

For the Love of Place: Paternalism and Patronage in the Georgia Lowcountry, 1865–1898

By PEGGY G. HARGIS

IN EARLY APRIL 1891 JOSEPH JONES, A RENOWNED PHYSICIAN AND THE youngest son of Rev. Charles Colcock Jones, made a pilgrimage from his residence in New Orleans to his childhood home in Liberty County, Georgia.¹ His return was motivated in part by nostalgia. Joseph had not seen the old homestead since leaving in 1863 to serve in the Civil

¹ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, April 4, 1891, Letter Press Copy Books, 1891–1892, F-2062:235, Charles Colcock Jones Jr. Papers, Collection No. 2893 (Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.); hereinafter cited as Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, April 10, 1891, Letter Press Copy Books, 1891–1892, F-2062:262, *ibid.* The Jones family, made famous by Robert Manson Myers's collection of their Civil War-era letters in *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War* (New Haven, 1972), owned three plantations in Liberty County, Georgia—Maybank, Monte Video, and Arcadia. (Although Myers spelled *Monte Video* as a single word, the Joneses typically did not. I follow their convention.) Arcadia plantation, at nearly 2,000 acres, was the largest of the three plantations. It was also the farthest inland, stretching from Midway Church westward to within three miles of the Savannah and Gulf Railroad at McIntosh Station. Although there was a modest home on the property, the Jones family rarely used it. South of Arcadia was Monte Video, the family's permanent winter residence. A plat of Arcadia plantation appears in Mart A. Stewart, "What Nature Suffers to Groe": *Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680–1920* (Athens, Ga., 1996), 190–91. Monte Video encompassed 1,400 acres of high and low lands on the North Newport River, one and a half miles east of Riceboro. The family spent the summer months, late May or early June through October, at Maybank plantation, located nearly fifteen miles east of Monte Video at the mouth of the Medway River on Colonel's Island. Together with the Sulligree (Half Moon) tract, Maybank comprised 1,146 acres, 420 acres of which were marsh. Charles Colcock Jones Jr. also owned a 1,412-acre plantation called Indianola in Burke County, Georgia. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 17–19, 964, 976; Memoranda, December 1, 1898, Folder 6, Box 29, Charles Colcock Jones Sr. Papers, Collection No. 154 (Manuscripts Department, Special Collections Division, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, La.), hereinafter cited as Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Edgeworth Jones to Hamilton Jones, March 14, 1906, Folder 5, Box 6, Joseph Jones Papers (Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge), hereinafter cited as Joseph Jones Papers, LSU; Charles Jones Jr. to Ruth Jones, May 11, 1888, Box 3, Jones Papers, Duke. I am indebted to J. Morgan Kousser, Scott P. Marler, Anastatia Sims, Mark M. Smith, and four anonymous referees for the *Journal of Southern History* for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Funding and support for this research came from Georgia Southern University and a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship.

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War.² His nineteen-year-old son, who accompanied him on the trip, brought a camera to capture Joseph's homecoming in a series of photographs. The snapshots, seven in all, show the places that members of the Jones family held dear—Midway Church, their plantation home at Monte Video, and patriarch Charles Colcock Jones's tomb.³ Upon receiving copies of the photographs, Joseph's older brother, Charles Colcock Jones Jr., vowed, "I will take good care of them and they will serve to recall memories of localities consecrated by recollections most precious."⁴

The brothers shared a nostalgic affection for the places and a way of life that, from their point of view, had been marred by war. The young photographer, however, captured something more than the locales and sentiments of his father's generation. All but two of the pictures included images of African Americans. The appearance of local black residents in a white family's snapshots reminds us that these were their places too. Stepney West, Niger Fraser, and many others caught on film that day lived and worked on the Jones family's plantations both before and after emancipation.⁵ Their inclusion in the family's photos,

² Joseph Jones to Charles Jones Jr., January 12, 1880, Folder 1, Box 11, Joseph Jones to Ruth Jones Carpenter, July 21, 1893, Folder 11, Box 11, Charles Colcock Jones family papers, Ms 215 (Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens); hereinafter cited as Jones family papers, UGa. Joseph's sister, Mary Mallard, left Liberty County in 1865 and never returned. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1438.

³ Photographs, Box 40, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane. The pictures, taken by Hamilton Jones, show the front and back of the family's beloved Monte Video plantation home; Joseph standing on the steps of Midway Church; Joseph, four black men, and a young boy at a spring on Monte Video property; a group of African Americans posing in front of a modest cabin; three black women and a child standing by a fence; and Joseph standing with two former servants at the Midway grave site of his father. Some of these pictures appear in R[obert] Q. Mallard, *Montevideo—Maybank: Some Memoirs of a Southern Christian Household in the Olden Time . . .* (Richmond, 1898). The book's photos, however, were altered in order to remove Joseph. Edgeworth Jones to Stepney West, March 20, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:836–37, Jones Papers, Duke.

⁴ Charles's poor health prevented him from joining Joseph in Liberty County. Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, May 4, 1891, Letter Press Copy Books, 1891–1892, F-2062:409–10, Jones Papers, Duke.

⁵ Using the Joneses' plantation books I was able to establish kinship ties among their slaves over multiple generations. I then used a variety of sources to identify what surnames these individuals adopted after emancipation and compared these names to those that appear on letters, labor contracts, and property deeds. Plantation books, Boxes 38 and 39, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Labor contract, January 31, 1867, Folder 1, Box 25, *ibid.*; Labor contract, December 28, 1867, Folder 8, Box 21, Jones family papers, UGa; Labor contract, February 12, 1867, Folder 11, Box 8, *ibid.*; Labor contract, December 29, 1869, Folder 2, Box 9, *ibid.*; Labor contract, December 30, 1869, Folder 8, Box 21, *ibid.*; Listing of Negro property, Folder 8, Box 8, *ibid.*; Labor contract, January 1, 1869, Legal Papers Folder, Box 10, Jones Papers, Duke; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, *Freedman's Bank Records* (Computer optical disc; Salt Lake City, Utah, 2000); Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, *1880 United States Census and National Index* (56 computer optical discs; Salt Lake City, Utah, 2001); Manuscript Census Returns, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Liberty County, Georgia, National Archives

taken twenty-six years after the war's end, whisper of the long-standing connections among the Joneses, their former slaves, and the place both groups called home.⁶

Joseph's return to Liberty County also served a practical aim. For years he had refused his brother Charles's repeated requests to sell two of the family's Lowcountry plantations—Maybank and Monte Video—because Joseph believed that one day he might return there to live.⁷ At age fifty-eight and in failing health, he must have felt that it was time to make a decision. His journey home, however, proved to be a harsh awakening. The old landmarks and his relationships with the men and women of his youth had changed, something that his older brother understood all too well. Joseph left Liberty and never returned.

Unlike Joseph, Charles had visited Liberty County every year since their mother's death in 1869. Usually he made the journey, first from Brooklyn, New York, and later from Augusta, Georgia, during the first week of January. He went there to protect and preserve their Monte Video home, to settle accounts with tenants on Monte Video and Maybank plantations, and to sell the lots carved from the family's third plantation, Arcadia.⁸ In between these visits, Charles relied on his family's former slaves to watch over the homesite, collect rents from tenants, broker land sales, and maintain his father's burial plot.⁹ In

Microfilm Series M-593, roll 162; Manuscript Census Returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Liberty County, Georgia, National Archives Microfilm Series T-9, roll 155; Manuscript Agricultural and Manufacturing Census Returns, 1880, Liberty County, Georgia, Duke University Microfilm Series M6270, reel 118.

⁶ Karen B. Bell notes that many freedpeople "maintained ancestral ties to the plantations" they had worked as slaves. See Bell, "'The Ogeechee Troubles': Federal Land Restoration and the 'Lived Realities' of Temporary Proprietors, 1865–1868," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 85 (Fall 2001), 375–97 (quotation on p. 376). Former slaves' attachment to place is also discussed in Edward Magdol, *A Right to the Land: Essays on the Freedmen's Community* (Westport, Conn., 1977), 175; Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York, 1979), 327–32; and Patricia Guthrie, *Catching Sense: African American Communities on a South Carolina Sea Island* (Westport, Conn., 1996), 31–39.

⁷ He also speculated that property in Liberty County might become more valuable. Joseph Jones to Charles Jones Jr., January 12, 1880, Folder 1, Box 11, Jones family papers, UGa.

⁸ Mary Jones died at the home of her daughter April 23, 1869. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1574–75. Charles Jones moved to New York in late December 1865 to open a law office with John Elliott Ward. The move to New York was precipitated by Jones's need for money and his wife's poor health. Her doctor advised them to make "a radical change to a colder climate at the earliest practical moment." Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, December 5, 1865, Folder 8, Box 8, Jones family papers, UGa (quotation); Manuscript Census Returns, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, New York City, New York, National Archives Microfilm Series M-593, roll 948, p. 167.

⁹ Many of the freedpeople who contracted to work Monte Video and Arcadia plantations after emancipation had always lived there. For instance, Sam and Rosetta Roberts, who were too old to labor, remained at Monte Video with their daughters, "Mom" Lucy Holmes and Fanny Lawson; their sons, July and Sam Roberts and Abram Reese; their children's spouses, Charles

return for their efforts, the freedpeople expected and received the typical benefits of patronage, such as extra allotments of food and supplies, occasional gifts of cash and clothing, and the modest amount of prestige and protection that came from their association with a wealthy white family.¹⁰

The Jones family was unique because of patriarch Charles Colcock Jones Sr.'s reputation as a benevolent slaveholder and his mission to provide slaves an oral, religious education. But in other ways, the Joneses were very much like their Liberty County neighbors after the war. They lost the source of their wealth, experimented with different labor-management practices, struggled to re-establish their plantations and reap a modest profit, argued with unscrupulous white overseers, and attempted to find "suitable" buyers for their Lowcountry properties. And they, like many of their wealthy neighbors, left the area after several years of suffering poor returns from their plantations.¹¹

Members of this family are unusual, however, in that their propensity

Holmes, Gilbert Lawson, Juno Roberts, and Judith Roberts; and their grandchildren. Three of the children of "Old" Niger and Phillis, Niger Fraser, Pulaski Fraser, and Hannah Moore Anderson, worked Monte Video land with their spouses, Tenah, Clarissa, and Abram. A third family group comprised the descendants of Caesar and Peggy Anderson. Also present were "Mom" Kate, Mary Jones's former cook, and her husband Charles James. Lastly, there were the offspring of Andrew and Mary Ann Lawson. Years before, Andrew had been the foreman at Maybank plantation. But after the war, an aging Andrew and Mary Ann moved to Monte Video to be with their sons Gilbert and George Lawson; their sons' wives, Fanny and Rose; and their many grandchildren, including their deceased daughter Dinah's two boys, Harry and Abram Bryan. At Arcadia, an elderly Robin West was surrounded by his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Daughter Elsey and her husband, Syphax Maxwell, farmed there, as did at least three of their grown children and the children's spouses—Robert and Harriet Maxwell, William and Kate Maxwell, and Elvira and Jack Baker. Robin's only son, Stepney West, had been the foreman at Arcadia before emancipation. Lena, Stepney and Daphne's daughter, also chose to live at Arcadia with her husband, Thomas Bacon. A second kin group included Prime and Fanny Stevens; their children Phillis Smith, Harriet Maxwell, and Niger Stevens; and their children's spouses Sam Smith, Robert Hall Maxwell, and Rhina Stevens. See note 5 for an explanation of the sources for this information.

¹⁰ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1320–21; Gilbert Jones [Lawson] to Charles Jones Jr., September 5, 1866, Folder 10, Box 24, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, February 11, 1866, Folder 2, Box 24, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, February 24, 1866, Folder 2, Box 24, *ibid.* Several of the Joneses' former slaves changed their surnames in the years following emancipation. Gilbert first used the surname Jones, until he changed it to Lawson; Niger Bacon later used Fraser; and Stepney dropped Jones in favor of West. Of the cases of surname changes that I can verify using letters, labor contracts, and plantation and census records, all occurred between 1865 and 1872.

¹¹ Dawn J. Herd-Clark, "Dorchester Academy: The American Missionary Association in Liberty County, Georgia, 1867–1950" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1999), 6. Unlike their counterparts in other areas of the Lowcountry, Liberty County planters typically did not leave during the summer months. Instead they moved their families to seaside properties or to one of the upland "resort" communities within the county. R[obert] Q. Mallard, *Plantation Life before Emancipation* (Richmond, 1892), 8–9; Buddy Sullivan, ed., "All Under Bank": Roswell King, Jr., and *Plantation Management in Tidewater Georgia, 1819–1854* (Darien, Ga., 2003), 2 (quotation).

for writing and preserving letters and other records has left scholars with nearly thirty years of extant postwar correspondence between members of the Jones family and black Liberty County residents, many of whom had been slaves of the Joneses. This remarkable but underutilized source of correspondence tells us why the Jones family remained connected to a handful of former slaves and discloses how members of each group used their connections to the other to further their own interests. It also illustrates how the transition to freedom forced a renegotiation of blacks' "proper place" and shows how black and white relationships to the land and to each other changed from one generation to the next. Moreover, the Jones family's well-established reputation for adhering to a paternalistic ideology and honoring aristocratic ideals makes this family uniquely suitable for an examination of how paternalism was transfigured by freedom.

