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The Life of the Negro Slave in Alabama

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THE LIFE OF THE NEGRO SLAVE IN ALABAMA

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INTRODUCTION

There have been numerous reports and claims by many writers that the Negro had little real freedom until after the historic court decisions of the middle and late 1950's. These claims along with the racial problems facing this nation and the South in particular today, created a desire for a better understanding of the Black people of this country.

In a document of this type and length it is neither possible nor desirable to attempt to study the entire Black race of this nation and therefore having a deep interest in slavery and the everyday problems that were encountered during the years in which the institution flourished in Alabama this writer has decided to make a study of the everyday life of the slave in the state.

This paper is an attempt to give an unbiased account of the conditions either good or bad under which slaves lived and worked. Special attention will be given to their housing conditions, the type and quantity of clothing, food and its preparation as well as the labor they performed. Space will also be given to the crimes and punishment of Negro slaves--additionally the education and religious opportunities will be surveyed.

In order to make this document more interesting and possibly more readable, statistics will be held to a minimum and bits of Negro dialogue and stories from their daily lives will be included.

The research will take this writer for an interview with the wife of a former slave as well as other immediate members of slave families. Newspaper articles during the period from 1820 until 1860 will be included as well as the United States Census Reports covering this period of time.

Manuscripts from various collections of prominent Alabama families, minutes of church meetings and other church records will be used.

The works of many noted historians will be searched for special bits of interesting facts that will help to better understand why many slaves had a deep devoted love for their master and his family and likewise why the master's family had a love, fondness or devotion for many a devoted servant.

CHAPTER I

Background

To understand slavery as it existed in Alabama, and the life that the Negro slave faced, one must inspect the conditions under which slavery existed in the upper-South and Eastern seaboard states. The laws, the conditions under which Negroes labored and the slave trade as well as other aspects of slavery drifted south and west with the settlers. For an understanding of conditions in the upper-South and other states one must look at the conditions under which Negroes were brought to America. The ways in which they were taken from their native lands and transported like wild animals without a friend or any knowledge of what lay ahead for them was inhuman.[1]

The slave trade, as it existed before the Dutch landed Negro slaves in the Colonies in 1619, was on a small scale compared with what it developed into in America.[2] Most of the slaves came from Guinea, the Gold

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[1]Daniel P. Mannix, Black Cargoes (New York: The Viking Press, 1962), p. 48. Hereinafter sited as Mannix, Black Cargoes.

[2]Leland D. Baldwin, The Streams of American History (New York: American Book Company, 1953), p. 112. Hereinafter sited as Baldwin, The Streams of American History.

Coast, and a few came from the West Coast of Africa.[1] They were captured in tribal wars and sold or traded for rum, the value of which was very little. Negroes were often kidnapped from their native lands by their own people or by slave traders whose mission was to load their ship with the valuable human cargo. The price paid for Negroes by these slave traders was insignificant in comparison with what they sold for in America.[2]

The slave trade grew in a few short years into such a profitable business that several European Countries took part in the inhuman activity. The cities of London, Bristol, and Liverpool were rivals in the struggle for a lead in the slave trade in England. Their vessels filled the seas enroute to load or unload their cargo of slaves. The captain of the ship was the, so-called, "slave trader" on the loading end of the vessel's run. It was his responsibility to buy, kidnap or secure in any way enough Negroes to fill his ship.[3]

Once the slave was purchased, he was made ready for his journey by the placing of shackles on his wrist and ankle. The right wrist of one slave was shackled to the left wrist of another and in the same method their ankles were shackled together. They were taken to the

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[1]Mannix, Black Cargoes, p. 50.

[2]Ibid., p. 52.

[3]Ibid., p. 69.

hole of the ship.[1] In many instances they remained below deck the entire time they were on ship crossing the ocean. It is worthwhile to remind the reader at this point that these ships were sailing vessels that required weeks and sometimes months to complete these voyages. The women on many ships were considered fair prey for the sailors.[2] Since the women and children were not chained, they could wander about the ship almost at will during the day. At night the women and children slept between decks in rooms away from the men. There was no covering for the slaves to sleep under and no beds for them to sleep on. They slept on bare wooden floors, which were often unplaned boards. When the ships were caught in storms at sea, the skin of the slaves would be rubbed raw on the rough floor, and often their elbows were worn away to the bare bone. The Reverend John Newton gave the following personal observation:

> The cargo of a vessel of a hundred ton or a little more is calculated to purchase from 220 to 250 slaves. Their lodging rooms are below the deck which are three (for the men, and the boys, and the women) besides a place for the sick, are sometimes more than five feet high and sometimes less; and this height is divided toward the middle for the slaves lie in two rows, one above the other, on each side of the ship, close to each other like books upon a shelf.

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[1]William Breyfogle, Make Free (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1958), p. 43. Hereinafter sited as Breyfogle, Make Free.

[2]Mannix, Black Cargoes, p. 43.

> I have known them so close that the shelf would not easily contain one more.
>
> The poor creatures, thus cramped, are likewise in irons for the most part, which makes it difficult for them to turn or move or attempt to rise or to lie down without hurting themselves or each other. Every morning, perhaps more instances than one, are found of the living and the dead fastened together.[1]

The ship's crew disposed of the dead by taking them upon the deck, holding them by the arms and heels, and tossing them overboard like one might an empty bottle. There are numerous cases describing the hardships of the voyages like the one above.

The lives of the slaves after they reached America had many different aspects. One of the worst things that could happen to a slave was to be sold away from his family, but this was often the case. The rise of the plantation system in the South brought on the demand for more slave labor. Many slaves were bought in the upper southern states and moved to the cotton plantations.[2] Sometimes entire families were sold but generally just the men or slaves suitable for field hands.

The slave traders had very little regard for the physical well being of the slaves. On their way to the

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[1]Mannix, Black Cargoes, p. 106.

[2]Eugene Reid, Sr., Private Interview, September, 1970. Mr. Reid's mother, Julia, and father, George, were slaves owned by the Reids in Calhoun County, Alabama. George Reid as a slave did shoe repair and after the Civil War continued the trade. He established Reid's Shoe Shop in Jacksonville, Alabama, in 1876 and later turned it over to his son, Eugene.

South the men and women were often forced to walk twenty-five to fifty miles a day. Sometimes along the way one or two would be sold to other traders after undergoing examinations to determine their age and physical condition. Josiah Henson, a Negro, said of the travel:

> Men trudged on foot, the children were put into wagons, and now and then my wife rode for a while. We went through Alexandria, Culpepper, Fauquier, Harper's Ferry, Cumberland, and over the mountain to the National Turnpike to Wheeling. In all the taverns along the road were regular places for the droves of Negroes continually passing along under the system of internal slave trade. At the places where we stopped for the night, we often met Negro drivers with their droves, who were almost uniformly kept chained to prevent them from running away.[1]

Once the droves of slaves reached their destination they were sold at auctions. The slaves, to a certain extent, would pick their buyers by obstructing their own sale or by trying to convince the buyer of their capabilities.

The first slaves brought into the region that is now Alabama came about the turn of the Eighteenth Century.[2] The region was then part of France's Louisiana Colony. The water ways of the region helped to make Mobile an ideal location for the introduction of slavery and the slave

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[1]Carter Godwin Woodson, The Negro in Our History (Washington: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1922), P. 217. Hereinafter sited as Woodson, The Negro in Our History.

[2]James Benson Sellers, Slavery in Alabama (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1950), p. 3. Hereinafter sited as Sellers, Slavery in Alabama.

trade that developed in the following years. By 1721, slave ships with their African cargo reached Mobile on an annual schedule.[1]

By 1750, the movement of settlers from the Atlantic Coast to the rich fertile lands of the south accounted for many slaves that entered the region that is now Alabama. The migration southward and westward increased with the beginning of the Revolutionary War. The majority of settlers brought slaves and many brought large numbers of them. This influx of slaves into Alabama was reflected in a report from the district known as Washington County which in 1802 showed that forty-eight per cent of the population was Negroes.[2]

By 1820, Alabama was a new state with a rapidly expanding population. The population of the state in 1820 consisted of 87,451 white people, 39,879 colored slaves, and 571 free colored people.[3]

The life of the slave in Alabama had many aspects that are important to the Historian. In researching this period of Alabama History, one finds different versions of the slave's day to day life depending on the origin of the writer as well as his opinion or belief about slavery.

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[1]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 4.

[2]Ibid., p. 15.

[3]U. S. Census Report (1820) (MS). These manuscript census reports are deposited in the Alabama State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, pp. 22-23.

CHAPTER II

Housing

The settlers who migrated from the states of the upper South and the Atlantic Coast states into Alabama found the living conditions to be that of any new frontier. They brought their slaves to help with the work and in many cases enough slaves to do all the work.

The first major task facing the southern pioneer was that of selecting a site and building some type of shelter. The masters must have houses as well as the slaves, and as a general rule they were built simultaneously. The small farmer and his slaves shared the same type of log cabin.[1] The master's cabin was usually larger than that of his slaves but was of the same log construction. The poorer of the slave owners in many cases even lived in cabins with dirt floors.[2]

The masters who owned several slaves usually selected a place for his own home so that houses for the

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[1]William Dosite Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), p. 44. Hereinafter sited as Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations.

[2]Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey in the Back Country (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861), pp. 198-99. Hereinafter sited as Olmsted, A Journey in the Back Country.

slaves could be built in rows from his home. The one-room log cabins stretched away from the "big house" like two white wings of a big bird.[1] These were known as the slave quarters. Around the "big house" were grouped the kitchen, nursery and laundry.[2] On the large plantation such buildings as a hospital, loom, storerooms, blacksmith shop, and other types of buildings were found near the "big house." The "big house" was the one in which the master and in some cases some of his servants lived.[3] The large plantations usually employed overseers whose house was built near the slave cabins.[4]

It is true that some of the wealthy planters owned fine estates with large plantation homes, but they were the exceptions and not the rule. Many fine mansions were built in the late anti-bellum period, though as a rule the residence of the planter consisted of a cottage with no claim to luxury or fine living.[5]

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[1]W. D. Weatherford, Negro Life in The South (New York: Association Press, 1915), p. 62. Hereinafter sited as Weatherford, Negro Life in The South.

[2]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 23.

[3]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 88.

[4]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 23.

[5]Ibid., p. 16.

