sharing business management, from practical issues such as transportation and insurance of slaves, to financial matters in trade.

This section will focus on the correspondence mainly among the four principle members of the firm: the two Franklins, Ballard, and Armfield, between the years 1831 to 1836, when Ballard’s purchasing activities were based in Richmond. In September 1836, Ballard moved out of Virginia and relocated to Natchez, which became a pivotal point in his career.

One of the earliest and typical letters from Isaac Franklin, May 30, 1831, from New

Orleans, was addressed to Rice C. Ballard and Co. in Richmond. In this letter Franklin sent Ballard two bills, \$6,000 and \$2,000, endorsed by Messrs. Samuel Herman & Sons of Philadelphia and W. Backe McEvans of New York respectively. He instructed to “have those bill[s] forwarded for acceptance immediately, if not in absolute need of the funds, in thus case have them discounted and write me the sum of the discount.” These funds were continuously provided to Ballard to purchase slaves, and commonly endorsed by northern merchants.<sup>18</sup>

Franklin usually commented on the market condition in the New Orleans and Natchez area in his letters. In the same letter, slave sales appeared to have been poor, with Franklin stating, “slaves have been dull in the extreme for some time back,” although, “until about ten days since which we have had a little stir in the wanted and they have gone off quite brisk for the season but at rather low prices.” The number of slaves in the market, prices and sales fluctuated daily, but Franklin’s major role was to make judgments on the long-term trends and inform his associates. As a consequence, Franklin became very keen on annual agricultural production and its market conditions, which usually correlated with slave sales. In the letter he indicated that the “prospect for the present grain crop, say both sugar and cotton is extremely unfavorable together with the low price of both is very discouraging. Indeed, I fear we will have to work for very short profits unless the price [of slaves] in your country can be lowered. I fear it will be rather a bad business.” He urged Ballard to purchase slaves at low prices in order to keep the profits high, and encouraged him to distinguishing

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<sup>18</sup> Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 30 May 1831, folder 2, Ballard Papers. Franklin usually spent his time between New Orleans and Tennessee. He would often go to the Deep South starting around September or October and return to Tennessee in April or May. While he was in the South, he would often go to Natchez to visit James Franklin, and James Franklin would often come down to visit him in New Orleans. This letter shows that this year he stayed in New Orleans quite long. Notes could only be discounted after a factor or a merchant endorsed it, and since a well-known house in a major market with a large business would be a better endorser than a smaller one, Franklin often relied on northern factors and merchants. The bills usually came due in 30, 60 or 90 days, and this note was due in 60 days. See Harold D. Woodman, *King Cotton and His Retainers: Financing and Marketing the Cotton Crop of the South, 1800-1925* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 115-7.

saleable slaves from non-saleable ones, stating, “we have been long enough in the trade to learn that there is no salesman [that] can make money of the article for sale [who] is badly layed in [,] a few negroes well purchased will always make more clear money than the any badly purchased,” and added, “I have very [high] confidence in your judgment.” Ballard was given full support on his purchasing based on his judgment, as Franklin stated, “the balance of Franklin & Armfield’s capital will be forwarded whenever you advise me you stand need of it.” Franklin advised Ballard to “be very industrious to lay out the forty thousand [dollars] to good advantage before time to ship,” indicating the amount he forwarded to Ballard for purchasing, and as a result, Ballard would be “able to borrow from some of the banks to keep your operation going on with [and] you can receive something from sales.”<sup>19</sup>

Most of the letters from Franklin addressed similar issues relating to market conditions, crop production, finance, and how they would affect the slave prices and the entire trade. They show that Franklin was well informed of the circumstances of the eastern states from his associates, and by considering the situation in both East and West, he was able to give knowledgeable, detailed, strategic advice to the members of the concern. Ballard, while at times clashing with Franklin in disputes, remained in a subordinate position while Franklin commanded the direction of his business enterprise. A closer analysis of this correspondence will reveal how their relationship developed, and how the largest slave trading firm of the era operated and affected the southern economy.

### **Commanding Sales: Instructions and Guidance from the West to the East**

Ballard became a member of the Richmond branch of the trading firm that had developed its network between the eastern region and western region at an unprecedented scale.

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<sup>19</sup> Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 30 May 1831, folder 1, Ballard Papers.

Ballard's role was to purchase slaves in the Richmond area, collect them, and deliver them "by sea or by land or in any way that may seem advisable" to the western markets.<sup>20</sup> Most of the slaves were sent to Armfield in Alexandria. Franklin and his associates in the West, once they accepted the slaves, took responsibility for selling them.

As the commander of this enterprise, Franklin was always informed and usually took careful but deliberate steps to generate as much profit as possible. He was in the position to control the overall trade, up until 1835 when he stepped back from the forefront of the business, and Ballard was considered one of his most important associates throughout the years. With the rise of Richmond as the central market for slaves in Virginia, Franklin relied on Ballard's skill and expertise and Ballard's position within the entire operation became essential. Ballard, likewise, depended on information and forecasts given by Franklin, who was the architect of the entire operation.<sup>21</sup>

From early on, it became customary for Franklin to inform Ballard how many slaves he had sold, or how many slaves he had on his hand. Shortly after Ballard became an official partner, on October 26, 1831, Franklin wrote to Ballard that he had "sold about fifty slaves since they arrived." Just four days later, a letter from James Franklin informed him that he had: "sold about 70 since I arrived [in New Orleans] at a tolerable fair." James Franklin had sold "14 of your stock consisting mostly of boys, women, and girls," and according to the demand of the present market, they had sold "but few men over 20 years of age as the

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<sup>20</sup> An agreement between Franklin & Armfield and Ballard and Alsop, 6 May 1833 (renewed), folder 421, Ballard Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Reportedly Isaac Franklin leased a lot and a house at the corner of Esplanade and Casa Calvo in New Orleans, which was in the slave trading center. He appeared to have spent a lot of time in Natchez once Louisiana law banned the importation of slaves in 1831 which convinced him to change his citizenship from Tennessee to Louisiana as a strategy to accommodate with the restrictions. During the non-trading season, he spent time in Fairvue and Gallatin, Tennessee, where he owned plantations. The issue of state importation bans and how traders worked around them will be discussed later in this chapter. See Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 70.

planters appear not to like men above that age.”<sup>22</sup> Traders usually considered the ages 15 to 25 the “prime age” and sought them in the market to sell at the highest prices, but records indicate that the age of slaves that planters desired the most may have been lower for the New Orleans market. According to Sweig’s analysis, slaves between the ages of 17 and 20 constituted the highest proportion with 859 slaves: 23.9 % of the 28 cargo manifests of Franklin & Armfield Sweig analyzed. Slaves between the ages of 13 to 25 numbered 2057, 57.4 % of the total, and the number of slaves between the ages 21 to 24 were slightly smaller than that between 17 and 20. The number of slaves under the age of 10 was unusually high, 15 -17% of the total. According to Pritchett, a slave’s “prime age” encompassed the period between 10 and 35, and approximately 70 % of all imported slaves sold in New Orleans were aged between 15 and 35, although this age group only consisted 40% of the total slave population in the South, and children under 10, who consisted more than 35% of the total population, accounted for only 10% of total sales in the city.<sup>23</sup>

On one occasion, Franklin suggested to Ballard that he “should only buy when [there is] a fare prospect at a profit,” when he observed that Ballard was buying at a much higher price than the other partners. Ballard followed his advice, and in response Franklin stated that he “was pleased to find you had pursued the right course by not buying.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 26 October 1831, folder 2; and James Franklin to Ballard, 30 October 1831, folder 2, all from Ballard Papers. Although New Orleans market and Natchez market were close geographically, the nature of the slave market was quite different. New Orleans was the destination for the coastal route and provided both sugar and cotton planters, while Natchez was the end of the land route but also accepted slaves shipped up and down the Mississippi River from New Orleans or cities along the Mississippi on steamships. Natchez market served mainly cotton planters in the Delta region. James Franklin was more acquainted with the Natchez market where he usually resided, although Isaac Franklin frequently visited there.

<sup>23</sup> Donald M Sweig, “Reassessing Human Dimension,” 10; Jonathan B. Pritchett, “The Interregional Slave Trade and the Selection of Slaves for the New Orleans Market,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28 (summer, 1997), 67-69; Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Little Brown, 1974), 50. Fogel and Engerman observed the ages 0-12 consisted 10%, 13 to 24 at 65 %, and over 25 at 25%.

<sup>24</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 26 October 1831, folder 2; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 10 November 1831,



Franklin made sure that Ballard was purchasing at the best possible prices, reminding him to “go under easy sale, and buy at reduced prices and continue and ship as usual, until further advised.” Franklin, as did many slave traders, frequently counted profit by the “head.” For example, he advised Ballard and Armfield to “sell when you can make \$50 ... on each negro clear of expenses.” In June of 1832, Franklin instructed to “buy sparingly and sell to the Louisiana planters which you can sell off in lots at \$50 profit a head.”<sup>25</sup>

In general, the decision to purchase or sell was made according to deep consideration and prediction of what might happen ahead, judging on their knowledge and experience. James Franklin instructed Ballard, for example, to “move on under easy sale, but at low prices for the next falls business,” because he was “not at all anxious to have many negroes this [coming] spring,” as they have “but little confidence in the spring market yet if they can be had at low price, we may make something,” again reminding Ballard to purchase at a low price to raise profits at the end.<sup>26</sup>

At times Franklin instructed Ballard to stop sending slaves to the West, judging from the current market demand. In May of 1832, at the end of the season, Isaac Franklin predicted that the best market would be in “your place [Richmond] and Alexandria next [season];” his judgment was based on the fact that the crops would not do well, and according to legal restrictions, they might have to rely on the Mississippi market instead of Louisiana. He

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folder 3; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 14 December 1831, folder 2, all in Ballard Papers. In the November letter, Franklin told Ballard that “your sales say R.C. Ballard & Co is about 1000 and not all cash at that you will attend to the instructors given in way last,” discouraging any purchases or transaction not made in cash.

<sup>25</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 January 1832, folder 4; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 19 May 1832, folder 6; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 8 June 1832, folder 7, all from Ballard Papers. Richmond market tended to have higher prices than surrounding urban centers, so it might have been inevitable that Ballard’s slaves were of higher price than other associates and concerns.

<sup>26</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 10 February 1832, folder 5, Ballard Papers.

explained, “if after a while should the crop bend fare too be abundant that the planters will cause an in draws and raise the price in your market almost to Louisiana prices, in that case it will be better to sell them [in Virginia] and make engagements as far as may be fair than to ship in the Brigg Tribune.” If the crops did not have a good harvest, resulting in planters drawing more notes, planters in the West would not be able to buy slaves. In such case, selling slaves in the East made more economic sense. Both Isaac and James Franklin repeated again on June 7, 1832 to “sell negroes in Richmond to those gentlemen you call planters whatever you can make a fair profit.” Price decline in the West, as well as price increase in the East at times forced the Franklins to take the strategy of abandoning sales in the West and to urge their partners in the East to sell in their own vicinity.<sup>27</sup>

To achieve higher efficiency in purchasing and selling, the partners agreed that they would “imploy an agent to reside” with Ballard & Alsop, and also “one or two agents to reside with said Franklin representing Franklin, Ballard & Co to assist them in doing and performing all things necessary and pertaining to the business of the copartnership.” As for the agents, their “necessary charges, expenses and wages” would be “allowed and paid them, out of the joint stock and gains thereof,” so that “each of the parties shall have and pay there proportionable part.” Correspondence and account book records indicate that Andrew Grimm of Fredericksburg, although a partner of Franklin & Armfield, may have worked as an agent at one point, as well as George Alsop, possibly a member of the Alsop family in Spotsylvania County, and John G. Blakey. For example, for Andrew Grimm, an entry on Ballard’s account on December 29, 1831 shows “Mr. Grimm’s expenses for the year, \$387.65,” and “Mr. Grimm’s wages, \$250.00.” For the following year, on March 31, Mr. Grimm’s expenses from January 18 to April 1 amounted to \$47.75, and from April 2 to November 22, the expenses

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<sup>27</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 19 May 1832, folder 6; Isaac Franklin and James Franklin to Ballard, 7 June 1832, folder 7, both from Ballard Papers.

added up to \$250.00. In August, “house expenses rendered by Mr. Grimm” came to \$32.00. This continued the next year, when his expenses to April were \$197.38 and from then to December 1833, his expenses came to \$292.65, and his wages for year 1832 were recorded in July of 1833, as \$350.00. It appears that Grimm was provided his various expenses from Ballard twice a year, first in early summer and then at the end of the year, and Joseph Alsop gave Ballard the information on statements of Grimm’s accounts. For the year 1834, in addition to his expenses of \$171.48 and \$293.50, he was provided \$41.00 for sending “20 negroes to Norfolk,” and his wage was \$350.00. George Alsop had a similar entry in March of 1833, although on a more limited scale, being provided with \$41.00 for services rendered, and \$30.50 for house expenses.<sup>28</sup> In addition to the stipends and various costs, the agents were provided cash to make purchases. Ballard recorded in his ledger, for example on April 21, 1832, “given Mr. Grimm \$1500,” and again \$1420 the following month.<sup>29</sup>

J.G. Blakey was not a partner of Ballard, but addressed Ballard as a “friend” in his letters, and worked closely with him and Grimm. He did not appear to hold any official partnerships, and admitted he “had several propositions for copartnership,” but refused since he “did not like [partnerships], if I can do without it, for I loose so much of the profits and have the same trouble.” He once encountered three very likely slave boys but did not have enough money when he “fallen in with Grime [Grimm],” and borrowed money from him to purchase them at \$616, \$571, and \$71. Consequently, Blakey urged Ballard to “send me another check for I am a thousand dollars in debt to Grimes now.” He then went on to Charlottesville to attend the

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<sup>28</sup> On Andrew Grimm and George Alsop’s expenses and various entries, see Series 5, folder 421, Ballard Papers. Also see Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 5 February 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Series 5, ledgers, 1831-1834, Ballard Papers. Some records indicate that Grimm was a partner of Franklin & Armfield, although others show he acted more like Ballard’s agent. It is possible that he was a partner of Franklin & Armfield at one time, or agreed to support Ballard in his partnership with the firm, and it is not clear when Grimm officially became Franklin & Armfield’s partner. He represented Ballard, Franklin & Co. later during the settlements after Isaac Franklin’s death in the 1840s.

court sale there, and reported that Templeman of the firm Templeman and Goodwin was selling slaves at high prices. Blakey actively bought slaves for Ballard, and his comments indicate that the trader's world was intricate and information spread quickly.<sup>30</sup>

Although relying on agents could be helpful, building partnerships with larger traders was a faster way to monopolize the market. On one occasion, Ballard suggested to the Franklins to add a partner to their firm, recommending R. Russell Esq. of Mississippi to the enterprise. The Franklins considered this suggestion, but concluded that "we think it advisable not to enlarge over present your business by making any more concerns than we have. We have no doubt that what we might all be benefited by it though at the same time think we have a[s] many concerns and partners as any two man can possibly do justice by and think it better to do much we do well than to do much more and badly completed." Franklin was content with the present size and organizational structure among the partners and agents, and that it worked most efficiently.<sup>31</sup>

Another important piece of information Franklin reported to Ballard was the price of slaves in the market. Judging from quotes in the letters, prices easily fluctuated within a day or two. When slave prices were very high, Franklin was afraid there would be a levy law, and when the prices were low, Ballard had to adjust accordingly the purchasing prices or decide whether he should continue purchasing at all. Franklin, as mentioned earlier, was strict on

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<sup>30</sup> J.G. Blakey to Ballard, 23 July 1834, 25 July 1834, 30 July 1834, 6 August 1834, folder 5, Ballard Papers. Another evidence of a trader that worked closely with Ballard, especially from the season of 1834 and onwards, was R.N. Windsor and W. Monholland, from Alexandria. Windsor wrote to Ballard asking for a check of \$5,000, for the "means of purchasing," and Monholland had gone into New York, but said he would "ship about sixty negroes" and that his friends would "funnel him more," and in the next letter mentioned that he had received the check and "purchased upward of 30 negroes suitable for shipping," and "have a flattering profit of purchasing more in the course of five days." See R.N. Windsor to Ballard, 19 September 1834, folder 15; and 24 September 1834, folder 15; Ballard Papers. Windsor also later wrote, "send me some money of the needful as soon as convenient, are expected to buy 5 or 6 likely fellows in the course of the day or tomorrow," and that he had "upwards of 50 of shipping and negroes," had agreed to carry "60 negroes which is to be shipped on the 20 instant." He also notified that the brig *Tribune* was lost by fire. R.N. Windsor to Ballard, 8 October 1834, folder 16, Ballard Papers.

<sup>31</sup> Isaac Franklin and James Franklin to Ballard, 29 October 1833, folder 11, Ballard Papers.

demanding slaves that were saleable. His ethic was that a few valuable slaves are better than a lot of unsalable ones. He once criticized Ballard that the slaves he sent were “little slim assed girls and boys,” who were “entirely out of the way and cannot be sold for a profit.”<sup>32</sup>

Although there are contemporary accounts that credit Armfield for being particularly careful to keep families together when shipping his slaves from Alexandria or when he set his coffles on journies to the West, it is doubtful whether those families were kept together when they were actually sold. One case shows that Old Ben and his family consisting of 6 women, 2 men and a child were sold altogether for \$4000, although this case may be rare.<sup>33</sup> According to Sweig, there were indications that young women were separated from their children during the trade, and the fact that the Louisiana law of 1829 only declared that mothers with young children must be sold together, suggests that traders did not show concern about separating father and children. It was likely that Armfield may have temporarily saw it as good business that would help their reputation in the rise of the abolitionist movement to purchase in family lots but sent families in separate shipments. Once they reached Louisiana, mother and child had to be sold together, which type of sale was usually not high in demand, so they were likely to be broken up beforehand.<sup>34</sup> In many cases, if they were to sell in family lots, the price will be lower than selling each slave individually. For those slaves that were difficult to sell were given a low price. For example in March of 1833, two of the men who Samuel Alsop sent to the West, were to be sold at

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<sup>32</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 8 June 1832, folder 7, Ballard Papers, Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 8 December 1832, folder 8, Ballard Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Bancroft, *Slave Trading*, 59-64. Ethan Allen Andrews referred to Armfield as a benevolent trader who kept families together and slaves preferred to be sold by him than other traders in the area. Ethan Allan Andrews, *Slavery and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States* (Boston: Light & Sterns, 1836), 135-43. James Franklin to Ballard, 27 March 1832, folder 5, Ballard Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Sweig, “Reassessing the Human Dimension,” 11-18. On family separation, see Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, chap.6.

“very low prices,” although “we do not know that he [Alsop] will be satisfied,” since it will not bring him profits. Franklin made the judgment that it was more important to sell them than to wait for the price to improve.<sup>35</sup>

Another noticeable trait in Franklin’s correspondence was his reference to “fancies.” There were occasions when Franklin mentioned specific slaves to Ballard, referring to them as “fancy white maids,” that is, slaves who were likely to be of mixed-blood with attractive appearances. It was common for slave traders to improve their slaves’ appearances when selling them, but the trader’s own fascination often resulted in abusive relationships. One time Franklin was particularly fascinated and desired the “fancy girl from Charlottesville” named Martha, who according to James Franklin, answered by the name of “Big Cuff,” and asked Ballard to send her to him. Sexual abuse was common, and Franklin once confessed that he entertained the idea of “keeping a whorehouse” consisting of their fancy slaves, for the pleasure of Ballard, Armfield and Purvis. They also thought that they always had, among their customers, buyers who eagerly sought for and willing to pay high prices for fancies, clearly for their pleasure and sexual exploitation. This was a common phenomenon among other traders and many planters in the South, and the morals of these southerners were being increasingly questioned in the North.<sup>36</sup>

So far it is clear that the trade was fundamentally structured according to the present demand, on which Franklin’s instructions played a central role. Purchasing in the East was

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<sup>35</sup> Isaac Franklin and James Franklin to Ballard, 4 March 1833, folder 10, Ballard Papers.

<sup>36</sup> On a detailed analysis on Franklin’s treatment of fancies, see Edward E. Baptist, “‘Cuffy,’ ‘Fancy Maids,’ and ‘One-Eyed Men’: Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave trade in the United States,” *American Historical Review* 106 (December 2001): 1637-49; Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 75. On having their slaves to have a better appearance for sales, James Franklin wrote to Ballard, “I am using all exertion to get them [slaves] dressed (this being Sunday morning), I shall open my fancy stock of wool and Ivory early in the morning.” See James Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 4 March 1832, folder 5; James Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 27 March 1832, folder 5; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 11 January 1834, folder 13; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 1 November 1833, folder 12 and James Franklin to Ballard, 16 April 1834, folder 14, all Ballard Papers.

based on how various aspects would affect the trends in demand that year, and Ballard, Armfield, and other partners followed his instructions to generate the highest profits possible for the entire concern.

### **In Relation with Crops**

It is clear that slave prices had a correlation with agricultural production in the Deep South, especially its major exports, cotton and sugar. In general, when crop production was expanding, planters bought more slaves, which caused slave prices to rise.

In the Mississippi Valley area, cotton was grown as a potential cash crop from the early times, even before the introduction of the gin. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, cotton had become the principal crop in the Red River Valley and Bayou Lafourche region, and large, profitable plantations appeared in the fertile lands. Great Britain was the principal importer of American cotton from the beginning, but in time France and many countries in continental Europe began to manufacture cotton and imported raw materials from the U.S. Despite international competition in the later antebellum period and prices fluctuating with downward tendency throughout the era, cotton production and plantations increased and demand for a constant supply of slaves continued. Sugar, on the other hand, arrived in the region after cotton, initiated by the refugees from St. Domingue. The climate and the alluvial soil and bayous of the area suited sugar production and despite the high technology and machinery required in processing, sugar production was known for its huge slave work force and strict regimen to maintain its operation. The two crops' regions overlapped with one another in the same area, and huge plantations with hundreds of slaves appeared along the Mississippi.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> On cotton and sugar production, marketing, trade, etc. see Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the*

Isaac Franklin was a cotton planter himself. He planted cotton on his plantations in both Tennessee and Louisiana. The comments he would make on crops for a certain year and their impact on the slave trade were reliable, since being a planter made him more aware of global commodity markets. His New Orleans factors, Dick and Hill, Nalle and Cox, and Hill, McLean and Company, would provide him with adequate information as well. While James Franklin and Ballard were not planters when they started out in the trading business, they knew the effect crop trends had on the slave market and how they should react to them strategically. These professional traders, even if they did not engage in staple production themselves, were exposed to a broad array of information about the commodity market both domestic and abroad.<sup>38</sup>

For the 1830-1831 season Isaac Franklin saw that both sugar and cotton were unfavorable with low price and low productivity. In February he predicted that there would not be “many planters [to buy slaves] in this spring owing to the shortness of these crops but should the next fall promise ... for full crops, they will come on in droves and will give nearby Louisiana prices to get them early.” This was the time when the Louisiana legislature was in session to discuss a ban on slave importation from other states, and the Franklins paid much attention to the proceedings, and avoided slave landings in New Orleans, in case such a ban would take effect. Isaac Franklin made sure that if Ballard should “ship any more this spring be sure to have them cleared out for Natchez” for that purpose. Strategically, he instructed

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*Southern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (1933; repr., Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1973) ; Paul W. Gates, *The Farmer's Age Agriculture, 1815-1860* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1960) chap. 1, 6. 7. For cotton production in Mississippi, see John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> On Isaac Franklin's estate and management of plantations in Tennessee and Louisiana, see Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 94-120. It was reported, upon his death in 1846, he was one of the richest man in the nation with Fairvue plantation in Tennessee, six plantations in total in Louisiana, and property in Texas, with more than 550 slaves to his name. Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 92.



Ballard to “take your bills of landing for that place you can tell captain that we will have his vessel load up the river 40 or 45 miles and receive the negroes on a boat and discharge him.” He also advised that if he can sell to any advantage in Richmond to go ahead and do so, since he would “rather have no more [slaves here] this spring” in such circumstances.<sup>39</sup> Matters did not improve much the following season, Franklin complained that there was “no doubt but the crop of sugar and cotton will be considerably short of last year,” and later repeated “we anticipated very hard times in Mississippi owing to the crops being very bad.”<sup>40</sup>

The failure of crops affected the regional economy to a level that financial institutions in the area had to intervene. In January 1832, it was reported that “the US bank and the Planters Bank at this place [Natchez] has thrown a larger amount of cash into circulation and the price of cotton had advanced ... from the prospects abroad and the great failure in crops, I have no doubt but there will be considerable improvement as the price of the article in the spring and the early part of next fall.” Despite such measures, in May 1832 the prospect of the sugar crop was still reported as “very loomey, cotton crops will be so far flattening yet.”<sup>41</sup>

Above all, cotton price was the indicator for the best time to sell slaves in market. In November 1833, Isaac Franklin told Ballard, with the severely declining cotton prices in the European markets, that while selling “fellows from 8 to 9 hundred dollars” was less than the price they desired, he decided that it would “be best to sell for those prices where we can get it and not run the risque of a further decline for should cotton get down to the old farm slaves will certainly fall in this [New Orleans] and the Mississippi market.” Similar notice came from James Franklin in Natchez that cotton was “only 13 to 14 [cents] which makes negroes

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<sup>39</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 28 February 1831, folder 1, Ballard Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 26 October 1831, Folder 2; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 14 December 1831, folder 3, all Ballard Papers. Also see Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 January 1832, folder 4; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 19 May 1832, folder 6, all Ballard Papers.

dull.” Matters did not change the following month, saying “I would not advice you to be anxious to purchase at present prices in your market as the prices of cotton is that and many negroes in market I am afraid we cannot obtain more than \$800 and \$600 for field negroes, they will not do when you pay \$625 to \$700 for men. I do not think Louis[iana] planters can pay more.” Considering the cost of transportation and maintenance, ordering to curtail purchase was the economical decision at this time.<sup>42</sup>

The weather, inevitably, affected how well the crops would produce that year. In January of 1834, the winter weather hit the otherwise warm climate severely. According to accounts, it “rained or snowed every day since the negroes landed, and there is great fears express an account of the freize some say that the cotton cane is entirely destroyed,” and the sugar planters would “break up many plantations and bring there hand into market in fall,” which they predicted would have a negative impact on their business. If sugar planters threw large numbers of slaves on the market at one time, it would result in a decrease of slave prices. Their lot from Virginia would not be able to sell for as much as they had anticipated, in such a case.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the expansion of their business, fluctuation in the cotton market made judgments hard for Franklin. It is also noticeable how intense and short-cycle the fluctuations could be, since Franklin’s attitude and predictions fluctuated accordingly. This also illustrated how fully exposed they were to all sorts of information. He often complained how difficult times can be, saying “even the cause of the rise of slaves had been lost by the pull of cotton and every thing that made slaves valuable had disappeared [its] confidence.” But only two months later in May, “the price of cotton is on the rise and should it continue slaves will sell

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<sup>42</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 1 November 1833, folder 11; James Franklin to Ballard, 14 November 1833, folder 12; James Franklin to Ballard, 2 December 1833, folder 12, all from Ballard Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 11 January 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

well next fall,” although he did not believe “there will be much money in the purchasing market this season, the greater part of the traders are hung up with paper that cannot be made available.”<sup>44</sup> Cotton production and slave sales were intricately linked with each other and together forecasted the direction of the southern economy. Traders like Franklin knew that it was the most important indicator for their business strategy, and made sure that accurate information reached all the concerns.

### **Getting Around the Law in the West**

A major issue that appeared in the correspondence in the early 1830s related to the laws to ban interstate slave trading in the western states. Most states passed legislative measures to curtail the importation of slaves into their states in the early nineteenth century, although they were generally ineffective (table 3.3).

**Table 3.3** State Laws to Restrict Slave Importation (selected states)

state	years
Alabama	<b>1827-29, 1832</b>
Mississippi	<b>1837-46</b>
Louisiana	<b>1826-28, 1831-34</b>
Georgia	<b>1817-55</b>
Tennessee	<b>1825-53</b>

Source) Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, chap.2.

Two major reasons for restricting the trade were to stop the drain of specie and capital out of the state, and the fear that the increase of the slave population could lead to social insecurity. Around the turn of the century, the slave revolt in St. Domingue triggered fears of

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<sup>44</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 18 March 1834, folder 13; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 13 May 1834, folder 14, from Ballard Papers.

former slaves pouring into sugar planting regions in the West. It is estimated that at least 15,000 to 20,000 refugees landed in Louisiana as a result of the revolt between 1791 and 1810. With Gabriel's rebellion in Virginia in 1800, fear intensified. Many southern leaders believed that the concentration of slaves and their activities and interactions within communities, permitted the rise of slaves' awareness of geography and current events, including events abroad, which could inspire them to rebel against their masters. It was in this context that most eastern states stiffened the importation ban of slaves from Africa toward the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the same reasoning was applied to curtail the interstate trade for the western states.<sup>45</sup>

Louisiana and Mississippi were organized as territories in 1803 and 1798 respectively, but they were not admitted into the Union until 1812 and 1817. The two states were importing slaves from eastern states when they were still territories, but the number dramatically increased after they became part of the Union. The major incident that triggered western states to strengthen their restriction was the Nat Turner rebellion that occurred in August 1831, in Southampton County, Virginia. For a while at least, several importing states began to consider total prohibition on the import of slaves. Governors of western states increasingly raised awareness in their speeches about the negative impact of the trade on their states. In 1831, Louisiana governor Jacques DuPre called attention by returning to the issue of Louisiana's unfavorable balance of trade, declaring a deficit of several million dollars from

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<sup>45</sup> On the impact of the Revolution in French Saint Domingue in the Atlantic world, particularly in Louisiana, see Nathalie Dessens, "From Saint Domingue to Louisiana: West Indian Refugees in the Lower Mississippi Region," in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, Bradley G. Bond ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 244-64. The population of Saint Domingue at the end of the eighteenth century is estimated at: white population 40,000, free colored people 28,000, and 452,000 slaves. Although the number of refugees was estimated at nearly 20,000, one third of them are said to have been whites (other two thirds were free colored or slaves). Also see Glen R. Conrad and Carl A. Brasseur, ed., *The Road to Louisiana: The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792-1809* (Lafayette, LA: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1992). The point of "geographical literacy" among slaves is discussed in Philip Troutman, "Grapevine in the Slave Market," in Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, 203-233.

importation of slaves arriving mainly from Maryland and Virginia.<sup>46</sup>

Mississippi, while still a federal territory in 1808, passed an earlier version of this prohibition act that required a certificate of good character for each slave, with signatures of two freeholders (affidavits) of the county where the slave was originally from. The state constitution in 1817 included provisions for restricting immigrants from importing slaves, and banned slaves with criminal records, but allowed slaves to be brought into the state as merchandize. In 1819, two years after joining the Union, the state passed a law regulating slaves coming into the state by requiring registration and swearing of the slave's good character. The legislature also laid \$20 tax per imported slave, and violators were fined at \$500. In 1825, the tax was altered to 2.5% upon all gross sales, but lowered in 1826 to 1%. The new state constitution of 1832 allowed settlers to bring in their own slaves with no criminal record for their own use, but prohibited slave sales after May 1833. This law helped to trigger the formation of the suburban slave depot, Forks of the Road, outside of the city of Natchez. It also gave rise to a great deal of litigation, despite the fact that it was not totally effective in prohibiting further importation. Later, sales that took place after this date and all transactions made in promissory notes were declared void and uncollectible, which caused a total panic among traders.<sup>47</sup> In the years following the 1832 constitutional restriction, Natchez traders frequently disposed of their slaves in Vidalia, Louisiana, located across the river from Natchez. Ballard, Franklin & Co, which was a new company established in 1835 by Armfield, Ballard and James Franklin, made numerous sales there to purchasers who

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<sup>46</sup> On the impact of Nat Turner's rebellion on the western states, especially for Louisiana see Judith K. Schafer, "The Immediate Impact of Nat Turner's Insurrection on New Orleans," *Louisiana History* 21 (1980): 361-76. Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 74n.

<sup>47</sup> Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 61-2; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 152-3. Another event that triggered discussions of a formation of the so called "Forks of the Road" in the outskirts of Natchez was the widespread cholera epidemic that hit the area in the early 1830s, which was thought to have been brought in by slaves. This aspect will be discussed later in the chapter.

specified Louisiana residences, although they may have concealed their residency and come from Mississippi. Crossing state borders to make sales in order to avoid the law became a common tactic among traders.<sup>48</sup>

In Louisiana, as early as 1810, a federal law was passed to prevent the introduction of slaves with criminal records. In 1826, the legislature banned the importation of slaves for sale, and anyone who brought in slaves illegally suffered penalties of fines and imprisonment, although immigrants and residents were exceptions and were allowed to bring in their slaves. This law was short-lived and was repealed in 1829; instead the state required a certificate of good character for imported slaves over age 12 with two affidavits from freeholders in the county of the slave's original residence. This certificate provided information on the name, age, sex, and as near as possible the size, marks and color of the slave and on oath, affidavits had to declare that the swearer had known the slave for several years and that the said slave had not been convicted of crimes and had good moral character, and would not run away. The certificate was a necessity not just for slaves but also for residents and immigrants, and slaves from insurrectionary counties could not be imported until 2 years after the conspiracy in question. The 1829 law also prohibited importation of a slave child or children ten years of age or under without their mother, and also made it illegal to sell a slave child or children ten years of age or under separate from their mother.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 63, 56. Ballard, Franklin & Co. was different from Franklin, Ballard & Co.; the former was formed among Armfield, Ballard and James Franklin in Natchez, and the latter was between Isaac Franklin and Ballard, based in New Orleans, which was established when Ballard became a partner of Franklin & Armfield in 1831. The reason for the establishment of Ballard, Franklin & Co. can be speculated that factors such as the fact that Isaac Franklin was planning to retire from the business by 1835, strategically it helped to have companies in both Louisiana and Mississippi while gradually shifting focus from New Orleans to the Mississippi market, and the fact that Ballard was planning to leave Virginia and relocate in Mississippi, played a role. The firm Ballard, Franklin & Company incorporated in 1835, and in the same year they purchased a lot in the Forks of the Road.

<sup>49</sup> Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 71-72; Winifred H. Collins, *The Domestic Slave Trade of the Southern States* (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1904), 126-7.

According to Franklin's account, after the 1829 law took effect, allowing importation of slaves only with certificates of good character, the Louisiana legislature continued its effort to totally prohibit the trade. In February 1831, Franklin wrote from New Orleans that "the legislator of this state is still in session and seem determined to close every avenue to the trade...constructing the law in a way to make the negroes on way here be able to seizure." Being acquainted with members of the legislature, Franklin said that he has "been using all my influence with the member[s] to get them to pass a law for our relief should thus fail god knows what will be the consequence." If a complete ban took place, he would be "much depressed and if we have to rely intirely on the Mississippi market we have more in this shipment than can be sold to advantage." Franklin went on to say that: "the legislature had already prohibited transfer of slaves from Missouri, Kentucky and Arkansas territory; and Alabama had passed a law of its own," restricting imports. Franklin believed that they would endeavor to pass further restrictions, eventually hunting down all slave trading agencies and planters who purchase them, which would force Franklin & Armfield to only sell its slaves in the East, in places like Alexandria, Norfolk and Baltimore.<sup>50</sup>

In August 1831, Nat Turner's rebellion in Virginia prompted the Louisiana legislature to reconsider its laws, and a special session of the legislature approved a bill that allowed new settlers and current citizens to bring in slaves for use, but banned traders from doing so. This evidently had a huge impact of Franklin and his concern.<sup>51</sup> Franklin feared there would be

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<sup>50</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 2 February 1831, folder 1, Ballard Papers. Franklin may have misunderstood about the state's bans at this time, slave imports even by citizens and immigrants from Alabama, Mississippi and the territories of Arkansas and Florida was restricted in 1831, and in April of 1832, importation from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri were banned, although the last three was repealed a year later. See Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 73-6.

<sup>51</sup> See detail on Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 73-6. The law passed on November 19, 1831, and traders were given one month to sell or remove their present stock, and slaves on sea route had to arrive within twelve days after the law takes effect, and within six days on land and river route, and they had to be removed within five days.

further restrictions, and since the above act did not take effect for thirty days until December 20, 1831, he was quick to ask advances on last year's slave prices, and was worried "how to cut should the law be passed." He also did the best he could to have slaves arrive from the East before the act passed. If the law took effect in Louisiana, they would be forced to transact most of their business in Mississippi, which would not be ideal, predicting that "the Mississippi market will be a very bad one, if times does not change naturally." Indeed, even if the law did not pass, Franklin thought that the prices for the slaves would be very low that season since many of the slaves that were supposed to be sold in Louisiana would flood into the Mississippi market. A few days later James Franklin said "it is out of my power what to say to you on the subject of the law legislation truly I think it would not do to pay higher for any kind of negroes than former prices and should they pass a law... I think it not advisable to ... pay those prices as we shall be compelled as such."<sup>52</sup> Frustrated even more, in November, he commented "I think the traders are giving away and appear to be in our situation on waiting with our mouth open to catch anything that may fall from the dam legislation....I am afraid they will pass some restriction."<sup>53</sup> These circumstances forced Franklin to liquidate his slaves as soon as possible. On November 19, the special session prohibited the introduction of slaves by professional dealers and accorded them one month to dispose of their stock. The firm had "270 slaves to sell in thirty days," and Franklin got help from his brother James R. Franklin so that he successfully sold all they had in possession in New Orleans within a month. Despite these fears and anxieties about the Mississippi market, in December the firm persevered: "though we have been forced by the last law we have

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<sup>52</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 26 October 1831, folder 2, Ballard Papers; James Franklin to Ballard, 30 October 1831, folder 2, Ballard Papers.

<sup>53</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 14 November 1831, folder 3, Ballard Papers



sustained our former prices,” and reportedly “sold in all 320,” for that season so far.<sup>54</sup>

Once the law went into effect, it had a huge impact on Isaac Franklin, who was forced to remove his business base. He had predicted that he would take that action, as he said he “will declare myself a civilian of the state,” in February 1831, if such law took effect. In January of 1832, the law forced him to “leave New Orleans for the purpose of selling the negroes that arrived in the last shipment.” The shipment was probably the brig *Industry* with 69 slaves, and he had to leave New Orleans for Natchez, then on to Memphis quickly without much preparation to sell those slaves within 5 days of arrival, saying he had “no time for financing and consequently my remittances have been sparing when I left New Orleans.”<sup>55</sup>

About the same time, James wrote to Ballard from New Orleans of the news that “the legislation [legislature] of this state has passed further restrictions relating to the introduction of slaves which are that no citizen should have an agent to buy negroes for him in any way whatsoever and that we shall go in person to the different state not already excluded shall by himself and introduce such a being bought into the state, they have also excluded the state of Tennessee.” With this, James called on Armfield to “ship all he had at hand,” and to “continue to do so until further advised and to commence buying at reduced prices,” and instructed him to inform Ballard on the same points as well. These shipments would likely be destined for Natchez, via New Orleans. This situation in Louisiana caused the Mississippi market to become highly competitive, although Isaac had nearly sold out and had “gone to Memphis to pass sales to save citizens of this state [Louisiana].” As mentioned earlier, Isaac Franklin changed his official residence to New Orleans in January 1832, from his prior citizenship in Tennessee. His strategy was to depend on his citizenship in Louisiana and bring in slaves from Tennessee (Memphis) and Virginia as a resident, which was perfectly legal.

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<sup>54</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 14 December 1831, folder 3, Ballard Papers; Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>55</sup> Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 28 February 1831, folder 1; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 January 1832, folder 4, all from Ballard Papers.

Sales by traders had been blocked in Louisiana but by using this method and perhaps do as well as in this market than if the legislature had not passed restriction this season. At the same time, “a bill before the house relate to the intro[duction] of certain slaves into this state [Louisiana] and it has passed,” which referred to the law that “permit all under certain ages say from 15 to 11 years.” Previously in 1829, a law was passed for children under ten to be sold with their mothers, and this refers to a reinforcement of this. Sweig has argued that Franklin & Armfield curtailed their importation of young slaves under ten, because of the law.<sup>56</sup> James Franklin was deeply affected by the Louisiana laws, which made his business harder and forced him into hurried sales. Moreover, he claimed he “had but little time for financing and indeed I have had thought that the prospect so bad and I have been so much discouraged.” Despite the hard times, he preferred “to continue purchasing as though nothing had happened and take the chances,” even though he was exhausted from “making and managing up and down the Mississippi until I hardly know myself.”<sup>57</sup>

Since the law required a certificate of good character for all slaves entering both states, the issue was a common subject among the concerns of Franklin & Armfield. In fact, these laws in the West had considerable impact on the slave prices in Virginia. According to one account, the ban in Louisiana in 1826 caused the value of slaves in the market to drop 25 percent within 2 hours after the news reached Richmond. Armfield asked his associates how to make the certificates, and Armfield was to have them “filled up at this place stating the sale was made then, everything complete with the exception of the name of the purchasers and the price of the negro which is left blank.” Then Armfield would be required to “go before the justice of the price and acknowledge the sale,” and the “justice witness it as justice of the

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<sup>56</sup> Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 17. James Franklin to Ballard, 18 January 1832, folder 4, Ballard Papers. Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 77; Sweig, “Reassessing Human Dimension,” 10-13.

<sup>57</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 10 February 1832, folder 5, Ballard Papers.

price,” then, according to his vivid account, the “clerk certifies that this man is a justice of the price and a hell of a fellow under his hand and the seal of the clerks office” will be provided, with the judge of the court certifying the slave’s good character. As this shows, the procedure was complicated, but for large firms like Franklin & Armfield where they needed to issue large numbers of certificates, the process was probably more routine and became standardized over time.<sup>58</sup>

In December 1832, Isaac Franklin told Ballard that “the convention of Louisiana has inserted a preemptory clause in the constitution of the state that it shall not be lawfull to introduce slaves into the state for sale as a merchandize after the first day of May.” At the time, slave importation from Virginia by a citizen of Louisiana was not banned, which allowed Franklin to make some imports, although as we can see in table 3.1, there were only 5 shipments that can be identified during the year 1832, which is much fewer than other years.<sup>59</sup> Although at this point Franklin was not convinced that this restriction would pass, predicting next month that he was “not yet to say whether the negro law will be repealed or not but am inclined to believe that there will be a modification.” On the business front, he told Ballard that he “would recommend you to go on and buy all of the right kind you can get at a low price,” and to continue his role “whether the law is repealed or not.”<sup>60</sup>

In March 1833, the portion of the Louisiana law restricting freeholders from importing

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<sup>58</sup> On the impact of laws in eastern states, see Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 108-9. John Armfield to Ballard, 26 January 1832, folder 4, Ballard Papers. On a work that analyzed the New Orleans slave’s certificates of good character, see Herman Freudenberger and Jonathan B. Pritchett, “The Domestic United States Slave Trade: New Evidence,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21 (winter 1991): 447-77. According to their analysis, 44.4% of the slaves imported to New Orleans based on their certificates, were from Virginia, the highest percentage of origin.

<sup>59</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 8 December 1832, folder 8, Ballard Papers. Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia were not included among the states that Louisiana banned the importation of slaves in April of 1832. Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>60</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 29 January 1833, folder 10, Ballard Papers.

their slaves was indeed repealed, and the remaining ban was lifted in January 1834. Hearing of the repeal in late March 1833, Isaac Franklin stated “the legislature of this state had taken off his restrictions from the state of Louisiana, Kentucky and Missouri accepted that the law remains as it was.” At the beginning of the following season in the fall, before the remaining ban was repealed, James Franklin was still concerned, saying that negroes were overflowing in Natchez. Although they had “rented the house near the forks of the road, the one we occupied last spring,” he was anxious of the overflow of slaves into the area saying, “the negroes are landing down the river very fast and I am afraid it will be hard to sustain former prices unless the Louisiana law should be repealed, should it be repealed we cannot raise the price much.”<sup>61</sup>

In November 1833, Franklin, after accepting slaves in New Orleans from his brig *Tribune*, had “no conclusion yet whether I will stop them here or go to Natchez with them I fear there will be too much rescue here unless I can get some person between me and the devil, yet they are selling here almost openly.” The state ban was not totally repealed until January of the following year, and Franklin thought it risky to sell too openly. He decided however, whether a repeal would take place or not, that “it will be best to sell for those prices where we can get it and not ruin the rescue of a further decline for should cotton get down to the old farm, slaves will certainly fall in this and the Mississippi market,” concluding that “had we not better sell for those prices than to hold.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 24 March 1833, folder 10; James Franklin to Ballard, 29 October 1833, folder 11, both from Ballard Papers. New Orleans city council forbade traders to “expose their negroes for sale within the incorporated limits of the city,” on November 29, 1834, but the following year on January 27, 1835, an ordinance permitted traders to maintain brick buildings two-stories or higher outside of Gaienné Street, provided they comply with the health ordinances. They were to notify the mayor within 24 hours of an epidemic outbreak. In April 10, 1835, the council legalized the selling of the slaves below Esplanade Street, so the trade within the city was banned for nearly 5 months. See Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 70n7 ; Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 101.

<sup>62</sup> Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 1 November 1833, folder 11, Ballard Papers.

But finally, in late December the Franklins recognized that the remaining portion of the law was on its way to be repealed. They informed Ballard, “the Louisiana law had been repealed and only lacks the governors signature,” although Isaac Franklin saw that it would not immediately affect the current season. Since most of the trading taking place in Natchez was at a reduced price, he was in “doubt very much whether at all be of any advantage or not for the price is and has been the whole season.”<sup>63</sup> Eventually, the repeal took place on January 2, 1834, and legally the Franklins did not face further obstacles in selling slaves in Louisiana and Mississippi, as long as they were not selling slaves under ten without their mothers, or those who did not have a valid certificate.

One final blow came later in the same year when the Louisiana legislature forbade traders to expose their negroes for sale within the incorporated limits of the city. This was devastating for most slave traders and it was modeled after a similar act passed in Mississippi, which banned trading in the city limits, for the purpose of excluding sickly slaves from entering the city. This gave rise to much resistance from the New Orleans traders. As a result, in the following year, in 1835, the council legalized the selling of slaves below Esplanade Street, an area that included the trading area.

The laws passed in Louisiana and Mississippi had a short-term negative effect on traders, but eventually the restrictions were either repealed or were not enforced strictly enough to completely damage the business. It shows that the demand in the area remained too high to stop the slaves from arriving from alternative routes, and trading networks had become sophisticated and established to seek ways to make their loss as small as possible. In other words, the traders and the business had achieved flexible entrepreneurial techniques, or were able to find a safety net, in challenging times. On the other hand, the attempted restrictions

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<sup>63</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 25 December 1833, folder 12, Ballard Papers.

on the legislative level indicate a growing anxiety and hatred toward this profitable business. It should be noticed that these attempts to curtail the business provided ammunition for abolitionist movement and to use to influence legislative process, and these attempts at the state level were at the margins of a larger, nationwide movement that was beginning to take place in the 1830s.

### **Avoiding Risks Financially**

If all traders were challenged by the state importation bans and various other restrictions on slave-trading, individual traders and firms devised different strategies to avoid financial risks. Some firms were extremely cautious and were able to maintain their financial security despite continuing fluctuations of the market. But in times of economic catastrophe, everyone in the market suffered devastating consequences. Crises hit especially hard when banks and other financial institutions were caught in the turmoil. In their relation with financial institutions, slave traders resembled other merchants and businessmen engaged in any commodity trade. They were dependent on banks and other intermediaries that would make decisions on whether to extend loans and credit, based on their confidence in future profits. Despite the preference for cash transactions, money in the Deep South mainly consisted of bank notes, which caused the total money supply in the South to increase.

According to their partnership agreement, Franklin & Armfield, agreed that the “capital stock to be employed in the said copartnership business has brought in and advanced the sum of twenty thousand dollars,” and Ballard & Alsop on the other hand, had also “brought in the sum of twenty thousand dollars,” and agreed that they were in “like proportion to receive his respective share of the capital stock and of the profits and fairs thereon accrued.” They also agreed that Ballard & Alsop would “first invest there amount of capital stock in negro slaves

at which time Franklin & Armfield will on notification or at request of the said Ballard & Alsop will pay over the amount of the capital stock.” The Franklins made sure that Ballard, as well as Armfield, would be sufficiently funded for their purchases, forwarding money up to \$20,000 at one time via financial intermediaries of both South and North.<sup>64</sup> Ballard informed Franklin after their first year of partnership the expenses (besides slave purchasing) of R.C. Ballard & Co., up to the first of April, 1832. Reportedly it amounted to \$6,314, which consisted of “credit of 200 for board of negroes, \$6114,” and “2 horses and 2 carry alls house hold and kitchen furniture.” According to the agreement, this amount was shared between the two firms.<sup>65</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Isaac Franklin once informed Ballard about the financial situation in relation to crops in Mississippi in early 1832. He stated that the United States bank and the Planters bank had thrown a large amount of cash (paper) into circulation causing the price of cotton to advance, and foresaw from the prospects abroad and the failure in crops, a considerable improvement of cotton prices in the coming spring and fall.<sup>66</sup> Banks, by controlling their supply of bank notes, were able to control market price indexes and influence trade, since issuance of bank notes, not the reserve of specie, was what allowed the southern economy to expand. Although short-term loans were the norm for commercial transactions, it was common to periodically renew the first note by a second note, and extend it to a long-term loan, which was possible for merchants and factors that had trustworthy

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<sup>64</sup> Agreement, folder 421, Ballard Papers. For example, in Ballard’s ledger entries, on October 17, 1833 stated “by draft on Isaac Franklin at 4 mons to pay notes borrowed 60 days since, \$5,000” and the same entry for \$5,000 on October 26, and for \$10,000 on November 6, 1833 can be found. Numerous banks channeled funds from the Franklins to the associates, such as Bank of Orleans, Union Bank of Louisiana, Merchants Bank of New York, the branch of the Bank of the United States in New York, Phenix Bank of Philadelphia and the Farmers and Mechanics Bank of Philadelphia, etc. Franklin & Armfield also agreed with associates that they get half of the profit.

<sup>65</sup> R.C. Ballard to Franklin, Ballard & Co., 5 April 1832, folder 6, Ballard Papers.

<sup>66</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 January 1832, folder 4, Ballard Papers.

relationships with local banks. The case in Mississippi was a sign of the beginning of a credit boom in the early 1830s. Franklin said “I have no doubt the price will be very low [for slaves] for anything like cash payments for nothing has kept the price up this season but the branch US bank,” and that “the planters bank and the old south bank in the early part of the season loaned out at 12 months those payments will all fall due next season.” Franklin thought that such long-term loans would affect “the present growing crop,” since planters would be short of cash to purchase slaves, and hence short of labor.<sup>67</sup>

Banks that slave traders dealt with, either directly or indirectly through factors, maintained specie (silver or gold) reserves and issued notes against those reserves. They were to facilitate trade by discounting notes, bills of exchange, and bills of landing, and provide a circulating medium in the absence of specie.<sup>68</sup> If a bank failed to retain specie reserve to redeem all the notes brought to it at due date, it had to suspend specie payments, and redeem only a portion of a note’s value in specie, and that percentage of the note’s value was the discount. Discounts could also refer to deductions in the accrued interest.<sup>69</sup> When Ballard needed additional funding to make purchase, Franklin would allow him to “borrow from your banks at sixty or ninety days with confidence that the money will be remitted to meet it in all our business in bills receivable.” On another occasion when Ballard wished to return the bills

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<sup>67</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 8 June 1832, folder 7, Ballard Papers. A 12-month note is a long-term note, notes due after 90 days is considered as long-term. Paper maturing in 90 days or less was often called commercial paper, and much more liquid than mortgage or improvement loan, so for slave trading transactions where they prefer quick resale, loans were usually in short terms. But short-term loans could be hard to collect since agricultural production could fail to realize as anticipated in such short period of time. Since specie was limited and not transportable, the notes that banks issued met the demand from trading in slaves to the marketing of cotton, without clogging the channel of trade that extended outside the state, region, or nation. For reference, see Woodman, *King Cotton and His Retainers*, 98-101, 114-125.

