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A PROFILE OF COLUMBIA IN 1850

MARY FULTON GREEN *

In the recent past the South has watched its way of life transformed by what seems to be the inevitable fall of an agricultural society before the forces of urbanization. This change intimately affects many southerners who view it with resignation or distrust as they dream of the days "before The War" with nostalgia for a society free from the problems of a modern world. Yet although the South trails behind the rest of the nation in facing this shift from an agricultural to an urban orientation, the base of this change was laid before 1860 when men began planning cities and founding urban centers in southern states. Columbia, South Carolina, was one of these cities planned quite early for a center of the state's activity by men who perhaps already perceived the future.

The South as a whole contained few considerable cities and towns in 1860. The reasons for this are complex and not entirely clear, but what is clear is that some southern towns were growing and beginning to exhibit truly urban characteristics when the shock of the war caused a severe setback. Columbia was one of these, and it is of considerable interest to try to put together a picture of its stage of urban development at the beginning of the fifties, a decade during which it was destined to grow 33%.¹

In 1850 Columbia had existed as official state capital for over half a century. Conceived and organized to be the seat of government and a trading depot, the midlands town by 1850 exhibited a character quite different from that of the state's dominant metropolis, Charleston. Columbia by 1850 was satisfying the expectations of her planners as her citizens moved toward her outskirts and her town council sought the power to cope with greater urban problems. Columbia's population, her physical characteristics, her government and politics, her economic development, her social institutions and organizations, and the reaction of her citizens to national events—these factors shaped the nature of the town in the ten years before the Civil War.

Columbians in 1850 numbered 6,060 white persons, free Negroes, and slaves. This was a 40% increase over the 1840 figure of 4,340 in contrast

* Miss Green is a student at Duke University.

¹ Miss Green wishes to acknowledge the helpful criticism of Professors Anne F. Scott and Sidney Nathans of the Department of History, Duke University. *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census, 1860* (Washington, 1860), p. 242.

- September 10 Passed a Ship Standing to the westward.
 September 13 A Brig on the lee bow st[andin]g to the Eastward. At 11 spoke her has been out 16 days from Phil[adelphi]a bound to Lisbon.
 September 16 At 10 p. m. spoke the Snow *Britannia*, Sam: Ayres, from Philadelphia bound to Lisbon. Says he is in Long 49.
 September 21 Brig in sight Standing to the Eastward.
 October 1 At 6 a. m. spoke a Brig from Corke bound to Yarmouth.

Similar encounters are recorded on the course of the other voyages. Such meetings are usually more frequent at the beginning or end of the voyage, when the *Lloyd* is close to the coast rather than in mid-Atlantic.

All these logs are illustrated by pen and ink drawings. In addition to the numerous portrayals of the vessel under sail in all conditions, there are drawings of various birds and fish, often named. The first log (for the voyages in 1767) has a drawing of an opossum for October 7 and "a bug in sight going to the Westward" for October 15. It also has two full page drawings of "A Prospect of Charles Town from the Eastward" and a "Plan of the Harbour of Charles Town" between the entries for September 17 and 18. In addition to the drawings of the *Lloyd* the second new log has only a few coast scenes, including drawings of the coast-line approaching Port Isaac, Cape Cornwall, and Cape Finisterre.

In the perspective of both South Carolina's and Bristol's trade in the eighteenth century, these few voyages of the *Lloyd* obviously bulk small. But their value should not be underestimated since we have so little material of a comparable kind. Our information about aggregate figures is better than that of the activity of individual enterprises and voyages. If our knowledge and understanding of the pattern and organization of eighteenth-century Atlantic trade is to be advanced, it will be by the analysis of business records such as these.

to only 8% growth for the whole state. Some of the country people leaving South Carolina farms at that time were, no doubt, settling in Columbia. Still the capital city lagged far behind Charleston with her 42,985 people.²

While Columbia's white population had grown by 49.8% the slave population had increased only by 30% from 1840 to 1850. These figures suggest that white immigrants may have been largely non-slave holders, since a disproportion in birth rates would hardly account for this change in the ratio of white to Negro inhabitants. The slower growth of the Negro population supports Richard Wade's idea that slavery in southern cities generally declined after 1840.³

Free persons of color numbered 196 in 1850, a 31.5% increase from 149 in 1840.⁴ Although the size of the free Negro population remained small, these few were a threat to the institution of slavery. Free Negroes were considered dangerous examples for slaves and were encouraged to leave the state. Ordinances of the town restricted them as severely as slaves.⁵

Few foreigners had settled in Columbia by 1850. Irish immigrants were the most numerous, followed by Germans and English in an approximate 3:2:1 ratio. The only other homelands noted on the manuscript census returns were France, Austria, Prussia, and the West Indies.⁶ Although the town had no unusual foreign elements or particular alien groups which would have been difficult to assimilate, part of the German population maintained a degree of individuality in the community. Robert W. Shand, son of the rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, recalled a German settlement on the edge of a residential section during his youth.⁷

² United States Census Office, *Seventh Census, 1850* (Washington, 1853), p. 339; United States Department of State, *Compendium of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States as Obtained from the Returns of the Sixth Census* (Washington, 1841), p. 46 (hereinafter called *Compendium of the Sixth Census*); Seventh Census of the United States, Original Returns, Town of Columbia, S. C., Richland District, microfilm, S. C. Archives; United States Bureau of the Census, *Statistical View of the United States . . . Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington, 1854), p. 305 (hereinafter called *Compendium of the Seventh Census*).

³ *Compendium of the Seventh Census*, p. 348; *Seventh Census, 1850*, p. 343; *Compendium of the Sixth Census*, pp. 44-46; see Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860* (New York, 1964).

⁴ *Compendium of the Seventh Census*, p. 348; *Compendium of the Sixth Census*, p. 328.