The one-room log cabins of the slaves were very simple sometimes having only dirt floors. However, they were usually built up off the ground about three feet to provide good ventilation under them and also make it easy to clean under them.[1] The three foot clearance between the ground and the house not only gave good ventilation but also made it easy for the owner or overseer to inspect and make sure there was no accumulation of trash or filth on the ground. The cabins were swept under regularly and lime sprinkled on the ground under them every spring.[2] Some owners even required the slave houses to be moved every two or three years for sanitary reasons.[3] The Negro dwellings had no inside plumbing; therefore, a suitable number of privies were usually placed near the houses and located well away from water supplies.[4]

Where there were extra large families of Negroes, their living quarters usually consisted of two big log rooms connected by a roof and floored section with no outside walls. This part of the house was called a

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[1]Charles S. Davis, The Cotton Kingdom in Alabama (Montgomery, Alabama: State Department of Archives and History, 1939), p. 80. Hereinafter sited as Davis, The Cotton Kingdom.

[2]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 90.

[3]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 86.

[4]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 80.

"dog trot." The name "dog trot" originated with the slaves since dogs belonging to their overseers usually slept under the floor and kept them awake trotting over the board floor at night.[1] At the outside end of each of the rooms stood a large chimney constructed of rock or brick. Figure 1 on page 11 is an example of the appearance of an Alabama slave cabin from the outside. The large fire place inside served to heat the room and also as a place to cook their food. Other than having two rooms, the houses had the same overcrowded living conditions as other quarters. In these one and two room houses were found the cooking area, usually an open fire place, the eating area, and sleeping area as well as storage for extra clothes and bedding. A house containing all of this and having rooms approximately sixteen feet wide and twenty feet long was typical of the overcrowding which was reflected in the 1850 census report that showed an average of six slaves living in one dwelling.[2]

The Negroes chinked the cracks between the logs of the cabins with mud or clay. The mud was sometimes

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[1]C. A. Weslager, The Log Cabin in America From Pioneer Days to the Present (Newbrunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), p. 72. Also found in Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 81.

[2]U. S. Census Report (1850) Schedule I, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama, p. XL.

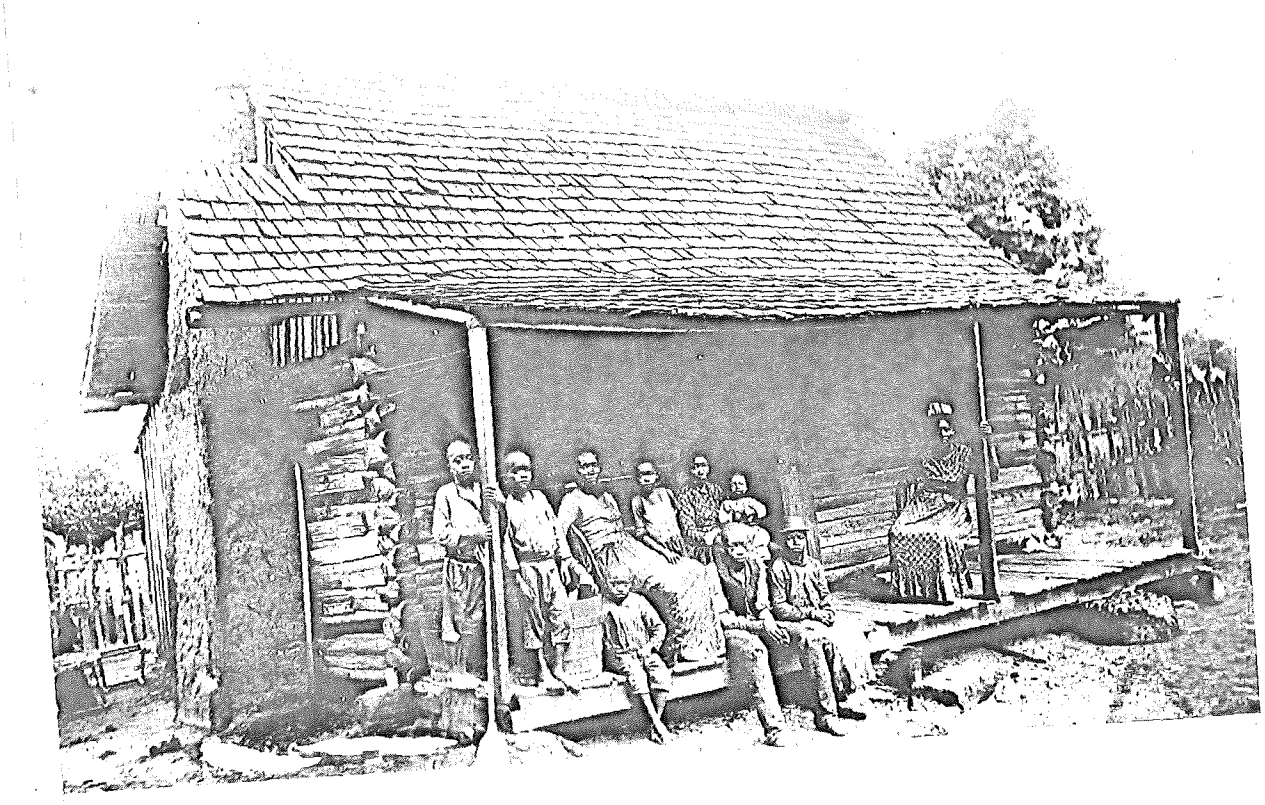

Fig. 1.--Slave cabin, near Eufaula, Barbour County, Alabama.

mixed with hog hair to hold it together.[1] They used this same combination to build chimneys in instances where brick was not available. Sticks were often used in the construction of chimneys to hold the mud and clay in place.[2]

The Negro houses were usually whitewashed inside and out when built and a new coat added every spring.[3] However, this did not always hold true as Olmsted pointed out in his travel through Alabama and Mississippi:

> The Negro cabins were small, dilapidated and dingy; the walls were not chinked, and there were no windows--which, indeed, would have been a superfluous luxury, for there were spaces of several inches between the logs, through which there was unobstructed vision. The furniture in the cabins was of the simplest and rudest imaginable kind, two or three beds with dirty clothing upon them, a chest, a wooden stool or two, made with an ax, and some earthenware and cooking apparatus. Everything within the cabins was colored black by smoke.[4]

Furniture inside the cabin was very simple consisting mostly of chairs, stools and beds with the beds sometimes being built into the wall.[5] Others had bedsteads

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[1]B. A. Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down (Chicago: University Press, 1945), p. 84. Hereinafter sited as Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down.

[2]Olmsted, A Journey in the Back Country, p. 140.

[3]Susan Kirkman Vaughn, Life in Alabama (Montgomery: Dixie Book Company, Inc., 1937), p. 122. Hereinafter sited as Vaughn, Life in Alabama.

[4]Olmsted, A Journey in the Back Country, p. 141.

[5]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 87.

or pallets and small boxes as beds for children, with mattresses made of grass, hay, shucks or rice straws.[1] There was usually a table with benches around it. Sometimes a second table was provided to hold the cooking utensils and some cabins had pegs driven into the logs to hold the utensils as well as extra clothing.[2] Reports of slaves having no beds other than a board to sleep on or having to sleep on the dirt floor are probably true but were exceptions and found only as houses were being built or on farms where slave owners were not much better off in their homes; since good health and sanitary living conditions of the slaves meant money to their owners, usually every effort possible was made to protect the health of slaves. The cleanliness of their cabins as well as other conditions under which they lived to a great extent depended upon the slave as well as the owner or overseer.[3]

Plantation owners usually had rules the slaves had to follow in keeping their houses clean inside and the yard swept outside. Plain common sense would have

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[1]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 47.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Charles S. Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), p. 43. Hereinafter sited as Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi.

made it improbable that an owner or overseer would have ever objected to the slaves keeping their cabins and yards clean or their houses in a good state of repair.[1]

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[1]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 44.

CHAPTER III

Clothing

Clothing was one of the essentials that plantation owners realized the slaves must have in order for them to stay healthy and do their work. The slave owners were responsible for providing clothing for their Negroes and in most instances were forced to go a step farther and see to it that they wore the appropriate clothes for the season of the year.[1] Many of the plantation owners took pride in the way they dressed their Negroes. One master desiring to dress his slaves a "little better than common" and to save the trouble of making the clothes on the plantation, had his slaves' clothes made in England. He said that it would be cheaper in the long run to buy clothes for them in England. He felt that for the price, five yards of plain material for a woman's gown or for a man's jacket and breeches for ten shillings, the material would be more durable and stronger and consequently warmer

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[1]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 38.

and more comfortable than cloth made in the United States.[1] Most slave owners did not have buying connections or credit in England that permitted them to order clothes for their Negroes. They could not order and pay for the clothes and wait the necessary time required for such orders to be filled and arrive on their plantations; therefore, many of the plantation owners bought their supplies of cloth for the making of clothes in the North as William Yancy pointed out in a speech made in New York. He estimated that the South spent $40,000,000 per year in the North for supplies for approximately 4,000,000 slaves. The cost of clothing alone bought in the North by Southern plantation owners for their slaves was estimated by Yancy to be at least $20,000,000 per year.[2]

Plantation owners did not always have plenty of money to spend on clothing for their Negroes. Many masters waited until they began to harvest their money crops, such as cotton, to make the purchases of clothing or the materials necessary for the making of clothing. Most of these purchases took place between the months of September and February.[3] Merchants found the months between September

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[1]Ulrich B. Phillips, Plantation and Frontier Documents: 1649-1863 (Cleveland, The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), pp. 293-94. Hereinafter sited as Phillips, Plantation and Frontier Documents.

[2]The New York Times, October 11, 1860, p. 8, Col. 3.

[3]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 23.

and February to be an excellent time to advertise and therefore ran numerous notices in newspapers offering for sale shoes, garments and clothing.[1] Many of the advertisements ran in newspapers by merchants specified that the articles were for Negroes or slaves. Such advertisements as Negro coats, Negro hats, and other specific garments were numerous in the papers. Many times the advertisements specified the number of items for sale such as 500 pairs of Negro shoes.[2] The sale of many slaves took place during the winter months also since money was available and skilled Negroes, especially women that could sew, were in demand to help with the making of clothes. The women that were exceptionally fine seamstresses brought unusually high prices.[3] Men that were skilled in the art of shoe repair or the making of shoes also brought high prices. Mr. Reid of near Jacksonville, Alabama, went to Spartanbury, South Carolina, and bought a young Negro named George who was a skilled shoe repairmen. Mr. Reid paid $2,700 in gold for George.[4]

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[1]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 23.

[2]Mobile Commercial Register, Vol. 1, No. 12, January 21, 1822. (Microfilm, Jacksonville State University Library)

[3]Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, American Negro Slavery (New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1929), p. 195.

[4]Interview with Mr. Eugene Reid, Jacksonville, Alabama, September 9, 1970.

