African Americans and Appomattox Manor Within the Structured Landscape of the Eppes Plantation

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Abstract

The Civil War brought about many changes in Virginian society, including the area around City Point, Virginia. These changes greatly effected the manner in which plantation owners managed their farms. Plantation owners had to find new ways of obtaining and exploiting their labor, and protecting their resources. The goal of this report is to explore those changes between the years 1851 and 1872 on the Eppes' plantations. I examine how Dr. Eppes structured his landscape to aid in controlling his productive resources, and the relationship he held with African-Americans. Part of exploring that relationship will be examining the living conditions of African-Americans on the Eppes' plantations as slaves and freedmen laborers.

Dr. Eppes' home, Appomattox Manor, and its grounds now make up the City Point Unit of the Petersburg National Battlefield. This report will place the City Point Unit into its larger historic context. Though the unit is best known as the location of General Grant's headquarters during the Siege of Petersburg, its history is far more extensive. In this report, I place City Point and Appomattox Manor in the plantation context which surrounded them before and after the war. It will show how the Civil War was not an isolated event, but was effected by and affected the social world around it.

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Introduction

In June 1864, General Ulysses S. Grant arrived in City Point, Virginia and established his headquarters on the lawn of Appomattox Manor, plantation home of Dr. Richard Eppes (Figure 1). From his headquarters General Grant controlled every aspect of his 100,000 man Union Army. From issuing orders, maintaining law and order, and punishing those who disrupted the order of military authority and system, General Grant used the lawn of Appomattox Manor as his center of command. His presence at City Point ended in March 1865 before General Lee's surrender on April 9, 1865. City Point's importance in the Petersburg National Battlefield centers on Grant's occupation, and its use as the Union Army headquarters and main supply depot. However, Appomattox Manor served as a center of command as part of a plantation system long before Grant's arrival, and it remained one after his departure.

Figure 1. Appomattox Manor, plantation home of Dr. Richard Eppes
(Photo by Gail Brown, June 1998).

Before owned by the National Park Service, the ground that today makes up the City Point Unit belonged to Eppes family since 1635 (Blades 1988: 6). Dr. Richard Eppes, who lived in Appomattox Manor during the nineteenth-century, was one of many Eppes who resided in the home and helped in developing the grounds around it. Though the Eppes family had a long history at City Point, Dr. Eppes' residency may be the most interesting period to study.

During his residency at Appomattox Manor from 1851 to 1896, many changes caused by the Civil War occurred throughout southern society. Dr. Eppes was one of the largest plantation owners in the area, and owned 130 slaves by the beginning of the war. Eppes and his ancestors built their wealth and property using the exploited labor of their slaves. Dr. Eppes was able to enjoy his high social rank in Virginia society from the products produced on his plantations by these slaves. The Civil War, however, changed the labor system in the south forcing plantation owners to find new means of producing the products that supported their lifestyles. Dr. Eppes was no exception. He was forced to find new ways to obtain labor and control it.

Most of the labors that returned to work on his plantations after the war were former enslaved African Americans. Most of the African Americans in the City Point area were attempting to redefine their way of life after receiving their freedom. Many expected to have their former owners' farms divided and given to them, but many instead faced having to return to their former owners for employment. The U.S. Army in the Petersburg, Virginia area supported the plan that called for freedmen to return to their former owners and sign employment contracts (Henderson 1977: 16-17). The army hoped that by returning labor to the plantations they could quickly restart the economy, and keep large segments of the recently freed population from moving into the cities causing an overabundance of labor in the urban centers (Henderson 1977:

16-17).

Though they were told to return and work for their former owners or other planters, African Americans attempted to assert their new freedom. For African Americans it was a chance to test the new social boundaries and attempt to better their lives for themselves and their families. While trying to test their freedom and rights, African Americans faced pressure from the plantation owners who were again attempting to control their labor (Eppes: 13 Sept. 1865).

In this report, I explore the living conditions of African Americans on the Eppes' plantations. I will look at African Americans who served as both slaves before the war and wage workers after it. I feel exploring Dr. Eppes' beliefs on slavery, free "negroes," and how he managed his plantations before and after the war will be very important. By exploring his beliefs and systems, we can come to a fuller understanding of the oppressive systems faced by African Americans. By understanding these oppressive systems, we can explore how African Americans resisted them.

Examining the structured landscape of Eppes' plantations will also be important. The landscape and Eppes' use of it aided him in controlling resources upon his plantations. Not only did the landscape aid Eppes in controlling his enslaved labor, but the natural resources as well. Because the landscape is important to understanding how Eppes controlled his productive resources, including African-American labor, we should examine it.

Methods

The data for this study came from the Eppes' papers in the collection of the Virginia Historical Society. Within the collection of photographs, letters, maps and other business

records, are Dr. Eppes' journals. Dr. Eppes kept daily journals from 1851 till his death in 1896, except the period from 1862 to 1865 during the Civil War. Eppes stated the purpose of his journals were to,

> . . . taking note, besides my daily transactions, of every important event occurring on my estate. There will be from time introduced my opinions on different agricultural subjects. As I am engaged probably more extensively than any man in the State in improving my land, should I meet with success, it may be interesting to those who come after me, to see by what means I succeeded and in what way I erred profiting by my success & guarding against my errors (Eppes: 3 Sept. 1852).

Using this rich resource concerning the social lives at Appomattox, I intend to examine African-American life on the plantations. I also intend to explore how Eppes structured his landscape to meet his needs in controlling labor and resources.

I examined journals from 1851 to 1872, minus the years 1862-65 when a break occurs in the journals. This period was chosen due to the dramatic social changes that occurred due to the Civil War. From this period we can examine the antebellum social structure and how it changed after the war to the struggle of reestablishing control and order. For this study, I took notes on entries concerning Eppes' relationships with African Americans and the landscape they lived and interacted on. By exploring journal entries concerning his properties' landscape structure, we can see how Eppes used the landscape to help exploit his labor and support his social position. Eppes made several notes on his beliefs on slavery and the conditions and behavior of his slaves. He also discussed his attempts, after the Civil War, to reestablish production on the plantations by establishing control over the labor provided by freedmen. By exploring these journals, we can better understand the structure and function of the landscape on Eppes' plantations and the various characters who were interacting within it.

I also took notes concerning the living conditions of African Americans during and after slavery. Dr. Eppes kept detailed accounts of provisions, such as food, clothing, and equipment, given to his laborers. He also noted the types of tasks laborers were working on along with the gender and age of those laborers. Though no detailed descriptions were left, we can extract housing conditions from the few notes concerning slave housing. We can also examine the medical conditions of Eppes' slaves. Whether it was his medical training or concern for his property, Eppes noted many of their ailments and treatments. By exploring these references we can come to at least a partial understanding of the living conditions.

Eppes failed to leave detailed descriptions of the interior layout of the slave quarters. Also, he provided no descriptions of the interior or exterior furnishings. He left no clues to the quartering arrangements. Eppes also omitted the material possessions of the slaves in the journals. I could not address many of these conditions with the resources available. These details perhaps could be addressed in other sources including slave narratives. Only one slave narrative was found during this research, however, information of this type was not included in this report.

Other sources were also used for data collection. Information provided by other studies of the City Point Unit by the National Park Service was useful in supplying details of structures and various activity areas within the cultural landscape. Photographs and maps from various institutions were also helpful in supplying images of the landscape around the Eppes' plantations, and provided visual clues to both structure and function. Other resources in Eppes' papers provided some additional information on the development of Eppes' property including deeds and letters.

I took most of the data for this report from Dr. Eppes' journals. Though our observations of African Americans came from Dr. Eppes and will undoubtably contain his biases, his views allow us to explore his ideal role for African Americans, and how they interacted within the plantation system. Through their punishments and Eppes' problems with them, we can explore how African Americans resisted oppressive control and tried to maintain their cultural identity.

History of Dr. Richard Eppes

Most of the land that comprised Dr. Eppes' plantations had been in the Eppes family since 1635 (Blades 1988: 6). Dr. Richard Eppes inherited most of his property, including the Eppes Island, Bermuda Hundreds, Appomattox plantations, and property within the village of City Point, from his mother at her death in 1844 (Blades 1981: 31). Richard Eppes, however, did not immediately take over the daily operation of the plantations, but instead continued his medical schooling at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Eppes did attempt to live and manage the plantations for a short period in 1847, but returned to Philadelphia (Eppes: 17 July 1852).

In Philadelphia, Richard Eppes completed his medical schooling and began to date the daughter of his medical professor Dr. William Horner. Dr. Richard Eppes and Josephine Horner were married in 1850, and began a long honeymoon traveling throughout Europe (Blades 1981: 31; Eppes: 12 March 1852). Upon their return in 1851, the Eppes moved into Appomattox Manor, and Richard, abandoning his medical practice, assumed the daily management of his plantations. Though he inherited a plantation with a system of operation already well developed, he began to manage the property in a way that he felt best. Eppes made changes in management

systems, agricultural practices, and landscape structure. By making these changes, he created his ideal system of plantation management. John Vlach observed,

> To mark their dominance over both nature and other men, planters acquired acreage, set out the boundaries of their holdings, had their fields cleared, selected building sites, and supervised the construction of dwellings and other structures. The design of a plantation estate was an expression of the owner's tastes, values, and attitudes (Vlach 1993: 1).

Keeping this in mind when reading this report and Dr. Eppes' journals is important, as these trends become apparent in them.

