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THE CHARLESTON PLANTERS IN 1860

JOHN RADFORD *

During the last three or four antebellum decades, it became increasingly fashionable for planters in many parts of the South to seek the social life and amenities offered by urban places. Although the rural-urban migration which resulted was at first largely seasonal in nature, cities and towns nevertheless came to hold an increasingly large place in the lives of the planting families.

This trend has been examined on several occasions from the viewpoint of the plantation. Less attention has been given to the impact of the planters upon the social history and social geography of Southern cities. It is not clear in many cases who the "urban planters" were, still less where they tended to live within the cities to which they were attracted.

Few urban centers seem to have felt the impact of the planters more than Charleston. The "capital of the plantations", was dominated by the planting families which constituted its ruling class. George C. Rogers has described the creation of a distinctive "mental climate", revolving around the plantation ethos, which was created within Charleston during the later antebellum decades.¹ His observations on the Georgetown planters in Charleston point the way to detailed study of the planting class as a whole within the city on the eve of the Civil War. Before such a study can be pursued much further, answers should be provided to two fundamental questions: (1) Who were the Charleston planters? and (2) Where did they live within the city?

Insight into the identity of the planters is best gained through the kind of painstaking research into the records of individual families which Rogers has undertaken for Georgetown County. An overall impression of the size and composition of the planter class as a whole can, however, be gleaned from less disparate sources. Federal census schedules, city directories and tax rolls provide an adequate data base for the

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¹ George C. Rogers, Jr., *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), p. 323. See also George C. Rogers, Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), pp. 161-5.

compilation of a checklist of planters in Charleston on the eve of the Civil War.²

In the federal census manuscripts and city directories for Charleston 1859-60, the description "planter" was applied to 133 individuals (see accompanying table).³ Inspection of the census schedules yielded 101 names, of which 79 could be traced in the city directories.⁴ The directories contained the names of an additional 32 people, listed as planters but not so designated in the census. Ninety-six of the 133 planters appearing in either the directory, or the census, or both, also appeared in the taxpayers' list. The occurrence of the 133 names in these three sets of source materials is shown in Figure 1.

A list compiled in this way should not, of course, be accepted uncritically. It is subject to the limitations of the data as well as to the rules governing the abstraction and compilation procedures. It is well known that the city directories of the period were highly selective in their coverage, and that mistakes and omissions were common in census enumerations. Moreover, the seasonality of much of the planter presence within Charleston raises the possibility of major omissions from the census, although the enumeration was carried out in mid-summer when the planter population was probably at its peak. On balance, indeed, the list of planters obtained from these sources is better regarded as too inclusive rather than too partial. It contains most of the familiar Charleston names—Aiken, Alston, Barnwell, Heyward, Huger, Legare, Lucas, Manigault, Middleton and Rhett among others. But the description "planter", whether in census or directory, is not confined exclusively to such families, and many so described would probably be omitted from any list which claimed to delineate an urban planter group with meaning in terms of social interaction.⁵

Approaching this problem at the aggregate level, it might be possible to refine the present list according to two sets of criteria. First, individuals might be excluded on the basis of low levels of personal or real

² Rogers made use of two such sources, the federal census of 1850 and the Charleston Taxpayers List for 1859, to compile a list of family estates in Georgetown County. Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County*, *op. cit.*, pp. 524-7.

³ The sources used to compile the accompanying table were: U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, Census of Population, 1860*. Manuscript schedules for the City of Charleston, S. C.; Charleston city directories for 1859 and 1860; *List of the Taxpayers of the City and Charleston, South Carolina, for 1859*, (Charleston: Walker, Evans and Co., 1861).

⁴ In cases where the directory listing is not identical to that in the census schedule, it is given in parentheses in the table.

⁵ An extreme example is Malcomb Brown—black, of limited means, ignored by directory and taxpayer listings, yet appearing in the census as "planter".

