Slave holidays and festivities in the United States

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SLAVE HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVITIES
IN THE UNITED STATES

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Folk sociology had its inception in Germany and probably evolved from the studies in folk psychology originated by Lazarus and Steinthal. These authors were particularly interested in manners and customs as expressions of underlying uniformities of folk-character which, true to the Hegelian tradition, they held to be something ineffable and hence not to be finally explained in causal terms. The man who took the concepts of Lazarus and Steithal and added to them his own psychological and sociological ideas to form a much more scientific system was Wilhelm Wundt. Wundt was primarily a philosopher-psychologist, but he was so deeply interested in the psychical phases of social life that he might almost be termed a psycho-sociologist. He held that his major psychological principle, creative synthesis, is responsible, through its immanent fluctuation of motives and ends, for the never-ending succession of cultural epochs. Wundt reckoned with the folk-psychology of Lazarus and Steinthal but attacked their concepts on the basis of their Romantic tone and import. For Wundt, the group, of whatever character, is not "a whole of a higher order," but simply a functional unity woven from the relevant aspects of the minds of its members. He also rejects "a group mind" although he admits that mind and the group are inseparable. Group relations are especially important for three phases of culture: language, myth (inclusive of religion), and the mores. Wundt uses these terms to encompass virtually all of non-material culture, except the arts and techniques intrinsically bound up with material culture, and it is highly significant that he should begin his enormous ten-volume Volkerpsychologie with topics so
much favored by the Romantic writers against whom he thought he was reacting. The work includes also lengthy analyses of social organization and of law, and concludes with a treatise on culture and history.¹

The German Alfred Vierkandt contributed to the early development of cultural sociology. He was an ethnologist who later developed sociological inclinations. Vierkandt's early work in cultural analysis was marked by a clear-cut, empirical approach but he later attempted to follow Simmel, Husserl and McDougall in "phenomenological sociology." It is the early work of Vierkandt in the field of cultural sociology that has significance in the development of the field. In his Die Stetigkeit im Kulturwandel (1908) he remained within the limits of empirical knowledge, and worked out a masterly theory of cultural continuity and cultural change. It can be said that he anticipated virtually all the significant theory postulated in Ogburn's Social Change (1923) and Wissler's Man and Culture (1923). The principle thesis of Vierkandt's early work in cultural sociology was that culture is the product of gradual accumulation, the acceptance, rejection and transformation of culture traits through the ages. In addition to setting forth the ideas of cultural continuity, inertia, and so on, he gave empirical examples such as the development of the bicycle, of economic institutions, languages, religion, and art. Further, he showed his essential agreement with the later cultural determinists in minimizing the role of "the great man" through calling attention to multiple inventions and similar phenomena. Once more, he was well aware of "cultural lag" as a characteristic typical of trans-

ititional periods, particularly of modern civilization, although he did not erect upon it a whole theory of social change, nor infuse it with value judgments.¹

The fields of cultural and folk sociology are comparatively recent developments in the United States. The earlier phases of cultural sociology were derived from the Boas and the British functionalist schools of ethnology.² In the beginnings of sociology in the United States, one of the first tendencies to be noticed is the use of ethnological materials as a source of sociological generalizations. This tendency is very marked in the early work of William Graham Sumner and W. I. Thomas and has been continued by younger writers such as Wissler, Chase, Redfield and Malinowski. According to Barnes and Becker there has been too much preoccupation with simpler peoples to the neglect of the historical records of the more complex civilizations.³ Even studies of contemporary American life are made in accordance with ethnographic formulas. These authors cite Middletown by the Lynds as an example of this type of research, and although this brings with it demonstrable advantages, there are also serious deficiencies, most notable of which are the neglect of historical intangibles and the failure to isolate social processes as such.