Cultural Landscape

By 1856 Dr. Richard Eppes owned a total of 2231 3/8 acres spread over four plantations in Prince George, Charles City and Chesterfield counties, and within the village of City Point (Eppes: 12 Aug. 1856). The plantations that made up Eppes' holdings included the Eppes Island, Bermuda Hundreds, Hopewell, and Appomattox. Though Eppes maintained money in other investments, his largest assets were in land. After establishing what he felt was the proper system of farm management and physical improvements on his Island and Bermuda plantations in 1852, he began to look toward expanding his holdings to the south and west of Appomattox Manor.

In his journals, the only reason Eppes suggested for the expansion dealt with the slave system. As his slave population on the plantations increased, Eppes became concerned with an excess of labor. It was a rule of his not to sell slaves and break up families, so he had to find other outlets for his labor. He remarked,

> My object in buying is to have surface for my surplus hands as I shall be overstocked in 8 or 10 years unless I extend which I must either do or sell, being loathe to do the latter I am compelled to do the former. This one of the evils attendant on slavery & there is no choice left ergo large farms a natural consequence where slavery exists (Eppes: 15 Jan. 1852).

Eppes needed to keep his slaves busy at work, hence keeping control over them. In order to do this, Eppes expanded his land holdings to increase the work load, meeting the growing labor population.

Eppes, however, also had a sense of place and historic connection to the land he was purchasing. Prior to Eppes' great-grandfather, Richard Eppes, the majority of the land at City Point belonged to the Eppes family (Blades 1981: 22). Throughout the journals he displayed a knowledge of old family dwellings and landscapes, and also examined old family land deeds to establish his property lines and trace his family history (Eppes: 14 Nov. 1851; 31 Nov. 1851; 14 Jan. 1858; 19 Feb. 1858). Perhaps it was this connection to his family's past that guided his purchasing decisions, as it appears most of the land he purchased once belonged to his family. It is important to note that this could have been a contributing factor in his purchasing decisions though it is not mentioned in the journals.

Controlling access to his resources may have also guided Eppes' purchasing patterns. By 1856, Eppes owned the largest portion of what would become his Hopewell plantation. This property, however, was not connected to the land he already possessed. In order to connect his property, Eppes participated in a land swap with his neighbor Mr. Proctor. He recorded,

> Dr. Harrison informed me that he had conversed with C Proctor and that he had agreed to make exchange of land acre for acre I paying $25 per acre for the surplus over in the 70 1/4 acres. To which I agreed though the price is very high, still from its locality dividing

> as it does my estate I feel authorized in making the purchase to consolidate my estate giving me 790 ½ acres in a body with a probability of increasing it to 913 shortly which will complete my purchase of real estate in Va (Eppes: 10 Dec. 1857).

Eppes was very concerned over having his land connected and not spread between other property owners. When opportunities to purchase ground appeared, Eppes would not only consider the price and quality of the ground, but also whether it was adjacent to his current property (Eppes: 27 Jan. 1858).

The exact reason for this pattern of purchasing land was not stated by Eppes in his journals, however, two trends could be seen in the journals which may lead to the explanation of this pattern. The first deals with maintaining Appomattox Manor as the center of all plantation operations. The other deals with maintaining control over the productive resources which allowed Eppes to maintain his position in society, and aided in maintaining social controls over his workers. Throughout Eppes' journals these trends appear continuously, and deserve to be examined closely.

Center of Plantation Operations

In his chapter in *The Recovery of Meaning*, "Toward a Theory of Power for Historical Archaeology: Plantations and Space," Charles Orser discusses how the spatial organization of plantations reflected the power structure among its inhabitants. He describes what Merle Prunty called the "Ante-Bellum Plantation Occupance Form"(Orser 1988: 323). Within this system the settlement pattern resembled clusters throughout the plantations. The planter's home, located in the center, would be surrounded by service buildings with clusters of smaller settlements, usually

the overseers' homes surrounded by slave quarters and other support buildings, located throughout the farm (Orser 1988: 323). This type of settlement system would place the workers near their workplaces (Orser and Nekola 1985: 70).

The Eppes' plantation appears to fit the "Ante-Bellum Plantation Occupance Form." When looking at potential properties to purchase, Eppes attempted to keep his home at Appomattox located in the center. Eppes remarked when examining the Skully and Thompson farm,

> Should I get it, my estates will then form a square N, E, W & S from my residence in short distances of each other (Eppes: 15 Jan. 1853).

By the beginning of the Civil War, at the end of Eppes' land purchases, Appomattox Manor was located near the center of his holdings (See Figure 2).

From this location Eppes could control the management system of the plantations. From the center Eppes could easily maneuver between his holdings during his daily rounds, send out orders to overseers, maneuver farm implements, and sift his enslaved labor force between plantations (Eppes: 27 Oct. 1851; 2-3 Nov. 1851; 15 Jan. 1853; 24&30 April 1858; 3 Jan. 1859; 22 March 1859; 2 Jan. 1860; 12 Jan. 1860). Several other plantation operations were also centered at Appomattox Manor. Not only did the house serve as the plantation owner's home, but also as the plantation office, provisions warehouse, and an observation platform. Eppes stored food provisions in his basement and other service buildings, and would ship them out to the surrounding plantations (Eppes: 16 Aug. 1852; 16 Jan. 1858). Eppes also maintained an office on the ground of Appomattox Manor, and ran most of the plantation's business and stored records in the office or his home (Eppes: 25 Nov. 1851; 17 April 1856; 13 Dec. 1858; 25 May

1859). In order to help maintain control over his resources and to keep an eye over his property, Eppes used his position from his home as an observation platform. From this position he could

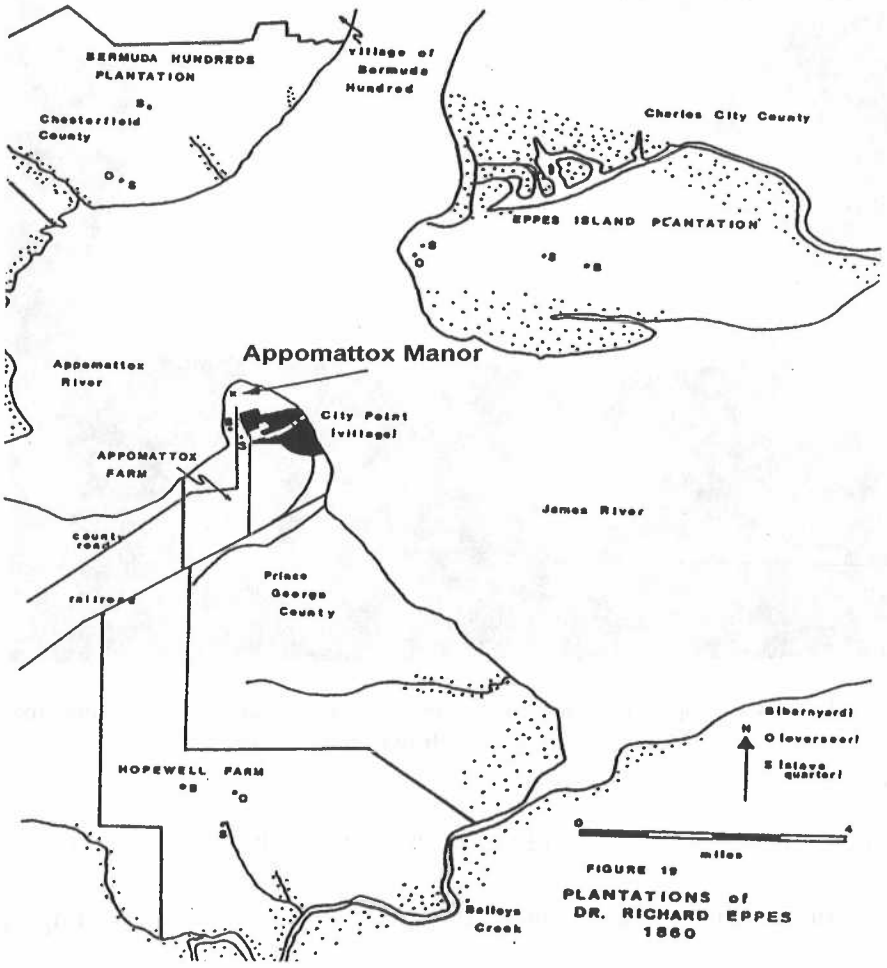

Figure 2. Map of Eppes' plantations (Blades 1981: 30).

observe traffic upon the rivers and partially observe his plantations (Eppes: 17 July 1852; 8 Jan. 1860) (See Figure 3). At times Eppes had to structure the landscape to help make these observations,

> The trees a long the river edge of both 1 & 2 to be cut down in order that the plantation can be seen from the river (Eppes: 17 July 1852).

These observation techniques helped reflect Eppes' influence over the area, and possibly aided in keeping Dr. Eppes informed on what was occurring around him.

Figure 3. View of Appomattox and James Rivers from the bluff behind Appomattox Manor (Photo by Gail Brown, June 1998).

As in Prunty's model, the remaining inhabitants of the plantation lived close to their work. Each plantation had an overseer living and managing the everyday farming operations and slaves. Each plantation also had its complement of field slaves. These slaves lived in quarters near the fields or in the other service buildings in which they worked as can be seen on the maps of Hopewell, Eppes Island, and Bermuda plantations (Figures 2, 4, 5, 6). Slaves who were trained craftsmen were often moved around the plantations, depending on where the work was located (Eppes: 11 March 1853; 23 Jan. 1858; 5 May 1858; 20 Aug. 1859). Slaves were also likely to be moved during the harvest seasons and in the winter to other plantations where Eppes

needed extra labor, in hopes to finish the harvest quicker, and to bring areas into production for the next season (Eppes: 16 June 1853; 21 Dec. 1853; 4 Jan. 1858; 14 June 1858; 2 Jan. 1860).