⁵ Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, Report to the Legislature of South Carolina, Nov. 1850, Governor's Reports, S. C. Archives; *Ordinances of the Town of Columbia Now of Force* (n. p., 1851), pp. 82-85 (hereinafter called *1851 Ordinances*).

⁶ Seventh Census, Original Returns.

⁷ Robert W. Shand, "Columbia From 1846 to 1866," ed. Edwin L. Green, *The State* (Columbia, S. C.), June 10, 1928; Map of Columbia c. 1850, surveyed by Messrs. Arthur and Moore.

In the beginning, Columbia had been surveyed in half-acre blocks separated by orderly, wide streets over a two mile section above the Congaree River. The town in 1850 remained within these same boundaries and, in fact, covered only part of this land with any density. The business district concentrated on the squares bordering Richardson (later Main) and Assembly streets. The cotton market was in the northwestern section of town along the river, and the produce market stood in the middle of the business district. Railroads ran from the northeast and northwest corners through the edges of town to meet the Charleston line near the southern outskirts.⁸

While the northern half of the city was fairly densely populated, the southern half was only partly filled. Much of the northeast quarter made up the substantial residential section where many wealthy citizens and community leaders lived. South of Gervais Street were the South Carolina College campus and a number of large tracts of land held by a few people.⁹ Shand remembered farms and woods in this part of town.¹⁰ Fearing that removal of forests in this section would "endanger the healthfulness" of the town and allow the disease and "miasma" from creek beds to invade the campus of the College, Columbians petitioned the Legislature to prevent further clearance of lands in the section.¹¹

One newspaper editor bragged about Columbia's housing conditions as he denounced the slums and tenements of northern cities.¹² Columbia's 721 families occupied 701 dwellings;¹³ indeed this statistic does not suggest overcrowding in the growing town. Advertisements in Columbia newspapers offered a variety of rooms and houses for rent, including "two dwelling tenements" in Court House range near Richland Street.

A wooden state house with chambers for the members of the legislature and offices for several state departments stood in the center of the town at the head of the business district. Near this building the South Carolina College owned six acres. The state Lunatic Asylum and the Arsenal Military Academy stood at the edges of the town.

The other public buildings were the courthouse for Richland District, a town hall and market, a jail, a fire engine house, a poor house, and an orphans home. The town hall, with its tower which housed the fire bell

⁸ Map of Columbia c. 1850; J. F. Williams, *Old and New Columbia* (Columbia, S. C., 1929), p. 43.

⁹ Map of Columbia, c. 1850.

¹⁰ *The State*, June 10, 1928.

¹¹ Petitions, Legislative System, S. C. Archives.

¹² *The Daily Telegram* (Columbia, S. C.), April 6, 1850 (hereinafter called *Telegraph*).

¹³ Seventh Census, Original Returns.

and a large clock, occupied the floor above the city market booths.¹⁴ According to the grand jury, the gaol was a foul structure which needed cleaning and whitewashing.¹⁵

The one public utility in 1850 was a waterworks leased by the town council to a superintendant. From this small plant pipes conducted a water supply through the main streets and to the public buildings. Only large consumers—hotels and stables—used these public mains, and most citizens drew their water from their own wells.¹⁶

The Independent Fire Fighting Company, Monteith's Fire Engine Company, and the Hook, Ladder, and Ax Company were the town's fire brigades. They housed a hand-pumped engine in the station on Richardson Street. This system was so inefficient that by the time the firemen found the blaze, they could only prevent its spread through the city.¹⁷

City streets, notorious for their mud holes, were maintained by the road work required of all male citizens under state law. Exemption from this labor could be bought by payment of a road tax or the substitution of a slave hand. These street gangs had constructed some drainage systems by 1850. Sidewalks on Richardson were built and maintained by the individual property owners.¹⁸

The railroad lines connecting Columbia with Charleston had become by 1850 the most important means of transportation for most interests in the town. Daily trains on the South Carolina Railroad circuit made the seven hour trip at a cost of \$5.17 for passengers and \$1 per bale for cotton freight. The importance of the railroad to town life is shown in newspaper notices that mark the arrival of freight shipments from Charleston, in delays in the news caused by late trains, and in announcements of the merchants' concern over shipping charges.¹⁹ This southbound line reinforced ties with the coastal towns and with other southern states, ties which continued to turn southern business interests in upon themselves. The importance of these links is implied in a contemporary description

¹⁴ Map of Columbia c. 1850; *Acts of the Legislature of South Carolina Relating to the Town of Columbia*, S. C. (n.p., c. 1851), p. 4 (hereinafter called *Acts Relating to Columbia*); Williams, p. 43.

¹⁵ Petition, Legislative System, S. C. Archives.

¹⁶ *The State*, June 10, 1928.

¹⁷ *Telegraph*, Oct. 15, 1850; *1851 Ordinances*, pp. 68-69; Williams, p. 61.

¹⁸ Edwin J. Scott, *Random Recollections of a Long Life 1806-1876* (Columbia, S. C., 1884), p. 153; *Acts Relating to Columbia*, p. 21; *1851 Ordinances*, pp. 86-89.

¹⁹ *Telegraph*, April 18, 1850; *The Tri-Weekly South Carolinian* (Columbia, S. C.) Dec. 18, 1850 (hereinafter called *South Carolinian*); *Palmetto State Banner* (Columbia, S. C.) Aug. 30, 1849, June 4, 1850 (hereinafter called *Banner*).

of Columbia: "Columbia . . . is a place of easy access by railroads which are connecting it more and more with other portions of the southern and southwestern states."²⁰

Construction was progressing on railroad lines to Charlotte, North Carolina, and to Greenville. The Greenville Railroad ran twenty miles north of town at this date and connected with stage lines from that point. The Charlotte road had extended a few miles. Both lines had built passenger depots on the edges of Columbia, and both owned right-of-way lands through the towns.²¹

A system of locks for navigation of the Congaree and Broad Rivers was functioning in 1850, but the railroads had captured most of the canal business. Between August of 1848 and August of 1849, 7,438 bales of cotton were shipped to Charleston by the canal system compared to 143,654 bales carried by rail.²²