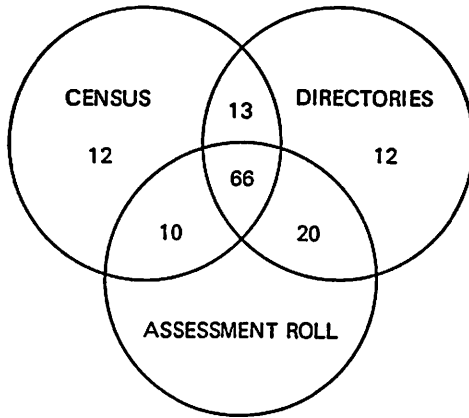


Figure 1 Distribution of Planters over Three Sets of Source Materials.

property ownership, information on which is provided both in the census manuscripts and the taxpayers' lists. The innumerable possibilities for error, omission and deception in this area make comparison between the two sources of particular importance. The last two columns in Table 1, which give information on property ownership, reveal some close congruencies, but are more notable for the discrepancies which they contain: in only fifteen cases are the values specified virtually the same. Some of the discrepancies can be accounted for by the fact that the assessment rolls list the value of property on which tax was paid in Charleston, whereas the census figures apply to the declared value of all property owned. In other cases, property ownership was undoubtedly disbursed through different members of the same family.

As an alternative to such an approach, it may be more useful to fall back upon refinements based upon the appearance of names of planters in more than one source. One might regard the 66 planters listed in all three sources used herein as the nucleus of the Charleston planting group (Figure 1). It would also be possible to select the 79 who appeared in census manuscripts and directories, or even the 109 who appeared in any two sources. Ultimately, rigorous delimitation of the composition of the Charleston planters must be undertaken on an individual basis, and justified according to qualitative criteria. It seems reasonable to claim, however, that the accompanying table represents a useful first approximation of the size and composition of the Charleston planting fraternity.

Having identified the planters listed in these sources, it is now possible to address the second question posed above: where did the planters live within the city? Reasonably reliable answers can be given for 104 of the 133 names, i.e. those for which residential addresses are given in the city directories. These addresses, when plotted with reference to contemporary descriptive and cartographic sources⁶ produce the pattern shown in Figure 2.

Three broad clusters of planters' homes can be identified. The first and most clearly demarcated grouping is at the southern tip of the peninsula, on and to the south of Broad Street. The second cluster stretches through the boroughs which flank the Ashley River. Most of the locations in this cluster lie to the north of Calhoun Street (the northern boundary of the city until 1850), but some are also found in Harleston. The third grouping is distributed over the boroughs bordering the Cooper River from Hampstead to just south of Rhettisbury.

This map demonstrates that Rogers' observations on the areas chosen by the Georgetown planters during the antebellum decades apply to the spatial arrangement of the Charleston planters as a whole in 1860. The planters either chose homes in the lower part of the city, or sought sites, "on the tongues of land which stuck out into the Ashley and Cooper rivers [where t]he lots were larger than in the older sections of the town, the gardens more extensive, and the piazzas broad".⁷ This is particularly true of the western part of the city in Cannonsborough, Radcliffeborough and Harleston.

As a distinctive element in antebellum Southern cities, the planters deserve more attention as an *urban* phenomenon than they have so far received. Census schedules, city directories and assessment rolls provide a basis for comparative study of the more tangible aspects of their existence, including their residential patterns. Such studies promise to make an important contribution to the continuing debate over the distinctiveness or otherwise of the antebellum Southern city within the national urban system.⁸

⁶ R. P. Bridgens and Robert Allen, "An Original Map of the City of Charleston, South Carolina" (Charleston and New York: Hayden Brothers and Co., 1852); G. W. Cotton and C. B. Cotton "The City of Charleston, South Carolina" (New York: 1855); Sanborn Atlases of Charleston for 1888 and 1902; Charleston city directories 1857-1885.

⁷ Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County*, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

⁸ The most recent review of this question is: Leonard P. Curry, "Urbanization and Urbanism in the Old South: A Comparative Review" *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. XL, No. 1, February 1974, pp. 43-60.