Slaves on the Appomattox Plantation served either as field hands or house servants on the grounds of Appomattox Manor. Eppes kept several house servants, gardeners, cooks, and others to aid in maintaining his home, gardens and his family (Eppes: 1 Jan. 1857; 1 April 1858; 24 Aug. 1859). These individuals also lived close to their work as many lived above the kitchen, and several others in quarters around the grounds of Appomattox Manor (Figure 7). The journals do not specify where the field hands at Appomattox were quartered, but in 1858 Eppes does construct slave quarters (gate house) across from the P.E. Church (Eppes: 28 Nov. 1858). Before the construction of this building, field slaves probably lived in the existing buildings with the house servants.

Charles Orser also discusses Prunty's "Post Bellum 'Fragmented' Occupance Form," which describes settlement patterns after the war as each tenant living near their fields (Orser 1988: 324). African-American freedmen on the Eppes plantation were in the beginning stages of the transformation from the Ante-Bellum form to the Post-Bellum form. The returning freedmen to the Eppes plantation found many new buildings in the City Point area. Eppes bought many of these new military buildings, moved them to various parts of his plantations and began to transform them into housing for his workers (Eppes: 14 July 1867; 14 May 1869; 3 Oct. 1871). He also rented many of these buildings to both freedmen and whites within City Point (Eppes: 27 Feb. 1866; 1 Sept. 1867; 19 Nov. 1867; 19 Dec. 1869; 7 Jan. 1872). Other freedmen were given permission to farm various tracts of land in return for their help in guarding Eppes' property lines (Eppes: 22 Sept. 1867; 29 Aug. 1868). These individuals tended to live near the land they were

farming (Eppes: 12 April 1866; 24 April 1867; 27 Oct. 1967; 8 March 1868; 16 May 1868).

What is noticeable in the journals is the lack of Appomattox Manor serving as center after the war. Eppes attempted to reestablish his plantations and use Appomattox Manor as his central office, but when efforts to start up the various plantations failed and Eppes began to rent them out, he had to move his office. With the financial cutbacks and the fear of losing control over his Island plantation, Eppes moved his office to the Island's overseer's house (Eppes: 20 Dec. 1869). Eppes lived on the Island for periods of time while attempting to manage the plantation. Though Appomattox Manor remained the center for his wealth and family, Eppes, like his laborers, had to move closer to his work.

Control of Productive Resources

Dr. Eppes was very concerned over the boundaries of his property. On multiple occasions after purchasing new property or improving old, he would have his property surveyed and the boundaries well marked (Eppes: 22-23 Jan. 1858; 10 Feb. 1858; 11 Feb. 1859). Afterwards, he would personally show or have the surveyor show his slaves the locations of the property lines so they would know where not to cross while working (Eppes: 25 Jan. 1858; 10 Feb. 1859). Eppes was very adamant about keeping his property boundaries well marked even to the point of whipping slaves who had cut into one of the stumps marking the boundary. He noted,

> Found on my arrival that the corner pine stump had been cut into upon inquiry was informed by Cha's Davis that it was done by Solomon & Ned Oldham also confessed he had cut it also gave both of them a slight whipping as a caution how they cut or touch line trees (Eppes: 28 Feb. 1859).

In the journals it appears that Eppes was not the only plantation owner in the area concerned about his property lines. Eppes had several altercations with neighbors over structures, livestock, and persons crossing the property lines that separated them (Eppes: 22 Jan. 1853; 21-22 Jan. 1858; 22 Jan. 1859; 11 July 1859). This type of behavior by plantation owners in the City Point area perhaps arose from their need to protect the resources that allowed them to maintain their social position.

Throughout his journals, Eppes constantly complained about persons trespassing on his property and taking property that belonged to him. Several times Eppes caught or heard of violators who were hunting, chopping wood, or building on his property (Eppes: 14 Jan. 1852; 18 April 1852). He recorded one such incident,

> Heard that some one had been cutting hoop poles off the land told him to let it be known that I would prosecute whoever was caught at it (Eppes: 27 Dec. 1852).

However, on many other occasions Eppes did allow persons to hunt and collect wood off his property. Nevertheless, these individuals usually obtained his permission before doing so (Eppes: 7 May 1858; 24 Feb. 1859). By protecting his resources and allowing restricted access to them, Eppes was establishing control over his productive resources. By ensuring this control over the resources available to him, he was ensuring his position in Virginia society. If he allowed everyone free access to use what they pleased, he would have no way of ensuring adequate resources for his own use. Eppes was so conscious of his property and having individuals on it he even turned down a request for a school on his property. He noted,

> Had an application from Mr Zimmer for my office to teach school in, declined letting him have it, not wishing to have school boys in my grounds (Eppes: 13 Dec. 1858).

Eppes always worried about theft of his property, and took several measures to protect it. During his daily rounds, Eppes not only gave orders and oversaw the plantation operations, but also rode over his farms making sure everything was in order and in its place. Eppes' philosophy on plantation management focused on order and system. In *Plantation and Farm*, written "By A Southern Planter," which Eppes kept of copy of in his journals, it states,

> No business of any kind can be successfully conducted without the aid of system and rule, and these are the more essentially necessary, in the varied and complicated operations of really good plantation and farm management. For what is management, but the carrying into practice of a well arranged system of order and rule, founded upon reason and experience. Order, then, in all things must be the aim of every man who expects to make himself a manager; and he must adopt and act upon the maxims, that there must be- A time for everything, and everything done in its time. A place for everything, and everything kept in its place. A rule for everything, and everything done according to rule (Anon 1852: 2).

"A place for everything, and everything kept in its place," was a rule Eppes followed very closely. By keeping watch over his property and making sure it was kept in its place, he could keep tighter control over it and possibly prevent its loss. One occasion during his daily rounds Eppes remarked,

> Found that the negroes were in the habit of scattering their hoes bout the plantation intend to take an inventory (Eppes: 11 March 1853).

To be sure everything was in its place, Eppes not only relied upon his daily rounds to observe his property, but also relied upon inventories (Eppes: 23-24 Dec. 1853). Eppes conducted inventories every year on each plantation to track his property and check for losses (Eppes: 1 Jan. 1858). These inventories allowed him to move resources if they were needed on other plantations, and to see where his losses were occurring.

It appears, Eppes relied on his overseers not only to supervise the slaves and enforce their labor,

> Being quite dissatisfied with his management (Mr. Conway), not strict enough with the negroes little or no work done & that imperfectly. Don't think that the negroes respect him, wants system (Eppes: 26 April 1852),

but also to protect the plantation owner's property (Eppes: 1 March 1856; 8 May 1856). Eppes told Mr. Conway,

> Told him to look out as I believe that my corn was being stolen neat Hundreds (Eppes: 3 Nov. 1852).

The overseers were to be sure everything was in its place and locked for the night (Eppes: 26 Nov. 1852). Eppes constantly reminded his overseers and slaves to lock items and buildings up for the night (Eppes: 21 Nov. 1851; 22 Oct. 1853). He, however, found on occasion that his overseers were not protecting his property. He was greatly upset twice with Mr. Crawford, his overseer at Bermuda, when he failed to obtain Eppes' permission before giving away his property. He recorded these occasions,

> On my arrival much to my annoyance and vexation I found that Crawford without waiting my answer had permitted Ray to have the Clover seed I told him candidly that such a thing must never take place on the farm again, that I gave him no right to lend or allow anything to leave the farm without my permission, if it is done again we shall be compelled to separate that is a thing decided (Eppes: 1 March 1856).

> Met Mr Bishop in my woods cutting down cedar post without my permission but according to his statement he had gotten permission from Mr Crawford, expressed my sentiments very freely to him about Mr Crawford's rights to give things away without my consent (Eppes: 8 May 1856).

Throughout the journals the overseers reported incidents of theft to Eppes, who they

believed the guilty party to be, and where they were from. Eppes noted,

> Crossed to Island informed by Marks that roasting ears had been stolen, supposed Bland or Eliza the thief (Eppes: 2 Aug. 1856).
>
> Informed by Crawford that he found some corn stolen & gave proof sufficiently strong to make me believe Davy guilty, had him well whipped (emphasis Eppes) a rare occurrence on either farm (Eppes: 24 Nov. 1855).
>
> Mr. Conway reported today that Mr Moddy's cow minder a boy about 8 years old has broken in Hopewell house and stolen Stewart's meat, Archer's molasses and a bag (Eppes: 20 Jan. 1860).

Eppes would usually continue to investigate the theft, draw his own conclusions, and if possible punish those responsible (Eppes: 25 Oct. 1852). He noted several occasions like the following,

> . . . ordered all the negro men to be called up, measured the tracks in the house (fish house), and found upon comparing them with the shoes of William Lewis, Davy & Jim that they corresponded. Gave each a severe whipping but could not get them to confess William & Jim confessed that they had stolen shad out on a former occasion but not last Saturday night, both much frightened. Davy took his whipping without confessing anything, found him very obstinate & not minding the lash (Eppes: 8 Jan. 1852).

Other investigations lead to the belief that the thieves were sailors from ships in the rivers (Eppes: 21 Sept. 1859).