George did the shoe repair on the Reid farm and as he grew older learned to make shoes. He was often hired out to others in the community to repair or make shoes for an entire family, a job that sometimes took three or four days at one farm. While he was making the shoes, he stayed with the family he was working for. When the job was completed, he moved on to another farm. The jobs kept him away from the Reid farm for three or four weeks at a time except for the weekend.[1]

The hiring out of Negroes as field hands usually included in the agreement the furnishing of clothing. For example, in Alabama during the early 1860's the slave men were hired at an annual rate of $138.00 including rations and clothing while women for the same period were hired on an annual basis for $89.00 including rations and clothing.[2]

The practice of hiring out of slaves to plantation owners often miles from the slave home and owner probably was one of the greatest reasons for the criticism by many writers about the clothing of slaves. Certainly the owner had an investment to protect by keeping his slaves well clothed and healthy; whereas, the person hiring the slave only had to worry about the healthy Negro while he had the slave in his employment. Some writers reported

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[1]Interview with Mr. Eugene Reid, Jacksonville, Alabama, September 9, 1970.

[2]Harold D. Woodman, Slavery and The Southern Economy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1966), p. 88. Hereinafter sited as Woodman, Slavery and The Southern Economy.

the clothing of the slaves as representing the minimum in comfort.[1] Most historians found that the slaves were usually dressed in coarse clothing as compared to the dress of the white people, but the Negro was usually dressed comfortably.[2]

The Negroes were generally much better off than the poor white's, "PO White trash," as the poor were referred to by the Negroes, because the slave at least could depend upon the planter to whom he belonged and the poor white had no one to fall back on for help in case of a bad crop year or bad luck in any way.[3]

Many items of clothing were made on the farms and plantations of the South. There was usually one or more skilled seamstress on the large plantations and the pregnant and convalescent women were also used to help make the clothing. Such jobs as found in the loomroom, the carding and spinning as well as the making and mending of clothes, were done by the convalescent or sickly women.[4]

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[1]Clement Eaton, The Civilization of The Old South (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1968), p. 119. Hereinafter sited as Eaton, The Civilization of The Old South.

[2]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 30.

[3]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 16.

[4]Ibid., p. 40.

The clothing was issued to the slaves by the master or an overseer. The issues ranged from four full suits of clothing with two pairs of shoes per year on some plantations down to two full suits and one pair of shoes on other plantations.[1]

The issues of clothing could not be made to the slaves for an entire year at a time. They were made for the season of the year and as a general rule clothing that was not to be worn had to be taken from the cabins. The Negroes paid little attention to whether they were wearing woolen clothing in the summer or cotton clothing in the winter as pointed out by William Postell. Cotton clothing was recommended from April until November and wool for the remainder of the year. "Cotton clothes were not to be left in the Negro cabins when wool clothes should be worn."[2]

Not only the wearing of clothing out of season prompted the owners to remove out-of-season clothing from their cabins but also the fact that generally they had little or no provision for hanging or storing clothing in their cabins. Many cabins had nothing more than wooden pegs in the wall to hang the extra clothing on.[3]

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[1]Harvey Wish, Slavery in The South (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1964), p. 199. Hereinafter sited as Wish, Slavery in The South.

[2]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 38.

[3]Ibid., p. 47.

The importance of warm bed clothing was not overlooked. Blankets were a regularly issued item; sheets and mattresses were issued as needed. Also among the regular items of issue were needles, thread, and buttons to repair clothing in their own cabins.[1]

Shoes were generally issued when the weather began to turn cold in the fall. The slaves cared little for shoes to work in the fields, but they took great pride in their new shoes especially shoes that were to be worn on Sunday or special occasions. They were often seen walking bare foot to church with a new pair of shoes hung over their back. They stopped at the church entrance and put on their shoes before entering the church then removed them again upon leaving. The slaves usually wore the shoes without socks as there is little evidence that socks were issued to the Negroes. Some plantation owners did issue socks, but those that did not far out number the ones that did.[2]

Hats were a common item of clothing issued to the slaves and one that most owners had to force the slaves to wear. Owners were critized because their slaves did not always wear hats in the field, but it was a fact as pointed out by Postell that slaves received regular issues of either woolen caps, straw hats, or camp hats.[3]

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[1]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 42.

[2]Vaughn, Life in Alabama, p. 127.

[3]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 42.

William L. Yancy pointed out in a speech in New York that the slaves seemed to enjoy the hot sun when overseers could not take it without some shade or cover.

> In July, August, and September, even the overseers who had charge of the slaves went out with umbrellas over their heads, or sought the shadow of a friendly tree, yet all the time the slave working in the boiling sun without hats, and seemed almost like the eagle, to look the sun in the eye. These glorious sons of toil were satisfied with their condition.[1]

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[1]The New York Times, October 11, 1860, p. 8, Col. 1.

CHAPTER IV

Food

The historian reading one or two accounts of slavery very easily could be led to feel that the slave suffered more from a lack of food than any other thing. When reading different authors' findings of how the slaves were fed and the amount of food they had for entire families, one can not help but unconsciously compare this with today's variety and abundance. The historian who made an effort to search the records and read materials from several writers found that the slave in Alabama faired favorable with the small plantation owners and even better in many cases than the poor whites and slaves of bordering states.[1]

In 1851, James Tait of Alabama estimated maintenance cost at $24.70 per slave including food and clothing, while in Georgia and Louisiana the cost varied from $18.33 to $23.60.[2] Woodman gave as the average expenditure

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[1]Woodman, Slavery and The Southern Economy, p. 230.

[2]Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 407. Hereinafter sited as Stampp, The Peculiar Institution.

per slave for food in Alabama at between $30 - $35, while non-slave holding whites spent an average of $25 per person.[1]

The above estimates and facts were rather low expenditures for slaves but when compared with the expenditures for whites for the same period of time, they were not out of line. Planters and physicians realized the need for keeping slaves healthy if they expected to gain from slave labor, and therefore in most cases made sure that the Negroes had the basic physical needs--food, clothing, and shelter. The slaves suffered very little from the lack of food. They usually had ample quantities but not variety and quality of foods.[2] For a master to fail to give his slaves enough to eat or punish them by withholding their food allowances was considered the most aggravated development of meanness even among slave holders.[3]

Doctor John Stinback Wilson, a physician who practiced in Georgia and Alabama, stated that slaves should have more variety in their food. He felt that

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[1]Woodman, Slavery and The Southern Economy, p. 230.

[2]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 31.

[3]Frederick Douglas, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas An American Slave (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 81. Hereinafter sited as Douglas, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas.

they should have vegetables in addition to their meat and bread, and milk and molasses occasionally.[1]

The majority of Alabama planters issued rations of food to the individual families rather than have the meals prepared by a plantation cook.[2] The issues usually were made Saturday after work or on Sunday and consisted of a peck or peck and a half of meal, and three pounds of bacon per person.[3] The general practice was to allow at least three and a half pounds of bacon, bread as desired unless it was rationed, and a peck or peck and a half of meal per man, woman or child if they were considered part of the labor force and especially the laborers that worked in the fields.[4]

It was not always easy or possible for the owner of a large plantation to keep the necessary provisions for a large labor force. Even though the master had the best intentions and a great desire to provide plenty for his slaves, some often found, as did A. J. Pickett, that even providing a sufficient quantity of food was sometimes a problem. Pickett, while on a trip to South Carolina wrote to his wife in Montgomery, Alabama:

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[1]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 34.

[2]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 84.

[3]Wish, Slavery in The South, p. 197.

[4]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 32.

Charleston, 12th April, 1851

My Dear Wife,

I enclose you a letter to Col. Stoudemire, and Harris which you can seal and hand to them. You ought to go down there and see the Negroes. You can borrow a bed from Mrs. Wylie, or stay with her or Mrs. Tyler of nights when you are there or stay with Mrs. Houser. I am sorry to hear that the Negroes do not get enough to eat, but I have one consolation - they cannot starve, for they certainly get plenty of meal from Daniel. I hope my letter will have the effect of their having a plenty of meat soon. I am glad you wrote to me about it. Never keep any bad news from me that by my knowing it, I could remedy.

Your affectionate husband
A. J. Picket

Mrs. Sarah S. Pickett
Montgomery, Alabama[1]

Planters in Alabama generally encouraged their slaves to raise vegetables in the summer. For that purpose, a small plot of land was set aside for each family a garden. Some planters allowed the slaves to have a few chickens and even a hog or two and a cow.[2] Slaves supplemented their meat diet on some plantations by hunting and fishing.

James Tait, one of the large plantation owners of Alabama, not only issued ample quantities of meal and bacon to his slaves, but his records also show large

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[1]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 93.

[2]Ibid., p. 91.

purchases of molasses, salt, sugar by the barrels, and considerable quantities of coffee, from Mobile.[1]

Many of Alabama's large plantation owners raised their own hogs for meat and corn for meal but many of the small farmers and especially those in the Tennessee River Valley of North Alabama bought their pork from Tennessee and other states.[2] By buying their pork they did not have to raise grain on which to fatten hogs and therefore could concentrate their efforts on the production of only one cash crop such as cotton.

The preparation of the food varied from plantation to plantation. On small plantations the food usually was prepared by slave cooks in a central kitchen for both the master's family and the slaves.[3] This was not practical for large plantations; however, each family prepared their own food in their cabin. The food usually was cooked over open fires in a fireplace.

Breakfast was generally prepared and eaten at the slave quarters before daylight so that the slave could be in the field as early as possible.[4] Many planters preferred

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[1]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 92.

[2]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 50.

[3]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 36.

[4]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 55.

to have the slave's breakfast carried to him in the fields especially in the summer when the days were long. The slave went to the field at sunrise. His breakfast was brought to him about eight o'clock, and he was given half an hour to eat.[1]

At twelve o'clock dinner was served. If the slaves were working in a field within a reasonable walking distance, they usually returned to the quarters to eat.[2] After the noon meal, they were allowed to rest from one to two hours depending upon the weather and the conditions of the crop.[3] On many plantations the slaves had as much as they wanted to eat twice a day of Indian corn, sweet potatoes, and broth, with meat being passed out in fair quantities.[4] The corn meal was made into hoecakes often cooked in the ashes of an open fire.[5]

The plantation mistress usually saw to it that the children did not go hungry while their mothers were at work in the fields. The mistress would call the children when she thought they might be hungry and pour buttermilk into

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[1]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 37.

[2]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 55.

[3]Ibid., p. 56.

[4]Nicholas Halasz, The Rattling Chains (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966), p. 144. Hereinafter sited as Halasz, The Rattling Chains.