The conditions of market roads leading to Columbia drew frequent complaints. *The Telegraph* editor remarked in April: "The weather for the most part has been very unfavorable . . . and the roads so bad that it is almost impossible for wagons to travel."²³ In 1850 the grand jury entered a grievance against the bad conditions of the state roads in Richland County.²⁴

Columbia city government was struggling to become an effective instrument for dealing with the problems of an urban community. Government revolved around a town council composed of an intendant and six wardens. This body held authority to make all ordinances for regulating the streets and markets, to set fines and penalties for all violations, to issue licenses to liquor retailers, to act as commissioners for the poor, to direct the fire companies, to organize the town patrol, to appoint minor town officials, and to tax for the support of government functions.²⁵

This government structure seems to have been largely a creature of the state legislature. The state government had incorporated the town and authorized the council; it periodically revised the powers of the council and allowed changes in city taxes. The state intervened in city government when it outlawed billiard tables and bawdy houses within

²⁰ *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina* (Columbia, S. C., 1851), p. 16.

²¹ *Telegraph*, May 15, June 17, Dec. 31, 1850.

²² *Banner*, Aug. 30, 1849.

²³ *Telegraph*, April 6, 1850.

²⁴ Grand Jury Presentments, Legal System, S. C. Archives.

²⁵ *Revised Ordinances of the City of Columbia, S. C.* (Columbia, S. C., 1907), pp. 178-182; *Acts Relating to Columbia*, pp. 15, 23, 26-27, 43, 46-47.

five miles of Columbia in the interest of the morals of South Carolina College students.²⁶ Even the citizens of Columbia resorted to petitioning the legislature above the heads of town officials.²⁷ But by 1850 the town council was resisting this domination and seeking greater independence—its frequent petitions for increased authority reflect this trend.

In 1850 the intendant was first Edward Sill and then Henry Lyons who defeated Sill in the April election for a year's term.²⁸ Sill was a merchant active in many phases of town life. Lyons was "a very heavy, corpulent man, with strongly-marked Jewish features, of free and easy manners . . . who knew everybody in and about Columbia, both whites and blacks. . . ." ²⁹ The wardens elected in 1850 were W. M. Maybin, A. S. Johnston, Thomas Wade, John Fisher, James Peckham, and Thomas Boyne.³⁰

The council annually appointed a clerk of council, a chief marshal and clerk of the market, six assistant marshals, the town physician, an engineer of the waterworks, an overseer of streets, carts, and Negroes, a town printer, and the holder of the public scales. A police force functioned in 1850 under Joshua Lowden, and the sheriff of Richland District, Nathaniel Hill, operated from Columbia. William Capon was the jailer, and William Beard collected taxes.³¹

Town taxes in 1850 covered many kinds of property, and town council petitions to the legislature continued to ask for greater authority to levy taxes. When the town was incorporated, real estate was assessed, and the wardens were instructed to levy a tax on property sufficient to defray the expenses of government. By 1850 taxes covered liquor, carriages and carts, auctioneers, proceeds from merchandise, slaves, and dogs.³² The council was denied its request for permission to increase the rate of property taxes by fifty per cent to cover \$150,000 in railroad stock which the city had bought.³³

Campaigns and elections in Columbia and Richland District were noticeably corrupt. The citizens assembled before the April election for town officers "to devise some plan whereby the scenes of debauchery that have disgraced our elections should in the future be avoided."³⁴

²⁶ *Acts Relating to Columbia*, pp. 26, 34, 42.

²⁷ Petitions, Legislative System, S. C. Archives.

²⁸ *Almanac of 1850* (Charleston, S. C.: A. E. Miller, 1850).

²⁹ Scott, pp. 160-163.

³⁰ *Almanac of 1850; Telegraph*, April 5, 1850.

³¹ *Telegraph*, April 5, 1850; Seventh Census, Original Returns.

³² *Acts Relating to Columbia*, pp. 26-27, 43, 46-47.

³³ Petitions, Legislative System, S. C. Archives.

³⁴ *Banner*, March 5, 1850.

They circulated a petition which pledged “. . . that we the undersigned will vote for no candidate for any office . . . in Richland District, who shall directly or indirectly bargain, trade, or canvas for votes either by gift or loan of money or credit, or the gift of any commodity, or under pretense of giving treats, dinners, or barbeques. . . .”³⁵ The 1850 election for the senator from Richland District was contested by incumbent Joseph A. Black who was defeated by James H. Adams in a close count. Adams won a second election which took place in January of 1851, and he took his seat in the 1851 legislative session.³⁶

Blue laws were common to both the town ordinances and the legislative acts regulating Columbia at this time. There were rules against retail liquor sales, taverns, gambling, and houses of prostitution. Licenses to retail spirituous liquors or to operate taverns were issued only upon the guarantee of three respectable freeholders and a surety of \$1000.³⁷ The legislature in 1835 had ruled “That from the passing of this act, if any person shall within ten miles of the South Carolina College keep any house as a bawdy house or a house of common prostitution . . . or shall keep any faro bank or other device for gaming . . . [he] shall be proceeded against as a vagrant.”³⁸ Billiard tables, considered a moral evil, were forbidden within a five-mile radius of Columbia during July through September and within a ten-mile radius the rest of the year. However, stronger measures than these were requested in 1849 by the grand jury which reported to the legislature: “We present the retailing of spirituous liquor in the town of Columbia as an evil of considerable magnitude calculated to disgrace and corrupt the morals of the youth of Columbia and those sent to the South Carolina College . . . and is further a source of considerable corruption to our slave population. . . .”³⁹

Numerous laws restricting the slaves and free Negroes in Columbia appeared in the town ordinances. This great concern over the regulation of the Negro population indicates the difficulty of controlling slavery under urban conditions. Curfew for Negroes rang at nine o'clock in the winter months and at nine forty-five in summer. After that hour Negroes in the streets had to show passes from their masters or employers stating the purpose of their missions. Negroes could not assemble for any reason in groups of more than five without white supervision, nor could they

³⁵ *Telegraph*, April 2, 1850.

