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OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

SLAVERY IN HEMPSTEAD COUNTY, ARKANSAS

SUBMITTED TO THE HONORS COUNCIL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR GRADUATION FROM THE
CARL GOODSON HONORS PROGRAM

APPROVED BY

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BY

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ARKADELPHIA, ARKANSAS

APRIL 1984

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For believing in me, for giving me courage and vision, I dedicate this study and its offspring to Mary, Brenda, and Lavell--for all they've done, for all they are, and for what they'll always mean to me.

A great number of general works on American Negro slavery have been published, but most are based upon records from the plantation belt. With the notable exception of Orville Taylor's Negro Slavery in Arkansas, these works almost entirely ignore Arkansas. Although slavery had certain uniformity throughout the South, the study of these previously untouched areas add to, and may eventually modify, our knowledge of the Old South's "peculiar institution."

A relatively new concept among historians is the study of slavery at the local, or county, level. Alfred North Whitehead has written, "We think in generalities, but we live in detail. To make the past live, we must perceive it in detail in addition to thinking of it in generalities." Within each county, the Old South's basic community, were towns, villages, plantations and farms. Here resided the full spectrum of ante-bellum society: planters, farmers, professional men, artisans, landless whites, slaves and free Negroes. To varying degrees, all interacted on social, economic and political levels.

At its creation in 1818, Hempstead County embraced all of southwest Arkansas and small portions of Oklahoma and Texas. (See Figure One) Despite the fact that new counties were created from Hempstead during each following decade, census reports showed growth in total population and in proportion of slaves to the whole. Hempstead County was typical in most respects of areas settled following the Louisiana

FIGURE ONE
ARKANSAS IN 1819

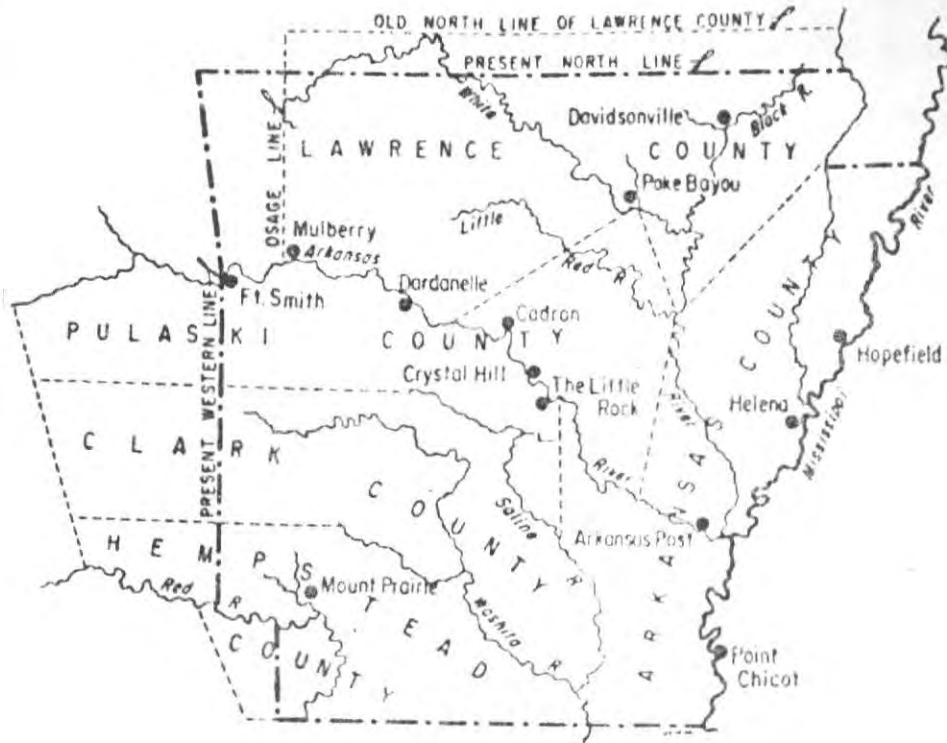
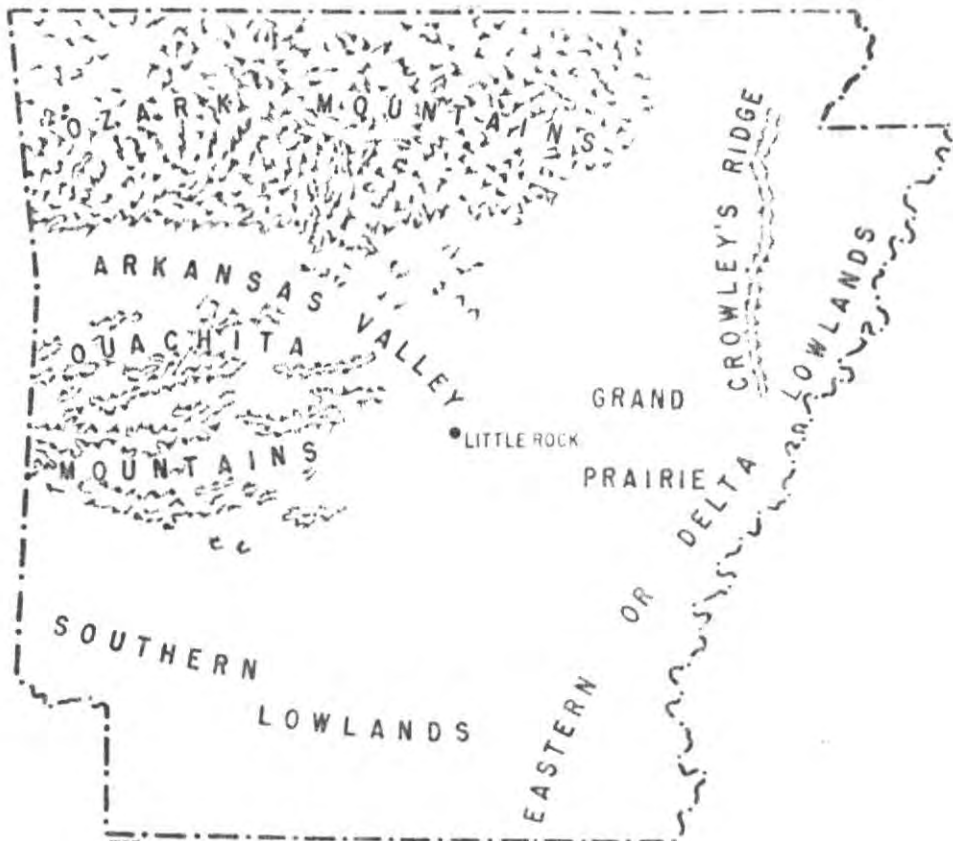


FIGURE TWO
LAND OF ARKANSAS



Purchase. Its productive black lands, prairies, and rolling hills attracted all walks of men--red, white and black. Located along Arkansas' highland-lowland dividing line, Hempstead was not a true lowland county, but it identified more closely with the more southerly and easterly counties of Lafayette, Columbia, Union and Ouachita than with the hilly counties of Pike, Polk and Montgomery to the north. (See Figure Two) The Red River, with its excellent bottom lands, was largely responsible for this identification.¹

Hempstead County's early history was also closely tied to the development of northeast Texas. A number of settlers enroute to Texas, via the Military Road which passed through Washington and Fulton, settled in Hempstead County instead. Settlers south of the Red River considered themselves in Spain (later Mexico, then Texas) or in the United States as the occasion suited them.² A number of settlers on the south side moved their slaves north into Hempstead and Lafayette counties to avoid losing their slaves in the conflict.³ Geography, rivers, excellent soils, Texas migration and other factors contributed to the rise of a lowland slave culture in the county.

White settlement began in earnest with the Louisiana Purchase. The 1820 census recorded 14,273 persons in Arkansas Territory, including 1,617 slaves.⁴ Hempstead County, at that time, embraced all of the area shown in Figure One, except land taken by the creation of Miller County primarily in the area of modern Oklahoma. It was the second most populous of the seven counties then in existence, with 1,767 whites and

~~4,484 slaves~~, Lawrence County, in the north, registered only eight more slaves but had a white population of 5,602.⁵

Hempstead consistently had one of the state's leading slave populations, and in 1830 it lead the state despite loss of area from the creation of Lafayette, Ouachita, Sevier and Union counties, which also had large slave populations.⁶

The aggregate population included 1,987 whites, 522 slaves and three free persons of color.⁷ The ratio of slaves remained about the same--26 to 27 percent.