Eppes was very conscious of the traffic on the James and Appomattox rivers. Before the Civil War, it appears that many trespassers were coming from the rivers. Occasionally sailors took grain or livestock off his property, and often they were caught fishing or hunting from his shore line (Eppes: 18 April 1852; 21 Sept. 1859). From his position on the bluff behind Appomattox Manor, he could see most of the activity on the water. Once his suspicions focused on a ship, the Tippecanoe, who's presence in the waters around his home made him anxious.

Eppes was worried the ship would carry away more than what it was suppose to from City Point, possibly his slaves (Eppes: 30 Aug. 1852). When he found the ship anchored off his shore line at Appomattox, Eppes informed the ship's captain he could not anchor close to his shore as it was against his rules to allow a ship to do so (Eppes: 2 Sept. 1852). Just before the Civil War, Eppes and others from City Point informed their representative in the Virginia Legislature that they were concerned over black sailors on the river. Eppes noted their petition in his journal,

> Whereas ships with crews consisting in part or wholly of free negroes, frequently arrive and remain for weeks at City Point and in the waters of James river therefore, Resolved; That as a community, particularly concerned we do most urgently call on the Legislature to protect us from the evils arising from free negro sailors thus turned loose in our midst with every opportunity to corrupt and mislead our slaves, to persuade and aid them to escape from servitude, and even to incite them to acts of insubordination and rebellion (Eppes: 11 Feb. 1860).

Eppes and his neighbors used the landscape to aid them in keeping their slaves from breaking the rules of the plantations and disrupting production. On the Eppes plantations slaves were restricted in their movement on and off the plantation. Slaves were assigned to a certain farm and were not allowed to visit the other farms unless they had a pass from Eppes. Often Eppes had to give slaves passes to visit their families on the other farms, or throughout Virginia (Eppes: 27 Oct. 1856; 6 Nov. 1856; 6 April 1858; 4 Dec. 1858; 11 June 1869). With his four plantations divided by two large rivers controlling the movement of his slaves between them was easier for Eppes.

Eppes also relied upon his neighbors to help control slaves and other individuals crossing across the country side over property boundaries. Eppes noted,

> . . . call on Mr L Ray & state to him the case of one of his boys

> Tom King having stolen my boat & that if he would not have him whipped I should apply to a Magistrate Mr Straughn for a warrant (Eppes: 12 Nov. 1851).

> Mr. Conway reported today that Mr moody's cow minder a boy about 8 years old has broken in Hopewell house. . . he had reported him to Mr Moody, must see that he is properly corrected (Eppes: 20 Jan. 1860).

By keeping a strong watch over their property boundaries for violations by their neighbors, plantation owners were also keeping note who else was crossing their property. Eppes recorded his attempts at controlling access to his land,

> Mr Birchett asked permission to erect a pair of steps over my fence opposite his lane for himself and negroes to pass down to City Point. Told him that I would consent provided the steps were so put up that the planks of fence were not knocked off or injured and that the negroes kept the straight path to railroad and not visiting my quarters of trespassing in any way on me, but that I would grant permission only so long as the land was not in cultivation, but as soon as we cleared and commenced cultivating land it would not allow anyone to pass over my fields as a constancy . . . (Eppes: 24 Feb. 1859).

This also worked in reverse for Eppes' neighbors. When Eppes was having problems with wild hogs on his Hopewell farm, he allowed some of his slaves to take guns and hunt the hogs at night (Eppes: 4 Sept. 1859; 3-4 June 1859). However, this act concerned some of Eppes' neighbors. He recorded some of their reactions,

> Was informed by Charles Davis that Birchett and another white man accompanied by six negroes were on my Hopewell estate last night at one of my quarters having heard the report of my old musket fired by Charles at a hog (wild) in my corn field. I have given orders to Chrles to leave the gun permanently at Hopewell Mr Moody's and not use it any more having determined to attempt these pests . . . with Strycnine (sic) (Eppes: 4 Sept. 1859).

> stating that he (Birchett) had fox hounds shot on the Hopewell

> estate, also lost 25 hogs stolen and that his wife had been frightened by the noise of guns fired on the Hopewell estate at night (Eppes: 13 Oct. 1859).

After Birchett's complaint, Eppes refused to allow the slaves weapons on the Hopewell farm, and replied to Birchett,

> No gun is kept at Hopewell and I have given positive orders that no negro of mine shall use one, if you hear a gun fired at Hopewell at night you are at perfect liberty to go over, take up the negro and carry him before a magistrate and have him punished according to law I am sure I shall be very much obliged to you for putting a stop to any kind of rascality that may be carried on the farm, moreover should you have sufficient proofs to convict one of my negroes of stealing I ask you to take him before a magistrate convict and punish him as he deserves (Eppes: 13 Oct. 1859).

Eppes' neighbors probably feared disorder on his property could spread and bring disorder to their own plantations, causing their systems of control to fail.

This system of property protection and social control did not survive after the Civil War. When Eppes returned in 1865, it appeared that many of his neighbors did not. If his neighbors did return, they were not developing their plantations as quickly as Eppes. Eppes was quick to reestablish production on most of his plantations within the first year of returning. It appears he was able to accomplish this through financial support of his Northern in-laws (Eppes: 1 Sept. 1865). Though he was able to start production quickly and bring some sense of control, it appears he faced greater losses through theft than he did before the war. Thieves were taking large quantities of livestock and grain from his property and barns (Eppes: 28 July 1869; 27-28 Nov. 1869). He was also finding individuals constantly trespassing to collect wood, and digging up potatoes among other crops (Eppes: 13 Aug. 1869; 20 Jan. 1870). Once, Eppes even had one of his small cabin houses stolen from his pasture lot (Eppes: 30 Nov. 1867).

Without the aid of his neighbors and trusted overseers, the system of protection and social control did not work. Eppes attempted to hire managers and place tenets in positions that would help guard his property. However, it appears that without the same amount of effort by his neighbors the system failed (Eppes: 22 Sept. 1867; 10 Aug. 1868; 4 Sept. 1869). Thieves and trespassers could easily cross the property boundary without fear of being caught by Eppes' neighbors, steal what they wanted and cross again without being noticed.

By strictly marking and watching property boundaries plantation owners could guard and control their material resources and their labor. By maintaining these controls, plantation owners could guarantee their access to these resources and therefore protect their positions within society. After the Civil War when these controls were lost due to the emancipation of the slaves and the displacement of property owners, it became easier for individuals to cross these boundaries unobserved. Eppes attempted to reestablish his control over his resources and labor, and found that without his neighbors' aid it was tough.

African Americans on the Eppes' Plantations

The data provided in Eppes' journals contains information on health, living conditions, work/occupations, and social constraints of African Americans. This information helps us understand how this large population lived in the landscape of Dr. Eppes' plantations. Through Dr. Eppes' eyes we can observe how he believed African Americans fit into the landscape he controlled, and how they possibly resisted those social controls. By exploring the African-American experience, we can allow African Americans to be seen and understand the social

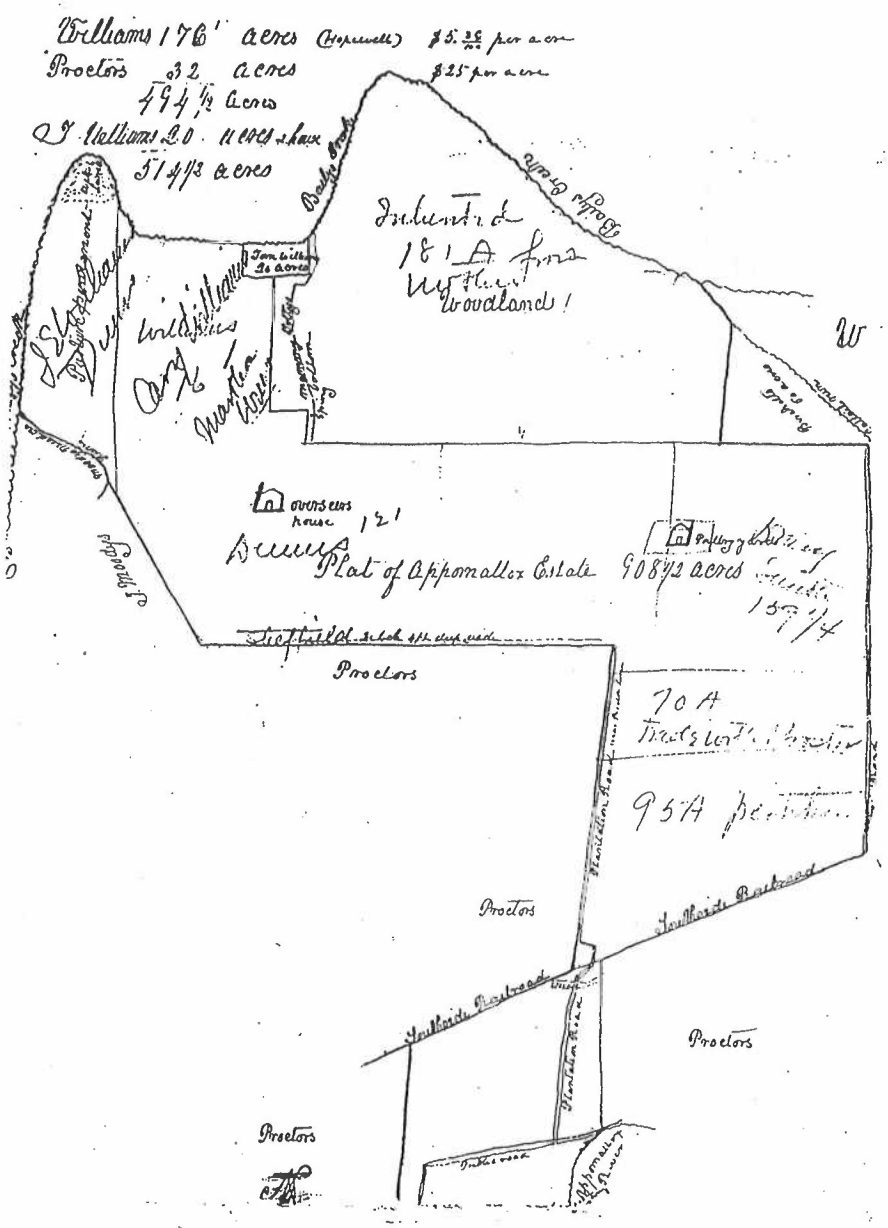

Figure 4. Sketch of Hopewell Plantation
(Eppes: 31 Dec. 1857).
Virginia Historical Society