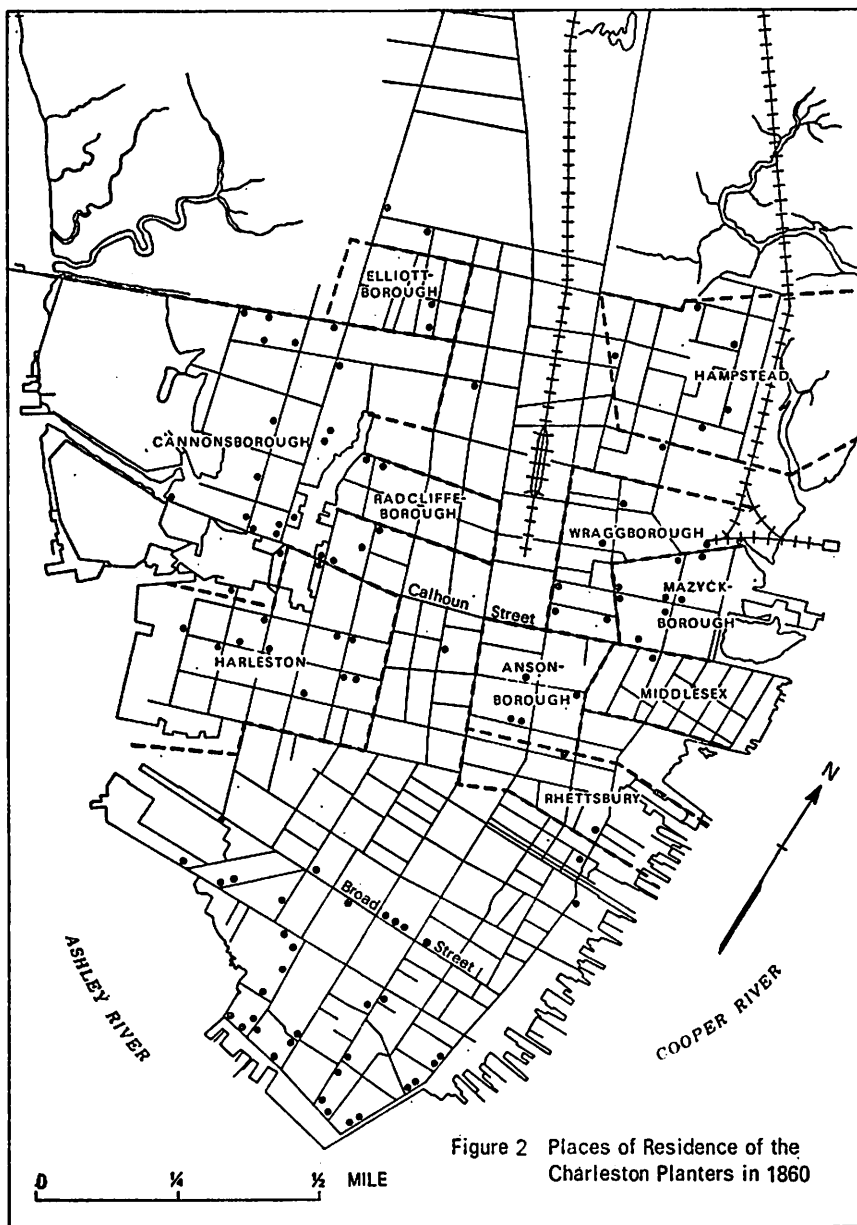


Figure 2 Places of Residence of the Charleston Planters in 1860

A LIST OF CHARLESTON PLANTERS IN 1860

Name	Address	1860 Census Occu- pation Planter	1859 or 1860 Directory Occupation		Taxpayers List		1860 Census	
			Planter	Other or none	Name Appears	Value Property	Value Real Estate	
Aiken, William (Wm.)	NE cor Judith & Elizabeth	X	X		X	\$290,000	\$290,600	
Alender, B. R.	.....	X		X		.....	8,500
Alston, Charles	9 East Battery	X	X			.....	22,000
Alston, Charles P.	.....	X			X	22,000	.....
Alston, Jos. P.	SE cor Montague & Pitt	X	X		X	9,000	.....
Alston, William A.	Ashley abv Calhoun	X	X		X	15,000	16,000	
Ashe, John S. (Col. John A.)	S. Bay nr King	X		X	X	28,000	.....
Ball, E. N.	head of Lynch	X	X		X	10,000	40,000	
Barker, S. G. (Saml. G.)	George bet King & Meeting	X	X		X	10,000	30,000	
Barnwell, Edw. (E.)	35 Meeting	X		X	X	18,000	20,000	
Barrett, Rachel J.	.....	X			X	20,000	75,000
Bartless, Wm.	.....	X			X	.....	.....
Baynard, W. G. (Wm. G.)	SW cor Montague & Lynch	X	X		X	15,000	25,000	
Beckman, Christian (C.)	.....	X				.....	.....
Belin, Allard	cor Orange & Broad		X			.....	.....
Bell, William	36 Society	X		X	X	.....	.....
Blair, Arch. M.	.....	X				.....	.....
Brisbanc, Gen. A. H.	W side Legare bel Tradd	X	X		X	.....	15,000
Brown, Keith	cor George & Anson		X			.....	.....
Brown, Malcomb	.....	X				.....	2,000
Bull, W. J.	W end Tradd	X		X		.....	15,000
Burden, Kinsey (K.)	Spring nr President	X		X		.....	5,000
Burnet, A. W.	6 Legare		X		X	.....	.....
Carew, John E. (Jno. E.)	SE cor America & Blake	X		X	X	6,500	13,000	
Carroll, P.	3 Henrietta		X			.....	.....
Clarkson, R. H.	26 Montague	X		X	X	3,000	.....
Cohen, Marx E.	Ashley bet Bee & Cannon	X		X	X	10,200	25,000	
Collurn, B. P.	.....	X				.....	.....
Coleman, P.	SE cor Charlotte & Elizabeth		X			.....	.....
