

Black-owned businesses in the South, 1790-1880

By: Loren Schweninger

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This essay analyzes the changing configuration of black-owned businesses in the South over nearly a century. It divides region into two sections-the Lower South and the Upper South-and examines changes that occurred prior to 1840, during the late antebellum era, and as a result of the Civil War. It uses a "wealth model" to define various business groups, and then creates business occupational categories based on the listings in various sources, including the U.S. censuses for 1850, 1860, and 1870. The article compares and contrasts the wealth holdings among various groups of blacks in business, and it analyzes, within a comparative framework, slave entrepreneurship, rural vs. urban business activity, color-black or mulatto-as a variable in business ownership, and slave ownership among blacks engaged in business before than a generation after his death in the mid-1840s, Craven County residents still recalled the remarkable business career of John Carruthers Stanly, an emancipated slave who became one of the most prosperous businessmen in North Carolina. Born shortly before the American Revolution, the son of John Wright Stanly, a white merchant-shipper, and an African-born Ibo woman, Stanly had received an education and opened a barbershop while still in bondage. By the time he was emancipated by his owners, Alexander and Lydia Carruthers Stewart (friends of John W Stanly) at twenty-one, he had already acquired a reputation as an astute businessman. During the early 1800s, he turned his barbershop over to two trusted slaves and began speculating in real estate and slaves. By the late 1820s, he had acquired three cotton and turpentine plantations, several rental houses in New Bern, and approximately 163 slaves. His total assets exceeded \$68,000. Eventually, as a result of a banking erisis and several bad loans, he lost most of his substantial wealth, but at the height of his business career in 1828 Stanly was one of the wealthiest men in Craven County.(1)

John Stanly's career, of course, was highly unusual. The vast majority of blacks in the early nineteenth-century South struggled merely to survive, much less to gain their freedom and establish business enterprises. Most were relegated to a life of perpetual bondage; the few who did gain the status of freedmen often discovered that in freedom they were little better off economically than they had been as slaves. In some cases they fared worse, since at least in bondage they had been provided with the necessities. Yet, beginning in the late eighteenth century and continuing during the first eight decades of the nineteenth, an increasing number of blacks in the South were able to establish various types of business enterprises. They did so as slaves and, following emancipation, as freedmen.

For many years historians and other writers have shown an interest in the changing profile of black-owned businesses in the South. Early in the twentieth century, both W E. B. Du Bois and

Booker T. Washington published works on blacks in business, Du Bois through his Atlanta University studies, and Washington using a ghostwriter) in his 1907 anecdotal volume, *The Negro in Business*. During the 1920s, Carter G. Woodson and his students produced a substantial literature on the emerging business ethos among Negroes and the rise in black property ownership during the nineteenth century. Later, other scholars discussed this period in a prefatory manner while focusing on such topics as Negro banking, insurance, and manufacturing. Most recently, historians have investigated the careers of South Carolina cotton gin manufacturer William Ellison, Louisiana sugar planter Andrew Durnford, and Missouri barber and real estate speculator James Thomas, three of the most successful black businessmen in the South during the middle period.(2)

But we still lack a clear picture of black business activity during the nineteenth century-of the subregional differences between the Upper South stretching from Delaware to Missouri) and the Lower South (from South Carolina to Texas) and of the changes that occurred over time. What were the most popular business enterprises among blacks? How and why did these change throughout the nineteenth century? in different regions of the South? What proportion of these businesses were owned and operated by various groups of blacksmen and women, blacks and mulattoes, urban dwellers and residents of rural areas-and how did these ratios change over time? How successful were Negroes in business? How much wealth and property did they accumulate? And what does this tell us about the values and attitudes of blacks and how these attitudes changed from one generation to the next?

To begin to answer such questions, this article seeks to analyze the changing configuration of black-owned businesses in the fifteen slaveholding (and former slaveholding) states and the District of Columbia over nearly a century. Such a broad spatial and temporal view requires a few prefatory comments about structure and organization. The essay begins with a discussion of business activity among slaves. Although scholars have only begun to examine this subject, and some of the conclusions are therefore tentative, its importance warrants inclusion. The article then moves to an examination of businesses owned by free blacks in the Lower South from 1790 to 1840 and compares those findings with data from the Upper South during the same period. As will be shown in the pages that follow, the free black population emerged quite differently in the two regions, and consequently their business activities were markedly different. The analysis then shifts to the significant transition period during the mid-nineteenth century-1841 to 1880-again comparing and contrasting businesses in the Lower and Upper South. The article concludes with a brief discussion of clientele and the significance of business ownership for black Americans.

Slave Entrepreneurs

It might seem incongruous to discuss slaves engaging in business activities, since they themselves were considered a species of property," but several aspects of the South's "peculiar institution" gave bonds-people opportunities to participate in various business activities. One was what contemporaries called the domestic," or Internal" slave economy(3) The exact nature of the trade that existed between blacks on a given plantation or on different plantations, or between slaves and their masters, or with other whites and free blacks, awaits full scholarly treatment, but the broad outlines of these economic activities are readily apparent. In rural areas, the internal slave economy generally took the form of raising vegetables, staple crops, or livestock, and of

trading such products with the master or a nearby merchant. This type of trade had a long tradition, dating back to the early colonial period.(4) In the early years, cash rarely changed hands. Though the "regional currencies," such as yards of cloth, cowrie shells, or iron bars, that were used in the African slave trade were largely absent, the bartering among plantation slaves probably resembled the trade among West African peoples-the Fulani, Mandinka, Wolof, Fanti, Ibo, Yoruba, Bakongo, Nsundi, and others-that had been carried on for centuries. (5)

During the nineteenth century, however, the American domestic slave economy moved away from its West African roots.(6) Some slaves continued to trade for certain items with little inclination toward getting ahead or acquiring property, but others sold goods and services with the intent of adding to their property holdings. One group of South Carolina planters explained in 1816 that in their district "negroes have every other Saturday [off], keep horses, raise hogs, cultivate for themselves every thing for home consumption & for market that their masters do," including cotton. On Julien S. Devereux's Monte Verdi estate in Rusk County, Texas, a dozen field hands used their evenings and weekends to plant their own cotton. "I send you \$300 in gold," a local merchant wrote Devereux in 1853, with the request to have the same distributed amongst those Negroes of your[s] who owned the Cotton which I bought from them.'17 Blacks not only raised and sold staple crops such as cotton, tobacco, rice, and sugar, but they also bought and sold livestock, cloth, clothing, tools, furniture, beehives, dogs, wagons, and firearms. They sometimes sold their commodities to "slave factors" who in turn sold them to whites or other slaves.(8)

Away from the plantation, in towns and cities, slaves discovered other ways to engage in various business activities. Two labor devices of the slave system that allowed them to do so were hiring and self-hiring arrangements. With the steadily rising prices for slaves and increased demands for temporary workers, antebellum slaveowners could hire out their blacks for profits ranging from 10 to 20 percent of the slave's price per year.(9) Contracts concerning clothing, food, medical attention, and treatment varied, but slaves hired in such a manner could often expect to earn "wages" for themselves. Once the principle of slave wages had been established, some of the most highly skilled and talented blacks could seek to hire their own time, negotiating contracts, making their own living arrangements, and paying their masters a specified amount, usually on a semi-annual or annual basis.(10)

Even under the best circumstances it was difficult for hired or self-hired slaves to engage in business, but a few slaves actually established business enterprises. Virginia's Robert Gordon sold slack from his white father's coal yard before purchasing his freedom in 1846 and moving to Ohio. (11) Kentucky's Frank McWorter set up a crude saltpeter manufactory (the principal ingredient in gunpowder) in Pulaski County.(12) Mississippi's Benjamin Montgomery, a favorite slave of cotton planter Joseph Davis (brother of the future president of the Confederacy), operated a retail dry goods store at Davis Bend, thirty miles south of Vicksburg, selling items to his fellow slaves in exchange for wood, vegetables, chickens, and eggs. (13) Future Alabama Congressman Benjamin Turner acquired a livery stable and considerable other property in Selma while still in bondage. "I [ran] a livery-stable," he later recalled, "and r[a]n omnibuses, hacks, etc."(14)

In Bennettsville (S.C.), bondsman Thomas David owned a construction business, negotiating contracts, hiring day laborers (many of whom were also bondsmen), and supervising the erection of numerous houses as well as several larger buildings.(15) This practice became so widespread in some areas that white mechanics complained of unfair competition. One group of white builders in North Carolina complained that slaves were undertaking contracts on their own account," hiring gangs of eight to twelve other slaves, and constructing houses and buildings. (16) In addition, the slaves were charging only half the price charged by white contractors. These slaves worked entirely "for their own benefit." Other slaves established businesses as barbers, storekeepers, shopkeepers, shoemakers, butchers, tailors, boardinghouse keepers, plasterers, and blacksmiths. Anthony Weston, a slave who managed to live virtually as a freedman, built and serviced rice mills for various slaveowners at the edge of South Carolina's inland river systems. Over a period of several decades, Weston amassed a small fortune while remaining legally in bondage.(17)