³⁶ Election Returns, Legislative System, S. C. Archives; Emily Reynolds and Joan Reynolds Faut, *Biographical Directory of the Senate of the State of South Carolina, 1776-1964* (Columbia, S. C., 1964), p. 53; *Telegraph*, Dec. 31, 1850.

³⁷ *South Carolinian*, Dec. 18, 1849.

³⁸ *Acts Relating to Columbia*, pp. 25-26, 33, 42-43.

³⁹ Grand Jury Presentments, Legal System, S. C. Archives.

meet for church more than three times in one week. They could not keep shops, serve as clerks, or run boarding houses. Sale of liquor to Negroes brought punishment to both the dealer and the colored person; without written permission from an owner or guardian, Negroes could not enter taverns.⁴⁰ But illegal liquor sales went on in the town to such an extent that the grand jury complained to the legislature: "In regard to illicit dealing with slaves, although the corporate authority of Columbia has done much to diminish this nefarious traffic at the most important point in the district, yet it is still carried on to an extent deeply injurious to the community. . . ." ⁴¹ For violating any of these town ordinances, Negroes received stronger punishments than white people; whipping and corporal punishments were usually prescribed.

Columbia's whole economic system revolved around the cotton market and the business cotton trading brought to the merchants of the town. Columbia served piedmont South Carolina as a trading center, and piedmont South Carolina in turn supplied a market for the large volume of retail merchandise imported by Columbia businesses. Profits from cotton sales supported the dry goods stores, the hardware stores, the lawyers, and the bankers. "There being few country stores and those in the villages generally scantily supplied, Columbia did a very large retail business in the winter months," commented Edwin A. Scott, a teller in the Commercial Bank in 1850.⁴² Notices in the Columbia papers suggest the importance of the cotton trade to everyone in the town. "As cotton is now looking up, he hopes it will be in the power of each debtor to liquidate his small demands for services rendered," ⁴³ one advertiser begged.

Produce from farmers in the district was also brought to Columbia to be sold at the market in the ground floor of the Town Hall. In the front part of this building were butcher stalls, and in the rear were poultry, fish, cheese, vegetables, butter, and eggs. ⁴⁴ Although slave trading was excluded from the public market, at least three slave traders periodically sold Negroes before the courthouse. Occasionally advertisers wanted to hire Negro slaves for domestic jobs.⁴⁵

Columbia merchants stocked a broad range of items which they imported from Charleston and indirectly from the North. Dry goods and

⁴⁰ 1851 *Ordinances*; *South Carolinian*, Dec. 18, 1849.

⁴¹ Grand Jury Presentments, Legal System, S. C. Archives.

⁴² Scott, p. 78; *Banner*, Aug. 30, 1849.

⁴³ *Banner*, Aug. 30, 1849.

⁴⁴ 1851 *Ordinances*, p. 78; Williams, p. 43.

⁴⁵ Williams, p. 70; *Telegraph*, July 27, 1850.

grocery stores often advertised both wholesale and retail trade, a practice appealing to planters who needed to outfit large households. The town supported several tailors, dressmakers, boot shops, a milliner, and a haberdasher. Local drug companies supplied the demand for patent medicine and vermifuge. A few jewelers conducted business in the town. The book store supplied musical instruments and office equipment as well as many current publications. Several establishments handled funerals and sold furniture.⁴⁶

Three hotels operated in Columbia—the United States Hotel, the American Hotel, and the Congaree Hotel. They, with about a dozen boarding houses lodged the visitors and the legislators who came to Columbia for the December session. Taverns also operated in the town and, in spite of state laws and school regulations, drew customers from the youths at the South Carolina College.⁴⁷

Through 1850 agents of out-of-state insurance companies provided insurance coverage to Columbians. The National Loan Fund Life, Hartford Fire, North Carolina Mutual, and the New England Mutual were represented. However, in December, 1850, the legislature incorporated a Columbia Insurance Company organized by Edward Sill, the former intendant.⁴⁸

Two banks operated in Columbia in 1850. A branch of the Bank of South Carolina was headed by R. H. Goodwyn; the recharter of this organization roused heated controversy in the town during this period. J. A. Crawford was the president of the Commercial Bank of Columbia, a local establishment younger than the Branch Bank.⁴⁹ Edwin Scott commented on this bank's business with the cotton merchants: "In the fall and winter months we assisted in moving the crops by advancing to purchasers of cotton for their drafts, generally at thirty days' dates upon Charleston factors of good standing whose acceptances were met at maturity from sale of the produce."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *South Carolinian*, Aug. 30, Dec. 18, 1849, June 25, Aug. 16, 27, April 16, May 7, Nov. 28, 1850; *Telegraph* Dec. 18, 1849-Dec. 31, 1850, *passim*.

⁴⁷ Map of Columbia c. 1850; *Telegraph*, April 18, 1850; *South Carolinian*, April 16, 1850, Dec. 18, 1849.

⁴⁸ *Telegraph*, Aug. 26, 1850; *South Carolinian*, Aug. 27, 1850; *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina Passed in December 1850* (Columbia, S. C., 1850), pp. 34-36.

⁴⁹ W. A. Clark, *The History of the Banking Institutions Organized in South Carolina Prior to 1860* (Columbia, S. C. 1922), p. 199.

⁵⁰ Scott, p. 165; for hostility to banks see *Banner*, June 4, 25, 1850; *South Carolinian*, May 7, 1850; Sally Elmore Taylor, "Memoir 1910," typescript, Southern Historical Association Collection, University of North Carolina Library.

