The Ever-Changing Dynamics of Control, Power, and Black Agency in Georgetown County, South Carolina from 1860 to 1900.

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Georgetown, South Carolina is located in the heart of the rice kingdom and would develop one of the most unique and unusual slave societies in the nineteenth century United States. This society and the slave cultures that developed within it had arisen as a reaction to the immense amount of control the enslavers exerted over their enslaved people to get as much labor and money out of them as possible. The unique slave society; the success of rice in the area; and other elements of life in Georgetown would affect the relationship and dynamics between the two groups. Even though slavery made it obvious who in the relationship had all power, this would become harder to distinguish once Georgetown entered into the Civil War and Reconstruction.

During slavery, rice had been incredibly successful in Georgetown and no other place where it was also being grown, such as Georgia's Lowcountry, could hold a candle to how much rice Georgetown was producing during the mid-nineteenth century.[1] For example, in 1860 Georgetown produced over 55,000,000 lbs. of rice[2] squashing Georgia's biggest rice producing county at the time, Chatham, who produced over 25,000,000 lbs.[3] To accomplish such a feat, Georgetown's enslavers had hundreds of enslaved people spread over various plantations. This led to Georgetown being home to some of the South's wealthiest enslavers and even one who in the 1850s, had over one thousand enslaved people working his plantations. That enslavers was Joshua John

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[1] William Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamp* (Athen: University of Georgia Press. 2000), 390. Georgetown is typically considered to be located in the Pee Dee region, as opposed to the Lowcountry region of South Carolina. The Pee Dee region is above the Lowcountry and it covers Georgetown, Horry, Marion, Dillon, Florence, Williamsburg, Clarendon, Sumter, Lee, Darlington, Marlboro, and Chesterfield counties.

[2] United States Census Bureau, *State of South Carolina Agriculture Produced.*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864) 129, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/agriculture/1860b-07.pdf.

[3] United States Census Bureau, *State of South Carolina Agriculture Produced.*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864) 23, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/agriculture/1860b-05.pdf.

Ward, who was recorded by historian Charles Joyner as having 1,121 enslaved people on his 1860 estate records.[4] This led to the enslavers having to exert an immense amount of control over their enslaved people to ensure a successful and efficient harvest.

The enslavers control was like a blanket that covered the entire plantation, however, it had some holes that the enslaved people noticed. These holes enabled the enslaved people to create that unique slave society, which included mixed communities, cultures, and even a language called Gullah that was largely under their control. Even the aspects of slavery that were under their enslavers' control, such as the days off reward afforded to them through the task system helped foster these communities and cultural mixing.[5] The days off allowed them to retain and diffuse parts of their African culture that had been brought with them from their homeland or that had been passed down to them. The mixing and diffusion of music and songs on the plantations is one example of the cultural mixing that took place on the plantations. As the enslaved people shared their songs between each other, they were sometimes transformed into new and unique one's people could hear being sung as the enslaved people worked. They acted as a nice distraction or break during the long working hours spent out in the rice fields and other places like boats, as even "boat crews on the Waccamaw socialized by singing as they worked."[6] Alongside songs and music, folktales, cultural and religious practices, and more were shared and transformed amongst the enslaved people. These were the forms of autonomy and agency the enslaved people had wanted because these were something they could control and was out of their enslavers' grasp. However, the

[4] Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* 25th Anniversary Edition. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 19.
[5] Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 127
[6] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 128

days off that were crucial to the creation of their unique slave society was not under their control and could be taken away by the enslaver.

The impossible task punishment is one example of how the days off reward could be stripped from the enslaved people. If they were taken away, the enslaved people would have had a much harder time continuing their society and would have lost what little agency and autonomy they had during slavery. Fortunately for the enslavers and their control, the agency and autonomy the enslaved people's society gave them was not able to break it, much less threaten it. If the enslaved people tried to push the boundaries of control, there were the typical punishments of whippings, beatings, or being sold waiting for them. Thanks to certain geographic factors, the enslavers never had to worry about revolts against them or their overseer(s); the enslaved people running away; or, to an extent, them causing much damage to the plantation or farm land. Rice's need for hundreds of workers had created a large population skew that caused the enslaved people to heavily outnumber the enslavers, but even this was not able to challenge the enslavers' control. Until the Civil War, the enslaved people were going to have to deal with the current systems in place and continue to rely on the communities they built for support and as a temporary escape from bondage. As Georgetown entered into 1860 life in the Rice Kingdom could be described as "a mixture of servitude and privilege, manual drudgery and technology. A manufactured landscape maintained with the energy of slaves."[7] Yet, this lifestyle the enslavers had built up for decades was about to change dramatically after the plunge into the Civil War.

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[7] Richard Dwight Porcher, Jr., and William Robert Judd, *The Market Preparation of Carolina Rice: An Illustrated History of Innovations in the Lowcountry Rice Kingdoms* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 296

When the calls for secession paddled up Georgetown County's rivers in 1860, many enslavers were all for it. Combine their support with various other counties in the state and they would all push South Carolina to secede from the Union in December 1860. Unbeknownst to the enslavers however, breaking away from the Union was the worst thing that they could do, as it just signed away the comfortable and wealthy lifestyle that slavery had afforded them. The Civil War would also be the catalyst to a variety of problems the enslavers would encounter during Reconstruction. One of those problems was a shrinking work force, brought on by the enslaved people's new ability to refuse to work on the plantations and sign labor contracts. While the labor contracts would not be an issue until Reconstruction, the enslaved people leaving the plantations in droves which led to decreased rice production would be. The enslavers would also abandon their plantations during the war to escape the encroaching Union military, however, this would leave them defenseless and open to looting or destruction. The Civil War would set the enslavers on a steep downwards trend as their wealth decreased and their control started to wane.

The Civil War for the enslaved people, however, provided them with the first steps towards more autonomy, agency, and freedom. The war and especially Reconstruction, helped immensely in the enslaved people gain more control in Georgetown's political, social, and economic spheres. During the war the enslaved people could runaway from the plantations and towards freedom. If that were still not an option, the enslaved people could turn on their enslavers and overseers and establish control over the plantation. During Reconstruction the Freedmen's Bureau and the enslaved people's increased power would help them in a variety of areas that had

previously been closed off to them. Along with stalling the former enslavers from regaining the political, social, and economic control they had lost. The transitions between slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction brought about monumental change that continuously blurred the lines between who was or was not in control.

Due to the ever-changing nature of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, when historians approach these periods, they do so in a variety of ways. Some will tackle just one of these periods, while others will analyze multiple periods and, much like this paper, discuss how the social, political, and economic orders were affected between each one. One Historian who looks at two periods is Bruce Levine and his book *The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South*. Levine provides a detailed analysis of how the Civil War completely upended the social, economic, and political way of life for the South's enslavers and how they functioned afterwards.[8] Although Levine looks at various places within the South, his discussion can be helpful in comparing how the enslavers and enslaved people elsewhere were affected and what changed. As both groups in Georgetown had their lives heavily disrupted and turned into something unfamiliar. We can also see this in Eric Foner's book *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* where he goes over how Reconstruction played out throughout the South and how the former enslavers and formerly enslaved people moved through it.[9] William A. Sinclair, who had been born into slavery in 1857 in Georgetown, contributes something similar with his book *The Aftermath of Slavery: A Study of the Condition and Environment of the American*

[8]Bruce Levine, *The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South* (New York: Random House, 2013).
[9] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877,* ed. Herny Steele Commager, Richard B. Harris 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014 [1988])

Negro.[10] His book also centers around the period of Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction and the lives of black citizens as they fought against the people who wanted to strip them of their newly gained freedoms. When it comes to Georgetown and Reconstruction, this period lasted longer than many others in the South and this was due in part to the strong political control the formerly enslaved people and black citizens had at the time. Comparing Georgetown's experience to other places in the South is important to see how unique the area was and how different Reconstruction can play out throughout the South.

The relationship between the enslaver and enslaved people during slavery defined how it was done in various Southern places. A historian who has developed a unique way to look at this was Ira Berlin, who argued that the groups relationship was a negotiated one that had "never proceeded on the basis of equality and was always informed by the master's near monopoly of force."[11] The idea of the enslaver not having total control over their enslaved people is seen throughout Georgetown as the enslaved people created their slave society outside their enslavers' grasp. How the enslaved people utilized their old and new cultures to create these pockets is seen in historian Charles Joyner's book, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community*. Something like the enslaved people's religious practices they brought over from Africa, such as the use of conjurers to help them with their physical or personal problems.[12] When it came to the new work relations during Reconstruction, the now former enslaver

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[10] William A. Sinclair, *The Aftermath of Slavery: A Study of the Condition and Environment of the American Negro* (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Company, 1905), https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t6sx64m6s&seq=10

[11] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), Prologue, 2

[12] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 146

had lost much of that control they had enjoyed during slavery. They could no longer force someone to work on their plantation or in the rice fields and this hurt the former enslavers trying to start again. In Henry Carrison's work *A Businessman in Crisis: Col. Daniel Jordan and the Civil War,* when Col. Jordan is trying to start turpentine farming again during Reconstruction the now formerly enslaved people refused to work, leaving Jordan in a tough situation.[13] During these three periods and especially after the enslaved people gained much of their agency and autonomy during Reconstruction, the relationship between the enslaver and enslaved people was going to be forever altered.

There are several research questions this paper seeks to answer regarding how the relationships between the enslaved people and enslavers changed during slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Some significant questions are, during slavery, how did Georgetown's enslavers utilize their almost complete control against the enslaved people? What happened during the Civil War that allowed the enslaved people to start breaking their enslavers' control? How and where did the enslaved or formerly enslaved people use their new abilities to create a new economic and political order? Finally, what allowed Georgetown's former enslavers and white population to reestablish political, economic, and societal control in Georgetown County following Reconstruction? These can be answered with help from a plethora of different sources, such as letters, books, and even a Presidential Pardon.

When it comes to the primary sources used throughout the paper many of them are personal letters sent between enslavers and their families. These provide good first-

[13] Henry Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis: Col. Daniel Jordan and the Civil War," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 102, no. 4 (October 2001): 354, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27570530

person accounts of the enslavers thought and their experiences during slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. J. H. Easterby's book *The South Carolina Rice Plantations as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston* was perfect for this as it was filled with letters from enslaver Robert F. W. Allston, his family, other enslavers, and more that provided a first-person insight into life in Georgetown during the three periods. Some of the key secondary sources included, George C. Rogers Jr.'s *History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* and Martin Abbott's *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872*. Joyner's book provided remarkable insight and information about the culture and lives of the enslaved people and how they navigated life under slavery. Rogers' book was a history of Georgetown from the colonial period to the 1970s and it had some insightful information about how the people of Georgetown's lives were shaped between slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and post-Reconstruction and what the major factors were that affected them. Abbott's book was filled with information on how the Freedmen's Bureau operated in South Carolina and what they managed to accomplish, even though they were severely understaffed and underfunded.

The relationship Georgetown's enslavers and enslaved people had during slavery was one where the enslavers enjoyed a "near monopoly of force".[14] The enslavers made sure to extract as much labor and money out of the enslaved people as possible using their control and various systems of incentives and rewards. However, even with the various systems in place the enslaved people learned where the enslavers' control did not reach. This created a blind spot the enslaved people took advantage of to gain a level of agency that was not typically available, however, the abilities it afforded was not

[14] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone,* Prologue, 2

enough to break their enslavers' control. This meant of the three periods, slavery was the only one where the enslavers' control would remain unchallenged and unbroken. The Civil War on the other hand, would provide the enslaved people with the tools they needed to start breaking the enslavers' control. The enslavers' "total" control during this period would become less and less enforceable as the war went on and as the enslaved people gained more during the war, the enslavers enter into a trend downwards, as rice planting became difficult and financial issues started to settle in.

