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During the first half of the nineteenth century, western North Carolina leaders fought a sectional political battle against an eastern-led legislature to gain political power and construct the North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) through the Piedmont. Over the course of westerners' push for internal improvements and the successful construction of the NCRR, western leaders grew from a marginal group on the periphery of North Carolina's economy to controlling the future trajectory of the state's economic development.

The NCRR Company's directors and contractors employed thousands of hired slaves to construct the railroad from 1851-1856, and hundreds more to maintain and operate trains, tracks, and facilities from 1856 through the end of the Civil War. The economic benefits of the new railroad combined with the opportunity to profit from regular slave hiring, extended the benefits of slavery to all classes of North Carolina's slaveholders, and created jobs and economic opportunities for all white North Carolinians.

The enslaved men who were hired out to the NCRR performed all of the hard labor that made the NCRR a reality. Slave hire contracts between masters and the company ripped these men away from their home farms and plantations, and sentenced them to a brutal existence in the NCRR's labor camps—a place void of slave families and communities, and characterized by inadequate food, shelter, clothing, and medical attention.

THE NORTH CAROLINA RAILROAD, INDUSTRIAL SLAVERY, AND THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH CAROLINA

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1849 former North Carolina Governor, John Motley Morehead, addressed the North Carolina General Assembly to argue for increased funding for the construction of a state-financed North Carolina Railroad. Morehead declared,

Let the North Carolina Railroad like a huge tree, strike its roots deeply into the shores of the Atlantic, and be moistened by its waters, and at last stretch its noble trunk through the center of the State, and extend its overshadowing and protecting branches through the valleys and along the mountain tops of the west, until it becomes indeed, the Tree of Life to North Carolina.

Morehead's prediction for the future of the North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) proved correct. After the road's completion in 1856, the North Carolina Railroad did indeed become the "Tree of Life" to North Carolina as it quickly became the state's original engine for economic development. The state legislature approved the company's charter in 1849 and construction of the 223-mile railroad connecting Goldsboro and Charlotte, via Raleigh, Greensboro, and Salisbury began in January 1851. The significance of the

¹ "The Tree of Life: A History of the North Carolina Railroad," (Raleigh: The North Carolina Railroad Company, 1972), 7, 9-11. Presently the route of the NCRR extends from Charlotte to the port at Morehead City as a result of a merger with the Atlantic & North Carolina Railroad Company in 1989.

NCRR to North Carolina's history is not a new story. The railroad was the first major east-to-west transportation route in the state and the key internal improvement allowing the state to transition from the "Rip Van Winkle State" of the early nineteenth-century to a successful, prosperous, and progressive state in the twentieth century. The NCRR opened the western part of the state to trade, increased commercial farming, and stimulated future transportation improvements, industrialization, urbanization, manufacturing, and cultural exchange. The lesser-known tale is that the NCRR was a product of elite western initiative that was conceived in and built through a fierce commitment to the institution of slavery as a capitalist, profit-making endeavor. From the mid-1850s through the end of the Civil War, the NCRR served as the foundation for the economic development of the state and ensured the spread and diversification of slavery in western North Carolina.²

This study focuses specifically on the founding, construction, and operation of the NCRR from the beginnings of a western-led movement for a centralized plan of internal improvements in the early nineteenth century through the Civil War and argues that

² For this study "western" North Carolina and "western" North Carolinians refers to all counties or residents located in the Piedmont west of the coastal plain through the mountain counties. This term has been chosen because it reflects the usage of antebellum North Carolinians. With initial colonial settlement to the east, anything west of Johnston County was referred to as "the west." "Eastern" North Carolina and its residents refers to the Coastal Plain and the region east of the boundaries of the following counties: Granville, Harnett, Cumberland, and Robeson. See Thomas E. Jeffrey, "Internal Improvements and Political Parties in Antebellum North Carolina, 1836-1860," *North Carolina Historical Review* 55, no. 2 (April 1978): 155; Allen W. Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad and the Modernization of North Carolina, 1849-1871* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 12-14, xii, xiii. For more about the use of slave labor to build railroads throughout the South see Aaron W. Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2009), 6.

through the creation of the NCRR, western leaders demonstrated that their vision for North Carolina's modern future would not only include slavery, it would be built with it.

This study also examines the impact of the NCRR on the lives of the enslaved men who built and operated it.³ Throughout the NCRR's construction, the company and its contractors employed over 1800 enslaved men, and over 400 slaves made up the bulk of the railroad's repair, maintenance, and operational labor force.⁴ Most of the NCRR's enslaved laborers were rented from their owners who sent them off for a year or more at a time to work far from their home farms and plantations and to live and work in all-male, often isolated environments, removed from their friends, families, slave neighborhoods, and their owners. For those thousands of enslaved people who were forced to work for the NCRR, slave-hire and trading were not simply economic transactions; for each transaction had potentially devastating, potentially liberating consequences. Enslaved people of African descent were the foundation undergirding the construction and operation of North Carolina's most integral piece of infrastructure, and by extension, North Carolina's economic development. This is an attempt to tell their story.

³ "Hand Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," "Bills of Sale for Slaves Bought by the Railroad, 1864," "Index to Hand Hire Bonds, 1864," and "North Carolina Railroad Slave Book, 1862-1864," all in North Carolina Railroad Company Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC (hereinafter cited as NCRR, NCSA).

⁴ North Carolina Railroad Company, "Report of the President and the Directors of the North Carolina Railroad Company to the Legislature, 1852," in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Allen W. Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad and the Modernization of North Carolina, 1849-1871* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 352-353, Table 6.

Internal improvements, especially railroads, in North Carolina have been a subject of scholarly inquiry since the early twentieth century. The three main works on the subject by Kenneth C. Brown, Allen Trelease, and Alan Watson describe antebellum western North Carolina as geographically isolated and economically stagnant due to the state's lack of natural transportation routes and dependence on distant markets in Virginia and South Carolina. Only the successful construction of the NCRR in 1856 linked the west to the east and thereby opened the region for commercial expansion. In *A State Movement in Railroad Development* (1928), Brown charted the basic chronological history of the NCRR that is retold in countless museum exhibits and state history textbooks. Brown concluded that the successful construction of the North Carolina Railroad in 1856 led to statewide political unification and increased economic opportunities for the state's residents. Allen Trelease provided an in-depth corporate history of the North Carolina Railroad Company in *The North Carolina Railroad and the Modernization of North Carolina*, 1848-1871 (1991). Trelease argued that above all

⁵ Enthusiastic about the progress of the NCRR, the General Assembly in 1852 authorized the incorporation of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad Company (A&NCRR) and the Western North Carolina Railroad Company (WNCRR) to construct eastern and western extensions of the NCRR to Morehead City on the coast and Morganton in the mountains. See Alan D. Watson, *Internal Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2002), 117-118.

⁶ Cecil Kenneth Brown, A State Movement in Railroad Development: The Story of North Carolina's First Effort to Establish an East to West Trunk Line Railroad (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1928), 278-280.

⁷ Allen W. Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad and the Modernization of North Carolina, 1849-1871* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

other internal improvement initiatives the NCRR became the state's primary engine for economic growth and modernization during the antebellum and Reconstruction eras until the line was leased to the Richmond and Danville Railroad in 1871. In *Internal* Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina (2002), Alan D. Watson surveyed the history of all types of internal improvements in the state including roads, river navigation, canals, and railroads and touched on the sectional political tensions between eastern and western North Carolina that stalled or defeated many attempts to improve the state's infrastructure and revitalize its economy. To Brown and Trelease, Watson added that the state's transportation disadvantages and political sectionalism kept western residents culturally and socially isolated, and that the east-to-west connection of the NCRR helped to remove sectional differences and facilitated greater access to educational opportunities and interaction of the state's residents.⁸ This study builds on the work of these earlier historians and positions the history of internal improvements in North Carolina and the chartering of the NCRR firmly within the sectional rivalry between eastern and western legislators and contextualizes these struggles within the broader market changes occurring in the antebellum South, namely the geographical expansion of the South, the market and transportation revolutions, and the emergence of the Cotton Kingdom and the domestic slave trade. I probe western leaders economic motivations and intentions as they proposed and invested in internal improvement projects that would increase their personal fortunes and transform the Piedmont into a lucrative transportation corridor

⁸ Alan D. Watson, *Internal Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2002), 2-3.

connecting the Upper and Lower South. ⁹ From this perspective, the NCRR was the principal economic development of the antebellum era because it connected the Piedmont west to the southern cotton economy and to integrated regional and national markets that increased economic opportunities for all white North Carolinians.

To understand western leaders drive and stubborn determination for state-funded internal improvements, and for railroads in particular, this study draws on recent scholarship by historians Aaron Marrs, Tom Downey, and Watson Jennison, that demonstrates the broad importance of southern railroads to the region's capitalist, modern development. These historians analyze the significance of antebellum southern railroads as they emerged within an era of great economic, social, demographic, and industrial change. Like Marrs, Downey, and Jennison, this study avoids the pitfalls of a false dichotomy pitting a backward pre-modern South against an industrialized modern North. In antebellum North Carolina western elites who promoted internal

⁹ Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4, 21, 41-42, 59.

The work of Marrs, Downey, and Jennison stand in great contrast to the older reigning interpretations of southern transportation and progress first espoused by Ulrich Bonnell Phillips in *A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1913). Phillips and other historians of the Old South focused largely on the poor performance of southern railroads, and generally portrayed them as less advanced and less important than their northern counterparts. See Aaron W. Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Tom Downey, *Planting a Capitalist South: Masters, Merchants, and Manufacturers in the Southern Interior, 1790-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Watson W. Jennison, *Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia, 1750-1860* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), Chapter 7.

¹¹ For examples see Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Random House,

improvements were capitalists interested in a variety of modern developments and reforms such as steamboats, railroads, and agricultural and technological improvements. The primary difference between these men and northern industrialists was their unwillingness to sacrifice slave labor, and therefore southern capitalists adapted it to meet their modernization needs. This work advances the notion that slaveholding leaders in western North Carolina were *the* capitalist visionaries pushing the state into the market revolution. They were forward-thinking businessmen who founded and directed the NCRR as they embraced the most modern forms of technological innovation, industrialization, and economic development within the parameters of a slave society. 13

Viewpoints, 1978); Fred Bateman and Thomas Weiss, *A Deplorable Scarcity: The Failure of Industrialization in the Slave Economy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch, "Capitalists without Capital: The Burden of Slavery and the Impact of Emancipation," *Agricultural History*, no. 62 (1988): 133-160; Douglas R. Egerton, "Markets without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism," *Journal of the Early Republic 16*, (Summer 1996): 207-221; John Majewski, "Commerce and Community: Internal Improvements in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1790-1860," *The Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 2 (June 1996); John Majewski, "Who Financed the Transportation Revolution? Regional Divergence and

1965); Raimondo Luraghi, The Rise and Fall of the Plantation South (New York: New

Internal Improvements in Antebellum Pennsylvania and Virginia," *The Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 4 (December 1996): 763-788; John Majewski, *A House Dividing: Economic Development in Pennsylvania and Virginia before the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹² Marrs, Railroads in the Old South, 6-7.

¹³ Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South,* 2, 6-8; Walter Johnson, "The Pedestal and the Veil: Rethinking the Capitalism/Slavery Question," *Journal of Early Republic* 24, (Summer 2004): 298-308.

This study adds to the growing amount of scholarship arguing for the dynamic simultaneity of capitalism and slavery in the antebellum South.¹⁴ In the late twentieth and into the twenty-first century historians such as Edward Baptist, Aaron Marrs, Brian Schoen, Susana Delfino, Michelle Gillespie, and many others have demonstrated that many southern leaders envisioned an industrialized South with a modern, diversified economy supported by government activism, and most of all, slavery.¹⁵ This work

The work of earlier historians including U. B. Phillips, Eugene Genovese, Douglas Egerton, and others depicted the South's commitment to slave labor as fundamentally hostile to the worlds of industry and commerce. See Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1913), 2-9; Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Random House, 1965); Douglas R. Egerton, "Markets without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism," *Journal of Early Republic 16*, (Summer 1996): 207-221; Fred Bateman and Thomas Weiss, *A Deplorable Scarcity: The Failure of Industrialization in the Slave Economy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Douglas R. Egerton, "Markets without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism," *Journal of Early Republic 16*, (Summer 1996): 207-221.

¹⁵ William Kauffman Scarborough, Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Ninteenth-Century South (Baton Rouge: Lousiana State University Press, 2003); Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie, eds., Technology, Innovation, and Southern Industrialization from the Antebellum Era to the Computer Age (Columbia: University of Missouri Press 2008); Richard Follet, "Slavery and Technology in Louisana's Sugar Bowl," in Technology, Innovation, and Southern Industrialization from the Antebellum Era to the Computer Age, ed. Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 68-96; Anthony Kaye, "The Second Slavery: Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century South and the Atlantic World," *Journal of* Southern History 75, no. 3 (August 2009): 627-650; Marrs, Railroads in the Old South, 6-7; Peter Kolchin, "The South and the World," Journal of Southern History 75 no. 3 (August 2009): 565-580; Brian Schoen, "The Burdens and Opportunities of Interdependence: The Political Economy of the Planter Class," in *The Old South's* Modern Worlds: Slavery, Region, and Nation in the Age of Progress, ed. L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, and Frank Towers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 68-84; William Harris, "Preface," in Southern Society and Its Transformations, 1790-1860, ed. Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011); 1-8; Watson W. Jennison, Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia,

contributes to this trend in southern historiography by demonstrating the compatibility of slavery, capitalism, and industrial growth in western North Carolina and revealing the commitment of western North Carolinians to building a modern society with slavery at the center. As directors and stockholders of the North Carolina Railroad Company, elite westerners chose to build and operate the NCRR with hired slave labor over native white or European immigrant laborers. They perceived no conflict between industry and slavery and all types of western slaveholders welcomed the opportunity to efficiently move their slaves from agriculture to industry and back again to meet their own economic needs.

When western North Carolina and the NCRR are examined as part of broader regional trends, slavery takes on a much larger, more central role in the state's development than previously considered. So much scholarly attention has focused on the fact that North Carolinians, especially those outside of the coastal region, owned smaller and fewer plantations and less slaves when compared to slaveholders in other southern states, that relatively little attention has been paid to the significance of non-agricultural and industrial slavery. 16 Historians have too often treated North Carolina as if it existed

^{1750-1860 (}Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012); Edward E. Baptist, The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

¹⁶ The state of North Carolina is often overlooked in general studies regarding slavery in the South and the institution renders little significance next to Chesapeake tobacco and the "terrible transformation" and the black majority rice-growing regions of the Carolina and Georgia lowcountries. Through comparisons with other states one can get the sense that outside of the coastal region, North Carolina had a sparse population of middling farmers, "mountain people," and few farms large enough to qualify as plantations. Some commentators have even suggested that slavery existed in a milder

in a vacuum and not part of the greater rhythms and changes occurring in the antebellum South. I focus on the slave labor that built and operated the NCRR to show that industrial slavery was crucial to the state's modern economic development. This work adds to the historiography of industrial slavery started by Robert Starobin in 1970 with the publication of *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*. Starobin provided the most comprehensive investigation of industrial slave labor and slave-based southern industries to date, in which he attempted to demonstrate the institution's compatibility with southern industrial pursuits. Starobin asserted that the majority of the capital for slave-employing industry came from planters who supported the idea of a more balanced economy, in which their plantation agriculture would be complimented by their ability to operate industries with slave labor. According to Starobin, as the transportation

form in North Carolina than in other areas of the South. See James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 5; John C. Inscoe, "Mountain Masters: Slaveholding in Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 61, no. 2 (April 1984): 167; Rebecca J. Fraser, *Courtship and Love among the Enslaved in North Carolina*, Margaret Walker Alexander Series in African American History (Jackson: University Press of MIssissippi, 2007), 8-9.

Carolina and that the frequency of slave ownership was on the rise between 1840 and 1860, partly because of improved transportation. A significant proportion of white people had a direct economic stake in the southern slave system, and planters owning twenty or more slaves wielded political power in disproportion to their numbers. The greatest number of slaves lived in portions of the Piedmont and eastern portions of the state, and in most North Carolina counties slaves constituted upwards of 35 percent and held a demographic majority in more than twelve counties. See Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 1836-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 14-15, 48-49.

¹⁸ Alex Lichtenstein, "Industrial Slavery and the Tragedy of Robert Starobin," *Reviews in American History* 19, no. 4 (Dec 1991): 607.

revolution expanded throughout the South, construction of internal improvements, particularly railroads, became the greatest employer of industrial slave labor, either through hiring or direct ownership. By the late 1850s, approximately 200,000 slaves or 5 percent of the total slave population worked in southern industry and more than 20,000 were employed by railroad companies.¹⁹

This study contributes to the historiographic debate over the experiences of hired industrial slaves and slaves who worked and resided on their owners' plantations in the antebellum South.²⁰ Previous historians, including Clement Eaton, Richard C. Wade, and Richard Morris, have argued that hiring slaves out weakened the boundaries of enslavement and increased personal freedoms for hired slaves to the extent that they lived in an "intermediate state between bondage and freedom" or as "quasi-free" slaves who could potentially earn money, hold property, enjoy increased mobility, and at times choose their own employers, hire out their own time, and secure their own lodgings.²¹ In opposition, Kenneth Stampp and Robert Starobin have argued that hired slaves were brutally exploited by employers who, unlike slaveowners, had no long-term economic stake in the welfare of hired slaves. Stampp and Starobin demonstrated that hired slaves

¹⁹ Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, vii-viii, 10-11, 28, 134.

²⁰ For an outline of the debate over the hiring out system, see Orville Vernon Burton, "Hiring Out," in *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*, ed. Randal Miller and John David Smith (Westport: Praeger, 1997).

²¹ Clement Eaton, "Slave Hiring in the Upper South: A Step Towards Freedom," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 46 (1960): 678; Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford, 1964), 145-147; Richard B. Morris, "The Measure of Bondage in the Slave States, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41, (1954): 230.

were notoriously overworked, underfed, abused, and neglected, and that they lived and worked in deplorable conditions in hazardous, disease-ridden environments.²²

I argue that the experiences of slaves hired out to the NCRR did not fit neatly into the narrow interpretive categories proscribed by previous historians. Their experiences were highly individual, variable, and contingent upon location, personal circumstances, and type of labor performed. Overall, slaves working for the NCRR endured brutal, uncomfortable, and miserable conditions. The great majority of the enslaved were unskilled laborers who worked extremely long hours with only the barest minimum of food and clothing. They lived in substandard housing and received inadequate medical attention. They also worked under close supervision of a hierarchy of white managers, supervisors, and overseers.

Earlier historians of slave hiring have often conflated all non-agricultural slavery under one experience and treated hired industrial slaves, owners, and hirers as monolithic groups, not specific to any particular industry, time, or place.²³ This study focuses on the nature of the industrial slave hire system as compared and contrasted with plantation slavery by investigating one specific industry in a specific time and place, and thereby

²² Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956, 1989), 84, 185, 318; Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery of the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 36-37, 51, 54, 57.

²³ More recently historians such as Watson Jennison, Midori Takagi, and John Zaborney have drawn more nuanced conclusions about slave hiring by focusing on specific times, places, and industries in the South. See Jennison, *Cultivating Race*, Chapter 7; Midori Takagi, "Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction": Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782-1865 (Charlottesville: University of Virgina Press, 1999); and John F. Zaborney, Slaves for Hire: Renting Enslaved Laborers in Antebellum Virginia (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012).

adds to the historiography of industrial slave hire and antebellum slave life in North Carolina and the South. The earliest professional academic historians of African-American slavery produced openly racist interpretations of their subject based on the premise that slavery was a benign institution in which enslaved people were content with their station in life. Writing in the post-Reconstruction era, scholars such as U. B. Phillips did not entertain or even suspect notions of black cultural creativity, African cultural retention, or subversive behavior among inferior slaves in need of whites' civilizing instruction.²⁴ Kenneth Stampp and Stanley Elkins challenged racist interpretations of southern slavery in the 1950s and 1970s, respectively. Stampp used detailed evidence of slaves' physical lives, including their diets, housing, labor, and discipline, to show the realities of slavery as an extremely brutal and exploitative institution.²⁵ Elkins contributed that the brutality of slavery left slaves emotionally devastated and incapable of retaining elements of African culture or identity. According to Elkins, slaves accepted their masters' views to the point of acknowledging their own inferiority as "Sambos"—docile, and permanently infantilized dependents.²⁶ Although

²⁴ Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Régime* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1918). For more on this early trend in slavery scholarship, see Drew Gilpin Foust, "Slavery in the American Experience," in *Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South*, eds. Edward D. C. Campbell and Kym S. Rice (Richmond: The Museum of the Confederacy and University Press of Virginia, 1991), 6.

²⁵ Kenneth Stamp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York: Knopf, 1956).

²⁶ Stanley Elkins, Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

these historians' conclusions were highly contentious, Phillips, Stampp, and Elkins shared a common perspective: each interpreted enslaved people as passive, powerless beings whose experiences were completely shaped by white masters.

The controversial nature of Elkins' thesis, along with the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power ideology in the 1960s, encouraged the creation of a new generation of scholarship that focused on the role of black families, religion, and slave communities as a counterbalance to whites' physical and psychological power.²⁷ Scholars such as John Blassingame, Herbert Gutman, Lawrence Levine, Albert Raboteau, and Eugene Genovese emerged to explore "the world the slaves made."²⁸ Gutman, for example, argued that enslaved people found strength in the structure of deliberately created extended families. Familial connections assisted slaves in sharing of resources and in surviving and resisting the harshness and injustices of slavery.²⁹

²⁷ See Ann J. Lane, ed., *The Debate Over Slavery: Stanley Elkins and His Critics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

²⁸ Foust, "Slavery in the American Experience," 7. See Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

²⁹ See Wayne K. Durrill, "Slavery, Kinship, and Dominance: The Black Community at Somerset Place Plantation, 1786-1860," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slavery Studies* 13 (August 1992): 1-2.

Scholarship focusing on the agency rather than the victimization of the enslaved went a long way toward destroying the "Sambo" image and demonstrating the ways in which enslaved people claimed control over their own lives; yet, these scholars have also overly exaggerated and at times painted an unrealistic utopian picture of the strength and cohesion of slave communities. In the 1980s scholars began to criticize studies of slave communities for placing too much emphasis on resistance and cultural development at the expensive of ignoring or glossing over the brutal, exploitative characteristics of the institution and the intense suffering endured by enslaved people.

This study contributes to the historiography of slave life by focusing on the dynamic nature of enslaved people's experiences and adding more complexity to the historical conversation over what it was like to be enslaved in the antebellum South. Even in the most advantageous situations, like hiring out one's own time in a bustling urban center like New Orleans or Charleston, being enslaved promised great suffering and the denial of any basic human rights. All types of slavery were grounded in inequality, exploitation, violence, and suffering; yet, there were considerable variations among slaves' experiences even within the various boundaries imposed by historians, such as "industrial slavery," "plantation slavery," "non-agricultural slavery," "urban slavery," "slave-hiring," etc. I draw on new trends in the scholarship of slave communities, namely Erskine Clarke's *Dwelling Place*, Anthony Kaye's *Joining Places*, and Brenda E. Stevenson's *Life in Black and White and White: Family and Community in the Slave South*, along with material culture and landscape studies, architectural remains, and archaeological excavations, to compare the lives and labor of railroad and plantation

slaves and demonstrate that enslaved people redefined imposed spatial arrangements on plantations in socially and culturally meaningful and empowering ways within a context of personal, economic, and political oppression. From the slaves' perspective, large plantations like Somerset Place and Stagville offered more favorable lifestyles than the labor camps of the NCRR.³⁰

The primary sources used to conduct my research include manuscript collections, corporate and state agency records, newspapers, census data, slave narratives, and material culture. The most significant manuscript sources include collections and plantation records of politically and economically prominent North Carolina families, state officials, and businessmen who were involved with the NCRR and other internal improvements in the state during the antebellum era. These papers include those of Archibald D. Murphey, William A. Graham, Thomas Ruffin, Charles F. Fisher, Paul

³⁰ See Erskine Clark, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Anthony E. Kaye, Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Brenda E. Stevenson, Life in Black and White and White: Family and Community in the Slave South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Dell Upton, "Imagining the Early Virginia Landscape," in Earth Patterns: Essays in Landscape Archaeology, ed. William M. Kelso and Rachel Most (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 7; John Michael Vlach, Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); William M. Kelso, "Mulberry Row: Slave Life at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello," Archaeology 39, no. 5 (September-October, 1986): 28-35; Laura A. Wilkie, Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, 1840-1950 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), xv-xvii; Theresa A. Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life," in Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South, eds. Edward D. C. Campbell and Kym S. Rice (Richmond: The Museum of the Confederacy and University Press of Virginia, 1991; Charles H. Fairbanks, "The Plantation Archaeology of the Southeastern Coast," Historical Archaeology vol. 18, no. 1 (1984): 1-14.

Cameron, George Mordecai, and Josiah Collins III. The primary state agency records used in this study are the corporate records of the North Carolina Railroad Company, including engineers' reports, slave-hire contracts, minutes of board meetings, annual reports, ledgers, account books, maps, and other planning documents and policies for the organization, construction, and operation of the NCRR Company. Records of the state Board of Internal Improvements, the state Treasurer and Comptroller's office, and the journal proceedings of the House of Commons and state Senate of the North Carolina General Assembly were also consulted and found to be beneficial.

This study integrates primary material culture evidence drawn from archeological excavations, extant structures, oral history interviews, and plantation landscapes to tell the stories of two groups of enslaved men who were hired out to the NCRR in the early 1860s. These sources are used to reconstruct a dynamic, complex, nuanced narrative comparing the lives of agricultural and industrial slaves.³¹ Stagville Plantation within the Cameron family plantation complex in the eastern Piedmont and the Collins Family plantation, Somerset Place, in the northeastern Coastal Plain are the central primary sources used to examine plantation landscapes and set them in context as cultural spaces experienced by owners and slaves in different ways.

Steven Deyle's *Carry Me Back* serves as the primary methodological model for examining the context and impact of the NCRR within the broader economic changes

³¹ See Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, Introduction and Chapter 1; Patricia Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (January 1996): 87-88.

sweeping the antebellum South and for asking new questions about the NCRR's founders and chosen route. Devle argues that the domestic slave trade and the subsequent rise of the Cotton Kingdom transformed southern society, making slaves the most valuable property in the South. Furthermore, Deyle argues that capital in slaves became capital for countless investments that propelled the southern economy and brought great wealth to the region.³² Within this context enslaved property, either traded and transported via the NCRR, or sold or hired to the company, became a major source of capital used to build more financial and social opportunities to produce even more wealth. This study demonstrates that slave-derived wealth provided the capital to fund the NCRR, which in turn increased opportunities to profit from slave labor by financing other investments and ultimately providing economic security for western slaveholding elites and extending commercial opportunities to less affluent, even non-slaveholding, western whites. Deyle's work has influenced me to not only investigate how the NCRR connected eastern and western portions of North Carolina in a common economic concern, but also how the NCRR helped to fuel southern expansion and link the two sub-regions in a common economic concern.

Chapter II, "Internal Improvements and the Rise of the West in Antebellum North Carolina," details the story of how western North Carolina leaders waged a sectional and political battle to overcome a powerful eastern plantocracy and build the NCRR through the Piedmont. I argue that throughout their push for internal improvements, western leaders grew from a marginal group on the periphery of North Carolina's economy and

³² Deyle, Carry Me Back, 41.

politics to one controlling the state's key economic asset and shaping the future of its economic development.

Chapter III, "Masters, Capitalists, and the NCRR," demonstrates how the NCRR acted as a catalyst for economic growth that brought North Carolina into the market revolution and created employment and economic opportunities for all white residents. This chapter also analyses the NCRR Company's choice to use hired slave labor to construct and operate the road and argues that by using hired slaves, the NCRR created a demand for industrial slavery in western North Carolina and gave slaveowners of all classes the opportunity to employ their slave property more flexibly and efficiently as hired slaves often bridged agriculture and industry.

Chapter IV, "Working for the Railroad: Hired Slave Labor on the NCRR," is devoted to the tasks performed and lifestyles of the thousands of slaves who worked for the NCRR and argues that the great majority of the enslaved worked debilitating, long hours at unskilled tasks and lived in all-male labor camps with inadequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention. Slaves hired by the NCRR did not become "quasi-free" in fact, they had little time or space to enjoy any of the benefits claimed by earlier historians.

Chapter V, "From Plantation to Railroad," explores the idea of using the built environment and material culture to examine the differences and similarities between living and working on the plantations of Stagville and Somerset Place and working for the NCRR and argues that slaves were not more contained and restricted within the boundaries of these large plantations than they were in the NCRR labor camps, miles

away from their masters' residences. Working for the NCRR took these men away from the slave neighborhoods in which they grew up, raised families, worshipped in a faith community, and developed their own distinct culture. Chapter VI serves as a conclusion that summarizes the arguments contained in this study and their contributions to historical scholarship. It also reflects on the ways in which this study reframes the significance of slavery to the history and development of North Carolina.

CHAPTER II

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS AND THE RISE OF THE WEST IN ANTEBELLUM NORTH CAROLINA

Constructed in 1856, the North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) radically changed the commercial landscape of North Carolina's Piedmont and represented a sea change in the state's traditional power structure. The NCRR was the first railroad and major transportation route west of North Carolina's Coastal Plain and a hard-won victory for western North Carolina leaders over a long-entrenched, powerful eastern plantocracy disinterested in developing the western part of the state. Economically isolated by a lack of natural transportation routes and politically marginalized by the state's original constitution, western leaders, led first by Senator Archibald Murphey of Orange County, pushed for greater representation in state government as well as for centralized, statefunded navigation, road, and railroad improvements to stimulate their economy and provide a tangible connection to the expanding Cotton Kingdom in the Deep South. Westerners' plans for economic development fell victim to a vicious sectional rivalry with eastern legislators who consistently ignored or blocked by western attempts at improvements to preserve their superior socio-economic and political position in the face of growing western population. After decades of eastern legislative opposition to western development, western leaders successfully reformed the state's constitution, increased their political power, and brought the NCRR to the west.

Once approved by the state legislature, the NCRR quickly became the most significant transportation route ever constructed in North Carolina and a symbol of the rise of western power in the state. Leading western planters took firm control over the NCRR by purchasing the bulk of its stock, influencing its final route through the Piedmont, and monopolizing construction and commercial revenues. Over the course of the sectional battle for western improvements, western leaders grew from a marginal group on the periphery of North Carolina's economy and politics to controlling the state's key economic asset and shaping the future of the state's modern economic development.

Sectionalism in the form of an east-west rivalry shaped the social, economic, and political development of North Carolina from the colonial era to the Civil War. The roots of sectional rivalry began in the colonial era as the state's natural geography framed the distinct settlement patterns of early European colonists. Without a deep-water port, navigable river systems, and natural interior trade routes, colonial settlement and economic growth became a permanent feature of the Coastal Plain, where residents enjoyed relatively good transportation along the east's rivers and streams, and access to Atlantic trade routes at Wilmington, Norfolk, and Charleston. Over time a slave society developed along the Coastal Plain and eastern planters grew to dominate the socioeconomic and political life of the colony and the young state. The isolated western backcountry, though fertile for growing food products and raising livestock, presented difficult terrain and red clay soil not well-suited to mono-crop agriculture. Western residents quickly found themselves commercially isolated and subject to an eastern-

controlled government. By the onset of the American Revolution the east and west constituted two distinct, separate regions marked by contrasting geography, ethnicity, religion, and economic interests.³³

The Coastal Plain attracted the first significant wave of European settlers and became home to the North Carolina colony's first successful commercial enterprises. When North Carolina became a Royal Colony in 1729 the majority of its white settlers were modest farmers of English descent who emigrated from Virginia's frontier in search of a cash crop to rival Virginia tobacco and South Carolina rice. They lived in the vicinity of the Albemarle Sound in the northeast corner of the colony and, at least nominally, supported the Anglican Church. In the Albemarle region the settlers survived on small plots of 250 acres or less where they typically raised hogs and grew small amounts of tobacco, Indian corn, and peas with a labor of one to five black slaves. Initially, demographic and economic growth proceeded slowly as a result of frequent flooding, hurricanes, a shortage of currency, and scarcity of labor. However, by the late colonial era, forest products and naval stores became the region's chief exports. As commercial demand grew for shingles, staves, tar, pitch, and turpentine throughout the

³³ Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (3rd ed.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 316-317; J. D. B. De Bow, *The Industrial Resources, Etc., of the Southern and Western States*, 3 vols. (New Orleans: Office of De Bow's Review, 1852), II: 170. Eastern residents had access to the few navigable rivers in the state: the Roanoke, Cape Fear, and Neuse Rivers.

British Atlantic world, white colonists in eastern North Carolina purchased increasing numbers of black slaves to work in these labor-intensive industries.³⁴

In the 1730s the top tiers of colonial North Carolina society coalesced in the southern Coastal Plain in the Lower Caper Fear River Valley where they put increasing numbers of black slaves to work in agriculture and extractive industries. The wealthiest residents of the Albemarle region and elite planters from South Carolina moved to the Lower Cape Fear River Valley where together they grew to possess the largest concentration of wealth in the colony. These settlers, also Anglican and of English heritage, took slaves with them to the Lower Cape Fear and used their labor to exploit the valley's abundance of unclaimed land and pine forest resources. Slaves in the Lower Cape Fear produced the rice, indigo, lumber, and naval stores that enmeshed their owners in an Atlantic World economy and funded the establishment of the port at Wilmington—the most important coastal trading center between Norfolk and Charleston.³⁵

of the North Carolinians,' by Francis Veale, Dec. 19, 1730," *North Carolina Historical Review* 41 (April 1964): 242; H. Roy Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 108-124, 134-140; Lloyd Johnson, "Naval Stores," John Locke Foundation, available online at http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/103/entry (accessed 13 February 2016); Alan D. Watson, "Household Size and Composition in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina," *Mississippi Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1978): 559; A. Roger Ekirch, "*Poor Carolina:*" *Politics and Society in Colonial North Carolina, 1729-1776* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 13.

³⁵ Ekirch, "Poor Carolina," 12; Merrens, Colonial North Carolina, 85-92; Bradford J. Wood, "Politics and Authority in Colonial North Carolina: A Regional Perspective," North Carolina Historical Review 81, no. 1 (January 2004): 2-6, 11, 13.

Throughout the colonial era eastern slaveholders steadily increased their reliance on slave labor, amassed large personal fortunes in land and slaves, and consolidated their political power over the entire colony. The slaveholding interests of the Albemarle and Lower Cape Fear became concentrated into one distinctly powerful socio-economic and political region, based on a common ancestry, religion, economy, increasing marriage and kinship ties, and a growing slave population.³⁶

While a slave society grew and then flourished in the Coastal Plain, a very different world began to develop on North Carolina's western frontier, also known as the Piedmont or backcountry. Backcountry settlers lacked the east's access to the Atlantic and riverine transportation, and most farmers lived far from intrastate trade routes and good commercial markets. While easterners amassed large plantations and slaves, most westerners and their families survived on self-sufficient farming among rolling hills and red-clay soil ill-suited to cash crop agriculture. Navigation obstacles plagued backcountry rivers and although they were appropriate for manufacturing use, they were inadequate for transportation. Western residents who could afford it paid extremely high overland freight costs to transport goods to markets in Virginia, South Carolina, and Tennessee.³⁷

³⁶ Ekirch, "Poor Carolina," 14-18, 38-39, 219; Marjoleine Kars, Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in pre-Revolutionary North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 22. For analysis of regional conflicts between the Albemarle and the Lower Cape Fear valley in the 1720s see Bradford J. Wood, "Politics and Authority in Colonial North Carolina: A Regional Perspective," North Carolina Historical Review 81, no. 1 (January 2004): 1-37.

³⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American States* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1862), 141-142,

In spite of geographic isolation, the western backcountry, or Piedmont, became a popular place for European settlement after 1750, when thousands of new immigrants arrived overland from colonies to the north. The majority of these settlers were not English, but of German and Welsh descent, who had travelled south from Pennsylvania and other middle colonies along the Great Wagon Road. Other settlers, including Scottish Highlanders and Scots-Irish, arrived directly from Europe. These settlers made their homes further and further inland and by 1767 the backcountry contained over 39,000 settlers of European descent and 3,000 of African descent living mostly in scattered rural settlements dotted with a few small commercial and governmental centers, namely Hillsborough, Salisbury, Salem, and Charlotte. Settlements of Paris and Paris and Charlotte.

^{339, 363-364;} William K. Boyd, "The North Carolina Fund for Internal Improvements," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 15 (January 1916): 55; Alan D. Watson, *Internal Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2002), 10-11, 55. Cecil K. Brown, *A State Movement in Railroad Development* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1928), 9-10; William S. Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 245, 248; Harry L. Watson, "Old Rip' in a New Era," in *The North Carolina Experience*, ed., Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 218. See also Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 18-19.

³⁸ Kars, Breaking Loose Together, 13.

³⁹ G. Johnson to Earl of Granville, March 13, 1750, Granville District Papers; *Connecticut Courant*, Nov. 30, 1767, cited in Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina*, 53-54; "Diary of a journey of Moravians from Bethlehem, PA to Betharbara, NC, 1753" in Newton D. Mereness, ed., *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 325-358; Kars, *Breaking Loose Together*, 16.

Migrants chose to settle western North Carolina for a variety of reasons, the chief ones being the abundance of cheap, fertile land and the weak establishment of the Anglican Church. Many left the middle colonies to escape rapid population growth, rising land prices, and mandatory church taxes. They traveled to North Carolina in groups of farming families and created communities bound by blood, friendship, and sectarian religion. Economically speaking, these migrants were intent on establishing economic independence for themselves and their descendants through agricultural and commercial activities. They were not content merely with "self-sufficiency;" they were ambitious, commercially-minded people who set out to improve their lot in life and make future provision for their families. The Piedmont of North Carolina offered these people a long growing season, decent soil, large pastures for raising livestock, and virgin forests for building materials. 41

The western backcountry's economy developed quite distinctly from that of the Coastal Plain. Farming families provided the labor for agriculture and livestock with occasional hired help. Early Piedmont farmers could not afford large numbers of slaves and many of them viewed slave labor as a threat to their economic independence. Corn and wheat became the region's chief crops during the 1750s and 1760s. Families grew

⁴⁰ Adelaide L. Fries, *The Records of the Moravians of North Carolina* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton State Printers, 1922), 1:5; Governor Tryon to Lord Hillsborough, April 12, 1770 in William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, (Raleigh: P. M. Hale, 1886), 8:195; Joseph R. Nixon, "The German Settlers in Lincoln County and Western North Carolina," *James Sprunt Historical Publications, 11* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1912); 54-60; Ekirch, "*Poor Carolina*," 7, 178.

⁴¹ Kars, Breaking Loose Together, 20; Merrens, Colonial North Carolina, 109-110.

wheat to meat rising demands in Europe during the late eighteenth century. Wheat did not require large numbers of laborers, it was in high demand in Europe, and ground into flour it was relatively inexpensive to haul over land. The nature of backcountry soil and climate encouraged a high degree of economic diversity. In addition to corn and wheat backcountry farmers supplemented their income by growing small amounts of tobacco, rye, barley, oats, hemp, flax, vegetables, herbs, and fruit trees, and by raising cattle, hogs, sheep, horses, and fowl. Westerners sold their livestock and tobacco in Virginia and traded domestic goods through local merchants.⁴²

In the colonial era western farmers faced a series of obstacles to economic success, the most critical problem being the lack of water transportation to move goods to markets in a cost-efficient manner. Over land transportation was expensive and at times cost prohibitive because it inevitably ate into profits, and drove up prices on imported finished goods. Westerners also suffered from frequent Indian and outlaw raids that resulted in widespread property damage in the 1750s and early 1760s. Natural disasters also plagued them beginning in the mid-1750s when droughts, diseases, and uncharacteristically harsh winters destroyed their yields.

⁴² Governor Tryon to Sewallis Shirley, July 24, 26, 1765 in William S. Powell, ed. *The Correspondence of William Tryon and Other Selected Papers* (Raleigh, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1980), 1:139; Governor Tryon to Lord Hillsborough, April 12, 1770 in Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 8:80a; Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina*, 109-119, 123.