<sup>68</sup> In most cases, drawing from a reliable cotton factor was the most common method to borrow funds. Woodman, *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>69</sup> Schweikart, “Southern Banks and Economic Growth in the Antebellum Period: A Reassessment,” *The Journal of Southern History* 53 (Feb. 1987); Richard H. Kilbourne Jr., *Debt, Investment, Slaves: Credit Relations in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 1825-1885* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama press, 1995), 53.



Franklin accepted and take a letter of credit, he told him to “send me the bills back and I will give you authority to draw on me at Natchez or New Orleans what ever sum you thing you will stand in need of.”<sup>70</sup>

As for the financial condition of the firm, Franklin wrote “we are saving ten percent annum and as they [bills receivable] come within 4 months we can get any amount discounted at 6 percent. It is therefore a saving of interest to borrow from the bank instead of having out long paper discounted.” According to Kilbourne, cash sales for slaves usually meant that a bill of exchange or sight draft drawn on a New Orleans factor could immediately be converted to bank notes issues redeemable in specie or bills and drafts drawn on other cities, and this sort of bill usually had about 6 percent discount.<sup>71</sup>

Although Isaac Franklin moved between New Orleans and Natchez, it appears he negotiated with financiers only in New Orleans. Accounts frequently state that Isaac had gone to New Orleans “to make some negotiations,” and “should he succeed, he will remit you [Ballard] several thousand dollars.”<sup>72</sup> Louisiana’s banking system greatly expanded and added strength in the 1830s, and served as an effective system overall, mobilizing both domestic and foreign savings and channeling them to the state’s agriculture and commerce.<sup>73</sup>

Bank notes from both the North and South circulated everywhere in the nation, and the

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<sup>70</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 January 1832, folder 4; Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 26 August 1833, folder 11, both from Ballard Papers. In the letter he added “I have no doubt but you could sell your bills on me without either on acception or letter of credit for no person.”

<sup>71</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 January 1832, folder 4, Ballard Papers. Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, Slaves*, 50-6.

<sup>72</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 13 May 1832, folder 6, Ballard Papers. According to the partnership agreement, Isaac Franklin was to be in New Orleans from at least November till the first of May, but he was usually in the city by October. Agreement, folder 421, Ballard Papers.

<sup>73</sup> Howard Bodenhorn, *A History of Banking in Antebellum America: Financial Markets and Developments in an Era of Nation-Building* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 42-3, On the strength of Louisiana banks, see George D. Green, *Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana Banking, 1804-1861* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972).

reputation and the capacity for specie redemption accompanied the banks that issued them. Banks with good reputations and sufficient specie would be able to exchange notes at face value, and notes of other banks would be accepted, and presented to the original bank of issue for redemption. If the bank of issuance had a poor record for redemption, their notes would suffer a discount penalty for causing inconvenience in specie collection. At this time in the South, it had become increasingly common among merchants to have their papers endorsed or remitted by a northern bank. Southern merchants were usually ill-equipped to extend long credits due to the lack of necessary capital resources, while northern merchants, firms and banks were backed by greater capital reserves, and could afford one-time, 12 month loans.<sup>74</sup> With such benefits and flexibility, Franklin & Armfield had their papers backed by northern banks, which required them to have knowledge in nationwide banking reputations. But at times even the northern banks were not always accessible for loan money. Franklin indicated in February 1832 that “exchange in the north has been and is at this time very scarce,” and in addition, the firm “had to give 10 to 12 percent prem for the check, bills @60 days are only 10 percent discount.” When northern banks did not supply sufficient credit or their remittances were down, it usually affected the cotton market by bringing the price down, and the planters and merchants in the South suffered.<sup>75</sup>

At the end of the 1831-32 season the firm Franklin & Armfield held nearly “\$250,000 worth of bills receivable which a greater part will have to [be] paid the next season.” Franklin hoped the next season would be favorable for Ballard, saying “all those circumstances proves that your market will be nearly as good as any, would be pleased to hear of your [slaves] making some good sales to the Louisiana planters.” Armfield on the other hand, was

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<sup>74</sup> The flow of capital can also arrive from Europe. Explanation in detail can be found in Woodman, *King Cotton*, 156-164.

<sup>75</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 10 February 1832, folder 5, Ballard Papers. Larry Schweikart, “Southern Banks,” 19-36; Woodman, *King Cotton*, 169.

suffering from difficulty in obtaining funds, since he was “considerably in debt and the banks have all stopped discounting in this place [Natchez] and New Orleans,” so Franklin did not have any method to liquidate his bills and forward them to Armfield. Franklin instructed that “you [Ballard] and Alsop must sustain him through the Fredericksburg and Richmond bank[s],” with “sixty to ninety [days] in that here I have no doubt I will be able to forward your funds to meet any engagements you may make.” It rested on Ballard to save Armfield from his situation, saying “you must sustain his credit for that time the brokers are asking in New Orleans 1. 1/2 to 2 percent per month, ” on interests, and asked him “to write Armfield what can be done in your place in the way of raising cash for sixty days,” and channel cash to Armfield from Richmond. By liquidating bills charged on the firm Franklin & Armfield in Alexandria, he asked to “raise as much as will pay Armfield’s debts and tell him to lay low until I [Franklin] can furnish funds, if the worst comes to the worst you can leave on Franklin & Armfield and Franklin & Armfield can draw on Purvis Baltimore by the means you can get 120 days,” in which time Franklin would be able to remit Ballard.<sup>76</sup>

Such a situation was probably unexpected by Franklin in light of the partnership agreement. They had agreed that this union would not “interfere with the original firm of Franklin & Armfield,” and that buying and selling with the money of Franklin & Armfield and “profits and gains thereof” were for the “exclusive benefit and interest of the aforesaid original firm but shall not be at liberty to use the money of R.C. Ballard & Co. or Franklin, Ballard & Co. without applying the profits and gains thereof to the concern to whom the money by right belongs.” In this case, Ballard had to channel the profits to Armfield to help him out of his debt, and Franklin promised to remit him the money by channeling savings from Franklin &

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<sup>76</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 8 June 1832, folder 7, Ballard Papers. This indicates that Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Baltimore were financially more secure at this time than the West.

Armfield or Purvis in Baltimore.<sup>77</sup>

But after the first season of their partnership, Ballard and the Franklins reviewed their financial matters and clashed over some misunderstandings. Isaac Franklin was notified that a conversation between Ballard and James R. Franklin, Isaac Franklin's brother and agent in New Orleans, produced "some dissatisfaction," and thought that Ballard "would be more than satisfied in the commitment of last fall business when paper could be obtained that could be cashed at 10 percent annum." James R. Franklin's role was, upon request, to "forward you [Ballard] the funds as fast as obtained," which he continued to do in cash until he was pressed for time and was obliged to "take paper that could not be cashed at the rate received," which led Franklin to eventually discount Franklin & Armfield paper from "the three previous years and forward you the funds as fast as sale was made." Franklin explained that he attempted to "give your concern [R.C.Ballard & Co.] credit for the full cash value on selling our own paper at a greater rate of interest than was obtained, believing that times would change and money matters become more easy." Ballard complained that he had not received the funds early and full enough, while Franklin explained that Ballard still had cash and paper in his concern, and had not shown good judgment. Franklin explained, "you must recollect that our original understanding was that Franklin & Armfield was not to furnish their part until Ballard & Alsop's part was layed out which was the case at the first onset ... Franklin & Armfield had sold your concerns negroes from one to seven years of credit and taken the paper that no other person would discount at any rate much less at 10 percent." He went on further, that "you are as good a judge of the difference between a cash estimation and slave sale per cash and those sold on from one to seven years credit say would these not be 50 dollars a head and in many instance \$100 but those sales would not have been made if there was or had been the least share of getting clear of them on any other terms." Infuriated,

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<sup>77</sup> Agreement, folder 421, Ballard Papers.

Franklin saw Ballard as “the last man belonging to this or any of our concerns that has a right to complain.”<sup>78</sup>

Franklin wanted his concerns to be content and satisfied with his arrangements, and explained that “how will you have it say if Franklin & Armfield should pay RCB & Co interest on the part you have not yet received or say if you will for your concern agree to hold your full interest in the paper- If you conclude to take your full interest in all the paper with its advantages and disadvantages, ... I have not the least objections.” Finally he urged Ballard to “select one of the ways proposed, say shall the thing remain as it is and shall remit the balance of the cash that belongs to your concern, [or] shall Franklin & Armfield pay interest on part withheld or will you take an interest in all the paper,” and if not satisfied with either of these, to suggest “what way be satisfactory and give directions in what way the slaves of your part of the concern must be disposed of next season in due.”<sup>79</sup>

Ballard responded on the above issue, stating he was very satisfied with the sales and feel convinced that “we have all the justice done us that we were entitled to,” and since R.C.Ballard & Co. did particularly well in sales compared to other partners, “regret if any of the other concern have suffered by our advantages.” But Ballard was still disappointed and asked Franklin, “suppose I was to lend out two thirds of the funds due our concern [R.C.Ballard & Co.] in this country and you had to borrow money to keep us going would you not complain?” He further complained about the statement Franklin had made in the last letter, saying “you name that the original understanding was that Franklin & Armfield was not to pay in their funds until Ballard & Alsop part was laid out,” but Ballard & Alsop’s part was laid out “before on receipt yours.” Ballard reminded Franklin that “discounting the paper met my views and it was what I desired,” but with frustration wrote “you never informed us

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<sup>78</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 15 August 1832, folder 7, Ballard Papers.

<sup>79</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 15 August 1832, folder 7, Ballard Papers.

in what was you were managing, our business or rather the sale.” As for the money, Franklin informed Ballard earlier to “borrow money that the paper was paying us 10 percent and when it became six months of being due you could then discount it at bank interest which would be a considerable saving to us [R.C. Ballard & Co.]” With that information, Ballard complained, that he could not infer from that letter “you had twelve month paper and you were to hold on to it until this fall and then discount it,” which was different from Ballard’s anticipation of getting the payment earlier. He explained that “any man would complain of having the funds of their concern retained and deriving no benefit from it and have to borrow money to keep the concerns going on.”<sup>80</sup>

Another major complaint Ballard had that was a misunderstanding on Franklin’s side was that Ballard had enough cash and paper in his concern. Ballard responded “I have been in debt ever since last fall and at no time less than eleven thousand dollar[s] and now upwards of twenty and was at no time able to pay my debts without stopping business.” Ballard also disagreed on the advices he got from Franklin on how to sell the negroes for the next season.<sup>81</sup>

Franklin regretted that he had not been able to forward the full amount to Ballard earlier, but judged that Ballard had sufficient credit, and still had “frequently remitted considerable sums belonging to the concern Franklin & Armfield.” He explained that he was able to discount paper when it became within six months of falling due, but the “discussion at the city of Washington on US Bank question and the presidents veto, things you must know intirely beyond my contract has operated to prevent my raising funds to meet the claim,” referring to Andrew Jackson’s veto of the recharter bill of the Second Bank of the United

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<sup>80</sup> R.C.Ballard to Franklin, Ballard, & Co. 7 September 1832, folder 7, Ballard Papers. It appeared that Ballard had some debts in the West from his earlier slave-trading activities, before building the partnership with Franklin & Armfield.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

States in July 1832. If cash sales were made there would not have been this misunderstanding, but since that had not occurred, Franklin had to take the “only way,” which “could be for the mutual interest of all concerned to pass the cash to the credit of your concern and discount Franklin & Armfield paper that received for sales last year and the year before and pay RCB & Co there full amount, then by getting or holding RCB & Co paper at a great deal lower rate of discount than it could possibly be done by any other person.” Franklin explained that he had always been on the alert for the mutual interest of all concerns, and has been promoting the interest of R.C. Ballard & Co.<sup>82</sup> From this point onward this feud between the two concerns seems to have ended, but it shows how minor misunderstandings about their credit or the mechanism of transmitting notes across regions could be complicated and could cause disputes on their marketing strategies.

In order to send notes to the concerns, Franklin relied on agents in New Orleans. One of his agents was R.L. Booker, and Franklin enclosed “my agent R.L. Booker a check on the bank of Orleans with instructions to forward you check for 15 to 20 thousand dollars,” for which Ballard would receive a “15<sup>th</sup> discount,” and he wrote to Booker in addition that he would endeavor to “get any paper shared to add to 5<sup>th</sup> more making 20<sup>th</sup> which I trust will be in time to save your credit.” Franklin also forwarded Armfield \$20,000 and added “it would be hard of two such old robbers as yourself and John [Armfield] could not sustain yourselves, you know you can,” calling Ballard and Armfield as “robbers” which Franklin often did for

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<sup>82</sup> Isaac Franklin to R. C. Ballard & Co., 5 October 1832, folder 8, Ballard Papers. On the details of the beginnings and the procedures of the bank war between the hard money views of Jackson and that of soft money and “banks as independent corporations” supporters represented in Nicholas Biddle, and the veto of the charter extension of the Second Bank of the United States, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1945), chap.7-10. Consequently, Jackson withdrew government deposits from the Second Bank and placed them in various state-chartered banks around the country, while at the same time the number of commercial banks more than doubled between 1830 and 1835. The connection between the bank war and the panic of 1837 will be discussed in the next chapter. For further reference see Peter Temin, “The Economic Consequences of the Bank War,” *Journal of Political Economy* 76 (1968): 257-74.

himself as well, on their profession.<sup>83</sup>

The negotiation process Franklin went through with the banks is revealing. According to him, “neither of the banks at this place [Natchez] [is] checking at this time and all the remittances will have come by the way of New Orleans. I first have to negotiate for the money here [in Natchez] and then buy checking on New Orleans and their get some person to forward you and Armfield from that place, the \$20000 I forwarded Armfield was to meet the bills he accepted for you and you are charged with the neat proceeds of the bills.” This indicates how New Orleans had a huge monopoly on commercial transactions of the surrounding hinterlands and to capitalize on transactions made in Mississippi, agents like R.L. Booker in New Orleans were crucial in circulating the funds necessary for traders in the East.<sup>84</sup>

While financial arrangements for Franklin’s empire were conducted mainly in New Orleans, that did not mean Crescent City was always reliable, although it was always sound and stable compared to Mississippi. For example, Franklin wrote in mid 1833 from Natchez that “the acceptance from New Orleans is dreadful, we have suffered considerable but not half so much as has been reported in this place and neighborhood nor as much as the other traders in proportion to numbers.”<sup>85</sup> Although Franklin emphasized the difficult money

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<sup>83</sup> Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 8 December 1832, folder 8, Ballard Papers. Franklin often referred to other fellow slave traders or planters who traded in slaves as “robbers,” or “pirates.” In March of 1834, Franklin wrote again that “R.L. Booker Esq a check for \$10,000 the largest portion of which belongs to Ballard & Alsop.” See Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 24 March 1833, folder 10, Ballard papers.

<sup>84</sup> Isaac Franklin to R. C. Ballard & Co., 8 December 1832, folder 8, Ballard Papers.

<sup>85</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 11 June 1833, folder 11, Ballard Papers. Mississippi obtained a tight credit policy until 1830, and trading in New Orleans was beneficial for the factors, who had limited market opportunities in the state. But credit expanded as a result of legislative pressure, and credit boom occurred after the demise of the Bank of the State in 1831. The boom accompanied by lack of specie and sophisticated, sufficient backing from local, northern and European merchants, appeared unstable for many who were familiar with the New Orleans finance. New Orleans was able to control the financial activities of the state, through factors, property banks, and branch banks. According to Green, New Orleans financial institutions stood out in commercial supremacy in the area by restricting credit allocation



matters in his letters, their firm was sound and stable compared to other traders, and he was more than careful not to make his concerns suffer. In August 1833, Franklin sent Ballard a check of Phoenix Bank of New York payable in 30 days for \$5000, and asked Ballard to write “how much the concern our R. C. Ballard & Co. exclusive of the paper held on ... acceptance,” and “if desirable, I [Franklin] will endeavor to make you another remittance.” Ballard had told Armfield that he wished to return the bills that Franklin accepted for Ballard in Philadelphia and be given the authority to draw on Franklin at Natchez or New Orleans for whatever sum Ballard thought he would stand in need of. Franklin accepted that request but reminded Ballard to “advise me the date and time payable in order that I may make my own arrangements to meet them if you wish you can hold the acceptances say what’s there amount, and say how much you want a letter of [credit] beside it for.” Despite setbacks, with their expansive network they were able to collect money from various sources which added to their dominance in the trade.<sup>86</sup>

A major problem the concerns faced was the continuing difficulty of obtaining cash. As we have seen, cash transactions were one of the unique features of the slave trade, compared to other commodity trades. Traders preferred quick resale and were usually able to command a large amount of cash payments, which was welcomed by the financiers who funded them. Advertisements commonly noted traders had available “cash for negroes.” But obtaining cash became hard at times, either when banks were not able to provide loans or discount, or because there was not enough cash in circulation so that purchasers could only pay in paper (bank notes). These papers, as we have seen, usually fell due within 90 days, but some could

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of their branches and protected their own liquidity by pooling rural loans and diverse portfolios of the city. See Green, *Finance and Economic Development*, 31-32; Schweikart, *Banking in the American South*, 202-5.

<sup>86</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 26 August 1833, folder 11, Ballard Papers.

not be cashed for up to a year.

An early indication of a cash deficit for Franklin & Armfield appeared during the 1833-34 season. James Franklin did not think “the Louisiana planters can pay more, and for getting cash it is utterly out of the question, all pay 12 months paper.”<sup>87</sup> The following month, Isaac Franklin was in “great fears for the latter part of the market this season,” predicting that “we will be hard run for cash for the next years business and would advise that we had better curtail our business next season.”<sup>88</sup> In New Orleans they forecasted that “as from the present prospects we will be compelled to sell less, I do not believe that brisk sales could be made for cash at even six hundred dollars, I never have experienced such times in my life,” and advised Ballard “you had better sell all you have on hand and try to pay or put off all your debts.”<sup>89</sup> James Franklin continuously complained that “we cannot receive one dollar in cash for negroes,” and told Ballard that “if you and Armfield has shipped my negroes on the Uncas and Tribune,” he would not be able to see Ballard this summer in Virginia since he “must stay with the negroes [in Natchez],” left unsold. Not willing to accept any further shipments for the season, he reminded that he “cannot sell them all, do not ship a negroe after the Tribune sales.”<sup>90</sup>

Financial institutions were largely blamed when crises of such nature occurred. According to Franklin, “the banks are doing nothing, I tried every bank in the city [New Orleans] for a check on the north, none will check at any rate not even for five hundred dollars and Armfield writes that sixty day bill is no more than 1 blank paper as none of the banks in your quarter will discount them.” This indicates that Franklin was not able to remit the money to

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<sup>87</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 25 December 1833, folder 12, Ballard Papers.

<sup>88</sup> Isaac Franklin to R.C. Ballard & Co., 11 January 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

<sup>89</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 6 February 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

<sup>90</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 2 February 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

the East, and even if they had been able to get a paper due in sixty days, they could not even get a portion of it liquidated since the banks had suspended specie payments for certain paper, and would only extend existing credit.<sup>91</sup>

By March of the following year, they were “selling a few [slaves] but at reduced prices for paper,” in Natchez, but James Franklin stated that “we shall not be able to do anything next season for the want of cash.” Such crises hit all the traders equally in the area; traders such as Russell and Jeffries were also selling slowly. Paper in Mississippi “cannot be discounted @18 percent, the best in this place,” and he was fearful of the quality of these papers since they were a result of an unsound credit boom in the state, concluding that “if we should wind up well this spring and not sustain my loss by paper we shall have done a fine business.” He ordered Ballard not to purchase any more without notice.<sup>92</sup>

In New Orleans, large factors such as Wright & Co., C. Dart & Co., and Wilkinson McNeil & Co., were all affected by the lack of commercial confidence in the area, although the drawers of the bills were for the most part good-standing planters. Slave sales continued to be dull and were not made in cash, and good acceptances were hard to get; and “the traders will be all laied out this season . . . have no money to purchase with and the price will be very low in your market.”<sup>93</sup> Since papers could not be cashed in at the banks, Isaac Franklin was afraid he would be forced to cash in to “shavers,” which he had been avoiding as much as possible. Shavers, as we saw in the previous chapter, were bill brokers, or moneylenders who charged high interest rates and illegally bought notes or bills at huge discounts. He saw that obtaining cash by normal transaction with banks was “out of the question,” and he had no time to “attend to sales for arranging to take up our bills, I have so far kept out of the hands of the

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<sup>91</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 6 February 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

<sup>92</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 7 March 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

<sup>93</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 10 March 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

shavers but do not know how soon I will be compelled to put some of our paper in market.” So far, he was almost the only “man in New Orleans that has sustained their credit without being shaved, the merchants are all pressed to death,” and he would be forced to “make renew engagements.” Planters needed to buy more negroes, but making the money arrangements at times of lack of specie was so difficult that it prevented them from further purchase. But at any given time despite the difficulty in channeling funding, Franklin was determined to keep the credit of Ballard sustained. He reminded him to “be sure to sustain your credit at any sacrifice,” to continue the operation without hurting the concern’s reputation in their credit ability.<sup>94</sup>

Despite such tight money matters in the West, Ballard was not adequately obeying Franklin’s advices and kept purchasing slaves in Virginia. Franklin complained that Ballard had been “frequently advised that no paper could be discounted unless at a sacrifice and he [Ballard] was advised a long time since that sale of slave could not be made for cash and it would be better to hold off and purchase sparingly, that it would be imbarressed in our money matter.” Ballard, who was aware of hard sales, but still continued to purchase because “he could get lots of money from the banks [in Virginia] and could put the payments of [them] at pleasure,” which was a very inconvenient situation for those in the West. This again, indicates that the banks in Richmond and Fredericksburg area were sound and functioning, compared to the banks in the West. Ballard had “conducted to continue to purchasing at prices that was not justifiable or profitable.” Meanwhile, during the same time, there were signs of diseases spreading among slaves, adding further confusion to the crisis, which Ballard also neglected the instructions about. It appears that from time to time Ballard, despite his contribution to the firm with his large purchases, would take actions without much

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<sup>94</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 10 March 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers. Franklin said that he had already taken up for Ballard \$130,000 of bills and he holds \$400,000 bills receivable, “only a small amt of which are within bank line.”

consideration of situations in other areas and other concerns in the Franklin & Armfield network. On the other hand, Franklin, as the chief of the firm, always sustained a watchful eye on the overall operation. He made sure all of the concerns were conducting under safe credit, and that they would not take measures that are not consistent with the benefit of the entire business. He was able to maintain his balance between his selling activities in the East and his managing of the large empire.<sup>95</sup>

Later that month after the clash between Franklin and Ballard had been resolved, Franklin was still struggling to collect the money needed to send to Ballard. He wrote “I am not able to say when I can remit you any money for I am still hard pressed to meet the bills already accepted,” and told Ballard that if the banks in Richmond were functioning, he could “borrow...with the prestige of taking up the rates at four months by bills on me you can go on to purchase sparingly at a dull price, this is the only way we will be able to do business the next season.” But hoping this cash-shortage situation had hit bottom, he was “not so desperate as I once had anticipated we will make some money under all our bad luck provide the times would change a little,” which shows Franklin’s confidence that traders who were still suffering from the crisis did not share. Franklin had developed such a good network and was so confident in his business management that he “can get money when no other traders can obtain a dollar.”<sup>96</sup>

While Franklin endeavored to maintain the credit of members of the concern, for Ballard and Alsop, he “had faith in you and old Sam Alsop to sustain yourselves,” and then stated that he would still “accept and pay any amt at least so much as you owe” that he can pay at the bank. With the assistance of Ballard earlier, Armfield was able to meet all the demands against him punctually, but overall this became a tough season to raise profits; Franklin

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<sup>95</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 18 March 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

<sup>96</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 30 March 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

admitted that “we have received little money from this years sales nearly all the money has been raised from Franklin & Armfield old debt, you will think it strange when I say to you that this has not been near as much cash received from the sales of RCB &Co.” and promised to pay even from his personal funds, to keep any member out of debt.<sup>97</sup>

Since Franklin had to depend on the past savings of Franklin & Armfield to furnish funds to the concerns, the profits of Franklin, Ballard & Co. and Franklin & Armfield ended up unbalanced. He “received very little money from sales this season and the most that had been paid out and remitted was raised from Franklin & Armfield last year and the year before last.” In April, Franklin had \$16,000 to remit to Ballard for that year, which led him to write that: “Franklin, Ballard & Co will have lotts of paper and Franklin, Armfield & Co. [Franklin & Armfield] will not have a dollar out of this years sales.” Exasperated, Franklin went on: “I never experienced such distressing times in the whole course of my life.” He thought there was “no chance for business next season unless times changed and your banks will assist us.” While he did complain that the concerns could have been more prudent and made their purchases sparingly, he asserted that they had “done for the best, yet if we ever collect we have made in handsome profit, the land pirates are coming down to sell these paper and they find that when they take up the discount they will not have cost for them negroes.” “Land pirate” was a label used by Franklin for bill brokers, or merchants in general. He instructed Ballard to “borrow money from the banks for 60 to 90 days with an understanding that you pay the notes by bill on my [account] at 4 or 6 months purchase sparingly at the low price for should the money market become easy the price will raise so soon as those pirates gets back.” Franklin saw that when the bill brokers come to collect their interests, slave prices would fall, but once they leave, prices would rise again, so he instructed Ballard to act

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

accordingly with that information in mind.<sup>98</sup>

Meanwhile, James Franklin was in Natchez still struggling to sell. He stated that he had sold some but “cannot get any cash,” and decided it “better to sell for paper as cash could not be had, some of traders here, been here for 3 or 4 months and have not ...sold out, they tries to sell for cash and refused paper and are willing at present to take paper at at least a decline in price of 15 percent from what they might have sold for in the winter.” This indicates the strategic misjudgment by other traders who waited long to see if they could obtain cash sales, but unfortunately matters did not change and prices in winter were even higher. At this time the best paper could be discounted at 30 percent at Natchez, but James Franklin came to a similar conclusion as Isaac Franklin, saying “I am afraid we should all have to stop this season for the want of cash to purchase unless you and Armfield can make some arrangement to [make] funds for a short time and have it understood you are to pay by a bill on us.” He complained that “we have had much stock this season, they should not have been purchased and I am confident our number to sell every year is too large for if we had 2/3 the number we could sell to the satisfaction of all concerned and what is better than all could hold on and sell for cash, which is the business I intend to do next season if we can possibly do any.” Emphasizing the unfavorable situation in the West, he told Ballard, “you have not the least idea the amount of paper received this season and the lowest amount of cash paid for negroes, those bund sales in this state last fall used up all the funds the banks could bound, yet at 6,9, and 12 months.” In such a dire situation, they confessed they still did everything they could to save the credit of the concerns.<sup>99</sup>

Nearing the end of the season, Isaac Franklin swore to Ballard that he would “indeavor to make you some remittances before I leave [for Tennessee] if you can keep upp your bank

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<sup>98</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 April 1834, folder 14, Ballard Papers.

<sup>99</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 16 April 1834, folder 14, Ballard Papers.

debt until they will discount bills on us I will be able to meet large amounts from November to January.” Owing to the disastrous season, Franklin saw that there would not be “much money in the purchasing market this season the greater part of the traders are hung up with paper that cannot be made available.” If money could be raised, Franklin recommended early purchases, but admitted he had been dissatisfied with the way he had been compelled to do business.<sup>100</sup>

Financial matters occupied a large part of their correspondence since such matters were at the heart of their joint venture. Although there were difficulties in continuously channeling the funds, records show that Franklin gave his best effort to maintain the steady flow of credit, and to arranged strategies to continue the business that would be beneficial to all concerns. Despite various disputes over finance, in the end, Ballard was able to benefit from such arrangements.

### **Avoiding Risks and Securing the Slaves**

Avoiding financial risk became a required skill for all businessmen and speculators no matter what their specialization. In the business of slave trading, there were additional risks that emerged from the peculiarity of dealing with slaves as commodities. One difference in particular stood out: the difficulty of securing the slaves on route since they were commodified human beings and deported against their will over long distances. Their security required specific methods, and Franklin & Armfield was able to overcome the challenges they faced for trading in such large volume.

As with other trades, slaves had to be transported to their ultimate destinations, and similarly, they had to be insured, for safe transit. An example from the previous chapter

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<sup>100</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 13 May 1834, folder 14, Ballard Papers.



illustrated how trader William Finney and Philip Thomas of Virginia made sure to insure their slaves before they sent them overland. The average size of an overland coffle, might fall between 50 and 100, but could go up to 300, according to some eye-witness accounts. For smaller coffles, one trader was sufficient for overseeing trips to the West. But even for larger coffles, there were often only a few white overseers to accompany them, which increased the risk of slaves rebelling against the overseer or running away on route. On board a ship to the West, for Franklin & Armfield, the average number of slaves per ship might be around 100, and the crew was very small with only one captain. In such cases, there was always a risk of mutiny or rebellion while transporting their slaves either by land or by sea.<sup>101</sup>

Cases of mutiny or slave revolt onboard a brig were witnessed once the coastwise route became a common method of delivery. Austin Woolfolk's slaves on board the *Decatur*, from Baltimore to New Orleans, rebelled against the captain and planned to head for Haiti, although unsuccessful. The case of the Brig *Creole* is another example of rebellion on the sea. The *Creole* was heading to New Orleans from the Chesapeake in 1840, and on route landed in Nassau, on the island of New Providence, a British territory in the Caribbean. The Brig *Lafayette*, although not Franklin & Armfield's, had a heavy routine between Norfolk and New Orleans, sending many of the firm's slaves in their formative years. In 1829, there was one rebel incident on the *Lafayette*, although it was unsuccessful.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> For example, Philip Thomas to Finney, 24 January 1859, Finney Papers. Ballard's overland coffles were less than 100. The average size of Franklin & Armfield's brig shipments was calculated from the earlier table, amounting to 98.8, excluding *Ariel*, which only shipped one of Franklin's slaves but sent more in total. It should be reminded that some of those numbers may not be the number of total slaves on board, which includes slaves that did not belong to Franklin & Armfield.

<sup>102</sup> Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 52. On the consequences of the incident of *Decatur*, see Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 46-7. Phillip Troutman explains in detail about the experience of the Creole rebels. According to Troutman, many of the slaves that revolted in Creole and other brigs had once been confined in Robert Lumpkin's jail, one of the largest of its kind in Richmond. These slaves acquired information of past incidents and were keen to develop "geographical literacy" and "geopolitical literacy," to take action onboard. See Phillip Troutman, "Grapevine in the Slave Market," in Johnson ed., *The Chattel Principle*, 203-233.

The brig *Comet* was said to have belonged to the firm of Franklin & Armfield and Isaac Staples was its captain. It sailed from Alexandria in January 1831, with 164 slaves on board, among whom 76 belonged to the firm of Franklin & Armfield. It was reported that the ship was cast away in Abaco, Bahamas, where the ship wrecked and reached Nassau. The British parliament had banned the slave trade in the first decade of the century, so the colonial governor decided to free all the slaves that landed on the island. Fortunately, Franklin had insured 40 of his slaves for \$22,275 with the Mississippi Marine and Fire Insurance Company of New Orleans, and 36 had been insured for \$15,280 with the Louisiana State Insurance Company also of New Orleans, and he was paid the full amount of the policies.<sup>103</sup>

Another major challenge that struck slave traders was the common outbreak of diseases among their slaves. This was certainly the case for Franklin & Armfield's slaves, and the principals referred to this problem in their letters frequently. Some of the common outbreaks of epidemics during their trading years were cholera and yellow fever, both of which had deadly consequences.

One of the earliest signs of an illness among the slaves came in April 1832 from Natchez. James Franklin mentioned that "owing to the measles and having our negroes crowded in the Brig we have had a great many sick," although fortunately they only lost one slave from this outbreak.<sup>104</sup> The next season starting later that year, James Franklin wrote again on a different disease in the district. Apparently, "the cholera has recently subsided as they have

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<sup>103</sup> Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 40-1. A typical insurance policy would provide a value of the slaves, for example \$40,000 for 100 slaves, and the premium would amount to 1.25 percent or more. See Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 197. The British Emancipation Act was not official until 1834, but the trade itself was banned in British territories and the British government pushed the movement to ban the trade and encouraged emancipation for other imperial colonies from the 1820s. The issue will be discussed in detail in the epilogue. For interpretations on British antislavery movement and its impact on the Atlantic world, see Thomas Bender ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Also see Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>104</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 29 April 1832, folder 6, Ballard Papers.

only a few cases in New Orleans at present, I have no fear about the negroes we have in this place but entertain great fear about those shipped,” which could mean the slaves that were shipped from New Orleans to Natchez, or the ones shipped from Alexandria to New Orleans. The following month, Ballard, after receiving the notice from James Franklin, reminded Isaac Franklin to be careful, to be sure to “guard against the disease and if it please god that the negroes should get it I hope you will be careful of yourself.” He continued that “we had better loose all [slaves] and begin again than loose ourselves,” but intended to follow the instructions from Franklin, that he “agree with you in shipping sooner than there was need for it and advised differently on the grounds that you would not want a recruit so soon, but I am at all times disposed to do as advised by my friends concerned, though before you receive this the die will be cast.” Although initially Isaac Franklin advised Ballard to sell what he had on hand or do as he thought best, his final opinion was, with the cholera outbreak, Ballard should “best hold on. The more negroes lost in that country the more will be wanting if they have the means of procuring them.” Even at such times, Isaac Franklin was thinking how demand would be affected by this outbreak.<sup>105</sup>

A few days later, Isaac Franklin was in Natchez and encountered the “Asiattick cholera... [which] killed a first rate man,” although he added that the place was now freer from the disease than any place in the whole country. Panic remained in the area for a while, and people were afraid of purchasing a sick slave, and Isaac reported that “some of the planters have suffered eminently,” and the people were “so much alarmed that they would not purchase.” The Franklins, in the past two weeks have “buried, since the negroes left Alexandria 9 negroes and 6 or 7 children and we have 7 or 8 negroes sick,” adding “it has been the most trying times that ever sailed in my high seas.” This outbreak greatly impacted

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<sup>105</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 23 November 1832, folder 8; R.C. Ballard to Isaac Franklin, 2 December 1832, folder 8, Ballard Papers.

their profits, since Franklin commented that “as the cholera had driven all the purchases out of the market and that our concerns was so hard run for money.”<sup>106</sup>

In fact, reports indicate that this cholera attack led Isaac Franklin to a heinous, remorseless act. Among the slaves that died from cholera on route to Natchez from New Orleans, Franklin decided to dispose of some of them in the swamps, hoping the bodies would not resurface. Since so many slaves were killed from the disease during the season, Franklin feared that if citizens noticed frequent burials taking place in the public cemetery in Natchez, it would hurt his business and reputation there. Apparently, this act had consequences. When the dead bodies were found, citizens, members of the city council and other slave traders together agreed to ban slave traders from the center of the city. The incident shows the extent to which Franklin and others would go in order to make profits and save their reputations. But even the movement to ban slave traders from the center of the city, which was triggered by this incident, was mainly to prevent sick slaves from entering the heavily populated area. The trade itself went on, without grief or sorrow over the slaves who had died and had been thrown into the swamps. Losing slaves during the process of this business was not unusual, and losses of slaves meant no more than losses of potential profit for traders.<sup>107</sup>

In the 1832-1833 season disease outbreak continued among Franklin & Armfield’s slaves,

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<sup>106</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 8 December 1832, folder 8, Ballard Papers. “Asiatic cholera” had the capacity to kill the infected, often on the same day. It spread as an epidemic in the United States in 1832, which was part of a worldwide epidemic originating in Europe. The disease entered from New York, and did not reach the South until August and September of 1832, but the South was severely hit in 1833 after the disease remained dormant over the winter. Cholera reentered the United States from Cuba in 1833, entering from leading ports of New Orleans and Charleston. The expanding transportation system (steamboats, canals, and railroads) all perpetuated the spread of the disease, and New Orleans was the hardest hit, with 5000 dead with cholera and another 5000 dead with yellow fever. In the first half of the nineteenth century, cholera’s true cause was unknown and there was no effective way of treatment. See George C. Kohn, *Encyclopedia of Plague and Pestilence* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 336-7. Great Britain and India also struggled with the epidemic, see Sheldon Watts, *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power and Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), chap. 5.

<sup>107</sup> Ballard Papers, folder ; Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 94-5.

and near the end of the season in April, James Franklin reported that the slaves “have been very sickly so much so the city council compels us all to have the limits of the cooperation in two days.” A few months later on June 11, 1833, Isaac Franklin in Natchez stated that one of Alsop’s slaves had cholera and had died, and this epidemic had attacked the area so hard that a “good many of the planters has suffered severely with cholera some have been so unfortunate as to loose half and some 2/3 of there whole stock.”<sup>108</sup> Earlier in May, the situation was already reportedly “dreadful,” and among their slaves they had “4 or 5 [slaves] down at present and it takes all the well negroes to attend to the sick.” Since this was near the end of the season, James Franklin told Ballard about the idea Isaac Franklin had suggested; “Uncle Isaac talks of sending the negroes in country and leaving some new to take care of them though I am in hopes all the fools are not yet dead, and some one-eyed man will buy us out yet.” This shows that they may have planned to send the sick negroes away from the market and tend for them there during the off season, so that the disease would not spread in the market, while also hoping that some potential buyers would come before the season ends.<sup>109</sup>

It is not clear to how they were able to sell out these sickly negroes that season, but recovery afterwards was difficult and the same problems continued during the new season that began later that year. Disease-infected slaves obviously would not attract purchasers in the market, and in November 1833, Franklin arrived in Natchez with lots that had “four or five case of cholera,” and “have lost two of cholera one of yours Jack Perrin and one of ours and have some 3 or 4 cases at present and several complaining, have not sold any and I am afraid we shall not unless at reduced price.” Despite the disease Franklin continued to sell,

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<sup>108</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 24 April 1833, folder 11; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 11 June 1833, folder 11, Ballard Papers.

<sup>109</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 7 May 1833, folder 11, Ballard Papers. On the metaphor of “one-eyed man”, see Baptist, “‘Cuffy’, ‘Fancy Maids,’ and ‘One-Eyed Men’.”

probably concealing the possibility of the disease, and reported that by December 13, 1833 he had sold about 100 negroes, although these sales may have been made at a lowered price. James Franklin saw the number of infected rise, “have about 15 down ... which are sick with the ... cholera, which I am afraid will take off all our profits,” and convinced Ballard that the only way to make a profit was for Ballard to “reduce the prices in Virginia so we can make something.”<sup>110</sup> Isaac Franklin, on Christmas that year reported that he had lost three prime men from cholera, but still “notwithstanding all the bad luck I sold more negroes than all the traders together,” while admitting he still had some that were sick. Although the sickness continued into the new year, as late as March Franklin lost “4 negroes in less that forty eight hours but thank god they are all with a very few acceptances.”<sup>111</sup> These episodes further demonstrates the marketing ability of the Franklins, and how determined they were to make a profit even at times of such severe, enduring crisis.

Vaccination of the slaves was one way to avoid diseases, no matter how limited their effectiveness was at this time. Not enough supplies were available, according to James Franklin, that “there are several cases in town and the citizens say it came from our negroes, and what is worse they all cannot obtain any vaccine.” Citizens and fellow traders often sought to pin the blame for initiating and spreading disease on certain slaves and traders as can be seen in Franklin’s handling of the cholera deaths of his slaves in the winter of 1832.<sup>112</sup> Apparently Ballard did not take the advice to vaccinate seriously, which upset the Franklins. Ballard kept buying at regular prices which caused huge financial losses. According to Franklin, “notwithstanding he [Ballard] had been advised that we were suffering great losses

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<sup>110</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 14 November 1833, folder 12; James Franklin to Ballard, 13 December 1833, folder 12, Ballard Papers.

<sup>111</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 25 December 1833, folder 12; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 30 March 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

<sup>112</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 2 February 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

from cholera, small pox and notwithstanding he [Ballard] had been advised of the risque of small pox and the necessity of vaccination it was intirely neglected until late in the season after we had lost five or six of thousand dollars worth of and the last shipment has arrived without more than half of the negroes being vaccinated.” Franklin wanted the slaves to be vaccinated before departure, since vaccines were not easily obtained in the West where planters and traders were already rushing to get them for themselves. Franklin also did not want to be blamed for spreading the disease in the market, which could hurt his reputation further. Vaccination before departure would lessen the risk of being contracted while on board or on route to the West.<sup>113</sup> If slaves become sick on board a ship, the captain of the ship was responsible for informing the owners. For example, Isaac mentioned that the “Brig Uncas has just came up two negroes sick and the Captain reports the rest in good order,” although they would be “compelled to sell for a less [price].”<sup>114</sup> Near the end of the 1833-34 season Isaac reminded Ballard for the next season to “be sure never to ship a negroe that has not been vaccinated or purchase one that will not sell readily for cash the unsalable and diseased negroes are always in the way here.”<sup>115</sup>

A fellow trader of Ballard’s in Richmond, Bacon Tait, who established a partnership firm Tait & Boudar with New Orleans trader Thomas Boudar, was Ballard’s frequent correspondent. Tait was an influential figure in the Richmond trading community, who

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<sup>113</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 18 March 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers. Cholera was transmitted by polluted water, by flies, unwashed hands and bodies, uncooked food, which means more than 10 days onboard can be a deadly journey in case of an outbreak. See Kohn, *Encyclopedia*, 336-7. For mortality rates and epidemiological research on the middle passage, see Herbert S. Klein, “Economic Aspects of the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Slave Trade,” in *The Rise of the Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 287-310; Philip D. Curtin, “Epidemiology of Migration,” in *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives*, ed. David Eltis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94-116.

<sup>114</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 6 February 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

<sup>115</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 13 May 1834, folder 14, Ballard Papers.

sought public council office in his later years while heavily involved in the trade, building a slave pen in the Locust Alley area in the slave trading center of the city. Tait & Boudar depended on Ballard's network, and later especially Ballard, Franklin & Co., to send their slaves.<sup>116</sup> Tait asked Ballard for advice when a diseased slave was found in his lot. The negro was bought by the firm Overly & Sanders of Virginia, who found noticeable marks upon the slave's body, arm and face which was "precisely like the measles." He had no cough, no headaches or sore throat, and he was not at all sick before he was purchased, and the day after they found the marks on his body, "the eruption had entirely disappeared." The said negro did not know for himself whether he ever had the measles, nor recollect that he was at a place where he could contract it. Overly, the purchaser, vigorously claimed that the negro had no chance to catch the measles while he had him, there had not been anything like the measles for months, and had not been any sort of sickness around the jail where these slaves stayed. Tait had "but five of our negroes which have not had the measles and I desire you to say to me if I shall or shall not send these five who have not had it with the others when they start by land." Although it is not clear what advice Ballard provided to Tait, with the lessons of the incidents he heard from Franklin in the West, he must have advised him not to send those who had not contracted the measles, because if they did contract the disease on the way, they would not be salable in the West. It is likely that as Franklin had advised Ballard earlier, Ballard advised Tait to sell them in Virginia.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Tait & Boudar relied on Franklin & Armfield's shipping capabilities, and were often funded by Ballard for slave purchases. On a letter on September 28, 1836, Tait wrote to Ballard, Franklin & Co., "the negroes were taken to Norfolk on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Tribune did not arrive at Norfolk until the 24<sup>th</sup>." He enclosed a list of 27 slaves invoice with name, age, height, color, cost and remarks for each. See Tait, Boudar & Co to Ballard Franklin & Co., 28 September 1836, folder 18, Ballard Papers.

<sup>117</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 2 August 1834, folder 18, Ballard Papers. Sanders, of Overly & Sanders was an associate of Franklin & Armfield, which implies that the firm Overly & Sanders probably had a partnership agreement with Franklin & Armfield, similar to what they made with Ballard & Alsop. As a partner, they would have sent their coastwise shipping slaves from Alexandria.



Finally, the stiff competition among traders in the markets could be harmful, and building a good reputation and good business relationships were both important to succeed in an impersonal world. The formation of partnerships would usually help traders enhance their businesses, but since market barriers were quite low, constantly increasing the number of traders in the market, inevitably there would be conflicts, bankruptcies, and takeovers. Earlier we saw the case of a takeover of Austin Woolfolk's business in Baltimore by Franklin & Armfield. To survive in the business, traders or firms often hid their valuable information from others they did not trust.<sup>118</sup> One such case involved the firm of trader "Jefferies," who appeared to have been active in the Natchez market, as James mentioned them from time to time. When sales were suffering, he mentioned "Jefferies are about one mile from town with there negroes have done but little I am very much pleasure with this, we are very friendly," although they must have been competing against each other.<sup>119</sup>

In spring 1834, Franklin often mentioned one of Ballard's acquaintances, trader Lewis Collier, whose reputation was not well accepted in the Natchez area. As we have seen from the Dun reports earlier, some slave traders often were not viewed favorably, although Collier was trading at a large scale. Isaac Franklin noted that he "assisted in skinning your friend Collier," who had some good paper amounting up to \$12,000, from reliable merchants such as Hoopes, Moore, and B. Hughes Walker of Natchez, endorsed by P.M. Lasrer and accepted by Minor and Eli Montgomery, whom the Franklins also dealt with. Franklin said he had been called on from a merchant regarding information about Collier's paper, and he reported that Collier had a payment to make the next day, so he should force Collier to endorse the whole of the paper and discount thirty percent. The merchant followed Franklin's directions and got the thirty percent discount. Franklin saw that "he is making discount efforts to form

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<sup>118</sup> Jonathan B. Pritchett, "The Interregional Slave Trade and the Selection of Slaves for the New Orleans Market," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28 (summer 1997): 57-85.

<sup>119</sup> James Franklin to Ballard, 2 February 1834, folder 13, Ballard Papers.

several concerns with other traders.” From Franklin’s judgment, “he will have use for all the funds that he can possibly raise here to pay his bills and in order to meet his bills there he has borrowed from several of the traders and given bills on Richmond,” and “should that be the case unless he has very strong bankers he must make a loosing.” As for the impression of Collier, Franklin said “he looks as much like a thief as any man I have ever seen in my life,” which seemed to resonate with the reputation of him around Natchez, “every man I am told had on with him as ... trading with a thief and the way they will sue him.” His reputation was such that Collier could not get reliable information from other traders, much less form partnerships with others.<sup>120</sup>

The following month, when money in the market was tight and traders were all “hung up with paper that cannot be made available,” he reported that Collier “will not be much in your way this season.” Collier, although he had been struggling after being avoided by Franklin and other traders, came back to New Orleans, and Franklin said “Thief Collier is here I think I have shown here a hard fall, he has been trying to get some person to introduce him to me but I have declined that honour,” and also wished “to have a reconsideration,” and “to make an arrangement with our house, a consideration of business,” which Franklin had no intention to answer.<sup>121</sup> The fate of Collier is unknown, but without support from partners and financial institutions, it was likely that he did not have much success in the area. Franklin, Armfield and Ballard, despite their disagreements, developed a strong bond as business partners, which also indicates how severe competition among traders could get in the market.

Franklin & Armfield officially dissolved in 1835. Their headquarters in Alexandria was purchased by their associate, George Kephart, and he bought the brig *Isaac Franklin* as well.

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<sup>120</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 April 1834, folder 14, Ballard Papers. Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 32.

<sup>121</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 13 May 1834, folder 14; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 17 April 1835, folder 17, Ballard Papers.

The brigs *Tribune* and *Uncas* were bought by another successful slave trader in the Washington area, William H. Williams. Isaac Franklin semi-retired, and focused on the running of his plantations in Tennessee and Louisiana. Franklin had accumulated enough wealth from the trade and some contemporaries considered him a millionaire, which was probably accurate. After Franklin stepped down from the commanding position, the main operation was handed over to Ballard, Franklin & Co, which was mainly run by Ballard and James Franklin. Ballard, who started out as a trader in Richmond had now risen to take control of the firm that ran business in the East and the West. Although he could have stayed in Richmond and continued the role he had as R.C. Ballard & Co., he decided to move on to the West to join forces with James Franklin. With Armfield in Alexandria, and Alsop, Tait, Blakey, and others who had already joined the network of partners or agents in Virginia, it was possible for Ballard to leave Richmond and control the trade from the West.

### **To Become a Planter**

Ballard moved out of Virginia to relocate in the West in the fall of 1836. Prior to the move there were several letters that suggest he had already determined to move and start a plantation in the West. Several letters included advertisements regarding a plantation in the area for him to move onto. As early as November 1832, a minor agent of Franklin & Armfield's, William Hewes of Warrenton, Mississippi wrote to Ballard enclosing a sugar plantation advertisement, and noted that one of the neighbors, W. Thibodaux "feels confident you ... be pleased with the place and that he would like very much to have you for a neighbor." Additionally, the letter told that the terms will be arranged any way to suit Ballard's wishes in times of purchase.<sup>122</sup> In December 1832, slave trader C.M. Rutherford,

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<sup>122</sup> William Hewes to Ballard, 27 November 1832, folder 8, Ballard Papers. The advertisement explained

although not a partner but a man who later worked extremely close with Ballard, wrote from Warrenton that “John McDonell said to me yesterday he had a great bargain on hand for you in a plantation in Laferche,” which is the above mentioned sugar plantation near the Bayou Lafourche.<sup>123</sup>

With Isaac Franklin moving out of the front scene of the trade, the firm Franklin, Ballard & Co. slowed its pace. A note from Franklin before Ballard relocated indicates that he has rented his place in Natchez to Silas Lillard, another extensive slave trader for \$2,000 a year, and that he had “mentioned to Armfield to stop purchasing,” and told Ballard to “write to Tait not to draw on us for any more without orders.”<sup>124</sup>

Since Armfield remained in Alexandria and other concerns remained in their vicinities as well, there were no major obstacles impeding Ballard from moving to the West. The move appeared as if Ballard was replacing Isaac Franklin’s position in the West, and looking over the entire operation, but Ballard never achieved or probably never desired such an end. Most likely, Ballard aimed to emulate the “planter” Isaac Franklin rather than succeed him in the slave trading business. Franklin’s wealth from his plantation income allowed him to withdraw from involvement in the business, and he was one of the wealthiest men in the South. It became clear once Ballard moved out of Virginia, that his goal was to become a

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that the place was a sugar plantation situated in the parish of Terrebonne, with 4,014 acres of land, of which about 800 to 1000 acres are cleared. The place has a “dwelling house, sugar house and steam engine, negro cabins & c & c, all the buildings in brick.” The Opelousas and Great Western Railroad will be within 5 miles of the place, which will be convenient to get to New Orleans, both by land and water, and is “well suited to a planter who desires to employ a large force.”

<sup>123</sup> C.M. Rutherford to Ballard, 27 December 1832, folder 9, Ballard Papers. C.M. Rutherford was a slave dealer appeared to be based in Louisville, Kentucky, and had close ties with Ballard from early on. He would eventually act like a slave trading agent for Ballard after 1836, which will be discussed in the final chapter. In the same letter, Rutherford talked about a female slave, which Ballard had talked about with New Orleans factor Nalle & Cox, about selling her, in which Rutherford wrote, “send the woman down by the [steamship] Princess, I can sell her in Mobile or have it done.”

<sup>124</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 14 October 1836, folder 18, Ballard Papers.

successful planter like Franklin.