There was some manufacturing within the Columbia area in 1850. Forty-two establishments reported a total production value of \$238,182 in the 1850 census. J. C. Thornton's carriage manufactory with a product worth \$26,000 was the largest of these; it hired seventeen men in 1850 on a payroll of \$400 a month. Benjamin Taylor's grist mill, which turned out a product of, \$792 was the smallest. Varied sorts of products fell in the category of manufacturing in the 1850 survey. Producers of goods worth over \$800 were classified as factors. The breakdown of the reports shows that Columbia had three tanners, a book binder, four saddlers, three blacksmiths, four concerns which handled metal works, five bakers, three saw mills, four grist mills, two carriage makers, two stone masons, one brick maker, two furniture producers, a mattress maker, and a washing machine producer.⁵¹

Metal materials and machines were produced on a small scale. Cotton gins, thrashers, and corn shellers were produced by James S. Boatwright and by Elisha Morris. Boatwright hired six men to produce a \$6,500 value on a \$2,000 investment, whereas Morris turned out a \$3,700 product with three men and a \$1,500 investment. William Burton's foundry employed nine men to produce iron castings worth \$1,300. Glaze and Radcliffe, who owned an armory, held a state contract for converting militia flintlocks into percussion locks in 1850.⁵²

White men labored in all these establishments. According to the 1850 census, the approximate average wage was \$20 a month.⁵³ At least one of the factories in the Columbia area was run with slave labor. The large Saluda cotton mill near the town owned by David Ewart employed 98 adults and 20 children—all slaves—to run its 5,000 spindles and 120 looms. *DeBow's Review* in an article on the Saluda mill reported on the relative values of slave and free mill workers: "The superintendent is decidedly of the opinion that slave labor is cheaper for cotton manufacture than free white labor. The average cost per annum of those employed in the mill, he says, does not exceed \$75 . . . or thirty per cent saved in the cost of labor."⁵⁴

Columbia factors had organized a "Columbia Mechanics Association" in 1850. Since five of the seventeen members owned factories within the

⁵¹ Seventh Census of the United States, Products of Industry, Original Returns, Town of Columbia, Richland District, South Carolina, S. C. Archives.

⁵² Seventh Census, Products of Industry, Original Returns; *Banner*, Jan. 9, 1850; Williams, p. 58.

⁵³ Seventh Census, Products of Industry, Original Returns.

⁵⁴ *DeBow's Review Upon Slavery and the Slave Institutions of the Southern States* (Washington, 1856), p. 127.

town limits, the membership of this group suggests that it was an association of owners for promoting interest in manufacturing rather than a workers' group.⁵⁵

On the statewide level the South Carolina Institute encouraged the young industries by offering premiums for the "best specimens of mechanism" sent to the World's Fair in England. The Columbia manufacturers took prizes in the industrial fairs both at Charleston and in the North. J. C. Thornton won a medal from the American Institute, and the dentist work of Blanding and Avery received the first prize. J. H. Adams, J. S. Boatwright, Wade Hampton, and R. S. Pomeroy were the Columbians who belonged to the South Carolina Institute.⁵⁶

Columbia in 1850 supported seventeen educational institutions which registered a total of 667 white pupils. Of these, the South Carolina College taught 195, the Presbyterian Seminary, 23, the four academies, 195, and the eleven primary schools, 244. These figures show an increase over the six primary schools with 195 pupils listed in 1840. Public funds aided only two of these schools, the college and the military academy; private sources financed the rest. In the whole Richland District 874 white children of the 2,396 between the ages of five and twenty attended schools in 1850.⁵⁷ No Negro educational facilities existed.

The South Carolina College under the leadership of William C. Preston exercised a considerable influence on the town in 1850. A faculty of eight taught the 195 male students. Two of these, James H. Thornwell, a Presbyterian theologian, and Francis Lieber, an Austrian political scientist, were well-known outside South Carolina. The governor and officers of the state legislature headed the board of trustees.⁵⁸

Student-faculty relations at the College were turbulent in 1850. The big issues were a rule requiring students to board at the college commons and the authority of a professor to assign a substitute instructor in his absence. A student committee reported on the state of the commons: "The chicken and turkies (when furnished) are cooked or made

⁵⁵ Seventh Census, Products of Industry, Original Returns; see Yates Snowden, *Notes on Labor Organization in South Carolina, 1742-1861* in No. 38, Part IV: *Bulletin of the University of South Carolina* (Columbia, S. C., 1914), pp. 22-24.

⁵⁶ *Second Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the South Carolina Institute, November 1850* (Charleston, S. C., 1850), pp. 7-9.

⁵⁷ Seventh Census of the United States, Social Statistics, Original Returns, Town of Columbia, Richland District, South Carolina, S. C. Archives; *Compendium of the Sixth Census*, p. 47; *Compendium of the Seventh Census*, pp. 343-344.

⁵⁸ *Catalogue of the Trustees, Faculty, and Students of the South Carolina College* (Columbia, S. C., 1850), pp. 5, 16.

to undergo some process so that peculiar taste and flavor are lost and they become a red and distasteful aggregate of muscular fibre."⁵⁹ A major rebellion occurred in the spring of 1850 when the junior class boycotted classes taught by a substitute professor and made a bonfire of books. The faculty affirmed its right to reassign classes and suspended the entire class for participation in "a combination to oppose the law of the college."⁶⁰

Another controversy raged around the college in 1850—this one over the sectarian tendencies of the institution. Students at the time were required to attend chapel services conducted by the college chaplain who was a Presbyterian. A literary battle in the columns of *The Daily Telegraph* reveals the great resentment at what some citizens considered the Presbyterian bias of the college.⁶¹

A Female Collegiate Academy run by Dr. Elias Marks operated at Barhamville on the outskirts of Columbia. Ninety boarding students were taught by a faculty of nine. Tuition and board for a term at the academy was \$200. The course of study at Marks's school provided a combination of practical and intellectual studies for women who would manage plantations.⁶²

The Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Columbia had twenty-three students and three faculty members. A three-year course in the *Bible*, rhetoric and preaching, and the theology of the church prepared ministers of the presbytery.⁶³

The Arsenal Military Academy registered 27 students in 1850 under the direction of superintendent Joseph Matthews.⁶⁴ Governor Seabrook's report on the Arsenal Academy reveals the purpose of this school and its role in the state military operations. Seabrook emphasized the need of practical experience in the art of war for a South Carolina man.⁶⁵ His statements take on especial significance in light of the secessionist sentiment bursting out during this year.