Proposed statehood for Arkansas brought another wave of debate over slavery in Congress, resolved by the joint admission of Michigan as a free state and Arkansas as a slave state. Statehood, further migration into Texas, and other factors brought many new settlers to the area, among them a number of slaveholders. Hempstead County's population doubled within the ten-year span from 1830 to 1840, even accounting for the formation of Pike County in 1833 from its northern bounds. (See Figure Three) The population of 4,921 inhabitants included 2,923 whites, 1,937 slaves and 61 free persons of color. Slaves formed 39 percent of the county's population. Not only was it the second leading slave county, after Chicot, but it also had one of the densest slave populations.⁸

In 1850 that ratio dipped to 32 percent, and Hempstead slipped to eighth in slave population, with the leading counties being those located along the Mississippi and the state's southern border. The population included 5,180 whites, 2,459 slaves and 32 free persons of color.⁹

FIGURE THREE
HEMPSTEAD COUNTY, 1840

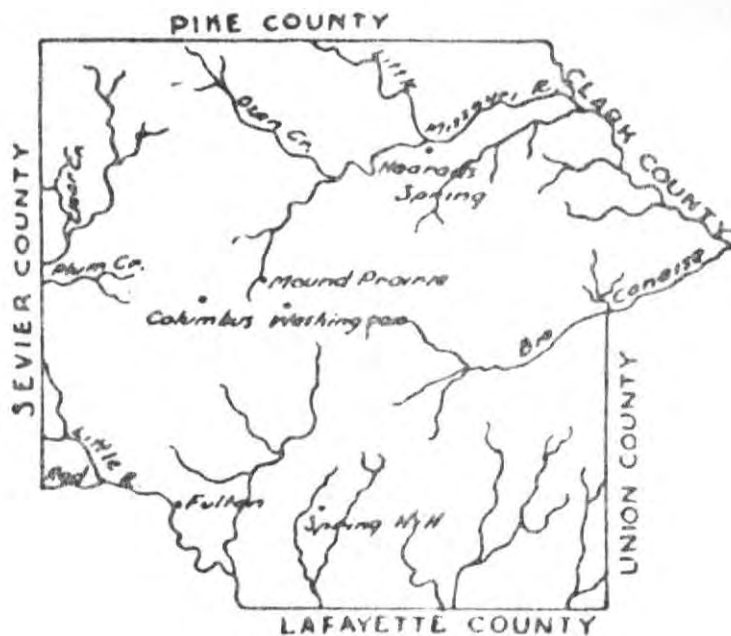
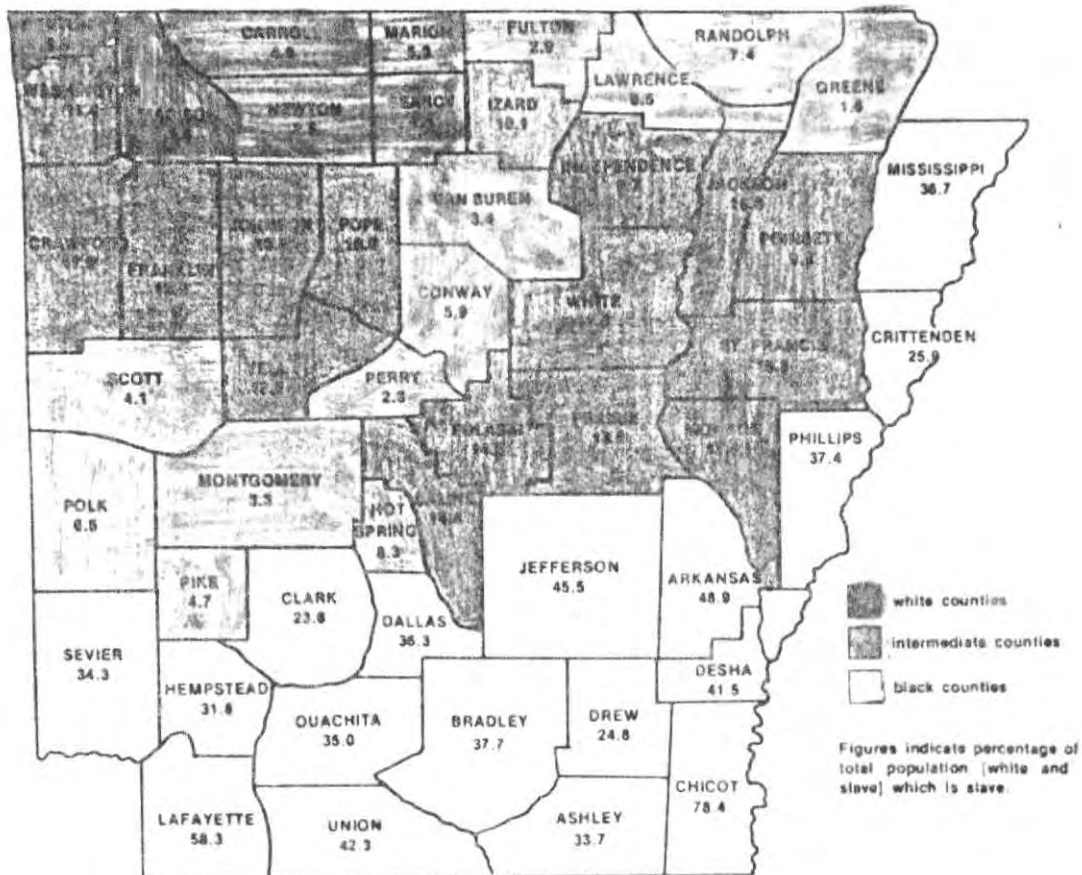


FIGURE FOUR
ARKANSAS, 1850



By 1860 the ratio of slaves was back up to 39 percent of a total population which included 8,589 whites, 5,398 slaves and two free persons of color. The county ranked fifth in slave population.¹⁰ In relation to its shrinking size, Hempstead County, nevertheless, increased by about 13 percent in slave population from 1820 to 1860.

Hempstead County, like Arkansas and the South, was predominantly agrarian. Most inhabitants were farmers, ranging from the man who, with the help of his family, cultivated a small patch of land for his own use, to the wealthy planter who, with slave labor, cultivated hundreds of acres of cotton for export to the New Orleans market. Because the area possessed no important manufacturing centers and few towns, slavery, too, was necessarily rural. A few slaves lived in Washington, the only town, and in the villages of Fulton, Spring Hill, Columbus, and Ozan (Bingen), serving primarily as house servants and shired help. But the bulk of slaves lived on farms as agricultural laborers.

Hempstead County's major cash crop was cotton. An acre of land on Red River produced 1,500 to 2,500 pounds of seed cotton. When ginned, or when the seed was removed, this left 25 to 30 percent of raw cotton, or about one 450-pound bale per acre. Each slave was expected to cultivate six to eight acres, on the average.¹¹ In 1842 the county produced 3,014 bales of cotton.¹² A visitor to the Red River area described the fertility of the river bottoms;

It is impossible to exaggerate the extraordinary fertility of the soil . . . Some of the [cotton] plants were near six feet high, and sent forth branches in great profusion, covered with large white bolls resembling the Guelder Rose when in full perfection. . . The field these plants were in contained 300 acres, and it was so dazzling white to look upon as to create rather a painful sensation to the eyes.¹³

Farmers also devoted considerable acreage to the culture of corn, oats and wheat, and raised cattle and hogs. Most food crops were used for home consumption, rather than sold. Even those men with other careers and only a few slaves probably raised crops to feed the family and slaves.

In 1850, the first census for which such information was given, farming was the predominant occupation of heads of households. Among slaveholders, this was especially true, with 176 of the 297 owners listed as farmers.¹⁴ (See Table One) Another three were tenants, one a manager (overseer), and one a farm laborer. Most of the 27 women, apparently widows, for whom no occupation was given, probably employed their slaves in agriculture as well. Of the remainder, a good proportion were doctors, lawyers, and merchants. Several were tradesmen.¹⁵ It is likely, though, that the bulk of those whose predominant occupation was other than farmer engaged as least some of their slaves in agriculture.

Only about 25 percent of the county's families held slaves, but it should not be assumed that Hempstead County, or the South in general, was a land of wealthy, aristocratic

TABLE ONE
SLAVE HOLDERS' OCCUPATIONS, 1850

# Owners	Occupation	# slaves	% Slaves
27	not found*		
21	women, no occupation		
5	men, no occupation		
176	farmers**		
14	physicians		
12	merchants/grocers		
6	lawyers		
5	carpenters		
3	tenants		
3	teachers		
3	clerks		
3	blacksmiths		
3	clergymen		
2	hotel keepers		
1	manager (overseer)		
1	laborer		
1	brickmaker		
1	saddler		
1	mail contractor		
1	Lieut. Col., U.S.A.		
1	gun maker		
1	watch maker		
1	gin maker		
1	trader		
1	county clerk		
1	sheriff		
1	constable		
1	newspaper editor		
297			100%

* Not found in Schedule One, Free Inhabitants either through error on behalf of this writer, error on behalf of census taker, or because the owner did not reside within the county.