Reconstruction would continue to give the now formerly enslaved people a variety of new abilities this time in land, labor, and politics. The enslaved men could now vote in elections or be elected themselves; they could own plots of land refuse labor contracts; and more. The former enslavers, however, saw their control fall even more, their wealth continue to decrease, and rice planting remain difficult to do. The "punishment" Reconstruction had for the enslavers greatly upset them and they were determined to regain what they had lost. They would get started on this mission of theirs early in Reconstruction, with many enslavers getting their abandoned plantation land back in late 1865 and 1866. As Reconstruction moved forward and eventually ended, the former enslavers and white population saw increasing success in their goal of reestablishing control. This trend would eventually turn Georgetown from a "haven" of progress for the formerly enslaved people to like any other place in the South that developed Jim Crow segregation and strong white supremacism. The formerly enslaved people and black citizens following Reconstruction watched as they were stripped of the agency and freedom they had received during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

The chapters of this paper will follow a chronological order, starting with slavery in chapter one. Chapter one starts with rice planting and describes how it became the king crop of Georgetown and the South Carolina Lowcountry. Followed by the systems Georgetown's enslavers used to exert their "total" control over the enslaved people and how they were used in rice plantings, before ending on the unique society the enslaved people built. Chapter two moves to the Civil War and covers the abilities and powers the enslaved people gained to start breaking their enslavers control. Along with how much power, control, and wealth the enslavers would lose during this period. Chapter 3 moves into Reconstruction and continues to look at the former enslavers and formerly enslaved people. For the formerly enslaved, the chapter goes over the advantages they had gained in contract and land negotiations and how they utilized their ability to vote against the former enslavers. For the former enslavers, the chapter looks at what they lost and how they went about regaining control in land, labor, and politics. The paper then concludes with a discussion of how Georgetown went from a unique place of progress for the formerly enslaved people to like any other place in the South who had been taken over by white supremacists, Democrats, and the white population.

Chapter 1: Georgetown's Unique Characteristics Under Slavery.

During slavery, rice had been barreling through Georgetown like an unstoppable freight train that had only gotten faster since its introduction to the area by the West African enslaved people in the 1690s and its early boom in the 1730s.[15] Once it hit its peak in the 1850s and early 1860s, the train had hit full speed ahead, until it abruptly stopped and was derailed, putting rice and the enslavers into a decline they would have a hard time recovering from. Rice plantings immense success made Georgetown County home to some of the south's wealthiest rice planting families that included the Allstons, Trapiers, Sparkmans, Westons, Middletons, and Wards. Most families strove to have enslaved people that had "respect, gratitude, deference, and importantly, obedience" towards them.[16] To achieve this, many families utilized the typical forms of control used throughout the south, such as threats of sale, beatings, and whippings. Georgetown's enslavers also employed various incentive and rewards systems to exert their control over their enslaved people that was distinct to the rice planting area. Considering how outnumbered they were with the enslaved people's population skew, the enslavers had to make sure their control was airtight and could not be circumnavigated. Yet, the enslaved people found many ways to move around it that centered around the unique slave society they developed.

Slavery's development in Georgetown County centered heavily around the success of rice planting, the wealth it generated the enslavers, and the unique slave

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[15] George C. Rogers, Jr., *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* (Spartanburg: The Reprint Company Publishers, 2018), 29. In 1850, Beaufort County produced the most amount of rice, producing 47,230,082 lbs. to Georgetown's 46,765,040 lbs.

[16] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women & Everyday Resistance in the Rice Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 65

culture that had developed in the area. Charles Joyner makes sure to emphasize this throughout his book and in the chapter "Off Times", he describes how they "most shaped the contours of slave culture."[17] The time they were allotted from these days off were crucial because it was time the enslaved people could control and shape themselves. It was not like working out in the rice fields where the overseer or driver were controlling their every move or punishing them if they messed up. Those days off were theirs to do whatever they saw fit. When it comes to analyzing how the enslavers moved through slavery and what life was like on the rice plantations, William Dusinberre in his book *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamp* dedicates a section of it to Robert F. W. Allston, an incredibly prominent Georgetown enslaver. Dusinberre does a detailed analysis of Allston's life during slavery and how he chose to run his plantation compared to his neighbors, interact with his enslaved people, and what life in Georgetown looked like. Dusinberre also features two other enslavers who are both in Georgia and they can be used to compare how differently slavery played out between the two states. We also get to see just how violent or cruel the enslavers and overseers could be towards their enslaved people, which also influenced the relationship between the enslaver and enslaved people.

Even though rice planting had made the enslavers very wealthy, for most of the rice season they were not even in Georgetown but were elsewhere within South Carolina from May to October, and only in Georgetown during the winter months.[18] In the Pee Dee region alone, where Georgetown County was, historian William Dusinberre

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[17] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 127
[18] National Park Service. *Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study and Final Environmental Impact Statement*. (Atlanta, GA: NPS Southeast Regional Office, 2005), 36, https://www.tompsc.com/DocumentCenter/View/5624/Gullah-Geechee-Resources-Report-435-popt

estimated that "76 percent of the slaves of [Robert F. W.] Allston's Pee Dee neighbors experienced summer absenteeism; and the real proportion may have been much higher."[19] Malarian ridden mosquitos had played a part in the enslavers absence, as the stagnant water in the rice fields were the perfect breeding grounds for it. This had made the West African enslaved people, more valuable because they had a much stronger immunity against malaria, creating "a noticeably lower rate of morbidity and mortality among the enslaved population."[20] This left many plantations in the hands of the overseer(s) and not the enslaver. Some enslavers, like Robert F. W. Allston, were an exception because he had a summer home on Pawleys Island that was close by his Chicora Wood plantation. This allowed him to wake up at 6 AM and leave his summer home, get to his plantation, look at the crop progress and see how things were going and be back home around 3 PM.[21] But Allston was an exception and most traveled far away from Georgetown and the mosquito ridden rice fields. This left a good possibility that some enslaved people barely ever if at all saw the person who actually owned them. When it came to the rice planting itself, which had made these enslavers their money, it was very laborious and back breaking work. Historian Charles Joyner provides a very detailed description of the entire process and the work that went into it.

The enslaved people started to prepare the rice fields right after the previous harvest and this involved cleaning and clearing the trenches and this needed to be done before April because that was when the seeds were planted. After the seeds were planted, the wooden trunks were opened and the fields were flooded and this first

[19] Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 312
[20] National Park Service. *Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study*, 51, https://www.tompsc.com/DocumentCenter/View/5624/Gullah-Geechee-Resources-Report-435-popt
[21] Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 310-311

flooding was "known as the sprout flow, [and it] remained on the fields until the grain sprouted." This could take anywhere from three days to a week and during the "sprout flow," the enslaved people were typically working elsewhere on the plantation. Once After the seeds sprouted during the "sprout flow", the fields were drained and once they germinated, the enslaved people began hoeing the fields "in tempo with work songs, moving across the fields in a row." Afterwards the fields were flooded again to kill any bugs and get rid of any young grasses that had appeared and after two to three days the field were drained to "half the plants height." There it remained until the rice could stand on its own, which took at least three weeks where it was then fully drained and the dry cultivation period began. This period also took three weeks and was "excruciating" as the enslaved people worked with narrow hoes under the hot sun. After this period the fields were flooded again for the last time in mid-July before the harvesting began in September. After the rice was harvested, the stalks were taken to a thresher where the heads of rice were removed and then they were taken to a rice mill where it was pounded and processed. Finally, in November it was shipped and sold at market.[22]

The enslaved people played a large role in rice's success in Georgetown County, however, they were not the only element that did, as the area's geography was also a large contributor. The six major rivers, the Pee Dee, Black River, North and South Santee, Waccamaw, and Sampit, that ran through the county played an important role as they provided the fresh water the enslavers used to flood the fields. The tidal cultivation method was the main cultivation method used in Georgetown County because it "provided higher yields and profits, as the crop was not dependent on

[22] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 45-50

rainfall."[23] The rice fields themselves were originally built on top of swamp land that had once been covered with "cypress-gum forests, where trees so thick that it was impossible to see the sky," and other plants and wildlife. The cleared land had been used to create the rice fields, the water trenches, and space for the buildings and structures that were necessary for rice planting.[24]

To grow as much rice as Georgetown's enslavers did, they needed to have hundreds of enslaved people, which led to a massive population skew in the area. Eventually, the population of enslaved people got so big that from 1800 to 1860 the enslaved people population was over 85% of the total population.[25] It would not fall to under 80% until after 1900, when it fell to 72.3% in 1910.[26] One would think that the large population skew would have resulted in the enslavers having a harder time at keeping control or it would have at least been tested more, but that was not the case.

There were various systems that were developed and used by the enslavers that helped them keep control. One of them was the task system and the other ones were the enslaver allowing their enslaved people to raise their own livestock, grow their own crops, and sell it back to their enslaver. Looking first at the task system, it was a somewhat mutually beneficial system for both the enslaved people and the enslaver. The enslaver used it to ensure their production levels stayed high and their rice planting

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[23] National Park Service. *Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study*, 35, https://www.tompsc.com/DocumentCenter/View/5624/Gullah-Geechee-Resources-Report-435-popt
[24] National Park Service. *Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study* 42, https://www.tompsc.com/DocumentCenter/View/5624/Gullah-Geechee-Resources-Report-435-popt
[25] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 343
[26] Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *Black Population 1790-1915,* (Washington: Government Printing Office 1918) 829, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/black-population-1790-1915/00480330ch09.pdf

operation was moving smoothly, while the enslaved people benefited from the rewards it gave them. Enslaver James R. Sparkman in a letter to Benjamin Allston, son of prominent enslaver Robert F. W. Allston, described how he ran this system on his plantation. On Sparkman's plantation "The ordinary plantation task is easily accomplished, during the winter months in 8 to 9 hours and in summer my people seldom exceed 10 hours labor *per day*."[27] When they finished their task that day, the enslaved people had the rest of the day and could do whatever they wanted to. In certain cases, if an enslaved person completed more than one task, they would have gotten the next day off as well. On certain plantations the enslaved person's age, gender, and situation did play a role in the tasks they were given. For example, pregnant enslaved women on Sparkman's plantation were only allowed to do light tasks.[28] There were also punishments in this system if an enslaved person acted up, which were whippings, beatings, or being sold.

Regarding the day off or rest of the day off reward, two historians, Richard Dwight Porcher Jr. and William Robert Judd, described it as giving the enslaved people "considerably more freedom and mobility [to] pursue a variety of activities" making it somewhat better when compared to other systems, like the gang system.[29] The gang system was prevalent on tobacco and sugar plantations and involved the enslaved people working under the control of a driver. Lewis Cecil Gray described this system "In its worst form the driver was expected to exact the maximum amount of labor by use of

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[27] J. H. Easterby, "Adele Petigru Allston to Colonel Brown" *The South Carolina Rice Plantation as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston,* ed. J. H. Easterby (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 346
[28] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 346
[29] Porcher, Jr., and Judd, *The Market Preparation of Carolina Rice*, 40

the lash."[30] The gang system relied much more on the use of a whip, a central controlling figure, the driver, and everyone doing the same thing regardless of age or gender. The task system, however, was much more diverse and the workload varied much more depending on the enslaver.

Sparkman also allowed his enslaved people to raise their own livestock and grow their own crops that he would then buy from them with money or items that were only "obtained through shop keepers."[31] An example of an enslaved person benefitting from this system was described in a letter from Sparkman to Benjamin Allston, where "One man received $25 and another $27, for hogs of their own raising", with that money going towards "Comforts and presents to their families".[32] Sparkman's system seemed to work very well as by limiting it "strictly to my own people I have found it to work well" and they are not stealing from each other or abuse the system.[33] Sparkman managed to turn this practice into something where both sides benefited. His enslaved people earned their own money or items that were otherwise unobtainable, and Sparkman received helpful goods like food.

