FAMILY TIES: THE GIBBS FAMILY, RACE, AND SOCIETY IN SOUTH CAROLINA: 1865-1945

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Abstract

The ancestors of the Gibbs family came to South Carolina as slaves from Barbados in the early 19th C., and four brothers, Anthony, Fortune, Moses and Wetus, born in South Carolina between 1832 and 1845, all grew up as slaves and became emancipated while they were still young men. This thesis will chronicle the lineage of these four brothers whose family serves as a microcosm of African American life in South Carolina and beyond. This includes an examination of the family from Reconstruction through the World War II period, and it will focus on issues such as emancipation, agriculture, landownership, political involvement, education, religion, and migration.

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Introduction

This project has two primary sources for its existence. The first is a graduate course on comparative slavery. Discussions about the conditions that led to the enslavement of human beings in various cultures piqued my interest due to my own personal story. Being an African American, my heritage as the descendant of people who were bought, sold, and held as property holds an important position in my life, particularly in regards to my work as a historian of southern American history. Like any good course, this class challenged my thinking as well shattered preconceived ideas and misinformation that I had regarded to be true. This was especially true in terms of where slaves were held in the world and how conditions for slaves differed from society to society. Of specific interest were readings and discussions around the sugar trade and the harsh conditions that slaves endured in Barbados and other Caribbean islands. Due to the second reason for the project, I was aware that my family had ties to Barbados. This enhanced my interest in this particular area due to my intimate connection with the subject. Reading about sugar barons and massive plantations that were built (and sometimes destroyed) by groups of individuals that experienced life as my family members did enticed me to learn more.

The second reason that this project came into existence (though it should probably be the first reason) was a conversation with my mother. I was perhaps twelve at the time. As we were traveling from our home in Rock Hill, South Carolina to visit relatives in the Summerville, South Carolina area, she informed me that one of

my older cousins had traced our family's lineage to Barbados. Trips like these were regular occurrences, as my family would sometimes spend large portions of our summers visiting with my mother's family, particularly her aunts. There was a large grouping of family members living on adjoining plots of land encompassing many acres. Visiting with dozens of family members was as simple as crossing a yard or a field, many of which retained the outline of crop rows even though no crops were still grown there on any large scale. This discovery was both exciting and intriguing to me. I would spend my remaining adolescent as well as my young adult years gaining additional pieces to the puzzle of the story that was my family tree. I had always envisioned myself eventually connecting all the dots and the story coming to a culmination with a visit to the tiny island to reconnect with long lost family members. As adolescence turned into young adulthood, this goal became but a memory, lying dormant until those graduate school readings brought them back to the fore front.

The goal of this project is to document and track the lineage of a South Carolina African American family from slavery through the Great Migration. This will include an examination of some of the more significant trends, occurrences, and legislation that affected African Americans during this period as well as how the family either fit into or bucked many of these trends.

Chapter One deals with the lack of information pertaining to the Gibbs brothers during enslavement. This includes an examination of the conditions that led to the emergence of the plantation system as it appeared in South Carolina, the importance of Africans to the development of South Carolina's rice culture, and an

examination of several plantations where the Gibbs brothers could have potentially been held as slaves. Many of South Carolina's most prominent white families appear in this chapter, highlighting the importance of slave labor to the state and to those who are most commonly associated with the growth and prominence of the state. Goose Creek, South Carolina, the first recorded location of the Gibbs brothers, also receives attention, as do the history of the Gibbs name and the background of the African American family that would inherit it as a surname.

Chapter Two focuses on the dawn of emancipation and the adjustment to a new order after the end of the Civil War. Included in this section is a comparison between slavery and freedom, and it examines the changes that occurred (or did not occur) in the day to day lives of the newly freed population. This includes the impact of the Freedmen's Bureau, the freedpeople's thirst for education and land ownership as concrete examples of their desire to solidify their newly secured social standing, and the rise of labor contracts, eventually leading to the entrenchment of the sharecropping system. This chapter also contains a closer examination of conditions in the Goose Creek area that may have made land ownership for blacks there a much more realistic goal than in other locations.

Where Chapter Two pertains to the gains made by African Americans in the early stages of Reconstruction, Chapter Three focuses on the white backlash against those gains. This includes the rise of the Black Codes and increasing violence against African Americans, the Radical Republican response to these southern efforts at controlling blacks, and the ultimate failure of Reconstruction. This chapter also takes

a closer look at the role of women and their place in a farm household, including the first generation of Gibbs women.

Chapter Four examines areas where African Americans were able to carve out success for themselves in the face of Jim Crow, primarily in the areas of education and religion. In regard to education the focus is on the rise of public education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and the unique story of the University of South Carolina, the only public southern university to admit African Americans during Reconstruction. Regarding religion, Chapter Four discusses the development of the black church, the importance of this institution to the community. Two particular Methodist denominations were of central importance to the family, and they receive primary attention. The chapter also looks at teaching and preaching as professions, as these were among the first non-agricultural occupations undertaken by members of the Gibbs family.

Finally, this project concludes with a brief look at the Great Migration and the spread of the Gibbs family outside of South Carolina, as the descendants of the four original brothers built upon their legacy and proceeded to lead lives that cover all walks of life. It is a chronicle of one family's journey from the challenges of slavery to the challenges of freedom. The story of the Gibbs family is one of struggle, suffering, and perseverance, but ultimately also one of triumph. Those who remained in South Carolina after the turn of the 20th century were part of a landowning minority, an island of achievement in a ocean of sharecroppers. Those who left the state carried the heritage of four slave brothers with them around the nation, making

the story of the Gibbses not only a South Carolina or African American one, but truly an American one.

Chapter 1- Yeshoe

"The republic is based upon the idea of a family connexion. A common ancestry, a common history, the recollections of adversities shared, and triumphs enjoyed."[1]
-Address pronounced at the Inauguration of the South Carolina Historical Society, June 28th, 1857, by Prof. F. A. Porcher.

In his address to the newly formed historical society, F.A. Porcher was speaking about his idea of America, by which he meant the mixing of European ethnicities into what could be considered an American. The Society was formed in order to properly document the history of those who had helped establish and grow both the state and nation, recognizing their ties to the Old World while also subordinating those ties to form something new and greater. He refers to Europeans as the "discordant materials" which have been "fused happily together" by that very force. The "family connexion" and common ancestry here were those of the Norman and Celt, Iberian and Saxon. These were the only people worth mentioning. According to Porcher, the history of each U.S. state "commences with the first appearance of a European family." The red man, as Native Americans were called, simply "disappears" so that "European civilization can commence." How generous of them! It must also be noted that there is no gain here for these noble men, no "spoil from their conquest". There is only the forest and the right to labor.[2]

Porcher was also not speaking about African Americans, whom he never explicitly mentioned in his address. In fact, the only reference to African Americans,

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[1] Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Vol. 1, Charleston, SC, 1857.
[2] Ibid.

a majority of the inhabitants of the state at that time, was the Europeans' newfound right to labor on their new continent.[3] A wealthy Charleston professor and businessman, Porcher most certainly did not mean the right to personal physical exertion, at least not for men of his social stature. Instead, he meant the European right to control labor. Porcher was a product of his time, which happened to be the eve of a bloody civil war fought over the status of enslaved Africans and the aforementioned European “right” to labor. He may or may not be forgiven for his blatant racism, depending on position of the judge. The weight of his words, however, cannot be diminished by his personal beliefs, as they ring true even for those he did not include in the body politic. Familial connections are among the strongest ties that exist among human beings. The idea of a blood-bonded grouping of individuals, strengthened through marriage, is the most basic of units, one that is recognized worldwide. The institution of family may, in fact, have meant more to African Americans, who were generally deprived of the Old World ties that Porcher seemed to find so important. These ties had to be recreated among the enslaved, who were generally allowed to hold on to no more of their heritage than necessary for them to be the true force of advancement of European civilization in America. This work is an attempt to rediscover some of that missing heritage for one African American family, as well as preserve the heritage that has emerged from that unknown past.

Much has been written about the struggle of the slave family to form and maintain family bonds in the mist of their oppression. Many historians, including

[3] Ibid.

Larry Hudson and Herbert Gutman, have marveled at both the strength of slaves attempting to form such fragile bonds in midst of their oppression and at the success of slave families had in maintaining those bonds. The Gibbses were one of those enslaved families working and living in South Carolina. The family ancestors most likely came to South Carolina as slaves from Barbados in the early 19th century, and four brothers, Anthony, Fortune, Moses and Wetus, born in South Carolina between 1819 and 1845, all spent their youth as slaves and became emancipated while they were still young men. This thesis will chronicle the lineage of these four brothers, particularly that of Fortune Gibbs, whose family serves as a microcosm of African American life in South Carolina. This includes an examination of the family from Reconstruction through the post-World War II era, and it will focus on such issues as the transition from slavery to freedom, economic conditions, education, and life in Jim Crow-era South Carolina.

Fortune Gibbs was in his mid-twenties when Porcher gave his address. Notwithstanding Porcher's feelings, Fortune must have surely thought his family was important. He and his brothers were most likely field laborers on a large plantation in present day Dorchester County near Charleston, South Carolina. After emancipation, the brothers all went on to become landowning farmers, marrying and raising families in the area. Their children and grandchildren worked, attended school, raised families of their own, migrated, and repeated this cycle for generations. The lineage of these four brothers now extends throughout the United States, from South Carolina to New

York to Utah, encompassing all walks of life. They are lawyers, doctors, and teachers. They are fathers and mothers. They are the descendants of slaves.

Fortune Gibbs was born during the late 1830s or early 1840s in the St. James Goose Creek Parish near Charleston, South Carolina. No one is sure of the exact date, or even the exact year, though he was probably born in May. The records that do exist prove inconclusive. The 1870 Census lists his age as 35 years old, giving him a birth year of 1835.[4] The 1900 Census, however, provides an age of 56, making his birth year 1844.[5] This ambiguity surrounds all of the brothers. A discrepancy similar to the one surrounding records for Fortune exists for Anthony (Tinney) Gibbs, the oldest known member of the Gibbs family. Family records have Tinney's date of birth listed as 1832, but the 1880 Census provides him a birthdate of 1819.[6] Family records show the birth date of Moses Gibbs as 1842, but records to confirm this have yet to be uncovered. Walter (Wetus) Gibbs, the youngest brother, has a birthdate of May 1845 provided by a single source.[7] Given the difficulties in pinpointing exact birth dates for the other brothers, this date can is probably best taken as an approximation. What can be said with certainty is that the brothers were born during a period of turmoil over their status as both human beings and property. This uncertainty was due to the lack of legal recognition afforded to the African American family.

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[4] 1870 Census. Year: 1870; Census Place: St James Goose Creek, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: M593_1488; Page: 117B; Image: 239; Family History Library Film: 552987.

[5] 1900 Census. Year: *1900;* Census Place: *Dorchester, Dorchester, South Carolina;* Roll: *1526;*Enumeration District: *0068;* FHL Microfilm: *1241526*

[6] 1880 Census. Year: 1880; Census Place: Saint James Goose Creek, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: 1223; Family History Film: 1255223; Page: 148D; Enumeration District: 085.

[7] 1900 Census. Year: *1900;* Census Place: *Dorchester, Dorchester, South Carolina;* Roll: *1526;*Enumeration District: *0068;* FHL Microfilm: *1241526*

The scant amount of information available about the brothers seems voluminous in comparison to that of their progenitors. There is no available information about their parents, only the assumption that their mother was a slave. Their father is also thought to be a slave, but this is unknown for sure. With the vulnerable position that slave women found themselves in under the control of their white owners as well as the inability of slave men to provide protection against sexual aggression, it is possible that the patriarch of the Gibbs family lineage is white, a slave-owner or possibly an overseer. That might help explain the mystery surrounding the brothers' parents. DNA testing on 21st century adult family members reveals a significant degree of European ancestry. Whether or not this miscegenation occurred between the brothers' parents is purely speculation, and unfortunately, this information may never be definitively known.

Another theory for the origin of the clan emerges from the available data. Perhaps Anthony Gibbs, known as the eldest brother, is in fact the father of the three other brothers. The census information available provides Anthony with a birthdate of 1819. If the 1835 birthdate given for Fortune is believed, there is a sixteen-year gap between siblings. This is not unheard of, but represents almost a full generation between births. This information should at least make the possibility a realistic consideration. If the 1844 birthdate is considered, the age gap extends to 25 years, making Anthony the parent much more plausible than Anthony the brother. Until further information is uncovered, speculation is the best tool available. For now, the family history begins here.

For the majority of those born into slavery in America, documenting their lineage was of little importance to the men and women who owned them. What mattered was that at some point, Fortune and his brothers would be able to provide labor for their owner. Keeping vital records had not yet been required by many states (1870 marks that first year that definitive census information for African Americans is widely available), and many slave-owners simply did not document such activities. Obviously there are exceptions. James Henry Hammond, owner of multiple plantations in South Carolina, meticulously documented slave births on his properties down to the day for over 30 years.[8] Other slave-owners kept such information in family Bibles, considering their slaves as part of an extended family and documenting them as such. Henry Briggs, the patriarch of the Briggs family of Edgefield County, South Carolina, started a family Bible in 1827 that included the birth of slave children starting in 1847. The notes encompass a twenty-year period running through the end of the Civil War in the area.[9] The paternalistic nature of many planters has been documented and debated by historians and archeologists. J.W. Joseph states "Racism, paternalism, and emergent capitalism have all been demonstrated through archaeological investigations been demonstrated through archaeological

[8] *James Henry Hammond's Slave Birth Register*. Accessed August 1, 2014. http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/files/State%20Parks/Redcliffe%20Plantation/RP_Slave%20Birth%20Register.pdf.

[9] Briggs family Bible records, 1827 – 2000. Briggs family 2 MSS, 1827-1870 &28 Apr. 2000; 13260. University of South Carolina. South Caroliniana Library

investigations as major constellations within this ideological universe."[10] The system was not without faults however. Lacy Ford points specifically to an insurrection scare that occurred in Camden in 1816 as a turning point in the emergence of paternalism in the state. Four of the Camden organizers were slaves who had been allowed to practice Christianity, one of the main tenets of paternalist ideology.[11] Perhaps this was a way to ensure that posterity remembered the influence and power of the father figure. Maybe it was a way to commemorate the people whom many planters considered as their children, even if they treated them in a manner that their true children would never experience. In either event, men like Hammond and Briggs were the exception and not the rule. Such records for the owner of the Gibbs brothers either do not exist or have yet to be uncovered. This is a hindrance, but it does not stop a researcher from making educated guesses about the circumstances in which the brothers lived and worked. By examining the larger trends of slavery in the state and those of the plantations in the Goose Creek area, reasonable conclusions about the brothers' lives can be drawn.

Slavery was the defining feature of life in the South Carolina Low Country, and plantations were the defining feature of the slave system. Plantations, while found throughout the state, were especially prominent in the coastal and inland regions below Columbia that make up what the area known as the Low Country. One reason

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[10] J. W. Joseph, *"White Columns and Black Hands: Class and Classification in the Plantation Ideology of the Georgia and South Carolina Lowcountry,"* Historical Archaeology 27, no. 3 (January, 1993): pg 57, accessed September 28, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616249

[11] Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 179.

for this may be the sheer volume of enslaved Africans that traveled through area ports. It has been estimated that between 40 to 60 percent of the Africans who were brought to North America via the Atlantic during the slave trade entered through Low Country ports.[12] The degree of wealth in the area was an attraction, drawing in slave traders towards planters with both the necessary capital and need for manpower on the area's large plantations. This made it likely that many stayed in the area upon arrival. Indeed, the Charleston area had so many more blacks than whites that a European visitor to the colony in 1737 said that Carolina looked "more like a negro country than like a country settled by white people."[13] Blacks were a majority in the state by 1708 and maintained this numerical dominance in population until the 1920s, when the Great Migration contributed to a decline in the state's African American population. Certain areas near Charleston maintained black populations that were upwards of eighty percent of the total population. The 1790 Census shows St. Paul's Parish with a white population that made up only seven percent of the total; parishes such as St. Bartholomew's (18 percent) and St. John's (13 percent) had only slightly higher numbers. St. James Goose Creek had a total population of 2,787, of which 2,333, or 84 percent, were slaves.[14] This large imbalance meant that large numbers of

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[12] "Estimates of African Slaves that entered United States through Low Country." Estimates. Accessed January 01, 2015. http://slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces?yearFrom=1501&yearTo=1866&flag=5&disembarkation=205.204.201.203.202.

[13] Quoted in Wood, Peter H. *Black Majority; Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*. (New York: Knopf, 1974), 132.

[14] 1790 Census. Year: 1790; Census Place: St James Goose Creek, Charleston, South Carolina; Series: M637; Roll: 11; Page: 535; Image: 354; Family History Library Film: 0568151.

slaves were owned by a small number of white planters. There were several factors that contributed to this large imbalance, and they all relate to rice and indigo.

Rice and indigo were the dominant crops in the Goose Creek area during the 18th century. These crops, particularly rice, led to a massive accumulation of wealth and made the planters in the Charleston very rich. By 1774, South Carolina had the highest per capita wealth among its white population of all the mainland colonies, and much of that wealth is due to rice.[15] Rice cultivation was work that many of the Low Country enslaved would have been familiar with from West Africa. Africans from the Windward Coast and Senegambia, for example, would have been familiar with both the crop and its cultivation process from their home regions, where it was grown by both freeman and slave.[16] Even though it was ultimately a European enterprise, a large number of Africans and their descendants took the lead in running and even designing many rice plantations. According to Elizabeth Allston Pringle, the daughter of a South Carolina planter, "Only the African race could have made it possible or profitable to clear the dense cypress swamps and cultivate them in race by a system of flooding the fields from the river canals, ditches, or floodgates, drawing of the water when necessary, and leaving those wonderfully rich rice lands dry for cultivation."[17] Pringle may well have been ahead of her time in her assessment. Historians such as Daniel Littlefield have suggested that Europeans learned the process of rice

[15] Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 84-90.
[16] Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 78.
[17] Quoted in Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and the Making of South Carolina: An Introductory Essay* (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Public Programs Division, 1995), 11.

cultivation from their African slaves and that the development of rice culture in South Carolina can be attributed primarily to African knowledge.[18] How rice arrived in South Carolina is debated, but one theory is that rice was introduced in 1685 in Charleston by John Thurber, a sea captain who paid for the repair of his ship with a sack of "Gold Seede" rice from Madagascar.[19] Others reject the idea that luck played any part in rice's introduction to the state, accrediting its appearance to planning on the part of the lord proprietors.[20] Whatever its origin, rice transformed the colony. By 1691 the grain was so valuable that the South Carolina Assembly allowed colonists to pay their taxes with it.[21] The value of rice lay in its high caloric content, and the increase in demand can be attributed to population growth in northern Europe, increases in the prices of competitive grains, and transportation and communication advancements.[22] Rice was also important to West Indian planters who used it to supplement slave diets.[23]

There was much work to be done preparing the land for the crop before cultivation could commence. First, the site had to be selected. Africans knowledge of

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[18] Ibid., 17.
[19] "Slavery on South Carolina Rice Plantations The Migration of People and Knowledge in Early Colonial America." Accessed June 17, 2014. http://ricediversity.org/outreach/educatorscorner/documents/Carolina-Gold-Student-handout.pdf.
[20] Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 99.
21 Christopher C. Boyle. *Rise of the Georgetown Rice Culture,* Accessed August 12, 2014, http://sciway3.net/proctor/sc_rice.html
[22] Peter A. Coclanis, "Rice Prices in the 1720s and the Evolution of the South Carolina Economy," *Journal of Southern History* 48, no. 4 (November, 1982): 540, accessed November 30, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2207852?ref=no-x-route:5af6d73073be273b7aae299341aba601.
[23] Kenneth Morgan, "The Organization of the Colonial American Rice Trade," *William and Mary Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (July, 1995): 435, accessed December 30, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2947294?ref=no-x-route:ef9c6504c93f55bf338db46b36fb4ba6.

rice cultivation techniques from their home made them instrumental in this process. Included in this was the selection of areas near waterways and selection of soil with a "substantial clay foundation" to prevent water from seeping out.[24] Next, the land had to be cleared. This meant removing brush, trees, and weeds, as well building earthen dams to separate water and land. Next hoes were used to level the ground. This was arduous labor, requiring exact measurements without the benefit of modern technology. Removing tree stumps and roots could sometimes be a multi-year process, meaning sometimes rice had to be planted around them. Rice gates and ditches were constructed to control the flow of water onto and off of the fields. The size and layout of the field typically depended on the natural landscape. Elevation changes and embankments typically determined the boundaries of a field, though there were also several characteristics that would be common to all plantations in the area of focus regardless of the crop. The main house would be the center of the plantation, positioned to allow visual mastery of the property. The main house was typically not a single building, but a complex that might have included a kitchen (separate from the primary house), an administrative or office building, a greenhouse, a slave hospital, and quarters for house slaves.[25] After the main house complex came the fields for the various crops, which encompassed the majority of the plantation grounds. Finally came the quarters for the field hands, which would be close enough to the main house to be seen, but were typically far enough away to provide some

[24] Ibid.