Free Black Businesses in the Lower South, 1790-1840 Despite occasionally successful efforts, the various legal codes as well as the payment demands by slaveowners made it extremely difficult for even the most industrious slave business people to obtain "freedom papers." Yet, beginning in the late eighteenth and continuing into the nineteenth century, a wave of emancipations occurred in the South. Motivated by the ideals of the American Revolution, and by the belief in some quarters that slavery would never be a profitable institution, slave masters freed their blacks in growing numbers.(18) In the Lower South, the manumissions were highly selective, usually involving persons of mixed racial ancestry, often directly related to white owners. This, coupled with a migration of free mulattoes from the Caribbean following the Haitian Revolution, gave the small but rapidly expanding free Negro group a unique configuration. As it grew-from 2,199 in 1790, to 20,153 in 1820, to 41,218 in 1840 (representing between 1.5 and 3.1 percent of the total black population in the region)-the free Negro population contained a significant proportion of skilled, often literate or semiliterate mulattoes who had received financial assistance from white relatives or benefactors. Except in Georgia, this group could legally own the same types of property and enter into the same types of business arrangements as free white citizens.(19)

As a result, despite the anti-free black sentiment among some whites, free Negroes in the region entered a variety of business pursuits. In towns and cities, they became builders, mechanics, tradesmen, grocers, restaurateurs, tailors, merchants, and barbers. Even during the American Revolution, a small group of skilled artisans and craftsmen had emerged in Charleston, South Carolina. By the 1790s, several among them had built up thriving businesses, especially in the furniture and building trades.(20) House builder and carpenter James Mitchell, who for many years lived above his shop, had become so prosperous by 1797 that he sought to rent a six-room house with stables and out-buildings. A Place in the suburbs, with a little Garden," he explained in a local newspaper, "would be preferred."(21)

With the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory in 1803 and the Gulf Coast region in 1819, a significant number of creoles of color (persons born in the Americas of French or Spanish and African heritage) came under American control. Some of them had already established various types of businesses. Others had migrated from the Caribbean Islands in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. By the 1820s and 1830s, free persons of color who owned businesses could be found

in nearly every town and city along the Gulf Coast—from Pensacola, to Mobile, to New Orleans—and in other areas such as Baton Rouge and Natchez. They managed establishments as shoemakers, wheel-wrights, millwrights, tailors, butchers, bakers, confectioners, livery keepers, and barbers.(22)

The center of free Negro business activity during this early period was New Orleans, with its Spanish and French traditions, its racial intermixing, and its long history of free black enterprise. As early as 1802, a visitor to the city commented on the "great number" of "free mulattoes" who had learned special skills as artisans. Several had begun to accumulate property, he said, and a few had established small businesses.(23) By the 1830s, their numbers had increased substantially. An 1836 tax list for the city included the names of 855 free persons of color who paid taxes on property worth \$2,462,470. Among them were several highly successful brokers, grocers, tailors, storekeepers, real estate speculators, and landlords (24) The Crescent City also boasted the most prosperous free mulatto businesswoman in the South, Eulalie d' Mandeville Macarty, who owned a wholesale mercantile and dry goods store. Worth an estimated \$155,000, she purchased various manufactured goods from abroad, housed them at her depot in Plaquemines Parish, and distributed them, through a network of slaves, to various retail outlets.(25)

Rural business activities also expanded significantly during this early period. Like their urban counterparts, free persons of color in the Lower South who owned large farms or plantations, or who had established rural business enterprises, were most often persons of mixed racial ancestry who had been given financial assistance by white relatives or patrons. The largest black planter and slaveowner during the eighteenth century, James Pendarvis, of St. Paul's Parish near Charleston, was the son of a white planter and a slave woman. Bequeathed a large plantation, by 1786 Pendarvis owned more than 3,000 acres and 113 slaves.(26) Although few would equal Pendarvis's wealth, in subsequent years South Carolina rice planters John Holman, jr., Samuel Holman, John Garden, and Elias Collins, Alabama cattle rancher Zeno Chastang, Mississippi cotton planter Andrew Barland, and Louisiana slaveowners Jean Baptiste Meullion, Dominique Metoyer, and Suzanne Metoyer were given tracts of land and slave property by their white fathers.(27) Even when there were no direct ancestral ties, rural free Negroes who established income-producing farms or other rural enterprises usually received assistance from whites. Alabama bridge builder Horace King, for example, was emancipated in 1829 by Georgia slaveowner John Godwin, who later became his former slave's partner in a construction company.(28)

In both urban and rural areas, free Negroes who engaged in businesses, like their white counterparts, acquired increasing numbers of slaves. Urban artisans-builders, brickmakers, and mechanics-purchased slave apprentices, hod carriers, and helpers; merchants and storekeepers bought haulers, carters, and stock boys; plantation owners purchased house servants, cooks, mechanics, and field hands. The three most successful black businessmen in Georgia-merchant Solomon Humphries, drayman Andrew Marshall, and fisherman Anthony Odingsells-used bondsmen to assist them in their businesses. (29) Cattle rancher Zeno Chastang and his neighbor Maximillian Collins gradually increased the slave labor force working on their farms in Mobile County. They obtained mainly stockmen, herdsman, and field hands.(30) Though once a slave himself, Jean Meullion purchased slaves on a regular basis for his St.

Landry Parish plantation, as did cotton planter Dominique Metoyer of Natchitoches Parish, who eventually owned thirty-two blacks.(31) By 1830, approximately 1,556 black masters in the Lower South owned a total of 7,188 slaves. Constituting about 42 percent of Negro owners in the South, they owned 60 percent of the black-owned slaves (7,188 of 11,912). By then, approximately one free Negro family in four in the lower states (one in three in Louisiana) held slaves. A significant number of black slaveowners were engaged in various business enterprises or owned large farms or plantations.(32)

Free Negro Businesses in the Upper South, 1790-1840 In the Upper South, the free Negro population emerged from quite different circumstances than in the lower states. Part of a large-scale manumission process following the American Revolution, those who acquired freedom were predominately dark-skinned, possessed few skills, and were often illiterate. The free black population of the Upper South grew from 30,158 in 1790, to 114,070 in 1820, to 174,357 in 1840 (representing between 5.5 and 12.5 percent of the total black population of the region), but few among them started out with bequests from whites or could claim white ancestry.(33) Consequently, most free blacks struggled merely to survive. According to one estimate, there were only two hundred property-owning rural free blacks in the entire state of Virginia in 1820, when the population of this anomalous group had reached 37,000.(34) As in the lower states, free Negroes were not denied the legal right to own property (except slave property after 1832 in Virginia) or to establish enterprises of various sorts, but their tenuous economic situation and their lack of skills made it virtually impossible, except in extremely rare instances, for them to enter the field of business.(35)

The dawn of the nineteenth century in the Upper South therefore did not see expanding groups of black skilled artisans and others who were establishing businesses, as was the case in various towns and cities in the lower states; instead, there were often only a few free blacks per town or city in the Upper South who could be considered quasi-businessmen, operating small blacksmith shops, cooperages, or barbering establishments.(36) Baltimore blacksmith Jacob Guillard built up a comfortable trade between 1796 and 1806 but lost most of his property after signing a \$510 note to acquire his slave son, who promptly ran away to the North.(37) Alexandria Va.) carpenter and builder Thomas Braddock hired several apprentices in his house construction business between 1812 and 1829, acquiring and building several rental houses in the process.(38) Georgetown (D.C.) grocer Joseph Moor, Norfolk (Va.) carpenter Cuddy Dunn, and Lynchburg Va.) wheelwright Archer Cooper were among the few men who were able to establish small businesses in their communities during this early period.(39)

In the upper states prior to 1840, the few free Negroes who established larger business operations were in some respects similar to their counterparts in the Lower South: they were most likely persons of mixed racial origin; they were often the children or grandchildren of whites; and they usually received some assistance from white benefactors. The two largest black farmers in Virginia, Priscilla Ivey and Frankey Miles, had cohabitated with white slaveowners.(40) Richmond bookkeeper Christopher MacPherson was emancipated by his owner and given some financial assistance as he began his career.(41) In North Carolina, besides John Stanly, whose father was white, cabinet maker Thomas Day of Milton, merchant Louis Sheridan of Bladen County, and contractor James D. Sampson of Wilmington were persons of mixed racial ancestry.(42) In Tennessee and Kentucky, the few free Negroes who established business

enterprises, including Nashville hotel owner Robert Rentfro, received assistance from their former owners.(43) With its early Spanish, French, and creole traditions, St. Louis was similar to the Gulf region, and by the 1830s most of the free persons of color who engaged in business there-merchant Samuel Mordecai, cattle dealer Louis Charleville, real estate developer Louis Rutgers, and "fancy goods" dealer Cyprian Clamorgan-were children or grandchildren of whites who had provided them with financial assistance.(44)

