

South Carolina
Historical Magazine

Volume 86 Number 4

October 1985

CONTENTS

Articles:	PAGE
The Journal of Frederick William Muller, edited by Charles W. Nicholson	255
The College of Charleston and the Year 1785, by George C. Rogers, Jr.	282
An Economic Study of the Substantial Slaveholders of Orangeburg County, 1860-1880, by Jayne Morris-Crowther	296
Book Reviews and Notes:	
Hoffman, Tate and Albert, <i>An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution</i> , by Jerome Nadelhaft	315
Yearns, <i>The Confederate Governors</i> , by Richard H. Abbott .	317
From the Archives: "A Flag Worthy of Your State and People": The South Carolina State Flag, by Wylma Anne Wates	320
From the Society: Recent Manuscript Accessions, by Harlan Greene	332
Index to Volume 86	337

AN ECONOMIC STUDY OF THE SUBSTANTIAL SLAVEHOLDERS OF ORANGEBURG COUNTY, 1860-1880

JAYNE MORRIS-CROWTHER*

Since the system of slave labor represented so important a part of the plantation economy of the Old South, emancipation of her slaves created a revolutionary situation. After all, the south had been economically, politically, and socially bound to the "peculiar institution." Therefore, after emancipation there was a question regarding the future not only of the south but also of the slaveholders themselves. Could the planters survive the Civil War, emancipation and the accompanying changes? Recently, Jonathan Wiener in his *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama 1869-1885* concluded that the wealthy slaveholders in the Black Belt counties of Alabama survived the war and emancipation rather well. They were relatively wealthier in 1870 than in 1860 and actually increased their share of the landholdings at the expense of the lesser planters. They even overcame a challenge to their domination by the local merchants.¹ However, the south was hardly a homogeneous region and Wiener studied a recently settled area. The question remains whether Wiener's conclusions would apply to an older area of the south. This study is an attempt to answer this question using Orangeburg County, South Carolina, to test Wiener's findings regarding the economic consequences of the war and resulting emancipation upon the substantial planters.

Orangeburg County is a good case study for several reasons. Blacks made up two thirds of the population in 1860 with 16,224 blacks and 8,108 whites.² Taxable property returned and taxes collected in Orange Parish showed only sixteen free Negroes.³ This indicated a substantial slave population and the likelihood of large plantations. According to the 1860 aggregate census, these slaves supported a plantation economy in Orangeburg which produced 16,315 bales of cotton that year.⁴ Cotton had been grown as a major crop in Orangeburg since the 1840 census.⁵ In

* Now a resident of West Bloomfield, Michigan, Ms. Morris-Crowther based this article on her master's thesis for the University of Houston.

¹ Jonathan Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama 1869-1885* (Baton Rouge, 1978), pp. 14, 107.

² U. S. Bureau of the Census, *The Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Compiled From the Original Returns of the Eighth Census of Population*, pp. 449, 451.

³ *Charleston Tri-Weekly Courier*, June 28, 1860.

⁴ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *The Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Compiled From the Original Returns of the Eighth Census of Agriculture*, p. 412.

⁵ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, 1840*, p. 192.

this institution as Grammar or English School, which it was until it was transformed into a full-fledged college in 1837, when it became a municipal college.

Dr. Easterby was my professor. At the end of World War II he suggested that I go to the University of Chicago to work on my doctor's degree. He had received his degree from that institution somewhat earlier. I owe my career to him, and I am most grateful.

Next month [March] the College will celebrate with much festivity the 200th anniversary of its founding — the theme is Renaissance-200 — the rebirth of a great institution.

It is still true to its heritage — its chief mission to prepare young men and women to be leaders of this great republic.

Let me conclude with these words drawn from a bicentennial address delivered in 1973 by Irving Kristol — the title of that address was "The American Revolution as a Successful Revolution."

"Just a few weeks ago, one of our most prominent statesmen remarked to an informal group of political scientists that he had been reading *The Federalist* papers and he was astonished to see how candidly our Founding Fathers could talk about the frailties of human nature and the necessity for a political system to take such frailties into account. It was not possible, he went on to observe, for anyone active in American politics today to speak publicly in this way: he would be accused of an imperfect democratic faith in the common man. Well, the Founding Fathers for the most part, and most of the time, subscribed to such an 'imperfect' faith. They understood that republican self-government could not exist if humanity did not possess — at some moments, and to a fair degree — the traditional 'republican virtues' of self-control, self-reliance, and a disinterested concern for the public good. They also understood that these virtues did not exist everywhere, at all times, and that there was no guarantee of their 'natural' preponderance. James Madison put it this way:

As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust; so there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form."²⁴

²⁴ Kristol, *The American Revolution*, pp. 4-5.

addition, General William Tecumseh Sherman's army passed through Orangeburg in 1865 and left extensive damage in its wake. The future of the slaveholders in Orangeburg would be affected not only by emancipation but also by the war's destruction and the exhausted soil of middle South Carolina.⁶

This study concentrates upon those slaveholders who had the greatest interest in the system. Therefore, only slaveholders owning more than fifteen slaves have been considered. This number was chosen to exclude the very small farms.