The words *paternalism* and *patronage* are often used interchangeably because both prioritize face-to-face interactions over those based on impersonal, contractual relations, involve informal norms of gift-giving, couch acts of giving as expressions of benevolence, and express the relationship between benefactor and recipient as a pairing between individuals of unequal status and power.¹² Yet few historians, if any, would argue that the "web of paternalism" associated with slavery and the social relations that emerged between former masters and their former slaves after emancipation were one and the same. Most scholars agree that whereas slavery imposed a hierarchical structure within which the paternalist sought to keep bondpeople in a dependent, child-like position, freedom transformed paternalism by releasing former masters from traditional obligations, thereby taking from freedpeople what little protection they had enjoyed as slaves.¹³ Freedom, however,

¹² The voluminous literature on paternalism spans disciplines in both the social sciences and humanities. Selected works include Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974); Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie, *Southern Paternalism and the American Welfare State: Economics, Politics, and Institutions in the South, 1865–1965* (Cambridge, Eng., 1999); Grace E. Goodell, "Paternalism, Patronage, and Potlatch: The Dynamics of Giving and Being Given To," *Current Anthropology*, 26 (April 1985), 247–66; and Jay R. Mandle, *Not Slave, Not Free: The African American Economic Experience since the Civil War* (Durham, 1992). For an excellent overview of the paternalist/capitalist debate see Mark M. Smith, *Debating Slavery: Economy and Society in the Antebellum American South* (Cambridge, Eng., 1998), 20–30. The term *paternalism* has been used also to describe the amount of persistent inequality after emancipation and to categorize southerners' intellectual convictions. See for instance Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, 1944), 459, 593; and Crandall A. Shifflett, *Patronage and Poverty in the Tobacco South: Louisa County, Virginia, 1860–1900* (Knoxville, 1982).

¹³ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 661–62; John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1862–1880* (Baton Rouge,

also gave African Americans unprecedented opportunities to act as self-directed adults. Even within the most restrictive environment, blacks tested the boundaries of freedom by challenging old expectations. The very act of emancipation created an incongruence between planters' beliefs about blacks and their behavior toward blacks. Planters may have questioned whether blacks were capable of providing for themselves in freedom, but the white plantation owners lacked the authority to re-create the old paternal relations wherein they exercised sole say over the extent of blacks' autonomy.

For example, writing to his mother in the spring of 1866, Charles Colcock Jones Jr. expressed a purely paternalistic point of view when he described blacks as childlike "in intellect," stressing that "the Negro" had always been "improvident, incapable of appreciating the obligations of a contract, ignorant of the operation of any law other than the will of his master, careless of the future, and without the most distant conception of the duties of life and labor" He concluded that it would take time and "fear of the law," in combination with "kindness and instruction," before freedpeople would fully appreciate and carry out their new duties and responsibilities. Yet eight months later, after having made concessions to freedpeople in order to secure a labor contract for 1867, Charles was perplexed and angered by what he construed as ingratitude on the part of his ex-slaves.¹⁴ But they were not the spoiled or disgruntled children he imagined them to be. The freedpeople on his plantation had used their limited leverage to negotiate as self-directed adults.

Initially Charles, like many former slaveholders, interpreted freedpeople's behavior as either trustworthy, faithful, and honorable or irresponsible, ungrateful, and immoral, depending on how willing blacks were to honor old roles and expectations. The fact that blacks were demanding more than Charles was prepared to offer offended his paternalist sensibilities. If he had been able to sell his family's holdings

2001), 33, 64–66; James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1977), 68–108; Michael Wayne, *The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860–1880* (Baton Rouge, 1983), 202.

¹⁴ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1338 (quotations), 1366. For an understanding of how Charles Colcock Jones may have influenced his sons' sense of obligation toward former slaves see Donald G. Mathews, "Charles Colcock Jones and the Southern Evangelical Crusade to Form a Biracial Community," *Journal of Southern History*, 41 (August 1975), 299–320; Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin' Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in Antebellum Georgia and the Carolina Low Country* (1979; rpt., Tuscaloosa, 2000); George A. Rogers and R. Frank Saunders Jr., *Swamp Water and Wiregrass: Historical Sketches of Coastal Georgia* (Macon, Ga., 1984), 43–59; James William Berry, "Growing Up in the Old South: The Childhood of Charles Colcock Jones, Jr." (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1981); and Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 103–4, 106–7.

in Liberty County or if there had been reliable whites to do his bidding, he might not have needed blacks to work his land or keep him informed. Had he been able to free himself from his Liberty County obligations, he might have cut all ties to Liberty's blacks, even the most trusted of his former slaves. But that was not the case. Despite any lingering paternalistic sentiments, Charles's relationship with his former retainers was shaped by circumstances beyond his control. Necessity—rather than charity or benevolence—bound Charles to the people on his land.

Likewise, it was not old habits, loyalty, or traditional obligations that convinced many of the Joneses' former slaves to remain and labor on the family's plantations for three decades. Their decision to stay rested in part on the fact that these were their plantations too.¹⁵ Their homes were there, their kin were there, they had personal knowledge of the Joneses, and they were familiar with the local community and its workings.¹⁶ Those blacks who had held a favored position within the Joneses' household during slavery used their connection to the family to garner personal favors. And in turn, their relationship with the Joneses served the larger black community. Former house servants and plantation foremen often acted as middlemen between local blacks and wealthy, more powerful whites.

In short, the experiences of the Joneses and their former slaves serve as a lens through which to better understand the shifting racial landscape after emancipation.¹⁷ Although the passage from master-slave paternalism to landlord-laborer patronage was triggered by planters' loss of wealth in human chattel and blacks' need to survive as owners

¹⁵ Before emancipation, the Joneses typically kept slave families together on the same plantation with two exceptions: house servants remained with the Joneses, spending summers at Maybank and winters at Monte Video, and male slave children were sometimes separated from their family to work one of the Joneses' other plantations once they were old enough to labor as a so-called full hand.

¹⁶ Blacks' sense of attachment to place was such that they rarely moved back and forth among the Joneses' plantations. Even after 1872, when the Joneses began selling the twenty-five lots cut from Arcadia plantation, none of the renters from Monte Video or former slaves from Maybank plantation chose to buy a farm there. Of the twelve Arcadia lots sold between 1872 and 1879, at least seven of the buyers had either lived at Arcadia as slaves or were married to former Arcadia slaves. These buyers included Niger Stevens, Robert Maxwell, Syphax Maxwell, William Maxwell, Stepney West, Jack Baker, and Samuel Smith. Deeds, Book R, pp. 45, 65, 249, 294, 295, 456; and Book S, p. 200, Liberty County Courthouse, Hinesville, Ga.

¹⁷ Although the Jones family collections, in conjunction with various other sources, offer a detailed and powerful case study for exploring the transition from paternalism to patronage within Liberty County, neither the Joneses' experiences nor the experiences of the African Americans who have been given a voice here are necessarily unique. They are representative of what happened in other areas of Georgia's Lowcountry and perhaps of what happened in pockets throughout the South.

of their own labor, the renegotiation of black-white relationships was rooted in local customs, economic conditions, and old connections to white families. Consequently, the unraveling of paternalism was neither uniform nor complete across place. When the opportunity presented itself, blacks used their personal relationships with whites to create new safety nets of patronage, just as whites tried to maintain dominance by recreating economic incentives for "upholding traditional race etiquette."¹⁸ This essay illustrates how patronage was negotiated and why personal knowledge of the other was key to maintaining the client-patron relationship. It begins in the turmoil of postwar Georgia.

The aftermath of the war left life unsettled in Liberty County, and the Joneses, like other planters, experimented with different labor arrangements, both over time and across plantations. Their seaside plantation, Maybank, remained idle and uncultivated for some years after 1865 because, according to Charles Colcock Jones Jr., "Yankee rascals or other plunderers [had] burned every house on the place," but the Joneses struggled to reclaim control over laborers and production at their other two Liberty County plantations, Monte Video and Arcadia.¹⁹

In the months immediately following emancipation, a sickly John N. Fennell, the overseer at Monte Video, tried to stifle threats of insurrection. In September 1865 he requested help from Union troops to squelch a challenge from laborers that was organized and led by the Joneses' former slave driver at Monte Video, Cato.²⁰ It was not the

¹⁸ Lee J. Alston, "Race Etiquette in the South: The Role of Tenancy," *Research in Economic History*, 10 (1986), 200.

¹⁹ Charles Jones Jr. to J. B. Chisholm, August 2, 1871, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870-1872, L-2035:691, Jones Papers, Duke. In 1867 the Joneses employed a system of sharecropping at Monte Video and share wages at Arcadia. Two years later they were renting land to tenants at both Monte Video and Arcadia plantations (Maybank was not under cultivation), but Charles Colcock Jones Jr. continued to operate his Burke County plantation under a sharecropping system. There is a wealth of information on landlords' experimentation with free-labor arrangements after the war. See, for instance, Lee J. Alston and Robert Higgs, "Contractual Mix in Southern Agriculture since the Civil War: Facts, Hypotheses, and Tests," *Journal of Economic History*, 42 (June 1982), 327-53; and Ralph Shlomowitz, "The Origins of Southern Sharecropping," *Agricultural History*, 53 (July 1979), 557-75. Other works that focus on the disorder in agriculture immediately after the war include Gerald David Jaynes, *Branches without Roots: Genesis of the Black Working Class in the American South, 1862-1882* (New York, 1986), 78-79, 104-6, 207-23; Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, chaps. 7-8; and Enoch Marvin Banks, *The Economics of Land Tenure in Georgia* (1905; rpt., New York, 1968), 65-66. Discussions of labor contracts and freedpeople's struggle to acquire land include Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge, 1983); and Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (New York, 1994).

²⁰ Cato was foreman of Monte Video plantation until the winter of 1864, but in 1866 Sam was acting as such. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1296, 1309, 1331. Gibert Jones [Lawson] to Charles

first time Cato had caused problems for the family. Nine months prior, Cato, who had been laboring on Charles's plantation in Burke County, told Union troops where sixteen mules and two horses were hidden and then, according to the overseer, promptly ran off with the mules, horses, and the wagons. Cato's actions were enough to convince Mary Jones that her longtime foreman had become "insolent, indolent, and dishonest" and was no longer welcome at Monte Video.²¹

In response to Cato's "betrayal," Mary Jones wanted Stepney West, formerly a slave driver at Arcadia plantation, to assume Cato's responsibilities at Monte Video. Although Stepney, who like Cato had been laboring at Charles's Burke County plantation at war's end, was anxious to return to Liberty County, he did not wish to manage laborers at Monte Video. His motives, however, were personal enough that he wanted to speak directly to Mary Jones. Charles assured his mother that "under the circumstances" he felt Stepney's reasons were valid.²² Despite whatever inducements Mary might have offered, Stepney refused to live or manage laborers there.

William Quarterman, the white overseer at Arcadia, was faring little better than Fennell was at Monte Video.²³ By the end of October 1865 the laborers had abandoned the fields in search of employment opportunities elsewhere. Moreover, both overseers reported that, like their laborers, the cotton had all but disappeared. In order to reestablish production at Monte Video in 1866, Charles had to sell the furnishings from his Savannah home. With the proceeds he purchased mules, a wagon, farming utensils, and household stores and paid off all the expenses associated with the family's Liberty County properties. But Charles's exasperation with thievery, labor disputes, and growing debt prompted him to suggest to his mother that with a few exceptions it might be in their best interest "to get rid of all those who had formerly been our slaves and hire new ones."²⁴ He also proposed that they sell Arcadia at the earliest possible moment but doubted that he could obtain what he thought the property was worth, "fifteen dollars in gold

Jones Jr., September 5, 1866, Folder 10, Box 24, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane. Although I use the phrase *slave driver* in the narrative, Charles Colcock Jones refused to use the term, preferring *foreman* instead. See Mallard, *Plantation Life before Emancipation*, 40–41.

²¹ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1296 (quotation); Joseph Jones to Charles Jones Jr., December 16, 1864, Folder 4, Box 6, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane.

²² Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, December 5, 1865, Folder 8, Box 8, Jones family papers, UGa.

²³ William Quarterman served as manager of Arcadia after William Martin's death in 1861. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 662–63, 1311, 1313, 1618.

²⁴ Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, January 9, 1866, Folder 10, Box 8, Jones family papers, UGa.

per acre."²⁵ Until a buyer could be found for Arcadia, however, the family agreed to lease it to another white overseer, John Mann.²⁶

Mann assumed responsibility for Arcadia in January 1866, but the Joneses' opinion of him quickly soured when he refused to enter into a written contract with Mary Jones. Despite Mann's arrogant behavior, he was permitted to remain. At year's end he returned "about a *bag and a half*" of cotton and "about twenty-five bushels of corn and a little rice"²⁷ Charles, dissatisfied with Mann's attitude and performance and frustrated by the paucity of interested buyers for Liberty County lands, was receptive when Stepney West approached him about assuming full responsibility for Arcadia. Charles proposed that the family allow Stepney to plant the place "with some thirty hands" Charles wrote, "If he will furnish the labor, seed, etc., he should respond to us for one-third of the crop, he and the laborers assuming all expenses."²⁸ He described his decision to lease Arcadia to a freedman as an "experiment in behalf of the free Negro."²⁹ Allowing Stepney to

²⁵ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1310–11 (quotation on p. 1311). Mary Jones was willing to sell Maybank at eighteen dollars per acre and Monte Video at nearly twenty-two, but after her death others in the family were less willing. Family disagreements over the sale of their properties, however, were moot since buyers were scarce. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1307; Charles Jones to Joseph Jones, January 6, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1884–1886, F-2049:855–56, Jones Papers, Duke.

²⁶ Lease agreement, John Mann, January 23, 1866, Folder 1, Box 24, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane.

²⁷ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1363–65 (quotation on p. 1365), 1376, 1616. Planters in Liberty County grew primarily long-staple cotton, corn, and rice. Sea Island cotton was bagged, rather than baled, in order to protect its long fibers. It took about a thousand pounds of seed cotton to produce a three-hundred-pound bag of lint cotton. See Stewart, "What Nature Suffers to Groe," 117–18, 122, 154; Sullivan, "All Under Bank," 14; and James E. Bagwell, *Rice Gold: James Hamilton Couper and Plantation Life on the Georgia Coast* (Macon, Ga., 2000), 57.