We previously saw that large planters “did not lose caste” even if they engaged in slave trading, and they were regarded as higher class citizens, with respect from the society. Isaac Franklin was a wealthy planter, well-connected with respected people and officials in both Louisiana and Tennessee. Armfield had a good relation with the public and was often praised, although rather ironically, for his hospitable attitude toward the slaves he traded. On the other hand, increasingly with the rise of abolitionist movement in the 1830s, professional slave traders found themselves not being able to totally free themselves from the often despised, immoral portrayal of traders who were not considered “gentlemen,” no matter how much they tried. The Franklins suffered some reputation damage with the outbreak of cholera among their slaves, and despite the volume of their trade and the wealth they were acquiring, the trade required much patience and endurance, being unpredictable in nature. The implicit instability of it often resulted in hard times. As many small independent traders entered and left the trade at a high turnaround rate, Isaac Franklin had also made enough money from the trade to leave the business behind to his successors. Ballard had also acquired enough wealth from the business, and could move on to achieve what his ultimate goal was from the beginning- planter status.

Exodus from the East had a particular meaning and connotations for those moving out of Virginia. Virginia was the “Old Dominion,” the land of the founding fathers, but was also the origin of the domestic slave trade that flooded the South by sending out its slaves. From the colonial period, Virginians had been migrating to the West, and slaves were destined to be relocated to the region as well. It is not surprising that it was in the Virginians’ blood to seek for land, as their ancestors had done for decades and centuries. The idea of the West and migration gained complexity in the minds of Virginians in the nineteenth century. Elements such as their view of the frontier, the dichotomy between kinship and individualism, the

meaning and the economy of slave ownership and land ownership come to mind in this regard. Ballard's moving to the West in 1836 represented many of those elements as does perhaps more than anything else, his move to become a planter from a slave trader.

In the next chapter we will analyze the broad meaning and personal motivations behind migration and becoming a planter, and how political and economic surroundings affected the migrant's decisions. The changes that followed Ballard's migration, and how he handled the transition while maintaining the network he created, will be explored. Ballard's case should reveal how he demonstrated his management skills as a planter in the West, while maintaining his former ties as a slave trader and skills he obtained during his Virginia years.

## **Chapter 4**

### **From a Trader to a Planter:**

#### **Transition, the West and the Turmoil, 1836-1840**

In the previous chapter we saw that Rice C. Ballard of Richmond had benefited from joining forces with the expanded slave trading network of Franklin & Armfield in the early 1830s, and decided to move to the West with his fortune. Ballard may not have been the typical slave trader in Virginia since he was far more blessed than others by the partnership. As a trader he had a distinguished career, and as a Virginian, he joined countless others on their journey to the West, in their desire to enter a new stage of their lives. Ballard's migration can be interpreted as a strategic decision to the semi-retirement of Isaac Franklin, with Ballard taking up Franklin's position. The opportunity was more appealing since it was possible for Ballard to pursue a career of a successful planter like Franklin, which was the ultimate marker of upward mobility and of achieving higher, elitist class in the South. The timing seemed perfect: mid-1830s being the flush times of land speculation in the West, and the wiser choice was to invest in the fertile cotton lands than in the already depleted soil in the East. In addition to these circumstances, one might speculate that Ballard, as well as other slave traders in general, were not content with the never ending, unstable nature of the trading business, which left them barely afloat. Moreover, because most of them did not own any real estate or valuable property, they were often forced to remain speculators for life. Ballard and his network associates were rather the exception, being able to succeed and profit in this business, and most traders were not as fortunate. It did not help that their occupation

never totally gained respect in the southern society, particularly at a time when northern abolitionists were increasingly targeting the trading business. But despite the attacks and the unstable profitability, most professional, dedicated traders knew that their business was at the core of the southern economy, and that their profession was essential for the southern way of life.

What they questioned was whether their business was worth the sacrifice; the sacrifice of their reputation, the sacrifice of their financial security, and sacrifice of leading a stable life. Perhaps Bacon Tait, an acquaintance of Ballard from Richmond, summed it up best in his letter to Ballard after he moved to the West. He told Ballard that “the truth is that [slave] labour is the actual and certain source of all wealth,” and that it was the “basis of all calculations of profits from banks, railroads, or other internal improvement stock, for without the product of labour, there would be no commerce, and without commerce, neither bank, railroad, nor any other kind of stock would be worth anything..” He continued that if you “increase banks and internal improvements you at once enhance the value of labour.” He righteously pointed out that the benefit of slave labor was not only limited in the South. “Without the produce of southern slaves,” he stated, “the northern parts of the Union would be barely able to live without adding to their wealth” and “our whole country ... nearly the whole world is blessed with peace and prosperity and with a fair prospect of its long continuance.”<sup>1</sup>

Tait looked back and thought that those who sold their slaves earlier when prices were not so high had “missed the mark,” but now, those who prospered the most were the ones who “strained every nerve to increase their number of negroes.” He stated, “you my dear Ballard, some years ago sold many of your negroes ... at \$1500, you and so did many others think that the purchaser had made bad bargains,” but now those purchasers who had bought

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<sup>1</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, undated correspondence (1830s), folder 30, Ballard Papers.



from Ballard “made much more by the traders than you [Ballard] did and I hazard the opinion that such will be the result for some time to come.” Tait’s letter indicated a change of times in the 1830s. Before, people bought their slaves in order to increase their crop production or cultivate more acreage to maximize their profits from their land. But now, Tait saw that “investments now in negroes will be more profitable than in any kind of stock, or even old field notes.” Earlier, slave traders were able to benefit from the high selling prices of slaves, and many entered the trade to generate quick profits. But now the purchasers were buying at higher prices to make a reliable form of investment. The high selling prices were not resulting in high profits for traders since the traders had to purchase at a higher price as well. Traders, being the intermediary, were bearing all the decreasing profit from the transaction. Ballard knew enough about slave-trading to see and experience this change. He would likely agree with Tait’s view on the sacrificing role of traders in the South. Ballard’s transition from a trader to a planter may have been motivated by this change; regarding slaves, it was better to purchase them as a form of investment, than being the intermediary. Ballard, perhaps with a pure economical calculation and mindset, saw that this new opportunity in the West of becoming a slaveholder, instead of a slave trader, would lead him to further wealth in the changing times.<sup>2</sup>

### **The View of the West for Virginians**

From the time the colony was founded, Virginians were always mobile. They were on the moving edge of the frontier of the British empire that crossed the Atlantic from the very beginning. Early Virginians and their leaders witnessed the successful transplanting of European culture to the colonies, and believed that the same process could be replicated

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<sup>2</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, Ibid., folder 30, Ballard Papers.

when they extended their settlements to the inlands.

The fertile Chesapeake and tidewater region had become occupied by the end of the seventeenth century, and soon the expanding population into the West became a jurisdictional, political, and cultural issue. Leaders in the tidewater anticipated that the western regions would develop similar political institutions and cultural traits that had framed their own aristocratic society, and had no doubt that they would be able to control and shape the direction of the West based on their view. From their standpoint, the West was merely a geographical expansion of a society they have cultivated on their own.<sup>3</sup>

With the rise of population heading westward, the competition for land became increasingly severe. Virginia as a colony had lost its attractiveness to foreign immigrants by the eighteenth century, and initially, it was the poorer, likely the second and third sons with no land inheritance in the tidewater region who flocked to the West. Until around the 1740s, the Piedmont region of Virginia had enough land to satisfy the needs of these new migrants at an affordable rate. These early settlers, no matter how small their first landholdings were in the Piedmont, hoped to increase their acreage and turn their farms into larger plantations. But by the 1740s, the view that the Piedmont was a place of opportunity and to create large plantations began to fade slightly. Speculative land companies began to claim the best large tracts of land in western Virginia and settlers either had to purchase additional lands at a speculative increased price or give up adding acreage and unwillingly accept the limited land they had. Despite the low possibility of becoming a large landowner in the West, the tidewater region still saw between 20 and 30 percent of its population drained to the Piedmont during the 1750s to the 1770s. This can be credited to the new opportunities

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<sup>3</sup> Russell R. Menard, "From Servants to Slaves." L. Scott Philyaw, introduction to *Virginia's Western Visions: Political and Cultural Expansion on an Early American Frontier* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004).

provided by British merchants in the Piedmont.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately for smaller farmers on the frontier in the mid-eighteenth century, their migration and beginning of their tobacco production coincided with the emergence of the Scottish merchants in the Piedmont, who focused on tobacco produced in the inlands by the smaller farmers and marketed this crop through their emerging Scottish network. The Scottish merchants, especially the Glasgow merchants as we saw earlier, established stores and staffed them with independent agents who exported their tobacco mainly to continental Europe. Along with the spread of Scottish merchants, the Piedmont region began directly to acquire their own slaves. Although most farmers owned very few slaves, the ones that did own were purchased from Bristol and later especially Liverpool merchants who bypassed the well-stocked tidewater planters and delivered slaves directly to the Piedmont.<sup>5</sup>

Such development in the Piedmont drew many migrants to the area, as it became a place where people with diverse backgrounds could settle and start a new life. The new settlers did not need the London merchant connection that most tidewater planters had, since they could rely on other routes available. Contrary to the vision that leaders in the tidewater imagined, the Piedmont region became a dynamic, diversely populated area, with a distinct cultural and social atmosphere that did not resemble the tidewater elitist society. Not only were there Anglo-Virginian residents, but the Scots-Irish, and settlers from Pennsylvania of German

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<sup>4</sup> Philyaw, *Ibid.* By the late eighteenth century, every southern state had officially abolished primogeniture, but the practice had been abandoned long before. Planters usually divided their lands with each passing generation distributing their estates among their children, where the eldest son commonly inherited the family home. Slaves, on the other hand, were usually divided equally among sons and daughters. See James Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 90.

<sup>5</sup> The increasing importance of Scottish merchants in tobacco export was emphasized in the first chapter. See for example, Jacob M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades*, Vol.1, 2 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973) and for the slave trade, see David Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'," *Slavery and Abolition* 26 (April 2005), 35-54. The migration percentage comes from Philip Troutman, "Slave Trade and Sentiment" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 2000) 21-22, 22n3, and historians have agreed that the number would fall around that vicinity, for example, they have come up with estimations such as "20 percent" or "one thirds."

descent migrated southward to provide a unique combination of people creating a distinct culture. In a Turnerian perspective, the Piedmont region of Virginia had formed a frontier society that assimilated the differences among the diverse European backgrounds of the migrants and together formed a more “democratic” world, where decentralization of power, popular participation and individualism were more evident. In Turner’s words, the region was where “most rapid and effective Americanization” took place, and Piedmont Virginia also fit with Turner’s theory in that its residents demanded democratic voting policies in state constitutions. According to historian Rhys Isaac, the experience of Virginians was marked by a dichotomy of those in the eastern coast characterized by interlocked families, and the same families likely having members of branches who settled away in the West. While wealth and class appeared to be stratified and strictly structured in the tidewater, on the frontier, crossing over that line was easier with the new opportunities provided. There, the line may not have been as clear, or may not have appeared at all. The westward migration, then, began to represent a movement of a younger generation striving for upward mobility and a place to achieve its goals in the otherwise class-driven society.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 131, 222; Kenneth E. Koons and Warren R. Hofstra ed. introduction to *After the Backcountry: Rural Life in the Great Valley of Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000); Rhys Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (New York: Norton, 1988), 116. The settlers in the West were also quick to adopt wheat and flour production for the market, and by the 1760s flour had become one of their chief income-generating crop. Wheat production became the main catalyst for the growth of urban centers and commercial linkages in western Virginia. On Turner thesis, see Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893*, 199-227. According to Fischer and Kelly, the Turnerian perspective does not apply to first century Virginians in the seventeenth century, since there was no process of democratization or emergence of individualism and capitalism, although it differed from the germ theory as well. The outcome was a new-modeled American version of an old European society, with conservative elements but that was more restless and dynamic. Also, in such cases as the French Huguenots, assimilation on the frontier was not apparent. See Fischer and Kelly, *Ibid.*, 72, 108. Turner’s thesis has been supported, criticized, and revisited repeatedly for the past century, with much effect on shaping of scholarship on western history. A brief overview of the Turner theory and its response can be found in James D. Bennett, *Frederick Jackson Turner* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975) chap. 2. An overview on the debates and historiographical traits of western history since Turner are explained in Richard White, “Western History,” in Eric Foner ed., *The New American History*, rev.ed.(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 203-230.

The new frontier life in the Piedmont was far from what the elites in the tidewater envisioned, which inevitably led to clashes at the political level. The tidewater planters desired a loyal population that remained dependent to them, and wanted to maintain their hierarchical standing at the top of social, economic and political affairs. These large planters believed that the destiny of the West and of the people who migrated there was in their hands, and they did not regard them as people who should have equal representation. But in time, the same planters with a sufficient capital and labor force began to see migration in a different light. For them, profitability of their farms had faced a significant decline, and major structural changes had to be made, which included the option of abandoning the region and investing in the flourishing West. The years of tobacco cultivation in a place where land was cheaper than labor; a place where fertilizer and “improved” cultivation methods generally were not employed, caused the quality of soil to deplete in the coastal area. By the mid-eighteenth century, infertile lands became a justification for abandoning the land altogether, even for larger planters. One emigrant from Maryland wrote from his new place in Louisiana; “in your states a planter with ten negroes with difficulty supports a family genteelly, here well managed, they would be a fortune to him. With you the season area so irregular your crops often fail, here the crops are certain.” As Avery Craven mentioned, soil depletion in the coastal area should be recognized as crucial factor in shaping not only the course of agricultural development, but the larger socio-economic order as well, including the pattern of out-migration. Craven also warned that while expansion was the only escape, when expansion became difficult, planters’ standards of living would fall, social lines would harden, and various economic, social and political conflicts would emerge, leading to social unrest.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 202-3; Avery O. Craven, *Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1606-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, vol. 13, no.1, 1926), 18-22; Winfield H. Collins, *The Domestic Slave Trade of the Southern*

Once the Piedmont region became occupied, Virginians continued to migrate further to the West and to the South. The first wave of major migration out of the colony occurred in the mid eighteenth century, and moved toward the South, especially to the Carolinas and Georgia. The settlers, in their new environment, were eager to exploit every profit-making opportunity available on the frontier. Exchange and trade on the frontier quickly spread as a necessity to survive, and waves of migrants continued the same pattern on the frontier that extended beyond colonial borders.<sup>8</sup>

While migration provided new opportunities and beginnings for those who had no valuable property in the coastal region, there were always critical voices against migration in general. Clearly, loss of population from Virginia represented loss of wealth and economic disadvantage. Early criticisms against migrants grew out of the common worldview of Virginia planters which assumed that the connection between the people and the land was essential to the creation of a stable society, often referred to as “agrarian republicanism.” Departing from the land of their ancestors and families was regarded as a rejection of the past and the values that had descended on to them for generations, and the detachment of people from land was thought to lead to social unrest.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, there was another view that had descended on for generations to Virginians: the idea of personal liberty and independence, which had roots in the republicanism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to this view, personal independence was always linked with the autonomy of property ownership. The political

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*States* (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1904), 26-7.

<sup>8</sup> On the developmental patterns of a frontier society, see the case study of Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> James David Miller, *South by Southwest: Planter Emigration and Identity in the Slave South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 13.

theory behind this thought came from the Lockean position that society should be a collection of free individuals with equal rights and the right to own private property, for the pursuit of their personal benefit.<sup>10</sup> In light of this perspective, obtaining a tract of land had a significant meaning that resonated with the foundation of the nation. In Virginia, a man could not vote or hold political office if he did not own land, and the amount and the value of land ownership determined how high one could progress in Virginia elite society, especially in politics. To own land was necessary to achieve any honor or profit.

The early migrants in search of land and respect appeared to have formed a distinct culture and society on the frontier. By the time of the Revolution, migration gained more significance in term of personal independence, or individualism. After the Revolution, those tidewater planters who were severely hit with their accumulated debt joined the journey to the West to pursue new opportunity and to pay off their debt. With the birth of the new nation, Virginians were also enthusiastic about renewing and restoring their tradition and virtue to the younger generation, and to those moving to the West.<sup>11</sup> The ideal of individualism at the core of the new nation spurred further movement of younger generation Virginians who sought to detach themselves from the past and achieve their own independence, and these men acknowledged that the pursuit of happiness and prosperity required land ownership. Joan Cashin argues that the migrants driven by the pursuit of personal independence were

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<sup>10</sup> Joan E. Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 34; Harry L. Watson, afterward to *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America*, rev.ed.(New York: Hill & Wang, 2006). Although Locke's ideas have been generally accepted that it formed the basis for the American Revolution, Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood in their works have stressed the "republican synthesis," which emphasized the common good, or the "commonwealth" tradition in England that came to America, which came to be called "republicanism." Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 1967); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969). Recently, Joyce Appleby, among others, have argued the centrality of Lockean, liberal thinking in the late eighteenth century America. See for example, Joyce O. Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Philyaw, *Virginia's Western Vision*, 30.

initially eager to break up family ties and kinship networks that developed in the East in order to realize their ambitious, commercial goals. Their focus was on their immediate, nuclear family, those who migrated with them to start their own, independent family life. This detachment from their past appeared to be particularly difficult for the women, who often depended on family ties, kinship, and neighborhood connections, and struggled to adjust to the isolating, impersonal frontier infant community. In general, by the nineteenth century, men, more than women, saw the West as a place to fulfill their personal goal and a place to embrace new values of individualism, competition and risk-taking. They saw in the West, a place where they can demonstrate their masculinity.<sup>12</sup>

But an alternative way to look at migration was that these younger migrants were imitating, rather than alienating the prevailing patterns of the tidewater elite class. One example related to marriage. As we shall see later in the case of Rice C. Ballard, many of the migrants married after they settled in the West, taking on the responsibility of running their own family. In this perspective, independence meant taking on traditional responsibilities, only at a distant place. It was not a total rejection of the traditional way of life that motivated the migrants to move, but rather the imitation of it, in a new place where the ownership of fertile lands made it possible to begin the same cycle as the previous generation. In James Miller's words, they "transplanted the very heart of plantation life" to the West.<sup>13</sup> Miller saw that it was their devotion to household, class, and community rather than individualism that

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<sup>12</sup> Joan E. Cashin, *A Family Venture*, 32-36; Fischer and Kelley, *Bound Away*, 213-222; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 312. A work on how family security and pursuing the best for the security of their children is emphasized by Daniel Vickers, which resonates with Cashin's point that while immediate family may have been at the core of their decision making, the opportunities provided by migration or market economy appealed to them as more secure for their future. Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47 (2000) 3-29. Women's reluctance toward migration can also be seen in the Cabell-Breckinridge family women. Gail S. Terry, "Sustaining the Bonds of Kinship in a Trans-Appalachian Migration, 1790-1811: The Cabell-Breckinridge Slaves Move West," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (Oct 1994), 455-476.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, *South by Southwest*, 66-7, 79.



characterized the motivations behind migration.

Ultimately, it is difficult to point out one particular reason behind westward migration, since various issues became intertwined. Miller's interpretation perhaps explains the motivations behind larger planters' sons more adequately than the smaller farmers, since those with smaller means to begin with were more mobile and detached from community connections. In areas such as the Mississippi Delta region where large plantations flourished, the society that emerged resembled that of tidewater Virginia or the South Carolina low country. But in rural places apart from navigable rivers, smaller farmers with limited wealth settled to start completely new lives in the wilderness.

After the Revolution, most migration out of Virginia went directly toward the West, to Tennessee and Kentucky. Settlers rushed into the territories ceded to the new nation under the Treaty of Paris in 1783. The Kentucky land office was opened in 1779, but migration to Kentucky was often dominated by elite gentry families of Virginia, as can be seen in the case of the Cabell-Breckinridge family. This family network migrated to Kentucky from Botetourt County, Virginia, and sent their slaves a year ahead in 1792 to begin clearing out their new plantation.<sup>14</sup> In the last years of the eighteenth century, the wave of migration shifted toward the North, to states such as Ohio and Indiana, where plantation slavery was not an option. The South and the West never failed to attract migrants though, especially with favorable cotton prices in the 1790s, and the rise of sugar cultivation and price in the Louisiana territory.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Terry, "Sustaining the Bonds of Kinship," 455-476. Many members of the Cabell-Breckinridge family relocated in Kentucky in the 15 years from the late eighteenth century, and the extended family stayed in close contact with each other between Kentucky and Virginia. Also see Philyaw, introduction of *Virginia's Western Vision*.

<sup>15</sup> Adam Rothman, "The Expansion of Slavery in the Deep South, 1790-1820" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2000), 65-72. On the refugees from St. Domingue and its impact on Louisiana sugar industry, see Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States*, vol.2, 739-51. Sugar production arrived in Louisiana at a time when the previous leading staple indigo was in decline, and

By the turn of the century, exploring the West added another dimension with the Louisiana purchase in 1803 by Jefferson, who was a proponent of western rights. He assured that newly acquired western territories and states of the United States would share the same democratic rights and responsibilities as those of the East, rather than creating colonial empires as the of European nations had done. Jefferson believed that all men had the right to seek new habitations and establish new societies, if that promoted public happiness. Moreover, he believed that the destiny of the West should be determined by the people in the West, and new states should be considered an equal member of the union.<sup>16</sup> With territorial expansion, migration further accelerated, with some Virginia counties losing 20 percent of their population in a single year, or more than 50 percent in a decade.<sup>17</sup>

It was only a matter of time before territorial expansion and the view of the West among Virginians became intertwined with the expansion of slavery in those territories. Early migrants who possessed slaves themselves were in the minority, but those who did usually brought their slaves with them on their journey. The interstate slave trade did not become an established business until the second decade of the nineteenth century, accelerating after the close of the African trade in 1808. By then, agricultural production in Virginia had shifted to

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quickly replaced it. Further detail can be found in chapter 5. Rhys Isaac sees that by the late eighteenth century, the region between the Chesapeake and the Blue Ridge changed from being a transatlantic margin of the British empire to a part of the eastern seaboard of an expanding continental nation-state. See Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 311.

<sup>16</sup> Philyaw, *Virginia's Western Vision*, 96-7. On details of the procedure of the Congressional committee on western lands, and ordinances issued during the early republic related to the West, see Philyaw, *Ibid.*, chap. 4. Also, in 1795 the Spanish conceded and opened the Mississippi River for American navigation, which stimulated commercial development of the area and further migration. On the acquisition of Louisiana, see Don Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 259-61.

<sup>17</sup> Philyaw, *Ibid.* Numbers are from Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 74. France was handed over Louisiana in 1802 from Spain, which was not convenient for the United States who had already negotiated a treaty with Spain for the navigation rights of Mississippi. Napoleon faced struggle handling the revolt in St. Domingue and various domestic problems, and in desperate need of cash, regrettably sold Louisiana to the United States. Rothman, "Expansion," 28-30.

a diversified, mixed farming of various marketable crops with increasing focus on grain production, which changed the labor regimen on plantations. With the out-migration of the white population, the white birthrate in the tidewater region declined while the slave birthrate remained high, resulting in gradual change in population composition. In time, Virginians on the east coast became aware that high concentration of slaves might not be beneficial for the region, especially in light of news of slave rebellions abroad, and they began to feel the increasing economic performance gap between the flourishing manufacturing North and the agricultural South.

In such circumstances, two views on the issue of southern expansion and slavery became apparent in the South. One of them was the “diffusion” of slavery into the West, supported by Virginia leaders such as Jefferson, who saw the expansion of the southern frontier as a safety valve for the well-being of the South. They sought an eventual termination of slavery, by dispersing the surplus slaves into the larger West, and decreasing the concentration of slave population in one region: clearly, these leaders had Virginia in mind. This view, when realized, would diminish the danger of slave revolts and by dispersing slaves along the frontier, would pave the way for a gradual emancipation.

The opposing view to the “diffusionists” came mainly from the Carolina planters, who claimed the necessity of slave labor on their rice, indigo, and cotton plantations, and considered plantation slavery as the core institution for the future of the southern economy. They sought to spread plantation slavery into the western territories, which implied the permanent status of slaves. Despite the different standpoint of the two views on the condition of slaves in the future, in the short run, they both agreed that slaves had to be sent to the territories.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Rothman, “Expansion,” 14-15, 49-50.

In time, the “diffusionist” group led to internal division, when members of the group began to disagree on the equal representation of western states. The division was led by James Monroe, who was initially supportive of the Jeffersonian vision of the West, but later changed positions in fear that Virginia would lose congressional power if the total number of states with equal power increased. He believed that there would eventually be enough states established in the West that their needs in the West would be prioritized over those of the seaboard states. Monroe’s view was a return to the traditional attitude, represented in George Washington, who maintained a conservative standpoint, expressing that the West should be domesticated by the right kind of person, which meant the elite class of the tidewater region.<sup>19</sup>

The method of sending slaves into the territories changed dramatically in the nineteenth century. After the War of 1812, the domestic slave trade blossomed into an interregional commercial affair with professional traders, which made the dispersal of slave population to the West much more convenient. The cotton revolution had spurred migration as farmers invested more money in slaves and moved further to the West. Early efforts by Congress to push navigation rights on western rivers was accomplished by securing Louisiana, Florida, and purchasing Choctaw land in the Mississippi Territory before the state officially became part of the union, and the federal government urged people to migrate for military security on the frontier. With the Creek cessions after the ending of the notoriously bloody Red Stick War in 1814, “Alabama fever” set in and thousands rushed in, craving for cotton prosperity. In the early 1830s, settlers poured into the former Chickasaw and Choctaw regions that were up for public sale, which were also a target of land speculation for large planters in the East. The recreation of plantation slavery on the frontier, as the anti-diffusionist leaders believed, appeared to have become a built-in mechanism of the southern economy. By then, the sense

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<sup>19</sup> Philyaw, *Virginia's Western Vision*, 103-4, 113-4.

of guilt that accompanied the slave trade had diminished with the emergence of an ideology that had banded the expanding South and the Old South together: the Christian proslavery ideology, which made the expansion of the institution of slavery a precondition for the South. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the transition from the earlier agrarian republicanism to proslavery ideology was achieved, and western migration became associated with, and became discussed in the language of proslavery ideology in public and official circles. In time, people came to believe that slavery and its expansion was what united the South, and western migration was supported as long as it was a movement to spread the geographical area of plantation slavery.<sup>20</sup>

There were several incidents that solidified the link between western migration and the proslavery view. The Missouri Compromise in 1819 became a pivotal point for the political development in the West, which coincidentally, was the year of a financial panic.

The banking system overall survived the panic, although some states were hit harder than others. The Missouri debate was fueled by the creation of a new state and especially by the expansion of slavery. Jefferson argued his view of diffusion, saying that diffusing slavery in the West would not increase the number of slaves, but would “make them individually happier and facilitate their eventual emancipation,” although he saw that deportation was a

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<sup>20</sup> Miller, *South by Southwest*, 14, 40. On navigation rights, see Rothman, “Expansion,” 20-30. Pickney’s Treaty in 1795, negotiated by Thomas Pickney of South Carolina is also known as the Treaty of San Lorenzo, with Spain, in which Spain ceded the land across the Mississippi river to the United States, and granted rights to deposit and navigate on the river for 3 years. Spain wanted to avoid United States allying with Great Britain to gain more territory from Spain in the area. When Spain handed Louisiana over to France, Congress considered France as a direct threat to the Union. The details of the forced removal of Native Americans in the West will not be discussed here, but economic development from their interaction is well documented in Daniel H. Usner’s works. See for example, Daniel H. Usner, “Frontier Exchange and Cotton Production: The Slave Economy in Mississippi, 1790-1836,” *Slavery and Abolition* 20 (April 1999). Andrew Jackson negotiated for the Treaty of Fort Jackson, which he was able to obtain 23 million acres from the Creeks in Mississippi and Georgia, and 3 further cessions followed from the Creeks, Chickasaws and Choctaws in the fall of 1816, and in 1820, Treaty of Doak’s Stand was made. See Sean Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Times Books, 2005), 23-27; Rothman, *Ibid.*, 283-5, 293-5. The so-called “Alabama fever” and public sales of Mississippi lands were generated by both land offices and speculation, with credit on unstable western banks, which caused most of the payments not able to meet owing to the 1819 financial panic.

prerequisite to any form of emancipation. Northern Congressmen argued that slavery violated the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness that was supported under the constitution, but southerners claimed that such principles only applied to the white population. Ultimately, they made an agreement with the aid of Henry Clay, that Missouri, as well as territory south of the 36°30' latitude of the Louisiana purchase became slave states and territories, and northerners agreed to the compromise by carrying Maine as a free state, as a counterweight to Missouri. This arrangement set the future course of slavery in the West. The compromise indicated that the interpretation of the Declaration of Independence only applied for whites, and sectional differences on views of slavery and the constitutional right over slavery as an institution became evident. From then on, southerners would prioritize the protection of slavery in the guidance and direction of their politics. The event was a crucial point in history because it allowed southerners to promptly support the proslavery ideology and it proved that there were no constitutional restraints from doing so.<sup>21</sup>

Following the Missouri Compromise, the decade of the 1820s saw series of tariffs passed which did not necessary benefit the South, but instead encouraged further manufacturing development in the North. These tariffs increased average duties on imported industrial intermediate and final products, which competed with goods produced almost exclusively in the North. Tariffs were increased in agricultural commodities as well, but not cotton; they were raised for hemp, molasses, and tobacco. Southern planters who had to sell their crops to unprotected foreign markets while purchasing northern manufactured goods at

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<sup>21</sup> Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 263-6. On the effect of the panic of 1819, see Schweikart, *Banking in the American South*, 54-6. The impact was severe for Virginia tidewater planters who saw their political power evade as well. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 139-43, 148-9; Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 70-2. The compromise is also attributed for the further acceleration of antislavery movement in the North. Also see Daniel S. Dupre, "The Panic of 1819 and the Political Economy of Sectionalism," in Matson ed. *Economy of Early America*, 263-93.

inflated prices perceived the tariff issue as a challenge to the plantation system.<sup>22</sup>

In light of such events, the decline of the Virginia economy became increasingly evident, which some leaders blamed on the drain of population. Also, they claimed that the decline in the productivity of soil, which encouraged the decision to move for many migrants, led to the decreasing land values in Virginia. At the Virginia Constitutional Convention in 1829, it was reported that in 1817, the total land value in Virginia was nearly \$207 million, but by 1829, it had plummeted to less than half, to \$90 million. According to Fischer and Kelly, more than 30 percent of white children born in Virginia around the turn of the century left the state, and many counties lost population while the national population continued to rise.<sup>23</sup> Some leaders debated seriously over the problem of economic decline, raising issues such as the lack of efficient transportation facilities, urban centers, and dependency on northern capital and merchants, but slavery was what drew focus as the institution that was at the root of southern economy. These issues continued to be discussed among delegates in the state legislature and at southern commercial conventions.<sup>24</sup>

Eventually, those on the eastern coast began to see western migration as a double-edged

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<sup>22</sup> A tariff bill passed in 1824 resulted in sharp increase in average duties, and in 1828 the so-called Tariff of Abominations was passed which raised average duties well above 50 percent. Landowners of the South were especially affected, since the tariff constrained the expansion for western agriculture where good production might have been 10 to 25 percent higher without it, reducing the profit of landowners perhaps as much as 25 percent. Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History from Colonial Times to 1940*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1994), 127-141. On detail of the proceedings of the government on the tariff of 1828 and the nullification, see Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 113-127.

<sup>23</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 202-3; Collins, *Domestic Slave Trade*, 26. It was also reported that the cost of negroes averages \$300 in 1817, and by 1829, they were \$150, although this may not be an accurate estimate.

<sup>24</sup> On southern conventions and the direction of southern economy discussed at these meetings are analyzed in classic works by Herbert Wender, *Southern Commercial Conventions, 1837-1859* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1930) and John Van Deusen, *The Antebellum Southern Commercial Convention* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1926). Also see Robert Royal Russell, *Economic Aspects of Southern Sectionalism, 1840-1860* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1960). More on the conventions will be discussed in chapter 5.

sword. On the one hand, the drainage of population threatened the economic stability of coastal societies and reduced their political representation and power in national politics, which they had held on to for decades. But on the other hand, westward migration of whites and the simultaneous movement of slave population into the West secured southern political representation at the national level, adding territories that would support the institution of slavery. Thus, western migration became inevitably linked to a sectional crisis, and ultimately, the latter view, supporting western migration as a way to strengthen slavery and unity of the South against the North, won out. It was under these circumstances that the domestic slave trade became a business of “necessary evil.” In Virginia, the cotton boom in the West in the 1820s and 1830s created unprecedented demand for the states’ surplus slaves, and the domestic slave trade became a major source of capital inflow to the state’s economy. In the context of the spreading antislavery movement and the negative views toward the southern “pre-modern” economy from the North, the territorial expansion of slavery and strengthening of regional solidarity was significant economically and ideologically. In time, those who did not migrate began to view the migrants as defenders and supporters of the southern proslavery stance against the North, and no longer viewed them as disrupting the societies that they left behind.<sup>25</sup>

This merger of the proslavery stance and the meaning of western migration became fixed by 1840. It had become clear that while pursuit of land ownership was still important

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<sup>25</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Ibid.*, 206-8.; Miller, *South by Southwest*, 32, 131. Some critics of migration encouraged measures to prevent the younger generation from migrating, especially in improving fertility of their farms, and introducing new scientific methods to cultivate the worn-out land. Internal improvements were proposed to facilitate the market economy as well, but did not help once proslavery ideals became the major motivation of migration. See Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, 88-90. While western migration had gained support of southerners, those in the West were also feeling the anxiety of the increasing number of slaves in their population, and the skyrocketing prices of the slaves. The rebellion in Southampton County by Nat Turner was seen as a manifestation of their fears which accelerated their efforts to curtail the trade, and also in discussions to reopen the African slave trade, which were both unsuccessful. See Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64-5, 69, 78-84



for most southerners, ownership of slaves became the crucial element that defended southern economic development, and unity among southerners. In Miller's words, the solidarity was not shaped by attachment to land, but formed by "common interests and experiences and by a shared commitment to particular forms of social thought, habit, organization," which was apparent in defending the institution of slavery. Mobility, in these circumstances, became itself a form of identity representing as individuals, as households, and as a class.<sup>26</sup>

Thomas R.R. Cobb explained in the late antebellum era that the greatest evidence of wealth, the most desired property, and the best property to leave to children was slaves. Accordingly, he viewed that investment in slaves should be given priority, compared to land. Cobb saw that planters eventually encouraged their children to seek new lands in such circumstances, with the slaves they inherited and settle in new fertile regions. The routine of such arrangements made this class of southerners, in Cobb's view, almost nomadic, never settling in a particular area, except for the original eastern coast settlers, but forming a class that geographically encompassed the entire South. Cobb's view supports the position that westward expansion was the ultimate way the slave economy could sustain itself and to reproduce the master class. It can even be said that internal improvements and the transportation revolution were measures to further expand and increase the effectiveness of proslavery society.<sup>27</sup>

Reflecting the consolidation of proslavery ideology, Virginia lost as much as 375,000

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<sup>26</sup> Miller, *Ibid.*, 133, 137-8, 146-7. James Oakes explained that by the late antebellum era, most slaveholders "had been conditioned to accept migration as the prerequisite to success," and that the antebellum master class was one of the most mobile in history, and pursuit of western land was what united small slaveholders with planters. The mobility rate measured up to that of the North. James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 76-78

<sup>27</sup> Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*, 100-3, 117- 9. Similar examples in Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, 73, 86-7. Also Olmstead portrayed plantations with dwellings and families in bad condition, but still raised huge crops and money and invest them in slaves. Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey Through Texas: or, a Saddle-Trip on the South-western Frontier: with Statistical Appendix* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1859) 47-51.

people by migration between 1830 and 1840, with the majority, 304,000 drained out of the eastern part of the state. According to the census of 1850, more than 388,000 Virginia-born citizens lived in other states, and between 1790 to 1840, Virginia had lost more people by migration than all the original free states combined.<sup>28</sup> Virginia was not an exception, and out-migration was commonly seen in all eastern seaboard states. For example, in South Carolina, more than 50 percent of people born after 1800 left the state, and overall, South Carolinians were nearly 80 percent more likely than other Americans to have left their state in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> The federal government was willing to promote western settlements as well, as Andrew Jackson once pointed out, “nothing can promote the welfare of the United States and particularly the Southwest frontier so much as bringing into market at an early day, the whole of this fertile country.” The motivation behind the encouragement of migration was to expand the system of slavery, but the true purpose was often blurred when people and the government used the language of potential upward mobility and wealth associated with people’s view of the Great West.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the ongoing changes in the view toward the West and migration, it remained unchallenged that Virginia occupied a special position among southerners in general, especially among Virginians themselves. No other state had done so much for the creation of the nation, and Virginians were distinguished in paying homage to their ancestors, the state of the founding fathers, the Old Dominion. Time had changed for sure when Jefferson’s

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<sup>28</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 137, 211.

<sup>29</sup> Miller, *South by Southwest*, 19. Some reasons accounting for South Carolinians being more mobile, were that the elite class dominated eastern seaboard port cities, the state had a developed backcountry, and their early adoption of cotton cultivation made the transition in the West easier. See Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States*, Vol.1, 119-120, 628-9, 731-9; Tom Downey, *Planting a Capitalist South: Masters, Merchants, and Manufactures in the Southern Interior, 1790-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Miller, *Ibid.*, 25. On upward mobility and westward migration, see Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, 96-121.

grandson Francis Eppes wrote in 1828, that he observed “no ties which should bind any descendants of our grandfather to this state.” He continued, “the people are cold to his memory,” and that “our children may grow rich under a different system, but we will never witness better times here.” For conservative, traditional Virginians, their devotion to the state went well beyond proslavery ideology and expanding slave territories. Thomas R. Dew of William and Mary College viewed the exodus as “fearful” and called it a “mania” with “evil” effect, since Virginia was losing its capital as well as its young men. In the eyes of Virginians, migrants’ actions would always be seen as selling “the bones of your fathers.” They urged young men to stay, and “live and die by old Virginia,” as their ancestors had done. This criticism regarding the migrants also gave rise to criticism toward the state government for being incompetent in preventing them from leaving. When the southern Whigs and Democrats each formed a coalition with distinct views on the southern development path in the 1830s, Virginia Whigs argued for the desperate need of internal improvements, so that younger generation Virginians would not wend “their way by thousands, from the land of their fathers- that land, to make it a paradise wanting nothing but a market- to bury their bones in the land of strangers.” Placing the responsibility on the state government was quite a departure from the 1829-1830 state constitutional convention where many delegates blamed the state’s economic problems on “Yankee greed,” which in their view was “augmenting dependence” of the South.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Quote from Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 204 ; Joan Cashin, “Landscape and Memory in Antebellum Virginia,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (Oct 1994) 492-3. Quote of Joseph Eggleton Segar of Virginia addressed in the House of Delegates, example from Harry L. Watson, “Slavery and Development of a Dual Economy: The South and the Market Revolution,” in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, ed. Melvin Stokes and Stephen Conway ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 60. The Whig principle eventually became bipartisan, connecting the proslavery arguments with southern modernization. On the general information on the Whig party and their ideology, see Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 158-9, 211-2, 218-224. On the Virginia Convention 1829-1830, from Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 206. Some of the criticisms were made toward the institution of slavery, which led to the discussion on slave trade and emancipation. Accepting the necessity of modernization did not mean that Virginians were trying to be northern, Kimball argues that the more contact they had with northerners, they became more consciously southern. Gregg D.

One common inspiration that led the Virginians to migrate was the desire to follow the footsteps of a relative or someone they knew in the community who had already moved West. For example, a migrant from Chesterfield, Virginia wrote from Fairfield, Texas to his brother in Virginia that “if you will come out and go to planting cotton on some of the bottom lands of our navigable rivers you can in the course of a few years make a fortune.” He further suggested that “if you will invest all your money in negroes and come out I can get you as much money as you want to buy a place and provisions for a start.”<sup>32</sup> Another migrant urged a friend to leave Kentucky for Mississippi, stating, “if you could reconcile it to yourself to bring your negroes to the Mississippi Territory they would certainly make you a handsome fortune in ten years by the cultivation of cotton.”<sup>33</sup>

As trading networks became more intricate, often a business acquaintance in the West would encourage eastern residents to move. An excellent example of this can be found in a letter that William Waller, a resident of Amherst County, Virginia received from John Ware, his acquaintance and partner in slave trading business, in Jackson, Mississippi. Ware criticized Waller’s attachment to Virginia, saying “I fear you are wedded to it, and hold on to old Virginia that you may boast you live in the mother of states and presidents.” He continued that it would be the best for him to “cut yourself loose from the old dominion and like the patriarchs of old, take up the wife and little ones and leave for better land.” Ware looked on the whole Mississippi valley as an “eldorado,” in which he believed the “deity smiled when he conceived it,” and wondered “why stay in Virginia and work poor hill sides

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Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000). On state constitutional conventions, especially of 1831-1832, and discussions on slavery in general, see Alison Goodyear Freehling, *Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

<sup>32</sup> From Fischer and Kelly, *Ibid.*, 234. Similar examples of relatives encouraging residents in the east to migrate, in Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, 74, 80.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Rothman, “Expansion,” 76.

and stop red gullies?” He tried to convince Waller that in comparison to Virginia, Mississippi had better health conditions, intelligence, morals and energy, and argued that labor would be more rewarding. Ware believed the time to move was now, and implored Waller to make his decision as soon as possible, if not, “the convenient season may never come.” Many westerners who had successfully migrated looked at themselves of possessing more energy and ambition, compared to those who stayed behind.<sup>34</sup>

Of course, not all migrations were successful, and it became increasingly apparent in the nineteenth century that migration required considerable money and sufficient labor force from the very beginning. Early migrants were often helped by the cheap land prices, or in the cases of Alabama and Mississippi, benefited by purchasing land through land offices in the region at an affordable price. But the land boom of the 1820s, which was a result of public land auctions in combination with easy credit practices in western banks, and a special currency called the “Mississippi scrip” which was only redeemable in federal land, caused land prices to steadily increase. Most land had already been cleared by squatters, which raised the price even higher. Reportedly, if a land had already been cleared, the land would sell at 50 percent premium over non-cleared wilderness.<sup>35</sup>

It also became common to use slaves to generate cash for purposes related to migration. Since migration required thousands of dollars for land and transportation, and required a few years before generating any profit, many slaveowners either sold their slaves or hired slaves in the vicinity to raise immediate cash. Those earnings would often help them obtain more land or tools and various necessities in establishing their plantation. Hiring was common at higher rates than in the East, since clearing of the new land required much labor, and having

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<sup>34</sup> John Ware to W.M. Waller, 11 April 1848, Waller Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Also see Cashin, “Landscape and Memory,” 493.

<sup>35</sup> Rothman, “Expansion,” 291-4; Daniel Dupre, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier: Madison County, Alabama, 1800-1840* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997).

surplus slaves helped migrating families bring in capital that could be liquidated at high demand.<sup>36</sup>

Cashin observed that many failed cases of migration occurred because of the shaky nature of the banks in the West, which forced migrants to rely on family connections and networks for financial purposes. While not all banks in the West were risky operations, it was true that most local banks in the West were initially not willing to lend immediate long-term mortgage loans to out-of-state residents or recent migrants with little collateral, and banks in the East were equally reluctant to afford credit for those moving out of the state. It was reported that a fertile land and a sizeable estate would cost \$20,000 to \$30,000 in the 1830s, and prime field slaves would cost more than \$1,000 each. If the land had been previously occupied, the sellers would usually sell the dwelling house, various tools and livestock along with the land. But if the land had not been cleared, the clearing fees and necessary labor would cost additional thousands of dollars. Cashin estimated that the entire cost could add up to more than \$60,000 before any profit would generate from the crops.<sup>37</sup>

These migrants from the 1820s and 1830s onward were faced with different challenges compared to the small farmers who settled in the Piedmont region of Virginia in the mid-eighteenth century. It became clear that substantial wealth was necessary to make the transition from the East to the West, and those who planned to operate a sizeable plantation in the fertile regions in the West were the ones who had accumulated enough wealth in the East. Some of the most prominent Upper South families, like the Lloyds of Maryland, Tayloes of Virginia, and Camerons of North Carolina were sending their labor forces to Alabama and Mississippi by the 1830s and took part in the frenzy of land speculation or absentee ownerships. As one migrant with no valuable means commented to a creditor, “you have no

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<sup>36</sup> On the role of slave hiring and its profits for helping western migration, see Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 34-42.

<sup>37</sup> Cashin, *Family Venture*. A sizable unit would need more than 20 slaves to begin its operation.

idea how hard it is to start on nothing, and I do hope most sincerely that you may never have to try it.” Although once settled in the West, some state banks practiced easy banking according to the legislature’s policy or conditions of the cotton market, and provided loans especially during credit boom years, the initial capital invested and carried over for migration made a huge difference. Fischer and Kelly found that migrants moved up in terms of wealth and class, while Cashin found that more migrants failed than succeeded and might have been better off if they had stayed in the East. It can be said that in the late antebellum years, the initial setup of a farm in the West had become increasingly difficult without valuable assets to start out with, and that affected people’s decision to migrate.<sup>38</sup>

Migration out of Virginia from the early eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century developed in different stages and changed its character over the years. While initially it was the small, younger, and the moneyless farmers that fled to the Piedmont in pursuit of land and independence, by the nineteenth century, the wealthier planters with access to enough capital and labor were at the forefront of the westward movement. They were able to acquire the best lands, and in parts of the West, a society that resembled that of the tidewater region emerged. From the 1830s and 1840s, the westward movement became a movement that carried a mission to strengthen the territorial solidarity of supporting slavery. The upward mobility and pursuit of happiness that was associated with westward migration began to cloud with the tension of sectional crisis. By the late antebellum era, it became clear that it was not how a migrant planter used his land, but how he used his slaves, that determined his future wealth and class. This was a significant change compared to the early perception that land ownership represented independence and social status.

In reality, wealth distribution studies indicate that inequality was actually greater in the

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<sup>38</sup> Rothman, “Expansion,” 95, 293-4; Cashin, *Family Venture*, 6, 38-40, 62; William K. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 129; Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, 125. On the financial difficulty for migration in general see Oakes, *Ibid.*, 124-7.

Mississippi River valley than in the tidewater in the antebellum era, which may give support to Cashin's view that many migrants actually failed. In those places, the Turnerian view illustrated by individualism, equality and democracy on the frontier was shattered by the reinvention of the old society characterized by hierarchy and wealth. Perhaps the liberal segments of Jeffersonian republicanism that remained was related to the belief in personal independence through the acquisition of a tract of land, but the measurement of wealth and honor no longer focused on land, but on slaves. In fact, the further migrants pushed the southern frontier, the more the emerging society became characterized by the ideological, and cultural ethics of the old tidewater elite society through a dynamic process. As Fischer and Kelly argues, if the westward movement was a safety valve for preserving free institutions in the North, it worked in a similar way to preserve the institution of slavery in the South. The domestic slave trade played a crucial part in this. The emergence of a system that would deliberately transport slaves to the West supported the migrants in their proslavery ideology, and the distribution of slaves to a wide geographical area made the idea that possession of slaves determined one's status in the South prevail. Although there were efforts at the federal level to decrease or limit the domestic slave-trading traffic by the 1830s, it never ceased to operate. While there were proslavery southerners who, despite their own acts and stance, were not supportive of the slave trade, ultimately the centrality of the trade for the realization of a united South persuaded the opponents. Migration and the slave trade, for that matter, worked hand in hand, one stimulating the other, and for the eastern states, the loss of population was more than supplemented by the income they made by selling their surplus slaves. Virginia's slave prices continued to rise owing to the demand in the West, despite the falling agricultural production and commodity prices in the state.

Turner was right when he maintained that major events in American history, even the controversy surrounding slavery achieved their importance because of their relation to



westward expansion. The expansion of slavery and westward migration were intertwined in a complex way ideologically, politically, and economically, and southerners' view toward both of them changed over time. The variables of supporting or opposing this institution and the movement created different combinations according to people's circumstances, such as their class, region, or occupation. But it is perhaps safe to say that by the 1830s or so, westward distribution of slaves, as well as migration of whites, gained significance for the future of the entire South; its meaning carried more than a mere shift in population. And perhaps it can be said that the Turnerian world of small independent farmers in an egalitarian frontier society was more a short-lived phenomenon or a myth in the South; at the least it was no longer how the Virginians viewed or experienced the Great West.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Impact of the Panic of 1837**

The years often referred to as the "market revolution," saw extraordinary growth and development in methods of communication, transportation and industrial production, and the economic strength of the United States as a nation can be seen in the multifold growth of trade volume and commercial transactions. In recent years, historians have discussed the economic, social, and political developments during this era and emphasized that the threat, anxiety, and hatred people felt toward the sweeping economic change made them rally around the ideals brought forth by Andrew Jackson and the Democrats. It is necessary to understand that westward migration, cotton expansion and territorial expansion, all occurred simultaneously when the entire nation was undergoing a whirlwind of economic growth.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 279-298; Turner, "Significance," Slave trade and its role in the development of the West and the formation of western migration is discussed in Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi*, chap.4.

<sup>40</sup> See in particular, Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York,

Finance and commerce was one of the many sectors that experienced this vast change. In fact, the experiments with the nation's financial system began before Jackson came in to power, as the rise of business corporations and state and federal banking systems started to take shape by the late eighteenth century.<sup>41</sup> The concentration of financial power in these banks and businesses rapidly interconnected, connecting the dots among urban centers, regions and countries, thereby leaving behind those who did not reside near these networks, and leaving them with the option to take advantage of these newly available opportunity or not. Westward migration should also be considered in this perspective, for it was indeed accelerated by the developing networks and the credit or loans available by these financial institutions.<sup>42</sup>

By the mid 1830s if not earlier, much of the land and slaves in the West was purchased by mortgage loans and on credit, and most planters did not have adequate liquid resources to call upon when crop prices fell or at the time when notes were due. Hence, there were signs years before the catastrophe of the late 1830s that a collapse of prices could be extremely damaging to the cotton and sugar planters who were in permanent debt because of purchases of additional land or slaves. Despite the potential devastation of their financial status, they failed to circulate their profits in a cautious way.

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Oxford University Press, 1992); Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990).

<sup>41</sup> On the development of early banking system in the United States, see Howard Bodenhorn, *A History of Banking in Antebellum America: Financial Markets and Developments in an Era of Nation-Building* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) ; Bray Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

<sup>42</sup> Harry L. Watson, afterward to *Liberty and Power*, rev.ed. For reference, see Peter Rousseau and Richard Sylla, "Emerging Financial Markets and Early U.S. Growth," *Explorations in Economic History* 42 (2005) 1-26. For example, Koons and Hofstra explained that once farmers in backcountry Virginia got involved in the grain market, they gained awareness in price fluctuations and market forces, and adopted labor-saving mechanisms to increase efficiency, and involved themselves in intricate network of finance, obtaining credit and various services. Kenneth E. Koons and Warren R. Hofstra, *After the Backcountry: Rural Life in the Great Valley of Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 22.

The panic of 1837 was one of the worst depressions of the nineteenth century. The panic started with disruptions in international currency transactions and it has been argued that it was aggravated by then president, Andrew Jackson's fiscal policies. Ultimately, it was an event that showed the vulnerability and immaturity of the banking system in the United States, especially in parts of the South which were hardly hit. The panic was all the more destructive since it occurred after years of prosperity in the South, and cotton had become the region's golden crop. The total export value of cotton in 1834 was more than fifty million dollars, and with the flourishing textile industry in Britain as well as other parts of Europe, the sales of cotton and its price did not seem to fall. In the Deep South, cotton was the basis of credit and determined business transactions and the character of the banks. In the Upper South, where the population lacked a golden cash crop like cotton, industrialization and internal improvements were stressed, and this strategy appeared to be a success. According to what they prioritized for their economic development, each state in the South had a different level of maturity in its financial system before the panic hit, which led to different consequences in each state.<sup>43</sup>

As Isaac Franklin mentioned to Ballard in the summer of 1832, the recharter bill for the Second Bank of the United States and the subsequent veto by President Jackson were pivotal points that led to financial destruction in the late 1830s.<sup>44</sup> Jackson withdrew government deposits from the Second Bank and placed them in state-chartered banks around the nation,

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<sup>43</sup> Larry Schweikart, *Banking in the American South from the Age of Jackson to Reconstruction*, 48-9.