Of the Orangeburg planters owning more than fifteen slaves the average owned thirty-six. This figure was a little high since there were a few plantations that had as many slaves as 169 and 184. The same was true of real estate value which averaged \$11,721 and was also raised by the addition of a few (\$70,000, \$75,000 and \$138,600) of the wealthiest landowners in the county. While the range of improved land on the plantations went from fifteen acres to 2,100, the average planter owned 464 acres. The unimproved farm land ranged from a low of only eight acres to a high of 27,460 acres, but the average fell at 1,421 acres. Orangeburg planters worked their land with about \$403 worth of farm implements (with \$25 as the lowest figure and \$4,350 as the highest) and owned \$1,745 worth of livestock (with \$100 as lowest and \$12,500 as highest). Almost all the farmers grew Indian corn for their own needs, and while some used as little as 150 bushels per year, the larger plantations consumed as much as six to ten thousand bushels. The average was 1,302 bushels. Although Orangeburg was a large cotton-producing county, not all planters chose to raise cotton: eight percent did not. Some produced as little as one bale while the large plantations produced as much as 409 and 606, the average being forty-seven bales. Each bale weighed 460 pounds, and the price of cotton stood at about eleven cents per pound in 1860.⁷

It appeared that most planters in Orangeburg County were married although the census of 1860 did not list the relationship of household members to the head of the household. They listed only an average of three children living within their household. Since the average age of the planters was forty-seven, possibly there were children who were no longer living at home. In addition, eleven percent of the households were headed by women in 1860. Personal property owned by planters ranged from as little as \$3,500 to as much as \$134,000, which averaged out to

⁶ Hugo S. Ackerman, *A Brief History of Orangeburg* (Orangeburg, n.d.), pp. 6-7.

⁷ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Eighth Census of the United States 1860*, South Carolina — Population Schedule Orangeburg and Pickens Counties, and *Agriculture of the Eighth Census of the United States 1860*, South Carolina — Agricultural Schedule, Marion, Marlboro, Orangeburg and Pickens Counties.

approximately \$34,774 per household. Most households owned more personal than real property, the bulk of this personal property represented an investment in slaves. The Orangeburg planters were financially bound to the slave economy.⁸

When the Civil War broke out, the white people of Orangeburg gave strong support to the Confederacy, and many men enlisted in the Confederate Army. In the closing months of the conflict, Orangeburg experienced the war first hand: Sherman's army burnt buildings such as the courthouse, jail, railroad depot, and government cotton warehouses.⁹ While there was general respect for the population of the county, there was much destruction of property and livestock.¹⁰

When peace finally came, Orangeburg had suffered considerably. In 1865, Sidney Andrews, traveling through the area, found the town and neighboring rural areas demolished. The railroad was very badly damaged. Even parts of the county that missed the bulk of Sherman's army, like Branchville, suffered destruction from raiding parties. Andrews reported that fences were in terrible disrepair and livestock scarce. He believed that the people of Orangeburg and the central part of South Carolina had been wiped out by the war and concluded that they had to start over from nothing.¹¹

While the planters of Orangeburg were in serious economic trouble, they still owned their lands and the land could be cultivated for a profit. There were, however, many obstacles to agricultural prosperity. The master-slave relationship was dissolved and the labor force was greatly diminished. Some blacks remained on the plantations while others left the county to seek their own land.¹² Many women and children withdrew from the labor force altogether. In addition, the war time dedication to provision crops had left the soil greatly depleted. Orangeburg and other counties in South Carolina had been fighting soil deterioration for at least twenty years, and the blockade had prevented the importation of much needed fertilizer.¹³ The price of cotton at a high of one dollar per pound in 1863 fell continually until 1870 when it stood at seventeen cents per pound.¹⁴ The year 1867 brought a severe drought and extensive cotton worm damage.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ackerman, *A Brief History of Orangeburg*, p. 7.

¹⁰ John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas* (Chapel Hill, 1956), p. 58.

¹¹ Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War* (New York, 1969), pp. 30-37.

¹² Francis B. Simkins, "The Problems of South Carolina Agriculture After the Civil War," *North Carolina Historical Review* (Jan.-Oct. 1930) 27: 50-55.

¹³ Robert H. Woody, "Some Aspects of the Economic Condition of South Carolina After the Civil War," *North Carolina Historical Review* (1930) 7: 252.

¹⁴ James L. Watkins, *Production and Price of Cotton for One Hundred Years*, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Series Bulletin #9, (Washington, 1895), p. 11.

While cotton prices were falling, the farmer throughout the south had credit problems as well. Currency devaluation, depression and the lack of an adequate credit system hurt the planters. The cotton factors, who in antebellum times provided needed credit, were destroyed by the Civil War. The southern banking system was also destroyed by the war and only reestablished itself very slowly. Later, the local merchants accepted growing crops as collateral, and they filled the credit vacuum left by the cotton factors.¹⁵

By 1870 the planters of Orangeburg were still in a period of transition. Within the context of postwar realities, they strove to become the great planters they had been before the war. They adapted themselves to emancipation but sought to control the freedmen as much as possible. They suffered great losses in the value of real estate and personal property but remained very persistent. In turn, they sought credit from new sources and became increasingly dependent upon the crop lien system. The planters replaced outdated farm implements with more modern ones, and they tried to improve the fertility of their soil through the extensive use of fertilizers. They rebuilt their transportation systems and formed an agricultural society to offer help in mutual agrarian problems. Throughout this transitional period, the Orangeburg planters displayed a determination to remain on the land within the county and optimize the new social, political, and economic realities of the 1870s.