[25] Michael Trinkley et al., *Broom Hall Plantation: A Good One and in a Pleasant Neighborhood* (Columbia: Chicora Foundation, 1995), 45.

autonomy and the development of slave culture. Bloomfield, one of the Goose Creek plantations examined later in this chapter, had a layout very similar to the above description.

Rice cultivation in inland areas such as Goose Creek consisted of three flooding stages, with secondary work such as weed pulling filling the work days of slaves between these periods. During the first flooding, water eroded the trench banks, covering the seeds with soil. After a controlled flooding, the seeds remained underwater for about twenty-one days until they sprouted. Next the water was removed and the fields were allowed to dry for about two weeks. As the seedlings sprouted, another twenty-one day stretch of flooding followed. This was done to remove any weeds and stalks that remained in the field after the first weeding by slaves and the water did not reach the level of the seedlings. After about 40 days of letting the fields drain from this second flooding the third and largest flooding occurred. This lasted until the crop was mature and ready for harvesting. This process differed from the rice growing techniques used in areas closer to the coast but both processes shared the intensive need for labor. [26]

Another nonnative plant, indigo production did not catch on as quickly as rice, and was subject to a few false starts. The earliest known attempt to grow indigo occurred in 1649, with indications that settlers in Dutch New York also tried to grow

[26] "Lowcountry Digital History Initiative." Omeka RSS. Accessed November 01, 2014. http://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/forgotten_fields/inland_rice_cultivation.

wild indigo the next year.[27] It would take almost another century before the crop would catch hold in the North American colonies. When it did, however, much like rice, it changed the future of the state of South Carolina.

Eliza Lucas Pinckney arrived in South Carolina in 1738 at age fifteen. The daughter of a prominent Antiguan planter, she would soon come to control three family plantations in the Charleston area. The properties were in need of a cash crop that would help pull them out of debt. After receiving several varieties of seed from her father, she expressed faith that indigo would be the crop they were looking for that would turn around the family's fortunes in the colony.[28] It did. Indigo would go on to become the second most lucrative crop in the colony, trailing only rice. Pinckney is typically credited with the reintroduction of indigo to the colony, though historians now see her as simply one of many who contributed to the emergence of the plant as South Carolina's second crop.[29]

Indigo production was as labor intensive as rice. The plants had to be grown and harvested before undergoing an intensive process of extraction. Slaves threw the freshly cut plants into a large wooden vat, covered the plants with water, and pounded them until they began to ferment, a process taking between eight and twenty hours. The mixture had to be tended the entire time, day and night. Once the water began to turn blue, thicken, and bubble, workers, again usually slaves, moved the liquid to the

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27 "A Brief History of Indigo in the United States." Accessed November 11, 2014. http://www.sewanee.edu/Chem/Chem&Art/Detail_Pages/Projects_2000/Leopold/History.html.
28 Eliza Lucas Pickney. *Journal and Letters of Eliza Lucas*. (Wormsloe, Georgia: n.p., 1850), 68.
29 David Coon. *Eliza Lucas Pinckney and the Reintroduction of Indigo Culture in South Carolina*. *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (February, 1976), 61.

next vat, where it was continuously churned. When the dye particles began to separate from the water, workers allowed the mixture to settle and siphoned off the liquid. They transferred the residue to a third vat to sit for eight to ten hours, then strained the paste and hung it in cloth bags to drain. As the indigo hardened, laborers cut it into squares and left it to dry in the shade until completely hard and shippable. While drying, the squares needed to be turned three or four times a day and protected from flies and sun; if exposed to direct sunlight before drying, the indigo would lose its color and much of its value. Overall, the process was highly labor intensive at every step, requiring a great deal of oversight and physical toil, not to mention dealing with the nauseating smell of fermenting indigo. [30] Like rice, indigo was seen as a valuable commodity by Europeans. Indigo was one of the few steadfast varieties of dye available for clothing, and the British paid subsidies to encourage production among their colonies.[31]

Beyond the need for massive amounts of labor to power the plantations and cultivate the area's cash crops, a third factor emerged that contributed to the huge majority of blacks in the area. The land around Goose Creek was, and in some places still is, basically swampland. High incidence of malaria, yellow fever, and other diseases, along with the miserable summer conditions led many of the planters to be absentee owners if possible. Many took up residence in Charleston during the hottest months of the year, leaving the day-to-day functioning of plantations to overseers.

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[30] Kenneth H. Beeson, Jr., "Indigo Production in the Eighteenth Century," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 44, no. 2 (May, 1964): 214, accessed April 19, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2511598?ref=no-x route:6064c7b0392583e6c0bb9079b01d5fcf.
[31] Ibid.

Swampland also affected the number of slaves that a planter would own. More swampland meant a need for more slaves to help clear and cultivate the land. Planter was the primary occupation of whites in the area. Unlike other areas of the South Carolina and the South in general, slave ownership in Goose Creek was the norm. In 1790, there were only twenty families with no slaves.[32] Also atypical of slaveholders, most owners had at least ten slaves. Nineteen families held 40 or more slaves and only 42 out of 116 slaveholding families held fewer than ten slaves. Slave labor was the primary economic driving force in the area. Beyond cultivating and tending to rice and indigo, slaves in the Goose Creek area also tended livestock, cut timber, and raised other crops. The work of the enslaved varied not only by plantation, but also by season. Rice, indigo, and other crops were cultivated from spring to September. In the fall slaves husked the rice, cleared land, sawed lumber, split rails, and coopered barrels.[33] In the winter, slaves prepared for the next planting season and also worked on roads and bridges. An ordinance passed in 1721 required all male slaves between the ages of 16 and 60 to perform work toward building and maintaining the roads in the parish.[34]

There are accounts indicating that slaves were given a minimal amount of free time but these accounts are somewhat contradictory. The account of a British soldier given in 1709 states that slaves worked from sunup to sundown, six days a week, with

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[32] 1790 Census. Year: 1790; Census Place: St James Goose Creek, Charleston, South Carolina; Series: M637; Roll: 11; Page: 535; Image: 354; Family History Library Film: 0568151.

[33] Michael J. Heitzler, and Richard N. Côté. *Historic Goose Creek, South Carolina, 1670-1980.* (Easley: Southern Historical 1983), 76.

[34] Ibid.

a minimal amount of idle time.[35] A report by Joseph Ioor Waring, a doctor and author who visited St. James Church a few years earlier, indicates that some slaves were allowed to attend church. “The Church at Goose Creek was well frequented as often as any of our ministers officiated there. The number of heathen slaves in this parish I suppose to be about two hundred, twenty of whom I observed to come constantly to Church, and these and several others of them well.”[36] It seems that not only were slaves given time to attend church, but many were taught to read and write, often with their master’s blessing. Waring states that of those attending the church, “these and several others of them well understanding the English tongue, and can read.”[37] Waring says this refutes the charge that colonists were opposed to Christianizing and educating slaves, but this example only indicates that a small proportion of slaves were given these privileges. In time, however, black congregations would come to dominate the church, with black members outnumbering their white counterparts by a ratio of three to one.

The labor and leisure of slaves cannot be properly discussed in the context of Low Country South Carolina without a discussion of the task system. This system, in which slaves were assigned a specific number of tasks to be completed during a work day, greatly contributed to the amount of personal time available to them. After the task had been completed, the slave was generally free to use their spare time as he or

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[35] Maxwell Clayton Orvin, *Historic Berkeley County, South Carolina, 1671-1900* (Berkeley, South Carolina n.p. 1973), 69.

[36] Waring, St. James. "*St. James Church, Goose Creek, S. C. A Sketch of the Parish from 1706 to 1909*." Accessed November 23, 2014.
http://archive.org/stream/stjameschurchg00wari/stjameschurchg00wari_djvu.txt.

[37] Ibid.

she liked. Obviously the specifics of the assigned tasks would factor into the length of the workday, as well as the wealth and circumstances of the planter, the location of the plantation, and the size of the workforce. Thus, the task system did not automatically shorten the workday for every slave. However, the incentive to complete tasks early in order to obtain free time was a motivating factor.[38] The task system is representative of the give and take between planters and slaves in this paternalistic environment. Planters benefited from the system's incentives to complete tasks as well and as quickly as possible. Slaves benefited from opportunity to receive free time to hire themselves out to earn money, hunt or tend gardens to add to their food rations, or help family members with their tasks.[39] Due to the lack of a true town center (St. James Church served as such) and the proximity of large plantations, visiting was a favored pasttime of planters and their families. Most of the accounts that exist of plantations in the community come from descriptions provided by visitors. Slaves had the same opportunities, in part due to the task system, to visit neighboring plantations, although their visits were surely less formal.

This is a story about a black family, but it must involve at least a brief discussion of the white family that would become forever linked to it. This connection is indeed an important one. Part of the reason for this discussion is to contrast the wealth of information available on the white Gibbs family compared to the dearth of information available on the black Gibbs family. The black Gibbs family

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[38] Larry Hudson, *To Have and To Hold: Slave Work and Family in Antebellum South Carolina.* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2010), 3.
[39] Littlefield, *Rice and the Making of South Carolina,* 28.

can trace its roots to the mid-nineteenth century. Anything prior to that is currently guesswork at best, owing to the trauma of the Middle Passage and the lack of written recordkeeping among slaves. The white Gibbs family has none of these issues, owning a history that bests that of the black Gibbs by several centuries. According to the *Gibbs Family History*, one of several genealogical resources available for the clan, "The Gibbs family is one of the most ancient that we have an account, capable of being traced back through England to France and the Norman Conquest." Adonit de Guibe of Brittany, who lived in the year 1221 is thought to be the oldest common Gibbs ancestor.[40] The family would go on to play a prominent role in English society, with several dukes and knights among the more prominent family members. The family was also influential in the establishment of English colonies in the Western Hemisphere. The *Gibbs Family History* documents family members throughout the North American colonies. Their presence in the Caribbean, particularly Barbados, was just as large. Phillip Gibbes, was the first of the family to move to Barbados, doing so in 1635, and he died around 1648. The small island was a pioneer in sugar production in the British Empire. Thomas Gibbes, a Collateral of the Bristol family, was a member of the first Council held at Barbados. John Gibbes, another Collateral, was also at the head of the council board in that island in the year 1697. Barbados plantations created enormous amounts of wealth for the crown, and enormous amounts of suffering for the enslaved forced to labor there. The island is 21 miles

[40] "Gibbs Family History." Accessed July 12, 2014. http://timbarron.net/genealogy/gibbs_family_history.pdf.

long, fourteen miles wide, with only half of that land being arable. This limited amount of land, coupled with primogeniture traditions that dictated that the eldest son typically received ownership of a plantation at the death of an owner, left limited options on the island for a second and third born son, or those who were not lucky enough to be born into such a family in the first place. This was true even of the Gibbs family. "Robert Gibbs, brother of Thomas and John Gibbs of the Barbados, was first Governor of South Carolina."[41] Indeed, The Gibbs name is synonymous with the founding of South Carolina, and the connection between Barbados and the early settlers in the colony is well documented.[42]

Settlers from the island were among the first to migrate to Carolina. There was a large concentration of Barbadians on Goose Creek, a tributary of the Cooper River north of Charleston. These Goose Creek men, as they were known, were among the wealthiest planters in the colony. They also served as the main foils to the Lords Proprietors. A main source of contention between these two groups was the Indian slave trade, and they also differed on the issue of trade with pirates. The Goose Creek men presented themselves as defenders of provincial liberties, although their true motives seem to be more self-serving in light of their underlying concerns. Nevertheless they enjoyed popular support around the colony.[43] They have been described as being representative of American colonists, resenting centralized

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Warren Alleyne and Henry Fraser, *The Barbados-Carolina Connection* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988).

[43] M. Eugene Sirmans, "Politics in Colonial South Carolina: The Failure of Proprietary Reform, 1682-1694," *William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (January, 1966): 40

government and what they considered to be outside meddling in local affairs.[44] Though they may have been typical of many other American colonists in terms of their politics, the men of Goose Creek were atypical in terms of their wealth. Goose Creek was historically home to some of the wealthiest and most politically active of the Charleston planters and contained one of the densest concentrations of plantations in the Charleston area.

In contrast to the European Gibbs family and their long and storied history stretching back to the medieval period, little is known about the Africans who were enslaved in order to power the plantations that made Europe and America rich. Beyond the generalities that are commonly attributed to the types of people that were typically enslaved [West African, teenagers/Young Adults, male] very few specifics are known. A DNA test on a 21th century young adult family descendant revealed the most prominent African ethnicity found in persons from Senegambia, Upper Guinea, and the Windward and Gold Coasts (centered near present-day Liberia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone), but there are also genetic similarities with people from other regions where slave trading occurred, including the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and the West Central region (encompassing an area that stretches from present-day Nigeria to Angola and Namibia). Due to both the imprecision of genetic tests and a lack of such information about other family members, the information gleaned from such testing is limited. There is no Adonit de Guibe of Brittany for this family; no

[44] Ibid.

Philip Gibbes of Barbados or Robert Gibbs of South Carolina. There is no evolution of a family name that can be tracked, no notable ancestors who were the first at anything. There is only a shared heritage of labor and bondage, of severed ties and a forgotten past. It is not known for certain when the family's ancestors arrived in South Carolina. They may have come directly from Africa into Charleston. They may have arrived in the Low Country via Barbados with the Goose Creek men. Indeed, many of the enslaved who arrived from the West Indies had already been stripped of their African identities, adding another layer of uncertainty to the quest for their past.[45] In either event, they would become influential in shaping the landscape. They would become one of the most prominent features of that landscape.

There is a dearth of information about specific African Americans prior to 1870, the first year that they were included in the United States Census. This fact, combined with a lack of recordkeeping related to slaves, means that it is hard, if not impossible to pinpoint specific information on the Gibbs family prior to this. Using information from that census allows us to make some educated guesses about the specific circumstances of the Gibbs family. That 1870 Census shows the brothers as being located in the St. James Goose Creek area. There are a number of plantations in this area that could have been the home of the Gibbs brothers before emancipation. These properties each deserve an overview because of the information that they can provide about the types of lives the brothers lived.

Bloomfield Plantation

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[45]Heitzler, *Historic Goose Creek*, 20.

A historic marker at the location of the plantation reads "Broom Hall Plantation, later called Bloom Hall and still later Bloomfield, was first granted to Edward Middleton in 1678. By 1710 this property passed to Benjamin Gibbes, nephew of South Carolina proprietary governor Robert, who named it for Broom House, his ancestral home in England." Gibbes, a planter from Barbados, is typically credited with establishing the plantation on the property, which consisted of 1000 acres of land at the mouth of Goose Creek. The plantation switched owners and names several times over the years. Gibbes died in 1721, and his daughter Elizabeth, born the previous year, only survived to age nineteen and had no children. The plantation would pass instead to Peter Taylor, the second husband of Gibbes' wife Amarinthia. Initially named Broom Hall, it was alternately known as Bloom Hall, Bloom, Bloomville and Fredericks, before its owners settled on Bloomfield. The plantation also switched hands several times after its purchase by Benjamin Gibbes, mainly via marriage and death, before returning to Gibbes family ownership in 1853 when Arthur Gibbes became the owner. The property consisted of a large brick house with several brick outbuildings, as well as a dairy and a stable. This is consistent with the setup of a typical plantation in the Charleston area. Michael Trinkley has identified that these properties "might contain not only a main house, but a kitchen, administrative building (or office), carriage house, privy, orangeries (or greenhouses), a slave hospital, house slaves' quarters or housing for slaves with specialized skill."[46]

[46] Michael Trinkley et al., *Broom Hall Plantation: A Good One and in a Pleasant Neighborhood* (Columbia: Chicora Foundation, 1995), 45.

During its heyday the plantation grew rice, corn, indigo, and livestock, including cattle, oxen, and horses.[47] It served some owners as a profitable crop-producing plantation and others as simply a country seat away from Charleston, where any production was simply meant to sustain the family and plantation workforce. Bloomfield, and the Goose Creek area in general, saw its best days prior to the Revolutionary War. Other than a brief resurrection during the first few decades of the nineteenth century and another short-lived revival during the 1840s, the plantation and the parish would fall short of the prominence it experienced before the late 1700s. By 1901 only a chimney and brick foundation remains of what was "a handsome home . . . situated on a hill which led down to a pond at the base."[48]

Crowfield Plantation

Due to the lack of information available, it cannot be said with certainty that the Gibbs brothers ever resided at Bloomfield. The only connection to the plantation is that of the Gibbs name. Unfortunately, there are several other plantations in the Goose Creek that carry that connection, making the ties between Bloomfield and the family coincidental in the worst-case scenario and inconclusive in the best. Another nearby plantation that can stake the same claim is Crowfield. Said to be second only to Middleton Place, the epitome of Carolina planter opulence, Crowfield was noted for its beauty and expansiveness.[49] Colonel John Gibbes of Barbados purchased the property, and he and his son John owned it for almost two decades in the early 1700s

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[47] Ibid., 56.
[48] "*Bloomfield-The Exposition*" Plantation File, Margaretta Childs Archives at Historic Charleston Foundation
[49] Heitzler, *Historic Goose Creek*, 111.

before falling under the Middleton umbrella.[50] Eliza Lucas wrote in depth about the beauty of the main home and grounds of Crowfield during a week-long visit in 1742. She speaks in flowery language in regards to the house and gardens, with seeming awe at the size of the fields, and not at all about the enslaved workforce.[51] Lucas' account stands as the best description of the property, which primarily functioned as a rice plantation, although it, like Bloomfield, also grew indigo and raised cattle. Although this ownership falls well before the period of interest for this study, the proximity of the property, as well as the Gibbes/Barbadian link make it worth noting. Also, as discussed later in this chapter, freedmen were more likely to have taken their names from sources other than their last owner. This means the likelihood that a slave might have chosen a surname chosen for a property owner from the 1700s is not as far-fetched as it might seem at first glance. A neighboring property of Bloomfield, it would suffer the same decline in prestige in the run-up to the Civil War and the same economic struggle afterwards. What remained of the plantation was virtually destroyed by the earthquake that hit the Charleston area in 1886.

Yeshoe

Otranto is another area plantation with ties to the both the Middleton and Gibbs names. Originally known as Yeshoe, the origin of which is unknown, the plantation was founded by Arthur Middleton, but most notably owned by Alexander Garden, a famed Charleston physician and botanist. The house has been described as

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[50] Ibid., 114,115.

[51] *Charleston Courier,* July 19, 1936.

being architecturally “unlike any other surviving plantation in the South Carolina lowcountry.”[52] Garden, whom the gardenia flower is named after, was also known for his opposition to the use of slave labor in the cultivation of rice:

> “Our Staple Commodity for some years has been rice and Tilling, Planting, Hoeling, Reaping, threshing, Pounding have all been done by the poor Slaves here, Labour and the loss of many of their lives testified the Fatigue they Underwent in Satiating the Inexpressible Avarice of their Masters, You may easily guess what a Tedious, Laborious, and slow method it is of Cultivating Lands to Till it all by the Hand.”[53]

This opposition can be attributed to a concern for the well-being of fellow human beings as well as a disdain for the inefficiency of manual rice production. Garden advocated horse-powered threshing. In 1798, he would sell the property to Robert Reeves Gibbs as Otranto. The lack of an “e” in the last name here is notable, as the spelling matches that of the Gibbs' brothers. Otranto is also notable for the large indigo vats that have survived to the present.