[5]Phillips, American Slavery, p. 312.

a long trough, usually made from the body of a tree and kept clean for that purpose.[1] They all drank from the trough and ate johnny cakes given them by the mistress.[2] The more interprising children gathered mussel shells from the creeks to be used as spoons; the others simply drank from the trough.[3]

The cooks and slaves who lived in the masters homes usually managed to have little extras to eat. Sometimes they were caught taking extra food they were not supposed to take and thereon paid the price as was the case with a young slave making cookies:

> The mistress had an old parrot, and one day I was in the kitchen making cookies, and I decided I wanted some of them, so I tooks me out some and put them on a chair; and when I did this the mistress entered the door. I picks up a cushion and throws over the pile of cookies on the chair, and the mistress come near the chair and the old parrot cries out, "Mistress burn, Mistress burn." Then the mistress looks under the cushion, and she had me whupped, but the next day I killed the parrot, and she often wondered who or what killed the bird.[4]

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[1]Interview with Marrion Morgan, White Plains, Alabama, September 11, 1970. Marrion's father was a slave who lived to be 101 years of age and died in 1952 at Jacksonville, Alabama.

[2]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 61.

[3]Halasz, The Rattling Chains, p. 226.

[4]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 7.

CHAPTER V

Slave Labor

As a workman, the slave had many disadvantages. His labor was involuntary, inefficient, and required constant supervision and guidance. In many instances slaves were very fond of their master and his family, but that in itself was not a sufficient motivating factor to cause him to do his best in his everyday work. As a general rule he was slow and usually slow for a reason. He paced himself in his work doing only what was necessary to prevent punishment, because to do his best one day meant he probably had to do as well the next day.[1]

The constant supervision that was required to keep the Negro working and doing the job as it was suppose to be done was expensive for the owners in more ways than one. The fact that one or more employees were required as overseers and drivers on many plantations plus the loss in value of abused slaves by poor overseers resulted in overhead and financial losses that greatly hurt many slave owners.

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[1]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 252.

The slave represented an investment or capital and also a source of labor. The double value of the Negro was one of the major weak points of the entire system of slavery. The protection of capital meant a sacrifice in labor while at the same time a master who overworked his Negros or allowed an overseer to overwork them lost much in the value of his capital investment.[1]

In order for the system of slavery to exist and grow, at least three factors had to be present. There had to be an abundance of rich land which was available in Alabama as well as other Southern states; there had to be a large labor supply; and there had to be a staple crop.[2]

The invention of the cotton gin, by Eli Whitney, gave the south another staple crop upon which the institution of slavery was kept alive. The cotton gin made the growing of short staple cotton profitable and Alabama's soil and climate were ideal for growing cotton.[3]

The cotton industry in Alabama dates back to approximately 1795, when Joseph Collins purchased ten slaves in Kentucky and began to raise the crop on a fairly large scale.[4] The abundance of land having a favorable

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[1]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 22.

[2]Ibid., p. 19.

[3]Ibid., p. 20.

[4]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 11.

soil for growing cotton was one reason for the heavy migration of slave owners into the territory that later became the State of Alabama. The pioneers who brought the cotton industry into Alabama had a second reason for leaving states such as Virginia and the Carolinas. The soils of these states had been depleted greatly by the continuous growing of cotton. The Carolinas and Virginia had produced in 1800 approximately three-fourths of the nation's cotton, but only half of the 19th Century had passed before the States of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana were producing almost three-fourths of the nation's output.[1]

The migration to Alabama from North Carolina led James Graham to write in 1817:

> I have it in contemplation to explore the Mississippi State and Alabama Territory next fall or winter so as to satisfy myself respecting the advantages and inducements which that country is said to afford. The Alabama Fever rages here with great violence and has carried off vast numbers of our citizens. I am apprehensive, if it continues to spread as it has done, it will almost depopulate the country. . . Some of our oldest and most wealthy men are offering their possessions for sale and are desirous of removing to this new country.[2]

The importance of slave labor for the production of cotton was greatly responsible for the distribution and rapid expansion of the Negro population in Alabama. Figure 2, page 33, shows only two counties having a slave

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 16.

[2]Ibid.

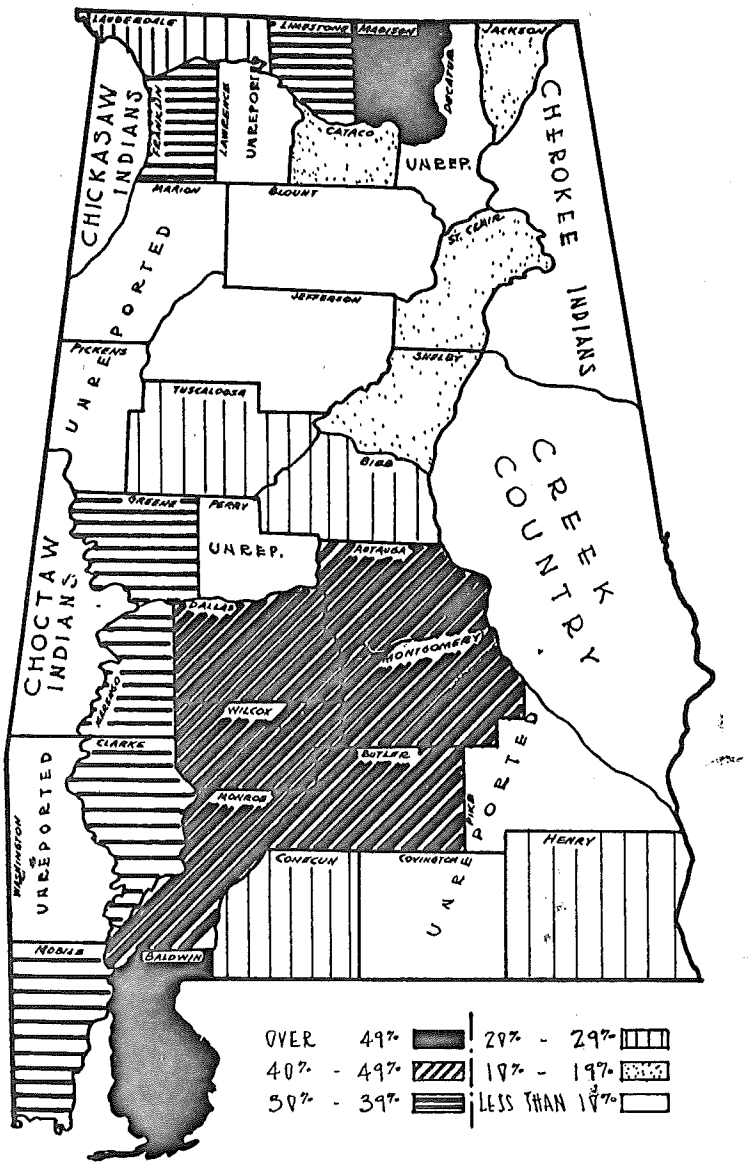

Figure 2. Distribution of Slaves in Alabama in 1820.[1]

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 192.

population greater than 49 per cent of the total population. Figure 3, page 35, shows the heavy concentration of Negroes in the Tennessee Valley and Black Belt regions, that make up approximately one half the area of the state, as having a slave population greater than 49 per cent of the total population for that area.[1] The Negro population of Alabama in 1860 was 435,080.[2] The large slave population and the soils of Alabama aided in placing Alabama first in the production of cotton in the nation in 1850.

The period from 1850 to 1860 was the decade of greatest cotton production in the South. At the beginning of that ten year era, Alabama had risen to first place among the cotton producing states with a peak production of 542,429 bales.[2] The distribution of cotton production for Alabama in 1850 is shown in Figure 4, page 36.

The production of cotton required much work on a plantation and as a general rule a plantation having several slaves also had an overseer to see that the work was done. The overseer was one of the very important individuals on the plantation. The owner gave the orders, but it was the overseer who saw that these orders were carried out.[3] Finding a good overseer was a problem faced by many

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, pp. 192, 196.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Postell, The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations, p. 24.

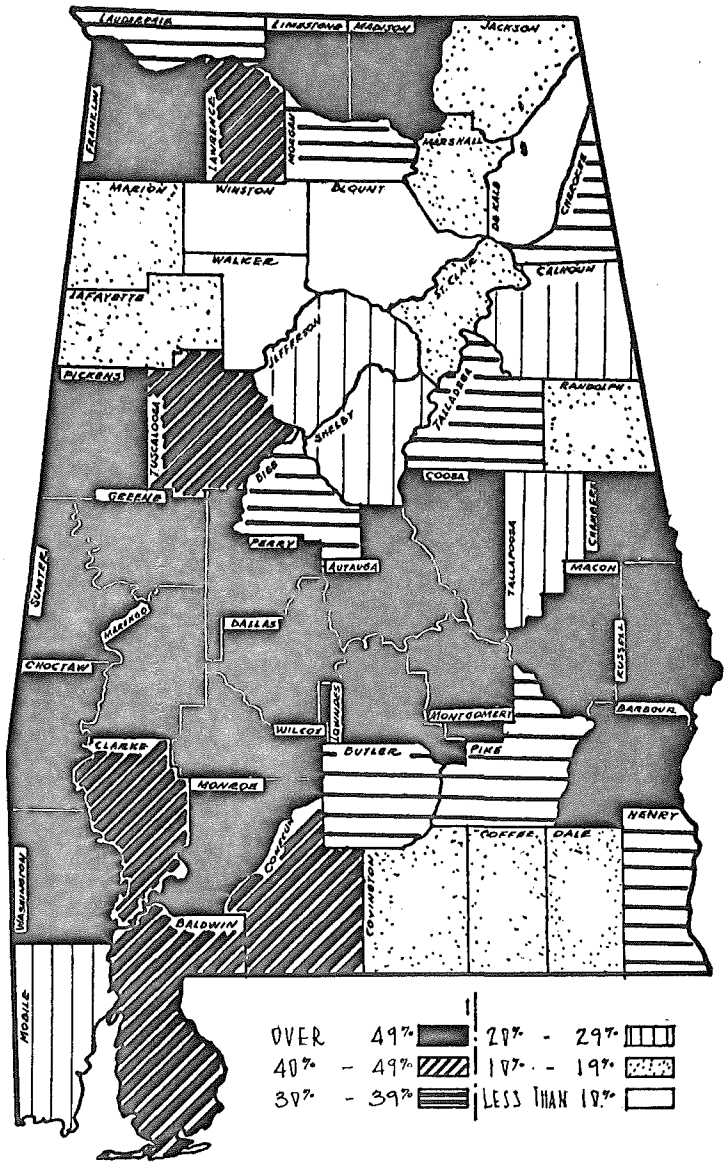

Figure 3. Distribution of Slaves in Alabama in 1860.[1]

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 196.