⁵⁹ Minutes of the Meetings of the Faculty of the South Carolina College, March 16, 1850.

⁶⁰ Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty of the South Carolina College, April 12-13, 1850; Maxmillian LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College* (Columbia, S. C., 1859), pp. 276-277.

⁶¹ *Telegraph*, June 25-26, May 10, 1850.

⁶² *Circular of The South Carolina Female Institute at Barhamville, 1849-1850* (Troy, N. Y., n. d.).

⁶³ *Catalogue of the Offices and Students of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C.*, pp. 15-18.

⁶⁴ Seventh Census, Social Statistics, Original Returns.

⁶⁵ Report to the South Carolina Legislature, Nov. 26, 1850, Governor's Reports, S. C. Archives.

Although four acres of land had been designated by the legislature for a free public school, there is no evidence that free instruction was available in the town. Within Richland District and, in fact, in the legislature there was much agitation about the efficiency of the free school system at this time. The legislature's committee on college, education, and religion reported in regard to the Richland District complaints: "The Committee unanimously agree in the utter inefficiency of the present system. The small amount of money appropriated will not engage competent teachers. Eight Hundred and Fifty children are reported in the District as needing free instruction, and this allows \$1.41 to each child."⁶⁶ In the spring of 1850, the governor circulated a questionnaire to the chairmen of the school commissions to evaluate the state's needs. He also called a meeting of the state's teachers which convened in Columbia in July; the only representatives of Columbia schools came from the college and the seminary.⁶⁷

By 1850 Columbia was showing some social conscience and taking municipal action to aid its poor. A Poor House, a boys' and a girls' orphan home, the town physician, and the commissioners of the poor functioned to this end. The commissioners of the poor, as the intendant and wardens were designated,⁶⁸ directed all the welfare activity. This group petitioned the state legislature for a \$500 increase in appropriations for the transient poor complaining that, "the Railroad from Charleston to this place affords to transient paupers ready opportunities of throwing themselves upon the support of this town, and those opportunities are made use of. . . ." ⁶⁹ The Alms House run by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jennings cared for fourteen paupers in 1850 at a cost to the public of \$2000. Eight female orphans lived with the matron, Elizabeth Bynum, in a home on Pickens Street. The town physician ministered to the poor at the expense of the city.⁷⁰

A board of health regulated the sanitation problems of the growing town. Its members in 1850 were Dr. A. Fitch, Dr. William Blanding, L. B. Beckwith, and John Bryce. The group inspected yards and cellars throughout the town in the summer.⁷¹

⁶⁶ *Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina in 1849*, p. 319; Grand Jury Presentments, Legal System, S. C. Archives.

⁶⁷ *Banner*, March 5, 1850; *Telegraph*, July 12, 18, 1850.

⁶⁸ *Acts Relating to Columbia*, p. 30.

⁶⁹ Petitions, Legislative System, S. C. Archives.

⁷⁰ Seventh Census, Social Statistics, Original Returns; *1851 Ordinances*, p. 93.

⁷¹ *Telegraph*, July 5, 1850.

The State Insane Asylum at Columbia provided enlightened and humane care for its inmates. The hospital housed 120 patients in 1850 in three brick buildings; provision for Negro patients had been made. Indigent patients were supported at the expense of the districts from which they came. State appropriations in 1850 were \$32,159.⁷² The regents commented on the treatment of patients: "Whatever may be the type of illness, it appears to your committee to be at the same time inconsistent with the dictates of humanity and the suggestions of common sense to treat its unfortunate victims as convicted criminals. No more restraint should be used than that which may be necessary to the safety of the patient and others."⁷³

Seven religious denominations had churches in Columbia. The Trinity Episcopal Church was under the pastorate of the Rev. Peter Shand. Whiteford Smith was rector of the large Washington Street Methodist Episcopal Church; a smaller Methodist congregation met in a church on Marion Street. The Ebenezer Lutheran Church was directed by the Rev. E. B. Hort who was also chaplain to the Insane Asylum. First Presbyterian Church was under the pastorate of Dr. Benjamin M. Palmer. The First Baptist Church on Plain Street, St. Peter's Catholic Church on Assembly Street, and the Jewish synogogue completed the number. Property holdings of these churches were valued at \$60,800.⁷⁴ "If there were any churches or chapels for Negroes, I do not recall them," said Robert Shand, "but some of the churches, perhaps all, had spaces reserved for Negro attendants."⁷⁵ Negro congregations met in the churches during the week—apart from the white assemblies.⁷⁶

The social activity and the welfare work of Columbia citizens probably centered in the numerous lodges and benevolent societies as much as in the church groups. Members of the Masonic Lodge, and Eutaw Encampment, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Independent Fire Engine Company, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, the Sons of Temperance, and the Cadets of Temperance all marched in Columbia's procession after the death of John C. Calhoun.⁷⁷

⁷² *Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly of South Carolina of 1850*, pp. 46-57; *Acts Concerning the Lunatic Asylum of South Carolina and By-Laws for Its Government* (Columbia, S. C., 1851), p. 7.

⁷³ *Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly of South Carolina of 1850*, pp. 50-53.

⁷⁴ Seventh Census, Social Statistics, Original Returns; Map of Columbia c. 1850.

⁷⁵ *The State*, June 10, 1928.

⁷⁶ 1851 *Ordinances*.

⁷⁷ *Telegraph*, April 19-20, May 15, 1850.