<sup>44</sup> On the details of the recharter of the second bank and the battle between Nicholas Biddle and President Jackson, see Reginald C. McGrane, *The Panic of 1837: Some Financial Problems of the Jacksonian Era* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965) chapter 3, Peter Temin, *The Jacksonian Economy* (New York: Norton, 1969) chap. 2. Jackson's veto message was hailed as a great speech in the tradition of the old republican discourse that defended small producers against the merchant capitalist financiers and foreign investors-eliminating the fears and aspirations of petty producers and workers threatened by the wave of market revolution and commercialization- exactly the basis on what Jacksonianism developed upon. See Sean Wilentz, "Society, Politics and the Market Revolution," in Foner ed., *The New American History*, 77. On the presidency of Jackson and his political view and its effects, see Sean Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson*.

which resulted in 23 pet banks acting as federal depositories. Simultaneously, the number of commercial banks exploded, from 330 in 1830 to 506 by 1834, and 704 by 1836. The Second Bank was forced to cut down on outstanding bank loans, causing financial contraction, and by 1835 an extraordinary inflation set in under this unchecked system, as witnessed in the speculative boom with rising land and slave prices. The quantity of public lands sold in 1835 was three times the amount of 1834, adding surplus in the treasury. With the limit on money creation, and any sort of a central policing bank to limit commercial banks from issuing notes, the unprecedented amount of money in circulation led to an inevitable liquidity crisis.<sup>45</sup> With such an expansive money market, the crops of 1836 fell short, a result partially blamed on the effects of the Hessian fly.<sup>46</sup> The so-called “flush times” in Alabama and Mississippi peaked in 1836, and some of the land companies, such as the New York and Mississippi Land Company, involved northern credit, indicating the nationwide speculative mania. In the spring of 1837, banks began to call in their loans, and New York banks suspended payments on May 10<sup>th</sup>, which was followed by a wave of bankruptcies all over the nation. After giving false hope by a slight recovery in 1838, another panic hit the following year, ending the decade in recession that would last nearly a decade.<sup>47</sup>

Within the South, the Deep South states suffered more directly from the panic. Virginia

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<sup>45</sup> Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History from Colonial Times to 1940*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1994), 94-96; McGrane, *Ibid.*, chapter 1.

<sup>46</sup> McGrane, *Ibid.*, 92. Hessian flies caused damages to not only cotton, but variety of other crops, generating great losses from time to time. See Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.2, 818-9, 876. Although focused on late eighteenth century, see Brooke Hunter, “Creative Destruction: The Forgotten Legacy of the Hessian Fly,” in Matson ed., *Economy of Early America*, 236-62.

<sup>47</sup> McGrane, *Ibid.*, 93. Following May 10<sup>th</sup>, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Albany, Hartford, New Haven and Providence suspended payment, and on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Mobile and New Orleans, on the 15<sup>th</sup> the banks in DC, on the 17<sup>th</sup> Charleston and Cincinnati, on the 19<sup>th</sup> Louisville and Augusta suspended payments. Schweikart, *Banking in the American South*, 59-60. Many southern banks had sold their bonds in Europe, and with the rising interest rate in Britain and declining price of cotton, forced first the New York banks to press debtors and compelled Europeans to pressure the banks. Suspension of specie payments by the New York banks had a domino effect on southern bank’s wave of suspensions. Schweikart, *Ibid.*, 70-1.

banks, for example, did not face the insolvency southwestern states faced, but the possible drain of specie to the North led to suspension anyway. Overall, however, the Upper South states did not escape the effect: in particular, their ongoing plans on internal developments came to a virtual halt. Migration plans for many ambitious farmers collapsed as well. The larger planters in the eastern states, albeit temporarily, prioritized improving their agricultural production capabilities instead of investing in non-agricultural commerce. Mississippi struggled especially among the Deep South states, since it was in the middle of a credit boom when the crash hit. Many planters went completely bankrupt, were forced to sell many slaves and even portions of their land. It was reportedly the older settled planters more than the newly arrived ones that suffered, since the new migrants were not able to purchase big tracts of land or slaves at the inflated prices, and started out with small property holdings. The large slaveholders and landowners were the ones who were permanently indebted to financiers. One observer recalled in 1840 that Mississippi “land that once commanded twenty to fifty dollars per acre may now be bought for three or five dollars, and that with considerable improvements, while many have been sold at sheriff sales at 50 cents, that were considered worth ten to twenty dollars.” Slaves were often sent to Alabama or Texas where they would be more valued, and advertisements from Mississippi newspapers were filled with slave and land offers.<sup>48</sup>

The situation in Louisiana differed. While official New Orleans banks suffered from lack of specie and remained suspended for a lengthy time after 1839 causing financial insecurity for years, overall, the state economy was able to gradually recover with emerging private bankers backed by expanding cotton production. The state had a sound banking system from

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<sup>48</sup> Schweikart, *Ibid.*, 70-1; McGrane, *The Panic of 1837*, 116-120. Mississippi banks were rather conservative in their formative years in the 1810s and 20s, see Schweikart, *Ibid.*, 52-3. South Carolina and Georgia banks recovered rather quickly as well, most banks returning to regular exchange within a year or two.

early times, escaping damage during the panic of 1819 and entering the decade of the 1820s financially secure and prosperous. Cotton and sugar production supported creation of several banks in New Orleans. Louisiana was rather the exception among the western states, with its expanded commerce, business structure and the experienced factors, with the financial capabilities of New Orleans resembling the characters of a northern port city.<sup>49</sup>

The cause of the panic has been debated among historians and economists but they have not totally agreed on a synthesis. Jackson certainly has been blamed by some scholars who saw the Specie Circular issued in August of 1836 particularly damaging. The Circular was Jackson's effort to curtail land sales for speculative purposes, providing that the Public Land Office would only accept specie (gold and silver) as payment for land transactions from then on. This caused the speculating companies to request specie from their network of banks in the East and the North, draining reserves from banks which resulted in suspended redemption.<sup>50</sup> Although rejected as the main cause, it should be noticed that there were banks that practiced under unsound principles, which was expected in western states dominated by a major agricultural staple, and where land, slaves and cotton were the only forms of collateral for most people.<sup>51</sup>

Atack and Passell have argued that the Specie Circular explanation was unconvincing, and

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<sup>49</sup> Schweikart, *Ibid.*, 71-3, 57-8; George D. Green, *Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana Banking, 1804-1861* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 19-22. The yellow fever epidemic that hit Louisiana in 1819 was more of a concern than the financial panic that hit other parts of the nation. In the 1820s, Bank of Louisiana, and the Consolidated Association of the Planters of Louisiana were created to provide credit and mortgage to all areas.

<sup>50</sup> McGrane, *The Panic of 1837*, 61-3, 92-3. Peter Temin was the first to refute this interpretation that the Circular was the main cause of the panic. There were no significant decrease in the ratio of bank reserves to liabilities, although inflation occurred owing to the Mexican silver inflow and the silver going to China for opium trade, the causation Atack and Passell explained. Bray Hammond provided the framework of interpretation that Andrew Jackson's fiscal policies leading up to the panic had a significant impact. Temin, *Jacksonian Economy*.; Hammond, *Bank and Politics in America*; Schweikart, *Banking in the American South*, 60-2.

<sup>51</sup> Schweikart, *Ibid.*, 59.

stated that the increase in the money supply during this period was not due to the bank's lending policies or Jackson's determination for a small government. They argued that international events triggered the panic. The specie inflow from abroad, from Mexico, France, and England had increased the stock, while the outflow decreased, owing to the repositioning of London's role in U.S.-China trade; in which America used its balances in London bills for Chinese imports, and China used those bills to purchase opium from India. Most of all, the British government and the Bank of England raised interest rates in 1836 in order to stop the outflow of specie, which caused interest rates to increase in the United States, and in combination with the declining cotton prices resulted in insecurity among banknote holders. In sum, the immaturity of its financial system at this point in the international world made the U.S. victim to the rapidly changing economy abroad.<sup>52</sup>

After the panic, commercial banks ceased to exist in Mississippi, and some major port cities in the South, particularly Mobile and New Orleans, remained very low on specie. The lingering effects of the depression forced bankers to attempt temporary measures to delay any specie redemption, obtaining loans, and their dealings with cotton factorages.<sup>53</sup> The public had changed its view toward banks. People were less willing to hold money in the form of bank notes, especially in the formally unsound banking practices in the West. The speculative credit system, in their view, was to blame for the catastrophe. Planters suffered years to pay off their debts, and reviving their plantation operations proved a difficult task.

The degree of devastation forced many southern merchants and businesses to realign and reevaluate their commercial relations. This included their relations with their trade with

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<sup>52</sup> Atack and Passell, *Ibid.*, 96-102. Temin, *The Jacksonian Economy*, 18-21. There was also a loss of confidence among borrowers on holding money in bank notes and the banking system itself, which made them vulnerable to sudden change of events. McGrane, *The Panic of 1837*, 40-42, explains the foreign demand for specie as the trigger of payment suspension.

<sup>53</sup> Schweikart, *Ibid.*, 68-9.

Europe, with the expansion of cotton exports. In southern conventions, direct trade with Europe became an increasingly important subject. The topics included southern banks building connections with European banks, and establishing agencies in European financial centers, hoping European investors would engage directly in southern businesses and development.<sup>54</sup>

Many contemporary accounts agreed that the panic hit the Southwest the worst. Edmund Ruffin thought that migrants would have done better if they had stayed in Virginia instead of moving to the frontier during the flush times.<sup>55</sup> At least for the moment, the days of “eldorados” were felt to be gone, which encouraged improving the soil quality and adopting new agricultural technologies at home. Those who had already migrated began to look back with regret after the devastation. Cashin argues that the panic and its lingering negative impact in the West proved that migration was not always the best option, and in more cases than less, it was a wiser decision to remain in Virginia and the eastern states. The decline of migration in the 1840s, in Cashin’s view, provided sufficient confirmation to her point. The panic and the depression of the late 1830s, it appeared, had a cultural impact on people’s thoughts on how they interpreted “success.”<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, in the northern cities where merchants were hard hit, migration increased after the panic. The panic in the northern cities affected urban businesses and factories, and the mechanics and laborers found their labor no

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<sup>54</sup> Brian Schoen, “Alternatives to Dependence: The Lower South’s Pursuit of Sectional Development through Global Interdependence,” in Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie ed., *Global Perspectives on Industrial Transformation in the American South* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 63. The issue will be discussed further in chapter 5. These efforts did not quite materialize, since a smaller but effective panic in 1839, withdrew temporarily many European interests away from the South. This encouraged and further stimulated southerners to install internal developments from domestic funding. Schoen, *Ibid.*, 67. On the political aftermath of the panic, on Van Buren’s effort and how he handled the panic and bank issues for the election of 1838, see McGrane, *The Panic of 1837*, chapter 5.

<sup>55</sup> Cashin, “Landscape and Memory,” 496.

<sup>56</sup> Cashin, *Ibid.*, 497-8.



longer in demand, eventually leaving the cities for the Midwest.<sup>57</sup>

In the Mississippi slave market before the panic, we saw in the previous chapter that the sales were generally conducted under credit, owing to the lack of cash in the market. Many planters bought slaves on a small or no cash payment, but would take out short and long-term loans from factors under the promise of the next year's cotton. With the price of land and slaves plummeting after the crash, those who purchased slaves on credit prior to the crash took advantage of the Mississippi Act of 1837 which declared that notes given in payment of slaves imported from other states in violation of the state constitution of 1832 were void. This announcement was devastating for most traders who had traded heavily with purchasers in Mississippi, including the Franklins. While Isaac Franklin had retired from the business, he and Armfield were still attempting to collect bills from sales made earlier, and Ballard, Franklin & Co. equally struggled for collection. (fig. 4.1)<sup>58</sup>

Later accounts looked back at the devastation and explained that slave prices had fallen by two-thirds, and cotton prices were sold at 3.5 cents per pound in parts of Mississippi.<sup>59</sup> The low price of cotton continued until the mid 1840s, and many of these large planters, in order to relieve themselves from the mounted debt, were forced to sell parts of their land or portion

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<sup>57</sup> McGrane, *The Panic of 1837*, 142-44.

<sup>58</sup> Mississippi state constitution of 1832 declared that actual settlers can bring slaves for their own use into the state until 1845, but it banned slave traders from importing slaves for the purpose of sale after May 1, 1833. Traders found alternate ways to bring slaves into the state, such as selling them in Louisiana and use Mississippi resident planters to bring them in. See Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 61-7. Bacon Tait, a trader in Richmond wrote to Ballard in October of 1840, that he was informed that "state courts of Mississippi have decide that a note given for negroes imported into that state for sale and sold in the state of Mississippi since 1<sup>st</sup> May 1833 is void- if this information is correct then according to Mr. Johnson's opinion you will have an uphill business" and told that in such case to ascertain and inform of him any appeals that will go on and its judgments. See Bacon Tait to Ballard, 14 October 1840, folder 36, Ballard Papers, SHC.

<sup>59</sup> Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 139.



Source) Lawrence J. Kotlikoff, “Quantitative Description of the New Orleans Slave Market, 1804-1862,” in *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery, Markets and Production: Technical Papers*, vol.1, Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman eds. (New York: Norton, 1992), 31-53.

of the slaves to liquidate their assets. Surprisingly, despite the low crop prices, by 1840, some parts of the South sold slaves at nearly pre-crash prices, for a “likely negro.” But it took until the late 1840s for the cotton prices to recover and consequently, slave prices rose as well. From then on, the price went on an upward spiral and reached unprecedented levels in the 1850s.<sup>60</sup>

The immediate impact of the panic of the late 1830s and its lingering effects lasted for years, and both the migration movement and the slave trade could not avoid them either. While many individuals suffered for decades financially, the South as a whole struggled to find ways to reinforce and reinvent its economic prosperity. Various entrepreneurial ideas

<sup>60</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 58-9.

floated at state levels and at commercial conventions, and some were made manifest in internal improvements, especially in the expansion of railroads. But most discussions eventually led to methods to strengthen the plantation system. In the 1840s, Texas opened up as a new territory, and migrants flocked there and repeated the same process. Although it took a while for the cotton prosperity to return, southern leaders and planters did not alter their way of life dramatically with the impact of the panic; instead they sought ways to preserve their system at every cause, especially on the ideological and political front.<sup>61</sup>

### **Laying Out his “Garden of Eden”: Ballard in Mississippi, 1837-1840**

Rice Ballard left his native Virginia in the fall of 1836. As mentioned earlier, the 1830s were flush times for western expansion and triggered land speculation mania. Many southerners who had the means could easily seize the new opportunity. Ballard was not an exception, and he had the means to make his transition successful.

Despite the common image that every southern migrant became a farmer or a planter on the frontier, which most migrants aspired for, by this time, the West was creating a variety of opportunities for newcomers. In Turner’s scheme there were sequential waves of migration, starting with the Indian-trader’s frontier to the rancher’s, then finally the farmer’s; eventually the frontier became densely populated enough to create towns and cities with manufacturing industries and the complexities of a developed civilization which completed its evolution. According to this view, the southern frontier had reached maturity and urban centers like New Orleans or Natchez had become populated and prosperous enough that they were attracting former eastern residents to new careers in business. In previous chapters we saw

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<sup>61</sup> Stuart Bruchey, *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy, 1790-1860, Sources and Readings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 115-7.

that many merchants in cities like Richmond began to erect branch offices in New Orleans, and northern capital flooded in to launch businesses as well. The prosperity of cotton made the business of marketing the crop one of the most important in the South, creating various related occupations. Commercial opportunities, as well as the traditional pursuit of land ownership, had become a significant pull factor for the West.

For example, a migrant from Kentucky settled first in Natchez in the 1820s and became a banker, and then went on to become a coffee merchant in New Orleans, a new business formed by the opening of trade with South America. With enough wealth accumulated in this business, he then finally went into agriculture when he married a widow of a wealthy planter. He became one of the most productive, successful cotton planters in the state by the late antebellum period, while acting as a successful moneylender as well.<sup>62</sup>

Ballard moved to the West right before the panic of 1837, which presumably had its positive and negative aspects. Unfortunately, because of the hazards of relocating, his correspondence for the year 1837 does not exist. In a letter from Franklin after the panic had hit, he mentioned that there “can be nothing done at Natchez other in the way of collections or on the banks we had as well secured.”<sup>63</sup>

But overall, Ballard seemed to have settled fairly well in the West. Bacon Tait, a slave trader and his associate from Richmond wrote he was pleased to know Ballard was doing well with “more money than you know what to do with.” Usually, starting a plantation operation in the West took a few years, and correspondence indicates that Ballard initially after his settlement focused more on making arrangements on his responsibilities in the partnership of Ballard, Franklin & Co.’s slave-trading business.

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<sup>62</sup> Example from Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 222. Moneylending by large planters were especially important after the panic of 1837, when many banks seized their operations, and they were more common in Mississippi than Louisiana.

<sup>63</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, late 1837, folder 19, Ballard Papers.

Tait, who had relied on Ballard's network when Ballard was in Richmond, took advantage of his migration to the West to introduce Boudar, his partner in New Orleans, so that Boudar could benefit from Ballard and Franklin's network. Tait also believed that Boudar could depend on Ballard for various financial arrangements. For example, when Virginia banks were not discounting notes for any one, Boudar went West with two negotiable notes in the amount of \$5000 each for Ballard to endorse, and he sent them back to Tait by mail.<sup>64</sup> According to Tait, whose political views aligned with the Whigs, said Boudar had recently changed his political views in accordance with the issue of the United States Bank. Boudar was engaged in a small business and "was getting along very well with it under the benign influence of a Whig administration and US bank." But he later became a Jackson, Van Buren, Kendall Democrat and was criticized by Tait that he "assisted in putting down the US bank and deranging the business of the whole country and more particularly his own." Now Boudar was "asking for as much good old US bank paper as will take him to a distant land where he can make a declaration of Whig sentiments without too great a mortification to his pride," and Tait asked Ballard to "extend to my poor friend a helping hand," especially to "exert in his behalf your influence with Mr. Franklin."<sup>65</sup>

Politically, Ballard was a Whig supporter judging from Tait's letter, at times referring to Ballard as possessing "good Whig principles." This may not be too surprising judging from the fact that Ballard had always been an active merchant in Richmond, and Whig principles was accepted well in places with greater commercial contacts with the outside world and near the mainstream of the national and world economy. On the other hand, Franklin was a "decided Democrat," and a "strong Polk man," according to accounts. Democrats, in general, were more popular in places where the market revolution had not altered ways of life, usually

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<sup>64</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 14 January 1838, folder 20, Ballard Papers.

<sup>65</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 16 January 1838, folder 20, Ballard Papers.

in rural areas, and which embraced the strand of republicanism of self-sufficient individualism. Despite his business in New Orleans and Natchez as a slave trader and his enormous wealth, and despite his investments in various forms of development projects in later years, it can be speculated that this native Tennessean championed territorial expansion and individualism. Undoubtedly, the Democrats' support for slavery as a "positive good" and for racial discrimination suited Franklin's view well. Among these two, Franklin appears to be more of an exception in the Mississippi River valley. Generally in this region, medium and large-sized planters tended to affiliate themselves with the Whig party, and small planters and farmers saw themselves aligned with the Democrats. Although Ballard's political view on territorial expansion is unclear, it can be speculated that his own move was mainly based on pure economic motivation. He judged that his expertise as a trader could be adopted and refined so as to become a successful cotton planter in the West, while carrying on his Whig principles of belief in economic improvement and connections to the greater economic world. With the addition of Ballard's ample means, the transition did not face obstacles and can be seen as a rational economic decision.<sup>66</sup>

Facing a difficult season after the panic, Tait in Richmond was giving thought to engaging in a new opportunity. He had a little capital and the support of his friends, which would be enough for him to enter the auction and commission business. He thought he could "do a perfectly safe and profitable business," and his "profits would be commensurate with the capital." He already had a vision, using large capital to great advantage without high risk, since he "could buy and sell the same negro on commission with perfect fairness both for the man I might sell for and the man I might buy for, the man selling would get the highest

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<sup>66</sup> Ballard papers, *Ibid.* Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*,; John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 138, 145; Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 10.

market price and the man for whom I might be buying would be paying the highest market price which in general turns out to be the best bargain.” If he had to dissolve his copartnership with Boudar, he planned to “buy his negroes for him on commission and attend to them and ship them for hire as heretofore,” and he told Ballard that he would be willing to do the same for him, if he planned to go back “into the trade again, or if you should not feel disposed to have any active agency in buying and selling negroes yourself.” In such a case, Tait suggested that Ballard could “employ some of your capital in that way through Boudar and you could also employ some with me in the commission business.”<sup>67</sup>

Auctioneers were thought to make at least part of their living from the slave trade, and commission brokers, dealers, and financiers were also considered similar professions. They were usually active in cities, and were engaged in a number of commodities besides slaves, and bought the commodities on order and got a good price for those who wanted to sell. Some of them were so specialized that they had their own slave pens and sold hundreds a year through their frequent auctions. They also funded other traders, or employed their own agents to purchase slaves and auctioned them off to collect the commission fee and their own portion of profit.<sup>68</sup>

Tait acted prudently once he thought his idea of running an auction and commission business would be profitable. He went to the Chamberlain’s office and examined the tax records of commission merchants Cosby and Hubbard of Richmond, to calculate their annual profits. There was a rule that all corporations had to pay tax of one percent on all sales made at public auctions, and from that Tait calculated that the two made from “8 to 9 thousand dollars upon their sales at auction,” and Cosby, who appeared to deal with slaves outside the auction scene, made “about one third as much by private sales than he does at public sales,”

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Ballard Papers.

<sup>68</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 113-9.

in which case he made “from 7 to 8 thousand dollars per annum.” Tait reported to Ballard that if he commenced into auction business at his present trading volume, he would be making “three to five thousand dollars,” but in the future he thought the business might be “extended to more than double what it is now if the present business can be extended and I could get order to purchase for others,” in which case he could make “more than \$5000.” Since he has been in the slave trading business and had enough experience and expertise, he planned to begin trading in slaves, saying “negroe business would of course be my aim at first,” but Tait thought, “after a little with funds to make advances I might expect consignments of produce from different quarters.” Tait also clearly knew the advantages of getting into this business. “The beauty of the auction business here,” he said, was that “advances are never here made unless when the property is in possession of the commission merchant, consequently there is no risk in making the advances.” For the first year, he needed \$2,500 to \$3,000 to build a house, and from then on, the costs “would only be for the wages of a clerk.” Tait’s calculations appear to have been well prepared, and he thought this business would generate more profit, with lower risk, and still be a central part of the slave trading business in Richmond where he could rely on his expertise.<sup>69</sup>

Although Tait had his plans laid out, he did not make the move immediately. He was still trading in the partnership with Boudar later that season, although they were struggling to make ends meet. He asked Ballard to “furnish me from time to time with a statement of the collections which have been made” via agent Grimm, so that he would have a better view on how to plan out the purchasing for the next season. The 1838 season did not seem to be a profitable one, despite sending “150 negroes this winter, perhaps 200.” Although he could “borrow any amount we want here, but until we get our little capital in hand [from the collections in the West] I will not go as far on credit as I might as.” If Ballard could collect

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<sup>69</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 16 January 1838, folder 20, Ballard Papers.



some of the debts owed to Tait in the West from the transactions made prior to the panic and furnish it to him, he explained that he would be able to make more purchases.<sup>70</sup>

Correspondence from Mississippi indicated the dire condition of the state after the panic in 1837. Franklin reminded that “not a single note or bill has been paid nor do I believe we will get our dollar from anything in this quarter.” Boudar, gaining a position similar to an agent for Ballard, Franklin & Co., reported to Ballard on the slave trading market in Mississippi and Louisiana. The trade in New Orleans was on its way to recovery with more than 150 negroes in the market in February of 1838, and since none of the banks in Mississippi was functioning, the notes of Mississippi banks were bought by brokers in New Orleans.<sup>71</sup> A different example shows how property values in Mississippi were dramatically declining. William Rives advised an acquaintance that on the way to Clinton, Mississippi with Mississippi currency, he should stop by the sheriff’s sale where they would sell “property land and lots sell for almost nothing and negroes have fallen \$100 a head in the last ten days and will continue to decline.” By April, Mississippi money was sold at “30 to 40 percent discount” in New Orleans, but Franklin was informed from lawyers that “Mississippi money will not be taken for our debts, it would be best to attend the sales [of slaves].”<sup>72</sup>

Many customers who had purchased from Ballard and his network prior to the panic were struggling to pay back their debts. One client from Claiborne County, Mississippi wrote repeatedly to Ballard, saying “I have made so permanent of paying the debt it truly mystifies me,” and asked “if you will extend your lenity a little longer and not sue me I’ll give you my

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<sup>70</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 25 November 1838, folder 25, Ballard Papers. Also the collections Tait referred to was partly on the Mississippi decision of declaring sales made after 1833 void, which made collecting debts nearly impossible. On agent Grimm, see footnote 29 in Chapter 3.

<sup>71</sup> Isaac Franklin to Ballard, Franklin & Co., 5 February 1838, folder 21; Thomas Boudar to Ballard, 8 February 1838, folder 22; Thomas Boudar to Ballard, 1 March 1838, folder 22, all Ballard Papers.

<sup>72</sup> William M. Rives to Jno L. Harrison, 18 March 1838, folder 22; Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 9 April 1838, folder 23, Ballard Papers.

word I shall exert every energy I have and use all the economy in my power to pay you all the next season.” This particular customer intended to pay the debt by her cotton crop income. According to the explanation, her “cotton merchants have had instructions all the time to pay over the proceeds of my cotton on the note,” and she instructed them “to hold on until prices was better,” although she left it “optionary with them, as they were better acquainted with the foreign market,” and the factors seem to have held on, waiting for the best time to sell in Liverpool. She was afraid to urge the factors too much “but to say sell at any price,” although convinced that “they certainly would not after keeping it so long return me accounts of low prices.”<sup>73</sup>

Another factor that made recovery in Mississippi so difficult was the drop of cotton prices that made plantation operations unprofitable. William Terry wrote to Ballard that “this country is broke up pretty much, I have lost faith in myself many plantations in a state of forwardness for planting left without one hand on it ... this is worse than cholera.” He was considering giving up his business and handing over his lands to his children, although disappointingly, they were “not in a givable condition.” Henry Pease informed Ballard that he would need “a little more time on the balance of the note,” and that the “distress was never as great as at present in this section of the country, plantations in this country are being broken up in great numbers, some half dozen in the immediate neighborhood of Woodland plantation,” and that “when I made the promise [to pay] to Maj. Armfield, I did not anticipate such times as the present.”<sup>74</sup>

Mississippi appeared to have been trapped in a downward spiral after the panic. The currency continued to depreciate and there was “no telling when it will be sound,” and “every

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<sup>73</sup> Catherine S. Prince to Ballard, 14 May 1839, folder 25, Ballard Papers.

<sup>74</sup> William Terry to Ballard, 8 April 1839, folder 26; 13 April 1839, Henry H. Pease to Ballard, 13 April 1839, folder 26, all Ballard Papers.

effort of state legislation makes it worse.” William Rives suggested that the road to economic recovery should emphasize the development of industries or an effort by a national bank, but said “the latter will be accomplished in six months, but it will take several years with the former.” Land and slaves were “sacrificed at officers sales, the former bringing scarcely anything and the latter selling very low,” and suggested that slaves would sell better with rising cotton and sugar prices in Louisiana.<sup>75</sup>

Isaac Franklin, who had retired from the slave trading business, had made some rearrangements as well. He had hired Francis Routh as early as 1826 to purchase land and slaves in the most fertile area of Louisiana, where he bought 3,600 acres and 75 slaves in his name that would eventually be passed on to Franklin. In May of 1835, the year Franklin semi-retired from the business, he purchased half of the property that was owned by Routh in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. The property consisted of 7767 acres with 205 slaves, with a purchase price of \$150,000, of which Franklin paid \$106,960.76 in cash with the remainder to be paid the following March. The promissory note drawn was in favor of Ballard, Franklin & Co. With this occasion, Franklin and Routh formed a partnership to work on the cotton plantation that Franklin purchased, although Routh failed to continue the union with his own financial problems, which made Franklin state that Routh had “less judgment and foresight than any man I have ever saw.” Franklin instructed Ballard in March of 1838 to tell Routh not to “exercise any ownership over the property ... and if he does I [Franklin] will be compelled to turn him off the plantation.” Franklin was planning to “lure him off forthwith,” although he “should dislike to do ... on acceptance of his family for they are intirely destitute and Frank in debt not upwards of two hundred thousand dollars, everything that has fallen due has been protested.” Under such condition, Routh was on the verge of being prosecuted

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<sup>75</sup> William M. Rives to Bacon Tait, 25 September 1839, folder 28, Ballard Papers.

by his creditors.<sup>76</sup>

An update from Alexandria explained how the former associates of Franklin & Armfield rearranged their businesses. Armfield began to spend more time in New Orleans and Natchez to discuss the rearrangement of the network with the Franklins and Ballard. George Kephart gradually began to take the place of Armfield who was also on his way to retirement from the trade. Kephart, as the principal associate in the East, informed Ballard that he had recruited W. M ... [illegible] who was “perfectly willing to join and live either here [Alexandria] or Baltimore,” and the purpose of having him was the lack of staff when associates dispersed to different locales during their purchasing and selling periods. Kephart and Purvis in Baltimore were working together on the east coast, and Kephart thought that “concern with Purvis alone, it would be unpleasant for either of us to be in the selling market,” and that “it would suit us both better to have some person in with us that could be on the South all the season,” indicating that having M [illegible] would be beneficial since he would be able to send slaves, probably overland, to the West. While Franklin & Armfield sold the majority of the slaves in New Orleans and Natchez, Kephart appeared to have ventured into new markets such as Charleston. He took 48 negroes to Charleston, in which he sold 27 and left the remaining 21 with a trader named Brewer, and the sales generated \$20,840. But the Charleston market, according to Kephart, witnessed “the money market much tightening,” which made him decide that he “cant send any more to Charleston as they wont sell for a profit.”<sup>77</sup>

The city of Richmond and the traders that resided there had to make adjustments after the departure of their largest trader. According to Tait’s account, the place Ballard used to operate from was now occupied by the jail owner Lumpkin, and a man named Lachet. A

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<sup>76</sup> Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 100-101. Note the price of the plantation is much higher than the average price given by Cashin earlier. See Gudmestad, epilogue in *Troublesome Commerce*. Isaac Franklin to Ballard, 5 March 1838, folder 22, Ballard Papers.

<sup>77</sup> George Kephart to Ballard, 16 March 1838, folder 22, Ballard Papers.

trader by the name of Freeman was trying to bind all the traders in the area, being connected with traders such as Saunders and Overby, and Steady.<sup>78</sup> After Ballard's migration, many Virginia traders relied on him to provide information on the markets in the West. A trader in Norfolk shipped "25 to 30 slaves about an equal portion of male and females" on the brig *Madison*, and wrote that his "business here had prevented me from going to New Orleans with them and have sent Mr. Jacob Hull out in the *Madison* with the slaves." The purpose of this letter to Ballard was to "ascertain through you what slaves are worth in Natchez, and if the prices are better in Natchez than in Orleans," and whether "a ready sale can be made in Natchez on better terms, and price than in Orleans," and whether there was "no danger in bringing slave[s] into Mississippi for sale." Ballard was in position to provide these sorts of information, and since "slaves are very scarce and has been rising" in Norfolk and the trader needed a quick sale with his limited means requesting "return of my funds at once for cash," Ballard had to return the request as soon as possible.<sup>79</sup>

By the time Ballard moved, the transportation revolution in the West had begun to change the landscape, and the purchasers of slaves had become increasingly diverse. While most customers were planters who needed a work force in their farms or individuals in the city who desired domestic servants, some industries began to purchase or hire slaves for their work. A member of West Feliciana Railroad Company who personally had talked with Armfield previously, requested slaves "upon what terms and at what time you can furnish this company with 50 negroe men, 10 women, and 10 boys- payable in Mississippi money, the negroes to be delivered at this place or Bayou Sara Louisa." At a meeting of the board of directors that day, he announced that "a resolution had passed authorizing the purchase [of]

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<sup>78</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 4 August 1839, folder 28, Ballard Papers.

<sup>79</sup> Wm J. Foster to Ballard, 19 November 1839, folder 25, Ballard Papers.

negroes.”<sup>80</sup>

Another responsibility Ballard had to take on after his migration was to manage the credit of his former partner Alsop, who had much money to collect in the West after the panic. The Alsops made some arrangements in their business at home; Samuel Alsop sold his tavern for \$8,000 and had moved to a farm in Massaponax. Joseph, the son, was staying on the original farm and raising crops, although “money [is] very scarce and hard to get,” and the crops “rather short but little made for the market.”<sup>81</sup> Most of the correspondence between Ballard and Alsop after Ballard moved dealt with the issue of collecting debts, especially from P.J. Burress, who had made large purchases from Alsop for years. Alsop relied on Ballard to make the best arrangement with Burress, and ordered to “have the balance well secured by good personal endorsation or a lieu on property.” In the fall of 1838, Burress’s debt to Alsop was estimated at more than \$70,000, and Alsop was willing to wait one year for the balance, provided Burress would make it amply secure by giving additional security. If the collection takes two to three years, Alsop commanded that “the money that is left unpaid to carry ten percent, until it is paid.” The problem of collecting notes in the West via Ballard continued for several years for the Alsops, and they reminded Ballard repeatedly on how they preferred their money to be transferred to Virginia.<sup>82</sup>

The Alsops had not totally distanced themselves from the slave trade even after Ballard relocated. Joseph would report on slave prices in Virginia, and Samuel asked Ballard whether

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<sup>80</sup> W.P. Grayson Carter to Armfield, 13 April 1838, folder 23, Ballard Papers.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 30 January 1838, folder 20; Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 10 February 1838, folder 21, Ballard Papers.

<sup>82</sup> Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 22 November 1838, folder 25; Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 18 January 1839, folder 26; Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 7 April 1839, folder 26, Ballard Papers. Joseph Alsop also asked Ballard to send the interest of the already collected portion of the debts, which would be divided as Joseph’s portion three sevenths and Samuel’s four sevenths. They also wanted all the collected money to be sent to Virginia.

he would sell negroes if he sent out likely ones by ship. Samuel consulted Ballard on selling 30 or so likely negroes in possession for the fall or 1839 season, but the trouble of shipping and collecting money made Joseph prefer to “sell them here [in Virginia] if he can meet with a purchase.” Joseph Alsop, who had long been at the farm in Hazlewood, Spotsylvania, being part of the younger generation of Virginians, appeared to have some aspirations for migrating to the West. He thought he would “buy a good farm in this country and make a permanent location and of others, I feel inclined to try the southwest.” In a letter later in 1839, he wrote again asking Ballard “if you have been to Missouri this summer, let me know what you think of the country and of my going there to reside, for as you know this [Virginia] is a very poor and hard country to live in.” He continued, “I am doing nothing here, making a bare support ... money is very scarce and the times very tight.”<sup>83</sup>

On the personal side, Ballard, whose age is estimated to be in his late 30s at this time, looked for a wife with whom to settle down. Apparently, he had mentioned his intention to others, since an acquaintance was willing to find a wife for him, saying “I am acquainted with every girl from this place [Lexington, Kentucky] to the Gulf of Mexico and to the Atlantic.” Old friend Samuel Alsop was delighted “to hear you talk of marrying as you know I have often advised you to marry and settle your self.” Ballard eventually married Louise Berthe of Louisville, Kentucky in the spring of 1840. This union allowed Ballard to maintain a residence in Louisville, although most of his cotton plantations were in the Mississippi river valley.<sup>84</sup>

Isaac Franklin, after retiring from the trade with an enormous amount of wealth to his name, settled down at the age of fifty with a wife nearly thirty years his junior. But the “one-

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<sup>83</sup> Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 18 January 1839, folder 26; Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 7 April 1839, folder 26; Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 22 October 1839, folder 29, all Ballard Papers. Despite his aspirations, Joseph Alsop remained in Virginia.

<sup>84</sup> Samuel Alsop to Ballard, 20 September 1838, folder 24, Ballard Papers.

eyed man” had some business to attend before he was able to start his marriage life. Apparently, Franklin held a slave girl as his lover and had a child with her, and had to take them away as soon as possible. J. Cage, Franklin’s acquaintance, wrote to William Cotton in Louisville that he would be handed by Mr. Douglass, “Franklin’s girl Lucinda and child,” and said “I presume he has advised you on the subject, our friend [Franklin] having married a very pretty and highly accomplished young girl, it becomes our duties as friends ... in making all things easy.” Apparently, Ballard took part in this arrangement, since Ballard had informed Cage about Cotton being “a smooth hand on cuffs” and they made up a story that Cotton was “an old trader,” and that the girl “remained unsold on your hands last spring and that she had come up in company with some of Mr. Franklin’s people from below.” They supposed that Cotton had written to Cage to “employ some person to take her to Louisville in the stage.” Cage reminded that this story should not reach the “old man, as he is now married.”<sup>85</sup>

Cashin argued that many single migrants married once they settled down on the frontier. With marriage, they were taking on the responsibility as heads of households, and were attempting to recreate the society and class they came from. Also, it was not surprising that Ballard decided to marry after he went to the West. The ownership of a plantation and the occupation of planter gave him the stability to lead a married life, which was never achieved as a slave trader in Richmond, despite the profitability of the business. Franklin’s marriage to a woman from one of the most prominent families in Tennessee was only possible after he retired from the slave trading business.

The late 1830s was a transition period for Ballard in terms of both his personal life and his career, and it was also a time of rapid economic and social change for the entire South.

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<sup>85</sup> Jess Case to William Cotton, 27 August 1839, folder 28, Ballard Papers; Baptist, “‘Cuffy,’ ‘Fancy Maids’ and ‘One-Eyed men’”, 184. On Franklin’s marriage, see Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 18-21.



Ballard attempted to expand his land ownership, and bought a plantation in Kentucky, near Louisville, where his wife was from, although his friend Bacon Tait tried to convince him to buy a place in the “forks [of the road],” which undoubtedly would have been convenient for the slave-trading business. He later settled his main residence in Louisville, although during most of the year he would spend his time in his plantations in Mississippi.<sup>86</sup>

While Ballard may have been overwhelmed with the various duties he had to engage in while establishing himself as a planter, by the end of the decade, his operations were beginning to generate profit. By the time Ballard migrated, not many young migrants were able to envision westward migration as an opportunity of upward mobility as they did in the past. More migrations ended in disappointing results than in success. Ballard was an exception who had the means and the network to fall back on, and obtained the most fertile portion of land in the West. In fact, it is difficult to categorize a migrant like Ballard under the Turnerian perspective of an independent farmer. With his residence in Kentucky and several plantations scattered in the West, he was more an absentee owner, or a modern entrepreneur who ran numerous “factory in the fields.”<sup>87</sup>

The following chapter will focus on Ballard’s plantation operations, and his ongoing business in slave trading. He was never able to totally cut himself off from the slave trading network, but his managerial focus had shifted to his “factory in the fields;” his cotton crops and his own slaves, which posed some new and some familiar challenges to him as a trader, businessman, and a planter.

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<sup>86</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 26 November 1838, folder 25, Ballard Papers.

<sup>87</sup> The term by Kenneth Stampp. See Kenneth Stampp, *Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage, 1956).

## **Chapter 5**

### **In the World of Cotton:**

#### **Plantation Management and the Marketing of a Global Commodity**

In the summer of 1835, Isaac Franklin, nearing his retirement from the slave trading business, received a letter from merchant Benjamin Story of New Orleans. Benjamin Story was the perfect merchant to receive any information or judgment on the direction of the Atlantic market. He was the trusted resident agent of the House of Alexander Brown and Company. This trading house, originally based in Baltimore, had branches in major cities on both sides of the Atlantic, and in terms of Anglo-American trade volume was only rivaled by perhaps Baring Brothers & Co. and George Peabody & Co. Story reported on the rainy weather conditions of that season, stating that the cotton stalk had grown too large to expect a favorable crop. Regarding cotton prices, he commented that “future prices depend on the raw material at Liverpool and Havre and at the manufacturer in England,” and that the house was receiving news that prices were currently too high, which may cause a decline by the end of the season. Another factor that may have affected the price was that despite the prediction that supply from the U.S. to Liverpool would be less than the previous year, “the expected prices from Egypt and Bombay will have an effect to put down prices.” According to Story, the advice from the East Indies indicated the “demand for cotton goods to be on a large scale quoting a good profit to shipping,” and that it was “as much in favour of [Indian] cotton as any thing I have been of late.” He reflected on past trends in prices and suggested that the purchases would be made at 10 to 15 cents according to the quality. In addition to the

increasing competition from cotton producers around the world, Story warned Franklin that “agitation of the abolition of slavery will cause those who have money out on interest in this country to withdraw those funds from this country.”<sup>1</sup>

A cotton planter’s world and a slave trader’s world overlapped on various grounds, which enabled them to engage in both. From their early development, they were both economically dependent on northern and foreign credit, and later, their defense of slavery against the abolition and emancipation movement both domestically and internationally, supported a similar vision of southern economic development. But while there were similarities, and while Ballard had sufficient knowledge and information about the cotton market from his experience in slave trading, running his own plantation opened up new opportunities, forced him to adopt new strategic methods, and to develop new types of networks. As Benjamin Story’s letter suggested, southern cotton exporters became automatically connected to a wider global market for their crop. In addition, by the 1830s when Ballard relocated to the West, further development of the cotton trade was based on how to protect and expand free trade policies against political and ideological challenges at the federal level. As people’s notion of cotton as a global commodity became solidified, proslavery southerners used cotton production as a tool to justify their embracement of free trade principles and to draw connections between their proslavery ideology and an economically profitable system for the entire region and beyond. Cotton wealth was not only benefiting the South, but by the 1830s, southerners knew very well that northerners also profited from the marketing of the golden crop. While tobacco, wheat, and rice had been international crops from the eighteenth century, the scale and volume of cotton had much greater implications in terms of affecting the direction of the nation’s economy and politics. Not only did cotton impact the defense of

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Story to Isaac Franklin, 30 August 1835, folder 17, Ballard papers. On the House of Brown, see Edwin J. Perkins, *Financing the Anglo-American Trade: The House of Brown, 1800-1881* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

plantation slavery, it became a central issue in warfare, political party formations, land policy, and worldwide commerce. The profoundly international scope of the trade opened people's notions to a wider awareness of increased global, transnational integration that was taking place in the early nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

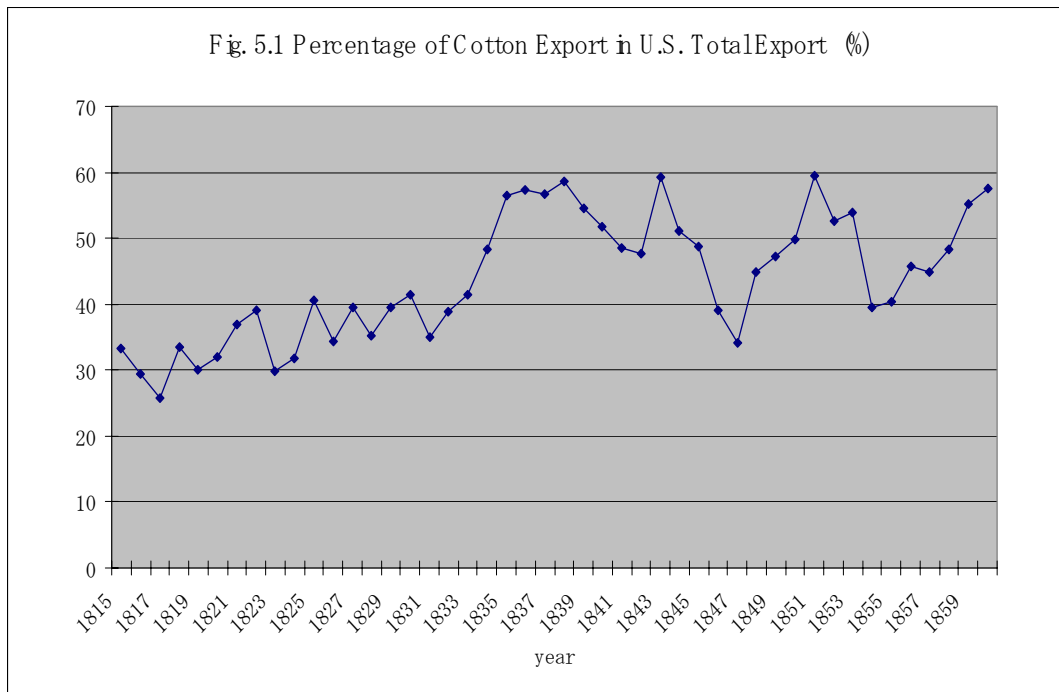
This chapter will follow Ballard's new career as a planter and detail how he managed to take control of his expanding cotton operations that spread over several states. Ballard's surroundings in the 1840s and the early 1850s will be the main focus, but developments surrounding the world of cotton and the southern economy will be explored as well. Ballard continued to stay involved in the domestic slave trade while running his plantations. Although no longer an active participant, the trade played an important part in his commercial life in the West. With expertise in every aspect of slave trading and ready access into the business, he fully utilized its speedy transactions to build a slave empire of his own. He purchased what he needed, and sold the unnecessary, in an economically rational manner. He relied on his personal network of traders, and often instructed them to conduct business on his behalf, while the traders frequently sought advice from him.

The emergence of cotton as a major staple commodity in the 1790s changed the direction and future of the entire South. Western lands acquired in the early nineteenth century suited the growth of this crop environmentally, and western movement of the slave population followed cotton's geographical expansion. Cotton production and the wealth it generated

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<sup>2</sup> For history of the cotton trade and cotton economy in the nineteenth century in general, see Matthew B. Hammond, *The Cotton Industry: An Essay in American Economic History* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1897); Thomas Ellison, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain* (1886; repr., New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968); William N. Parker ed., *The Structure of the Cotton Economy of the Antebellum South* (Washington D.C.: Agricultural History Society, 1970); Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 1978); Sven Beckert, "Cotton: A Global History," in *Interactions: Transregional Perspectives on World History*, ed. Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Anand A. Yang (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005):48-63. Sven Beckert's book on the history of nineteenth century world cotton trade, *Empire of Cotton*, is anticipated.

funded and sustained the South, as westward expansion and the protection of slavery for the South became complexly interrelated in the antebellum era. The cotton trade powerfully affected the direction of the entire national economy, occupying 41.4% of national export in 1830, and 57.5% by 1860. Eventually cotton and slavery became central components in the increasing sectionalism, the two factors that solidified the ideological view of southerners in the antebellum era (fig.5.1).<sup>3</sup>



Source) Bruchey ed., *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy, 1790-1860*, 22.

The richest soil for cotton production was the alluvial river bottoms along the Mississippi River in the states of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas, and the Red River region of Louisiana, all of which were admitted to the Union after 1800. Not surprisingly, highly

<sup>3</sup> Philip Foner, *Business and Slavery: The New York Merchants and the Irrepressible Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941); Brian Schoen, “The Fragile Fabric of the Union: The Cotton South, Federal Policies, and the Atlantic World, 1783-1861” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 2004). Statistics from Stuart Bruchey, *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy, 1790-1860: Sources and Readings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967).

productive plantations with large concentrations of slaves quickly appeared in the area.<sup>4</sup> Cotton became a means for cash and credit, and profits were quickly reinvested to enlarge landholding and work forces. But unlike rice or sugar which required technologically efficient machineries, cotton could also be grown on a small tract of land, even without a slave force. The majority of southerners did not own slaves, and those who did generally had very few. In 1850, 71 % of slaveowners owned less than 10, and 89% owned less than 20, the threshold generally considered necessary to qualify as a member of the planter class. Percentages for 1860 are seen in table 5.1.<sup>5</sup>

Whitney's gin in 1793 has been credited for the spurt of production and its timing coincided with the booming cotton demand in Britain to supply the Lancashire textile mills, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.<sup>6</sup> Large planters typically had several gins with eighty saws, although sixty saws were the most common, and may have had several gin houses with horsepower for each, or a large single gin house with a steam engine.<sup>7</sup> Increasing

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<sup>4</sup> Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, 22. On the history of cotton production and its technological improvement, see Angele Lakwete, *Inventing the Cotton Gin: Machine and Myth in Antebellum America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Bruchey ed., *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy, 1790-1860*, 165.

<sup>6</sup> Wright, *Political Economy*, 13. Wright has emphasized that there was an early demand for a gin that could separate cotton fibers from the seed existed long before Whitney's invention. Lakwete, *Inventing the Cotton Gin*. Also see Thomas Ellison, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain*, Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2002), chap. 8,9.

<sup>7</sup> Gins in the mid-nineteenth century ranged from forty to eighty saws, with sixty saws being most common, and the price would usually cost three to four dollars a saw. Most southern cities in the cotton belt would house agents who specialized in selling cotton gins, and gin orders were sent to manufacturers in cities such as Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and later Prattsville, Alabama and Griswoldville, Georgia. John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 58-64, 69-71. Gin machinery improved greatly in the 1850s with the usage of wires to separate cotton fiber from the seed, than the steel previously used. Gins lasted usually around 2 to 3 seasons. Steam engine was capable of running several gins at one time, while horsepower could not run more than two, so larger planters usually preferred steam engines, which would require huge capital investment. These buildings would at least have gin stands, cotton press, grist and flour mill, sawmill, among other machineries.

technological efficiency in cotton production was accompanied by various other breakthroughs, including the refinement of cotton pressing machinery that began around the turn of the century, reducing the cost of transporting packed cotton, pressing 300 to 400 bales of cotton into 150 to 250 pound bags.<sup>8</sup> For the cotton region of the lower Mississippi Valley, the introduction of Mexican varieties of cotton seeds, such as “Petit Gulf” that Ballard apparently adopted on his plantations, suited the soil and accelerated output, producing

**Table 5.1** Slaves and Slaveholders, Mississippi and Louisiana, 1860

	Mississippi (%)	Louisiana (%)
1 slave	4856 (15.7)	4092 (18.57)
2 slaves	3201 (10.34)	2573(11.68)
3 slaves	2503 (8.1)	2034(9.23)
4 slaves	2129 (6.9)	1536(6.97)
5 slaves	1809 (5.85)	1310(5.9)
6 slaves	1585 (5.12)	1103(5)
7 slaves	1303 (4.2)	858(3.9)
8 slaves	1149 (3.7)	771(3.5)
9 slaves	1024 (3.3)	609(2.76)
10 and under 15	3432 (11.1)	2065(9.37)
15 and under 20	2057 (6.65)	1157(0.7)
20 and under 30	2322 (7.5)	1241(5.63)
30 and under 40	1143 (3.7)	695(3.15)
40 and under 50	755 (2.44)	413(1.87)
50 and under 70	814 (2.63)	560(2.54)
70 and under 100	545 (1.76)	469(2.13)
100 and under 200	279 (0.9)	460(2.09)
200 and under 300	28 (0.09)	63(0.29)
300 and under 500	8 (0.02)	20(0.09)
500 and under 1000	1 (0.003)	4(0.018)
Total slaveholders	30943	22033

Source) Harold D. Woodman, *Slavery and the Southern Economy: Sources and Readings*, 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 4-6, 11.

greater quantities of better quality cotton that was easier to pick.<sup>9</sup>

Ballard entered this new world of cotton at the center of its production in the alluvial lands. He moved to Natchez, Mississippi, a place he knew well from his slave trading business, indeed, the place where Ballard, Franklin & Co. based their operation. He had visited the city before, and relied on personal commercial ties to the area to settle. Natchez was an ideal depot for slaves traded from the East, and a place where wealthy cotton planters gathered for both social and commercial purposes. Although the lower Mississippi Valley region appeared to be at the westernmost frontier that began to boom economically with new migrants and cotton production after entering the union, the area had a complex economic and political background. In addition to the conquest of indigenous people, conflict amongst European empires over control of the region, indicated from early on the region's commercial significance as the westernmost frontier of the Atlantic world.