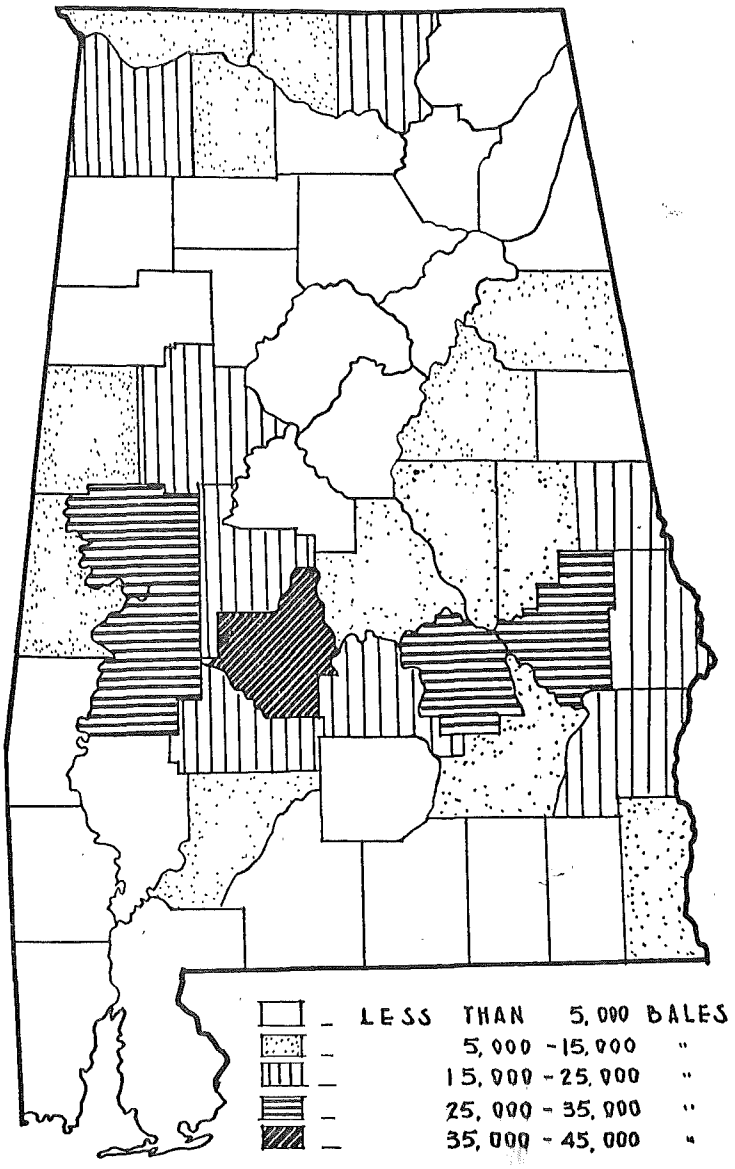

Figure 4. Distribution of Cotton Production in Alabama in 1850.[1]

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 198.

of the planters at one time or another and by many of the owners constantly.

The qualities an overseer needed most were honesty, sobriety, knowledge of his business, and an understanding of the management of slaves.[1] The majority of slave owners looked for an overseer with these qualities but often he was hired because of his record in the production of cotton. The rich plantation owners were constantly bidding for the services of the overseers that could produce the most cotton.[2] The demand for cotton production by owners in many instances cost him more in the deminished value of his slaves than he gained by large crops of cotton. The overseers had no real investment in slaves and of course lacked the check of self interest.[3] Their only aim was mere crop results and therein lay one of the major reasons for slave abuse.

Many of Alabama's plantation owners did not live on their plantations; and, therefore, they did not always see how the overseers ran their farms and how their slaves were treated. The results were often mismanagement by poor overseers. Some overseers were too lenient with the slaves which often led to unmanageable slaves and the

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[1]Sellers, Slavery In Alabama, p. 51.

[2]Frederick Law Olmsted, The Cotton Kingdom (New York: Alfred A. Knof, 1953), p. 438. Hereinafter sited as Olmsted, Cotton Kingdom.

[3]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 54.

plantation losing money.[1] Some planters employed their sons as overseers in an attempt to correct the constant problems they faced from overseers that had no monetary interest in the slaves.[2] Many Alabama planters found that they had not solved their problems even when they employed a relative as an overseer. There was still complaints of abuse by rushing, whipping, and lashing of the slaves by the overseer.[3] A plantation owner of 150 slaves living at Chunnennuggee, Alabama, recorded in his records that he had to take residence on his plantation because he could not find an overseer combining the qualities necessary in good management.[4]

The numerous problems encountered from using overseers led the Southern Cultivator to report in 1848 "one of the biggest objections to employing Negro slaves in this country is involved in the necessity, real or apparent, of employing overseers."[5] The plantations that were the most successful were the ones in which the owners either lived on the plantation and observed from day to day or had a written list of instructions which they required the overseers to follow such as the one drawn up by William P. Gould:

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[1]Sellers, Slavery In Alabama, p. 46.

[2]Ibid., p. 51.

[3]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 183.

[4]Phillips, American Negro Slavery, p. 278.

[5]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 52.

1. Humanity, as well as policy would dictate that my negroes will be well fed and clothed and comfortably lodges. To the negroes of this plantation rations of meat are issued monthly and on a stated day of each week, one peck of meal per each grown hand. Clothing and building repairing will be attended to as occasion may require.

2. It will be required of the overseer at all times to give his individual attention to the business of the plantation and as far as practicable to be with the hands in the fields. If at any time it should be necessary for him to leave the plantation, it is expected that he will notify the proprietor of the same, that he may take charge of the hands during his absence. If particular directions are given or suggestions made by the proprietor to the overseer in relation to the affairs of the plantation it is expected that they will immediately be attended to; but in order that nothing may be neglected, he will in all other cases use his own judgment and discretion. In order, to as much as possible, economize time, and that the attention of the overseer may not be taken from the hands while in the field, it is desirable that a part of such jobs as will admit of delay, may be reserved for wet weather; and when the old women cannot be advantageously employed out of doors, they will be required to perform the stated task of spinning.

3. The mode of feeding the work horses will be directed as the overseer may think best, but it is expected that he will assure himself that it is regularly and carefully attended to, and that they have salt at least once a week, particularly during the plowing season. It is expected that he will from time to time count the stock of sheep and hogs and that he will make some one accountable for their general superintendence.

4. No negroes belonging to the plantation will be allowed to leave it without a pass from the proprietor, and no one from the neighborhood or elsewhere will be permitted to frequent it without written permission to do so.

In order to ascertain if this rule is observed, it will be required of the overseer to inspect the cabins at different hours of the night as often as once in every week.

5. No negro will be suffered under any pretense whatever to strike another--excepting always such moderate correction as it may be necessary for parents to use with their children. They will not be permitted to have whiskey or other intoxicating spirits in their cabins--the drams that it may occasionally be thought proper to give them to be drunk immediately and not suffered to accumulate.

6. If a negro reports sick he or she will be sent immediately to the dwelling house for examination and when considered by the proprietor to be again fit for duty it will be so reported to the overseer.

7. When it becomes necessary to punish a negro for neglect of duty, disobedience of orders or other offense, the punishment is inflicted cooly (sic) and dispassionately, a stick, the fist, or kicking are positively forbidden. Care is to be taken to proportion as far as may be, the correction to the offense, but in no case to desist until submission and penitence are manifested.

8. The overseer will eat at the dwelling house, or his meals will be furnished at his own room, as may from time to time be most convenient to the family. The engagement between the proprietor and the overseer may be dissolved, whenever either party may desire it, and payment will be made for the time that service has been rendered.

December 23, 1837

Ludwig Henderson has this day engaged with me after having read and agreed to the foregoing. William P. Gould and L. Henderson
(Pay $500 per annum)[1]

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, pp. 47-48.

The day's routine on the plantation for the overseer and the slave began early. The overseer saw that the livestock was fed while the Negroes had their breakfast which they finished before dawn. With the dawn of day the overseer blew a horn or rang a bell to summon the slaves from their cabins to begin the day's work.[1] James Tait stated that in order to get the Negroes out of their cabins quickly after the horn, he always whipped the last one out.[2]

Alabama planters used both the gang system and the task system in distributing work to Negroes. Some planters used a combination of both systems for the distribution of work on their farms. James Tait allotted three hundred acres of cotton to a gang of thirty-three hands, which included ten plows. He found that this was a sufficient force to work the entire three hundred acres every three weeks.[3] The men usually did the plowing in preparation for the planting of the crops and the women helped with the planting. The preparation of the fields was not always a job left to the slaves as pointed out by Frederick Olmsted. He found more white men in the fields in North Alabama plowing than he did Negroes. He also found white men plowing while slaves did other jobs on the farm.[4]

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[1]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 71.

[2]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 54.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Olmsted, Cotton Kingdom, p. 381.

When the preparation was completed and the crops planted the attention soon was directed to the cultivation of the different crops. Row crops such as corn and cotton had to be plowed, hoed, and thinned in order to leave the plants spaced correctly in the rows. "Chopping cotton" began as soon as the plant reached a height of several inches. The first chopping left two plants to a hill and a later chopping cut the number down to one stalk spaced about every twelve to fourteen inches apart.[1] On Tait's farm the young, strong men plowed while the women and the older men worked in the hoe gang. The young girls worked in the house until they were ten or twelve years of age then they joined the hoe gang.[2] Each member of Tait's hoe gang received a daily assignment of fifty rows of cotton to chop. However, when a Negro reached the age of fifty, his task was reduced to forty rows and the nursing mothers and pregnant women were expected to chop thirty to forty rows each day.[3] The task did not work in all cases as was pointed out by Kenneth Stampp. The strong Negroes were not sufficiently motivated to accomplish more than the weak ones; therefore, much time was wasted. In many instances the slaves would rush

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 62.

[2]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 89.

[3]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 57.

through their assignments in order to finish early and return to their cabins. The result was usually poor work that in many instances had to be done over.[1]

The majority of the slave owners encouraged their Negroes to sing as they worked. The singing gave the appearance of a field full of happy slaves, but to the owners it served another important purpose.[2] The singing allowed the overseers to tell where the slaves were and also gave them some idea as to what they were doing. A silent slave was not liked by the overseer or the master.[3] Keeping up with the Negroes and keeping them busy was a big job on the large plantations. Often the fields were far apart or separated by wooded sections making the overseers' jobs harder. Overseers generally made use of "drivers" when the Negroes were not all working in the same field.[4] The driver was trusted and held a position that all salves wanted to hold. He was considered the most important slave on the plantation by the other Negroes. Owners sometimes used the "driver" instead of an overseer where there were several farms owned or when the fields were far apart.[5]

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[1]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 55.