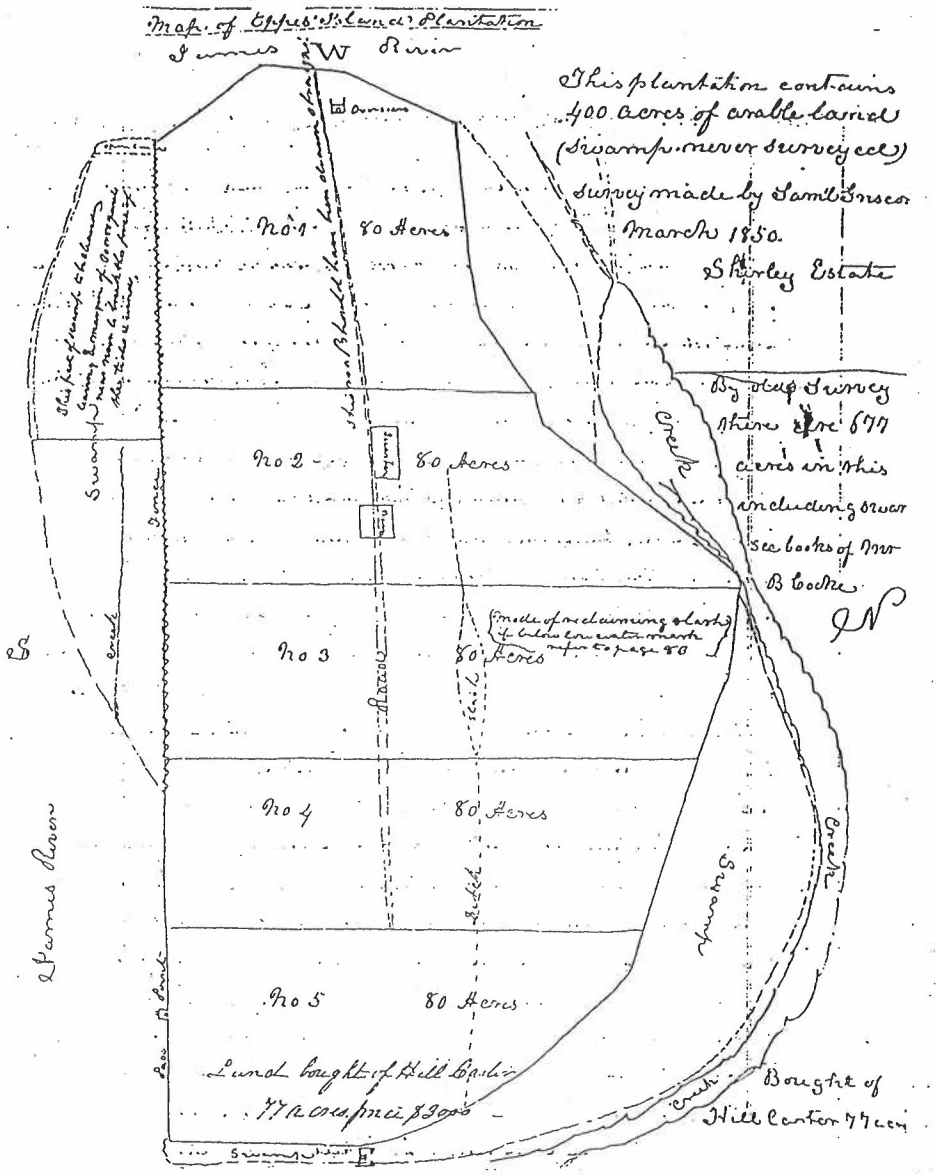

Figure 5. Sketch of Eppes Island Plantation
(Eppes: 17 July 1852).
Virginia Historical Society

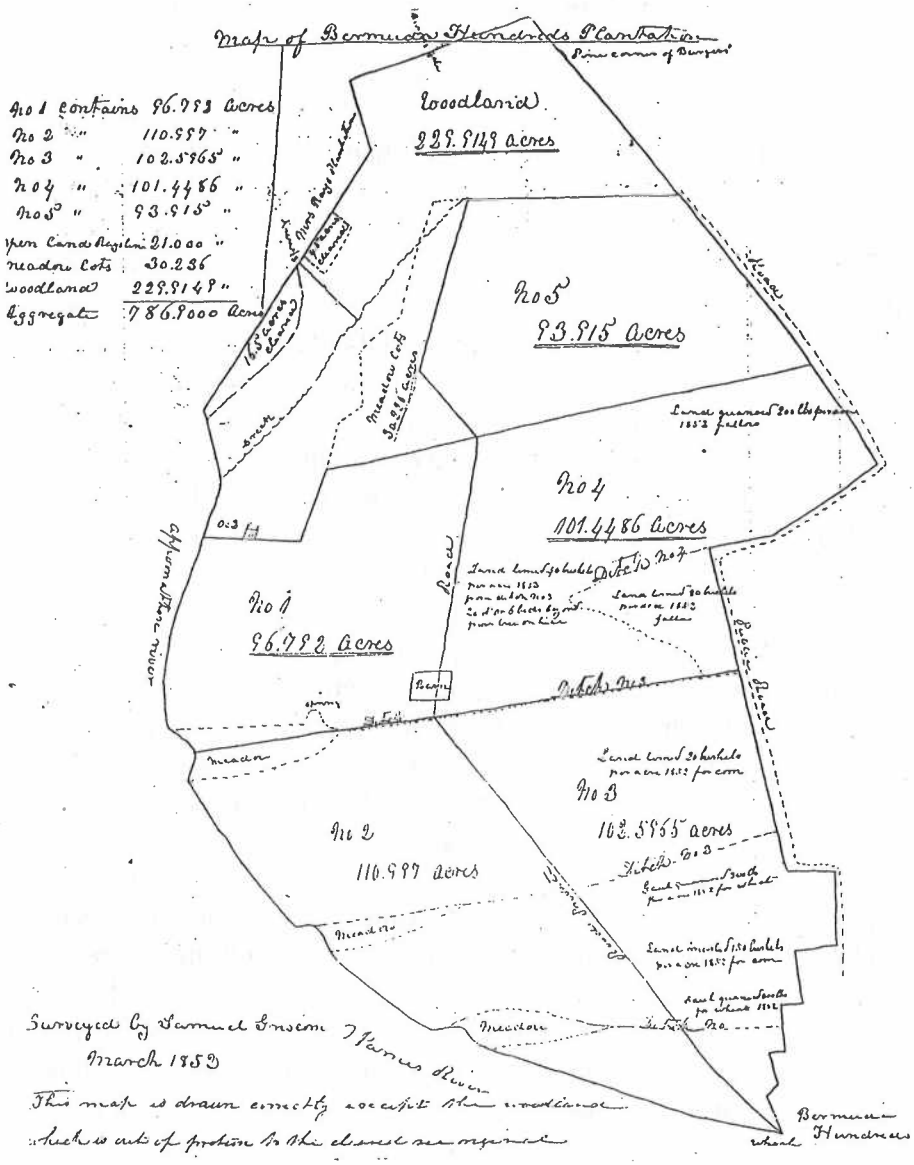

Figure 6. Sketch of Bermuda Hundreds Plantation
(Eppes: 17 July 1852).
Virginia Historical Society

interaction between them and those who sought to oppress them.