The Gibbs’ name, in relation to the formerly enslaved, involves a bit of mystery, making the search for information on the family prior to emancipation even more difficult. This research was begun under the assumption that Gibbs was simply the last name of the last owner of the family, but that is not known for sure. A study of freed people in South Carolina from the period shortly after emancipation showed that between one-quarter and one-third of former slave surnames were taken from

[52] "Otranto Plantation, Berkeley County (18 Basilica Ave., Hanahan Vicinity)" South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Accessed July 12, 2014. http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/berkeley/S10817708013/.
[53] Heitzler, *Historic Goose Creek,* 104.

their former masters.[54] This indicates that the vast majority of South Carolina slaves did not, in fact, take the last name of their last owner. Other variables must be considered, including slave-naming traditions. Names that were passed down through the family were popular, and slaves also took the surnames of the owners of grandparents, nearby owners, or others that may have had some notoriety.[55] John Gibbs, who lived in Savannah, Georgia after the Civil War, was the son of Jack Google and Christiana Denote. Julia Gibbs of Charleston, South Carolina was the wife of Daniel Duncan and the daughter of Dempsey and Lizzie Brown, meaning her surname was acquired neither by marriage nor by birth. James T. Gibbs, also of Charleston, lists no last name for his wife (Cecelia) or parents (Harry and Rosa), but notes the last name of his employer, George Gibbs. It is possible that George owned James prior to emancipation, but it is also just as likely that James adopted the surname of his new employer, either as a show of gratitude for work, or out of simple convenience.[56] An interesting example of freedman name adoption was that of the eldest Gibbs brother Tinney. Tinney later changed his last name to Cummings, which was the surname of his wife Chloe. Perhaps her family had higher social standing; she might have been free prior to 1865. Maybe Tinney wanted to disassociate himself with the Gibbs name that was a very popular choice of former slaves in the

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[54] Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company,1865-74, NARA microfilm, M816, roll 11, Louisville, Kentucky, branch, record no. 1.
[55] Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 1750-1925 (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 230-56.
[56] Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, 1865-1874. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. Micropublication M816, 27 rolls.

Charleston area. In either event, the oldest known member of the Gibbs family severed his link to the name.[57]

It was against this backdrop of faded wealth and influence that Anthony, Fortune, Moses, and Wetus Gibbs were born. Bloomfield, Otranto, and Crowfield are representative of the decline that the Goose Creek parish was going through when Anthony was born. Already in decline for several decades prior to the Civil War, the area suffered more in the post-war era with the development of share-cropping and the crop lien system. The large plantations of Goose Creek, most of which changed hands repeatedly during the early 1800s, were eventually split into multiple small holdings to liquidate mortgages, pay taxes, and to purchase equipment. By 1870, the majority of the property in Goose Creek was farmed by newly freed African Americans. The long, steady economic decline of Goose Creek, seen in a negative light by its white residents, would eventually become a blessing to some of its black residents, including the Gibbs family. Despite the murky nature of the family origins, they now had the foundation necessary to build a bright future.

[57] Cheryll Ann Cody, "There Was No "Absalom" on the Ball Plantations: Slave-Naming Practices in the South Carolina Low Country, 1720-1865," *American Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (June, 1987), accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/1869910?ref=search-gateway:568e4cf383bd7effdfedf4a42e418499.

Chapter 2 – Now What?

"If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation…want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters…. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."[1]

-Fredrick Douglass, 1857

Freedom came for the southern slave population at various times. For some areas of Texas and the Deep South, slaves did not find out that they were freed until June 19, 1865, a date commemorated by Juneteenth celebrations. These were mainly areas that had escaped conflict during the Civil War and the presence of Union troops during and after war. Planters in these areas simply did not disclose the fact that the war was over and the Union had been victorious. Preely Coleman, a South Carolina born slave who found himself in Texas by 1865, recalled the day. "I well 'members when freedom come. We was in the field and massa comes up and say, 'You all is free as I is.' There was shoutin' and singin' and 'fore night us was all 'way to freedom."[2] This was more than two months after the end of hostilities between the Union and Confederacy and more than two years after Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. This was not the case in South Carolina. Seen as the instigator of the conflict, South Carolina had been a central focus of Union offensives, and areas of the Low Country had a northern troop presence throughout the war. In such areas, particularly coastal areas accessible to Union gunboats, slaves

[1] Frederick Douglass. "The Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies." Speech, Canandaigua, New York, August 3, 1857; collected in pamphlet by author. *In The Frederick Douglass Papers.* Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews. Volume 3: 1855-63. Edited by John W. Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press), 204.

[2] WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, accessed January 27, 2015, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=161/mesn161.db&recNum=1.

were essentially free as early as 1862. Even in areas of the state where Confederates held control until late in the conflict, slaves would often escape to nearby Union encampments and turn themselves over to gain their freedom. Those slaves who were not lucky enough to gain freedom earlier in the conflict would still achieve that status several months earlier than slaves in Texas. By February 1865, Charleston was being evacuated and Goose Creek lay near the escape route for Confederate soldiers and citizens.[3]

The Goose Creek area avoided armed conflict during the Civil War, but residents of the area suffered in much the same way that Confederate civilian populations elsewhere did. Soil exhaustion and disease caused a decline in the number of white residents in the parish that began in the 1750s and intensified in the century leading up to the Civil War, save for a brief respite during the 1820s. Calls for the end of slavery from Northern abolitionists were met with particular disdain in Goose Creek, which was heavily dependent on its enslaved agricultural workforce. The commencement of hostilities in South Carolina did not make life in the area any easier. The Union blockade of Charleston harbor affected the entire Low Country, creating shortages of most goods. This, in turn, drove up the prices of those goods that were available.[4] In a community of poor agricultural laborers, this ultimately meant that most people, black as well as white, simply did without. Goose Creek residents who did not fight for the Confederate army were charged with helping protect Charleston. Other than a militia comprised of males either too old or too young for military service, defense efforts fell to women and slaves. In particular, Berkeley County slaves were tasked with constructing fortifications in the Charleston

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[3] Heitzler, *Historic Goose Creek*, 154.
[4] E. Milby Burton, *The Siege of Charleston, 1861 – 1865* (Columbia: 1970), 263.

Neck area to prevent the chance of a ground invasion of the city.[5] It is highly likely that the brothers, being young able bodied men in their early twenties and located only a short distance from Charleston, were called on for this type of work. Such labor gangs were familiar to the slaves of Goose Creek, but the days of this type of forced labor were quickly coming to an end.

The approach of Union General William Sherman's army in 1864, along with the abandonment of properties by planters and Confederate soldiers created a power vacuum that Low Country slaves quickly took advantage of and used to advance their idea of freedom. The word freedom, however, is a loaded one that must be explained in the context of the period and changing social landscape. As discussed in the previous chapter, most slaves in Goose Creek would have been accustomed to a certain degree of independence and autonomy as a result of the task system and the high incidence of absenteeism among area planters. This included owning and maintaining small gardens, possibly holding livestock, the ability to trade and barter with other slaves and with whites, and the ability to travel to nearby plantations. These were typically hard-fought concessions from owners that slaves were reluctant to give up. More importantly for this discussion, they provide a baseline standard against which to view the gains of blacks after the Civil War, however short-lived those gains may have been.

An important factor in the development of the idea of freedom was the widespread absenteeism that was common on Goose Creek plantations. This trend intensified during the war, as even fewer planters and overseers than normal were available to operate plantations due to service in the Confederate army. South

[5] *Charleston Courier*, July 14, 1863.

Carolina had the highest proportion of military service by men ages 18 – 45 of any state. Another factor, the influx of slaves into the area, made the already large slave majority even larger and thus harder to control. Early in the conflict, after the invasion of Port Royal by Union forces in 1861, many coastal plantation owners attempted to evacuate their slaves further inland to prevent them from escaping to or being confiscated by Union soldiers. In doing this, however, plantation owners simply prolonged the inevitable and helped make wartime Goose Creek that much more unstable. The increase in the number of slaves to be supervised coupled with a decrease in the number of whites to supervise them gave slaves even more autonomy than they had prior to the war. It is important to note that this type of activity varied from plantation to plantation and was subject to the will of plantation owners. In other words, autonomy should in no way be mistaken for freedom. Still, there were some similarities in the day-to-day experience of slaves and the freedpeople that they would become. The gains in autonomy that slaves saw during the Civil War helped this transition, but made the picture somewhat murky. The line between slavery and freedom was blurred at best.

Port Royal was a special case that bears further discussion. Historian Willie Lee Rose says that The Experiment, as Port Royal was known, was "in effect a dress rehearsal for Reconstruction acted out on the stage neatly defined by the Sea Islands of South Carolina."[6] During the 1861 invasion, whites fled the Sea Islands around Beaufort for the relative protection of the South Carolina interior, leaving behind over 10,000 slaves on almost 200 plantations. The majority of these plantations lay on Port Royal, St. Helena's Island, and Lady's Island. There was an initial destruction of

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[6] Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction; the Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), xv.

property by both fleeing planters and exuberant newly freed blacks. Planters destroyed their cotton, reasoning that without cotton to harvest, the slaves would become a burden on the Union forces. The slaves took liberty with the homes and property of their former masters, seeking to destroy all that remained of their previous way of life.[7] With the assistance of several northern charitable organizations as well as protection from planters by Union forces, the freedpeople at Port Royal showed that they could successfully cultivate the land without white supervision.

The Experiment was not without its difficulties. Some of the missionaries and soldiers brought their preconceptions of blacks with them. Many of the whites tasked with teaching the newly freedpeople ran into issues attempting to teach reading and writing to an island population that mainly knew colloquialisms. There were also some white observers who noted that the amount of cotton harvested was less than what had been gathered under slavery.[8] These critiques contain some validity, but they overlook the priorities of the freedpeople, who were more concerned with their newfound freedom and establishing their own hierarchy of importance. The Sea Island people sought to secure their food supply first and foremost. They had no desire to harvest the cotton that was the main source of their misery and had made their previous masters rich.[9] The cotton crop of 1862 on the Sea Islands was of massive importance to northern investors and the United States government. A Treasury Department agent who visited Port Royal early in 1862 suggested that more than one million pounds of cotton could be secured from St. Helena's and Ladies

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[7] Ibid., 16.
[8] Ibid., 303.
[9] Ira Berlin, Steven Hahn, and René Hayden, *Freedom, a Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 16.

Islands.[10] The concerns of the Sea Island people bore themselves to be true. The white superintendents were more concerned with the freedpeople's integration into the market economy than their self-sufficiency, even as they applauded the later.[11] Despite protests from freedpeople and others arguing on their behalf, the majority of the land seized in the Port Royal Experiment would be returned to its pre-war owners.

Union troops were indirectly responsible for gains in autonomy experienced by those slaves whom had masters that sent them away from approaching northern forces. The role that these soldiers played in contributing to the freedom of slaves that they encountered was much more direct, but in many ways just as nuanced and complicated as the situation was for those slaves they never encountered. Union soldiers were by no means a liberating force at the start of the war. Lincoln made it quite clear that his primary objective for fighting the war was the preservation of the Union, not the freeing of slaves. In a letter to *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greely dated August 22, 1862, Lincoln outlined this position:

> "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that."[12]

Lincoln's position on the issue of slavery did not change during the early part of the conflict. In May of 1862, General David Hunter, a Union commander in the South Carolina coastal islands, issued General Order No. 11. This order declared all slaves

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[10] Lt. Col. Wm. H. Reynolds to Hon. S. P. Chase, 1 Jan 1862, vol. 19, #30, Port Royal Correspondence, 5th Agency, Records of Civil War Agencies of the Treasury Department.
[11] Ibid., 94.
[12] "Letter to Horace Greely," Abraham Lincoln to Horace Greely, August 22, 1862, in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 389.

in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida free.[13] Lincoln immediately nullified Hunter's proclamation, having the previous month denied Hunter's request to recruit and arm black men in South Carolina to form a fighting regiment. Lincoln had done the same thing when General John Fremont attempted to emancipate slaves in Missouri the prior year.[14]

Though Lincoln made it clear his priorities lay with preserving the Union, there were some steps taken to alleviate the condition of at least some bondsmen. In March 1862, Congress issued an article of war that prohibited the returning of escaped slaves to bondage.[15] This had much more to do with depriving the Confederates of resources rather than improving the material reality of slaves. The second Confiscation Act of July 1862 reinforced this. Slaves were treated as confiscated property. They were often put to work in Union camps as servants or laborers, and many were forced to return to field labor. Essentially, they traded their southern masters for northern ones. This was particularly true of slaves employed by Confederate armies in the war effort. Union General Benjamin Butler was the first to declare three captured slaves "contraband of war", refusing to return them to their master by using the legality of their status as property as the basis of his argument.[16] Fugitive slaves provided the Union with valuable information regarding Confederate

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[13] *"The Abolition of Slavery." Harper's Weekly* (New York City), May 31, 1862. Accessed January 25, 2015. http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1862/may/hunter-frees-slaves-order-11.htm.
[14] Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*, 144-152.
[15] *Statutes at Large*, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America, vol. 12 (Boston, 1863), 354.
[16] William K. Klingaman, *Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation*, 1861-1865 (New York: Penguin, 2002), 114.

troop movement and helped to liberate others who were still enslaved. Captain Charles B. Wilder explained their effect. “The most valuable information we received in regard to the Merrimack and the operations of the rebels came from the colored people and they got no credit for it.”[17] Wilder goes on to note the bravery and increased sense of independence in the absence of planters. The treatment of contrabands varied according to the policies of Union commanders, but in many places very little of the day to day realities of life changed for slaves. This is only one example of the ideal of freedom and its reality being two disparate things in terms of southern blacks.

The Gibbs brothers and other Goose Creek slaves most likely did not come into contact with any Union forces prior to Sherman’s invading force in early 1865. They may not have come into contact with Union forces at all. Granny Cain, a former slave near Spartanburg, SC shared an experience that may have been similar to that. "The Yankees went through Maybinton but didn't get over as far as us. Some say they stole cattle and burned ginhouses. Squire Kenner was killed in the war, and when the war was over we stayed on with de mistress; she was like a mamma. She had a son who was killed in the war, too. Another son lived there and we worked for him after Mistress died, but he soon moved far away and sold out his plantation.”[18] Tales of marauding Union soldiers were often spread by whites in order to frighten slaves into

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[17] *Testimony by the Superintendent of Contrabands at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission*, May 9, 1863. http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/fafpg.htm. Accessed 01/18/2015.
[18] *WPA Slave Narrative Project, South Carolina Narratives*, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18912/18912-h/18912-h.htm, accessed 1/18/2015.

staying away from northern troops. Before this period, Goose Creek was made up mostly of slaves, women, and those unable to contribute to the war effort, mainly the elderly and children. The absenteeism contributed to work slowdowns. Slaves often left properties at will and took liberties with their master's possessions. The changes that took place during this period had a fundamental effect on the agricultural system that would follow.[19]

One of the first things former slaves did was split up the former plantation plots into smaller parcels of land. Historian Julie Saville views this type of behavior as the pursuit of autonomy within the framework of a larger communal community structure. [20] Burgeoning freedpeople communities such as the one forming in Goose Creek were aware of the need for cooperation in order to cultivate a plantation's worth of crops, but this acknowledgement was subordinated to the desire of community members to be individual property owners. One way that this ideal manifested itself was through the division of fields into multiple small plots, with each slave or family being responsible for a small area of land in each field. An example of this was a rice farming plantation in Georgetown, South Carolina, located about 60 miles from Goose Creek. Slaves on the plantation of Dr. Alexius M. Forster rejected a Union army order of work and decided upon their own divisions of land and labor. Forster, like many planters during this period, had abandoned his plantation. In an attempt to keep the former slaves working and establish some sort of

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[19] Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina 1860-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 16.
[20] Ibid., 16.

normalcy, General Sherman issued Special Field Orders, No. 15 on January, 16th, 1865. The orders promised each black family in the coastal areas of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida 40 acres of tillable land and the use of Union mules.[21] The order calls for a minimum of three families in order to acquire a plot of land, and only after the approval of an Army inspector. Ammiel J. Willard, the inspector at Forster's Friendfield plantation, saw the disregard for the order and the pattern of land division as a clear claim of ownership over both the land and of the right to control one's own labor.[22] By further subdividing each already divided plot among each family, the Friendfield freedpeople positioned themselves, and the land, in a manner that would make any future labor contracts more advantageous to the community as a whole.

Strengthening family ties and reshaping family life were major priorities for freedpeople. The reestablishment of severed familial bonds was among the first activities undertaken after emancipation. Many former slaves took their newfound freedom as an opportunity to see family at nearby plantations. Fathers often abandoned their "home" plantations and moved to where their wives and children lived. Households would no longer be constituted on the basis of ownership, but rather, in terms of kinship. This seems to be the most glaring and obvious example of the strength of the kinship. Not even the trauma of enslavement could sever these connections.

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[21] *Special Field Orders, No. 15, Headquarters Military Division of the Mississippi*, 16 Jan. 1865. Orders & Circulars, ser. 44, Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, National Archives.

[22] A. J. Willard to George W. Hooker, 7 Nov. 1865, M 869, r 11; U. S. Army, *Official Register*, part 8, 206.

After reconnecting with loved ones, Freedpeople immediately began legitimizing their family ties after emancipation. Once proximity had been established, the clearest way to do this was marriage. Since marriages were not recognized during slavery, freedpeople immediately had weddings whenever possible. Henry Davis, a former slave in Winnsboro, SC, recalled his wedding in the aftermath of the war. "After slavery time, us live on de Turner place nigh onto thirty years and then was de time I go to see Rosa and court and marry her. Her folks b'long to de Lemmons and they had stayed on at de Lemmon's place."[23] Fortune Gibbs married Phyllis Ladson in 1866. [24] It is quite possible that Fortune and Phyllis took advantage of General Order No.14. Issued in 1866 by Assistant Commissioner Robert Scott of the Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, this order outlined the requirements for validating existing marriages, entering into new ones, and conditions for divorces and separations.[25] Fortune was not the only Gibbs brother to be married to a Ladson in the immediate aftermath of the war. Two more of the Gibbs brothers went on to marry Ladson women, with Moses marrying Rachel Ladson and Wetus marrying Elizabeth Ladson.[26] While the basis of their connection is unknown, it is likely that there were some prior dealings between the two families.

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[23] WPA Slave Narrative Project, South Carolina Narratives, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18912/18912-h/18912-h.htm, accessed 1/18/2015.

[24] 1880 Census. Year: 1880; Census Place: Saint James Goose Creek, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: 1223; Family History Film: 1255223; Page: 148D; Enumeration District: 085.

[25] Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865 – 1870 National Archives Publication M869 Roll 44 "Other Records"

[26] Gibbs Family Circle, comp. *Gibbs Family Reunion: Togetherness*, 1953-1983. New York: n.p., 1983.

Only slightly more can be ascertained about the Ladson family than is known about the Gibbses. Peter Ladson, the father of the Ladson girls, was born between 1800 and 1815.The girls' mother, Elizabeth, was born around the same period. Other than the fact that they also lived in Goose Creek after emancipation and that three Ladson women married Gibbs men, their background is as murky as that of the Gibbses. Most likely they lived on the same or neighboring plantations, possibly sharing kinship. Whatever the case, the bond between these two families seems to be quite a strong one. This type of extended family was quite common among slaves, and these ties continued into freedom. The household of Fortune Gibbs is an excellent example. The 1870 U.S. Census reveals a household of Fortune, his wife Phyllis, children Timmy, James, and Rhael. Bess Davis, an unrelated woman, and her son William also shared the household with the Gibbses.[27] Extended and non-nuclear family arrangements were common among both races during this period. Barbara Agresti notes an important distinction between family and household. In some situations it is important to distinguish between primary families, which contained household heads, and nonrelated secondary families or related subfamilies.[28]The Gibbs-Davis household was representative of this phenomenon. As is the case with the Gibbs relationship to the Ladson family, the origin of the relationship with the Davis family is unknown. All of the household members are listed as farm laborers,

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[27] 1870 Census. Year: 1870; Census Place: St James Goose Creek, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: M593_1488; Page: 117B; Image: 239; Family History Library Film: 552987.

[28] Barbara Finlay Agresti, "The First Decades of Freedom: Black Families in a Southern County, 1870 and 1885," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 40, no. 4, “Black Families” (November, 1978): 699, accessed February 15, 2015, http://0-www.jstor.org.library.winthrop.edu/stable/351190.

with the exceptions of James and Rhael, who were both toddlers. Women and children were essential sources of labor for virtually every small farmer, black and white. As semi-subsistence farmers, the difference between having enough and not was usually very thin. An extra set of hands or two could be the deciding factor. This was more necessary for African Americans, who were typically closer to the subsistence level than most whites.