### **The Settlement of Mississippi and Louisiana**

For the slaves traded by Franklin & Armfield, Natchez or New Orleans was their last stop before they would be sold to their final destination, whether it was a plantation, an urban aristocratic residence, or a manufacturing site. Both cities gained strategic significance and notoriety as the entrepôt for slaves arriving via land and sea. The development of the cities and the entire region would indicate that it had the advantage to develop as a slave market in the early nineteenth century. It will also illuminate the region's role in the Atlantic world and

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<sup>9</sup> Experimentation with cotton seed samples from various areas included those from South America, Asia, and the Middle East, which began in the colonial era. See Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode, ““Wait a Cotton Pickin’ Minute!”: A New View of Slave Productivity” (Paper presented at the Alfred D. Chandler Lecture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, August, 2005), 10-17, for account on experimenting and development of various seed from colonial era to mid nineteenth century. The author would like to thank Professor Paul W. Rhode for permission to cite the paper. On Mexican cotton, see Olmstead and Rhode, *Ibid.*, 18-26.



how the region was destined to become the center of the southern economy.

The Natchez region of Mississippi was occupied by the French as the northern outpost of Louisiana in the early eighteenth century. Natchez had rich soil and forests, and from early on tobacco became a dominant staple under French rule. During the period of French rule, tobacco was produced by slaves on plantations. The early slaves that arrived in Louisiana were from the Senegambia region of West Africa, transported across the Atlantic in accordance with the mercantilist strategies of the French empire.<sup>10</sup> But in time, the centralization of French settlements in Louisiana made the distance to Natchez inconvenient for further development, which resulted in stagnation of the Mississippi valley throughout the rest of the eighteenth century, although Natchez did develop as a hub for deerskin trade. Plantation slavery was thus limited along a narrow geographical area along the Mississippi River. By the time French left after the Seven Year's War in 1763, and Louisiana was divided between English and Spanish rule, Natchez had become a permanent settlement as a part of British province of West Florida, and the declining deerskin trade was replaced by British merchant firms and their trading network. From the 1760s, the British government encouraged settlers into the Natchez district by maximizing headrights and offering land grants for those who improved lands for cultivation, and many of these mid-eighteenth century migrants arriving in Mississippi were from Maryland and the Carolinas, who brought their slaves with them.<sup>11</sup> During the Revolution, Spaniards invaded West Florida in 1780 and the region benefited from its access to the Spanish Atlantic network. With the encouragement

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<sup>10</sup> David J. Libby, *Slavery and Frontier in Mississippi, 1720-1835* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 8-9. French slavery was racial slavery, or chattel slavery, as we know of the slavery that developed in the New World, which was different from the concept of slavery among Indians, who saw slaves as outside of the society, but with no racial or economic underpinnings. On the geographical and natural characteristics of the region, see Thomas D. Clark and John D. W. Guice, *The Old Southwest, 1795-1830: Frontiers in Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Libby, *Ibid.*, 17-21. Pensacola was the colonial capital of the province of West Florida.

of the Spanish authorities, the area evolved again into a staple-producing plantation region, initially tobacco, but within a few years, a new staple, indigo, became a profitable cash crop. Spanish rule also opened up direct importation of African slaves from their transatlantic slave trading network, and the high prices of the cash crops allowed planters to continue purchasing slaves in large numbers. By the time the area became part of the United States under the Treaty of San Lorenzo in 1795, and the subsequent establishment of a government for Mississippi territory in 1798, indigo production had rapidly declined and cotton production began to take off. Migrants poured in from every eastern state. According to John Hebron Moore, between 1795 and 1800, all of the former slaves that worked on tobacco plantations in the region were quickly transformed into workers for cotton plantations. The transition from tobacco to cotton was done easily, because the crops shared similar cultivation methods and tools required for production. Both crops also adopted the gang system as the method to monitor slave labor.<sup>12</sup> With the emergence of cotton as a profitable cash staple and Mississippi's assimilation into the Union in 1817, the region attracted further migrants seeking cotton fortunes.<sup>13</sup> By the 1820s, Mississippi and Louisiana; had surpassed the former cotton-producing states of South Carolina and Georgia in their output volume of the staple (table 5.2).

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<sup>12</sup> Libby, *Ibid.* Initially in the 1760s Spanish government blocked Natchez's British colonist access to New Orleans, but after the Revolution Spanish crown deliberately purchased all tobacco produced in the Natchez district at higher price to improve their economy which resulted in rapid development of the region. Tobacco in Natchez district produced twice the output compared to the farms in the east coast. The subsidy was withdrawn in 1790, forcing American produce to be marketed in New Orleans, which forced tobacco planters out of business from fierce competition. See Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 3-5, 76-7.

<sup>13</sup> Moore, *Ibid.*, 131-2. Unfortunately, these migrants brought to the West the same primitive and exhausting cultivation methods that damaged the soil quality faster than if they had applied effective conservations processes.

**Table 5.2** Cotton Production by Individual States (in millions of pounds), Percentage, and Relative Rank, 1821- 1859

State	1821	1826	1833	1834	1839	1849	1859
South Carolina	50.0 28.2% (1)	70.0 21.2% (2)	73.0 16.7% (2)	65.5 14.3% (4)	61.7 7.8% (5)	120.0 12.2% (4)	141.0 6.9% (7)
Georgia	45.0 25.4% (2)	75.0 22.7% (1)	88.0 20.0% (1)	75.0 16.4% (3)	163.4 20.7% (2)	199.6 20.2% (2)	312.3 15.4% (3)
Alabama	20.0 11.3% (3)	45.0 13.6% (3)	65.0 14.8% (4)	85.0 18.6% (1)	117.1 14.8% (4)	225.8 22.9% (1)	440.5 21.7% (2)
Mississippi	10.0 5.7% (5)	20.0 6.0% (6)	70.0 15.9% (3)	85.0 18.6% (1)	193.2 24.3% (1)	194.0 19.7% (3)	535.1 26.4% (1)
Louisiana	10.0 5.7% (5)	38.0 11.5% (4)	55.0 12.5% (5)	62.0 13.5% (5)	153.9 19.5% (3)	71.5 7.2% (6)	311.0 15.4% (4)

Source) Bruchey, *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy*, 18-20

Although Natchez and other cities such as Vicksburg and Columbus developed into market towns, their population remained low, and in Mississippi, only Natchez surpassed 5,000 inhabitants during the antebellum era. Cities in Mississippi never grew out of the shadow of the dominating influence of the commercial city of New Orleans, despite the fact that the city was founded later than Natchez. Commission merchants from all trading parties gathered in New Orleans and lucrative businesses flourished. Flatboats and keelboats up to the 1820s, and steamboats thereafter provided easy access to the Crescent City from upper Mississippi, which led necessary financial and business activities to center there, and not beyond.<sup>14</sup>

The founding of Louisiana in particular should be considered in the context of imperial competition among France, Great Britain and Spain. These nations strived to maintain their imperial power and territorial security often by maneuvering the surrounding Indian nations

<sup>14</sup> For details on the development of the cities in Mississippi, see Moore, *Ibid.*,204-31.

in the area by aligning them against one another.<sup>15</sup>

The French colonized Louisiana in 1699, first as a royal colony and later after Antoine Crozat, a French financier who was awarded from Louis XIV a fifteen year royal charter for Louisiana in 1712, suffered financial problems and returned the colony to the crown in 1717. Eventually the settling of Louisiana began under the new charter, the Company of the Indies, providing land grants to those who purchased shares.<sup>16</sup> The city of New Orleans served as a frontier market town, a major port, provincial capital, and a military center with French troops by the mid-eighteenth century, and its population components were diverse, which contributed to its cosmopolitan character. By then, the consumer society of the New Orleans residents had created a distinct French culture with goods imported by the predominantly French merchant community.<sup>17</sup>

The colony early on experimented unsuccessfully with various cash crops, eventually finding profit with the fur and skin trades. The subsequent increase in population led to tobacco cultivation on plantations, which did not do well compared to Mississippi and disappeared by the third decade of the eighteenth century. Indigo and rice followed, as well as corn, peas, lumber products, and various others, all of which showed some output but did not succeed as long-run commercial staples. French Louisiana also lacked adequate support, investment, and immigrants from the home country, and necessary credit resources and banking facilities for development lagged behind. Merchants often had difficulties remitting their notes, which made conducting business uncertain. Their military weakness also left

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<sup>15</sup> On the details of maneuvering of southwestern Indian nations, see Adam Rothman, "The Expansion of Slavery in the Deep South, 1790-1820" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2000), chap.3

<sup>16</sup> Bradley G. Bond ed. Introduction to *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); John G. Clark, *New Orleans, 1718-1812: An Economic History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 3-20.

<sup>17</sup> Clark, *New Orleans*, 51, on colonial merchants, see *Ibid.*, 88-106.

them vulnerable in the ongoing struggle with the European powers. By the end of the French era, the colony was economically in bad shape, and the French government had lost interest in further development of the colony.<sup>18</sup>

Louisiana was ceded to Spain from France under the agreements of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, and they quickly eradicated French authorities to create a Spanish bureaucratic structure. English merchants had a strong presence during the Spanish era with their access to navigation on the Mississippi, and they were able to retain mercantile connections in the face of competition with Spanish and French merchants. The scale and scope of plantation operations expanded after the American Revolution, with indigo and tobacco as important sources of revenue. Tobacco was the largest crop produced in the colony in the 1780s when the Spanish Crown agreed to purchase all of the tobacco produced in Louisiana. But by the turn of the century, Louisiana tobacco had lost out to American tobacco. Under Spanish rule, New Orleans in particular, became an important center for trade with the interior regions of the U.S., and developed strong commercial ties with France, Britain, and the West Indies. Spain controlled the colony until 1802 when it handed over Louisiana to France once again, only to be purchased by the United States the following year. Napoleon, whether because of the effect of the Revolution in St. Domingue, or under financial pressures, or in order to prevent an Anglo-American alliance in the region, agreed to sell Louisiana, signaling a triumph of Thomas Jefferson's presidency that arguably determined the fate of the West.<sup>19</sup>

The economic landscape changed dramatically when sugar cane was introduced to Louisiana in the early nineteenth century. St. Domingue refugees following the Revolution are said to have successfully transplanted the knowledge of sugar planting in Louisiana. The

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<sup>18</sup> Clark, *Ibid.*, 53-9, 107-25. On fur trade and negotiations with Indians, see *Ibid.*, 193-201.

<sup>19</sup> Rothman, "Expansion," 25-30. On tobacco, see Clark, *Ibid.*, 188-92. On the economic impact of Spanish Louisiana, see Clark, *Ibid.*, 158-80.

number of refugees was estimated at more than 25,000 between 1791 and 1810, and the importation of Africans increased during the same period, totaling near 10,000 between 1795 and 1808.<sup>20</sup> Louisiana already had a high proportion of African population, but the founding of the sugar industry and its requirement of a large slave labor force cemented that trend. Louisiana became the last member to join into the sugar-producing Atlantic world at its northern rim, a world centered in the Caribbean islands since the seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup>

Louisiana had a semitropical climate, but compared to the Caribbean islands, sugar was not an easy crop to grow under given natural circumstances. Sugar promoted industrial development and technology at highly advanced levels compared to other cash crops in the South. Sugar planters were said to have invested about 12 times more per acre on machinery compared to cotton. Sugar mills adopted steam power from early on, and highly skilled laborers were disciplined under assembly-line gang work management that promised to maximize profit. Historians have referred to sugar plantations as “industrial units with a definite organizational model and architectural specificity.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, sugar plantations

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<sup>20</sup> Kevin David Roberts, “Slaves and Slavery in Louisiana: The Evolution of Atlantic World Identities, 1791-1831” (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2003) 24; Clark, *Ibid.*, 217-9. On cultural impact of the refugees, see Nathalie Dessens, “From Saint Domingue to Louisiana: West Indian Refugees in the Lower Mississippi Region,” in Bond, *French Colonial Louisiana*, 244-64. Kulikoff estimates that 26,000 slaves were imported to Louisiana and Mississippi between 1790 and 1810, and 18,000 were Africans. Quote from Rothman, “Expansion,” 77. The fear of a rebellion put state officials in dilemma between limiting importation but the necessity of them for the cane industry. For more detail, along with the impact of African culture on New Orleans, see Roberts, *Ibid.*, 35-100.

<sup>21</sup> On the disproportionate population estimates of French American colonies in the early eighteenth century, see James Pritchard, “Population in French America, 1670-1730: The Demographic Context of Colonial Louisiana,” in Bond ed., *French Colonial Louisiana*, 175-203. For sugar, see footnote 23.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (1933; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 15; Nathalie Dessens, *Myths of the Plantations Society: Slavery in the American South and the West Indies* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 48. Dessens explains the commonalities of societal development between the Caribbean colonies and mainland colonies, and one focus is on the economic patterns based on agricultural production and plantation systems. The lack of machinery on cotton plantations is only in comparison with the more technological procedures required in sugar. For the developments of machinery on cotton plantations, see Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 57-72. For developments on sugar plantations, see Roberts, “Slaves and Slavery,” 204n6, from *Niles Weekly Register*, Dec 11 1830.

required much initial capital: one account estimated \$15,000 for the land and machinery, in addition to the estimated \$30,000 or so necessary to purchase at least 50 negroes to run a profitable operation. Others estimated the initial investment for an 800 acre, 60 hand plantation at more than \$84000. But the high profitability, available credit from stable Louisiana finance, and the assistance of the federal tariff promised a realization of return within 5 years, which attracted the rich to multiply their fortunes. Also, sugar plantations disproportionately required male slaves for their intense regimented labor on fields, and young fertile women for reproductive purposes, a common trend throughout the Atlantic sugar economies that necessitated constant supply of labor through trade.<sup>23</sup>

Although the sugar industry in Louisiana became characterized by sophisticated production units similar to that of a modern manufacturing industry, and planters' strategic management and entrepreneurial attitude toward their operations proved successful, the industry may not have been as conducive to the promotion of internal improvements as were economic developments in the North. Sugar successfully melded agriculture and industry, and planters were naturally capitalistic and market-oriented, but also highly individualistic and could be vulnerable against competition from Caribbean production. Compared to cotton, sugar was not as dominant as a global commodity, and geographically the production was limited to the swamiest soil along the lower Mississippi River in the state of Louisiana. (table 5.3, 5.4). The sugar industry, compared to cotton, never fully influenced or impacted

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<sup>23</sup> A large part of my knowledge on the sugar industry in Louisiana comes from the recent work by Richard Follet, *Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005). For the industry's development, see in particular 14-45. Male slaves consisted as high as 85 % of the slaves sold to sugar planters, and were said to be about an inch taller than other slaves. More than 70% of slaves imported to New Orleans were male; even some of the samples from Franklin & Armfield's traded slaves indicate the heavily skewed sex ratio of the New Orleans slave market. Donald M. Sweig, "Reassessing the Human Dimension of the Interstate Slave Trade," *Prologue: the Journal of National Archives* 12 (Spring 1980); Follet, *Ibid.*, 46-89. The average number of slaves on a Louisiana sugar plantation in 1830 was 52, which increased in the 1840s and 1850s to 76 and 85 respectively, and by the eve of the Civil War, most plantations had more than 110. Follet, *Ibid.*, 24-5.

the direction of national policies. Nonetheless, the effect of successful sugar production on the mainland was significant in its contribution to the population composition of the region and the development of mercantile and service sectors in the city of New Orleans.

Long before the introduction of sugar, every aspect of societal life in Louisiana was centered in New Orleans, the chief entrepôt and the most cosmopolitan city of the South throughout the antebellum era. The city was founded in 1718, as a center for French imperial ambition to populate the region and produce tobacco to counter their dependence on Virginia exports. The population grew slowly by New World standards. African slaves were imported in early stages of development, and large numbers of slaves arrived in Louisiana by the hands

**Table 5.3** Production of Cane Sugar in the Principal Sugar Producing States and Percentage, 1850 and 1860 (hogsheads, %)

states	1850	1860
Louisiana	226001 (95.4)	221726 (96)
Texas	7032 (3)	5099 (2.2)
Florida	2750 (1.16)	1669 (-)
Georgia	846(-)	1167 (-)
Mississippi	8 (-)	506 (-)
US total	236814	230982

Source) Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 748.

Note) The numbers may not add up to 100 because it was rounded.

Under 1% neglected.

of several trading companies from 1722, perhaps as many as some 6,000 negroes were in the city by 1731.<sup>24</sup> A sufficient number of slaves were present by 1724, resulting in the creation of the Code Noir, which controlled the behavior of slaves and their owners.<sup>25</sup> The failure of tobacco followed by the stagnant indigo and rice productions led to a virtual halt of slave

<sup>24</sup> Roberts, "Slaves and Slavery," 12-15.

<sup>25</sup> On early Louisiana population see Paul LaChance, "The Growth of Free and Slave Populations of French Colonial Louisiana," in Boyd, *French Colonial Louisiana*, 204-243.



imports in the mid eighteenth century, but by the end of the century importation resumed and New Orleans became even more populated with Africans. New Orleans slaves worked in various domestic and industrial occupations, and large numbers of free slaves resided in the city: more than 20% of the population in 1820, which was the highest number among North American cities.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 5.4** Sugar Production in Louisiana (hogsheads)

year	hogsheads	year	Hogsheads
1832	70000	1847	240000
17833	75000	1848	220000
1834	100000	1849	247923
1835	30000	1850	211201
1836	70000	1851	236547
1837	65000	1852	321934
1838	70000	1853	449324
1839	115000	1854	346635
1840	87000	1855	231427
1841	90000	1856	73976
1842	140000	1857	279697
1843	100000	1858	362296
1844	200000	1859	221840
1845	186000	1860	228758
1846	140000	1861	459410

Source) Gray, *History of Agriculture*, and Follet, *Sugar Masters*, 23.

As the New Orleans hinterlands became productive agricultural plantations, the city became an entrepôt for the interior, encompassing Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, and beyond. The role of the port facilitated the development of a financial system which contributed to the dependency of the vast southwestern region on New Orleans. Planters in the hinterlands would usually have their own agents in New

<sup>26</sup> Clark, *New Orleans*, 23-4, 128- 135. Rothman, “Expansion,” chap. 4. The development of New Orleans and Louisiana as a slave society has been explored in many works, such as Thomas N. Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Early Deep South, 1718-1819* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

Orleans, and overseas firms would establish branches there. Business connections between planters, shippers, and domestic and foreign merchants had transformed the city into a thriving commercial center.

New Orleans and Natchez both developed into flourishing slave-trading centers. Location-wise, the former served most sugar planters in Louisiana and the latter was at the heart of the cotton region, although each did provide slaves for both sugar and cotton production. Natchez eventually removed its slave exchange center outside of the city limits owing to public criticisms and legal restriction that followed, forming the Forks of the Road. New Orleans was a peculiar market owing to the skewed demographics desired for sugar production, a clear contrast to the cotton plantations where sex ratios tended to be more balanced. New Orleans had a thriving hiring market early on for slaves in the city who would hire themselves out for domestic service, but the selling market took off with the arrival of sugar. Compared to Natchez, New Orleans was a more active market, providing younger, constant supplies of slaves in order to satisfy the sugar lords, and auction houses and jails developed around Gravier Street, Barronne Street and Esplanade Street. New Orleans market was known for its notoriety and was always full of masters and professional slave traders who categorized and read slaves' bodies to extract the most of what the slave could offer. Judging all physical attributes to fit their needs, the scene represented the manifestation of power relations in plantation culture, and the rational economic attitude of sustaining a profitable system.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, both Mississippi and Louisiana benefited from the ongoing changes in the global economy and the expansion of slavery. Britain demanded a continuing supply of cotton, and sugar demand both domestically and abroad continued to increase. Planters strived to

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<sup>27</sup> Follet, *Sugar Masters*, 46-89; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 45-77, 135-61. A small sign stands at the Forks of the Road today to indicate the destination and selling point of thousands of slaves. Gravier, Barronne, and Esplanade streets are located at the heart of the financial district of New Orleans today.

improve their production capacity and technology, and the government in many ways supported the acceleration of its production. But foremost, both of these crops were supported by the endless supply of slaves from the eastern states. The key to the Old South's ability to enter the global commodity trade in the nineteenth century and the key to the region's growth derived from the fact that it had become a slave-based economy.

### **Ballard's New Business Network and the Cotton Factors: Agents of Interregional and International Trade**

Although Ballard moved to Natchez in 1836, eventually Ballard's family life became centered in Louisville, Kentucky. In the spring of 1840, he married Louise Berthe, who was from Louisville, and she and their three daughters (born in the 1840s) resided in that city. Ballard spent more than half of the year on his plantations in the West, and he corresponded frequently with his wife on family matters while he was away. One of the commission merchants that Ballard relied on for commercial transactions was based in Louisville; the firm of Adams and Anderson, and it dealt mainly in pork and foodstuffs. Nalle & Cox, the firm of merchants Albert Nalle and William Cox, was his chief factor in New Orleans marketing his cotton, and this firm also handled his operations in Kentucky, sending imported goods to Ballard's wife and family.<sup>28</sup> He held several hemp plantations in Kentucky that others looked after when he was away.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For example, in January of 1845, Nalle & Cox in New Orleans sent to the care of Messrs W&C Fellows & Co. in Louisville, via Steamer *Talma* following goods to send to Mrs. Ballard: cordials, Malaza grapes, Havana sweet meats, jar of Canton ginger, Curacao cordial, boxes of sardines, brandy fruits, box containing cloak, etc., and the fruits and cordials are "of our own [Nalle & Cox] selection." Nalle & Cox to Mrs. Ballard, 9 January 1845, folder 82, Ballard Papers.

<sup>29</sup> It is unclear how much expertise Ballard had in cultivating and managing hemp, and how profitable the plantations in Kentucky were. But on one occasion, an overseer from Kentucky informed, "if you do not expect to be at home [in] time enough to pick your crop you had better tell me how you want your

For the Mississippians who experienced the panic in the late 1830s, financial problems lingered on for years. Isaac Franklin's land speculation and plantation operating partner Francis Routh was one of many who failed in the panic, and Franklin had to purchase Routh's share of lands in order to save his credit.<sup>30</sup> For slave traders who sold slaves in Mississippi up to the early 1830s, collecting debts continued to be difficult. The fact that traders often extended credit upon earlier credit that promised 12 months or more, made the collections even harder. The Mississippi state decision in 1837 which declared that notes given for negroes imported into the state for sale and sold since May 1, 1833 was void, was particularly devastating. Bacon Tait was extremely concerned, asking Ballard in Mississippi to "ascertain how many if any suits or notes on bond for negroes imported into and sold, in which the invalidity was raised, on which judgments were rendered by the state courts," and also asked to report to him "if any appeals were taken on such judgments to the supreme courts of the state and how the decision was." Ballard himself faced difficulties collecting debt, and continued to receive numerous letters asking for extension and patience for the next profitable cotton crop to pay out the debt. Isaac Franklin once mentioned that he and Ballard would have to go up to "Yazoo [County] together and sequester the negroes" to collect debt from years before.<sup>31</sup>

Ballard also continued to manage finance for the Alsops, mainly collections, but also their slave sales. By an arrangement made by Ballard, Philip Burriss who had massive debt to

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different fields cultivated." See M.D. Robard to Ballard, 11 February 1845, folder 83, Ballard Papers. Hemp was manufactured into baling cloth and rope to send to the cotton region, but faced competition from other states, especially Missouri, and internationally from Russia by the 1850s. See L.C. Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.2, 821-22; Paul W. Gates, *Farmer's Age: Agriculture*, 115-7.

<sup>30</sup> For the agreements and conditions over purchasing Routh's land, see Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 123-46.

<sup>31</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 14 Oct 1840, folder 36; Isaac Franklin to Ballard 22 March 1840, folder, both from Ballard Papers.

Alsop, would forward most of his profits from cotton in order to pay down the debt, and Nalle & Cox, the factors of Ballard in New Orleans, took control of marketing Burriss's cotton. Ballard even gained access to the management of Burriss's plantation, the Bushy Bayou Plantation, to make sure that profits generated there would be remitted to him.<sup>32</sup> The Alsops were determined to collect all their debts in the southwest as soon as possible from all the former customers to whom they sold their slaves. On one occasion, Alsop protested against one of his former clients, which was a final method for those under debt to "blast his credit" and was "a means of disabling him."<sup>33</sup>

Although Tait often criticized Ballard for moving to the West and reminded him that he would be better off to return, Ballard was not convinced, and believed in the profitability of landownership and potential cotton wealth of the Southwest. Ballard once suggested to his former associate J.F. Purvis to move to a plantation nearby one of his. But Purvis declined the offer, saying "I cannot at present purchase land and shall have to arrange my business below before I do anything," but later, in July 1844, Purvis confessed that he had "not yet abandoned the idea of moving to the west and think it very likely I will do so when the concern pay me the balance owing me." He added that he would like to know "any good farms for sale in the neighborhood of Louisville ... I like the area in the vicinity."<sup>34</sup> Despite such intentions, five years later, Purvis was still in Baltimore, and was "still in the exchange business doing as well as I ought to expect," indicating that he remained in the slave trading business.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> A.B. Hays to Ballard, 2 July 1846, folder 105, Ballard Papers. Burriss sold portion of his property in Yazoo County to pay off his debt, but that was still not sufficient.

<sup>33</sup> Blakey to Ballard, 2 April 1841, folder 40, Ballard Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Jas F. Purvis to Ballard, 4 October 1842, folder 56, Ballard Papers; Purvis to Ballard, 31 July 1844, folder 75, Ballard Papers.

<sup>35</sup> J.F. Purvis to Ballard, 25 January 1847, folder 108, Ballard Papers.

The company of Ballard, Franklin & Company dissolved in November 1841. John Armfield informed Ballard of the decision to sell the property situated near the Forks of the Road in Natchez in December 1845, which marked an end of their interstate slave trading venture. According to Armfield, the property was “in such a wretched condition,” that he thought it “better to sell at a very low price than to hold on.”<sup>36</sup> The following year in 1846, Isaac Franklin died unexpectedly, which also represented an end to the firm of Franklin & Armfield.<sup>37</sup> The settlement of the firm took unexpectedly long, owing mainly to the difficulty of collecting debt. Armfield wrote in the winter of 1847 that he was “very anxious to settle up and get clear of the business of Ballard, Franklin & Co., if it can be done,” but that “the debts cannot near all be collected this winter.” Armfield managed the settlement, transferring to the bank responsibility for taking up the notes, including Ballard’s stock, and he informed Ballard that he would have to pay Armfield and the late Franklin’s estate the amount by which Ballard’s share of stock fell short.<sup>38</sup> It took more than another five years for the settlement to reach a final agreement. In January 1853, Armfield was “compelled to make a final settlement with the court in Tennessee of the firm of Ballard, Franklin & Co., after which time no voucher or claim can be admitted.” Several parties were involved, including Oliver B. Hayes, the father-in-law of Isaac Franklin, and A. Grimm, the agent and associate of Ballard and Franklin, who would “explain the books of Ballard & Co.” in the courts. Armfield was eager to request along with Ballard the “reclamation we shall make on the firm,” believing that the “old man [Isaac Franklin]” had the advantage over him and Ballard.

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<sup>36</sup> John Armfield to Ballard, 26 December 1845, folder 94; John Armfield to Ballard, 25 January 1846, folder 95, all Ballard Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Franklin at his death in 1846 had more than 600 slaves in 10,000 acres of land in Tennessee, Louisiana and Texas, among them were 7 plantations. Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> John Armfield to Ballard, 9 December 1847, folder 121, Ballard Papers. This likely indicates the bank stock settlement mentioned later.

Armfield wrote to Ballard that “you and me have suffered together,” and that “I want us to be benefited together.” At the end, the reclamation from Franklin’s side for collecting Frank Routh’s debt, which amounted to about \$16,000, was permitted, and by turning in evidence of a mortgage and a copy of Franklin’s deed, other settlements appeared to have reached an agreement.<sup>39</sup>

One of the businesses other than land speculation and planting, in which Ballard may have been involved in was stockholding in southern commercial banks. Bacon Tait, who repeatedly attempted to convince Ballard to return to Richmond, ridiculed Ballard on the news that he was appointed a director in “one of the wild cat bank away out south.” Ballard had been a stockholder of the Commercial Bank of Manchester - he held at least 220 shares by 1846 - along with Isaac Franklin who held 340 shares of this bank’s stock at the time of his death, and John Armfield who had 330 shares. It was likely that they invested jointly under the company Ballard, Franklin & Co. When the stockholders of the said bank held a meeting in New York to determine their future policies, Ballard, unable to attend, wrote to M. Morrison of New York to represent his stock at the meeting. Ballard was “decidedly opposed to the commercial bank of Manchester giving into “liquidation”, and supported the idea that the best course would be to “continue the present form of transacting business,” and hoped that as soon as they could, they should safely resume their exchange business.<sup>40</sup>

While the legal settlement of Ballard, Franklin & Co. continued and unexpected bank

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<sup>39</sup> John Armfield to Ballard, 11 January 1853, folder 184, Ballard Papers; Armfield to Ballard, 21 January 1853, folder 184, and Armfield to Ballard, 16 February 1853, folder 186, Ballard papers. Armfield was one of the executors of Isaac Franklin’s will, along with Oliver B. Hayes, and they superintended Franklin’s Louisiana plantations, which brought them 2.5% commission of the estate value, mounting to \$6400 annually, in addition to the \$1500 they both received for the services over the duties of executors. Armfield staffed the plantations with further slaves, and according to Franklin’s will, executors were to “dispose of any refractory slaves or those of little use or value.” See Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 94-120.

<sup>40</sup> Bacon Tait to Ballard, 25 May 1841, folder 41, Ballard to M. Morrison at Manhattan Company, New York, 15 January 1843, folder 58; ditto, 10 July 1845, folder 189; J.M. Morrison to Armfield 12 April 1846, folder 99; , W. Barnett to Ballard, 29 April 1846, all Ballard Papers.

stock failure caused some setback, Ballard remained associated with the slave trading business in an indirect way. Many who knew him in Virginia asked him for information regarding the slave market in the West. A slaveowner in Fredericksburg, Virginia wished to get information from Ballard on the prices of slaves, saying “I will give you a list of some of them with their ages that you may fill up the price with what you think they will bring cash in Louisiana, and what the prospects of a quick sale at those prices will be, and who I had better ship to at New Orleans.”<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Virginia traders constantly provided Ballard with slave market information there. In almost every letter, the Alsops mentioned the price trends in the Richmond market, and Silas Lillard wrote to Ballard of the hard times in Virginia in the early 1850s, observing that the flour market had declined and “nothing but negroes will bring money here.” He continued that “there will be a great many sold this spring the people is very much in debt and will be compelled to sell I want to bring a few out this fawl if I can get some money.”<sup>42</sup>

The most important new business relationships Ballard had to establish were with those who would sell his cotton in the competitive global market. Albert G. Nalle, who initially was associated with the firm of William R. Glover & Co. of New Orleans, became his main commission merchant and factor. Nalle later became independent from Glover and became a principal member of the concern Dupuy, Tate & Nalle, and eventually launched a partnership firm with William Cox to form Nalle & Cox in 1844. Factors competed against each other to attract more planters, and for the most part, planter-factor relations were on a rather loose connection and were based more on personal trust. Many large planters dealt with several factors at one time, and Ballard dealt with a few other factors, such as the one in Louisville,

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<sup>41</sup> William Jackson to Ballard, 27 October 1840, folder 43, Ballard Papers.

<sup>42</sup> S.Lillard to Ballard, 24 March 1852, folder 174, Ballard Papers.



Kentucky for supply of pork, but most of his transactions went through Nalle & Cox.<sup>43</sup>

In old interpretations, cotton factors were often blamed for the planter's over-concentration of producing cotton and investing their surplus in land and slaves, which led to the commission clause for planters to obtain credit. Factors made every arrangement to market the crop at the best offer available, and it was the large, experienced factors that were more attentive, providing various services according to the condition of the crop, and operated flexible strategies to overcome the fluctuations of the speculative market.

Factors based in major port cities where cotton was gathered were responsible for the essential functions of marketing and financing every aspect of the international cotton trade, which included arranging for storage, insurance, freight, drayage, weighing, and selling of the crop. Nalle & Cox marketed Ballard's cotton from each plantation, and shipped necessities for his plantation including rope and bags for the cotton and foodstuffs such as pork, sugar, salt and also luxury items like tea and coffee, and took 2.5% commissions on all the transactions they conducted. Nalle & Cox also held an open account, or credit of Ballard's, handling drafts and making transactions with other parties to collect goods from various sources.<sup>44</sup> In Ballard's case, this account was often used to purchase and sell slaves on his plantations.

Factors were also "merchant bankers," who would endorse planters' notes, which guaranteed that the amount would be paid when due, and the local banks would discount such note. The bank's added endorsement would mean that it could get funds from banks in

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<sup>43</sup> After Nalle & Cox dissolved in 1854, Ballard continued his relation with W. Cox and companies he formed. These firms were all located in New Orleans.

<sup>44</sup> J.D. Williams to Ballard, 8 June 1850, folder 154, Ballard Papers, shows that Ballard bought foreign wine and liquor from a Boston merchant. Almost all the purchases Ballard made from distant merchants were handled by the account under Nalle & Cox. Nalle & Cox were also one of the major factors of Isaac Franklin, from which connection Ballard was likely to have been introduced. Their office was located on 90 Camp Street, New Orleans. Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, chap. 7. Nalle & Cox related records in financial and correspondence section of Ballard papers.

the North and abroad. This meant that the world's money markets were made available to the planter via his factor, and also meant that banks were lending not just on a security of real property or cotton, but on the liquid assets of factors. For example, R.J. Walker, a Natchez native, wrote to his factor in Philadelphia to endorse a bill which would be paid at maturity for an acquaintance who wanted to make purchases in Philadelphia without a Philadelphia endorser, and was given by Walker the "authority to draw upon at six months sight for eleven hundred dollars." Once the bill was endorsed, it became an acceptance, and would be submitted to a bank in six months for final cash payment.<sup>45</sup> Although other forms of financial intermediaries such as private bankers and brokers existed in the South, the common belief was that factors that could provide the best service and had the reputation as good endorsers of bills was the safest and were trusted to both banks and the planters. The ability and function of the factor to draw capital resources from around the world, not only in sterling bills but also in French francs and Dutch guilders for tobacco and grain to the European continent, made the commodity market, and the credit structure in the South virtually unique. Factors played a fundamental role in marketing and moving the crop, and the structure of the southern economy made such arrangements inevitable.<sup>46</sup>

Factors usually informed planters of market conditions, advising price trends in Europe, as well as important political developments concerning wars and conflicts that might impact the market. Their news sources were international in scope, reflecting the global nature of the cotton market. In 1850, Nalle & Cox reported to Ballard that it was hard to predict "how

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<sup>45</sup> R. J. Walker to Jackson, Riddle & Company, 15 April 1835, folder 1, Jackson, Riddle & Company Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Also see Perkins, *House of Brown*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> General role of factors and their expertise is illustrated with plantations records in Woodman, *King Cotton*, 15-29, 40-1, 124-5, 130, 175-86. On endorsements, see Woodman, *Ibid.*, 114-8. When banks discounted planters' notes with their factors' endorsements, they were lending on promissory notes (accommodation paper) rather which were renewed into long-term loans, issuing second note to pay the first.

much may be drawn by the high prices from the East Indies, and we think them in no reason to expect a decline of any importance from any other cause unless it be disturbance on the continent which we have some fear of.”<sup>47</sup> Although England’s cotton import was dominated by U.S. cotton, U.S. was not their only source.<sup>48</sup> Ballard’s cotton was marketed in Liverpool, and demand from continental Europe affected the prices, which Nalle and others paid attention to in making their predictions. Right before the Crimean War broke out in 1854, they predicted that “as to the Turkish difficulty we think it can produce no great effect either our way or another, unless the war spirit should extend through Europe.” When factory workers in England rioted around the same time, they assured that there was “no doubt they will be shredily [shrewdly] adjusted.”<sup>49</sup> They watched each stage of the triangular relation of southern cotton export between Europe and the North, reporting at one time, “northern profits take much less this season than usual, which fact will almost give England all that she wants.”<sup>50</sup>

In the long-term perspective, the cotton market was gloomy in the late 1830s and early 1840s when Ballard’s plantation began to produce its crops. The lingering effects of the panic

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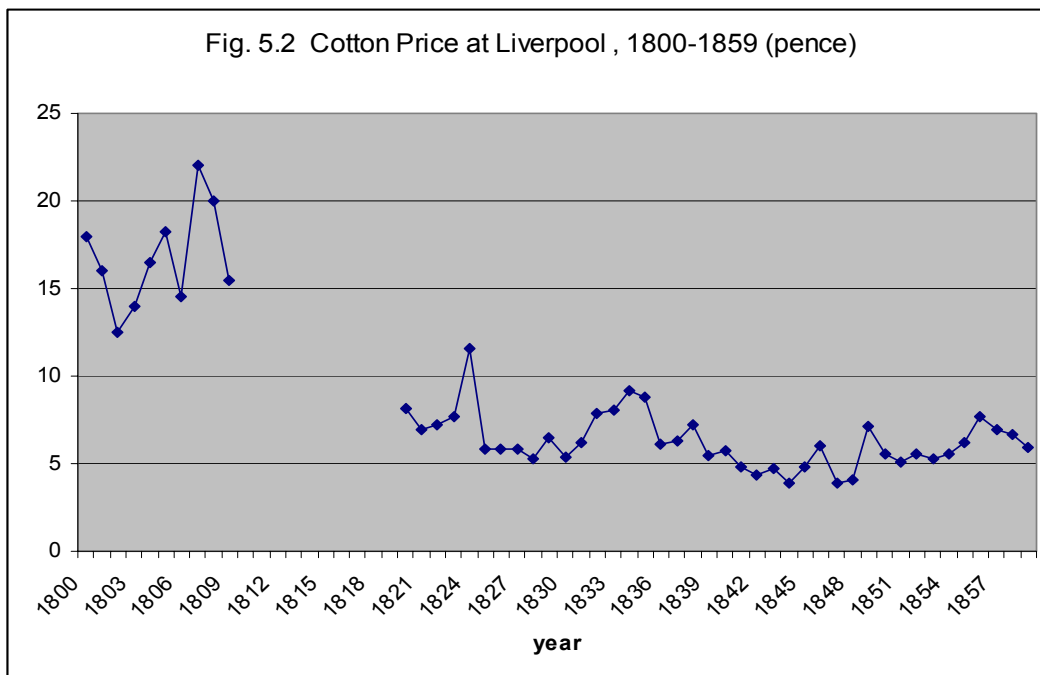
<sup>47</sup> Nalle & Cox to Ballard, 19 November 1850, folder 159, Ballard Papers. The “disturbance” mentioned here must be pointing to the instability of European powers after 1848, although international system was not shaken from the events. More specifically, from subsequent correspondences, this points to the Turkish conflict and European perspectives toward the “Eastern Question.” See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (New York: Vintage, 1975), 69-81.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. cotton consisted nearly 80% of British imports, and imports from the East Indies and Brazil occupied most of the remainder. Ellison, *Cotton Trade of Great Britain*.

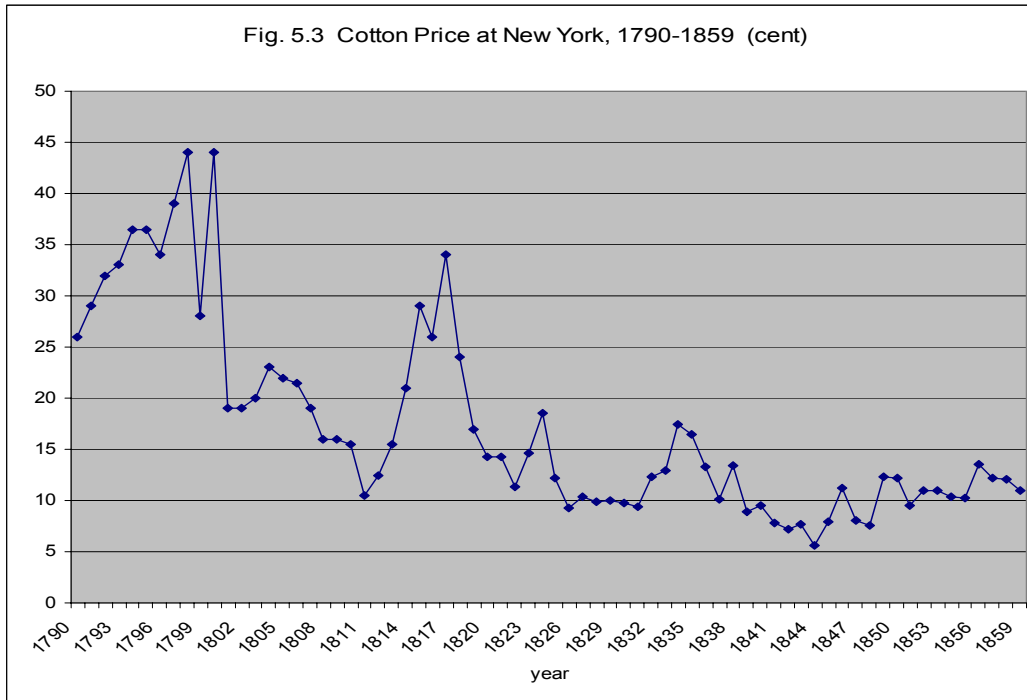
<sup>49</sup> Nalle & Cox to Ballard, November 25, 1853, folder 200, Ballard Papers. For more examples of the relations between large planters and factors, and how factors were well informed of and monitored events and market conditions abroad, see William K. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid- Nineteenth Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 154-61. Ballard’s cotton was marketed in Liverpool, and according to its quality, portions of it must have ended up in the continental market. On the Crimean War and the realignment of European powers see Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital*, 74-81. It is unclear which riot this comment refers to, but it was not until after 1860s that British workers turned to more peaceful methods to show their discontent. See Francois Crouzet, *The Victorian Economy*, trans. Anthony Forster (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 183.

<sup>50</sup> Nalle & Cox to Ballard, 1 April 1851, folder 167, Ballard Papers.

pushed cotton prices downward and financial intermediaries were wary of taking on high risks as they did earlier. In addition to the notion that much of southern cotton wealth was absorbed by northern merchants and shipping interests, abolition and free soil principles were making headway into the national scene, which southerners felt increasingly threatened about because of their aggression. Some merchant houses were deeply affected by the declining prices (fig.5.2, 5.3). Ballard’s plantations were producing cotton as early as 1838, and in the following year another panic hit the region. In 1839, the New York price for “middling” upland cotton was 8.92 cents, more than a 33% decline from the 13.36 cents in 1838. The price at Liverpool declined from 7.19 pence to 5.42 pence. The 1841-42 season was even worse with 7.85 cents in New York and 4.86 pence in Liverpool, which caused Ballard’s factors to report “a general panic” among the houses in New Orleans, that “there seems to be great distrust and want of confidence on



Source) Bruchey, *Cotton and Growth*, 15.



Source) Bruchey, *Cotton and Growth*, 15.

all sides, failures are taking place daily and before the season closes it is predicted that there will be general bankruptcy, every house in the city is more or less suspected.”<sup>51</sup> Dupuy, Tate & Nalle received 50 bales of cotton from Philip Burriss’s Brushy Bayou plantation in January 1842, but wrote that “times look gloomy in the extreme, and some say worse than they were at the corresponding period in 1837.” After examining samples of their cotton, they judged that some had “undergone some process which has coloured it too highly, almost amounting to stain,” in which the brokers judged it was the result of “the heat in the gin house, and the smell of it goes somewhat to confirm the opinion.”<sup>52</sup>

Under such circumstances, Dupuy, Tate & Nalle advised Ballard to use up the credit Ballard had on their account since there was “terrible confusion among the banks and we

<sup>51</sup> Dupuy, Tate and Nalle to Ballard, 12 February 1842, folder 46, Ballard Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Dupuy, Tate and Nalle to Ballard, 26 January 1842, folder 44, Ballard Papers.

should not be surprised to see some of our money going at 50 cents in the dollar in less than 60 days.” Ballard’s factors kept his money on deposit in a bank with good reputation, but they felt quite uneasy about the future of the banks in the city. Eventually, in May of the same year, they informed Ballard that Bank of Louisiana note was available, but still “canal, commercial, citizens, carollton, and consolidated [banks] are somewhat suspected,” and reminded him still to be on guard. Their predictions proved to be reliable, since by the next month, “all our banks have suspended specie payments except the Bank of Louisiana, Union Bank, Mechanics and Traders and Carolton.”<sup>53</sup>

Factors usually were held responsible for the marketing, but planters had some influence on their strategies, especially by holding on to their crop and waiting for the prices to improve. For example, one factor complained that “notwithstanding our repeated advices to the planters there are a great many of them who either limit their crops or refuse to send them forward,” which they thought was caused in part by “the anxiety of planters to pick their fields clean during the late fine weather, and not before, remarked the opinion of a large number that our prices must yet advance.”<sup>54</sup> Although planters at times gave instructions on how they wanted their crop to be marketed and what transactions to make, factors were the experts in handling the crop to generate the highest profit. Factors were familiar with the various types of cotton, and the categories according to the quality, and they also predicted price fluctuations according to the annual cotton prospects. If the amount of cotton in Liverpool was predictably high, the prices would likely drop. They also had cotton inspected by specialized brokers, who often complained to Ballard, “so large is the proportion of low

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<sup>53</sup> Dupuy, Tate and Nalle to Ballard, 2 February 1842, folder 46; Dupuy, Tate and Nalle to Ballard, 12 February 1842, folder 46; Dupuy, Tate and Nalle to Ballard, 15 February 1842, folder 46; 4 May 1842, folder 49; Nalle to Ballard, 3 June 1842, folder 51, all Ballard Papers.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Barrett & Co. to Jackson, Riddle & Company (hereafter JRC), 19 December 1835, folder 1, Jackson, Riddle and Company Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Harold Woodman, *King Cotton*, 181.

washy cotton that has some time past come in,” that it would not sell in the market.<sup>55</sup> Liverpool, being the center of the world cotton trade, drew a diverse demand in quality, even the inferior, lower quality cotton. Dupuy, Tate & Nalle once indicated that it would be Ballard’s advantage to “ship the inferior to Liverpool and intend to have it classed and valued and get an advance upon it.”<sup>56</sup>

Despite the setback in the cotton prices, Ballard was able to expand his production after he settled in the West. The 1844 season was when the cotton prices hit bottom at 5.63 cents at New York and 3.92 pence at Liverpool. The season started with demand in “qualities above “middling” for some scattering order for the French and Spanish market,” and for the large bulk of the stock of low quality cotton, purchasers had a “wide field for their operations and demand constant concession.” Ballard’s factors, by this time Nalle & Cox, offered the prediction that overproduction added to the depression, since the English market was “having a supply fully sufficient for 30 weeks consumption, are sending out their orders at extremely low limits.”<sup>57</sup>

Southern planters’ cotton sales were intricately tied to mercantile credit in the North and England, or even beyond, as mentioned earlier. Advances for the crops were necessary for the exporters, while northerners issued letters of credit to import foreign goods. Cotton factors could make advances on the crop in the form of a draft, and the planter could discount it at a

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<sup>55</sup> On grading terms of cotton, the Liverpool terminology such as brood, middling, ordinary, fair, and good fair, began to have influence in the U.S., where they would term them such as prime, seconds, inferior, etc, and by 1840, the Liverpool terms dominated. See Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol 2, 719.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Barrett to JRC, 7 October 1836, folder 7; Bryne Hermann & Co to JRC, 20 Feb 1836, folder 2; and unknown author to JRC, 17 Feb 1836, folder 3; all from Jackson, Riddle and Company Papers. Dupuy Tate and Nalle to Ballard, 31 December 1842, folder 57, Ballard Papers.

<sup>57</sup> Nalle & Cox to Ballard, 4 Oct 1844, folder 78, Ballard Papers. Ballard’s principle commission merchant changes its name and partnership forms from Dupuy, Tate and Nalle in 1843 to Nalle and Cox in 1843-44, which continued to 1850, then changed its name to Nalle, Cox and Co. from 1850 to 1854, then to Cox, Gillis, and Boyd from 1854 to 1856 which included Samuel Boyd’s brother James Boyd among the chief concern, and W.Cox and Co. from 1857 to 1860.

bank.<sup>58</sup> The network of discounting these notes connected the inland factors, or what Woodman called the “country storekeepers,” speculators, or to a lesser extent, peddlers, to the factors in the coastal area in the South, with whom they commonly built official partnerships, and they would discount from northern and British merchants after they consigned cotton for sale. As such, factors strived to build new, profitable partnership with northern and British firms. For example, Bennett Ferridays & Company in New Orleans was introduced to Mr. Bolton Jackson in Liverpool, a member of the Jackson, Riddle and Company, who had the “willingness to accept two thirds of the amount of cotton consigned to him.” They also received, from one of the most respectable houses in Liverpool, the right to authorize drawing “against any planters cotton we may ship to their consignment.” Despite the time of depression after the panic, this concern was able to take advantage of the creation of strong networks.<sup>59</sup> Having foreign partners and agents could also help get reliable information. Jackson, Riddle and Company’s partner in Bordeaux was J.H. Boyer, who wrote of his strategy to export liquor to the U.S. at times of European tension. The French people had always thought that “France was playing a double game to fit out her vessels,” and Boyer claimed he would “depend on our industry and activity to find out some means to send you a cargo on a foreign bottom if advantageous.”<sup>60</sup>

Many advertisements in the South announced, for example, that “liberal advances in

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<sup>58</sup> Discounting is to sell the draft that is due in the future for cash, with a “deduction” from the face value of the draft. The “deduction” represents the bank’s charge for the cash payment, which is determined by the interest rate and the length of time the note (draft) has to run before it matures. See Bruchey, *Cotton and Growth*, 225. “Advances” was when a firm to which goods were consigned for sale would pay the consigner a part of the expected sale price in advance of sale. When the sale had been made, the remainder (deducting also the expenses and commissions) was remitted to the consigner. Advances on future crops were usually available in cash if there was enough cash in circulation, no matter where you were, but the amount would vary according to the expected sale price and the risk involved. Woodman, *King Cotton*, 34-5.

<sup>59</sup> Bennett Ferridays & Co to JRC, 21 Jan 1838, folder 9, Jackson, Riddle and Company Papers.

<sup>60</sup> J.H Boyer to JRC, 20 Dec 1835, folder 1, Ibid.



cash” could be made in New Orleans, or referred to associates in New York, Liverpool, Havre, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg or Bremen, indicating the extent of the cotton market at this time. Especially during the cotton boom of the early 1830s, English capital poured in to buy bank and state bonds in the U.S., making credit arrangements easy for merchants. Once a cotton sale was made in Liverpool, the sterling bill could be sold for cash, but from early on, many sent their bills to the North through exchange brokers. Although the number of southern representatives of northern and English firms and banks increased and it became easier to make foreign exchange, in more cases, the bills were sent to New York by the local banks. New York was the largest importing center and the largest market for sterling and other foreign bills. By the eve of the Civil War, two thirds of the nation’s imports and one-third of exports went through the port of New York.<sup>61</sup> The correspondence of factors show that, as Woodman had indicated, the authority and the mechanism that kept the world of King Cotton intact were out of the factor’s reach. The central power was located in New York and Liverpool, not in the port cities of the American South.