²⁸ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1366 (first quotation), 1363 (second quotation). It appears that Stepney approached Charles with his plan to manage Arcadia and that Charles in turn presented the idea to his mother. Stepney, however, was not alone in his desire to manage other laborers. In 1867 Tom Cumming, another field hand, who was from Liberty but was laboring at Charles's Burke County plantation, asked if he might rent the mill field at Indianola and work it with seven hands. Unlike the situation with Stepney, Charles refused Tom's request but offered to help him in any other way that he could. Charles made it clear to Careless Dawson, his black foreman at Indianola, that he did not wish to rent out any part of his Burke County place. His decision not to rent a section of the plantation had little to do with Tom's color but much to do with Charles's debt. Charles owed nearly five thousand dollars on Indianola and was seeking a buyer willing to buy the entire tract. Keeping the property under his management would make it easier for him to sell if he found a buyer mid-year, before Tom's lease would have expired. Charles Jones Jr. to Careless Dawson, September 30, 1867, Letter Press Copy Books, 1867–1869, L-2033:125–30, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Edgeworth Eve, September 28, 1867, Letter Press Copy Books, 1867–1869, L-2033:110–11, *ibid.*; Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1402–3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1366. Although it was common for Lowcountry absentee planters to use black foremen to supervise the day-to-day tasks of slave labor, they typically relied on white overseers to manage plantation operations. Thus, Charles Jones Jr. saw his decision to turn management of Arcadia over to a freedman as an "experiment." Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 2, 1867, Folder 1, Box 25, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane. Also see William Kauffman Scarborough,

lease Arcadia, however, proved to be a prudent decision. Stepney's returns from Arcadia in 1867 totaled \$105, an amount slightly higher than that which Daniel Broughton, the white overseer at Monte Video, made for the Joneses that same year.³⁰

Daniel Broughton managed operations at Monte Video both in 1866 and 1867. The specifics of the freedpeople's contract at Monte Video for 1866 are unknown, but it is clear that Charles was frustrated by their demands to alter the 1867 contract. After making some concessions, Charles described the terms of that year's contract as "not absolutely desirable" but "the best which could be secured" He felt that "everything considered," the final terms of the agreement were "tolerably fair, if fully carried into effect." But having to make concessions to freedpeople annoyed Charles. Exasperated, he tried persuading his mother "not to bother herself with the ingrates, but to shut up shop and make her home with her children."³¹

The labor contract for Monte Video in 1867 specified that tenants would be furnished with a house and permitted to cut and use wood for fencing, fuel, cooking, and general repairs. Mary Jones would furnish seed, plow animals, and farming utensils and would supply tenants with garden plots for their exclusive use, just as had been done under slavery. In return, men and women "must prepare, plant, cultivate, and harvest in proper manner . . . one and a half acre of long-staple cotton, and one half acre of corn, each, and apiece." These crops belonged exclusively to Mary Jones. Freedpeople were also expected to "perform all labor that may be deemed necessary in splitting rails, in making fences, in repairing dams, in general repairs about the plantation, and generally in such services as may be beneficial." Near the end of the contract, as if the laborers had demanded yet one more concession, Mary Jones added, "It is further agreed that the women shall plant one half acre less [in cotton] than the men."³²

Changes in the labor contracts reflected the shift in social relations.

The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South (Athens, Ga., 1984), 3–19; and Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838–1839*, edited by John A. Scott (1961; rpt., Athens, Ga., 1984), 176.

³⁰ Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, December 30, 1867, Folder 4, Box 8, Joseph Jones, M.D., Papers, Collection No. 172 (Manuscripts Department, Tulane University), hereinafter cited as Joseph Jones Papers, Tulane; Mary Jones to Joseph Jones, January 3, 1868, Folder 5, Box 8, *ibid.*

³¹ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1366.

³² Labor contract, January 31, 1867, Folder 1, Box 25, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane. For a discussion of gender and work roles in the Lowcountry see Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana, 1997) and Betty Wood, *Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia* (Athens, Ga., 1995).

Initially the Joneses imposed all management decisions, but the bitter reality of postwar economics in Liberty County, coupled with a lack of interested buyers for Arcadia and the family's desire to preserve their Monte Video home, gave freedpeople leverage. Although Charles often dressed his concessions in paternalistic motives, blacks were able to exploit the family's needs, and by making themselves useful to the Joneses, they increased their autonomy and advanced their own welfare.

Lackluster profits and societal uncertainty eventually led even Mary Jones to question her reasons for remaining in Liberty. In the fall of 1867 Charles wrote to his mother, who was visiting his brother Joseph in Nashville, to say that he had "tried in vain to effect a sale" of Arcadia but that "the unsettled conditions in the county and the decline in cotton purchasers from abroad" had made it impossible to entice suitable buyers.³³ Charles concluded that "No one will wish to be there who can reside elsewhere."³⁴ He pleaded with her "not to entertain for a moment the idea of returning and living" in Liberty County: "So entirely have the foundations of Society been upturned, so sadly have all the characteristics of Southern Society been changed, so utterly have all the old land marks been removed that we can never again expect a return of the happiness, the joy, the independence, and the honorable life we once enjoyed."³⁵ By year's end, laborers at Monte Video returned "one bale of cotton and about twenty bushels of corn," and Mary Jones earned a total of ninety dollars.³⁶ The overseer, however, had contracted for a wage of four hundred dollars and was unwilling to share in the family's losses. Though Charles eventually forced Daniel Broughton to settle for half that amount, the unprofitable season was demoralizing to the Jones family.³⁷ Defeated, Mary Jones

³³ Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, September 30, 1867, Letter Press Copy Books, 1867–1869, L-2033:117–20, Jones Papers, Duke.

³⁴ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1403; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, October 30, 1867, Folder 10, Box 25, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane.

³⁵ Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, September 30, 1867, Letter Press Copy Books, 1867–1869, L-2033:117, Jones Papers, Duke.

³⁶ Mary Jones to Joseph Jones, January 3, 1868, Folder 5, Box 8, Joseph Jones Papers, Tulane; Receipt, Charles Jones and Daniel Broughton, January 1, 1868, Folder 1, Box 26, *ibid.* The overseer returned about three hundred pounds of lint cotton and about twenty bushels of corn, and Gilbert contributed another twenty bushels of corn. Mary Jones complained to her daughter that no rice and few sweet potatoes were produced. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1407 (quotation), 1409.

³⁷ Unsigned 1867 contract, Mary Jones and Daniel Broughton, Folder 1, Box 25, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Receipt, Charles Jones and Daniel Broughton, January 1, 1868, Folder 1, Box 26, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, December 30, 1867, Folder 5, Box 8, *ibid.*; Mary Jones to Joseph Jones, January 3, 1868, Folder 5, Box 8, *ibid.* The Joneses felt that Broughton had been "indifferent to his duties." Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, March 11, 1867, Folder 11, Box

took her son's advice and left the county to live with her daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Robert Mallard, in New Orleans.³⁸

The failed attempts to attract a buyer for Arcadia, coupled with the fact that no one from the immediate family remained in Liberty to watch over their house and properties, required the Joneses to make a series of decisions that bound them for the next thirty-odd years to a small group of former slaves. Stepney West was asked to continue as manager of their Arcadia property and once again to return a one-third share of the product. Mary Jones requested that he also assume responsibility for caring for her husband's tomb at Midway Church. The Joneses' former house servant and carriage driver, Gilbert Lawson, was asked to serve as plantation foreman and to report on affairs at Monte Video. "Mom" Lucy, also a former house servant, and her husband, Charles Holmes, were asked to "live over at the lot and take care of the house." She would be entrusted with preparing the house for Charles Colcock Jones Jr.'s annual visits and for keeping reserve allotments of grain and supplies under lock and key.³⁹

Upon leaving Monte Video, Mary Jones changed the tenant contract once again. No longer would she provide plow animals or farming utensils, although she would continue to set aside garden plots for freedpeople's exclusive use. She also expected each male laborer to "deliver 400 pounds of good, clean, well-picked and well-dried, long-staple, black seed cotton, of good quality and honest weight—and also 10 bushels of clean, shelled, winnowed, good Indian corn, of standard weight, or the equivalent of same in money at the market value of the said cotton and corn." The women were to hand over "300 pounds of long-staple, black seed cotton" and eight bushels of Indian corn, or the same in cash. Either the "first cotton and corn harvested" or the money had to be "paid before December 24, 1868."⁴⁰ None of the hands met

8, Jones family papers, UGa; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, September 30, 1867, Letter Press Copy Books, 1867–1869, L-2033:268–73, Jones Papers, Duke (quotation).

³⁸ She moved in January 1868. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1419–20, 1422–23.

³⁹ Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, November 30, 1867, Letter Press Copy Books, 1867–1869, L-2033:268–73, Jones Papers, Duke (quotation on p. 271); Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 6, 1879, Letter Press Copy Books, 1878–1880, L-2041:181, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, November 11, 1875, Letter Press Copy Books, 1874–1876, L-2037:637, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, April 4, 1891, Letter Press Copy Books, 1891–1892, F-2062:235, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Lucy Holmes, March 6, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1885–1886, F-2050:43, *ibid.*; Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, January 7, 1898 [1899], Folder 10, Box 12, Jones family papers, UGa; Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1362–63, 1409.

⁴⁰ Labor contract, December 28, 1867, Folder 8, Box 21, Jones family papers, UGa. Although the family no longer provided tools or draft animals for their laborers after Mary Jones moved from the county, the Joneses expected production quotas to mirror those before emancipation. Before the war it would have been reasonable for a Liberty County planter to estimate that an acre

these conditions, however. Although married couples were expected to produce a total of seven hundred pounds of cotton and eighteen bushels of corn, the most that any family returned that year was two hundred pounds of cotton and ten bushels of corn.⁴¹

Perhaps frustrated by their inability to directly supervise operations or maybe because they realized that their expectations of laborers were unrealistic, the Joneses made further modifications to the labor contracts for both Monte Video and Arcadia at year's end. Beginning in 1869, laborers at Monte Video were to cultivate long-staple cotton, corn, and rice. No area was to be set aside for garden plots, and freedpeople would have to either turn over a one-third share of all crops grown on the property or pay twenty dollars per adult male and twelve dollars per adult female. Older children were charged a prorated share. The contract at Arcadia was also altered. Although Stepney continued to supervise, male laborers were charged eighteen dollars per year, and females were to pay twelve dollars. In addition, restrictions within both contracts suggest that the family was increasingly concerned about trespassers and encroachments on its property.⁴² Charles had already turned down a request to build a school on Arcadia land because "It would, in the present condition of things, be but an opening to complications, losses, etc., etc."⁴³

Both the Jones family and the tenants welcomed aspects of the new rental arrangement. Leasing land to freedpeople for a fixed cash pay-

of land would produce 150 to 250 pounds of Sea Island cotton and an average of 10–20 bushels of unshelled corn and 60 bushels of rough rice. Sullivan, "All Under Bank," 12, 46–47, 53, 63, 67, 72, 77–78, 85, 93; Manuscript Agricultural and Manufacturing Census Returns, 1880, Liberty County, Georgia, Duke University Microfilm Series M6270, reel 118; Liberty County, Georgia, Southern Claims Commission, Allowed Case Files, Records of the Office of the Third Auditor, Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury, Record Group 217, National Archives, Washington, D.C., hereinafter cited as RG 217.

⁴¹ Labor contract, December 28, 1867, Folder 8, Box 21, Jones family papers, UGa.

⁴² The contract for Monte Video in 1869 specified that tenants were to grow rice, corn, and cotton, but after 1869 renters were permitted to grow whatever they chose. Rent at Monte Video was twenty dollars per man and twelve dollars per woman in 1869. The following year it was reduced to eighteen dollars for males and twelve dollars for females. In 1875 the combined rent for a married couple was twenty-five dollars. Rent was reduced again in 1883, and by 1898 rents had dropped to ten dollars for men and four dollars for women. Labor contract, January 1, 1869, Legal Papers Folder, Box 10, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, January 5, 1883, Letter Press Copy Books, 1881–1883, F-2044:632, *ibid.*; Labor contract, December 29, 1869, Folder 2, Box 9, Jones family papers, UGa; Labor contract, December 30, 1869, Folder 8, Box 21, *ibid.*; Labor contract, December 28, 1867, Folder 8, Box 21, *ibid.*; Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, January 7, 1898 [1899], Folder 10, Box 12, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 9, 1888, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane.

⁴³ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1363. In 1871 Charles refused permission to open a black-owned store on Arcadia land. Charles Jones Jr. to Stepney West, July 12, 1871, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870–1872, L-2035:672, Jones Papers, Duke.

ment, rather than a share of the product, must have been particularly appealing to the Joneses, given that they had suffered several years of poor returns on shares and experienced a few disagreeable associations with overseers. Share-tenancy required constant monitoring in order to ensure that laborers complied with the terms of the contract. Renting for cash, however, reduced the Joneses' obligation of providing for tenants, although the family continued to keep allotments of grain and supplies on hand.⁴⁴ If workers shirked their responsibilities, they were still obliged to pay the Joneses a fixed quantity of goods or a sum of money at the end of the year. Renting for a fixed payment may have also appealed to the Joneses' tenants. They could choose what and how much they would plant or decide not to plant at all, as long as they had the money to pay their lease at year's end.⁴⁵ This gave blacks an opportunity to seek wages off the farm yet have control over what and how much they planted on the farm. The new regime presented one new challenge, however. Not having a family member present in the community made screening potential renters, collecting rents, protecting property, and staying informed all the more difficult for the Joneses. In order to insure that certain tasks were performed and that the property was protected, they would either have to risk hiring more white overseers or grant responsibility to the people they knew best—their former slaves. They chose the latter.

Stepney West helped to implement two approaches that the Joneses took while trying to earn money from their land in Liberty County. Stepney initially managed operations at Arcadia from 1867 until 1872, at which point the Joneses cut the two-thousand-acre plantation into twenty-five parcels and put the land up for sale.⁴⁶ In return for

⁴⁴ Charles Jones Jr. to Gilbert Lawson, March 6, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1885–1886, F-2050:44, Jones Papers, Duke. For a discussion of renting see Keijiro Otsuka, Hiroyuki Chuma, and Yujiro Hayami, "Land and Labor Contracts in Agrarian Economies: Theories and Facts," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 30 (December 1992), 1965–2018; Alston and Higgs, "Contractual Mix in Southern Agriculture," 327–53; Banks, *Economics of Land Tenure*, 97–98; and Robert Preston Brooks, *The Agrarian Revolution in Georgia, 1865–1912* (Madison, Wis., 1914), 48–68.