⁴³ Kars, Breaking Loose Together, 20.

⁴⁴ Ekirch, "Poor Carolina," 179-180.

With differing geographies and distinct patterns of colonial settlement and economic development, the political interests of easterners and westerners diverged dramatically. Wealthy easterners and crown officials determined the colony's political trajectory and their political lives largely revolved around conflicting private, factional, and regional interests. In the west, religious practices and affiliations had significant bearing on political ideology. Most westerners were brought up within various denominations of dissenting Protestants including, Presbyterian, Lutherans, Quakers, Baptists, and Moravians, however they found common ground in the popularity of new evangelical protestant movements in the late 1760s. The shared beliefs of evangelical Protestants in individual conversion and egalitarian church membership helped to unify western colonists across ethnic lines and encouraged a tendency toward radical egalitarian politics. Westerners' political ideologies contrasted greatly with that of the formal local political authorities whose economic interests and political connections coincided with those of eastern planters, leaving backcountry settlers with very little say in the colony's provincial government.⁴⁵

Sectional tensions between east and west erupted in a series of violent conflicts, collectively known as the War of Regulation (1769-1771), which exacerbated the growing regional divide among North Carolinians. "The Regulators," were a band of western men named out their desire to "regulate" local government officials. Their numbers expanded from a small group in Orange County in 1766 to include more than 6,000 participants from all backcountry classes against the highest level of legislative

⁴⁵ Ekirch, "Poor Carolina," xv-xvi, 27, 52, 219.

assembly and the Royal Governor, William Tryon. The leadership and core of the Regulators were commercially ambitious, relatively well-to-do men who immigrated to the backcountry in search of economic opportunity and religious tolerance. Herman Husband, the Regulators' most visible spokesperson, emigrated from Maryland to the western Piedmont where he accumulated over 10,000 acres in Orange and Rowan counties. Like many others who joined the Regulation, Husband's religious practices informed his radical politics. He converted to evangelical Protestantism during one of George Wakefield's visits to Maryland and in North Carolina he became a practicing Quaker, raised wheat, and worked as a land surveyor. In 1764 Husband's Quaker meeting disowned him as a consequence of his growing radical tendencies and two years later he joined the nascent Regulator Movement as a member of the Sandy Creek Association, a group of Orange County residents who read a list of grievances in front of their local county court denouncing the corruption of local officials.

The Regulator Movement began with protests against corrupt local officials who stymied westerners' paths to economic independence and mobility, and spread quickly throughout the west in Orange, Rowan, Anson, Mecklenburg, Granville, and Johnston

⁴⁶ William S. Powell, James K. Huhta, and Thomas J. Farnham, comps. and eds., *The Regulators in North Carolina: A Documentary History, 1759-1776* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1971), 251, 268, hereinafter cited as *Reg. Doc.*

⁴⁷ Described as "regulating gentry." See Reg. Doc., 251, 268.

⁴⁸Mark, H. Jones, "Husband, Herman," in Powell, ed. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 1988.

counties. Regulators called out aggressive land speculators from the east and decried the exorbitant fees charged for title services that thwarted westerners' chances to make provisions for their families while local officials, especially sheriffs, grew rich on embezzlement and extortion.⁴⁹ As the Regulators' protests gained momentum they launched a wholesale challenge to the legitimacy of the eastern elite to govern in a General Assembly who ignored the backcountry's demands for reforms. To westerners tax expenditures appeared to benefit easterners only, with the most outrageous example of legislative excess being the funding of Governor Tryon's "palace" in Newbern—likely the most extravagant statehouse in the mainland colonies. Tactically, Regulators employed petitions, calls for negotiations, refusals to pay taxes, disruption of county courts, arson, and mob violence with the goal to increase accountability of appointed public officers and to make government more responsive to its constituents. The formal movement ended when Royal Governor Tryon's forces crushed the Regulators at the Battle of Alamance in 1771, but their military defeat did not erase the heightened political awareness among western residents.⁵⁰ Eastern leaders stopped the Regulators because they presented a clear threat to the lower house of assembly and threatened to

⁴⁹ Scarcity of currency in the colony, along with a regressive tax system, overly burdened backcountry settlers who relocated to the area in pursuit of economic opportunity. The corruption of Orange County official Edmund Fanning was one of the Regulators' primary targets. After local officials seized a Regulators' property to pay Fanning's taxes, a group of Regulators discharged their weapons outside Fanning's Hillsborough home. Fanning had held several public offices and was a close associate of Governor Tryon. He grew wealthy by charging large fees for land registration. See Link, *North Carolina*, 91.

⁵⁰ Ekirch, "Poor Carolina," 165-166.

usurp its power. Seven of the Regulators were publicly hanged in Hillsborough after the Battle of Alamance and westerners perceived the executions as a grievous abuse of power.⁵¹

Sectional rivalry evident in the legacy of the rise and fall of the Regulators continued as easterners and westerners remained deeply divided throughout the Revolutionary War and the creation of a new state.⁵² In 1776 wealthy easterners controlled North Carolina's revolutionary government and by July formed a Provincial Council committed to fighting a war for independence. Former Regulators and an embittered western population took up the Loyalist because they were more eager to fight eastern Whigs than the British.⁵³ For example, former Regulators fought alongside loyalist Highland Scots against American patriots in the Battle of Kings Mountain near Blacksburg, South Carolina, and guerilla fighting on the part of angry westerners persisted in the backcountry into 1782.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ekirch, "*Poor Carolina*," 198, 201.

⁵² Henry M. Wagstaff, *State Rights and Political Parties in North Carolina, 1776-1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1906, 1977), 12-13.

⁵³ Colonists who supported Tryon's suppression of the Regulators became Whigs. See Link, *North Carolina*, 104, 106.

⁵⁴ Ronald Huffman, "The 'Disaffected' in the Revolutionary South," in Alfred. F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 295; During the Revolution, patriots used the term Whig to demonstrate their opposition to the English crown. See Jeffrey, *State Parties*, 12-14. Wilma Dykeman, *The Battle of Kings Mountain: With Fire and Sword, 1780* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, 1978), 11.

The first state constitution placed a disproportionate amount of power in the hands of elite eastern planters, and hence, encouraged existing tensions between the eastern and western sections of the state. In 1776 conservative and radical eastern leaders seized power for themselves when they joined together in the Fifth Provincial Congress where they drafted a state constitution without western input, and ultimately adopted a document that would perpetuate eastern political and economic supremacy for the next sixty years.⁵⁵ The constitution gave all power to the General Assembly, the legislative branch, consisting of two houses, a senate and a house of commons. The General Assembly appointed all state officers including the governor.⁵⁶ Each county sent three elected officials to the legislature, one senator and two commoners. Thus, the constitution established representation in the state's most powerful branch by county and not by population, ensuring the greatest representation for the older, more numerous counties in the Coastal Plain.⁵⁷ Whenever a new county was created to serve a growing western population, the General Assembly divided at least one eastern county—stifling political voices in the west to perpetuate their own power. By 1799 there were forty-six

⁵⁵ William A. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, X, 1775-1776 (Raleigh: 1890), 164-220; Henry M. Wagstaff, *State Rights and Political Parties*, 9.

⁵⁶ Harold Joseph Counihan, "North Carolina 1815-1836: State and Local Perspectives on the Age of Jackson" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina 1971), "Introduction," 1-3, 15-16; Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 11.

⁵⁷ Counihan, "North Carolina 1815-1836, "Introduction," 1-3; William S. Powell, North Carolina, 247-248, 250-251; Kruman, Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 11. The North Carolina constitution of 1776 can be found in Francis Newton Thorpe, The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming the United States (7 vols., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), V, 2787-94.

eastern counties and thirty-four western counties. A majority of whites in North Carolina lived in the Piedmont and mountain west, but easterners enjoyed a 33-19 majority in the senate and a 70-40 majority in the commons.⁵⁸ Property protections in the constitution also favored eastern leadership. A free man had to own fifty or more acres to vote for state senator while all free male taxpayers could vote for members in the House of Commons. Those serving in the House of Commons had to own a minimum of 100 acres, and senators had to own a minimum of 300 acres. Governors of the state had to own property valued at no less than 1,000 pounds.⁵⁹

After the Revolutionary War sectional rivalries broke out over cession of western lands to the national government under the Cession Act of 1784, and a group of westerners who declared independence from North Carolina then attempted to enter the Union as the fourteenth state of Franklin. Eastern legistlators viewed western lands as an investment opportunity and a source of revenue to pay off the state's Revolutionary war debt. The "Land Grab Acts" of 1783 and 1784, allowed eastern legislators to purchase, at times illegally, approximately three million acres of western lands. Next they tried to quickly pass an act to cede the territory to the United States with a special provision guaranteeing any land warrants issued under North Carolina law. In contrast, western residents viewed their home territory as a source of independence and self-government

⁵⁸ Any eastern legislator who voted in favor of creating a western county was accused of betraying their section and never reelected. See Powell, *North Carolina*, 251 and Link, *North Carolina*, 111, 122.

⁵⁹ Powell, *North Carolina*, 247-248, 250-251; Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 11-12.

and they hoped that a cheap and amiable land policy would accompany cession as well as national military protection from Indian attacks and a buffer from Spanish control in the Mississippi Valley.⁶⁰ After easterners began purchasing large acreages of western lands, the issue grew so contentious that in 1784 a group of westerners from Washington, Sullivan, and Green counties initiated a separatist campaign, issued a declaration of independence from North Carolina, and organized as the state of Franklin. In their declaration, "Franklinites" claimed that North Carolina's legislators held all western residents in contempt and that westerners lived too far from the state capital to receive any timely assistance against Indian attacks. In 1785 Franklin requested admission to the union, adopted its own constitution, appointed a governor, and began land negotiations with the Cherokee. The North Carolina legislature would not approve any land cession while the Franklin movement had any chance at success because they would not chance the future of their land purchases to Franklin's leaders. Finally, when the United States congress and the state of North Carolina failed to recognize Franklin's legitimacy, its governor, John Sevier a hero of the Battle of King's Mountain, requested annexation by the Spanish governor of New Orleans. Plans for statehood completely fell apart, when Sevier was arrested for treason and thrown in the Morganton jail. With the Franklinites out of the way, the General Assembly agreed to cede all western lands to the federal

⁶⁰ Link, North Carolina, 129.

government in exchange for all legal claims to North Carolina's land warrants—a move that legalized easterners' investments.⁶¹

From the ratification debates over the national constitution to the emergence of the Second Party System in the 1830s, North Carolina's legislators adhered to sectional interests, not party platforms, on state issues. With the state constitution's endorsement of eastern legislative supremacy, the west remained terribly underrepresented.

Westerners grew increasingly frustrated over their exclusion from political power by a three-delegate county system of representation, and they wanted influence in state government that was in proportion to their population. Between 1787 and 1821 western legislators submitted seven proposals to call a convention on constitutional reform to increase their representation in the General Assembly—each proposal was either denied by vote or postponed indefinitely. As their population continued to outdistance the east, westerners proposed numerous bills to create new counties to deal with growth in the region; they gained only three new counties—Davidson, Macon, and Yancey—between 1822 and 1833.

⁶¹ In 1796 the remnants of Franklin became part of the modern state of Tennessee. See Michael Toomey, "State of Franklin," available online at www.northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/State-of-Franklin (accessed 24 August 2017).

⁶² Senate Journal, 1816, 23, 48-49; William Henry Hoyt, ed. *The Papers of Archibald Debow Murphey, 1777-1832*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: F. M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers, 1914), 2:56 ff, hereinafter cited as *Murphey Papers*; Herbert Snipes Turner, *The Dreamer: Archibald DeBow Murphey, 1777-1832* (Verona, VA: McLure Press, 1971), 80; Delbert Harold Gilpatrick, *Jeffersonian Democracy in North Carolina* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 37-81, 92-99; Counihan, "North Carolina," 81, 83, 86, 88; Jeff Broadwater, "The Antifederalists: North Carolina's Other Founders," available online at http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/109/entry (accessed 5

In addition to increased political representation, westerners also wanted statesponsored economic development through transportation improvements, banking reform,
and public education. Westerners felt increasingly isolated as the state's economy
stagnated after the Revolution. Inadequate transportation facilities in the west
discouraged production. Public education remained virtually nonexistent and a shortage
of money and lack of banks prevented investment and economic growth. Native North
Carolinians, attracted by cotton production in newly opened lands, began emigrating to
the south and west by the hundreds of thousands in search of economic opportunity; only
a high birthrate sustained the native population. The situation in the west grew dismal by
the early nineteenth century. Other states began referring to North Carolina as the "Rip
Van Winkle State," for it slept while the rest of the nation prospered. The eastern-led
General Assembly remained apathetic towards the west and its problems. Easterners'
coastal plantations enjoyed access to commerce, and as a political faction they were

February 2016); R. D. W. Connor, William Kenneth Boyd, J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, *The History of North Carolina*, 3 vols. (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1919), 2:147; Salisbury *Western Carolinian*, January 7, 1823. See also *Western Carolinian*, February 25, March 4, 11, 18, April 8, 1823 and *Proceedings of a Meeting of the Members of the Legislature*, January 11, 1834 (Raleigh: Jos. Gale & Son, 1834), 10.

⁶³ Counihan, "North Carolina, 1815-1836," 180.

⁶⁴ Archibald D. Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, October, 19, 1825 in Hoyt, ed., *Murphey Papers*, 1:318; Broadwater, "The AntiFederalists;" Outside critics dubbed North Carolina the "Rip Van Winkle State" after the famed character in Washington Irving's 1819 short story about a man, Rip Van Winkle, who slept for twenty years, through the American Revolution, and awoke to find a new, modernized nation. See Guion Griffis Johnson, *Antebellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 20.

bound by a common defense of their traditional socio-political predominance against the increasingly populous west.⁶⁵

In the 1830s western economic interests started gaining ground in the legislature and a new political coalition formed that complicated the traditional east-west rivalry and eventually grew to undermine eastern control over the state. Legislative representatives from undeveloped sections of the northeast and from growing commercial towns in the Coastal Plain also wanted to reap the economic benefits of state sponsored internal improvements and public education. These easterners, like William Graham of New Bern, decided to cast their lot with westerners to mount a political attack on traditional eastern legislative supremacy. ⁶⁶ In 1834 the new coalition called for a state constitutional convention to reapportion representation in the General Assembly, end Democratic control of state politics, and build internal improvements that eastern legislators had

⁶⁵ Fayetteville Observer, February 17, 1831; Counihan, "North Carolina 1815-1836," 88-89.

⁶⁶ William A. Graham to James W. Bryan, November 21, 1840 in J. G. deRoulhac Hamilton and Max R. Williams, eds., *The Papers of William Alexander Graham*, 2:122; Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 17; Jeffrey, *State Parties*, 1. See also Harry L. Watson, *The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

prevented.⁶⁷ Then after the convention in 1835 the balance of power in the state began to shift to the west.⁶⁸

The coalition of west and urban east helped to increase western influence; however, sectionalism remained the defining characteristic of North Carolina politics during the Second Party System. The two-party system of Whigs and Democrats emerged in North Carolina in 1836 and lasted until the Civil War. Westerners found a natural home in the Whig Party. Both nationally and at the state level Whigs attracted a diverse group of people who supported government activism in economic development; state aid to internal improvements, banking and credit systems reforms, limited liability protections, and the creation of transportation corporations. Whigs interpreted the role of government as a liberating force in the economy, meaning that only the government had enough resources to build large facilities like railroads, turnpikes, or canals that would lead to greater economic opportunities like commercial farming and manufacturing. Whigs also generally supported government activism in social policy through prison and asylum reform, and the creation of public schools.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Senate Journal, 1834, 104; Commons Journal, 1834, 228; Counihan, "North Carolina, 1815-1836," 53-55; Ronnie W. Faulkner, "Constitution of 1835," available online at www.northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/32/entry (accessed 15 December 2015).

⁶⁸ See An Address to the Freemen of North Carolina on the subject of Amending the State Constitution, With the Amendments reported the Legislature at the Session of 1832-1833 (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1832), 22-42.

⁶⁹ Raleigh Register, February 10, 1843; Kruman, Parties and Politics, 26.

The Democratic Party attracted easterners because they opposed government intervention in both the economy and social policy. Generally, Democrats, although not opposed to prosperity, were displeased with the growing market economy and disinterested in promoting economic development with government funds. They voted against internal improvements legislation and denounced banks that were necessary to grow the economy. Democrats also opposed government activism in the form of state-supported asylums, and schools for the deaf, dumb, and blind.⁷⁰

In contrast to Whigs, North Carolina's Democrats were wealthy elite planters and rural farmers from the middle and southern coastal plain who viewed social reforms and internal improvements as a wasteful use of their tax money to benefit western parts of the state.⁷¹ Easterners were members of an older, more established hierarchical society with a tradition of state and community dominance and they feared political and socioeconomic change wrought by the market revolution. They saw little need for internal improvements because they already enjoyed relatively good access to water transportation.⁷²

After the constitutional convention of 1835 the balance of power in the state began to shift to the west under the leadership of the Whig Party. Under a new state

⁷⁰ Kruman, Parties and Politics, 26.

⁷¹ Thomas D. McDowell to Walter W. Lenoir, July 8, 1854, in Lenoir Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; David Walbert, "Whigs and Democrats," UNC School of Education, available online at http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newnation/5205 (accessed 15 December 2015); Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 6-8, 14.

⁷² Senate Journal, 1840-1841, 235-236, 298; Jeffrey, "Internal Improvements," 152-155; Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 6-7.

constitution the west gained control of the house of commons, through strength of numbers, and the ability to elect a western governor in a popularly held election every two years. The new constitution and the newly active political parties spurred a greater popular interest in the statewide electoral system. The gubernatorial and presidential elections of the 1840s demonstrated unparalleled levels of political participation by North Carolinians. Whigs were the most successful at getting voters to the polls and were victorious in every gubernatorial election from 1836-1848. Democrats, however, remained intensely competitive, with only slight minorities in the General Assembly.⁷³

The western movement for internal improvements was likely the most contentious sectional issue in antebellum North Carolina. From the founding of the state to the chartering of the NCRR in 1849, most eastern legislators absolutely refused to support internal improvement projects that did not promise a clear and direct benefit to wealthy eastern residents. Eastern legislators outright ignored proposals for western projects and prohibited them from passing in the legislature. Following the Revolution, eastern leaders modeled the state's road and navigation maintenance and improvement efforts after the colonial government, which left it to meager county (formerly parish) and private resources. The legislature at that time committed only to providing minimal and rudimentary transportation services, believing that anything more would be an overuse of

⁷³ Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 12-13; Milton Ready, *The Tar Heel State: A History of North Carolina*, (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 180.

government power. ⁷⁴ Private investment companies relied on profits from tolls, and if projects failed, then it was without loss or embarrassment to the government. Prior to 1815 the eastern-led General Assembly limited its involvement to the incorporation of companies charged with enhancing eastern transportation by increasing the navigability of rivers, building canals, deepening inlets along the coast, and constructing a few public roads; only a few of these companies succeeded in raising the subscriptions necessary to incorporate. ⁷⁵ This private approach yielded few lasting results; companies were disorganized, underfunded, lacked expertise, and often failed to achieve their goals or maintain the navigability of the rivers for which they were responsible. ⁷⁶

In the early nineteenth century, western North Carolinians desperately needed transportation improvements and renewed economic opportunities. The region, isolated from the east by a lack of navigable rivers and to the west by mountains, suffered from economic stagnation and large-scale emigration. Economic growth hinged on improved transportation, and the private approach failed to meet this need. In 1815 western legislators started pushing for change. They looked to the state government to assume

⁷⁴ Walter Clark, ed. *State Records of North Carolina*, 16 vols. (Goldsboro: Nash Brothers, 1895-1907, 24: 89-90, 36-39, 48-75, 165-166, 674-678. See *Laws of North Carolina*, 1786, 47-48; 1796, 17-22 for examples of transportation services.

Transportation in North Carolina," in *The North Carolina Booklet* X (July, 1910), 26; Archibald D. Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, April 25, 1819 in Hoty, ed. *Murphey Papers*, 1:139; John Haywood to Archibald D. Murphey, April 26, 1819 in Hoyt, ed. *Murphey Papers*, 1:141; William K. Boyd, "The North Carolina Fund for Internal Improvements," 55.

⁷⁶Watson, Internal Improvements, 58-59.

responsibility for creating economic opportunities by overseeing, organizing, and investing in improvement companies to increase commercial farming in the west and provide easier, more profitable trade between the western counties and the expanding nation. The success of South Carolina, Virginia, and New York in using internal improvements to promote economic development and trade with the West inspired western leaders to emulate that success in North Carolina.⁷⁷

From 1815 through the 1820s, Orange County senator Archibald D. Murphey became the leading spokesperson for western economic development via a state-funded internal improvements program. Beginning in 1812, Murphey served seven consecutive terms as senator from Orange County . He disclaimed any party affiliation; though his views and close friends were largely Federalist. He devoted most of his senatorial career to transportation issues facing the state. From 1815 to 1818 Murphey chaired the senate Committee on Internal Improvements, and 1819 left his career in the senate to become Judge of the Superior Court for Orange County. As a judge Murphey continued to be closely involved with internal improvements as a member of the state's Board of Internal Improvements and author of its annual reports through 1821.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Archibald D. Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, April 25, 1819 in Hoyt, ed., *Murphey Papers*, 1:139; Charles Clinton Weaver, *Internal Improvements in North Carolina Previous to 1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1903), 9.

⁷⁸ Senate Journal, 1812, 4; 1813, 36; Hoyt, ed., Murphey Papers, 1: 60-62; 2: 29, 47, 84, 101; Senate Journal, 1818, 102. Turner, The Dreamer, 90. Murphey's annual appointment to the committee came from Bartlett Yancey, the speaker of the assembly. Yancey had studied law under Murphey and held progressive views on education, reapportionment, and internal improvements. As speaker, Yancey appointed all the members of joint select committees and there was greater support among the men he chose to serve on the internal improvements committee than there was among senators as

In November of 1815, Murphey successfully introduced a resolution in the senate that created a legislative Committee on Inland Navigation. Murphey chaired the committee made up of western legislators and wealthy professionals from the Piedmont.⁷⁹ Within a few years, the Committee's recommendations united western legislators from the Piedmont and mountain counties behind a centralized state program of internal improvements and encountered an intense backlash from traditionalist eastern legislators. From 1815-1818 Murphey submitted the committeee's recommendations to the senate and the commons followed by a series of bills and resolutions designed to put the committeee's recommendations into action.⁸⁰ In 1815 the committee called for a centralized approach to navigation and road improvements through which the state government would organize, oversee, and direct the efforts of private navigation improvements companies by purchasing up to one-third of each company's stock, paying for state engineers to survey all major river systems and propose improvements to increase navigation to ports at the Albemarle Sound, Pamlico Sound, and mouth of the

a whole. Speaker Yancey's influence in favor of internal improvements was lost with his sudden death in 1828. See Counihan, "North Carolina," 73-75, 79.

⁷⁹ Commons Journal, 1815, 7; Senate Journal, 1815, 22-25; "Plummer, Kemp," in Powell, ed. Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, 1988; Watson, Internal Improvements, 5, 60; Hoyt, Murphey Papers, 2:19-29, 111-114, 19 n. 1; Weaver, Internal Improvements, 10; John L. Cheney, North Carolina Government, 1585-1974: A Narrative and Statistical History (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1975), 267-268; "Browne, Peter," and "Gales, Joseph, Sr. in Powell, ed. Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, 1988.

⁸⁰Commons Journal, 1815, 42; 1817, 60; 1818; 104.

Cape Fear River. In the west, the committee proposed the construction of turnpikes for connecting backcountry counties to ports or streams.⁸¹

Eastern opposition undermined passage of the committee's recommendations in its first year. The strongest resistance came from a faction of easterners known as the "traditionalists" in the house of commons where only 52 out of 131 members voted in favor of the committee's recommendations. Traditionalists opposed all forms of state involvement in the economy. Some traditionalists argued specifically against the commitment of state funds or the purchase of stock in private navigation companies, and others were fundamentally opposed to the "centralist" nature of the recommendations. Sectional differences among commons members were clear; traditionalists hailed from the eastern river districts, and centralists who favored government promotion of economic development were westerners from the tobacco counties of the northern Piedmont. 82 The mountains and lower Piedmont were divided with fifteen out of twentytwo supporting. The 1815 vote showed support for the committee's plans was far greater in the areas without navigable rivers, in which farmers had to haul produce over land for great distances at high expense. The near unity of the west in support of a centralized navigation improvements plan signaled a warning to easterners that the growing west was anxious to flex its political influence for economic gain.⁸³

⁸¹ The state's contribution was estimated at \$40,000 in 1815; The report is printed in the Raleigh *Register*, December 8, 20, 27, 1815.

⁸² See *Senate Journal*, 1815, 25; *Commons Journal*, 1815, 42; Counihan, "North Carolina 1815-1836," 109 n. 47, n. 48.

⁸³ Commons Journal, 1815, 42; Counihan, "North Carolina 1815-1836," 109-110.

From 1816 to 1819 Murphey increasingly added western transportation improvements to the committee's recommendations until they gained solid western support from the Piedmont and mountain counties that together, controlled eighty-one percent of the common's vote. In 1816 his report to the legislature added proposals to improve western transportation by connecting the Yadkin and Catawba rivers by canal to the growing commercial town of Fayetteville on the Cape Fear River. Again, the report failed to pass the commons; however, it attracted support from the mountains and lower Piedmont. By 1819 Murphey included improvements to western rivers, the Broad, Pee Dee, and Lumber as well as the construction of a system of turnpikes over the mountains designed to connect the mountain west to navigable rivers further east. These additional western improvements secured support from all parts of the west—the upper and lower Piedmont sections, and the mountains—and allowed the passage of the report and recommendations of the Committee on Inland navigation in 1819.

With the passage of the committee's report in 1819, the General Assembly agreed to subscribe to stock in navigation companies, fund surveys of the state's major river systems and the salaries for state engineers, and to create a state fund for internal improvements, along with a managing Board of Internal Improvements. The Board of

⁸⁴ The committee's recommendations in their entirety are contained in the *Reports of the Committee on Inland Navigation*, 1815 and 1816 and in "Memoir of Hon. Archibald D. Murphey, Late Judge of the Superior Court of North Carolina," in *Hoyt*, ed. *Murphey* Papers, 2:19-29, 33-47, 103-95, 144-149, 182, 184-184, hereinafter cited as Murphey's "Memoir." *Commons Journal*, 1819, 82; Counihan, "North Carolina 1815-1836," 111; *Senate Journal*, 1816, 31; *Senate Journal*, 1817, 44, 55-56, 89.

⁸⁵ Laws of North Carolina, 1819, 42-43; Hoyt, ed. Murphey Papers, 2:19 (n. 1), 23.

Internal Improvements absorbed the Committee on Inland Navigation; the new board consisted of the governor and six directors, one from each of the state's six judicial districts, appointed by a joint ballot of the General Assembly. The board's primary responsibilities consisted of appointing engineers, recommending projects for legislative consideration, informing the General Assembly on the progress of all projects, accounting for expenditures, and subscribing to stock in improvement projects on behalf of the state "as the General Assembly may from time to time agree to patronize." Members of the Board enjoyed limited political power; their duties were largely administrative and their ability to make policy decisions went no further than recommendations to the legislature.

Murphey and his supporters intended to raise the money for the internal improvements fund in the west and invest it in the west. They would use the proceeds from the sales of lands recently acquired from the Cherokee Indians in the mountain west to start the fund. As in other states to the west and to the south, Indian removal in North Carolina served as a precursor to the expansion of capitalism. Federal treaties in 1817 and 1819 dissolved Cherokee title to over one million acres in western North

⁸⁶ Treasurer's and Comptroller's Papers, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 5-6; *Laws of North Carolina*, 1819, 42-43.

⁸⁷ North Carolina General Assembly, *Public Laws of North Carolina*, 1819 (Newbern: Arnett & Hodge, Printers to the State), 42-43; Weaver, *Internal Improvements*, 12-13; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 6.

⁸⁸ Counihan, "North Carolina, 1815-1836," 62.

⁸⁹ Public Laws of North Carolina, 1819.

Carolina and the state immediately began to sell the land to white settlers. Settlers paid one-eighth the purchase price in cash and signed promissory notes for the remainder in four annual installments. This money was then deposited into an account designated, "Internal Improvements Fund." In 1821 the General Assembly added the dividends from state-held stock in the Bank of Cape Fear and the Bank of Newbern to the fund. 91

In 1822 the Board of Internal Improvements presented its overall recommendations for internal improvements to the General Assembly. Their recommendation, known as the Murphey plan, required a full government commitment to developing and directing a system of intrastate transportation arteries, including, improved access to the state's Atlantic ports by opening up all the state's major rivers and constructing roads in the west to divert western trade to those newly opened rivers. The Murphey plan was designed to allow western residents to benefit from the newly opened Cherokee lands with improvements to the Yadkin and Catawba rivers, along with new roads to draw trade from Virginia and Tennessee through western North Carolina. 92

Financial obstacles doomed the Murphey plan practically from the moment of its presentation. Many navigation companies failed in the wake of the financial panic of 1819 and funds from the Cherokee land sales became increasingly difficult to collect. 93

⁹⁰ Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 8, 8 n. 23, 9; Weaver, *Internal Improvements*, 13.

⁹¹ Turner, *The Dreamer*, 101.

⁹² Counihan, "North Carolina, 1815-1836," 105; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 4, 28; Hoyt, ed., *Murphey Papers*, 2:19-29, 122-150; Hoyt, ed., Murphey "Memoir," 107.

⁹³ Laws of North Carolina, 1823; Turner, The Dreamer, 101.

An additional economic setback stemmed from a severe misappropriation of internal improvement funds by the state treasurer, John Haywood, of over \$22,000. 94 The hard economic times intensified eastern opposition to the Murphey plan in both houses of the General Assembly and the historical apathy between east and west plagued the program's success. 95 The General Assembly outright ignored the recommendations of the Murphey plan, and continued to fund eastern navigation improvements with money harvested from the sale of Cherokee lands in the west. 96 From 1815 to 1818 the state appropriated approximately \$118,000 for eastern projects and only \$2,500 for western projects. 97 The only significant western project to be approved after 1819 was the construction of the Buncombe turnpike—a private initiative proposed by western investors and the state engineer, Hamilton Fulton, to draw vacationers to a resort at Warm Springs, North Carolina. The state invested \$5,000 in the turnpike from the General Fund, not from the Fund for Internal Improvements, and did not invest in another western turnpike until 1854. 98 The Buncombe turnpike was not an improvement that allowed for a major

⁹⁴ Raleigh Register, January 30, 1829; Watson, Internal Improvements, 8.

⁹⁵ Turner, *The Dreamer*, 101.

⁹⁶ See Paul Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 15; Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina,* 6-7, 12.

⁹⁷ Weaver, *Internal Improvements*, 9-11; Boyd, "The North Carolina Fund for Internal Improvements," 59.

⁹⁸ Michael Hill, "Buncombe Turnpike," in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, ed. William S. Powell and Jay Mazzocchi (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Charles McArver, "Turnpikes," in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, 2006; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 35.

increase in western access to outside markets; therefore, it did not pose a threat to the east's superior socio-economic position.

Further difficulties arose when the General Assembly took measures to decrease western influence on the Board of Internal Improvements and eliminated the position of the state engineer. In 1824 the General Assembly reduced the membership of the board from the governor and six representatives from each of the state's judicial districts to the Governor and three directors elected by the legislature. In 1831 membership was reduced again, this time to the governor, state treasurer, and one member elected jointly by the two houses of the legislature. Easterners criticized the state's chief engineer, Hamilton Fulton, for his large salary, his foreign birth, and his reports against purely local projects until he resigned in 1825. In 1828 the General Assembly effectively eliminated the position's salary from the budget.

Easterners' objections to internal improvements covered a variety of economic, political, and social reasons, many of which were irrational and hypocritical. Easterners were blessed with navigable rivers, and from their perspective, using state or federal aid for internal improvement projects would violate individuals' rights and give too much power to the central government—possibly even the power to free slaves. They also worried about the consequence of setting a precedent that might later result in the

⁹⁹ Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 6, 9, 10, 11,15.

¹⁰⁰ Watson, Internal Improvements, 6.

¹⁰¹ Hoyt, ed. *Murphey Papers*, 2: 119-120; *Public Laws of North Carolina*, 1824; Lefler and Newsome, *North* Carolina, 317; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 10.

Easterners also argued that internal improvements had the power to encourage social instability by putting laborers out of work and forcing them into a life of theft and crime. Western leaders consistently countered eastern opposition, arguing that funds were not taken from taxes, but from the sale of Cherokee lands, and added that the expense of hiring a state engineer would pay for itself by eliminating wastefulness in the future, and if North Carolinians refused or were unable to invest voluntarily in public works, then it was the state's responsibility to do it for them. Counterarguments proved insufficient against the eastern planters' firm control over the state government, and easterners, though clearly willing to appropriate funds for projects located in the eastern part of the state, were unwilling to spend large amounts of money on western development.

By the close of the 1820s a politically united west posed a significant political and economic threat to traditional eastern power. Easterners who controlled the General

¹⁰² Raleigh Register, December 29, 1820, January 5, 1821, November 9, 1829. Tarborough Free Press, June 29, 1833, July 27, 1833; Carolina Observer, July 2, 1829; Harry L. Watson, "'Old Rip' in a New Era," 221-222; Jeffrey, "Internal Improvements and Political Parties in Antebellum North Carolina," 113. Easterners were correct about the point that the greatest portion of tax revenue in the state came from the east while the greatest need for expenditures came from the underdeveloped west. See Counihan, "North Carolina," 28.

¹⁰³ Watson, "'Old Rip' in a New Era," 221-222.

¹⁰⁴ Morgan, "State Aid to Transportation," 134-135, 137; *Raleigh Register*, January 5, 1821; *Tarborough Free Press*, July 6, 1833.

¹⁰⁵ Jeffrey, "Internal Improvements and Political Parties in Antebellum North Carolina," 113; Turner, *The Dreamer*, 102.

Assembly feared change and especially the growing political and economic potential of the west. Easterners attacked westerners in the press, claiming that statewide plans for internal improvements were simply ploys for westerners to gain political office. Additionally, easterners repeatedly blocked western attempts to create additional counties and gain more equitable representation in the General Assembly. 107

The western leaders of the movement for internal improvements have been labeled champions of western farmers fighting for better access to transportation to surpass subsistence, and they adopted this rhetoric for their constituents, claiming that state-funded internal improvement projects would lift the prospects of all North Carolinians, and especially those of western farmers. Privately they held significant vested interests in public projects. Internal improvements were planned to enhance their personal power and wealth in land and slave-grown and slave-processed natural resources like corn, wheat, cotton, tobacco, silver, and iron. ¹⁰⁸ In the early nineteenth century

¹⁰⁶ Tarborough Free Press, August 24, 1830; Watson, "'Old Rip' in a New Era," 221-222.

¹⁰⁷ Journal of the Senate, 1816, 23; Hoyt, ed. Murphey Papers, II:56 ff. Western legislators submitted seven proposals to call a convention on constitutional reform to correct the inequality of representation in the legislature for westerners between 1787 and 1821; each proposal was defeated in the eastern-led assembly. In 1816 Murphey issued a report to the legislature detailing the growth of the western population and calling for a constitutional convention to address the sectional inequality of representation in state government concurrently with his report from the Committee on Inland Navigation. See Turner, *The Dreamer*, 80.

^{108 &}quot;Moredecai Family Papers, 1649-1947," finding aid, available online at http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/m/Mordecai_Family.html, (accessed 7 September 2013); Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, March 29, 1819; January 15, 1820 in Hoyt, ed., *Murphey Papers*, 1:130, 130 (n. 3), 154-156; *Raleigh Register*, November 24, 1815.

western political leaders were modern, capitalist, slaveholding entrepreneurs who aggressively pursued wealth in an expanding market economy. Western climbers like Murphey and his peers frightened traditional eastern planters, who maintained power by limiting political and economic power in the growing west. Western leaders advocated internal improvements for their own personal enrichment and these private motivations have been obscured by the history of the state's sectional political battles of the early nineteenth century.

Members of the Committee on Inland Navigation and the Board of Internal Improvements speculated heavily on future transportation in the west. They planned investments in land, slaves, agriculture, manufactuing, and domestic slave trading in areas predicted to develop as a result of internal improvements. For example, Murphey blatantly matched his investment activity with proposed internal improvements with the intention to increase his slaveholdings as well as his overall fortune and status. Murphey was a climber and he had a proven ability to influence other western planters like himself. He grew up on a tobacco plantation and in 1801 owned his own 2,000-acre plantation, the Hermitage, in the backcountry of Orange County, along with a general

Murphey, 1777-1832, ed. William Henry Hoyt (Raleigh: F. M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers, 1914), and William A. Graham, LL. D., "Memoir of Hon. Archibald D. Murphey, Late Judge of the Superior Court of North Carolina," in *The Papers of Archibald Debow Murphey, 1777-1832*, ed. William Henry Hoyt (Raleigh: F. M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers, 1914). See Hoyt, ed., *The Papers of Archibald Debow Murphey,* 1:1 (n. 1), 38. Archibald D. Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, October 6, 1815, March 26, 1818, and July 8, 1821, Murphey to Colonel William Polk, February 18, 1820, in Hoyt, ed., *The Papers of Archibald Debow Murphey,* 1:83, 105-107, 131 n.1, 158,160 n. 2; Turner, *The Dreamer,* 19-25.

store, mill, and distillery, as well as another plantation in Caswell County. His slaves primarily grew corn and also worked to convert his fields to the more profitable southern staples of tobacco and cotton. He hauled merchandise for his store by private wagon team from Petersburg and returned with corn meal and whiskey for sale. In 1820 he owned forty-one slaves and a half interest in six more—making him an average, elite planter in North Carolina's Piedmont. Murphey also invested heavily in a natural springs health resort known as Lenox Castle in Rockingham County. As a western planter he tried to balance the needs of agriculture with a modern sense of expansion and development, often buying and selling land and slaves to pay debts or raise capital for new bonds and investments in slave-employing industries. He was well aware of the potential effects of transportation on the values of landholdings and appeared to work tirelessly to buy up as many town lots and plantations as he could in areas where he predicted transportation improvements would increase property and commercial values. 110 As a westerner, Murphey's chosen path to wealth and power meant embracing the new capitalist market changes taking place all around North Carolina, as well as

¹¹⁰ Archibald D. Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, October 6, 1815 in Hoyt, ed., 83; Murphey to Ruffin, March 26, 1818 in Hoyt, ed., 107; Hoyt, ed. *Murphey Papers*, 1:1 (n. 1); Archibald D. Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, October 6, 1815 in Hoyt, ed., *Murphey Papers*, 1:83. See also Murphey to Ruffin, March 26, 1818 in Hoyt, ed., 107; Archibald D. Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, July 8, 1821, and Murphey to Colonel William Polk, February 18, 1820 in Hoyt, ed.; Archibald D. Murphey to Thomas Ruffin, March 26, 1818 in Hoyt, ed. *Murphey Papers*, 1:105-107, 131 (n. 1).

assuming the risks associated with market speculation. His scheming literally landed him bankrupt and in the poor house before his death in 1832. 111

Eastern opposition in the legislature combined with financial and engineering hardships to bring the first phase of a western campaign for internal improvements to an anticlimactic pause. By the close of the 1820s, the Board of Internal Improvements failed to get their plans for western projects through the General Assembly, and practically speaking, little had changed for western North Carolinians. After a brief glimmer of success in 1819, they remained isolated from the east and the rest of the country.

Archibald D. Murphey, the undeniable leader of the movement, remained frustrated and bitter towards the east until his death in 1832. His plan for improving and developing the state failed, although posterity has labeled him the "Father of Internal Improvements," because his actions undeniably influenced the next generation of western planters to campaign aggressively for state sponsored railroad construction in the west.

In the post-Murphey era, western leaders united in support of two primary goals: obtaining a railroad through western North Carolina and increasing western representation in the General Assembly. While North Carolinians argued over navigation

¹¹¹ Murphey spent twenty days in a Greensboro debtor's prison before his death in 1832. See North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources/Office of Archives and History, "Archibald Murphey," http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newnation/5114 (accessed 11 June 2015).