Clear divisions in Columbia society were evident and could be drawn along the lines of religious affiliation. Sally Elmore Taylor, daughter of Senator Franklin Elmore, described the social groups as she saw them:

The church denominations sensibly separated the social circles without creating separation in community matters of Columbia. The Scotch merchants, mechanics, and tradesmen built the strength of citizenship. The planter folks often supplied guardians of public welfare. The Methodists were warm in hospitality; the Lutherans, strong in integrity; the Baptists, earnest; the Roman Catholics, zealous, interested in municipal development.⁷⁸

The "planter" class were the mainstays of the Presbyterian and Episcopal congregations. The abstemious Presbyterians, led by Thornwell and backed by their local seminary, clashed with the more liberal Episcopalians more than once. The groups disagreed publicly about the policy of the South Carolina College and privately on questions of intermarriage. In an autobiography written during the Civil War, David Wyatt Aiken mentioned his love for an Episcopal girl whose parents objected to Presbyterians marrying into Episcopal families.⁷⁹ Sally Elmore Taylor commented on this division:

Gay society seems to have been relegated to the Episcopalians, wealthy and public-spirited people—the Gibbes, Hamptons, Starks, Elmores, Prestons, Guignards, Taylors, Howells, Butlers, Bays, Trezevants, and many others were mainstays in the prosperity of Trinity Church and in the furthering of the State College Interests. . . . Though not meddled with, so severely were the Episcopalians left alone with worldly enjoyments that they supported the race course, dancing master, and theater. Many years this continued the case.⁸⁰

The tempo of town life picked up in December when the cotton market bustled and the legislature held forth. "The social season lasted during the session of the Legislature, and the college commencement ball was the great event of local gaiety," wrote Sally Taylor.⁸¹ "The Fall was pleasant and the season gay in Columbia, and pleasure held sway over my every nature far more than study until after the commencement

⁷⁸ Taylor, "Memoir, 1910."

⁷⁹ David Wyatt Aiken, "Autobiography of David Wyatt Aiken," typescript, Univ. of N. Carolina Library.

⁸⁰ Taylor, "Memoir, 1910."

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

exercises in December,"⁸² said David Aiken about his college years in 1848 and 1849.

Traveling theatrical groups performed in the theater beside the St. Peter's Catholic Church. Jefferson and Ellsler's company played comedies in the spring of 1850. The Raymond and Company Menagerie came to town in July with its show of "Living Wild Beasts—Lions, Tigers, Cygars, Leopards, Etc." In August citizens were even treated to a spectacular "wire-walking exhibition" from the window of a warehouse to the piazza of the American Hotel.⁸³

Two race courses, the Congaree Course and the Columbia Jockey Club, sponsored horse trials in December. The town was a stopping point for racing stock on the way to New Orleans.⁸⁴ Ten-pin alleys were one vice which Columbians could enjoy in 1850. Although the grand jury complained of these "evil" establishments, a legislative committee refused to recognize them as public nuisances.⁸⁵

The town itself sponsored a municipal picnic in May, 1850, at the Lightwood Knot Springs on the Charlotte Railroad. Trains carried the guests from the Charlotte Depot along the new rail line to the affair.⁸⁶

On a small scale Columbia offered the cultural advantages of an urban community in 1850. One art collector, Dr. Robert W. Gibbes, owned valuable paintings, marbles, and engravings. William C. Preston was the benefactor of a young sculptor, Hiram Powers. William H. Scarborough and John Maier, portrait painters, had studios in Columbia.⁸⁷ A French dancing master, M. Berger, held a school in Columbia, and F. T. Stravinski of Charleston made arrangements to give lessons in Columbia.⁸⁸ Lectures and programs at the South Carolina College provided a cultural asset for the community; Louis Agassiz wrote from Columbia in 1850 that his lectures had been well-attended.⁸⁹ Aside from the College and the legislature collections, all the libraries

⁸² Aiken, "Autobiography."

⁸³ Selby, p. 11; *Telegraph*, May 22, 25, Aug. 24, 1850.

⁸⁴ *South Carolinian*, Dec. 20, Nov. 28, 1850; Selby, p. 132.

⁸⁵ Grand Jury Presentments, Legal System, S. C. Archives.

⁸⁶ *Telegraph*, May 15, 1850.

⁸⁷ Catalogue of the Paintings, Marbles, and Casts in the Collection of Dr. Robert W. Gibbes, S. Caroliniana Library, Univ. of S. Carolina; Selby, pp. 80-81; *Telegraph*, Sept. 13, 1850.

⁸⁸ *Telegraph*, Oct. 9, Nov. 28, 1850.

⁸⁹ Louis Agassiz to William Hollbrook, March 22, 1850, S. Caroliniana Library, Univ. of S. Carolina.

listed in the 1850 census were private ones; these probably belonged to the academies and schools in the town as well as to individuals. The eight listed in the survey each had over a thousand books.⁹⁰

Five newspapers issued from Columbia in 1850 with a total circulation of 6,650. The *South Carolina Temperance Advocate and Register of Agricultural and General Literature* and the *Palmetto State Banner* were weekly periodicals. The *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily South Carolinian*, and the *States Rights Republican* published daily; the *Telegraph* and the *Carolinian* also issued tri-weekly editions. The *Banner*, the *Republican*, and the *Carolinian* reported their "character" to the census taker as "political-democrat," but the *Telegraph* was "political-independent."⁹¹

In addition to these, the *Southern Presbyterian Review* was published in Columbia. Edited by James H. Thornwell, this magazine published political articles as well as those of religious nature. "Thoughts on the Priesthood of Christ" and "Missionary Zeal" appeared beside discussions on "Church and State" and "North and South." The opinions of the editor emerge from a review of several books about sectionalism; the writer declared:

We have gone with our opponents to the inspired word of God and proved beyond the possibility of sober denial that though slavery existed at least from the time of Abraham, there is not, from the first, so much as an implied condemnation or prohibition of it. . . . In the New Testament our defense is impregnable. It regulates the institutions of slavery and thus by fair implication authorizes its existence. . . . We do not wish to be understood as justifying everything connected with Southern Slavery—or maintaining it to be the best conceivable state of human society. . . . The question is . . . what is best here, at the South under the present conditions.⁹²

This was a year of sharp political tensions in Columbia as citizens responded violently to national issues. The National House of Representatives speaker controversy, the Compromise of 1850 debates, and the Nashville Southern Rights Convention agitated the public and brought threats of secession. The reminiscence of a northern traveler to Columbia in December 1850, commented on public opinion in Columbia. "Though extremely cordial to us personally, . . . [the hostess] ex-

⁹⁰ Seventh Census, Social Statistics, Original Returns.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² "North and South," *Southern Presbyterian Review*, III (April 1850), pp. 338, 366.

pressed what seemed to be the general feeling in Columbia when she said to us, 'We ought to fight you of the North.'"⁹³ Columbians organized a Southern Rights Society "for the purpose of adopting a plan of organization to give concert and harmony to whatever measures for the defense of the South may be deemed advisable by their fellow citizens in other districts and our sister states."⁹⁴ The group established a committee of safety in Columbia.⁹⁵

Columbians did not welcome abolitionists or unionists at the height of these sectional debates. The treatment of Francis Lieber whose unionist sentiments were known in Columbia reveals the fervor with which that town enforced its opinions. Writing to a friend in the North on the day before the Southern Rights Association meeting, Lieber said:

I feared that the disunion sentiment in this Community would be so strong that my stay here would be made very uncomfortable. . . . This morning a citizen told me by the way of good advice by all means to go tomorrow to a town meeting when certain measures will be debated—you may imagine what sort—for said he, 'you don't know what rumors about you are abroad' . . . Now you must see that my time here is up, that if I don't go away, I will be sent away. . . .⁹⁶

Francis Lieber understood the emotion behind reactions of the Columbia people to the slavery question.

"Extravagant" was the term a senator from Barnwell used to describe the Columbia he saw in December 1850.⁹⁷ The bustling cotton market, the busy merchants, the pompous college exercises, the gay social season—all must have given the country visitor this impression. The senate debates, the angry arguments on secession, the citizens' committees for southern rights—these were part of the town character he must have noted. The peculiar personality which belonged to the town was a product of its mercantile business interests and its position as state capital. Significantly, town life rose to its highest pitch at the time when both the legislature and the merchants were most active. This pitch of activity, appropriate for a growing urban center, was what the country visitor found "extravagant."

⁹³ James B. Angell, *The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angel* (New York, 1912), p. 56.

⁹⁴ *South Carolinian*, Aug. 27, 1850.

⁹⁵ *Telegraph*, Dec. 31, 1850.

⁹⁶ Francis Lieber to Ruggles, Aug. 23, 1850, Duke Univ. Library.

⁹⁷ Elijah Webb to Rosa Webb, Dec. 5, 1850, S. Caroliniana Library, Univ. of S. Carolina.

THE SCHIRMER DIARY

(Continued from January)

1841

- Jan. 5 Election today & yesterday for Senator in the place of Ker Boyce. He was again a Candidate opposed by Dr. North. The former elected. Then was also election for Clerk of Court. No opposition to C. C. Strohecker.
- " 20 Hibernian Hall was opened 1st time. An Address delivered by Bishop England and a Collation of Fruits served up.
- " 7 Elijah Brownlee Sara C. Murray Mr. Williams
- " 14 S. Frothingham jr. Maria L. Whitridge Dr. Gilman
- " 12 D. H. Kemme May W. Dennis Dr. England
- " 19 Geo. E. Harrall Anna C. Righton S. Hanckle
- " 19 Peter Caw Jane Bell Dr. Post
- " 21 R. F. Sass Mrs. Gonzales Mr. Campbell
- " 21 H. Fretyen Johanna Benjamin Dr. Bachman
- " 20 L. P. Pezant Emily A. Caldwell Mr. Burke
- " 26 John M. Wade Eliza Ehney Dr. Bachman
- " 27 Henry E. Swinton Sarah J. Clement S. Hanckle
- " 27 John K. Bevin Susan H. Elsworth Dr. Bachman in Ch.
- " 28 Capt. Wm. Roberston Mary Macbeth Mr. Forrest
of Aiken

Deaths: 24th F. C. Blum's youngest child; 29th Lawrence Benson.

- Feb. 4 Peter Gaillard Henrietta C. Barker Dr. Gadsden
- " 4 Chs. Foster Clara S. Poyas Dr. Hanckle
- " 10 David Leckie Ellen A. Miller Mr. Forrest
- " 10 Wm. Walter M. G. Calder Dr. Bachman in Ch.
- " 10 A. P. Aldrich Anna Ayer Mr. Duncan at Barnwell
- " 11 W. E. Jenkins Ann B. Poyas Dr. Gadsden
- " 15 Augustus Lafitte Anna M. Barbot Mr. Burke
- " 16 J. Chapman Huger Henrietta Lynah Dr. Hanckle
- " 14 John P. Griner Mrs. Ann Fash Mr. Smith
- " 17 J. G. Milnor Agnes Dickson Dr. Hanckle
- " 18 Revd. F. Prud Homme Madam D'Orval Mr. Forrest
- " 16 Robt. Berry Duncan Susan Brodie Gerard Mr. Spaulding, Greenville
- " 24 Geo. Elfe Eliza Clement Dr. Post
- " 25 Geo. Fryer Mrs. Julia Francis Mr. Forrest

Deaths: 21st J. G. Schult in the country said to be insane.

- Mar. 7 Suicide: it is said Martin Reeves put an end to his existence in a state of mental alienation.
- " 19 New Synagogue in Hasell St. dedicated, large Crowd present.
- " 3 Jas. W. Cleapor Anna Cudworth Dr. Bachman