Compared with the Lower South, black slave ownership developed differently in the upper states. In 1830, a total of 2,128 free Negroes owned 4,728 slaves, slightly more than two blacks per slaveowner. If approximately one out of four families in the lower states owned slaves, only approximately one out of fourteen in the Upper South was in that category. Most of them owned family members or other loved ones whom they could not emancipate according to the laws. Yet some of the most successful entrepreneurs in the region were slaveowners for profit. Stanly was the most notable example, but farmer Priscilla Ivey in Virginia, Louis Sheridan and James Sampson in North Carolina, and Sherod Bryant, one of the largest free black farmers in Tennessee, purchased or acquired slave laborers, as did Virginia grocer Archibald Batte of Chesterfield County, who relied on slaves to perform much of the labor he required for stocking shelves and delivering groceries.(45)

Thus, with the growth and expansion of the free Negro population in the South between 1790 and 1840, two distinct groups of Negro entrepreneurs emerged. In the lower states, with its relatively small and largely mulatto free Negro population, free persons of color had many advantages over their brethren in the upper states. In Charleston, New Orleans, and a few other towns and cities, as well as in some farming districts, a distinct free Negro business class emerged. Often directly related to the white slaveholding class, these entrepreneur's were persons of substantial means who owned prosperous enterprises. Free blacks in the upper states, on the other hand, rarely established themselves in business, and those who did often maintained small operations working as skilled or semiskilled artisans. The tiny number of Upper South free persons of color who did own and operate large businesses or who owned large farms were in some respects similar to their brethren in the Deep South-they were persons of mixed racial background and sometimes slaveholders-but they were so few and so widely scattered (except perhaps in St. Louis) that they represent less a business class than isolated instances of individual entrepreneurial success.

Continued Growth in the Lower South, 1841-1860

During the late antebellum era, as the sectional controversy intensified, free persons of color in the lower states came under increasing attack from whites. Those engaged in business, however, were often large property owners who were able to protect themselves from the tumultuous political currents. Thus, although the fairly rapid expansion into the entrepreneurial class during the 1820s and 1830s began to slow in some sections, the 1840s and 1850s witnessed a continued growth of black business activity in the region. Some large farmers suffered from the depression of the early 1840s or lost their land and slaves because of droughts, floods, crop failures, or price fluctuations, but others expanded their landholdings, increased their slave labor force, and bought new machinery. Although some urban businessmen lost white customers in the hostile racial climate, others expanded their business operations and attracted new customers. If some blacks faced increasing competition from white artisans who raised the race question to gain a

competitive edge, others maintained their virtual monopoly in certain trades. Thus, despite racial tensions, there was a continued growth of the business class during the period. And the entrepreneurial group in the Lower South remained, by a significant margin, the most prosperous group of blacks in the country.

The continued expansion can be readily seen by analyzing the middle-period U.S. population censuses. Any definition of what constituted a black business class during the middle period has certain limitations, but census takers were instructed to record the occupation household heads, as well as an estimate of their real (1850-70) and personal (1860-70) property holdings. At the same time, R- G. Dun and Company, the New York credit rating company, used the "M" rating-less than \$500-as the lowest "estimated pecuniary strength" for individual entrepreneurs.(46) By combining the occupation and property information in the census with an estimated total estate (real and personal property) of at least \$500, a rough profile of Negro business activity emerges.

But for certain occupations not usually considered business pursuits for whites but that were so for blacks (carpenters, laundresses, seamstresses), as well as for farmers and planters, such a small estate would not indicate business involvement. Consequently, two other wealth estimates have been used to determine business activity among these groups: at least \$1,000 for skilled workers who were sometimes engaged in business, and at least \$2,000 for farmers and planters. In 1850, census takers recorded an estimate only of real, not personal, estate. The adjustments made to estimate total estates in that year are \$300 for business occupations, \$600 for skilled blacks engaged in business, and \$1,400 for rural blacks listed as farmers and planters. The three-fifths realty/total estate ratio was about the same as the distribution in 1860 of real (63 percent) compared to personal (37 percent) property owned by those engaged in business. Despite this adjusted scale, the changing configuration of black-owned businesses can be readily seen by analyzing the censuses in such a manner (see "A Note on Sources and Methodology" at the end of this article).

In the rural Lower South, free persons of color continued to manage large farms and plantations during the 1840s and 1850s. South Carolina rice planter Margaret Mitchell Harris produced nearly 250,000 pounds of rice in 1849, while cotton planter and cotton gin manufacturer William Ellison of Statebutg shipped between eighty and one hundred bales of cotton to market each year during the 1850s, and his gins could be found in Georgia; Alabarna, and Mississippi. By 1860, Ellison owned sixty-three slaves and had amassed a fortune of more than \$68,000.(47) Alabama cattle ranchers and farmers Zeno Chastang and Maximillian Collins, who owned land and slaves on an island in Mobile Bay, were nearly as prosperous, as was the plantation-owning Barland family of Jefferson and Adams counties, Mississippi, who owned several large cotton plantations. Three mulatto brothers in Texas, William, Aaron, and Abner Ashworth, managed thriving cattle ranches. Even after being forced to flee for their fives during a period of racial unrest in the mid-1850s, they returned to a different county and resumed their ranching business. (48)

In Louisiana, large-scale farming remained relatively widespread among the state's rural free Negro population. By 1850, among Louisiana's rural free black owners of real estate, nearly two out of five (209) controlled at least \$1,400 worth of real estate. They owned an average of \$9,062 per landholder. The proportion among rural free Negro family heads who had reached this level

was almost exactly the same as the proportion (17 percent) of white landowners in the nation as a whole.(49) In 1860, among the approximately 1,088 rural free black families, 201 possessed total estates worth at least \$2,000. They owned \$3.5 million worth of property-land, slaves, livestock, and machinery-for an average of 17,000 per property owner.(50) These Louisiana farmers controlled one-sixth of all black-owned property in the South. Typically, they cultivated a few hundred acres, owned small gangs of slaves, and tended herds of livestock, but the group also included some of the most prosperous black merchant-farmers in the United States: St. John the Baptist Parish's Louisa Ponis, who owned 1,300 acres valued at \$35,000 and produced several hundred hogsheads of sugar each year; Plaquemines Parish's Andrew Durnford, whose 2,660-acre St. Rosalie plantation was worth \$161,300; and Iberville Parish's Madam Cyprien Ricard who, along with her son Pierre, owned a 1,050-acre plantation valued at \$200,000 on the eve of the Civil War.(51) Like their white neighbors, they bought and sold slaves, marketed their crops with commission merchants, maintained lines of credit with various brokers, and secured loans from mercantile houses and banks in New Orleans and Natchez.(52)

Estates of this size were extremely rare, but in towns and cities of the Lower South free blacks continued to maintain more modest businesses as carpenters and builders, bricklayers and brickmakers, tailors, grocers, and storekeepers. In Charleston, South Carolina, the building trades continued to be dominated by free persons of color who worked gangs of free black and sometimes slave apprentices, but the city also boasted prosperous shoemakers Malcolm Brown and John Mishaw, hairdresser John Francis, barber Peter Brown, stablekeeper Jacob Green, and woodyard owner Robert Howard.(53) In Savannah, and along the Gulf Coast in Pensacola and Mobile, a few free people of color maintained shops and stores, and in Huntsville and Florence (Ala.), Natchez, and Baton Rouge, they ran livery stables, omnibus lines, barbershops, grocery stores, and mercantile firms.(54)

Even in New Orleans, despite increased harassment and the emigration of some free black businessmen to islands in the Caribbean, large-scale free black business activity continued during the late antebellum era. Eulalie Macarty's son, Drausin McCarty [sic], ran a highly regarded dry goods brokerage firm in the city, and Drausin's brothers-in-law, merchants and exchange brokers Bernard and Albin Soulie, were described in an R- G. Dun credit report as very wealthy, est. w[orth] from 250-300m." Equally impressive were the ascents of undertaker Pierre Casenave, who, between 1850 and 1857, increased his annual income from \$10,000 to \$40,000, and tailor Francois Lacroix, who speculated in various city properties between 1845 and 1860, and increased his real estate holdings from \$30,000 to \$242,600, making him one of the largest individual Negro realty owners in the South.(55)