Robert F. W. Allston was another prominent enslaver who also practiced what Sparkman was doing but with hogs. He allowed his enslaved people to raise their own hogs and sell them to him or his overseer, however, there were rules that Allston had set up, which his enslaved people needed to follow. Through his rules and system, he made

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[30] Lewis Cecil Gray, *The History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860,* (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1933), 550, https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/chla2944804_1944
[31] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 345-350, 350
[32] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 345-350, 350
[33] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 345-350, 350

sure to emphasize to his enslaved people that this was a "privilege" which could be taken away at any point.[34] Yet, even with the new, but still restrictive forms of freedom and agency the task system and the rewards it granted were still "under the direct control of their masters. These human beings were chattel, personal property of their masters, and were subject to arbitrary bearings and other harsh punishments."[35] Even though the rewards from the task system made it look like the enslaved people were outside their enslavers' grasp on their days off, as long as the enslaver controlled the tasks that were given out, what the rewards were, and were able to keep an eye on their enslaved people, the enslaved person(s) were always going to be shackled down with the chains of control. However, even with what seemed like complete and total control by an enslaver, the enslaved people did manage to dig out pockets of autonomy that were outside their enslavers' control.

The coercive and oppressive nature of slavery profoundly shaped the lives of Georgetown's enslaved population and combined with the extraordinarily high percentage of enslaved people in the area, the development of a unique slave culture was bound to happen. Georgetown's enslaved people came from various parts of Africa that by the mid-nineteenth century, had mixed together and created a new culture with their own unique music, stories, language, and more. The slave culture of Georgetown also integrated elements of Euro-America culture, including different forms of Christianity and other religious practices. The cultural intermixing of Georgetown and Lowcountry South Carolina even led to the creation of a new and later creolized language called

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[34] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 345-350, 350

[35] National Park Service. *Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study*, 39, https://www.tompsc.com/DocumentCenter/View/5624/Gullah-Geechee-Resources-Report-435-popt

Gullah. This development of a unique culture, language, and community helped the enslaved people to release themselves from the grips of their enslavers momentarily and take control of their religious, spiritual, and private lives.

The Gullah language, which quickly became an important aspect of enslaved people's lives, came from the intermixing of the wide variety of African languages the enslaved people, who had been imported to the Lowcountry during the colonial period, spoke. Some of the source languages that contributed to Gullah were the Wolof, Fante, Ga, Kikongo, Ibo, and Yoruba. Historian Charles Joyner also describes its creation as the enslaved people's necessity, "to learn English and to retain African speech patterns."[36] This language became standardized and understood by a wide range of some, if not all, enslaved people in Georgetown by rice production's peak period. Having their own language was one of the best ways to create and entrench a unique community backed with familial and tight kinship ties that Georgetown's enslaved people could rely on and belong to. It also allowed the enslaved people to easily share their stories, religious practices, and cultural practices with each other, while simultaneously preserving them for future generations.

The communities and the building or maintaining of kinship and cultural ties between the enslaved people's family, friends, or strangers was another important development.[37] It created a large support system for the enslaved people and was something the enslaver had a hard time of controlling. One way the enslaved people built their communities up was through meeting other enslaved people on other

[36] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 207.
[37] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 132

plantations. However, an enslaved person who wanted to do this, ran the risk of severe punishment if they were caught off their plantation, especially without a ticket, pass, or were not traveling to a job site they had been hired to work at. Leaving the plantation without a pass required the enslaved person to escape unnoticed, which challenged their enslaver's control and ability to keep them in check.[38]

Religion was another area the enslaved people took part in that was partly outside their enslaver's control. In Georgetown, there were a variety of religions the enslaved people could choose from and belong to. With the most popular religious groups being the Methodist, Episcopalian, Christian, or Baptist religions. Some enslaved people even merged the Christianity they knew with the new Christianity they were introduced to and made it their own.[39] Others continued parts of the "old religion" amongst the enslaved people, such as consulting conjurers, priests, or medicine men who helped the enslaved with any problems they had. The enslaved people also became religious because it "offered a refuge from their many miseries and offered hope for the future."[40] Religion quickly became a huge part of the enslaved people's lives and was openly encouraged by the enslavers. Religion was also a way for the enslaved people to blow off steam and this can be seen with Christian enslaved people who went to each other houses for "praise meetings." The "expressive behavior provided a release for pent-up emotions in the soaring rhetoric of the prayers, antiphonal singing, and the ecstatic shouts…"[41] Interestingly, the Episcopal were much flatter and more uninspired

[38] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 132
[39] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 141-143
[40] National Park Service. *Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study* 75, https://www.tompsc.com/DocumentCenter/View/5624/Gullah-Geechee-Resources-Report-435-popt
[41] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 161

than the Christian ones were. Yet, even with all these cultural adaptations the enslaved people still desired the “forbidden fruit” of freedom. Until they managed to find it, though, they continued to use their religion, language, and close kinship and community ties to express their hopes, dreams, and agency as they waited for their chance to claim their freedom.

Coming out of the 1850s and moving into the 1860s it was shaping up to be another great decade for the enslavers. They had managed to keep their control over their enslaved people, keep the systems they relied on in place, and rice planting was moving along smoothly. They were hoping for another prosperous decade in rice planting and it would prove that way for many enslavers as rice production increased compared to the last decade. With the enslavers doing well, the enslaved people had made moves in creating various pockets of autonomy and agency they could fall back on to escape their enslavers’ control momentarily. However, these had not been enough to break or even threaten their enslavers’ control, but things were about to change for both sides. The Civil War would be a whirlwind of disruption that started to alter the dynamics of power and control that had existed between the enslaver and enslaved people for decades.

Chapter 2: The Increasing Agency of the Enslaved People.

The Civil War was the real beginning of disruption between the enslaved people and enslavers. For the enslaved people, their agency and control would only increase, as the war afforded them a variety of new tools and abilities to use against the enslavers' control. The enslavers, not wanting to lose what they had had for so long, tried to keep the same levels of control they had during slavery, but it was largely in vain. With the increased presence of the Union military and the chaos they and the war created the relationship between the enslaved people and the enslaver became heavily frayed. The war would show to the enslaved people that the enslavers control was not complete and could be tested, if not outright broken and ignored. It also caused the destruction of the vast mountains of wealth so many enslavers had built up from their success in rice planting.

The change brought on by the Civil War would make the previous life under slavery unrecognizable. It had been a whirlwind of change that completely upended various parts of a once dominant society. Georgetown and the Lowcountry would experience the changes like anywhere else in the South and what those changes affected are looked at by various historians. Someone like Bruce Levine calls the period that occurred during and after the Civil War a "second revolution" because like the American Revolution, irreversibly changed the lives of everyone in the South. It "undermined the economic, social, and political foundations of the old South" and this experience was no different to Georgetown.[42] The enslavers in Georgetown watched as rice production fell, their wealth decreased, and their control falter. To get a real sense of how dramatic the

[42] Levine, *The Fall of the House of Dixie*, xviii-xix

changes were in the area historian J. H. Easterby's *The South Carolina Rice Plantations as Revealed in the Letters of Robert F. W. Allston* does this really well.[43] It is full of letters from Allston, his wife Adele, their son Benjamin, and various others in the area that give a first-person account of how their lives have changed. One enslaver James R. Sparkman described how he had to leave Georgetown County and move elsewhere because of how little money he had following the war.[44] However, before this disaster that befell Sparkman could occur, the enslavers had to get through the Civil War first and wade through the problems that it had instore for them.

The Union military, especially its Navy, would become extremely familiar with Georgetown and its rivers throughout the war. They would become a strong ally for the enslaved people as they helped them to freedom and move against their enslavers. This was especially damaging to the enslavers because it stopped ships who were shipping enslavers' goods outside of South Carolina. Even with the decline of rice planting and profits from it and the obvious Union blockade, the enslavers continued to plant and ship their crops elsewhere. For example, the enslaver Colonel Daniel Jordon, who grew rice and turpentine and made turpentine spirits at his Laurel Hill Plantation continued to plant and ship his crops throughout the war. He had written to his factor Stephen Howard on July 30, 1861, that "several Charleston merchants were planning to run the blockade with a load of naval store."[45] Jordan joined these merchants and shipped his turpentine spirits alongside everyone else, however, things quickly fell apart as "the vessel [with his spirits] was intercepted by the blockade and captured." This meant a

[43] J. H. Easterby, *The South Carolina Rice Plantation.*
[44] J. H. Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 224-226
[45] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis," 345

total loss for the entire shipment of spirits and would have really eaten into his likely already meager profits. Even though he had lost his turpentine spirits, Jordan would successfully sell his 1861 rice harvest. However, his yield for 1861 was meager at only 230,000lbs and only sold for $8,000. Compared to past years, harvests, and profits, this was very small and showed how quickly rice had fallen since the start of the war in April that year.[46]

Before the war, Jordan had seen great success with his rice planting during the 1850s. Historian Henry Carrison described his success in 1859, where he had produced "672,000 pounds of whole rice, or about $23,000 in revenue, and he expected to produce at least that much income."[47] Compared to what he made in 1861, he would have likely been very upset, but he was not perturbed by the low profits from 1861 and he persevered. He continued to do business through his agent or factor Mazyck & Howard, who was responsible for selling Jordan's rice outside of Georgetown, even when they ran out of money during the war. Jordan's perseverance would eventually lead to a profitable period from 1863 to 1864, which came from selling his rice to the government, leading to him and his factors making a nice profit.[48] However, past the end of the Civil War in 1865 up to 1868, Jordan experienced a dire financial situation, as did many other enslavers. In a personal diary entry he wrote in 1868, "the writer of this has been nearly ruined by this and [the] state of affairs."[49] Various factors during the first few years of Reconstruction had pushed Jordan, with a large one being the enslaved people's refusal to sign labor contracts and work on the rice plantations. The blockade

[46] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis," 345
[47] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis," 340
[48] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis,"348
[49] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis,"361

was a nuisance to any enslavers wanting to ship their crops elsewhere, but it was only the beginning of their problems with the Union Navy. Things would only get worse once the Navy gained access to Georgetown's rivers.

Without access to Georgetown's rivers all the Union Navy could do was keep up their blockade. This meant for the first year and a-half of the war, Georgetown's enslavers who were inland or planted along the rivers were relatively safe. However, February 1862 was a turning point for the enslavers and their safety as well as the enslaved people and their prospects of freedom. In February two forts in Tennessee, Fort Donelson and Fort Henry, would fall to the Union and cause the "Confederate War Department…to withdraw units from the sea islands to the mainland and to establish an interior line of defense."[50] This shift of Confederate troops included Georgetown and the troops there. This meant Colonel Arthur Middleton Manigault, who was stationed at Winyah Bay and North Island in Georgetown, was asked to abandon his position and move to Charleston.[51] Colonel Robert F. Graham, who replaced Manigault, would later do the same thing. This left Georgetown, Winyah Bay, and North Island defenseless and once the Union Navy caught wind of this, they quickly descended upon the Georgetown area in April 1862. By May, the Union Navy had taken over North Island, which is just inside Winyah Bay, with little challenge and had firmly established a base there. Georgetown's rivers for the Union gunboats and with the help from captured or "confiscated" enslaved pilots, like Prince Coit, they patrolled the rivers and harassed the enslavers for the remainder of the war.[52] The Union gunboats even went to Georgetown

[50] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolian,* 396
[51] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolian,* 397
[52] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolian,* 399

itself but choose not to capture or destroy the town as it did not offer much of an advantage for the army.