¹¹² North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources/Office of Archives and History, "Archibald Murphey," available online at http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newnation/5114 (accessed 11 June 2015).

and road improvements, railroads expanded across the Deep South, carrying increasing amounts of goods, people, cotton, and slaves. Western leaders argued that railroads were the most cost-effective way to transport western North Carolina goods of corn, pork, cotton, tobacco, and slaves to markets and plantations; however, they also began to envision the Piedmont as a valuable transportation corridor linking the Upper and Lower South via railroad. Their past experience with internal improvements and the General Assembly dictated that increased political power would be absolutely necessary to overcome long-entrenched eastern opposition to western plans for future development.

While easterners were focused on maintaining the status quo, westerners were looking to the West and to the South, beyond the borders of North Carolina, pursuing a tangible connection to the market and transportation revolutions. In the 1830s, western leaders seriously pursued three different railroad options to integrate the Piedmont into the southern cotton economy. All three options—the Central Rail Road, the "Metropolitan Route," and the Raleigh and Columbia Railroad—failed because westerners were still too politically and economically weak to push a western-serving railroad through an eastern-led General Assembly. In spite of failing to become a reality, each proposal was important for the future success of a western North Carolina railroad.

The idea for the Central Rail Road came from Joseph Caldwell, one of Murphey's strongest supporters and a leading advocate for the superiority of railroads over canals. In his immensely popular treatise, *The Numbers of Carlton*, published in 1828, Caldwell argued that the most effective way to bring economic development to the state would be to build a railroad from the Atlantic to the Tennessee line in cooperation with the state

and federal government. *The Numbers* described the history and superiority of railroads to the public and encouraged people to inform the legislature of their desire for railroad construction. Caldwell's plan included a railroad fund of \$50,000 created from a thirty-seven cent poll tax combined with private stock subscriptions. The railroad would also charge tolls and all revenue would go to the state. In the same vein as Murphey, Caldwell insisted that centralized planning and oversight by the state government was key to the "promise of ultimate profitability."

Caldwell's *Numbers* instigated a popular movement for state-funded railroad construction through which rail advocates increased public support and exerted pressure on the eastern faction of the General Assembly. From 1828 to 1833, western rail supporters and centralists in the General Assembly organized committees at state and county levels to hold conventions and publish annual journals to address the electorate. By 1833 the popularity of a railroad drew over 150 delegates from 47 counties to a state convention in Raleigh to debate the details of a central railroad and compose a memorial

¹¹³ Joseph Caldwell, *The Numbers of Carlton* (New York: G. Long, 1828), 67.

¹¹⁴ Caldwell, *The Numbers*, 9-10, 65-76, 88, 123.

¹¹⁵ Counihan, "North Carolina," 123.

¹¹⁶ Caldwell, The Numbers, 221-232. Brown, A State Movement in Railroad Development, 16; Board of Internal Improvements, Annual Report of the Board of Internal Improvements of North Carolina to the General Assembly, 1829 (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1823-1829), 13-20.

to the General Assembly.¹¹⁷ Most attendees were from the western half of the state where geographical limits to trade made them distinctly inclined to support state-aided rail construction.¹¹⁸ The memorial demanded massive state action to support a liberal system of internal improvements essential to the future prosperity of the state.¹¹⁹

As conceived by the convention delegates of 1833, the Central Rail Road (CRR) entailed a route from Beaufort on the coast to Salisbury in the Piedmont, then on to the Tennessee border with north-south spurs to the Roanoke and Cape Fear rivers. The CRR was intended to connect to a proposed canal from Beaufort to Newbern and thereby allow the state to "enter into competition with other markets, and trade with Europe, the Mediterranean, South America, and the West Indies as well as the rest of the United States." The route was local, regional, national, and international in scope. The plan drew the bulk of its support from planters, professionals, and gold miners in the

¹¹⁷ Proceedings of the Internal Improvement Convention held in Raleigh, November 1833 with the Address of the Central Committee, to the Citizens of North Carolina (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1834), 3-4.

¹¹⁸ Counihan, "North Carolina," 128-129.

¹¹⁹ Proceedings of the Internal Improvement Convention held in Raleigh, November 1833 with the Address of the Central Committee, to the Citizens of North Carolina (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1834). See also Governor Swain's address about internal improvements in the Commons Journal, 1833, 129-132 and Raleigh Register, October 1, 1833.

¹²⁰ James C. Burke, *The Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2011), 9, 33, 35; *Journal of the Internal Improvement Convention: Which Met at Raleigh, on the 4th of July, 1833 Together with the Address of the Committee of That Body of Citizens of North Carolina Volume 1833* (Raleigh: Internal Improvement Convention, 1833).

¹²¹ Weaver, *Internal Improvements*, 37-40, quote on page 37.

Piedmont, but also from as far away as South Carolina, Georgia, and Cincinnati. Perhaps most significantly, the CRR attracted the support of a few important, centralist urban eastern leaders, like Judge William Gaston from Newbern, who were beginning to understand the value of opening eastern towns, and their own plantations, to western trade ¹²²

In response to the convention's demands and the proposed CRR, the General Assembly remained unwilling to commit to large-scale internal improvement projects. In the 1833-1834 session the General Assembly continued business as usual when it authorized charters of incorporation to several private railroad, bridge, and ferry companies. It blocked the passage of a resolution instructing the governor to request the Secretary of War to have the United States Army Corps of Engineers survey the CRR route from New Bern through Raleigh and then west. The primary opposition to the CRR came from residents in the southeastern Coastal Plain who claimed that the federal government had no right to fund internal improvements in the state—a self-serving move intended to squash potential challenges from the west. 123

After the failure of the convention movement and the CRR, western leaders worked through private channels to plan the "Metropolitan Route" and the Raleigh and

¹²² Charles Bowman, Jr., "Gaston, William," in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

 ¹²³ Commons Journal, 1833, 157-158; Laws of North Carolina, 1833, 70-145,
 158-164; Report of the Joint Committee on Internal Improvement, Legislative Papers,
 1833, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Senate Journal, 1833, 89; Report of the Committee on
 Internal Improvement, 1834 (Raleigh: Lawrence & Lemay), 1-8; Watson, Internal
 Improvements, 12-14, 106.

Columbia Railroad (R&CRR). Each plan was specifically designed to provide connections to Virginia and South Carolina through the Piedmont and cut the east off from western trade in perpetuity. Plans for the "Metropolitan Route" came together in 1833 and proposed to connect the major cities of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The R&CRR was surveyed in 1838 with the goal of directing north-south traffic away from the coastal plain by connecting with Virginia through Raleigh, and then from the capital city into South Carolina. Both plans were abandoned in the wake of the financial panic of 1837, but served as evidence of western persistence to achieve their larger vision and circumvent eastern opposition. 125

In the 1830s, the eastern-dominated General Assembly objected to western railroads but nevertheless approved rail construction to serve the needs of eastern planters. Arguments against railroads echoed those used against western navigation improvements in the 1820s with easterners maintaining that the state could not support western rail projects because it was unfair to tax eastern residents for improvements that would only benefit western counties; it would allow the government to infringe on individuals' rights and increase the state debt. Despite these objections the General Assembly made exceptions for eastern railroads and chartered the first two railroads to be built in the North Carolina, the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad (W&WRR) and the

¹²⁴ Burke, *The Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road*, 9, 39, 162.

¹²⁵ Charles Fenton Mercer Garnett to George W. Mordecai, April 4, 1846, George W. Mordecai Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; November 5, 1838; Hunter-Garnett Families Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia; Burke, *The Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road*, 9, 53-54; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 112-113.

Raleigh and Gaston Railroad (R&GRR).¹²⁶ Each of these railroads had the potential to reduce the cost of transporting eastern North Carolina goods and enhance the value of real property.¹²⁷ The W&WRR was particularly successful. After 1840, with connections to Charleston, Petersburg, and Baltimore via steamboat, the W&WRR drove the economy of eastern North Carolina, galvanized its politics, and opened it up for cotton production and a greater reliance on slave labor.¹²⁸ The town of Weldon became an important trade center for eastern North Carolina, while western North Carolina remained neglected.

By the mid-1830s, it was increasingly clear that westerners needed greater representation in the General Assembly to secure internal improvements for their own region. In 1834 westerners along with a few centralist eastern allies demanded a convention to reform the state constitution. A Constitutional Act narrowly passed after the reformers threatened to hold up the rebuilding of the state capitol following a fire in 1831. The possibility for internal improvements, particularly a state-sponsored central railroad envisioned to connect the east with the mountain west, brought a small, but significant group of eastern legislators to support the western call for constitutional

¹²⁶ Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 22-23; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 60-61, 82, 107-108, 110-111, and Chapter 7; Burke, *The Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road*, 22-23.

¹²⁷ Burke, *The Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road*, 20; Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 4-8, 12, 18-19; Ready, *The Tar Heel State*, 180.

¹²⁸ Burke, *The Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road*, 9; Watson, *Internal Improvements* 108, 111, 112.

reform and a more positive state government. 130 Legislators in eastern towns were more interested in economic growth than regional loyalty. The Newbern Spectator reported that the town of Newbern in the small eastern tidewater county of Craven "had more in common with them [westerners] than the small counties of the east, the most determined enemies of both internal improvements and constitutional reform legislation." In 1833 prominent legislators from growing eastern towns such as William Gaston of New Bern, Edward B. Dudley of Wilmington, James Sewall of Fayetteville, and William Haywood, Jr. of Raleigh, established a coalition with western legislators to support statewide internal improvements planning and a central railroad. These men were fully aware of the increasing population of the west and needed a western-led legislature to support internal improvements. 132 Gaston saw the western ascendency to power as inevitable, and he asserted that he had taken "prudent advantage of the westerners" for his own and his constituents' benefit. 133 Haywood stated to his constituents that "it is obvious that further resistance [to the west] is vain and possibly, may be dangerous to our local and general interest....It is the plain dictate of duty and of common sense to moderate and

¹³⁰ Raleigh Register, February 14, 25, 1834.

¹³¹ Newbern Spectator, February 3, 1834 quoted in Raleigh Register, February 14, 1834.

¹³² Senate Journal, 1834, 104; Commons Journal, 1834, 228.

¹³³ William Gaston to Robert Moore, August 16, 1835 in Mathias Manly Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

control that measure while it is still in our power to do it."¹³⁴ At the constitutional convention in 1835, traditionalist eastern delegates continued to argue that they would be disproportionately burdened by taxes for railroads and highways. They also declared that "highways and other modes of transportation would not benefit the West because ninetenths of their soil is exhausted and not worth cultivation, contrasted with hundreds and thousands of acres brought into market in the Southwestern States."¹³⁵ This time the old east was outnumbered, and thanks to eastern allies and the full support of small western counties, the plan to reform the constitution and reapportion representation passed in the General Assembly. Only twenty votes were cast against the new constitution and they were all eastern. Approval of the constitution was then put to the electorate where it passed narrowly—90 percent of westerners voted in its favor, whereas 88 percent of easterners voted against it.¹³⁶

After the constitutional convention in 1835, the balance of power in the state began to shift toward the west. The most significant change for western improvements was the popular election of the state governor, which led to the successful election of "the

¹³⁴ William Haywood Jr., *To the Freemen of Wake County* (Raleigh: Philo White Printer, 1835).

¹³⁵ Weaver, *Internal Improvements*, 15.

¹³⁶ Senate Journal, 1834, 104; Commons Journal, 1834, 228; Proceedings and Debates of the Convention of North Carolina, Called to Amend the Constitution of the State which Assembled at Raleigh, June 4, 1835, To Which are subjoined the Convention Act and the Amendments to the Constitution, Together with the Votes of the People (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1836), 339, 400; Journal of the Convention called by the Freemen of North Carolina to Amend the Constitution of the State, Which Assembled in the City of Raleigh, on the 4th of June 1835, and Continued in Session until the 11th day of July thereafter (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1835), 102.

railroad governor," John Motley Morehead, a western Whig candidate, to the governorship in 1841. Morehead emerged as the new champion of internal improvements amidst the sectional conflicts of the 1830s. As a slaveowning entrepreneurial capitalist from Greensboro, Morehead's campaign for governor appealed to elite westerners in every way. He was a former student of Murphey's, a leading advocate of state-funded railroads, and instrumental in launching the attack from the west on the state's original constitution. According to the *Newbern Spectator*

Mr. Morehead has a large stake in the welfare and prosperity of the State. *Its interests are his*. He owns many slaves, is deeply embarked in manufacturing and mining, and possesses talents and acquirements fully adequate to the duties of the high station to which the people seem inclined to call him. He is besides, a *Western man*, and justice demands that we support a gentleman of that section. ¹³⁹

During his campaign the Whig Party touted Morehead as a modern man, capable of appealing to both sections of the state—a western man of commerce and manufacturing as well as a slaveholding planter. Like his supporters, Morehead wanted greater access to the economic independence afforded by slavery's expansion, and he did not want to be cut off from a burgeoning capitalist marketplace by old-fashioned eastern dominance. In

 $^{^{137}}$ Kruman, Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 12-13; Ready, The Tar Heel State, 180.

¹³⁸ Alva Burton Konkle, *John Motley Morehead and the Development of North Carolina, 1796-1866* (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1922), 177; Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina,* 14.

¹³⁹ Konkle, *John Motley Morehead*, 189.

¹⁴⁰ United States Federal Census 1840, 1850, Guilford County, North Carolina, available online at www.Ancestry.com (accessed 4 April 2016).

the late 1840s he successfully led the movement for railroad construction into western North Carolina. 141

Following the state constitutional convention and Morehead's election, western leaders became a dominant force in North Carolina politics, capable of pressuring the east into a compromise over western rail. In 1847 two rail proposals, one from Virginia and one from South Carolina, created an important opportunity for westerners to flex their new political and economic power. Private investors in Virginia backed the Richmond and Danville Railroad (R&DRR), a route designed to connect its namesake cities, while South Carolina proposed to build the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad (C&SCRR) from Charlotte to Columbia. With these two railroads in place, an additional railroad through North Carolina's Piedmont would connect the Chesapeake with the Gulf Coast. Westerners threw their support behind all three projects. Western leaders, William Boylan, Duncan Cameron, and George Mordecai, began raising money in Petersburg – attempting to circumvent the need for state funds. Residents in Charlotte established a local committee on internal improvements to raise stock subscriptions for the C&SCRR, and many westerners supported the Danville-to-Charlotte connection because it would

¹⁴¹ Downey, *Planting a Capitalist South*, 8: Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 9: Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 48, 61. The financial crisis following the panic of 1837 delayed western progress toward rail construction. In its report of 1842, the Board of Internal Improvements refused to recommend any extensive improvements on the grounds that the state was poor and would have to rely on loans or taxes to fund any public works. The prolonged depression following the financial crisis of 1837 kept western legislators from voting for increased state spending or higher taxes from their constituents. By 1847 the fund had been phased out completely, having only spent \$402.61 per year on improvements since 1840. See Weaver, *Internal Improvements*, 21-22.

facilitate existing trade routes at lower rates.¹⁴² The confluence of all these activities threatened to bisect North Carolina through the Piedmont, prevent the east from ever competing for western trade, and choke the state's ports.¹⁴³

Faced with the possibility of economic ruin, easterners finally took a seat at the negotiating table with western legislators to devise an alternate transportation solution with benefits for both regions. On January 27, 1849, the General Assembly authorized a charter for a North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) to run from "the Wilmington and [Weldon] Rail Road where the same passes over the Neuse River, in the County of Wayne, via Raleigh, and thence by the most practicable route, via Salisbury, in the county of Rowan, to the Town of Charlotte, in the County of Mecklenburg." The charter

¹⁴² Private investors in Virginia and South Carolina proposed a Danville-to-Richmond connection and were aligning to construct the road without state aid. Boylan, Cameron, and Mordecai were leaders of the proposed "Metropolitan Route" that was proposed in 1833 as a multi-state rail corridor to connect the Piedmont with major cities in Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina and to cut off eastern North Carolina from western trade. The plan was abandoned by western legislators in the wake of the financial panic of 1837. See Charles Fenton Mercer Garnett to George W. Mordecai, April 4, 1846; Charles Peter Mollett to George W. Mordecai, January 29, 1847, George W. Mordecai Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 63-65; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 114-115; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, xii. D. A. Tompkins, "History of Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte," (Charlotte: Observer Print House, 1903) available online at openlibrary.org/books/OL23304731M/History_of_Mecklenburg_County_and_the_city_of Charlotte (accessed 23 July 2013).

¹⁴³ Konkle, John Motley Morehead, 297; Kruman, Parties and Politics, 64.

¹⁴⁴ Western Whigs demanded the support of eastern Whigs and threatened to disrupt the party if they did not support a North Carolina rail project to connect to Virginia and South Carolina through the Piedmont, together they worked to come up with a compromise and the result was the bill to charter a North Carolina Railroad. The R&DRR would also most likely kill the R&GRR and cost the state hundreds of thousands of dollars. See Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 64-66.

authorized the state to subscribe to \$2,000,000 of stock in the North Carolina Railroad Company with \$1,000,000 for purchase by the public.¹⁴⁵ To placate opposing easterners and ease the charter's passage, the NCRR charter was placed within a larger internal improvements bill that included a turnpike from Salisbury to the Georgia border, a plank road connecting Salisbury to Fayetteville, and navigation improvements to the Tar and Neuse Rivers. The package bill passed by only one vote cast by Caswell County senator Calvin Graves. Graves went against his eastern interests when he changed his vote at the last minute to support the bill, and that vote ended his political career.¹⁴⁶

Once the NCRR charter passed, western leaders from the Piedmont quickly took control over all aspects of the railroad's construction and operation. They gobbled up the large majority of the company's stock, used their political and economic influence to control the road's final route through their own Piedmont properties, and maintained a monopoly on the road's construction contracts. John Motley Morehead became the first president of the North Carolina Railroad Company and he was accompanied by leaders from Guilford, Rowan, Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, and Wake counties to raise the required \$1,000,000 in capital stock to secure the \$2,000,000 in aid from the state required by the NCRR's charter. Fundraising conventions were held in Salisbury and Greensboro where they professed the economic advantages that the NCRR would bring to the state: a rise in the fortunes of all western North Carolinians, increased commercial traffic, placement of

¹⁴⁵ Laws of North Carolina, 1848-1849, chapter 82, 138-159.

¹⁴⁶ Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, xiv, 15-16; *Laws of North Carolina*, 1848-1849, chapter 82, 138-159; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 115-116.

western products from mines, farms, and factories in reach of larger markets and higher prices. 147 They also argued that the NCRR would decrease emigration, encourage greater use of the telegraph, raise land values along the route, provide work for unemployed slaves, and bring an end to the ruinous sectionalism between eastern and western North Carolina. 148 Ultimately, the road's greatest financial support came from the Piedmont areas expecting to be the NCRR's most immediate beneficiaries. 149 With the minimum stock subscription set at one hundred dollars, only elite westerners could realistically afford to invest in the railroad and control its future. 150

Western leaders planned and directed the NCRR's route to maximize their personal economic benefits—a sign of their increased political and economic influence in the state. Charlotte, Salisbury, Raleigh, and Goldsboro were the only towns specifically named as stations in the NCRR charter, leaving the trajectories between these stopping points open to the highest bidder. For western planters and businessmen, a connection to Charlotte was key. In Charlotte and areas immediately south, once small-time upcountry

¹⁴⁷ Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 7-18; *Laws of North Carolina*, 1848-1849, chapter 82, 138-159.

Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 18; *North Carolina Star*, August 15, 1849, July 10, 1850; *Raleigh Register*, January 31, May 12, 1849; *Carolina Watchman*, March 8, 1849; *Greensboro Patriot*, September 21, 1850; *Hillsborough Recorder*, October, 10, 1849.

¹⁴⁹ The largest stock subscriptions came from Orange, Alamance, Guilford, and Davidson Counties. See Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 20.

¹⁵⁰ The NCRR was unique among antebellum railroads in that it received no financial support from local, city, or county governments; leaving the task of investing to individuals. See Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 7-18, 24.

planters had begun earning great profits in transportation, cotton, gold mining, financing, manufacturing, and domestic slave trading. Connecting to this growing commercial center at a junction with the new Charlotte & South Carolina Railroad was intended to have a tremendous impact on the fortunes of western elite. The other named terminus, Goldsboro, allowed for a connection with the Wilmington and Weldon Rail Road leading to Virginia, and helped to garner eastern support in the General Assembly and sell stock subscriptions in eastern counties. A stop in Raleigh allowed for a rail connection with the R&GRR, which was in desperate need of repair and financial help at the time. The town of Salisbury was an integral piece of the entire internal improvements package for its strategic commercial location within six miles of the Yadkin River, and as an important center in North Carolina for the domestic slave trade.

¹⁵¹ Lacy K. Ford, "The Tale of Two Entrepreneurs in the Old South: John Springs and Hiram Hutchison of the South Carolina Upcountry," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 95, no. 3 (July 1994): 198-201, 204, 211, 214-216; Michael Tadman, "The Hidden History of Slave Trading in the Old South: John Springs and Other 'Gentlemen Dealing in Slaves," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 97, no. 1 (January 1996): 6-7, 19, 20, 26; Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Growth of Charlotte: A History," available online at www.cmhpf.org/educhargrowth.html (accessed 23 July 2013); D. A. Tompkins, "History of Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte," (Charlotte: Observer Print House, 1903) available online at openlibrary.org/books/OL23304731M/History_of_Mecklenburg_County_and_the_city_of Charlotte (accessed 23 July 2013).

Improvements, 115-116; Jethro Rumple, "A History of Rowan County Containing Sketches of Prominent Families and Distinguished Men," (Salisbury: Maxwell Steele Chapter, Daughters of the Revolution, 1916) available online at www.openlibrary.org/books/OL23304922m/A_history_of_Rowan_County_North_Caroli na (accessed 24 July 2013); "In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience", The New York Public Library available online at http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm (accessed 21 January 2013); Wilma Dunaway, The African American Family in Slavery and Emancipation (New York: Cambridge

Western leaders also influenced the NCRR's path between the towns named in the charter; ultimately, they created a circuitous path through Hillsborough and Greensboro that enhanced their own personal property and diverse economic investments. For example, John Motley Morehead, one of the NCRR's largest stockholders, donated a one hundred-foot right-of-way through his Greensboro plantation, Blandwood, to secure the road's passage through his home property. Residents of Orange, Alamance, and Davidson counties traded large stock subscriptions, land deals, development rights, and construction contracts in return for specific routes. Western legislators Cadwallader Jones, Paul Cameron, William Graham, and Giles Mebane led the fight to secure the NCRR's passage through Hillsboro over a route through Chapel Hill. These men invested heavily in NCRR stock. Jones, Cameron, and Mebane each secured a contract to build portions of the railroad through Orange and Alamance Counties. As an owner of a plantation near Hillsboro and a cotton plantation just south of Charlotte, Jones particularly favored a connection to the NCRR and C&SCRR for better access to the

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University Press, 2003), 22; Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 14; Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 98-99, 111, 148, 149; Counihan, "North Carolina," 88.

¹⁵³ See NCRR Maps for survey of property donation, 1851, Surveys in Guilford County, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 116; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 21-22.

¹⁵⁴ For a list of contractors hired by the NCRR in the 1850s, see "Contractor's Ledger, 1852-1859," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC. Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 22-24, 29; "Mary G. Matthews," "Thomas, John Warwick," in Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 1988.

cotton-growing regions farther south. ¹⁵⁵ In sum, eighty-five percent of the total stock subscriptions raised for the NCRR came from counties along the final surveyed route. ¹⁵⁶ The greatest number of investors were in the Piedmont and the smallest number were from the road's termini at Goldsboro and Charlotte where rail connections were already a reality and residents were generally more satisfied with their access to markets. ¹⁵⁷ The final route of the NCRR connected the properties and commercial interests of the largest stockholders, most wealthy, and most influential men of the Piedmont and laid a foundation for their future success. Investments in and along the NCRR led to tremendous increases in personal wealth and an expansion of investment opportunities in a growing capitalist regional and national economy.

Western elites used their wealth and power to build the NCRR through their own backyards, and as contractors they employed their own slaves to do the work. For example, as large stockholders in the NCRR Piedmont, planters like Paul Cameron, Giles Mebane, and Archibald Henderson were given preference in receiving construction contracts and were rewarded for providing their own slave labor. As stockholders they were allowed to pay for part of their stock in labor or in labor by their slaves. ¹⁵⁸ Cameron

¹⁵⁵ *Hillsborough Recorder*, August 8, 1849. See "Cadwallader Jones Papers, 1847-1925," available online at http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/j/Jones,Cadwallader.html (accessed 22 June 2013).

¹⁵⁶ 1851 valuation maps, stockholder lists, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

¹⁵⁷ Trelease, *The North Carolina Railraod*, 24.

¹⁵⁸ At their meeting, on July 10, 1851, NCRR stockholders passed a resolution that stockholders be given preference in the awarding of construction contracts and that contractors would receive one-half of their contracts in cash and the other half in stock of

received over \$22,000 in grading contracts between 1850 and 1859, and once construction was complete, he continued to hire his slaves out to the company until the end of the Civil War.¹⁵⁹ Mebane and Henderson received contracts to grade the roadbed directly through their home plantations in Alamance and Rowan counties. Mebane received over \$8,000 in grading contracts and the value of his assessed real estate along the road increased more than eight times between 1850 and 1860. Henderson's real estate value tripled.¹⁶⁰

The history of the sectional battle for internal improvements reveals a capitalist western leadership with a dynamic, modern vision for North Carolina's economic future. Western leaders were not simply trying to lift western farmers out of subsistence through transportation improvements; they were determined to integrate western North Carolina into a burgeoning southern market revolution, increase their personal fortunes, and bring an end to decades of economic isolation imposed by traditional eastern dominance. Finally, by 1849 the NCRR signified the rise of western power in antebellum North Carolina. The NCRR transformed the Piedmont into an important transportation corridor connecting the Upper and Lower Souths and became the foundation for the future

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the company. See "President's Report" in the "Proceedings of the General Meeting of Stockholders of the North Carolina Railroad Company, July 10, 1851," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

¹⁵⁹ "Cash book, 1850-1859;" "Hand Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Jean Bradley Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation: The Benehan-Cameron Family Lands in North* Carolina (Durham: Historic Preservation Society of Durham, 1985), 57-58.

¹⁶⁰ 1850 United States Federal Census, 1860 United States Federal Census, available online at Ancestry.com (accessed 15 October 2013).

economic development of the state into the twenty-first century. Elite westerners invested heavily in the NCRR Company and henceforth recouped the road's greatest economic benefits. As large stockholders they were not only the beneficiaries of increased access to markets and direct dividends from stocks, but the construction of the NCRR also allowed them to maximize economic opportunities in real estate, mercantile businesses, agriculture, manufacturing, mining, urban development, and slavery. Profits from their growing and diverse economic portfolios went on to fund even greater investments in land, industry, and slaves.

CHAPTER III

MASTERS, CAPITALISTS, AND THE NCRR

The antebellum history of western North Carolina has suffered from a lack of scholarly attention to its slave past, particularly when compared to the plantation districts of the eastern Coastal Plain and in the neighboring states of Virginia and South Carolina. However, the history of slave hiring and the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCRR) in the Piedmont demonstrates that western North Carolina, typically described as a region of subsistence farming and less dependent on slavery than her neighbors, was not an anomaly in a slave-obsessed South. During the late antebellum era, the NCRR brought western North Carolina into the southern Market Revolution and proved that Piedmont slavery was essential to the state's modern economic development in an industrial age. The NCRR created a demand for industrial slavery in western North Carolina and gave slaveowners of all classes the opportunity to employ their slave property more flexibly and efficiently, as hired slaves often bridged agriculture and industry.

The history of slave labor and the North Carolina Railroad also reveals that Piedmont slaveholders were competitive capitalists who directly or indirectly supported the creation of a modern South through the marriage of slavery and industry. Piedmont slaveowners of all types embraced industrial slave hire and thereby turned their human property into consumable goods. Ultimately, the NCRR extended the benefits of slavery to all white westerners in the form of economic growth and new job opportunities. This

chapter builds on the work of recent historians such as Edward Baptist, Aaron Marrs, Brian Schoen, Susana Delfino, Michelle Gillespie, and many others who have argued that southern leaders envisioned an industrialized South with a modern, diversified economy supported by government activism, and most of all, slavery. The history of the NCRR demonstrates the compatibility of slavery, capitalism, and industrial growth in North Carolina's Piedmont and highlights the commitment of western leaders to building a modern society with slavery at its core. As directors and stockholders of the North Carolina Railroad Company elite westerners purposely chose to build and operate the NCRR with hired slave labor over any other labor options. They saw no conflict between industry and slavery and all types of western slaveholders welcomed the opportunity to

¹⁶¹ For examples see William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House:* Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Ninteenth-Century South (Baton Rouge: Lousiana State University Press, 2003); Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie, eds., *Technology*, Innovation, and Southern Industrialization from the Antebellum Era to the Computer Age (Columbia: University of Missouri Press 2008); Richard Follet, "Slavery and Technology in Louisana's Sugar Bowl," in Technology, Innovation, and Southern Industrialization from the Antebellum Era to the Computer Age, ed. Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 68-96; Anthony Kave, "The Second Slavery: Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century South and the Atlantic World," Journal of Southern History 75, no. 3 (August 2009): 627-650; Marrs, Railroads in the Old South, 6-7; Peter Kolchin, "The South and the World," Journal of Southern History 75 no. 3 (August 2009): 565-580; Brian Schoen, "The Burdens and Opportunities of Interdependence: The Political Economy of the Planter Class," in The Old South's Modern Worlds: Slavery, Region, and Nation in the Age of Progress, ed. L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, and Frank Towers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 68-84; William Harris, "Preface," in Southern Society and Its Transformations, 1790-1860, ed. Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 1-8; Watson W. Jennison, Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia, 1750-1860 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012); Edward E. Baptist, The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

efficiently move their slaves from agriculture to industry and back again as profits and economic efficiency dictated.

Throughout North Carolina's history slaves did not just work on plantations; they worked in a variety of industrial settings and constituted a vital part of society in both the eastern and western sections of the state. From the colonial era onward the greatest number of enslaved people were concentrated in the Coastal Plain where many worked in the extractive industries of fishing, lumber, naval stores, and turpentine, while smaller numbers tended livestock or cultivated rice, tobacco, indigo, and food crops for trade across the Atlantic to Britain or the West Indies. In the nineteenth century, the slave population coalesced on large plantations, each with hundreds of slaves devoted to the staples of tobacco, rice and cotton. The enslaved population grew to a near majority in the plantation districts and planters' wealth in slaves became the determining factor for elite socio-economic status and the foundation of political rule in a traditional hierarchical slave society. In the plantation of political rule in a traditional

Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 12-13, 15, 23, 25-27.

¹⁶³ A. Roger Ekirch, "Poor Carolina:" Politics and Society in Colonial North Carolina, 1729-1776 (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press), 12; H. Roy Merrens, Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 85-92; Bradford J. Wood, "Politics and Authority in Colonial North Carolina: A Regional Perspective," North Carolina Historical Review 81, no. 1 (January 2004): 2-6, 11, 13; Marc W. Kruman, Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 8.

The western counties of the Piedmont and mountains had fewer slaves and fewer slaveholding families than the eastern counties. 164 Western backcountry colonists established family farms, and few could afford large numbers of slaves. 165 The soil and climate in the western parts of the state were not supportive of large tracts of cotton, rice, tobacco, or other mono-crop plantation agriculture; however, the institution of slavery became more entrenched in the nineteenth century with the expansion of tobacco further into the central Piedmont and the discovery of gold in the southwestern Piedmont. ¹⁶⁶ Cotton production also expanded up from South Carolina into the southern Piedmont around Charlotte. In the Piedmont and mountain counties, slaves worked in a large variety of occupations and industries that reflected the diversity of the regions economy. Slaves cultivated and processed many varieties of food crops and they also practiced skilled trades such as blacksmithing, tanning, carpentry, distilling whiskey, and shoe making. Thousands of enslaved people worked in gold and copper mines, iron foundries, retail stores, health resorts, hotels, and public and private construction projects. Slaves were invaluable to livestock industry in the mountains that produced fresh meat for

¹⁶⁴ Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 15. In the mid-nineteenth century slaves constituted just over 25% of the population in the Piedmont, and 42% in the Coastal Plain.

¹⁶⁵ Governor Tryon to Sewallis Shirley, July 24, 26, 1765 in William S. Powell, ed. *The Correspondence of William Tryon and Other Selected Papers* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1980), 1:139; Governor Tryon to Lord Hillsborough, April 12, 1770 in Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 8:80a; Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina*, 109-119, 123; Inscoe, "Mountain Masters," 144.

¹⁶⁶ Cornelius Oliver Cathey, *Agricultural Developments in North Carolina*, *1783-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), 8.

plantations in Georgia and South Carolina. Overall, a lack of natural trade routes and alternatives to expansive overland transportation limited commercial agricultural production for most western farmers and kept plantations small compared to those in the eastern counties and neighboring states.¹⁶⁷ Geographic and market isolation during the early nineteenth-century led to a stagnant economy, while the rest of the slave South underwent the radical geographic and economic changes wrought by the market and transportation revolutions.¹⁶⁸

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the development of a capitalist marketplace and the expansion of slavery into new geographic and occupational spaces

¹⁶⁷ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, 49, 54; William Thornton, North Carolina Gold Mine Company (Washington, D.C.: np., 1806), 10; Henry Barnard, The South Atlantic States in 1833, as Seen by a New Englander (Maryland Historical Society, 1918), 346; Richard F. Knapp and Brent D. Glass, Gold Mining in North Carolina: A Bicentennial History (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1999), 21,42; Lacy K. Ford, "The Tale of Two Entrepreneurs in the Old South: John Springs and Hiram Hutchison of the South Carolina Upcountry," The South Carolina Historical Magazine 95, no. 3 (July 1994): 198-201, 204, 211, 214-216; Michael Tadman, "The Hidden History of Slave Trading in the Old South: John Springs and Other "Gentlemen Dealing in Slaves,"" The South Carolina Historical Magazine 97, no. 1 (Jan 1996): 6-7, 19, 20, 26; Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Growth of Charlotte: A History," available online at www.cmhpf.org/educhargrowth.html (accessed 23 July 2013); D. A. Tompkins, "History of Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte," (Charlotte: Observer Print House, 1903) available online at openlibrary.org/books/OL23304731M/History of Mecklenburg County and the city o f Charlotte (accessed 23 July 2013); Starobin, *Industrial Slavery*, vii, 11-12; Orville Vernon Burton, "Hiring Out," in *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*, ed. Randall Miller and John David Smith (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 322; Allen W. Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad and the Modernization of North Carolina, 1849-1871 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 121; "Fisher Family Papers, 1758-1896," finding aid, available online at http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/f/Fisher Family.html (accessed 28 June 2016).

¹⁶⁸ Kruman, Parties and Politics, 106.

were intrinsically linked phenomena. Throughout this era the market revolution dramatically changed Americans' daily lives through a series of economic revolutions in transportation, communications, and industrialization that collectively modernized business practices, increased consumerism, and made commercial activity a commonplace occurrence. Nationally the market revolution joined the economies of the North and South in one reciprocal market in which southern cotton plantations fed raw materials to large textile mills in the Northeast, and products from those mills were sent southward for consumption. In the South, the market revolution entailed changes to the institution of slavery including the development of an inter-regional trade in slaves between the Upper and Lower South. This domestic slave trade fueled the expansion of the Cotton Kingdom and made human property the absolute most valuable form of property in the South. The trade led to a steady escalation of slave prices that increased the role of slave property as collateral for innumerable types of investments that drove the southern economy and increased slaveholders' commitment to the institution's preservation. 169

Monumental innovations in antebellum America's transportation networks followed and enhanced changes in the marketplace. ¹⁷⁰ In the South, following the invention of the cotton gin and the forceful removal of Indians, technological advancements in transportation grew out of a desire to connect agriculture in the

¹⁶⁹ Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6, 41-42.

¹⁷⁰ Deyle, Carry Me Back, 97.

expanding southern interior, most notably cotton, with commercial ports and trading centers, and to move enslaved people from the older Upper South states to the newly opened cotton-growing territories of the Lower and Deep South. Southerners invested, through a combination of private and public funds, in steam-powered boats and locomotives, navigation improvements, canal construction, and iron rails. A boom in railroad construction followed the boom in cotton and slaves from Virginia to Alabama, with each state building large trunk lines and smaller feeder routes essential for sending cotton from the interior to the coast, and supplies and slaves from the coasts to the interior.¹⁷¹

An increase in industrial slavery was an outgrowth of market changes and the development of the Cotton Kingdom. The southern transportation revolution depended on industrial slave labor. Enslaved people built the physical infrastructure of canals, roads, and railroads that made market expansion possible, and that infrastructure strengthened, increased, and spread the institution of slavery. As a labor system, slavery adapted readily to industrial labor, as masters transferred slaves by sale or hire between agriculture and infrastructure projects, as market needs dictated. Slavery was not diminished by modern industrial development; it evolved to meet the new demands of

¹⁷¹ Deyle, Carry Me Back, 21, 41-42; Jennison, Cultivating Race, 225, 237, 249; Tom Downey, Planting a Capitalist South: Masters, Merchants, and Manufacturers in the Southern Interior, 1790-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 18-20, Chapter 4; Urlich Bonnell Phillips, A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860 (New York: MacMillan Company, 1913), 2-3, 14, 17-18.

¹⁷² Adam Rothman, Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2005), 37.

the commercial marketplace. Railroad companies alone became the largest employers of slaves in the South, demonstrating the compatibility of advanced technologies and modern development with the institution of slavery.¹⁷³

Changes in the southern economy meant dramatic changes for the institution of slavery. Using slaves for non-agricultural labor was an established, profitable southern tradition and their use in industry accelerated during the nineteenth century as the South began to industrialize and diversify its economy. Slave labor proved to be highly flexible and slaves were increasingly used in a variety of tasks outside of agricultural settings. By the late 1850s, approximately 200,000 slaves or 5 percent of the total enslaved population worked in southern industry and more than 20,000 were employed by railroad companies. In fact, when most industries turned to free white labor in the

¹⁷³ Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 4-5; William G. Thomas, "'Swerve Me?': The South, Railroads, and the Rush to Modernity" in *The Old South's Modern Worlds: Slavery, Region, and Nation in the Age of Progress*, ed., L. Diane Barnes, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 169.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, vii-viii, 12.

Press, 1995), 36. See also Ronald L. Lewis, *Coal, Iron, and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1715-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Charles B. Dew, *Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995); Earnest McPherson Lander, Jr., *The Textile Industry in Antebellum South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); Joseph Clarke Robert, "The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market, and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University 1938); T. Stephen Whitman, "Industrial Slavery at the Margin: The Maryland Chemical Works," *Journal of Southern History* 59, no. 1 (February 1993): 31-62; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 12-31.

¹⁷⁶ Starobin, *Industrial Slavery*, 10-11, 28, 134.

1840s, railroad companies actually increased their reliance on slave labor. ¹⁷⁷ In eastern North Carolina, following the establishment of the state's Board of Internal Improvements in 1819, slaves became central to the construction of the Coastal Plain's infrastructure. They were hired annually to work on navigation and road construction projects, where they assisted with surveying, draining swamplands, clearing obstacles to navigation, and constructing canals and roadbeds. In the 1830s the state's first two railroads, the Raleigh and Gaston and Wilmington and Weldon, employed hundreds of slaves to construct and operate their roads. ¹⁷⁸

While the South experienced geographic and commercial expansion in the antebellum era, western North Carolinians struggled to grow beyond a subsistence economy. Elite western leaders, hemmed in by geography and high overland freight costs wanted a piece of the expanding marketplace and an opportunity to compete in the

¹⁷⁷ Marrs, Railroads in the Old South, 57; Starobin, Industrial Slavery, 123-124.