The study of culture and culture groups is intertwined with the fields of anthropology, and sociology. The boundaries between sociology and cultural anthropology are by no means conclusively drawn. There are

¹Ibid., p. 913.
²Ibid., p. 993
³Ibid., p. 993
some writers who claim that "the study of sociology is the study of culture."\(^1\) In the light of the fact that E. B. Tylor's definition of culture is generally accepted in principle, although varying in practice from interpreter to interpreter, it is easily seen how such overlapping and confusion come about. Tylor defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capacities acquired by man as a member of society."\(^2\) To put it rather bluntly, but exactly, the scientists studying culture and culture groups are not agreed among themselves as to the nature and scope of the data about which they are concerned.

James G. Leyburn states that "sociology is, among other things, the study of culture." He hastens to add, however, that he does not maintain that the study of culture is exclusively the subject-matter of sociology alone, nor that this is the whole field of sociology. He further complicates the maze of concepts in the field by discussing "cultural sociology" as differentiated from "folk sociology". "Cultural sociology" is defined as the synthetic and generalizing study of folkways which has as its aim the clearer understanding of origin, evolution, and spread of human institutions. Leyburn states that the study of the folkways and culture of any particular people, whether primitive tribe, modern immigrant group, nation, social class, or any other limited and fairly homogeneous folk is "folk sociology." From these definitions it is apparent that cultural and folk sociology are not identical. The former is much broader than the latter in that it is concerned not with the folk-

\(^1\)M. M. Willey and Melville J. Herskovits, "The Cultural Approach to Sociology", American Journal of Sociology, XXIX (1923), 189-199

ways of any particular group, but with the folkways and social institutions of human society all over the world. But, without the work of the ethnologists dealing in folk sociology the cultural anthropologists would lack material from which generalizations could be drawn.¹

In the work that has already been done Leyburn considers as cultural sociology the bulk of the writings of Herbert Spencer, E. B. Tylor, Edward Westermarck, Frazer, Sumner, Briffault, Case, Chapin, Hart, Keller, Ogburn, Stern, Wallis, Webster, and Willey, to name but a few. The outstanding and characteristic works of Thomas and Znaniecki, Odum, Radcliffe Brown, Malinowski, Redfield, the Lynds, and the whole group of ethnologists who see in their research more than the mere local significance of group folkways, are classified as "folk sociology."²

In the United States two men stand out more than others in the field of cultural and folk sociology, William Graham Sumner and W. I. Thomas; they have paid a great deal of attention to ethnology.³ It would be difficult to name two other men who have played a larger part in the development of sociology in the United States, unless Franklin Giddings and Lester F. Ward be considered of equal importance. Sumner's *Folkways* is probably the widest known of the works in cultural sociology. In it the essential features of his sociology are revealed. The whole scheme revolves around the distinction between the in-group and the out-group and the conceptual considerations of folkways and mores and institutions. Although the concepts of the folkways and mores are most conspicuous in Sumner's thought, the distinction between the

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²Ibid., p. 111.

³Floyd N. House, *The Development of Sociology* (New York, 1936) p. 273
in-group and the out-group is fundamental to his theory of culture.¹

His generalized description of "primitive society" is quoted as follows:

"The conception we ought to form of "primitive society" is that of small groups scattered over a territory....
A differentiation arises between ourselves, the we-group, or in-group, and everybody else, the others-group, or out-group. The insiders in a we-group are in relation of peace, order, law, government, and industry, to each other. Their relation to all outsiders, or others-groups, is one of war and plunder, except so far as agreements have modified it."²

It may be implied from this generalized statement on primitive society that practically all human society is a conglomerate of groups; the members of which stand in a different sort of relationship to each other from what they do to outsiders and are governed by a different pattern, or rule of behavior, in their dealings with each other from what governs them in their treatment of members of the out-group. The folkways and mores, in short, are attributes of specific groups and not of society in general; they require one to treat his neighbor, his kinsman, his compatriot in a certain way, but they do not require him to treat an outsider in the same way; indeed, they may require him to do virtually the opposite.³