⁴⁵ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, December 1, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:593, Jones Papers, Duke. Discussions about blacks' appetite for autonomy in the Lowcountry can be found in Dylan Penningroth, "Slavery, Freedom, and Social Claims to Property among African Americans in Liberty County, Georgia, 1850–1880," *Journal of American History*, 84 (September 1997), 405–35; Philip D. Morgan, "Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700 to 1880," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 39 (October 1982), 563–99; and Philip D. Morgan, "The Ownership of Property by Slaves in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Low Country," *Journal of Southern History*, 49 (August 1983), 399–420.

⁴⁶ Samuel Fleming to Charles Jones, April 29, 1872, Folder 5, Box 9, Jones family papers, UGa. In Illustration 1 from 1891, Stepney West is pictured next to Joseph Jones at the grave site of Charles Colcock Jones Sr. at Midway. The two individuals in the photograph were

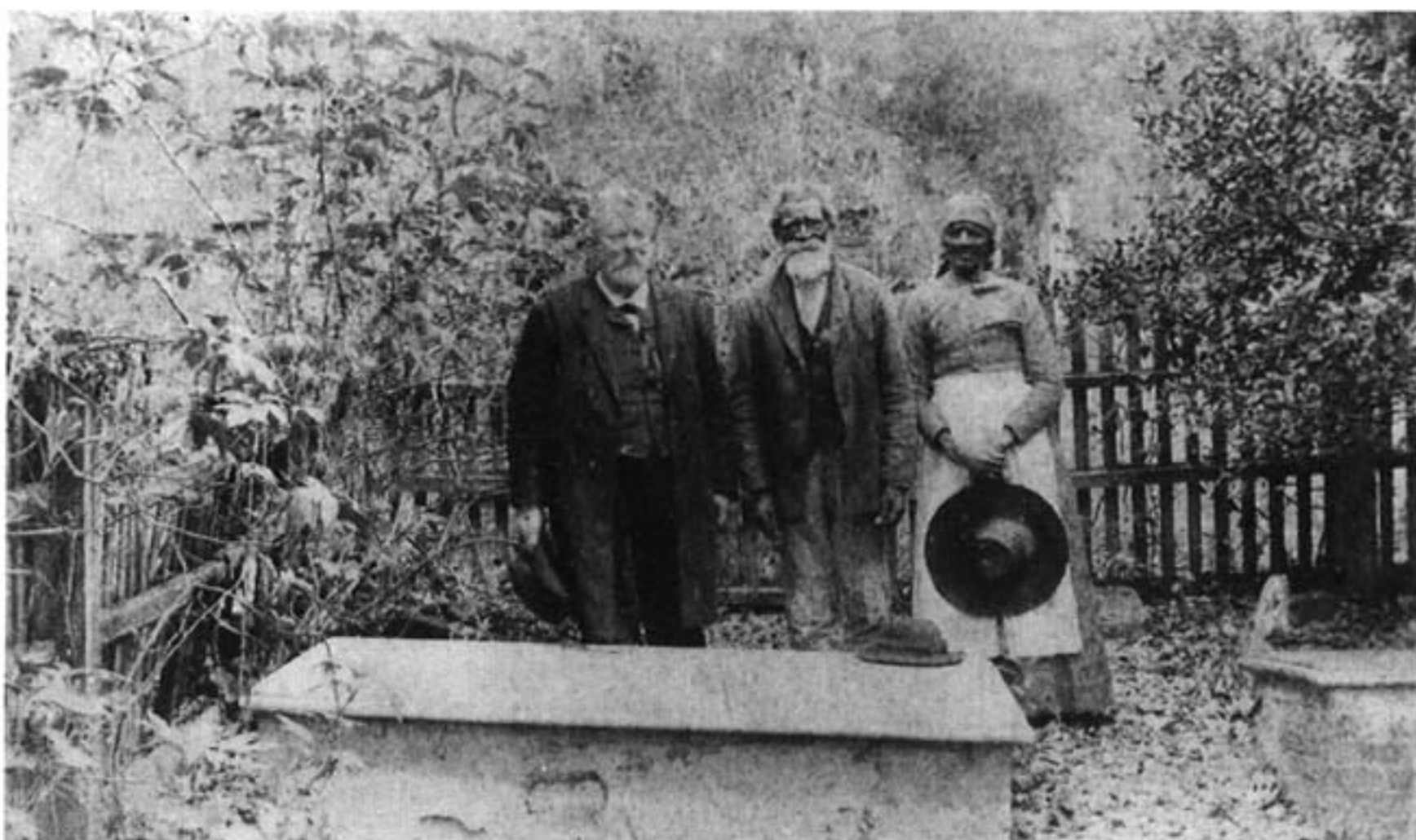


Illustration 1. Stepney West (center) by Charles Colcock Jones Sr.'s Midway Church grave.

From the Charles Colcock Jones Sr. Papers; reproduced by permission of the Manuscripts Department, Special Collections Division, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, La.

Stepney's assistance, Charles Colcock Jones Jr. gave him his pick of lots. Stepney selected a ninety-acre plot of mostly high ground for which he paid \$270 over a period of three years. Stepney became the first person to own a slice of Arcadia on January 1, 1875.⁴⁷ The

misidentified in Clarke's *Wrestlin' Jacob* (facing p. 113) as Charles and Lucy. Charles Holmes, however, died in 1871, nearly twenty years before the photograph was taken. Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, March 20, 1871, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870–1872, L-2035:899, Jones Papers, Duke. Likewise, the woman in the picture probably was not Charles Holmes's wife, Lucy, since she was described in 1888 as "crippled up with rheumatism" and "scarcely able to move about." Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 9, 1888, Folder 4, Box 29, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane. Nor was she Stepney's wife, Daphne, since she died in 1889. Charles Jones Jr. to Stepney West, August 9, 1889, Letter Press Copy Books, 1889–1890, F-2058:213, Jones Papers, Duke. Most likely the woman was Stepney's neighbor and sister, Elsey Maxwell. Elsey and her husband Syphax owned lot number twenty. Deeds, Book R, p. 294, Liberty County Courthouse.

⁴⁷ Arcadia's lots sold for three dollars an acre, and potential buyers contracted to pay for them in three equal installments over a period of three years. As long as a buyer paid each year's installment in full, he was not charged a 7 percent interest fee on the remaining unpaid balance. Once the purchase price was paid in full, Charles Jones Jr. conveyed the title. Tax and census records indicate that Stepney owned eighty acres, although the title was for ninety. The explanation for the discrepancy in acreage is that Stepney's property included ten acres of nonarable swamp (i.e., wild land) that the census and tax records did not count as farm land. Liberty County's 1880 tax ledger lists the assessed value of Stepney's land as eighty dollars, whereas the value reported in the 1880 Census of Population is three hundred dollars. The 1880 Census of Agriculture for Liberty County shows that Stepney had thirty acres under cultivation, nine acres

Joneses were following the lead of other Liberty County planters when they divided their plantation in hopes of selling unwanted land.⁴⁸ Charles explained to Joseph, who was unsure about selling Arcadia, that a typical lot varied in size from fifty to a hundred acres.⁴⁹ Once a bond for title was made, aspiring landowners had three to five years to pay off the balance. By subdividing Arcadia's two thousand acres into twenty-five lots and selling them for \$3 per acre, Charles hoped to earn

in pasture, and an additional forty acres in woods. Of the thirty acres under cultivation, Stepney planted ten in corn, seven in cotton, one in sugar, and two in potatoes. Stepney also owned seven cows and three pigs. Stepney thought of himself as "prosperous." Four hundred and forty-two acres of Arcadia's land remained unsold in 1906. Memorandum, Sandy Steven's purchase of lot #7, undated, Folder 1, Box 12, Jones family papers, UGa; Charles Jones Jr. to Stepney West, February 22, 1875, Letter Press Copy Books, 1874-1876, L-2037:136, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Stepney West, September 3, 1877, Letter Press Copy Books, 1876-1877, L-2038:828, *ibid.* (quotation); Edgeworth Jones to Joseph Jones, February 13, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893-1894, F-2065:723-24, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Charles Mallard, December 1, 1898, Folder 6, Box 29, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Memoranda, December 1, 1898, Folder 6, Box 29, *ibid.*; Deeds, Book R, p. 65, Liberty County Courthouse; Edgeworth Jones to Hamilton Jones, March 14, 1906, Folder 5, Box 6, Joseph Jones Papers, LSU; Manuscript Agricultural and Manufacturing Census Returns, 1880, Liberty County, Georgia, Duke University Microfilm Series M6270, reel 118; County Tax Ledger, Liberty County, 1880 (Georgia Department of History and Archives, Atlanta).

⁴⁸ Josephine Bacon Martin, *Midway-Georgia in History and Legend* (Savannah, Ga., 1932), 9; Thomas Jackson Woofter Jr., *Negro Migration: Changes in Rural Organization and Population of the Cotton Belt* (1920; rpt., New York, 1969), 60-61; Banks, *Economics of Land Tenure in Georgia*, 67. Seaborn Snelson, an AMA teacher, wrote that it typically took "four years' hard labor and strict economy" for blacks to buy land in Liberty County. Snelson, "School Children Farming—Their Parents Buying Farms," *American Missionary*, 32 (June 1878), 175-76.

⁴⁹ Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, February 5, 1872, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870-1872, L-2035:934-36, Jones Papers, Duke. Some historians have argued that blacks' experience with a task system of slavery produced a peasant mentality among Lowcountry freedpeople that ultimately caused them to withdraw from the market and to work small self-sufficient farms. This argument suggests that blacks preferred to buy small farms and ignores the fact that their choices were shaped by local market conditions. Liberty County blacks bought small farms not because they wanted to isolate themselves from market forces but because white planters had subdivided their plantations into affordable parcels of fifty to a hundred acres. For a discussion of how the task system influenced the culture and economy of the Lowcountry see Thomas F. Armstrong, "From Task Labor to Free Labor: The Transition Along Georgia's Rice Coast, 1820-1880," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 64 (Winter 1980), 432-47; Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (New York, 1989); Foner, *Nothing But Freedom*; Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana, 1984); John Scott Strickland, "'No More Mud Work': The Struggle for the Control of Labor and Production in Low Country South Carolina, 1863-1880," in Walter J. Fraser Jr. and Winfred B. Moore Jr., eds., *The Southern Enigma: Essays on Race, Class, and Folk Culture* (Westport, Conn., 1983), 43-62; Philip D. Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems: The Organization of Labor on New World Plantations," in Stephen Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (Chapel Hill, 1988), 189-220; Morgan, "Work and Culture"; Morgan, "Ownership of Property"; Julia Floyd Smith, *Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia, 1750-1860* (Knoxville, 1985); John Scott Strickland, "Traditional Culture and Moral Economy: Social and Economic Change in the South Carolina Low Country, 1865-1910," in Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation* (Chapel Hill, 1985), 141-78; and Wood, *Women's Work*.

\$6,000, nearly twice what his father had paid for the plantation. Charles warned his brother that they should sell the property “or matters will continue as they are, growing worse every year.”⁵⁰ Joseph acquiesced. Finding suitable parties to purchase the lots, however, also fell to Stepney West.

During Charles’s annual visits to Liberty County, one day was spent at Stepney’s house meeting prospective buyers, drafting bonds for titles, collecting payments on the lots already under contract, and making out deeds to those who were completing their purchases. Stepney brokered these transactions. He was responsible for finding and screening interested buyers, collecting payments from those who could not meet with Jones, and removing troublemakers from the property. For instance, both George B. Snowden, a black schoolteacher from Augusta, Georgia, and Floyd S. Snelson, a black minister and schoolteacher with the American Missionary Association (AMA), had expressed an interest in buying Arcadia property. Stepney, however, informed Charles that he had granted the opportunity to purchase land to Snowden. Stepney felt that Snowden’s offer was preferable because he wanted to buy the entire ninety-two-acre parcel, whereas Snelson wanted to contract for only ten acres.⁵¹

It was probably William A. Golding—who was in the process of buying seventy-five acres from the Joneses—who advised Snowden and Snelson to speak to Stepney about the property.⁵² Golding knew

⁵⁰ Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, February 5, 1872, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870–1872, L-2035:934–36, Jones Papers, Duke. A bond for title is a sales contract that specifies the conditions and dates of payment. The seller agrees to a purchase price and payment plan, but the title remains with the seller until the purchase price is paid in full by the buyer. The title conveys once the conditions of the contract are met. For a discussion of property records see Peggy G. Hargis, “Name Games: Deeds, Mortgages, and the Conventions of Race,” *Historical Methods*, 35 (Spring 2002), 53–61.

⁵¹ Stepney West to Charles Jones Jr., December 20, 1874, Folder 7, Box 9, Jones family papers, UGa. George B. Snowden did not work as a teacher for the AMA when he inquired about purchasing land, but he was working for the group a few months later. Charles Jones Jr. arranged for him to buy lot number fifteen, a ninety-two-acre parcel. The lot was classified as “old and worn” by the surveyor who subdivided Arcadia. Samuel Fleming to Charles Jones Jr., April 29, 1872, Folder 5, Box 9, Jones family papers, UGa (quotation); Charles Jones Jr. to Stepney West, January 16, 1875, Letter Press Copy Books, 1874–1876, L-2037:48, Jones Papers, Duke.