**Includes one "planter" with four slaves.

planters and poor, degraded whites. A class of moderately well-off slaveholders did exist, and a number of non-holders successfully engaged in business and professional careers.¹⁶

Many men who owned no slaves probably aspired to do so, since slaveowning was considered something of a status symbol. Several hired slaves, for varying lengths of times, as cooks, launderesses, seamstresses, maids, mill workers, and farm laborers.¹⁷ In addition, men who operated commission firms, steamboats which plied the Red River transporting crops to New Orleans, and others were indirectly involved in slavery. Henry and Augustus Block, sons of a Jewish merchant, operated a commission firm at Fulton where they traded in slaves brought upriver from New Orleans.¹⁸ J.R. Crosby manufactured cotton gins near Washington, and Edward Cross operated a cotton mill near the Little Missouri River.¹⁹ When one considers the number of men who gave slavery their open or implied approval, the fact that 75 percent of the families owned no slaves loses some of its significance. Orville Taylor has written that while few people in Arkansas vigorously defended slavery, most of them accepted it as a part of the pattern of life.²⁰

Most slave owners throughout the county's history owned fewer than five slaves, but most slaves lived in holdings of ten or more. (See Table Two) The number of owners who belonged to the planter class, distinguished by U. B. Phillips²¹ as those holding twenty or more slaves, increased during each decade until the Civil War, with holdings also becoming larger. owners who held five to 19 slaves owned most of the county's

slaves in 1830; but by 1850 planters and middle-class slave owners held equal proportions of slaves.²²

Movies, novels, even Southerners themselves, in the post-bellum era tend to glamorize the Old South, to make it a South of wealthy planters and planters' sons who "never did any work and never will."²³ Recalling a South that never existed, except in isolated areas, they have popularized the notion of the slave owner as a highly educated, aristocratic gentleman who lived in ease, leaving the management of his slaves to an overseer. Few men in Hempstead County ever obtained such wealth. Most small farmers worked alongside their black labor, increasing the productivity of their farms. Even among the planter class it was not uncommon for owners and their sons to work with or oversee slave labor. The September 6, 1843 issue of the Washington Telegraph carried an article about the Maryland governor who worked alongside his slaves, commenting that "though we have slaves and make them work, we do not ask of them that which we would not do ourselves."²⁴

An example of this was Alfred Carrigan, a graduate of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and later an Arkansas state senator. Before moving to Hempstead County in 1852 Carrigan had principal charge of his father's farm in Alamance County, North Carolina. The farm included a cotton manufacturing plant, store, 150 acres in corn, 250 acres in wheat and oats, 50 head of cattle, and hogs. Of the 30 Negroes, most were aged, young and women, and therefore not considered full hands. Two younger sons worked in the fields, as well.²⁵

Few men, even among the planter class employed overseers. For most, it was economically unfeasible and impractical. In a slaveholding of 20, for instance, usually only three or four were able-bodied men.²⁶ Women and children, considered half-hands, formed the balance of the work force. Small children, pregnant women, and the elderly and infirm remained at the quarters. If house servants were excluded from field work, the number of hands was even smaller.

Samuel Chester, who grew up in the Mt. Holly community of Southwest Arkansas, wrote that most of the slave owners there did not employ overseers but put their sons to managing the slaves.²⁷ This appears to have been true of Hempstead County. The 1850 census reported only 21 managers, or overseers, for 297 owners. Of these 21, many are easily recognizable as sons, nephews and in-laws of the men with whom they resided or lived men and for whom they presumably managed slaves. Abner D. Fowlkes was listed as manager, presumably for his father Edward B. Fowlkes who owned 16 slaves in Spring Hill Township and another 78 in adjacent Lafayette County. Joanna Carrigan's son Thomas managed her 39 slaves and Joseph Stewart's son Crittenden managed his 39. Jeremiah Pate appears to have managed his father's 13 slaves. Several managers are recognizable as members of respectable non-slaveholding families, such as Franklin, the son of Dr. Nathan D. Smith.²⁸ The system of employing young relatives as overseers was more economical and probably served as a way to educate them to become slaveholders themselves.

The 1860 census recorded 38 overseers for 440 owners. No "managers" were listed; however, again, some--though not as many as in 1850--appear to have been relatives of the slave owners. A few, like William Mayfield of Red Land Township, with seven, appeared also in the slave schedule as owners.²⁹ Most of the overseers listed, both in 1850 and 1860, were young, in their twenties, and single. While most owned little or no real or personal estate, the same was true of most young, single sons of slaveholders, who normally did not receive land and slaves until they married or inherited.³⁰

Since so few overseers were employed, and those chiefly among the planter class, most men must have employed other means of slave management. If they did not oversee the work themselves or employ an overseer--or sometimes even if they did-- some owners put a trusted slave or free Negro in charge of overseeing slave work. Dr. Isaac N. Jones hired a white overseer and used one of his slaves, Sandy, as a lead row man, or Negro foreman.³¹ On the Chester farm in Mt. Holly, where there were about 12 slaves, Andrew was the Negro foreman for his master, a physician, who was frequently absent. As a special privilege he was allowed to cultivate a small piece of land on which he annually raised about two bales of cotton and for which he received the proceeds.³²

Charlean Moss Williams recalled that in the 1840s an old free Negro who called himself Steven Washington and who claimed to have been President George Washington's body servant wandered into the town of Washington seeking protection under the laws."

Her father, James Moss, put the old man in charge of the slaves and the hogs and provided him, in exchange, with a cabin and a patch of ground to cultivate.³³

Slavery had its roots in both racialism and capitalism. Historians still debate whether the "peculiar institution" was more a domination of rich over poor or black over white.³⁴ In terms of economics, or quality of life, some historians believe that blacks were no worse off than poor whites; but psychologically they were treated much worse.³⁵ Some pro-slavery writers of the period defended the institution of slavery by saying that slaves received much better treatment and better reward than Northern factory workers. One, George Fitzhugh, in Cannibals All!, referred to these Northern workers as "slaves without masters."³⁶

Certainly, white men used slaves as a means of promoting their economic status. Even non-owners perhaps thought of it as a means of limiting labor competition. It was equally true that a great number of owners regarded themselves racially superior to blacks. Non-owners and even poor whites could consider themselves members of a "master class." From this attitude, from religious teachings, and from genuine fondness developed paternalism. White men felt it was their responsibility to provide for and protect their slaves. How masters treated their slaves, how hard they worked them, the quality of food clothing and shelter they provided, and whether they provided them with education and spiritual instruction were all outgrowths of men's attitudes about the Negro. Needless to say, slave life varied greatly from master to master.³⁷

Slavery was, above all, a labor system, and their lives revolved around work, usually agricultural. Whether slavery was actually profitable or not is another great debate, but certainly it was, or most owners believed it was, or it would not have continued to flourish.³⁸ In Hempstead County, the majority of slaves worked in cotton fields, almost year round, hoeing, chopping, and picking.³⁹ An overseer's journal from nearby Clark County provides some insights into what labor might have been like on a cotton plantation. Depending upon the season, the slaves planted, tended and harvested crops, split rails, repaired fences and cleared new ground. If the weather prevented outside work, the slaves worked indoors, making baskets or cleaning out the corn cribs. More often than not though, the slaves worked outdoors, regardless of cold or damp, as the journal entries show:

Jan. 1--The day was threatening snow. . . This day I have gathered 1,823 lbs of cotton.

Jan. 3--This was an extraordinarily cold day. I had four loads of cotton hauled to the gin house from the old place. Then I put the hands to picking cotton.

Feb. 13--A dark, cloudy, rainy day. Finished hauling rails out of the new ground, fixed up fences about the house and coal kiln and did other piddling work.⁴⁰

Women and boys worked alongside men, although the tasks to which the overseer--a nephew of his employer, Hawes Coleman--assigned them sometimes appeared less strenuous.⁴¹

Among some white farmers, it is likely that females and children worked in the fields as well, though perhaps not with the same regularity as slaves.

Because their health and labor depended upon adequate

nourishment, most slaves received sufficient food, although it may have been high in bulk, but not in nutrients. Arkansas, unlike some other states, made no laws regarding the quality or quantity of slaves' food, clothing or shelter.⁴² Most masters, for both humanitarian and practical purposes adequately provided for their slaves. The basic slave foods were meal, molasses, and pork, along with fruits and vegetables in season.⁴³ The forests of Hempstead County abounded in wild game--bears, deer, turkeys, wild hogs and smaller game--as well as edible wild fruits, nuts, and berries. By law, slaves were forbidden to carry weapons or be absent after dark without the owners' permission. Since these restrictions were usually only loosely enforced, they did not greatly interfere with the slave's ability to supplement his food supply with wild game. In addition, some masters rewarded slaves with small plots of land on which they could grow their own gardens. On Sundays, if the master permitted, slaves could labor for themselves or fish in nearby creeks and rivers.⁴⁴

On small farms slaves probably ate from the same gardens as their masters, and thus there was little difference in the diet of the two races. These gardens might have included cabbage, cucumbers, bunch beans, turnips, tomatoes, beets, peas, carrots, squash, lettuce and watermelons.⁴⁵ On larger farms, where much acreage and labor were devoted to cash crop cultivation, and where the economic differences were more pronounced, the diet of master and owner were likely to be more pronounced, as well. When Featherstonhaugh visited

a Red River plantation in 1834 he was driven to comment upon the deplorable condition of slaves in "Texas":

The poor slaves I saw here did not appear to me to stand any higher in the scale of animal existence than the horse. . . This is the history of the slave in Texas, differing in nothing from that of the horse, except that instead of maize and straw he is supplied with a little salt pork to his maize, day after day, without any change, until death⁴⁶ relieves him from his wearisome existence.