During early colonial times when large planters on the eastern coast marketed their tobacco, their factors were often in Europe, mainly in London, who marketed on their behalf and also supplied them with variety of manufactured goods.<sup>62</sup> In time, local merchants began to congregate in the port cities of the South: some were local residents hired as agents, others were sent from Britain, and they eventually formed an urban merchant community. In the immediate postwar era, American merchants were able to control a larger part of the cotton trade, but as the volume of the trade increased with England as the dominant importer, the

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<sup>61</sup> The country storekeeper offered various goods to the small cotton farmers, including providing credit, to him hundreds of neighbors in the area, and they in turn became important customers for the coastal urban factors. Woodman, *King Cotton*, 76-97. On partnerships, see Woodman, *Ibid.*, 17-8.

<sup>62</sup> London merchants did not make inroads into the smaller farmers in the interior. Instead, Scottish merchants, especially those from Glasgow marketed their tobacco to the continental market. See Chapter 1.

transatlantic merchant network became concentrated in larger ports with greater ability to forward and receive various financial transactions. British credit constituted the major component of the financing system up to the turn of the century, until the American financial system became mature enough and accumulated enough capital to fund its own industries and trades. As a result of domestic financial security, New York merchants in particular were able to provide longer-term credits that would go up to twelve months. In the South, however, in order to protect liquidity at a time when it had become a custom to make advances on future crops, short-term commercial loans, usually from 30 to 90 days secured by bills of exchange were the norm. Twelve-month papers proved beneficial at times when the money market was insecure. In January 1836, a partner of the firm Jackson, Riddle and Company wrote to them from New Orleans that the “money markets at the North, ... together with the backwardness of the produce receipts, has made money tight here for some,” but that “twelve months paper with one good city name discounts out of doors.”<sup>63</sup> The fact that northern merchants were able to supply longer credit, added further dependency of the southern economy on the North.<sup>64</sup> Above all, it was the New York connection that facilitated the generous credits to southerners.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bryne, Hermann & Co to JRC, 9 January 1836, folder 2, Jackson, Riddle and Company Papers.

<sup>64</sup> Woodman, *King Cotton*, 156-64. Southern banks and branches increased at this time, as we saw in the previous chapter, but these banks were funded largely by British capital. They did not interfere with the role of factors and were not involved directly in the speculation of cotton trade. According to Schoen, in 1803 foreigners owned 35% of state bank stocks (19% Britain), and 62% of Bank of United States stocks (40% Britain). Schoen, “Fragile Fabric,” 93.

<sup>65</sup> According to Woodman, the so-called “in transit” buying of cotton in New York, of the samples of each bale of cotton exported from the South, provided the speculator to either “sell out in New York,” or sell it in Europe. Woodman, *Ibid.*, 28. The vessels that sailed from the southern ports to Liverpool up to the 1830s usually consisted of cotton only, but that changed by the 1850s, and cargoes became more mixed, except for those that departed Mobile, which remained dominated by cotton. There were hardly any vessels that left New York that consisted only of cotton. Most were mixed cargoes with usually various foodstuffs. See David M. Williams, “The Shipping of the North Atlantic Cotton Trade in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” in *Merchants and Mariners: Selected Maritime Writings of David M. Williams*, Lars U. Scholl ed. (St. Johns, Nfd.: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2000), 59-61; Philip Foner, *Business and Slavery: The New York Merchants and the Irrepressible Conflict* (Chapel Hill:

Early on, cotton was produced mainly in the eastern seaboard states, and the staple became a crucial commodity in returning the prewar debt to British merchants, who according to the arrangements under the Jay's Treaty in 1794, were allowed to make a comeback in the U.S. trade. Imports of manufactured goods originally came to the cotton planters directly from England, but as industrialization and manufacturers matured in the North and the Mid-Atlantic states, domestic sources began to supply such goods to the South. The same mercantile houses that were importers of British goods began to expand their business to distribute and market domestic manufactures. As such, northern mercantile and shipping interests were able to make inroads into southern markets and successfully secure an important position in the Atlantic economy.

The majority of cotton shipments went to Liverpool, which had now become the cotton capital of the world, and other European ports such as Havre, Bremen, and Rotterdam imported U.S. cotton as well. Cities such as Boston became major destinations providing raw cotton for the New England textile industry, while New York gained prominence as the port of entry for transshipment across the Atlantic.<sup>66</sup> Cotton was being exported to Europe from New York as early as 1761. As the city matured financially, it developed risk-reducing marine insurance and New York companies provided a large portion the vessels that crossed the Atlantic. War with Great Britain in the first two decades of the nineteenth century resulted in

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University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 5-7. Thomas Barrett to JRC, 12 Sept 1836, folder 6, Jackson, Riddle and Company Papers.

<sup>66</sup> Cotton trade from Liverpool's point of view will be discussed further in the epilogue. See Graeme J. Milne. *Trade and Traders in Mid-Victorian Liverpool: Mercantile Business and the Making of a World port* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000); David M. Williams, "Liverpool Merchants and the Cotton Trade 1820-1850," in Scholl ed., *Merchants and Mariners*, 19-52. On the rise of New York as a cotton port, see Robert G. Albion, *The Rise of New York Port* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1939). On the role of New York merchants and capital in southern ventures, see Foner, *Business and Slavery*, 1-14. Most raw cotton was handed to Manchester brokers once they went through Liverpool merchants. Schoen, "Fragile Fabric," 87.

decline of British mercantile and shipping activities on the American coast. Congress quickly passed a navigation act that banned foreign vessels from the intercoastal trade, giving northern merchants a monopoly, and with the establishment of the New York- Liverpool packet line in 1819, the greater position of New York in the domestic shipping industry was cemented. With its advantage in transshipment and credit facilities, New York became the center of the so-called “cotton triangle,” that consisted of southern ports at one end and Liverpool or Havre on the other. Although southern cotton usually was shipped directly to Europe, shipments back from Europe consisting of various goods and immigrants, landed in New York, from which port developed a coastal trade down to the South. The resident agents of northern mercantile houses in southern ports usually arranged cargoes for shipment, charging various costs. Ultimately, a large portion of the cotton income, including commission, insurance, freight charges and handling charges, went into the hands of northern merchants. One southern paper wrote, “New York City ... by means of her railways and navigable streams, she sends out her long arms to the extreme South; and ... grasps our gains and transfers them to herself- taxing us at every step and depleting us as extensively as possible without actually destroying us.” With the emergence of the cotton triangular trade, New York bills of exchange on cotton, payable in England, became a crucial component of Atlantic commerce.<sup>67</sup>

Examples of connections with New York and northern merchants come in various types according to their trading scale. Smaller inland factors were provided various articles, and they also made frequent purchasing trips to New York in person. Larger firms such as House of Brown of Baltimore, was one of the leading recipients of cotton consignments from the South. This house pioneered in the cotton trade and foreign exchange, which developed into

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Foner, *Business and Slavery*, 10. Schoen, “Fragile Fabric,” 90. Also see Perkins, *House of Brown*, 4-16. For the development of transatlantic marine insurance, see Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution*, 314-61.

investment banking. Its operation extended further with the establishment of William Brown & Company in Liverpool in 1810, and it developed a technique whereby it offered in normal times to advance the full value of cotton shipments consigned to the Liverpool branch, which was made in the form of bills drawn by the exporter on the Liverpool house and endorsed by the Brown agent. This Brown agent eventually began to purchase the bills that they endorsed, and sold to importers, making them bill dealers as well as cotton commission merchants. In addition to these functions, they also bought and sold cotton on their own account.<sup>68</sup>

The largest exporting center for the South was New Orleans. The city became a collection point for cotton by the turn of the century. The four major ports that exported cotton were New Orleans, Mobile, Charleston and Savannah (table 5.5). While the four ports together exported more than 80% of the cotton produced in the U.S. in the four decades before the Civil War, the ports of New Orleans and Mobile became more dominant while Charleston and Savannah declined with the rise of coastal packet services to New York.<sup>69</sup> New Orleans became a destination for agents and partners for northern and British firms, and navigational and financial advantages, as we have seen, drew all of the hinterland's commerce into the Crescent City.

The panic in the late 1830s made it even more evident that northern credit was crucial for running the southern economy. When there was lack of credit supply or specie from the North, and demand for northern bills and the sale of sterling bills in the North fell, the prices of cotton fell as well. Although the panic led to some conservative fiscal policies and restrictions in the 1840s, debts were hard to collect as we saw in Ballard's case. But by 1850, papers of short and long-terms were freely discounted and the cycle of borrowing extensively

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<sup>68</sup> Bruchey, *Cotton and Growth*, 229. Jas Brown & Co to JRC, 15 March 1836, folder 3, Jackson, Riddle and Company Papers. The Brown family had Brown Brothers and Company in New York, Brown, Shipley and Company in Liverpool and London, and firms in Boston and Baltimore as well. Perkins, *House of Brown*, especially 104-113.

<sup>69</sup> David M. Williams, "Shipping," 57-8.

from foreign sources on the basis of crop expectation became active again.

**Table 5.5** Cotton Exports to Great Britain from U.S. Ports

	1830-32		1853-55	
	bales	%	bales	%
New Orleans	623,631	33.67	2453150	50.90
Mobile	161362	8.71	683770	14.19
Savannah	371004	20.03	386848	8.03
Charleston	424768	22.94	558378	11.59
New York	189701	10.24	654360	13.58

Source) David M. Williams, "Shipping," 56.

Also see E.J. Donnell, *Chronological and Statistical History of Cotton* (New York: J. Sutton & Co. printers, 1872).

The panic and the following recession was a turning point for cotton planters' confidence and their view toward management and the southern economy in general. As we shall see, it raised voices amongst southerners promoting diversification of the economy and financial independence from the North. Although the free-trade policy they continued to embrace involved much risk, southerners turned to even grander schemes to facilitate free trade, while southern planters increasingly acknowledged that their managerial skills and entrepreneurial strategies toward their crop production would become their individual safety-net. Thus sophistication in plantation management became a key to survival at the time when Ballard made his move to the West.

### **The Plantation Empire of Ballard and Boyd: Speculation, Production, and Management**

One of the earliest accounts of Ballard's plantation operation can be found in 1838, on his "Magnolia" plantation in Warren County, Mississippi. Magnolia remained the main

plantation complex of his entire cotton empire. The composition of slaves of Magnolia in January 1838 can be seen in table 5.6. Within two years of moving to Mississippi, he already owned 149 slaves. The age composition shows that slaves between the ages 10 to 30 comprised a huge majority among both males and females. In May 1838, the total cultivated land in cotton on Magnolia was 772 acres, and 110 acres for corn. The acreage would quickly expand in the coming years. The total cotton production of that year was 497,181 pounds, which was extremely high considering the fact that cotton was picked only from August to October, shorter than most years when picking would end near Christmas time.<sup>70</sup>

**Table 5.6** Magnolia Slaves, January 1838

age	30 and over	20-29	10-19	Under 10	total
Male Slaves	9 (14.3)	21(33.3)	29 (46)	4 (6.34)	63 (mean 19.6)
Female Slaves	13 (15.1)	25 (29)	39 (45.3)	9 (10.5)	86 (mean 20.5)

Source) Volume 11, folder 429, Magnolia plantation journal, 1838-1840, Ballard Papers.  
 Note) 23 female slaves were listed as wife of one of the male slaves. Mean age 20.4

Samuel S. Boyd of Natchez was a judge who became Ballard’s partner in running the plantations in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas. Originally from Maine, Boyd already had a good reputation as a lawyer in the region, and established both business and family relations with prominent families in the area, becoming a notable figure in the aristocratic scene in Natchez. Boyd had come to know Ballard by 1840. His brother James Boyd also lived in the area and acted as their agent. In addition to Magnolia, the plantations that began operation early were Bushy Bayou (which belonged to Philip Burriss), Providence plantation,

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<sup>70</sup> The breakdown are as follows: For cotton, River field 225 acres, Hill field 74 acres, Canal field 94 acres, Gin field 82 acres, Long field 125 acres, Race field 69 acres, Bridge field 86 field, Petit field 17 acres. For corn, River field 33 acres, Stable field 57 acres, Long field 20 acres. Volume 11, folder 429, Magnolia Plantation Journal, Ballard papers. Although Magnolia had 149 slaves in 1838, it is likely that many were sent out in subsequent years to other plantation of Ballard’s, and the total number at Magnolia settled under 100.

Golden Plains plantation (sold for \$15000 in 1843) and Quattlebum plantation (Yazoo County, MS). Later, they added Woodland plantation, Karnac plantation (Claiborne County, MS), Outpost plantation (Carroll Parish, LA, also referred to as Pecan Grove), Elcho plantation (Madison Parish, LA), Elk plantation, Laurell Hill plantation (Warren County, MS), Lepine plantation, and Wagram plantation (Chicot County, Arkansas). These plantations were usually jointly owned by Ballard and Boyd, but Boyd was the sole owner for some of them, and Ballard owned some with a different partner. Ballard also had plantations and farms near his residence in Louisville, Kentucky. Since Boyd resided in Natchez, he visited the plantations frequently and reported the conditions to Ballard when Ballard was in Kentucky. When Boyd was not able to make visits to observe the plantations, C. Steele often observed and reported in his place.<sup>71</sup>

One of the first steps in starting a plantation operation was to prepare an adequate slave labor force. Once a plantation was purchased or cleared, Ballard began to add slaves to maximize its productivity. In May 1842, he purchased 45 slaves from Lewis Phenix, John Baynton and others.<sup>72</sup> He would continue to furnish his plantations with slaves, for example in spring of 1849 he bought 10 male slaves at the Forks of the Road for a total of \$6,800 through one of his agents and would often receive notices from his agents, factors

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<sup>71</sup> Some plantations are unclear of the location. There are also plantations named Pine Mount, Forest Hill, and Mrytle Grove, though unclear on their operations and locations. Some of the plantations had detailed records of their slaves, livestock, and equipments.

<sup>72</sup> R.C. Ballard to Marshall of the southern district of Mississippi, May 1842, folder 49, Ballard Papers. The following slaves were purchased : Daniel, Kitty, Juniver, Olive, Emily, Kitty, Kelly, Lydia, Henrietta, Nancy, Sally, Ann, Amanda, Sukey, Bob, Buckner, Tom, Boston, McDaniel, Joe, Henry, Wallace, JoeBuck, Frank, Isham, Seldon, Sigh, Peter, Jeff, Moses, Amanda, Piney, Alfred, Amelia, William, Eliza, Catherine, Elizabeth, Erick, Margaret, Old Lydia, Old Alsa, Old Celia, Emeline, John Charles. It is unclear how Ballard furnished the 149 slaves at Magnolia in 1838. Boyd likely purchased them before the operation began, or they were included in the purchase of the plantation.



**Table 5.7** List of Overseers on Ballard and Boyd's Plantations

	Brushy Bayou	Pine Mt	Providence	Magnolia	Karnac
1838				McNeal	
1840				W. Buck	
1842			Edward Moore		
1843				W.J.C Dixon, Ward, Buck?	
1844				Dixon, Dowling, and Ward	
1845		Knott ?		A. Stampley	
1846				Isaac Folkes, Cox	Richard Alsop
1847				J. Cox and Rice B. Read (John P. Wilson?)	
1848	L.B Gravy	A.M. Reeves		Jacob Westbrook	
1849				Jacob Westbrook and R.B. Read	
1850				Loyd Stevenson	
1851				R.B.Read, and J.P. Wilson	
1852	Robert J. Morgan			J.P.Wilson,H.Shaw	Ben Polks? and Frisk
1853				H.H. Williams	J.Westbrook
1854				J. Nalley	
1855				J. Nalley	
1856				J.B. Wilson, J. Nalley	
				J.B. Wilson	

	Quattlebum	Elks	Laurell	Lapine	Outpost (Pecan Grove)	Elcho
1842	A. Stampley					
1848		Graves				
1849					G.W.Thompson?	
1850		J.H. Lacy				
1851-2			John H Bailey			
1854					H. Shaw	
1855				Knott		
1857						J.B. Wilson
1859						J. Palmer

Source) Composite according to Correspondences and Volumes of Ballard Papers. Other identified plantations: Forest Hill, Golden Plains, Woodland, Wagram (Chicot County, Arkansas), Dunlop, and Myrtle Grove.

and Boyd about large slave sales in the area.<sup>73</sup> James Boyd once informed Ballard that there was a “large sale of negroes [87 in number] near Vicksburg at the 22<sup>nd</sup>... the sale will be at Col. Taylor’s plantation,” and promised to report to Ballard in a few days on the age and value of the slaves.<sup>74</sup> In order to equip the plantations with a sufficient number of slaves, Boyd informed Ballard of slave sales and what type and how many slaves were needed on a particular plantation. For example, he notified Ballard that there would be a huge slave sale in North Carolina, about 125 slaves offered, and told Ballard that if he knew anyone in the area, to “have about 20 hands purchased,” and that “if they are not all needed at Magnolia, I [Boyd] will take the balance,” indicating that he would distribute the surplus slaves among the plantations.<sup>75</sup>

Ballard and Boyd gradually expanded their plantation empire, and continued to invest and gain ownership of additional plantations over the years. Boyd was an acute land speculator, always on alert, and sought for best lands in which to invest. He would often send Ballard newspaper clippings of a plantation sale in the area and ask his opinion of it.<sup>76</sup> Although Boyd was interested in any profitable land, he sought eagerly in particular

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<sup>73</sup> John James to Ballard, 8 March 1849, folder 138, Ballard Papers. The age and price of the slaves bought are as follows: John Brown 22, \$700, John Allen 19, \$750, Rolf Robinson 18, \$725, Tom 17, \$680, Quinny 18, \$680, George Wallace 14, \$625, George Harris 20, \$655, Robul Skewer 17, \$680, Hanis Lewis 17, \$680, John 17, \$650.

<sup>74</sup> James Boyd to Ballard, 14 January 1844, folder 68, Ballard Papers.

<sup>75</sup> Samuel Boyd to Ballard, 20 November 1850, folder 159, Ballard Papers.

<sup>76</sup> Boyd once wrote, “a sugar plantation and 36 slaves before New Orleans, to take place 4<sup>th</sup> April, which looks as if the terms would suite provided the place is good to me,” although he added that he did not mean to “speak of my having any interest in your purchase of the Garden of Eden.” He suggested naming the plantation either “Gilde, Karnac, or Goldace,” and although he did not purchase this particular plantation, they named another plantation they purchased “Karnac.” See S. Boyd to Ballard, 2 March 1846, folder 97, Ballard Papers.

affordable sugar plantations. But sugar plantations were usually competitive in the land market and tended to be much expensive than those of cotton, and it is unclear if they ever purchased one. In addition to seeking good lands on his own, Boyd used his network in the area to gain information on sugar plantations. One member of his network sent him a “list of 5 or 6 varying in price from \$800 to \$1000 for negroes [each] and 50 to 60 dollars an acre for land.” The table indicates that compared to the cotton producing states of Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi, the value per acre in Louisiana, where sugar plantations concentrated, was much higher (table 5.8).<sup>77</sup>

Boyd usually consulted Ballard on various issues, one being on his view of hiring and firing overseers. For example, on one occasion he told Ballard about overseer W.J.C. Dixon on Magnolia, who Ballard had some doubts about. Boyd agreed with Ballard that it would be good to wait “a little while before employing Dixon permanently.” Boyd was also in close relation with the factors Nalle & Cox, and would provide his opinions on how to market the crop, and would report to Ballard on how the crops were handled. The relationship among Ballard, Boyd and the factors in New Orleans appeared to be very stable and amicable, and functioned adequately. For example, production in 1843 started

**Table 5.8** Value Per Acre of Farms and Buildings, 1850 and 1860 (dollars)

<b>state</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1860</b>
Alabama	5.30	9.20
Georgia	4.20	5.89
Louisiana	15.20	22.02
Mississippi	5.22	12.04
Texas	1.44	3.48

Source) Gray, *History of Agriculture*, vol.2, 643.

<sup>77</sup> S. Boyd to Ballard, 26 March 1846, folder 98, Ballard Papers. S. Boyd to Ballard, 2 June 1847, folder 112, Ballard Papers. Boyd suggested a place that “had no improvements hardly and not more than 120 acres in cane, it would require an outlay of 10 to \$15000 to put up the buildings and machinery,” and another one “with 100 slaves on it, it has been planted heretofore in cotton and is just getting ready for sugar.”

out better than in the previous year, and Boyd estimated that the prospects were good for the cotton crops of Mississippi and Louisiana, informing Ballard that he should have the factors sell his cotton immediately after sending them, since “the favorable accounts from England, and the consequent spur in our markets, the early prices will be as good or any during the season.” But he continued that “if you have confidence in your merchants, it would be safe to leave it to them, as they have the best means of knowing and will feel greater responsibility without restrictions.”<sup>78</sup> Boyd also made arrangements for each plantation’s supplies, and if one plantation lacked sufficient produce to feed the slaves, other plantations with surplus corn would often be brought over to supply them.<sup>79</sup> Disease outbreaks occurred from time to time as well, and Boyd made sure all remedies were stocked when there were rumors of yellow fever or cholera spreading nearby. Slaves were moved around between the plantations when necessary. When a slave with a certain skill was needed, Boyd would make the arrangements to supply him or her where needed from other plantations. James Boyd wrote that “the hands which went from Magnolia to my place were sent back in two weeks.” He additionally needed more slaves at the plantation, since he “cannot get the crop out without ten or fifteen more pickers.”<sup>80</sup> In January 1845, 10 slaves from Magnolia were sent out to Pine Mount plantation for a period of time.<sup>81</sup> According to the cotton picking records at

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<sup>78</sup> S. Boyd to Ballard, 11 October 1843, folder 65, Ballard Papers. Ballard also once wrote to his wife about one overseer, mentioning that “he has taken charge of the place until Christmas,” but “I shall not keep him another year and have to employ another man.” R.C. Ballard to his wife, 2 November 1844, folder 79, Ballard Papers. It is likely he was referring to Dixon here.

<sup>79</sup> S. Boyd to Ballard, 1 August 1847, folder 116, saying “I have 400 acres in corn at Forest Hill, and can supply Karnac if you think that will be the best way.”

<sup>80</sup> James Boyd to Ballard, 24 August 1844, folder 76, Ballard Papers. Although the letter is from Natchez, the which plantation was referred to as “my place” in the letter is unclear. In the late antebellum period, Boyd applied homeopathic treatment on the slaves on their plantations.

<sup>81</sup> Volume 19, folder 438, Magnolia Plantation journal, Ballard Papers. The name and age of slaves sent were Jerry 50, Daniel 22, Ephraim 15, Henry 15, Celest 20, Susan 25, Winny 45, Ann 40, and the two children of Ann, Margaret 6 and Tom 4.

Magnolia, nearly 20 hands were sent to Elcho and Karnac plantations for the most of November, and in 1855, almost all hands were sent to Elcho for the third week of November.<sup>82</sup>

After a brief testing period, W.J.C. Dixon became the overseer for the 1843 season at Magnolia. Correspondence indicate that Ballard and Boyd used advertisements to seek overseers, for example, a man named A. Price showed interest in overseeing for them and that he had “been overseeing for 12 years and my experience ought to make me equal to any [overseer].” On another occasion, John Stevens responded hearing that Ballard wanted to employ someone, that he “would like very much to do your business for you,” and he would “do it on as reasonable terms and as well as any person you could get.” As the earlier table on overseers shows, some overseers moved from one plantation to another among those that belonged to Ballard and Boyd, and those overseers were the ones more reliable and responsible in their work. Overseers were provided annual wages. For example, W.J. Dixon’s annual wage for 1843 was \$500, and he was paid \$124 for his work from January 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup> of that year, and J. H. Cox’s wages for 11 months in 1847 were \$457.37. Past studies show that a plantation with 30 slaves was the lowest threshold set for hiring an overseer, and 100 was the highest number for a single overseer’s managing capacity, and perhaps 50 slaves per overseer was the ideal ratio.<sup>83</sup>

Changing of overseers had a huge effect on the morale and the working pace of slaves on the plantation. Once when Magnolia overseer Dixon was not well enough to attend his duties, another overseer, Dowling, took over his place temporarily, who was reportedly doing

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<sup>82</sup> Volume 30, folder 452, Cotton Plantation Record and Account book, Magnolia Plantation, Ballard Papers.

<sup>83</sup> Jacob Metzger, “Rational Management, Modern Business Practices, and Economies of Scale in the Antebellum Southern Plantations” *Explorations in Economic History* 12 (April 1975): 144; John B. Stevens to Ballard, 23 November 1847, folder 120, Ballard Papers. On the wages, see Volume 16, folder 424, Ballard Papers, which also includes overseer’s expenses for Magnolia in 1843, and Volume 21, folder 441, for Cox.

well, but “at first the negroes complained he was too tight,” which James Boyd said was due to the slaves “having been without discipline during Dixon’s blindness.” But later Samuel Boyd reported that the new overseer was almost a “monster of cruelty,” clashing with the driver and negroes, and was “going on at such a rate that Steele had to protect the negroes.” Samuel Boyd immediately discharged him, and put a man named Ward in charge, who was a man well known and highly recommended by Steele, and Samuel Boyd was “pleased with his appearance and talk.”<sup>84</sup>

By the summer of 1846, Magnolia had a new overseer, J.H. Cox, who according to Steele’s observations, appeared to be “industrious and getting his crop clean.” Boyd agreed that Cox was doing better than he expected “considering the time when he set in and the state of the crop ... he has done as well as he could.”<sup>85</sup> But a year later, the favorable view toward Cox changed dramatically. Steele reported that Cox was “becoming very intemperate,” and was “a most abominable liar,” and that he was more a “splendid driver” than an overseer, and was “not fit to leave a plantation like that entirely on his charge.” By then, Magnolia had 57 slaves and was producing around 15000 to 20000 pounds of cotton. He reported to Ballard that Cox would do “a great deal better when you are watching him,” but when no one was around he was out of control. According to information gathered by Steele and Boyd, Cox seriously hurt a slave boy named Bill when Ballard and others were not at Magnolia. Cox was about to “finish him or maltreat him” with the whip, when Boyd and others thought that whipping was not the kind of punishment that he required. Steele even heard that Bill was not only badly whipped but Cox “got drunk and made the dogs bite him seriously,” upon which

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<sup>84</sup> James Boyd to Ballard, 24 August 1844, folder 76; Samuel Boyd to Ballard, 1 September 1844, folder 76, Ballard Papers. Thomas Dowling, apparently was one of the overseers for Isaac Franklin’s estates in Louisiana. See Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 108n37, 109n40.

<sup>85</sup> C. Steele to Ballard, 29 June 1846, folder 104, Ballard Papers.

Boyd informed Ballard that “he ought to be discharged.”<sup>86</sup>

When Cox left Magnolia, the journal entries suggest that he left the place totally disorganized. When Rice B. Read, the nephew of Ballard took over the overseer position in Magnolia, he recorded a long description of the place at the time he arrived. Large portion of both cotton and corn fields were covered over with grass, some “shoulders high,” and the corn field was “never thinned or hoed and never was ploughed.” As a result, they did not have sufficient corn and had to purchase 200 barrels, in addition to 2000 pounds of fodder. The fences, ditches, and tools were all in terrible condition, including the gin which was “in a bad fix crowded all around with rotten seed and the boards of the shed torne off.” On the negroes, Read commented that they were “in worse training than any I ever had to manage and the worst hands to do bad work ... [and they] work very slow.”<sup>87</sup>

Various studies have documented the tension between overseers and drivers, who were the foreman for slaves, and set the pace for the gangs, on large plantations.<sup>88</sup> Ballard and Boyd’s plantations were not an exception, although Boyd and Steele paid enough visits and carefully watched if any tensions existed between the overseer and the slaves. In one extreme case, on Forest Hill plantation, apparently the new overseer “shot the driver badly.” Boyd quickly went to Forest Hill, and although the driver was by then “out of danger,” his “wounds were severe and may possibly terminate badly.” Boyd found a new overseer within a few months for replacement.<sup>89</sup> Although not between an overseer and a driver, in early 1860,

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<sup>86</sup> C. Steele to Ballard, 31 May 1847, folder 111; S. Boyd to Ballard, and enclosed, 10 June 1847, folder 112, Ballard Papers.

<sup>87</sup> Volume 20, folder 439, Magnolia Plantation Journal, 1847, Ballard Papers. In the previous year, Ballard and Boyd hired Richard Alsop, a relative of the Alsops in Virginia on their Karnac plantation. See Richard Alsop to Ballard, June 29, 1846, folder 104, Ballard Papers.

<sup>88</sup> Disputes between overseers and drivers, see John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, rev.ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>89</sup> S. Boyd to Ballard, 20 September 1847, folder 118; S. Boyd to Ballard, 25 September 1847, folder 118, Ballard Papers. There is not much information on Forest Hill plantation, and it is unclear who the overseer

overseer Henry C. Buckner was attacked by one of his slaves, and claimed the slave “struck me with his ax and would have willed me if I had not of gotten out of his way,” and that he “tried to shoot him but his pistol would not shoot.” In extreme cases, overseers did not hesitate to kill the slave that put them in danger. Various clashes occurred between the overseer and the slaves, which was one reason why much southern journals devoted their focus on the best management of slaves on plantation.<sup>90</sup>

Ballard and Boyd added Pine(y) Mount Plantation to their empire in late 1844. Boyd visited the site and it was the best purchase he had heard of, and the price which included all necessities at \$31000. Boyd continued to strengthen the production capability on Pine Mount, placing an experienced overseer and asking Ballard to “bring down some ten hands to add to the force, say 5 men and 5 women,” and suggested that “we ought to get a blacksmith for Pine Mt.”<sup>91</sup> In early 1847, they added Elk plantation to their operation. The following table lists the slaves and their ages that were sent to the Elk plantation, and each line represents a family unit (table 5.9).<sup>92</sup> Many slaves were brought over from Brushy Bayou plantation, and part of the work force was divided and left at “Mrs. Lillard’s plantation,” which was a portion of the former Providence plantation that appeared to have been sold.

In the fall of 1850, Boyd purchased the land which formerly belonged to a man named Thorn, a land of 1450 acres at \$9 per acre.<sup>93</sup> In the mid 1850s, the land Ballard owned in

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was.

<sup>90</sup> Henry C. Buckner to Ballard, 4 January 1860, folder 322, Ballard Papers.

<sup>91</sup> J. Boyd to Ballard, 15 December 1844, folder 80; S. Boyd to Ballard, 22 December 1844, folder 81, Ballard Papers. The experienced, old overseer on Pine Mount was of such high quality that he was given several offers from other plantations, and Boyd feared that he might leave. S. Boyd to Ballard, 17 November 1847, folder 120, Ballard Papers.

<sup>92</sup> James Maurice to Ballard, 3 January 1847, folder 108, Ballard Papers.

<sup>93</sup> S. Boyd to Ballard, 29 November 1850, folder 259, Ballard Papers.



Texas was up for sale. S.W. Warren of Adams County, Mississippi had interest in purchasing the place with the price Boyd gave, which was \$25,000, and C.W. Rutherford, Ballard's slave

**Table 5.9** Elk Plantation Slaves, 1847

<b>Slave families</b>	<b>Total</b>
George Mills (40), Louisa (30), Milley (3), Mills(1)	4
William (27), Paulina (33)	2
Big Abe (30), Rose (40)	2
Little Abe (28), Ellen (21), Lewis (5), Ben (3), Tom (1)	5
Robert (28), Jane (25), Frank (3), Nancy (1)	4
Old Jefry(53), Big Maria(45), Little Jefry (18), Monroe (7) Anderson (6), Aggy(3), George Ann (3 mons)	7
Stephen (28), Little Maria (25)	2
Edmund (21)	1
<b>(from Brushy Bayou)</b>	
Isaac (24), Black Henry(21)	2
Ann (48), Rachel (24), Margaret and her child (20), Miles (18) Yellow Henry (16)	6
Cole (35), Marinda (48), Dick (16)	3
Big Henry (30)*	1
Little Charlotte (24)*, Adam (4), Mary (3), Easter (3 months)	4
Big Charlotte (37)	1
Nelley(40)*, Little Eliza (17)	2
Caney (22), Big Eliza (32), Lucile (11) John (6), Andy (4), Caesar (2)	6
Sarah(33)*, Martha (8), General (6), Spencer (3), Caroline (1)	5
Black Harriet (30), Adeline (5)	2
Betsy (32), Moses (8), Emily (7), Bob(3)	4
Big Kitty (30)	1
Jeny (25), Mahaley (30)	2
Old Philis (50)	1

Source) James Maurice to Ballard, January 3, 1847, folder 108, Ballard Papers.

Note) The following slaves were sent to Lillard's plantation, neighboring one of Ballard and Boyd's plantation. Charles (husband of Little Charlotte), Minor, Diana, Kitty, Joe, Luker (the husband of Nelley), John, Easter, Anthony (husband of Sarah), Isaac, Alfred, Winder (3 children of F. Charles by first wife), Jim, George, Hannah (wife and children of Big Henry) \* indicates the ones with families on different plantations.

trading agent, reported to Ballard that the purchaser "wants all the farming utensils and corn and fodder, don't want any negroes," and that he wanted "1-2-3-4 year payments, bearing 6

percent from date until paid.”<sup>94</sup> Around the same time, Ballard developed a new plantation, the Dunlop plantation which was located about 7 miles from Vicksburg, Mississippi but in Madison Parish, Louisiana, and began to furnish that place with negroes.<sup>95</sup>

Ballard and Boyd’s discussion and ambitions over land speculation accelerated in the early 1850s. In December of 1854, Boyd wrote to Ballard, “the place you speak of in Bachelors Bend is too high price to think of, indeed I would not buy any more this season or everything is out of all season.” But next January, he heard the news that Madison Parish in Louisiana had “raised a tax to levee the bend at Diamond Island,” and if that was the case he judged that “it would make the stones place a cheap one at \$50,000 for everything.” He asked Ballard to “attend the sale and buy it for us, with a view to sell it after the levee is finished.” For payment, Boyd suggested that “principle part of the cost payment, Outpost [plantation] can be used in possibly the balance on our cotton account after you take out what you told me you would need, may be enough to make the payment.” He estimated that the surplus cotton was about 800-900 bales on other plantations including Forest Hill and Magnolia. Boyd thought it was too late to make any other investment for that season, but “we may make a profitable speculation [from this purchase].”<sup>96</sup>

By the late 1850s, Ballard and Boyd’s empire totaled at least 10, but perhaps up to 16 plantations, including the ones briefly mentioned, and some of them were located fairly close to one another. Magnolia by far offers the liveliest records of plantation management. The slaves on Magnolia in 1848 are listed on table 5.10. The Magnolia journal usually recorded marriages, births, and deaths among the negroes, and it was likely that marriage among the

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<sup>94</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 5 January 1853, folder 205, Ballard Papers. Further description of the land in Texas in unclear.

<sup>95</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 14 January 1854, folder 205, Ballard Papers.

<sup>96</sup> Boyd to Ballard, 16 December 1854, folder 221; Ballard to Boyd, 3 January 1855, folder 224, Ballard Papers.

slaves was encouraged, since it had a list of numbered houses with the names of slaves that live in each house. The total number of slave houses on Magnolia numbered 32. From the 1848 record, there were 24 different units, in which some appeared to be families (table 5.11).

Slave runaways occurred from time to time on Ballard's plantations. James Boyd reported in 1844 that "four of the Jefferson County negroes are runaway[s] from Magnolia." A few weeks later Dixon had to go to Port Gibson, where the county jail was located, and "got the ten negroes who were there in jail" that had ran away.<sup>97</sup>

Overseer Stampley had to pay a visit to the Port Gibson jail as well, to get out a runaway slave named Harry from Magnolia, but he failed when Harry escaped again.<sup>98</sup> In the summer of 1846, Magnolia overseer Cox had trouble with a runaway slave named Wilson, who was caught by an overseer of a neighboring plantation. Wilson ran away because "he could not get his mule greated in time and he was afraid I [Cox] would whip him."<sup>99</sup> Five slaves ran away from Magnolia in the summer of 1849, but all were caught in Louisiana.<sup>100</sup> A few years later, Boyd was informed that three Magnolia runaways were in a hide out, and that there seemed to be a "regular business of that kind going on for several years, and one principal hiding place is on the burden of Claiborne [County]."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> James Boyd to Ballard, 24 August 1844, folder 76; James Boyd to Ballard, 4 September 1844, folder 76, Ballard Papers.

<sup>98</sup> C. Steele to Ballard, 10 July 1845, folder 89, Ballard Papers.

<sup>99</sup> J.H.Cot to Ballard, 26 June 1846, folder 104, Ballard Papers.

<sup>100</sup> Heisenbuttle & Maynadeer to Ballard, 31 July 1849, folder 141, Ballard Papers.

<sup>101</sup> S.Boyd to Ballard, 24 May 1852, folder 177, Ballard Papers. Marroonage by runaway slaves was more common in the Caribbean slave societies than in Louisiana. Dessens, *Myths of a Plantation Society*, 95.

**Table 5.10** Magnolia Slaves, 1848

age	30 and over	20-29	10-19	Under 10	Total
Male slaves	8	19	9	11	47
Female slaves	12	19	6	14	51

(Source) Volume 23, folder 442; Volume 39, folder 465, Magnolia Plantation journal, 1848, Ballard Papers.

**Table 5.11** Magnolia Families, 1848

Marriages / parent (age)	Children (age)
Ambrose (26) Dinah (33)	Samuel (4 months), Ceily(9), Dealy (9), Mariah (3)
Nat (26) Sarah (25)	Tisha (2), Sie Briscoe (1)
Tom Perkins (28) Charlotte Buckner (28)	
Ed (23) Caroline Edmond (24)	
Robert (24) Lucinda (24)	Louisa (2)
Windsor (23) Nancy Dorson (21)	
(John Chase?), Sally (27)	Harris (4), Clarisa (1)
Dick (35), Viny (27)	Martha Jane (1)
Merit (32) Francis (23)	Slena (8), Mary Jane (2) Elick (4)
Sie Briscoe (22), Harriet Johnston (27)	
Dolphin (27), Malviny (21)	
Henderson (22), Hester (34)	
Cordy (26), Mary Ben (35)	Jackarias (1)
David (23), Caroline C (20)	Elizabeth (3)
Jim Clemmon (34), Amy (37)	
Isaac Carter (35), Betsy (36)	
Jim Juniver (21) Tabby (20)	
Solomon S (25), Nancy Lee (27)	
George S (22), Matilda (27)	Mary Jane (4), Henry (2)
Epps (25), Mary Ross (23)	Nancy (4)
(Tom Creek?)	Jim (19), Josepha (4), Peter (2),
Milly (39)	Rebecca (5), Citty (3)
Harriet B (28)	John (6), Charlotte (4), Nicholas (2)
Rose (30)	Tom (2)

(Source) Volume 23, folder 442; Volume 39, folder 465, Magnolia Plantation journal, 1848, Ballard Papers.

Contemporary accounts, as well as later scholarly works have often criticized cotton

planters for their primitive and inadequate methods of cultivation, their lack of innovation, and their unwillingness to change their practices which often times ended up in overproduction.<sup>102</sup> But there were gradual, but noticeable changes and sophistication in management, both in the process of cotton cultivation and the control of slaves. Cotton plantation management depended largely on the size of the labor force. The larger the labor force, usually the higher the degree of labor specialization among the slaves. Numerous studies have shown the organizational sophistication of work regimens, which were structured so as to generate the highest profits on a large plantation: as Kenneth Stampf had put it, a well-functioning plantation was indeed a “factory in the fields.”<sup>103</sup> Occupations included both domestic work and field work. On Ballard’s plantation, the common skilled slaves, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, cooks and weavers were all present. Other slaves engaged in combination of various tasks on the field.

At least up to 1840, cotton plantations in the West commonly applied gangs to organize their labor force.<sup>104</sup> Negro drivers would usually lead the gangs, and 1 driver for about 15 slaves appeared to have been the norm, since an average size gang consisted of 10 to 20 laborers. Some of the common gangs for cotton production were plow gangs, hoe gangs, cotton-picking gangs, fence-building gangs, land-clearing gangs, and ginning gangs, which operated under an assembly-line type of labor. Men and women usually worked separately, and women were excluded from the physically demanding gangs. Past studies have revealed that nearly one-third to one-fourths of the male slaves were excluded from gangs, and those

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<sup>102</sup> Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 132-4.

<sup>103</sup> Kenneth Stampf, *Peculiar Institution*, 42.

<sup>104</sup> Gang labor developed at an uneven pace in different places, and they differ according to the crop. The system began in large sugar plantations and gradually spread to rice, coffee, cotton, and to a lesser extent, tobacco. For various works on gang labor, see Robert W. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, Philip Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*. It should be noted that an average cotton farmer in the South owned about 8 slaves, and slave ownership was becoming increasingly concentrated throughout the antebellum era.

excluded usually worked in managerial positions or skilled work. The efficiency that made the gang system profitable required total control of slaves, which indicated close supervision not just of their labor, but also of their lives in the slave quarters. The rules and regulations of slave life and the authority of overseers and drivers differed on each plantation. Since applying gang labor required a large slave labor force, the average wealth of a gang-system farm was more than \$56,000, which was 15 times more than the average northern farmer or southern yeomen.<sup>105</sup> Overall, gang labor was more common in slavery in the Americas, and it would be a mistake to associate this labor system with only monoculture agricultural societies. In fact, the process of gang labor development accompanied complex labor occupations and hierarchies within the labor force that created social differentiations among those societies that adopted such system.<sup>106</sup>

The cotton production cycle began its calendar in January, when clearing up the grounds for plowing started, which would last until March or April. On the plow ground for the coming cotton, “water furrows” were prepared in five to six feet apart by heavy plow of oxen or mules. Until the 1840s, before horizontal rows of cotton became common, water would accumulate toward the lower hillside and cause an overflow and damage the top soil. With additional draining ditches to avoid overflow, the continuing problem of soil erosion and water damage was rectified. In between the furrows, a light plow would “drill,” which was where they seeded the cotton, then it was “harrowed,” which completed the process.<sup>107</sup> Two

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<sup>105</sup> Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 78; Fogel, *Without Consent*, 52, 83. On plow gangs see Edward Moore to Ballard, 28 June 1842, folder 51, Ballard Papers. One of the common cited disadvantages of the gang system was that the set pace would be the pace of the slowest worker, and slaves could conspire to slow down the pace at their will as a form of resistance. If the morale and work ethic remained low, even the driver could lead the resistance to a lowered productivity. One of the major reasons why the overseer and the driver clashed so frequently centered on this overseer’s expectation and driver’s unwillingness to achieve this expectation.

<sup>106</sup> Fogel, *Without Consent*, 58-9.

<sup>107</sup> T. B. Thorpe, “Cotton and Cultivation,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 8 (February, 1854) 452-7, 9, quoted in Bruchey, *Cotton and Growth*, 171; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 32-6, has

to three bushels of cotton seed were said to be necessary for an acre of cotton ground. On fertile cotton lands, more than 1500 pounds of seed cotton per acre were produced and about 1000 pounds for uplands.<sup>108</sup> Within a week or two after seeding, the young plant would appear, followed by the plows to “scrape” the crop and the hoes to cut away the abundant shoots and weeds, in order to have single cotton plant in two feet apart from each other. If no cut-worm disasters or severe weather hit, two weeks after the scraping, another hoe would go down to throw the furrow back on to the roots of the now strengthened plant. This procedure was often called “molding.” On Magnolia, one overseer reported that he would run “20 to 25 double ploughs, the average was 23, and from 20 to 50 single ploughs, the average will be 40,” but the frequency and the number of laborers for plow and hoe depended on what the overseer saw best fit for that cotton year.<sup>109</sup> Plow and hoe repeated several times before July, when cotton began to make its appearance. Plow labor required more strength, and possibly more difficulty than hoes, and usually the strongest men, in their twenties and thirties were in the plow gang. Hoe gangs were more likely to consist of women and boys or older men.<sup>110</sup> Table 5.12 shows the overseer’s recapitulation of the cotton calendar at Magnolia in 1845. Although cotton began to appear in May, it “commenced opening” in July, and after August, the picking season continued till the end of the year.

In the rich cotton lands, the fleecy staple could grow to become higher than the tallest picker, and a single plant could hold hundreds of perfect bolls. Cotton bolls were always

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additional information on ways to avoid soil damage, such as planting oats or rye in between cotton planting time, and used various fertilizers.

<sup>108</sup> Moore, *Emergence of Cotton Kingdom*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> Volume 19, folder 438, Magnolia Plantation Journal, 1845, Ballard Papers.

<sup>110</sup> Details on the improvements in plows and hoes, and the adaptation of cultivators and scrapers, see Moore, 38-41. Scrapers required less labor than the hoe, which became popular in the late two decades before the Civil War. Metzger, “Rational Management,” 135; Fogel, *Without Consent*, 45.

under threat from severe weather, along with worms that would make their way to the boll, and the danger of rots. Army-worms were the most notorious, and there was no effective way to destroy them. These worms attacked Magnolia and the entire region in the summer of 1845. Magnolia overseer Stampley reported, “the boll worm has been very disruptive to the cotton crop this season and particular in this neighborhood,” which has caused “a serious injury.”<sup>111</sup> Various types of worms attacked in the summer of 1847 and damaged portion of the cotton at Karnac and Magnolia. By the following month boll worms had destroyed “at least 50 bales” at Magnolia.<sup>112</sup>

**Table 5.12** Recapitulation of Magnolia Planting, 1845

January 22	Commence plowing for corn
February 5	Finished plowing for corn
February 6	Commence plowing for cotton
February 18	Commence planting corn
February 27	Finish planting corn
March 5	Finish plowing for cotton
March 20	Commenced scraping corn
March 26	Commence planting cotton on stable field
April 3	Finished scraping corn
April 4	Finished planting cotton on stable field
April 16	Commenced scraping cotton
April 18	Commence planting cotton on hills and petit field
April 19	Finished planting cotton on hills and petit field
May 1	Finished scraping cotton
May 26	Cotton began to bloom
July 10	Commence opening cotton
August 4	Finished plowing
August 13	Commence picking

Source) Volume 19, folder 438, Magnolia Plantation journal, 1845, Ballard papers.

Cotton picking began usually in late July or August, continuing up to Christmas without intermission. Each slave would be provided a basket and a bag: the basket would be placed at

<sup>111</sup> Stampley to Ballard, 29 August 1845, folder 90, Ballard Papers.

<sup>112</sup> Boyd to Ballard, 1 August 1847, folder 116; Boyd to Ballard, 28 August 1847, folder 117; Cox to Ballard, 3 September 1849, folder 118, Ballard Papers.



the end of the row the slave was working on, and the slave would empty the cotton in the bag into the basket. The average picking amount varied, but one account states that each slave picked 250 to 300 pounds of seed cotton in a full working day. Such high amounts of picking per day were accomplished only after the so-called “Petit Gulf” cotton seed was found and spread in the 1820s.<sup>113</sup> A successful planter in Mississippi had his own system of rewards and gave money to those who picked the most every week during the season. Where 300 or 350 pounds per slave a day for plantation around the area was considered a good day, on this plantation many slaves picked 500 pounds. The best cotton picker on this plantation was a tall woman who picked two rows at one time, going down the middle with both arms extended and grasping the bolls with each hand. The said planter also made the slaves work so as not to disturb others who were working on different tasks, and for pickers who were picking continuously for hours, other slaves would carry water to them, so that they would not have to stop. Cotton picking was one task that almost all slaves took part in. Children started to pick at age five or less, and in certain age groups, women picked more than men, and they outnumbered adult men in a ratio of about 5 to 4. On Ballard’s plantation, all hands engaged in cotton picking, and in Magnolia record of 1845, 6-year-old Frances had a picking record, although cotton picked by children under 10 was added together and recorded as “children” by most overseers. Some pickers would leave from time to time to perform other tasks during the picking season. Overseers on Ballard and Boyd’s plantations kept detailed cotton picking records for many years. Magnolia, Laurell Hill, and Elcho plantation records of certain years are especially well documented. Table 5.13 and 5.14 show the recapitulation

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 12-3, 85 This was also referred to as Mexican cotton, and the increased productivity from each slave raised the value of a slave and their ability to pick high amounts of cotton became an important skill. Also see Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi*, 15; Olmstead and Rhode, ““Wait a Cotton Pickin’ Minute!”,” 19-26.

of years with the best documented picking records.<sup>114</sup>

Not all cotton picking records on Ballard's plantations are available, and even for those with a considerable stock of records like the Magnolia plantation, some years or some months are simply not available or were never recorded. But from the existing records, the total work days for picking, total cotton picked (lbs.), and the total number of slaves (male, female and total) are used to calculate the mean amount of cotton picked per slave and per day.

If the weather was fine, the picked cotton might go straight to packing, but in most cases it was taken to be spread out on scaffolds where it was left to dry, and trash cotton was picked up and abandoned there. Packing rooms were located in the gin house, usually on the loft above the gin stand. Bailing cotton was the end of the cotton production process, which was done by a single powerful screw to press down the cotton, then roped and closed, to be sent to the ports. From Ballard's records, it was clear that slaves began working on the scaffolds, bailing, pressing, and ginning once there was enough cotton to work on. On Magnolia in 1848, ginning and pressing began on September 4<sup>th</sup> with 3 hands and 6 hands respectively. Some even began earlier, on Laurell Hill the ginning began on August 18, although in most years the highest concentration of hands ginning were in the later months, usually November. It was also clear that while cotton picking was the most important task from early fall to the end of the year the slaves also had to work on production of foodstuffs. Usually when the weather was not suitable for picking, all hands would engage in cultivating potatoes, peas, or corn. It was a common practice to plow up and down the slopes and to plant cotton or corn in successive years without using clover or peas to plow under and restore humus to the soil,

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<sup>114</sup> Early in the nineteenth century, a field hand could pick about 50 to 60 pounds of Siamese cotton a day, Moore, *Ibid.*, 9; Fogel, *Without Consent*, 45. According to Fogel, children by the age of 7, 40% of the boys and half of the girls enter the labor force, and by 12 they were full-time workers. Fogel, *Ibid.*, 54-5.

which method reportedly caused depletion of soil.<sup>115</sup> It is unclear how much care Ballard and Boyd provided to the soil quality of their plantations, but their rational management should have brought some attention to its preservation.

**Table 5.13** Picking Records 1 (Magnolia)

	Total working days	Total cotton (lbs )	Available hands Male/female/ Total (approx.)			Total Aggregate hands	Mean per Hand (lbs)	Mean per day (lbs)
1845	47	497981	54	46	100	3510	141.9	10595.34
1848	55	441998	34	33	67	--	--	8036.33
1849	unclear	85185	18	31	49	--	--	--
1850	64	268883	15	17	32	--	--	4201.3
1851	48	291871	17	17	34	--	--	6080.65
1853	69	402798	21	16	37	2068	194.8	5837.65
1854	81	401152	27	20	41	2937	136.6	4952.5
1855	108	495294	22	16	38	3158	156.8	4586.0
1856	90	366153	24	19	41	3046	120.2	4068.37

Source) Ballard Papers. Composed from volumes in Series 5, Magnolia plantation.

Note) Available hands were calculated at near average, since the number of working hands differed every week.

1848: men worked 54 days.

1845: portion of August records are missing.

1849: no record before September, several parts missing.

1850: many days without daily records.

1854: many hands left to help at Karnac and Elcho plantations from late October.

1855: many hands left to help at Elcho plantation between November 18 to December 7.