⁵² Snelson and Snowden had each lived with Golding on separate occasions. The parcel that Golding bought, lot number twenty-five, was described as having “no good planting land” but being “well timbered.” Samuel Fleming to Charles Jones Jr., April 29, 1872, Folder 5, Box 9, Jones family papers, UGa (quotations); Floyd Snelson to Michael Strieby, October 20, 1875, American Missionary Association Archives, Georgia (Amistad Research Center, Tulane University), microfilm, roll 10, hereinafter cited as AMA; Deeds, Book S, p. 750, Liberty County Courthouse; Stepney West to Charles Jones Jr., December 20, 1874, Folder 7, Box 9, Jones family papers, UGa.

the Jones family through their mutual involvement with Midway Congregational Church. Like his father and grandfather, he had been an active member of the church as a slave.⁵³ A three-term representative to the Georgia legislature after the war, he also was instrumental in establishing schools for freedpeople in Liberty County.⁵⁴ Acting on the behalf of his constituents, Golding wrote the American Missionary Association in 1870 to request that the organization send a "colored" teacher of "good moral character" and a "preacher, if possible."⁵⁵ The AMA responded by establishing its first school in the county in 1871. Floyd Snelson assumed his post as an AMA teacher and minister in 1874. The following year, Snowden, along with Snelson's brother, were also hired to teach school.⁵⁶

Perhaps as a gesture of appreciation or maybe hoping to win influence, William Golding pledged the Arcadia property he was buying from the Joneses to the American Missionary Association. The AMA, however, could not claim rights to the property until Golding completed the purchase and received clear title. When Charles made his annual stopover at Stepney West's house in 1876, William Golding was there to meet with him. It was Golding's third and last year to pay on the property, but he only had twenty dollars of the final seventy-five-dollar payment. Not wanting to borrow money, he asked if he

⁵³ William Anthony Golding's grandfather, Larson Sharper Jones, was reputed to be the "first colored congregationalist preacher under the whites." Golding claimed that he joined Midway Church in 1839. He had been a body servant for John B. Mallard (planter and educator), whose plantation was adjacent to Arcadia. Golding, however, lived off the plantation in Walthourville with his free wife, Harriet Rebecca. James Stacy, *History of the Midway Congregational Church, Liberty County, Georgia* (1903; new ed., Newnan, Ga., 1951), 209–10, 218–19; William Golding to Michael Strieby, December 3, 1875, AMA, microfilm, reel 10 (quotation); Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1613; Claim of W. A. Golding, Liberty County, Georgia, Southern Claims Commission, RG 217.

⁵⁴ Golding was elected to the Georgia legislature in 1868, expelled along with all other African Americans in September of that year, and then reseated in 1870 as a result of Reconstruction-era legislation and military rule. He also served from 1873 to 1874. Golding claimed that he refused nomination in 1874 because he wanted to devote his time to improving what he considered to be a contentious situation in local education. William A. Golding to George Whipple, September 25, 1875, AMA, microfilm, roll 10; Herd-Clark, "Dorchester Academy," 11n17.

⁵⁵ Rogers and Saunders, *Swamp Water and Wiregrass*, 112; William Golding to Erastus Cravath, October 3, 1870, AMA, microfilm, roll 7; William Golding to Erastus Cravath, November 22, 1870, *ibid.*, (quotations).

⁵⁶ Snelson was sent to Liberty County by the AMA in 1874. Snowden, who was already living in Liberty County in 1874, was hired by the AMA to teach school in May 1875. The AMA's role in Georgia is discussed in Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865–1873* (Chapel Hill, 1980). A discussion of the association's role in Liberty County can be found in Rogers and Saunders, *Swamp Water and Wiregrass*, 109–22, 139–50; and Herd-Clark, "Dorchester Academy."

could have an extension. According to Golding, Jones agreed to give him another eighteen months, without any penalty of interest, to complete the purchase.⁵⁷

When word got out that Golding had not completed the terms of the contract, Snelson was alarmed, and he hastily intervened.⁵⁸ He feared that Golding, and thus the AMA, would lose the property if Jones reneged on his oral agreement to extend the sale. Golding, however, maintained that there was no need to be in a hurry, asserting that "Jones is honest."⁵⁹ But Snelson was so convinced that a gullible Golding had acted irresponsibly that he hurried to Savannah in hopes of intercepting Jones before he returned to New York.⁶⁰ Snelson and the AMA's white Superintendent of Missions for the Savannah area, Robert F. Markham, located and met with Jones. They asked him to put this oral agreement in writing. Reportedly Jones refused, asking "Can't you trust me for that little matter?"⁶¹ Neither Markham nor Snelson felt that they could. Snelson handed over thirty-five dollars of his own money, and Markham contributed twenty so that the contract could be executed. Jones then delivered title to the land. In Markham's official report of the incident he said, "I fear this Jones will cheat half the colored people out of all their payments." He went on to quip, "I would not trust Jones further than I would a dog with my dinner."⁶²

Golding's view of the situation differed from both Snelson's and Markham's, in part because he knew Jones. Golding had used his personal relationship with Jones to ask for a favor, and Golding readily accepted the agreement at face value because to do otherwise would have been an insult. Nevertheless, Markham, a white abolitionist from the Midwest, saw Jones's behavior as a blatant example of the southern slave aristocracy's mentality. In Markham's eyes, Jones's un-

⁵⁷ Robert Markham to Michael Strieby, February 5, 1876, AMA, microfilm, roll 10.

⁵⁸ Snelson and Golding were involved in an ongoing feud, each trying hard to besmirch the other's reputation. Herd-Clark, "Dorchester Academy," 18-31 (esp. p. 30).

⁵⁹ Robert Markham to Michael Strieby, January 5, 1876, AMA, microfilm, roll 10.

⁶⁰ Golding's motivations for not completing the purchase may have involved more than simple economics. Golding wanted a say in how the AMA ran the school and who taught there. He may have felt that if he completed the purchase and fulfilled his promise to give the land to the AMA, he would lose influence with the group. William Golding to Erastus Cravath, August 11, 1871, AMA, microfilm, roll 7; William Golding to Erastus Cravath, November 16, 1874, AMA, microfilm, roll 9; William Golding to Michael Strieby, September 21, 1875, AMA, microfilm, roll 10; William Golding to George Whipple, September 25, 1875, *ibid.*

⁶¹ Robert Markham to Michael Strieby, January 5, 1876, AMA, microfilm, roll 10.

⁶² *Ibid.* Charles Jones Jr. titled the deed to William A. Golding. Golding, in turn, relinquished fifteen acres of the property to Floyd Snelson in order to cover \$52.50 of his \$55.00 debt. I have found no evidence that Golding ever deeded the rest of the land to the AMA. Deeds, Book S, p. 50, and Deeds, Book R, p. 408, Liberty County Courthouse.

willingness to put the extension in writing was little more than vulgar exploitation.

Snelson's motivations for disputing Golding's claim of an extension, rushing to Savannah, and meeting with Jones in Markham's presence probably had less to do with his distrust of a white planter than it did with his dislike of Golding. Snelson and Golding were feuding.⁶³ Both men wanted a say in how the AMA ran its schools and who should teach in them. Golding had learned the rudiments of literacy while a slave, whereas Snelson's formal education included training at Atlanta University. Snelson perhaps felt that Golding's lack of formal education made him particularly susceptible to Jones's influence. Or maybe he suspected that Golding was not interested in consummating the contract and titling the deed to the AMA. Either way, Snelson was no more willing to trust Golding than he was Jones.⁶⁴

Although Jones thought that blacks needed guidance from whites and that he personally had an obligation to set an example, his decision to sell Arcadia to local residents, all of whom were black, was not a paternalistic offering. It was a prudent solution to a grim economic reality. No one had expressed an interest in buying the entire tract, so the plantation was broken into small parcels. The family sold to blacks, just as other whites in the area had done, because the freedpeople were willing buyers. Jones agreed to give Golding more time because he had made a good-faith effort to fulfill the contract, had not caused any "trouble," and because no one, black or white, was waiting in the wings to buy the lot.⁶⁵

In short, Jones may have embraced paternalistic attitudes, but the

⁶³ Herd-Clark, "Dorchester Academy," 26–28.

⁶⁴ Although both men were Republicans, William Golding's ties to conservative whites in Liberty County sometimes caused others to question his commitment to the party. Robert Markham to Michael Strieby, February 20, 1877, AMA, microfilm, roll 11; Herd-Clark, "Dorchester Academy," 16, 24–30.

⁶⁵ Buyers were scarce, and Jones often extended purchase agreements. For instance, Pharaoh Johnson contracted to buy 72 acres (lot number eleven) in 1878. He then switched lots and joined with Sandy Houston to buy 110 acres (lot number ten). The purchase price was \$330.00, or \$110.00 per year for three years. Johnson and Houston, however, were accruing a 7 percent interest charge on each year's unpaid portion of the balance. As a result, in 1890 their unpaid balance totaled \$524.26. The debt had dropped to \$75.15 by 1898, but they never completed the purchase for the entire tract. A 1909 plat shows that Samuel Johnson and Sarah Ann Houston had each been deeded 14 acres from the northwest corner of lot number ten. Accounts, Pharaoh Johnson, Folder 4, Box 10, Jones family papers, UGa; Accounts, Pharaoh Johnson, Folder 7, Box 11, *ibid.*; Accounts, Pharaoh Johnson, Folder 9, Box 12, *ibid.*; Accounts, Pharaoh Johnson, Folder 10, Box 12, *ibid.*; Plats, March 4, 1909, Folder 2, Box 13, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Charles Mallard, December 1, 1898, Folder 6, Box 29, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Memoranda, December 1, 1898, Folder 6, Box 29, *ibid.*

institutional structure for invoking and enforcing those relations had been drastically altered. In the master-slave relationship, the downward movement of goods or services was limited to what masters chose to give. Masters could be beneficent or barbarous, but it was always their choice whether or not to bestow protection or provide guidance in return for their slaves' labor and loyalty. Although the patron-client relationship was far from egalitarian, it differed from paternalistic relations in that without the institutional corset of slavery white landlords had to cultivate relationships with blacks based on the principle of *quid pro quo*, rather than pure coercion or tradition. Freedpeople, unlike slaves, were not solely dependent on the choices and whims of a master. Despite their lower status, blacks could use the autonomy they did have to initiate services, seek specific rewards, and search out new sponsors.⁶⁶ Finding and encouraging a relationship with a benevolent patron was one way freedpeople could maneuver within the South's restrictive environment. Gilbert Lawson, the Joneses' former house servant and carriage driver, certainly understood that.

Gilbert's fidelity to the Jones family, from their point of view, was beyond question. Mary Jones had once described his conduct as noble, and Charles Colcock Jones Jr. claimed that Lawson was "a good fellow" who was "entirely obedient and trustworthy."⁶⁷ Gilbert's loyalty, whether imagined or real, was often rewarded. In January 1866 Mary Jones contracted to give Gilbert "six dollars per month, the customary allowance of corn per week, two suits of clothing, a comfortable home and land to plant for gardening purposes" in exchange for his personal services and labor around Monte Video.⁶⁸ That same month, Gilbert wrote to Charles Colcock Jones Jr. to ask that Gilbert's elderly parents also be given allowances of corn. Charles, in turn, wrote his mother, who was with Gilbert at Monte Video, to ask that Gilbert's request be granted, saying that "He has been so faithful that I am willing to do so,

⁶⁶ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 661; James Scott, "Patronage or Exploitation," in Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London, 1977), 21–39; Mandle, *Not Slave, Not Free*, 21.

⁶⁷ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1241, 1252, 1321; Charles Jones Jr. to Eve Jones, April 17, 1877, Letter Press Copy Books, 1876–1877, L-2038:596, Jones Papers, Duke (quotations).

⁶⁸ Wage contract, January 1, 1866, Folder 1, Box 24, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane. Gilbert was also given a wage contract for 1867, but he withdrew his wife Fanny and put his nephews Harry and Little Abram in her place. Gilbert continued to receive six dollars per month, a house, a garden, and two suits of clothes, and he was also given two pairs of shoes. His two nephews were also given clothes, shoes, and allotments of corn. Wage contract, January 1, 1867, Folder 1, Box 25, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Mary Jones to Mary Mallard, January 8, 1867, Folder 1, Box 25, *ibid.* Mary Jones also had wage contracts with "Mom" Lucy and "Mom" Kate. They were each paid three dollars per month. Wage contract, January 1, 1866, Folder 1, Box 24, *ibid.*

especially since his wages are very low.”⁶⁹ Soon thereafter, Charles sent Gilbert a new suit and a watch to replace one that had been stolen by Union soldiers. Gilbert was so pleased with his clothes and watch that he pledged to “*hang to*” Charles “*to the last.*”⁷⁰ In the brutal reality of postwar Liberty County, it proved to be a sound decision.

In the fall of 1866, while Mary Jones was in New York visiting her son, Charles asked Gilbert, rather than his mother’s plantation overseer, to report on the crops at Arcadia and Monte Video. Gilbert visited Arcadia before responding to his former master’s request. The letter, which is quoted in full, clearly shows that Gilbert took pride of ownership in Monte Video’s crops and land. He refers to “Our cotton on the hill,” “Our marsh cotton,” and “our marsh land.” His tone, although respectful, is familial. He gives news about freedpeople’s health, sends “howdys,” and makes a plea for a former house servant named Sue who was persuaded by an abusive husband to leave the employ of the Joneses.

Riceboro, September 5, 1866

My Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 10th Inst has been reced enclosing ten *dollars* for which amount you will please accept my sincere thanks. It certainly was of great assistance to me and my family the time it was received. I would have answered your letter sooner but could not find out the full particulars from Arcadia plantation agreeable. As requested by you I visited Arcadia a few days ago, looked over the crops and place generally, and to the best of judgements I do not think much will be made on that place. The corn is almost a total loss. The prospect for a cotton crop was very good at first but owing to the long spell of dry weather we had I do not think the field of cotton will be much. The recent rains we have had was almost too late to be of much service. Very little rice was planted on Arcadia and what was planted I consider very inferior. The people all on that place is in very good health. They had a good deal of small pox but they are relieved of it at present and there is very little small pox in the neighborhood. As regard to Monte Video plantation everything hold its own and I have nothing of much importance to write about this place. We have made as good corn as could possibly be expected. Our pea crop is fine. The prospect for a potato crop is only tolerable good. Our cotton on the hill is very good for the chance it has had. Our marsh cotton there is nothing in the county can equal it. I think it is as fine cotton as I have ever seen grown on our marsh land. I hope if no misfortunes befalls us we will be handsomely rewarded for our industry this year as I know there is no self of people has worked as faithful as we have this year. As

⁶⁹ Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, January 27, 1866, Folder 10, Box 8, Jones family papers, UGa (quotation); Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, February 24, 1866, Folder 2, Box 24, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1321.