In addition to this survey of the mores of the peoples of the earth from the standpoint of functional content, Summer laid down two elementary propositions concerning the process of the change or modification of the folkways and mores and formulated definitions of two other related con-

¹Ibid., p. 277


³Floyd N. House, Ibid., p. 277
cepts: institutions and fashions. The folkways are, through the pleasure and pain that they evoke in those who follow or violate them, subject (1) to a "strain of better adaptation of means to ends" and (2) to a "strain of consistency with each other."1 Besides the foregoing considerations Summer made contributions to sociological ideas with reference to war,2 revolution and reform,3 and social classes.4 Few subjects of fundamental interest to sociologists escaped Summer's cursory treatment in *Folkways*.

Now to the field of Folk Sociology to view briefly the work of W. I. Thomas, who with Florian Znaniecki wrote one of the outstanding works in folk sociology in the United States. Floyd House ranks Thomas as the American sociologist who ranks second only to Summer, and in some respects excels him in the use of ethnographical materials and his development of a "cultural" point of view.5 In *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, done in collaboration with Znaniecki, Thomas took the significant step of applying the general viewpoint of ethnology to the study of customs, traditions, and social organization of contemporary peoples living at a comparatively advanced stage of civilization.6 The treatment in the investigation of the Polish peasant is similar to that which an ethnographer would use in studying the culture of a savage tribe.

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2"War" reprinted as first essay in Summer's *War and Other Essays* (ed.) Albert Keller (New Haven, 1911)
4W. G. Summer, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (New York, 1883)
6Ibid.
Using the historical approach Thomas and Znaniecki avoided the weakness commonly charged against the exponents of the "comparative methods," viz., that of losing the significance of culture traits by abstracting them too casually from their context. For these reasons, and for the important contributions to methodology and theory of sociology which it includes, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America marks an epoch in the development of sociological thought and research in the United States.

Since the pioneering work of Thomas and Znaniecki, folk sociology has undergone steady development. Such American groups as the mountain-eers of Kentucky and the Ozark Plateau, the Florida scrub dwellers, the lower strata of Negro society, those levels of American society at large described in the so-called proletarian novels, immigrant communities, Mexican and Indian groups in transition, and the like have been studied to advantage. The work of Robert Redfield may be considered as providing the most adequate statement of the content of folk sociology and has provided in his Tepotztlán: A Mexican Village (1929) a splendid example of research in the field.¹ To folk sociology in the United States Leyburn, Odum, Wallis, Vance, Mead and the Lynds have made significant contributions.

Notwithstanding the fact that folk sociology has developed with steady strides since The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, the rich materials for research in the United States have been woefully unexploited. Folk sociology with its broad scope offers endless opportunity for scientific analysis and interpretation. America is perhaps the largest seed bed of folk material in the world. Into American culture have been

¹Harry E. Barnes and Howard Becker, Social Thought From Lore to Science Vol. II (New York, 1938) pp. 993-994.
woven the culture traits of many lands, both of a material and non-material kind. Across the doorstep of the nation have poured the attitudes and patterns of thought from almost every quarter of the globe. From the American scene itself few indigenous expressions of native culture have arisen. Nevertheless, the mingling of racial and national groups has brought about many changes in culture patterns existing at the time of settlement. Different patterns of thought and action have fused in part to become what is often thought of as being American. In the light of these facts it is apparent that there is much that could be done with the rich folk materials of which the United States can boast.

Least studied of all groups, perhaps, from the point of view of folk sociology was the American Negro prior to the 20th century. Certainly here is a fertile field for the methodology of the field. Cultural traits characteristic of Negro slaves in some portions of the United States and their expressions in ritual, festival, carnival and holiday festivities are long since dead; the colorful pageantry, mummering and celebration are things of the past; the memories, however, linger on.