Creighton, James	Rutledge nr Calhoun	X	X			.....	.....

Desel, Benjamin M. (Benj. M.)	Pitt opp Duncan	X		X				
Doar, Stephen	SE cor Pitt & Bull		X		X		14,000	
Drayton, James	Percy		X			X	5,500	
Drayton, Thos. F.	SW cor Thomas & Radcliffe		X			X	500	
Fishburne, Robert		X						35,000
Ford, F. W.	204 E Bay		X			X		
Fripp, Jno. A.	112 Wentworth		X			X		
Fuller, Benjamin (Benj.)	94 Rutledge	X		X		X		15,000
Gadsden, A. E.	13 Amherst	X		X		X	12,000	
Geiger, David	46 St. Philip		X			X	10,000	
Glover, Francis	Bull cor Rutledge	X		X		X	13,000	15,000
Graves, Chas. (Charles)	Society W of Meeting	X	X			X	5,000	21,000
Graves, Dr. D.	4 Friend		X			X		
Grayson, William (Wm. J.)	247 E Bay	X	X			X	10,000	10,000
Grimball, John (J. Berkley)	Meeting cor Fords La.	X	X			X		50,000
Hanckel, J. M. (Jno.)	cor Spring & Rutledge	X			X	X	5,500	8,000
Happoldt, John (M.)	45 State	X			X	X		
Harleston, Summers		X			X			
Heyward, Charles (Chas.)	241 E Bay	X	X			X	30,000	25,000
Heyward, Danl. (Daniel)	11 E Battery	X	X			X	20,000	241,000
Heyward, J. B. (James B.)	90 Broad	X	X			X	16,000	18,000
Heyward, William B. (W. B.)	Charlotte nr Alexander	X	X					
Heyward, W. H. (Wm. Henry)	E side Legare	X		X		X	20,000	20,000
Hudson, William (H.)		X						8,000
Huger, Benjamin	Calhoun nr Smith	X		X		X	7,000	50,000
Huger, Optimus		X						12,000
Ingraham, Wm. P.		X				X	18,000	40,000
Izard, Allen L.		X				X		125,000
Kerrison, Chas.	5 New	X	X			X	12,000	15,000
Ladson, Jas. H.	4 Meeting	X	X			X		60,000
Lamb, David W. (David)	Meeting opp Citadel	X		X				6,000
Legare, Jas.	cor Broad & Logan	X		X		X	25,000	30,000
Legare, Solomon (Sol.)	103 Tradd	X				X	20,000	13,000
Lowndes, H. L.	NW cor King & Lamboll		X			X		
Lucas, E. S.	W end Calhoun		X			X		
Lucas, Robert H. (R. H.)	Ashley bet Bee & Doughty	X	X			X	14,000	65,000
Lucas, William (W. M.)	Rutledge opp Radcliffe	X	X			X	25,000	100,000