African-American Management on the Plantation

To begin to understanding the African-American condition on the Eppes' plantation we must first understand how Eppes himself viewed them and his ideal treatment of them. Eppes summarized his beliefs on slavery, the proper form of managing slaves, and how they should be treated,

> It being too late yesterday after we finished giving out provisions to have a talk with the negroes I appointed today and met them according to appointment at 11 O.C. This annual talk which I shall always hold on the first of day Jan:, when I regulate the provisions of the year striking off those who die & adding those who are born, provided I am at home, giving half the day to the Island & half to the Hundreds, plays a very important part in my system of management of my negroes; on this day after the provisions are regulated & after having carefully read the monthly reports of my overseers & written out my notes, previously all those who have committed any crimes such as roguery, fighting laziness &c are made to stand apart from the rest and receive a lecture &exhortation to improve another year; it would be worse than the abolition of capital punishment, it is the substitute by the laws of the State Penitentiary, as the negro slave must receive the lash or be hung, it not being permitted to send him to prison except at the masters expense unless guilty of the greatest crimes. When hung the master is allowed by the State the value of the negro but nothing for the time intervening between the perpetration of the crime & the hanging. When a crime occurs on a plantation or a negro is universally careless & indolent, he cannot be paid his wages and dismissed as the white at the North or in Europe, but the question arises immediately in the mind of the master, shall he be sold or whipped? The only two resources he has, for let it once be known on the plantation that the master will not whip, there is an end to all management, all the talking, giving good advice will effect nothing. A master who punishes not crimes is not only annoyed continually himself, but a perfect curse to the whole neighborhood, (John Archer Bermuda Hundreds) and pretty generally looses (sic) his estate or dies insolvent

> My father. In this annual talk, in addition to those who commit crimes which are punished at the time when perpetrated, all those coming under the head of immorality are set a part & lectured one by one, the attention of the others being drawn to them the difference between husband & wife are also commented upon. Also any meritorious act is noticed & rewarded. The humane master dislikes to part husband and wife, mother & child &c and will prefer to whip rather than sell. The punishment of petty crimes as indolence &c should be delegated to the overseer with a caution not to give more than 20 lashes, but when roguery or any thing which tends to impair the whole tone of the plantation occurs & the punishment is to be severe as it should always be in such cases then the master should be present & be the judge of the number to be given which requires no little judgement on his part. In 1847 when I managed my estate I was guided by the Mosaic law I feel now by experience if there is any thing human in the Bible that must be, some men will receive 39 without appearing to mind it, others on the contrary are decidedly injured. In administering the lash you should be guided by the effect produced and in order to do so the master should never whip himself but stand by cool calm & collected, looking upon the operation as a duty to be performed though a disagreeable one: It is better always to whip slowly & deliberately, thereby you can judge the effect. The number of lashes I have administered run from 5 or 10 to 150 which last has always succeeded in my hands to produce the desired, though I would not hesitate to give more if I thought it necessary. By kindness & firmness on the part of both master & overseer punishment may be abolished in a great measure on an estate, system will also tend much to effect this then every man knows his duty. Viewing man in one relation as a dog or horse I have found it best to break him when young & advise him when at mature age "spare the rod you spoil the child" is my experience as well as Solomon's (Eppes: 2 Jan. 1853).

Eppes believed in managing his plantations, including his slaves, by a system. Eppes laid out his system in what he calls the Plantation Code of Laws (See appendix 1). Within the code of laws, which was read to the slaves on each plantation at the first of each year, Eppes described how he expected them to act within the system (Eppes: 1 Jan. 1858). In his codes he explained the ideal proper behavior and the corresponding punishment if that behavior was not achieved.

In order for the system to work the master had to remain in control. Without the system there would be chaos and slaves would be allowed to do as they please causing the system of slavery to fail. Eppes pointed out that if a crime or improper behavior was observed, which could destroy the system, applying punishment was important. If they allowed the improper behavior or crime to go unpunished, the system begun to deteriorate as those under its rule began to break free. In order for Eppes to maintain his position in society, he relied upon the enslaved labor to produce the resources which supplied income. Therefore he required them to work within the system he established.

Eppes punished those who broke the code of laws in various ways, but whipping was the most common form of punishment,

> Had quite a hunt after George cow minder of herd & found him at last, having hide from me. Although a boy of not more than 8 years I have been compelled to whip him repeatedly for keeping the cows on the lower field #5 contrary to my express orders, yesterday I hope will be the last time having given a most severe thrashing with Mr. R cowhide, I believe though doing him less hurt than myself as I now suffer from the effect of the violent exertions I had to make. Light whippings seem to have no effect on him (Eppes: 4 Nov. 1852).
>
> Whipped George for going to Mr. Gilliams Measles possibly infecting the rest of the laborers (Eppes: 23 April 1856).
>
> Informed by Crawford that he found some corn stolen & gave proof sufficiently strong to make me believe Davy guilty, had <u>him well whipped</u> (emphasis Eppes) a rare occurrence on either farm (Eppes: 24 Nov. 1855).
>
> Having missed a good deal of fruit lately & the evil being on the increase determined to check it. Being satisfied that the children were the principal aggressors, but not knowing which I strapped Tom, Dick, Jim, Paulina, Agnes, & Williams which I hope check the evil at least of the time being (Eppes: 21 July 1858).

> Ordered old Gennie to receive 5 lashes for allowing her chickens to run out contrary to my express orders told Crawford to carry out my order as mildly as possible more for effect on the others than to hurt her (Eppes: 15 July 1859).

As with old Gennie, Eppes tried to punish his slaves in front of the others to strike fear into them. Eppes remarked once,

> Henry Corsen took the oars of Davy's boat this evening and my white boat & went over to the Island without letting me know or having any pass, shall chastise him tomorrow & have ordered all the hands to be present at the kitchen to witness the punishment finding by experience that it excites a wholesome fear and enables me to get along with very little punishment which is the most disagreeable thing connected with slavery (Eppes: 1 Sept. 1859).

Though whipping was the common form of punishment, Eppes employed several other means of punishment for those rule infractions of less significance, or to those who he hoped would change without the whip. He noted,

> Explained to Mr. Johnson that there were certain negroes on the estate that I never whipped for light offenses preferring to punish them in some other way as whipping did them more harm than good (Eppes: 9 or 10 June 1858).
>
> Mrs. Eppes reported the loss of an excellent daguerreotype likeness of her intimate friend Mary Leland . . . . &suspicion rested upon Jim he having been seen with a daguerreotype some weeks since, called him up but he told a tale of having found it on the shore: as I intend to trace this matter up I locked him up for the day keeping until night without anything to eat (Eppes: 17 March 1859).
>
> Read laws of farm after giving out provisions today there having been several delinquents lately, among them Henry Corsen who left here Friday night for Island without a pass and did not get back until this morning, reduced his allowance a pound of meat & gave him warning . . . (Eppes: 24 April 1859).
>
> . . . sent over provisions which were stopped when hogs were reported

> as missing, our established rule being to stop the meat or bacon when any animal is stolen unless the offender is pointed out or we are satisfied it has been done by the crew of some passing vessel (Eppes: 8 Nov. 1859).

Punishment was not the sole means used to encourage slaves to work their best. Eppes had also installed an award system upon his plantations, which would bring cash rewards, or gifts, to those who did good work in Eppes' view (Eppes: 19 Aug. 1852; 25 Dec. 1857). He remarked,

> I have thinking also of establishing rewards for extra mint among my negroes, particularly ploughman, say ($.)50 per week for the best ploughing i.e. best & most done ($.)25 for the team kept in best order, each man's ploughing or land to be staked off say with a stick of a particular tree, gum. ash & c. To the young ploughman $1 per week as soon as they can plough a land equal to the worst old ploughman. A reward also to the best shocker say $1. ($.)50 to 2nd ($.)25 to 3rd also to the best & fastest picker up (Eppes: 19 Aug. 1852).

He believed that by enticing them with money and holiday time off, he could bring them further under his control with a hopeful decrease in physical punishments.

If constant punishment or the reward system did not work bringing the desired behavior and the threat to the system was continuous, Eppes, it appeared had no other recourse except to sell "the troublesome negro" (Eppes: 28 Nov. 1859). Selling appears to have been the ultimate punishment on his plantations. Only occasionally was this threat used like the following,

> Took Bland over with me called up Davy before the hands & told him that he had broken the laws of the plantation by stealing corn & running away, that I gave him six months to amend his ways, but if he did not I should sell him & place Bland in his place (Eppes: 4 Dec. 1855).

Only in one case is it apparent that the threat was acted upon (Eppes: 4 Dec. 1855; 11 June 1856). This extreme case involved a slave named Bins. Bins began working on the Bermuda Hundreds plantation. As he became more trouble for Eppes, he was moved to the Appomattox

plantation so Eppes could keep a closer eye on him (Eppes: 5 June 1858). However, in the end Bins never developed in the way Eppes hoped and was sold (Eppes: 28 Nov. 1859). Eppes recorded his thoughts on selling Bins,

> It is truly a painful thing to sell a really troublesome negro but must be done for the good of the others or discipline & good management will disappear from the estate. I have tried for three years to reclaim & make good negro of this boy, but found except under the temporary excitement of the whip which gave me more pain than him, that my time & pains were thrown away (Eppes: 28 Nov. 1859).

At least in his mind, Eppes possessed a sense of fairness. He had laid out the laws to his slaves, and if they chose to break them he punished them. However, it appears that Eppes would also punish them for things that were not always clear or stipulated in the laws. In George's case above, going to another farm that had an outbreak of the measles, would be one example. On another occasion he boxed his dairy maid's jaws on the Island Plantation due to a decrease in butter production,

> Visited Island Plantation & called up my dairymaid & boxed her jaws the butter having fallen short six pounds in one week, cleared out the dairy & put new lock giving her the key with positive orders that the butter & milk was to be kept in the dairy & not allowed to go in the house overseer under any circumstances that the overseer or his wife had nothing to do with the milk or butter, except that the overseer measured the milk once a week. No one & no thing to be allowed in the dairy except the dairy utensils (Eppes: 18 Jan. 1858).

The slaves were under the constant threat of being punished if they did not meet Eppes' expectations. For example,

> Threatened to correct Robert if he did not attend better to the cows (Eppes: 15 Jan. 1858).

> Gave Toby a whipping for neglecting his mules, getting to his work at 9 O.C. & numerous other misdemeanors, hope it will be of great service to him (Eppes: 28 March 1857).

The slaves would also have to fear punishment from the overseers as well (Eppes: 1 Jan. 1858; 9 Jan. 1859). Though Eppes recorded many occasions of punishment, how many unrecorded whippings were given by the overseers. Also, how many were for little or not very clear offenses? The fact remained that the slaves on the Eppes plantations were always under the threat of punishment by more than one individual.