The Census of 1870 for Orangeburg County must be viewed with some skepticism as a complete enumeration of its inhabitants. According to its count, fifty-seven percent of the planters in the 1860 census continued to live in Orangeburg County in 1870. (They are therefore considered statistically "persistent.") However, out of the original 1860 sample of 294, an additional twenty-six still lived in Orangeburg according to the census of 1880, while they failed to show up on the 1870 census. Other problems besides careless census enumeration affected the persistence of the substantial planters. There was a thirty percent drop in white population for the county during the ten-year span. One explanation was that many had died. Twenty-three percent of the men of military age in South Carolina died during the Civil War.¹⁶ If the head of a household died and left neither a wife nor offspring bearing his name, the family would be "lost" in the interim.

Of the 168 planters who persisted in 1870, fifty of them failed to leave sufficient information for the comparisons used in this study. They were counted in the rates of persistence but the data were incomplete

¹⁵ Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom — The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (New York, 1977), pp. 107-109.

¹⁶ Woody, "Some Aspects of the Economic Condition," p. 353.

thus making accurate comparisons of land acreage and real estate value difficult. Using the remaining 118, the average acreage for the substantial planters in Orangeburg fell from 464 in 1860 to 309 acres of improved land in 1870, a loss of thirty-three percent. They also lost unimproved land which fell from an average of 1,421 acres in 1860 to 920 acres in 1870, a loss of thirty-five percent. Since there were losses in both the improved and unimproved land, the planters in Orangeburg did not merely allow their improved land to fall into an unimproved state. The average value of the individual farms fell eighty-six percent from \$11,721 in 1860 to only \$1,674 in 1870.* The average value of farm implements also declined seventy percent from \$403 in 1860 to \$120 in 1870. Livestock value dropped sixty-six percent from an average of \$1,745 in 1860 to \$875 ten years later. Indian corn, which was the primary grain consumed on the farms, fell from 1,302 bushels in 1860 to 570 bushels in 1870, an average drop of fifty-six percent. Cotton production survived the poor seasons of 1866 and 1867 as the main staple of Orangeburg. In 1870 the average production was 8,398 pounds. In 1860 the average production of cotton had been 21,942 pounds, and therefore there was a drop of fifty-nine percent in the amount of cotton grown. The greatest decline for Orangeburg's planters occurred in the category of personal property. Slaves were included in the value of personal property in 1860, and the average for the substantial slaveholders in Orangeburg was \$34,774. By 1870, that figure had plunged to \$2,207, a loss of ninety-seven percent.¹⁷

There were several explanations for the losses in acreage. The loss in improved acreage could be directly related to the change in labor between 1860 and 1870. The slave system extracted the full amount of labor from each member in the slave family. The freedmen chose to work shorter hours and consequently, the man-hours per person fell considerably. Furthermore, the withdrawal of many women and children from the labor force added to the decline. The total improved land for the substantial planters of Orangeburg County fell thirty-four percent from 43,816 acres in 1860 to 25,532 acres in 1870.¹⁸

* Figures of dollar value have already been calculated in terms of 1860 dollars or with the 33% rate of inflation worked in.

¹⁷ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* South Carolina — Population Schedule of Orangeburg and Pickens Counties, and *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* South Carolina — Population Schedule of Orangeburg and Pickens Counties, and *Agriculture of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* South Carolina — Agricultural Schedule, Marion, Marlboro, Orangeburg and Pickens Districts and *Agriculture of the Ninth Census of United States, 1870*, South Carolina — Agricultural Schedule Orangeburg and Pickens Counties.

¹⁸ Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, pp. 44-47.

The reduction in unimproved land for the substantial slaveholders in Orangeburg could be directly connected to the policy of the Reconstruction government in South Carolina in levying a heavy tax upon all unused land. This was to force owners to either be productive or to sell their property.¹⁹ Consequently, the average of unimproved land for the substantial slaveholders fell thirty-five percent from 1,421 acres in 1860 to 919 in 1870.

Closely related to farm acreage was the cash value of the farms. In this respect all of the substantial planters of Orangeburg County suffered large losses. The average cash value of farms fell for the substantial planters (as previously shown) eighty-six percent. Within Orangeburg County people owning the same amount of improved and unimproved land in both 1860 and 1870 still had the value fall by twenty-six percent. Real estate value in general fell between 1860 and 1870 and this was symptomatic of the postwar south. Some historians have suggested that this was because of the physical damage to plantations. Since surplus capital had previously been invested in slaves and land, there was none available to rebuild. In addition, the shortage of reliable labor drove property values down.²⁰ Also, the value of real estate was said to have been underreported in 1870 for tax purposes therefore the real estate value for Orangeburg County may not have been quite as depressed as the figures suggest. Nevertheless, all of the large planters of Orangeburg lost a substantial amount of their land value. The group of slaveholders who once owned thirty to forty-four slaves suffered the greatest loss. An explanation for this may be that they were the group most closely bound to the slave system. The smaller slaveholder could possibly have kept a greater percentage of his land under cultivation using his own labor.²¹ The wealthiest planters may have had options as well. Perhaps the freedmen were inclined to remain on the very large estates.²² While there was no evidence to suggest the great planters found credit easier, they were in a better position to barter.

Slaves were included as part of an individual's personal property in 1860. As a result of emancipation, the dramatic losses in personal property are easily understood. The data indicated that the substantial planters of Orangeburg lost between ninety-three and ninety-nine percent of their personal property.²³ Obviously people who had a substantial

¹⁹ Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, 1965), p. 148.

²⁰ Richard Griffin, "Problems of the Southern Cotton Planters After the Civil War," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 39 (1955): 103-117.

²¹ Eugene Genovese, *The Slave Economy of the Old South* (New York, 1967), p. 96.