¹⁷⁸ See William Boylan to John Haywood, August 14, 1819, "List of Disbursements for Internal Improvements for the fiscal year ending 31st of October. 1825; "Charles B. Shaw debit to A. B. Levindell," December 5, 1837; H. G. Burton to John Haywood, May 1, 1826; "List of Names for services rendered in surveys and examinations for draining the swamp lands in Hyde County, North Carolina," all in Treasurer's and Comptroller's Papers, Board of Internal Improvements, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Box 7, Folder: Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company, Negro Hire, 1859, Treasurer's and Comptroller's Papers, Navigation Companies, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Starobin, Industrial Slavery, 28-29; 1840 United States Federal Census, Wake County, North Carolina, available online at Ancestry.com (accessed 26 October 2013). For railroad ownership of slaves see 1850 United States Federal Census, Slave Schedules, Wake County, North Carolina, available online at Ancestry.com (accessed 26 October 2013; Catherine Bishir, "Location Book of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad," The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archaeology 5, no. 1 (1979): 51; Calvin Schermerhorn, Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 184-185.

Cotton Kingdom and national economy. They made large private investments in slavery and land on the cotton frontiers of Alabama and Mississippi, they speculated in newly opened territories, purchased additional slaves, and divided up their slaveholdings in North Carolina to work their new plantations. On the home front they waged a sectional political battle against the eastern controlled legislature for state sponsored transportation improvements, especially railroads, for easier, more profitable access to markets in the South and West. For North Carolina, slave-built railroads held the possibility for massive economic change and the opening of the NCRR to through traffic between Goldsboro in the east and Charlotte in the southwest changed everything for western

¹⁷⁹ Kate Pattison, "William Boylan, Federalist turned state's rights supporter," Raleigh Public Record, March 23, 2009, available online at http://raleighpublicrecord.org/featured/2009/03/23/william-boylan-federalist-turnedstates-rights-supporter/ (accessed 28 June 2016); William, B. Bushong, "Montfort Hall and Its Architect, William Percival" (PhD diss., Appalachian State University, Boone, 1979); U.S. General Land Office Records, 1796-1907 available online at www.Ancestry.com (accessed 10 July 2013); Jean Bradley Anderson, Piedmont Plantation: The Benehan-Cameron Family Lands in North Carolina (Durham: Historic Preservation Society of Durham, 1985), 57-58, 63, 66, 69-70; Trelease, *The North* Carolina Railroad, xiii, 23, 33, 121; "Fisher Family Papers, 1758-1896," finding aid, available online at http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/f/Fisher Family.html (accessed 28 June 2016). The largest Piedmont slaveholders, including William Boylan, Paul Cameron, and Charles F. Fisher were among the primary drivers and financial supporters of western North Carolina rail projects and internal improvements in the 1830s. Boylan owned four plantations in North Carolina and four plantations in Mississippi. Cameron owned a large planation in Orange County near present-day Durham as well as cotton plantations in Alabama and Mississippi. He divided his slave property of over 1,000 slaves amongst the three properties. Fisher owned at least two plantations in western North Carolina and at least three plantations in Mississippi. Fisher also owned three gold mining companies and three iron foundries in western North Carolina.

North Carolinians, as the railroad immediately became an important link in a chain of railroads and steamship lines connecting New York to New Orleans. 180

The NCRR was strategically positioned to orient western North Carolina into the dominant slavery-based economic network of the cotton South. In the Piedmont west the NCRR became a catalyst for economic growth in agriculture and industrial sectors. The railroad increased job opportunities for whites, led to rising land values, lower freight costs, and heightened investment opportunities. It led to urban development and improved access to education and recreation. Farmers began to grow greater surpluses of wheat, grains, corn, tobacco, and cotton, and their products commanded higher prices at lower freight costs. Manufacturing increased as well. For example, North Carolina's nascent textile industry grew up along the NCRR tracks and became one of the state's largest and most profitable commercial enterprises. The NCRR opened new job opportunities for skilled and unskilled white laborers. Whites benefited from skilled positions including, machinists, mechanics, carpenters, ironworkers, conductors, station

¹⁸⁰ Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad, xiii.

North Carolina, 1820-1870," ed. Joe Mobley, *The Way We Lived in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 316-317, 328; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 25, 85, 101, 104 105, 115; Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 5, 19; "Holts of Alamance," available online at www.textilehistory.org/HoltsofAlamanceNC.html (accessed 19 July 2013); "The Alamance Cotton Mill," available online at https://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-antebellum/5349 (accessed 19 July 2013); Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Growth of Charlotte: A History," available online at www.cmhpf.org/educhargrowth.html (accessed 23 July 2013).

agents, section masters, and clerks.¹⁸² Opportunities also increased for hired wage laborers. Other jobs opened up in ancillary businesses stimulated by transportation and urbanization such as taverns, stores, groceries, hotels, and lodging houses.¹⁸³

For Piedmont whites, the NCRR brought tremendous increases in land values and agricultural and industrial profits, as well as greater access to markets and investment opportunities in a growing, capitalist regional and national economy. Enthusiastic about the progress of the NCRR, the General Assembly in 1852 authorized the incorporation of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad Company (A&NCRR) and the Western North Carolina Railroad Company (WNCRR) to construct the eastern and western extensions of the NCRR to Morehead City on the coast and Morganton in the mountains. The construction of the NCRR and its eastern and western extensions represented the rise of westerners to political prominence in the state and its history demonstrates how western leaders used their political power to further and protect their own diverse business interests.

¹⁸² "Hand Hire Book, 1864-1865," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

¹⁸³ Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad, 64; Bolton, Poor Whites, 15; Marrs, Railroads in the Old South, 66.

¹⁸⁴ Bolton, *Poor Whites*, 12-13, 18-21; Clayton, "Close to the Land," 316-317, 328; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 25, 85, 101, 104 105, 115; Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 5, 19.

¹⁸⁵ Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 117-118. The A&NCRR joined with the NCRR at Goldsboro and was completed in 1858. The WNCRR was initially supposed to connect Salisbury with Asheville, then ultimately provide a rail connection with the Mississippi Valley, however by the outbreak of Civil War the WNCRR had only been completed to Morganton.

Throughout the southern market and transportation revolutions, many southerners argued that the South should use slavery as a means to economic development, however industrialists debated over the best course of action, should they employ native white labor, European immigrant laborers, or enslaved black laborers? Most industries chose to use slaves because they thought wage labor to be too expensive and southern white and European laborers to be lazy, unreliable, and untrustworthy.

The initial investment to purchase or hire a large number of slaves to build and maintain a railroad required a substantial amount of capital that few new transportation companies could afford. In addition to the purchase price, slave-employing industrial companies also had to bear the cost of food, clothing, housing, and medical care while bearing the financial risks of labor lost due to injury, death, sickness, or escape. In spite of these costs, the expenses associated with slave labor were measured differently than the expense of paying wages. Money spent amassing a labor force of slaves was a capitalization of future expenditures on labor paid up front as opposed to wages that an employer would pay to free workers over several years. One southern railroad president calculated that paying wage laborers would cost his company five times as much as purchasing slaves: "the purchase money, interest, insurance, and maintenance of a slave will be only about 46 cents per day, or about \$115 per year...the same labor of white men cost two and a half dollars per day." 186

¹⁸⁶ President of the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad Company, 1856, quoted in Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 182.

Not only were free white laborers expensive, when employers compared them to enslaved workers, they were perceived as lazy, irresponsible, inexperienced, and difficult to manage. Many employers shared the opinion of a Charlotte area sawmill owner who complained that he had "had enough of white labor in this country—for it appears to me that they are the gentlemen and I the workman—they absent themselves when they please, throwing more work on my hands." Southern employers found it frustrating that white laborers moved around a lot and did not stick with any one job long enough to develop a particular skill-set, which did not justify the time and expense in training them. 188

In western North Carolina, and in other southern states, native white laborers could be difficult to employ regularly. Many white laborers owned little or no property and they lived in a dependent state by laboring for other whites at a variety of tasks and locations. The existence of black slavery limited the demand for white laborers as well as the wages paid to them. Southerners who needed extra labor relied on slaves, while

¹⁸⁷ John Wilkes ran a sawmill near Charlotte. Wilkes had settled for white labor when he could not hire slaves in the middle of the year, as most slave hiring was done in January and contracts lasted for the year. Wilkes quoted in Bolton, "Edward Isham and Poor White Labor in the Old South," 27.

¹⁸⁸ Bolton, "Edward Isham and Poor White Labor in the Old South," 27; Alex Lichtenstein, "Industrial Slavery and the Tragedy of Robert Starobin," *Reviews in American History* 19, no. 4 (Dec 1991): 609; Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 61; Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 182. Herbert G. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *American Historical Review* 78 (June 1973): 540-545; Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 106-109; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery*, 6.

whites could only obtain jobs as supplemental laborers who fulfilled temporary labor needs in a slave economy. 189

Southern internal improvement companies preferred slaves, but at times of labor shortages, they imported northern labor or hired immigrant labor to supplement their forces. Local slaves were especially preferred because they knew the language, understood the projects, and were accustomed to working in the hot climate. ¹⁹⁰ Importing laborers was costly and there were no guarantees that they would stay on the job. In 1856 the chief engineer of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad (A&NCRR) reported that construction of the road's eastern section was severely hindered by a shortage of laborers "as negro labor could not be obtained in sufficient numbers, the contractor from Kinston to Goldsboro...found it necessary to resort to free white labor from the North, mostly recent immigrants from Europe—always a precarious reliance in our Southern country, and with us not comparable to slave labor." The contractor brought in five hundred and eighty laborers from the North, but after a short while only sixty remained. In an attempt to retain laborers, the company issued an order that no wages would be paid to men who worked less than six days. Despite the order many men left the A&NCRR after two or three days, deciding to lose their wages rather than continue working. Immigrant workers complained about the punishing work, low wages, and the indignities of bound labor. They found the competition with slavery to be too

¹⁸⁹ Bolton, "Edward Isham and Poor White Labor in the Old South," 20-23.

¹⁹⁰ Schermerhorn, Money Over Mastery, 182.

great of a hindrance to their own prosperity and many escaped as soon as they arrived. ¹⁹¹ One NCRR contractor, Charles Johnston, lamented that Irish workers did not stay on the job long enough, and "our Countrymen, with but few exceptions, are not worth employing." ¹⁹²

Southern industrialists were reluctant to use immigrant wage laborers because they considered them untrustworthy and potentially threatening to the southern social structure. In the South unskilled immigrant laborers had no choice but to compete with slaves for jobs, and when they found employment, they did not appreciate being condescended to for doing "nigger work." They often came from working-class European backgrounds in which slavery was opposed on ideological and economic grounds. Employers worried that European laborers had a propensity for striking based on the long traditions of labor organization, trade unions, and protest movements in their home countries. In contrast, slave labor was praised for being "free of strikes, drunkenness and other labor trouble."

¹⁹¹ A&NCRR, Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad Company (Newbern: William J. Williams, Printer, 1856).

¹⁹² Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of William A. Graham*, 4: 243, 316, quote on p. 316.

¹⁹³ Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum South" *American Historical Review* 88, no. 5 (December 1983): 1194-1198.

¹⁹⁴ Fletcher Melvin Green, "Gold Mining: A Forgotten Industry of Antebellum North Carolina" *North Carolina Historical Review* 14, no. 1(January 1937): 15.

¹⁹⁵ President of the Mississippi Central Railroad quoted in Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 61.

Slaveowners also feared that that racial divisions would give way to class solidarity if free and slave laborers spent a lot of time working closely with each other. The presence of white laborers working amongst slaves challenged the tenuous relationship between slaveholders and the more numerous nonslaveholders in North Carolina's Piedmont. Social cohesion among whites across class lines depended on white racism against blacks that allowed even the poorest nosnslaveholding whites to be the social superior to any black person. Elite slaveholders feared the rise of an antislavery working class, and in order for slaveholders to maintain their power, it was important that all poor and working-class whites aspire to become slaveholders, thus giving all whites an interest in slavery regardless of class. If black workers and free wageworkers found any common ground while working side-by-side on the job, then the whole slave-based social structure of the region was vulnerable to attack. Unlike white laborers, slaves could be punished and physically forced to submit to the harsh

¹⁹⁶ Laurence Shore, *Southern Capitalists: The Ideological Leadership of an Elite, 1832-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 53.

¹⁹⁷ George M. Frederickson, "Aristocracy and Democracy in the Southern Tradition" in *The Southern Enigma: Essays on Race, Class, and Folk Culture,* ed. Walter J. Fraser, Jr. and Winfred G. Moore, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 97-104; Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites*, 84-85; Eugene D. Genovese, "Yeoman Farmers in a Slaveholders' Democracy" *Agricultural History* 49, no. 2 (April 1975): 331-342; Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1965), 24; John Ashworth, *Slavery Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic*, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1:98; Ronald C. Lewis, *Coal Iron and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 231; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 6. See also W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941) and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

realities of industrial labor in the nineteenth century, while white workers were free to withdraw their labor at will. Slaves, unlike white workers, did not have access to organized, formal labor protests, or the freedom to change jobs. 198

Throughout the antebellum South, industrialists disagreed over the best way to assemble an enslaved workforce; some fully supported hiring as a way to maximize the flexibility and efficiency of capital invested in slaves, while others favored purchasing as the most practical business decision. There were advantages and disadvantages to each method, and some railroad companies used a combination of hiring and purchasing slaves by using a large number of hired slaves during construction, and then purchasing a smaller force to operate and maintain projects once they were built. ¹⁹⁹ The practice of hiring-out a slave, or renting a slave, was the act of temporarily conveying an enslaved person between persons or industries for various labor needs, at an agreed upon length of time and rate of compensation to the slave's owner. ²⁰⁰ By the time of the NCRR charter in 1849, slave hiring was ubiquitous throughout the South, primarily because it allowed for consistent economic returns on capital investments in slave property as slaves were rented to work for someone else when their labor was not needed by their owner. ²⁰¹ In

¹⁹⁸ Alex Lichtenstein, "Industrial Slavery and the Tragedy of Robert Starobin," 609; Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 61; Schermerhorn, *Money Over* Mastery, 182.

¹⁹⁹ Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 28-29; Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 185. In North Carolina the Raleigh and Gaston and Wilmington Railroads changed from slave hiring to slaveowning after construction, as did the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Works.

²⁰⁰ Zaborney, Slaves for Hire, 1.

²⁰¹ Burton, "Hiring Out," 322.

the antebellum South estimates of slave hiring range from 5 to 10 percent of all slaves to nearly one third of all urban slaves. Slaves were hired out to perform a large variety of jobs including agricultural labor and processing, domestic service, mining, and construction of internal improvements such as navigation improvements, canals, roads, and railroads. Additionally, hired slaves worked in the lumber and naval stores industries, tobacco factories, textile mills, chemical works, gold and copper mines, and iron works. In southern industries, companies owned approximately 80 percent of their enslaved laborers outright, while approximately 20 percent were temporarily hired from their owners.²⁰²

Proponents of slave hiring asserted that hiring exhibited a more efficient use of corporate capital. It allowed for greater flexibility in the size of the workforce and gave the company a chance to try out different slaves on a temporary basis rather than commit to employing them for life. Hiring hundreds or thousands of slaves required significantly less start-up capital than purchasing. Hiring was thought to be especially expedient at the beginning of large projects when labor needs were at their highest and stock subscriptions were still coming in. ²⁰³

Hiring slaves was thought to be a more flexible and efficient use of labor than purchasing because hired slaves could be returned to their owners as work needs

²⁰² Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, vii, 11-12; Burton, "Hiring Out," 322.

²⁰³ South Carolina Railroad Minute Book, August 13, 1836, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina; *Semi-Annual Report to the Stockholders of the South-Carolina Canal and Rail-Road Company, July 20, 1840* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1840) 10-11, cited in Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 60.

fluctuated. When companies hired slaves they did not find themselves stuck with idle surplus labor at the close of projects or when business slowed. Hiring also helped companies to weed out undesirables or those ill suited to the work; if the enslaved person "proved unable or unwilling to work," companies could return them to their owner and were not saddled with arranging a sale.²⁰⁴ Hiring also allowed for a lot more flexibility in the labor force as contractual terms could be made as short or long as necessary.²⁰⁵

Those who argued in favor of purchasing slaves argued that hiring slaves was risky and a waste of time and money. They pointed out the trouble of having to deal with the demands of the slaves' owners. When a company owned slaves outright, there was no master to negotiate terms with or attempt to ameliorate if they thought their slaves had been mistreated. Hiring always brought up the question of who was actually in charge of the hired slaves, the company or the master, and often led to legal fees and lawsuits with dissatisfied slaveowners. When companies purchased their own slaves, they did not have to train new slaves every year, and they did not risk getting a bad group who were ill-suited to the labor or too rebellious or troublesome.

Hiring large numbers of slaves meant having to deal with their owners in what appears to have been a constant haggling over who was really in charge of the hired enslaved worker—the slave's master or the railroad company? Slaveowners were not

²⁰⁴ South Carolina Railroad Minute Book, August 13, 1836, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina; *Semi-Annual Report to the Stockholders of the South-Carolina Canal and Rail-Road Company, July 20, 1840* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1840) 10-11, cited in Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 60.

²⁰⁵ Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 62.

prepared to relinquish full control of their slaves to employers who may not have the same vested interests in caring for their property, and therefore the company had to spend a lot of time, trouble, and expense negotiating hiring contracts with slaveowners and dealing with their individual needs and desires. ²⁰⁶ Conflicts between owners and employers over the use, treatment, and even punishment of hired slaves were inherent in the slave-hiring system because both parties sought to exercise complete control over their enslaved laborers to increase profits. To maximize profits slaveowners made a long-term commitment to an enslaved person's welfare. In contrast, industrial slave hirers focused on obtaining the greatest amount of labor possible from a slave during the term of the hire contract, and that amount of labor was proportionate to the degree of control asserted over the hired slaves. ²⁰⁷

For the NCRR, choosing slaves over free labor to construct and operate the road was a forgone conclusion, and the company only employed free wage labor when dictated by absolute necessity. In the beginning the NCRR was struggling to secure state-aid and stock subscriptions just to meet the demands of its charter, purchasing over a thousand enslaved people for construction was virtually impossible. By hiring slaves the company left the initial purchase capital to slaveowners and spread its expenditures for slave labor out over time. To hire slaves from their owners, the NCRR Company used standardized pre-printed contracts specifying the terms of the hire agreement

²⁰⁶ Seventh Annual Report of the President & Directors of the North Carolina Railroad Company (Raleigh: Holden & Wilson, "Standard Office", 1856), 17.

²⁰⁷ Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, 131.

between slaveowners and the company. Under the basic pre-printed form contract designed to simplify the transaction, the company agreed to pay an annual fee to the slaveowner and to furnish food, clothing, and medical care to the hired slaves.²⁰⁸ In 1851 and 1852 NCRR's contractors hired slaves for \$100 to \$125 per year, and at times for \$6 to \$8 per month.²⁰⁹

As the NCRR neared completion, the company's president and directors debated internally over whether or not the company would continue to hire slaves to operate, maintain, and repair the railroad and its facilities or begin to purchase its own enslaved labor force. After the road's construction, the number of workers needed to maintain and operate the NCRR dropped dramatically from over 1,800 laborers in 1852 to 442 in 1857. In 1856, shortly after Charles F. Fisher became president of the NCRR, Fisher tried, although unsuccessfully, to convince the company's board of directors to stop hiring and begin purchasing slaves. Fisher argued that in the long run, the company would save money if it purchased 100 hands at \$1,000 each, rather than continue to hire each one at an average cost of \$150 per year. Fisher advised that the company should

²⁰⁸ "Hand Hire Book, 1864-1865," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²⁰⁹ C. W. Johnston and S. A. White to W. A. Graham, 21, 27 January 1852, 6 April 1852, Hamilton, ed. *The Papers of William Alexander Graham*, 4: 236, 243, 287-88.

²¹⁰ "Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Railroad Company, July 1852," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 352-353, Table 6.

²¹¹ Seventh Annual Report of the President & Directors of the North Carolina Railroad Company (Raleigh: Holden & Wilson, "Standard Office", 1856), 5, 16-17.

change its labor policy from hire to purchase based on the cost, but other factors impacted the decision to recommend such a change. For example, the 1850s were a time of rising slave prices and a very lucrative period for the domestic slave trade allowing slaveowners to easily liquidate slave property into cash at will and at high returns on their investments. Additionally, purchasing slaves became less risky in the 1850s with the emergence of life insurance corporations that offered slave life insurance policies designed to alleviate the risk of financial disaster from loss of human property. Despite these circumstances, the NCRR continued to hire slave laborers.

For the NCRR, and other southern industries hiring entailed some significant disadvantages like training a new workforce each year, negotiating with owners over the various details of hire contracts, as legal challenges associated with disciplining another person's slave property. An advantage of purchasing an industrial slave force was the guarantee that a company would spend less time and money training new workers while retaining the skills and experience of the best workers. For example, the Chief Engineer of the WNCRR proposed that his company purchase its "train hands, and such as required at the stations" because of the "uncertainty of retaining" slaves with "experience, honesty, and good judgment." Hiring led to annual influxes of new and

²¹² Seventh Annual Report of the President & Directors of the North Carolina Railroad Company, 17; Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, 156; Schermerhorn, Money Over Mastery, 183.

²¹³ Seventh Annual Report of the President & Directors of the North Carolina Railroad Company, 17; Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the Western North-Carolina Railroad Company (Raleigh: Holden & Wilson, 1858), 17-18.

unknown slaves. NCRR president Charles F. Fisher complained that hiring was a risky business because of "carelessness and insubordination" on the part of hired slaves, as well as their "lack of interest in Road work." The NCRR increased commercial farming in North Carolina's Piedmont, which increased both the demand for slave labor and the prices for hiring and buying slaves.²¹⁴ Purchasing would alleviate the chance of "always getting a good many inefficient hands" and ensure that the company would have a sufficient number of laborers from year to year.²¹⁵

So many difficulties arose between industrial employers and slaveowners that some employers, such as NCRR and WNCRR president Charles F. Fisher, believed that hiring was not worth the trouble and companies would have greater control over enslaved workers if they owned them outright. Some slaveowners simply agreed to the terms of the standard contract, but many negotiated specific terms in effort to protect their slave property from devaluation by injury, illness, or other forms of maltreatment. To exert their right of mastery over their slaves while in the employ of the company, owners placed restrictions on the company's use of their slave property, including the locations where they could be worked and the type of tasks they could perform. The company also had to adhere to owners' demands for time off at Christmas, or the right to recall their slaves home to work, especially during harvest times. For example, W. A. Blount, Jr.'s contract hiring five slaves to the NCRR stipulated, "The said slaves we are not to re-hire,

²¹⁴ Jonathan Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 118; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 156; Bolton, *Poor Whites*, 12-13, 22.

²¹⁵ Seventh Annual Report of the President & Directors of the North Carolina Railroad Company, 17.

nor carry beyond the limits of the State of NC nor east of the Wilmington and Weldon Rail Road." Mrs. Mary Bason rented Frank and Daniel for work on the gravel train only, while Squire was to be worked only in sections nine and ten. Dr. James Dusenbury required that Jerry must be worked as a brakeman. George W. Mordecai's contract specified that his ten slaves had to be returned home for one week at harvest time. ²¹⁶

Other slaveowners maintained a sense of control and paternalism by insisting on providing their slaves' clothing, housing, and medical care rather than rely on the company to supply these items. ²¹⁷ Industrial employers in the South were known for skimping on rations and cutting corners on housing, clothing, and doctor visits for hired slaves. ²¹⁸ For instance, J. Dortch rejected the NCRR company's care policy when he agreed to pay the doctor's bills for his slave and Warren. J. P. Stinson's contract dictated that he would pay doctor bills for and board his slave Joseph. ²¹⁹ C. M. Lines insisted that he provide his slave Charles with shoes. Owner J. W. B. Watson agreed that he would provide both food and clothing for his slaves who could only be worked as section hands. ²²⁰ Perhaps it appealed to masters' sense of paternal responsibility to make

 $^{^{216}}$ "Hire of Slaves, 1864-1865," "Hand Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²¹⁷ "Hire of Slaves, 1864-1865," "Hand Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²¹⁸ Starobin, *Industrial Slavery*, 63.

²¹⁹ "Hand-Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

 $^{^{220}}$ "Hand-Hire Bonds, 1862-1865," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, North Carolina.

provision for their slaves whom they rented out to work in notoriously rough conditions, away from their wives and children. Sending them off with sturdy shoes, an extra coat, and the promise of a Christmas vacation and a physician's care helped masters to continue to justify their pro-slavery ideology and pride themselves on paternalism in the face of the market-driven decisions they made for other human beings.

Despite the hassles of hiring and managing hundreds of slaves each year, the NCRR board of directors chose not to approve president Fisher's request to forego hiring and purchase 100 slaves in 1856, and the company continued to hire slaves to form the bulk of its labor force through the end of the Civil War.²²¹ Hiring may not have been the best option for the company, but it was good for the company's directors. Hiring their slaves to the company allowed for multiple streams of increased revenue for the company's largest stockholders and it encouraged the support of even the smallest slaveholders who could make quick and easy profits hiring their slaves out to the NCRR. Western North Carolina elites used their wealth and political power to build the NCRR through their own Piedmont properties and they employed their own slaves to do the work. Elite investors like Paul Cameron and Archibald Henderson were allowed to pay for part of their stock subscriptions in labor by their slaves and in return for their investments they received exclusive construction contracts, a railroad on or in close proximity to their plantations and businesses, reduced freight costs, increased land values, improved access to commercial markets, decreased cost of commercial agriculture and

²²¹ Seventh Annual Report of the President & Directors of the North Carolina Railroad Company, 17.

manufacturing, dividends from NCRR Company profits, and a lucrative market for hiring their slaves.²²² Elite planters stood to make the most profits, however hiring slaves from local slaveholders put extra cash in the hands of even the smallest Piedmont slaveholders and encouraged them to develop a personal interest in the ultimate success of the NCRR, and support the regional leadership of the company's directors.

The NCRR also allowed slaveholders a means to dramatically enhance the value of their slave property by increasing the demand for hired industrial slaves and creating opportunities for slaveowners to efficiently maximize their investments in slave property. What was good for the directors also benefitted all types of slaveholders in North Carolina—big, small, farmers, industrialists, professional, men, women, planters, widows—they could hire their slaves out, make money, not have to take care of them, feed them, house them, clothe them or call for a doctor when they were sick. They also retained the option of retrieving them for another task or sending them off to a more lucrative opportunity.

Industrial expansion and the transportation revolution in the South created a myriad of new markets to absorb surplus slaves, making slave-hiring a feasible and profitable strategy for slaveowners. Throughout the south slaveowners could expect an annual return of 10 to 20 percent of the local purchase value for hiring-out a male

²²² "Cash Books, 1850-1859," "General Ledger, 1850-1864" and Correspondence Box 22, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; *American Railroad Journal* 23, (1850): 9, cited in Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 181; *Greensboro Patriot*, October 4, 1851; Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 61; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 32.

slave. 223 Money from hiring slaves could be used to pay debts, buy land and additional slaves, and invest more heavily in southern industries. At the time of the NCRR's construction in 1850s, slave property was the most valuable form of property in the South and hire rates were closely tied to fluctuations in sale prices. For many western slaveholders the railroad provided opportunities to maximize the fluidity of their slave capital by shifting slaves from agriculture to industry and back again, employing them in the most profitable pursuits in response to flexing market conditions or personal economic needs. For some the railroad acted like an economic and social safety valve because it reduced the economic risk of slave purchase and maintenance in a time of rapid economic change. Hiring provided income to those struggling to maintain their slaveholder status and a solution for slaveowners with idle, extraneous, and difficult slaves. Hiring out likely kept many enslaved people out of the domestic slave trade and helped to reinforce the slave population in the North Carolina Piedmont during a time of net slave exportation. Instead of selling off surplus or difficult slaves to the cotton and sugar regions of the Deep South, slaveholders could rent them to railroads and other employers as needed. Or an owner could earn money hiring out their slave while waiting for market values to increase before selling them in the Deep South. 224

The NCRR increased the demand for hired slaves in North Carolina's Piedmont and all classes of western North Carolina slaveholders took advantage of this opportunity

²²³ Burton "Hiring Out," 322.

²²⁴ Shermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 194; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery*, 129; Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, 7-8.

to earn extra cash. Large and small planters, farmers, merchants, professionals, clergy, and widows turned profits by hiring slaves out to the NCRR through annual, and occasionally monthly contracts. Initially during the railroad's construction phase, the majority of slaves working for the NCRR were hired from elite Piedmont planters who served on the company's board of directors and owned upwards of 10,000 shares of company stock. Many of these planters continued to hire out large numbers of slaves after construction; they gained exponentially from slave hire fees and from the new railroad designed to support and enhance their agricultural and business activities. For the typical western elite, agrarian-capitalist like Cyrus Mendenhall, the NCRR helped to integrate their interests in slavery, agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing into a modern diversified economy. The NCRR provided these men with large amounts of stock and cash in exchange for their slave labor as well as access to transportation that connected their various business interests and led to personal enrichment. Mendenhall arranged for the NCRR to be located through his plantation outside of Greensboro when he donated three large tracks of land for the railroad's right-of-way. As a large stockholder and company treasurer he received a construction contract for six miles through Guilford County that paid him in shares for his slaves' labor. After construction Mendenhall received dividend payments on his stock, a stipend for serving as company treasurer, and annual fees from the 11 slaves he hired out to the NCRR. The new railroad also stimulated investment activity for Mendenhall; in 1860 he became part owner of a new cotton mill, Oakdale, located just a few miles away on the NCRR in Jamestown. 225

²²⁵ Greensboro Patriot, November 22, 1851; John Hairr, "Nineteenth Century Oil

Large planters in the Piedmont were not the only slaveholders who benefited from hiring slaves to the NCRR. In fact, many of the slaves who were hired after the railroad's construction were owned by either by mid-to-small size Piedmont slaveowners who owned farms adjacent to the tracks or by nearby professionals and merchants. Extant hire contracts reveal that although most western North Carolina slaveowners owned only one or two slaves, their financial livelihoods were no less dependent on slavery than that of a wealthy planter. Reverend P. H. Dalton of Guilford County hired out two of his three male slaves, Lee and Wash, to the NCRR in 1861 for \$380. Reverend Dalton's wife was employed in domestic service and the annual payment from the NCRR was likely a welcomed supplement to his income. ²²⁶ Greensboro merchant R. M. Sloan hired out one of his seven slaves in 1861 for \$150. ²²⁷ And W. F. Askew, a tradesman in Raleigh who owned a paper mill and the Negro Auction & Commission House on Fayetteville Street,

Exploration in North Carolina." *Journal of North Carolina Academy of Science* 127, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 264-274; Mary A. Browning and Patricia M. Koehler, *Oakdale Cotton Mills* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), Back Matter.

²²⁶ "Hand-Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; *1860 United States Federal Census*, Southern Division, Guilford County, North Carolina, available online at Ancestry.com (accessed 20 July 2014); *1860 United States Federal Census*, slave schedules, Southern Division, Guilford County, North Carolina, available online at www. Ancestry.com (accessed 20 July 2014). Dalton owned six slaves, three females and three males, in 1860.

²²⁷ "Hand-Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC: *1860 United States Federal Census*, Northern Division, Guilford County, North Carolina, available online at www. Ancestry.com (accessed 20 July 2014); *1860 United States Federal Census*, Northern Division, Guilford County, North Carolina, available online at www.Ancestry.com (accessed 20 July 2014); "Property Maps of the North Carolina Railroad Company, 1850-1851," Guilford County, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

rented half of his eighteen slaves to the NCRR for \$910 in 1861 and \$800 in 1862.²²⁸ Elite Piedmont planters directed the trajectory of the company and reaped the most economic benefits; however, even the smallest slaveholders near the NCRR prospered from the increased demand for hired slaves, in addition to receiving the commercial benefits of the slave-built railroad.

Hiring slaves to the NCRR was not purely an economic decision. Hiring made it possible to enjoy the social status of a slaveowner without all the responsibility or expense of managing and caring for slave property. A North Carolina Clergyman explained why he rented his slaves to the railroad: "I have hired out a part of my hands to the Rail Road, and will probably continue to so do so as I am anxious to have less care and trouble attending to them." Others like Mrs. Sarah A. Happoldt of Morganton used the NCRR as punishment for her slaves when she offered three of them to the NCRR because "they have become disobedient and troublesome."

Slave hiring could be especially beneficial for women. Widows hired out slaves because it provided income to pay for their children's education and allowed them to continue to be slaveowners and remain distinguished socially from non-slaveholding

²²⁸ "Hand-Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; *1860 United States Federal Census*, Wake County, North Carolina, available online at www. Ancestry.com (accessed 20 July 2014); *1860 United States Federal Census*, slave shedules, Wake County, North Carolina, available online at www. Ancestry.com (accessed 20 July 2014).

²²⁹ Burton, "Hiring Out," 323.

²³⁰ Correspondence, 1861-1864, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

whites after the death of an indebted husband.²³¹ In 1861 Mrs. Margaret Hargrave of Chapel Hill, hired out six of her male slaves to work on the NCRR gravel train at the rate of \$140 each for the year. Her husband Jesse Hargrave, a leading storekeeper and one of the largest landholders in Chapel Hill died in 1854, leaving her with three children, a mercantile business, a university boarding house, and a large plantation. The family's store had to be sold soon after Jesse's death, and Margaret kept the student boardinghouse, at a peak enrollment time for the University of North Carolina. Prior to marrying Jesse Hargrave, Margaret was a member of the wealthy Barbee family, a "First Family" of Chapel Hill. Her grandfather was the largest single contributor of land to the new university and her father was likely the wealthiest man in Chapel Hill, and by Piedmont standards, a large slaveholder.²³² Hiring slaves to the NCRR brought Margaret much needed income and helped her maintain her accustomed social status as a slaveowner during lean economic times.

The Civil War dictated tremendous changes in the NCRR's slave-hiring policies to keep the road in operation. After the outbreak of the war, the NCRR quickly became an important supply line for the Confederate Army, and transferring supplies and troops

²³¹ Burton, "Hiring Out," 323. Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, 114.

²³² Jesse Hargrave Will, June 2, 1854, Orange County Records, Orange County Courthouse, Hillsborough, North Carolina; Walter E. Campbell, *Across Fortunes Tracks*: *A Biography of William Rand Kenan, Jr.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 27-29; "Hire of Slaves, 1864-1865," Correspondence, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; *1860 United States Federal Census*, Orange County, North Carolina, household of M. J. Hargrave, available online at www. Ancestry.com, (accessed 20 July 2014). *1860 United States Federal Census*, slave schedules, Orange County, North Carolina, slaveowner M. J. Hargrave, available online at www.Ancestry.com (accessed 20 July 2014).

during the war increased the road's traffic and caused a lot of wear and tear on the tracks, rolling stock, and depot and warehouse facilities, which increased the demand for good workers. As the war progressed labor became increasingly scarce. In 1863 one officer complained that "scarcely anyone can be found who is willing to get crossties and wood." Hired slaves were difficult to find and keep employed so the company began to purchase slaves to supplement hired labor. Agents were dispatched across the South to purchase any available slaves, including women and children, at hugely inflated prices. Several enslaved workers were purchased in Augusta, Georgia, by NCRR agents, including a woman named Margaret and her five children for \$20,000, and a girl, Lidia for \$5,500.²³⁴ In 1863 NCRR president Thomas Webb urged the board of directors to begin purchasing slaves as an investment for the company's future, noting that slaves would be extremely valuable after the war came to a close. Webb argued:

Think for a moment, when peace comes—and come it must, what great demand there will be for labor to cultivate the wheat farms of Virginia; the corn lands of North Carolina; the rice fields of South Carolina and Georgia; and the cotton and sugar plantations of the south. So many Negroes have been stolen by our treacherous foes that the demand for them will be far greater than ever before, and the difficulties heretofore in obtaining a force to keep up your road will be increased to a ten fold extent.²³⁵

²³³ NCRR, *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Rail Road Company* (Raleigh: Printed at the Inst. of the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind, 1863), 14.

²³⁴ Correspondence, 1861-1865, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²³⁵ NCRR, Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Rail Road Company, 14.

Webb, apparently clueless of the impending demise of slavery, continued to forecast that investing in slave labor was key to the company's future economic viability. By the close of the war, the NCRR had suffered a lot of physical damage from Confederate use and from advancing Union troops. Several bridges, structures, and miles of track were destroyed in the last few weeks of the war, and emancipation ended the company's tradition of employing slaves. After emancipation, the NCRR lamented the loss of full control over black labor and only grudgingly began to turn to white wage labor. In July 1865 an inspection committee reported to the stockholders that

the late change in our system of labor is one of the difficulties with which your road, at present, has to contend, and one which may cause trouble for years to come, at least until "the freedmen" learn to do a freeman's work…or be supplanted by white labor. At present many of "the freedmen" do not work as well as they hitherto have done....They come to-day and engage to work for a month or three months, commence work, receive rations, and to-morrow they are gone. ²³⁶

Damages caused by the war coupled with the loss of slave labor left the NCRR in financial crisis. In 1871, the board of directors, incapable of pulling the company out of trouble, voted to lease all of the company's property to the Richmond and Danville Railroad Company for thirty years.

The rise of Western North Carolina's leaders to political prominence led to the expansion of slavery into the interior of the state and transformed the lives of blacks and

²³⁶ NCRR, *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Railroad Company* (Raleigh: Printed at the Inst. for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind, 1865).

whites in western North Carolina during the antebellum and Civil War eras. The use of hired slaves to build, maintain, and operate the North Carolina Railroad and its facilities demonstrates that slavery was not a peripheral or marginal institution in western North Carolina. The hired slaves who built the NCRR created the primary transportation network in the state and laid the foundation for its future economic development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The NCRR provided a profitable and flexible way for all classes of slaveowners to maximize the use of their investments in slaves while supporting economic development initiatives happening in their own backyards. Slavery in western North Carolina was not an obstacle to capitalist development; in fact, it facilitated growth and expanded economic and social opportunities for all whites in the region.

CHAPTER IV

WORKING FOR THE RAILROAD: HIRED SLAVE LABOR ON THE NCRR

During the antebellum era, western North Carolina's elites aggressively pursued the construction of the North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) and integrated this modern development into their slave society. The scale of railroad construction in the 1850s was huge, and building the NCRR involved one of the largest mobilizations of manpower in the state. From 1851 to 1856 the North Carolina Railroad employed thousands of enslaved men in the construction of the 223-mile railroad through the heart of North Carolina's Piedmont, and from 1856 through the Civil War, hundreds of slaves comprised the bulk of the company's maintenance, repair, and operation workforce. These slaves were integral to all aspects of the railroad's construction and operation; they were only excluded from managerial, highly skilled, and a few unskilled positions. The decision to use slave labor on the NCRR demonstrates that the institution's value to the region far exceeded the boundaries of Piedmont farms and plantations.

The vast majority of the NCRR's enslaved laborers were hired annually from Piedmont stockholders and landowners adjacent to the railroad tracks and facilities. The transition of large numbers of enslaved men from farms and plantations to industrial railroad labor was not a fluid process, and its complexities reveal how modern industrial development was affecting changes to the institution of slavery. For the hired slaves, working for the NCRR changed their working and private lives in profound ways. The

details of their daily lives were hashed out and bargained in hiring transactions between their owners and the company. They were taken away from family, friends, and kinship networks and forced to endure brutal working and living conditions enforced by a profitdriven corporation with limited economic interest in their personal well-being.

Historians have long associated slave-hiring with increased autonomy for enslaved people and its advantages over plantation slavery, such as extra mobility, earning extra cash, hiring out one's own time, choosing one's own lodging and clothing, and having freedom over one's non-working time. However, the experiences of slaves working for the NCRR demonstrate that only a select few slaves in certain positions enjoyed cash incentives and increased autonomy and mobility, while the vast majority worked and lived in miserable conditions with regular supervision by white managers. Nevertheless, many hired slaves took advantage of their time away from their masters'

For works equating hired slavery with more freedom see Richard Morris, "The Measure of Bondage in the Slave States," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 41, no. 2 (September, 1954): 230; Clement Eaton, "Slave Hiring in the Upper South: A Step Toward Freedom," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 46, no. 4 (March, 1960): 669; Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 145-147. For opposing views see Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York: Vintage Books, 1956, 1989), 84, 185, 318; Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 36-37, 51, 54, 57. Recent works by Watson W. Jennison, Midori Takagi, and John Zaborney have drawn more nuanced conclusions about slave hiring within specific times, places, and industries in the South. See Watson W. Jennison, Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia, 1750-1860 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), Chapter 7; Midori Takagi, "Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction": Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782-1865 (Charlottesville: University of Virgina Press, 1999); John F. Zaborney, Slaves for Hire: Renting Enslaved Laborers in Antebellum Virginia (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012).

oversight to assert control over parts of their own lives as they mingled, gambled, and drank alcohol with other black and white workers in the camps; stole or damaged company property; or ran away at their first opportunity.