The patrolling boats quickly proved to be very dangerous for the enslavers because they could land at the docks, beaches, inlets, or other spots outside their plantations and harass them very easily, alongside picking up their enslaved people as "contraband". When Union soldiers appeared on a plantation, unless Confederate soldiers were nearby, all the enslavers could do was let the Union soldiers do what they wanted because the power and control they had was useless against the Union. This resulted in many enslavers, such as Henry A. Middleton, having to deal with soldiers and enslaved people who came in and ransacked, damaged, or even destroyed their plantations. Instances of the enslaved people ransacking the plantations did happen throughout the war, but most cases from letters and other documents seem to report them happening near or just after the war ended. In a letter from Elizabeth to Adele Petigru Allston from March 17, 1865, she reported several instances of the enslaved people going against their enslavers and the situations many found themselves in as their powers waned. Elizabeth reported that "Mr. Reese Ford was put under arrest for 5 hours and not allowed to speak, his Bacon and provisions taken from him" because of a complaint from a young boy saying Ford had whipped him, but according to Elizabeth he had not. "The Hagly Negroes went to the Parsonage and took his beddings etc."[53] The Allston's overseer Jesse Belflowers also reported instances of enslaved people ransaking Chicora Wood and the surrounding buildings in a letter to Adele on April 2, 1865. Belflowers wrote "the negroes still go on in puling building to Peicies that have broke in

[53] Easterby, "Elizabeth to Adele Petigru Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston,* 206-207

to the Brick Church and taken out all the board that was left in it…I hear that they have made the attempt to Ripe up the floor in Chicora House," Belflowers was not sure about this because he had not been down there for two weeks.[54] In a letter found amongst the Trapier Family papers, Middleton had chosen to stay behind on his plantation, which led to him watching it be "burned before the eyes of its venerable owner. His refusal to leave his home had him taken herefrom by main force."[55] The plantation was not the only place that was burnt down in these raids, as the rice crops and mills were also burned. The increased presence of the Union troops opened new avenues for the enslaved people that had previously been closed off.

One thing the Union made much easier to accomplish was the act of running away. Prior to 1862, running away had been an incredibly difficult task, which was likely due to the isolation of the rice swamps and plantations. Historian Charles Joyner commented on this phenomenon and the increased number of enslaved people fleeing the plantations and reported "From April 1862 on, a steady stream of runaways fled to Union ships,"[56] and historian George C. Rogers Jr. reported, "By the end of July there was 15 or 20 refugees and 1,700 contrabands in the navy's hands."[57] Enslaved people of all occupations and from every plantation were fleeing to the gunboats with the hopes of gaining their freedom. This act also squashed the enslaver and enslaved people's relationship that had been built up over the decades and heavily disrupted rice planting.

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[54] Easterby, "Jesse Belflowers to Adele Petigru Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston,* 329
[55] University of South Carolina, Trapier (Family, Trapier, A., & Trapier, J. H. (1861). *Trapier family papers.*
[56] Joyner, *Down by the Riverside,* 225
[57] Rogers, Jr., *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* 399

Thus, making it much harder to grow let alone plant it, resulting in the enslavers taking a large financial hit and possibly putting them into debt.

As the war progressed and running away became more feasible, more enslavers were reporting instances of finding some of their enslaved people gone, having successfully escaped. For example, in a letter from Adele Petigru Allston to her son Benjamin Allston on October 30, 1862, she described how the Weston family's enslaved people had escaped to the "enemy."[58] They had accomplished their feat in the early morning and Mr. Weston's (based on the usage of he in the quote) "surprise was great to hear that their head carpenter and 18 others of his finest, most intelligent and trusted men had taken his family boat".[59] Adele described the escape of the Westons' enslaved people as a "very painful" experience because many of these enslavers had built what they thought was a strong paternalistic relationship between them and their enslaved people, and to see it be thrown away so easily hurt. Certain enslaved people were seen by their enslaver as very loyal and were sometimes granted certain opportunities or privileges the typical field hand would not have had. So, to watch these loyal enslaved people leave without a second thought might have felt like a betrayal. The enslaved people, on the other hand, did not see it this way and ran away at the first chance they got. Successfully running away showed the enslavers that their "near monopoly of force" was slipping and that the enslaved were no longer afraid to test it.[60] To try and retain their control, escape the Union soldiers, and keep their loyal enslaved people close,

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[58] Easterby, "Adele Petigru Allston to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation* 189-190 at 190. Adele Petigru Allston was the wife of prominent rice planter and active politician, Robert F. W. Allston.
[59] Easterby, "Adele Petigru Allston to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation* 189-190 at 190
[60] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone,* 2

many enslavers fled from their plantations and moved elsewhere within Georgetown County.

Most Georgetown enslavers who chose to flee during the war would have fled inland to another one of their plantations or to their summer home(s). This led to the plantations being left in a variety of conditions, with some being completely abandoned; while others were left with an overseer, enslaver or just the enslaved people in charge. An example of a family who fled during this time was the Trapier family, who left their Keithfield plantation along the Black River.[61] While they were gone, Union soldiers and enslaved people came across the abandoned plantation and it would be "burned with everything in it except for the slaves which the family had fortunately carried away."[62] The Trapiers were far from the only family who left their plantation during the war. It is not said where the Trapiers went to, but they obviously were able to get to a safer location with their enslaved people in two. Many enslavers, like the Trapiers, who also fled their plantations typically went to Plantersville. This was because multiple enslavers had built or bought other plantations in the area, such as Robert F. W. Allston with his Exchange Plantation.[63] Prior to the war, before it became a refuge location for the enslavers, Plantersville had been a pine land village that Historian George C. Rogers Jr. described as "places safe enough for the family yet close enough for the fathers to ride over to their plantations during the day." Enslavers who did not trust their overseer to

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[61] "Keithfield Plantation – Georgetown – Georgetown County," South Carolina Plantations, SCIWAY, South Carolina's Information Highway, last modified 2019, https://south-carolina-plantations.com/georgetown/keithfield.html

[62] University of South Carolina, Trapier (Family, Trapier, A., & Trapier, J. H. (1861). *Trapier family papers*.

[63] "Exchange Plantation – Plantersville – Georgetown County," South Carolina Plantations, SCIWAY, South Carolina's Information Highway, last modified 2019, https://south-carolina-plantations.com/georgetown/keithfield.html. It had perviously been called Asylum prior to the 1840s when it was changed to Exchange.

run the plantation correctly were especially keen on these kinds of places and Plantersville quickly became "the best example of such a rendezvous point in Georgetown District" owing in part to its location on raised ground between the Black and Pee Dee rivers.[64]

However, not all of Georgetown enslavers chose to leave their plantations and some stayed behind to continue operations. Although, if they chose to stay behind, they would have had to deal with the increasingly problematic enslaved people who were becoming more and more restless and harassment from Union soldiers. To keep any sort of control these enslavers had to employ certain punishments, some being quite extreme. Historian William Kauffman Scarborough described how before the war and when "slave resistance became ubiquitous, some slaveowners retaliated against rebellious Negroes by selling either the offenders or members of their families. Occasionally, they resorted to even more extreme punishments."[65] This precedent stayed with the enslavers and was employed during the war. Enslaver Henry A. Middleton, who stayed behind on his plantation during the war, recounted an example of what an extreme punishment could have looked like. He recounted how three enslaved men, who had successfully run away, returned for their wives, but were later captured. They were subsequently tried by the "provost marshal's court" and this ended in them being charged and set to be hung the next day to keep any "executive clemency" from intervening.[66] The executions took place in the fall of 1862, only a few months after the Union military had established themselves in the rivers. The enslaved people at this

[64] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 316-317
[65] William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Nineteenth Century South,* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 362.
[66] Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House,* 362

point were already leaving in droves, but this still could have been used to send a message from the people to any enslaved people who were thinking of running away not to or risk being hanged. It may have also been their way of trying to reestablish some control, considering every enslaved person who successfully ran away took part of the enslavers' control with them.

The plantation or "Big House" had once stood as one of the enslavers' greatest symbols of power, identity, and livelihood. It had loomed over the enslaved people's head for decades or even centuries, constantly reaffirming the enslavers' power over their enslaved people. However, with the war in full swing they no longer held the same intimidation and power they once had and were now a defenseless husk of their former selves, especially after the enslavers had abandoned them. The enslaved people, realizing this, took revenge on the plantations that had kept them in bondage for so long and had been built off their back breaking labor. Many plantations were looted such as Robert F. W. Allston's Chicora Wood[67] and others were burned. The rice crops also became targets for the Union soldiers and enslaved people, who gladly broke the rice planting instruments, burned the rice crops, and destroyed the threshers and rice mills. Damaging or destroy what had previously been untouchable was bringing the enslaved people closer to breaking the chains of control that had kept them tethered for so long. When an enslaver left their plantation, they relinquished the control they had over their plantation and the land it had been built on. It was no longer being run by them and anyone who stumbled upon it could do with it what they pleased. The enslaved people

[67] University of South Carolina, Trapier (Family, Trapier, A., & Trapier, J. H. (1861). *Trapier family papers*.

and Union soldiers used this to their advantage to loot, damage, destroy, and deface one of the biggest symbols of power and wealth in Georgetown.

The Confederate government, who was witnessing all this turmoil, tried to help those enslavers who wanted to leave. An ordinance was put out in 1862 with the purpose of helping them out and it was titled *An Ordinance To provide for the removal of Negroes and other property from portions of the State which may be invaded by the Enemy*. It created commissioners in various counties, including Georgetown County who were tasked with helping any enslavers escape if the enemy were close by.[68] It provided financial support and other things to "owner or owners, or persons having charge of negroes to be removed under this ordinance, shall not have prepared or provided any place or places to which such negroes can be carried."[69] Whether the enslavers utilized this ordinance or other ones put out is not clear, but if they did it was likely helpful in getting them safely away from the Union.

The Confederate Government was also allowing enslavers to submit a claim for land, enslaved people, and other items for monetary compensation. The book *NO. 2 Claims Against Government for Losses Caused by the War* book, is filled with enslavers and things they have claimed, such as multiple Georgetown enslavers requesting what could have been monetary compensation for their lost property.[70] One enslaver, J. Izard Middleton submitted a claim for eight different enslaved people on May 22nd, 1862. Six

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[68] South Carolina Historical Society, "An Ordinance to Provide for the Removal of Negroes and Other Property from Portions of the State Which May Be Invaded by the Enemy, 1862.," 1862. 1
[69] South Carolina Historical Society, "An Ordinance to Provide for the Removal of Negroes and Other Property from Portions of the State Which May Be Invaded by the Enemy, 1862.," 1862. 2
[70] South Carolina Historical Society, *Claims Against Government for Losses Caused by the War, 1861-1862*. Manufactured by Walker, Evans & CO.

of the eight enslaved people that are recorded were named Tom, Philip, Scipio, Ben, John, and Judy and they have no information next to their names on what happened to them for Middleton to create a claim for them. But the other two enslaved people, Toney and Davy, do have information on what happened to them. Toney was reported as "captured" and Davy was reported as having "ran away."[71] Enslaved people were not the only thing Middleton would submit a claim for, as he also reported a "Large Rice pounding Mills" and "Salt Works" that had been "destroyed by the enemy" on May 22nd, 1862. Those were valued at $36,5000.00 for both, but whether he was compensated for them or given something of equal value is not known.[72] The escaped enslaved people and destroyed mills and salt works would have eaten into Middlton's profits and stripped him of the comfortable planting lifestyle he had known. Plenty of other enslavers in and around Georgetown were also submitting claims for mills, fences, barns, and more that were damaged or destroyed during the war with the hopes of starting to plant again. Middlton watched his enslaved people run away or be captured, his rice crop and mills were being destroyed, and this left him in a tough situation. His world, like many other enslavers, was falling apart and the claims he was registering were one of few things he still had in his control. Yet, even with these rapidly mounting problems facing Georgetown's enslavers, many tried to persevere and continue to grow rice and earn some sort of money.

James R. Sparkman was one enslaver who tried to continue planting and working as a physician, but the war had destroyed his wealth and made it very difficult to continue his practice and rice planting. Sparkman would be forced to move up to his

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[71] South Carolina Historical Society, *Claims Books, 1861-1862.,* 1862, 30-31.
[72]. Historical Society, *Claim Books, 1861-1862.,* 1862, 126.