⁷⁰ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1327. The suit was not a gift. It was given in partial fulfillment of Gilbert’s wage contract. Wage contract, January 1, 1866, Folder 1, Box 24, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Charles Jones to Mary Jones, February 11, 1866, Folder 2, Box 24, *ibid.*

regards to the turkeys and deer I have an eye to them. I think there will be a good many this winter and there be a chance for a good deal of sport in the way of killing deer, turkeys, etc. Aunt Sue requested me to say to you that she was sorry she had acted so hastily in leaving your mother. She was induced to leave by her husband and she has found out that her husbands treatment to her was such that she could not live with him and she concluded to come back to Liberty County. She is now out of employment and desire to return to her old home and if your mother will take her back she will be willing to stay with her on very reasonable terms. Sam the foreman on the place wishes you to bring for him when you come a hat. Please write to me soon. I am always anxious to hear from you. Tell Miss Eva howdy. *Also* howdy to all the family. Let me know if your mother is with you. If she is you can tell her what I have to say about Arcadia and Monte Video, etc. Hope this will find you and family in good health as it leaves me and all the people Fanny, Sam and all the people sends howdy to all.

I am your Humble
 Servant as Ever,
 Gilbert Jones [Lawson]⁷¹

Charles continued to correspond with Gilbert for the next nineteen years. There was a purpose to each of Charles's letters, whether it was to ask about conditions at Monte Video, to make small requests, or to give explicit instructions. His tone was always cordial, and he included warm, newsy accounts about the family. Invariably he also offered gentle but unsolicited counsel. For example, in the fall of 1868 while Mary Jones was visiting Joseph in Nashville, Charles wrote Gilbert to give instructions regarding the fall harvest. As usual Charles began his letters to Gilbert with "My Dear Gilbert" and then praised him for his service: "I felt confident that you would do your best, and would take care of everything and encourage the people to industry and honesty. You know how we have always placed our dependence in you and you have never disappointed expectation." Charles's references to others in his family were such that they included Gilbert as well. Charles wrote that "Mother expects to come home," "Mother and sister and Robert Mallard and the children are all well," and "Brother expects to move from Nashville by the last of the year," rather than using the possessive *my mother* or *my brother*. Charles ended his directive that Gilbert himself attend to the weighing and measuring of cotton and corn by asking that he "Remember the old times . . . and do your best. Tell Fanny and Lucy and Charles and little Gilbert and Sam and July and

⁷¹ Gilbert Jones [Lawson] to Charles Jones Jr., September 5, 1866, Folder 10, Box 24, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane; Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1303, 1308, 1312. Eva was Charles Jones Jr.'s second wife; Fanny was Gilbert's wife; and Sam was probably Sam Roberts. Although some of the Joneses' slaves knew how to read, it is unlikely that Gilbert penned this letter. Each letter from Gilbert appears to be written in a different script.

Stepney and all the people howdy for me. I hope old Daddy Andrew and Mom Mary are well.”⁷²

For a brief period in January 1869, Gilbert left Monte Video to live in Darien, a nearby coastal town. Perhaps he was searching for more-lucrative employment opportunities, but Charles speculated that Gilbert’s move would put him in moral jeopardy. Nevertheless, Charles recognized that ultimately Gilbert was now responsible for himself and that all the family could do was advise. He wrote, “Gilbert, I fear will be sadly demoralized by his residence in Darien, and if he does indulge in drink, he will not last long. He has been a willing servant and I can not bear to think of his throwing himself away in this manner. . . . He alone, under the changed condition of affairs, is responsible for his proper conduct and care of himself.”⁷³ Charles had little to fear, however. Gilbert returned to Monte Video and lived there until his death some sixteen years later.

During those years Charles continued to depend on Gilbert. For instance, in the spring of 1877, when Charles was moving his family from New York to Augusta, Georgia, he asked Gilbert if he would be willing to come to Augusta for a few weeks in order to prepare the house for his family’s arrival. “You are so handy about such matters that I would rather have you there than anyone else, and thus there will be money in your pocket for the services rendered.” Gilbert agreed, and Charles sent him specific instructions, along with ten dollars to cover his fare to Augusta. Charles also reminded Gilbert to bring the “bow and arrows and fishing rod” that another ex-slave, Niger Fraser, had made for Charles’s son Edgeworth.⁷⁴

Gilbert was about sixty years of age in 1885. In March of that year he wrote to Charles to say that he had been sick. Charles, concerned about Gilbert’s poor health, then wrote to “Mom” Lucy, whose job it was to keep the grain locked away, authorizing her to give the “corn-meal in the attic” to Gilbert. “He is to use it and take good care of it.”⁷⁵ Over the next few months, Charles and his sister, Mary Mallard, sent

⁷² Charles Jones Jr. to Gilbert Lawson, October 6, 1868, Letter Press Copy Books, 1867–1869, L-2033:678–79, Jones Papers, Duke.

⁷³ Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, January 23, 1869, Folder 2, Box 9, Jones family papers, UGa.

⁷⁴ Charles Jones Jr. to Gilbert Lawson, March 26, 1877, Letter Press Copy Books, 1876–1877, L-2038:555, Jones Papers, Duke (first quotation); Charles Jones Jr. to Gilbert Lawson, April 16, 1877, Letter Press Copy Books, 1876–1877, L-2038:595, *ibid.* (second quotation); Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, November 13, 1876, Letter Press Copy Books, 1876–1877, L-2038:283, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Charles Jones Jr. to Lucy Holmes, March 6, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1885–1886, F-2050:44, *ibid.*

Gilbert gifts of money. Charles tucked two dollars into a note, saying that Gilbert should “purchase something to tempt [his] appetite.” Mary Mallard mailed him six dollars. Gilbert wrote back to say that “I have not words to express my gratitude to you for your bountiful gift. . . . And hope the Lord will continually bestow his blessing upon you for your love and kindness and tender mercies.” He also took the opportunity to inform the Mallards of sad news about their former nursemaid, Tenah. Niger Fraser’s wife had died while giving birth for the eleventh time. Gilbert explained that his sister-in-law Lucy was now caring for Tenah’s six surviving children and that he had given Lucy half of the money the family had sent him.⁷⁶

Gilbert died the following September. Charles wrote to Niger Fraser to say that news of Gilbert’s death was very distressing. “I knew he was sick but had no reason to think he was near his end.” He also asked for Niger Fraser’s advice about another former slave, also named Niger, “Niger Roberts writes me that he expects to be married in January next and tells me that Fannie [Gilbert’s widow] is about to move out of her house and live with her son. That will leave that house vacant. He asks me to let him have it. What have you to say about this? Is there any objection to granting his request?”⁷⁷ By 1885 Niger Fraser had been collecting rents for the Joneses for nearly sixteen years. He had say over who could or could not rent land on Monte Video and Maybank plantations and acted as the Joneses’ local constable by solving disputes between tenants and keeping trespassers at bay.⁷⁸ It is Niger who poses with a group of women and children in front of a tenant cabin in a photograph from 1891.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Tenah, who was Niger Fraser’s wife and Lucy Holmes’s daughter, died giving birth to her eleventh child on May 9, 1884. Charles Jones Jr. to Gilbert Lawson, July 29, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1885–1886, F-2050:452, Jones Papers, Duke (first quotation); Gilbert Lawson to Mary Mallard, May 20, 1885, Folder 10, Box 28, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane (second quotation); Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 6, 1879, Letter Press Copy Books, 1878–1880, L-2041:181, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, May 28, 1884, Letter Press Copy Books, 1884–1886, F-2049:192, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, September 12, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1885–1886, F-2050:558, Jones Papers, Duke. Myers in *Children of Pride* refers to three males named Niger—Niger Fraser, Niger Fraser’s father “Old Niger,” and a third man named Niger Stevens, who was unrelated to the other two. Niger Roberts was born to Sam and Judy just before the war ended. He was Niger Fraser’s nephew. See the explanation of sources in note 5.

⁷⁸ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, November 15, 1870, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870–1872, L-2035:424, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, October 5, 1875, Letter Press Copy Books, 1874–1876, L2037:569, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, February 6, 1876, Letter Press Copy Books, 1877–1878, L-2039:293, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, October 13, 1876, Letter Press Copy Books, 1876–1877, L-2038:228, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, May 16, 1879, Letter Press Copy Books, 1878–1880, L-2041:443–44, *ibid.*

⁷⁹ In Illustration 2, Niger poses with his second wife and her five children from a former



Illustration 2. Niger Fraser with family on Monte Video plantation.

From the Charles Colcock Jones Sr. Papers; reproduced by permission of the Manuscripts Department, Special Collections Division, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, La.

Unlike Gilbert, Niger had not been a favored house servant of the Joneses; instead he had labored primarily as a field hand.⁸⁰ The tone of the letters between Niger and Charles reflected Niger's former position outside the household in that they were less intimate and more businesslike. Although Charles was always cordial, beginning his letters with a salutation such as "Dear Niger" or the more intimate "My Dear Niger," he never shared with Niger the personal family details that he did with Gilbert. Yet, like Gilbert's, Niger's relationship with Charles was rooted in their families' shared history of living and working Monte Video land.

marriage. The three women at the far left may be his mother-in-law, Lucy Holmes, Lucy's sister and Gilbert's wife, Fanny Lawson, and Niger's sister-in-law, Judy Roberts. Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 11, 1886, Letter Press Copy Books, 1885–1886, L-2050:932–34, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, May 28, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1884–1885, F-2049:192, *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Although Niger labored primarily as a field hand, he testified to the Southern Claims Commission that he had served his master by "waiting about the house" and as a coachman. Niger's wife, Tenah, labored as a nursemaid for the Mallards, and Tenah's mother was a cook in the Jones household. Claim of Nedger Fraser, Liberty County, Georgia, Southern Claims Commission, RG 217. Former house servants, drivers, and carpenters held an advantage over field hands when negotiating with the Joneses after the war. After all, the family knew them best. For a similar observation see Michael Tadman, "The Persistent Myth of Paternalism: Historians and the Nature of Master-Slave Relations in the American South," *Sage Race Relations Abstracts*, 23 (February 1998), 7–23.

Before and during the Civil War, Niger's association with a household servant brought him to the attention of the Jones family. Early in 1861 he had asked Mary Mallard, Charles's sister, for permission to marry her slave Tenah. Mary was reluctant to grant Niger's request because she thought the arrangement would present an inconvenience. Although she acquiesced after Niger persisted, she showed her annoyance by refusing to attend the wedding given at her mother's Monte Video home. She did, however, indulge Tenah by giving her a "swiss muslin" dress and preparing a cake for her "faithful servant."⁸¹ Three years later, when Robert and Mary Mallard moved to Atlanta with Tenah in tow, Niger once again used his powers of persuasion to convince Mary Jones and the Mallards that he should be allowed to join his wife. Robert Mallard secured Niger a job chopping wood and collecting bark at a steam tannery near their home. Mr. Henderson, the tannery owner, agreed to pay Mary Jones four hundred dollars per year for Niger's services, in addition to feeding and clothing him. Although he thought that his employer was a "pretty fine man," Niger complained that he was not able to make anything by selling his own time. The work at the tannery, however, was short lived. Within a few months Henderson closed the business, and Niger was allowed to seek day jobs, such as cultivating urban garden plots, in order to stay in Atlanta with his wife.⁸²

After the war, the freed couple chose to remain connected to the Jones family. Tenah was paid a wage to stay in her old role within the Mallard household. Niger, however, had no such contract, and his continued presence with the Mallards was thought to be a nuisance. Mary Jones advised her daughter that she should "make 'Mr. Niger' pay like a 'gentleman' for his many privileges."⁸³ At the end of the year, when Tenah's contract was up, the couple decided to move back home and contract with Mary Jones to work at Monte Video. Six months later, Mary Jones reported to her daughter that "Niger has his fill of planting."⁸⁴ Niger may not have been keen on farming, but he certainly knew how to cultivate an opportunity. For example, when Gilbert left the Joneses' employ for a brief period in 1869, Niger made himself available to Charles to collect rents at Monte Video. And in the

⁸¹ Myers, *Children of Pride*, 643–46 (quotations on p. 645). On slave marriages in Liberty County see also Penningroth, "Slavery, Freedom, and Social Claims to Property," 421.

⁸² Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1133, 1136, 1140 (quotation), 1145, 1162, 1178, 1182.

⁸³ Niger and Tenah's large family made it more difficult for the Mallards to provide for them. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1291, 1299–1300, 1305 (quotation).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1385–86.

fall of 1870, Niger suggested to Charles that he would like to re-establish production at Maybank. By the following year, Niger was managing tenants and collecting rents at both Monte Video and Maybank plantations.⁸⁵

Niger served as Charles's agent in all matters related to the two plantations. He evicted tenants and confiscated property from those who were habitually past due in their rent. He hired workers, purchased supplies, and oversaw the repairs to fences, gates, roads, bridges, and the house. And when Charles tried to restart rice production on Monte Video in the early 1880s, Niger spearheaded the operation.⁸⁶ He hired laborers to repair trunks and dikes, purchased seed and supplies, and made all the decisions about the planting, harvesting, and shipping of the rice crop. The endeavor, however, cost Charles much more than he expected, and he complained bitterly: "I do not understand your conduct in regard to this rice matter. Last year I spent nearly \$300 and have received back not one cent."⁸⁷ Charles had expected 150 bags of rice to be sent to market, but only 44 were. Furthermore, the schooner carrying those bags sank. Niger, who claimed a one-third share of the crop, also claimed part of the insurance settlement. Charles, frustrated, told Niger, "Although you are largely in my debt, I have authorized

⁸⁵ Niger collected rents for other planters in the county, gaining a reputation for being "the most successful" agent in that line of work. Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, November 15, 1870, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870–1872, L-2035:424, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, December 17, 1870, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870–1872, L-2035:470, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, September 30, 1870, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870–1872, L-2035:768–69, *ibid.*; Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, January 7, 1898 [1899], Folder 10, Box 12, Jones family papers, UGa (quotation).