A LIST OF CHARLESTON PLANTERS IN 1860—Continued

Name	Address	1860	1859 or 1860		Taxpayers		1860 Census
		Census Occu- pation Planter	Directory Occupation Planter	Other or none	Name Appears	Value Property	Value Real Estate
Macbeth, J. Ravenel	30 S Bay	X		X	X	6,000	.....
Magwood, Simon J. (Simon)	Rutledge nr Radcliffe	X		X		.....	6,000
Manigault, Charles (Chas.)	6 Gibbs	X		X		.....	25,000
Manigault, E. H. (Henry M.)	Drake nr Amherst	X	X		X	25,000	.....
Manigault, G. (Gabriel)	96 Broad	X		X	X	16,000	.....
Manigault, Jos.	24 Meeting		X			.....	.....
Matthews, J. E.	Rutledge cor Calhoun		X		X	7,000	.....
Matthewes, John R. (J. R.)	29 E Bay	X	X		X	16,000	15,000
Matthewes, W. R.	29 E Bay		X			.....	.....
Mazyck, Dr. P. P. (Dr. Philip)	96 Broad	X		X	X	10,000	13,000
Menude, Alexander	cor Laurel & Line		X			.....	.....
Middleton, H. A.	S Bay nr River	X		X	X	13,000	12,000
Middleton, Mrs. J. S.	.....	X				.....	15,000
Middleton, O. H.	New nr Tradd		X		X	16,000	.....
Middleton, W.	1 Meeting		X		X	28,600	.....
Mikell, Ephraim	.....	X				.....	3,500
Mikell, J. Jenkins	NE cor Montague & Rutledge		X		X	20,000	.....
Monpoly, H.	13 Bull		X		X	4,000	.....
Nesbit, Robert	Wentworth nr Anson		X			.....	.....
Newton, Capt. William	Cannon bet Ashley & President	X	X			.....	3,500
Nowell, J. L. (Jno. L.)	SW cor Reid & Bay	X	X			.....	.....
O'Neill, Patrick	.....	X			X	5,500	20,000
Parker, Chs. W. (C. W.)	33 E Bay	X	X		X	6,050	10,000
Parker, R. D.	18 Charlotte	X		X	X	9,000	9,000
Parker, Thos. S. (Thos.)	NW cor Montague & Gadsden	X		X	X	.....	12,000
Parker, W. C.	33 E Bay		X			.....	.....
Parker, W. M.	.....	X			X	.....	10,000
Poppenheim, John L. (John Jr.)	10 John	X	X		X	.....	.....
Poyas, James (Jas.)	NW cor Calhoun & Smith	X	X		X	.....	45,000