Dirleton plantation in Plantersville to escape the Union army and try to stop anymore financial issues. He described the ruin the war had brought him in a letter from December 7th, 1864, to Adele Petigru Allston, where he reported that his last successful harvest was back in 1861. Because of rising prices and no workforce working his rice fields, he had been left with very little money and a hungry family. In an attempt to feed his family, instead of taking money (which he was more than willing to take) for his medical services, he was also accepting "Corn, Rice, Peas, Potatoes, Fodder, Pork, Mutton Lard, Butter, Eggs…any and every thing that will enable my family to live, and feed my horses."[73] The war had made Sparkman desperate for anything to keep him and his family afloat. The desperation that had enveloped Sparkman also consumed various other enslavers and showed just how disastrous the escaping enslaved people and Union military had been on their lives.

Robert F. W. Allston would try to continue selling his rice through his factor Robertson, Blacklock and Company.[74] Looking first at Allston, he quickly faced problems with his rice that he sent to his factor. In a letter to Allston, his factor described the rice as being poor quality and it "had been beat out some time."[75] The factor also describes the hard living conditions in the area because of high inflation and people not having enough money to be able to afford rice. With these pressing issues in

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[73] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Adele Petigru Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation* 203-204, 204. Sparkman was also a practicing physician in the area and worked with both enslaved people and the enslavers. He did not raise his medical rates and continued to charge normal prices for it, even with the dire financial situation he faced and that was happening in Georgetown at the time.
[74] Easterby, "Robertson, Blacklock and Company to Robert F. W. Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation* 427, and Stephan Doar Papers pg. 403 University of South Carolina
[75] Easterby, "Robertson, Blacklock and Company to Robert F. W. Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation* 427

mind, to try and make any sort of profit, the factor recommends Allston either sell the rice on the spot or approach the Confederate government who he knows will buy it.

R. G. Izard was another enslaver who also tried to continue selling rice, but he did it with Mr. Middleton (likely Henry A. Middleton). Like Allston, Izard also had problems with his rice's quality and the half bushels he had beaten were "very bad, I fear Mr. Middleton will not take it." To try and save face, Izard believes Middleton may "sell it in the rough for more than he pays" because it would otherwise "not pay to beat here when the expenses transportation are so great".[76] Other crops were not faring well either, such as corn, which had been and was being grown alongside rice on higher plateaus, was becoming moldy or was of poor quality, rendering it useless for human consumption. Which happened to Izard with a corn shipment that he had to turn into animal feed over giving it to his family or workers.[77]What Allston and Izard were experiencing was becoming a much more common reality for Georgetown's enslavers as the war dragged on.

As the war neared its end and Confederate defeat looked likely, the enslaved people became progressively bolder against their enslavers and overseers. They no longer feared their power and knew they no longer held the same control over them. Instances of enslaved people who were still working on the plantations revolting and attacking their enslaver or overseer became more common. The Weston family witnessed this with their enslaved people who turned on them and the plantation as "General William T. Sherman's mighty army ploughed through the Carolinas".

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[76] University of South Carolina Doar, S. D. (Stephen D. (1805). *Stephen D. Doar papers, 1807-1898* May 9th, 1863, letter from R. G. Izard.
[77] University of South Carolina Doar, S. D. (Stephen D. (1805). *Stephen D. Doar papers, 1807-1898* May 9th, 1863, letter from R. G. Izard.

Fortunately for the Westons there were five loyal enslaved people who helped them escape. But the rest of their enslaved ignored the driver, ran the overseer off the property, and took over sections of the plantation land before dismantling it all.[78] Robert F. W. Allston's overseer Jesse Belflowers, experienced a similar situation. In a letter to Adele Petigru Allston on March 18, 1865, Belflowers reported how things started to go bad on March 5, 1865 when Union soldiers showed up to Chicora Wood and "turnd the People loose to distribet the house…taking out every thing" in the home and surrounding buildings.[79] Not only had the soldiers released the enslaved people from their invisible shackles and gone about looting the plantation, which on its own was bad enough, but they had shown the enslaved people how little power their overseer actually had. Once the enslaved people realized this, things only got worse for Belflowers.

He was later threatened by the enslaved people to give them the barn key or else face their wrath and to avoid a violent confrontation he gave them the key. With the key in their possetion, the enslaved people supposedly calmed down and were "a little moore Recconcild to wards me [Belflowers]."[80] Before the war, a situation like this would have never occurred under Belflowers' watch. At this point, Belflowers had worked for Allston for twenty-four years and had become a well-respected favorite of Allstons.[81] However, to the enslaved people he held a certain reputation amongst them and, according to Allston himself, they "dislike [Belflowers] mortally." This stemmed from his ability to

[78] Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 359
[79] Easterby, "Jesse Belflowers to Adel Petigru Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation* 328
[80] Easterby, "Jesse Belflowers to Adele Petigru Allston" *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 328
[81] Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 316

roam the plantation silently and pop up from out of nowhere.[82] Belflowers knew the best ways to keep control over the enslaved people and to get them to do what was required of them, but those days were over, and the enslaved people had started to turn on their enslavers and overseer(s). The hatred they had held towards Belflowers and Allston, the realization that Belflowers no longer held the same control as he once had, and the Union soldiers who "encouraged the Negroes to join them in plundering the mansion" helped jumpstart this revolt and eventually take over.[83] All Belflowers could do was watch as Chicora Wood was looted, taken a part, and its surrounding buildings burned.

The Civil War was the start of a monumental change in Georgetown and South Carolina that would only continue into and through Reconstruction. As the war ended, both the enslavers and enslaved people were in completely different situations compared to just five years ago in 1860. The enslaved people were coming out of the war with more agency, autonomy, and freedom than they had ever had before. The enslavers on the other hand came out of the war with less control, power, money, and land then before. Not being able to grow rice or even get it planted had eaten into the already meager profits the enslavers were able to make during the war. They also experienced a severe loss of control over the enslaved people. The war had been humiliating for them and to try and save face, many enslavers came into Reconstruction with the intention of regaining their lost control and reestablishing themselves over the soon to be formerly enslaved people.

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[82] Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days,* 316
[83] Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House,* 359

Chapter 3: Reconstruction and the Challenges it Brought.

The former enslavers were going to enter a world that historian William Kauffman Scarborough described as "a society that, in many respects, was turned upside down."[84] Many former enslavers now entered into a reality where the world they had once known was now gone and they now needed to figure out how to function within it. The formerly enslaved on the other hand, were entering this new period on somewhat of a high note as the Civil War and Reconstruction had increased the amount of agency, autonomy, and freedoms they had. However, even with their new advantages, they were not too far away from square one in various areas. The lack of land and capital left many of the formerly enslaved people in a vulnerable position. This opened them up to the possibility of exploitation at the hands of the former enslavers, especially with negotiating labor contracts. This led to some groups such as the Freedmen's Bureau coming in to try and prevent this from happening and helping the formerly enslaved people where they could. Despite the former enslavers trying to drag them down, the formerly enslaved people were still able to establish themselves in this period and make some important steps forward in the arena of civil rights and equality.

Reconstruction placed the now former enslavers and formerly enslaved people into a world that was unfamiliar and would, at least in Georgetown, show how powerful the formerly enslaved people's new abilities were. The former enslavers during Reconstruction were having to deal with a life in which they did not have total control anymore. To make things harder, groups like the Freedmen's Bureau and the new abilities the formerly enslaved had were making things like rice planting very difficult to

[84] Scarborough. *Masters of the Big House,* 374

do. Martin Abbott and his book *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872* shows what the Bureau did to help the formerly enslaved people keep their new freedoms and adapt to this period.[85] While at the same time stopping any former enslaver who was trying to take advantage of the formerly enslaved people who were now in a completely unfamiliar world. Everyone during Reconstruction, at least during its first few years, were on somewhat equal footing as they struggled to adapt to a world they had never experienced before.

The war had laid "the estates of exceptionally wealthy aristocracies…in ruin" and given them an unsure future.[86] Rice planting was not as viable and proved difficult to start back up again and factors such as a depleted workforce, Union officials still being around, and the Freedmen's Bureau contributed more to this state of ruin. An example of a large "aristocrat" who had entered Reconstruction in terrible financial straits was Adele Petigru Allston. She gained a $200,000 debt from her late husband Robert F. W. Allston that had been accrued during the 1850s when Robert had bought a plantation, 200 enslaved people, and a home for his son Benjamin.[87] This was impossible for Adele to pay off at the time and it resulted in the Allston estate becoming insolvent, forcing them to move back to "the only property the family could save", their Chicora Wood plantation.[88] Chicora Wood, however, laid in shambles as it had been looted by the formerly enslaved people and Union soldiers during the war, along with various outside buildings were burned down. While Adele and her family had been able to move back

[85] Martin Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967).
[86] Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution,* 170
[87] Scarborough, *The Masters of the Big House,* 389 Robert had passed away in 1864.
[88] Scarborough, *The Masters of the Big House,* 389

into a familiar place, it was devoid of the character and prominence it once had. To try and pay off her debts and start earning some money again, Adele would open a girls' school in 1866, but this would not last. She was not the only former enslaver who chose to make money outside of rice planting, as Colonel Daniel Jordan, who owned Laurel Hill Plantation, continued to make, and sell Turpentine spirits to earn some money alongside his struggling rice planting.[89]

Looking first at Adele's school, it did see some success in 1866 and 1867, but come 1868, things had started to fall apart. In a letter to Caroline Carson on April 13, 1868, the school "Last year [1867], and the year before [1866] our school did as well as I could expect", however, in 1868 "This year it has fallen off so as to discourage me greatly. It really does not make enough to pay the teachers employed."[90] Adele's pupil numbers dropped off severely because "The loss of crops, and other disasters, prevented many persons sending their daughters to school. Our school has been smaller, and the pay worse."[91] This shows another problem Adele and other families were still facing financial problems and did not have enough to even pay for a local school. Considering Adele's school had fallen apart three years after the war when it had been thriving just a year earlier shows that the problems the Civil War brought to the area was still being felt.

Jordan was not having any easier of time with Turpentine either. Jordan, had been a skilled and successful Turpentine distiller during the 1840s and 1850s, even becoming "for a time possibly the largest single producer in the United States" in the

[89] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis," 354
[90] Easterby, "Adele Petigru Allston to Caroline Carson", *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 240-241
[91] Easterby, "Adele Petigru Allston to George Peabody", *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 243-44, 243

1850s, continued to work with turpentine spirits to help combat low profits from rice planting.[92] However, turpentine spirits making and growing during Reconstruction was hard to get back into because of the formerly enslaved people refusing to work on the plantation and in the turpentine groves, regardless of it they were going to be paid. This left Jordan and his partner Eli Parker in a bad situation, especially with Parker's extra Turpentine he had kept selling in Georgetown for "only 60 cents, a premium price before the war but now with the effects of inflation, was unreasonably low."[93] Planting, which had been the life blood of so many former enslavers in Georgetown was just not working out at all during the early years of Reconstruction. To many former enslavers or whites in the area, this financial downwards trend must have felt like it was never going to end, and it even pushed some people to believe South Carolina was going to fall apart unless things changed.

This new wave of disaster that had flooded the country had made former enslavers, like F. W. Pickens, believe South Carolina and the South were in a period of "hopeless poverty and ruin, and I fear must get worse".[94] He described to Adele Petigru Allston what he noticed and his experiences were in a letter on November 22, 1867. Pickens and a bunch of other former enslavers had hoped for an abundant crop year that would have brought "with it some means for our poor disheartened people…but now the price for cotton does not pay taxes, and wages of labour and cost of transportation".[95] However, Pickens and the enslavers wishes were squashed, as 1865, 1866, and 1867 saw many rice crops fail, resulting in small harvests. This pushed some

[92] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis," 337
[93] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis," 354
[94] Easterby, "F. W. Pickens to Adele Petigru Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 236-237, 236
[95] Easterby, "F. W. Pickens to Adele Petigru Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 236-237 236

former enslavers to borrow "money at 2½ to 3 percent per month", to stay afloat.[96] Pickens would continue to air out his frustrations and his hatred towards the "wretched Military Bureau" for what they were doing for the formerly enslaved people and how the former enslavers were left to struggle. All Pickens could do though was hang on for "a few more tedious and oppressive months" before things hopefully get better for him and others like Adele.[97] In the meantime, the former enslavers needed to figure out a way to weather this storm and to secure the necessary labor to restart operations. One thing the former enslavers did to start rebuilding their labor force was by offering contracts to the formerly enslaved people. However, the contracts would not be a cure-all and problems would arise quickly with the contracts and getting the formerly enslaved people to agree to them.