⁸⁶ Niger's brother, Pulaski, was often hired to make repairs to the house at Monte Video. The family's constant attention to the house paid off, as it was reputed to be the last colonial home left standing in the county. After the death of Prince Stewart, Susan Cumming's former slave driver, in 1876 and of Tom Cumming in 1887, Niger assumed responsibility for White Oak Plantation. White Oak was owned by the descendants of Susan Cumming, sister of Charles Colcock Jones Sr. Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, February 6, 1878, Letter Press Copy Books, 1877–1878, L-2039:293, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, February 14, 1879, Letter Press Copy Books, 1878–1880, L-2041:270, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, February 2, 1880, Letter Press Copy Books, 1878–1880, L-2041:669, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, April 7, 1880, Letter Press Copy Books, 1880, L-2042:72, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, October 4, 1880, Letter Press Copy Books, 1880, L-2042:442, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, January 5, 1883, Letter Press Copy Books, 1881–1883, F-2044:632, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, March 28, 1883, Letter Press Copy Books, 1883, F-2046:120, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, January 13, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1884–1886, F-2049:872, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, February 21, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1884–1886, F-2049:986–87, *ibid.*; Martin, *Midway-Georgia in History and Legend*, 9; Niger Fraser to Charles Jones Jr., December 31, 1881, Folder 2, Box 11, Jones family papers, UGa.

⁸⁷ In actuality it cost Charles \$247.86 to establish rice production on seven acres of land. Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, April 30, 1881, Letter Press Copy Books, 1881, L-2043:256, Jones Papers, Duke (quotation); Receipts, December 28, 1880, Folder 9, Box 21, Jones family papers, UGa.

Misters W. W. Gordon & Co to pay you the proceeds of insurance collected upon 12 of the 44 sacks of rice.”⁸⁸ The following year proved just as catastrophic. Fire and floods ruined the rice crop in 1881.

Charles permitted Niger to live on the family’s property free of charge in exchange for Niger’s rent-collecting services. However, he used his relationship with Charles to extract more than rent. Niger was not shy about asking Charles for cash and specific items such as nails and cedar posts. Charles typically granted Niger’s requests, albeit somewhat reluctantly. In a note written by Charles in 1885, he expressed dissatisfaction with Niger’s repeated requests for money. Although Charles had recently sent twenty dollars, he enclosed five dollars more and added that “I think it is about time for you to begin paying back some of the money which I have been advancing for several years past.” He then cheerfully appended, “I hope you will make a good crop this year.”⁸⁹

But the crops were not good, and profits from the sale of Arcadia land slowed to a trickle.⁹⁰ On average, the three siblings each earned about sixty-one dollars per year throughout the 1880s. Bad weather was partially to blame. The county had experienced a series of natural disasters—a hurricane and wildfires in 1881, a flood in 1885, an earthquake and floods in 1886, and extremes of wet and then dry weather in 1887. Severe weather and time had taken a toll on the family’s home, too. After each visit Charles would write to his sister to lament the unfortunate state of affairs.

January 10, 1882—. . . [M]any of the Negro houses were blown down, and all of them were damaged to a greater or less extent. The rice crop was totally destroyed, and the provision crop so beaten about that the Negroes have not food for two months. What little cotton was planted was so twisted and torn that little was gathered. Under the circumstances you will not be surprised when I say that my collections were very small. I am having the Negro houses repaired and everything put in tolerable order.

January 11, 1886—The entire rice crop had been swept away, and the cotton,

⁸⁸ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, May 6, 1881, Letter Press Copy Books, 1881, L-2043: 271, Jones Papers, Duke.

⁸⁹ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, July 5, 1882, Letter Press Copy Books, 1881–1883, F-2044:272, *ibid.* (quotations); Claim of Nedger Fraser, Liberty County, Georgia, Southern Claims Commission, RG 217.

⁹⁰ The Jones family earned the bulk of the money from their sale of Arcadia between 1872 and 1875. Excluding rents, the family’s profits from the sale of Arcadia land were \$1,101.60 in 1873 and \$1,020.00 in 1875. Joseph Jones to Charles Jones Jr., January 14, 1874, Folder 7, Box 9, Jones family papers, UGa; Joseph Jones to Charles Jones Jr., January 12, 1876, Folder 9, Box 9, *ibid.*; Mary Mallard to Charles Jones Jr., January 11, 1876, Folder 9, Box 9, *ibid.*; Joseph Jones to Charles Jones Jr., January 24, 1876, Folder 9, Box 9, *ibid.*

and much of the corn rotted in the fields. The consequence of all this was that I did not collect enough to pay taxes and defray the cost of the extensive repairs which I have found it necessary to put upon the old homestead.

January 9, 1888—Freshets and dry weather had ruined the small crops of the negroes [*sic*] and such of them as had sought employment on the new Dublin Rail road to earn their rent money and were embarrassed by the failure of the enterprise and their inability to collect a dollar for several months service rendered. There was nothing at home from which the rent in arrears could be made. Several of the best hands had been sick for months, and two of them during the entire year. Under such circumstances, as you may well understand, the collections were very small. . . . The visit was a sad one to me.⁹¹

Charles's yearly visits to Liberty were sad reminders of how the county and his old home place had changed. He told his brother after one winter trip that Liberty was "a depressed, lonely, melancholy county." Charles repeatedly asked his siblings' permission to subdivide and sell Monte Video and Maybank, as they had Arcadia. Although Mary reluctantly agreed to sell in 1880, after Charles informed her that he had been asked to sell the Maybank tract for three dollars per acre, Joseph was not willing.⁹² Joseph imagined that he might return one day to live in his childhood home. He wanted to make sure that enough of

⁹¹ Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 10, 1882, Letter Press Copy Books, 1881–1883, F-2044:79, Jones Papers, Duke (first quotation); Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 11, 1886, Letter Press Copy Books, 1885–1886, F-2050:932, *ibid.* (second quotation); Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 9, 1888, Folder 4, Box 29, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane (third quotation). Their best year during the decade was 1880. That year they earned a combined total of \$453.00. After taxes were paid and repairs made, there was no money to distribute in 1885. Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 7, 1881, Letter Press Copy Books, 1881, L-2043:12, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 9, 1883, Letter Press Copy Books, 1881–1883, F-2044:642, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 7, 1884, Letter Press Copy Books, 1883–1884, F-2047:224, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 6, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1884–1886, F-2049:857, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 11, 1886, Letter Press Copy Books, 1885–1886, F-2050:932–34, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 6, 1887, Letter Press Copy Books, 1886–1887, F-2053:224, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, January 9, 1888, Letter Press Copy Books, 1887–1888, F-2054:938, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Mallard, January 8, 1889, Letter Press Copy Books, 1888–1889, F-2056:346, *ibid.*; Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, January 10, 1890, Letter Press Copy Books, 1889–1890, F-2058:954, *ibid.*

⁹² Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, December 30, 1867, Folder 4, Box 8, Joseph Jones Papers, Tulane. In 1885 Charles asked Joseph, "What is the use of our continuing to hold Monte Video and Maybank? It is doubtful that any good offer could be had for either place. There is of course a precious sentiment with their tenure which has led us to hold on to them and to minister to their conservation, but in all truth I do not see any future for the region." Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, January 6, 1885, Letter Press Copy Books, 1884–1886, F-2049:855–56, Jones Papers, Duke. Years later, after Charles's death, Edgeworth asked his uncle Joseph for permission to sell Monte Video. The request was finally granted in the summer of 1894. Charles Jones Jr. to Mary Jones, January 5, 1880, Letter Press Copy Books, 1878–1880, L-2041:601–2, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Joseph Jones, February 13, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:723–24, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Joseph Jones, August 30, 1894, Folder 5, Box 5, Joseph Jones Papers, LSU.

Maybank remained in the family's hands to build a summer house.⁹³ Joseph's plea, combined with a decade of harsh weather and poor returns from rents, meant that Charles was tethered to Liberty County without hope of realizing a worthwhile profit from his efforts.

A new generation of the Jones family faced the same conundrum in the 1890s, but the younger Joneses dealt with the problem differently. After Mary Mallard's death in August 1889 and Charles's death in July 1893, the duty of tending to the family's interests in Liberty fell, not to the only surviving sibling, Joseph, but to Charles's son Edgeworth.⁹⁴ The year after Charles's death, the profits from Liberty County had declined to less than a third of what they had been in 1893, leaving barely enough to cover taxes.⁹⁵ Edgeworth, a city gentleman who never lived in Liberty County, assumed his father's chores of collecting payments and distributing shares to others within the family. Although he had visited the county a few times with his father, he knew it and its people best from his father's stories.⁹⁶ But unlike his father, Edgeworth held no nostalgic affections for the people, the place, or the old way of life there.⁹⁷ He did not have nor want a personal relationship with the custodians of the family's land. Instead, he expected the

⁹³ Joseph Jones to Charles Jones Jr., January 12, 1880, Folder 1, Box 11, Jones family papers, UGa.

⁹⁴ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, September 1, 1889, Letter Press Copy Books, 1889–1890, F-2058:363, Jones Papers, Duke; Edgeworth Jones to Stepney West, September 7, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:322–23, *ibid.* Edgeworth was born in July 1867 in New York City. Ten years later, his parents moved the family to Augusta, Georgia. His parents' return to Georgia was precipitated by Eva Jones's poor health, New York's cold climate, and Charles's belief "that there is no pleasant future for children in the lands of strangers." Charles Jones Jr. to Joseph Jones, March 1, 1877, Folder 3, Box 13, Joseph Jones Papers, Tulane.

⁹⁵ In 1893 the family members earned \$144 from rent at Monte Video and Maybank plantations. In 1894 their combined profit was \$45.25 (\$32.75 from Monte Video and \$12.50 from Maybank). By 1899 the family earned a mere \$27.15 from its Liberty County properties. Edgeworth Jones to Robert Mallard, January 4, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:657, Jones Papers, Duke; Edgeworth Jones to Joseph Jones, January 4, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:658, *ibid.*; Memoranda on Rents, 1894–1898, Folder 10, Box 12, Jones family papers, UGa.

⁹⁶ After receiving a degree from the University of Georgia, Edgeworth moved to Baltimore to study Greek and Latin at Johns Hopkins University. Upon returning home to Augusta in 1887 he practiced law with his father and helped, on occasion, with the collections in Liberty County. Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1569.

⁹⁷ For example, when Edgeworth visited Liberty County in 1894 he did not stop in to see Stepney, who had moved from his Arcadia farm to live with kin at Monte Video. Stepney was eighty-two years old and had been a widower for five years. Living at Monte Video, however, meant that he had to travel farther to care for Charles Colcock Jones Sr.'s tomb. But neither Stepney's advancing age nor the distance from his residence to the tomb kept the younger Joneses from complaining about Stepney's lack of attention to the grave site. Edgeworth Jones to Stepney West, June 13, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1890–1893, F-2061:626, Jones Papers, Duke; Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, January 7, 1898 [1899], Folder 10, Box 12, Jones family papers, UGa.

men and women of Liberty to abide by the terms of their contracts. And if they were unwilling or unable to live up to their obligations, as defined by Edgeworth, then he was prepared to turn matters over to a constable and force them into compliance.

Two months after his father's death, Edgeworth wrote letters to Stepney and Niger informing them of Charles's passing; Edgeworth stressed that he was now officially in charge.⁹⁸ He insisted that Stepney remind those who had agreed to purchase Arcadia lots to pay what they owed and warned that he would tolerate "no foolishness this year." He added, "They must come up to the mark, or I must know the reason why. I will have no more dilly-dallying. I am personally in *charge* of the collections now, and they must come to your house on the morning of the 1st of January 1894 prepared to pay in good money."⁹⁹ His words left no doubt that Edgeworth meant business. In a letter to Niger Fraser, Edgeworth threatened to hold him personally responsible for collecting back rents: "If the people refuse to pay their rent, counsel them to do so even if you have to resort to law. Get the money by all means. We are entitled to it. They live on our land; they must pay for the privilege. They have fiddled and fooled long enough. They must come up to the scratch now. Bear in mind what I say. I will hold you responsible if the collections are not what they should be in January."¹⁰⁰

The tenor of Edgeworth's letters differed markedly from those of his father. Perhaps Edgeworth resented the prospect of having to travel to Liberty each year, as his father had done. Or maybe he thought that the responsibility of dealing with collections and taxes should rightly rest with his cousins, since his father had always advised the family to sell their holdings in Liberty. Or perhaps he believed that his father had been too soft on renters and purchasers and that returns from the Liberty County properties would have been higher had his father been

⁹⁸ Because his father was not well, Edgeworth traveled to Liberty County to collect rents and land payments in January of 1892 and 1893. Evidently he did not feel that he had been afforded the appropriate deference, as he claimed that he had wasted a whole day waiting for Niger to make his appearance in 1892. Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, December 1, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:588, Jones Papers, Duke.