²² Williamson, *After Slavery*, p. 39.

²³ *Population of the Eighth Census . . . Population of the Ninth . . . Agriculture of the Eighth . . . Agriculture of the Ninth . . .*

investment in slaves lost a great deal through emancipation. The significance of this figure demonstrated how extensive the Orangeburg financial commitment was to the slave economy.

Another statistic related to personal property was the value of farm implements. The average planter held \$403 worth of farm implements in 1860 and only \$120 in 1870, a drop of seventy percent.

Throughout the postwar south, the value of farm machinery and equipment fell by thirty-seven percent.²⁴ Part of the explanation for this decline must be attributed to the general depreciation of farm implements during the war years. Normal depreciation would account for a thirty-three to a sixty-six percent decline in value.²⁵ Additionally, Orangeburg County perhaps suffered greater losses to property than the average because of the devastation caused by Sherman's army.

One result of the losses in farm machinery and implements was the change in both the system and quality of cotton ginning. In antebellum times almost every cotton planter had a gin house. However, after the war Orangeburg had only one gin house for every thirty-two farms, and these were often owned by the local merchants. Consequently, cotton ginning became a separate business from cotton growing. Unfortunately, cotton picked on different plantations often at different times frequently had long and short fibers mixed. The merchant's gins operated rapidly and sometimes knotted and broke fibers. As cotton ginning moved from the plantations, the quality of cotton shipped out of Orangeburg declined.²⁶

In estimating the agricultural wealth of Orangeburg, the value of livestock was of vital importance. The Orangeburg planters did not lose livestock to the same extent as they did implements. Perhaps this only reflected the fact that livestock was a partially renewable resource. However, they were more distressed than planters generally throughout the South. The value of livestock in the former Confederate states fell by only twenty-eight percent.²⁷ In Orangeburg the average fell from \$1,745 in 1860 to \$575 in 1870 or sixty-six percent. Furthermore, the Orangeburg planters fared worse than their counterparts in South Carolina where the value of livestock fell forty-nine percent.²⁸

A partial explanation for this lay in the destruction wrought by Sherman's army. Their orders were to appropriate whatever they needed in terms of livestock. General Sherman specifically asked officers to

²⁴ Paul W. Gates, *Agriculture and the Civil War* (New York, 1965), p. 373.

²⁵ Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, p. 50.

²⁶ Harry Hammond, *South Carolina: Resources and Population, Institutions and Industries* (Charleston, 1883) pp. 589-595.

²⁷ Gates, *Agriculture and the Civil War*, p. 373.

²⁸ Francis B. Simkins, "The Solution of Post-Bellum Agricultural Problems in South Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* (Jan.-Oct., 1930) 7: 205.

discriminate between "the rich who are usually hostile, and the poor or industrious who are usually neutral or friendly."²⁹ Any area through which Sherman's army marched was susceptible to confiscations of livestock. The planters in this study were thus considered "hostile" and lost more than most.

The preceding statistics were ones of value: however, statistics of agricultural production are important to this study as well. While the main agricultural interest of the area remained cotton, more acreage was devoted to Indian corn than cotton in 1870.³⁰ It became the main provision crop of Orangeburg planters and its cultivation was encouraged by organizations such as the Agricultural Society of South Carolina.³¹ However, the average 1860 planter grew 1,302 bushels of corn while the 1870 planter only grew 570 bushels. This was a decrease of fifty-six percent. Most plantations had decreased their livestock as well as their labor force and chose to cultivate less corn. Sometimes they were required to buy their provisions at a great expense.

One of the criteria for using Orangeburg County as a case study in planter persistence was large cotton production. By 1870, the average production of the substantial planters fell from 21,942 pounds in 1860 to 8,398 pounds in 1870, or fifty-nine percent. Labor and credit problems continued to plague the planters in 1870. The small slaveholder maintained a greater percentage of his cotton crop than his wealthier counterparts: perhaps in Orangeburg the smaller farms suffered less than the larger ones. Their smaller investment in slaves made both their losses and their dependence upon slave labor less.

As the 1870s progressed, planter families in South Carolina increasingly concentrated on cotton. Unfortunately, increased cotton production led to a steady decline in prices. By 1872 it was down to eighteen or nineteen cents per pound, and by 1876 the higher yields helped lower the price to ten cents per pound.³²

An important reason why Orangeburg became tied to cotton production was the new credit system which replaced the cotton factorage system. Farmers were unable to pay cash for supplies needed before harvest and the local merchants filled the gap with small amounts of credit. These merchants secured their loans by mortgages on the prospective yields.³³ Since the risk involved in advancing cash before the harvest was great, the merchants demanded that the most reliable crop

²⁹ Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, p. 48.

³⁰ Simkins, "The Solution of Post-Bellum Agricultural," p. 204.

³¹ Chalmers S. Murray, *This Our Land — The Story of the Agricultural Society of South Carolina* (Columbia, 1949), p. 167.

³² Williamson, *After Slavery*, p. 168.