Under the criteria cited previously, the number of free blacks engaged in business nearly doubled during the 1850s (from 575 to 1,048) (see Table 1). Although the number of large farmers and planters fell in some sections of the Lower South, including several Louisiana parishes, in other sections free persons of color expanded their holdings and began new business operations. There was also a surge into the entrepreneurial class during the 1850s among free women of color, who opened boarding and lodging houses, seamstress shops, and laundry businesses. AD the business occupational categories-artisans usually engaged in business blacksmiths, cabinet makers, shoemakers, tailors, etc.); small-scale manufacturers (brickmakers, cigarmakers, sugar manufacturers, etc.); service businesses (barbers, brokers, livery keepers, "landlords," realtors);

retailers (butchers, grocers, lumber merchants, dry goods merchants, etc.); and artisans, seamstresses, and laundresses with at least \$1,000 in total estate holdings or farmers and planters with at least \$2,000-grew between 1850 and 1860. Estimated pecuniary strength also rose, though not enough to keep pace with inflation or rising land and property values. By 1860, the mean total estate of Lower South blacks engaged in business stood at \$7,000; the median stood at \$2,300 (see Table 2). The figures suggest that those at the top of the business hierarchy were to some extent protected from the racial turmoil confronting other free blacks during the tumultuous decade before the Civil War.(56)

Rapid Expansion in the Upper South, 1841-1860

It took Upper South free blacks a generation after freedom to begin their entry into the business class in significant numbers. Rarely assisted by whites, often emerging from slavery themselves or the children of slaves, free Negroes in the region confronted substantial barriers to establishing even the smallest enterprises. But from the mid-1840s onward, with an upturn in the economy, improved roads and river transportation systems, new techniques for replenishing the land, and increasing demands for skilled workers, they found conditions more favorable. It was more than the general prosperity, however, that caused the number of free blacks engaged in business in the Upper South to rise much more rapidly than that of their counterparts in the lower states (from 514 in 1850 to 1,402 in 1860) (see Tables 3 and 4). Now a generation removed from bondage, they had acquired a considerable degree of experience in dealing with economic matters. In rural areas, some began purchasing land when prices were low and by the 1850s had acquired total estates in excess of \$2,000, whereas in towns and cities they opened shops as blacksmiths, builders, shoemakers, and barbers or started businesses as draymen and haulers.

Most of those who entered the business field had spent many years building up their enterprises. The careers of three Upper South free blacks-Georgetown (D.C.) feed merchant Alfred Lee, Petersburg Va.) livery operator Robert Clark, and St. Louis barber William Johnson-indicate both the qualities it took to move ahead in the border states and the differences between the entrepreneurial class in the upper states and their counterparts in the Lower South. Born in 1805, at about the age of twenty-five Lee opened a small feed store. By close attention to details, he gradually built up his white clientele, expanded into the flour retailing business, and by 1850 was one of the most prosperous free blacks in the area. "No man of his race," one observer noted, "[is] more highly respected in Georgetown."(57) Similarly, Robert Clark began with little capital and even less experience. After working in a hotel and saving enough to purchase his freedom, he opened a livery stable, which eventually became the most popular establishment of its kind in the town of Petersburg. By 1860, he possessed a total estate of \$9,000, including \$5,000 worth of real estate.(58) Described as clear, farsighted, and shrewd in business," William Johnson opened his barbershop on one of the main thoroughfares in St. Louis in 1840. Within a few years he had saved a small amount of money and began investing in city property. During the 1850s he greatly increased his business among white lawyers, businessmen, and civic leaders as well as his property holdings.(59)

As suggested by the careers of Lee, Clark, and Johnson, free blacks who engaged in business in the Upper South differed markedly from those in the lower states. In the upper states most Negroes who entered the business field did so without the assistance of whites. Even the most prosperous among them controlled relatively modest estates, and most worked as draymen,

laundresses, blacksmiths, and barbers. There were very few skilled craftsmen (brickmasons, carpenters, coopers, mechanics, shoemakers, or plasterers) who established businesses, and even fewer tradesmen, shopkeepers, and large-scale farmers. In the 1850 census, among free Negroes with at least \$1,400 in realty, there was only one farmer in the entire Upper South listed as a "planter." William Epps of Halifax County, Virginia, owned no slaves and possessed only \$5,900 worth of real estate. Besides John Stanly, who lost his holdings during the 1830s, the few free Negroes in the region who did manage relatively large business operations-Baltimore caterer Henry Jakes, Richmond barber Reuben West, North Carolina merchant Louis Sheridan, Nashville gardener Lewis Doxey, and St. Louis cooper John Meachum-were among only a handful of prosperous black businessmen in the entire Upper South.(60)

A profile of free Negro business people on the eve of the Civil War further demonstrates the differences between the two sections. With six times the total free black population, and even after the substantial growth of the 1850s, the number of blacks engaged in business in the upper states (1,402) was not much greater than that in the Lower South (1,048). Among Upper South black entrepreneurs, about two out of five were residents of towns and cities (compared with three of five in the Lower South), one out of ten was female (compared with two of five in the Lower South), and a majority was listed in the census as black rather than mulatto (compared with 84 percent of mixed racial heritage in the Lower South). In every occupational business category, free blacks in the upper states remained far below their counterparts in the Deep South in pecuniary strength, and in some categories they possessed only one-third the average wealth of the Lower South entrepreneurs. In the upper states the proportion of business people who owned less than \$1,000 worth of property was substantially larger (23 percent compared with 14 percent), and the proportion of those with over \$5,000 was significantly smaller (11 percent compared with 27 percent) than in the lower states. The average total estate among free black business people in the Upper South stood at about \$2,700 (compared with more than \$7,000), and the median holding was \$1,700 (compared with \$2,300). The lower median reflected a broader distribution, and suggested that some of these entrepreneurs, like Petersburg's Robert Clark, had started out as slaves.(61)

The Transition Period, 1861-1880

The Civil War and its aftermath brought profound changes to the antebellum configuration of black-owned businesses in the South. In the lower states, the unique and privileged position of free persons of color who managed stores and shops or owned large farms and plantations was shattered by the intrusion of the Union soldiers. Like their white neighbors, blacks suffered from wartime destruction, declining land values, and postwar economic dislocations. Those who owned slaves lost their slave property," and others found it difficult to adjust to the political upheaval that came in the wake of emancipation.(62) Moreover, political reconstruction in the lower states was marked by prolonged periods of racial unrest and violence.

In the rural areas of the Lower South, free persons of color who had once owned thriving farms and plantations and marketed substantial quantities of rice, sugar, and cotton now struggled desperately merely to hold on to their land. "When [the] war commence it purty hard on folks," a free Negro in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana, recalled. First came the Confederates, who swept up the slaves, including those owned by blacks, to work on fortifications. Then came the Yankee raiding parties who burned, pillaged, and looted. Everywhere the Union Army advanced, free

Negroes told of death and destruction. "The road a the way to Natchitoches," one observer said, describing the region where some of the wealthiest free persons of color in America owned their plantations, "was a solid flame." During the 1860s, among blacks listed as large farmers and planters in the Lower South, the mean value of property held dropped by 68 percent, from \$14,177 to \$4,513, more than the general postwar depreciation in total estate values (see Table 5).(63)

Even in New Orleans, where some former free persons of color continued to maintain their profitable business enterprises during the Union occupation (1862-65), and in Charleston, with its rapid postwar economic recovery (1865-68), the trend was downward for a majority of the free black entrepreneurs who had established businesses before the war. Among free persons of color who owned real estate in 1860 and 1870 in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth wards, the "heart of the free mulatto [business] community," as David Rankin has called this section, nearly half experienced losses, only one out of four improved his position, and nearly a third lost everything. Grocer Felix Roberts saw his real holdings dwindle from \$5,600 to \$1,000; builder Casimir Labat moved from \$3,000 to no wealth at all in 1870. Roberts and Labat were joined by several other former free Negro businessmen in the three wards who lost most of their antebellum estates.(64) During the 1870s, other leading creoles of color who had managed successful prewar businesses suffered a similar fate.(65) On the eve of the Civil War, Charleston boasted ninety-two free Negroes who ran businesses of various types. Most of them were shopkeepers, storekeepers, skilled artisans, wood dealers, butchers, and boardinghouse keepers. By the 1870s, despite the substantial increase in the free black population in the wake of emancipation, the number of businesses operated by the group had remained about the same, with a steadily decreasing number of free persons of color within their ranks. (66)