An account by a former slave on this plantation, during the late ante-bellum period, indicated a greater variety. In the course of telling her story, Rosa Washington mentioned corn, meat, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, hoe cake, and molasses.⁴⁷

Considerable acreage was devoted to food crops, usually for home consumption rather than export. In 1842, the county produced 200,570 bushels of corn, 8,652 of oats, and 3,516 of wheat.⁴⁸ In 1860 Hempstead County ranked fourth in production of corn, peas, and beans.⁴⁹ If a man failed to grow enough food for his slaves, he could purchase food from his neighbors, from New Orleans or from local merchants. In 1849, a disastrous year for crops, William Moss, owner of 22 slaves, advertized that he wanted to buy 100 to 500 bushels of corn and from 1,000 to 5,000 pounds of pork.⁵⁰

Farmers also raised cattle and hogs. Beef was seldom fed to slaves, as it was costlier than pork and not easily preserved. To supply his Red River, Lafayette County, plantation that was home to 46 slaves Governor James Sevier Conway sent 35,000 pounds of pork from his Hot Spring County plantation. If that were not enough, he wrote his overseer, he should

purchase pickled pork. Sevier also wrote:

I have determined never again to send cattle for meat to the farm; What may be needed for oxen I would prefer to buy raised on Red River & as for beef & milk cows for negroes, it is nonsense to try to⁵¹ keep them supplied with the articles.

In general, slaves ate their morning and evening meals in the cabins, but took their lunch to the fields with them. Slaves sometimes ate in family groupings in individual cabins, sometimes in a common kitchen with food prepared by one slave, who might also prepare the master's food.⁵²

As with food, the discrepancy in quality of clothing was perhaps more pronounced among large-scale holdings. Since their primary purpose was agricultural labor, slaves wore clothing geared to that purpose. Whether they had "Sunday" clothing was at the master's discretion. A house servant, or slave who possessed a special skill, such as blacksmithing or acting as foreman, might be rewarded with nicer clothing, since they occupied a higher position in the black social caste system and were more in contact with whites.⁵³ Also, some slaves were provided with warm, winter clothing and shoes; others were not.⁵⁴

Most slave clothing was made in the home. This duty fell to the mistress and perhaps a house servant, if there was one, and if not, a field hand borrowed long enough for the job. In 1850 John Wilson, a farmer with eight slaves, advertized for a servant girl, a seamstress, capable of cutting and making course clothing.⁵⁵ Slave clothing usually was of a courser grade of cloth, including osnaberg, linsey,

jeans, and homespun cotton and wool. Judge Edward Cross operated a cotton mill at Royston, which may have supplied some thread and spun cotton for slave clothing.⁵⁶ Owners could purchase cloth or ready-made clothing for slaves from local merchants. The differences in quality is evident from references to "negro clothing" and in prices. For instance, in 1852 Jeremiah P. Johnson purchased a "Negro Champeachy Hat" for 25 cents at the firm of Trimble and Johnson in Washington.⁵⁷ By contrast, a "Fine Panama Hat" cost six collars.⁵⁸

Two advertisements for runaway slaves described the types of clothing slaves wore. A man who escaped from the county jail in 1845 wore a black fur hat and a light jeans or lindsey coat.⁵⁹ When Bob took unannounced leave of his master, J. G. D'Armond, he wore a brown coat, with a hole in the back, a black hat, and striped pantaloons.⁶⁰

Depending upon the master's financial capabilities and caring for his slaves, housing varied from poorly constructed shacks to neatly-constructed and painted cottages. In towns slave houses usually stood to the rear of the owner's house, along with sheds, a kitchen, smoke-house, and other outbuildings --often occupying an entire block. On large farms, however, slave houses were usually grouped in rows near the fields and known as "the quarters." If an overseer were employed, his house, slightly more substantial, stood near the quarters.

Most houses were built of logs. Timber was plentiful and slave labor cheap. Since the area had no saw mills until the late ante-bellum period, logs were hand-hewn. A family of slaves belonging to John W. Williams resided in a cabin

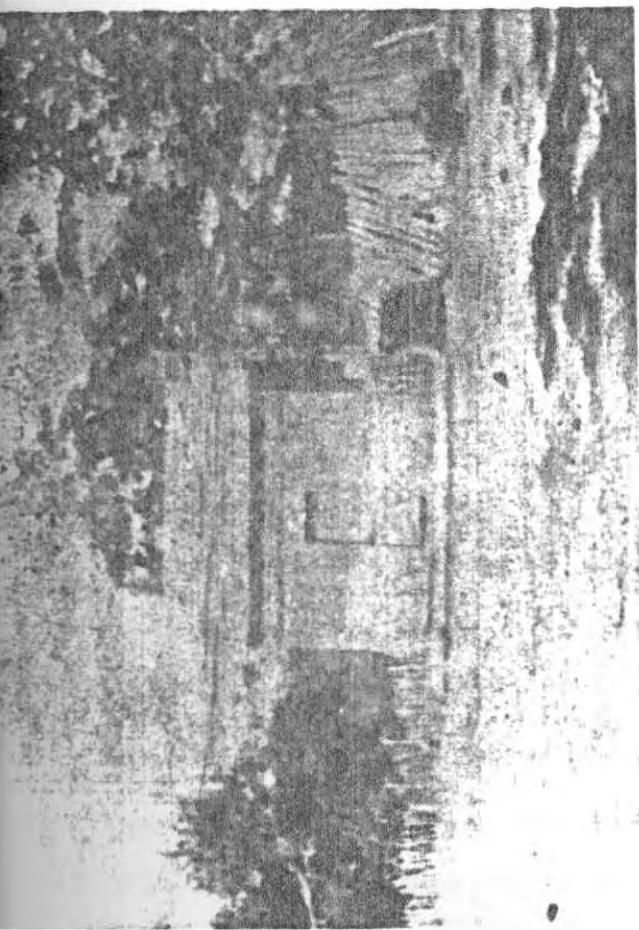


FIGURE FOUR: SHED



FIGURE FIVE: KITCHEN



FIGURE SIX: MAIN HOUSE

built of logs from which the first courthouse, eight miles northeast of Washington, was constructed.⁶¹

The first homes of white men were, likewise, generally log houses, with central hallways, or "dog trots." As men prospered, they improved existing homes or built more substantial ones, often in the Greek Revival style. For instance, Grandison D. Royston built a house in 1838 on the Marlbrook-Washington Road. In the 1850s the Roystons built a substantial Greek Revival home in Washington, which still stands. The old home, eight miles north of town, then became home to the Roystons' overseer.⁶² (See Figures Four, Five, Six) A number of the county's wealthiest men owned town homes, in addition to plantation homes, where they resided to escape the threat of malaria on their river bottom lands and to provide their families with accessible schools and churches.⁶³ Few men were that wealthy, and the majority of homes more closely approximated the crude log dwellings of the early pioneer period. In terms of quality, the difference between slave and master's housing was more pronounced, the more wealthy the owner.

So, too, did the number of slaves per cabin. In Arkansas, the average number of slaves per dwelling was 5.74--only slightly higher than the average for blacks and whites.⁶⁴ In Hempstead County, the average number of slaves per dwelling was about the same. However, the average number of slaves per dwelling was slightly higher among larger holdings. John McFadden's 51 slaves lived in eight houses--an average of 6.4 per dwelling. James H. Walker provided 30 houses for his 205 slaves, or one for each 6.8 slaves. George C. Muldrow's

132 slaves resided in only 16 houses--a crowded average of 8.3 slaves per house. An exception was William H. Turner's 54 slaves, who had 15 houses--only 3.6 slaves per house on the average.⁶⁵

For some holdings, the census taker reported no dwellings. In some cases, this was almost assuredly an oversight. In some instances, however, slaves probably lived in the master's house or slept in an outbuilding, such as a barn.

While slave life may have differed little economically from that of many poor whites, the quality of his life suffered more in other respects. Several historians deal with the subject of slavery's psychological abuses and how slaves coped with their enslavement.⁶⁶ Successful owners understood psychology in employing methods of minimizing resistance. Some methods were subtle, others brutal. Maintaining strict discipline, implanting the idea of inferiority, creating dependence, impressing slaves with power, and interesting him in the master's enterprise were methods owners used to create productive workers.⁶⁷ The methods were not always successful. Beyond receiving the necessities of life, the slave had little reason to increase his productivity, unless he benefitted directly or was threatened with force. Some masters won their slaves love and loyalty; others won fear and hatred.

In a system inherent of cruel abuse,"⁶⁸ men who physically abused their slaves were the exception rather than the rule. Probably, these types of masters were as rare as another

type--men who, "for the humanity" freed their slaves, who allowed them dignity. Had these two types of masters been the norm slavery would have ceased to exist. Unfortunately, it is the nature of men to record extremes rather than the rule. On the one hand, Hempstead County's fragmentary legacy of slave history records tales of owners who abused slaves like animals; on the other, it remembers the owners who treated their slaves as family, which, in instances, they were.

The narrative of Rosa Washington is particularly revealing:

Lots of old people lak me say dat dey was happy in slavery, and dat dey had de worst tribulations after freedom. But I knows dey didn't have no white master and overseer lak we all had on our place. Dey both dead now I reckon, and dey no use talking 'bout de dead, but I know I been gone long ago iffen dat white man Saunders didn't lose his hold on me.⁶⁹

There appears to be some truth to the idea that slavery was more inhumane on plantations with overseers directing the slaves in place of absentee owners, but as Rosa Washington pointed out:

De niggers had hard traveling on de plantation whar I was raised 'cause old Master live in town [Washington] and jest had de overseer on de place, but iffen he had lived out dar hisself I speck it been as bad,⁷⁰ 'cause he was a hard driver his own self.