⁹⁹ Those who owed money on lots included Aleck Maxwell, William Maxwell, Pharaoh Johnson, Thomas Baker, Sandy Houston, Green Bell, and Sandy Stevens. Edgeworth Jones to Stepney West, September 7, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:322–23, Jones Papers, Duke (quotations on p. 323); Edgeworth Jones to Stepney West, September 23, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:391, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, March 5, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:783, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, September 7, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:328–30, *ibid.*

more demanding. No matter the reason, there is little doubt that Edgeworth was serious about installing a new, purely capitalistic regime. He wrote to Niger a total of seven times between September 11 and December 11, 1893, and each time he emphasized what his expectations of Niger were—namely, to “squeeze every coffer you can out of the renters.”¹⁰¹ In one such letter he warned: “As to the rent, remember that I am coming to Monte Video myself this year, and will hold you to strict accounts. So go to work collecting, and have a good showing when I look in on you in January 1894. I want no idlers about Monte Video or Maybank. If the people refuse to pay their rent, turn them out and put in those that will. I am not satisfied with the way things are going, so look out, for I am going to have a general shaking up when I come. I will have the rent money. If I find you don’t attend to your business, I may be forced to put the matter of rent collections in the hands of the Justice of the Peace.”¹⁰²

Niger extracted slightly more from renters in 1893 than he had two years before. But despite a sum of \$144 from Maybank and Monte Video tenants, Edgeworth was unhappy that Niger had not been able to garner all that was due. To entice Niger to collect back rents, Edgeworth agreed to purchase him a pair of shoes. Upon returning to Augusta, Edgeworth mailed Niger the shoes and reminded him of their agreement, “Bear in mind what you said to me about collecting back rent, and also remember your promise to send, if you can, money at the end of this month. The rent *must* be collected and you must have the matter *always* before your mind.” When he had received no money after two and a half weeks, Edgeworth wrote Niger again, saying that he assumed Niger had received the shoes and found them to be of service. He added, “*Remember*, I have great confidence in you, and you must live up to it.” Another two weeks passed before Edgeworth wrote again asking why Niger had not sent him the money: “I *remembered* about the shoes as soon as I got home, and I think the least you can do

¹⁰¹ Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, September 7, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:328–30, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, September 14, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:361, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, October 2, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:428–29, *ibid.* (quotation); Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, October 12, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:458, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, December 1, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:588, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, December 1, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:593, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, December 11, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:620, *ibid.*

¹⁰² Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, September 14, 1893, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:361, *ibid.*

is to bear in mind your promise to me in the matter of collecting back rent, and forwarding it to me early this month.”¹⁰³

By early March Edgeworth's frustration was evident. His letter to Niger that month lacked the usual warm greeting so typical of his father's letters. It began, instead, with a question, “Why have I not heard from you, Niger? You have taken no notice whatever of my letters, and have fulfilled none of the promises you made me when I was in Liberty. You have not even taken the trouble to say why you have failed to come up to your agreement. I am not used to that sort of treatment, and must have an account from you of what you have been doing, and why you did not send me my money last month. Remember I want *no foolishness*; you must answer this, and that without delay.” Edgeworth wrote to Niger again in June, berating him for not doing his “duty” or “attending” to his “business in the matter of rent collecting.” Edgeworth claimed that he had “been waiting faithfully” and had given Niger “all the time in the world” without receiving “a cent” in return. Edgeworth expected deference, unquestioned compliance, and gratitude from the men and women residing on his family's property. What he neither wanted nor had, however, was an intimate understanding of their situations. He felt no obligation to sympathize with strangers.¹⁰⁴

Niger chose to restrict his work for the Joneses after Edgeworth began his aggressive collection efforts. Niger responded to Edgeworth's hounding by writing Joseph Jones in New Orleans. The aging freedman explained that he desired the Joneses to make some new arrangements for taking care of their Monte Video home. Since Mom Lucy's death, it had fallen to Niger to care for the home, but he felt that given his large family, he could no longer “loan so much time” to it. He thanked Joseph for the package he had sent, asked that he remember Niger's love to all, and then signed his letter “I remain as ever your true friend and servant.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, January 4, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:656, Jones Papers, Duke (first quotation); Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, January 22, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:686, *ibid.* (second quotation); Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, February 8, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:713, *ibid.* (third quotation). Niger Fraser was fifty-four years of age in 1894. See note 5 for information on sources.

¹⁰⁴ Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, March 5, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1893–1894, F-2065:783, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Niger Fraser, June 13, 1894, Letter Press Copy Books, 1890–1893, F-2061:622, *ibid.* Edgeworth made little distinction between the renters at Monte Video and blacks elsewhere in the county. In a letter to his uncle, Edgeworth wrote, “Yes, there is a pretty low crowd of tenants at Monte Video, but about on average, I expect, with the general run in Liberty County.” Edgeworth Jones to Joseph Jones, August 30, 1894, Folder 5, Box 5, Joseph Jones Papers, LSU.

¹⁰⁵ Niger Fraser to Joseph Jones, August 14, 1894, Folder 8, Box 12, Jones family papers, UGa.

Joseph's death in 1896 marked the end of a long and mutually beneficial postbellum relationship between the members of the Jones family who had lived in Liberty County before the war and those African Americans who had labored there as their slaves. The younger Joneses felt saddled by their parents' legacy. They did not want personal relationships with the blacks their parents had known, nor did they have an interest in preserving the family's properties. Moreover, their disinterest in Liberty County affairs and in the people who lived there eroded the modest amounts of bargaining power that local residents had over the family. Although Niger continued to collect rents for Charles, Mary, and Joseph's descendants, the sums were meager, and as the old tenants passed away, few new ones joined the rolls.¹⁰⁶

The Liberty County properties and the relationships with former slaves hung like millstones around the necks of the younger generation of the Joneses, creating tension among the cousins. In 1898 Edgeworth insisted that his cousin Charles Mallard assume responsibility for traveling to Liberty to collect rents and land payments. In a letter detailing who owed what amounts and where to reach the debtors, Edgeworth could not resist pointing out to his cousin that had the family members supported an offer in 1894 to exchange their lands in Liberty County for property in Detroit, Charles Mallard's upcoming trip to the Lowcountry would not be necessary. The real estate in Detroit had recently sold for fifty thousand dollars, whereas the family still owned Maybank, Monte Video, and 511 acres of Arcadia. It would be another twenty years before Edgeworth found a buyer for what remained of Arcadia, and even then he would sell it for three dollars per acre, just as his father had done in 1872.¹⁰⁷

The patron-client relationship seems very different when viewed from the vantage points of both planters and their subordinates, rather than just from the bottom up or, as is much more often the case, from

¹⁰⁶ Rent collections in 1896 from Monte Video and Maybank totaled \$24.50 and \$21.50, respectively. In 1897 the figures were \$22.00 and \$16.00, and in 1898 they were \$7.50 and \$19.65. By 1906 a white man was collecting rents at Maybank. He returned \$26.10 that year. Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, March 22, 1896, Folder 9, Box 12, Jones family papers, UGa; Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, January 12, 1898, Folder 10, Box 12, *ibid.*; Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, May 16, 1898, Folder 10, Box 12, *ibid.*; Susan Jones to Edgeworth Jones, May 16, 1898, Folder 10, Box 12, *ibid.*; Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, February 13, 1899, Folder 1, Box 13, *ibid.*; Edgeworth Jones to Susan Jones, July 19, 1906, Folder 5, Box 6, Joseph Jones Papers, LSU.

¹⁰⁷ Edgeworth Jones to Charles Mallard, December 1, 1898, Folder 6, Box 29, Charles Jones Papers, Tulane. Edgeworth was later forced to resume his management of the properties in order to sell them. Acting as the family's representative, he sold 391.5 acres to Aaron H. Reppard on March 20, 1918. Deeds, Book AQ, pp. 426-27, Liberty County Courthouse.

the top down. Fortunately, in the case of the Joneses and the black men who actually ran their plantations after emancipation, the sources allow us to see the negotiations and bargaining from two and sometimes more sides. Of the five central figures in these letters—Stepney West, Gilbert Lawson, Niger Fraser, Charles Jones Jr., and Edgeworth Jones—four had both emotional and financial stakes in the rural post-bellum socioeconomic system, and it would be a mistake to divide them into simple black-and-white categories of exploiter and exploited.

Although Charles's devotion to his family and his attachments to former "faithful" slaves were steeped in paternalistic motives, without the institutional scaffolding of slavery his ability to invoke paternalistic customs crumbled. He understood that freedom entitled blacks to be treated as adults, although initially he doubted that many were prepared to behave as such—that is, to respect the law and abide by contracts. But economic hardship and a bleak future for his home county forced Charles to recognize that he, too, was dependent. He needed Gilbert, Stepney, and Niger to serve as custodians of his family's legacy in Liberty so that members of the Jones family could make their lives and livelihoods elsewhere. Charles relied on the black middlemen for both information and services, while Stepney, Gilbert, and Niger depended on him to expand their range of economic opportunities and to soften financial hardships. Stepney, Gilbert, and Niger were agents in patronage, not objects of paternalism.

Stepney, for instance, refused to work for Mary Jones at Monte Video, although he did not object *per se* to remaining in the Joneses' service. When Stepney approached Charles about leasing Arcadia, Charles agreed, but not out of a sense of protection or affection for an old slave. Had previous overseers been successful, profits good, or land in demand, Charles would not have consented to such an unusual arrangement. He acquiesced because he had already exhausted more conventional options.

Stepney's success as a plantation manager kept him in Charles's good graces when Arcadia was subdivided.¹⁰⁸ Stepney was given his choice of lots, although he was not given a discount or a special

¹⁰⁸ In 1894 Edgeworth advised his uncle Joseph against subdividing Maybank or Monte Video plantations. He considered the Arcadia "experiment" a failure because after twenty years a quarter of the property had not yet sold. Edgeworth Jones to Joseph Jones, August 30, 1894, Folder 5, Box 5, Joseph Jones Papers, LSU.

arrangement for payment. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Stepney was paid for his services as land broker. But the fact that Stepney had say over who would or would not be granted an opportunity to buy land gave him power within the local community, and his status as middleman freed Charles from having to negotiate individually with potential buyers. Compared to others within his community, Stepney had good reason to describe himself as “prosperous.”¹⁰⁹

Like Stepney’s close ties to the family in slavery, Gilbert’s connection gave him certain advantages in freedom. After emancipation he was paid a monthly wage, described by the family as meager, to remain in Mary Jones’s employ. His willingness to do so was interpreted as an act of loyalty; Gilbert had earned the trust of his patrons. When Mary Jones moved from the county, Gilbert became the family’s eyes and ears, reporting on crops and conditions at both Monte Video and Arcadia. Charles, in particular, depended on Gilbert for personal favors, such as watching over his family’s household goods in Augusta or supervising twelve-year-old Edgeworth’s use of a gun, just as Gilbert had done when Charles was a boy. Gilbert’s pledge to “*hang to*” Charles “*to the last*” proved to be a sound strategy for survival in Liberty’s bleak postwar economy.¹¹⁰

Niger, perhaps more than Stepney and Gilbert, understood what a patron could do for him. Unlike them, Niger had not been a trusted house servant or plantation foreman. He was a field hand who married his way into the “big house” and then used his more personal relationship within the family to help him get what he wanted. Niger excelled at making himself indispensable, as when he suggested that Charles re-establish production at Maybank and then offered to collect rents at both Maybank and Monte Video.¹¹¹ Niger reported on trespassers, foreclosed on renters in arrears, purchased supplies, sold livestock and crops, and supervised repairs to the family’s Monte Video home. In exchange for his many duties, he often asked for and received small loans. Perhaps he felt entitled to them, because he rarely repaid them, yet Charles continued to “lend” him money. Niger fits no stereotype. He had the opportunity and means to buy his own farm, but he chose not to. He did not want to farm yet made his living from farmers. It is

¹⁰⁹ Charles Jones Jr. to Stepney West, September 3, 1877, Letter Press Copy Books, 1876–1877, L-2038:828, Jones Papers, Duke.

¹¹⁰ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, December 10, 1879, Letter Press Copy Books, 1878–1880, L-2041:555, *ibid.*; Myers, *Children of Pride*, 1327 (quotations).

¹¹¹ Charles Jones Jr. to Niger Fraser, September 30, 1870, Letter Press Copy Books, 1870–1872, L-2035:768–69, Jones Papers, Duke.

little wonder that Niger became known among locals as one of the "most successful" in his line of work.¹¹²

The abrupt change in the tone of the letters and of the patron-client relationships when Edgeworth replaced his deceased father illuminates the personal nature of negotiation and exchange within Charles's generation and what might be labeled as the impersonal Jim Crow capitalism of Edgeworth's. Patronage differed from the paternal system of slavery because, on the one hand, planters no longer had such an economic and ideological stake in the welfare of their workers as the slaveholders had had under slavery and, on the other, because freed-people could move and enjoyed at least some legal and political rights. The social relations of exchange within a system of patronage were rooted in personal knowledge of the other and an etiquette of reciprocity between unequal, dependent adults. Compared to a system of patronage, Jim Crow capitalism, as the tenor of Edgeworth's letters suggests, was both harsher and more strictly contractual and based not on partial black subordination, but on nearly total black powerlessness. Edgeworth treated the middlemen not as familiar dependents who needed to be cajoled and from whom one could expect useful advice, but as unruly underlings whom one advised, threatened, and dispensed with. The contractual relationship had the full force of the law, which Edgeworth constantly threatened to use. He relied on intimidation to extract what he wanted and refused to have his rights and privileges tempered by custom or sentiment. He had little, if any, emotional stake in either the people of Liberty County or his father's properties there.

Clearly, the social relations of patronage had roots in the paternalism of slavery. Yet unlike a system of paternalism, in which whites relegated blacks to a dependent, childlike position, a system of patronage permitted blacks to negotiate with whites as autonomous adults, albeit of a lower status. Blacks who successfully negotiated mutually beneficial services with whites often acted as middlemen by representing the interests of other blacks who lacked access to a patron. The degree to which black-white relationships embodied characteristics of paternalism or patronage depended in large part on local economics, politics, and customs. Hence location determined to a great extent the outcomes as blacks across the South renegotiated their "proper place" in freedom.

Liberty County, a long-staple cotton area, had a very high proportion of blacks and a history of paternalism that was epitomized by the

¹¹² Charles Mallard to Edgeworth Jones, January 7, 1898 [1899], Folder 10, Box 12, Jones family papers, UGa.

writings and actions of Charles Colcock Jones Sr. and his children. Long settled, Liberty did not undergo any striking, positive economic change, such as industrialization or the adoption of new and lucrative crops, after the Civil War. The county was too poor to attract eager settlers who might have bid up land prices and induced families like the Joneses to sell. In short, Liberty's depressed economy and black majority constituted an environment that was ripe for a system of patronage.