³³ Simkins, "The Solution of Post-Bellum Agricultural Problems," pp. 208-209.

be produced and this crop was cotton. They also charged high rates of interest and at harvest, the merchant received between one third and seven eighths of the crop for his earlier advances. The farmer oftentimes received little profit and was forced to enter into a similar agreement the next crop year.³⁴

The crop lien system was forcing Orangeburg planters to concentrate on cotton. Furthermore, the lien system took control over the freedmen from the employer when it allowed the freedmen to go directly to the merchant for supplies. However, it did provide the needed credit for necessary agricultural supplies. One of the supplies most needed was fertilizer. With fertilizer, the farmers of Orangeburg were getting more from their soil but having to spend additional capital before the crop was harvested.³⁵

New developments in transportation also enhanced the position of the rural merchant but led to added expenses as well. The steam operated cotton gins compressed the bales and prepared the cotton directly for market. The railroad afforded the local merchants expensive but direct transportation to these markets. This greater expense was passed on by the merchant to his customers in the form of higher interest rates for credit.³⁶

In spite of the obstacles to agricultural prosperity, the planters of Orangeburg remained remarkably persistent between 1860 and 1870. Fifty-seven percent of them stayed within the county during a very tumultuous decade. They were persistent because they were able to adapt to and mold postwar circumstances in Orangeburg. They adapted to emancipation but sustained some control over their freedmen. They suffered great financial losses but used the wealth of their crops to secure credit. With available credit, the planters rebuilt their agricultural operations. The South Carolina Railroad rebuilt the line through Orangeburg, and the way was opened to trade outside the county. The planters remained because they were able to work within the new system.

Consequently, when the 1870s drew to a close, the period of transition had ended also. The uncertainties of the immediate postwar era had passed. Federal domination of the state had ended, and politically the state controlled itself. The Orangeburg planters accepted the new agricultural system and sought to prosper within it.

Throughout the South a new agricultural system had evolved after

³⁴ Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, 1932), pp. 209-211, 213.

³⁵ Simkins, "The Problems of South Carolina Agriculture," p. 76.

³⁶ Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, p. 110.

the Civil War. This evolution was complete in Orangeburg County by 1880. The 1880 Census for Orangeburg indicated that the substantial planters had survived the postwar transition period and had adjusted to the demands of emancipation and the accompanying political upheaval. They accepted a new credit system and the increased influence of the merchants. They accepted what was necessary, modifying what they could. The 1880s were not a period of transition but rather a time of building on earlier changes. By 1880 the children of the substantial planters of 1860 played an increasingly important role in the economic affairs of the county. Working within a new framework, the planter families continued a significant role in agricultural affairs. This role changed gradually as some of the children chose to expand their activities beyond the plantation. As in prewar times, they remained an influential minority.

The 1880 Census reflected the better times for Orangeburg planters. Most farmers had percentage increases in the value of their farm implements and cotton production, as well as gains in other aspects of farm wealth and agricultural production. The substantial planters of Orangeburg experienced an average gain in the cash value of their farms of forty-six percent. These increases were seldom substantial enough to offset the losses sustained before 1870 however, and consequently, they suffered overall losses from 1860 to 1880. But the Orangeburg agricultural economy prospered more by 1880 than anytime since the war.

The 144 substantial planters of Orangeburg who were persistent from 1860 to 1880 indicated a persistence rate of forty-nine percent. Their average acreage of improved land fell to only 213 acres or another thirty-one percent decrease from 1870. This left their overall decrease in acres of improved land from 1860 at fifty-four percent. Their acreage of unimproved land also fell another twenty percent to only 734 acres. This brought their loss in unimproved land down forty-nine percent since 1860. However, the average cash value of their farms increased between 1870 and 1880, by forty-six percent.* This was not sufficient to bring it to the prewar levels, and the planters suffered an overall seventy-four percent decline in the value of their farms from 1860 to 1880. Also the average value of farm implements went up from \$120 to \$147 between 1870 and 1880, eighteen percent, for Orangeburg farmers. Once more, this was not enough to make up for the great losses of the immediate postwar period, and there was an overall sixty-four percent loss in value of farm implements between 1860 and 1880. Livestock declined in value another twenty-three percent from an average of \$575 in 1870 to an

* All 1880 dollar amounts have been calculated in 1860 dollars or with the 24% inflation from 1860 to 1880 worked in.

average of \$444 in 1880. This brought the total percentage losses to seventy-five percent in the value of livestock from 1860 to 1880. The amount of Indian corn produced fell another twenty-four percent for the average substantial planter of Orangeburg between 1870 and 1880. This brought their overall production down by sixty-seven percent from the prewar level to 1880. Cotton production was up thirty-nine percent for the average Orangeburg planter from 8,398 in 1870 to 13,775 pounds in 1880. However, the increase during the 1870s did not compensate for the decline during the previous decade and the planters suffered a thirty-seven percent decline in cotton production from 1860 to 1880. Only six percent of the planter households were headed by women in 1880. This was a decrease from the eleven and twelve percent female-headed households of the 1860 and 1870 census. The average age for the households headed by sons only was thirty-four. These sons were younger in 1880 than their fathers had been (average age forty-seven) on the eve of the Civil War. They were also not as prosperous. They did have the same average number of children — three.³⁷

In the area of both improved and unimproved land most of the planters saw declines between 1870 and 1880. Consequently, just as between 1860 and 1870, they were not allowing their improved land to sink into an unimproved state. The county had plenty of land for sale and the Deeds and Conveyance Records of Orangeburg County showed that fifty-three percent of the persistent planters sold or gave away some of their land at least once between 1870 and 1880.³⁸ One of the reasons the planters sold land was that they were still plagued with labor problems. Harry Hammond noted in his *South Carolina: Resources and Populations, Institutions and Industries* that within Orangeburg County approximately fifty-four percent of the land under cultivation was worked by the owners themselves.³⁹ In Orangeburg County hired field labor was nevertheless available in the 1880s. Sharecropping was the system most preferred by the freedmen there.⁴⁰

Total acreage was closely related to the cash value of the farm. The value of the farms increased for all substantial planters between 1870 and 1880. An Orangeburg planter who owned the same amount of improved land and only twelve acres less of unimproved land saw the value of his farm increase thirty-eight percent between 1870 and 1880.