Contracts were a big-ticket item for both the former enslavers and the formerly enslaved people. They enabled the formerly enslaved people to earn a wage, ensure they had crops and food for themselves every year, and it gave them increased agency, autonomy, and freedom. The former enslavers used them to start earning a steady income again, as the formerly enslaved people they hired got their rice planting operation back on its feet. Throughout Georgetown County, contracts such as the one "between J. [Joseph] W. Ford and the Formerly enslaved people on Perue Plantation Georgetown District", which was approved on April 2, 1867, were being signed.[98] Ford's contract, like many others, stipulated how much the formerly enslaved people were

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[96] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 435
[97] Easterby, "F. W. Pickens to Adele Petigru Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 236-237 237
[98] "South Carolina, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," images, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L9ZG-8WJ4?i=7&wc=MFH2-3M9%3A1017931601%2C1017956401&cc=2127881 :21 May, 2014), Georgetown (sub assistant commissioner) > Roll 77, Labor Contracts, April 1867-March 1868> image 8 of 354; Citing NARA Microfilm Publication M1910 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

going to be paid and it agreed "to pay laborers doing full day's work as hereinbefore specified for full hands $12 per month ¾ for each week wages payable at the end of each 1[?] week the balance to be payed 1st January 1868…" It also described various other rules and guarantees for the formerly enslaved people, such as what the tasks were going to be; that Ford would provide furnished quarters; Ford would "treat laborers with justice and kindness"; and more.[99] In another document signed January 14, 1867, all the workers Ford had hired are listed and it includes the "capacity" the formerly enslaved people would work in, along with their signatures and a witness's signature. Some of the listed laborers were Kate Walter who is listed as a whole hand; Maria Washington who is listed as a ¾ hand; Hagar Baker who is listed as a whole hand; and Easter Rutledge who is listed as a half hand.[100] Which, according to Lewis Cecil Gray, an agricultural economist, was determined based on the persons strength, at least during the task system under slavery, though it likely carried over into Reconstruction.[101]

Another former enslaver who was successful in getting a contract signed was Adele Allston in the Darlington district. She had created one between six formerly enslaved people sometime in 1865, as the end of the contract stipulates that "This agreement [is] to continue till the first day of January 1866".[102] However, her contract is not as detailed as Ford's was and does not provide what the formerly enslaved people

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[99] "South Carolina, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," images, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L9ZG-8WJ1?i=8&wc=MFH2-3M9%3A1017931601%2C1017956401&cc=2127881) image 9 of 354

[100] "South Carolina, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872," images, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89ZG-84W6?i=9&wc=MFH2-3M9%3A1017931601%2C1017956401&cc=2127881) image 10 of 354

[101] Lewis Cecil Gray, *The History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860,* 550, https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/chla2944804_1944

[102] *Agreement Between Adele Allston and Six Freedmen and Women of the Upper Quarters Plantation, July 28th, 1865.* South Carolina Historical Society, 1865

people's "capacity" was on the plantation. This contract did have similar rules to Ford's that the formerly enslaved people needed to follow. However, unlike Ford's, the formerly enslaved people were paid in crops and if "Any deviations from the condition of the forgoing contract may, upon sufficient proof be punished with dismissal from the plantation", their crop portion was forfeited.[103] Some of the rules set in this contract were to take care of the tools they were given, not to show up drunk, return any tools they had in their possession to the plantation at the end of their contract (as they were considered plantation property), and if anything were damaged or destroyed, the price of repair or replacement would be deducted from their crop allowance or wage.[104] It also called for them to "yield prompt obedience to all order from Mrs. Allston or his agent" and the formerly enslaved people would be treated "in a manner consistent with their freedom".[105] Paying the formerly enslaved people in crops rather than money may have resulted from Adele's financial problems she faced during and after the war, leaving crops as her best option. Contracts became a necessary part of the former enslavers' lives and they needed to get them signed because the formerly enslaved people were constantly refusing to work on the rice fields again. During this period, there were instances where the formerly enslaved people needed help with contract signing and would have gotten help from groups like the Freedmen's Bureau.

When the Freedmen's Bureau started their work in the summer of 1865 within South Carolina, their "most pressing problem…lay in organizing a system of contract

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[103] *Agreement Between Adele Allston and Six Freedmen and Women of the Upper Quarters Plantation, July 28th, 1865*. South Carolina Historical Society, 1865
[104] *Agreement Between Adele Allston and Six Freedmen and Women of the Upper Quarters Plantation, July 28th, 1865*. South Carolina Historical Society, 1865
[105] *Agreement Between Adele Allston and Six Freedmen and Women of the Upper Quarters Plantation, July 28th, 1865*. South Carolina Historical Society, 1865

labor for Negro workers", which had been exacerbated further by the failure of the formerly enslaved people to get land.[106] One of their main tasks was to also "expand the system as rapidly as possible during the remainder of the year" by doing what they could to help the formerly enslaved people secure fair contracts.[107] An example of them helping the formerly enslaved people came when the assistant commissioner General Robert Scott "warned the whites that plantations would be seized wherever the freedmen had been unjustly dismissed, and that the crops would be held for the exclusive benefit of the workers." However, the formerly enslaved people also felt Scott's threat when he told them they "would be forcible ejected from the land and have their wages forfeited if they failed to live up to the terms of their agreement" that was established in their contract.[108] The former enslavers, who had been used to being the ones in control, found themselves with a sizable lack of it when it came to the enforcement of contracts before and after they were signed.

The refusal to work or sign contracts amongst the formerly enslaved people was noticed by various former enslavers like James R. Sparkman. In a letter to Benjamin Allston dated November 23, 1866, he saw that the formerly enslaved people can be "force[d] by law *to contract* but how to enforce their labor is not yet determined, for neither hunger nor want can stimulate them to any reasonable effort".[109] This problem extended to other former enslavers, such as Colonel Daniel W. Jordan. When he was looking to start earning money again through turpentine production, he saw that "in the

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[106] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872*, 66
[107] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872* 68
[108] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 74
[109] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 224-226, 224

turpentine woods, the former slaves were reluctant to work whether or not there was money to pay them".[110] Other former enslavers, such as Joshua Ward at his Brookgreen plantation, Dr. Fishbourne at his Enfield plantation, and R. H. Nesbit at his Woodstock plantation experienced similar problems. To try and get this problem ironed out, the former enslavers complained to the military in the area and managed to get Union solider Lieutenant Colonel B. H. Smith to help with contract approval. Smith was responsible for overseeing the signing of contracts between the former enslavers and the formerly enslaved people. By having a military official like Smith preside over this, the former enslavers believed the formerly enslaved people had to and were required to obey the contracts they signed. After Colonel Smith helped the former enslavers get signed contracts in their hands, many left "to Charleston, [where they] borrowed money at high rates of interest" to start planting again.[111] However, upon returning home many found the formerly enslaved people refusing to obey the contracts that had just been approved and signed.

This was not the situation the former enslavers wanted or expected to find themselves in, as many were short of money, faced high levels of debt, and were desperate to start planting again. The formerly enslaved people, however, had some very valid reasons behind why they refused to obey the contracts. Black codes and exploitative contracts were two things employed by the former enslavers against the formerly enslaved people. Both had severe requirements tied into them. For example, the black codes "granted broad authority to the white employer over his workers" and required the formerly enslaved people to "work from sun to sun, to remain quiet at

[110] Carrison, "A Businessman in Crisis,"354
[111] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 434

night, and not to leave the premises or receive visitors without permission from the owner."[112] Exploitative contracts compared to black codes varied more in what they wanted the formerly enslaved people to do. Some had the formerly enslaved people working for at least ten hours, if the work was not assigned by task, and included punishments such as the loss of all their crop share if they were absent more than once. They even had terms like Adele Allston's six-person contract, which had the requirement to pay for damaged tools, to take care of the tools and other instruments, and they stipulated the kind of work on the plantation.

Facing such unfair contracts, terms, rules, and punishments, some formerly enslaved people chose to leave South Carolin altogether. Starting in 1865, some thirty-seven thousand or more left South Carolina in search of better jobs and opportunities in places like Texas or Mississippi.[113] The formerly enslaved people who chose to stay behind, however, continued to refuse the unfair contracts and in some cases, they organized together and would not sign a contract, "until certain terms had been met; occasionally they managed to win acceptance of their demands."[114] Fortunately for the formerly enslaved people, black codes would not last forever and they were voided in January 1866, by General D. E. Sickles, but exploitative contracts still remained.[115]

Exploitative contracts and black codes were not the only reasons behind why the formerly enslaved people refused to sign contracts, however. Georgetown's abysmal harvests in 1865, 1866, and 1867 were also responsible for contract refusal by the formerly enslaved people. Many of the formerly enslaved people were being paid in

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[112] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 71
[113] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 78.
[114] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 72.
[115] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolin,* 431

crops for their labor on the plantations and because of the small crop production, this led to, "Large numbers [of formerly enslaved people] had little or nothing to show for the year's labor, and some, in fact, were actually in debt" because their crop share that year could not pay for their rations.[116] These terrible harvests and the debt that had followed created a sense of apprehension in the formerly enslaved people that led to many refusing to resign contracts again for the next year. Leaving many former enslavers, who were trying to keep their lives from getting any worse, in a tight situation that eventually forced the hand of General Scott to act. Scott threatened the formerly enslaved people with "forcible removal from the plantations of those who refused to accept reasonable terms of labor."[117] However instead of folding to Scott's threat, many formerly enslaved people met to discuss better options before agreeing to Scott's conditions. Some thought of leaving the area altogether, others still wanted to refuse the contracts outright, but eventually many of them begrudgingly signed the contracts and started to work again in 1866. Like 1866 and 1865, 1867 was no better and the same bad harvest and financial problems would plague the formerly enslaved people and former enslavers. Contracts, while seeming like a good idea, overwhelmingly benefited the former enslavers and created tension between the two groups.

Yet, even with all the complications that came with the contract signing, the formerly enslaved people had shown the former enslavers that their control was still not as strong as it had been in the past. For the time being, the formerly enslaved people had "succeeded in shaping labor relations in accordance with their own aspirations."[118] Like

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[116] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 75
[117] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 75
[118] Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Business* 403

running away during the Civil War, the refusal to obey contracts or sign them had proven to be one of the formerly enslaved people's biggest weapons they used against the former enslavers. The financial problems that came from the contract refusals had pushed some former enslavers to do desperate things to stay afloat, such as auctioning off their plantations. An example of this can be seen with Joshua Ward and his family during the first five years of Reconstruction. He dealt with formerly enslaved people refusing to work, the banks charging "usurious interest that made it almost impossible to pay back loans" and neglected rice fields and tools. This led to his plantation, Brookgreen, being divided up because he could no longer afford it, with the central part of it going to Joanna D. Ward. However, it did not last in Joanna's possession, as she later sold it to her former son-in-law Dr. Lewis C. Hassell for $10,000.[119]

Some enslavers simply left Georgetown County or South Carolina altogether either because of their financial situation or the societal situation at the time. Former enslaver James R. Sparkman described in a letter to Benjamin Allston from Clarendon district (an inland county), his dire situation and how he wished he could be back in Georgetown, but alas he was "bankrupt…await[ing] the Executioner as calmly and resignedly as in my power, which, with my large family, is no easy matter".[120] Even if he wanted to, "To go now would be *to starve*. I have nothing left by my profession".[121] By this time Sparkman had not had a successful rice harvest since 1861 and it seems it was not getting any easier to start rice planting again. With no options left, Sparkman chose

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[119] Suzanne Cameron Linder Hurley, Marta Lislie Thacker, and Leland Baldwin, *Historical Atlas of Rice Plantations in Georgetown County and the Santee River* (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 2001), 177.
[120] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 224-226, 225
[121] Easterby, "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston," *The South Carolina Rice Plantation*, 224-226, 225

to leave Georgetown in hopes of starting over again in Clarendon County. A former enslaver who took it a step forward was Edward Barnwell Heyward, who "vowed to leave the country rather than face 'the storm…which must soon burst upon *the whole* country and break up everything which we have so long boasted of'".[122] As both groups grappled with one another over labor, contracts, and finances, another problem would appear and this one involved land.