> Complaints from Amy of Mrs Marks treatment of Susan, sent her word by Fannie not to strike her over the head but whip her if she thought she required it (Eppes: 6 March 1856).

Though Eppes and his managers punished the slaves with physical force, Eppes had limits. It appears Eppes attempted to regulate the amount of physical abuse toward his slaves. Punishment was one thing, but outright violence was another, and Eppes' slaves knew when to complain. Eppes recorded,

> Complaint from Patty of her daughter Ursilla having been whipped very severely by Mrs. Crawford, examined the child and found her much scared and bruised. These difficulties having occurred so often with the wives of the overseers that I have almost made up my mind to allow none hereafter to have small girls in family, being annually annoyed by their complaints (Eppes: 2 March 1856).
>
> Susan the cook whose daughter Amy is, presented herself before Mrs Eppes with a shirt of Amy's neck arm & half the back covered with blood (Eppes: 9 Dec. 1857).
>
> Examined Amy this morning & found a gash or cut on the back of her head at least an inch long with a knot nearly as large as a pullet egg. Concluded to keep her on this being the desire of Mrs Eppes. Crossed to Island with Mr Sanxy had a conversation with Marks in which he expressed a desire to leave my service and I though perfectly satisfied with him, thinking that it would be impossible

> ever to have any peace with the infernal temper of his wifes (sic) agreed that it would be the best for both (Eppes: 10 Dec. 1857).
>
> Complaints also from Fanny about being beaten with stick by Mrs Marks really do not know what to do with this woman who I can scarcely believe is sane (Eppes: 10 Dec. 1857).

The slaves evidently knew that their owner would not tolerate this type of abuse, and consequently had some recourse.

Eppes, it appears, believed slavery was a charitable cause. After involving himself in a conversation concerning slavery with friends, he wrote,

> Effects of slavery upon the formation of the Southern character, much better calculated to develop the finer feelings & nobler thoughts than the institutions of the North according to William's views. No opportunity offered North for displaying the feelings of pity sympathy, authority & suavity there as here, reason why North produces better business men & South professional men, a fact observed by Dr. Horner (Eppes: 9 Dec. 1855).

Eppes was a man raised in a slave society and possessed the views of many slave owners. Though in his mind he attempted to be a fair man, Eppes still participated in an oppressive system. He was raised in a period when some believed African Americans were less than human and depended upon the charity of whites. He wrote,

> We regard you all in the light of human beings possessing faculties similar to our own and capable of distinguishing between right and wrong (Eppes: 1 Jan. 1858).

Eppes took on the role of a provider for those in a lower position. He justified his position as did many southerners, and was able to create an ideology that allowed them to own another individual and exploit them. This ideology allowed them to use slave labor to support their own wealth and position in society. Though slave owners created and maintained an ideology that

allowed them to continue slavery, not all were supportive of their beliefs. In the next section we will look at the various forms of resistance African Americans used to maintain their identity and customs.

Resistance

Using the landscape, methods of observation, and the threat of various forms of punishment, Dr. Eppes attempted to keep the African Americans on his plantations under his direct control. Eppes has filled his journals with accounts of punishments given to his hands both before and after the war and his observations of their behavior. Accounts of their resistance to his control are also present. Though Eppes strived to maintain control over his workers' production and their every move, he could not accomplish total control. African-American resistance became more evident and open after the Civil War, but it also occurred during slavery. This section explores the various forms of resistance African Americans used both as slaves and as freedmen. The data has come from Eppes' journals and contain his biases. However, it is clear African Americans did not accept the complete control over their lives and attempted to create their own way of life in face of great oppression.

Slave Resistance

Slaves on Eppes' plantations faced almost constant observation from Dr. Eppes, his overseers, and other whites in the area. When caught breaking the rules, they could face both light and severe punishments ranging from public humiliation to physical beatings. Slaves, however, were not like the natural resources planters controlled, but were instead humans with

their own identity and customs. As humans they attempted to retain that identity and freedom. To accomplish this, they employed various forms of resistance that would reflect their customs and freedom.

The slaves on Eppes' plantations had to live in the system Dr. Eppes created. As discussed above, Eppes managed his plantations based on a system in which the slaves were a vital part. When slaves acted apart from that system, he quickly punished and forced them back into the system. By studying these incidents in Eppes' journals we can come to some understanding of the types of resistance his slaves put up.

The simplest form of resistance the slaves used was complaining about their condition. Eppes noted a few of their complaints in his journals,

> Jack head ploughman made complaints of not having enough meat (Eppes: 12 Oct. 1851).
>
> Complaints from negroes about their shirts being too short . . . (Eppes: 25 Feb. 1856).

Through their complaints, slaves could voice their opinions and possibly have their situation or conditions changed. After their complaint on the shirts being too short, Eppes ordered his clothier to put more material into the clothes (Eppes: 25 Feb. 1856). Eppes listed only a few complaints in his journals possibly reflecting the slaves content with their living conditions, or, more likely, their fear in complaining to their owners. Perhaps slaves complained about issues they knew Eppes would not punish them for, and used other less open forms of resistance to reflect their disagreement with their situation?

Slaves on Eppes' plantations were restricted moving from plantation to plantation by both the James and Appomattox Rivers and a pass system imposed by Dr. Eppes (Eppes: 6 Nov.

1856; 24 April 1859; 11 June 1859). They were also restricted to the plantations unless given a pass by Eppes to visit family in other parts of Virginia (Eppes: 29 Dec. 1859). These restrictions, however, did not keep the slaves in place. Eppes recorded many violations of the pass system,

> Edward Bland negro bought of Mrs. Martha Cocke ran away yesterday afternoon, being taken off from Pax Point by a black man, straw hat in a red boat. Eliza and Nancy present (Eppes: 9 May 1856).
>
> Crossed to Bermuda taking with me Archer who left the farm without permission having gotten angry with Mr Conway for which I administered to him a slight whipping (Eppes: 13 July 1858).
>
> Bins ran away caught by Nancy now under lock and key (Eppes: 24 March 1857).

In attempting to avoid punishment and possibly to see loved ones, slaves broke the rules crossing the established boundaries. These infractions usually resulted in whipping. The slaves knowingly broke the established rules in the face of punishment to go where they wanted.

Slaves also crossed boundaries when they stole personal items belonging to the planter and his family. Though there is no direct proof in the journals that slaves stole items from Eppes, he believed they did, and had to take extra precautions to prevent his loses. House servants were in daily contact with personal items in the home. They possibly stole items to reflect their own control over the planter. By taking his objects and getting away with it, slaves were exhibiting their freedom over the planter. Only a few occasions were personal items reported stolen or lost in the journals,

> Took an inventory of the furniture belonging to dining room also the silver, think 4 pieces are missing viz. 2 forks & 2 spoons (Eppes: 6 March 1852).

> Chastised Patience, Dick & Dilsy for loss of a small print brought from Rome i.e. the two last, the first for stealing rails (Eppes: 7 July 1852).
>
> Mrs. Eppes reported the loss of an excellent daguerreotype likeness of her intimate friend Mary Leland . . . &suspicion rested upon Jim he having been seen with a daguerreotype some weeks since (Eppes: 17 March 1859).

These thefts not only served as an inconvenience to Eppes, but also forced him to take extra precautions. On a later absence from his home, Eppes was forced to bundle his silver and store it at the home of Dr. Rudder (Eppes: 11 Sept. 1852).

Eppes widely recorded more thefts from other parts of the plantations in the journals. Slaves either in attempting to collect more food or to inflict loses upon the master, stole grain and livestock from the plantations. Many were caught and punished,

> ...corrected Dick for stealing sugar & telling a lie (Eppes: 7 July 1852).
>
> Jack accused by Conway of stealing corn out of mule troughs (Eppes: 7 Oct. 1852).
>
> Archy was whipped & head half shaved for stealing meal last December being mill boy at that time from Island Plantation, informed me that he sold meal to Drew A (Eppes: 30 April 1852).
>
> Crossed to Island informed by Marks that roasting ears had been stolen, supposed Bland or Eliza the thief (Eppes: 2 Aug. 1856).

Possibly the most common form of resistance slaves on the Eppes plantations used was feigning sickness. Eppes noted,

> Found Archy who played possum this morning out at his work (Eppes: 26 Aug. 1852).
>
> Found Frederick inclined to play possum, sent him out to work & gave Mr Conway orders to flog him the first time he attempted

> to play the same game (Eppes: 12 Oct. 1852).
>
> George White pretended to be sick had Jim trying to plough in his place, set George to work after 12 O.C. (Eppes: 2 Sept. 1853).
>
> Had Frederick chastised for playing possum of feigning sickness (Eppes: 24 Jan. 1854).
>
> Bins complained of being sick told him if I heard anything more of it, there being no visible symptoms I should send for Dr Harrison to pronounce on his case if sick he would be well attended to, if pretence (sic) not sick 20 lashes (Eppes: 8 July 1858).