Not all black families agreed with this line of thinking. Many black men used their newfound freedom to keep their wives and children out of the fields, something they had been unable to do under the strains of slavery. This represented a symbolic break from slavery and the much more physically demanding labor that black women had been forced to endure in fields under a less gendered division of labor. Historian Gao Chunchang has theorized that this was due to attempts by blacks to follow trends that were popular in mainstream society.[29] Beyond removing women from the fields and making them responsible for keeping home and child rearing, Chunchang also points to black men taking a more patriarchal physical position in the course of performing fieldwork. This placed them in a facsimile of the central position that had been vacated by the former master, complete with visual mastery over his property and people.[30]

Another important consideration was the importance of household labor and production by women. Their retreat from field labor in no way implies these women

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[29] Gao Chunchang, *African Americans in The Reconstruction Era* (New York: Garland, 2000), 74.
[30] Ibid.

were not working. The day to activities needed to power a household, such as cooking, cleaning, washing and mending clothes, tending chickens or other livestock, making butter and other activities, were as vital as they were time-consuming. Women's non-field labor was as important as field labor to the household. Historian Thavolia Glymph remarks "Even if it could not buy a plow, the work a thriftiness of black women helped put meat on the table and purchase other necessities."[31]

Why Fortune chose not to follow this pattern is unknown, but a few options present themselves as possible. Perhaps the home they occupied actually belonged to Bess Davis, and Fortune and his family were living with her. This would explain why every able-bodied person of working age in the house performed field labor. Perhaps, as mentioned before, the families could not produce enough to allow the women not to work. Perhaps the families decided to pool their resources in order to save money. The labor contracts that emerged in the wake of the war paid different wage rates to laborers, marking them as full, half, and quarter hands. Having extra bodies earning a higher rate of pay must have been an attractive incentive. Maybe the women alternated between field labor and household work in order to maximize production in both areas. Such part-time labor was common among black women, who often split time not only between the field and their own households, but also often performed part-time domestic work in white households.[32] Whatever the case, the Gibbs/Davis household did not seem to copy their white counterparts in the manner observed by

[31] Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 176.
[32] Ibid., 168.

Chunchang. Despite this fact, the organization of Fortune Gibbs household clearly displays a rejection of pre-war housing arrangements that were dictated by planters.

It is likely that the other Gibbs brothers had similar living arrangements in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, though this is not known for certain. The census information available on them, from 1880 and 1900, shows households of farming men and house laboring wives with many children and grandchildren in the homes. How long it took them to reach the ability to not have their wives doing field labor is unknown. Fortune and Phyllis Gibbs would eventually attain the status of land owning farmers as well. Following the war however, most of the Gibbs clan probably lived in some sort of multiple family setting. This may be one reason why all of the brothers were able to become landowners before the turn of the 20th century. By pooling resources, including the labor from their growing families, the Gibbs brothers would have been able to save the capital necessary to each purchase their own homesteads. Historian Steven Hahn notes that this type of resource sharing existed during slavery, with multiple household members performing extra work, hiring themselves out, and selling personal provisions in order to save money.[33] The large household numbers also could have been a means of protection. Lynchings and mob violence were common forms of violence perpetuated against blacks by whites. More prosperous blacks, including those lucky enough to own land, were common targets. Republican Carl Schurz wrote that “Armed bands of white men patrolled the country roads to drive back the Negroes wandering about.” Reports of vicious

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[33] Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 141.

atrocities committed against freedpeople would help usher in the period of Radical Reconstruction, even though violence against blacks would continue.[34]

Freedpeople regarded the ability to control their labor as a major expression of freedom. Appropriating land and reordering family living and working situations were two key aspects of this expression. Another was education. Part of the reason that black men during this period typically insisted that their children remain out of the fields was to attend school. Black men regarded the education of their children as an essential priority; they thus chose that their children attend school instead of laboring in the field. Learning to read write was by no means limited to children however. Former slaves of all ages sought to gain access to the type of formal education that had been denied to them in bondage. Lacking the resources to organize and maintain formal schools, slaves relied on the already established tradition of brush arbors in an attempt to fill the void. Wallace Davis, a former slave from Newberry, SC recalled the transition. "We didn't have schools and couldn't learn to read and write till after freedom come; den some niggers learned at de brush arbors."[35] Brush arbors were the religious meetings held by slaves and freedpeople under arbors constructed in a centralized area, usually a grove of saplings that could help support the structure. This was similar to the white use of Sunday schools to provide basic literacy to their children in the absence of a public system of education. Treasury Department agent Edward Pierce reported on the thirst for education he witnessed among Sea Island freedpeople. "All of proper age, when inquired of, expressed a desire to have their children taught to read and write, and to learn

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[34] Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 5.
[35] *WPA Slave Narrative Project, South Carolina Narratives*. accessed January 18, 2015, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18912/18912-h/18912-h.htm.

themselves. On this point they showed more earnestness than on any other."[36] Formal education usually came in the form of missionary schools and the Freedman's Bureau.

The United States Bureau of Refugees, Freedman, and Abandoned Lands, known more commonly as the Freedmen's Bureau, was established in 1865 to assist former slaves and poor whites in the South.[37] The war destroyed much of the southern economy, and many people, both black and white, were displaced and lacking many basic necessities. The main objective of the Bureau was to help southerners meet these needs and shape the transition from slavery to a more equitable social structure. In many facets of their short-term relief efforts, the Bureau was successful in alleviating the hardships that the war created. The successes of their long-term goals, however, were a mixed bag. Many of the failures of the Freedmen's Bureau would have a profound effect on the direction that southern society pursued after Reconstruction.

A major part of the Freedmen's Bureau early work focused on the administration of abandoned or confiscated property that fell into Union hands during the war. Its primary mission, as its common name implies, was to "provide relief and help freedpeople become self-sufficient." Officials issued rations and clothing, operated hospitals and refugee camps, supervised labor contracts, managed apprenticeship disputes, assisted benevolent societies in the establishment of schools, helped freedpeople in legalizing marriages entered into during slavery, provided transportation to freedpeople looking to relocate or reunite with family, and helped

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[36] Edward L. Pierce to Hon. Salmon P. Chase, 3 Feb. 1862, vol.19, #72a, Port Royal Correspondence, 5th Agency, Records of Civil War Agencies of the Treasury Department.

[37] "African American Records: Freedmen's Bureau," National Archives and Records Administration, Background, accessed January 23, 2015, http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau/.

black soldiers and sailors collect bounty claims, pension, and back pay.[38] The Bureau was organized by state: each Confederate state, border state, and the District of Columbia was a single district. An Assistant Commissioner, who was responsible for setting policy goals, delegating work to subordinates and corresponding with the Washington headquarters, headed each state organization. In South Carolina, this duty fell to Brevet Major General Rufus Saxton.[39] Saxton had previously directed the Port Royal Experiment. He was a radical Republican who would eventually come to be seen as too favorable towards freedpeople. After initially basing his field office in Beaufort, he moved it Charleston, where it remained until Saxton was replaced in 1866. Saxton was followed as Assistant Commissioner by Brevet Major General Robert K. Scott, who held the position until he was elected governor of South Carolina in 1868.[40]

When Saxton assumed his position as Assistant Commissioner, he faced an immediate emergency. There were tens of thousands of freedpeople and whites in dire need. After initially issuing enough supplies to stave off the crisis, including over 300,000 rations, clothing, and medical supplies, Saxton was replaced by Scott, who attempted to drastically reduce the number of rations given out. Wide spread crop failures and shortages in 1866 and 1867 required that Scott give more than he would

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[38] National Archives and Records Administration. Records of the field offices for the state of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872.— Washington, DC : U.S. Congress and NationalArchives and Records Administration, 2005. Accessed January 25, 2015, http://www.archives.gov/research/microfilm/m1910.pdf

[39] John H. Eicher and David J. Eicher, *Civil War High Commands* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 34. A brevet was a warrant that gave a commissioned officer a higher rank title as a reward for gallantry or meritorious conduct. By the end of the Civil War, the honor was somewhat common among senior officers, who were conferred none of the authority, precedence, nor pay of the real or full rank.

[40] Records of the field offices for the state of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872.— Washington, DC : U.S. Congress and NationalArchives and Records Administration, 2005. Accessed January 25, 2015, http://www.archives.gov/research/microfilm/m1910.pdf

have liked in order to prevent large-scale starvation. In 1868, the Bureau adopted a crop lien system. Rations were provided to planters and farmers, who in turn shared those supplies with their laborers. A lien was then placed on the farmer's crops as collateral for the value of the rations. This essentially forced farmers to grow staple crops that generated cash in order to pay off the loans. This was somewhat troublesome for freedpeople, who wanted to their labor to produce for their families and not for the market. The Bureau was also instrumental in persuading black farmers, sometimes with the threat of force, into staple production. These loans helped the situations of planters and laborers, though they were largely unpaid when the program ended in 1870.[41]

Educating freedpeople was also a primary concern of the Bureau. As with the crop lien system, however, the results of the Bureau's efforts were mixed. Reuben Tomlinson was charged with directing the Freedmen's Bureau's South Carolina education division. When he began his position as superintendent in the summer of 1865, there were already nine schools with around 9,000 pupils already up and running. This would increase to 73 schools at its peak in 1868. Declines in funding and waning northern support would lead to the education program being shuttered in 1870.[42]

The area where the Freedmen's Bureau arguably played its largest role in the lives of freedpeople, and possibly suffered its greatest failure, was that of land and labor contracts. The war fundamentally altered the entire social and economic landscape. In an area like Goose Creek, where the entire economy was tied to

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[41] Martin Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865–1872* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 37–48

[42] Ibid., 85-98.

farming, the establishment of a new social order predicated on free labor was essential. General Orders Number 11, issued on August 28, 1865, Saxton pushed his subordinates to seek fair and liberal contracts between planters and freedpeople. This included a share of the crop for laborers. The contracts were not viewed in a positive light by freedpeople, who were expecting to receive shares of their former owner's property. This was particularly true on the Sea Islands and along the coast. Planters, on the other hand, were generally pleased with the idea of wage labor. The Bureau, backed by the federal government, was instrumental in bring both sides into agreements and settling disputes when they arose. Sharecropping represented a compromise freedpeople who wanted outright land ownership and planters who wanted wage labor under prewar gang labor conditions. Sharecropping and the crop lien system worked in tandem. The process was similar to the crop lien system employed by the Freedmen's Bureau. Supplies were forwarded to the tenant by planters or merchants. In return for these supplies, the tenant agreed to grow a staple crop that could be sold for cash. Tenants would receive either a share of the crop or a share of the profits from the crops sale. At harvest, the planter or merchant would deduct the cost of supplies from the tenant's share. At the end of the year, many tenants found themselves indebted to the planter or merchant, forcing them to enter into additional contracts. Other times, merchants and bankers would take entire crops for loans that they had given to planters, leaving sharecroppers with nothing to show for their work. The practice also presented many opportunities for fraud, with planters often finding reasons to deduct from the tenant's share.[43]This cycle was hard, if not impossible, to break once it was begun. Ultimately 8,000 contracts, involving almost

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[43] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*(New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 172.

130,000 freedpeople were signed in 1865 and 1866. In 1867 a model contract was published via a circular. This model included housing, rations, medical care, and at least half of the crop among other things. Despite the model, there was a considerable amount of variety in the actual contracts. They range from brief paragraphs outlining simple agreements to several pages long containing very specific clauses and rules of conduct.

Freedpeople could also work for wages. Families that opted for wages were responsible for providing their own rations. The wage rates for these laborers were between $8 and $12 per month for full hands.[44] A consideration for both wage earners and sharecroppers was whether or not they would be provided with a plot for personal crops. Food shortages in 1866 and 1867 meant that most freedpeople found themselves unable to work for wages and enter agreements that included provisions. Once terms were agreed upon, the Freedmen's Bureau field staff was responsible for making sure contracts were enforced and that freedpeople were treated fairly.

An excellent example of a fairly typical contract was that of E.H. Deas and the freed people of Buck Hall plantation in Berkeley County on March 3, 1866. The term of this contract, which included 65 people, ran through January 1867. It begins with a provision on conduct, including an agreement to "order themselves honestly and civilly, to perform diligently" as well as a prohibition on alcohol. Some contracts also prohibited freedpeople from possessing firearms, though this one did not. The contract next calls for ten hours of labor, including "such tasks as used formerly to have been done." The freedpeople at Buck Hall were advanced supplies and worked at worked at a rate of five dollars per month for full hands and a lesser amount for

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[44] Ibid., 33-50.

others. From this amount deductions would be made for the supplies. The contract also calls deductions of fifty cents for days missed, with the exceptions made only for inclement weather and excused absences. The types of absences which might be excused are not explicitly mentioned. Freedpeople were also given several holidays off, though there was a clause included that calls for a half-day of labor from all of the heads of households on Sundays. The contract also outlined rules for the use of tools and houses on the plantation. Nurses and foremen were to be selected by the freedpeople from among themselves. Each family was allotted a plot upon which to grow personal crops. Pigs were also allowed, though there was a prohibition on horses or cattle, except in cases of special permission. Most of the freedpeople listed on the contract were marked as half or quarter hands. Only eight of the 65 freedpeople are noted as having the $5 salary of a full hand. These were presumably family heads. Interestingly, there were two freedpeople listed as having $10 salaries, despite there being no mention of this salary in the terms of the contract.[45] This contract was approved by the Freedmen's Bureau, though the fairness of such an agreement can certainly be argued. It is possible that the half and quarter hands are listed as such because they are women and children. The ages and sexes of the freedpeople are not listed on the contract. However, beyond the minimal rates paid, the rules around conduct and plantation life read as eerily similar to the pre-emancipation status quo. The phrasing of the contracts' clauses would have been foreign to the majority of the freedpeople, and they were clearly bargaining from a vulnerable position. One of the major critiques of the Freedmen's Bureau was that it

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[45] E.H. Deas and the freedmen and women of Buck Hall Plantation, *Labor Contracts Berkeley County, SC, Jan-May 1866*. NARA Record accessed January 28, 2015 http://www.lowcountryafricana.com/2013/02/04/freedmens-labor-contract-e-h-deas-with-freedmen-buck-hall-plantation-berkeley-sc-1866/#sthash.PQ13zaY9.dpuf

not only was unable to prevent these types of contracts from occurring, but in many cases they assisted in their enforcement.

In contrast to the freedpeople at Buck Hall, a family in Goose Creek signed a much more favorable contract on the heels of the Civil War. Dated July 3rd, 1865, the contract between Dr. Joseph Murray and the freedpeople of Argyle Plantation, calls for supplies, housing, food, and medical assistance provided free of charge. In return for their labor, the freedpeople were given one-third of the crop, a guarantee of private plots and time to work those plots. Dr. Murray also offered his personal assistance with the freedpeople's private gardens on Saturdays. Plenty Murray, one of the freedpeople, was listed as the Power of Attorney for the group of twenty-four laborers, and his signature is shown. This is atypical, as the vast majority of contract signatures contain a simple X marked beside the name of the field hand, if their names are listed at all. Some contracts simply contain the name and signature of the planter and an x from a tenant acting as a representative for the whole plantation. A majority of the Argyle group was listed as full hands, and the crops grown at Argyle included such foodstuffs as ground nuts, sorghum, corn, peas, sweet potatoes, as well as the staple crops of rice and cotton. It seems the literacy of Plenty Murray may have influenced the more favorable terms of the deal. It is also possible that the proximity of the contract to the end of the war was also a factor. Perhaps the smaller number of freedpeople involved played a factor. Whatever the case, Dr. Murray seems to have dealt with Argyle freedpeople on terms that were much closer to the usual desires of freedom.[46]

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[46] Dr. Joseph Murray with freed people, Freedmen's Labor Contracts, Charleston County, SC, Contracts, Records of the Field Offices for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1868, NARA Record Group 105, M1910, Reel 63, Target 12, accessed January 28, 2015 http://www.lowcountryafricana.com/tag/murray/#sthash.ApiINZuQ.dpuf

Unlike other areas where planters eventually returned to their plantations and reclaimed their property, Gosse Creek planters did not return en masse, and the area remained mostly in the hands of small black farmers for close to a century. This probably played a factor in the ability of the Gibbs brothers and others to attain and sustain positions as land owners in the face of immediate postwar challenges, as well as during the more repressive changes that occurred at the end of Reconstruction. South Carolina was the first state to experience the changes that accompanied the restructuring of southern society, and the losses that accompanied the end of Reconstruction there were felt especially hard.

Chapter 3 – Gains and Losses

"One reads the truer deeper facts of Reconstruction with a great despair. It is at once so simple and human, and yet so futile. There is no villain, no idiot, no saint. There are just men; men who crave ease and power, men who know want and hunger, men who have crawled."[1]

-W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America*

The labor contract that E. H. Deas signed with the freedmen of his plantation is representative of the attitude that many southern whites held in regards to blacks' newfound freedom. More than anything else, whites sought a return to the prewar social structure where blacks stayed on the lower rungs of the ladder of power. The black majority, coupled with the presence of Union troops, slowed this return to the status quo in South Carolina, though it could not fully prevent it. Political participation during this period would see blacks come to control the state legislature, and whites resorted to many means, particularly the use of violence, to wrest back control of the state. Some of the battles that ensued were as hard fought and bloody as those of the Civil War. Eventually white control would return, but only after the most memorable period of black political participation in South Carolina until the aftermath of the civil rights movements of the 1960s.

It does not appear that any of the Gibbs brothers held political office during Reconstruction, but many black men their age did. South Carolina had the largest number of blacks in the legislature of any Southern state, and much of this activity was centered on the Charleston region. The large number of blacks in the city and surrounding counties made it easy for black representatives to be elected to office. Historian William Hine used census, tax, and military records to identify 234

[1] W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America; An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 650.

black men who were active in politics in Charleston between 1865 and 1875. This includes actual officeholders as well as men who were influential in Republican circles, and even some Democrats.[2] These men came from all backgrounds. Many were literate, though an almost equal number were not. They included craftsmen, unskilled laborers, and a few professionals, though it seems many black businessmen, particularly the wealthier ones, shied away from politics in the postwar period. There were developing political dynasties, embodied in families such as the McKinlays and Walls.[3] There were even more black elected officials at the state and federal levels for South Carolina. Political rallies were common throughout the Reconstruction era, as the climate was highly charged. Even those men not directly involved in politics were surely aware of political developments in this highly contentious period. However, there were more important concerns for those in St. James Goose Creek during this time.

Starvation, crime, rape, and disease, particularly smallpox, were common features of the Goose Creek parish. Farm production in the area dropped to a fraction of its previous peak. There was limited infrastructure. Tools, equipment, and livestock had been stolen or destroyed during and in the immediate aftermath of the war. Distressed creditors began calling in loans and demanding repayment of mortgages. Due to the lack of capital and other businesses in the area, seed and supplies to even begin the cultivation cycle generally had to come from merchants. These factors combined to force many of the plantation owners in the area to sell off pieces of their property in order to be able to farm the remaining land. Ironically,

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[2] William C. Hine, "Black Politicians in Reconstruction Charleston, South Carolina: A Collective Study," *Journal of Southern History* 49, no. 4 (November, 1983): 556-557, accessed January 31, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2208676?ref=no-x-route:0c710a13f16091ed9339ffc67af26dc5.
[3] Ibid., 565.

these same factors probably made it significantly easier for blacks to eventually acquire land. The 1870 agricultural census for Saint James Goose Creek shows almost double the number of property owners as there were in 1850.[4] Many of the areas plantations were sub-divided this way, helping to speed the coming of the emerging sharecropping system.

Relations between blacks and whites in this period were strained, to say the least. Whites believed that liberated blacks would begin a race war or lead the state into anarchy. Many whites refused to acknowledge the freedom of blacks and the legitimacy of the government. Some planters refused to offer the types of contracts advocated by the Freedmen's Bureau, and many of those farms went uncultivated. This type of openly rebellious behavior was fairly common in areas that held such large black majorities. As blacks sought to stake their claims to citizenship, whites immediately implemented several preventative measures.[5]

After the assassination of President Lincoln in April 1865, and the assumption of office by Andrew Johnson, the process of restoring governments to the states of the Confederacy began. Taking advantage of the fact that Congress did not reconvene until December, Johnson started what would be known as Presidential Reconstruction. During the summer and fall of 1865, new southern governments were appointed, elected solely by southern whites. Johnson also ordered lands occupied by freedpeople to be returned to their previous owners. The nation's war weariness and racism led to initial support for these policies. Despite Union victory in the war, many people still believed in an idea of federalism that restricted federal intervention in

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[4] South Carolina. Saint James Goose Creek, Charleston. 1870 U.S. Census, agricultural schedule, Saint James Goose Creek.