Land disputes quickly became a problem once the former enslavers wanted their abandoned plantations back. During and shortly after the war the abandoned plantations that Edward King, a Northern author, and journalist, in 1874 described as looking "like sorrowful ghosts lamenting the past", had become the perfect places for the formerly enslaved people to start their new lives on.[123] Historian George C. Rogers Jr. described them as being the perfect "rendezvous, where the former slaves could gather to enjoy their freedom".[124] The formerly enslaved people used the land to start their own small-scale farms where they grew crops; raised livestock; built a home; raised a family; and more. For many of the formerly enslaved this was the "forty acres and a mule" they had hoped to earn and no one could take it away from them. The "forty acres and a mule" fulfilled the formerly enslaved people's "aspiration to be free in a way that they could see and feel and measure" and it had been their "dream to own the land which for so long had owned them".[125] The Freedmen's Bureau also played a role in the formerly enslaved people getting their own land because they had been given jurisdiction over the

[122] Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House,* 400
[123] Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Business* 403
[124] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* 422
[125] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 52

abandoned plantations following the war. However, these precious plots of land would not last forever, as the former enslavers strove to regain their land as soon as possible.

Late 1865 saw various new laws and orders put out by the government and officials regarding what was supposed to happen with the abandoned plantation land and who was going to own it. One was President Andrew Johnson's order to the Freedmen's Bureau to restore the abandoned plantations to the former enslavers, something the Bureau had been actively trying to avoid. The Bureau tried to persuade Johnson to change his mind by offering up ideas to him about what to do with the land so the formerly enslaved people could stay on it, but Johnson held firm. With negotiations seemingly going nowhere, "neither the commissioner [O. O. Howard] nor his assistant commissioner [Rufus Saxton] in South Carolina felt disposed to defy the President in the matter. Accordingly, Saxton – though reluctantly and with heavy heart – began the restoration" of the abandoned or confiscated lands back to the former enslavers.[126]

Another law was the Bureau's Commissioner O. O. Howard's "Circular NO. 15 stating that in the future all lands held as confiscated were to be restored unless they had been condemned and sold by decree of a Federal court."[127] However, even if the Freedmen's Bureau had managed to uphold their end of the bargain and provide the formerly enslaved people with their own land from the confiscated plots that they had in their possession, it would not have been anywhere close to the forty acres so many had dreamed of receiving. Historian Martin Abbott described just how much land the

[126] Abbott *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 56
[127] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 428

Bureau would have been able to give and "General Howard pointed out, it [the Bureau] would have been able to provide no more than an acre to each Negro family," a far calling from the supposed forty acres many believed they would get.[128] The formerly enslaved people were not out of the woods yet and continued to get the land taken out from under them. President Johnson created and started accepting pardons and oaths that would restore everything to the former enslavers, except for enslaved people. [129] These were instantly taken advantage of by Georgetown's former enslavers who started submitting pardons and oaths as quickly as they could.

When it came to who could get an approved pardon, it did not seem to matter how much or how little someone had helped and supported the Confederacy because many former enslavers saw theirs get approved. Henry Augustus Middleton is one example of a prominent enslaver who had a pardon approved. Before the war Middleton had owned two plantations in 1850, Kensington and Weehaw, that combined had 302 enslaved people and produced 900,000 lbs. of rice,[130] which increased to 1,300,000 lbs. of rice in 1860.[131] Middleton was obviously a very prominent enslaver who profited heavily from slavery and likely supported the Confederacy during the war. He should not have gotten a pardon approved based on those factors alone, yet he did and he received it on August 15, 1865. Looking at his pardon further, it can help show what one would have looked like after approval.[132]. The first part of Middleton's pardon states that, "by taking part in the late rebellion against the Government of the United States

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[128] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 65
[129] Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Business,* 183
[130] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 285
[131] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 301
[132] South Carolina Historical Society, Middleton, Henry A. (Henry Augustus). "Henry A. Middleton Family Correspondence, 1839-1886.," *Andrew Johnson, President of the United States Pardon for Henry A. Middlton,* 1839.

has made himself liable to heavy pains and penalties."[133] What those penalties and pains are is not stated in the pardon, but it may have been put in to show people that Middleton showed "regret" for his decision to support the Confederacy and was willing to take whatever punishment the government saw fit for his act. However, right after this showing of "regret" the pardon continues and Middleton is granted, "a full pardon and amnesty for all offences by him committed, arising from participation, direct or implied in the said rebellion." There were some rules Middleton would have to follow to keep his pardon from becoming void and one of those rules was he could not "acquire any property whatever in slavers, or make use of slave labor."[134] Considering it was already a couple months since the end of the war, this was never going to be broken.

Another once prominent enslaving family, the Trapiers, also submitted for a pardon on 15 January 1866 to get James H. Trapier's Kiethfield Plantation back. It had been in the hands of the Bureau and Colonel B. F. Smith, who oversaw what happened to the plantation under his care. However, thanks to the "accepted testimony of citizens of this district [Georgetown]" the Trapier family asserted that they owned the title to the plantation. This was lucky because the public documents in Georgetown had been destroyed, likely during the war, and proving they owned the plantation without them would have been difficult. With this confirmed, plans were made "for the restitution of the said plantation to the family of Genl. Trapier, viz. his widow and children".[135] The

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[133] South Carolina Historical Society, Henry A. Middleton Family Correspondence, *Andrew Johnson Pardon*

[134] South Carolina Historical Society, Henry A. Middleton Family Correspondence, *Andrew Johnson Pardon*

[135] Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. "F. S. Parker Letter to Trapier Family" *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolian, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, Records Relating to Restoration of Property, Registered Applications for Restoration of Property, S-Z,* 192. James H. Trapier had died in 1865.

pardons and how many were approved showed that Johnson was essentially on the side of the former enslavers and wanted to help them reestablish control or at least more control in the area during Reconstruction. They were being approved regardless of the support they offered, and this meant many of Georgetown's former enslavers would see the return of their land.

Regaining land was one of many steps the former enslavers made towards reestablishing total control in Georgetown and over the formerly enslaved people. Despite the type of control, they during slavery was never going to happen again, the former enslavers still strove to deprive the formerly enslaved of the opportunities Reconstruction had afforded them. Unfortunately for the formerly enslaved people, in most situations involving land disputes, the former enslavers had every advantage. All the formerly enslaved people could do during this period was watch as their dream of owning their own pieces of land crumbled before them. Now, the only way a formerly enslaved person could get their own piece of land was through renting, buying, or being given some through a labor contract. For the formerly enslaved people, this was far from what they had envisioned Reconstruction would bring them. However, while the battle for land had seemingly been lost, the realm of politics was turning out to be much more fruitful.

The door which had held politics, the ability to vote, and the ability to be elected to governmental positions had now been opened. The 1868 South Carolina Constitutional Convention, which took place from January 14 to March 17, 1868, and the

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https://nmaahc.si.edu/freedmens-bureau/record/fbs-1662423774659-1662426197661-0?destination=%2Fexplore%2Ffreedmens-bureau%2Fsearch%3Fedan_q%3Dgeorgetown%2Btrapier%26edan_fq%255B0%255D%3Dp.nmaahc_fb.index.event_city%253AGeorgetown%26page%3D0

South Carolina Constitution that was produced, had important implications for the formerly enslaved people, especially for the men who now had the ability to vote.[136] It granted them freedoms and privileges they had never had before. Article 8 of the 1868 ratified Constitution *of South Carolina* has twelve sections dedicated to the *Right of Suffrage,* with Section two being one of, if not the most important one.[137] Section two reads "Every male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years and upwards…without distinction of race, color, or former condition…shall be entitled to vote for all officers that are now, or hereafter may be, elected by the people…."[138] This all but confirmed the formerly enslaved men's ability to vote in South Carolina elections and this is entrenched even further in section eight, that declared, "The General Assembly shall never pass any law that will deprive any of the citizens of this State of the right of suffrage," unless they had committed treason, murder, or another felony offense.[139] Having the ability to vote codified in the 1868 South Carolina Constitution meant it could not easily be taken away from the formerly enslaved people and it motivated many of them to go out and vote.

Seeing how many formerly enslaved men took advantage of the ability to vote had enraged some former enslavers. The formerly enslaved men came out in droves to vote in the March 1868 election cycle, driving some former enslavers to completely abstain from voting for state officials that year. The former enslavers refusal to vote allowed the Radical Republicans to easily take control of both state offices and the congressional

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[136] *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of South Carolina, Held at Charleston, S.C., Beginning January 14th and ending March 17th, 1868.* By J. Woodruff (Charleston, S.C., Printed Denny & Perry, 1868), Title Page.
[137] South Carolina. *Constitution of South Carolina Ratified April 16, 1868, together with the Constitution of the United States of America,* art. 8, sec. 2 https://www.loc.gov/item/14008433/
[138] South Carolina. *Constitution of South Carolina,* art. 8, sec. 2, https://www.loc.gov/item/14008433/
[139] South Carolina. *Constitution of South Carolina,* art. 8, sec. 8, https://www.loc.gov/item/14008433/

delegation.[140] Getting Republican politicians elected to the government was an important step towards equal footing with the former enslavers and white population. As the formerly enslaved men took full advantage of the ability to vote, others took it a step further and ran for election in various governmental position in Georgetown. The formerly enslaved men who did run for office were elected to various local positions, such as the postmaster, but other positions like "the town officials remained generally in the hands of the white citizens".[141] Georgetown's citizens also witnessed one formerly enslaved people person go further than local government positions. That was Georgetown's own Joseph H. Rainey, who was successfully elected to the state Senate before later moving on to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Rainey had been born into slavery, but his family would earn their freedom in 1846 after his father, a barber, was able to purchase it. During the war Rainey was forced to work on the Confederate fortifications, but in 1862 he and his wife would escape to the West Indies, before returning to South Carolina after the war.[142] He had developed an interest in politics after the war and would become one of three men to represent Georgetown in the 1868 South Carolina Constitutional Convention. There, he would weigh in on a variety of issues, such as supporting a resolution to "suspend all executions of judgements or other forcible collections of debts contracted prior to the 30th June 1865."[143] He seemed to have been taken as seriously as everyone else at the Convention and once he returned home, he would start his career as a politician. Rainey was first elected to the State Senate of South Carolina in 1868, then he would serve in

[140] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 444
[141] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 444
[142] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 442
[143] Woodruff, *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention*, 41

the Senate for "two years, during which time I was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, to fill out an unexpired term in 1870-71."[144] Rainey described himself as "the first colored (bona fide) member of Congress" and the first and last "of our race" who was elected to the House.[145] Rainey exemplified how strong the ability to vote was for the formerly enslaved people and how important it was to hold onto it tight.