This study of hired slaves employed to build, operate, and maintain the NCRR demonstrates that the individual experiences of hired slaves were unique to particular locations and circumstances, and should not be subsumed into predetermined categories. The evidence and conclusions provided here broadly support Starobin's and Stampp's arguments that hired industrial slaves were most often victims of brutal exploitation. The railroad company's lack of paternalism and absence of longstanding economic selfinterest in hired slaves' welfare made the lives of many hired slaves difficult, uncomfortable, and miserable. The vast majority of them endured abhorrent conditions; they were overworked in a dangerous environment; inadequately sheltered, clothed, and fed; and neglected as the company strove to meet deadlines and earn profits. This study argues that quasi-freedom was not an inherent characteristic of slave hiring, and that the concept certainly did not apply to all industrial slaves. Slaves working for the NCRR did not hire out their own time, choose their own lodging, or have any choice of work or employer. For the great majority of slaves hired to the NCRR, much of their daily life was intensely supervised by white managers; where they lived, what they ate, and how they worked were all controlled by a corporation with the goal of profiting from their temporary labor.

This study focuses on a specific time and place, 1851-1865 in the North Carolina Piedmont, and argues that even within one industry, the experiences of hired slaves were

extremely complex and highly variable. The nature of their work required railroad officials and managers to spread hundreds, at times thousands, of enslaved men out over 223 miles of mostly rural terrain and assign them to a great variety of unskilled and skilled tasks. Some lived in temporary shacks, others aboard train cars. Some unloaded and loaded passengers' luggage in growing urban areas like Charlotte and Raleigh, while others dug ditches and chopped wood miles away from any town or village. A few slaves hired by the NCRR enjoyed increased freedoms, like earning cash from overwork, while most did not. Numerous variables affected the incidences of autonomy and mobility for hired slaves, including where and who they came from and how far away from home they were taken, the types of labor performed, and the number of overseers and managers there to watch over them.

From 1851 to 1856, the NCRR Company and its contractors employed as many as 1,858 male slaves to build the 223- mile railroad connecting Goldsboro, Raleigh,
Hillsboro, Greensboro, Salisbury, and Charlotte.²³⁸ From the beginning, NCRR directors planned that the initial grading of the roadbed and the construction of the railroad would

²³⁸ NCRR, *Report of the Chief Engineer on the Survey, 1851*, 5-6; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1850, 30; 1851, 4-5. 8-9; "Cash Books, 1850-1859;" "General Ledger, 1850-1864;" and Correspondence Box 22, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; C. W. Johnston and S. A. White to W. A. Graham, 21, 27 January 1852, 6 April 1852, William A. Graham, *The Papers of William Alexander Graham*, ed. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton and Max. R. Williams, 7 vols. (Raleigh: Archives & History, 1957), 4: 236, 243, 287-88; "Exhibit A: Statement of the Force Employed on the North Carolina Rail Road, July 1, 1852" in "Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Stockholders, July 1852;" *Report of the Chief Engineer on the Survey, 1851*, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad Company*, 34-36, 61-64.

be contracted out to stockholders and accomplished with enslaved laborers.²³⁹
Stockholders had the advantage of paying for part of their stock subscriptions in labor by their slaves, and they received exclusive construction contracts with the company.²⁴⁰ In February 1851 enslaved men began clearing the land and grading the roadbed simultaneously at the eastern and western ends of the route at Goldsboro and Charlotte, and finally on January 29, 1856, two enslaved crews of tracklayers met midway between Greensboro and Jamestown and the first train traversed the entire route from Goldsboro to Charlotte.²⁴¹ Following the initial construction period, the company hired enslaved men directly from slaveholders along the route through annual, and occasionally monthly, contracts, with the help of professional hiring agents and through mass slavehire auctions held in Salisbury, a strategic commercial crossroads in the central Piedmont and an important hub for the domestic slave trade.²⁴² After 1856, over 400 enslaved men

²³⁹ *Greensboro Patriot*, February 2, 1850.

²⁴⁰ "Cash Books, 1850-1859," "General Ledger, 1850-1864" and Correspondence Box 22, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; *American Railroad Journal* 23, (1850): 9, cited in Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 181; *Greensboro Patriot*, October 4, 1851: Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 61; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 32.

<sup>Public Laws of North Carolina, 1852, c. 136; Carolina Watchman, January 6, 1853; Brown, A State Movement in Railroad Development, 120-121, 145-147;
Greensboro Patriot, July 12, 1851; NCRR, Annual Report, 1853, 14; Goldsboro Republican and Patriot, May 17, 24, 1853; June 28, 1853; North Carolina Standard, December 31, 1853; Greensboro Patriot, January 18; February 1, 1856; Greensboro Times, January 31, 1856.</sup>

²⁴² See "Cash Books, 1850-1859," "General Ledger, 1850-1864" and Correspondence Box 22, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC. "Hiring Day," *Carolina Watchman,* January 10, 1860; C. W. Johnston and S. A. White to W. A. Graham, January 21, 27, 1852, April 6, 1852, Hamilton, ed., *Papers of William A.*

made up approximately two-thirds of the company's annual operating and maintenance labor force until the end of the Civil War.²⁴³

For five years, from 1851-1856, almost two thousand laborers undertook a tremendous physical effort to construct the NCRR. The great majority of the laborers were enslaved men employed at unskilled tasks. Throughout construction the need for labor invariably exceeded the supply of available slaves and at times contractors hired small numbers of native white and Irish workers to supplement their slave forces. All

Graham, 4: 236, 243, 287-88; "Exhibit A: Statement of the Force Employed on the North Carolina Rail Road, July 1, 1852" in "Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Stockholders, July 1852;" "Appendix A: Statement of the Force Employed on the North Carolina Rail Road on July 1, 1853, in "Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Rail Road Company, July 1853;" Report of the Chief Engineer on the Survey, 1851, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad Company, 34-36, 61-64. For information about Salsibury and the domestic slave trade see Jethro Rumple, "A History of Rowan County Containing Sketches of Prominent Families and Distinguished Men," (Salisbury: Maxwell Steele Chapter, Daughters of the Revolution, 1916). available online at www.openlibrary.org/books/OL23304922m/A history_of_Rowan_County_North_Caroli na (accessed 24 July 2013); "In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience," available online at The New York Public Library http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm (accessed21 January 2013); Wilma Dunaway, The African American Family in Slavery and Emancipation (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 22; Edward Baptist, The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 14: Steven Deyle, Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 98-99, 111, 148, 149; Counihan, "North Carolina," 88.

²⁴³ After construction, the number of workers needed to maintain and operate a railroad dropped dramatically. For example, after construction the NCRR force reduced from over 1,800 laborers in 1852 to 442 in 1857. See Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad Company*, 352-354, Table 6; "Hand Hire Bonds, 1861-1864" and "Slave Book, 1861-1864;" "Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Railroad Company, July 1852, "all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

unskilled laborers, regardless of race or ethnicity, engaged in the same tasks.²⁴⁴ The men worked in small racially integrated groups under the supervision of white contractors or their agents. They labored outdoors through all four seasons, and in all types of weather. The work was hard, physical, and practically everything was done by hand. Mule, horse, and oxen power were used whenever possible, but the manpower of unskilled enslaved workers was most essential.²⁴⁵

Construction began with clearing the land. Gangs of enslaved axemen felled and cleared thousands of trees to make way for 223-miles of roadbed with 100 feet on either side cleared for the right-of-way. With the trees and any underbrush cleared, construction teams excavated and graded the earth with plows and hand-held scapers to a depth of one foot with double-width cuts. When workers encountered rock they either blasted it out of the way with gunpowder or they quarried it and retained it for use in bridge piers and abutments. In especially rocky areas they used gunpowder to blast rock out of the way for nearly every foot of excavation for several miles at a time. Next, workers filled the excavated roadbed with gravel or ballast to support T-rails weighing sixty-pounds per yard. They also built bridges over waterways, constructed culverts to allow for water drainage, and building embankments to protect the roadbed from

²⁴⁴ Hamilton, ed., The Papers of William A. Graham, 4: 287-288.

²⁴⁵ NCRR, Report of the Chief Engineer on the Survey, 1851, 17, 19, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad Company, 34.

²⁴⁶ Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of William A. Graham*, 4: 242, 315.

overflowing creeks and rivers. They constructed twenty-four bridges along the roadbed ranging from 40 to 658 feet in length; 18 were covered and some were painted.²⁴⁷

Next, enslaved laborers placed crossties, known as sills in the 1850s, on the roadbed to hold the rails. They cut the crossties by hand from lumber cleared for the road bed to lengths of seven to nine feet and six to eight inches thick, then shaped them into a rectangle with two sides parallel for smooth, level placement against the roadbed and rails. Laborers placed crossties along the entire roadbed nearly every two-and-half feet which equated to about 2,347 crossties per mile and a grand total of approximately 490,000. Workers cut and hewed the crossties from white or post oak in the west and from yellow pine in the east, then delivered the finished crossties in bunches of twenty at fifty-foot intervals along the roadbed for installation.²⁴⁸

Two large corps of eighty-five enslaved men each spent three years laying iron rails, or track, on top of the crossties. One corps moved west from Raleigh while the other moved east from Charlotte. Laying track was a particularly arduous task in the 1850s. The rails came in eighteen-foot sections and were extremely heavy at sixty-

²⁴⁷ NCRR, *Report of the President, January 29, 1859,* Property Inventory, September 1, 1871, XV, vols. 93-95, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC. NCRR, *Report of Colonel Walter Gwynn, January 10. 1856*, 6. North Carolina Collection, Chapel Hill, NC; NCRR, *Annual Report,* 1856, 18-19, 22; 1857, 7; 1860, 8.

²⁴⁸ John B. Jervis, *Railway Property: A Treatise on the Construction and Management of Railways* (New York: Phinney, Blakeman, & Mason, 1861), 125-126; *Greensboro Patriot*, February 14, 1852; July 3, 10, 1862; *North Carolina Standard*, November 10, 1852; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1859-1863; 1866-71; 1860, 7, 20; 1868, 28; Statement of Superintendent Edmund Wilkes in Marmaduke Swaim Robins Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

pounds to the yard, and they had to be fastened into place with hand-driven spikes. The pace of work was painstakingly slow, with 12 miles completed in seven months. The two teams finally met near Greensboro and joined the two sections of rails in January 1856.²⁴⁹

The demand for unskilled enslaved construction crews remained high once the roadbed and track were in place. The men built freight and passenger stations, water towers, warehouses, maintenance and repair shops and other buildings. They built twenty-five stations by January 1859 each with a warehouse building to accompany passenger and freight traffic or an additional building for passenger traffic. They added a water tank and a woodshed to each station and built large engine and car sheds at Goldsboro and Charlotte. Enslaved crews also built the NCRR Company's main headquarters and repair and maintenance facilities near the center of the route in Alamance County, in a company-built town called Company Shops, popularly known as "the shops." From 1855 to 1859, they constructed large brick buildings at the shops,

²⁴⁹ Republican and Patriot (Goldsboro), February 3, 1852; NCRR, Report of the Chief Engineer on the Survey, 1851, 17, 19, NCRR Records, SHC, Raleigh, NC; Printed Contract, June 30, 1851 with John Reich, Ralph Gorrell Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC: NCRR, Annual Report, 1854, 6; 1855, 8; 1856, 10; Raleigh North Carolina Standard, June 3, 1854; Greensboro Patriot, January 18; February 1, 1856; Greensboro Times, January 31, 1856.

²⁵⁰ Greensboro *Times*, January 31, 1856; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 7.

²⁵¹. NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 7; NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 29; XI. Maps, v. 67-68, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC. Burning wood fueled all of the NCRR's steam locomotives.

²⁵² NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1856, 11, Durwood Stokes, *Company Shops: A Town Built by a Railroad* (Winston-Salem: J.F. Blair, Publisher, 1981), 30-35; NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 11-12, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC. The

including a carpentry shop, two engine/machine shops, blacksmith shop, foundry, engine shed, a car shed, three large houses for company officials, a company office, vault, and a number of smaller homes for shops' employees. An additional building housed the passenger and freight station, general store, post office, telegraph office, and public meeting space. There was also a large two-story, company-owned hotel built at the site with approximately thirty guest rooms and a café. Slaves made the bricks for the shops buildings by hand from local clay. When completed, the shops represented the largest brick structures in the state, and they became the foundation of a rapidly growing, industry-based town characteristic of nineteenth-century economic development. In 1857 Company Shops contained twenty-seven buildings, and in 1859, fifty-seven.²⁵³

After the NCRR's initial construction, the company and its large labor force moved into new territorities: maintenance of its track, facilities, and rolling stock; and operation of passenger and freight trains. Sources for employment records are unfortunately incomplete for the period after construction through the end of the Civil War. The NCRR only published its full employment records for its first two years of

remains of Company Shops are located in present-day downtown Burlington, North Carolina.

²⁵³ Stokes, *Company Shops*, 13-16; 21-29, 71; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1856, 12-13; 1857, 8-9; Memorial to the General Assembly, December 1856, N.C. *Public Documents*, 1856-1857, #21, 2-3; NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 12-15; *Communication from the President*, February 14, 1859, 19-21, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Walter Whitaker, Staley A. Cook, and A. Howard White, *Centennial History of Alamance County 1849-1949* (Burlington, NC: Alamance County Historical Association, 1974), 109-111; Report of Joint Select Committee, N. C. *Public Documents*, 1858-1859, #71, 17.

operation, 1856-1857 and 1857-1858. The following descriptions of skilled and unskilled labor draws heavily from these published records, and is supplemented with additional employment information from other years pieced together from various places across the NCRR's manuscript records and related manuscript collections, including annual reports, account books and ledgers, minutes, correspondence, contracts, and newspaper accounts.

For operation and maintenance purposes, the NCRR Company organized its labor force into three separate departments: road department, train department, and machine department. Each department fell under the control of the company's board of directors, president, and superintendent. The company and each of its departments were structured hierarchically based on race, class, and skill. The highest tiers of the company's leadership, namely members of the company's board of directors and the company president, had little, if any, experience running a railroad company. Their positions were secured through their elite status in their communities as well as by large personal investments in the company's stock. The board of directors elected the president and it was his job to deal with stockholders and the board to determine company policies. The president also served as the company's representative to the general public, but typically had little to do with the railroad's daily operations. The superintendent oversaw all railroad operations and reported to the president, he administered all matters of freight and passenger transportation, road maintenance, and the purchasing of equipment and

supplies.²⁵⁴ All other supervisory positions and the great majority of skilled positions were also reserved for white, educated men with significant skill or experience. These positions included road master, master machinist, transportation agent, section masters, station agents and clerks, engineers, conductors, baggage masters, and most of the repair shops positions.

In all three of the NCRR's departments, educated whites held the top tier positions while slaves, and small numbers of lower poor native whites, Irish immigrants, and free blacks performed all of the unskilled labor. Unskilled jobs included firemen, brakemen, woodpassers, freight and passenger hands, lumber and gravel train hands, station hands, watchmen, and repair shops helpers and laborers in the repair shops. For the years available, two-thirds of the operating and maintenance labor force was black and enslaved. The only unskilled positions held exclusively by blacks were that of section hands and lumber train hands, and the only unskilled positions held exclusively by whites were that of station and bridge watchmen. Whites in all other unskilled jobs were always greatly outnumbered by enslaved black workers. For example, there was only one white laborer among twenty-seven enslaved gravel train hands, and twelve white station hands compared to forty-six enslaved ones. The section hands compared to forty-six enslaved ones.

²⁵⁴ Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad Company*, 59; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 16; 1861, 15; 1862, 18.

²⁵⁵ NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 18-19, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²⁵⁶ Compiled from NCRR Annual Reports and Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, Table 6, pp. 352-355.

The greatest number of the company's unskilled slaves worked in the company's road department where they greatly outnumbered white supervisors and white laborers. The road department oversaw and completed maintenance and repairs to the track, roadbed, and right-of way to keep the railroad in good condition for the safe and timely running of freight and passenger trains. The department was also responsible for operating the NCRR's twenty-five freight and passenger stations. The entire road department fell under the direction of a road master who traveled the length of the NCRR on a weekly basis to inspect the railroad's condition and report back to the superintendent. The road master organized repairs, inspected the road's wood supplies, and supervised the section masters.²⁵⁷ Nineteen section masters were each responsible for a twelve-mile section of the railroad and their duties included inspecting their section every three days and serving as overseer for the section hands, work gangs of unskilled laborers who were responsible for completing maintenance and repairs and for keeping water tanks full in each section.²⁵⁸ Available records show that approximately half of the slaves hired by the company worked in the road department as section hands, approximately 163 enslaved men and 1 free black man in 1857. This large group of

²⁵⁷ NCRR, Regulations and Instructions for the Government of the Transportation Department and the Running of Trains &C. On the North Carolina Railroad to Go into Effect on the 1st Monday of October, 1854 (Salisbury: J. J. Bruner, 1854), 40-44; NCRR, Regulations and Instructions for the Government of the Transportation Department: The Road and Shops, and the Running of Trains on the North Carolina Rail Road: June 20, 1857 (Salisbury: J. J. Bruner, 1857), 22-24; NCRR, Annual Report, 1857, 7; NCRR, Report of the President, January 20, 1859, 29; XI. Maps, vols. 67-68, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²⁵⁸ NCRR, Regulations and Instructions, 1854, 40-44; 1857, 22-24.

section hands was broken down into small work gangs of seven to nine men per section of railroad, and each gang worked under the direct supervision of a section master.²⁵⁹

Section hands performed some of the most difficult, physically demanding work on the NCRR. They worked ten to twelve hour days, at least six days of the week. Section hands were regularly engaged in repairing and rebuilding bridges, culverts, and embankments. Wooden trestles decayed rapidly and had to be repaired or replaced regularly. When bridges caught fire from arson and locomotive sparks, as they frequently did, section hands rebuilt them. During and after heavy rains, gangs of section hands moved in to repair embankments and culverts, and sometimes they had to construct temporary trestles that were essential to the safe operation of trains. Additionally section hands repaired, and at times reconstructed, railroad facilities such as passenger and freight stations, car sheds, and warehouses in the aftermath of heavy

²⁵⁹ NCRR, Regulations and Instructions, 1854, 40-44; 1857, 22-24. NCRR, Report of the President, January 20, 1859, 18-19, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²⁶⁰ Hillsborough Recorder, March 19, 1856; Charlotte Western Democrat, March 18, 1856; Paul C. Cameron to Thomas Ruffin, March 15, 1856 in Joseph Gregoire de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., Papers of Thomas Ruffin (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1918), 2:509, available online at http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/332240 (accessed 10 October 2016); NCRR, Annual Report, 1860, 8-9.

²⁶¹ Charlotte North Carolina Whig, June 13, 1854; North Carolina Standard, September 6, 1856; John C. McRae, A Defense of John C. McRae & Co. From the Imputations Cast Upon them as Contractors on the North Carolina Railroad Company (N.p. nd.), 13-15, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; NCRR, Annual Report, 1857, 7; 1860, 6, 20; 1861, 5; 1862, 26-27; Marshall M. Kirkman, Railway Expenditures (Chicago: Railway Age: 1880), 1:86-88; Robert C. Black, Railroads of the Confederacy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 12-13; Jervis, Railway Property: A Treatise on the Construction and Management of Railways (New York: Phinney, Blakeman, & Mason, 1861), 74-77, 118-119, 225-226.

storms or once they became inadequate to handle the road's increasing business. Most of these structures and had to be torn down and replaced within a few years of their initial construction.²⁶²

Elsewhere in the road department, large numbers of slaves worked as gravel and lumber train hands. Gravel train hands spent their days aboard gravel cars digging ditches and repairing and replenishing the roadbed's gravel or ballast to allow for efficient water drainage from the track, an essential task that prevented trains from derailing in rainy weather. Gravel train hands dug and maintained drainage ditches on a perpetual basis, especially in areas where water did not flow naturally away from the track. The company skimped on labor and materials in the construction of ditches, which led to regular landslides during rainy weather and kept the gravel train hands very busy. Ditching was a priority, as a lack of drainage not only impacted the safety of passengers and freight, but it slowed the trains, caused delays, and cost the company money. ²⁶⁴

²⁶² NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 7; 1858, 10; 1860, 9; 19; 1861, 8; Charlotte, *Western Democrat*, December 2, 1856, June 16, 1860; *North Carolina Standard*, July 15, 1854; *Raleigh Register*, March 29, 1856; *Carolina Watchman*, April 19, 1855; July 24, 1859; Agreement with the WNCRR, May 27, 1857 in XXII Contracts, v. 19, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Western North Carolina Railroad, *Annual Report*, 1859, 26; 1860, 22.

²⁶³ NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1860, 37; Greensboro *Times*, January 17, 1856; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 11; 1859, 10; 1860, 6, 20; 1861, 6; Printed contract, June 30, 1851, with John Reich, Ralph Gorrell Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

²⁶⁴ NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 11; 1859, 10; 1860, 6-7, 37; 1861, 6; Printed contract, June 30, 1851, with John Reich, Ralph Gorrell Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. *North Carolina Whig*, May 29, 1860; Charles F. Fisher to Paul C. Cameron, January 29, 1861, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. The Chief Engineer recommended that all ditches be faced with rock to prevent landslides, however these directions were

Lumber train hands spent their workdays on lumber cars, and their workload consisted of clearing branches that drooped over the tracks and trimming undergrowth away from the sides of passing locomotives and train cars. Lumber hands also gathered and chopped wood for locomotives, crossties, and structural repairs. On the NCRR wood was in constant demand. Eighteen-fifty's locomotives used about one cord of wood for every twenty-five miles of travel. The NCRR used approximately 6,000-8,000 cords of wood annually.²⁶⁵

Other enslaved laborers in the road department worked as station hands under the management of the white transportation agents, white station agents, and white clerks. The transportation agent managed all of the railroad's stations. He compiled and published passenger and freight rates, coordinated transportation services with other railroad companies, and supervised station agents and clerks. Station agents acted as the business and records managers at each station, where they also served as overseers for enslaved and white station hands. Station agents directed the placement of passenger and freight cars, arranged the loading and unloading of passenger and freight cars, and managed the receiving and sending of freight and passengers. They also oversaw the setting of switches and filling and maintenance of water tanks. Larger stations often had

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not followed. See NCRR, Report of the Chief Engineer on the Survey, 1851, 17, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²⁶⁵ Trelease, *North Carolina Railroad*, 55. One cord of wood measures four feet high by four feet wide by eight feet long, and occupies a volume of 128 cubic feet. See The Wood Heat Organization, Inc. 2016, "What is a cord?" available online at www.woodheat.org/cord-wood.html (accessed 13 November 2016).

more than one agent or additional helpers known as clerks, while smaller stations had only part-time agents.²⁶⁶

About three-fourths of the railroad's station hands were enslaved and the reminder were native whites. They performed the physical labor at each station; they loaded and unloaded passengers' bags, mail, and wood, and may have assisted freight hands with the loading and unloading of freight. Station hands also kept stations clean and ready for passenger and freight traffic, and they were responsible for filling water tanks and stocking woodsheds. The duties assigned to station hands were likely less physically demanding than section, gravel train or lumber train work, and they did not work out in rural, isolated wooded areas or in difficult terrain. They worked and lived in growing urban areas, with the largest and busiest stations located at Charlotte, Salisbury, Raleigh, and Goldsboro.²⁶⁷

The train department dealt with the operation of passenger, freight, and maintenance trains. Skilled white positions in the train department included engineers, conductors, and baggage masters while unskilled slaves worked as firemen, brakemen, passenger and freight hands, and woodpassers. A few white laborers and free blacks

²⁶⁶ NCRR, Regulations and Instructions, 1854, 29-33; NCRR, Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Railroad Company (Raleigh: Printed at the N. C. Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind, 1860), 38-39; NCRR, Annual Reports, 1856-1858; Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad Company, 60-61.

²⁶⁷ NCRR, Regulations and Instructions, 1854, 29-33; NCRR, Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Railroad Company (Raleigh: Printed at the N. C. Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind, 1860), 38-39; NCRR, Annual Reports, 1856-1858; Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad Company, 60-61, Table 6, pp. 352-355.

worked alongside slaves in all of these unskilled positions.²⁶⁸ Engineers were the most elite, skilled workers in the train department; they drove the locomotives and supervised a train crew that typically consisted of a conductor, a fireman, a woodpasser, and a brakeman. The woodpasser passed the wood to the fireman and the fireman stoked the boiler.²⁶⁹ The brakeman crawled over the rooftops of cars to set the wheel-operated brakes and, along with the fireman, coupled and uncoupled the locomotives and cars.²⁷⁰ Train crews were frequently assigned to a specific locomotive and crewmembers kept them cleaned and polished regularly.²⁷¹

Passenger and freight hands were overseen by the conductor who was responsible for keeping train records and for providing congenial customer service to passengers. Enslaved and free passenger hands worked on passenger trains that traveled approximately 110 miles from Company Shops either west to Charlotte or east to Goldsboro then back again. Following each run, the hands and train crews spent two days at the shops while mechanics inspected their locomotives. The passenger hands cleaned and maintained the passenger cars; they polished the wooden seats and trim, stocked cars with candles, replenished tanks of drinking water, and emptied and cleaned

²⁶⁸ Compiled from NCRR Annual Reports and Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, Table 6, pp. 352-355.

²⁶⁹ Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad, 61.

²⁷⁰ Automatic couplers did not appear until the 1890s. See Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 64.

²⁷¹ Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad, 55.

passengers' toilets. In the colder months, passenger hands tended to wood and coal burning stoves to keep the cars warm for travelers.²⁷²

The majority of the company's skilled white laborers were employed in the machine department, and they lived and worked at Company Shops. ²⁷³ The master machinist recruited many of the skilled shop employees from New England, Ireland, and Scotland because native white North Carolinians did not possess the technical education or expertise to obtain this type of work. In the shops skilled workers constructed and reconstructed locomotives, repaired and serviced engines, constructed rail cars, worked as blacksmiths, and melted and casted metal pieces in the company's foundry. ²⁷⁴ Skilled carpenters added decorative finish details to the interiors of passenger cars and skilled painters painted the exteriors of locomotives and cars, often with highly decorative murals, lettering, and striping. Other shopmen were locally recruited for their experience with more traditional handcrafts. ²⁷⁵ Unlike the road and train departments, white workers in the machine department outnumbered black workers, three to one. Slaves and an occasional free black laborer worked at the shops at primarily unskilled tasks assisting white employees and performing general labor as needed including unloading and

²⁷² North Carolina Standard, July 23, 1856; Charlotte Western Democrat, December 30, 1856; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 56.

²⁷³ NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 11.

²⁷⁴ *North Carolina Standard,* August 27, 1859; W. M. Roberts to Isaac Richardson, April 1, 1856, Isaac Richardson Letter, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

²⁷⁵ Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad, 56.

loading the mail, stocking items in the general store, cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, and doing laundry at the Company Shops hotel; others may have tended to the needs of guests, such as carrying luggage or taking care of horses. There were a small number of skilled slaves employed at the shops. At least two enslaved men appear to have been purchased by the master machinist to work as mechanics. One man was purchased in 1857 for \$1,150 and another for \$414.58 in 1858. Existing hire contracts demonstrate that skilled slaves were also hired to the NCRR's machinery department, and at premium prices. J. W. B. Watson of Smithfield hired thirty-five slaves to the NCRR in 1864 for \$300 each and one additional man who brought \$720 as a skilled sawyer. In 1865 Andrew, a blacksmith, was hired for one year at the rate of \$2,000.

Enslaved workers in all three departments of the NCRR worked extremely long and difficult hours, sometimes day and night, seven days a week. The average industrial slave worked from sunrise to sunset or "six to six" with very short lunch breaks and Sundays off; however, the railroad company's and its contractors' quests for profits drove

²⁷⁶ NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 18-19, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²⁷⁷ Bill of Sale, May 11, 1857, Bill of Sale for Slaves, XXIII Correspondence, v. 22, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1858, 13, 25; 1859, 19, 23.

²⁷⁸ "Hand Hire Book, 1864-1865," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC. Black men filled additional positions after the Civil War as blacksmiths, carpenters, car cleaners, and painters. See Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad Company*, Table 6, 352-355.

their slaves to exceed an average agricultural or industrial slaves' schedule.²⁷⁹ With labor constantly in short supply, the men were frequently overwhelmed by the amount of work. Supervisors and contractors were under pressure to meet deadlines with an insufficient number of men in their workgangs.²⁸⁰ To keep passengers and freight moving safely and on schedule, enslaved workers were perpetually on call. For example, during peak travel seasons, train crews with black firemen, brakemen, and woodpassers commonly worked seventy-hour workweeks and fifteen to seventeen hour days.²⁸¹ In emergencies or accidents such as flooding, heavy snowfall, derailments, collisions, bridge collapses, or fires, enslaved workers had to work at all hours to make repairs quickly and keep the trains in motion. The only real vacation time offered was a week off at Christmas time when many hired slaves returned to their home farms or plantations.²⁸²

Only a small number of slaves hired to the NCRR took advantage of any opportunities to earn cash wages by preforming overwork during time off. Southern railroad companies used the system known as overwork to combine bound slave labor with wage incentives. Cash payments for overwork became increasingly commonplace in the late antebellum era as a practical matter to increase productivity, create competition

²⁷⁹ W. Hollister to W. A. Graham, February 11, 1847, Board of Internal Improvements, Treasurer and Comptrollers' Papers, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²⁸⁰ C. W. Johnston and S. A. White to W. A. Graham, January 21, 27, 1852; June 22, 1852, Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of William A. Graham*, 4: 241-244; 315-317.

²⁸¹ NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1856, 36; 1860, 38-39; Journal, 1852-1860; VIII. Expenditures, v. 39, all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; NCRR, *Regulations and Instructions*, 1854, 5, 46; 1857, 4, 20.

²⁸² NCRR, Annual Report, 1856, 10.

among workers, and undermine labor solidarity. Additionally, overwork wages gave hired slaves a stake in the outcome of their work and of the company. Employers' believed that hired slaves who had the opportunity to earn money and increase their economic power were more easily managed and less likely to commit sabotage or engage in rebellious acts.²⁸³

For the enslaved there were a variety of reasons for engaging in overwork; ultimately, cash helped to ease some of the oppression of enslavement and offered a small measure of control over one's own life.²⁸⁴ Slaves frequently spent money on liquor and gambling—two recreational activities prohibited by many masters—with other enslaved, free black or white laborers. Cash wages also encouraged the development of private economic activities such as illicit trade networks where slaves acquired and sold goods to other slaves and to poor whites. Such trade networks extended the reach of slaves' daily lives beyond the plantation, farm, or railroad labor camp, and allowed engagement with others beyond the masters' sphere.²⁸⁵ Money also provided slaves the power to add to their own material comforts or to that of their families with purchased items such as clothing, shoes, and blankets that provided a modicum of self-expression

²⁸³ Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 197-198.

²⁸⁴ Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, Chapter 2.

²⁸⁵ Jeff Forret, "Slaves, Poor Whites," and the Underground Economy of the Rural Carolinas," *The Journal of Southern History* 70, no. 4 (November 2004): 784, 795, 803.

and a chance to exercise one's own judgment when the master made most other choices. ²⁸⁶

The NCRR paid cash wages to some hired slaves, typically station hands, for overwork, primarily on Sundays and during the Christmas holiday. These slaves used their precious little time off to perform a variety of tasks including "night service" at stations, cutting wood, and pumping water for locomotives. They earned twenty to twenty-five cents per each cord of extra wood, twenty-five to fifty cents per day for "Sunday work," and a dollar per day for working during the Christmas holiday. Examples include Stephen, an enslaved station hand at Jamestown, who worked thirty-seven Sundays and seven days at Christmas for \$16.25 in 1856. Another enslaved man, Dave regularly cut wood for wages and in 1857 worked ten Sundays at the Charlotte station. Overwork on the NCRR was a very limited opportunity that few hired slaves engaged in.

On the NCRR hired slaves from various owners throughout the state combined with a handful of native white, Irish, and free black laborers to form large labor camps that varied in size and location according to assigned tasks. For example, in 1857 approximately 247 unskilled enslaved laborers worked and lived alongside twenty-five

²⁸⁶ Larry E. Hudson, "All That Cash: Work and Status in the Slave Quarters," in Hudson, ed. *Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1994), 80-81; Forret, "Slaves, Poor Whites," 786, 822.

²⁸⁷ Statement by Charles F. Fisher, May 8, 1858, Bills Receivable, 1854-1865; Receipts, 1857; and Correspondence, 1856-1857 all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

free blacks, and thirteen whites.²⁸⁸ These unskilled railroad laborers did not work or live in environments segregated by race or enslaved status; they worked alongside each other in small groups, cooked and ate together, relaxed together, and slept near each other in tents, shanties, crude shacks, and train cars.²⁸⁹ The close proximity of slaves and poor whites on the job and in the camps challenged traditional southern racial boundaries, as the closeness of railroad life had the potential to smooth out racial differences.²⁹⁰ Sometimes these two groups found common ground through shared experiences, and they especially spent leisure time gambling and drinking alcohol in each other's company.²⁹¹

Drinking and gambling were probably the two most popular recreational activities among enslaved and white laborers in the railroad's work camps, and it is likely that they

²⁸⁸ Numbers of workers compiled from Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, Table 6, 352-354. The exact number of Irish laborers is unknown, however, there is evidence that they were employed as supplemental laborers. See Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of William A. Graham*, 4:237, 238, 243 and Cecil K. Brown, *A State Movement in Railroad Development* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 117.

²⁸⁹ Camp size described in William K. Lane v. John C. Washington and J. D. Burdick, available online at Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina 1860).

²⁹⁰ Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins*, 17-18; Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 144, 148-149, 155-156. See also Bolton, *Poor Whites*, 120, 84. For an example of the interracial composition of NCRR work gangs see Samuel Couch v. George W. Jones, Adm'r. et al., available online at www.Lexisnexis.com, (accessed 20 November 2016) (Supreme Court of North Carolina 1857).

²⁹¹ Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 182, 190; Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins*, 27. The regulations adopted by the NCRR Company tried to minimize alcohol use in its camps by forbidding it among all employees during working hours and when off the clock. Anyone found intoxicated faced the possibility of immediate dismissal. See NCRR, *Regulations and Instructions*, 1854, 3-5; 1857, 3-5.

often engaged in these activities together. As a class, poor white men were heavy drinkers; even by antebellum standards, and for slaves drinking alcohol was a way to temporarily escape the harsh realities of enslaved life.²⁹² Throughout the South masters forbid their slaves to drink alcohol recreationally outside of the Christmas holiday, and therefore slaves ran away to taverns and grog shops to sneak a drink, or to purchase alcohol illegally from whites.²⁹³ Grog shops, a popular place to spend overwork wages, were conveniently positioned along well-traveled trade routes, including railroads, in rural and urban areas where they attracted the business of clandestine and interracial clientele.²⁹⁴

Prior to working for the NCRR, enslaved people in the Piedmont had fairly common, but limited contact with poor whites, either in agricultural settings or through illicit trade. On farms and plantations slaves typically begrudged poor whites for their roles as slavecatchers, patrollers, bloodhound trainers, and overseers. Male slaves were especially prone to resentment of white males for inflicting sexual violence and abuse on black women. Many slaveowners discouraged interactions between enslaved and poor white people while at the same time encouraging slaves' loyalty to upper-class whites. Masters' air of class superiority influenced slaves to condescend to poor whites, view

²⁹² Forret, "Slaves, Poor Whites," 795.

²⁹³ W. J. Roroabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), ix, 7, 12, 13, 20, 248. For restrictions on alcohol consumption see Session Records, 1854-1855, Petitions (2) Folder, General Assembly, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

²⁹⁴ Forret, Race Relations at the Margins, 54, 787, 789.

them as lazy, drunken, and unreliable, and to call them "white trash." And, many slaves showed a preference for wealthy masters because it heightened their own status among other slaves and increased their chances of receiving life's basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. Having a poor master meant greater material deprivation for slaves. ²⁹⁵

Many white laborers resented the fact that they had to compete with slaves for work and some felt hatred and even envy for enslaved people because poor whites had to fend for themselves while slaves received basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter from their masters.²⁹⁶ Landless, unskilled laboring whites in the antebellum central

²⁹⁵ George Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), Supplement Series I, vol. 9, pt. 4, 1712; vol. 14, pt. I, 98; vol. 14, pt. I, 180; E. C. Perrow, "Songs and Rhymes from the South," Journal of American Folklore 25, no. 96 (April-June 1915): 189; Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: African American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 300-320; Frederick Law Olmsted, The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observation on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 19; Fredericka Bremer, The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America, vol. 1, trans. Mary Howitt (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1853), 374, available online at https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011542365 (accessed 27 June 2016); James Stirling, Letters from the Slave States (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1857), 222, 230, available online at https://archive.org/details/lettersfromslav00stirgoog, (accessed 27 June 2016); J. S. Buckingham, *The Slave States of America*, vol. 1 (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1842), 554, available online at https://archive.org/details/slavestatesofame02buckuoft (accessed 27 June 2016).

²⁹⁶ Henry Barnard, ed. Bernard C. Steiner, "The South Atlantic States in 1833, as Seen By a New Englander," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 13 (December 1918), 338; W. H. Robinson, *From Log Cabin to the Pulpit, or, Fifteen Years in Slavery,* 3rd ed. (Eau Claire, WI: James H. Tift, 1913), 22, available on line at http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/robinson/robinson.html (accessed 27 June 2003); Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins,* 22. Bolton, "Edward Isham and Poor White Labor in the Old South," 25-26; J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White*

Piedmont could only expect to serve as temporary, mobile laborers in all areas where they had to compete with slave laborers working in gold, copper, and lead mines; textile manufacturing; internal improvements, and in the turpentine and lumber industries.²⁹⁷ The NCRR's construction increased the number of available jobs for whites in the Piedmont, however many native poor whites found themselves squeezed out of these job opportunities by slaves and upper-class, educated whites. The majority of the company's positions that were reserved for whites were skilled and thus required education and experience unavailable to many poor whites in North Carolina. Skilled positions were often filled from outside the company or through family connections and personal friendships, making it difficult for native laboring whites to work their way up through the ranks of the organization.²⁹⁸ For unskilled positions, the company preferred slave labor and only hired whites when slave labor was unavailable to meet their needs, thus the company hired only a small number of unskilled whites, each for about seventy-five cents per day.²⁹⁹

Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985, 1998), 78.

²⁹⁷ Bolton, *Poor Whites*, 15; Bolton, "Edward Isham and Poor White Labor in the Old South," 31.

²⁹⁸ Jervis, Railway Property, 219-220; Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad, 65.

²⁹⁹ Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins*, 41, 43-44. John C. Inscoe, "Mountain Masters: Slaveholding in Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 61 (April 1984): 167; "North Carolina Policy," *Greensboro Patriot*, April 3, 1857; New *Orleans Daily Crescent*, September 9, 1859; *Raleigh Register*, May 9, 1853; *North Carolina Whig*, June 8, 1853, October 4, 1853. See also Brent D. Glass, "'Poor Men with Rude Machinery,' The Formative Years of the Gold Hill Mining District, 1842-1853," *North Carolina Historical Review* 61 (January 1984): 25 and Glass, "The Other Miner's

Slaveowners understood that frequent proximity of slaves and poor whites often led to the blurring of racial boundaries, and in a society defined by its adherence to rigid racial categories, slaveowners took measures to try to keep poor whites and slaves apart. Interracial gambling especially worried slaveowners who feared that unscrupulous poor whites would use the pastime along with drinking alcohol to degrade their slaves' character. North Carolina took interracial gambling very seriously and by law forbade enslaved people to engage in any form of gambling. Free and enslaved laborers risked harsh consequences if caught gambling together. The law sentenced enslaved and free black violators to a maximum of thirty-nine lashes on the back.