[2]Vaughn, Life in Alabama, p. 126.

[3]Wish, Slavery in The South, p. 75.

[4]Olmsted, Cotton Kingdom, p. 189.

[5]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 40.

The cultivation of cotton and other row crops on the plantations in Alabama lasted all summer. There was little time to be wasted by anyone on the farms. Some planters gave the Negroes half of the day off on Saturday. The men could work in their own crops and the women were expected to clean their cabins.[1] The majority of masters in Alabama allowed their slaves to raise and even sell vegetables, poultry, and hogs.[2] Many slave owners in Alabama also allowed their Negroes to have their own patches of cotton.[3]

The laying-by of crops in the summer was a time that all slaves looked forward to. It did not mean, however, an end to the year's work for the slaves because there was always work to be done on the plantation. Usually when the cotton was laid-by, the Negroes had a revival, and they always enjoyed these religious meetings.[4]

A few short weeks passed after the cotton was laid-by before the Negroes were back in the cotton fields picking cotton. The labor of picking the year's cotton crop was hard work for the slaves, but it did not impair his health as the cultivation of such crops as did rice and indigo.[5] The picking of cotton was somewhat a contest

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[1]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 79.

[2]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 91.

[3]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 60.

[4]Vaughn, Life In Alabama, p. 124.

[5]Halasz, The Rattling Chains, p. 102.

at times between slaves of one plantation and those of another. Planters liked to boast about the ability of their Negroes to pick cotton and frequently bet with their neighbors over cotton picking contests. The contests were held with the Negroes picking from sunrise until sunset under the supervision of a disinterested person.[1] A Huntsville, Alabama, newspaper reported, in 1846, a day's cotton picking on S. K. Oates's plantation by his ten best pickers as follows:

Henry	362	Wasden	289
Mary	225	Nancy	210
Phillis	232	Washing	265
Bob	224	Milly	204
Ellen	220	Mary	209

The average for the ten Negroes was 224 pounds.[2]

The average on Colonel Robert Fearn's plantation was even better. Ten hands on Fearn's farm picked 2,700 pounds which was an average of 270 pounds per person.[3] The planters often boasted of slaves that could pick much more cotton than Fearn's Negroes averaged, but the slave that could pick as much as 500 pounds in a day was indeed a rare exception. The average Negro picked approximately one hundred to one hundred and twenty pounds in a day.[4]

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 64.

[2]Sellers, Slavery In Alabama, p. 68.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 64.

The masters often stimulated their slaves to do their best by paying them by the pound for picking cotton. Sometimes money was paid to the one that picked the most cotton in a day.[1]

William Jemison of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, actually entered into an agreement with his slaves in 1827 to pay them for their labor. One-third of the year's crop was to go the owner; the remainder was to go to the slaves. The slaves were to take two-thirds of the produce and pay the overseer, the taxes on the farm and produce, their doctors' fee, and all other expenses of the plantation. Jemison provided that records would be kept of the time put in by the slaves to enable each of them to get his share of the returns from the crops.[2] The plan was still in operation in 1829; Jemison kept a record of the slaves' time put in at picking cotton and pulling corn. This account contains evidence to show how well Jemison's plan was working as well as a day-to-day description of the work of his Negroes in such areas as cotton picking and the pulling of corn. Jemison entered in his record book the name of the Negro, a description of work completed and the amount paid to the slave. As an example of Jemison's entries, Woodly was paid two dollars and sixty-two

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[1]Vaughn, Life In Alabama, p. 131.

[2]Sellers, Slavery In Alabama, p. 59.

and one-half cents for pulling corn for a day and a half.[1]

Slaves were used primarily as agricultural workers. The cultivation of cotton and corn were the most common crops in Alabama that required their labor. Their work was year-round on the majority of plantations because as soon as cotton picking was finished they began pulling corn. When the gathering of corn was completed, the Negroes started knocking down the corn and cotton stalks, repairing fences, clearing new grounds, burning brush, and mauling rails.[2] There was very little time on most plantations for the miscellaneous jobs that could be done by the field hands because the preparation of fields for new crops was begun soon after the gathering of corn was completed.[3]

The field hands constituted the majority of slaves on the plantation but there were other Negroes that played important parts in the functioning of most plantations. The skilled Negro and the houseservants were common to all large plantations. The job of serving the master or mistress as their personel servant or as a servant in their home was a position desired and looked up to by most slaves.

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[1]William Jemison, "Cotton Picker's Time Book," MS, in the Jemison Collection (in possession of the Library of University of Alabama).

[2]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 11.

[3]Phillips, American Negro Slavery, p. 210.

The number of slaves and variety of jobs in the household depended upon the size of the plantation and the wealth of the master. Negroes served as hostesses, coachmen, laundresses, seamstresses, cooks, footmen, butlers, housemaids, chambermaids, children's nurses, and personal servants.[1] On the largest plantations specialization was practiced and no one worked out of his special area. For example, the cook stayed in the kitchen, and the nurse or any other servant was not allowed to enter that kitchen to work.[2]

There was a great distinction made between the house servants and the field hands. Generally the house servants ate much better since they usually ate about the same food as the master's family. They were dressed appropriately for their jobs which usually meant that they were better dressed than the field hands.[3]

The life of the house servants was not always pleasant as Mrs. Morgan reported. Her mother worked in the home of a mistress who was always sick. The mistress often sent her slave servant out to the spring at night for fresh water because she knew the Negro was afraid to go near the spring at night. That particular slave was afraid of the owls and bats that fluttered by as she

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[1]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 59.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Eaton, The Civilization of The Old South, p. 115.

walked the trail to the spring.[1] The house servants were sometimes punished just as the field hands when they did not do what was expected of them. The Negro women were whipped the same as the men. The worst punishment they could receive was to be demoted to a field hand, and that sometimes happened especially when they gave food or other aid to runaway slaves.[2]

There were many skilled jobs held by slaves. The slaves that lived in towns labored chiefly as mechanics, hostlers, common laborers or as assistants to White cabinetmakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, and builders.[3] The skilled slaves were often hired out to business men or to plantation owners who needed their services. A mechanic, for example, was not needed year-round by one plantation or by one businessman; therefore, he was hired out to do a job or several jobs and when completed moved on to other work. The moves were directed by the masters and the masters received the rewards for their services.[4]

Some of the abuse of slaves reported of course came as a result of their being hired out to different

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[1]Interview with Anna Morgan, age 99, on September 11, 1970. Mrs. Morgan lives in Calhoun County, Alabama, at White Plains. Her mother, father, and husband were slaves. Her husband, Joe Morgan, died in 1952 in Jacksonville, Alabama, at the age of 101 years.

[2]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 116.

[3]Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi, p. 6.

[4]Ibid., p. 178.

people. The person hiring a skilled Negro, such as a carpenter, wanted to get as much work out of him as possible and often whipped the slave when he did not produce as much as the employer thought he should.[1] However, an Alabama slave owner could sue when his slave was mistreated at the hands of one who had hired him. The grounds for such suits was loss in market value of the slave.[2] The agreement between the slave owner and the person hiring the Negro included provisions for clothing and taking care of the medical needs of the slaves if they lived on the employer's estate. The slaves often stayed with the person hiring them through the week and returned to their masters' farms on the week-ends.[3]

The annual hiring rate for slaves in Alabama in 1860, as stated earlier, was $138.00 for men and $89.00 for women. This was considerably higher than Georgia's $124.00 for men and $75.00 for women, for the same period but below the rate of $166.00 for men and $100.00 for women in Mississippi.[4]

Slaves were considered too valuable to be placed in dangerous jobs. The employer could be sued for injury

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[1]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 84.

[2]Ibid., p. 204.

[3]Interview with Eugene Reid.

[4]Woodman, Slavery and The Southern Economy, p. 88.

or death to a slave if he was working in unsafe situations; therefore, other people were used in unsafe jobs.[1] In such jobs as loading cotton on boats the slaves were never allowed to work on the lower levels of the boat where the cotton might fall and injure them. Irishmen generally were employed to work in the dangerous jobs on the cotton boats.[2]

Olmsted traveling from Montgomery, Alabama, to Mobile, Alabama, by cotton boat reported that slaves working on the boat earned for their masters forty dollars a month. The Negroes were paid one dollar for every Sunday that they worked on the boat. They were well fed by the owners of the boat but were not allowed to eat with the Irishmen.[3] Olmsted also reported that when the cotton boat docked at night to take on more cotton, the slaves from the surrounding area or town would go on board the boat to sell eggs and produce from their gardens.[4] Masters sometimes took the time to go with their slave to make sure he was not taken advantage of in making change and selling his produce.[5]

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[1]Eaton, The Civilization of the Old South, p. 125.

[2]Olmsted, Cotton Kingdom, p. 215.

[3]Ibid., p. 218.

[4]Ibid., p. 219.

[5]Nehemiah Adams, South-Side View of Slavery (Boston: T. R. Marvin and B. B. Massey and Company, 1854), p. 36. Hereinafter sited as Adams, South-Side View of Slavery.

Slave labor was used in the construction of schools and churches in the State of Alabama. John Hubbard and his son, Baylus, took the job of constructing a new building for the congregation of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Calhoun County, Alabama. The Hubbards made use of slaves supplied by the church members in building the new building which was completed in 1860 and still stands today.[1]

The railroads which came into Northern Alabama in the early 1850's took advantage of the cheap labor of slaves. Slaves were often used in building railroads through the country and almost every railroad in the South was built at least in part by slave labor.[2]

The Noble Brothers used slaves in their ordnance works producing supplies for the Confederate armies. A voucher written on September 25, 1863, by the Noble Brothers shows payment of $352.00 for the use of thirty-four Negroes in the making of guns for the Ordnance Department.[3] Slaves were also used in other areas of the war. Mr. Reid reported that his father who was a slave made shoes at times for the Confederate soldiers.[4]

The Weaver Brothers, Gary, Charles, Mack, and Lockin, of Russell County, Alabama, took their slave, Stanford, with them when they went to war in 1862. Stanford

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[1]Mount Zion Baptist Church records (in the Carnegie Library, Anniston, Alabama).

[2]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 62.

[3]Noble Brothers Collection (Alabama Room, Carnegie Library, Anniston, Alabama).