Rosa's master was Dr. Isaac Newton Jones, who had moved to Washington about 1842. According to Rosa, Jones died in a boiler explosion on the plantation, still "cussing fire to" their "black hearts."⁷¹

Saunders, a white man, was overseer for about 200 slaves near Washington, close to Bois D'Arc Creek, in the river bottoms. He assigned their work and checked to see if it had been completed at the end of the day. Slaves who "didn't git out all de work de overseer set out for 'em" were subject to "whuppings," children not excluded. Rosa remembered them well:

Old man Saunders was de hardest overseer of anybody. He would git mad and give a whipping some time and de slave wouldn't even know what it was about. . . . When he go to whip a nigger he make him strip to de waist, and he take a cat-o-nine tails and bring de blisters, and de bust de blisters wid a wide strap of leather fastened to a stick handle. I seen de blood running out 'n many a back, all de way from de neck to de waist!

Many de time a nigger git blistered and cut up so dat we have to git a sheet and grease it wid lard and wrap 'em up in it, and dey have to wear a greasy cloth wrapped around dey body under de shirt for three, four days after dey git a big whipping!⁷²

In the process of one whipping, Rosa claimed, Saunders killed her uncle Sandy, the lead row man, and threw his body in a small pond where it was discovered the next day by some white boys. "And dey never done nothing to old man Saunders at all!" she protested.⁷³ Arkansas law did not consider the death of a slave during the administering of punishment to be murder.⁷⁴

Because slavery's existence depended upon force or threat of force, most laws and statutes reinforced the authority of whites over Negroes. James Martin, overseer for Robert Brunson, a doctor who owned 31 slaves in Saline Township, shot and killed the slave Nathan in 1853 after Nathan had said

"shoot and be damned" and advanced threateningly--but unarmed --toward him. Brunson dismissed Martin without pay. believing that Martin had unnecessarily deprived him of a valuable slave, worth \$1,500. Martin sued Brunson for his wages. In the course of the trial, it was revealed that Martin had been drinking before he shot the slave and had been heard to say he had "a rough and saucy set of negroes on the farm, and that he would make the negroes obey him, or he would kill them."⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the court ruled that Martin had shown no negligence in managing the slaves to justify Brunson's withholding pay.⁷⁶

Samuel Chester wrote that his blood boiled when he recalled some of the abuses of slavery he witnessed as a child. These abuses, he claimed, were the exception and not the rule where sons managed the farms. Most, he said, occurred on the larger plantations where overseers bossed the slaves. The number of brutal and sadistic overseers can never have been very large, for the simple reason that, in Hempstead County at least, slaveowners employed few overseers. The notion that most of the meanest ones were Yankees and that slaves would rather work for anyone than a Yankee overseer seems even less likely, since most of Hempstead County's overseers were native Southerners--products of Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia.

Most of slavery's abuses were less dramatic than the accounts above mentioned. Simply because slaves acquiesced to bondage did not mean they enjoyed it or were even contented. One historian, Kenneth Stamp, cites alcoholism

among slaves as one sign of rebellion.⁷⁷ Arkansas slaves were not allowed to work where liquor was sold in quantities of less than a quart, nor to buy, sell or transport liquor. That slaves did, somehow, acquire liquor is directly indicated in the Rosa Washington narrative.⁷⁸

Slavery also disrupted family life. Marriage among slaves had no legal validity, and therefore no adultery, fornication, or bastardy was recognized. The father of a slave was "unknown" to the law. Children belonged to the master of the mother. In small holdings, particularly when there was no suitable mate for a slave, the master might allow the slave to "marry" off the farm. An example was Andrew, the Negro foreman on the Chester farm, whose wife belonged to a neighbor.⁷⁹

Although slave marriages received no legal recognition, some masters encouraged monogamy and faithfulness. Some required some sort of wedding, ranging from a Christian ceremony performed by a white preacher to the simple act of "jumping the broomstick."⁸⁰ By white standards of the time, sexual practices among slaves were promiscuous, due to a general lack of legal and social restraint. No evidence exists to suggest that owners forced slaves to cohabit in order to produce children. As Orville Taylor has pointed out:

Those accusing slaveowners of enforced breeding have neglected to attempt to explain why it would have been necessary to compel slaves to satisfy one of the most basic of human urges.⁸¹

No Arkansas law required that slave families be kept

together, but for humane reasons and because of attachments to their slaves, many owners preferred not to separate families. Selling off husbands, wives, or children was likely to evoke censure from neighbors; but it did not always prevent separations. Two stories illustrate the attitudes owners had toward slave families. "Old Mom Hessay" was the black mammy of Dr. Henry Walker of Columbus. When Dr. Walker's daughter married Rufus K. Garland, Mom Hessay's daughter, of her own volition, went with the daughter. Soon, Garland persuaded his bride to trade the girl for a stallion. Charlean Moss Williams continues the story:

. . . No sooner had it happened than the news reached Mom Hessay . . . Mom ran screaming to Dr. Walker and forgetting herself she lapsed back into the days of his childhood and cried 'Oh Henry. Henry dey don't swap my girl fo a stud horse.' . . . Calling one of his men he immediately sent after the girl with instructions that the man bring her back at any price.⁸²

In another instance, a Mr. Littlejohn gave a slave woman, Roas Washington's grandmother, to his sister Elizabeth before she married Dr. Jones. Years later, Jones allowed a man to take Rosa's mother, then a child, as payment for a debt. When Littlejohn learned of this he followed the man and brought the child back to the plantation.⁸³

Slave families also became separated when owners gave slaves as wedding presents or in their wills. If families lived near each other, the separation was less difficult. Charlean Moss Williams wrote that giving children as wedding presents was common practice. When a couple married, those slaves of either family who were particularly attached to the couple might go with them. This practice, she said,

taught the children to be kind to the slaves, because if no slaves wanted to go with the new couple, then they received none.⁸⁴

Owners sometimes left wills stipulating which children were to receive which slaves. In his will, Basi Berry stipulated that the slave girl Lindy be left to his wife. After her death, Lindy was to live with any of the children she pleased and was not to be sold out of the family.⁸⁵ If an owner left no will, the fate of his slaves was less certain. An administrator divided the slaves among his legal heirs. If no satisfactory division could be reached or if the owner owed debts which could not be paid otherwise, the slaves were auctioned to the highest bidder at the courthouse door.⁸⁶

Private sale of Negroes might be advertised in the Washington Telegraph, but sales normally occurred on the owner's property. Rosa Washington described a sale on the Jones plantation:

Before old Master died he sold off a whole bunch of hosses and cattle, and some niggers, too. He had de sales on de plantation, and white men from around dar come to bid, and some traders come. He had a big stump whar he made de niggers stand while dey was being sold, and de men and boys had to strip off to de waist to show dey muscle and iffen dey had any scars or hurt places, but de women and gals didn't have to strip to de waist.

De white men come up and look in de slave's mouth jest lak he was a mule or a hoss.⁸⁷

Traders, or drovers, were men who speculated in slaves for a living. They were considered among the lowest forms of life. These traders apparently passed through the area with some regularity. Rosa described one of their trips:

After old Master go, de overseer hold one sale, but mostly he jest trade wid de traders what come

by. De traders all had big bunches of slaves and dey have 'em all strung out in a line going down de road. Some had waggons and de chillun could ride, but not camp. Dey didn't or tie 'em 'cause dey didn't have no place dey could run to anyway.⁸⁸

Between some slaves and masters great affection and loyalty existed, and these slaves had little fear of being sold. Particularly between Negro mammies and their white children and between black and white children of similar ages, ties were often very strong. Black and white children played together and worked together, sometimes.

Arkansas law did not prohibit teaching slaves to read and write, and sometimes the children of masters taught their slaves basic skills. Charlean Moss Williams recalled that her father had a slave named Dan Hill who wanted to be a preacher.

Dan [she wrote] was about the age of one of my brothers, and he and my brother would burn the midnight pine-torch in the home, my brother teaching him the three R's.⁸⁹

Likewise, the children in the Chester family taught the slave Andrew to read and write and do mathematics. He was the Negro foreman and also kept the accounts for Chester.⁹⁰ It is doubtful that owners encouraged most slaves to read. Slavery's primary purpose was labor, and slaves had little need for literacy in the fields. Too, slaves who could read and write could easily forge passes to help them escape. Edward, a slave of Nicholas Trammel, was described as a bright mulatto with straight hair, who "reads well and speaks quick."⁹¹

Some owners felt bound to provide for their slaves' spiritual welfare, as well as his physical being. The Louisiana Black Code of 1724 made many provisions for the slave's religious life. With the exception that Catholicism was no longer the official religion, provisions remained relatively undisturbed when the territory became United States property. The code required masters to provide religious instruction and forbade work on the Sabbath. Under Missouri laws, the penalty for slaves working on the Sabbath fell on the master, but under Arkansas law, slaves could labor on Sundays for their own benefit, provided the work was not compulsory.⁹²

The role of religion in shaping attitudes toward slavery cannot be overexaggerated. Pro-slavery Southerners cited many Bible passages to justify slavery. All of the major Protestant denominations were at work in Southwest Arkansas. Motivations for preaching to slaves varied, and religion on the whole was carefully censored Christianity. Some felt genuine concern for the slave's soul; some saw slavery as a means of exercising greater control over the Negroes.