³⁷ U. S. Bureau of Census, *Agricultural Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States: 1860, Agricultural Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, Agricultural Schedules of the Tenth Census of the United States: 1880*.

³⁸ State of South Carolina, County of Orangeburg Office of Clerk of Court, *Deeds and Conveyances, Grantee, Orangeburg 1865-1904, Roll 60, 2/9/1954*.

³⁹ Hammond, *South Carolina: Resources*, p. 82.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 83, 100.

However, the average increase for the substantial planters was forty-six percent for all the former slaveholders.⁴¹

In the value of farm machinery, the Orangeburg planters also achieved increases. Most of the planters in Orangeburg saw the value of their farm implements increase from twenty-one to eighty-five percent between 1870 and 1880. In spite of the purchase of new and more valuable machinery, they all suffered percentage losses over their 1860 figures. The overall average for the substantial planters of Orangeburg was a seventy percent drop in the value of farm implements for the period 1860-1880.⁴²

In the value of livestock as well as the value of farm implements, the planters of Orangeburg showed a slow recovery. Even before the Civil War, livestock had become less important in Orangeburg. As the county committed itself to staple crops, livestock became of secondary importance. Most of the substantial farmers continued to see a decline in the value of their livestock throughout the 1870s. The average decline between 1870 and 1880 for the planters was twenty-three percent. Over the twenty year period from 1860 to 1880 the decline in livestock raised was seventy-five percent.⁴³

One explanation for the decline in livestock value in Orangeburg was that the livestock market throughout the nation was poor. The statistics for the whole country showed a slight decrease in livestock value between 1870 and 1880. In addition, Orangeburg was committed to cotton rather than provision crops. Consequently, it was expensive to feed stock with western corn. The poor livestock market and the entanglements of the lien system discouraged the growing of local corn.

Although some Orangeburg farmers grew more corn in 1880, the overall average was twenty-four percent less corn produced during the 1870s. The average for the substantial planters was sixty-seven percent less corn produced in 1880 than in 1860.⁴⁴

In April 1881, the Orangeburg *Democrat* reported that the supply of corn, fodder, and hay was scarce throughout the county. The previous season had been unfavorable and because of a protracted drought, corn likewise did not look promising for 1881. They suggested that the farmers plant other provision crops or sell their livestock.⁴⁵

As the 1880s progressed, Orangeburg planters may have devoted more acreage to provision crops. However, they were often bound by the

⁴¹ U. S. Bureau of Census, *Agriculture Schedules of the Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Census*.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Orangeburg Democrat*, April 14, 1881, June 30, July 7, 1881.

credit system to plant cotton. More than one third of the tilled acreage in the area was devoted to cotton. Over the ten-year period, the bales of cotton produced per square mile increased by forty-nine percent. Per capita pounds of lint cotton increased from 195 to 327 pounds, or sixty percent.⁴⁶ The average increase was thirty-nine percent over the ten-year period. By 1870, the south had regained its prewar position as the world leader in cotton production. However, the farmers of Orangeburg were still not producing what they had in 1860: thirty-seven percent less in 1880 than in 1860.⁴⁷

The perennial problem of the postwar cotton farmer in Orangeburg and throughout the south was the low price of cotton. By 1882, the price of cotton ranged from 8.75 cents to 11.25 cents per pound, depending upon the quality. These prices remained relatively stable throughout the 1880s.⁴⁸ With the cost of producing a pound of cotton approximately 8.375 cents, there was not much room for profit.

In spite of all of the problems associated with marketing cotton (such as high freight rates) the farmers of Orangeburg and many other areas of the south kept planting cotton. The major factor influencing this decision was outside the control of the planter and in the hands of his creditor. The lien law enacted by the state in 1866 was an effort to facilitate credit in places where labor and land were the only forms of wealth. Because of the risk involved with advancing supplies before the crop was harvested, the credit price was between twenty and one hundred percent higher than the cash price.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the credit system served a necessary purpose and continued to exist. Farmers had little capital and little chance to acquire it with the low price of cotton.⁵⁰ An attempt to repeal the lien law in 1873 failed. Consequently, the farmers of Orangeburg remained tied to the merchants and the credit lien system.

Harry Hammond noted the commitment to agriculture in both South Carolina and Orangeburg in 1883, and, while still the dominant pursuit, farming had not increased as rapidly as other occupations. Farming declined four percent between 1870 and 1880, while there was an increase in the professional and personal services of eighty-seven percent in the state and fifty-one percent in Orangeburg during the same ten-year period.⁵¹ Most of the merchants and manufacturers of the

⁴⁶ Hammond, *South Carolina: Resources*, pp. 81, 565.

⁴⁷ U. S. Bureau of Census, *Agriculture Schedules of the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Census*.

⁴⁸ *Orangeburg Times and Democrat*, March 21, July 20, 1882.

⁴⁹ Simkins, Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction*, p. 275.

⁵⁰ Simkins, "The Solution of Post-Bellum Agricultural," pp. 216-217.

⁵¹ Hammond, *South Carolina: Resources*, p. 565.