Regardless, the pastime continued and slaveowners' fears of the corrupting influence of white laborers on their slaves increased. In 1851 North Carolina passed a law that any whites found playing any sorts of games with slaves would be subjected to a fine and a maximum of six months in jail. 301

World: Life and Labor at Gold Hill," *North Carolina Historical Review* 62 (October 1985): 430, 437-438.

³⁰⁰ The large variety of slave-poor white relationships implies that whiteness itself was not powerful enough to unite all white southerners across class lines. The fact that many slaves and poor whites spent leisure time together or traded together also demonstrates that race was not always the determining factor in the ways they interacted with one another. See Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins*, 17-18; Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," 144, 148-149, 155-156, and Bolton, *Poor Whites*, 120, 84.

³⁰¹ Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, at the Session of 1830-1831 (Raleigh: Lwrence & Lemay, 1831), 14-15; "An Act to prevent more effectually the corruption of the slave population" in Laws of the State of North Carolina, Passed By the General Assembly, at the Session of 1850-1851 (Raleigh: T. J. Lemay, 1851), 498.

Some masters refused to allow their slaves to work with whites in any capacity, and those that hired them out to the railroad tried to prevent their slaves from having regular contact with white laborers. In addition to drinking and gambling, slaveowners feared that whites would introduce slaves to organized labor protest, encourage slave resistance, and ultimately encourage a disregard for racial hierarchy. The railroad company showed little concern over mixed-race labor gangs and placed workers where they were needed and could best execute their duties. Some of the slaveowners who hired their slaves to the NCRR tired to use hiring contracts to reduce their slaves' exposure to white laborers. For example, several owners specified in their contracts that their slaves were only to be worked as section hands, one of two unskilled positions that were exclusively filled by black laborers. Section hands worked on twelve-mile sections of railroad in small groups of seven to nine men under the supervision of a white section master. Section hands worked some of the longest hours; they were always on call for repairs and emergencies, and they lived in separate section houses located near the

³⁰² Hudson, "All That Cash," 83; Forret, "Slaves, Poor Whites," 784; Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 182; Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins*, 27; President of the Mississippi Central Railroad quoted in Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 61; Morris, "The Measure of Bondage," 229. For examples of strikes see *Times and Compiler*, Richmond, Virginia, May 28, 1847; *Richmond Daily Whig*, May 28, 1847.

³⁰³ "Hand Hire Bonds, 1862-1864;" NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 18-19, 29 all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, North Carolina; NCRR *Annual Report*, 1857, 7-8; 1860, 9, 19; 1861, 7-8; NCRR, *Regulations and Instructions*, 1854, 40-44; 1857, 22-24.

section masters' house. ³⁰⁴ They would have had limited contact with white laborers and their long working hours minimized time off to fraternize with other, potentially white laborers in the camps.

Extant slave hire contracts and correspondence between slaveowners and company officials reveal that slaveowners were fully aware of how their slaves were treated on the NCRR. Slaveowners feelings of paternal responsibility notwithstanding, masters hired their slaves out to a corporation that capitalized on the temporary nature of hired labor and employed cost-saving measures to the detriment of the slaves safety and health. NCRR company officials had to make the absolute most out of slaves' temporary labor in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment in which slave labor was always in short supply. Construction contractors pressed labor gangs to meet quick deadlines set by the state and private investors. To keep freight and passengers moving, facilities such as stations and repair shops, track, and rolling stock had to be in good working order, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, in all types of weather conditions.³⁰⁵

From a corporate perspective working and living conditions for hired slaves reflected cost-saving strategies aimed at keeping the business profitable. Working for the

³⁰⁴ NCRR *Annual Report*, 1857, 7-8; 1860, 9, 19; 1861, 7-8, NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 29, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Hamilton, ed. *Papers of William A. Graham*, 4:242.

³⁰⁵ NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1855, 8; 1856, 9; *Raleigh Register*, December 9, 1854. *Hillsborough Recorder*, April 4; May 2; June 6, 1855; Trelease, *North Carolina Railroad Company*, 36; "Hand Hire Bonds 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC. Contracts no. 49, 73, 112, 1861; Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, 71-72; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 60; William K. Lane V. John C. Washington and J. D. Burdick, available online at Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina 1860).

railroad was an exceedingly dangerous occupation compared to laboring on the tobacco, wheat, and corn farms of western North Carolina. Railroad companies exposed slaves to dangerous industrial accidents; exhaustion, injury, and illness from overwork, nutrient and calorically deficient diets, and exposure to inclement weather; contagious diseases; inadequate housing and clothing; and a lack of responsible medical care. Only those few slaves who were assigned to work as train station and shop hands may have escaped the horrible working and living conditions that the vast majority of the railroad's hired slaves were forced to endure.

Health hazards were inherent in nature and abundant during railroad work. Slaves risked exposure to poisonous snakes, wild animals, and harmful insects that inhabited the job sites and surrounding countryside. Railroad slaves also faced drowning in rivers, being crushed by falling trees or rocks, struck in the head by a pickaxe, or suffering burns or other injuries from blasting with dynamite. In their timely quest for profits, overseers pushed hired slaves to work long hours under perilous conditions with little concern for their safety. For example, Calvin, an enslaved man working with construction gangs in Orange County, died instantly when struck on the head by a twenty-five-pound falling stone after his overseers engaged him in blasting rock out of the roadbed in the dark. Calvin reportedly ran as soon as the match was applied to the

³⁰⁶ Conditions for hired industrial slaves were generally more dangerous than agricultural conditions. See John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36.

³⁰⁷ Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, 36-37, 42; Trelease, The North Carolina Railroad Company, 62-64.

dynamite charge, however it was too dark for him to see and gauge the trajectory of the falling stones.³⁰⁸

Working on and around rolling stock exposed hired slaves to a gamut of industrial accidents. Generally, accidents were rampant on antebellum railroads and the NCRR had at least fifty accidents prior to the Civil War. Enslaved members of train crews—firemen, brakemen, and woodpassers—worked on locomotives at the front lines of the most common accidents including, boiler explosions and derailments from collisions or damaged infrastructure, which left them vulnerable to injuries and death.³⁰⁹ In the late 1850s, two train crewmembers were killed when an embankment collapsed under a freight train, and two more perished after their locomotive crashed into a washed-out culvert. ³¹⁰ Human error and negligence also led to terrible accidents. A train stalled on the tracks when it ran out of water, then was crashed by an oncoming passenger train, and left several people injured. ³¹¹ Other times trains were simply left on the track overnight then smashed by other oncoming trains in the morning. In January 1861, two trains

³⁰⁸ Samuel Couch v. George W. Jones, Adm'r., et al., available online at Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1857).

³⁰⁹ Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 65, 71; John F. Stover, *Iron Road to the West: American Railroads in the 1850s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 210.

³¹⁰ Charlotte *North Carolina Whig*, June 13, 1854; *North Carolina Standard*, September 6, 1856; John C. McRae, *A Defense of John C. McRae & Co.*, 13-15; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 7; 1860, 6, 20; 1861, 5; 1862, 26-27.

³¹¹ Raleigh Register, October 21, 1854.

collided head-on near Charlotte resulting in the death of an engineer and injuries to several enslaved train hands.³¹²

In addition to collisions and derailments, brakemen, and sometimes fireman, were commonly injured, even crushed to death, when coupling and uncoupling train cars and locomotives. Coupling trains was the most notoriously dangerous position on any antebellum railroad; the task was typically performed by brakemen, a position reserved exclusively for black labor on the NCRR. Coupling and uncoupling cars required men to move between the cars, insert or remove a metal pin from one car into the loop device of another car. If the cars moved, and at times they did, the brakeman could be fatally crushed between cars or caught under the wheels of the train. Before the advent of automatic couplers in the 1890s, brakemen suffered thirty-five to fifty percent of all railroad laborer injuries and fatalities while making up only ten percent of the workforce. Newspaper reports show that on the NCRR in the 1850s an enslaved man was crushed to death between two train cars, a brakeman was run over while attempting

³¹² Greensboro Patriot, October 19, 1855; January 31, 1861. Charlotte Daily Bulletin, January 4, 1861; North Carolina Star, November 15, 1854; Carolina Watchman, April 1, 1856; North Carolina Standard, September 6, 1856; Greensboro Times, October 9, 1856; Charlotte Western Democrat, May 24, 1859; Hillsborough Recorder, January 23, 1861.

³¹³ Mungo T. Ponton v. Wilmington and Weldon R. Road Co., available online at Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1858); Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad Company*, 62-64.

to uncouple a car, and a fireman was killed at Company Shops while trying to uncouple his locomotive. ³¹⁴

Disease and illness were commonplace in the closely-knit working and living conditions of NCRR labor camps. The lack of a balanced diet, regular exposure to inclement weather, inadequate housing and sanitation standards, long hours, and laborious nature of railroad work all combined to endanger the health of enslaved workers. Diseases such as dysentery, "bilious diarrhea," and typhoid fever spread quickly through work camps as a result of contaminated food and water or through close contact with an infected person. Because they lived in cramped quarters and worked outdoors in the rain and snow, railroad slaves were particularly susceptible to fatal lung-related ailments such as bacterial pneumonia and tuberculosis, as well as to weather-related injuries like frostbite. Working in extreme heat, in and around insect-infested

³¹⁴ North Carolina Star, November 15, 1854; Carolina Watchman, April 1, 1856; North Carolina Standard, September 6, 1856; Greensboro Times, October 9, 1856; Charlotte Western Democrat, May 24, 1859.

³¹⁵ Todd L. Savitt, "Healthcare," in *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*, ed. Randall Miller and John David Smith (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 312.

³¹⁶ Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of William A. Graham*, 4:315. Information about Typhoid Fever available on line at http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/typhoid-fever/basics/definition/con-20028553 (accessed 23 September 2016).

³¹⁷ Hamilton, ed. *The Papers of William A. Graham*, 4: 236, 237; Greensboro *Times*, January 22, 1857; *Greensboro Patriot*, January 23, 1857; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1856, 10; John C. Slocumb v. John C. Washington, et. Al., available online at Lexisnexis.com, (27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1859); William K. Lane V. John C. Washington and J. D. Burdick, available online at Lexisnexis.com, (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina 1860); Kenneth F. Kiple, "Health and Disease," ed. Miller and Smith, *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*, 310-311.

swamplands also aided the spread of contagious diseases among workers. All of these health issues were compounded by consistently poor nutrition and exhaustion from long hours of hard physical labor that weakened immune systems and made slaves more vulnerable to illness and epidemic diseases.³¹⁸

Back on the farm or plantation, slaves could expect owners to administer at least some form of medical attention and possibly to summon a doctor in more serious cases. In the nineteenth century, masters, plantation mistresses, and overseers popularly administered medical treatments for ailing slaves. Calling in a physician was very costly and in areas without fast, reliable transportation, it often took hours, even days for a physician to arrive on the scene. Medical knowledge at the time was fairly primitive and many whites recognized that doctors' methods yielded questionable results. Close observers could purchase and learn to administer the same treatments as a doctor, and many plantations kept well-stocked medicine chests along with a domestic medicine guidebook for that purpose. In treating slaves, overseers, masters and mistresses relied heavily on harsh, often harmful, white treatments namely, bloodletting; blistering; the induction of vomiting, diarrhea, and sweating. Slaves on antebellum plantations did not always report illnesses to their overseers, masters, or mistresses; instead they preferred to rely on black treatments recommended by friends or relatives in the slave quarters, or black herb or root doctors. Generally slaves had little to gain by notifying whites when they were sick, illnesses did not always translate into time off from work and reporting an

³¹⁸ William K. Lane V. John C. Washington and J. D. Burdick, available online at Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina 1860); Kenneth F. Kiple, "Health and Disease," 310-311.

illness required surrendering one's body to the harsh medical treatments used by whites. Masters often found out that slaves were sick only after their illnesses had considerably progressed. Working for the NCRR, hired slaves found themselves in new and often precarious medical positions when they fell ill or suffered an injury. Separated from their home plantations, slaves experienced either limited or no contact with black medical practitioners. They labored mostly in rural, isolated areas where they would have had little freedom or resources to attempt to treat their own illnesses, and forcing them to submit to whites' medical treatments if seriously afflicted. 320

According to slaveowners, railroad representatives did not exercise good judgment in tending to hired slaves' illnesses and injuries, and many owners refused to entrust their slaves' health to the company and instead agreed to pay for their slaves' doctor bills throughout the term of the hiring contract. Owners took the health of their slaves more seriously than the company, they needed to protect their financial investments and at the same time fulfill any paternalist humanitarian commitment they may have felt towards their enslaved property. The railroad company had economic incentive to keep slaves healthy and working and when a slave was injured or became ill, NCRR overseers exercised a few different options depending on the illness, time, place, and terms of the slave's hiring contract. Overseers administered treatments or home remedies directly to slaves, sent slaves home for medical attention, occasionally called in

³¹⁹ Todd L. Savitt, Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Healthcare of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 312-313.

³²⁰ Savitt, Medicine and Slavery, 185.

a physician, and sometimes chose to do nothing at all. The type and effectiveness of care slaves' received was variable; some contractors and overseers appear to have taken good measure to care for injured or sick slaves while others did not. Some slaves employed by construction contractors worked close to home and could be sent to the planters' physician or even to their relatives for medical attention. When one young man, Ephraim, working on a construction gang in Orange County, fell dangerously ill his overseer sent him home to his mother to be nursed back to health. Others, entrusted to the company's care, were not so fortunate. After a section hand, Dick, complained of pain in the head and breast, his section master sent him alone to his shanty and left him there for several hours, then attempted to treat Dick's complaints with laudanum and a mustard plaster to the head. When Dick was still sick the next morning, the section master allowed him to walk six miles to the Charlotte station, then board a train and ride over forty miles to Holtsburg. By the time Dick arrived at his master's house, his illness had progressed and he was diagnosed with Typhoid fever, he died the next day. His owner sued the company for negligence.³²² Sometimes injured and sick railroad slaves were left in precarious positions for days without medical attention of any kind, these men were either ran away back to their owners, or they were left to die. 323

³²¹ Hamilton, ed., The Papers of William A. Graham, 4:315.

³²² James H. Haden v. North Carolina Railroad Company, available online at www.Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1861).

³²³ William K. Lane v. John C. Washington & J. D. Burdick, available online at www.Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina,

For hired slaves from small farms in the Piedmont, the railroad's annual clothing allowance—hat, shoes, and a blanket—was probably less than what they were used to receiving. Even if their master only provided the bare minimum, they were at least allowed to make their own clothes—shirts, trousers, and coats—out of homespun and woven "negro cloth." For slaves from particularly poor owners, the allowance may have been an improvement. Whatever the case, slaveowners were aware that industrial employers like the NCRR frequently tried to cut corners on clothing for their enslaved labor forces, therefore owners tried to bind them to contracts requiring specific or additional apparel, or they agreed to provide slaves' clothing themselves.³²⁴ Larger, wealthier slaveowners like Paul Cameron agreed to provide his slaves with clothing while they worked for the NCRR. 325 Others supplemented the railroad's offerings when they sent boxes of clothing, provided additional pairs of shoes, or negotiated additional clothing items in their hiring contracts.³²⁶ Regardless of the quality of shoes, hat and blanket provided by the NCRR, these items were inadequate for working outside in all temperatures and weather conditions. Clothing items like warm gloves and socks, and multiple layers to protect from extreme cold and rain were likely rare and would have had

1860); Jane C. Knox v. North Carolina Railroad Company, available online at www. Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1859).

³²⁴ Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 57.

³²⁵ "Hand Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," Contract No. 2, 1864, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

³²⁶ Letter, January 9, 1864, in "Hire of Slaves 1864-1865," Correspondence; "Hand-Hire Book, 1864-1865," all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

to be brought from home. Hired slaves on the railroad likely wore a large variety of clothing that reflected different levels of paternalist care and social status among their masters, and among themselves.

Housing for hired slaves was often a source of contention between slaveowners and the railroad. Unsuitable housing exposed slaves to illness and injury, especially during extreme weather conditions. When logistically possible, slaveowners boarded their slaves at home and sent them off to work for the railroad each day rather than allow them to live in inadequate quarters or experience the rough lifestyle of the railroad's work camps. When living with their owners, many enslaved people lived in small wooden cabins, typically with their relatives. Cabins contained sparse, but utilitarian furniture with utensils and a fireplace with a chimney for heat and cooking. They also had significant items such as doors, shutters over windows, and plank floors. As with clothing, the quality of slave housing usually varied in accordance with masters' wealth. Wealthier masters took great care to provide healthful living conditions such as raised cabins to reduce moisture and with good insulation between siding and walls. Slaves also used time-off to improve their own living conditions with left over or bartered materials. 328

³²⁷ "Hand Hire Bonds, 1862-1864," Contract No. 2, 1864, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

³²⁸ See Theresa A. Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life," and John Michael Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," in *Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South*, eds. Edward D. C. Campbell and Kym S. Rice (Richmond: The Museum of the Confederacy and University Press of Virginia, 1991).

Slaves hired to work on the NCRR experienced a wide variety of housing conditions contingent upon the type of labor they performed and their geographic location on the railroad. The majority of laborers were housed in overcrowded, cheap, inadequate, and even atrocious conditions that fostered injuries, illness, and the spread of contagious diseases. During the railroad's construction, contractors were responsible for building their own temporary cabins to house workers near their sections.³²⁹ These socalled "cabins" ranged from crowded, temporary tents to wooden shanties, to outdoor camps where men slept on the ground with no shelters at all. 330 Construction gang housing was purposefully minimal and inexpensive because it needed to be relocated easily and quickly, sometimes on a weekly basis depending on the pace of work.³³¹ Wooden shanties, presumably built by the slaves themselves, were described as crude pens or lean-tos built from surplus materials at the jobsites. 332 Shanties offered little-tono protection from the weather and no physical comforts. Shanties built for construction gangs near Raleigh were described as thirty by sixteen-foot pens made of pine poles separated by large cracks. The structures were without a floor, a door, or a chimney. Fires were built on a pile of dirt in the center of the pen for warmth and cooking. A three-foot opening in a low roof allowed for the escape of smoke and for the entrance of

³²⁹ Hamilton, ed., Papers of William A. Graham, 4:242.

³³⁰ Marrs, Railroads in the Old South, 71-72; Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, 60.

³³¹ Hamilton, ed., *Papers of William A. Graham*, 4:287-288.

³³² William K. Lane v. John C. Washington and J. D. Burdick, available online at Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1860).

rain, snow, and wind. The shanties were without furniture, textiles, or cooking utensils. The enslaved men slept, about twenty in each pen, on wooden planks on the ground without blankets or pillows. Some shanties were even more crude, at another camp near Raleigh shanties were constructed of pine crossties stacked on top of each other to make three sides of a room, the fourth side was left completely open and additional crossties were laid across the top for a makeshift roof. Slaves were forced to stay in these shanties during all types of weather, including a heavy snowstorm in January 1857 in which several were frost-bitten, and at least two men died of health complications, possibly pneumonia. 333

Slaves directly employed by the NCRR also lived in a wide range of inexpensive, over-crowded, low-quality company housing.³³⁴ When space and funding permitted, the company made efforts to match slaves' living quarters with their assigned jobs to increase labor efficiency. For example, most section hands lived in a "negro house" or "quarters" built specifically for workers in their assigned twelve-mile section and close to

³³³ William K. Lane v. John C. Washington and J. D. Burdick, available online at Lexisnexis.com, (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1860); John C. Slocumb v. John C. Washington et al., available online at Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1859).

³³⁴ Marrs, Railroads in the Old South, 71-72; Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, 60; NCRR, Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Rail Road Company (Raleigh: Inst. for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind, 1864); NCRR, Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the North Carolina Rail Road Company, (Raleigh: Inst. for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind, 1862).

a section master's house.³³⁵ Lumber train and gravel train hands either bunked with section hands or lived in canvas tents or moveable tent cars that transported them to various locations as needed.³³⁶ When houses became too crowded, more tents were probably used. Passenger and freight hands, as well as train hands—fireman, brakemen, and woodpassers--presumably lived on their assigned trains where they slept in a "negro car" or car designated for train hands. Station hands were intended to live in company-built houses near each station; however, these were not completed for all of the stations, and it is clear that some of the station masters paid to board the enslaved station hands elsewhere. Others perhaps found places to sleep in backrooms or attic spaces within the station buildings.³³⁷ A few skilled and unskilled enslaved men worked at the company's repair facilities at Company Shops, where they lived in small brick or wooden structures constructed at the edge of the shop's complex.³³⁸

Slaves working for the NCRR were underfed and malnourished; their diets consisted of rations of bacon and cornmeal, which they prepared themselves over open

³³⁵ NCRR *Annual Report*, 1857, 7-8; 1860, 9, 19; 1861, 7-8; NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 29, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

³³⁶ Marrs, Railroads in the Old South, 71-72; Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, 60.

³³⁷ Ledgers, 1855-1857; NCRR, *Report of the President, January 20, 1859*, 29 all in NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1857, 7-8; 1860, 9, 19; 1861, 7-8.

³³⁸ XI Maps, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

nutrients necessary for their bodies and minds to sustain the physical effort needed to endure hard physical labor required of unskilled railroad workers. For many of these men, the food they consumed while hired out to the railroad may have differed little from what they were used to on their home farms and plantations. Most of the slaves were hired from smaller farms and plantations in the Piedmont where slaves were accustomed to meager rations. Cultivatable land in the area was likely limited and unavailable for slaves to use as personal garden plots or provisioning grounds. For other slaves hired away from larger plantations owned by wealthy planter families like the Camerons or Mordecais, railroad fare likely provided significantly less calories, nutrients, and variety than their typical diet at home, which included occasional scraps or leftovers from the big house table or parties, vegetables from their own garden plots, or items stolen from the master's smokehouse or pantry. 341

During the railroad's construction phase, slaves' diets were particularly lean.

Contractors were responsible for supplying their own bacon, and they reported food shortages and difficulties getting much-needed provisions for feeding hands and work

³³⁹ James Redpath, *The Roving Editor; or Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (New York: Burdick, 1859), 138; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 57-59.

³⁴⁰ Forret, "Slaves, Poor Whites," 783.

³⁴¹ "Essex Henry interview, George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* vol. 14 North Carolina Narratives Part 1 (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1941, 1972), 394-398. Henry lived on the Mordecai plantation with several hundred other slaves just outside of Raleigh.

animals in the workcamps. One contractor and his agent put up 2,000 pounds of bacon and fearing that would be too little, they made plans to purchase an additional 1,000 pounds to feed approximately sixteen laborers for the year. Two thousand pounds of bacon would have provided each laborer with about one-third pound of fatty pork per day. At times food was so short that contractors had to suspend operations on the railroad to send slave laborers home to harvest much-needed supplies like corn, oats, and wheat, as well as hay to feed the oxen and horses. After construction, when slaves were hired directly to the company, they subsisted on rations of bacon and cornmeal that they turned into ashcakes and dumplings to be cooked over a fire. Suitable drinking water posed an additional challenge. Enslaved men working in the rural countryside drank water found nearby their jobsites and living quarters. Their living conditions were unsanitary, and sometimes water became contaminated, leading to debilitating sickness and death from diseases such as typhoid fever that spread through contaminated food and water.

Slaves hired out to the railroad company demonstrated their disdain for industrial bondage when they employed a variety of resistance strategies, including theft, assault,

³⁴² Hamilton, ed., The Papers of William A. Graham, 4:237.

³⁴³ Hamilton, ed., The Papers of William A. Graham, 4: 242, 316.

³⁴⁴ James Redpath, *The Roving Editor*, 138.

³⁴⁵ James H. Haden v. North Carolina Railroad Company, available online at www. Lexisnexis.com, (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1861).

arson, industrial sabotage, and escape. 346 Their resistance reflected their dissatisfaction with intolerable working and living conditions and resentment over extortion of their labor, even with incentives like overwork pay. Dozens of slave hire contracts were cancelled by the NCRR as a result of slaves running away. Generally, slaveowners often chose to hire out slaves who were flight risks—they were either discipline problems at home or self-confident, hard-working, and independent individuals for whom masters' charged high rental fees. Hired slaves ran away to see their families and to escape harsh labor, long hours, and harsh treatment. They were in a position to really understand the monetary value of their labor and it may have angered them to see that value go to their masters. 347 Some like Pharaoh Richardson of Mecklenburg County stole their own time temporarily, and then returned. Richardson left several times during his one-year contract, each time returning, presumably when he was ready.³⁴⁸ Others stole company property and then ran away for good. For example, an enslaved man Ishmael stole and absconded with several pairs of new shoes that he made on the company's time.³⁴⁹ Hiring fees were docked when slaves ran away during the contract, meaning that by running away, these men deprived the railroad company of their labor and deprived their

³⁴⁶ Raleigh Register, October 21, 1854; Jane C. Knox v. NC R Road Co,
51INC.415, available online at www.Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013)
(June 1859); NCRR "Reported thefts of company-owned items by negroes," NCRR
Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; "Railroad Obstruction," Greensboro Patriot, July 3, 1857.

³⁴⁷ Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 4, 33.

^{348 &}quot;Hand Hire Bonds, 1861-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

³⁴⁹ J. G. Moore to Mr. Collins, January 4, 18, 1863, Correspondence, Josiah Collins Papers, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

owner of the annual hiring fee. Hired slaves took advantage of the railroad's neglectful care and exploited tensions between owners and their employers when they were victims of especially cruel treatment. When a group of slaves ran away from their construction gang during a snow storm, they returned to their masters sick and frost-bitten and complained of their treatment and housing. Their owners brought charges against the company's contractor for negligence.³⁵⁰

Using hired slaves to work for the NCRR changed the parameters of enslavement and posed challenges to the conventional norms that dictated master-slave relations.

Hired slaves found opportunities to work and live, at least partially, outside of the boundaries of their masters' field of vision; however, the evidence described here does not suggest that these hired slaves enjoyed a state of quasi-freedom compared to plantation slaves. In fact, this study further complicates the history of slave hiring in the South by showing that the experiences of hired slaves within this one industry were highly individualistic, and therefore, do not fit neatly into predefined categories designating degrees of freedom. While working for the railroad, these men experienced a completely different lifestyle than they had on their farms and plantations, and the degree of change depended upon the status and temperament of their owner and their assigned place on the railroad. Men who were hired away from particularly poor, or over-bearing,

³⁵⁰ John C. Slocumb v. John C. Washington, et al., available online at Lexisnexis.com, (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1859); William K. Lane V. John C. Washington and J. D. Burdick, available online at Lexisnexis.com (27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina 1860).

abusive owners or overseers may have found the railroad's conditions much more tolerable than those who came from more comfortable settings where owners adhered to a paternalist ethos. To many of the NCRR's slaves who were hired from small farms in the Piedmont where they lived and worked in close proximity with their master and his family, going off to work for the railroad, no matter how grim the circumstances, could have felt liberating. On the other hand, for slaves owned by wealthy masters with larger holdings, working for the railroad meant a significant downgrading in their quality of life.³⁵¹

Railroad life and work offered a few advantages to hired slaves, though these were very limited and not distributed equally amongst all hired slaves, nor were the advantages given automatically as a condition of being hired out. The small number of enslaved men hired to work as station hands, shop hands, and some train hands were better positioned to achieve greater levels of autonomy and generally live with less-intensive white oversight than slaves engaged in more traditional agricultural labor. These men could spend time off in the state's largest and fastest growing urban areas, where they could participate in some of the same activities enjoyed by other urban hired slaves, including increased mobility around town, visits to grog shops and taverns, greater access to extra paid work, and participation in underground trading networks. Station hands also earned extra money working on Sundays and during the Christmas

³⁵¹ Forret, "Slaves, Poor Whites," 795, 796.

³⁵² Jane C. Knox v. North Carolina Railroad Company, available online at www. Lexisnexis.com (accessed 27 November 2013) (Supreme Court of North Carolina, 1859).

holiday. Most of the slaves, however, worked in positions that were less likely to afford mobility and increased autonomy. These men performed general repairs and maintenance as section hands and gravel and lumber train hands; they worked long hours in small groups under motivated overseers, and only a documented few out of hundreds of men earned cash cutting wood through the overwork system. They may have enjoyed unsupervised leisure time in the camps, where they fraternized and relaxed together, drinking and gambling without fear of their masters' retribution. Realistically though, for most of these enslaved men, their work was all-consuming, leaving little time to appreciate any perceived advantages of being hired out. After long days and nights of working, they still had to take care of their own living space, washing, and cooking. For all of the hired slaves, any advantages that they incurred were trade-offs, or perhaps small conciliations, for the terrible working and living conditions that they endured while working for the NCRR.

CHAPTER V

FROM PLANTATION TO RAILROAD

In January 1862, twenty-one year old Preston, "Presly," Justice left his home in the Horton Grove Quarter of Stagville Plantation because his owner, Paul Cameron, rented him, along with several of his enslaved neighbors and kin, to the North Carolina Railroad as a laborers for one year. As slaves at Stagville, Presly and the others were sentenced to a lifetime of hard agricultural labor in a dehumanizing oppressive system that deprived them of their freedom, but the railroad company subjected these men to even greater misery in some of the most formidable conditions of their lives as slaves thus far. Presly, like many other Cameron slaves, had been born and raised at Stagville, and his family's roots there extended back to the first group of enslaved people brought to the area by Paul Cameron's grandparents in 1776. When he left for the NCRR, Presly left behind the only home that he had ever known, his parents and grandparents, his sixteen siblings, a dynamic community of enslaved people, and the neighborhood that he and four generations of his kinfolk had carved out of their owners' plantations in North Carolina's backcountry frontier. 353

³⁵³ "Hand-Hire Contracts," 1862, 1864, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Slave lists, Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. For Preston's genealogy at Stagville see "Stagville African American Genealogy," available online at http://www.genealogy.com/ftm/s/t/a/Historic-Stagville/index.html, last updated September 12, 2006 (accessed 31 July 2017).

In that same year, 1862, a group of enslaved men including forty-six-year-old Peter King, his younger brother Alex King, and his two sons Brian and Whitaker, were sent by their master, Josiah Collins III from Somerset Plantation in the Albemarle region of the Coastal Plain to two years of labor in the NCRR's Piedmont labor camps. Like Presly at Stagville, the King men had lived their entire lives at Somerset Place as members of a large community of enslaved people marked by several generations of extended families and kinship networks.³⁵⁴

The men who were hired out to the NCRR by Josiah Collins III and Paul Cameron left their home plantations as fathers, grandfathers, husbands, sons, brothers, uncles, and cousins and entered an impersonal, exploitive capitalist workplace that represented a severe decline in their quality of life. On their plantations they had been slaves to their owners and individuals to the families, communities, and neighborhoods that defined their identities and sense of self. Membership in a large collective slave community helped to ease the harsh realties of slavery and allowed them to carve out the physical, emotional, and social space to resist and undermine planters' attempts to control them. 355

³⁵⁴. Slave Records, Lists Families, Josiah Collins Papers, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; "Josiah Collins III: A Time Line: 1860-1865," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017). Josiah Collins III hired out thirty-five men to the NCRR in 1862, thirty-seven men in 1863, and thirty men in 1864. See "Hand-Hire Contracts", 1862, 1864, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC

³⁵⁵ Anthony. E Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 3, 6-7; Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), ix; Alisa Yael

At their core, both the plantations and the NCRR were essentially oppressive, abusive labor camps, where enslaved people worked under continuous threat of violence and separation to the economic benefit of white owners and investors. However, when the lives of hired slaves on the NCRR are compared to slave life on at Stagville and Somerset Place, the NCRR was the worst of the two environments to be enslaved in. The railroad displayed no sense of economically self-interested paternalism towards hired slaves that contrasted greatly with the plantation worlds and slave neighborhoods that the men left behind. Somerset Place and Stagville were not only labor camps, they were also home places where enslaved people and their owners raised their families, prepared meals, socialized, worshipped, cared for the sick, and buried their dead. For all who resided there, free or enslaved, the plantation became the geographic, social, economic, political, and religious center of their lives.³⁵⁶

Large plantations like Somerset Place and Stagville were unique environments for enslaved people; they served as the spaces for the development of slave neighborhoods characterized by extended family and kinship networks and a distinctive African-American culture that helped ease the burden of enslavement and provided enslaved people with worlds of their own, separate from whites. Slave hiring, like slave sales,

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Harrison, "Reconstructing Somerset Place: Slavery, Memory, and Historical Consciousness," PhD Dissertation, Duke University, 2008, 302.

³⁵⁶ Laura A. Wilkie, Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, 1840-1950 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 42, 53. For descriptions of southern plantations as "labor camps" see Edward E.Baptist, The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

neighborhoods, and sent them off into uncertainty. Their masters forced them to leave a place where their families and extended kin networks lived together, worked together, and interacted on a daily basis, and instead go to an all-male, corporate, industrial labor camp with the barest amenities. These men were forced to adjust physically and emotionally to a wholly different working and living environment. After working long days, and sometimes long nights and weekends, there would be no slave women to help prepare their evening meals or to sew damaged clothing, no children to teach or to play with. When they became sick, they would be forced to rely on treatments from white strangers who cared little if they lived or died. They would have to learn to meet the demands and moods of a new supervisor, safely navigate industrial hazards, and get used to living on sparse rations of cornmeal and bacon. Railroad labor would consume their every waking moment, and at night they tried to sleep in crowded temporary housing with no privacy and little rest.

This chapter contributes to the historiography of slave hiring by demonstrating hired non-agricultural slaves experienced a wide range of living and working situations. Whereas urban slaves often hired out their own time and secured their own lodgings in the South's growing towns and cities where they enjoyed greater mobility and autonomy

³⁵⁷ Kave, *Joining Places*, 4-6, 8, 11.

³⁵⁸ Brenda E. Stevenson, Life in Black and White and White: Family and Community in the Slave South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 242.

than other types of slaves; most enslaved people hired out to industries like gold mining or railroad companies lived and worked in stark, rigidly regimented labor camps under strict supervision. The experiences of slaves hired out to the NCRR were highly individual, variable, and contingent upon location, personal circumstances, and type of labor performed. For enslaved men from Stagville and Somerset Plantations working for the NCRR as hired slaves did not allow them more control over their own lives or more freedoms than they experienced on their home plantations. In fact, relocating to the NCRR represented a marked reduction in slaves' overall quality of life as they were ripped away from their homes, families, and neighborhoods and denied personal space essentially; they lost of some of the more favorable facets of their lives under slavery. This chapter also contributes to the historiography of slave families, communities, neighborhoods, and the development of African-American culture in plantation settings. Scholarly interest in the nature and character of black slavery and the development of a distinct African American culture has diverged significantly since the work of U. B. Phillips and his critics who interpreted enslaved African Americas as passive victims, powerless to whites' indoctrination.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ See Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Régime (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1918); Stanley Elkins, Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); Kenneth Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York: Knopf, 1956). For a review of scholarship on antebellum slave life see Drew Gilpin Foust, "Slavery in the American Experience," in Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South, eds., Edward D. C. Campbell and Kym S. Rice (Richmond: The Museum of the Confederacy and University Press of Virginia, 1991).

The emergence of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power ideology in the 1960s, ushered in a new generation of scholarship that focused on slaves' agency and the role of black families, religion, and slave communities as a counterbalance to whites' physical and psychological power. 360 Critics of the community paradigm for understanding slave life have pointed to its overemphasis on slaves' agency and communal strength to the point of erasing their victimization and the evils of the plantation system. 361 New trends in slave community studies exemplified by the works of Erskine Clarke and Anthony Kaye, two historians who demonstrate that generations of enslaved people carved out and maintained their own social and geographical spaces on plantations that were separate from, yet also linked and interwoven with the spaces inhabited by white masters and their families. 362 Their work shows that lives of slaves

³⁶⁰ For example Herbert Gutman argued that enslaved people found strength in the structure of deliberately created extended families. Familial connections assisted slaves in sharing of resources, and in surviving and resisting the harshness and injustices of slavery. See Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Ann J. Lane, ed., *The Debate Over Slavery: Stanley Elkins and His Critics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Foust, "Slavery in the American Experience." 7.

³⁶¹ Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie M. H. Camp, eds., *New Studies in the History of American Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 1-5.

³⁶² Anthony. E Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 3, 6-7; Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), ix.

cannot be understood as playing out in separate autonomous communities when the physical and geographic terrains were shaped and shared by both masters and slaves. Clarke effectively shows how slaves and planters viewed their plantations and home places from different perspectives, and at the same time interacted with each other through a range of human emotions within a shared place where both owners and owned lived, worked, and died. Clarke also shows how the slaves' landscape and community were largely incomprehensible and concealed from many whites, and hence created opportunities for enslaved people to build families, worship as members of a faith community, and negotiate a give and take relationship with their owners. Kaye develoed the concept of slave neighborhoods to explore the every day lives of enslaved people and asserts that slaves' neighborhoods were social spaces created by enslaved people to help meet their physical and emotional needs. Slave neighborhoods were geographical locations, social constructs, and collective understandings formed out of alternative plantation landscapes, such as the well-worn paths to and from adjoining plantations, familial and intimate relationships, and alternative histories and cultural practices. Such neighborhoods often became crucial sites of opposition and resistance to their owner's attempts at controlling their daily lives.³⁶³

This chapter builds on the received historiography of slave communities and contributes to this body of scholarship by interweaving a variety of different methods, including historical archaeology, analysis of landscape features and architectural remains, material culture evidence, folklore studies, and planters' records to tell the stories of the

³⁶³ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 4-5, 8; Clarke, *Dwelling Place*, x-xi.

enslaved men who were hired out from Stagville and Somerset Plantations to the NCRR and the intricate worlds they left behind. This chapter also adds to the work of public historians and archaeologists such as John Michael Vlach, William Kelso, Laurie Wilkie, and Dell Upton who have conducted in depth research on plantation landscapes and concluded that enslaved people redefined imposed spatial arrangements on plantations in socially and culturally meaningful and empowering ways within a context of personal, economic, and political oppression.³⁶⁴

Planters and enslaved people viewed and experienced plantations from their own perspectives.³⁶⁵ Planters consciously designed plantation landscapes as a visual statement of their own status, power, and worldview.³⁶⁶ The layout of plantation structures, gardens, fields, roads and pathways mirrored the rigid social hierarchy of race and class in the antebellum South and was intended to create distinct boundaries and spaces through which planters asserted control over the privacy, movement, and activities of enslaved laborers. The planter's residence or big house purposefully set atop the highest point on his property, accessed by a long processional approach, and surrounded

³⁶⁴ Dell Upton, "Imagining the Early Virginia Landscape," in *Earth Patterns: Essays in Landscape Archaeology*, ed. William M. Kelso and Rachel Most (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 7; John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); William M. Kelso, "Mulberry Row: Slave Life at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello," *Archaeology* 39, no. 5 (September-October, 1986): 28-35; Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, xv-xvii.

³⁶⁵ Clarke, *Dwelling Place*, 20-23, 34, 49, 115, 228.

³⁶⁶ Rhys Issac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 19.

by manicured gardens served as an overt expression of his position in the world.³⁶⁷ The architectural embellishments of the big house were typically echoed in its neatly clustered village of dependency structures for service to the white family such as, dairies, smokehouses, kitchens, and domestic slave quarters, that were all tucked squarely behind the big house and formal gardens to create a distinct "owner's compound" or owner's neighborhood. From the planter's perspective the plantation was laid out in orderly, hierarchical terms in neatly arranged grids and quadrants with well-marked divisions between owners and owned. Gardens, walkways, fences, trees, and shrubs separated the picturesque domestication of the planter's neighborhood from the messy realties of owning humans and forcing them to work against their will.³⁶⁸ Beyond the planter's neighborhood, he was surrounded by enslaved dependents, and his identity became deeply attached to the successful management and regulation of his slaves' activities.³⁶⁹

Within the plantation landscape, slaves' dwellings stood in marked contrast to the planter's house. They were ordinary wooden buildings and extraordinarily small. Their typical location on the plantation landscape, down and away from the big house but not completely out of view from windows and balconies, emphasized slaves' place at the

³⁶⁷ Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 1-12. For additional information about the ideological role of the plantation house see Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 32-42.

³⁶⁸ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 5; Dell Upton, "Imagining the Early Virginia Landscape," 7; Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 1-5, 22-23; Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, 199-200; James Deetz, "Prologue," in *Earth Patterns: Essays in Landscape Archaeology*, ed. William M. Kelso and Rachel Most (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 1-3.