The Methodists came early to Hempstead County. William Stephenson, father of Arkansas Methodism, settled at Mound Prairie in 1816 and brought about ten families of Methodists from Southeast Missouri. Some were preachers; some were slaveholders. Some were both.⁹³

The Methodist church's official stand opposed slavery. A ruling in 1784 required that all Methodist masters free their slaves within five years, but it proved unenforceable.⁹⁴

In September of 1823 the question of John Reid's ownership of a slave was the subject of discussion at the Arkansas Conference, held at Ebenezer Camp Ground below the town creek at Washington. The Church Discipline required that any preacher who came into possession of a slave emancipate him or give him up. The minutes read:

After some desultory remarks on the subject, a motion was made, seconded and carried, that Bro. Reid retain the⁹⁵ slave; and his license was accordingly renewed.

In 1825 the entire Arkansas Conference had 45 slave members out of 712.⁹⁶ In the autumn of that year Jesse Haile arrived. His four-year tenure as presiding elder of the Arkansas District soon came to be known as the "Haile Storm." Haile was an ardent abolitionist, who "died in the work."⁹⁷ A fellow minister described Haile:

He had a most inveterate hatred to African slavery and felt in duty bound to preach against the institution on⁹⁸ all occasions [both public and private].

His object, according to a fellow minister, was to influence public opinion so that when Arkansas came to apply for statehood it would enter as a free state.⁹⁹ Haile persuaded at least one Methodist, Thomas Tennant, to manumit his slaves. Tennant, in reply to a speech by Ambrose Sevier on "Fanaticism on the Subject of Slavery," printed in the Arkansas Gazette, responded:

. . . Are all fanatics who are opposed to slavery? Who, then, I would ask, are FANATICS? Every philosopher who ever lived? Every true republican on the surface of the globe? The Methodists, the Quakers, whom you eulogize? Do you know, sir--why all the world knows--that slavery is wrong! morally, religiously, poligically wrong!¹⁰⁰

Haile took an aggressive stance on the enforcement of the provisions of the Discipline, which made slave owners ineligible to hold positions in the church and required preachers who might acquire slaves to manumit them or forfeit their positions. Williams Stevensons and three other ministers, though not slave owners themselves, transferred to the Louisiana and Missouri Conferences. 101

In the meantime the rich lands on the Red River and Mound Prairie had drawn quite a number of slaveholders to south Arkansas. . . . The Presiding Elder never held a Quarterly Meeting that he did not fire into the peculiar institution and the preachers in the District copying his example there was constant friction.¹⁰²

As a consequence, many Methodists left the church to unite with the Cumberland Presbyterians. "When the 'Hail Storm' had passed those on the ground in southwest Arkansas said it seemed that all was lost as concerned Methodism."¹⁰³ In 1829, Jerome Berryman, a Methodist minister came to the Arkansas District as assistant preacher. He reported that Haile had "scattered firebrands" all over the territory, causing strife in the church but that, to his knowledge, it had not released one servant from bondage. "Rather it was the occasion of many masters drawing the reins of servitude still tighter upon the slave." ¹⁰³

One of Berryman's Saturday preaching places was at Rall's (probably Daniel Rawles) farm in the Red River bottoms, and the congregation was composed of the overseer and slaves.¹⁰⁴ In the wake of the Haile Storm, it is doubtful that many men allowed preachers time alone with their slaves.

Berryman was present at the Methodist General Conference in 1844 at which the Methodist Church split, Southern Methodists forming the Methodist Episcopal Church, South the following year. Berryman recalled that at this session Peter Cartwright "boastingly" said "that he intended to make some of the Southern delegates "swallow a nigger whole, wool and all" before he left for New York. The year 1844 marks the beginning of vigorous defense of slavery by southern Methodist slaveholders. In 1857 the Ouachita Conference and in 1858 the Arkansas Conference petitioned the General Conference to drop its ruling against slavery without one dissenting vote.¹⁰⁵

Methodism, despite the Haile storm, continued to grow in both black and white membership after 1836, due to the great wave of immigration statehood brought. In 1846 the church started an African mission on Red River in Washington District. One year later it reported 150 members.¹⁰⁶

the newly formed Wachita (Ouachita) Conference covering the southern portion of the state, reported 1,955 colored members of a total 8,675. The Washington Circuit of Washington District reported 39 colored members and 407 white members. In 1858 an African mission was established at Columbus with J. C. Cobb as pastor. The following year it reported 21 colored members and 55 colored probationers. The Washington District Red River mission reported 150 white members, 41 white probationers, 20 colored members and 5 colored probationers. Established within the Washington District in that year were the Hempstead African Mission,

Center Point African Mission and Cut-Off African Mission.¹⁰⁷

The long-held myth that most slaves were Baptists is probably a fiction, according to Orville Taylor, the authority on Arkansas slavery. Most slaves belonged to the denominations of their masters, and the Methodist Church was the largest church before the war. Secondly, Baptists ranked relatively low on the social and economic scale of the ante-bellum South and probably held fewer slaves. Taylor estimates that less than 3,000 adult Arkansas slaves were members of Baptist churches.¹⁰⁸

Baptist policy, emphasizing the authority of the local church, permitted diversity of opinion about slavery. Yet it is this same autonomy that makes data on membership difficult to compile. Baptist churches were begun by 1830 in HEMPSTEAD County, but state convention of Baptist churches was not organized until 1846. At this first convention, which met at Tulip, Dallas County, committees were appointed to oversee the religious state of slaves. The first report read:

In view of the great responsibility resting on all that love our blessed Savior, and particularly the owners of slaves, we would recommend, first, the importance of family instruction by the heads of families or qualified persons to their servants, and require them as much as possible to attend their family worship. And we further recommend to our churches, to prepare some apartment for them to hear the preaching of the Gospel, and we recommend our ministering brethren to preach to them when the opportunity offers. And we further recommend each church, when they have colored members, to have a committee on instruction, and to have a day in each month for the purpose of reading the scripture to them,¹⁰⁹

The following year, the convention appointed B. L. Wright missionary to the blacks on Red River, an area probably chosen because of its high degree of absentee ownership, for August through October . He reported that he baptized 30 blacks, and had it not been for illness, he would have baptized more. For lack of funds, missionary work among blacks was discontinued in 1851, but the Convention continued to be concerned with their instruction. At the 1854 Convention, the Committee on Duties to Servants reported:

We very much regret that, with the limited resources of the Convention, no satisfactory provision can be made for supplying this much neglected portion of the population.¹¹⁰

Local associations and churches continued the work discarded by the state convention. In 1854, the Red River Regular Baptist Association, with B. L. Wright chairman of the Committee on the State of the Colored Population, expressed concern that Arkansas slaves stood "in a more remote relation to the Gospel" than was true of other Southern states.¹¹¹ The committee offered several remedies: that various churches expand their buildings to accommodate blacks; that slave owners be assured that if they allowed slaves to attend church services they would be properly supervised; that ministers and lay persons adopt "a general system of personal invitation of the colored people to attend the Gospel"; and that meetings be scheduled on the Sabbath so slaves could attend.¹¹²

Red River was one of the most active associations in work among slaves, supporting four missions in a single year.¹¹³

The "official" attitude of Arkansas Baptists was "unqualified, unapologetic, and unchanging support of the institution of slavery."¹¹⁴ Arkansas Baptists appear to have quietly accepted slavery but not vigorously defended the institution. Like most churches, Baptists believed that slavery was scriptural--ordained of God--and that slavery benefitted the slaves, that it was "moral in its tendency and by far the best situation in which the African can be placed."¹¹⁵

This appears also to have been the opinion of Presbyterians. John Mebane Allen, a Presbyterian slaveholder of Hempstead County, owned a copy of the 1859 publication, Slavery Ordained of God written by A Presbyterian minister of South Carolina. ". . . slavery, like all evils, has its corresponding and greater good;" the minister wrote, "that the Southern slave, though degraded compared with his master, is elevated and enobled compared with his brethren in Africa."¹¹⁶

After Methodists and Baptists, Presbyterians were the third largest denomination in Arkansas. They began work in 1828. The Reverend A. R. Banks organized the earliest Presbyterian church in Hempstead County at Spring Hill December 11, 1836. Among the charter members was Letta, a servant of W. B. Morelton. Throughout its existence the church accepted slaves into the church, on certificate from a previous church, by examination, by profession of faith and on the master's recommendation.¹¹⁶

On May 5, 1839, Rev. Banks recorded:

Rec[eive]d by certificate^{and} reccomendation [sic] of her master, Nancy, servant of Mr. Sam B. Huitt, who had been a member of Williamsburg Church, S.C.

Same day--Red[eive]d Betty, a servant of

Mr. J. B. Huitt, on examination and recommendation of her master, into the Spring Hill Church. Baptized her and admitted her to the Lord's table for the first time.¹¹⁷

A list of members as of January 1, 1845 showed sixteen white members (four of whom had died and another two moved away) and 43 colored persons (three of whom had removed and one died).¹¹⁸

It may have been the practice of the Washington Presbyterian Church to hold separate services for whites and blacks, as an entry for September 28, 1856 indicates:

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered to a number of Christ's followers in the morning, in¹¹⁹ the evening to a number of colored brethren.