The decline of Negro business people free before the war in the deep South gave rise to a new group of black entrepreneurs. Census takers in 1870 did not ask a question about former status, but a profile of postwar blacks engaged in business suggests that at least some of those entering the entrepreneurial class were former slaves. A majority of those engaged in business (53 percent) were now listed in the census as "black" rather than "mulatto." Among them the proportion who were listed as "planters" with total estates of at least \$2,000 had dropped from 14 percent in 1860 to 2 percent a decade later. After large farmers and planters, the next leading occupations in 1860 had been carpenters with estates of \$1,000 or more, boardinghouse keepers, and seamstresses, laundresses, and shoemakers; in 1870, the next leading business occupations were blacksmiths, draymen, carpenters, grocers, and barbers (see Table 6). The proportion who were illiterate rose from 18 percent to 46 percent, and the proportion with estates of less than \$1,000 rose from 14 to 37 percent, while the mean wealth dropped from 7,000 to less than \$2,500. Although none of these indices proves the infusion of ex-slaves into the business class, taken together they strongly suggest a significant transition in the lower states.(67)

Nearly as precipitous as the decline of former free blacks in business in the lower states was the rise of black-owned business operations in the Upper South during and immediately after the Civil War. Upper South blacks possessed many advantages over their brethren in the Deep South. Except in Virginia and in portions of Tennessee and North Carolina, they were often far removed from the fields of battle.(68) They had owned relatively few slaves, often members of their own families or other loved ones, and the value of their total estate holdings did not

depreciate as sharply as the property owned by free persons of color in the lower states.(69) In some areas, rather than wartime destruction, there was an economic boom during the 1860s, which created increased demands for service-type businesses, which had long been dominated by free blacks.(70) Moreover, political reconstruction in the Upper South was of relatively short duration and white fear of "black domination" less pronounced, at least compared to the black belt regions of the lower states. Consequently, despite violence, intimidation, white resistance, and the failure of the federal government to provide assistance, blacks in the upper states, including a few former slaves, significantly expanded their business operations as well as their wealth holdings.

They did so by engaging in a broad range of economic activities as shopkeepers, storekeepers, skilled artisans, haulers and draymen, and restaurant owners. Delaware blacksmith Prince Colwell, Maryland shoemaker George Adams, District of Columbia laundress Eliza Bean, Kentucky furniture dealer Moses Spencer, Tennessee hauler-coachman William Napier, and Missouri wagoner Adam Taylor were among a significant number of antebellum business people who sustained or slightly improved their economic position after the war.(71) Among the most successful former free Negroes in this economic expansion were Chestertown (Md.) restaurateur William Perkins, who more than quadrupled his \$2,300 antebellum estate by 1870; Baltimore barber Augustus Roberts, who owned no realty in 1860, but was listed as being worth \$12,000 in 1870; Alexandria Va.) butcher William Gray, who increased his realty from \$1,700 to \$5,000; Richmond boiler-maker James Woodson, whose wealth rose from \$700 to \$4,000; and Louisville barber Nathaniel Rogers, who increased his holdings from \$1,800 to 8,000.(72)

Not only were a number of former free blacks able to improve their business and property accumulations during the Civil War decade, but in some regions of the Upper South a few freedmen entered the entrepreneurial class. In the wake of emancipation, with few resources and the general climate of white hostility, it is not surprising that only a tiny number of former slaves were able to establish businesses, but the changing profile of black businesses in the postbellum Upper South suggests that in this region too freedmen were now entering the entrepreneurial group. There was an increase in the proportion of those listed in the census as "black" from 51 percent to 67 percent, as well as a proportional decline among barbers (after farmers the largest antebellum business group) and an increase among blacksmiths and draymen. The antebellum slave population, of course, was overwhelmingly black rather than mulatto, and blacksmithing and hauling took very small amounts of investment capital. The proportion who were illiterate rose from 38 percent to 49 percent with an additional 10 percent in 1870 semiliterate), and the proportion with estates of less than \$1,000 rose from 23 to 32 percent, while the mean wealth dropped from \$2,700 to under \$2,400 (see Table 7). As in the lower states, none of these indices proves the infusion of ex-slaves into the business class, but the evidence is strongly suggestive that such was the case.(73)

Unlike the antebellum period, when a few of the South's wealthiest black business people were residents of the Lower South, by the 1870s a number of the region's richest entrepreneurs lived in the urban areas of the Upper South. District of Columbia hotel owner and restaurateur James T Wormley acquired one of the finest hotels in the city, and its dining room became "one of the experiences which every visitor to Washington thought he must not miss." In 1870, Wormley, born of free parents, had amassed a small fortune of 87,000. Another hotel

owner, slave-born Henry Harding, was just as well known to visitors of Nashville, and in 1870 he was listed as being worth \$35,000. He later became one of the two largest Negro taxpayers in Davidson County. Former bondsman James Thomas, a slave and subsequently a free black barber in Nashville and St. Louis before the war, married Antoinette Rutgers, the daughter of Pelagie Rutgers, the wealthiest black woman in Missouri, and amassed a fortune speculating in real estate, some of it originally belonging to his late mother-in-law. By the 1870s, he owned nearly two entire blocks in downtown St. Louis, rented forty-eight apartment units, and was worth an estimated \$165,000, the third largest estate controlled by a black in the South. (74)

The new center of black business activity, surpassing antebellum Charleston and New Orleans, was the District of Columbia. During the 1860s, the city witnessed a rapid population growth, which increased the demand for builders, skilled workers, and supply merchants. In addition, unlike some rural areas of the Upper South, the new demands for real estate drove D.C. property values spiraling upward, higher than those of any other city except perhaps St. Louis. Free Negroes who had acquired buildings and businesses before or during the war, especially in the First and Second wards, where most black business people owned property, witnessed a marked appreciation in the value of their holdings. There were also new employment opportunities for blacks as teachers, physicians, lawyers, government employees, and skilled workers, which sometimes led to later careers in business. (75)

As a result the city's black entrepreneurial class expanded rapidly. It included former free blacks of modest means who had expanded their business operations, formerly prosperous free Negroes who had maintained or improved their prewar enterprises, and a few industrious former slaves who started new businesses. Prior to the war grocer Edward Crusoe owned a small store and his real estate was valued at \$2,000. By 1870, he ran a large-scale retail grain outlet, and his realty had increased tenfold. (76) Crusoe was joined by a number of other antebellum free blacks of relatively modest means who now boasted estates in excess of \$5,000—barber Robert Booker, restaurant owner Richard Francis, salvager Palmer Briscoe, and plastering contractor Richard Sanders. (77) The city also boasted prosperous prewar blacks who maintained or enhanced their business operations, including boardinghouse owner Andrew Henson, barber James Wright, and restaurateur George I. Downing, whose estate was estimated at 17,000 in 1870. (78) In all, the District of Columbia witnessed more than a doubling in the number of blacks who owned businesses (156 to approximately 318) and a significant increase in their average real and personal property holdings (see Table 8). (79)

During the period under discussion, in both the Lower and Upper South, black business people catered almost exclusively to a white clientele. The skilled artisans, shopowners, grocers, and merchants of the lower states were in this respect similar to the blacksmiths, haulers, and barbers of the Upper South. Although there were a few instances of free persons of color serving both races prior to the war (undertaker Pierre Casenave in New Orleans, for instance), the limited economic resources of blacks in the Upper South and the racial prejudices in both sections made it virtually impossible for more than a few to serve black customers. Even those who had themselves emerged from slavery saw their economic prosperity linked to whites. After the war, most black business people continued to serve white customers and sometimes expressly forbade their brethren to enter their shops and stores, lest they sacrifice their white customers. (80)

Conclusion

The configuration of the black business class changed dramatically during the late eighteenth century and the first eight decades of the nineteenth century. Beginning during the 1790s and early 1800s in Charleston, New Orleans, and a few Louisiana parishes, free persons of color in the lower states entered the entrepreneurial class with the assistance of whites, often relatives who provided them with financial assistance. The growth of the business class in the lower states continued during the late antebellum era, but increasing racial conflicts and growing anti-Negro sentiment made it difficult for some business people to expand their operations. Only a handful of free blacks were able to establish themselves in business during the early years in the Upper South. Most of those who achieved a measure of success were like their brethren in the Lower South—persons of mixed racial ancestry who had been assisted by white relatives. The significant expansion in the upper states in the two decades prior to the Civil War was largely the result of years of effort among free blacks, some of whom had begun life in bondage. The Civil War and its aftermath proved to be disastrous for most formerly free Negroes in the lower states who had engaged in business, especially large farmers and planters, but within only a few years after the war formerly free blacks in the upper states and former slaves in both sections began opening small shops and stores and establishing themselves as blacksmiths, draymen, shoemakers, builders, and grocers.