PERCENT LOSSES FOR SUBSTANTIAL PLANTERS
(IN 1860 DOLLARS)

		Original Owners			Fathers and Sons			Sons Only		
		15-29	30-44	45 +	15-29	30-44	45 +	15-29	30-44	45 +
Improved Land	1860/1870	42%	34%	2%	47%	82%	+33%	46%	74%	54%
	1870/1880	21%	42%	25%	+42%	+66%	73%	2%	2%	53%
	1860/1880	54%	62%	26%	8%	48%	59%	49%	75%	88%
Unimproved Land	1860/1870	7%	55%	5%	50%	34%	65%	25%	39%	48%
	1870/1880	25%	11%	22%	+21%	+57%	22%	33%	53%	18%
	1860/1880	30%	60%	26%	37%	+34%	72%	50%	72%	57%
\$ Value of Farm	1860/1870	79%	94%	82%	88%	92%	91%	92%	92%	86%
	1870/1880	+35%	+78%	+32%	+73%	+84%	+41%	+63%	+44%	+ 8%
	1860/1880	68%	72%	73%	54%	48%	84%	78%	86%	85%
Implements	1860/1870	85%	95%	63%	56%	92%	45%	87%	86%	86%
	1870/1880	+55%	+84%	26%	+44%	+85%	43%	+83%	+37%	+21%
	1860/1880	66%	63%	73%	21%	42%	69%	40%	78%	82%
Livestock	1860/1870	55%	61%	50%	60%	86%	78%	69%	80%	50%
	1870/1880	41%	51%	49%	+12%	+53%	11%	9%	+14%	30%
	1860/1880	73%	81%	75%	55%	71%	80%	71%	77%	64%
Corn	1860/1870	28%	69%	+ 5%	43%	76%	65%	80%	76%	80%
	1870/1880	35%	21%	69%	+24%	+56%	32%	+54%	+ 4%	39%
	1860/1880	53%	75%	67%	25%	46%	77%	56%	74%	88%
Cotton	1860/1870	37%	77%	3%	40%	90%	51%	51%	83%	71%
	1870/1880	+22%	+22%	23%	+68%	+92%	6%	+48%	+60%	+16%
	1860/1880	19%	64%	25%	47%	18%	54%	6%	58%	66%

SLAVEHOLDERS OF ORANGEBURG COUNTY, 1860-1880

OVERALL AVERAGES FOR SUBSTANTIAL PLANTERS OF ORANGEBURG COUNTY

310

SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

		Original Owners			Fathers and Sons		
		15-29 Slaves	30-44	45+	15-29	30-44	45+
Improved Land in Acres	1860	311	454	648	318	503	1,071
	1870	181	300	637	169	90	1,600
	1880	143	173	478	293	262	435
		Sons Only			Overall Average		
	1860	235	497	992	464		
	1870	123	129	453	309		
	1880	120	126	215	213		
		Original Owners			Fathers and Sons		
	1860	904	1,741	1,133	1,421	840	6,740
	1870	843	778	1,076	711	552	2,384
Unimproved Land in Acres	1880	635	694	839	900	1,272	1,868
		Sons Only			Overall Average		
	1860	899	1,308	1,287	1,421		
	1870	678	796	670	919		
	1880	453	370	549	734		
		Original Owners			Fathers and Sons		
	1860	7,455	14,204	17,911	8,641	7,130	42,834
	1870	1,553	886	3,287	1,065	585	3,962
	1880	2,392	3,986	4,834	4,017	3,713	6,765
		Sons Only			Overall Average		
Cash Value of Farm in 1860 \$	1860	6,559	10,274	21,100	11,721		
	1870	542	809	2,974	1,674		
	1880	1,458	1,444	3,219	4,054		
		Original Owners			Fathers and Sons		
	1860	336	478	411	253	304	1,013
	1870	52	28	151	112	26	554
	1880	115	178	112	201	178	314
		Sons Only			Overall Average		
	1860	223	360	569	403		
	1870	28	49	81	120		
Value of Implements in 1860 \$	1880	133	78	103	193		

Value of Livestock in 1860 \$	1860	Original Owners	1,185	1,990	2,727	Fathers and Sons	1,238	1,685	4,485
	1870		536	779	1,352		496	232	995
	1880		318	384	695		562	493	885
		Sons Only				Overall Average			
	1860		967	1,417	1,509		1,745		
	1870		304	284	764		575		
	1880		277	331	537		582		
Indian Corn in Bushels		Original Owners				Fathers and Sons			
	1860		810	1,480	1,722		859	1,203	3,113
	1870		585	460	1,820		489	288	1,080
	1880		378	363	567		644	650	730
		Sons Only				Overall Average			
	1860		764	1,217	2,207		1,302		
	1870		155	299	432		570		
	1880		334	313	263		435		
Cotton in Pounds		Original Owners				Fathers and Sons			
	1860		10,494	24,804	32,436		8,109	12,879	43,407
	1870		6,630	7,072	31,382		4,862	1,326	21,216
	1880		8,550	9,025	24,225		15,200	15,675	19,950
		Sons Only				Overall Average			
	1860		8,109	15,741	41,499		21,942		
	1870		3,978	2,652	11,934		8,390		
	1880		7,600	6,650	14,250		13,775		
Personal Property in 1860 \$		Original Owners				Fathers and Sons			
	1860		19,496	37,886	64,126		20,126	37,250	111,895
	1870		1,102	no data	1,898		612	385	3,138
	1880		n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a
		Sons Only				Overall Average			
	1860		16,475	25,086	28,902		34,774		
	1870		no data	no data	2,258		1,107		
	1880		n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a		