[5] Bruce E. Baker and Brian Kelly, *After Slavery: Race, Labor, and Citizenship in the Reconstruction South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013).

local affairs.[6] Johnson appointed Benjamin Franklin Perry as provisional governor to South Carolina in June 1865.[7] The government that initially followed was stocked with former Confederate leaders, who sought to codify their vision of a new society that looked very much like the old one. Ironically, Johnson considered himself a representative of poor white farmers and gained his position due to his opposition of the southern planter aristocracy. Perry's appointment as Governor was due to him holding similar views as Johnson.

By December 1865, laws known as the Black Codes were created to regulate all aspects of freedmen life. There were regulations on the types of labor contracts that could be entered into, restrictions on travel and gathering, vagrancy laws, and prohibitions on the types of employment that blacks were able to possess. These codes were meant to provide whites with a cheap labor pool and keep blacks from attaining land or wealth. The labor contract of E. H. Deas very closely resembles the provisions of the South Carolina Black Code, down to the deduction of wages for lost time. Hands could be summarily dismissed, while planters were held to almost no obligation at all. A striking feature of the contract and the black code was the terminology used. Those involved were not referred to as employer and employee, but as master and servant. "All persons of color who make contracts for service or labor, shall be known as servants, and those with whom they contract, shall be known as masters."[8] This was certainly done on purpose, with the goal of retaining as much

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[6] Eric Foner and Joshua Brown, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 109.
[7] Presidential Proclamation No. 46, 30 June 1865, 13 Stat. 769, 770
[8] *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina Passed at the Sessions of 1864-65* (Columbia: 1865), 291-304.

of the old way as possible.[9] The Freedmen's Bureau, which had been a point of particular pain for South Carolina whites, often overruled these laws, but the gauntlet had already been thrown.

South Carolina's Black Codes were considered, along with Mississippi's, to be among the most restrictive and severe in the south. Blacks were allowed to rent land, but forced to pay a tax for holding any occupation other than farmer or servant. This effectively eliminated the black skilled worker and artisan, a particular blow to the significant population of black crafts and tradesmen in Charleston.[10] The rights that whites were willing to concede to blacks were described by historian Stetson Kennedy as being "few and far between." These rights included the rights of movement, assembly, marriage, property ownership, school attendance, and the right to sue and be sued. All of these newfound rights came with massive stipulations and were only applicable under certain circumstances. At the same time, blacks were forbidden from bearing arms, attending school with whites, and sitting on juries or testifying in trials involving whites.[11] Steven Hahn refers to this interpretation of emancipation, which manifested itself under the regime of Presidential Reconstruction, as the "most limited", considering that "no state gave even fleeting consideration to any form of black sufferage."[12]

Blacks initially responded to the passage of the Black Codes with pleas for fairness and justice. A petition to the state convention written and signed by over one hundred black delegates at a Charleston convention tells the story. "But we do ask

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[9] Stetson Kennedy, *After Appomattox: How the South Won the War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 39-41.
[10] Foner, *Reconstruction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 199.
[11] Kennedy, *After Appomattox* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 32.
[12] Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 158.

that if the ignorant white man is allowed to vote, that the ignorant colored man shall be allowed to vote also. We would be unmanly and uncandid did we not avow our intense joy at the course of events, which struck from our limbs the chains of slavery, but we would be equally unmanly and uncandid did we not express our sorrow that freedom to us and our race is accompanied by the ruin of thousands of those for whom, notwithstanding the bitterness of the past, and of the present, we cherish feelings of respect and affection."[13]

After this first petition was ignored (notes written on the back of the petition indicate it was never read aloud during the convention)[14], the same group of black delegates submitted another petition repeating their pleas. This group of men included many of the active black Charleston politicians examined in William Hine's study. The second petition, much like the first, reads more as a plea instead of a demand: "We ask that those laws that have been enacted that apply to us on account of Color, be repealed. We do not presume to dictate, but we appeal to your own Sense of justice and generosity, Why should we suffer this, is it because of the color an All Wise Creator has given us? Is it possible that the only reason for enacting such stringent laws for us is because our color is of a darker hue?"[15] Relief would not come from the state convention, but would eventually manifest in the form of the Reconstruction Acts.[16]

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[13] MMS in Slavery file No. 3, "Petitions 1865," in library of S. C. Historical Commission, Memorial Building, Columbia, S. C.

[14] Herbert Aptheker, "South Carolina Negro Conventions, 1865," *Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 1 (January, 1946): 96, accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2714969?ref=search-gateway:6409066abf64a576de51df779694e116.

[15] "Petitions 1865."

[16] Herbert Aptheker, "South Carolina Poll Tax, 1737-1895," *Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 2 (April, 1946), accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2714766?ref=search-gateway:98ee9d2fc138db6a6d41121fd6bed26e.

Pleas would soon give way to demands. Political organization among freedpeople was by no means limited to state level politics. In fact, local organizing was much more common. Local groups met to deal with specific local concerns, especially those surrounding labor. According to historian Martin Abbott, "Beginning in 1865 and lasting throughout the Reconstruction years, they held meetings, large and small, to discuss their plight and to suggest means for improving it."[17] Initially the organizing did not have much of an effect on the wages or crop shares that freedmen received. After successive years of receiving minimal shares and wages, black laborers began organizing on a large scale in many areas. According to Freedmen's Bureau reports from several areas, black laborers banded together and set minimum amounts that they were willing to work for and attacking those who agreed to work for less than that amount.[18] This type of organizing displayed similarities to the emerging labor unions of the North. Ironically, it was Northern business interests that played a part in the lack of land distribution among freedmen, in part because they saw the freedmen as a potential cheap labor source to help them combat unions.[19] However, very few, if any, concessions were typically won by either side in this struggle. A compromise between planters who desperately needed labor but wanted to pay wages and the freedpeople who desperately wanted land but also needed basic supplies would emerge in the form of sharecropping. Many freedpeople accepted sharecropping as a better alternative to wage labor. Others would take their chances by moving to areas where employment and ownership prospects were better.

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[17] Martin Abbott, "Freedom's Cry: Negroes and Their Meetings in South Carolina, 1865-1869," *Phylon Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (September , 1959): 267, accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/273053?ref=search-gateway:fca36cde6fa93af9c51515e39fff5a88.

[18] W. H. Holton to R. K. Scott, January 30, 1868.

[19] Robert Cruden, *The Negro in Reconstruction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 36.

Migration, one of the primary expressions of freedom for newly freed slaves, remained a primary tool at the disposal of freedmen in the face of an increasing hostile society. Once emancipated, blacks began moving as never before. Beyond simply reuniting with loved ones, black families often left the plantations that they once called home in search of greener pastures. Moving could occur locally, by simply leaving their former plantation and seeking work in the same local area. "Blacks dressed as they pleased and left plantations when they desired."[20] The vagrancy provisions of the Black Codes were designed to prevent exactly this type of unrestricted local movement. Some freedmen, unable to bear to oppressive new measures meant to strip their newfound freedom, moved further. Emigration outside of the country proved unpopular, though over a thousand freedmen from Georgia and South Carolina did resettle in Liberia through efforts from the American Colonization Society.[21] Those who left South Carolina instead opted to go towards other states. "...farm hands were leaving the middle and upper districts of the state bound for Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Florida, with Florida as the favorite."[22] These states were chosen because of the availability of recently opened federal lands and the promise of higher wages. It has been estimated that upwards of 37,000 freedmen left South Carolina for other states by 1867.[23] Though local movement by the Gibbs was likely, there is no indication that any of the brothers or their children

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[20] Foner, Eric. "Rights and the Constitution in Black Life during the Civil War and Reconstruction." *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 3, (December, 1987): 863-83. Accessed February 01, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/1902157?ref=no-x-route:80c145c53d4f72e5db211ad894718588.

[21] Ibid., 876.

[22] R. H. Woody, "The Labor and Immigration Problem of South Carolina during Reconstruction," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 18, no. 2 (September, 1931): 198, accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/1893380?ref=search-gateway:690f356f4b4f40299afe27be84817e27.

[23] Martin Abbott, "Freedom's Cry: Negroes and Their Meetings in South Carolina, 1865-1869," *Phylon* 20, no. 3 (September, 1959): 269, accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/273053?ref=search-gateway:fca36cde6fa93af9c51515e39fff5a88.

made in significant migration during the Reconstruction period. Migration by family members would occur later, much of it during the Great Migration of the 20th Century.

For those freedmen like the Gibbs who chose to stay in the state after the establishment of the black codes, violence became a regular part of their everyday existence. Political participation, labor organizing and unrestricted migration were among the cardinal sins that freedmen could commit in the eyes of many whites. Whites employed violence as a means of ensuring compliance and instilling a sense of inferiority as well as one of fear. Freedmen's Bureau records contain multiple instances of freedmen being attacked by whites for the smallest of provocations, and many times lacking even that. There are examples of blacks being attacked or killed for refusing to work, not displaying deference to whites, and for their political affiliations. Incidents, when reported, usually drew no response from local authorities. An account from 1866 is telling of this behavior:

> Ephraim McCallum, freedman, was murdered in Bennettsville, Marlsbourough Dist., on Monday 2nd December /66 by James McCall, Thomas Cottingham, Dr. Patterson, Thomas M. Kal, Thomas Welsh and other white citizens. The civil authorities are reported as not having taken any action in the matter.

Many of the reports, particularly towards the end of the records period in 1868, list the perpetrators of the crime as simply KKK, denoting the terrorist group that would be instrumental in the return of white rule to South Carolina.

Formed in 1865 in Pulaski, Tennessee by six former Confederate soldiers, the original iteration of the Ku Klux Klan was begun under somewhat mysterious circumstances. While disagreement exists over the true purpose of the groups' founders, it is likely they were not as malicious as they would become. The

genesis of one of the most notorious terror groups in history can probably be attributed to small town boredom. The secrecy of the group was intended to heighten the men's fun. In a bit of irony, the purposely silly titles such as Grand Cyclops and Ghoul were devised to avoid any military or political implications.[24] The reputation of the group spread quickly; tales of their masked nighttime horse rides and pranks perpetrated against blacks, Unionists, and northerners encouraged membership among whites and instilled fear in freedmen. Pranks would soon give way to violence. Aided by the same defiant atmosphere that led to the passage of the Black Codes, Klan activity both intensified and spread throughout the South in the late 1860s. Mom Hagar, a former slave from Murrells Inlet, South Carolina recalled avoiding the Klan's night rides during this period. "Have to run way, you go church. Going to come in to ketch you or do any mischievous thing—come carry you place they going beat you—in suit of white."[25] Isaiah Butler, a former slave from Hampton County, South Carolina, remembered the night time patrols that were reminiscent of what occurred under slavery. "De Ku Klan had "patrol" all about in de bushes by de side of de road at night. And when dey caught you dey'd whip you almost to death! Dey'd horsewhip you. Dey didn't run away nowhere 'cause dey knowed dey couldn't."[26] Julie Saville notes that freedmen who either refused labor contracts or owned land were especially targeted for acts of violence and intimidation.[27]

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[24] The Klanwatch Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, comp., *Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence*, 6th ed. (Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011), 9, accessed February 4, 2015, http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/Ku-Klux-Klan-A-History-of-Racism.pdf.
[25] WPA Slave Narrative Project, South Carolina Narratives, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, accessed January 18, 2015, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18912/18912-h/18912-h.htm.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction*, 139, 188-190.

While much of the violence perpetrated against blacks during this period was attributed to the Klan, most violence against freedpeople was committed by whites with no ties to the group. In South Carolina, this included vigilante groups such as the Red Shirts. Initially many of the red shirt groups were rifle clubs and militias that sprung up in the aftermath of the Civil War. Dating back to the Revolutionary War, these clubs and militias served an important social purpose, including bringing people together, reaffirming community values, and reinforcing group identities.[28] Historians such as Eric Foner have argued that these South Carolina groups adopted what was known as the Mississippi Plan to regain control of state politics through violence and intimidation, though this recapturing of power did not occur until the election of 1876.The Mississippi Plan included large scale violence and black voter suppression to regain control of the legislature and governor's office. Originally devised by the Democratic Party in Mississippi, the tactics were important in South Carolina, which like Mississippi, contained a population with a large black majority.[29] State militias were not recognized until 1869, though the lack of recognition should not be viewed as a lack of organization. The prohibition on militias led to the groups calling themselves rifle clubs or survivor's groups. The latter term was applied to groups that were heavily stocked with Confederate veterans. The groups would become extremely important to the rise of men like Ben Tillman and Wade Hampton. Their nickname was derived from the red shirts that members wore to political rallies. A number of these men were former slaveholders, like Ben Tillman, Wade Hampton, and their families. According to

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[28] Andrew Abeyounis, "Before They Were Red Shirts: The Rifle Clubs of Columbia, South Carolina" (Master's thesis, University of South Carolina, 2014), 1, Accessed February 16, 2015. http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/2786.
[29] Foner, *Reconstruction,* 558-563.

historian Stephen Kantrowitz, men like Tillman, accustomed to unquestioned mastery and control, could not fathom a world where their laborers, free or not, acted towards white men with insolence and lacked in deference. White elites such as Tillman used longstanding racial animosity and the very limited gains achieved by freedpeople during prohibition to build a coalition of whites that was ultimately able to regain control of the state, though this control was still limited to white elites. Tillman in particular was successful at this because of the way that he was able to play on the insecurities of poor whites. Tillman positioned himself as a champion of white rights and the common man, even though he came from and represented South Carolina's former slaveholding elites. Tillman and the Red Shirts were every bit as organized as the Klan, if not more so, but they held an advantage over that group in that where the Klan resorted to violence and secrecy to achieve its goals, more mainstream groups like the Red Shirts employed a more brazen and open form of violence that was coupled with large scale political organizing to achieve their goals. [30]

The violence of the Klan and other white vigilantes were extreme manifestations of the desire to control blacks. Several other means of intimidation and control occurred. Historian Leon Litwack speaks in detail about the adjustments and accommodations that blacks, particularly children and young adults, came to terms with during this period. "Race consciousness came early. The initial lessons in race relations invariably revolved around the difficulty of effecting any changes and the permanency of the position of inferiority assigned blacks."[31] These lessons could range from insults to segregation in public areas to violence. Litwack refers to these

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[30] Stephen David Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman & the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 43.
[31] Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 17.

episodes as baptisms. This was something the first generation of Gibbses born into freedom dealt with directly. From the 1870s through the turn of the century, the Gibbs family increased by leaps and bounds. A Gibbs child was born among one of the families almost yearly from the 1870s through the 1890s. Fortune and Wetus Gibbs would each father fifteen children; Moses was the father of thirteen, and Tinney the father of five. One the difficulties that the brothers and their spouses definitely faced was explaining the ways of white people to their children. Many parents, and in turn their children, expressed the sense of hopelessness that accompanied the repeated reminders of racial status. A Mississippi father gave his son a representative answer when asked. "Well, son, that's just the way it is. I don't know what we can do about it. There ain't nothin' we can do about it. Because if we do anything about it, they kill you."[32] Despite these necessary reckonings, black parents also instilled a sense of pride about their family and heritage, even if that pride was forced to be tempered around whites. Pride and a sense of self was definitely a trait the Gibbs brothers passed to their families.

Episodes of violence and degradation were all too common and troubling for black men of the era. The situation for black women of the period was even more complicated. Discussions of freedom, landownership, and political involvement did not apply to black women, as they did not apply to any women of the day. Northern ideals of patriarchy and female domesticity combined with Southern ones to shape definitions of manhood, so long denied to black men under the bondage of slavery. This extended to the Freedmen's Bureau, which saw free labor and control of family

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[32]Quoted in Ibid., 24.

as almost synonymous.[33] This attitude is exemplified by the orders outlining marriages issued by Freedmen's Bureau Assistant Commissioner Saxton discussed in the previous chapter. The penalties for failing to provide for one's wife and children point to the emphasis that was placed on male headed households. In return, women were expected to maintain homes, rear children, and defer to their husbands. According to historian Mary Farmer-Kaiser, emancipation in many ways simply changed the type of subordination required of freedwomen, even prior to the end of Reconstruction. "Emancipation and lawful marriage had promised much to African American women. But the protections of marriage and familial relations, according to Bureau men, were dependent upon former slave women devoting themselves with 'noblest enthusiasm' and becoming 'true women'." The ideal black family, at least according to the Bureau, was one with a father in the field, a mother in the home, and a child at school.[34] No consideration was given as to whether or not the woman wanted to be at home.

Women played a valuable and primary role in a semi-subsistence household, even if there labor was harder to accurately monetize. "Women's responsibilities included the home manufacturing of clothing, provisioning of goods to market, cooking, cultivating small gardens for supplemental food, and child rearing."[35] The necessity of this type of work alongside field labor was a factor for the withdrawal of women from the field, but it was not the only one. Historian Gerald Jaynes suggests that differing wage amounts for women influenced this decision as well. Jaynes sees

[33] Mary Farmer-Kaiser, *Freedwomen and the Freedmen's Bureau: Race, Gender, and Public Policy in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 28.
[34] Ibid., 30.
[35] Ryan Poe, "The Laboring Family through Rebellion and Reconstruction," *Ozark Historical Review* XXXIX (Spring, 2010): 21, accessed February 7, 2015, http://history.uark.edu/OHR20102.pdf.

the retreat from the field, where women were typically paid as half or quarter hands, as a rational movement to an area where their labor could produce more for the family.[36] For the Gibbs family, this may not have been an available option. Leslie Schwalm, in a study of black women on Low Country rice plantations, notes that most women were unable to withdraw from field work and remained in a fairly stable role that experienced little change from slavery to freedom.[37] The Gibbs-Davis household seems typical of this in this regard, with both adult women listed as laborers on the 1870 Census.

The line of thinking that espoused defined roles for men and women may have influenced the Gibbs men and Ladson women into taking vows when they did. It also raises questions about the options available to non-married women, particularly single mothers. Without a man in the home, these women would be expected to labor to support themselves and their families. Many planters were already upset that so many freedwomen were not working in the field. The vagrancy laws that applied to black men were often used to induce black women to work. Often, single mothers were forced to accept whatever type of work was available to keep from being considered vagrants or to stave off their children becoming victims of the apprenticeship system. Coupled with the low wages black women earned, in the field and otherwise, many female-headed households were destitute.[38] "Female labor commands very low wages," explained Freedmen's Bureau agent Samuel Armstrong, "their sphere here is

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[36] Gerald David. Jaynes, *Branches without Roots: Genesis of the Black Working Class in the American South, 1862-1882* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 228-232.
[37] Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), ch. 6-7.
[38] George Blackburn, "The Mother - Headed Family among Free Negroes in Charleston, South Carolina, 1850-1860," *Phylon (1960-)* 42, no. 1 (March, 1981), accessed July 17, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/274881?ref=search-gateway:3dbfc9051005d8139e7099ee4375b2ee.

one that presents no cheerful phase. No opportunities for improvement."[39] This was particularly true of households with multiple small children. Some women did receive assistance from the Freedmen's Bureau in these types of situations, but the determination usually came down to how a freedwoman's moral standing was judged. Mary Farmer-Kaiser calls this her perceived "worthiness" a combination of condition, reputation, and character.[40] A similar criterion was used to judge cases of perceived vagrancy. Most of the cases of vagrancy were against women who fought or caused trouble, childless women who refused work, and women accused of prostitution, but vagrancy laws also acted as a mechanism to keep wives from leaving their husbands.[41] Without some means of supporting themselves, married women of both races were essentially bound to their spouses. It is quite possible the vagrancy laws of the period influenced the household coupling of Bess Davis and her son with Fortune Gibbs and his family. Some black women rejected the idea that their husbands legitimately led their labor. The struggle for control of black women's labor was indeed a multifaceted one, with several competing factors fighting for control of the women's labor. On the one hand, the Freedmen's Bureau wanted to encourage work among the freedpeople to establish self-sufficiency. On the other, black men wanted to express their newfound control over their families. Southern white society wanted their previous labor force back under as close to previous terms as possible. And caught in the middle of this were black women, looking for opportunities to define freedom for themselves.

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[39] S. C. Armstrong to Orlando Brown, 27 May 1867, letters sent, reel 48, BRFAL (M752)
[40] Farmer-Kaiser, *Freedwomen and the Freedmen's Bureau*, 88.
[41] Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 65.