Picking Records 2 (Laurell Hill, 1852)

	Total working days	Total cotton (lbs)	Total available hands	Total aggregate hands	Mean per hand (lbs)	Mean per day (lbs)
1852	87	377033	41 (20/21)	2483	151.85	4333.7

Source) Volume 26, folder 447, Larell Hill plantation journal, 1852, Ballard Papers.

<sup>115</sup> Gates, *Farmers Age*, 142-4. Gates credits the circulating periodicals and agricultural societies that implemented the necessity of reform for planters.

Picking Records 3 (Elcho, 1857)

	Total working days	Total cotton (lbs)	Total available hands	Total aggregate hands	Mean per hand (lbs)	Mean per day (lbs)
1857	68	901057	97 (50/47)	5070	177.72	13250.8

Source) Volume 32, folder 456, Cotton Plantation Record and Account Book, Elcho plantation, 1857, Ballard Papers.

**Table 5.14** Monthly Picking Records (Magnolia, Laurell Hill, Elcho)

	July		August		September		October		November		December	
	d	lbs	d	lbs	d	lbs	d	lbs	d	lbs	d	lbs
1845 (M)	0	0	8	48426	19	221165	20	228390	--	--	--	--
1848 (M)	0	0	6	37361	26	221136	20	163791	3	19710	--	--
1850 (M)	0	0	4	18491	22	110438	24	95715	14	44239	0	0
1851 (M)	0	0	17	67770	--	--	--	--	20	16099 7	11	63104
1853 (M)	0	0	0	0	17	78080	18	129997	23	14478 5	11	49936
1854 (M)	0	0	15	89813	21	128326	25	127379	18	50814	2	4820
1855 (M)	1	46 15	27	161642	25	138200	25	89427	14	55784	16	45626
1856 (M)	0	0	11	57317	26	167430	26	153296	24	12668 0	3	12430
1852 (LH)	0	0	11	42001	20	84729	21	125919	21	87450	14	90368
1857 (E)	0	0	0	0	21	251906	21	301080	20	29712 6	6	50945

Source) Ballard Papers, volumes, series 5.

Note) d=days worked, M=Magnolia plantation, LH=Laurel Hill plantation, E=Elcho plantation.

The first cotton to arrive in the southern port cities in any given season was likely to be in October, although it could be earlier, and shipments would continue to arrive for the next six months or so. For example, on Magnolia in 1848, the first shipment was made on September 13, on steamer Concordia, of 50 bales, equivalent of 23,098 lbs. of cotton to Nalle & Cox. For that season, records show that subsequent shipments were made on September 20<sup>th</sup>, October 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, November 8<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, and the final one on December 21<sup>st</sup>, for a

total of 337 bales, 153,670 lbs. Sailing dates toward the North or England would start from late November and continue until May, although some indicate the dates more likely fell between October and April. The route between New York and Liverpool took approximately 20 to 30 days, while packets from Charleston and Savannah usually took between 25 to 40 days. New Orleans, being further to the West, took between 35 to 50 days to reach Liverpool. The estimated time these vessels stationed in Liverpool was between two to four weeks, which made the total voyage for a New York-Liverpool packet three and a half to four months. Charleston and Savannah to Liverpool would take around five months, and a New Orleans-Liverpool voyage would take five to six and a half months. All this indicated that one vessel could make probably only one trip to Liverpool during the shipping season.<sup>116</sup>

Larger planters increasingly tried to produce much of their necessities at home. Corn and pork were the major rations provided for slaves, which in most cases were distributed every week. On Ballard's plantation, corn production was given much attention, and Boyd and overseers reported on its condition frequently. The common ratio of cotton to corn raised on a plantation was two to one, and in some cases corn could go up to two-thirds of the total amount of cotton. Corn and other grain products that were produced on the plantation required grinding and milling, which Ballard often had done at a nearby grinding facility in Vicksburg, which would "grind eight bushels for [the] hour."<sup>117</sup> Ballard and Boyd chose to purchase much of their hog supply for their plantations, although they did raise some. Ballard, as mentioned earlier, had a particular factor in Kentucky who handled all the necessary pork for him. Ballard received updates on the hog market from time to time. Once the dealer wrote, "in regard to pork, I would advise you to make some purchase soon, probably it would be

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<sup>116</sup> David M. Williams, "Shipping," 66-69; Metzger, "Rational Management," 135.

<sup>117</sup> Ben R. Austin to Ballard, 12 November 1845, folder 93, Ballard Papers. Sydner, *Slavery in Mississippi*, 14; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 90, 121.

best to do so at once.” According to his account “as soon as the money market improves the hog product will advance.” For the year 1854, Kentucky hogs were extremely short from the previous year, “at least 23 percent less, and lard still greater.”<sup>118</sup>

Improved technology in cotton machinery may explain some part of the declining intensity of slave gang labor in the 1840s, but another major change that took place which improved the quality of slave life was the gradual adoption of task labor in slave management. On cotton plantations, Moore indicates that cultivation by horse-drawn scrapers, cultivators, and double-shovels was noticeably changed to the task system to increase the efficiency of field labor.<sup>119</sup> Task labor sought to systematically achieve the full capacity of the laborer by utilizing his or her skills to the greatest extent, commonly categorizing workers by their age, sex, and physical ability. But tasking itself did not indicate that the labor itself was any less intense than sunup-to-sundown gang labor.<sup>120</sup> Labor specialization was apparent from a much earlier time, not just between house servants and field slaves, but within those two categories, certain occupation and skills characterized most slaves. For domestic servants there were female spinners, weavers, seamstresses, cooks, washers, and ironers, to mention just a few. Male skilled workers also were identified with special skills, from blacksmiths, carpenters, brickmasters, ginners, sawyers, millers to hostlers. Young slaves would often become apprentices to acquire and train for a certain skill. These skilled slaves were often given privileges on the plantation.<sup>121</sup> It can be said that cotton operations

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<sup>118</sup>, H. Hull to Ballard, 7 December 1854, folder 220, Ballard Papers.

<sup>119</sup> Moore *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 95.

<sup>120</sup> Peter A. Coclanis, “How the Low Country was Taken to Task: Slave Labor Organization in Coastal South Carolina and Georgia” in *Slavery, Secession, and Southern History*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Louis Ferleger (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Philip D. Morgan, “Task and Gang Systems: The Organization of Labor on New World Plantations,” in Innes ed., *Work and Labor*, 189-220.

<sup>121</sup> Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 106-9.

from the 1840s onward had not only diversified their production process, but each of the processes had become professionalized or required specialized, trained personnel.<sup>122</sup> The extent of tasking on cotton plantation was not comparable to levels in rice or sugar. As seen on Ballard's plantations, all hands engaged in cotton picking at one time or another, with no regards to their special skills. Also, those who may have been "pressing" one day might be "ginning" on another, which indicated that cotton slaves could be multi-tasked. Not all specialized labor was suited for tasking on a cotton plantation. Plowing, one of the most intensive labor on cotton plantations, usually was not tasked. Some plantations where cotton picking became a task might show in their records that the daily picking for each slave topped at a certain amount, but it was more common for planters or overseers to fix the amount as a minimum and encourage slaves to pick as much as possible, often by prizes and rewards.<sup>123</sup>

It was safe to say that cotton planters combined tasking and the gang system to fit the needs of changing production technology and to achieve highest proficiency. In addition to reward incentives, better food and clothing, social events and independent activities, many planters began to encourage slaves to form families and provided separate cabins for each family. Although there were some indications of family housing on Ballard's plantations, records do not show slaves producing foodstuff for their own use or for marketing purposes, a practice that was spreading in the late antebellum era.<sup>124</sup> In general, by the 1840s and 1850s, most slaves on cotton plantations appear to have been living more comfortably than they did in the early nineteenth century.

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<sup>122</sup> Metzger, "Rational Management," 126-30.

<sup>123</sup> Rice plantations saw task labor develop more than any other commodity. Metzger, "Rational Management," 142-3.

<sup>124</sup> Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 98-106. There is abundant scholarly work on slave's independent economic activity in the Atlantic world. See footnote 11 in Introduction.

Although Ballard and Boyd may not have permitted slaves to produce foodstuffs or own their gardens, records indicate they did make arrangements to provide better working condition and home lives in the slave quarters. In the winter of 1845, Ballard discussed with Magnolia overseer Stampley about building a new negro quarter for the 149 slaves on the plantation. According to the description given to the contractor, each house was to be 16 to 18 feet with a veranda in front, 5 or 6 feet wide to be framed with one door and one window in each. The contractor was to bring all materials “except the chimney,” and the materials came from the “recent sundry on the river.” The plan was that it would have “the overseers house in the center,” so that “he could see all that passed[,] in each cabin to have a high fence from each cabin which will form an enclosed square with only one gate to be locked at night.”<sup>125</sup>

As for the clothing of slaves, up to the 1830s they were usually manufactured in the East, North, or in England, which could amount to a considerable expense. Buying slaves’ clothes tended to concentrate between September and February, according to Sydnor.<sup>126</sup> After the disastrous consequences of the panic and the depression of the late 1830s, large cotton plantations in the West began to pursue further self-sufficiency and higher efficiency in their management. For this purpose, planters began to install spinning and weaving equipment and assign permanent or temporary female weavers among their slave force. Magnolia overseer Cox reported that he had “all the negroe clothes out and will finish making them today.” The slaves produced dresses, trousers, shirts, blankets and pants for both males and females.<sup>127</sup> Table 5.15 shows the slaves’ clothes produced on Magnolia during the year 1849. It shows

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<sup>125</sup> Ben R. Austin to Ballard, 12 November 1845, folder 93, Ballard Papers. A drawing of the layout can be seen on the actual letter.

<sup>126</sup> Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi*, 23-4.

<sup>127</sup> Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 25. Cox to Ballard, 27 August 1847, folder 117, Ballard Papers.



how many days were engaged for making particular type of clothing, and also shows the seamstress's name, which was limited to a few selected female slaves. Weaving of slaves' outfits, according to contemporary accounts, was highly encouraged and was a sign of good management.<sup>128</sup> But some products could not be made on the plantations, such as iron, copper, various machineries, and rope and bagging for the cotton, for which products planters had to depend on outside manufacturing. Bagging and rope were usually provided by factors, along with some of the clothing such as boots, and other manufactured goods. Usually planters would write to their factors ordering these necessities, and the factor would purchase and send the products to them with an invoice.

Whether or not slaves were well fed on the plantations has been a question among scholars. Estimation confirms that slaves on cotton plantations worked an average of about 2800 hours per year, and 281 days per year, which is mainly explained by the fact that most slaves had Sundays off from work. This is much lower than the 3200 hour average of a northern farmer at the same time.<sup>129</sup> As for slaves' diets, economists have estimated that U.S. slaves in 1830 to 1860 took in about 2500 to 3000 calories a day, with a varied assortment of food, at a better rate than many people in the leading European countries at that time.<sup>130</sup> Ballard's records are not thoroughly documented to estimate those numbers, but rations appear to have been provided regularly. The record of Laurell Hill plantation shows that on August 22, 1852 rations of "milk, meat and molasses" were provided and on August 29, "bacon and molasses"

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<sup>128</sup> Affleck, *Cotton Plantation and Account Book*, 1852, quoted in Metzger, "Rational Management," 131. It has been estimated that about 10 percent of all women over the age of 40 among the slave labor force were usually engaged in cloth production on the plantation, although Ballard's plantation did not fit that statistic, perhaps because the slaves were concentrated in younger age category, and the plantation was rather new. See Fogel, *Without Consent*, 47.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-8.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-8.

**Table 5.15** Clothing for Magnolia Slaves, 1849

Date	Type of clothes	Seamstress (days worked)
February 11- 23	Shirts	Charlotte Buckner
February 24-March 10	Men's Pantaloon	Charlotte Buckner
March 10- 20	Women's Shirts	Charlotte Buckner (10-19) Harriet M (19 <sup>th</sup> ) Tabby (20 <sup>th</sup> )
March 20-24	Frocks for Women	Charlotte Buckner (20-24) Harriet M (20-24) Tabby (20-24)
March 23-29	Shirts for Men	Charlotte Buckner (23-29) Harriet (23-29) Tabby(23-29)
March 28-April 2	Men's Pantaloon	Charlotte Buckner (28-2) Harriet (28-2) Tabby (28-2)
April 2-5	Women's Shirts	Charlotte Buckner (2-5) Harriet (3-5) Tabby (3-5)
April 6-14	Frocks for Women	Charlotte Buckner (6-14) Harriet (6) Tabby (6)
April 16-19	Boy's Pantaloon	Julia from Karnac (6, 10-13) Charlotte (16-19) Julia from Karnac (16-18)
April 19-21	Shirts for the men that were bought and sent to Magnolia	Charlotte (19-21) Julia from Karnac (19-21)
April 26	Clothes for children	Charlotte, Julia from Karnac
July 29- August 14	Winter clothes	Francis (30-14), Imanda (6-14)
August 14-18	Pantaloon	Francis (14-18), Imanda (15-18)
August 20-29	Men's Coats	Francis (20-29), Imanda (20-29) Tabby (27-29), Harriet (29)
August 30-Sept 6	Men's Shirts and children's clothes	Tabby (30-1), Francis (30-6) Amanda (30-6), Harriet (30)
Sept 7-12	Men's shirts	Francis(7-12), Amanda (7-12)
Sept 12-17	Women's Shirts	Amanda (12-17)
Sept 17-Oct 4	Children's Clothes	Amanda (17-4), Mary Ross (19),

Source) Volume 22, folder 441, Clothes Book, 1849, Ballard Papers.

Note) The age of the seamstresses: Charlotte Buckner 26, Tabby 17, Francis 23. There were three slaves named Amanda, and their ages were 31, 22, and 20. There were two slaves Harriet M, aged 22 and 18. Mary Ross, Imanda, and Julia from Karnac are unclear.

were given. On Laurell Hill, records show that such rations were provided every week on

Sundays, and other plantations likely ran under a similar routine.<sup>131</sup>

Fogel and Engerman estimated that the division of labor time (measured in man years) on cotton plantations was 34% in cotton, 17% in corn, 15% livestock raising and 34% other activities, which included various chores for the slaves maintenance, such as making clothes, cooking, and nursing.<sup>132</sup> The spread of distribution could lead to higher productivity on plantations, since it suggests self-sufficiency. One account revealed that on cotton plantations in 1860, an average of about 22 different operations were performed each day in and out of the field. This was a highly diverse occupational structure considering the fact that the median labor size on a cotton plantation in that year was 35.<sup>133</sup> To manage all such tasks in a suitable way was a challenge for all planters and overseers, which often led to a strict and precise manual and instructions on their daily routines, and heavy supervising became mandatory for overseers. In sum planters devoted their entire attention to keep their plantation operations in the best condition possible, and achieve the highest efficiency and productivity under their advanced management skills.

### **Cotton Trade on the Political Front : Conventions, Texas, and the Compromise**

Cotton was at the center of increasing sectionalism in the early nineteenth century. The commodity had become the principal crop that accounted for 32% of national exports by 1820. While the South produced this global crop to fuel the textile industry in Europe, as we have seen, most of its commerce was handled by the North. The widening economic gap

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<sup>131</sup> Volume 26, folder 447, Laurell Hill plantation journal, 1851-1852, Ballard Papers.

<sup>132</sup> Metzger, "Rational Management," 127; Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, 41. Fogel, *Without Consent*, 45.

<sup>133</sup> Fogel, *Ibid.*, 31. Largest labor force was on rice and sugar plantations, a typical Louisiana sugar plantations would have of about 100 slaves.

between the North and the South became increasingly apparent by the 1830s. Southerners recognized their wealth being swept to the North, and their main concern became focused on lessening their economic dependence on the North.

Despite the fact that both North and South benefited from the cotton trade and both were eager to sustain its growth, their developmental pattern and commercial interests led to different positions on federal policies such as the tariff, taxation, navigation laws, and government funding. Despite limited federal funding for internal improvements, southern entrepreneurs began to embark on long-term development in transportation and communication projects. Their immediate economic discontent and anxiety provoked a public discussion on the economic and political direction for the South. Southern commercial conventions held from the 1830s were one of the outgrowths of these developments.

The first of these conventions focused on the South establishing a direct trade relationship with Europe, instead of the triangular trade that had developed with northern port cities.<sup>134</sup> This had been a common issue that gained more focus after the panic of the late 1830s. Direct trade with Europe and bypassing the middlemen in the North, would greatly decrease the additional costs that derived from the triangle route of the cotton trade.<sup>135</sup> Delegates at the conventions claimed that this “voluntary tribute” to the North drained \$10,000,000 or more profit annually from the South, which in the long run depleted capital for internal improvements and investing in manufacturing industries.<sup>136</sup> Southerners were

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<sup>134</sup> Direct trade conventions started following the panic of the late 1830s, first in Georgia in 1837, then followed in South Carolina and Virginia in the following years 1838 and 1839.

<sup>135</sup> Woodman, *King Cotton*, 142-53. In the last few years before the Civil War, the issue of reopening of the slave trade became a main issue in the commercial conventions..

<sup>136</sup> These conventions were held at a time when most southern states were aggressively pursuing to establish connections of railroads and canals with the north and Midwest. Connecting South and the West was desirable for the South, to both purchase foodstuffs and sell imported goods. Robert Royal Russell, *Economic Aspects of Southern Sectionalism, 1840-1861* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1960), 21-30.

also aware of the lack of sufficient credit opportunities from southern financial institutions. At one convention, delegates suggested that southern banks form European connections that would help assist southern importers with letters of credit, and also encouraged them to establish agencies in European cities to facilitate direct trade. With the damage from the panic, southerners saw a perfect opportunity to attract European capital directly to the South that would contribute to the growth of advanced financial institutions. Southern port cities such as New Orleans, Mobile, and Charleston, in their view, had the capability to function in a similar capacity as port cities in the North, and for a limited time, their efforts seemed successful, attracting agencies of Baring Brothers and Alexander Brown and Company to southern cities. But the panic of 1839 quickly diminished the possibility of drawing capital from Britain, and British direct investment did not return until the late 1840s.<sup>137</sup>

By 1840, southern agriculture was in a deep recession in every commodity, and although grain production was able to revive by the latter half of the decade owing partially to the repeal of the Corn Laws in Britain in 1846, cotton did not fully recover until the end of the decade. In the early 1840s, critics warned of cotton overproduction and advised planters to focus their attention more on investing in the manufacturing sector. Not only were southerners aware now of the speculative, unstable nature of the cotton market, but they were also hearing news of potential foreign competition from India and Brazil (table 5.16).<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Schoen, "Fragile Fabric," 243-53. On the policy of establishing agencies for the House of Brown, see Perkins. *Financing the Anglo-American Trade*. On letters of credit, see Perkins, *Ibid.*, 114-46.

<sup>138</sup> Russell, *Economic Aspects*, 35-7. DeBow's Review, among others, were influential in spreading the notion that cotton was being overproduced and diversification was necessary. British Corn Laws were passed between 1816 and 1818, crippling the grain export trade for many mid-Atlantic states. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 was seen as a victory for free trade supporters in the South. Economic analysis on the positive and negative effect of the repeal in Britain and Ireland can be found in Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 77-92. Also see Crouzet, *Victorian Economy*, 158-66. For cotton, from the early nineteenth century Britain had experimented in fostering cotton production in various regions, especially India, Egypt, and Brazil, and these regions, unlike the U.S. offered open markets for British manufactured goods and had the potential to replace the American South as the main contributor for the British textile industry. See Schoen, "Fragile Fabric," 198, 289.

Led by cotton planters and manufacturers in South Carolina, many southerners began to advocate the need to diversify southern industry, beginning with encouraging the development of cotton factories. Ideally, this would combat the overproduction problem not only by turning out final products and yield higher profit, but also by strengthening the manufacturing sector of the South. Diversification, in their view, would work to lessen dependency on the North by producing imported goods within the region.

**Table 5.16** Cotton Production by Areas Worldwide, 1791-1860 (million pounds)

	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831	1840	1850	1860
Brazil	22	26	35	32	38	30	40	36
West Indies	12	10	12	10	9	8	3	6
Egypt	-	-	1	6	18	25	30	34
Rest of Africa	45	46	44	40	36	34	34	35
India	130	160	170	175	180	185	210	450
Rest of Asia	190	160	146	135	115	110	120	132
Mexico and South America	68	56	57	44	35	35	40	57
Other Areas	-	15	11	8	4	13	15	100
United States	2	48	80	180	385	654	990	1650
<b>Total</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>1044</b>	<b>1482</b>	<b>2500</b>
<b>U.S. Share</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>62.6</b>	<b>67.8</b>	<b>66.0</b>

Source) Bruchey, *Cotton and Growth*, 7.

Conventions continued in the 1850s after the long depression in the previous decade at a larger, southern-wide scale, with the increasing tension in the political front surrounding slavery. J.D.B. DeBow was an active proponent of gathering proslavery southerners together to discuss the future of the region. They were held in major southern cities such as Baltimore, Charleston, Mobile, New Orleans, and gained more attention every year. Among other issues, the topics that generated heated debate were the South American trade and opening the

Amazon River for navigation, repeal of the U.S. tonnage duties and fishing bounties, the admission of foreign vessels to the American coasting trade, and direct shipments of cotton to the ports of Continental Europe. Despite the setback from the panic in the late 1830s, cotton producers in the South remained confident and optimistic about their free trade policies. Strengthening the economy through various internal improvements and diversification, in their view, would increase their competitiveness in the international market. In addition to the repeal of the Corn Laws, southerners believed European developments would turn to their favor. Continental Europe had a growing manufacturing sector and decreased its dependence toward Britain. Southerners hoped that British policy to explore new trade routes between Africa and Asia, especially China, would open opportunities for them to access new markets via Britain.<sup>139</sup>

The optimistic outlook of southerners gradually began to shift by the late 1850s with the increasing sectional tension on territorial issues, including the Kansas-Nebraska bill debated in Congress. By then, the main topic in these conventions focused on slavery, especially on reopening of the African slave trade to secure the labor supply. Along with the politics of free trade, southern interests became difficult to realize within the Union, and even within the South, the diverse coalition comprised of the Upper South and the Deep South, cotton planters and planters of other commodities, rural yeomen and urban manufacturers each held different priorities.

As the previous chapter explained, by the early 1840s, the proslavery ideology had become interlocked with the support of western migration, in that migration would enlarge the geographical area that supported the institution of slavery. The domestic slave trade gained significance as the necessary system to achieve this goal. When Texas became

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<sup>139</sup> Schoen, "Fragile Fabric," 282-3.

independently recognized in 1837, an opposition to its annexation quickly rose in the North, fueled by the rising antislavery movement within the nation and in the Atlantic world.<sup>140</sup>

During the Missouri controversy, the antislavery movement was still at an infant stage and had not reached most of the southern states, which resulted in a compromise. The Wilmot Proviso led by Pennsylvania Democrat David Wilmot to ban slavery from any territory taken from Mexico eventually failed in the senate, but led to serious discussion on slavery, free soil, and property rights within the context of the constitution. The proslavery Tyler administration sought aggressive measures to annex Texas because it believed that the British were making their move to use Texas as a starting point for spreading abolition on the mainland. For the administration, opening Texas as a slave state would increase its political power in Congress, and for states with surplus slaves, a vast area for slavery would increase slave demand and raise prices, which would be financially beneficial after the devastating panics in the previous decade. To gain support for Texas annexation as a slave state, Democratic senator from Mississippi Robert Walker argued that annexation would realize the views of the diffusionists decades before. The vast land would function as a safety valve relocating slaves from the eastern states, eventually outside the national boundary toward Mexico and Central America.

On the other hand, northern merchants and businessmen feared that if annexation failed, Texas commerce with great potential would fall in the hands of France or England, and could eventually cut down the trade of New York and other northern ports. They came to view annexation as a competition for commercial hegemony between them and European leading ports.<sup>141</sup> Although some northerners and southerners were suspicious and were against such arguments and methods, Texas eventually entered the Union as a slave state in 1845, and as a

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<sup>140</sup> British abolitionist movement from 1830s onward and its impact in the Atlantic world and the U.S. will be discussed in detail in the epilogue.

<sup>141</sup> Foner, *Business and Slavery*, 16-7.



result, mean slave prices jumped 150 percent between the annexation and the Civil War. The Alsops in Virginia reported to Ballard that in January 1847 the price of male slaves in Richmond ranged from \$600 to \$700 and were selling well, supposedly because of the “rise in cotton, together with Texas, has produced this change in the price of negroes.”<sup>142</sup> The rise in price coincided with increased demand and prices for cotton, and the South as a whole slowly came out of depression in the last 15 years of the antebellum era. The annexation of Texas became a pivotal moment that proved that European commercial interests and the humanitarian movement were not sufficient to alter the established economic structure of the American South and the North, and that the addition of a slave state resulted in acceleration of the domestic slave trade and the rise in slave prices.<sup>143</sup>

The Texas question also triggered the debate on land policy in the West. In light of increasing immigrants, criticisms against large-scale land speculation in the West, and the northern belief in free soil principles, the discussion of free homesteading policy revived. The safety-valve theory that small cheap land grants in the West would solve problems such as overpopulation and low wages in the eastern cities, was gaining support in the North and for some Democrats in the South. By keeping the grants small, the policy would limit the ongoing large speculation and would provide security for migrants and immigrants with limited assets. But for most southerners the fear that a liberal land policy would reduce revenue and lead to higher tariffs caused opposition, which heightened after the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Since the 160 acre they planned to give was not enough to run a slaveholding plantation, southerners began to view such policy as a method to diminish slaveholding and implant antislavery forces in the South.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Joseph Alsop to Ballard, 29 January 1847, folder 108, Ballard Papers.

<sup>143</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 64-70; Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 119-126, 266-71.

<sup>144</sup> Schoen, “Fragile Fabric,” 302-7; David Potter, *Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper &

The legislation that became the Compromise of 1850 was originally a set of eight resolutions presented by Henry Clay to the Senate. Various committee actions were taken to shape those resolutions and proposals to a compromise package and in May, the legislative program dealt with the admission of California, territorial organization for Utah and New Mexico, and boundaries and the public debt of Texas. It also recommended amendments to an ongoing discussion on the fugitive slave measure, and the suppression of the slave trade in the District of Columbia.<sup>145</sup> The last two measures, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the ban on the slave trade in the District, were intended to offset each other.<sup>146</sup> But the ban on the slave trade in the District merely moved the trading scene out of the national capital to neighboring Alexandria, already a thriving port and slave center on its own which had been returned to the state of Virginia in 1846 to avoid the increasing criticisms of the trade in the nation's capital. Traders left the area, but local slaves were allowed to be sold within and outside the District, could be auctioned off for legal purposes, and jails in the District still housed slaves to be sold.<sup>147</sup>

In sum, the events that culminated toward the end of the antebellum era showed southern optimism and confidence toward pursuing free trade policy for cotton, and no federal measure or territorial development became a major setback for the expansion of the slave

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Row, 1976).

<sup>145</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 83. As a result of the compromise, California was admitted as a free state, and Utah and New Mexico territorial legislatures provided legal sanction to slavery in 1852 and 1859 respectively. As explained in Chapter 2, the bill for forbidding the slave trade in the District of Columbia merely prohibited within the district, and the trade went on centering their operations in the surrounding areas, especially Alexandria. It also did not forbid local residents to import slaves for their own use, and local owners could still sell their slaves within the District or anywhere in the country. Fehrenbacher, *Ibid.*, 84-87.

<sup>146</sup> The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 allowed slaveowners to seize or obtain warrants to arrest fugitive slaves anywhere and stipulated that fugitives were not to be given traditional legal resorts of accused persons.

<sup>147</sup> Fehrenbacher, *Ibid.*, 83-7, 231-3, 271-6.

trade and slavery. The Texas question triggered a further rise in slave prices, and the southern concession in the 1850 Compromise hardly had any effect on the southern-wide slave trading market. The domestic slave trade continued to play an integral part of the southern economy and influenced the managerial practices of slaveholding planters.

### **Slave Trading in the West and the Debate on Paternalism**

The major involvement in the slave trade for Ballard after he moved from Virginia was through a Louisville-based trader C.M. Rutherford, who acted mostly as Ballard and Boyd's slave-trading agent. Rutherford moved actively through the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Kentucky purchasing and selling slaves on an extensive scale, and he made his credit arrangements for Ballard's slaves through Nalle & Cox. Rutherford had strong ties with traders in the area, particularly with a trader named Chenowith, who appeared frequently in their correspondences. Rutherford had long been in connection with Thomas McCargo, an associate of J. Purvis of Baltimore, who was an associate of Franklin & Armfield. Rutherford had much experience and expertise in the business and was also well informed about foreign cotton markets, which was a necessity for slave traders to conduct their business efficiently. He commented once that "the best news from England, heavy sales of cotton and fine prices manufacturing districts flourishing, the news on the whole good for cotton."<sup>148</sup> On another occasion he wrote, "news [of] no war in turkey and Russia, cotton advanced and heavy sales and that makes me have a good feeling," although the war did

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<sup>148</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 8 June 1850, folder 154, Ballard Papers. Ballard knew Rutherford well before he moved to the West, but became closer after he married Louise Berthe of Louisville and settled there. His trading activities went back to the early 1830s. In December 1832, he wrote to Ballard that he had "thirteen negroes on board," and that "he will get off [the steamer] at Natchez in the morning I have a change to sell them." He was preparing a base in New Orleans, where "McCargo came here," and told Ballard to "send the woman down by the Princess I can sell her in Mobile." See Rutherford to Ballard, 23 December 1832, folder 9; Rutherford to Ballard 27 December 1832, folder 9, Ballard Papers.

break out the following year.<sup>149</sup>

Rutherford briefly lived in New Orleans and conducted business there sometime in the early 1830s. In 1849 he was located at 179 Ganvier Street near his former residence, at the rent of \$900 a year, with one of his partners named Martin. In October 1849, Martin was sent to Louisville to “assist Chenowith at in buying, my instruction is to buy all the good negroes he can buy, his hands of good color and sound,” and that “he must buy fast for they will certainly rise.” This indicates that Chenowith was likely to have been responsible for supplying slaves from Kentucky to Rutherford when he was in New Orleans or Natchez. Rutherford judged the 1849 market better than he had seen in the past seven years, and “all the merchants here advise me to buy, they tell me they have never had as many enquiries from the country for negroes, they are calling on me every day to know prices &c.,” which explained why he asked for more slaves from Kentucky. Ballard funded Rutherford’s trading through the credit he had at Nalle & Cox. Rutherford would borrow money from Ballard’s account, \$5000 or so at a time, but usually paid them back once slaves were sold. In order for Chenowith to purchase slaves in Kentucky, Rutherford wrote to Ballard that “it will be necessary for you to make some arrangement through the banks at Louisville to get more money.”<sup>150</sup>

Rutherford frequently bought slaves which he judged Ballard might find necessary for his plantation. He was “afforded the prettiest small girl eleven years old mulatto I ever saw, for \$500,” and asked “shall I buy her, I think it favorable, I can get her for \$450 she is very

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<sup>149</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 6 August 1853, folder 196, Ballard Papers.

<sup>150</sup> C.W. Rutherford to Ballard, 29 October 1849, folder 143; Rutherford to Ballard, 1 November 1849, folder 144, Ballard Papers. In the letter, Rutherford mentioned he saw 250 slaves in the Natchez market. It is likely that Rutherford had a place in 157 or 159 Granvier Street previously. Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi*, 155. According to an earlier letter, he wrote “please send his [McCargo] woman down here to me at 157 Granvier Street if she is well and not sold,” referring to one of the slaves. Rutherford to Ballard, 27 December 1832, folder 9, Ballard Papers.

smart.”<sup>151</sup> On another occasion, Rutherford had a “19 years old black likely and all rite as tall and likely as the one you wanted of white, price \$700,” which also indicated that Ballard was looking for a light-colored female slave.<sup>152</sup> Rutherford once notified Ballard of buying slaves for him after he took money from Ballard’s account with Nalle & Cox to purchase 5 creole slaves raised in the parish of Pointe Coupee, knowing that if Ballard didn’t like them or if they were not necessary, he “would sell them in the fall.”<sup>153</sup>

Rutherford provided Ballard with detailed descriptions of the slaves in the market. In addition to the price, he often informed about the estimated height and weight, the color, mainly dark or light, and their physical condition, especially observing their teeth, which slave traders thought represented the health of the slave.<sup>154</sup> Samuel Boyd also corresponded with Rutherford regarding the slaves on their plantations, once asking him for “10 to 15 more females,” but Rutherford in his own judgment was not able to find female slaves that would suit Boyd’s preference. He suggested that he knew “a lot of Georgia negroes at Memphis that I think you could buy the women for \$900,” and told Boyd that he would go up there to find 10 to 15 female slaves, and he would only need “a letter of credit to draw at 60 or 90 days on Nalle Cox & Co.”<sup>155</sup> Boyd bought a total of 23 slaves, 16 men and 7 women from Rutherford in December 1853, for \$27500, and on terms of taking up his acceptances in balance, Boyd made arrangements with Nalle, Cox & Co. but wrote to Ballard that the exchange was “not

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<sup>151</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 1 November 1849, folder 144, Ballard Papers.

<sup>152</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 22 March 1851, folder 174, Ballard Papers.

<sup>153</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 17 February 1853, folder 187; Rutherford to Ballard, 27 February 1853, folder 187, Ballard Papers. He also referred to these creole slaves as “French darkies.”

<sup>154</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 30 April 1853, folder 190, Ballard Papers. On checking bodies of slaves, see Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul*.

<sup>155</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 14 December 1853, folder 202, Ballard Papers.

complete unless you are satisfied with it.”<sup>156</sup>

Nalle & Cox was cooperative when it came to purchasing slaves. Once when Boyd wrote to Nalle & Cox inquiring about the price of the best negro man and women in the New Orleans market, they strived to get the correct information and wrote back to Boyd, saying they “went down to Esplanade Street to see the dealers there and was informed that the best men could be had in lots at \$1400 and women to correspond at \$1100.” From their observance in the market and correspondence with Rutherford, they advised that at that time, the “Natchez market offers a better opening to purchase.”<sup>157</sup> On another occasion, Nalle & Cox wrote that they “accidentally met with 3 young negroes ... just brought over from Alabama for sale.” They were 2 boys aged 15 and 16, and a young women aged 19, and they could be purchased at \$3000. They wrote to Ballard that if he “wanted such negroes we think they would please you,” and would purchase them for him if he was interested.<sup>158</sup>

Rutherford also sold many slaves that once belonged to one of Ballard and Boyd’s plantations. When he received negroes from Ballard on the steamer *Princess* in early 1853, he was ready to “sell them as soon as I can, [but] I will wait to get a good price and sell them on 12 months [credit].” He reported that prices in the New Orleans market were \$1100 to 1200 for good men, and \$900 to 975 for good women, and suggested that for the next lot of slaves from Ballard’s plantation, it would make a better deal to “sell them at auction on six months credit.”<sup>159</sup> He also hired out some of Ballard’s slaves, especially those who were hard to sell in the market. Rutherford’s active trading included the disposal of troublesome slaves on Ballard’s plantation, and Ballard, as we shall see, was a merciless master when it came to

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Nalle, Cox & Co. to Ballard, 15 December 1853, folder 202, Ballard Papers.

<sup>158</sup> Nalle & Cox to Ballard, 1854, folder 222, Ballard Papers.

<sup>159</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 10 January, 1853, folder 184, Ballard Papers.

selling slaves. He was not hesitant to dispose of slaves that were not contributing to the total profit of the plantation operation, and to replace them for greater efficiency. In January 1854, Ballard sent to Rutherford a boy named Jim from Outpost plantation, and an old female slave from Elk plantation to have them sold, and Boyd made sure that Rutherford would find “a man in the place of the boy Jim,” a more productive slave that would take Jim’s place.<sup>160</sup>

Slave traders Rutherford, Chenowith, Tompkins, and Hundley, appeared to have arranged a loose working partnership that operated in various markets in the South.<sup>161</sup> Tompkins reported to Ballard on the sales he made in New Orleans, a list of 55 slaves in late 1849 to early 1850, where “business appears to be looking up a little in the city.”<sup>162</sup> Despite the fact that slaves Tompkins sold were not slaves on Ballard’s plantation, it was likely that these purchasing activities were partially funded by Ballard, Boyd, or Nalle & Cox. In some cases, Rutherford was able to find other financial sources. For example, one of the largest purchases he made was in June 1852, when he had entered into a negotiation for 67 negroes with another party in New Orleans. The price for the whole lot was \$25,000, and there was a commission house in the city with which Rutherford was working closely and it was to pay half.<sup>163</sup> While purchasing and selling his own slaves through Rutherford’s network, Ballard maintained his influence in the operation of several agents to conduct an interregional business.

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<sup>160</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 14 January 1854, folder 205, Ballard Papers.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Hundley was a slave trader based in Amherst County, Virginia, and supplied slaves for the New Orleans market, as well as markets in Alabama and Georgia. He apparently sold slaves to Isaac Franklin’s Louisiana plantations. See Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 103.

<sup>162</sup> Tompkins to Ballard, 19 November 1849, folder 144; Tompkins to Ballard, 20 November 1849, folder 144; Tompkins to Ballard, 18 February 1850, folder 147, Ballard Papers.

<sup>163</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 4 June 1852, folder 178, Ballard Papers.

Slave prices in the 1850s were on the rise in general.<sup>164</sup> Rutherford's correspondence and prices current detail the extremely high prices for which slaves were traded and sold in the West compared to the prices in previous decades. In December 1849, Rutherford reported he sold two slaves in New Orleans for \$1,000 each on credit, by a factor's acceptance "payable 13<sup>th</sup> of October and 15<sup>th</sup> of November next, drawn by a good planter." Rutherford wanted the papers to be endorsed by Ballard since "I can save brokage by your signing it."<sup>165</sup> In March of 1850, although Rutherford thought the prices were low, he was able to sell "about 40 negroes" in the last 30 days.<sup>166</sup>

Although the prices were on the rise, there were small fluctuations within the market, and Rutherford kept track of the price movements. For instance, in March of 1853 he wrote that the New Orleans market was a "shade lower," since there were "good many coming in from Alabama and Georgia, I fear too many for the market unless a better demand. They will decline \$100 shortly." He also noted that "early negroes have declined in Richmond \$50, and they will decline \$100 there." Rutherford strategically planned to go to Richmond and buy "thirty or forty in May and June and bring them to Louisville for the market there." Even with the declining prices, he estimated that prices in Richmond would be around \$1,000 each, but he predicted that the selling price for a good male slave would climb to \$1,500, after witnessing a sale of a good male slave sold at \$1,650 and "common pairs" sold at \$2,500 and \$2,700. If he could purchase in Richmond at a lower price, he estimated that the income per slave sold in the fall in New Orleans might go up to \$500.<sup>167</sup> By the following month, there were about 900 slaves in the New Orleans market, and the prices were "a full decline of

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<sup>164</sup> See fig.4.1 in the Chapter 4.

<sup>165</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 18 December 1849, folder 145, Ballard Papers.

<sup>166</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 11 March 1850, folder 148, Ballard Papers.

<sup>167</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 19 March 1853, folder 188, Ballard Papers.



\$50,” and for some, a \$100 decline per head. Rutherford observed that “some of the best Georgia and Virginia negroe[s] [are] here,” which led to increasing competition that drove the prices down. His plan to go to Virginia was pending since he judged the prices in Richmond were still too high, but for financial arrangement he planned to use “New Orleans acceptances but not longer than 4 months in Virginia,” and that he could “cash them at Louisville” on his way there.<sup>168</sup> Eventually he only went to his usual Louisville, not Richmond, to purchase slaves, where prices were between \$1,000 and \$1,500. But Rutherford did receive a price circular from Colonel Dickinson of Richmond, a well-known slave trader who ran the firm Dickinson & Hill. According to the firm’s information, Richmond slaves were No.1 field men at \$1,300, 2<sup>nd</sup> rate men \$1,000 to 1,150, and all others in proportion.<sup>169</sup> These reports show that the origins of slaves made differences in prices, and traders were required to be aware of them and calculate the profits accordingly.

But the high prices did not lead to a stable life, for Rutherford complained that “it is common for traders to broke or fail,” and that he wanted to make “a fortune [in the business] but failed at that and I cannot make it [in] trading, honestly so I think I had better take ...advice [and] make money some [other] way.” Chenowith, who started out as a partner in Louisville, eventually left the business, in which Rutherford explained that Chenowith “wont speak to a negro trader any more since he got to farming.” Although many saw the slave trade as a good way to make money, the business was highly speculative and traders were easily affected by the fluctuation. Rutherford himself thought of other business, telling Ballard he was thinking of building “a pork house at Lexington,” and to take Ballard as his

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<sup>168</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 2 April 1853, folder 189, Ballard Papers.

<sup>169</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 21 May 1853, folder 192; Rutherford to Ballard, 6 August 1853, folder 196, Ballard Papers. According to the circular, No.1 women and child were \$1280, middle aged men were \$750 to \$850, Boys 16 to 18 years of age at \$1000 to \$1200, boys 12 to 14 were \$850 to \$1000, and No.1 field women were \$1050 to \$1150, girls 12 to 14 at \$900 to \$1050.

guardian and send him hogs, although that never realized.<sup>170</sup>

In the mid 1850s, Rutherford discussed with Boyd about “some vacant sand lying on the rail road near this place [New Orleans] ... about 40 miles from here,” which was a “high cane land and has not been surveyed.” He had already made arrangements with a land surveyor to preserve the land for him as soon as it was surveyed, and Boyd had an interest in investing in the place. If Ballard and Boyd would invest in that land, which was about ten to twenty thousand acres, Rutherford wished to “have a slice of it.” Rutherford saw that this land along the railroad would be worth “\$50 per acre,” and if he could have a tract at a low price, he thought it would be a good investment since “the railroad will run through it before the first day of September next and it is bound to be valuable shortly.”<sup>171</sup> Although unclear whether they were able to obtain the land, this showed that Rutherford had interests outside of the slave-trading business, as in this case, in land speculation.

Rutherford continued his trading despite his misgivings about the business, and by early 1851 he was encouraged by making good sales and “made money \$250 gross on every negro sold,” and saw “the prospects better for trade than I have seen it here for several years.” He predicted that by spring the prices would become higher in the New Orleans market by “\$50 to \$100 a head.”<sup>172</sup> Although the market started out dull the following year and Rutherford could not find good slaves to purchase in the market, he predicted that the “recent rise in cotton will make all of the negroes sell this spring.”<sup>173</sup>

A major slave marketing center in Alabama was Mobile, although the firm Franklin &

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<sup>170</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 16 April 1850, folder 151, Ballard Papers.

<sup>171</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 19 April 1853, folder 190; Rutherford to Ballard, 30 April 1853, folder 190, Ballard Papers.

<sup>172</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 7 January 1851, folder 164, Ballard Papers.

<sup>173</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 11 May 1852, folder 176, Ballard Papers.

Armfield was never active in this area. One of Georgia's active markets was in Macon, along with Savannah, which was likely the largest market in the state. One of Rutherford's partners, Thomas Hundley, invested part of his income from selling his land in order to pay out a debt to Ballard, and worked actively in the Alabama and Georgia markets. Hundley wrote to Rutherford that the "negro market have been better here [Mobile] than in New Orleans," and that if Ballard could provide him \$27,400 in cash within 30 days, he would be "investing it in negroes so as to try and make it up a reasonable price for my land by the 1<sup>st</sup> of January at which time I will give him possession [of the land]." For the land, Ballard could "send hands there immediately if he chooses to clear and clean up land and might make some corn crop."<sup>174</sup> The following January, Hundley was in Macon, Georgia, where he had "sold 46 negroes ... men as high as \$1200 and women \$900 ... average [men] about \$1050, women \$850 field hands."<sup>175</sup> The traders exchanged information on the markets in various areas, and in late 1853, Rutherford predicted that for purchasing slaves, "Memphis [is] the best place to get them at the present time."<sup>176</sup> In addition to Alabama and Georgia slaves, Hundley brought into the New Orleans market "South Carolina and Virginia stock," but overstocking of the New Orleans market was unsuitable for other partners, which led him to return to Alabama to sell them.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Thomas Hundley to Rutherford, 14 June 1850, folder 154, Ballard Papers.

<sup>175</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 7 January 1851, folder 164, Ballard Papers.

<sup>176</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 18 December 1853, folder 203, Ballard Papers. .

<sup>177</sup> Samuel D. Tompkins to Ballard, 5 March 1854, folder 210, Ballard Papers.

**Table 5.17** Insurance on Slaves Traded By Rutherford

Name	age	value	amount risk	rates	premium
Amanda (f)	24	1400	750	1.75	16.63
Carolina (f)	23	1000	700	1.75	12.25
Laura (f)	17	1000	700	1.5	10.50
Harriet Jones(f)	17	1500	1000	1.5	15.00
Issac (m)	18	1200	800	1.5	12.00
Jaily (m)	24	900	600	1.75	10.50
John Wesly (m)	21	2000	1200	1.75	21.00
Dolphina (f)	17	1200	800	1.5	12.00
Manuel (m)	21	1300	800	1.75	14.00
James (m)	21	1400	900	1.75	15.75
Hillary (m)	22	1300	800	1.75	14.00
William (m)	18	1300	800	1.5	12.00
Dick (m)	26	1300	800	2	16.00
Ben Chambers (m)	18	1300	800	1.5	12.00
Ben (m)	32	1100	700	2.25	15.75
John (m)	23	1100	700	1.75	12.25
Jon (m)	24	1300	800	1.75	14.00
Chas Craig (m)	23	1300	800	1.75	14.00
Isaac (m)	21	1400	900	1.75	15.75
Leroy (m)	19	1300	800	1.5	12.00
Dick Ashley (m)	27	1200	800	2	16.00
Philip (m)	26	1400	900	2	18.00
Henry (m)	19	1000	700	1.5	10.50

Source) Nalle & Cox to Rutherford, 1 December 1853, folder 201, Ballard Papers.

Slave traders were quick to respond whenever there was a disease outbreak in the area. We saw earlier how Franklin & Armfield were careful in their operation in the 1830s dealing with cholera and yellow fever outbreaks in the southwest. The humid, swampy climate and environment always meant a risk of various diseases. In the fall of 1853, yellow fever broke out in Natchez, Vicksburg, and the Warrenton area, and some of Ballard and Boyd's slaves contracted the disease. One record shows that Rutherford had 23 slaves insured in order to add extra security when selling them in the market (table 5.20).<sup>178</sup> He sent Boyd the copy of the slave insurance policy, and told Ballard to "direct Nalle, Cox & Co. to collect the

<sup>178</sup> Nalle & Cox to Rutherford, 1 December 1853, folder 201, Ballard Papers.

insurance on the boy Charles Craig that died here, \$800,” apparently from yellow fever.<sup>179</sup>

Despite his reputation as an able lawyer with a prominent status in the elite Natchez society, Boyd had personal problems when it came to relationships with his slaves. Boyd had been physically abusing a female slave Maria and her daughter, which forced a Natchez attorney J.M. Duffield, who previously owned and had a relation with Maria, to write to Ballard asking to intervene and allow him to purchase her out of her miserable condition. She had been abused by Boyd and lashed “like an ox, until the blood gushes from her,” and he pleaded to Ballard that “I know your kind and humane heart must revolt at the barbarities she is constantly enduring [under Boyd].” Later, Duffield reported that Maria wrote to him saying “Mr. Boyd will part with her now as her health is such that she must be a charge on any owner,” and physically she had “womb complaint dreadfully brought on by unkindness and injuries, bodily injuries, and ... [now that she can leave Boyd,] she can now recover though she will probably linger out to several years.” Duffield pleaded to Ballard to “say nothing to anyone of the letter she procured to ... written to me, as it would doubtless cause her to be severely punished.” Duffield said he was “willing to take her,” and said that he would pay for her in January and February and would give “Whaley [another slave] as my security,” and pay “any price you might think she ought to bring, and perhaps prolong her life, which will soon be shortened where she is [now].”<sup>180</sup> It is not clear whether or when Duffield was able to obtain Maria back from the hands of Boyd, but even if she was released and no matter how soon she was able to flee from her current owner, she would have been physically severely injured by the time she returned to Duffield.

On another occasion, Rutherford was forced to sell a female slave with whom Samuel

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<sup>179</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 5 January 1854, folder 205, Ballard Papers.

<sup>180</sup> J.M. Duffield to Ballard, 29 May 1848, folder 127; J.M. Duffield to Ballard, 5 August 1848, folder 131, Ballard Papers. Duffield was not able to pay cash for her initially, and he had to wait for an pending attorney fee in order to purchase her.

Boyd had been involved and had several children with. The slave, Virginia Boyd, was first sent to Rutherford in New Orleans in February 1853, but Rutherford judged that he would not “have any opportunity to sell her here [in New Orleans],” and that she would “run off if she have a chance,” so he decided to “send her to Texas by March ...or send her to Mobile.”<sup>181</sup> Rutherford, after giving the matter considerable thought, decided to send Virginia to Texas, saying that he had “a friend there I can send her to but the vessels will not take any negro unless under the charge of some white person.”<sup>182</sup>

On April 19, 1853, Rutherford “shipped Virginia and the children to S.B. Ewing, Houston, Texas with special instructions to sell her not to return to this place or Mississippi.” He had to hire a young white man to accompany her to Galveston, Texas. Out of total desperation Virginia wrote to Ballard to plead for her freedom and to avoid her sale. From Houston, she wrote to Ballard, since she was sold “by your orders,” which information she gathered when she overheard a letter from Ballard read out loud by one of the doctors, telling to sell Virginia within thirty days. She was devastated that “the father of my children [Boyd] to sell his own offspring, yes, his own flesh and blood my god, is it possible that any free born American would brand his charter with such a stigma as that, but I hope before this he will relent and see his error, for I still believe that he is posset of more honer than that.” She added, “I know too that you have influence and can assist me in some measure from out of this dilemma and if you will, gods will be sure to reward you.” Despite her plea, Virginia was reportedly sold along with one of her daughters in early August 1853.<sup>183</sup>

Another direct plea from a former slave of Ballard’s came from a female slave named

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<sup>181</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 27 February 1853, folder 187, Ballard Papers.

<sup>182</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 2 April 1853, folder 189, Ballard Papers.

<sup>183</sup> Virginia Boyd to Ballard, 6 May 1853, folder 191; Rutherford to Ballard, 8 August 1853, folder 196, Ballard Papers.

Delia. After being purchased by Ballard, she pleaded with him to purchase her husband, Henry, so she could be with him. She wrote, “please to buy Henry and let him come home and live with me,” and explained the hardship of having “my husband ... take[n] away from me I never expect to see him again in this world,” and desperately begged to “buy him, I have don all that I can if you don’t buy him pleas get som body to bye him that will let him com and seeme.”<sup>184</sup> It was unclear whether or not Ballard ever purchased her husband, but the incident shows that Ballard did not give consideration to keeping families together when he purchased slaves in the market. In fact, from the records of his Magnolia plantation in 1848-49, there were 6 slaves under the age of 12 that did not have a parent or a sibling on the plantation. As mentioned earlier, Louisiana had a law since 1829 that prohibited slaves under 10 from being sold separately from their mothers, but Mississippi did not follow this practice, and young children could be sold away from their families.<sup>185</sup>

Rutherford confessed in early 1855 that he felt he had “overreached himself,” and was considering pursuing other professions. Boyd wrote to Ballard that he “cannot get a word from Rutherford, and learn he has quit the trade and gone to keeping a hotel in Louisville.” The following month, Rutherford wrote to Ballard saying “I find I could not make anything in the negro trade.” He was in the process of furnishing the hotel in Louisville, which he had rented in partnership with another investor. The hotel had 175 rooms, which he obtained by lease for 5 years at \$11,000 per year. He thought the “prospects are good for making money” from this hotel.<sup>186</sup> Although Rutherford disappeared from the forefront of the trading scene,

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<sup>184</sup> Delia to Ballard, 23 October 1854, folder 217, Ballard Papers.