Viewing the period as a whole, one is struck by the remarkable determination of black southerners to become part of the capitalist system by acquiring business enterprises. Although many faded in their business endeavors, a few were highly successful. Most of them were strong-willed, aggressive, industrious, and independent men and women who were able to carve out a niche in their local economies. Some did so while still in bondage, others as free persons of color, and still others as former slaves. A few were as successful as the best-known white business people in their communities. They had to overcome not only various economic problems, but also slavery, racial oppression, white hostility and violence, discrimination, segregation, and institutions designed to keep them in a subordinate position. Considering these difficulties, blacks made impressive strides in the business world during a period that witnessed the end of the African slave trade, the destruction of the South's "peculiar institution," and the rise of a small but important black entrepreneurial class. From this perspective, W. E. B. Du Bois's comment early in the twentieth century achieves greater clarity: "It is astonishing," he wrote, "how the African has integrated himself into American civilization." (81)

A Note on Sources and Methodology

Because the statistical evidence in this study is derived primarily from the U.S. population census returns for 1850, 1860, and 1870, it seems appropriate to point out some of the strengths and weaknesses of using the census in studying black business history during the middle period. As suggested in the text, census takers were instructed to record the name, age, color, gender, occupation, and wealth holdings of every household head (excluding slaves) in the United States. The great strength of the census is that it connects the color, occupation, and wealth of individuals for the entire South. Most sources omit one or another of these variables.

Scholars who have dealt with statistical evidence for the nineteenth century, however, recognize the limitations of even the best sources. "Color" was sometimes difficult to discern, and some blacks were listed as mulattoes, while some mulattoes were listed as white. A few individuals

were missed by census takers or listed twice. There was an undercount of Charleston's free blacks in 1850, and of the South's entire black population in 1870 between 6 and 7 percent) (see Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, 53-54). The occupation category was often disregarded b), census takers for free women of color, even those who owned substantial amounts of property, and in 1850 they failed to include about 30 percent of the occupations for property owners with at least \$300 in real estate. In 1860, they omitted occupational listings for about 18 percent, and in 1870 about 2 percent, of those with total estates of at least \$500. These undercounts and omissions were surely, smaller among black business people, who were often among the best-known free Negroes and freedmen in their communities, but the census nevertheless lacks the degree of precision that twentieth-century sources provide.

Added to this is the problem of merely defining what constituted a black-owned business during the nineteenth century. I have relied primarily on a "wealth model" in this essay, but there were some propertyless blacks (including slaves) who engaged in various types of business activity. In general, however, most men and women in business were property owners. I have included individuals with total estates (real and personal property) worth at least \$500. To some extent this is arbitrary, but generally, it is in line with R- G. Dun and Company's guidelines for a business enterprise. An individual's total estate was then connected with his or her occupation.

The census returns included a number of occupations that were of all obvious business nature, but others were not as easily discernable. Since some blacks who were engaged in business were listed as carpenters, masons, mechanics, brickmasons, laundresses, and seamstresses, but most of those listed in such a manner worked as skilled or semiskilled laborers, I have pushed the total estate level in these occupations up to at least \$1,000, indicating that most of those with such an estate were engaged in business. Washington Beatie of Washington County, Virginia, for example, was listed in the 1860 census as a carpenter with \$4,000 worth of real estate and \$2,500 in personal holdings. Actually, he was a small builder whose realty holdings placed him among the upper 10 percent (approximately) of landholders-white or black-in the nation. The same was true for Catherine Stanly, John Stanly's daughter, who was listed in the census as a seamstress but actually ran a dressmaking shop in New Bern, North Carolina, during the 1850s. To omit them and other skilled blacks with significant amounts of property would be to omit a very important segment of the black entrepreneurial class.

Farmers constituted another group of entrepreneurs. Land values were such that \$1,000 would not be appropriate as a minimum for rural blacks who might be considered engaged in business, but it seems likely that those with total estates of at least \$2,000 had moved away from subsistence farming and had begun to market their crops for profit. Here, too, to omit farmers and planters from an analysis of blacks in business would be to exclude some of the most successful business people and wealthiest free persons of color in the South.

Since the 1850 census included only real property estimates, I have dropped the amounts in the three categories to individuals with real estate worth at least \$300, \$600, and \$1,400, approximately the same proportion (three-fifths) of real and personal property that free black property owners held a decade later. About 15 percent of those who constituted a business class in 1860 did not own real estate, and thus the 1850 data are only estimates.

Despite these limitations, there is little doubt that analyses of the middle-period censuses show better than any other source the general trends with regard to black-owned businesses. This is especially true when comparing the Upper South with the Lower South, since the relative changes over time can be clearly observed by examining the census returns. And, despite the multi-tier analysis and the changes in the census, the data strongly demonstrate the general expansion in the upper states and the changing nature of the business class in the Lower South during the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

In the business categories that follow it should also be noted that, although every property-owning head of household was included from the censuses of 1850 and 1860, and those with at least \$1,000 total estate from 1870, a sampling procedure was used for those whose total estates were between \$500 and \$900 in 1870. The sample included property owners who appeared on every twentieth page and its facing page (numbers in the upper right corner) of the census returns. The sampled data were then considered to be 5 percent of the total number of those engaged in business within this property range. At the local and county levels, these data provide only rough estimates (thus the information on Charleston and the District of Columbia for 1870 is general), but for the subregional divisions in this article the data probably vary by only a few percentage points. All of this information was typed into the computer and analyzed with SPSSX, the most recent version of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

LOREN SCHWENINGER is professor of history at the University, of North Carolina, Greensboro.

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- 26 Brent H. Holcomb, ed., "1786 Tax Returns," *South Carolina Magazine of ancestral Research* 9 (Spring 1981): 73; Duke de la Rouchefoucault Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America the Country of the Iroquois and Upper Canada in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* London, 1799), 602; Larry Koger, *Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860* (Jefferson, N.C., 1985), 13-14, 108-10.
- 27 Legislative Records, Petition to the South Carolina General Assembly, 3 Oct. 1791, SCDH [the Holmans]; Koger, *Black Slaveowners*, 107-8, 119-21, 128-29, 168 [Collins and Garden]-Jack D. L. Holmes, "The Role of Blacks in Spanish Alabama: The Mobile District, 1786-1813," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 37 (Spring 1975):10 [Chastang]; Legislative Petitions, Petition of Andrew Barland to the Senate and House of Representatives of Mississippi, c. 1824, R.G. 47, boxes 16-17, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss. [Barland]; Deed of Emancipation, 21 Feb. 1776, Meullion Family Papers, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, La. [Meullion]; Records of the Parish Probate Court [hereafter RPPC]: Natchitoches Parish, La., Successions, #375, 26 July 1839 [Dominique Metoyer]; #355, 7 Sept. 1838 [Marie Susanne Metoyer]; Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 74-75.
- 28 George Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, supplement, ser. 1, 10 vols. (Westport, Conn., 1979), vol. 4, pt. 2:368, 371.
- 29 Johnson, "Free Blacks in Antebellum Savannah," 423-24.
- 30 Carter G. Woodson, ed., *Free - Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (1924; rpt., Westport, Conn., 1968). 1; United States Manuscript Slave Census, Co., Ala.,
- 31 Receipt, William Shipp to Jean Meullion, 5 Feb. 1811, Meullion Family Papers Mills, *The Forgotten People* 57; RPPC, Natchitoches Parish, La., Successions, #375, 26 July 1839.
- 32 These statistics are derived from Woodson, ed., *Free Negro Owners of Slaves*, and Koger, *Black Slaveowners*, 20-21; see R- Halliburton, jr., "Free Blacks Owners of Slaves: A Reappraisal of the Woodson Thesis," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 76 (July 1976): 129-35, and Loren Schweningen, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915* (Urbana, Ill., 1990 [forthcoming]), 385-86. The number of free Black families in the Lower South is a rough estimate derived from the general population figures in Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 136-37. In a total population of 30,193 with about one in five counted as a family head, there were approximately 6,039 free black families in the region.
- 33 Berlin, "The Structure of the Free Negro Caste," 297-319; and *Slaves Without* 136-37.
- 34 Memorial of the Richmond and Manchester Colonization Society, Presented January 1825, in *Annual Reports of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States*, 91 vols. (1818-1910; rpt., New York, 1969), 8:55.
- 35 John H. Russell, *The Free Negro in Virginia, 1619-1865* (Baltimore, Md., 1913), 94.
- 36 Michael L. Nicholls, "Passing Through This Troublesome World: Free Blacks in the Early Southside," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 92 (Jan. 1984): 64-67.