Ironically, it was the white ideals of womanhood that led freedwomen to other occupations besides fieldwork. For white women, working outside of the home was socially unacceptable and unladylike, at least for women of higher social standing. Ideas of womanhood and what that actually entailed were influenced by what was known as the cult of domesticity or the cult of true womanhood. Followers of this ideal adopted a value system that included new ideals of femininity and a woman's place within the home and her responsibilities with regards to her family. The system had four basic virtues. Women were to be pious, pure, domesticated, and submissive.[42] According to Catherine Lavender, this cult emerged "as family lost its function as economic unit. Many of the links between family and community closed off as work left home. Emergence of market economy and the devaluation of women's work contribute to this change."[43] The same factors affected freedwomen, but in a much different sense. New definitions of womanhood only applied to middle- and upper-class women, however, it was only through the efforts of lower class women laboring in middle- and upper-class homes that these ideals were able to be realized. Litwack discusses how white perceptions of blacks and expectations of a return to the prewar status quo influenced white attitudes towards blacks in terms of labor. Numerous examples of this have been demonstrated in the previous chapters with regard to field labor. The same was true of white ideals of domestic labor and blacks were the key to fulfilling these roles. Among other things, the war drastically changed the realities of life for white women. Victorian notions of womanhood were

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[42] Lisa A. Keister and Darby E. Southgate, *Inequality: A Contemporary Approach to Race, Class, and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 228-230.

[43] Catherine J. Lavender, ""Notes on The Cult of Domesticity and True Womanhood," *Prepared for Students in HST 386: Women in the City, Department of History, The College of Staten Island/CUNY*, (1998), 1, accessed February 8, 2015, https://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/history/files/lavender/386/truewoman.pdf.

upset along with the social and economic order by the conflict. "My wife says she would not have felt so bad about the results of the war if it had only left her her negro servants."[44] Upper-class white women were often forced to undertake the types of activities that would be off limits to them under normal circumstances. Black women worked as cooks, maids, and laundresses prior to the war, and their former mistresses sought a reestablishment of the older system.[45] Freedwomen had mixed feelings about this. For those fortunate enough to avoid field labor, work as a servant could provide an alternative source of income. Indeed, Rebecca Sharpless notes that work in white kitchens and as maids would become the primary source of employment for black women until the 1970s.[46] While the first generation of Gibbs women seem to have avoided this type of labor, at least outside the home, subsequent generations of Gibbs women would find this type of employment as a viable alternative to farm life in the Low Country.

One area where the Freedmen’s Bureau did play a significant role in the lives of some freedwomen was in terms of migration out of the South to find work in other areas of the country. Female employment agents such as Josephine Griffin and Sojourner Truth helped facilitate the movement of between five and seven thousand freedpeople, mainly women and children, to the north. Once there, a network of "agencies and personal connections" aided women in finding employment and establishing themselves in their new homes.[47] The Freedmen's Bureau approved and

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[44] Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 118.
[45] Marli Frances Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
[46] Rebecca Sharpless, *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), xi.
[47] Carol Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction: The Freedmen's Aid Movement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 117.

aided this effort, though their support varied by location and time. The more freedpeople employed in the North, the fewer there would be in need in the South. More importantly, the agency would appear to be actively moving freedpeople toward self-sufficiency instead of simply providing them with charity. For all the northerner's sentiments and feelings of moral superiority over southerners in terms of racial relations, the reality is that the increased presence of blacks was not very well received. Waity Harris, an employment agent, experienced difficulty when she transported five girls to New York State. She reported a lukewarm response from some residents "in my work; but there was another class, who did not seem to feel very well pleased at the idea of these people coming among them and one of the number took upon himself to make some demonstrations."[48] Concerns about increased employment competition and black dependency on aid were the source of such attitudes. The next chapter will examine these attitudes towards northern migration by southern blacks and their persistence until well after the turn of the 20th century.

In response to President Andrew Johnson's leniency towards ex Confederates and reports of violence being perpetrated against southern blacks, Congress stepped in. Johnson's efforts were much in the same vein as the Abraham Lincoln, a Moderate Republican who sought the restoration of the Union above all. Lincoln's reconstruction plan was also seen as too lenient by Radicals, who were initially pleased with Johnson's assumption of power.[49] Zachariah Chandler, a Republican Senator from Michigan said that Johnson "is as radical as I am and fully up to the

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[48] Waity Harris to Samuel Austin, September 11, 1866, Records of the Rhode Island Association for Freedmen, RIHS.
[49] Eric C. Sands, *American Public Philosophy and the Mystery of Lincolnism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 67.

mark. If he has good men around him, there will be no danger in the future."[50] Whether it was due to a lack of good men around him or a misjudging of character by Chandler, Johnson proved to be no Radical. Johnson's reconstruction plan resembled Lincoln's in that priority was given to the "restoration" of the South rather than its reconstruction.[51] This varied significantly from the Radical vision. Historian Eric Sands says that while a large part of this vision included equality for former slaves, it was about much more than that. Radicals saw Reconstruction as an opportunity to address women's rights, build greater equity between capital and labor, and create their "perfect society."[52]The first thing Congress did was extend the Freedmen's Bureau.[53] Johnson immediately vetoed this action and an override attempt failed. In response, Congress passed a Civil Rights Act. This act was used to interpret the Thirteenth Amendment as abolishing slavery, guaranteeing free institutions, conferring citizenship, and providing for equal rights and protection without regard to race or color.[54] The back and forth between Johnson and Congress would culminate with the passage of the Reconstruction Acts. Included among these acts were provisions to register qualified voters as well as supervise elections and state constitutional conventions. Military governments were installed to oversee elections and ensure protection for blacks. States were required to draft new state constitutions

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[50] Quoted in Stampp, *Era of Reconstruction*, 52.
[51] Sands, *American Public Philosophy and the Mystery of Lincolnism,*67.
[52] Ibid., 76.
[53] Stetson Kennedy, *After Appomattox: How the South Won the War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 53.
[54] Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina during Reconstruction, 1861-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

which had to be approved by Congress, as well as ratify the Fourteenth Amendment and ensure voting rights for black men. These calls prompted a defiant response from white southerners, which in turn led to increasingly harsher legislation from an increasingly radicalized Congress. Along with the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the Radical Republican controlled Congress would also pass the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, The Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871, and a second Civil Rights Act in 1875. Significant gains were made by blacks during this period in many areas of life; however, the North's enthusiasm for ensuring equality for blacks was waning.

The assistance of Radical Republicans would prove important, even if ultimately short-lived. The counterrevolution, led by men like Tillman and Hampton, eventually undermined almost all of the gains made by freedpeople. Well organized violence and political maneuvering were employed by white Democrats to regain control of both the government and the labor force.[55] By 1876 the disenfranchisement of blacks was nearly complete. Wade Hampton's election to the position of governor that year marked the beginning of the end of a bloody violent period that may have seen more actual battles in the state than the Civil War.

With all of the factors of the reemerging social order seemingly pointed against the Gibbs brothers and other black freedmen in the rural area near Charleston, how were the Gibbs brothers able to become landowning farmers instead of sharecropping tenants? One factor may have been the ability to enter into a favorable

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[55] Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman & the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, 53.

contract that paid above average wages or crop shares. E. A. Kozlay, a Freedmen's Bureau subdistrict commander in neighboring Orangeburg County, noted a variety in the manner of labor contracts drawn up between 1865 and 1868. The majority of the contracts were for fractional shares of crop, due to the laborer post-harvest. However, there also existed contracts that called for a combination of crops and wages, and others still that called for regular cash payments. According to historian Julie Saville, the inland rice and cotton growing areas were of vital commercial importance. Purchases, lease agreements and loans made it possible for owners to offer cash for work.[56] St. James Goose Creek, home of the Gibbs family, is firmly located in this area. The parish was long removed from its expansive antebellum plantations, mired in a significant economic slump, and full of debt laden planters. It would have been ripe for the picking of investors looking for cheap land to invest in. These types of opportunities occurred for blacks in other areas as well. Historian Adrienne Petty reported a similar situation in the lower Cape Fear region of North Carolina, where a decline in turpentine production led to the availability of land for both black and white farmers.[57] A large household of wage earners would have been optimal for escaping the trap of life as a tenant farmer. This would help further explain the household coupling of Fortune Gibbs' family with Bess Davis and her son William, as well as later Gibbs households including multiple generations and more importantly, multiple adult wage earners. Whatever the specifics of the matter, the

[56] Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction*, 111-112.
[57] Debra Ann Reid and Evan P. Bennett, eds., *Beyond Forty Acres and a Mule: African American Landowning Families since Reconstruction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 25.

Gibbs were able to collectively defy the odds that said black farmers in the south could not become landowners. Historian Robert Cruden sums up this sentiment perfectly: "Although the proportion of black men who were able to buy and keep land was small, it is significant. It is an indication that in the face of great difficulties, some Negroes were able to cope successfully with the problems of living in a society in which race was to the swift and the battle to the strong. By their very being they helped disprove the claim that black men could not survive in a competitive society."[58] The Gibbs brothers do indeed fit this description. By 1903, Moses and Fortune Gibbs were able to invest along with in the purchase of 120 acres of land known as the Wilbur Tract in the Goose Creek area, about three miles from Summerville, South Carolina. The seller is listed simply as Mrs. Wharton. The plat shows Fortune and Moses as the owners of individual pieces of land which contained their separate homes and some crop space. There was also a shared field which adjoined the individual properties and was probably worked by both households. Another field lay across a small stream that passed through the property to the north of the brothers' holdings. To the south lay properties owned by R. Sinkler and Mary McNeil. [59] The Sinkler family is another that plays a prominent role in the Gibbs story. R Sinkler is most likely Robert Sinkler. His mother, Julia Sinkler went from a widowed farmhand 1880 to a self-employed businesswoman who headed up a very unique household twenty years later. By 1900, Julia was a dressmaker that employed

[58] Robert Cruden, *The Negro in Reconstruction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 45.
[59] Plat of 120 acres of land situated about three miles from Summerville, S.C., Saint James Goose Creek known as the Wilbur Tract and surveyed by Simons-Mayrant Co. July 15, 1903, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

her daughter May and daughter-in-law Jennie as assistants. Also in the house were sons Robert, William, and David. Robert was a carpenter, William was a school teacher, and David was a bellman at a hotel in Charleston. There was farm work undertaken in this household, but not by any member of the immediate family. Agricultural responsibilities in the household fell to Charles White, a teenager, and Stephen Brickler, a middle aged man, who were both employed by Julia.[60] If landowning made the Gibbs family part of a very small minority, having employees that were responsible for field labor made the Sinklers part of an even smaller one. A black female headed household that employed non-familial labor was even more anathema to societal norms. Julia would typically have been the one laboring for someone, not vice versa. Eventually the Sinklers would marry into the Gibbs family and play a significant role in the establishment of a family branch outside of South Carolina in New York City. These neighbors to the Gibbses seem to offer evidence that success for black families in Gosse Creek was not abnormal.

The initial purchase of land by Moses and Fortune was not the only purchase made during this period. Noah Gibbs was the sole owner of 32.35 acres of land by 1906, in another purchase from the Wharton family.[61] By this time over three decades had passed since the end of the Reconstruction. Nevertheless, it seems that the combination of familial cooperation and a fortuitous location aided the brothers and other families in the immediate vicinity in achieving a goal that very few southern

[60] 1900 Census. Year: 1900; Census Place: Dorchester, Dorchester, South Carolina; Roll: 1526;Enumeration District: 0068; FHL Microfilm: 1241526

[61] Plat of 25 Acres of Land in Berkeley County, S.C., Surveyed by Simons-Mayrant Co. January 2, 1906. South Carolina Department of Archives and History

blacks to attain. There were very few planters remaining in Goose Creek by the turn of the century. Combined with a favorable contract, a large household labor force, and cooperation among neighboring farmers, these ingredients provided the perfect conditions for the Gibbses and other black families to become landowners. This would not occur until well beyond the end of Reconstruction however.

Chapter 4 – Making the Best of It

"It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities."[1]

-Booker T Washington, in his 1895 Atlanta Compromise Speech.

Given before a primarily white audience during the Cotton States and International Exposition, Booker T Washington's speech was meant to allay white fears regarding "uppity" blacks as well show the racial progress that the South had made since the end of Reconstruction. Washington urged blacks as well as whites to have patience in the face of increasing agitation for equality. More importantly, Washington is telling blacks that in order to achieve equality, they must start "at the bottom of life" and prove their worth economically. "No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem."[2] Whites welcomed this sentiment, weary of black educational attainment and competition in the classroom. Washington's words, contentious as they may seem, highlight an important dynamic in black America at this time. Despite the many legal, economic, and social hurdles that emerged between the rise of the Redeemer governments and the turn of the century, there were indeed areas of opportunity that emerged for blacks.[3]

Many African Americans pursued careers in areas that emerged, somewhat ironically, because of segregation. This included fields like education and religion, where due to Jim Crow laws, blacks needed professionals who could serve their populations. The mass of pupils who sought education during the dawn of freedom a

[1] "Atlanta Compromise Speech," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. accessed March 08, 2015, http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 269-275.

generation earlier would become the teachers of many newly established schools. Despite the losses that occurred after Reconstruction for many blacks, gaining teachers who looked like their pupils could be seen as a benefit in a sea of losses. "A'ter freedom declare, I go to school to uh white man up dere to de ole Academy en den I go to school to uh white man up dere to de ole Academy en den I is go to annuder school down dere to uh blacksmith shop. I go to uh white man dere too. Ne'er hab no colored teacher den," explained Louisa Collier of Marion County, South Carolina, "cause dey ain' hab 'nough schooling den."[4] Collier was born in 1859, and she and her peers were the product of white missionary schools and brush arbors that sought to supply former slaves with only the very basic elements of an education.[5] Northern white missionaries went south en masse in the aftermath of the war, seeing themselves as continuing the mission of the abolitionist cause. [6] Their success, was mixed. "White folks never teach us to read nor write much. They learned us our A, B, C's, and teach us to read some in de testament" said Victoria Adams of Columbia, who was three years older than Collier.[7] Collier was referring to the time of enslavement, but this was much the same after emancipation. Besides making it easier to control their labor force, an illiterate black population would be easier to disenfranchise, one of Ben Tillman's primary goals as his power and influence increased in the state. In 1886, Tillman declared "when you educate a negro you

[4] WPA Louisa Collier Interview. Retrieved from memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/141/141.pdf

[5] Perry Chang, "Angels of Peace in a Smitten Land': The Northern Teachers' Crusade in the Reconstruction South Reconsidered." *Southern Historian* 16 (1995): 26-45.

[6] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 141.

[7] WPA Victoria Adams Interview.

educate a candidate for the penitentiary or spoil a good field hand."[8] Public school education was instituted in South Carolina in 1868. The Reconstruction Era constitution called for "nondiscriminatory public education for children ages six to sixteen," with a one dollar tax on each citizen to fund schools.

Redemption brought changes to the funding calculations. Wade Hampton, a firm believer in segregation, initially divided funds for education fairly even between white and black schools during his time as governor. However, by 1878, an amendment to the state constitution would change the funding formula to base it on attendance instead of school-age population. Historian Stephen Kantrowitz notes this distinction's importance, since the necessity of black children's labor in many sharecropping households meant that money for schools would now flow disproportionately into white hands. [9] This backlash was a reaction to the circumstances of the previous decade, as well as part of the Redeemer plan to form a coalition between wealthy and poor whites. The massive number of black students during Reconstruction both frightened and mobilized whites of all classes, who were concerned with black educational attainment besting that of poor whites.[10] Education and disenfranchisement were interwoven into the fabric of the political system.

African Americans took their education into their own hands, much as they had under slavery and as a newly freed people. As slaves, the watchful eye of owners

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[8] Quoted in Stephen David Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman & the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 216.
[9] Ibid., 213.
[10] Donald Spivey, *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1868-1915* (Westport, Connecticutt: Greenwood Press, 1978), Chapter 2.

and overseers made widespread education impossible for the vast majority of blacks. Though there were some owners who educated their slaves, much learning during this time was self-taught. During Reconstruction freedpeople's commitment to education was clearly evident in the way they built schools, protected teachers from violence, and sought to become literate, participating members of American society.[11] As Reconstruction ended, African Americans continued their pursuit of both elementary and advanced education.

South Carolina holds the distinction of being the only southern state to admit black students to a public university. South Carolina College, founded on December 19, 1801 by an act of the General Assembly, was intended to unite the Low Country and Backcountry regions of the state. The Act calls for "a College in the central part of the State, where all of its youth might be educated," with idea that such a school would "promote the instruction, the good order, and the harmony of the whole community."[12] The former would become a reality to the extent the act's authors could not have imagined. The latter, at least during Reconstruction and the white redemption that followed, could not have been further from the truth. Good order and harmony, a phrase used quite often by South Carolinians, meant different things

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[11] Heather Andrea. Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 175.
[12] Quoted in Elizabeth Cassidy. West, *The University of South Carolina* (Charleston: Arcadia Pub., 2006), 9.

during different periods, but generally it meant elite white control, poor white subordination, and black (whether freedman or slave) subjugation.[13]

Union forces took control of the campus, which was one of the leading colleges in the South prior to the Civil War, in May 1865. Before reopening in January 1866, the legislature reorganized the college into a university, modeled after the University of Virginia. Very little changed other than the students' ability to deviate from the traditional classic curriculum and take more practical courses. Very much would change, however, in 1873 when the state government controlled by the Radical Republican succeeded in admitting blacks to the school. Henry Haynes, the secretary of state, would be the first black student admitted.[14] Other black politicians enrolled as well, and the school was mostly black by 1875.White enrollment plummeted. A normal school was established to train teachers, and a preparatory school was set up for students not yet prepared for advanced education. [15] When the Democrats gained control of the legislature in 1876, they closed the school and then reopened it as a school for whites only.[16] Claflin College, a Methodist school for blacks in nearby Orangeburg would be reorganized as the state's public black college.

Founded in 1869, Claflin College was named after a prominent Massachusetts family with ties to the Methodist Church that donated funds towards the

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[13] Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), xx.
[14] "Reconstruction 1873-1877," University of South Carolina, Office of Multicultural Affairs, accessed March 05, 2015, http://www.sa.sc.edu/omsa/1873-1877-the-end-of-reconstruction/.
[15] John S. Reynolds, *Reconstruction in South Carolina: 1865-1877* (New York: Negro Univ. Press, 1969), 236.
[16] Edwin L. Green, *A History of the University of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: State, 1916), 92, 148.

establishment of the school. The only requirements for admission were "possession of good moral character and a conscientious desire to learn." Alonzo Webster, a white minister from Vermont, served as the school's first president, while also teaching and serving on the Board of Trustees. Webster traveled widely seeking to raise funds for the school.[17] Seeking to take advantage of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, Webster helped establish the South Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical Institute in 1872. [18] The Morrill Land Grant Act called for instruction in "such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life."[19] Each state received 30,000 acres of federal land for each member of Congress that the state had as of 1860. Either the land or any sales proceeds would be used to fund these schools. This first act did not apply to states of the Confederacy, as the act was passed after the beginning of hostilities. Eventually the act would be extended to include southern states. Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College in Mississippi, later renamed Alcorn State University, was the first public black institution established with Morrill funds in 1871.[20] Robert Charles Bates, the first certified black architect in the nation, designed and constructed one of the Claflin's

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[17] Vann R. Newkirk, *New Life for Historically Black Colleges and Universities: A 21st Century Perspective* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland &, 2012), 68.
[18]Blinzy L. Gore, *On a Hilltop High: The Origin and History of Claflin College to 1984* (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company, Publishers, 1993), Chapter 1.; "About Claflin," Claflin History, accessed March 08, 2015, http://www.claflin.edu/about-cu/claflin-history.
[19] 7 U.S.C. § 304
[20] Kenneth E. Redd, "Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Making a Comeback," *New Directions for Higher Education* 1998, no. 102 (1998): 34, doi:10.1002/he.10203.

central buildings.[21] The first students at Claflin received elementary and secondary education. Upon completion of these courses, those who elected to do so could continue with advanced training at Claflin or the neighboring agricultural school, which was still under the Claflin umbrella.[22] Webster ultimately fought a losing battle to secure long-term funding for the school from the state, which had no interest in funding multiple black colleges, even if the schools were technically part of the same institution at this time. Eugene Gary, Ben Tillman's running mate in the 1890 election, advocated against the appropriation of state funds to Claflin for technical education.[23] In 1890, a revision to the Morrill Act required states to either show that race was not a factor in admissions at land-grant schools, or establish a separate land-grant schools for people of color.[24] The agricultural and mechanical school thus separated from Claflin and became known as the Mechanics Institute for Colored Students in South Carolina, later renamed South Carolina State University.[25] The Mechanics Institute served as South Carolina's public black college, partially as a mechanism to keep blacks out of the University of South Carolina, but also to provide blacks with skills deemed by whites to be appropriate for laborers and artisans.[26]

The type of industrial education that the land-grant schools were established to provide was exactly the type of training for blacks that Booker T. Washington

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[21] F. Erik. Brooks and Glenn L. Starks, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2011), 52.
[22] Nancy C. Curtis, *Black Heritage Sites: The South* (New York: New Press, 1996), 254.
[23] Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy,* 143.
[24] 7 U.S.C. § 323
[25] Curtis, *Black Heritage Sites,* 255.
[26] Frank C. Martin, Aimee R. Berry, and William C. Hine, *South Carolina State University* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub., 2000), 9.

advocated for. "I have always believed that the stronger the economic and industrial foundation of the masses of the race and the more numerous those engaged in gainful occupations became, the more successful and prosperous would the professional class among the race become," he stated.[27] Washington was not only a proponent of industrial and agricultural institutions for education's sake, but also for the economic and industrial effect they could have on their surrounding communities. An example of this occurred during a visit to the Voorhies Industrial School near Denmark, South Carolina. Washington observed a hospital being built and remarked that it was one way "in which an industrial school like this, situated in the open country as it is, can exercise and is exercising a civilizing and uplifting influence upon the masses of the people."[28] Many African Americans, most notably W.E.B. DuBois, disagreed with Washington's approach, particularly his willingness to concede black political rights.[29] Regardless, Washington highlighted an arena where blacks could prosper without the threat of overt white hostility. The Mechanic's Institute was designed to fill such a role in South Carolina.