³⁶⁹ Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 42.

bottom of the plantation and region's social hierarchy. Their small stature and roughly constructed, unadorned exteriors further enhanced the size and importance of the planter's residence. Planters typically arranged slaves' dwellings neatly in barracks-style, symmetrical rows that signaled strict hierarchical order and implied a sense of regimentation and imposed authority, as opposed to a free persons way of life where items and structures could be placed at will. Planters used the placement and orientation of slave cabins and workspaces as a form of social control for regulating labor production, exerting control over private space, and for treating slaves as a collective population, not as individuals. Masters intended this arrangement to limit slaves' privacy, reduce slaves' ability to practice their own culture, and prevent undesirable activities such as plotting resistance, learning to read, or developing alternative economic systems.³⁷⁰

For the enslaved population the plantation landscape represented a disjointed, haphazard mixture of free and controlled spaces. The big house and the owner's compound represented the center of their master's authority and the most tightly controlled spaces on the plantation, but as slaves moved away from the center to the plantation's peripheries, they traveled down a scale of power and significance and thereby experienced a decline in the master's ability to control their actions. In their daily movements around the plantation, enslaved people undermined their masters' attempts at control as they ignored the spatial constraints built into the whites' landscape

³⁷⁰ Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, 204-20; Upton, "Imagining the Early Virginia Landscape," 71-72, 74; Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 163-164.

and created alternative approaches to and through the plantation grounds to the paths, gates, and roads designed and designated by whites. They used back ways to neighboring plantations, taverns, and secret meeting places in the woods and swamps to shape the plantation for their own purposes. Slaves exerted control over extra-plantation spaces like waterways, forests, and swamps and transformed them into spaces that encouraged racial solidarity and escape routes—even if only temporarily—from a masters' control.³⁷¹ Their landscape consisted of crisscrossed foot-worn trails leading to scenes of communal activities, to garden plots, fishing holes, and out into the woods to forage and hunt for food.³⁷²

Slaves' living and working spaces were included in the plantation's patriarchal structure but not completely assimilated to it. In their quarters and margins of the plantation landscape, enslaved people coopted space and created their own neighborhoods, defined as a parallel and alternative way of ordering the plantation landscape that shaped and reinforced slaves' sense of self and shared collective identity, and not by the planters' self-serving, self-aggrandizing vision. Slaves carved out neighborhoods over generations of work and social relationships, through their daily activities, friendship ties, enmities, and intimacies. Ultimately, the slaves' landscape and

³⁷¹ Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 13.

³⁷² Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 52.

neighborhoods allowed them to maintain an alternative territorial system that challenged and undermined their masters' hegemony on the plantation.³⁷³

Stagville and the Cameron Family Plantation Complex

When Paul Cameron's ancestors first brought slaves to the North Carolina

Piedmont in the late eighteenth century, they began the laborious task of carving a

plantation and a life out of wilderness. Over three generations, slaves labored to coopt

plantation spaces and create a shared identity while their white owners symbolically

arranged them across the largest plantation in North Carolina.

When Paul Cameron hired out enslaved men to work for the NCRR he was the wealthiest man in North Carolina, owner of the state's largest plantation complex, and the patriarch of the Cameron family.³⁷⁴ Cameron and his siblings owned over 900 enslaved men, women, and children who worked nearly 30,000 acres of plantation land in Orange, Wake, Person, and Granville Counties, with additional slaves in Alabama and Mississippi.³⁷⁵ The origins of Cameron's immense holdings dated to the 1760s, and by

³⁷³ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 5, 8; Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 1-5, 25, 36; Upton, "Imagining the Early Virginia Landscape," 72-74, 85; Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 17; Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, 205; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 53.

³⁷⁴ Charles Richard Sanders, "Cameron, Paul Carrington," in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), available online at www.ncpedia.org (accessed 7 February 2017); Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, x.

³⁷⁵ Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 93-94; "Biographical Information," Finding Aid, Cameron Family Papers, 1757-1978, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC available online at http://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/00133/#d1e56 (accessed at 6 June 2017), last updated May 2010.

the mid nineteenth century, Cameron's lands comprised an extensive, mature plantation complex in the eastern Piedmont, bounded by three rivers, the Eno River, Little River, and Flat River. The entire complex consisted of four main plantations, Fairntosh, Stagville, Brick House, and Snow Hill, with Fairntosh, Cameron's residence, as the focal point or "big house" for the entire complex. Each of the other three main plantations sat within a mile or two of Fairntosh: Stagville approximately one and a half miles to the north, Brick House about two miles to the southeast, and Snow Hill about two miles to the southwest. Each plantation contained a smaller central residence, auxiliary structures, domestic slave dwellings, barns, and overseers' dwellings. Each main plantation also had its own livestock, tools, machinery, and overseer along with a black foreman to work as the overseer's assistant. Several other ancillary farms called Quarters were scattered across the landscape in a diffuse pattern. Each Quarter acted as a separate unit

³⁷⁶ Alice Eley Jones, "West African Spiritualism in North Carolina's Buildings and Crafts," *North Carolina Folklore Journal* 47.2 (midwinter 2000), 85-86; United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, "Fairntosh Plantation," prepared by North Carolina Survey and Planning Unit Staff, State Department of Archives and History, September 21, 1972, Historic Architecture Research Project Records, Special Collections Resarch Center at NCSU Libraries, Raleigh, NC, available online at. http://d.lib.ncsu.edu/collections/catalog/bh0187p07 (accessed 29 October 2013).

³⁷⁷ Charles Richard Sanders, "Cameron, Paul Carrington," in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979) available online at www.ncpedia.org (accessed 7 February 2017).

³⁷⁸ Anderson, Piedmont Plantation, 75-76.

of plantation production and consisted of a variety of spaces and structures, including slave dwellings, fields, barns, and vegetable gardens.³⁷⁹

Fairntosh was the geographical and ceremonial center of the large plantation complex and the seat of Cameron's control over his vast holdings. Cameron's residence, the big house and its surrounding planned, manicured gardens and outbuildings, represented the estate's headquarters and served as a visual statement of his wealth, status, and power as master of the largest slave force in the region and highlighted his family's accomplishments.³⁸⁰ Everything about the house—its well-built, tastefully adorned exterior, fashionably appointed interiors, gardens, drives, walkways, and dependency structures—was designed to highlight its owner's importance.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ Several farms, or Quarters, were combined into one plantation complex in the same layout style as early tobacco planters in the Chesapeake Bay. The term "Quarter" denotes a specific section or designated a unit of production on the plantation estate; when lowercased it refers to a slaves' dwelling house. See Charles Richard Sanders, "Cameron, Paul Carrington," in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979) available online at www.ncpedia.org (accessed 7 February 2017); Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 25; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 31.

³⁸⁰ Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 25, 26.

³⁸¹ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, "Fairntosh Plantation," prepared by North Carolina Survey and Planning Unit Staff, State Department of Archives and History, September 21, 1972; "Site Map;" "Title Page with location map and notes;" "View, outbuildings;" "Dairy plan, elevation, and detail;" "Kitchen plans;" "North and east elevations of kitchen;" "Ration house plan and elevation;" "Smokehouse plan, elevation, and section;" "Weaving house plan and elevation," Fairntosh, Durham, North Carolina, all in Historic Architecture Research Projects Records, Special Collections Research Center at NCSU Libraries, Raleigh, NC; Accounts, March 1834; February 24, 1844; May 2, 1853; January 6, 1863, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

It was the hard, physical labor of enslaved people that turned the rough backcountry frontier into an elegant plantation and a thriving agricultural enterprise. Slaves cleared the land, prepared the fields, and cultivated a diverse array of crops, including wheat, corn, rye, oats, clover, flax, alfalfa, potatoes, tobacco, and cotton. They made bricks by hand from mud onsite, gathered stones from the rivers for masonry, and hewed timbers from the vast forests for constructing barns, mills, slave dwellings, and other dependency structures. The slave population grew tremendously over the decades through natural increase and purchase, from the first thirty-one slaves purchased by Paul Cameron's grandfather, Richard Bennehan, in 1778 to approximately nine hundred by 1861.

As the Camerons became more economically successful, the black majority on the plantation complex became increasingly noticeable.³⁸⁴ The dwellings of field slaves and other non-domestic slaves were located at least a few miles from the Cameron's residence at Fairntosh in the various Quarters scattered around the vast plantation

Charles Richard Sanders, "Cameron, Paul Carrington," in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), accessed February 7, 2017 at www.ncpedia.org; Thomas Bennehan, October 22, 1846; Paul C. Cameron, September 5, 1844; December 1844; December 15, 1846; November 20, 1850, Correspondence, 1.3.3, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 63, 67, 69-70; Doc Edwards, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, North Carolina Narratives, Vol. XI, Part I, 296-297, available online at www.ncpedia.org; Thomas Bennehan, October 22, 1846; Paul C. Cameron, September 5, 1844; December 1844; December 15, 1846; November 20, 1850, Correspondence, 1.3.3, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 63, 67, 69-70; Doc Edwards, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, North Carolina Narratives, Vol. XI, Part I, 296-297, available online at <a href="http://memory.loc.gov/cgibin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=301&itemLink=D?mesnbib1:./temp/~ammem_edOB:: (accessed 28 May 2017).

³⁸³ 1778 Tax List, Tax Lists and Receipts, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

³⁸⁴ Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 93-94.

complex. Eight of the fifteen men hired out to the NCRR resided with their families at the Horton Grove Quarter of Stagville Plantation. The men lived among approximately 230 other enslaved people at Horton Grove in a row of two-story, four-room frame cabins surrounded by vegetable gardens and fields.³⁸⁵ To the enslaved the vast complex encompassed a landscape of profound oppression. But over time the Quarters became the nexus of the slaves' neighborhood that encompassed their homes, the location of their families and friends, and the places where they had buried their ancestors and their children. Slaves knew that it was their hard labor that created the beauty and productivity of their master's property, and they recognized the permeable nature of the hard boundaries and punishments inflicted by whites.³⁸⁶

Somerset Place

Somerset Place Plantation began in 1784 as part of a land development scheme devised by three British entrepreneurs, Josiah Collins, Nathaniel Allen, and Samuel Dickinson, to spread commercial agriculture into the northeastern swamps. By the midnineteenth century, more than fifty buildings stood on Somerset Plantation along the shore of Lake Phelps. During its eighty years as an active plantation, Somerset Place

³⁸⁵ The second largest number of slaves lived at the Quarter closest to Fairntosh, sixty-seven in 1855 and 120 in 1857. The other Quarters, Eno, Snow Hill, Bobbit's, Little River, Jones, Belvin, and Newhouses were home to smaller groups ranging from twenty-six to fifty-five slaves each. The other men who were hired out lived at Eno Quarter and Fairntosh. See Slave lists, Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

³⁸⁶ Clarke, Dwelling Place, 115.

served as an industrial complex and a residential community and home to three generations of owners, approximately fifty white employees, two free black employees, and more than 850 enslaved black people.³⁸⁷

The configuration of structures across the landscape of Somerset Place suggests that one portion of the plantation was designed to serve the master and his family, another to manage agricultural production, and a third to control and care for the slave population.³⁸⁸ The owner, Josiah Collins III and his wife, Mary Riggs, were lavish entertainers and their home quickly became the social center of the Albemarle region. The couple was particularly concerned with outward appearances and designed the plantation's features to impress the members of their social circle, demonstrate their wealth and elite status, and to exert their mastery over a large force of black slaves.³⁸⁹ As one rounded the house and continued along the lake's shore they would barely glimpse the neat, tight cluster of dependency buildings—kitchen, laundry, smokehouse, salting house, dairy, and bath house—tucked behind the formal gardens at the north corner of the mansion. From the lakeshore road, visitor's passed the two-story "colony house," a boarding school for the two young Collins boys, and a residence for tutors and plantation ministers. Beyond the colony house, the slave's landscape began with a long row of twenty-six whitewashed slave dwellings facing the lake. A large two-story

³⁸⁷ "A Representative Antebellum Plantation," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated April 18, 2017 (accessed 4 May 2017).

³⁸⁸ Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 31.

³⁸⁹ "The Collins Family House," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017).

hospital, domestic slave quarters, kitchen complex, Episcopal chapel, ration house, and overseers house were all positioned along a path known as "the street" which ran perpendicular to the lake shore road between the colony house and the first lakefront slave quarter. The whole plantation was laid out in a neat symmetrical grid with straight lines that radiated out from the large white, elegant big house demonstrating hierarchy through visibility, scale, and decoration.³⁹⁰

Josiah Collins III's field slaves lived in the linear row of twenty-six cabins facing the lake, separated from the owner's compound by a fence. This configuration and setting allowed slaves to live in the company of other slaves while keeping them out of sight and marking a clear distinction between the owner and his human property.³⁹¹ The overseer's house sat at the end of "the street" some distance from the slave cabins at the lake, yet much closer to the domestic slaves' cabins. The overseers' front porch, entrance, and windows had a clear view of "the street," the cabins, and the lake

Jivision of Archives and History, 2001, available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset/somerset_map.pdf (accessed 11 December 2013); Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 36; "A Representative Antebellum Plantation;" "Colony House," all available on line at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated April 18, 2017 (accessed 4 May 2017); "Formal Garden," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017). The present-day site consists of thirty-one of the original lakeside acres and seven original nineteenth-century structures. The overseer's house, plantation hospital, and one, one-room, and one, four-room slave quarter are reconstructed at the site.

³⁹¹ Transcript, Uriah Bennett interview, May 1937, Farm Security Administration Papers, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

beyond.³⁹² The two-story, double-pen structure housed the families of two overseers, the head overseer and an assistant called the "under overseer."³⁹³

Labor was central to slaves' plantation experience and slaves at Somerset Place and Stagville performed similar types of work. Those who were hired out to the NCRR were accustomed to hard physical labor, yet the two types of labor differed dramatically because of the disparate nature of the spaces and contexts in which they were carried out. At Stagville and Somerset Place, field slaves worked at a diverse array of crops and experienced seasonal variety in their tasks; they had more time off from work, more robust social lives, some chances for increased mobility and responsibility, and less white oversight than those who labored to maintain the NCRR.

Field slaves at Somerset Place and on Cameron's complex cleared and prepared fields and planted and harvested a variety of crops for commercial sale and domestic use. Slaves on both plantations produced large amounts of wheat, corn, food crops, and livestock. On Cameron's farms and plantations enslaved people also cultivated the very labor-intensive tobacco crop, as well as smaller amounts of cotton for home use. On both plantations men and women cleared and readied the fields for planting. They used plows to break the soil, and hoes and axes to clear stumps, and pull weeds. They spent weeks transplanting seedlings and burying seeds. All of the field slaves, including children and

³⁹² "Plantation Hospital," available online at <u>www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset</u>, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017).

³⁹³ "The Overseer's House," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017).

the elderly engaged in constant weeding, replanting, and insect control. At harvest times every available field slave worked long, tedious hours picking and curing tobacco leaves; hoeing, threshing, and grinding wheat; harvesting and shucking corn before grinding it into meal. In addition to commercial crops, slaves picked fruit from trees in the orchards, and cultivated, harvested, and processed food crops including, oats, clover, alfalfa, corn, rye, and potatoes for domestic use.³⁹⁴ Typically, the field hands worked from dawn until dusk, Monday through Friday, with a lunch break, and half days on Saturdays. They were off on Sundays, one day at Thanksgiving, and for a week at Christmas time.³⁹⁵.

Josiah Collins III's and Cameron's slaves also raised, butchered, and processed thousands of livestock for commercial and home use. They raised sheep for wool and meat; cattle for milk, leather, and meat; mules and horses for pulling plows, wagons, and carriages; and hogs for pork, ham, bacon, lard, and leather. In one year on Cameron's plantations, 484 hogs produced 58,343 pounds of pork. In December there were large

³⁹⁴ Charles Joyner, "The World of Plantation Slaves," in *Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South*, eds. Edward D. C. Campbell and Kym S. Rice (Richmond: The Museum of the Confederacy and University Press of Virginia, 1991), 52-53; Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 190-191; Dorothy Redford Redford, *Somerset Homecoming: Recovering a Lost Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988),148-149; Doc Edwards, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, North Carolina Narratives, Vol. XI, Part I, 296-297, available online at http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=301&itemLink=D?mesnbib1:/temp/~ammem_edOB::: (accessed 28 May 2017); Durrill, "Slavery, Kinship, and Dominance," 11.

³⁹⁵ Abner Jordan Narrative, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 2,* Jackson-Yellerday, 1936, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, available online at https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/ (accessed 28 May 2017); Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 144-145, 147.

hog slaughterings when the hogs were at their fattest. Male slaves butchered them, smoked, and salted the pork for their masters to sell or give away, and a large portion was stored to feed the slaves for the following year. On Cameron's plantation, enslaved women rendered lard from pig fat in huge pots in the kitchen while Mrs. Cameron supervised.³⁹⁶

When not tending to crops or livestock, slaves on each plantation performed a variety of maintenance and construction tasks. They cleared more forestland, prepared new fields, and applied fertilizers—constantly needed to counteract the poor quality of Cameron's Piedmont soil. Slaves also dug and maintained ditches; built, installed, and mended fencing and cut grass. They constructed new buildings, cleaned barns and mills, cut firewood and hay, and hauled materials. At Somerset Place female slaves were responsible for clearing and maintaining irrigation canals and ditches that directed water from the lake to the fields.³⁹⁷ On each plantation tasks were divided by gender, age, and skill and slaves' experiences including housing, living and working conditions, varied considerably according to assigned occupations. Enslaved women worked in the fields,

³⁹⁶ Account books, December 1843; November 1845; December 1888, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 148-149. Account book for 1845 shows that Cameron owned hundreds of cattle and sheep and over 1300 hogs.

³⁹⁷ Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 148; *Farmer's Register*, 1:692; Paul C. Cameron, April 23, December 29, February 25, 1847; Correspondence 1.3.3; October 17, 1850, Correspondence, 1.3.4; "Tribute of the Faculty of the University of North Carolina to Paul C. Cameron, January 15, 1891; Account Books, 1842, 1845, 1852, 1853, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; William Piper, December 20, 1846; William Hams, January 7, 1847, Correspondence, 1.3.3, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 191; Durrill, "Slavery, Kinship, and Dominance," 11.

often doing the same work as men. They were also engaged regularly in spinning, weaving, and sewing for thousands of shirts, pairs of trousers, blouses, skirts, and dresses to clothe the enslaved men, women, and children on the large plantations. Women typically worked longer hours than men, nursing, cooking, tending to children, and taking care of domestic chores in their own cabins after finishing their fieldwork for the day. Older slaves cared for small children while older children assisted with livestock, helped to clear fields and pull weeds, removed insects from plants, and trained to do the same field or domestic work as their parents.³⁹⁸

Skilled craftsmen, artisans, and domestic slaves were in a better position to gain from their masters' paternalist impulses. Skilled slaves and those who interacted with the masters' family in their household on a daily basis received more personal attention, incentives, and rewards than the large numbers of slaves who worked out in the fields.³⁹⁹ Skilled slaves performed a variety of tasks for Cameron and Josiah Collins III; some gained better living conditions, increased responsibilities, mobility, and cash incentives. Skilled slaves worked as blacksmiths, millers, tanners, distillers, coopers, wagoners,

³⁹⁸ Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 67, 69-70, 96, 109; William Piper, December 20, 1846; William Hams, January 7, 1847, Correspondence, 1.3.3; Paul C. Cameron, December, 1844; December 15, 1846; November 20, 1850; December 1865, Correspondence, 1.4.2, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; Doc Edwards, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, North Carolina Narratives, Vol. XI, Part I, 296-297, available online at <a href="http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=301&itemLink=D?mesnbib1:./temp/~ammem_edOB</sub>:: (accessed 28 May 2017); Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 190-192; Joyner, "The World of Plantation Slaves," 52-53.

³⁹⁹ Kaye, Joining Places, 11.

tanners, mechanics, cobblers, carpenters, and furniture and toolmakers on Cameron's and Josiah Collins III's properties. There is tangible evidence of highly skilled enslaved craftsmen at Stagville in the Great Barn that still stands near the Horton Grove slave quarters. Enslaved carpenters built the Great Barn during the summer of 1860 from huge timbers felled and milled on Cameron's land. Their high level of skill is evident in the barn's rarely seen, complex joinery. Cameron owned a highly skilled enslaved mechanic named Ben Sears, who repaired all major farm machinery on his plantations, including McCormick Plows and screw-propelled straw cutters. Sears also worked as a tanner and manager of the threshing machine.

Abner Jordan Narrative, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 2, Jackson-Yellerday. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, available on line at https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn112/ (accessed 28 May 2017); Doc Edwards, Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938, North Carolina Narratives, Vol. XI, Part I, 296-297, available online at http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=301&itemLink=D?mesnbib1:/temp/~ammem_edOB:: (accessed 28 May 2017); Paul C. Cameron, January 12, 1835, Correspondence, 1.3.2; February 1, 8, 1842; December 29, 1842, Correspondence, 1.3.3; February 7, February 12, 1858, Correspondence, 1.4; Paul C. Cameron, February 8, 1844; August 14, 1847, Correspondence, 1.3.3, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. Antebellum Accounts, 1810, 1829, 1835, 1842, 1846, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁴⁰¹ The Great Barn is a huge structure at 135 feet long. See "Teaching through historic sites: Architecture as Primary Source," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated August 31, 2011 (accessed 4 May 2017).

⁴⁰² Other Antebellum Account Books, 1847, 1857, 1852, 1853, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁴⁰³ Paul C. Cameron, Other Papers, Notes and Fragments, Undated, 5.14; July 28, 1848; September, 1848, Correspondence, 1.3.4, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

distilleries and mills.⁴⁰⁴ Wagoners owned by Cameron drove wagon teams of goods to markets as far away as Fayetteville and Petersburg, Virginia. Enslaved craftsmen and artisans with valuable skills typically lived closer to the big house and perhaps received leftover food from the master's family. Josiah Collins III paid cash or gave extra credit at the plantation commissary to skilled slaves for work on special projects.⁴⁰⁵

Both masters strategically fostered a hierarchy among their slaves based on skill, occupation, and skin color. They appointed black foremen and drivers to assist white overseers, and they preferred lighter-skinned, biracial slaves to work in their residences. The Collins mansion employed a staff of about twenty-five domestic slaves, one head house servant, and one very fair-skinned free black woman, Charlotte Cabarrus, who worked as a nursemaid to his children and lived in an attic-floor bedroom adjacent to the children's nursery. Cameron and Collins's plantation records show that domestic positions were hereditary, meaning that the children of house slaves were taught the skills and occupations of their parents and took over as the next generation of house slaves. House slaves lived and worked under immediate supervision of their white owners most of the time, and it is likely that they received better food and clothing than field slaves, sometimes, they received preferential treatment. On the other hand, their proximity to the

 ⁴⁰⁴ Paul C. Cameron, January 12, 1835, Correspondence, 1.3.2; December 18, 1843; February 1, 1842; February 8, 1847; December 29, 1842; August 10, 1846, Correspondence, 1.3.3; Antebellum Accounts, 1850, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁴⁰⁵ "A Time Line: 1850-1860;" "Enslaved Community Kitchen," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 153-154.

white family made them more susceptible to violence, particularly sexual violence, and daily displays of condescension and humiliation that served as constant reminders of their inferior status.⁴⁰⁶

Paul Cameron and Josiah Collins III took their roles as paternalist masters seriously in the sense that they provided slaves with the basic necessities of cabins, food rations and provisioning grounds, sets of summer and winter clothing, and conscientious medical attention in exchange for slaves' labor. Some slaves on the plantations likely internalized paternalism, but for the great mass of field slaves, the psychology of paternalism was less potent than for those who worked and lived in close contact with the master and his family.⁴⁰⁷

On the Cameron plantation complex, the great distances between the fields, slave dwellings, and Cameron's house at Fairntosh helped to undercut his degree of control over the enslaved. While domestic slaves lived directly behind the mansion, the field

⁴⁰⁶ Paul C. Cameron, Undated Papers, folder 3; Paul C. Cameron, March 11, 1853, Affidavit, "For Mr. Jas. Woods," Correspondence, 1.3.4; September 4, 1859, Correspondence, 1.4.1; Paul C. Cameron to his sisters, May 27, 1865, Correspondence, 1.5.1, all in Cameron family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; "Kitchen/Laundry," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); "Kitchen Rations," accessed May 4, 2017, www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015; "The Smokehouse," available on line at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); "Formal Garden," available on line at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017); Redford, Somerset, last updated

⁴⁰⁷ Kaye, Joining Places, 11.

slaves were generally kept out of sight at the various Quarters scattered around the complex leaving them adequate opportunities to create a life separate from whites and space to find a measure of independence within their captivity. Prior to being hired out to the NCRR, the enslaved men, Preston Justice, Redin, Nathan, Luke, John, Bob, William, and Humphrey, lived with their families in the Horton Grove Quarter of Stagville Plantation. In the 1850s and 1860s, Horton Grove served as the center of farming operations for the plantation complex and as a central home place for its entire slave population. Four cabins remain standing at Horton Grove today, located approximately one mile northeast from the Bennehan House at Stagville, and about two miles northeast from the big house at Fairntosh.

At Somerset Place, the thirty-four men who were hired out to the NCRR lived in the row of slave cabins facing Lake Phelps.⁴¹¹ Archaeological excavations at the site uncovered a narrow-brick walkway connecting the main house to the row of quarters and

⁴⁰⁸ Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 47.

⁴⁰⁹ Slave lists, Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. Two hundred and twenty-nine slaves lived at Horton Grove Quarter in 1857. The second largest number of slaves lived at the Quarter closest to Fairntosh, 67 in 1855 and 120 in 1857. The other Quarters, Eno, Snow Hill, Bobbit's, Little River, Jones, Belvin, and Newhouses were home to smaller groups ranging from twenty-six to fifty-five slaves. The other men who were hired out lived at Eno Quarter and Fairntosh.

⁴¹⁰ Historic Stagville Foundation, "Map," available online at http://www.stagville.org/map (accessed 5 June 2017).

⁴¹¹ NCRR, "Hand-Hire Contracts," 1862, 1864, NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Josiah Collins Papers, Slave Records, Lists Families, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Harrison, "Reconstructing Somerset", 32-33; Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 88, 117, 109, 143-144.

the foundation of the closest cabin to be about 200 feet from the mansion, and about 300 hundred feet from the overseer's house. The cabins were close enough to the master and overseer to be readily called for work, but not so close that every little movement or problem would be brought to the master's attention.⁴¹²

Cameron and Josiah Collins III each provided their field slaves at Horton Grove and Somerset Place with higher-quality, above average slave housing for antebellum North Carolina, and for much of the South. At each plantation, slaves cabins were constructed of durable building materials to reflect the plantations' economic success and to protect the health of Collins and Cameron's investments in human property. Household and personal items recovered from slave quarters show that enslaved people owned few possessions, typically course earthen- and stoneware vessels for preparing and storing food, cooking pots and kettles made of colonoware or iron, disparate dishes, bowls, cups, and occasionally a few spoons and forks. Enslaved people had very little in the way of furnishings in their cabins, as well as few items of clothing and personal adornments. 413

The cabins at Horton Grove were remarkably well constructed and unique.

Enslaved workers constructed the large, two-story cabins at Horton Grove in 1851 from

⁴¹²Slave Records, Lists Families, Josiah Collins Papers, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Map of Somerset Plantation, North Carolina Historic Sites available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset/somerset_map.pdf (accessed 11 December 2013); Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 187.

⁴¹³ For a description of more typical slave housing and their contents, see Singleton, "Archaeology of Slave Life," 167 and Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 184.

local timbers, stones from the Eno, Flat, and Little Rivers, and hand-made mud bricks. 414
The builders constructed the cabins out of heavy frame timbers and built them on raised pilings made of river stones, to keep the first-floor lifted from the ground. They covered the exterior walls in board and batten siding, and topped it all off with a tin roof. 415 The interiors of each cabin contained a central stair and hall flanked by a 17 x 17.5 foot room on each floor. Builders infilled the interior walls with brick nogging and whitewashed them for a neat appearance. They added a simple, brick fireplace to each room and a chimney at either end of the structures. Designed to improve the health of slaves, the floors were raised to keep them dry during malaria season, and the brick nogging made

⁴¹⁴ Alice Eley Jones, "West African Spiritualism in North Carolina's Buildings and Crafts," North Carolina Folklore Journal, 47 no. 2 (midwinter 2000): 85; Alice Eley Jones, "Sacred Spaces and Holy Ground: West African Spiritualism at Stagville Plantation," in Keep Your Head to the Sky: Interpreting African American Home Ground, ed. Gundaker Grey (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 106, 108. Four of these cabins remain standing at Horton Grove today along with two more identical ones at Shop Hill Quarter, it is likely there were a more at both sites, survey archaeology is currently being conducted at the site. See "Stagville plantation surveyors uncover enslaved people's past," Herald Sun, Durham, NC, July 14, 2017, available online at http://www.heraldsun.com/news/local/counties/durham-county/article161264043.html (accessed 14 July 2017).

⁴¹⁵ Paul C. Cameron, September 19, 1850; May 1, 1851, Correspondence, 1.3.4, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 51, 58; United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, "Horton Grove Complex," prepared by Catherine W. Bishir, Head, North Carolina Survey and Planning Unit Staff, Division of Archives and History, Historic Architecture Research Project Records, Special Collections Resarch Center at NCSU Libraries, Raleigh, NC, available online at. http://d.lib.ncsu.edu/collections/catalog/bh0187p07 (accessed 29 October 2013).

good insulation against summer heat and winter cold, and also acted as a deterrent against rodent infestation.⁴¹⁶

Outside of Horton Grove, Cameron's slaves lived in a variety of housing. Some families lived in one-story, one-room structures made of frame timbers and wood floors. Slaves at Snow Hill Quarter lived in identical cabins to those of Horton Grove and slaves at Eno Quarter had similar two-story, brick-insulated cabins built in the 1840s. At that time Cameron began building this new style of cabin to replace the older, more typical cabins, for he believed that living conditions were contributing to the spread of disease amongst his slaves. At 17 Not all of the slaves lived in cabins; other spaces served as living quarters, including an old shop and store, kitchen attics, and other miscellaneous outbuildings. House servants lived in quarters near the main house and some slept in the house with the master's family. All of the slaves lived in crowded conditions. In

⁴¹⁶ Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 106; "Teaching Through Historic Sites: Architecture as Primary Source: Horton Grove," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset (accessed 4 May, 2017), last updated August 31, 2011.

⁴¹⁷ Paul C. Cameron, December 28, 1841, Correspondence, 1.3.3, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; "Teaching through historic sites: Architecture as Primary Source: Horton Grove," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset (accessed 4 May 2017) last updated August 31, 2011. Cameron oversaw the construction of an elevated, brick insulated, two-story cabin at Eno Quarter in 1841 and a one-story cabin of the same style just behind the big house at Fairntosh before the larger building projects at Horton Grove and Snow Hill.

^{418 1860} United States Federal Census, available online at www.ancestry.com (accessed 18 June 2017); Paul C. Cameron, December 18, 1830, Correspondence, 1.3.2; November 11, 1852, Correspondence, 1.3.4, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. See also, Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 108, and Appendix D.

with one family each, some double cabins with two families each, and some two-story, four-room cabins with four families each.⁴¹⁹

At Somerset Place twenty-three of the lakefront cabins were single, one-room structures each measuring sixteen square feet, and the other three were two-story, double cabins with four rooms each measuring 18 square feet. They were all white washed to add to the neat and comfortable appearance of the estate. Inside, they were crowded with inhabitants and sparsely furnished. The twenty-six small cabins housed around 300 people of all ages at any given time. 420 Occupancy in the one-room cabins ranged from three to fifteen people. For example, Judy and her husband Lewis lived in one cabin along with five teenagers, one adult child, a daughter-in-law, and one grandchild in 1843. 421 As many as fifteen people lived in one of the two-story, double cabins, and a later inventory shows thirty people residing in one cabin. At one time, three rooms of one double cabin was home to eighteen members of the same extended family, spanning three generations, while an unrelated family of five lived in the fourth room. 422 Domestic slaves were isolated from field slaves; they lived on "the street" in two, one-room cabins separated by the kitchen complex and close to the overseers' house. All the cabins for

⁴¹⁹ Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 108, and Appendix D.

⁴²⁰ Slave Records, Lists Families, Josiah Collins Papers, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 140, 142-143; Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 163.

⁴²¹ "Lewis and Judy's Home," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset (accessed 4 May 2017), last updated October 6, 2015.

⁴²² "Sucky Davis' Home," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset (accessed 4 May 2017), last updated October 6, 2015.

enslaved people at Somerset Place were well-built, small, wooden structures with brick fireplaces and chimneys for cooking and heating.⁴²³

There were dramatic differences between the condition of slave quarters at Somerset Place and Stagville plantations and the various housing options for slaves hired to the NCRR. As described in detail in Chapter Three, housing for NCRR slaves was comprised of a wide range of options dependent upon location and job assignment along the road. Housing options consisted of temporary tents and makeshift shanties, sleeping on open ground with no shelter, low-quality structures built for shop and station hands, and temporary moveable tent cars. Some masters sued the railroad companies over illnesses, injuries, and deaths associated with inadequate slave shelters, and some masters refused to allow the NCRR to provide housing at all, instead choosing to board them at home and send them off to work every day. All types of housing offered by the NCRR were crowded and unsanitary and none provided any personal space or the characteristics of even the smallest home. 424

The placement, orientation, and arrangement of slave dwellings at Somerset Place and Horton Grove were purposefully chosen as a means of exerting control over the enslaved inhabitants; however, in actuality the location and orientation of quarters on the plantation landscape unintentionally allowed slaves room to assert themselves in a space where their masters wielded less influence. When retreating from the fields each day to

⁴²³ Slave Records, Lists Families, Josiah Collins Papers, NCSA, Raleigh, NC; Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 140, 142-143.

⁴²⁴ See Chapter IV.

socialize, prepare and share meals, and raise children, several generations of slaves at Stagville and Somerset Place turned quarters into the nucleus of a vibrant neighborhoods separate from white control. Within a collective community, slaves felt strong ownership over their dwelling spaces and claimed these parts of the plantation landscapes for themselves. 425 This was the space for the formation of nuclear, extended, and adaptive families and households that encompassed a wide range of living arrangements and intimate relationships. 426 Around the quarters, generations of enslaved people learned about the traditions of their ancestral homelands and created new African-American traditions; they also devised, discerned, and shared strategies for survival and resistance. Cabins, although small, cramped, and uncomfortable, became family homes where enslaved people raised their children, their grandchildren, and their neighbors' children. They watched their children grow and form their own families. Their children associated these homes with their parents, memories of their parents, and of others who lived around them and helped to shape their daily lives. In their quarters, slaves sensed that they were home and in a space that reinforced a feeling of control over their own lives.⁴²⁷

The row of slave quarters along Lake Phelps at Somerset Place and the grouping of cabins at Stagville's Horton Grove Quarter were critical spaces for the formation of enslaved families. Although Josiah Collins III and Cameron fostered the creation of

⁴²⁵ William Tynes Cowan, The Slave in the Swamp: Disrupting the Plantation Narrative (New York: Routledge, 2005), 12

⁴²⁶ Vlach, Back of the Big House, 13.

⁴²⁷ Clarke, *Dwelling Place*, 36, 47, 188; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 31; Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 47."

strong family ties among their slaves and often assigned living spaces according to nuclear and extended family units, their slaves used their quarters and the communal yards around them in ways that their masters never intended and likely never imagined. For these slaveowners, and for many others throughout the South, slave families were an important component of a well-managed, profitable business enterprise; they believed that slave families enforced discipline and loyalty, reduced acts of resistance and escape, and ensured natural increase of their slave property. In contrast, for the enslaved, marriage and cohabitation of families were integral to their identity and survival; they provided emotional support, companionship, love, and sexual relationships that implied a sense of comfort and peace in an unpredictable and brutal world.⁴²⁸

The plantation landscapes, histories, and management of Somerset Place and Stagville were especially conducive to the formation of nuclear and extended families among their enslaved populations. Both plantations were large with sizeable slave populations of men and women that lived and worked together in large groups. Large slaveholdings increased the potential for slaves to marry on the same plantation and to form the basis for nuclear, co-residential families. The fact that Collins and Cameron rarely sold or gifted slaves allowed several generations of the same families to grow up on their plantations. 429

⁴²⁸ Kaye, *Joining Places*, 52-56, 62; Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 111, 138; Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, xii. Gutman also argued that enslaved African Americans found strength in the structure of black families, and that they deliberately created extended families and communities from which to draw on in times of need, see Durrill, "Slavery, Kinship, and Dominance," 1-2.

⁴²⁹ Stevenson, Life in Black and White, 207-208, 233.

By the time that Josiah Collins III and Cameron rented slaves to the NCRR in 1862, enslaved people at their plantations had formed, unformed, and reformed many types of extended households. 430 Practically all of the men claimed deep historical roots in their neighborhoods where they lived amongst a large community of extended families and kinship networks who had carved out their own lives in their own spaces.⁴³¹ Nuclear families, defined by the presence of a father, mother, and children living under the same roof, were normative features on both plantations and their presence turned Stagville's Horton Grove Quarter and Somerset Place's lakeshore slave cabins into homes. As part of a family, enslaved fathers and husbands ideally served their families with emotional support, affection, moral instruction, discipline, and physical protection. Some men found ways to provide material support. They used word-carving and blacksmithing skills to make furniture and household items. They hunted and fished to supplement their families' diets and some worked overtime and developed entrepreneurial enterprises to earn cash. Fathers taught their children important and potentially lucrative skills such as how to fish, hunt, and trap animals. They passed down trade skills like carpentry and blacksmithing, and traditional skills such as folk medicine and knowledge of roots and

⁴³⁰ Ebenezer Pettigrew to ?, 1828, Correspondence 1815-1830, Pettigrew Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; Mrs. Ebenezer Pettigrew to Mrs. J. H. Bryan, October 20, 1828, Correspondence 1828-1829, Bryan Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; Harrison, "Reconstructing Somerset Place," 31-32; Durrill, "Slavery, Kinship, and Dominance," 4-6, 15; "Sucky Davis' House," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset (accessed 4 May 2017), last updated October 6, 2015

⁴³¹ "A Time Line: 1860-1865, available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015 (accessed 4 May 2017).

herbs.⁴³² Wives and mothers tended garden patches out front or out back of cabins, prepared meals for their families, nursed sick husbands and children, and mended and sewed their family's clothing. Through these types of actions, enslaved families turned the well-defined spaces of their living quarters into households where identities were constructed and reinforced, where people learned and internalized gender roles, ethnic traditions, standards of living, as well as kinship, and neighborly obligations. In a household, individuals learned to act like women, men, children, adults, mothers, fathers, husbands, and wives through the daily routines and practices in the home.⁴³³

Even with a master who encouraged slave families, slaves endured harsh domestic lives in which masters found various ways to intrude. The master had the final say as to if, when, and who their slaves could marry. They restricted the enslaved father's authority over his family, and determined when he and his wife would see each other, go to work, when and what they would eat, where and when they slept or attended church, and controlled the fate of their children. Families watched their loved ones suffer from over work, malnutrition, hunger, beatings, rapes, and separation by sale and rental. Enslaved men and women had to deal and bargain with their masters to have even the slightest control over their own intimate lives and romantic relationships.⁴³⁴ Under such conditions it may have been a relief for married men to be hired away from their families

⁴³² Stevenson, Life in Black and White, 251; Vlach, Back of the Big House, 15; Redford, Somerset Homecoming, 144-145, 154.

⁴³³ Wilkie, Creating Freedom, 134.

⁴³⁴ Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, 164, 172, 179; Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, xii, 226.

to work on the NCRR. Industrial labor could have provided a reprieve from the daily demonstrations of an enslaved man's powerlessness.⁴³⁵

At Stagville and Somerset Place plantations, individual households spread outward and blurred into broader slave communities that found ways to undermine their masters' authority. The slave ommunity was more than a gathering of people who lived in proximity to each other; it was also a "sense of community"—a network of social relationships characterized by emotional bonds and mutuality, held together by shared understandings, common values, perceptions, and interests. Slave communities acted as a protective barrier to outside threats, and maintained the collective values and integrity of the slaves, their extended families, and of their domestic spaces. To example, slave communities were also crucial places for educating children about life on the plantation, how to act around white people, and to recognize danger disguised by benevolence. Children learned survival strategies such as when to be quiet or act dumb, how to show their subservience while concealing their secret thoughts and lives, and ways to protect themselves and their families and friends.