Slaves had many other forms of resistance as well. The children, who were to mind the livestock, and those in charge of plough teams often did not take care of their herds or abused them. Eppes wrote,

> Ordered cow & hog minders to be flogged for allowing cattle & hogs to graze where ordered not to (Eppes: 23 Oct. 1852).
>
> Whipped cow & sheep minders. Much annoyed having my mules gauled, cautioned the ploughmen (Eppes: 27 Oct. 1852).
>
> Chastised Wm Henderson for beating Beauty (cow) on the head & running away (Eppes: 11 Dec. 1852).
>
> Whipped Mat & Davy for turning cattle in damp clover . . . (Eppes: 2 May 1853).
>
> Charles Lewis by sheer carelessness all owed to the (storm) drown 5 Chester pigs during the late storm ordered him 20 lashes . . . (Eppes: 18 Oct. 1856).
>
> Gave Toby a whipping for neglecting his mules, hope it will be of great service to him (Eppes: 28 March 1857).

Slaves also left their equipment laying out not returning them to where Eppes wanted them stored. They also, according to Eppes, stole nuts and bolts out of the farm implements,

> Patrick being whipped for breaking the pole of the reaper . . .

(Eppes: 8 July 1852).

> Found that the negroes were in the habit of scattering their hoes about the plantation, intend to take an inventory (Eppes: 11 March 1852).

> He first put down the small one (horsepower) but when down & examined we found nearly every bolt & pin had been taken out & used for some other purpose supposed to be done by the ploughman, having been so mad for a long time, it seems impossible to keep anything on the farms which the negroes will not destroy. Gave Mr Conway pointed orders that if he caught anyone taking a bolt top screw out of anything to take him up & administer 39 lashes. The destruction of tools by carelessness is one if the heaviest expenditure on the estate, and I am determined to check it if possible (Eppes: 22 July 1858).

Eppes also had many problems with his slaves taking his boat equipment or not taking care of it,

> . . . then went to my boat found her beating on the rocks, gave George and Dick a slight whipping (Eppes: 11 March 1852).

> Lectured Archy about taking my oar . . . (Eppes: 19 Aug. 1852).

The most severe form of resistance, at least as it appeared to Eppes, were slaves striking or running away from the overseers. Eppes recorded a few of these incidents,

> Informed that Davy had been insolent to overseer last Sunday, warned him that if I heard anymore complaints I should have him whipped (Eppes: 4 Nov. 1851).

> Quite a fracas at the Hundreds early this morning between George White & John. George came over to see me having refused to be whipped by Mr. Conway, had him whipped by John when I visited the plantation, good deal of insorbendination (sic) among the negroes on this farm (Eppes: 11 July 1853).

> Informed by Marks overseer that in attempting to whip Bland the negro had fought him but that he had subdued him & given him a good whipping having examined him & found although scared on the shoulder the whipping was ineffectual and as

> striking the overseer ought to be punished severely I administered another dose (Eppes: 18 Oct. 1856).

> Discipline having been restored on the estates I hope we shall have little of this disagreeable duty to perform for several years, scarcely any having been done since 1847 (Eppes: 27 March 1861).

This form of resistance, toward Eppes' and his overseers' authority, was perhaps the most troublesome. If slaves were allowed to strike and run away from those in the authority position, there would be no sense of control. The planters and overseers had to keep this form of resistance from happening and punish those who practiced it severely.

As the Civil War neared, slave resistance began to take on new forms on the plantations. Eppes recorded that the slaves in the area held a large meeting on his Island Plantation (Eppes: 20 Jan. 1861). This is the first report in the journals of this type of meeting, and though he shows no concern over the event in his journals, it does show a change in the way slaves were gathering. He also described a large fight among his Island negroes, and remarked that there had not been this many problems since 1847 (Eppes: 14 March 1861).

As these problems occurred, Eppes started to see the coming of the war. Eppes sent several of his slaves to work on a Confederate fort on the James River (Eppes: 9 May 1861). While working on the fort, one of his slaves ran off possibly crossing to Union lines at Fortress Monroe and freedom (Eppes: 7 May 1861; 13 May 1861). The ultimate in resistance took place in 1862, when Eppes' slaves abandoned the plantations as the Union Army approached, and they ran into the Union lines to freedom (Eppes: 24 Aug. 1859, list in back of Mss1Ep734d296).

Freedmen Resistance

When Eppes returned to begin production on his plantations after the war, he no longer could rely upon oppressed slave labor. He instead had to find new ways to control his workers, who were mostly African American, in what he would view as a cost efficient system. Though African Americans were no longer property, were free to go where they pleased, and possessed other rights of freedmen, they struggled to find their position in the new social order. This struggle included resistance to planter control of natural and economic resources. Most African Americans did not have access to natural or economic resources, as the Euro American population controlled most of these resources. Many African Americans were disappointed to learn they would not be receiving land from the government as they returned to work for those who previously owned them (Henderson 1977: 16-17).

Some of Dr. Eppes' slaves returned to work for him after the war, including Madison and his family, George Boiling and John Bird (Eppes: 24 March 1866; 2 June 1867; 16 July 1869). According to Eppes some attempted to secure their place as servants by attempting to run off the others. Eppes wanted to get rid of the Ruffin family, including Madison, because of this practice (Eppes: 2 June 1867). It appears, however, that those who did return to work for Eppes did not remain long, because Eppes failed to mention them in regard to his laborers. These hands could have left to find better employment or perhaps were let go by Eppes. He mentioned,

> . . . found it a bad rule to employ former slaves of your own, being more unmanageable & disposed to take more liberties than strangers (Eppes: 16 July 1869).
>
> Though Eppes attempted to control his labor through contracts and hiring daily labor, . . . pay off month hands determining to do so every month, hereafter as it gives me better control over

> them (Eppes: 31 Aug. 1867),

he faced new forms of labor resistance. Freedmen were coming together to form labor organizations that would give them some bargaining leverage. Eppes noted,

> The negroes on City Point and at Bermuda Hundreds have held a meeting and passed resolutions that they will not work on farms threshing wheat at less than $.75 per diem. I understand Mr. R. Carter has agreed to give that but don't know certainly. This is but the beginning of such troubles, the old squabble between Capital and Labor. Owing to the above resolutions I have found great difficulty in getting labor which has thrown me much behind in laying by my corn . . . (Eppes: 6 July 1867).

African Americans as Eppes noted were attempting to assert their new freedom by following the practices of white labor organizations.

African Americans were not only exercising their new freedom in labor organizations, but as individuals as well. Eppes found himself being accused of slander, after blaming a freedman of stealing potatoes from his property (Eppes: 30 Aug. 1869). Eppes appeared to have no evidence linking the individual to the potato theft, but simply suspected him (Eppes: 13 Aug. 1869). The action taken by the individual was very new. By refusing to be blamed for a crime that Eppes accused him and then reversing the accusation onto Eppes, the freedman was expanding his range of freedom using the law. Eppes made no other mention of this event and subsequently we do not know how it ended. The fact that an African American could accuse a white plantation owner of slander displays how social boundaries changed, and how African Americans were attempting to claim their freedom.

Resistance not only took the form of resisting labor controls and displaying ones freedom through reverse accusations, but also against the planter's control over natural resources.

Freedmen and others took the liberty of taking resources they needed off Eppes' property without first securing permission. Occasionally Eppes found individuals chopping wood or stealing other objects from his property (Eppes: 20 Jan. 1870). These individuals were perhaps not thinking about inflicting a loss upon Eppes, but were instead attempting to collect needed material for living. Many new persons in the City Point area may not have realized where property boundaries were, or were confused over ownership of the land. Though Eppes caught a few thieves, many others irritated Eppes by successfully stealing much of his livestock and grain. He noted,

> Much infuriated today by having the irons torn out of the chimnies (sic) of Madison's house by some miserable negro scoundrels who make it a buisiness (sic) of stealing iron this old iron buisiness (sic) has become one of the greatest nuisances of the country (Eppes: 15 March 1866).
>
> The guard of soldiers stationed at City Point left yesterday and delivered up the keys of the buildings to Madison & I received them today. It being reported that the negroes were taking the window sash & other property I immediately sent over for Mr. Conway & had a bed & c carried up so that he quarters there tonight to protect the property (Eppes: 5 Nov. 1867).
>
> Sheep 22 head by being stolen . . . Hogs 32 head by being stolen . . . (Eppes: 28 Nov. 1869).

As African Americans began to test their new freedoms after the war, they used new forms of resistance not possible under slavery. Either through labor parties or as individuals they attempted to build their place in the new southern society. They still faced oppression from white plantation owners, who were attempting to retain their position in society, rebuild their property, and relied upon African Americans for labor. African Americans and planters were experimenting with new forms of social rules seeking to form a way of life that was ideal to

them.

African Americans used resistance toward planters' oppression to display their freedom and personal identity. As planters attempted to control most aspects of their slaves' lives, they created new forms of control structures that they hoped would bring about the ideal behavior in their slaves. Slaves, however, maintained their own way of life under the planter's control. Slaves on Eppes' plantations proved that they could live a life under the oppressive structure Eppes created. They were not only able to create enough farm products to support Eppes and his family, but their own as well. They were able to socialize and create lasting family relationships. Possibly to supplement their provisions, slaves resorted to stealing food products from the plantation. They also showed their independence by going against Eppes' system of order by leaving their tools scattered around the plantation, and occasionally taking household items that belonged to him.

Through these forms of resistance they maintained their individual and group identities that kept the hope of freedom burning. As the Civil War ended, African Americans were prepared to use their new freedom to create better lives for themselves and their families. They still faced oppressive systems as planters attempted to rebuild their plantations, but they fought back with forms of resistance they could never have used under slavery. By using these new forms of resistance, they aspired to maintain their independence from the planters. By negotiating deals, they could force the planters to make concessions, reversing the power relationships. The social structure in the south was greatly upset after the war and people caught in the middle were striving to find a new social order.