Their location in Orangeburg made Claflin and South Carolina State the practical choices for many Low Country African Americans in pursuit of educational opportunities. The Gibbses were among those who flocked to the schools. Joseph Samuel Gibbs, the first-born child of Moses Gibbs, attended Claflin. His oldest daughter, Romena Gibbs Smith, attended South Carolina State and also became a

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[27]Booker T. Washington, Elizabeth Sauer, and Stephen Orgel, *The Story of the Negro the Rise of the Race from Slavery,* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 186.
[28]Ibid., 173.
[29]Gibbs Family Circle, comp., *Gibbs Family Reunion: Togetherness, 1953-1983* (New York:n.p.1983)

teacher.[30] It is likely that Joseph received primary instruction at Claflin. His later career as a teacher means that he probably received training through the normal school. Students at all of the nation's burgeoning black colleges faced many challenges. Finding money with which to pay for tuition, room, and board was a particular concern for many students. Most students worked while attending class. Some of the more fortunate students received scholarships from private benefactors to support their education. Some schools even waived or discounted tuition for students.

Travel was another issue. Students sometimes had to travel hundreds of miles in order to attend school. Once they arrived at the school, traveling home to visit loved ones became a strenuous task. Many students, particularly those at the normal schools, only attended school for a few semesters before seeking employment or returning home.[31] Many schools were fortunate enough to receive assistance from the General Education Board. The board was a philanthropy that was created by John D. Rockefeller and Fredrick T. Gates in 1902 and chartered by Congress in 1903. It was designed to promote education in United States "without distinction as to race, sex or creed." The four main areas of board focus were the promotion of practical farming in the southern states, the establishment of southern public high schools, the promotion of institutions of higher learning, and schools for Negroes, primarily for teacher training.[32] The Southern Education Board, established in 1901, served a very similar

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30 Ibid.
31 Williams, *Self-taught,* 174.
32 Fredrick T. Gates, *The Occasional Papers* (New York City: General Education Board, 1913), 28, accessed April 15, 2015, http://books.google.com/books?id=aaygAAAAMAAJ.

purpose, with its focus on rural and agricultural education in the South.[33] These organizations were significant to the development of black secondary and higher education, as almost every black school received funding from one of these groups at one point or another.

Joseph Gibbs and the other Gibbses that attended Claflin and South Carolina State were fortunate in that Orangeburg lies only 60 miles away from Goose Creek and the area just north of it in newly established Dorchester County that many members of the family would come to call home. After attending Claflin, Joseph Gibbs became a schoolteacher in Dorchester County.[34] He and others like him represent the second generation of African American educators, progressing from the period where black teachers often knew little more education that their pupils. Black teachers also began to outnumber white ones throughout much of the South during this time. Many black leaders, particularly in the church, advocated for black students to have black teachers. Somewhat surprisingly, the white supremacist governments that emerged in the South missed an opportunity to install white teachers who would potentially indoctrinate children into a subordinate social standing. Historian Adam Fairclough attributes this to the Redeemers lack of "commitment to public education: lukewarm in their support for white public schools, they spent even less on black

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33 Louis R. Harlan, "The Southern Education Board and the Race Issue in Public Education," *Journal of Southern History* 23, no. 2 (May 01, 1957): 189, accessed April 15, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2955313?ref=no-x-route:60d73d66863c7f44e0d6d4e0d176f523.
34 Gibbs Family Circle, comp., *Gibbs Family Reunion: Togetherness, 1953-1983* (New York:n.p.,1983)

ones."[35] This lack of funding, exhibited earlier with Claflin and South Carolina State, continued once public school education became widespread throughout the South. Minimal state support also meant that positions teaching black children had low pay, which contributed to the shift to black educators. This was particularly true in rural schools and was only one of many hurdles that came into play regarding the education of southern black school children. Besides being underpaid themselves, black school teachers had to deal with significant levels of poverty among their students. A black teacher from Tennessee outlined the situation at his school in very clear terms when he said, "We are very poor here and try to do all in our power, …we find our arms are to[o] short."[36] As with teacher pay, this was particularly true in rural areas. Joseph Gibbs and educators like him fought an uphill battle to provide any type of worthwhile education to poor black children under some of the worst circumstances imaginable. Family stories tell of Joseph traveling across multiple fields and streams each day to teach in his one room schoolhouse, with rainy days requiring him to walk on logs to cross the small ponds that formed on his route.[37] Despite the challenges they faced, many were successful at providing children with at least basic educations, building upon the educational foundation laid by the previous generation.

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[35] Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 66.
[36] Quoted in Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010), 31.
[37] Jeanette Alston, Mary Smith, and Hattie Spruell, interview by author, July 26, 2014.

Religion has always been an area of central importance for African Americans, and it was no different for the Gibbs family. Historian Eric Foner calls the church “econd only to the family” as a focal point of the black community, Like the black family and the organization of black education, the black church underwent a drastic shift after the Civil War. Most black led religious activities prior to emancipation were held in secret. This “invisible institution” emerged from their secrecy into the light of day. Churches were established and physically constructed by blacks throughout the South. Blacks who attended churches with whites prior to emancipation fled white churches en masse. Offending practices of the white church included things such as segregated seating and refusing to ordain black ministers or appoint black bishops. Foner acknowledges this as only one of the contributing factors of the withdrawal. The other was the same drive for black self-determination present in economic and educational endeavors. The church held a special place, however, due to its place as the first wholly black controlled institution in the nation and in most rural areas; the only one.[38] In some rural areas many congregants were extremely poor and even the pooling of community resources was often not enough to construct a church or pay a minister. These communities improvised by holding services in homes, abandoned buildings, and clearings, and by using circuit riders and sharing preaching duties among church elders. What these churches lacked in physical structure, they made up for in faith and spirituality. The synthesis of

[38] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 88-93.

Christianity and African traditions led to a more emotional type of worship than most whites were accustomed to. Black religious practices were often disparaged as superstition and heathenism.[39] Sometimes this outlook was shared by more educated blacks. One bishop in the AME Church bishop was opposed to the singing of spirituals, which he thought of as an improper mode of worship. Despite these challenges, the growth of black churches was exponential. Between 1856 and 1876, the AME Church grew from 20,000 to 200,000 members. Other denominations experienced similar growth.[40] By 1890, the AME and AME Zion churches each had over 300,000 members nationwide.[41] By 1890,In South Carolina there were 1,959 black church buildings that collectively had 317,020 members and held a combined value close to $1.8 million.[42] These gains came mainly at the expense of white-led Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations.[43]

The church was instrumental to black life. Churches served as community centers for blacks, in much the same way that it served for whites. However, the exclusion of blacks from certain aspects of larger society elevated the importance of the black church. Besides housing schools and social events, churches also mediated community and family disputes and were centrally involved in political organizing

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[39] Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 233.
[40] Norma Jean Lutz, *The History of the Black Church* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001), 22.
[41] Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 160.
[42] W. E. B. DuBois, *The Negro Church* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 39.
[43] David R. Roediger, *Seizing Freedom: Slave Emancipation and Liberty for All* (London: Verso, 2014), 50.

and the dissemination of news.[44] Political events were viewed through a religious lens, and happenings were imbued with spiritual meaning. Slavery was known as the time of Paul. Emancipation was referred to as the Day of Jubilee. Reconstruction was known as the time of Isaiah, in reference to the humility and obedience of the former and letter's prophecy of cataclysmic change through violence.[45] Historian Stephen Hahn writes that the church had an unrivaled ability to rouse both sentiment and action throughout the community. Females made up a majority of the congregations, though few, if any, women held leadership positions. This is not to say there were not influential women in the church. Evidence exists that "church mothers," women who possessed a combination of age, spiritual maturity, and community service, exercised power that often exceeded that of the minister and were a fairly common component of congregations.[46] As African Americans were forced out of the political arena, political activity continued on a smaller scale behind the doors of the church.[47]

Preachers, as the leaders of churches, occupied an elevated position in the community. Many preachers were also politicians, and even those who weren't office holders were politically active due to the nature of their position. Over 100 black ministers were elected to legislative positions during Reconstruction.[48] For those with the right combination of education, spirituality, and community influence, working as a preacher was an opportunity that was almost unmatched in the black community. As

[44] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 92-93.
[45] Ibid., 94.
[46] Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 233.
[47] Lutz, *The History of the Black Church*, 28.
[48] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 93.

was the case with teaching, influence and prestige often trumped income for those who undertook the profession. Historian Edward Ayers calls the job "more of a calling than a profession" and says that farmer mixed in with the general farming population quite easily. Many times preachers were farmers themselves.[49] Indeed bivocational ministers were very common. The general poverty of their congregations meant that most ministers had to derive most of their income from another job. Soloman Hilary Helsabeck, a minister in Winston, North Carolina exemplified this. A day for Helsabeck could consist of digging potatoes and butchering a hog, followed by praying for a visitor and preparing for a Sunday sermon.[50] This was probably the case for the first Gibbses who entered the calling. Anna Gibbs, the tenth child born to Fortune married preacher Irvin Kitrell, who was both a reverend and a teacher in Summerville, South Carolina. Still, even in these cases the centrality and importance of the minister's position in the community was never doubted. W. E. B. DuBois called the black preacher "a leader, a politician, an orator, a 'boss,' an intriguer, and idealist."[51] As revered as these men were in their communities, there remained some people whose favor they could not win, including DuBois. He was ultimately critical of black preachers as a whole. DuBois believed that some black preachers were good, but most were poorly educated and too focused on the next life rather than this one.[52] He reserved his praise for highly politicized ministers like AME bishop Henry

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[49] Ayers, *Promise of the New South,* 211.
[50] Soloman Hilary Helsabeck Diary, Vol. 17, March 1, April 26, June 6, May 28, 1890, UNC-SHC.
[51] Quoted in Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 164.
[52] Reiland Rabaka, *Du Bois's Dialectics: Black Radical Politics and the Reconstruction of Critical Social Theory* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 115.

McNeill Turner.[53] DuBois' sentiments were shared by younger members of the community, many of whom had become more educated than some of the older generation of preachers could have ever imagined. Congregations sometimes split along generational lines. Northern black leaders were also critical of southern clergy for their general lack of education.[54] Indeed, black preachers were all things to all people, even being scapegoats when necessary.

As the growth of black churches accelerated near the end of the 19th Century, a few denominations emerged as more influential than others. African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church seems to be one the Gibbs family was initially drawn to. This was common choice among African Americans in the area. The A.M.E. church's roots lie in the city of Baltimore, where the church was established in 1816, but also in Philadelphia, where much of the denominations original leadership came from. Black members of the Methodist Church withdrew from the parent church "in order that they might have larger privileges and more freedom of action among themselves than they believed they could secure in continued association with their white brethren." Rev. Richard Allen was the first bishop of the church. The first church was built on land purchased by Allen in Philadelphia on the corner of Sixth and Lombard streets in 1794. The church structure and doctrine were pretty similar to that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with regions divided into conferences, which were

[53] DuBois, *The Negro Church,* 35.
[54] Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 163.

further sub-divided into districts. By 1900 the majority of the church's members were located in South Carolina.[55]

The AME church emerged from another group, the Free African Society, which traced its roots to 1787. Allen, along with Absalom Jones and others, began the process of creating their own autonomous church when members of the society were literally pulled off their knees and prevented from praying at St. George's MEC Church in Philadelphia.[56] The church would experience its greatest period of growth immediately after the war, when the primarily Northern and Midwest based denomination moved south. Clergymen of the church followed Union troops into Confederate territory to proselytize to freedmen and bring them into the church. Theophilus G. Steward, a traveling preacher in the church, was among the most popular and well known of the pastors. Steward is credited with spreading one of the most popular and well known sermons of the time, "I seek my brethren." On the topic of the sermon in question, Steward said "It is probable that I had heard of Bishop Wayman's popular sermon on the text, 'I seek my brethren,' which he had preached in so many places directly after the war, although I had never heard the sermon nor seen any notes of it in print. But recognizing that the Bible is a free book for all preachers, and that no man can take out a patent right on any particular passage of God's book, I determined to employ the same text. Accordingly my first sermon in Beaufort was

[55] DuBois, *The Negro Church,* 41-43.
[56] "OUR HISTORY | African Methodist Episcopal Church," African Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed March 11, 2015, http://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/.

from the text, 'I seek my brethren'."[57] That inaugural sermon was heard by Beaufort freedmen on June 18, 1865. Steward was influential in growing the membership of the church, particularly in the coastal areas near Beaufort and Charleston. Due to the wide area that he covered, it's likely that the Gibbs brothers heard the "I seek my brethren" sermon directly from Steward during Reconstruction and Steward may be personally responsible for directing the family toward Methodism. Branch AME Church, which is located in Summerville, South Carolina and is still attended by the descendants of Fortune Gibbs, was established during this time.

Another northern Methodist denomination that would make inroads among South Carolina African Americans was the A.M.E Zion Church. Very little differs between the AME and AME Zion churches, with their structures and governance being almost identical, save for their positions on bishops in the pulpit. The A.M.E. Zion church can be traced back to the John Street Methodist Church of New York City.[58] Following acts of overt discrimination within the white Methodist church, such as black parishioners being forced to leave worship, and the refusal of churches to ordain black ministers, many black worshippers left to form their own church. "Methodists did not persecute colored people but simply denied them certain privileges."[59] Initially, the Methodist church was on John Street was friendly to blacks. Both sets of historians trace the roots of the church to Peter Williams, a slave

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[57] Steward, T. G. *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry Twenty-seven Years in the Pastorate* (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1921), Accessed March 14, 2015. http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/steward/steward.html. p 41-42.
[58] William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 69.
[59] B.F.Wheeler, *The Varick Family with Many Family Portraits* (Mobile, Ala.: S.n. 1906), 7.

who petitioned the church to purchase his freedom and allow him to repay them through working for the church and for members. The church agreed, and even paid him a stipend, which made Williams' dream of working to obtain his freedom realistic.[60] The first church founded by the AME Zion Church was built in 1800 and was named Zion, also referred to as the African Chapel. This early black church was still part of the mostly white Methodist denomination, although the African American congregation was independent. Even though this first church was not considered to be an A.M.E. Zion church, historians, religious and secular, traced the birth of the church to this first institution. "It cannot be said that the African Chapel was an experiment for too purposeful was its establishment and every act. No road was too pioneering, no thought too liberal for these were freedmen, seeking spiritual freedom."[61]

A third black Methodist denomination emerged, but it was further down the pecking order. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, familiarly known as the CME Church, was organized December 16, 1870 in Jackson, Tennessee by 41 former slave members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.[62] The Methodist Episcopal Church, South split with the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 over the issue of slavery.[63] CME church leaders, most of them former slaves, saw northern black Methodists as condescending. Many of the northern missionaries saw themselves as

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[60] David Bradley. *A History of the A.M.E. Zion Church.* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1956), 44.
[61] Ibid., 47.
[62] "The History of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church," The History of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed April 16, 2015, http://www.thecmechurch.org/history.htm.
[63] Othal Hawthorne. Lakey, *The History of the CME Church* (Memphis, TN: CME Pub. House, 1996), Chapter 1.

superior to the largely uneducated and illiterate freedpeople and treated them like children in need of direction. The CME church was established as a rejection of this treatment. In terms of the social standing of members, the AME church was the highest, followed by the AME Zion Church. The CME Church was last.

While the Baptist denomination never gained the foothold in South Carolina that Methodists did, they were still important to the spread of black churches throughout the South. Where Methodist missionaries gained an early advantage in South Carolina, Baptist agents did the same in Virginia and other southern states. Like their Methodist counterparts, Baptist missionaries headed south almost as soon as hostilities ceased between Union and Confederate forces. Also like their Methodist brethren, most black Baptists attended church with whites prior to the war and left white churches due to the same types of discrimination.[64] Black Baptists, however, can trace a much longer history of independent churches than black Methodists can.[65] The Negro Baptist Church, organized at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, can trace its history to 1773. Several Baptist Conventions existed prior to the Civil War including the American Baptist Missionary Convention, the Northwestern Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention. The Northwest and Southern Conventions would eventually merge, and the Consolidated Convention that emerged gave their support to southern Baptists forming their own state conventions. Multiple schisms would occur among the larger regional and national conventions throughout the years.

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[64] Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig,* 113.

[65] Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 100.

Often these splits occurred over the issue of cooperation and reconciliation with the white Baptist Church. [66]

Tensions occurred between churches as well as within congregations over the shape that worship should take. According to historian Edward Ayers, "The South's major denominations stressed that faith should be a matter of reflection and reason, of quiet joy and peace; beautiful singing, stained-glass windows, an educated minister, and organizations to aid the unfortunate and spread the gospel could only help Christ's cause. Many other people, though, became suspicious of these innovations, which they saw as ostentation."[67] These other people, who were opposed with any sort of religious reconciliation with the world, were part of a long-standing Southern tradition that opposed the direction and structure of most larger denominations. This was mainly observed as a phenomenon of white churches, since there were very few southern black churches with any history prior to the Civil War, but the same tensions existed within the black community. Northern blacks were critical of the mostly uneducated former slaves and their preferred style of worship which was less structured and more spiritual and emotional than northerners were accustomed to. This was particularly true of the Methodist church. Schisms occurred within various denominations, such as The Disciples of Christ (later the Church of Christ) movement that occurred within the Baptist Church, but none were more volatile than the Holiness movement that emerged from the Methodist Church. According to Ayers

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[66] Walter H. Brooks, "The Evolution of the Negro Baptist Church," *Journal of Negro History* 7, no. 1 (January, 1922): 16, accessed April 15, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2713578?ref=no-x-route:42cf5eae68250a5643cc13014f56570f.

[67] Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 398.

this conflict was heightened due to the Methodists "ecclesiastical structure" that was "more elaborate and centralized than that of the Baptists."[68] The Holiness movement traces its roots to the writings of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Many of Wesley's works, most notably “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” were widely published and read by American Methodists. The basic premise of the belief in Holiness revolves around the idea that a "second blessing" or "second work of grace" could enable Christians to achieve "complete sanctification," or holiness. This was described, especially in the South, as an emotional peace that allowed an individual to live a more graceful, ascetic and disciplined life.[69] The Holiness movement began in the north prior to the Civil War, but was largely dormant until 1867, when it reemerged in the form of an interdenominational camp meeting in New Jersey. This was followed by other camp meetings throughout the next two decades in the North, and a massive flood of holiness literature into the South. Due to the fact that the first Southerners were exposed to the doctrine via print, the Southern Holiness movement was begun by more educated, urban church members, before being disseminated among the less educated and more rural congregations. Initially the movement was welcomed by Methodist leaders but as it spread and became more radicalized, it began to be viewed as a threat by Methodist leaders. The fight to eliminate Holiness within Methodism was successful, to a limited degree. Church leaders initially sought to destroy Holiness completely. That effort to squelch the

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[68] Ibid., 399.

[69] John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766), Chapter 1, accessed March 14, 2015, http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/wesley/8317/831701.htm.

growing practice did not work. Methodist leadership would reclaim official control of the church, but only after Holiness preachers and congregations left the church and instituted their own.