⁴³⁵ Stevenson, Life in Black and White, 239-240.

⁴³⁶ Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 3-12; Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, 134, 135; Clarke, *Dwelling Place*, 183, 187-188.

⁴³⁷ Clarke, Dwelling Place, 201; Stevenson, Life in Black and White, 227.

⁴³⁸ Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Thought from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 99-100; James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 3-4, 31-36.

from older women's experiences as they learned how to be wives and mothers for their own familiesSlave communities while fulfilling the duties assigned by their masters.⁴³⁹

When men left slave neighborhoods for the NCRR, the women that they left behind had to be more self-protective, self-reliant, and self-determined. They had to make important decisions and be prepared to deal with the consequences if their husbands or masters did not agree. Women also had to aggressively protect their children, and find ways to supply extra food. The strong sense of identity and community ethos helped those who stayed on the plantation to cope with the new stress that hiring out brought to their domestic relationships, while the men who were hired out may have lived in worry or even fear about the fate of the women and children that they left behind. Without fathers present, mothers and other members of the community would likely step in, raise their children, and make important decisions without their input. Other males in the community could offer emotional or material support or sexually abuse their wives and daughters without their husbands and fathers around to offer their protection.⁴⁴⁰

Men hired to the NCRR were separated from the cultural insulation provided by strong, cohesive slave communities that preserved and practiced elements of ancestral African heritage. Enslaved people at Somerset Place and at Stagville adapted elements of African heritage to new situations, and created a separate African-American culture that undermined the orderly façade of the plantation layout, patronized masters' religious

⁴³⁹ Stevenson, Life in Black and White, 234.

⁴⁴⁰ Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 212, 227, 250, 255.

instruction and whites' medicine, and upended the general control over "his" landscape and people. Slaves' cultural practices manifested in the uniquely black spaces on the margins of their plantations—the fields, the quarters, the lawns outside of their cabins, the forests and swamps. It was in these spaces that enslaved people joined together in their own expressions of music, dance, oral literature, spirituality, folk arts, and crafts. They worked together, sat together and told stories, developed traditions, created and reflected upon shared memories, and strengthened bonds of kinship. In their quarters and surrounding yards, they gathered in all seasons with open fires for cooking, sharing of simple meals, hearing stories about Africa and their ancestors. They sang spirituals, socialized, taught each other, and whispered things that could not be said in front of whites.⁴⁴¹

Cameron and Josiah Collins III provided elaborate chapels for slaves to gather for worship, marriage ceremonies, baptisms, and bible studies, but their slaves defied their masters' attempts to control them with religion. Slaves created robust religious and spiritual lives by fashioning their own neighborhood faith communities and creating their own styles of worship that blended elements of African spirituality with elements of Christianity. Although slaves were not given a choice as to what formal religion to

⁴⁴¹ Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes, 12, 23; Clark, *Dwelling Place*, 114, 188.

William S. Tarlton, "Somerset Place and its Restoration." Prepared by the Division of State Parks, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development by William S. Tarlton, August 1, 1954," in Josiah Collins Papers, 1761-1892, NCSA, 52, 116. Redford, Somerset Homecoming, 155; Map of Somerset Place, North Carolina Historic Sites; Clark, Dwelling Place, 228; Guion Griffis Johnson, Antebellum North Carolina: A Social History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 547; Episcopal Church Diocese of North Carolina, Journal of the Proceedings of the Annual

practice, the chance to worship as a group was not a privilege granted to all enslaved people, and public worship gave slaves an opportunity to express unity within a congregation. Slaves who participated in plantation chapel services found an escape from the cruelty of their daily lives in Christianity despite its controlling messages of obedience. Certain elements of the Christian message appealed to enslaved people and became important sources of strength and self-worth such as the notion that the present life is only temporary and the afterlife commanded retribution and freedom for all.⁴⁴³ Chapel attendance meant opportunities for social gatherings amongst friends, families, and potential spouses, and they became major social centers, particularly on the large Cameron complex, because it brought large groups of enslaved people together from disparate parts of the plantation.⁴⁴⁴

Though Josiah Collins III and Paul Cameron paid significant attention to their slaves' religious lives, enslaved people appropriated plantation spaces to worship in ways and for reasons that their owners never anticipated.⁴⁴⁵ Slaves turned Christian doctrine to their own purposes and created the ritual means to find a spiritual release that helped balance the absence of personal liberty. At Somerset Place, slaves appeared to be

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Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of North-Carolina (Fayetteville: Edward J. Hale, printer), 1823, p. 11; 1824, p. 20; 1827, p. 23; 1828, pp. 9-10; 1840, pp. 9, 19; 1843, p. 25, available online at Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/journalofproceed23epis (accessed 18 June 2017).

⁴⁴³ Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness, 63.

⁴⁴⁴ Blassingame, The Slave Community, 145.

⁴⁴⁵ Vlach, Back of the Big House, 148.

devoted Christians, and they left the Chapel with "the service" upon the tips of their tongues. However, at night they gathered in the quarters, forests and edges of the swamp to practice, in Dr. Warren's words, "faith in evil genii, charms, philters, metempsychosis, etc., and they habitually indulged in an infinitude of cannibalistic rites and ceremonies, in which the gizzards of chickens, the livers of dogs, the heads of snakes and the tails of lizards played a mysterious but very conspicuous part."⁴⁴⁶

In addition to nurturing slaves' religious welfare, Josiah Collins III and Cameron also took the physical welfare of their slaves very seriously. From their point of view as masters, the slave populations were their responsibility and needed proper control and management. They also needed food and clothing to be supplied and their health attended too. Most of all they viewed their slaves as a source of wealth and caring for their physical needs was fundamental to their economic self-interests. ⁴⁴⁷ As a result of Cameron and Collins's attention, slaves who remained on their plantations received superior food, clothing, and medical attention to those who were hired out to the NCRR. NCRR slaves suffered from a scarcity of food, dining most often on cornmeal mush and very limited amounts of bacon, coffee, and fresh water. They were provided with only one set of clothes, one pair of shoes, and one blanket for an entire year. Railroad labor was physically dangerous, and living conditions were unsanitary and inadequate to protect the men from cold, rain, and snow. Industrial accidents, physical fatigue,

⁴⁴⁶ Edward Warren, *A Doctor's Experiences in Three Continents* (Baltimore: Cushings & Bailey, 1885), 200.

⁴⁴⁷ Clarke, Dwelling Place, 114.

malnutrition and disease were ubiquitous among the company's hired slaves, and medical attention was slow and sparse.

On the plantations, slaves received a greater quantity and variety of foods; were given space to supplement their diets with gardening, wild plants, and wild animals; and enjoyed more autonomy, creativity, and socio-cultural expression during food preparation and mealtime gatherings than hired railroad slaves. At Somerset Place and on the Cameron plantations enslaved people received weekly rations of molasses or syrup, coffee, salt, bacon, cornmeal, potatoes and some seasonal vegetables and fruits. The masters rationed out weekly allowances of preserved salted bacon as the slaves' primary source of protein throughout the year. At Somerset Place, Collins, III allowed field slaves three-and-one-half pounds of pork per week. 448 On special occasions like Christmas or to celebrate the end of a heavy work season, slaves received additional portions of lower-quality cuts of pork and beef, including ribs, heads, and feet. 449 These rations, although better than those distributed to NCRR slaves, did not provide a balanced diet and sufficient nutrients for growing children and people engaged regularly in physical labor on a plantation. Slaves at Stagville plantation had access to a variety of foods; however, evidence suggests that rations were small and tightly controlled, especially during the Civil War. At the end of the war, Cameron's field slaves broke into

^{448 &}quot;Salting House," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset (accessed 4 May 2017), last updated October 6, 2015.

⁴⁴⁹ Singleton, "Archaeology of Slave Life," 172; Fairbanks, "The Plantation Archaeology," 3, 9; Paul C. Cameron to his sisters, May 27, 1865, Correspondence, 1.5.1, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; George McDaniel, *Stagville, Kin and Community* (Durham, Historic Stagville Foundation, 1997), 6.

the smokehouses, killed and ate much of the livestock, and consumed several months' supply of rations.⁴⁵⁰

The ability to supplement one's own diet was crucial to the welfare of most slaves, which provided additional nutrients and encouraged a sense of independence and self-reliance. Slaves at Somerset Place and Stagville's Horton Grove supplemented their own diets with vegetable gardens and corn patches, and a few raised their own chickens and hogs. They hunted rabbits, possums, raccoons, duck, geese, turkey, and deer. They fished in the nearby rivers and trapped snakes and turtles for additional protein. Many wild animals were easily caught with traps and with minimal time and effort while slaves attended to other tasks. Slave families also foraged in the surrounding forests where they gathered berries, grapes, seeds, and nuts when possible. 451 Archaeologists of slave sites on plantations estimate that wild foods may have comprised as much as forty percent of the meat in slaves' diets. Slaves could not have contributed so much to the productivity of their plantations without supplementing their diets with wild animals, fishing, and foraging. Many slaves struggled daily to meet basic nutritional and caloric needs and suffered from a general pool of common health problems associated with highcarbohydrate, low-protein diets and lack of calories, including tooth decay, tooth loss,

⁴⁵⁰ Anderson, "Piedmont Plantation," 111.

⁴⁵¹ 1849 Accounts, Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 108; Durrill, "Slavery, Kinship, and Dominance," 9-10.

dental diseases, anemia, and chronic infections, as well as degenerative arthritic diseases. 452

The spaces where slaves grew their own food and prepared their own meals were spaces where they exerted control over their portion of the plantation landscape. Meals and recipes were clearly constrained by the conditions of enslavement; however, slaves' dietary staples became the foundation for creativity and tradition as rations were supplemented with local plants, wild animals, and anything that could be cultivated on one's own time. They personalized weekly rations through methods of food preparation and consumption that incorporated elements of West African culinary heritage. They used foods imported to the South along with enslaved people, including grains like rice; vegetables such as okra, peanuts, and yams; fruits such as watermelons; and fowl such as guinea hens. They also used spices like red pepper and sesame seeds to season their food.

Paul Cameron seemed particularly concerned that his slaves, at home and those with the NCRR, were appropriately clothed and well shod. Cameron and the NCRR Company agreed that as their master, Cameron would supply his slaves' clothing while they worked for the company. The company's meager clothing allowances put slaves at greater risk of developing illnesses in cold, wet conditions. Cameron also had an elite

⁴⁵² Singleton, "Archaeology of Slave Life," 172; Fairbanks, "The Plantation Archaeology," 3, 9.

⁴⁵³ Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, 136; Singleton, "Archaeology of Slave Life," 170.

⁴⁵⁴ Alice Eley Jones, *The African American Presence at Stagville Plantation* (Murfreesboro, NC: Minnie-Troy Publishers, 2003), np.

image to maintain as the wealthiest man in the state, and as the newly elected president of the NCRR Company. Like many other wealthy masters, Cameron distributed clothing to his slaves twice per year, late fall and early summer. New shoes and blankets were distributed throughout the year, as replacements were needed. The quality and design of slaves' outfits varied according to their occupation, with house slaves receiving the highest quality clothing and field slaves the lowest quality.⁴⁵⁵

Both environments, the railroad and the plantation, were unhealthy, and at times, dangerous; however the NCRR tended to be the more dangerous and disease-ridden environment in which hired slaves received no preventative care and minimal, delayed medical attention, if any medical attention at all. Slaves hired by the NCRR suffered a large variety of debilitating illnesses, injuries, and even death. Industrial accidents, frostbite, digestive viruses and bacterial infections, common cold, fevers, malaria, and influenza were common occurrences amongst the railroad men. The lack of healthcare for sick or injured slaves made renting them out to the NCRR a considerable financial risk to their owners. The hire contract did not guarantee that a slave would return home in the same condition in which he left, or that he would return at all. In fact, three of Collins, III's slaves, Britton, Daniel, and Mitchell, died while in the company's employ. Several masters filed lawsuits against the NCRR for property and labor losses as a result

^{455 1849-1860} Accounts, Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; Doc Edwards, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, North Carolina Narratives, Vol. XI, Part I, 296-297, available online at http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=111/mesn111.db&recNum=301&itemLink=D?mesnbib1:./temp/~ammem_edOB:: (accessed 28 May 2017).

of the company's neglectful treatment of slaves, but the fact that the NCRR emerged victorious each suit gave the company little incentive to make changes to its labor policies. 456

Although slaves at Somerset Place and Stagville suffered from many physical ailments, they received substantially more preventative healthcare and medical attention than NCRR slaves. Slaves' close and unsanitary living conditions, lack of proper nutrition, and exhausting work all contributed to the contraction of and spread of diseases on plantations. Cameron and Josiah Collins III attended their slaves' health as a way of protecting their largest financial investments now and for the future. Masters tried to create a healthful living environment for their slaves, and they provided what they believed to be the most effective medical treatments for those who became ill or injured. The most common slave complaints included malaria ("chills and fever") and yellow fever from mosquito-infested swamps and riverine bottomlands, hookworm and other parasite infestations in children, measles, dysentery and other gastrointestinal problems, complications from pregnancy and childbirth, and work-related illnesses and injuries.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ See Chapter IV.

⁴⁵⁷ Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia Himmelsteib King, *Another Dimension to the Black Diaspora: Diet, Disease, and Racism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 113-116; Durrill, "Slavery, Kinship, and Dominance," 7-8. 1849, Payment to Dr. John H. Parrish; Doctors' Visits, 1848; Midwife Visits, 1842-1848, Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1; Medicinal supply lists, 1848-1849; Paul C. Cameron, July 3, 1848; July 28, 1848, Correspondence, 1.3.3; September 13, 1855, Correspondence, 1.4.1, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC. Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, 106. "Plantation Hospital," accessed May 4, 2017, www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset, last updated October 6, 2015.

Josiah Collins III and Cameron used similar approaches to caring for their slaves' health. They each tried to prevent the incidence and spread of diseases. To protect the health of his slaves, Cameron, who blamed the pervasive "chills and fever" on ground moisture, ordered the building of the new style of raised cabins at Horton Grove and Snow Hill with brick noggin insulation to help prevent disease. He also retained the services of a midwife who made monthly visits to examine pregnant female slaves and assist them in labor and delivery. 458 Josiah Collins III had his family's personal physician attend enslaved women during childbirth, and Somerset Place had a large plantation hospital that served as a place of quarantine where slaves with illnesses could be isolated from the healthy ones.⁴⁵⁹ Both planters spent large amounts of money annually on medical supplies, treatments, and physicians' services for their slaves. When available, Cameron himself made daily rounds to visit sick slaves and evaluate their progress and dispense medicines. 460 But with such a large number of slaves and his busy schedule, Cameron relied heavily on an enslaved doctor and respected house servant, Virgil Bennehan, to care for the sick in his absences. 461 Regular treatments administered

⁴⁵⁸ Doctors' Visits, 1848; Midwife Visits, 1842-1848, Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁴⁵⁹ "Plantation Hospital," available online at <u>www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset</u> (accessed 4 May 2017), last updated October 6, 2015.

⁴⁶⁰ Paul C. Cameron, March 8, 1852, Correspondence, 1.3.4, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁴⁶¹ Correspondence about Virgil Bennehan in the Cameron Family Papers is available online at http://www.genealogy.com/ftm/s/t/a/Historic-Stagville/index.html, (accessed June 18, 2017), last updated September 12, 2006.

by Cameron, Virgil, and overseers consisted of cupping, quinine pills, copper pills, medicinal liquids and powders, and herbs such as cough medicine, calomel, ipecac, opium, castor oil, arrowroot, morphine, camphor, iodine, rhubarb pills, magnesia, and vermifuge to expel intestinal worms. 462 Some of these treatments likely did more harm than good to people suffering from illness, even to the point of causing long-term problems. For example, calomel, a regularly prescribed form of mercurous chloride given to patients with diarrhea or dysentery to "keep the bowels open" was toxic if given often or in high doses. Calomel caused a variety of health concerns, including excessive salivation, gum inflammation, loosening of the teeth, gastrointestinal problems, and neurological symptoms such as arm and facial tremors and personality changes.⁴⁶³ Cameron tried to avoid the use of doctors, except in acute cases. He found their treatments, especially bleeding, to be ineffective, and he found that overseers could manage average cases of malaria and other fevers with regular doses of quinine and opium. 464 He called for the services of a physician when cases of illness or injury required expertise beyond that of Virgil's or his own, and when necessary he sent slaves

⁴⁶² Doctors' Visits, 1848; 1849; 1849-1852; 1850; 1851; Medicinal supply lists, 1848-1849, 1849, 1851,1851-1853, Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁴⁶³ Larry E. Davis, "Unregulated Potions Still Cause Mercury Poisoning," *Western Journal of Medicine* 173, no. 1 (2000): 19 available online at United States National Library of Medicine, www.ncbl.nim.nih.gov (accessed 4 April 2017).

⁴⁶⁴ Paul C. Cameron, July 3, 1848, Correspondence, 1.3.3, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

out to physicians' offices or hospitals for surgery, where they stayed until healed and ready to return to work.⁴⁶⁵

Cameron and Josiah Collins III provided medical attention to their slaves, but their slaves often rejected white medicine in favor of traditional home remedies that circulated within their own communities. 466 In addition to Anglo-European diagnoses and treatments, enslaved people treated themselves with traditional remedies, medicines, and charms—remedies that were cultivated and passed down through families and communities on plantations. Slaves' healing practices were closely related to spiritual practices, and therefore disease was viewed as a physical and a spiritual problem. Slaves frequently distrusted white medicine, they preferred to practice and receive healing through their own doctors and treatments that combined a mixture of local and African traditions. Generally, slaves were often more familiar with the natural environment surrounding the plantation than their owners and they had more knowledge of local medicinal plants, herbs and roots, especially those similar to those used by ancestors in Africa. When slaves relied on black healing practices derived from ancestors or their immediate community, they practiced personal competence, control, and active participation in at least one part of their lives.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ Doctors' Visits, 1848; 1849; Antebellum Accounts, 2.1.1; Paul C. Cameron, February 12, 27, 1858, Correspondence, 1.4.1, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁴⁶⁶ Wilkie, Creating Freedom, 64.

⁴⁶⁷ Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness, 62, 66.

In their own minds, and perhaps in some of their practices, Josiah Collins III and Cameron were kind, just, benevolent masters who treated their slaves humanely, with generous provisions of food and clothing and better than average living arrangements. They supported slave marriages and the formation of families on their plantations. They provided chapels for them to worship and cemeteries to bury their dead. Collins, III read the Bible to his slaves and Cameron personally nursed the sick members of his "black family" back to health. Each man took a personal interest in managing his plantation and embraced his role as a paternal caretaker over slaves he believed to be inferior, uncivilized, permanent children who were in need of his care and control.

Josiah Collins III and Cameron perceived themselves as worthy of their slaves' loyalty and respect, but in reality, they were masters over a system that relied on fear, violence, and heartache to keep slaves working and the profits rolling in. Slave labor was the source of their families' wealth and slaves' obedience was enforced whenever necessary. Collins, III relied on overseers and black drivers to supervise slaves and punish them as needed, and he used the threat of sale to keep slaves in their place. Somerset Place plantation included a slave jail and stocks, located just outside of the overseer's house. Enslaved woman, Becky Drew attempted to runaway, but after the county patrollers caught her and returned her to Collins, she was placed in the stocks on very cold night; her feet froze necessitating the amputation of both legs. Slaves rarely

⁴⁶⁸ William S. Tarlton, "Somerset Place and its Restoration. Prepared by the Division of State Parks, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development by William S. Tarlton, August 1, 1954," in Josiah Collins Papers, 1761-1892, NCSA, Raleigh, NC, 52.

tried to escape Somerset Place, and when they did they were swiftly and brutally punished. An enslaved man named Smart was caught after fleeing and Collins immediately sold him off to the West Indies. Other acts of defiance landed slaves in the Deep South, including an attempt by sixteen or more field slaves led by Peter and Elsy Littlejohn to poison their overseer, Joseph Newberry. Sixteen of the accused were sold to traders in the Deep South. The Littlejohn's son, the blacksmith Diamond Reeves attempted to runaway, but he was apprehended and returned to Somerset Place for punishment. Cameron had a reputation among members of his "black family" as a harsh disciplinarian who eagerly whipped and beat them just to let them know that he was their master and he instructed his overseers and black foremen to use physical punishment when slaves were not working hard enough in the fields. 470

Cameron encouraged family formation amongst his slaves, yet he did not hesitate to split families apart, or turn a blind eye when overseers raped black women, if it served his economic interests. The threat of sale to Cameron's cotton plantations in Alabama and Mississippi was ever present after he transported 110 slaves from his Person County properties to work in his cotton fields in Alabama—the first mass breakup of slave

^{469 &}quot;A Time Line: 1789-1819," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset (accessed 4 May 2017), last updated October 6, 2015; "The Slave Community at Somerset," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset/slavery.htm (accessed 8 August 2017), last updated October 6, 2015.

⁴⁷⁰ Paul Cameron to Duncan Cameron, May 20, 1835; June 10, 1835, April 26, 1835, Correspondence, 1.3.2; March 25, 1846, Correspondence, 1.3.3, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

families in three generations.⁴⁷¹ Reports from overseers on the Deep South plantations reveal harsh discipline against slaves who resisted the transfer and new conditions. Slaves who attempted to runaway were returned to work wearing shackles and confined under guard at night in an outdoor pen. Slaves were also whipped when they did not pick enough cotton to meet their daily quotas.⁴⁷² The Cameron's preference for mulatto house slaves and the presence and birth of mulattos on the plantation, some sired by white overseers, suggests that sexual violence against female slaves was also condoned on the plantations. The fact that hundreds of slaves deserted Cameron upon emancipation, or stayed on the property and refused to work, is a testament to how enslaved people felt about their master. Almost all of the house slaves left within a few weeks of the Civil War's end. Cameron reported that those who remained spent several months celebrating their new freedom in a "carnival" along the riverbanks. Cameron interpreted the slaves' actions as a complete betrayal of himself and of his family.⁴⁷³

Despite Cameron's and Collins III's paternalist outlooks and use of physical punishments to influence and control slaves' behavior, enslaved people resisted their bound condition and the centrality of the planter to their physical and mental worlds.

⁴⁷¹ Nathans, *To Free a Family*, 83.

⁴⁷² W. T. Lamb to Paul C. Cameron, February 4, 1860, Correspondence, 1.4.2; Paul C. Cameron, February 5, 1847, Correspondence, 1.3.3; Undated and unclassified notes and fragments, all in Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁴⁷³ Anderson, *Piedmont Plantation*, xviii; Nathans, *To Free a Family*, 221-222; Paul C. Cameron to Thomas Ruffin, May 11, 1865; August 11, 1865, Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, 3:451, 464, available online at http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p249901coll22/id/332719/rec/8 (accessed 19 June 2017).

Resistance patterns on these and other large plantations show that planters did not have complete control over the daily actions of their slaves and when compared to life and labor for the NCRR, plantation slaves had relatively more opportunities to resist daily constraints of enslavement in a variety of ways. Slaves moved around the plantation landscape in alternative ways that contradicted their masters' well-ordered intentions and suited their own purposes. They stole from storehouses; created their own pathways to taverns and neighboring plantations, secret meeting spaces and escape routes; they hid things and people in the swamps and forests; and practiced elements of African and African-American culture, all as acts of resistance to the people and system that kept them in bondage. 474 Unlike white visitors who submitted to the plantations' processional landscapes and architectural hierarchies, slaves moved in ways counter to social convention. They rejected the planter's attempts to enforce hierarchy through the symbolic use of space when they ignored the spatial constraints built into the house and grounds, when they took shortcuts across lawns and through formal and vegetable gardens, or crept into food stores or distilleries at night. Because they were seen as part of a planation's physical inventory, they were expected to be everywhere and thus did not have to adhere to the scripted movements expected of white visitors. For example, even house slaves who lived under direct scrutiny of the planter's family entered parlors, bedrooms, and pantries without always asking permission.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ Cowan, The Slave in the Swamp, 11-13..

⁴⁷⁵ Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp*, 11; Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, 208; Vlach, "Plantation Landscapes," 13; Nathans, *To Free a Family*, 83.

Outside of the owners' compounds, in their quarters and in the extra-plantation spaces such as swamps, waterways, and forests, slaves appropriated space for their own purposes. As already discussed, slaves used their quarters and surrounding yards to develop a distinct culture influenced by ancestral traditions in West Africa and transfer it to future generations. They turned small cabins into family households and rows of quarters into a community unto itself with its own modes of social decorum and hierarchies. Used African-American cultural practices including magic, hexing, and conjuring to try to control the fates of their master and his family or to guard against punishment or harsh treatment. Cultural acts of resistance like placing a medicine stick between the walls of the master's house to place a curse on his family were powerful because they allowed enslaved people to harness the powers of a secret world and proved that whites were neither omnipotent nor omniscient.⁴⁷⁶

The further that slaves moved away from the center of the plantation and into its peripheries, the less white control they experienced. Swamplands surrounded Somerset Place while forests and rivers surrounded the Cameron complex. Planters like Collins, III believed the uncultivated swamps on the periphery of his property were unprofitable and beyond his control. In contrast, slaves asserted control over the swamps and turned them into places of temporary refuge from white control or a "holiday" from plantation labor. The Great Dismal swamp in eastern North Carolina provided well-guarded spaces for maroon communities, or with hundreds of square miles of wilderness in which to lose

⁴⁷⁶ Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness, 66, 73; Philip D. Morgan, Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), xii.

pursuers. Swamps and deep forests around plantations also became spaces for secret meetings, practicing magic and conjuring, hiding stolen goods or other evidence of theft, or as hunting grounds to supplement their food rations. 477

Josiah Collins III's and Cameron's slaves also engaged in blatant acts of defiance against their masters' authority, but these were rare and not often successful. Slaves stole and consumed food and whiskey belonging to their masters, and a few attempted to murder their overseers with poison. A small number of enslaved people actually ran away and an even smaller number successfully escaped their lives as slaves for the Collins and Cameron families and many plausible factors kept the others from attempting to flee. For Cameron's slaves in the Piedmont, a white majority population surrounded the complex, making it difficult for fugitive slaves to hide or to blend in. For those at Somerset Place, patrollers hunting runaways notoriously policed the eastern counties. It is very likely that enslaved people remained because they feared being caught and separated from their families and communities, and the only homes they had ever known. 478

⁴⁷⁷ Herbert Aptheker estimated that the Great Dismal Swamp housed a population of 2,000 maroons, some fugitives and others descendants of fugitives. See Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp*, 10-11, 45, 48.

⁴⁷⁸ Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, 3:127, 451; Paul C. Cameron, January 2, 1830, Correspondence, 1.3.2, Cameron Family Papers, SHC, Chapel Hill, NC; "A Time Line: 1789-1819," available on line at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset (accessed 4 May 2017), last updated October 6, 2015; "The Slave Community at Somerset," available online at www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset/slavery.htm (accessed 8 August 2017), last updated October 6, 2015.

At the NCRR, slaves were no longer held captive in the contrived and manipulated plantation landscape; however, the railroad's environment and labor structure presented different kinds of chains. NCRR work gangs and camps were overwhelmingly male, leaving the hired slaves no opportunities for family life while in railroad service. Even with several men from the same plantation present at the NCRR work camps, and some of men related to one another, there were no women or children present, no large family gatherings or meals, and little in the way of distractions from their life as hired laborers. At the NCRR most of the men lived in temporary tents and shanties in the company's right-of-way, adjacent to the track, moving up and down the route as their work dictated. Only a very small portion of hired slaves lived at the company's headquarters at Company Shops, North Carolina, and a few others were scattered amongst the various passenger, freight, and repair stations. Any benefits such as overwork, or time spent drinking or gambling with other slaves was at the expense of any comforts of their home plantations, families, friends, communities, or familiar work and social routines.

Back on their home plantations of Somerset Place and Stagville, these enslaved men lived among large groups of enslaved people tied together by a shared identity created over four generations of kinship; had common working, living, and socializing spaces; and shared a culture distinct from that of their white owners. Most of the enslaved men who were rented to the NCRR descended from the black men and women who created and maintained their home plantations with their own back-breaking labor, and those plantation shaped their lives in significant ways. While Cameron and Josiah

Collins III bound their slaves to a physical landscape designed to control and contain their human property, the enslaved deliberately created their own versions of the plantations and carved out space to improve, however slightly, the conditions of their captivity and take charge of their own lives and communities.⁴⁷⁹

Slaves' experiences living and working on these large residential plantations with hundreds of other slaves were significantly dissimilar to the experience of living and working as a hired slave for the NCRR, which disparages any scholarly claims to "quasifreedom" for the men hired out by Josiah Collins III and Cameron to the NCRR; however, the experiences of the enslaved men discussed here, should not be used to conflate the experiences of all hired industrial slaves under one interpretation. It is important to consider a range of experiences among all types of slaves and the significance of time and place. The Cameron and Collins plantations were not representative of all the farms and plantations that provided slaves to work for the NCRR. The slave forces on these plantations were large enough for adults to find marriage partners and to build communities with extensive kin networks. Many of the slaves hired out to the NCRR came from much smaller groups of enslaved people. Creating a strong community was much more difficult on farms with ten or fewer slaves, and it was challenging, and sometimes impossible, to find a marriage partner and establish a family. Paternalism, though important for physical well being, could also be extremely intrusive on family life and restrictive on even the smallest claims for independence. The

⁴⁷⁹ Vlach, Back of the Big House, 14, 16; Wilkie, Creating Freedom, 216.

institution of slavery included a constant struggle between blacks and whites, with each group trying to push and stretch the limits of control as far as possible.⁴⁸⁰

Enslaved people were not passive victims or simply beneficiaries of white superiority; however, we should not let their agency overshadow the fact that slavery in all forms was a brutal, oppressive, and dehumanizing institution that deprived people of their freedom and undeniably impacted their lives, personalities, and culture in ways that were fundamental to the slave experience. For enslaved families, a plantation home came with a certain set of realties, and any treatment of their experience that focuses only on resilience and successful adaptation, rather than also on the pain, brutality, and disruption they suffered, is most likely one-sided. The concepts of home, family, community, and neighborhood can easily imply a false level of security and comfort that even in the best of times did not exist for enslaved people in the same way that it did for free people. Help and the same way that it did for free people.

⁴⁸⁰ Foust, "Slavery in the American Experience," 14.

⁴⁸¹ Foust, "Slavery in the American Experience," 14.

⁴⁸² Peter Kolchin, "Reevaluating the Antebellum Slave Community," *Journal of American History* 70, no. 3 (December 1983): 582; Redford, *Somerset Homecoming*, 140; Harrison, "Reconstructing Somerset," 377.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The construction of the North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) in the 1850s signified the rise of western North Carolina leaders to political and economic prominence over a powerful eastern plantocracy for the first time in the state's history. The NCRR became the state's most significant transportation route and chief economic asset as it transformed the Piedmont from a geographically isolated, economically stagnant backcountry to a valuable transportation corridor connecting western North Carolina to an expanding cotton economy. The history of the western movement for state-funded internal improvements and its culmination in the NCRR demonstrate that western leaders pursued increased access to transportation as part of a dynamic, capitalist, entrepreneurial vision for North Carolina's modern economic future. Western leaders, beginning with Archibald Murphey, followed by John Motley Morehead, Paul Cameron, and others, were not stereotypical southern slaveholders committed to cash crop agriculture and landed, aristocratic slaveholding. They were slaveholders and modern businessmen who supported and participated in a diversity of economic activities, and led the economic expansion of the state through a marriage of slavery and industry.

Industrial slave labor formed the core of North Carolina's modern economic development. Western leaders funded the NCRR with slave-derived wealth; they became company directors by exchanging slave labor for stock subscriptions; and they capitalized

on the railroad's benefits to make even greater investments in land, slaves, and slave-employing industries. This slave-built railroad increased economic opportunities for all types and classes of slaveowners and non-slaveholders in the Piedmont west. Small, midsize, and large slaveowners embraced the flexibility, adaptability, and profitability of hired industrial slave labor by renting surplus or troublesome slaves to the NCRR. Non-slaveholders also benefited through increased transportation, employment opportunities, ancillary businesses, and urbanization. Generally, for Piedmont whites, the NCRR brought substantial increases in land values and agricultural and manufacturing profits, as well as greater access to markets and investment opportunities in a growing, capitalist regional and national economy. 483

While the NCRR created increased opportunities for whites, it represented a brutal, impersonal system of corporate oppression for its hired enslaved workers. NCRR officials chose, out of economic necessity, not to purchase slaves, and instead decided to hire them annually from stockholders and other slaveowners along the route. Enslaved men were forced to leave their homes and be separated from families, friends, and neighborhoods created by generations of enslaved people that supported each other through the various obstacles and challenges of enslavement. For many of these men, being hired out to the NCRR represented a significant decline in their quality of life, and not an opportunity for greater mobility, autonomy, or access to cash wages. The great

⁴⁸³ Bolton, *Poor Whites*, 12-13, 18-21; Clayton, "Close to the Land," 316-317, 328; Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad*, 25, 85, 101, 104 105, 115; Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 5, 19.

majority of the NCRR's hired slaves were overworked, hungry, and inadequately clothed. They lived in extremely crude, crowded housing, or slept outdoors in temporary camps through all four seasons. Many suffered and several died from diseases, injuries, and a lack of medical attention. 484

Hiring slaves to the NCRR negated any claims to paternalism on the part of slaveholders. Although many slaveholders feared financial loss by corporate abuse of their slave property, they willingly entered into hiring contracts with the company and knowingly sent their slaves off to face extraordinarily harsh, treacherous conditions. Some masters tried to protect their investments from afar by placing restrictions on the type of work and geographic locations that their slaves could be employed in. Others sent additional items of clothing and food, while some owners insisted on providing all food, clothing, and medical care for their slaves during the hire term. And a few slaveowners stipulated that their slaves were to be boarded at home. Lawsuits between slaveowners and the NCRR over maltreatment or neglect of hired slaves reveal that company representatives frequently ignored owners' demands and restrictions. Economic expediency guided the company's choice to hire rather than purchase their own slaves, and dealing with slaveowners' wishes and demands did not interfere with the company's profits. 485 These conflicts between slaveowners and the NCRR demonstrate how the ideology of paternalism persisted as an ideal for some, while in reality it was a

⁴⁸⁴ See Chapter IV.

⁴⁸⁵ NCRR, *Annual Report*, 1856, 5-6, 16-18; 1859,18-19; 1860, 27; "Hand Hire Bonds 1862-1864," NCRR Records, NCSA, Raleigh, NC.

dying philosophy in a world in which slavery increasingly represented opportunity for modernization, upward mobility, and economic advancement. The experiences of hired slaves and the relationships between masters, hirers, and slaves were highly variable, individual, and contingent upon multiple factors, including personalities of individual owners and their immediate economic circumstances, and the willingness of slaves to cooperate with their demands. ⁴⁸⁶

This study contributes to a reevaluation of North Carolina's slave past within the framework of recent scholarship on the capitalist nature of antebellum southern development and the compatibility of slavery and industrialization. North Carolina is largely missing from recent southern modernization studies. In fact, much of the available scholarship on the history of the state does not place the state's antebellum economic and political changes within a broader context of a rapidly expanding, modernizing South. To an overwhelming degree, North Carolina's antebellum past has been interpreted through comparisons with other southern states, most notably Virginia and South Carolina, leaving it to appear as a backward anomaly in a slave

⁴⁸⁶ See James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 39-41, 54, 196.

⁴⁸⁷ Exceptions include Deyle, *Carry Me Back*; and Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

⁴⁸⁸ Exceptions include, Harry L. Watson, "Squire Oldway and His Friends: Internal Improvements in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (April 1977): see pages 105-119; Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); and John Insoe, "Mountain Masters: Slaveholding in Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 61, no. 2 (April 1984): 143-173.

obsessed South, with a minimal commitment to cash crop agriculture, few large plantations, and a diminutive slave population. One popular, but worn, cliché describes the state as "a vale of humility between two mountains of conceit." Singular reliance on demographic statistics of slave ownership, especially in the Piedmont and mountain counties, has fostered conclusions that North Carolina had a weaker commitment to the "peculiar institution" and no important role or stake in the development of the Cotton Kingdom.

Slavery in antebellum North Carolina often appears to be less entrenched than in other parts of the South, because of its natural disadvantages as a cotton producer and historians' emphasis on cash crop agriculture as an indicator of slavery's impact on any given location. Cotton production in North Carolina did not become the all-absorbing agricultural interest that it became in the Deep South; however this fact does not negate the importance of cotton production to the economic life of the state. As part of a dynamic South in which slaves became valuable investment capital, North Carolinians became key players in the slave trade from the Chesapeake to cotton-growing areas to the west and south.⁴⁹⁰ And with the construction of the NCRR, the town of Salisbury

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⁴⁸⁹ Escott, *Many Excellent People*, xv. This phrase describing North Carolina originated from a speech delivered by Mary Oates Spratt Van Landingham to the Mecklenburg County Historical Association on March 6, 1900. According to William Powell, "the term has remained a source of tongue-in-cheek pride for North Carolinians." See "Vale of Humility Between Two Mountains of Conceit," in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

⁴⁹⁰ Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 44-45, 98, 11.

became an important transportation hub between Richmond, Columbia, and Morganton, North Carolina, as well as a major center for the domestic trade in slaves. 491

Additionally, historians' emphasis on the plantation as a way of measuring the impact of slavery on the social and economic system of the South minimizes the significance of the impact of non-agricultural slavery in antebellum North Carolina as well as in other southern states. North Carolina has a long history of industrial and non-agricultural slavery in all three of its geographical sections that only increased with the construction of railroads. The state's program of internal improvements employed slave labor from 1819 through the 1860s. Slaves were also employed in cotton processing, textile mills, tobacco processing, gold mining, lumbering, fisheries, and turpentine extraction. The NCRR and its extensions increased industrial slavery by stimulating corporate gold mining in the western counties between Charlotte and Greensboro. In the mountain counties slaves were employed in a range of non-agricultural settings including working in livestock management, hospitality and tourism,

⁴⁹¹ See Arwin D. Smallwood and Jeffrey M. Elliot, *The Atlas of African-American History and Politics: From the Slave Trade to Modern Times* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998).

⁴⁹² Cathey, Agricultural Developments, 8, 49.

⁴⁹³ See Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 184-185; and Chapters II and III.

⁴⁹⁴ Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 12-13, 15, 23, 25-27, 28; Jeffrey Crow, "Foreword," in *Gold Mining in North Carolina: A Bicentennial History*, Richard F. Knapp and Brent D. Glass (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1999), xi; Knapp and Glass, *Gold Mining in North Carolina*, 1, 3, 4, 20-21, 42-43, 46, 76, 81.

stables, retail, manufacturing, sewing, shoe-making, wagon-repair, tobacco processing, road work, mining, rock quarrying, construction, and railroad construction.⁴⁹⁵

Through a close analysis of the western movement for internal improvements, and the success of the NCRR and its founders' role in the economic development of the state, this study concludes that industrial slavery was integral to North Carolina's developing economy, and therefore no less important than slavery anywhere else in the South. Yes, it is true that North Carolinians grew less cotton and held fewer slaves than residents of neighboring states or of the Deep South; however, North Carolina occupied a unique location in the history of southern slavery that has been obscured by comparisons with other southern states and an overreliance on population statistics and agricultural schedules. This study looks beyond these statistics and the boundaries of plantation agriculture to demonstrate that slavery in the Piedmont was a capitalist, flexible, and fluid institution for a diversity of slaveholders, and a central component to North Carolina's modern industrial and economic development.

Slave owners from the North Carolina Piedmont reaped the economic benefits from the exploitation of the labor of thousands of black men who built and operated the NCCR from the beginning of the railroad's construction in 1851 to the end of the Civil War. This labor primed the state for pre and post-Civil War development, and changed the struggling Piedmont from the "Rip Van Winkle" of the South to an urban, manufacturing magnet. Regardless of the low incidence of slavery and relatively small

⁴⁹⁵ Inscoe, "Mountain Masters, 158-168.

numbers of large planters and plantations west of the Coastal Plain, western slaveholders and their slaves made the NCRR a reality.

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