Pringle, Jas. R.	9 Legare	X		X	X	12,000	12,000
Pringle, W. B. (Wm. B.)	King nr Lamboll	X		X	X	18,000	18,000
Pyatt, John (F.)	SE cor Meeting & Charlotte	X	X		X	.....	.....
Rhett, Barnwell (B. S.)	cor Rutledge & Vanderhorst	X		X	X	9,000	9,000
Rose, A. C. (Dr. Arthur)	Rutledge abv Calhoun	X			X	10,000	30,000
Rose, Hugh	74 Broad	X	X			.....	.....
Rutledge, John	156 Calhoun	X	X		X	.....	40,000
Salvo, J. M.	King bel Romney		X		X	6,500	.....
Seabrook, Wm.	Broad opp Rutledge		X		X	10,000	.....
Smith, Eliza	15 Montague	X		X	X	8,000	40,000
Smith, J. J. Pringle	18 Meeting	X	X		X	.....	20,000
Starr, W. W.	Spring bet Ashley & President	X	X		X	.....	5,000
Swinton, H. R.	.....	X				.....	15,000
Tennent, Josiah S. (J.)	cor Blake & Bay	X	X		X	12,000	40,000
Tennent, William (Wm.)	Calhoun opp Wall	X	X			.....	.....
Thompson, John	Congress & Rutledge		X		X	12,500	.....
Tirman, J. H.	.....	X			X	.....	11,000
Tooner, Henry L.	Ashley cor Cannon	X	X		X	11,700	40,000
Turnbull, Andrew (A.)	SE cor Pitt & Vanderhorst	X		X	X	3,000	6,500
Vanderhorst, E.	11 Chapel	X	X		X	100,000	100,000
Vanderlippe, F.	Bogard at Percy		X		X	1,500	.....
Vardell, W. G.	.....	X				.....	12,000
Vidal, James	23 Middle	X		X	X	5,000	6,000
Wagner, Effingham	.....	X			X	.....	.....
Waring, Morton A.	St. Philip nr Cannon	X		X	X	7,000	8,000
Weldon, John	Chapel nr NERR		X		X	5,000	.....
Weston, Francis	.....	X			X	10,000	320,000
Whaley, Christopher	10 Grange		X			.....	.....
White, J. T. H.	Charlotte cor Elizabeth	X		X	X	15,000	15,000
Wilson, Abraham (A.)	Smith & Calhoun	X		X	X	.....	2,550
Wilson, Hugh Sr. (H.)	Washington nr Chapel	X	X		X	13,000	13,000
Wilson, Hugh Jr. (H. J.)	Washington nr Charlotte	X	X		X	.....	.....
Wilson, John	Rutledge cor Smith		X		X	3,900	.....
Wilson, Radcliffe	.....	X				.....	.....
Wilson, St. Julian A.	Thomas nr Radcliffe	X	X		X	.....	2,000
Wright, D.	19 Hanover			X		.....	.....
Wundrum, Samuel L.	.....	X				.....	20,000

HAMLET TO HOTSPUR: LETTERS OF ROBERT WOODWARD BARNWELL TO ROBERT BARNWELL RHETT

JOHN BARNWELL *

Robert Woodward Barnwell has long puzzled historians of South Carolina. Clement Eaton characterized this "South Carolina aristocrat" as "a gifted individual who never fulfilled the brilliant promise of his youth."¹ Born in 1801 to the wealthy and privileged world of Beaufort's planting elite, Robert Barnwell inherited a tradition of family political prominence. His great-grandfather, Colonel John Barnwell, had won the colonial gentry's gratitude by a campaign against the Tuscorora Indians. His father, Robert Gibbes Barnwell, fought in the Revolution and afterwards successfully combined planting and Federalist politics.

Robert W. Barnwell's education fulfilled his father's expectations. James Louis Petigru was his teacher at Beaufort College, a private academy catering to the sons of low-country planters. In 1817 Barnwell went to Harvard where he formed a friendship with classmate Ralph Waldo Emerson. The South Carolinian reveled in college life and engaged in a "great struggle of ambition"² for social pre-eminence. He also excelled academically, inbibing a fondness for classics from his tutor in Greek, Edward Everett. Barnwell graduated valedictorian in 1821.

He returned to South Carolina and read law in the Charleston office of Hamilton & Petigru;³ admitted to the bar in 1823, Barnwell formed a partnership with his second cousin Robert Barnwell Smith (Rhett).⁴ Three years later both men were elected to South Carolina's lower house, and in another three, Robert Barnwell succeeded James Hamilton in Congress. Despite the excitement of the Nullification Movement, which spanned Barnwell's congressional service, he became dissatisfied

* Doctoral candidate in American History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The letters are in the Robert Barnwell Rhett Papers, Southern Historical Collection at the University. Mr. Barnwell wishes to acknowledge the kind assistance of the director and staff of the Southern Historical Collection.

¹ Clement Eaton, *The Mind of the Old South*, p. 66.

² *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, edited by William H. Gilman *et al.*, I: 38.

³ James Hamilton's state rights view had not yet clashed irreconcilably with Petigru's Unionism.

⁴ In 1837 Rhett and his five brothers changed their name from Smith.