THE PERCENT OF ENTIRE COUNTY THE PLANTERS OWNED IN 1860

	White Population	Improved Land	Farm Value	Implements	Livestock	Corn	Cotton
County	8,108	225,492	5,331,097	200,733	969,351	686,110	16,315
# of substantial planters	144	69,033	1,654,020	56,152	250,900	183,460	5,559
% of population	1.8%	30.6%	31%	28%	25.9%	26.7%	34.1%
Owning 15-29 slaves	74	21,464	554,519	20,827	83,868	59,859	1,423
% of population	.9%	9.5%	10.4%	10.4%	8.7%	8.7%	8.7%
Owning 30-44 slaves	38	18,289	424,210	14,987	64,585	50,094	1,491
% of population	.5%	8.1%	8%	7.5%	6.9%	7.3%	9.1%
Owning 45+ slaves	32	29,280	675,291	20,338	102,447	73,507	3,645
% of population	.4%	12.3%	12.7%	10.1%	10.6%	10.7%	16.2%

THE PERCENT OF ENTIRE COUNTY THE PLANTERS OWNED IN 1880

	White Population	Improved Land	Farm Value	Implements	Livestock	Corn	Cotton
County	12,942	208,147	2,769,313	161,555	602,200	529,259	24,452
# of substantial planters	144	30,514	579,681	27,379	82,669	62,313	3,521
% of population	1.1%	14.7%	20.9%	16.9%	13.7%	11.8%	14.4%
Owning 15-29 slaves	74	12,926	242,540	13,808	35,390	32,058	1,490
% of population	.5%	6.2%	8.2%	8.5%	5.9%	6.1%	6.1%
Owning 30-44 slaves	38	6,581	145,775	6,912	19,223	15,340	759
% of population	.3%	3.2%	5.3%	4.3%	3.2%	2.9%	3.1%
Owning 45+ slaves	32	11,007	191,366	6,659	28,056	14,888	1,272
% of population	.2%	5.3%	6.9%	4.1%	4.7%	2.8%	5.2%

county apparently came from outside the planter class and usually from outside the state as well.

By the 1880s the substantial planters in Orangeburg were still the dominant force in agriculture in the county. In 1867 the 144 heads of households that this survey traced made up only 1.8 percent of the white population. However, they owned 30.6 percent of the total improved land for the county and thirty-one percent of its total farm value. Furthermore, they owned twenty-eight percent of the county's farm implements and 25.9 percent of its livestock. They grew 26.7 percent of the corn and 34.1 percent of the cotton. In 1880 these same people made up only 1.1 percent of the population and once more they controlled more than their numbers suggest. They still owned 14.7 percent of the improved land and 20.9 percent of the farm value for the whole county. They owned 16.9 percent of Orangeburg's farm implements and 13.7 percent of her livestock. They grew 11.8 percent of the county's corn and 14.4 percent of its cotton. The substantial planters of the county not only controlled a smaller percentage of the agricultural wealth by 1880, and overall wealth itself was smaller than in 1860. However, within their own county, they were still the elite of the farmers. They controlled proportionally more of agriculture than any other group.⁵²

Nevertheless, their grip on agriculture was giving way to a more modern group of farmer-businessmen. The younger generation of planter families were turning their attention from farming to other business interests. Their rising prominence was reflected in their political activities. In the list of Democratic candidates for the 1882 elections only three of the nine white candidates listed themselves as farmers. Of these three, two were listed as farmer-businessmen.⁵³

Compared to the findings of Jonathan Wiener in the *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama 1869-1885*, the planters of Orangeburg failed to maintain the same degree of control. By the 1880s, Wiener's planter elite held a greater share of real estate value at the expense of the smaller planters. In Orangeburg the wealthiest of the planters who had once owned more than forty-five slaves did not control a higher proportion of the value of farms. The planters in the Wiener study overcame a merchant challenge to their political and economic domination and kept the first lien on their crops. However, in Orangeburg, the attempt to repeal the lien law failed. In Alabama, planters were less persistent in the path of Union Armies while this did not effect the persistence of Orangeburg planters. Owning large amounts of real estate made the

⁵² U. S. Bureau of Census, *Agriculture Schedules of the Eighth and Tenth Census, Population Schedules of the Eighth and Tenth Census*.

⁵³ *Orangeburg Times and Democrat*, Oct. 5, 1882.

planters in the Wiener study more persistent while it did not effect persistence in Orangeburg. The postwar merchants in 1880 Orangeburg as in Alabama were seldom prewar planters and less likely to be Southerners. However, by the late nineteenth century, the offspring of the 1860 planters in Orangeburg pursued business interests.

In summary, the substantial planters of Orangeburg County, South Carolina, dominated agriculture within the county in 1860. They survived the ravages of the Civil War with their plantations damaged but reparable. They hesitatingly accepted an imposed system of free labor but nevertheless worked with it. They adjusted to a new system of credit with all its implications of crop liens and ties to local merchants. They suffered but survived the plunge in cotton prices. They endured the political tumult of Reconstruction. In spite of all the revolutionary changes that took place in Orangeburg between 1860 and 1880, the substantial planters were still directing proportionally a large part of the county's agriculture. They did not control as much as in 1860, and they shared control with the merchants who held crop liens. But, they were still a very prominent group. The new demands of postwar agriculture led them to evolve into planter-businessmen. The leadership of Orangeburg County would belong to the more modern men who were not only planters but manufacturers and business entrepreneurs as well.