- 37 Federal Intelligencer, and Baltimore Daily Gazette, 25 April 1895; Federal Gazette and Baltimore Advertiser 11 April 1805, MESDA; Leroy Graham, *Baltimore: The Nineteenth Century Black Capital* (New York, 1982), 261-62.
- 38 RCPC, Alexandria, Va., Wills, bk. 1821-1831 (25 Nov. 1829), 342, MESDA.
- 39 Letitia Brown, *Free Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1790-1846* (New York, 1972), 132 [Moor]; RCPC, Norfolk Co., Va.: Deeds, bk. 36 (29 Feb. 1796), 123; bk. 38 (10 Jan. 1800), 88; Wills, bk. 3 (26 April 1814), 118, MESDA [Dunn]; RCPC, Campbell Co., Va., *Hustings Deed Book A, 1805-1813* (6 June 1808), 103 [Cooper]. In 1816, Cooper was charged with retailing beer without a license. See *ibid.*, *Hustings Court Order Book 1812-1817* (8 Nov. 1816), 232, MESDA.
- 40 Luther Porter Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia:*, 1830-1860* (Washington, D.C., 1942), 122, 127, 217.
- 41 Deed of Emancipation, David Ross to Christopher MacPherson, 2 June 1792, in *Legislative Records, Petition of Christopher MacPherson*, 10 Dec. 1810, Richmond City, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Va.
- 42 Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 45, 144, 176, 183, 190, 216; USMSPC, Caswell Co., N. C., 1850, p. 193 [Day]. In this and subsequent census citations, the page number in the upper right corner of the right-hand page is cited to include both the page on which the number appears and the facing page. The page numbers are usually printed, but occasionally they are holograph. Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., " 'To Be Truly Free': Louis Sheridan and the Colonization of Liberia," *Civil War History* 29 (Dec. 1983): 332; Louis Sheridan to Joseph Gales, 20, 27 May 1836, in *Records of the American Colonization Society*, reel 26 [Sheridan]; John Hope Franklin, "The Free Negro in the Economic Life of Antebellum North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 19 (Oct. 1942), 369-70 [Sampson].
- 43 *Legislative Records, Petition of the Inhabitants of Davidson County to the Tennessee General Assembly, 1801, #20-1-1801*, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tenn.
- 44 Cyprian Clamorgan, *The Colored Aristocracy of St. Louis* (St. Louis, Mo., 1858), 9 [Mordecai], 15 [Charleville]; RCPC, St. Louis, Mo., *Estates, #637*, 29 July 1825 [Rutgers]; Lawrence O. Christensen, "Cyprian Clamorgan, the Colored Aristocracy of St. Louis 1858," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 31 (Oct. 1974): 5, 6, 13, 14, 16, 22.
- 45 For Ivey, Sampson, and Sherida. see notes 40 and 42. J. Me on En d, "The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Tennessee," *Journal of Southern History* 9 (Feb. 1943): 54 [Bryant]; Philip J. Schwartz, "Emancipators, Protectors, and Anomalies: Free Black Slaveowners in Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 95 (July 1987): 317 [Batte].
- 46 [F. G. Dun and Company], *The Mercantile Agency Reference Book and Key) Containing Ratings of the Merchants, Manufacturers and Traders Generally throughout the United States* (New York, 1865).
- 47 USMSPC: Georgetown Co., S.C., 1850, p. 309 [Mitchell]; Sumter Co., S.C., 1850, p. 385; 1860, p. 133 [Ellison]. I have estimated Ellison's realty at \$15,000, rather than the \$8,300 listed in the census. Koger, *Black Slaveowners*, 37-38, 62, 121-23, 132, 136, 144-45.
- 48 USMSPC: Mobile Co., Ala., 1850, pp. 464, 481; Southern District, 1860, p. 27; Northern District, 1860, pp. 136-37, 140 [Chastang and Collins]; Adams Co., Miss., Natchez, 1860, pp. 44, 120; Jefferson Co., Texas, 1850, pp. 481, 497, 499; Orange Co., Texas, 1860, n.p.; Andrew Muir, "The Free Negro in Jefferson and Orange Counties, Texas," *Journal of Negro History* 35 (April 1950): 186, 191, 206 [Ashworths].

49 Computed from USMSPC, Louisiana, 1850; U. S. Census Office, *The seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, D.C., 1853), 474. The approximate number of rural free black families in the state was derived from dividing the total rural population by the average family size (6,302 by 5 = 1,260). In the nation, 22 percent of the families owned at least \$1,000 worth of realty, and 13 percent at least \$2,000. Soltow, *Men and Wealth*, 186.

50 Computed from USMSPC, 1850, 1860; Soltow, *Men and Wealth*, 64, 76, 81, 186; Joseph Karl Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana--1860* (New Orleans, La., 1964), 316; Sterkx, *The Free Negro in Ante-bellum Louisiana*, 200-214.

51 United States Manuscript Agricultural Census [hereafter USMSAC]: St. John the Baptist Parish, La., P. 661; St. Landry Parish, La., 1850, p. 1850 [Ponis] Whitten, Andrew Durnford, 85, 88; USMSPC, Plaquemines Parish, La., 1850, p. 278; USMSAC, Iberville Parish, La., 1850, p. 81; USMSPC, Iberville Parish, La., 1850, p. 329; James Freeman Clarke, *Present Condition of Free Colored People of the United States* (New York, 1859), 13; also see Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 221-23 [Ricard].

52 USMSAC: Pointe Coupee Parish, La., 1850, p. 569; St. Landry Parish, La., 1850, p. 695; St. Mary Parish, La., 1850, pp. 727-29; Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana-1860*, 79, 92-93; USMSPC, St. Mary Parish, La., 1850, p. 213.

53 USMSPC: Charleston, S.C., 3d Ward, 1860, p. 312 [Francis]; Charleston, S.C., St. Philip and St. Michael Parishes, 1850, p. 98 [Lee]; 1850, p. 129 [Brown]; 1850, p. 186 [Howard]; 1850, p. 156 [Mishaw]; 1850, p. 269 [Francis]; 1850, p. 110 [Green]; 3d Ward, 1860, p. 283 [Howard]; *List of the Tax Payers of the City of Charleston for 1859* (Charleston, S.C., 1860), 389 [Francis].

54 Johnson, "Free Blacks in Antebellum Savannah," 418-31; USMSPC: Escambia Co., Fla., Pensacola, 1850, p. 135 [tailor Ransom Lambert]; Mobile, Ala., p. 299 [carpenter and builder Joseph Lorant]; Madison Co., Ala., Huntsville, p. 188 [Every operator John Robinson]; Lauderdale Co., Ala., Florence, 1860, p. 39 [barber John Rapier, Sr.]; Hogan and Davis, *William Johnson's Natchez*, intro.; USMSPC: East Baton Rouge Parish, La., 1850, p. 169 [grocer Michael Granary]; 1860, p. 481 [merchant B. J. Beauregard].

55 Catterall, *Judicial Cases*, 3:292, 589, 611-12; Walker, "Racism, Slavery, and Free Enterprise," 354, 361-62 [Macarty]; USMSPC: New Orleans, La., 1st Mun., 7th Ward, 1850, p. 396 [Soulie]; New Orleans, 3d Ward, 1860, p. 257 [Lacroix]; 4th Ward, p. 82 [Casenave]; RPPC, *New Orleans, La. Successions, #38,677, 27 May 1876*, in *New Orleans Public Library* [Lacroix]; Leonard Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago, Ill., 1981), 42 [Soulie]; David Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War on the Free Colored Community of New Orleans," *Perspectives in American History* 11 (1977-78): 402-3 [Lacroix].

56 Computed from USMSPC, 1850, 1860. For a detailed list of occupations in each group, see the appendix.

57 Henry Robinson, "Some Aspects of the Free Negro Population of Washington, D.C., 1800-1862," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 64 (Spring 1969): 52-53; USMSPC: District of Columbia, Georgetown, 1850, p. 186; Georgetown, 1st Ward, 1860, p. 3.

58 Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding*, 97 n, 156; USMSPC Va., Petersburg, East Ward, 1860, p. 199.

59 Clamorgan, *The Colored Aristocracy*, 14; USMSPC, St. Louis, Mo., 2d Ward, 1850, p. 222; James Thomas to John Rapier, 3 May 1858, Rapier-Thomas Papers, MoorlandSpingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

60 USMSPC, Halifax Co., Va., 1850, p. 95 Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Pro" Holding, 107, 129 [Epps]; Gatewood, To Be Truly Free,' " 332-48; USMSPC: Baltimore, Md., 9th Ward, 1850, p. 47 [Jakes]; Henrico Co., Va., Richmond, 1850, p. 248 [West]; Davidson Co., Tenn., Nashville, 3d Ward, 1850, p. 356 [Doxey]; St. Louis, Mo., 4th Ward, 1850, p. 49; RCPC, St. Louis, Mo., Estates, #4173, 12 April 1854 [Meachum].