This schism within the Methodist church was not limited to white churches and the Gibbses were affected. Agnes Gibbs, the daughter of Wetus, is credited with leading a significant portion of the family from Methodism to the Church of God. Branch AME Church in the Jedburg area of Summerville, South Carolina had come to serve as the family church. Many of the first generation of Gibbs children were educated in the church's Sunday School. Though the exact details of the decision to leave remain unknown, it can be safely assumed that Agnes embraced the doctrine of the Church of God of Summerville when she became a member. Not all members of the family left Methodism, as Branch AME is still attended by members of Fortune Gibb's lineage to the present. Agnes, as well as those that followed her, were willing to take a perceived step down on the social ladder in order to worship in a more expressive manner. The Gibbs Family journal attributes Agnes with "perpetuating holiness and Christianity through her life, practices, and principles."[70] It seems that her relationship with God was much more significant to her than her social standing in the here and now.

Despite the increasingly restrictive nature of southern society towards African Americans as Reconstruction ended, there remained avenues where blacks could claim and express their autonomy. As conditions deteriorated for blacks in the South

[70] Gibbs Family Circle, *Gibbs Family Reunion: Togetherness, 1953-1983*

in many areas, gains in education and religious control were accomplishments that provided a sense of pride for many of those who lived through that period. For others, no amount of gains could offset the worsening day to day conditions of life in the South. Instead of attempting to carve out autonomous space for themselves in the South, many selected another alternative: leaving the South.

Chapter 5 – The End of the Beginning

"Sir: Having been informed that you can secure jobs for people who desire to leave the south, I would like to get information about the conditions and wages either in Niagra or Detroit. I would prefer work in a factory in either town. Also advise as to climate."

-Letter from African American in Charleston, SC written May 25, 1917[1]

Letters to African-American newspapers in the North like the one above were common-place during the first part of the 20th Century as African Americans in the South sought information about the prospects of working and living in the North. By the time the author composed this letter of inquiry over fifty years had elapsed since the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. Despite this legislation and the promise of full citizenship and political participation, three generations of blacks had lived to see the emptiness of that promise, especially in the South. Another potential Charleston migrant, writing in February 1917 to ask about work prospects at a sugar factory in New York summed up the sentiment when he concluded his letter by saying "As it is understood the times in the south is very hard and one can scarcely live. Kindly take the matters into consideration, and reply to my request at your earliest convenience."[2] Men and women like these authors expressed sentiments that were widespread throughout Southern black communities. The erosion of freedom and economic opportunities coupled with increased demand for labor in the North during World War I contributed to the number of African Americans that decided to head North, but that only tells part of the story.

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[1] Emmett J. Scott, "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916-1918," *The Journal of Negro History* 4, no. 3 (July, 1919): 296, accessed March 24, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2713780

[2] Ibid., 295.

Historians have debated whether it was the "push" of the South or the "pull" of the North that had the most influence on the decision to leave the South during the war. Both sides of this argument hold some merit, but limiting the study of black migrations patterns to the war time period leaves out important context. Historian James Grossman says the Great Migration "both constituted a stage in the long-term process of Afro-American urbanization and accelerated a northward trend that had begun in the 1890s." Grossman calls this period and the massive movement of people a "transformation" in the mindset of southern blacks from pursuing autonomy and control based on landownership to pursuing political participation by securing the economic foundation through life in the more urban and industrial North. Grossman even refers to the period as a "second emancipation" of sorts.[3] This analysis, while painting a powerful image, omits those African Americans who emancipated themselves from the South prior to the war. These pilgrims often laid the groundwork for the networks of families, churches, and communities that would develop to later aid those who made the decision to trek north.

The steady stream of black migrants to the north during the great depression began as a trickle during the 1890s. Economics played a factor in many a decision to relocate, but there were other factors that contributed as well. These included rampant racism and segregation, including increased violence and widespread lynching. Crop failures and unfavorable labor contracts also exerted influence over the decision to

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[3] James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 19.

leave the South. Hughsey Childs of Abbeville, South Carolina recalled an instance where a black sharecropper withheld two bales of cotton from a white landowner. “There was a man had been, was working sharecrop for a gentleman and naturally, he couldn’t read or either write. And every year, regardless of how much cotton he made he would just bring him out so he would have just a little bit left. So he got kinda wise and where he would get at the harvest time.” After settling his debt with the owner, the sharecropper took the extra bales of cotton to town to sell. After learning of this omission, the owner had the sharecropper meet him in town. An argument ensued between the men, after which the sharecropper was beaten, tied to a horse and drug through the streets of Abbeville before being hung in a park. Childes concluded his story by saying “Now that’s just as true as I’m looking at you. But you wasn’t allowed to say anything about it.”[4] Henry Blake, who was born in Arkansas during the Civil War, also talked about the pitfalls of the sharecropping system. “When we worked on shares, we couldn’t make nothing, just overalls and something to eat. Half went to the other man and you would destroy your half if you weren’t careful. A man that didn’t know how to count would always lose. He might lose anyhow. They didn’t give no itemized statement. No, you just had to take their word.”[5] The experiences of Childes and Blake were common to many African Americans throughout the South, and these common experiences influenced many a desire to leave the region.

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[4] Hughsey Childes interview with Charles Hardy III. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Atwater Kent Museum, 1984), West Chester University. Accessed March 24, 2015 http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/81/

[5] *Henry Blake, Little Rock, Arkansas* Federal Writer’s Project, United States Work Projects Administration; Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Accessed March 23, 2015. http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6377/

Several common characteristics appear among those who chose to leave. Younger people were more likely to leave, as their ties to the land were not nearly as strong as those of their parents and grandparents. For black families like the Gibbses that were able to become landowners instead of sharecroppers, the availability of land would have played a factor as well. No child of a landowner could possibly be happy as a sharecropper, and as time progressed and the family grew in size, the original plots of land that were owned by the brothers were becoming smaller as they became subdivided among children and grandchildren. An excellent example of this influence at work is Beatrice Gibbs, one of the many grandchildren of Wetus Gibbs. Born in 1910 to Noah Gibbs and Carrie Gadson, she had firmly established roots in Jamaica, Queens, New York by 1935.[6] After the start of World War I, jobs became increasingly available, providing a viable, and in many cases preferable, alternative to farm life. This was even truer of work availability during World War II. As northern employment and equality prospects pulled at the southern black labor supply, factors beyond racism and discrimination contributed to the push of African Americans beyond the Mason Dixie line. Agricultural conditions throughout the region in the first part of the century were by no means optimal. The dependence of most planters on the availability of credit affected them negatively and their sharecroppers doubly so. Credit was not widely available throughout the South until the passage of the New Deal and the subsidy checks that accompanied it in the 1930s. Even once capital

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[6]1940 Census. Year: 1940; Census Place: New York, Kings, New York; Roll: *T627_2599*; Page: *9A*; Enumeration District: *24-201*

became more readily available to planters, many withheld funds that were due to their tenants, or simply evicted them in order to maximize crop space and modernize machinery. Combined with the spread of boll weevils and other crop issues, farming was not only an unattractive option to many African Americans, it became an increasingly unavailable option as well.[7]

The New Deal merits a longer discussion here, mainly due to the transformative effect of the legislation on the South. The New Deal refers to a series of domestic programs enacted during the 1930s that focused on providing "relief, recovery and reform" from the conditions that led to and emerged from the onset of the Great Depression. The New Deal is typically associated with the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt as many of the New Deal programs were created via executive order. Of particular importance to southerners, especially sharecroppers, was the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). Southern farm income, already the lowest in the nation on a per farm and per acre basis, dropped even lower as the Depression started. As the prices of cotton and tobacco plummeted, many southern farm families suffered. The AAA, led by administrator George Peek, sought to prop up the prices of crops without affecting any sort of social reform in the rural South. This differed from the outlook of the more liberal Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, who saw the program as a way of upsetting the status quo, inching the South towards racial equality, and modernizing in one fell swoop. The program would

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[7] Jack Temple. Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 53.

indeed modernize southern agriculture, as cotton and tobacco prices soared from their previous lows. Simultaneously, limitation agreements on cotton acreage forced a sharp decline in the amount of cotton grown. Planters benefited mightily, as the increase in cash, thanks to AAA subsidy payments, led to a decrease in the number of tenants as well as an increase in the labor pool. The program weakened the still lingering plantation system even as the decentralized nature of the program allowed planters to retain control of both land and labor.[8]

Migration was often a twofold process. First was movement from the countryside to a southern city. The reasons for this are obvious. A move to a closer city in the South was both more familiar and less resource exhaustive. Southern cities, while not as industrially advanced as their northern counterparts, were still a good starting point for those with wholly rural upbringings. There were a few southern industrial cities such as Atlanta and Birmingham that had been drawing people from the countryside well prior to World War I.[9] In South Carolina, such a move primarily meant going to Columbia or Charleston, with Atlanta, Savannah, Birmingham, Richmond, and other smaller southern cities serving as possible destinations. The impetus for many transitions was tales of better conditions and opportunities in the South's cities. Those migrants were disappointed to learn that the second place status

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[8] Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 15-18, 44.

[9] Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 18.

of African Americans was mirrored throughout the South.[10] Many traveled to southern cities believing that sending correspondence to the North would be safer from these points than sending and receiving mail on plantations. Earlier migration of blacks from southern cities to northern ones made employment in southern cities available for new arrivals.[11] Some migrants stayed in the South's cities. Charleston's proximity to the traditional family home made it an easy transition for countless Gibbs family members. Still, much of the movement towards cities was to facilitate a larger journey.

Another pattern that emerged was that of the different paths that emerged to the North. Migrants typically followed a linear course northward. African Americans from Alabama and Mississippi were more likely to end up in Midwestern cities like Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland. Those from Texas were more likely to travel west towards California. Black people from the southern Atlantic states usually ended up in East Coast cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. These cities are among those where members of the Gibbs family tree established roots, though there were exceptions to this. Upstate New York, Detroit, Richmond, and Salt Lake City served as some of the other landing spots for family members. Mortimer Gibbs, the son of Wetus, settled in Sharon, Pennsylvania, near the Ohio border.[12] A city of heavy industry including steel making, it was an ideal place for resettlement outside of one

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[10] Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York, NY: Random House, 2010), 57.
[11] Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 111.
[12] 1930 Census. Year: 1930; Census Place: Sharon, Mercer, Pennsylvania; Roll: 2077; Page: 20A; Enumeration District: 0069; Image: 1034.0; FHL Microfilm: 2341811

of the major metropolises. Steel was a primary job creator, particularly after World War I when the job market for African Americans expanded and many restrictions towards them in hiring practices were eased. Prior to this, most black employment was limited to service positions. Steel, railroads, construction, and automobiles were among the industries that heavily recruited blacks during and following the First World War.[13] Employment in these areas doubled from 500,000 to almost one million from 1910 to 1920, and accelerated even further following that period.[14] Mortimer, whose profession was listed as a self-employed butcher on his draft registration card in 1917, was as a steel worker by 1930.[15] It would seem that those not restricted to agricultural labor sometimes opted to leave the South as well. Indeed, it was often the best and the brightest, the young and ambitious, that chose to leave the familiarity of home in search of something greater. Though farm workers made up the majority of those that chose to make the journey, the composition of the migrant class was varied. In particular, the southern black population lost significantly more of its elites than whites, who similarly left the South in large numbers. Black professionals had long been leaving the region in droves, particularly writers and artists. This group tended to be more urban and educated, or at least in search of those things.[16]

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[13] James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 97.
[14] William Hamilton Harris, *The Harder We Run: Black Workers since the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 61.
[15] *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. Washington, D.C.: NARA. M1509. Registration State: *South Carolina;* Registration County: *Dorchester;* Roll:*1877591*
[16] Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora*, 28.

While conditions and prospects in the North were improved in many aspects, they were far from perfect. Racism was not as blatant or violent as it had manifested in the South, but it was very much alive and remained a daily reality for black newcomers to the North. Indeed, there were those who sought to relay this information to potential migrants before they embarked on any journey north with false impressions of what awaited them. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, a black religious weekly based in New Orleans, produced an editorial entitled *Read This Before You Move North* that attempted to lay out the situation in very simple terms:

> In no case should our people attempt to go North until they know where they are going, to what they are going and whether the firms that offer employment are reliable. . . Our people who move North should not expect to find everything rosy. There will be considerable disappointment if they think they will not encounter prejudice in the North. There is less prejudice there of a kind. There are better opportunities for education, and there is better protection, but there is more intense prejudice on the part of the Labor Unions against skilled workmen who are Negroes.[17]

Despite these warnings, which sometimes had ulterior motives behind them, the stream of migrants North would only grow larger. Whether they believed the advice they received or not, travelers would soon be introduced to the reality of their situation. There were restrictions on where migrants could live, shop, and go to school, while multiple options existed in these areas for whites that had made the same journey and often presented similar backgrounds and skillsets. When African Americans were able to find work and housing, they typically commanded lower

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[17] "Read This Before You Move North," *Southwestern Christian Advocate* (New Orleans), April 5, 1917.

wage rates and higher rent rates as compared to their white counterparts. The restriction on housing helped limit job opportunities, with available jobs being too far away from available housing to make travel realistic. Black families that attempted to move into white neighborhoods were often greeted violence and intimidation. This would remain the norm until the rise of suburban communities made white flight from the cities possible in the 1940s and 50s.[18] The United States Housing Authority, another of the agencies established by the New Deal, was setup to administer a system of loans, grants, and subsidies to assist in developing low-rent housing projects. Local housing boards typically followed local racial customs, meaning blacks remained mostly confined to overcrowded areas. With assistance from the existing discriminative norms in employment and employment, the Housing Authority contributed to the rise of urban ghettoes.[19]

The large black communities, though usually overcrowded and impoverished, were home to vibrant cultural institutions and were largely welcoming of new migrants. While tensions did sometimes emerge between northerners and new arrivals, these were not typically widespread. Notable exceptions include cities like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. In these cities a long standing, mainly mulatto elite class showed a sometimes vocal resentment to the large number arrival of southern blacks. They accused the newcomers of upsetting what they saw as "equitable relations" with local whites. Migrants were described as "green" or FOB

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[18] Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora,* 102.

[19]Labor Records, boxes 1-20, Records of the Intergroup Relations Branch, 1936-1963, RG 196, NA.

(Fresh off the Boat) and many older black residents complained of their effect on housing prices and job availability. Despite these examples, the majority of the complaints about black newcomers came from whites, who saw them as competition for jobs. For the most part, black migrants to the North were greeted and welcomed into their new communities. Even in those cities where divisions arose, they were typically short-lived.[20]

Black neighborhoods, owing to their isolation and the constant influx of newcomers, developed as "cities within the city". Black owned businesses that catered to all aspects of life, churches, and newspapers were among the institutions that thrived in these black metropolises. The most notable of these neighborhoods were Harlem in New York City and South Side Chicago. A new black intelligentsia emerged, aided by the growth of black publishers, graduate schools, and other institutions in a developing network that sometimes worked with a growing white liberal community. Jazz musicians and black baseball players emerged, pushing their way into white America's social conscious. Many of the most notable individuals from all of these fields were southerners who made the journey north.[21]

Newcomers relied on family networks and assistance from church and community groups to ease their transition. Beulah Gibbs Sally, the granddaughter of Moses Gibbs, and Ida Grant, the granddaughter of Wetus Gibbs, were among the first generation that made the move the move to New York. Family records indicate that

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[20] Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora,* 118.
[21] Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land,* 155, Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora* 132.

both women regularly opened their homes to new arrivals to the city and provided them with housing until they were able to find more permanent arrangements.[22] The third generation of Gibbses, that is, the grandchildren of the original brothers, seems to have been the one that mainly exploited the opportunity to move north. Census records and other documents show that the brothers and their children stayed in the traditional family home. Not all the grandchildren left, but those who did leave were typically grandchildren. They were the beginning of a significant stream of family members who moved away from the Goose Creek/Summerville area that would continue for generations.

It would seem that this is the conclusion of the Gibbs story, at least the story of the family as one based primarily in South Carolina. In actuality it is only the end of the first part of the story. Like many southerners who traveled north during the first part of the 20th century, members of the Gibbs family retraced their steps along the same path on a return journey home. Over the last three decades of the 20th century, in migration of African Americans to the South has outpaced that not only that of whites, but of the United States population as a whole. This migration was spearheaded by middle class, college-educated individuals seeking opportunities, much as their parents and grandparents had during their original odyssey north. Once again the "best and the brightest" led the way, as they had done during the previous period of northern migration. This reverse migration is a direct result of the economic

[22] Gibbs Family Circle, comp., *Gibbs Family Reunion: Togetherness, 1953-1983* (New York: n.p., 1983)

growth and mechanization of the South, as well as improved race relations and the longstanding cultural and kinship ties to the region that could not even be weakened by decades in another part of the country.[23] The factors that were major contributors to the "push" of the South in the first part of the century would eventually become major factors in the newfound "pull" of the South for African Americans.

African American history is littered with stories of struggle and adversity. From ominous origins up through the present, blacks in general have faced many difficult circumstances in many difficult eras. Despite this overall seemingly negative situation for this segment of the population, exceptions did exist. There were African Americans, both individually and collectively, who bucked societal norms, succeeding and excelling in areas where conventional wisdom might suggest they should not. The Gibbs family, both as individuals and as a collective, seems to embody one of these examples. From the humblest of known beginnings, the family navigated some of the worst periods of life for blacks in America. They not only survived, but grew and thrived. Within a few generations, there were as many family members employed in nonfarm labor as there were in the fields, and many of those in the fields by then were tilling family crops in family owned fields. Educational attainment seems to have always been both a central focus and achievement, as was religious leadership.

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[23] William H. Frey, "The New Great Migration: Black Americans' Return to the South, 1965–2000," *The Brookings Institution*, (May, 2004): 1-3, accessed April 9, 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2004/5/demographics%20frey/20040524_frey

The story of the Gibbs family is one that is shared by many American families. There are certain circumstances to the tale that are specific to the family, but the journey is a common one that many Americans from different backgrounds can relate to. While a great deal is known about the family, much work remains to be done. In the same way that migration out of the state signaled the beginning of a much larger story for the Gibbs family, so too does the ending of this work lay the foundation for much larger future endeavors. The hope is that eventually not only will more be discovered about the progenitors of the family, but also that many more members of the family may be added to the story.

Fortune and Phyllis Gibbs' seventh and eighth children were twins named Isaac and Rebecca. They were born in 1875. Like all the couple's children, they both contributed to the households output as children. Unlike most of the couple's children, Rebecca did not remain in the household long after reaching adulthood. She is notably absent on the 1900 Census.[24] She and James Thomas had a daughter named Ida in 1904. Little is known about Ida's early life, other than the fact that she did not attend school. Despite this fact she was literate. In 1924 at age twenty she married a local man named James Marion Simmons. A laborer at a lumber mill, he never attended school formally but was able to read and write.[25] Simmons also served in

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[24] 1900 Census. Year: 1900; Census Place: Dorchester, Dorchester, South Carolina; Roll: 1526;Enumeration District: 0068; FHL Microfilm: 1241526

[25] 1930 Census. Year: 1930;Census Place: Dorchester, Dorchester, South Carolina; Roll: 2195; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 0008; Image: 514.0; FHL Microfilm: 2341929

World War I and used his military earnings to purchase land in in Summerville on Jedburg Road, where many of his descendants still live today.[26]

The coupling of James and Ida produced six children, including James, Jr., who would follow in his father's footsteps and parlay military earnings into landownership. Young James worked as a slab sawyer during his teenage years and after serving in World War II, he eventually moved to Rock Hill, South Carolina. It was here that he met and married a young girl named Rosie Bell White from nearby Catawba, South Carolina. Their oldest child, Rosa Simmons, was born in 1953 and remains a lifelong Rock Hill resident. She was a member of the first integrated class to attend Rock Hill High School. Her later husband, Terry Thompson, was a member of the last segregated class to graduate from the city's black high school, Emmett Scott. Like many members of the Gibbs family, they encouraged education even they themselves were not able to attain it. Both Terry and Rosa completed high school, but received limited higher education, placing the needs of their growing family ahead of personal accomplishments. The sacrifices made by them enabled their second son Andre to receive multiple college degrees, and their love of family and recognition of the importance of heritage played a major role in the creation of this project. I am Andre, the son of Terry and Rosa, and the descendant of slaves who made good on the promise of America.

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[26] Alston, Jeanette, Mary Smith, and Hattie Spruell. Interview by author. July 26, 2014.

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