[4]Interview with Eugene Reid.

was not used on the front line but instead performed his services for the Weaver Brothers a few miles back from the front. He did their cooking, cleaning of equipment and boots, and the washing of their clothes. Stanford was often sent back to Alabama for money, new supplies of clothing and food while the brothers remained at the fighting front.[1]

The life and labor of a slave on a Southern plantation was not one of continual happiness but the slave that worked and lived on a well-run plantation, whether his job was in the field or shop or in the master's house, found that life had its rewards and satisfactions. In some ways, the Negro had the best of it. His master furnished all the necessities of life and shouldered all the responsibilities and worries, but the pride of a beautiful and well-run plantation could be shared by slave and master alike.[2]

The slaves often worked long hours on the plantations and at other work in the South, but generally they did not perform an unreasonable amount of work in a day's time.[3] Their slow, unhurried movement on the Southern

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[1]Weaver Brothers Collection (letters written by Gary, Charles, Mack, and Lockin between the years 1862 and 1864, Archives of History, Montgomery, Alabama).

[2]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 80.

[3]Sydnor, Slavery In Mississippi, p. 252.

plantation did not compare with the factory work that slaves in the industrial states faced. The factory work took its told of adults and even boys and girls.[1]

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[1]Alan Dovety, "Urban Slavery In Pro-Southern Fiction of The 1850's" Journal of Southern History, Vol. 35, February-November, 1966, p. 30.

CHAPTER VI

Crimes and Punishments

A discussion of slave life would not be complete without a discussion of the crimes and punishments of slaves. Alabama, as well as other Southern States having large slave populations, was faced throughout the slave area with crimes committed by the slaves as well as crimes against them.

Many of the slave crimes were of a capital nature. For that reason it is necessary to review the procedures used in hearing such cases as were prescribed by state law. The trials were to be held in the circuit court of the county in which the crime was committed. The jury was made up of white citizens of which two-thirds were slaveholders. The owner of a slave accused of a crime could provide counsel for his Negro; but if the owner refused the court was authorized to appoint a counsel who could demand a fee of ten dollars from the owner. If found guilty, the slave was to be sentenced by the court. If a slave was found guilty of a capital crime, the jury was required to set the value of the slave and award the owner one-half of that value.[1]

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[1]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 244.

Murder, rape, burglary, robbery, arson, manslaughter of a white person, and insurrection were some of the offenses considered capital crimes if committed by a slave. An attempt to commit any of these crimes was a capital offense. Negroes, who were accessories to any of these crimes, were subject to capital punishment.[1]

The punishment received by a slave or free Negro for a capital crime was death. Most of the death sentences were to be carried out by hanging. The hangings were attended by all slaves in the area where the hanging took place. The masters made sure that all of their Negroes were present.[2] The slave owners felt that by requiring their Negroes to attend the hangings similar crimes as the one for which the person was hung would not be committed on their farms.

The viewing of hangings may have helped to curb crimes to a certain extent but the records show numerous cases of capital crimes. A Negro woman was hung for the murder of her child. During her trial she confessed killing the child, giving as her reason a statement that her owner was the father of the child and her mistress knowing this had constantly abused the baby. She did not want it to suffer any longer, so she took its life.[3]

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[1]Sellers, Slavery In Alabama, pp. 217-20.

[2]Phillips, American Negro Slavery, p. 463.

[3]Olmsted, Cotton Kingdom, p. 240.

Slaves sometimes killed their owners and overseers because of harsh treatment. One Negro woman was lashed by an overseer while she was chopping cotton; she turned upon the overseer and killed him with her hoe.[1]

Often several slaves would band together to kill their overseer or owner when they felt they had been unjustly abused or overworked.[2] Richard E. Stewart of Sumter County, Alabama, was killed in October, 1857, by ten of his slaves who beat him to death with a wooden mallet and hauled his body to the corn field where it was buried.[3]

The death penalty for a slave punished the owner as well as the Negro. Even though the court set the value of a slave and paid the owner for part of his loss the amount paid was only half of the value of the slave; therefore, the owner had to stand the rest of the loss of his investment.[4]

The crimes other than capital crimes committed by slaves often received only the attention of the owner and punishment was administered by the owner or overseer on the plantation.[5] However, Alabama law did provide for trials for the so called "lesser offenses":

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[1]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 175.

[2]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 131.

[3]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 247.

[4]Ibid., p. 244.

[5]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 256.

> For the offense of petit larceny, or any offense of a lesser grade, any slave may be tried by any justice of the peace on warrant, and may be sentenced to receive any number of stripes not exceeding fifty, which sentence shall be executed by the constable; but no justice of the peace shall be authorized to inflict more than thirty-nine lashes, unless he associates with him at least two respectable slaveholders, who will concur with him in the propriety of the sentence.[1]

Alabama law permitted up to one hundred lashes on the bare back of slaves who forged a pass, engaged in riots, unlawful assemblies, and for trespassing.[2]

In order to enforce the laws every slaveowner under the age of sixty and every non-slaveholder under forty-five was compelled by state law to perform patrol duty.[3] The so called "patrollers" were often guilty of abusing the slaves. They were hated and feared more than any other individuals by slaves.[4]

The whipping of slaves was often cruel and a poor way to punish, but to put a slave in jail as a means of punishment was harder on the owner than the slave. The owner lost the services of the slave which during the busy season of the year could mean a great financial loss, though the slave in many instances did not mind a few days

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 106.

[2]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 210.

[3]Ibid., p. 214.

[4]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 168.

in jail because he did not have to work during his jail stay.[1] The whippings were frequent but when administered with the whip, as described by Sydnor, did very little damage to the slave.

> The common overseer's whip consisted of a stout flexible stalk, large at the handle, tapering rapidly to the distance of about eighteen inches, and thence continued with cord or leather; the whole is covered with leather plat, which continues tapering into, and forms the lash--the whole together being about three feet and a half long. To the end of the lash is attached a soft, dry, buckskin cracker, about three eights of an inch wide and ten or twelve inches long, which is the only part allowed to strike, in whipping on the bare skin. So soft is the cracker, that a person who has not the sleight of using the whip could scarcely hurt a child with it. When it is used by an experienced hand it makes a very loud report, and stings, or burns the skin smartly, but does not bruise it. One hundred stripes well laid on with it, would not injure the skin as much as ten moderate stripes with a cow-skin.[2]

The Negroes were often whipped for very minor offenses. A Negro girl was whipped for hiding cookies she planned to eat later.[3] A man was whipped for failing to comb the master's horse before the saddle was put on the animal. There were also whippings in order to rush slaves out of their cabins for work in the mornings.

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[1]Sydnor, Slavery In Mississippi, p. 86.

[2]Ibid., p. 88.

[3]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 7.

James Tait stated that he whipped the last slave out of his cabin in the morning. He wanted them out as quickly as possible after the horn sounded for work.[1]

There was always a problem with runaway slaves especially on large plantations. They left the plantation in order to find a friend or a member of their family that had been sold.[2] They also ran away in order to avoid hard work or abuse by a hard overseer. Sometimes the runaways went only as far as the nearest woods where they could watch the plantation house for the return of their master. They would return when they were sure the master was back on the plantation.[3]

Bloodhounds were used in Alabama to trail runaway slaves. The dogs were well trained to follow a Negro but generally were not allowed to catch him. The Negroes climbed the nearest tree when the dogs came close, but if they were caught in an open field the hunter would call off the dogs unless the Negro fought with them. If the Negro fought when caught, the dogs were allowed "to tear him up a little."[4]

Often the slave got such a start that the dogs could not trail them. The masters were forced to use other means to attempt to recover his runaway slaves,

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[1]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 54.

[2]Sellers, Slavery In Alabama, p. 267.

[3]Phillips, American Negro Slavery, p. 203.

[4]Olmsted, Cotton Kingdom, p. 387.

when the dogs failed. Henry Gunnison of Mobile, Alabama, advertised in a Mobile newspaper for his runaway slaves. He offered a twenty dollar reward to any one who would secure an old Negro man named Abraham Miller and his wife Volinda and notify him in Mobile.[1] Rewards as high as $200.00 were often offered for the return of runaways.[2] The masters in advertising for a runaway frequently insisted that the slave had left for no good reason, or for none that they could understand.[3] In many cases the slave ran away because of a longing for at least temporary relief from the constant restraints and disciplines connected with slavery.[4]

Cruelty to slaves did exist through out the years of Negro slavery. It was found in most communities and was not always the result of poor or unconcerned overseers, but as a general rule cruelty was much more common in newly settled regions where ambitious young men were trying to make their fortunes swiftly and had little concern for their slaves' health and lives.[5]

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[1]Mobile Commercial Regrister, Vol. 1, No. 24, Monday Evening, March 4, 1822, p. 2.

[2]Sellers, Slavery In Alabama, p. 279.

[3]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 111.

[4]Ibid., p. 114.

[5]Ibid., p. 185.

CHAPTER VII

Education and Religion

Alabama like other states of the South did not provide public education for her slave population. In fact many states both north and south put laws on their statue books forbidding the teaching of Negroes.[1] Alabama's Constitution which was adopted in 1819, declared that "schools, and the means of education, shall forever be encouraged." There was no mention at that time about educating slaves or about segregation.[2] However, as a result of the Southampton Insurrection, led by Nat Turner in 1831, the General Assembly of the State of Alabama passed several acts in 1832 to strengthen the laws dealing with slaves.[3] In that year the General Assembly passed a law prohibiting any person attempting to educate slaves. A violator of the 1832 Law was subject to a fine of not less than $250.00 nor more than $500.00.[4]

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[1]W. D. Weatherford, Negro Life in The South (New York Association Press, 1915), p. 93. Hereinafter sited as Weatherford, Negro Life in The South.

[2]Barnett Hollander, Slavery in America (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1964), p. 93. Hereinafter sited as Hollander, Slavery in America.

[3]Davis, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 94.

[4]Ibid., p. 95.

The majority of slaves in Alabama were ignorant of books, but they were trained and educated from early infancy in many of the essentials of good citizenship and efficient service.[1] The training and education that they received was provided by the master's family. The children played together and sometimes learned to read from the same books even though the Negro children were not attending school.[2]

There were instances where the master or his family did a very efficient job in teaching slaves. They taught them to read the Bible and other books as well. One Negro servant, named Ellis, of Alabama could read both Greek and Latin and was reported to be anxious to learn Hebrew.[3] He, of course, was an exception to the rule as most slaves did well just to learn to read. According to the slaves, "Mother Wit was responsible for what they did and said. Mother Wit tells you what to say and do and think, on the spur of the moment; and yet its promptings come from away back."[4]

The slave's general education was prohibited by law, but his religious training was actually encouraged

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[1]Weatherford, Negro Life in The South, p. 89.

[2]Interview with Anna Morgan.

[3]Therodore D. Jervey, The Slave Trade (Columbia: The State Company, 1925), p. 113.