61 Computed from USMSPC, 1860.

62 Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (New York, 1977), 64-73; Whitelaw Reid, *After the War.- A Tour of the Southern States, 1865-66*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (1866; rpt., New York, 1965), 211-12; Koger, *Black Slaveowners*, chap. 10; Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 237.

63 George Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 19 vols. (Westport, Conn., 1972-), vol. 5, pt. 4:158 [St. Mary quote]; Mills, *the Forgotten People*, 237 [Natchitoches quote]; Petition for Relief of Antoine Meullion, Dec. 1889, #8090, in Meullion Family Papers; RPPC: St. Landry Parish, La., Successions, #5040, 14 Oct. 1890; Iberville Parish, La., Deeds, bk. 9(15 July 1868), 221-23; J. Ward Gurley, Jr., to Charles Benjamin, 18 May 1875, RCC, reel 6; Koger, *Black Slaveowners*, 120-24, 193-95; Johnson and Roark, *Black Masterds*, 314-15, 324, 330-31; Record of General Tax Return, Sout Carolina, 1865, 1866, 1867, SCDAB; Computed from USMSPC, 1860, 1870. Land values in the South dropped approximately 45 percent between 1860 and 1870; in some areas of the Lower South, they depreciated between 60 and 70 percent. The average total estate for adult males in the South dropped nearly 50 percent, from \$3,978 for the free population in 1860 to \$2,034 for whites in 1870. See U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture for the Year 1867*, 12 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1867), 102-19; Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind Freedom*, 51; Soltow, *Men and Wealth*, 65.

64 Computed from USMSPC, 1860, 1870; USMSPC, New Orleans, La., 6th Ward, 1860, p. 189 [Labat]; Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War," 396-98, 403-6.

65 New Orleans Picayune, 9 Sept. 1874 [Lacroix]; RPPC, New Orleans, La., Successions, #38,677, 27 May 1876 [Lacroix]; Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War," 405 [broker John Racquet Clay].

66 Computed from USMSPC, 1860, 1870; Koger, *Black Slaveholders*, 197. Some of this decline came after the deaths of leading antebellum businessmen and the failure of their children to sustain their wealth holdings. See RCPC, Charleston, S.C., Estates: #239-25, 15 June 1876 [realor Joseph Dereef]; #220-6, 8 July 1873 [tailor William McKinlay]; #243-20, 5 Feb. 1877 [builder Anthony Weston]; #158-19, 24 Feb. 1864 [butcher Francis L. Wilkinson]; Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 202.

67 Computed from USMSPC, 1860, 1870. Sec A Note on Sources and Methodology" and appendix.

68 John Dennett, *The South As It Is, 1865-66* (New York, 1965), 48; John T Trowbridge, *The Desolate South, 1865-66 - A Picture of the Battlefields and of the Devastated Confederacy*, ed. Gordon Carroll (1866; rpt., Boston, 1956), 153. Despite the title, Trowbridge described areas in the upper states that were conducting business as usual within a short period after the war.

69 Jackson, *Free Negro Labor*, 202-4; Schwarz, "Emancipators, Protectors, and Anomalies," 329-32; Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, 160.

70 Howard Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York, 1978), 62.

71 USMSPC: Kent Co., Del., Murderkill Hundred, 1850, p. 228; 1870, p. 192 [Colwell]; Baltimore Co., Md., Baltimore, 6th Ward, 1860, p. 541; Baltimore, 5th Ward, 1870, p. 159

[Adams]; District of Columbia, 7th Ward, 1860, p. 868; District of Columbia, 7th Ward, 1870, p. 322 [Bean]; Herbert A. Thomas, jr., "Victims of Circumstance: Negroes in a Southern Town [Lexington], 1865-1880," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 71 July 1973): 268 [Spencer]; USMSPC: Davidson Co., Tenn., Nashville, 4th Ward, 1860, p. 400; Nashville, 4th Ward, 1870, p. 240 [Napier]; St. Louis, Mo., 4th Ward, 1860, p. 73; St. Louis, 5th Ward, 1870, p. 31 [Taylor].

72 RCPC: Kent Co., Md., Land Deeds, Liber #JR-1 (1849), p. 27; Liber #JKH-2 (1860), p. 230; Liber #JKH-5 (1866), p. 359, in Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Md. [Perkins]; USMSPC: Kent Co., Md., Chestertown, 1860, p. 1006; Chestertown, 4th Dist., 1870, p. 172; A. W. Bolenius to the Freedmen's Bureau, 31 May 1866, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Maryland, R-G. 105, National Archives [Perkins]; USMSPC: Baltimore, Md., 9th Ward, 1860, p. 426; 9th Ward, 1870, p. 409 [Roberts] - Henrico Co., Va., Richmond, 1860, n. p.; Richmond, Clay Ward, 1870, p. 422 [Woodson]; Jefferson Co., Ky., Louisville, 5th Ward, 1860, p. 107; Louisville, 6th Ward, 1870, p. 632 [Rogers]. In 1860, Rogers's real estate was listed under his wife's name.

73 Computed from USMSPC, 1860, 1870. See "A Note on Sources and Methodology" and appendix.

74 Charles R. Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 17 May 1867, Frederick Douglass Papers, reel 2, Library of Congress; USMSPC, District of Columbia, 1st Ward, 1870, p. 1; RCPC, District of Columbia, Estates, #1700, 31 Oct. 1884; Broad Ax [Salt Lake City], 31 Aug. 31, 1895 [Wormley]; USMSPC, Davidson Co., Tenn., Nashville, 5th Ward, 1870, p. 266 [Harding]; Rabinowitz, Race Relations, 88 [Harding]; USMSPC, St. Louis, Mo., 3d Ward, 1870, p. 196 [handwritten page number]; RCPC, St. Louis, Mo., Deeds, bk. 405 (1 April 1870), 69- *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 July 1871; Schwening, *From Tennessee Slave to St. Louis Entrepreneur*, 12-13 [Thomas].

75 Robinson, "Some Aspects of the Free Negro Population," 43-64; Constance Green, *Secret City.- A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital* (Princeton, N.J., 1967), 94; USMSPC District of Columbia, 1st Ward, 1860, pp. 222, 232-33, 347, 357.

76 USMSPC, District of Columbia, 1st Ward, 1860, p. 378; 1st Ward, 1870, p. 67.

77 *Ibid.*, 2nd Ward, 1870, p. 170 [Booker]; 2d Ward, 1860, p. 525; 2d Ward, 1870, p. 268 [Francis]; 4th Ward, 1870, p. 683 [Briscoe]; 2d Ward, 1870, p. 228 [Sanders].

78 *Ibid.*, 2d Ward, 1860, p. 550-, 2d Ward, 1870, p. 300 [Henson]; 1st Ward, 1850, p. 26; 1st Ward, 1870, p. 181 [Wright]; 5th Ward, 1870, p. 22 [Downing]; *New York Fyrenun*, 7 March 1885 [Downing]. Other antebellum free persons of color in the city not listed as businessmen were also engaged in various business activities. Isaac Johnson, for example, although listed as a messenger in 1870, was actively engaged in a number of real estate transactions. By 1870, he had increased his holdings substantially and controlled \$17,000 worth of property. USMSPC, 1st Ward, 1860, p. 324; 1st Ward, 1870, p. 53.

79 Computed from USMSPC, 1860, 1870.

80 Anita Goodstein, "Black History on the Nashville Frontier, 1780-1810," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 30 (Winter 1979): 412-13 [hotel owner Robert Rentfro]; Sterkx, *The Free Negro in Ante-bellum Louisiana*, 206 [Jean Baptiste Meullion]; Robert Reinders, "The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850-60," *Loud "Hi"* 6 (Summer 1965):279; *New Orleans Tribune*, 26 March 1865 [Casenave]; Ralph Flanders, "The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Georgia," *North Carolina Historical Review* 9 July 1932): 271 [Humphries]; Mills, *The Forgotten People*, 128-29 [merchant Jerome Sarpy, Sr.]; Tinsley Spraggins, "The History of Negro Business Prior to 1860"

(MA thesis, Howard University, 1935), 37 [North Carolina merchant Louis Sheridan]; W B. Hartgrove, "The Story of Maria Louise Moore and Fannie M. Richards," *Journal of Negro History* 1 (Jan. 1916): 24 [Moore's husband, shopowner Adolphe Richards]. One of the most fruitful areas for future research in black business history centers on the question of clientele. There is some preliminary evidence that the movement to serve black customers, well-documented for the period from the 1880s onward, might well have begun with the expansion of blacks in business immediately following the Civil War.

81 W E. B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now: An Essay on the History and Sociology of the Negro Race* (New York, 1939), 217. This was an expanded version of Du Bois's *The Negro*, published in 1915.