To some former enslavers and especially white supremacists, seeing formerly enslaved men voting and in government positions was incomprehensible. To some, it must have been humiliating and it showed them just how much power and control they had lost since the end of the Civil War. People like Theodore G. Barker hated the idea of formerly enslaved people working in the government so much that Barker out right refused to "live under a negro government, still less under a mixed republic."[146] Barker expressed this perspective in a letter he sent to Benajmin Allston on October 10, 1867. Ardent white supremacists, like Barker, did not accept black suffrage and refused to see formerly enslaved people as equals in any situation. Barker, who shared this sentiment vehemently, stated to Benjamin, "In the name of my race I protest against it! [black suffrage] He is not a citizen by law, is not entitled to suffrage, is not equal of the white man!"[147] Based on the date of Barker's letter, he had been pushing these ideals long before the ratification of South Carolina's Constitution in 1868. Barker would have hated the 1868 South Carolian Constitution because it solidified the formerly enslaved

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[144] University of South Carolina, Rainey, J. H., "June 13th, 1873, Letter to Mr. C. A. McCollough" *Joseph H. Rainey papers* (1871).
[145] University of South Carolian, Rainey, J. H., "October 5, 1880, Letter to G. M. Johnson", *Joseph H. Rainey papers* (1871).
[146] Easterby "Theodore G. Barker to Benjamin Allston", *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 234-236 236. Barker had previously been a Charleston lawyer, but later became a supporter of the Hampton Movement and ardent white supremacist. He was especially against the idea of black suffrage.
[147] Easterby "Theodore G. Barker to Benjamin Allston", *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 234-236 236

people as citizens and cemented their right to vote. Barker was not alone in his hatred for black suffrage or the 1868 South Carolina Constitution and various other former enslavers and white supremacists shared his same viewpoints and beliefs.

Benjamin Allston also loathed the 1868 Constitutional Convention and the new State Constitution that had come from it, and he expressed this in a letter to Ellen Allston on April 16, 1868. Ben had been "out all day trying to get men to do their *duty* in voting against the constitution submitted by the Radical Convention. I have been repulsed in two instances."[148] It became obvious that this new constitution was something no white supremacist or certain former enslavers wanted to happen. It meant the formerly enslaved people would move closer to being on equal footing with the former enslavers and reduce what control they had left even more. Some former enslavers believed they had to fight back and prevent this black suffrage was dragging the country downwards. Former enslaver James R. Sparkman told Benjamin Allston he had a constant feeling of grief and regret because he was "not there with you all [in Georgetown], to battle shoulder to shoulder against the storm that is upon us."[149] Benjamin Allston held similar beliefs and in a letter to Ellen Allston, he expressed how the government and white population were the only groups who could reestablish "prosperity in this country".[150] Yet, even while pushing these ideals the formerly enslaved people continued to make gains in more equality and keep full control away from the former enslavers.

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[148] Easterby "Benjamin Allston to Ellen Allston", *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 242-243 242
[149] Easterby "James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston", *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 224-226, 225
[150] Easterby "Benjamin Allston to Ellen Allston", *The South Carolina Rice Plantation,* 239-240, 240

Reconstruction's first few years had been a rollercoaster for both the formerly enslaved people and former enslavers. Each side had experienced lows and highs as everyone was pulling themselves out of the chaos of the Civil War. The formerly enslaved people had made major leaps forward in politics, which had led to situations like the election of Joseph H. Rainey to the House of Representatives.[151] They had crippled the former enslavers financially, by standing against the contracts they had wanted them to sign and refused to work in the rice plantations. However, the increased agency was not going to last forever though. The first signs of this occurred with the fast redistribution of land to the former enslavers. Even though the Freedmen's Bureau had been given the abandoned and confiscated lands by the federal government and were then vested with the power to do whatever they wanted with it,[152] President Johnson and the subsequent pardons he granted quickly stripped them of their control over those lands. This in turn stripped the formerly enslaved people of the powers and opportunities that land would have given them if they could have kept it. As Georgetown entered the 1870s, the continuous stripping of the formerly enslaved people's power and control would only increase, before it ended in the former enslavers and white population reasserting complete control over Georgetown and the surrounding regions.

[151] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 442
[152] Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872,* 53

Conclusion: Georgetown's Alignment with the Rest of the South

The former enslavers and formerly enslaved people had experienced a whirlwind of change during the Civil War and Reconstruction. In just a few years, the former enslavers had lost much of the comfortable and wealthy lifestyle that slavery had given them and they saw a severe decrease in the amount of control they had and could use. While the formerly enslaved people went from slavery to a form of quasi-citizenship that gave them much more agency and autonomy in politics and the economy. One of the most exciting and monumental changes for the formerly enslaved men at least was the ability to vote, which they took full advantage of. As the formerly enslaved people enjoyed their new freedoms, autonomy, and agency during those two periods, the former enslavers had been looking to take back the control and power they had lost.

The first few years of Reconstruction had seen the former enslavers regaining their control in land, labor, and education relatively quickly. An example of how quick one of these areas had fell in Georgetown and what it looked like elsewhere can be seen with education. In Reconstruction the formerly enslaved had invested what limited resources they had into this area to satisfy what historian Eric Foner, called a "seemingly unquenchable thirst for education"[153] The 1868 South Carolina Constitution would play a major role in securing the formerly enslaved people education, as it established that "All public schools, colleges, and universities of this State supported in whole or in part by public funds shall be free and open to all the children and youth of the State, without regard to race or color."[154] However, the education system in Georgetown would quickly

[153] Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Business,* 96.
[154] South Carolina. *Constitution of South Carolina Ratified April 16, 1868,* art. 10, sec. 10

be marred with problems shortly after its establishment. Low funding, not enough teachers, the need for land, and more restricted the amount of formerly enslaved people and black citizens who could attend schools in Georgetown and the surrounding area. Along with white families pulling their kids out of the local schools and putting them elsewhere and the eventual segregation of the schools, education was in bad shape before the 1870s had even begun.

Education elsewhere had not developed any better. For example, in Mississippi, they were dealing with a group Foner called the "South's Redeemers" who were determined to take down the "Reconstruction state," reduce black citizens political power, dismantle education, state budgets, labor and land dynamics, and more that had been set up for the formerly enslaved people. Mississippi saw the "Redeemers" slash "the state budget by 50 percent in ten years following 1875 and restored to their owners millions of acres forfeited for nonpayment of taxes."[155] This group was successfully taking away or minimizing some of the opportunities Reconstruction was supposed to cement in place for the formerly enslaved people. Yet, as education and land and labor dynamics fell to the white supremacists, Democrats, and white population across the South and in Georgeotwn, one area would stand out amongst the rest. In Georgetown at least, politics was one place the formerly enslaved people and black population held onto well past Reconstructions end.

The former enslavers and white populations were desperate to reestablish political control in the area and take it away from the formerly enslaved people. The ability to vote was a powerful weapon for the formerly enslaved men, and it opened

[155] Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Business,* 588

doors to them that had previously been closed. Civil Rights activist William A. Sinclair described the ballot and the power it had for the formerly enslaved people. He described it as "the citadel of the colored man's safety; the guarantor of his liberty; the defender of his immunities and privileges…With the ballot the negro is a man; an American among Americans", whilst also describing the ballots power as the "Crux of the Southern problem."[156] The ballot was not so much a crux for the entire South, but was one for the white supremacists, former enslavers, and Democrats as it stopped them from reestablishing political control and getting people that could further their interests elected. The former enslavers and white population's determination had caused some to develop a belief early on that "the white man alone should rule." [157] Yet, this was not going to happen as long as the formerly enslaved people and black citizens voted and had the power to vote. However, once Reconstruction ended in 1877 and Georgetown moved into the 1880s, the belief that "the white man alone should rule" so many had held onto would move closer to reality.[158]

The 1880s was the beginning of a political storm, which saw the start of the formerly enslaved people and black citizens shrinking presence in the region's political arena. This had become apparent in the increasing number of black statesmen who were now being pushed out of high government positions and offices. One of the black statemen included Georgetown's Joesph H. Rainey, who lost his seat in the First Congressional District to John S. Richardson in 1878. The situation in politics would go from bad to worse during the 1890s for the formerly enslaved people and black citizens,

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[156] Sinclair, *The Aftermath of Slavery,* 104, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t6sx64m6s&seq=10
[157] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 483
[158] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 483

as movements that aimed at disenfranchising them and stripping them of any political or economic power gained steam. One movement, the Tillman movement led by Benjamin Tillman, had been trying to take political power away from South Carolina's black citizens for a long time. Tillman, who was elected Senator in 1894, pushed for the passing of 1895 South Carolina Constitution that he had played a role in writing. Within the constitution that was created at the constitutional convention, it "firmly established white supremacy by eliminating any meaningful African American input into the political process."[159] They not only decreased the formerly enslaved men and black citizen's ability to take part in politics, but also ended the policy of fusion in 1900.

The policy of fusion in post-Reconstruction Georgetown saw black Republicans and white Democrats working together on issues like education and who was being put on ballots and nominated for elections.[160] Georgetown's population skew for black citizens had also contributed to the success of fusion because it allowed them to continue holding political power, forcing the Democrats to cooperate when they did not want to. With the death of fusion, however, white citizens, white supremacists, and Democrats would start to gain political strength and take back over. Help from the rest of South Carolina would only make these groups stronger and it led to them successfully establishing "white rule to Georgetown" and stripping the formerly enslaved people and black citizens of their last piece of power. [161] Tillman's campaign to get rid of black citizens from politics and stripping them of their political power had worked and the

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[159] William V. Moore "The South Carolina Constitution of 1895: An Introduction." *Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 1 (1996): 2 https://digitalcommons.coastal.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1222&context=jops
[160] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 475
[161] Rogers, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina,* 484

white population, white supremacists, and Democrats were able to reassert the control they had been looking for since the beginning of Reconstruction.[162]

Georgetown by the beginning of the twentieth century had experienced a great deal of change since the start of the Civil War in 1860. Slavery had been defined by various different factors, such as the explosion of rice and the almost total control of the enslavers on their enslaved people. The control exerted by the enslavers would create a unique relationship between the two groups. This then resulted in the enslaved people building communities and even a new language to escape the work in the rice fields and bring some sort of agency to their lives. Today, various cultural elements from that period, such as Gullah, still persist the modern Gullah/Geechee people. Once they moved into the Civil War, things would change dramatically for both groups as the enslaved people gained abilities and powers that were finally strong enough to test and break their enslavers' control. They utilized them wherever and whenever they could and they only got stronger once Georgetown entered into Reconstruction. The enslavers however, saw a large decrease in their money and control, as the enslaved people ran away and rice became much less profitable. Reconstruction would not make it any easier for them to regain what they had lost at first, but especially after Reconstruction ended, they had a much easier time regaining those parts of life they had lost.

Looking at the start of the twentieth century, Georgetown County was being taken over by a similar type of white supremacy that pervaded other parts of the South. The large number of black residents no longer provided the political power that it had

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[162] Laughlin McDonald, "An Aristocracy of Voters: The Disfranchisement of Blacks in South Carolina," *South Carolina Law Review* 37, no. 4 (Summer, 1986): 569, https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/sclr/vol37/iss4/3/?utm_source=scholarcommons.sc.edu%2Fsclr%2Fvol37%2Fiss4%2F3&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages

before and even with the other abilities and powers they had gained back in the Civil War and first few years of Reconstruction, they were not enough to stop the re-establishment of white control. Even though they had lost political control because of how long it had taken for the white citizens to do that, it meant that Georgetown County's formerly enslaved people, black citizens, and statesmen had enjoyed certain freedoms much longer than many other places in South Carolina and the south.

Fortunately for the black citizens, the re-establishment of white control did not impact the unique cultures, religious practices, songs, language, and more that they had developed all the way back in slavery. These were entrenched in Georgetown's history and culture and continue to be a big part of it today. For such a small, rural, coastal community, they did more and accomplished more for the formerly enslaved people and black citizens than many other places. This unique county demonstrates, in particularly stark form, the different ways emancipation and Reconstruction would proceed throughout much of the South.

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