[4]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 1.

by the majority of owners. There was little resistance to the religious teaching of the Negro in the State of Alabama throughout the slave era.[1] Many masters saw the benefits of religious instruction to their slaves in moral relations, and they felt that religious training enhanced the slave's value as an honest, faithful servant and laborer.[2] The owners realized that they gained much by developing the pride of their slaves and by cultivating in them a desire to have a reputation for honesty and fidelity. The slave having religious training and a desire for a good reputation did not steal as much or drink as much as other Negroes and therefore brought a higher price when offered for sale.[3]

The slaves who were converted usually belonged to white churches since it was feared by many Whites that separate churches would give them unnecessary opportunity to stir up discontent and bring on uprisings.[4] They had their places in the white churches where they either sat on the floor or in the gallery.[5] Some churches had a partition near the rear of the church to separate the

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[1]Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, p. 294.

[2]Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 156.

[3]Ibid., p. 163.

[4]Weatherford, Negro Life in The South, p. 135.

[5]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 25.

slaves from their owners.[1] The entire slave family attended church and responded to the needs of their master's family even in church. When the owner's children cried out during church, a servant quietly slipped the child out of church for a walk or a cup of water.[2]

The slaves were accepted as members the same as whites. The minutes of the Antioch Church in Calhoun County, Alabama, in conference on May 3, 1859, shows a vote to accept three slaves.

> Antioch Church met in Conference and recd. by letter from Friendship Church Brother Prime and his wife, Sister Aggy, servants of Bro. S. G. Jenkins and also Sister Hannah from Friendship a cullared woman in charge of Mr. Hendrick.[3] Then adjourned in order.

The Antioch Church roll for September, 1862, listed several slaves and in some instances their masters and how the Negroes were received by the church. The following is part of the roll:

Primes		Servants of S. G. Jenkins
Todd	Letter	
Aggy	Letter	
Mary		
Amander		
Emeline	Letter	
Caroline		
Julia		
Willie Ann	Letter	
Mary Ann	Letter	B. A. Matteson

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[1] Mount Zion Baptist Church Records on file in Carnegia Library, Anniston, Alabama.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Antioch Church, McIntosh Road, Anniston, Alabama, records on file in Carnegie Library, Anniston, Alabama.

Emiline	Ex. and Restored	
Jessie	Ex.	
Pleasant	S. Mc	
Malinda		
Lucy		
David	Ex.	Mrs. Jack
Willis	Ex.	T. Merrit
Solomon	Ex.	S. Hawkins
Emma	Ex.	
Lucy		
Natt		
Hamier	Letter	Free
Martha	Ex.	I. Hawkins[1]

The list contains those that were excluded and the minutes for April 2, 1859, shows that the church voted to exclude Sister Amanda, a servant of S. G. Jenkins. She was excluded from church fellowship for adultery.[2]

The rapid growth of congregations often made it necessary to enlarge the church or build a new one. The growth of Mount Zion Baptist Church during the 1850's made it necessary for the congregation to build a new church. In 1860, John Hubbard and his son Baylus contracted to build a new church for the Mount Zion congregation. They made use of slaves owned by members to construct the new building which still stands today.[3]

The Methodist began their work in Alabama with slaves about the turn of the 19th Century, and by 1832 they had enrolled about 3,000. However, slaves seemed to favor the Baptist Church. The Immersion required by the

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[1]Antioch Church Roll, September, 1862, Carnegie Library, Anniston, Alabama.

[2]Antioch Church Minutes.

[3]Mount Zion Baptist Church Records, Carnegie Library, Anniston, Alabama.

Baptist church appealed to them. It was reported that the slaves came out of the water, and believed they saw "The Lord."[1] Mr. Olmsted found that not one slave in seven had any clear comprehension of the meaning of the Articles of Faith which they professed. He found four Negro women who belonged to a Baptist church, all of whom had children but were not married. The father, a Negro also, belonged to the same church.[2] The slaves in many areas of the state professed a belief in religion more rapidly than did the white population.[3]

The camp meetings always appealed to the slaves. They enjoyed taking part in the services--singing and praying without being called upon.[4] It was not unusual to see them walking to church carrying a new pair of shoes over their shoulder. They stopped and put the shoes on before entering the church.

Doctor Nehemiah Adams stated that in visiting churches in the South he had never seen a slave inattentive or asleep during the sermon. He found that the slaves were very faithful in attendance and often thoroughly instructed in the word of God.[5]

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[1]Wish, Slavery In The South, p. 202.

[2]Olmsted, The Cotton Kingdom, p. 473.

[3]Nehemiah Adams, South-Side View of Slavery (Boston: T. R. Marvin and B. B. Mussey and Co., 1854), p. 53. Hereinafter sited as Adams, South-Side View.

[4]Eaton, The Civilization of The Old South, p. 68.

[5]Adams, South-Side View, p. 59.

The Negroes enjoyed their days away from work which included Sundays as well as special holidays throughout the year. They often had a holiday when there was a wedding on the plantation. On some plantations a slave wedding amounted to little more than securing the permission of the master to live together and perhaps stepping over a broom.[1] On other plantations a wedding was a big affair. The couple getting married would dress up and go to the big house where the master would marry them by reading from the Bible. A big dinner and dance would follow the wedding.[2]

Christmas was a time of the year when all slaves looked forward to excitement. They were not concerned with the reason for the celebration but were happy with the free time. Some masters made Christmas a big day for their slaves by giving presents to all. The head of every family received five dollars and everybody got apples and candy.[3] The baking and preparation for Christmas often went on for several days.[4] The big celebration often lasted from Christmas until New Year's Day. During that time the slaves were not required to work other than to take care of the livestock.[5]

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[1]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 91.

[2]Ibid., p. 147.

[3]Vaughn, Life in Alabama, p. 140.

[4]Bodkin, Lay My Burden Down, p. 86.

[5]Douglas, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, p. 106.

SUMMARY

The buying or kidnapping of Negroes in the vicinity of Guinea and the West Coast of Africa for the purpose of transporting them to the new colonies of North America became a very profitable business during the 17th Century. Vessels from several European Countries sailed the seas with their human cargoes with little if any regard for the welfare of the black men, women, and children who in many instances literally filled their ships beyond capacity.

The Negroes were sold into slavery along the Atlantic Coast of North America. They migrated with the American pioneers southward and westward with many settling in the Mississippi territory that later became the State of Alabama.

The pioneer settler who came to Alabama with his family and slaves faced many hardships and much hard work. The first major task facing them was the building of some type of shelter. Houses for the masters and for the slaves had to be built and all able bodied workers took part in the construction with owners and slaves working side by side.

The majority of houses built by the pioneers were constructed of logs. The master's home was of the same basic log construction as that of his slaves. The master's house was the "big house" and the small cabins that stretched out from the "big house" were slave quarters. Some wealthy planters built fine mansions, but as a general rule the plantation owner's home consisted of a cottage with no claim to luxury or fine living.

The one and two room log cabins for the slaves were very simple. They were usually built up off the ground, whitewashed inside and outside, and furnished with only the necessities. The cracks between the logs were filled with anything that would keep out the cold winter wind and rain, and was easily knocked out in the summer in order to let in light and fresh air.

Clothing for the slaves was provided by the owners. They either issued the clothing necessary or suitable for the season of the year at the time it was to be worn or they were forced to keep a constant watch on the Negroes to make sure that they wore the suitable clothing. Most of the clothing for Negroes was made on the plantations from materials purchased outside of the State of Alabama. Many slaves were bought for their skills of sewing, spinning, weaving, and shoe repair. The slaves received issues of warm bed clothing each year. They received matresses and sheets as they were needed.

Food was usually provided in sufficient quantity. There was not an abundance and a variety of food available at all times, but generally there was plenty of meat and bread. Many slaves had their own gardens and supplemented their regular issued food with vegetables which they had grown. There was some trapping, hunting, and fishing for extra meat. The records indicate that many slaves in Alabama were better off than slaves of bordering states in amount spent by their owners for food and often far better off than the poor whites of Alabama.

The majority of plantation owners in Alabama issued the meat, meal, and other food supplies to the Negro families rather than prepare the food in a central kitchen. However, some small farmers did have the food for their families and their slaves prepared together in a central kitchen. Slaves were allowed a reasonable time off for lunch, and some slaves were given time to rest after the noon meal.

Slave labor in Alabama was used primarily in agriculture. The production of crops such as cotton and corn required long hours of hard work on Alabama farms. The Negro was a cheap source of labor for the owners but required constant supervision either from the plantation owner or overseers working for him. The supervision was often the greatest problem the owners faced. To find a qualified overseer, and one who protected the owners investment in his slaves, was often hard to do.

Many slaveowners drew up contracts or rules which the overseers had to follow. Generally, the contracts proved to be most successful. Some slaveowners tried sons or relatives in the position of overseers. However, there was still the complaint of slave abuse by the overseer.

The slaves worked long hours in the preparation of grounds, the cultivation and harvest of crops, but they seldom were badly overworked. Many slaves learned early to pace themselves in their work because to accomplish too much in one day meant that the next day they would be expected to do as much or more. Slaves were used as house servants on the large plantations, and many had special jobs that required their skills. There were cooks, nurses, seamstresses, spinners, shoemakers, and many other skilled jobs done by the Negroes. Some were hired out to other plantation owners or to do jobs in nearby towns.

Crimes were committed by the slaves and against the slaves, but the crimes that attracted the most attention were the capital crimes committed by the slaves. Capital crimes included murder, rape, burglary, robbery, and carried the death sentence if convicted. The sentence was usually carried out by hanging at which all slaves in the vicinity were expected to attend.

For minor crimes the usual punishment for a slave was the whipping of the slave. They were whipped for

almost any reason and often for reasons that did not warrant such punishment. However, slaves could not be put in jail for minor offenses as to place a slave in jail punished the owner as much or more so than the slave.

Cruelty to slaves did exist and was found in most communities. In many instances it resulted from owners hiring poor overseers. Other cases resulted from owners trying to get rich over night.

There was no public education for slaves in Alabama and in fact after 1832 there were laws that prohibited the teaching of slaves. Many Negroes were taught by their owners' families. Some learned to read well and to write letters, but the majority had little exposure to any education other than religious teaching. Most plantation owners wanted their slaves to take part in religious services and encouraged them in religious training.

The Negroes attended white churches and belonged to the same church as the white. They took part in prayer meeting and other religious services by singing and praying. However, they were not allowed to hold their own religious services without white people being in attendance. They enjoyed the holidays and especially the Christmas season. They looked forward to the gifts from the master and his family and the few days off from work.

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