<sup>185</sup> Volume 23, folder 442; Volume 39, folder 465; Volume 40, folder 466, Magnolia Plantation journal, Ballard Papers.

<sup>186</sup> Rutherford to Ballard, 16 January 1855, folder 225; S. Boyd to Ballard, 1 February 1855, folder 226; Rutherford to Ballard, 23 March 1855, folder 229, all Ballard Papers. The hotel stood at the corner of Main and 4<sup>th</sup> streets in Louisville.

Ballard and Boyd needed to continue their slave purchases, and began to rely on other agents and traders.

One of the most debated issues of the institution of slavery in the U.S. South is the characterization of the relationship between the master and the slave. Cotton wealth allowed many who were not slaveholders in the East to become slaveholders for the first time in the West. Although large slaveholding was never widespread, with the majority of slaveholders possessing fewer than 6 slaves in Mississippi in 1860, nevertheless, they had to deal with the new relationship and the responsibilities that accompanied being a master of human property.

Interpreting slavery as a paternalist institution goes back to the early twentieth century when Georgia-born U.B. Phillips explained the humanity of slaveholders while at the same time criticizing the institution for being the main cause for retarding modernization of the southern economy. But it was Eugene Genovese, who redefined the argument along Marxist lines, that southern society was best explained by Gramscian paternalism. Southern slavery, in this view, was fundamentally based on what grew out of the negotiations and personal relationships between masters and the slaves, not from any sort of cash or market transactions. The dynamics and the dialectics between the two parties, in fact, had a social, ideological effect that defined various aspects of the slave society. In addition, slavery as an institution created a pre-modern society in opposition to the free-labor based industrial development in the North. The argument here though, did not totally refute the existence of capitalism tendencies among southerners or in the South.<sup>187</sup>

The idea of paternalist relations between masters and slaves met criticism, most notably from James Oakes. The masters in Oakes's view, driven by material interest in the capitalistic

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<sup>187</sup> Eugene D. Genovese. *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage, 1965); *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (Hanover, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969); *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1972).



spirit of accumulation, diminished, or overshadowed the existence of any ideal form of paternalism in the South. Paternalism itself was not enough to alleviate the inherent elements of slavery, such as racism and commodification of slaves in sales, and the masters' worldview was said to be a "dying philosophy." Oakes made clear that conservative proslavery ideologues could not "endorse the capitalistic framework and racist assumptions of slavery and argue at the same time that paternalism somehow made a difference to slaves."<sup>188</sup>

The recent scholarly works on the internal slave trade offer strong evidence against the paternalist interpretation. Most notably Tadman and Johnson, joined and further elaborated the criticisms first pointed out by scholars such as Gutman and Berlin. Tadman analyzed statistically the profound effects of the trade showing the profit-maximizing and rational strategies of traders who gave no consideration of slaves' families and connections, and Johnson provided a post-modernist analysis on the language and descriptions of the body to contextualize sold slaves, arguing that "chattel principle," the ownership of slaves as property, was an unshakable reality for those slaves who had to endure the separations, humiliation, violence and sales. These works have emphasized persuasively that paternalism was not what characterized southern society. What appeared to be paternalism in the image of a benevolent master, in their view, was an artificial, hypocritical portrayal, deliberately acted out to defend themselves against the increasing attack toward the institution from antislavery movements, not an ideology that naturally derived from master-slave relationship.<sup>189</sup>

But despite these attacks, many historians of southern slavery still acknowledge the

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<sup>188</sup> James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of the American Slaveholders* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 192-204, 219

<sup>189</sup> Historiographical debate by Lacy Ford, "Reconsidering the Internal Slave Trade," in Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, 143-64. Summary of the debate is in Michael Smith, *Debating Slavery: Economy and Society in the Antebellum American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*; Johnson, *Soul By Soul*.

power of Genovese's interpretation. In their view, these attacks do not refute enough of Genovese's point. His view of paternalism was not about whether masters were benevolent or cruel, or sold them for profit or not. Paternalism grew out of the "incontrovertible material and psychological circumstances of slavery, the efforts of masters to control slaves and efforts of slaves to limit or resist that control," and was a social system that was based on the fact that a free man was controlling and managing a unfree laborer, and the pattern of negotiation between the unequal parties to at least make the slave society function and continue. Measures like slave sales, violence, rewards, and limited independence, were negotiating material for the parties, and the balance of the parties differed on each plantation. Some planters would willingly sell their slaves for profit, and others would sacrifice financial gain to keep their relationship with their slaves. For the followers of Genovese's interpretation, paternalism was something that could coexist with the fact that masters had the will and ability to sell slaves in times of trouble. When the balance on the plantation tipped over to one side, a sale would occur, and when tipped over to the other side, a slave could resist in various ways.<sup>190</sup>

On the other hand, it was not possible, in the antebellum South, to separate the existence of the commercial market to sustain the institution of slavery, and the daily relationship between a master and a slave on the plantation. Genovese concurred to that by explaining that planters sought an alternate route to modernity, by embracing market-oriented commercialism, but still rejecting the democratic, liberal aspects of capitalism. One account said of the masters in the plantation system that "they are not masters of the system, the system is master of them, and the slaves are their vassals."<sup>191</sup>

Ultimately the debate on paternalism remains unsettled although interpretational

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<sup>190</sup> Quote from Lacy Ford, "Reconsidering," 150.

<sup>191</sup> Oakes, *Ruling Race*, 153-91, Quote from Oakes, *Ibid.*, 183.

differences have considerably narrowed over the years. There were dualistic, capitalist and pre-modern tendencies among planters, and paternalism did exist, which was a distinctive character compared to the northern capitalist society, but it did not characterize every aspect of the slave holding class. For the relation between slave trade and paternalism, it was clear that the former could refute the latter to a considerable extent, and it was true the same planters who frequently sold their slaves used the theory of paternalism to arm themselves against any outside attack on slavery. Paternalism can be interpreted as a useful and peculiar system that existed perhaps at the core of the southern society that defined the unfree, pre-bourgeois society that the Genovesian followers emphasized, and as long as it existed, the liberal, democratic capitalism that flourished in the North would never be realized. But, if we extract southern planters' general mindset and outlook toward modernity, it should be underscored that they were commercially-oriented, profit-driven, and entrepreneurial, just like their counterparts in the North.<sup>192</sup>

Ballard and Isaac Franklin were those who experienced the commodification of slaves during their early careers as professional slave traders, but later rose into the ranks as masters of slaves on their plantations and had to build a power relation between them. It was not expected that Ballard or Franklin would be benevolent and paternalist masters considering their previous occupation. They flirted with “fancies” and harassed their commodities as traders, and relied on others to furnish and dispose of their slave labor work force on their plantations. Although instances of rewards, holiday celebrations, and fair treatment in

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<sup>192</sup> On recent interpretation on the dualistic tendencies among the master class, see Genovese, *Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992); Joyce E. Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1712-1911* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Jeffrey R. Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Edward E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

housing and diet can be documented, those were necessary incentives to exploit the most out of each slave. Ballard's management always tipped over to the profit-maximizing rational manager's side. If Oakes' view that the force of capitalism appeared in the strongest form in the slave South when the masters extended their rationalizing impulse beyond the workplace and into the private lives of the slaves was accurate, Ballard and Franklin's experience as slave traders who destroyed slaves' private lives in pursuit of profit from their sales was a perfect breeding ground for their capitalist ethos.<sup>193</sup> The rational mentality seen in the planters' interests and power over their slaves was an ability and mindset that Ballard had trained and nurtured before he entered the ranks of planters, and he was not hesitant to demonstrate that power as a master. The negotiation process between the slave and the master; the fact that slaves could resist, by running away, or at times attacking violently against overseers, and the fact that masters had to provide work incentives- rewards, holiday events, punishment and ultimately, sale, was a new dimension for Ballard. But the process and effort to bring the best out of the slave's physical capabilities and their bodies whether by labor or drawing the best price in the auction room, had commonalities in the fact that slaves would be profitable investments under relentless, rationalized management. Ultimately, the management of a efficient labor force on plantations was a crucial aspect of their profitable venture - as growing of crops and investing in land - and for Ballard and Franklin who knew every inroad in the slave-trading business, their ability in acquiring, refining and updating their work force for the highest efficiency was an advantage that benefited them in their new careers.

There is no denying the fact that the domestic slave trade and the activities of slave traders were essential in the southern version of the market revolution, with the creation of an interregional slave market. The accessibility of the market to slaveholders in general was

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<sup>193</sup> Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*.

significant not only because it enhanced efficiency and productivity of raw material export sector by the redistribution of slaves, but also because it provided southern masters the ultimate negotiating tool that they could wield over their slaves: the possibility of a sale. The existence of a flourishing, accessible slave market made the masters more likely to tip over to sale when faced with resistance or trouble, but when his plantation was under control, he could always disguise himself and become the “paternalist master.” Keeping this balance was the central component of conducting an efficient plantation management.

### **A Planter-Capitalist-Entrepreneur**

Boyd’s treatment of Maria or Virginia Boyd was only a part of his and Ballard’s inhumane attitude toward their slaves. Although Ballard may have attempted to keep slaves in family units in the slave quarters, records show that he ruthlessly sold those who were troublesome, old, worthless, or insane. Siblings were sold apart on many occasions, along with the separation from their parents.<sup>194</sup> According to Rutherford’s account which represents Ballard and Boyd’s views, slaves were bought and sold in the market to pursue the best offer possible, and Rutherford sought slaves that would suit the preference of Ballard and Boyd. There are no clear records that indicate any of Ballard’s slaves enjoying their own property of garden plot to produce their own foodstuffs, like many slaves in the South began to do at this time.<sup>195</sup>

The area where Ballard and Boyd expanded their plantation empire, around the border of Mississippi and Louisiana was one of the richest cotton producing regions in the South,

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<sup>194</sup> For example, see S. Boyd to Ballard, 1 December 1854, folder 220, Ballard Papers.

<sup>195</sup> On Isaac Franklin’s plantations, slaves were able to pick Spanish moss to earn money, and the records show that the overseer paid slaves \$350.71 cash for collecting them. Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin*, 112.

and many of the absentee plantation owners in the same area such as Benjamin Roach Jr., Henry R.W. Hill, Zebulon York and partner E.J. Hoover, and Joseph A. S. Acklen, produced similar amounts of cotton and earned similar incomes as Ballard from their operations.<sup>196</sup> By the late 1850s, Ballard jointly owned around 10 plantations in the West with more than 500 slaves.<sup>197</sup> If mere land speculation was counted, the entire acreage under Ballard and Boyd's name would amount much more than just those from their plantations. Isaac Franklin, his model and predecessor, who passed away rather unexpectedly in 1846, owned nearly 600 slaves on 7 plantations as well as other lands and stockholdings.

Although Ballard never owned a plantation in Virginia, his wealth in the West in the joint venture with Boyd is comparable to the land speculation of the Tayloe family in Virginia. The Tayloes began to operate and invest in absentee plantations in Alabama from the 1830s, with family members speculating in both land and slaves during the flush times. Despite some setbacks in the 1840s, the Tayloes' investments later flourished under the guidance of a professional speculator, and by 1851 they owned 7 plantations in Alabama with a total acreage of 13,146 acres and 465 slaves, with wealth valued at \$334,250. By the eve of the Civil War, the slaves on their Alabama plantations had increased to 768.<sup>198</sup>

The definition of how we interpret an entrepreneur, or a capitalist differs in various ways, but most scholars, including Genovese and his followers would agree that southern slaveholders had a rationalized pursuit toward profit, and held a capitalist mentality or capitalist spirit, as Max Weber had expressed, in their economic life. For planters in the South in the antebellum era, land speculation and investing in banking business can be considered

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<sup>196</sup> Stephenson, *Ibid.*, 134-5.

<sup>197</sup> Some are unclear whether or not the land produced much marketable crop, and might have been a tentative, speculative land holding.

<sup>198</sup> Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 131; Laura Croghan Kamoie, "Three Generations of Planters: The Tayloes, Slave Labor and Entrepreneurship in Virginia, 1710-1830" (Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1999).

as an entrepreneurial venture. Many planters were involved in manufacturing, commerce, internal improvements, and a considerable number of planters invested in various state, federal, and corporate bonds, as Ballard did in his stock in commercial banks. Cotton textile industries were popular investments for southern elites, and back in Virginia iron works and flour manufacturing became attractive forms of investment. Railroads were also a perfect investment opportunity for many southerners by the late antebellum era. For Ballard, above all it was land speculation with Boyd and his continuing involvement in the slave-trading business via Rutherford that kept his managing abilities attuned. The skills and the mindset Ballard acquired from the slave-trading business was what kept him innovative, adaptive and entrepreneurial in his management.

Slaveownership in the New World and producing a global commodity automatically required a keen and efficient management of labor force and inevitable obsession toward acquiring every detail of market information in order to minimize the risk factor. Slaveowners were unconsciously participating in the relentless world of uncertainty rising from events taking place in every part of the world that consumed the global crop. Being aware, and developing a safety net from accumulated business knowledge and available service was a prerequisite, or a survival method for southern large slaveholders, as well as any entrepreneurs in modern business. Their worldview, or mindsets, adjusted to what was required, and those who did not adjust, did not succeed. Clearly, Ballard was able to survive and succeed in this aggressive, relentless world.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*, 40-79.

## **Epilogue:**

### **Virginia, the Cotton South, and the Internal Slave Trade** **in Global Perspectives on the Eve of the Civil War**

In 1836, U.S. secretary of the treasury Levi Woodbury delivered to the sitting Congress a detailed report on the cotton market and its consumption around the world. Although he often used estimates in the report, he provided export data from all parts of the world, including major cotton producing and consuming areas such as Brazil, the West Indies, Egypt, India, China, and Mexico. This report was in part an attempt by the government to bring attention to encourage further market dominance of the nation's most profitable export crop. Woodbury reported that the United States cultivated cotton on approximately 2 million acres of land, providing 384 million pounds out of the estimated 535 million pounds of total cotton production around the world in 1834. He had in mind that "we could raise the whole of the other 150 millions, by putting into cultivation only about 500,000 acres more cotton land, and employing less than 100,000 more field hands in this branch of industry." According to Woodbury's analysis, the United States had the comparative advantage in the availability of land suited for cotton growth: there was "sufficient [land] to raise all the cotton now grown in the world," and the U.S. was capable of sustaining constant supply for the future increase in demand. The only concern he had was the price of labor: the increase in the price of slaves, which would increase the cost of raising the crop, potentially could lead to higher prices and less competitiveness. But in addition to the United States' advantages in cheap, suitable land



and in the production of high quality cotton at cheap prices, Woodbury had confidence in the technological improvements in the U.S. cotton industry: his report indicated that many countries in Asia and South America still depended on wooden rollers, and much labor already utilized by machinery in the U.S. was done by hand.<sup>1</sup>

Overall, Woodbury maintained a confident and optimistic tone in his speech, reflecting the strength of rising U.S. cotton exports. The Industrial Revolution in England, and manufacturing industries in continental Europe ensured the continuing growth of exports of this crop. In the speech Woodbury also lobbied for more cotton lands to be opened up for cultivation, providing new opportunities for farmers and planters as well as the need for more slaves. It might have also intended to restrain the emerging movements that hammered against slavery, its expansion, and the free trade principles that the South embraced.

A year after this speech, a panic of an international scale hit the U.S. that caused severe damage to the financial system in the South and a recession in cotton and slave prices. While southerners began to search for the cause of the depression and alternative ways to strengthen their economy, beginning in 1846, worldwide demand for cotton began to recover rapidly.<sup>2</sup> With the years of depression still not distant in their minds, southerners entered a decade of sustained cotton boom, with high prices and production. As Woodbury predicted, slave prices jumped to unprecedented heights, eliminating small cotton planters from competition at the micro level, but the national competitiveness did not lose its edge up to the Civil War. Through it all, the domestic slave trade continued to operate adapting to the economic and political developments, increasing its volume and adding organizational sophistication,

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Treasury Department Report by Levi Woodbury, *Cotton, Cultivation, Manufacture and Foreign Trade of*, House Document No. 146, 24<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 8-12, 14-5. Also in Bruchey, *Cotton and Growth*, 67-71.

<sup>2</sup> Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 95-8.

affecting people's mindsets about slave labor, value, property, and its meaning for the entire South.

From a global perspective, the cotton industry was one of the largest industries in the mid-nineteenth century, with approximately 20 million workers. The American South was the chief supplier before the Civil War, exporting most of its raw material to be manufactured in Lancashire.<sup>3</sup> As suggested by the connections between southern factors and northern and European capital in the antebellum era, cotton wealth not only supported the livelihood of southern planters and slaves, but it was also the commodity that was at the basis of the worldwide financial structure centered in Britain. In England's flourishing cotton textile industry, nearly one-fourth of the population based its livelihood on this industry, and one-tenth of all British capital was invested in it by 1860. In fact, Britain consumed 800 million pounds of cotton in the 1850s with 77 % of that imported from the U.S., and half of its exports consisted of cotton yarn and cloth. U.S. cotton dominated in continental Europe as well, supplying as much as 90% of French consumption and 92% of that of Russia in pre-Civil War era.<sup>4</sup>

From the British side, two experimental and organizational developments merit attention. First, an effort to lessen dependency on U.S. cotton by looking for alternative sources of supply within the empire, and second, an organizational and structural change in the cotton

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<sup>3</sup> The reoccurring panics reinforced the Anglophobic tendencies among the public in general. See David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). According to Sven Beckert, the Civil War became pivotal moment when the center of cotton production gravitated and spread to areas other than the United States. The war triggered a raw material crisis that emerged as a result of transition from coerced labor to free labor, and more importantly, a rearrangement of global powers and the implementation of imperial policies, shifting the cotton market dominated by merchants to the hands of state bureaucrats. States became the central power to secure raw materials. Among the countries that came into fierce competition were India, Egypt, Brazil, and later in areas in West African and Turkmenistan. See Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *American Historical Review* (Dec 2004): 1405-38.

<sup>4</sup> Beckert, *Ibid.*, 1408-9.

merchant communities.

British bureaucrats had been experimenting with cotton production in other parts of their empire from early on, but with increased intensity after the War of 1812. Looking further back, the years after the American Revolution were accompanied by an upsurge and refocusing of British overseas trade. The British used their influence to regain their commercial advantage in the U.S. (as seen in the passage of Jay's Treaty), and they also refocused their attention eastward on India, China, Malaya and the East Indies, as part of an effort to redefine their concepts of the empire, moving away from a purely maritime, Atlantic world to a broader one that comprehended both hemispheres.<sup>5</sup> The targets for new cotton production included India, which in fact had been exporting Indian calico from at least the seventeenth century, and Egypt and Brazil were also seen as potential producers. By the 1820s, southerners feared that with northern protective tariffs on manufactured goods, the British could retaliate by focusing on these new cotton producers, which might be a better market for their manufactured goods. The search for cotton accelerated after the emancipation in the British West Indies and the collapse of the East India Company; British officials sent agents to the American South to master the cotton growing practices and transplant them into other parts of their empire. These early efforts paid off when the cotton trade was disrupted with the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Julie Flavell and Stephen Conway, *Britain and America go to War: The Impact of War and Warfare in Anglo-America, 1754-1815* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 32-3. The history of Indian textiles in the English textile market goes back at least to the early eighteenth century. This means that the British more or less were forced to renew and redefine their concepts of empire with the newly born U.S., alongside their empirical stance toward Asian and Eastern world.

<sup>6</sup> Schoen, "Fragile Fabric," 267-8. British government sent European agents and merchants, established infrastructural facilities, provided technology, expertise and financial capital for these places to transform into a cotton producing region. India in particular was successful during the war years, where property laws were changed to arrange a circumstance that allowed freer investment to cotton. By 1863, India supplied 75% of raw cotton to Britain, 70% to France, which was a drastic increase from 16% to Britain in 1860 and 1.1% to France in 1857. Egypt and Brazil, each exported five times and twice the amount of cotton in 1865 compared to 1861 when the war began. Eventually, by the late nineteenth century, these three countries would supply their cotton mostly to Continental Europe. These wartime, and later postwar

The second adjustment was seen in cotton merchant communities in England. The focus here would be on Liverpool, where many cotton merchants got their start in the slaving business, and made their transition when the slave trade was banned. Liverpool had an advantage in its port facilities, its location near the Lancashire region, and its financial ties to London via the London network in Lancashire, which had developed since the slave trade years. Cotton brokers who were disposed of the cotton imported, usually became the vital link between the Liverpool importer and Manchester manufacturing interests.<sup>7</sup> Between 1820 and 1860, cotton imports into Britain increased nearly tenfold, and Liverpool accounted for more than 80% of the annual imports in those years. Liverpool alone saw a threefold growth in imports in the years between 1820 and 1850. Records show that in the early 1830s, more than 500 vessels arrived from the U.S. annually, and in the mid 1850s, the number climbed to more than 700 vessels a year.<sup>8</sup>

Even with the increasing volume of trade, Liverpool merchants were constantly reminded of the abrupt end of the profitable slave trade earlier. The rise of the abolitionist movement in the U.S. kept merchants on guard. Starting with the collapse of plantation slavery in St. Domingue up to the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies in 1834, emancipation's negative effects on the European markets had raised anxiety among cotton merchants in case slavery in the U.S was abolished. As such, merchants' awareness of overseas events and the risk involved in the cotton trade intensified with its rising volume;

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rearrangements, according to Beckert, ended the role of laissez-faire capitalism, free trade, foreign credit and merchants, and lead to imperial powers struggling to secure raw materials by state controlled commercial policies. See Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire," 1411-4, 1421-3, 1428-9, 1432-3.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, "Liverpool Merchants," 36.

<sup>8</sup> David M. Williams, "Shipping," and "Liverpool Merchants," 20. Liverpool import of cotton also came from Brazil, Egypt, East Indies, and almost negligible amount from West Indies, Mediterranean, and Australia.

over time this lead to increased specialization and concentration of trade in fewer hands, eliminating those who could not survive the severe competition.<sup>9</sup>

The increase in mercantile concentration was followed by sophistication of organization and finance, and the structure of the merchant community became more complex with the extensive network and partnerships among port cities in Britain and the U.S. The development was strikingly similar to the process explained in chapter 1, in the colonial tobacco trade in Virginia. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, cotton was imported mostly by consignment merchants, but a gradual shift toward direct imports began to take place. In the 1820s and 1830s, most merchants conducted mixed business, with part of their cotton acquired by consignment through commission merchants, and partly on their own account. By the mid century however, consignment business was totally in decline and most merchants conducted business on their own accounts. This was another reason why many smaller cotton merchants went out of business. Although the consignment business might be safer, the profit proved to be higher if conducted under direct business, and such high risk

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<sup>9</sup> Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire," 1419. Emancipation in the British colonies and its impact on European markets have been under a heated debate since Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961). The debate is discussed in Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chap. 12 and David Northrup ed., *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), chap. 5. Seymour Drescher and David Eltis has argued that the ending of the slave system hurt the British economy. See Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976) and David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York:Oxford University Press, 1987). Also see footnote 20 of this epilogue. On the reaction of Liverpool merchants to abolitionist movement, see Seymour Drescher, "The Slaving Capital of the World: Liverpool and National Opinion in the Age of Abolition," *Slavery and Abolition* 9 (1988): 128-43. According to David Williams, cotton merchants in Liverpool decreased from 607 in 1820 to 341 in 1839, and the top 30 cotton importers handled nearly 40% in 1820, but increased to nearly 58% in 1839. This can be attributed to the elimination of the smaller merchants who made spontaneous entries into the trade, who were not capable of handling large risks. With the increase in concentration, individual functions within the trade became specialized as well, for example, the common "general merchant" of the eighteenth century performed buying, selling, as well as being an agent, owning and docking vessels, and clearing various transactions, but each of these functions became conducted by specialists, leading to division of labor in the entire trading scene and making complex partnerships and connections. David M. Williams, "Liverpool," 26-9, 35-7.

operation was only possible for larger firms.<sup>10</sup>

Returning our focus to the U.S, it becomes clear that the southern cotton industry had a major impact on global commerce, shaping political and entrepreneurial strategies both domestic and abroad, in Britain in particular. As a result of cotton production, the U.S. South as a region had become one of the wealthiest in the world and was more industrialized than many European nations. The extraordinary strength of the agricultural sector and plantation slavery in the South did not indicate economic backwardness, but rather, a deliberative choice, a matter of economic emphasis and decisions that were made to accelerate the growth of cotton. Every aspect of the southern economy fueled and supported cotton production, and other sectors did not gain enough attention or were not given sufficiently high priority to change the economic structure in the South. The domestic slave trade made such choice possible. The trade represented the peculiarity and the expanding nature of the southern economy, and it provided a foundation where specialized business skills were built, which skills were analogous to those necessary to navigate successfully in the transnational economy.<sup>11</sup>

Our argument started in Virginia, which remained the largest slaveholding state in the

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<sup>10</sup> Williams, *Ibid.*, 30-31. See how early commission trade in Virginia tobacco shifted toward direct cargo trade in mid eighteenth century in Chapter 1. According to Perkins, from the 1840s onward, American cotton traders demanded higher advances against the cotton sales in Liverpool, and also became concerned with over-advancing. Direct purchases of cotton by the leading merchants in import trade, such as the Barings, became the norm and English spinners made more direct purchases in the South bypassing local commission merchants. On the other hand, more manufactured goods began to enter the U.S. on account of American merchants who specialized in importing activities, aided by the issuance of letters of credit by merchant-banking houses, hence making it possible for American importers to travel abroad and purchase merchandize directly from English manufacturers. Both buyers and sellers were able to bypass the British commission merchants. Perkins, *Financing Anglo-American Trade*, 13, 86-7.

<sup>11</sup> For antebellum and postbellum development in a comparative perspective, Shearer Davis Bowman, "Industrialization and Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century U.S. South," in *Global Perspectives*, and Peter A. Coclanis, "The Paths before Us/U.S.: Tracking the Economic Divergence of the North and the South," in *The South, the Nation, and the World: Perspectives on Southern Economic Development*, David L. Carlton and Peter A. Coclanis eds.(Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2003), 12-23.

South throughout the antebellum era. Much recent scholarship has refuted the stereotypical view of late antebellum Virginia as an aristocratic, anti-modern, backward economy that sealed its own fate by not making the steps toward change.<sup>12</sup> Chapter 1 revealed that since the early colonial era, international networks and mindsets had characterized Virginia's economy. Because of its relatively underdeveloped domestic markets, Virginians inevitably looked outwards, not inwards.<sup>13</sup> Virginians already had interest in trading with the Orient in the early national era. They shipped goods such as furs, ginseng, and cotton to China, and flour, whale oil, timber, and tobacco to the East Indies. In 1802, a merchant in Richmond advertised that he had received from the brig *Mount Vernon*, various goods from China including white and yellow nankeens, Chinaware, Canton and garden fans, and silk.<sup>14</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, Virginia tobacco made a return as a major crop, and agricultural diversification in the late eighteenth century proved successful in production such as corn and wheat. All three crops remained major exports of the state and Virginia was the leading producer of tobacco in the antebellum era. Aside from agriculture, internal improvements proved to be quite successful. Manufacturing industries in urban settings were promising, which can be seen especially in the growth of Richmond as one of the leading manufacturing centers of the South with its iron, tobacco, and flour industries. The diverse urban industrial sector and large urban slave population produced a flourishing hiring market for slaves, alongside its slave-trading operations.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For example, William G. Shade, *Democratizing the Old Dominion: Virginia and the Second Party System, 1824-1861* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), Introduction, chapter 3

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Winifred J. Losse, "The Foreign Trade of Virginia, 1789-1809," *William and Mary Quarterly* 1 (April 1944) 175.

<sup>15</sup> On Virginia tobacco industry, see Joseph Clarke Robert, *The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1938). Of

The domestic slave trade remained a vital economic activity of the state, especially with the high prices in the 1850s. Although in 1850, only 10% of the 55,000 slaveholders in the state held more than 20 slaves, the common point of reaching “planter-hood,” with the rising value of the slaves, many Virginians sought to defend their property rights, and radical proslavery arguments had a favorable appeal to their interests.

As discussed earlier, slavery had become a key political issue that divided the Democrats and the Whigs in the state, and by the 1840s, led to tensions between the eastern and western regions. When the cession from Mexico gave rise to the debate on slavery in the new territories, Virginia Democrats claimed the right to take slaves to the territories, while the Whigs sought the realization of diffusion theory, and supported the Compromise of 1850. Eventually in the 1850s, a very pro-southern Democratic party dominated Virginia politics, gaining political power in western Virginia as it had in the east, through influence of interconnected families. By then, ideologically, Virginians had become aligned with the proslavery stance that had characterized the Deep South, which was facilitated by Virginians who had migrated to the West and created ideological networks that transcended geographical space. The last strand of Whig Unionists in the western part of the state united against secession. They had always promoted economic diversification, industrial development, and improved transportation, and claimed that connections with the North in the development of commerce were inevitable, and independence would likely end in an

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course, not all Virginians benefited from the export trade, and many suffered from financial difficulties. For example, R.W. Schooler once wrote to Ballard, “as you know we Old Virginians are pretty generally very hard pressed,” and numerous other Virginians were not able to pay back the debt to Ballard, Franklin, and Armfield. R.W. Schooler to Ballard, 22 November 1844, folder 79, Ballard Papers. *Richmond Whig* wrote on the present condition of Virginia as “declined, she has gone downhill with melancholy velocity, as compared with many of sister states, ... Debt! Debt! Taxes! Taxes! Describes exactly the existing condition of the commonwealth and people of Virginia.” Cited in *New York Daily Times*, April 7, 1857. Slave hiring in Richmond and Virginia, see Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*. On southern antebellum urbanization in general, see David L. Carlton, “Antebellum Southern Urbanization,” in *The South, the Nation, and the World: Perspectives on Southern Economic Development*, eds. David L. Carlton and Peter A. Coclanis (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 35-48.



economic disaster, since much Virginia produce was exported to northern ports and depended on northern capital. Whigs gained much support among non-slaveholders, but eventually even urban merchants and industrialists who were portrayed as cosmopolitan and entrepreneurial, increasingly began to embrace proslavery arguments when they came in contact with northerners. They were increasing their hostility to advance of northern capitalism, as we saw earlier in Chapter 2. Ultimately at the political level, their effort to push the state in a Whiggish direction ended in failure.<sup>16</sup>

But in Virginia's decision to secede, the domestic slave trade was at the heart of the discussion. By the 1850s, many people in the Deep South began to agitate for the reopening of the African slave trade. James D. B. DeBow, the editor of the widely read proslavery magazine *DeBow's Review*, came out in favor of this idea. The reopening, they thought, would not only provide the needed slaves, but also strengthen the political power of the South. With the skyrocketing price of slaves in the market, African importation would help to reduce costs, allowing more people to become slaveowners, thus increasing the number of people defending the institution. Not surprisingly, Virginia was furiously against the idea. Earlier, as seen in Chapter 4, Virginians come to hold a positive view toward populating the West to spread proslavery views to a wider geographical area. But by the 1850s, it became clear that reducing profits from the domestic slave trade, one of their most important businesses and decreasing the value of the negroes owned by planters, was economically too damaging for the state. One report estimated that reopening the African trade and importing slaves would reduce the value of slaves by half, and postulated that the loss of people's

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel W. Crofts, "Late Antebellum Virginia Reconsidered," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 107 (summer 1999) 281-2. Nationally, the second party system had come to an end debating over slavery and westward expansion in the late 1850s. Virginia suffered in postwar period, with their rising industries severely damaged. Wheat came into competition with western states, and iron industry was defeated by the mass production of Pennsylvania iron supplying the railroads. Ironically, it was again tobacco that revived the state economy in the 1880s. Crofts, *Ibid.*, 260.

interest in raising and keeping slaves as a valuable investment could lead to social unrest. In the end, the trade did not reopen, but the debate demonstrated how the South attempted to pursue every measure possible to sustain the system of slavery, even at the risk of losing solidarity among the southern states.<sup>17</sup>

Scholars have argued that Virginia's dependency on the slave trade and thus its connections with the Deep South states via this trade was what ultimately led the state to secede. The trade had become such an integral part of the state's economy that Virginia was destined to be "dragged into a common destiny with them [the Deep South states]." Slaves were the largest capital investment in the state, and if Virginia followed the Union and stopped its reliance on the domestic trade, it would not have been able to sustain financial stability, or contain the slave population, which would lead to a situation "more pitiable than that of St. Domingo."<sup>18</sup> For proslavery southerners, the domestic slave trade had taken on an important role of spreading the concept of slaves as valuable property and solidifying the planter class and their economic interests. Gavin Wright and Lacy Ford, among others, have emphasized the economic role slave traders and the business of slave trading had on the entire South. As seen in Chapter 3, traders were willing to take the high risks that accompanied the trade, such as state laws and regulation, tax, disease, and threat of abolition. Their risk-taking attitude and commitment to this business played a major part in promoting

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<sup>17</sup> Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 78-84. The domestic slave trade was so central to Virginia's economy that the state refused to join the Confederacy in case African slave trade was reopened. Since Virginia would be essential for the Confederacy, it resulted in remaining of the ban on the African slave trade. See Ronald Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade*, 232-43. Contemporary accounts also justified the reopening that it would be moral and philanthropic, by rescuing slaves out of bondage in African and treated under humane Christian masters in the U.S. See, for example, L.W. Spratt, *The Foreign Slave Trade. The Source of Political Power – of Material Progress, of Social Integrity, and of the Social Emancipation to the South* (Charleston, S.C.: Steam Power Press of Walker, Evans & Co., 1858).

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Deyle, *Ibid.*, 90-3.

the long-term economic growth of the southern economy.<sup>19</sup>

As the birthplace of the diffusionist view, Virginia always maintained an ambivalent perspective to the fate of Africans in their society and in the nation. As early as 1777, Jefferson had in mind the idea of colonizing former slaves, although the issue was never debated officially. Virginia, along with the entire South had to fend off the aggressive antislavery movement that had spread from Britain to the North. Efforts and collective measures to ban the international slave trade began in Great Britain in 1787, and succeeded in the 1807 ban in the U.S. and the British West Indies.<sup>20</sup> The antislavery impulse had been a constant, albeit minor, force in Virginia and the South since the Revolutionary era. Except for the Carolinas and Georgia, all states between 1784 and 1791 organized abolitionist societies, although they mostly focused either on local affairs and helping free blacks, or on pursuing the ban of the international slave trade. Most of the legislative and organizational efforts to push antislavery measures were defeated, causing only a minor setback for proslavery forces, and by the turn of the century most antislavery societies had disappeared.<sup>21</sup> In the first decade

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<sup>19</sup> Gavin Wright, *Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 1978); Lacy K. Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> Abolitionist perspective in Britain in the late eighteenth century was based on the new world view that free labor was beneficial for both workers and masters, which was the opening theme of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. Seymour Drescher and David Eltis has been the leading scholar in the field and has produced numerous works on the subject, especially to refute Eric William's thesis that transatlantic slave trade ended as a consequence of economic decline in the British West Indies. On the early developments in British abolitionist movement, see for example, Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); "Abolitionist Expectations: Britain," in *After Slavery: Emancipation and Discontents*, ed. Howard Temperley (London: Frank Cass, 2000) 41-53; David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (check). For a comparative analysis on British, French, Dutch and other empires and colonies on abolition, see Seymour Drescher, *From Slavery to Freedom: Comparative Studies in the Rise and Fall of Atlantic Slavery* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor Versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially chapter 2 and 4 analyzes in detail the interpretation on Adam Smith's perspective. For an overview of political developments in Britain, see Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 234-8.

<sup>21</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 247-252.

of the nineteenth century, several resolutions to support colonization passed in the Virginia Assembly, culminating in the 1816 establishment of the American Colonization Society, mostly led by Virginians.<sup>22</sup> The slavery debates in the 1831-32 Convention led to agreement that ending slavery was desirable for the well-being of the state, and the best way to achieve that goal was through colonization. But with increased dependency on the domestic slave trade, colonization eventually faced numerous financial difficulties and was heavily criticized from proslavery forces.<sup>23</sup>

The next big wave of abolitionist movement became much more radical, in part because of the British abolitionist campaign, which coincided with the era of the Great Awakening, and attempted to accomplish its mission by intertwining the revivalist zeal with the sin and immorality of slavery. The northern states had long abandoned the trade, and the new movement was different from other forces in the past, with its goal of immediate emancipation, which was a departure from the gradual emancipation pursued in earlier organizations. After the Napoleonic Wars, Britain began a vigorous campaign to end slavery throughout the British empire, climaxing in the emancipation of more than 800,000 slaves in its colonies on August 1, 1834.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Ibid.*, 239. Operation began in 1817. The American Colonization Society was initially supported by many southern border states: Maryland, Kentucky, Virginia, Georgia, and Tennessee. It pursued legislative support for congressional financing of sending slaves back to Liberia. Eventually abolitionists saw fraud in the idea itself. See Howard Temperley, "African-American Aspirations and the Settlement of Liberia," in Temperley, *After Slavery*, 67-92.

<sup>23</sup> On the discussion of colonization at the convention, see Alison Goodyear Freehling, *Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). Proslavery southerners thought that tariff revenues would be channeled to fund colonization projects, hence portraying that northerners were controlling the fate of both tariff policy and slavery's systematic termination. Schoen, "Fragile Fabric," 173-4.

<sup>24</sup> Drescher, *Mighty Experiment*. While the ending of the Napoleonic wars weakened slaveholding regimes, especially France and Spain in the New World colonies, by this time, since U.S. northern states and Britain both had materially progressed by the spur of industrialization, the abolitionist movement, in Temperley's view, had become interconnected with the idea of progress; that progress in the modern sense was achievable without dependence on slave labor, and those societies that achieved that, U.S. North and Britain, were outstanding examples that accepted the idea of progress and became the leaders to pursue

But bringing the abolitionist campaign to the federal level was initially difficult, since most thought eliminating slavery under the support of the Constitution seemed impossible. Southerners remained confident and stood by their belief that British and northern industrialization was only possible with the cotton produced by slave labor, and therefore benefited from the system as well. In southerners' view, abolition and emancipation would not only be damaging to the South, but also to the nation as a whole, pointing to the devastating recession in the British West Indies after emancipation. Emancipation on the whole had an effect at home as well, depressing the economy in Britain in the 1840s, which made George Fitzhugh remark in 1854, "the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies is admitted to have been a failure in all respects."<sup>25</sup>

In the U.S., the domestic slave trade was a major target for abolitionist attack, and was viewed as the fundamental business that could ultimately lead to the destruction of the institution of slavery. Those who opposed the expansion of slavery in the new states in the southwest eventually rallied behind the advocates of antislavery and abolition. The Missouri

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abolition of slavery in other societies that did not own the idea of progress. See Howard Temperley, "The Ideology of Antislavery," in *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa and the Americas*, ed. David Eltis and James Walvin (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 21-30. This social acceptance of free labor ideology in terms of economic efficiency and dignity and honor of labor per se- is discussed in Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 248-9. Also see Stanley L. Engerman ed., *Terms of Labor: Slavery, Serfdom, and Free Labor* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999). Discussion on the relation between capitalist development and the spread of antislavery movement, see Thomas Bender ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); in relation, see David Bryon Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, and Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 238-49.

<sup>25</sup> See in particular, Stanley Engerman, "Comparative Approaches to the Ending of Slavery," in Temperley, *After Slavery*, 287. The article provides comparative analysis and patterns of emancipation and its aftermath of slave societies in the Americas. Schoen, "Fragile Fabric," 264-6. George Fitzhugh, "Sociology for the South (1854)," quoted in Matthew Pratt Gutrel, "After Slavery: Asian Labor, the American South, and the Age of Emancipation," *Journal of World History* 14, no.2 (2003):222-3; Rosanne Marion Adderley, "'A Most Useful and Valuable People?': Cultural, Moral, and Practical Dilemmas in the Use of Liberated African Labour in the Nineteenth-Century Caribbean," in *From Slavery to Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood eds. (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 59-80. The fear among southern planters increased through the 1850s as news spread of "Africanization" of Cuba and other Caribbean free labor societies, accompanied by lower productivity and racial violence.

Compromise was a pivotal moment that brought territorial acquisition and the expansion of slavery on the same stage, and from then on, domestic slave trading became a suitable target for attack. The defenders of the compromise argued that regulation of the domestic slave trade lay in the hands of the state and not Congress, referring to their interpretation of the interstate commerce clause. Proslavery southerners managed to find various excuses up to the Civil War to get around the problem, not facing directly the inherent problems within the system.<sup>26</sup> The movement began to gain momentum in the 1830s at both the state and national levels, and became a central component of the sectional debates. As mentioned earlier, southern slaveholders attempted to distinguish themselves from the slave traders in order to avoid the criticisms and divert the attack toward trading, and not slaveholding, while in reality, a majority of slaveholders and large planters were involved in the trade. The U.S. South was exceptional in that many slaveowners were able to avoid direct criticisms and justify their actions by using paternalism as their defense.

The height of the abolitionist movement coincided with the dramatic increase in slave prices after 1840. This rise in slave prices was seen not just in the U.S., but also in Cuba, Brazil, and the British Caribbean, which was a manifestation of the fact that slave productivity was high and slave labor was deemed valuable enough to command those prices. The long-term trend in the price and the quantity of slaves from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century can be explained by the demand-driven dynamics of the market, and for most new world societies, it was sugar that was central on the demand side, while for the U.S., for the most part, it was cotton.<sup>27</sup> In these societies, commodity production was

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<sup>26</sup> Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, Intro. David Lightner, “The Door to Great Bastille” On Missouri Compromise and its effects, see (earlier Chapter note) and Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 271-80. The uniqueness of U.S. proslavery was facilitated by the advance of scientific racism which became accepted by the 1840s. British emancipation was successful in part because it was accomplished before the spread of such idea.

<sup>27</sup> David Eltis and David Richardson, “Prices of African Slaves Newly Arrived in the Americas, 1673-

dependent on slave labor, and the correlation between the two led to a formation of a highly speculative slave market.

As a result, the domestic slave trade existed in plantation societies other than the American South, especially after the transatlantic slave trade was abolished. These movements of slaves and the comparative role of domestic slave trades around the Atlantic rim have been documented in several recent impressive works.<sup>28</sup>

On the one hand, scholars such as Bergad compare the similarities in the development of slave trading in the 1850s. According to his analysis, cotton in the U.S., sugar in Cuba, and coffee in Brazil all developed an allocation system for slave labor which contributed to the price increase of slaves and higher productivity of crops. The three cases followed a similar geographical expansion pattern into more productive soil regions, and the acceleration in production as a result led to similar upward trend. He also indicated that the expansion was accompanied by technological innovations, such as railroads and telegraph and various mechanizations in processing, which introduced cost-efficient methods.<sup>29</sup>

But in general each experienced its own unique developmental path, both in terms of business practices and the slaves themselves. In the U.S., the domestic trade developed easily and quickly, since trading at a smaller scale had been taking place privately decades before

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1865: New Evidence on Long-Run Trends and Regional Differentials,” in Eltis, Lewis, Sokoloff ed., *Slavery in the Development of the Americas*. 204-9. Economists have revealed that for Virginia tobacco, the doubling of the slave prices in the 1840s and 1850s was a result of not the high demand of slaves in the West, but of the resurgence of tobacco demand in Europe in those decades. See Fogel, *Without Consent and Contract*, 69-70. Stanley Engerman, “Southern Industrialization,” in Delfino and Gillespie ed., *Global Perspectives*, 19-20.

<sup>28</sup> For example, see J.R. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery, 1750- 1834* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Laird Bergad, *Slavery and the Demographic and Economic History of Minas Gerais, Brazil, 1720-1888* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Laird W. Baird, “American Slave Markets during the 1850s: Slave Price Rises in the U.S., Cuba, and Brazil in Comparative Perspective,” in Eltis, Lewis, Sokoloff ed., *Slavery in the Development of the Americas*, 224. Also see Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*.

the closing of the Atlantic trade, and the ongoing westward migration of planters refined the practice and developed the personnel necessary for this business. The process became more sophisticated and systematic with the appearance of professional traders and a well-developed market. The emerging market revolution provided the essentials in terms of marketing and financial necessities involving commodity trade. Half of the nation or more was literally in support of the trade, which helped the expansion as well.

The domestic trade in the Caribbean and in South America, mainly Brazil, followed a distinct path. As emphasized repeatedly, the revolution in St. Domingue had a spill-over effect of sending out refugee slaves to other Caribbean countries and to the American Deep South. In the case of the British West Indies, which reluctantly abandoned the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, the domestic trade per se, never developed into a full-blown business as it did in the U.S. Geography imposed constraints, and the proportion of white population was too small to conduct such trade at a sophisticated level. The pool of surplus slaves that was apparent in the U.S. in the Upper South did not exist in the British islands, and those that did migrate were accompanied by their masters, not by trade. The movement of slaves did not carry political weight as it did for the slave trade in the U.S. South. Illegal intercolonial trade was conducted under massive bribes to government officials among the British West Indies from the smaller former sugar islands such as Barbados and the Leeward Islands to the larger, frontier islands such as Jamaica, Trinidad, and Demerara, once the transatlantic trade was closed. In light of humanitarian movement in the homeland, the British Parliament tried to limit the intercolonial trade with a series of regulations in the 1820s and 1830s. These regulations curtailed planter's control over the use of their slaves, which created circumstances that made it easier to accept eventual abolition and emancipation. For places like Jamaica, the restrictions on the intercolonial slave trade prevented further increase in



sugar production, which limited production at a level less than capability.<sup>30</sup>

Cuba followed a slightly different path compared to the British West Indies, since it was able to continue geographical expansion into the frontier area in the era of abolition, and increase its sugar production. Cuba was similar to the U.S., and later Brazil in the sense that the increase in production was accelerated by various internal improvements and advances in technology. But Cuba and Brazil continued their involvement in the transatlantic trade until 1866 and 1850 respectively. The domestic slave trade in Brazil went back to the seventeenth century, when Indians were traded under Dutch rule. After the end of the slave trade in 1850, the defenders of slavery were initially against the internal slave trade, but one account estimates that more than 200,000 slaves were reallocated within Brazil from 1850 to total abolition of slavery in 1888. In terms of the cruelty, volume, the businesslike attitude of traders, and the distance the slaves were traded in the domestic trade in the 1870s and 1880s Brazil, resembled the pattern of the U.S. domestic trade in the late antebellum era. Indeed, the domestic trade was said to be the fundamental reasons why social unrest remained among Creole slaves decades after emancipation. Brazil also had a vast open area in the West that was not exploited until cultivation of coffee spread by the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, for Brazil, the American Civil War and its impact on the world cotton economy had an immediate effect on reorganizing its domestic slave trade.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Hilary McD. Beckles, ““An Unfeeling Traffick”: The Intercolonial Movement of Slaves in the British Caribbean, 1807-1833,” and Seymour Drescher, “The Fragmentation of Atlantic Slavery and the British Intercolonial Slave Trade,” in Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, 256-74 , 234-54. The regulations posed legal restrictions on such as required licenses, number of slaves that can be carried per person, as well as an annual limit for importing colonies. According to Eltis, such restrictions were a setback to the British planters, and prevented them from exploiting the world market, in addition to their setback in the ban of further slave importation and the fail of apprenticeship system for free slaves. Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 8-9, 295.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Graham, “Another Middle Passage?: The Internal Slave Trade in Brazil,” in *Chattel Principle*, Walter Johnson ed. 291- Initial wave of forced internal migration was from the northeastern region, mainly from small to middle-sized farms, to the coffee regions into the ports of Rio de Janeiro and Santos, and also to Minas Gerais. Robert W. Slenes compares that the portion of slaves sold in the market was virtually the same in Brazil and in the U.S., although the increase rate was higher for Brazil. See Robert W. Slenes,

The factors that determined developmental patterns in the domestic trade are difficult to determine, although Walter Johnson suggests that alternative approaches from the so-called “black Atlantic” studies, or the perspective of “African diaspora,” may prove helpful. The experiences and actions of slaves themselves, as seen in the case of St. Domingue, or slave revolts on board the *Creole*, indicate that they had an important part in shaping of this trade in the respective areas.<sup>32</sup>

The geographical expansion of slavery and forced migration of slaves within the Americas has been emphasized as lasting negative effects of slavery. In more cases than not, slave families and community ties were destroyed throughout the process. While slaves were moved further west in the New World, catchment areas of the African slaves extended more deeply into the African continent, therefore continuously widening the scope and affecting more people throughout the slave-trading years. Merchant networks and merchant capital expanded far beyond the Atlantic rim, reaching any place where goods were traded and the system of slavery took various forms. From the business point of view, transactions were becoming more integrated, as mechanisms such as bills of exchanges, insurance, letters of credit, and such, became common for those engaged in international trade. Financial integration was witnessed among banking facilities in the U.S. when they were much affected

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“The Brazilian Internal Slave Trade, 1850-1888: Regional Economies, Slave Experience and the Politics of a Peculiar Market,” in Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, 325-70. For the rearrangement after the breakout of the Civil War in U.S., see Slenes, *Ibid.*, 357-61. It should also be noticed that American vessels were heavily involved in the continuing of Atlantic slave trade in Brazil. See contemporary accounts, such as a letter from Henry A. Wise, American minister in Rio de Janeiro, to British minister to Brazil, Mr. Hamilton, March 27, 1846, quoted in Conrad, *In the Hands of Strangers*, 92-101.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Johnson, *The Chattel Principle*, Introduction. Also see Walter Johnson, “Time and Revolution in African America: Temporality and the History of Atlantic Slavery,” in Thomas Bender ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 148-167. Another account that relates slave uprisings and the pace of emancipation in the Caribbean can be seen in Michael Craton, “Slave Revolts and the End of Slavery,” in *Out of Slavery: Abolition and After*, Jack Hayward ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1985). Also see Phillip Troutman, “Grapevine in the Slave Market: African American Geopolitical Literacy and the 1841 *Creole* Revolt,” in Johnson, *Chattel Principle*, 203-33.

by the policies of Britain during the recurring antebellum panics. Planters and merchants of the American South experienced and adjusted not only to the advanced efficiency of the ongoing domestic market revolution, but also to the increased integration of the global economy of the early nineteenth century world. Those who dealt with slaves or cotton perhaps were more aware of such integration, because these trades mandated a political agenda to defend a particular social order.<sup>33</sup>

Ballard's experience provides a window into the mind and business operation of a southern slave trader, migrant, and a cotton planter. His experience was one that reminds us that the American South was expansive. He was from Virginia, the economy of which was integrated into the Atlantic economy from the start. As a slave trader, his attention focused on the expanding West, where the slaves were sold, but also on the North where financial ties were made, and also on the wider global market of staple commodities, where events that shaped the market took place. As a migrant, he was among the many Americans who not only experienced the vast frontier, but became a "self-made man" on it. By the time he was a cotton planter, he was a producer of one of the most important international commodities of his time and a participant in the world of global commerce. Through these transitions, he was able to acquire entrepreneurial skills and develop a worldview that suited the evolving era. Through partnerships, speculation, investment, and risk-taking, he nurtured the skills necessary to become a modern-day businessman. By the time the Civil War was approaching, southerners with such experiences were able to operate their businesses with a global outlook and were aware of their economic position and political stance in the domestic sphere and in the world.

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<sup>33</sup> For example see Markus Vink, "The World's Oldest Trade": Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History* 14 (2003): 131-77. On globalization, see essays in Michael D. Bordo, Alan M. Taylor, and Jeffrey G. Williamson ed., *Globalization in Historical Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

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