The servants Susan and Sam of the Reverend S. Williamson, pastor of the church, were received into the church in 1857; however their names do not appear among the slaves who removed to the Marlbrook Church organized in 1860 by the Reverend.¹²⁰

In 1859 a group of Presbyterians living in Hempstead County, about eight miles from the nearest Presbyterian church and "conscious of their personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of their Negro slaves" considered establishing a church of their own. In the fall of 1859, William J. Frierson, George C. Muldrow, Thomas G. McFaddin, and Mrs. F. A. Quintilla Morgan hired the Reverend Marcus J. Wallace to preach half-time in their neighborhood. For the year 1860 they paid him \$400.¹²¹

Then, "convinced of the utility of the enterprize," they

decided to build a church, 36 by 50 feet, on the plantation of William J. Frierson, about three miles north of the present town of Hope. The preface to the earliest church record begins:

This church originated in a desire and necessity for more ready and frequent access to the preaching of the Gospel felt by the Presbyterian families in the neighborhood, especially on the account of the colored people, many of whom were members of the Presbyterian Church.¹²²

Thirty-two slaves, servants whose first names only were recorded, were charter members of the Greenwood Church.¹²³

An interesting aspect of the Presbyterian church minutes is that they illustrate the role churches played in establishing law and order on the frontier and in regulating slavery. In 1838, W. H. Winn was tried before the Spring Hill church council for "breach of promise from general rumor," concerning the purchase of slaves. The charges were dismissed.¹²⁴ The Spring Hill church also brought a charge of "common fame" against Addison, servant of T. R. Bradley "for either stealing or embezzling stolen money and trying to pass it off without the knowledge of the proper owner Mr. Muldrow." Addison acknowledged partial guilt, and his master acknowledged the rest by testifying against him. Addison was dismissed from the priveleges of the church "untill he show by Repentance and a good conduct, that he is worthy to be restored." Two years later, at his own request, he was restored to church priveleges. ¹²⁵

Thomas L. Spragins, a member of the Washington Church was called before the session to relate the circumstances connected with "his unfortunate killing of a runaway negroe

a few weeks since. . ." After hearing his statement and "full acknowledgement of sorrow and repentance before God" the session resolved that "whilst the Session does regret the occurrence, the profession of Mr. Spragins is satisfactory."¹²⁶

There were Episcopal and Campbellite (Disciples of Christ) churches in the county by 1860 but their effect on slavery was limited. In 1863 Bishop Henry C. Lay stopped in Spring Hill where there was no Episcopal church, but a few communicants. He preached five sermons, including one for the Negroes. At Washington Grace Episcopal Church, he preached seven times, once to the Negroes. In July of 1863, the Reverend H. Murphy baptized Alexander, seven, and Priscilla, two, children of the slave woman Priscilla, the cook at the rectory. These children appear to have been baptized at the same services as white children.¹²⁷

It is evident from church, association and convention records of the denominations that not all slaves were affiliated with churches. Some may have attended without officially joining the church. Others, it is presumed, received religious instruction of some sort from their owners. When a slave woman on a plantation in the Mt. Holly community felt she had sinned, she turned to her mistress for counsel:

One day I was walking across de field and stumped my toe and fell down and said 'damn it.' When I got up I felt awful bad and went and axed Old Missus what mus' I do. Ole Missus said 'go pray.' I went and prayed and kep' on prayin' till at las' I felt sho' de Lawd had forgive me.¹²⁸

As mentioned before, some owners hired preachers to deliver sermons to their slaves on the plantation. Some put negro preachers in charge. Both the Baptist and Methodist denominations had negro preachers. They were probably more frequent, due to local autonomy of churches, among the Baptists. William B. Arnold, a Methodist preacher, had a slave, Sam who was also a Methodist preacher.

In the long, long ago this good old negro, Uncle Sam, was a regular visitor to the campmeetings in his section, [Terre Rouge Creek] and used to preach from the pulpit, by special invitation, to white audiences, which always paid him the most respectful attention. ¹²⁹

Al Frierson, an ex-slave living at Magnolia, Columbia County, recalled that slaves often were "married" by the white minister but that there were also colored preachers.¹³⁰

Some slaves probably recieved little or no religious instruction, as was the case of Columbus Williams, a slave in southwest Arkansas, who said,

We didn't have no church nor nothing. No Sunday schools, no nothin'. Worked from Monday morning till Saturday night. On Sunday we didn't do nothin' but set right down there on that big plantation. Couldn't go nowhere. ¹³¹

The notion that most slaves were pious Christians is probably exaggerated, according to Taylor.¹³¹ Certainly, some were. For all, though, regardless of religion or lack of it, Sunday was a day of rest, since state law forbade compulsory work on the Sabbath, except light household chores. Some may have chosen to work for themselves on the Sabbath.¹³² Some slaves fished, as is evident from an article

in the Washington Telegraph which laid the blame for Edward Cross' burned sawmill to the negligence of some negroes who had built a fire while fishing the previous Sunday.¹³³

Religion was also one factor which led to manumission of slaves. Jesse Haile's brief term convinced Thomas Tennant, and perhaps some other local preachers that slavery was immoral, and these local preachers in Hempstead County carried on Haile's work. The state and local newspapers frequently accused Northern abolitionists of tampering with the state's clergy.¹³⁴ But religion alone did not account for all of the free persons of color in the county.

Because owners did, for various reasons, manumit their slaves, free persons of color were a necessary by-product of American Negro slavery. These freed slaves and their descendants were the anomaly of Southern culture, the third stratum of a society built for two. Neither slaves nor citizens, and often of mixed black and white parentage, free persons of color found their legal and social status in question. Although they were permitted to move about more freely, to own property, and to hold paying jobs, in terms of education, religion and legal rights, as well as social status, they were bracketed more closely with slaves.¹³⁵

The Black Code of 1724 permitted emancipation of slaves but admonished all manumitted slaves to show the profoundest respect to their former masters, to their widows and children. A freed slave who insulted or injured his

former master or family was to be punished "with more severity than if it had been offered by any other person." 136

The code also prohibited intermarriage of free Negroes with slaves, thus limiting severely the free person's choice of partners.¹³⁷

The Code also stipulated that freed slaves were to enjoy all the rights of freeborn persons, but this laxity never carried over into Arkansas, where with each successive decade the free person of color lost more and more of his rights. The state eventually forbade immigration of free Negroes. Many Southerners regarded the presence of free Negroes as a threat to the peculiar institution's fragile class structure. Slave owners feared that the presence of the free class of blacks might incite discontent among slaves or actively incite riot. Non-owners resented the employment competition.

Provided manumission of slaves did not defraud creditors, owners were permitted to free slaves by bill of manumission or last will and testament. Their reason for doing so varied, and in most cases are known--now--only to them. Some owners experienced qualms over slavery's morality; some freed slaves as a reward for faithfulness and service; and some freed their black mistresses and mulatto children. The earliest record of a manumission in Hempstead County was recorded August 13, 1820. The bill read:

I Edward Bradley. . . for the humanity and desirous to . . . do fully emancipate and forever set free from slavery both from me and all other persons

whatsoever the following malata [sic] boy child
known by the name of Eli eighteen months old . . . 138

Bradley had, in 1815 and 1818, recorded bills of manumission for Eli's mother Ann, a woman of color, and her children, Zeb, Dan, Gad, and Caroline, while residing in Missouri. In his will, made shortly after Eli's emancipation, Bradley acknowledged these manumissions and willed all his property to these freed slaves. The will contained one unique provision which alone indicates Bradley's reason for setting his slaves free. The clause ordered that the property not be sold until Ann's youngest child, or any child born to her from the date of the will until eleven months after Bradley's death, reached maturity.¹³⁹ Bradley, almost certainly, was setting free what he regarded as his family and making provisions for their wellbeing.

In a case argued before the Arkansas Supreme Court, James H. Dunn, a Fulton merchant, attempted to purchase the girl Eliza from the estate of James Moss, but died before he could do so. Dunn openly acknowledged Eliza as his daughter. Her mother was the slave woman Mourning whom Dunn had hired from the Moss estate to serve as cook and housekeeper. 140

Arkansas laws allowed free Negroes to hold both personalty and realty but discouraged slaveholding. No law prohibited their holding slaves, but the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled in 1859 that it was "directly opposed to the principles upon which slavery exists among us"--because slavery had its basis in an inferiority of race. 141

Instances of free Negroes owning slaves were rare.

In most cases these Negroes had simply purchased members of their family and, for various reasons, were unable to free them. Dolly Pennington purchased her daughter Nancy from Hugh A. Blevins and in an 1834 will gave the child her freedom and left Nancy all her property. The property was to be shared with any of her brothers and sisters who were in a situation to enjoy it.¹⁴²

Sam Williams, in his reminiscences of early Hempstead County, recalled that Absalom Madden [sic] had freed his slaves by will and that one, Jake, acquired a small fortune, plantation and slaves.¹⁴³ Jacob Mading did not, as Williams supposed, own slaves. In 1843 a state law became effective which prohibited further immigration of free persons of color into Arkansas. All free Negroes within the state had to appear before the county courts to post bond for the amount of \$500 for their good behavior and to prove their freedom. Children between the ages of 17 and 21 were apprenticed. This accounted for Williams' misconception. The children, some of whom were his wife's and perhaps his own, became apprentices to Jacob Mading, the boys to learn farming and the girls to learn "the business of housekeeping."¹⁴⁴

The greatest number of free persons known to have resided in the county was 61, in 1840. The census reports show many of them to reside in their own home, and to own property. Several, including Dolly Pennington, Gad Bradly, and Maria Oakley owned property in Washington.¹⁴⁵ Gad Bradley earned his living as a blacksmith, Jacob Mading

as a carpenter, others as farm laborers, hired help, and slave overseers.¹⁴⁶

Free Negroes were subject to several restrictions not imposed on whites. The burden of proof of freedom rested on him; all blacks and mulattos were considered slaves unless they could prove otherwise. If he failed to execute bond or pay a fine, he could be hired out for a time, then deported. Punishment for crimes, was often corporal rather than imprisonment.¹⁴⁷

As sectional tensions built, Southerners considered the presence of free Negroes more and more a threat. The Arkansas legislature passed a law forbidding free Negroes and free mulattoes to remain in the state after January 1, 1860. Those who failed to comply were to be arrested and hired out for twelve months and the money used to deport them. If a Negro refused to leave he could be sold into slavery. The act also prohibited manumission of slaves.¹⁴⁸

Many of Hempstead's county's free persons of color did leave. Whereas in 1850, 29 free Negroes had resided in the county, only two remained in 1860.¹⁴⁹ Rather than leave, some probably sought protection under a white master, and thus reenslaved themselves. By an act approved January 10, 1861, free Negroes still residing in Arkansas could remain until 1865.¹⁵⁰ Few persons were affected by the law. And before it took effect all Negroes were, legally, free.

END NOTES

¹Orville W. Taylor, Negro Slavery in Arkansas (Durham: Duke University Press, 1958) pp. 27, 93

²Jerome C. Berryman, "A Circuit Rider's Experiences," Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society 16 (1923-1925):199-200; George W. Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States: From Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico 2 (London: John Murray, 1844):155-156.

³Washington Telegraph, February 23, 1842

⁴U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of 1820 (Washington, 1821), p. 41 cited by Taylor, Negro Slavery, p. 25.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Francis A. Walker, A Compendium of the Ninth Census (Washington: Government Publishing Office, 1872), pp. 26-27.

⁷U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of 1830 (Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1967) : Walker, A Compendium, pp. 26-27.

⁸U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of 1840 (Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1967); Walker, A Compendium, pp. 26-27.

⁹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of 1850, Population--Free and Slave Inhabitants (Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1967); Walker, A Compendium, pp. 26-27; Robert B. Walz, "Arkansas Slaveholders and Slaveholdings in 1850," Arkansas Historical Quarterly 12 (Spring 1953): 307-336.

¹⁰U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of 1860, Population--Free and Slave Inhabitants (Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1967). Hereinafter census reports will be cited in this manner: Census of 1860, Population; Walker, A Compendium, pp. 26-27.

¹¹Featherstonhaugh, Excursion, p. 187; See also: Ulrich B. Phillips, American Negro Slavery (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1918), Chapter 12.

- ¹² Washington Telegraph, April 6, 1842.
- ¹³ Featherstonhaugh, Excursion, pp. 185-186.
- ¹⁴ Census of 1850.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Census of 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860.
- ¹⁷ Washington Telegraph, July 19, 1843; October 30, 1844; December 2, 1846; Taylor Negro Slavery, p. 20.
- ¹⁸ Mary Medearis, Washington, Arkansas: History on the Southwest Trail (Hope: Etter Printing Company, 1976), p. 33.
- ¹⁹ Washington Telegraph, September 4, 1850; "Journal of Bishop Henry C. Lay, 1862-1863," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Church 8 (March 1939):85.
- ²⁰ Orville W. Taylor, "Baptists and Slavery in Arkansas: Relationships and Attitudes," Arkansas Historical Quarterly 38 (Autumn 1979):232.
- ²¹ Ulrich B. Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1929), p. 329. Other historians have used figures as high as fifty slaves in distinguishing planters from farmers. Hempstead County's large slave owners seldom used the term planter in reference to themselves, and it is used here simply to distinguish between sizes of holdings.
- ²² Census of 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860.
- ²³ Stark Young, So Red the Rose (New York: Random House, 1934; Ballantine books, 1962), p. 20.
- ²⁴ Washington Telegraph, September 6, 1843.
- ²⁵ Avery O. Cravens, The Coming of the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 30.
- ²⁶ Census of 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860. Based upon ages of slaves in reports.
- ²⁷ Samuel H. Chester, Pioneer Days in Arkansas (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1927), p. 46.
- ²⁸ Census of 1850.
- ²⁹ Census of 1860.

³⁰Census of 1850, 1860.

³¹George P. Rawick, ed., The American Slave: A Composite Biography (Westford: Greenwood Press, inc., 1972)

³²Chester, Pioneer Days, pp. 39-40.

³³Charlean Moss Williams, The Old Town Speaks (Houston: Anson Jones Press, 1951), pp. 142-143.

³⁴See: Eugene Genovase, The Political Economy of Slavery (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1961) and Roll Jordan, Roll Stanley Elkins, Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life: Engelman and Fogel, Time on the Cross.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶George Fitzhugh, Cannibals All: or Slaves Without Masters (1857), reprinted in Harvey Wish, ed., Ante-Bellum (New York) G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960).

³⁷See: Stamp, Peculiar Institution.

³⁸See: Phillips, Life and Labor, American Negro Slavery; Genovase, Political Economy.

³⁹Cotton was planted in April and harvested in late August or early September. In some regions the harvest did not end until March. Then it was time to replant. Phillips, American Negro Slavery, Chapter 12.

⁴⁰Farrar Newberry, ed., "A Clark County Plantation Journal for 1857," Arkansas Historical Quarterly 18 (Winter 1959):401-409.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Jacob Trieber, "Legal Status of Negroes in Arkansas Before the Civil War," Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association 3 (1911): 175-183

⁴³See: Stamp, Peculiar Institution.

⁴⁴Taylor, Negro Slavery, 131-139.

⁴⁵Washington Telegraph, Dec ember 22, 1841.

⁴⁶Featherstonhaugh, Excursion, p. 189.

⁴⁷Rawick, ed., American Slave.

⁴⁸Washington Telegraph, April 6, 1842.

⁴⁹Census of 1860, Agriculture, p. 7, cited in Taylor, Negro Slavery, p. 136.

⁵⁰Washington Telegraph, December 5, 1849.

⁵¹Orville W. Taylor, ed., "A Letter from Governor James S. Conway to the Plantation Overseer," Arkansas Historical Quarterly 17 (Autumn 1958):219-232.

⁵²Taylor, Negro Slavery, p. 139.

⁵³Ibid., 139-144.

⁵⁴See: Student Essay Collection, Riley Library, Ouachita Baptist University, contains essays ca. 1930, interviews with former slaves.

⁵⁵Washington Telegraph, March 6, 1850.

⁵⁶"Journal of Bishop Henry C. Lay," p. 85.

⁵⁷Trimble and Johnson Account Book, 1852, p. 65, Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁹Washington Telegraph, January 15, 1843.

⁶⁰Ibid., May 1, 1850.

⁶¹Mary Medearis, ed., Sam Williams: Printer's Devil (Hope: Etter Printing Company, 1979), p. 237.

⁶²Royston Picture File, Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives.

⁶³Medearis, ed., Sam Williams, pp. 151-156, 170-180, etc.

⁶⁴Taylor, Negro Slavery, pp. 144-149.

⁶⁵Census of 1860.

⁶⁶See: Stamp, Peculiar Institution; Elkins, Slavery.

⁶⁷Stamp, Peculiar Institution, pp. 141-199.

⁶⁸Chester, Pioneer Days, p. 38.

⁶⁹Raywick, ed., American Slave.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

- ⁷³Ibid.
- ⁷⁴Trieber, "Legal Status."
- ⁷⁵Taylor, Negro Slavery, p. 200.
- ⁷⁶Ibid.
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- ⁷⁸Rawick, ed., American Slave.
- ⁷⁹Chester, Pioneer Days, pp. 39-40.
- ⁸⁰See: Orville W. Taylor, "Jumping the Broomstick: Slave Marriage and Morality in Arkansas." Arkansas Historical Quarterly 17 (Autumn 1958):219-232.
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- ⁸²Hope Star, June 26, 1936.
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- ⁸⁴Hope Star, June 26, 1936.
- ⁸⁵Hempstead County Records, Probate, Marriage, Etc., Book AA, 1819-1825, p. 66.
- ⁸⁶See: Washington Telegraph, December 1, 1841; January 25, 1849; April 10, 1850.
- ⁸⁷Rawick, ed., American Slave.
- ⁸⁸Ibid.
- ⁸⁹Williams, Old Town, p. 40.
- ⁹⁰Chester, Pioneer Days, p. 39.
- ⁹¹Washington Telegraph, July 31, 1850.
- ⁹²Trieber, "Legal Status."
- ⁹³Walter N. Vernon, Methodism in Arkansa, 1816-1976 (Little Rock: Joint Committee for the History of Arkansas Methodism, 1976) and "Methodist Pioneers Along the Great Bend of the Red River, " Red River Valley Historical Review 6 (Winter 1981):46-57.
- ⁹⁴Vernon, Methodists, p. 38

- ⁹⁵ Ibid.
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- ¹⁰¹ Hunter Manuscript.
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