During the last twenty years, however, the work of Melville Herskovits has been a contribution to the fields of cultural anthropology and folk sociology with special reference to research on the Negro. He has presented some new angles and scientific credo for the study of American Negro origins and acculturation. Through personal and intensive research Herskovits concludes that the preponderance of Negro slaves derived in the forested coastal regions of West Africa. Since this is true he further postulates that a thorough knowledge of the physical types, the customs, and beliefs, and the languages of the peoples of this region are absolutely necessary to the understanding and interpretation of Negro cul-
ture in the New World. Herskovits holds that the study of racial crossing is of paramount importance and of practical concern as well. Studies of Negro-White crossing necessitate much more knowledge of the physical types of West Africa than the fragmentary information that is now available.

The interest in West African research in the United States derives largely from the need to trace relationships between the African and New World Negro cultures in order to establish origins and to study survivals. Too much superficial and inadequate research has been produced by American sociologists who are interested in the provenience of American Negroes. Not only in West Africa is the material of interest to those concerned with New World Negro origins lacking, for relatively little study of New World ethnology has been done. The studies that have been made in America, however, have already demonstrated that reciprocal advantages accrue from the study of related Negro cultures on both sides of the Atlantic.

One of the important aspects of Herskovits' work in African culture is the study of West African music, a study of which derived from the assumption that music, one of the elements in human civilization least exposed to conscious direction, offers a strategic point of attack for the study of the results of cultural contact. In the case of Negro cultures where music bulks so importantly, its value is even greater than among folk in whose culture music plays a less important role. He had to be cautious in evaluating the results of his first-hand recording of actual African songs and culling the literature on African music.

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Herskovits concludes from his researches that there can be little doubt that the Negro spirituals were influenced by European patterns more than any other form of Negro music—to a far greater extent than work-songs and ordinary secular dance-songs, where Africanisms are apparent even to those who hold a theory of European origin of spirituals.1

It is the assumption of this study of Slave Holidays and Festivities in the United States that along with the drudgeries of the slave system there was a parallel life of temporary happiness and enjoyment without which slave life would have been unbearable. Activities of the slaves on holidays and during other festive occasions, if they can be reproduced in their proper perspective to the economic, political and social situation by the historical approach, would furnish a distinct contribution to the body of existing materials in folk sociology. By analyzing these festival activities among the slaves with reference to the effects of culture contacts with whites and the importance of African survivals would point to significant phases of Negro acculturation in the United States. It is assumed also that a fairly continuous and related description of the general entertainment pattern and specific festive occasions may be reconstructed from books and manuscripts written of phases of plantation life but not emphasizing particularly the social life of the slaves.

A study of this nature is fraught with limitations, mainly those concerning the obtaining of a continuity that is scientifically accurate. A period of nearly three hundred years elapsed between the importing of the first African slaves into Virginia and the Emancipation. For

1Melville J. Herskovits, "Some Recent Developments in the Study of West African Native Life," Journal of Negro History XXIV (1939), 14-32
large blocks of time no materials have been available on the subject. Festive activities differed in time and space and between localities but materials did not always provide evidence of the differentials in place or limit themselves according to time. The accuracy and logic of the interpretations of cause and effect relationships will be hampered also by the dearth of information on some important phases through which the general entertainment and specific festivities passed. Accordingly, much of the interpretation used must necessarily be based on inference, but such inference as is included will be made as accurately as possible from the facts presented in the materials.

As in all studies dealing with New World Negro cultures some interest is evinced in the effect of the passage of Negroes from Africa through the West Indies Islands to the United States. There can be no doubt that along this path of the Negro slaves certain items of culture were absorbed. It has been apparent also that certain parallels exist between manifestations of festivals and holiday activities in these three lands. Although an attempt will be made to describe significant similarities the lack of sufficient material precludes any attempt at setting up a hard and fast theory of African survivals and diffusion in the New World. In other words, the purpose of this study is to describe the recreational and play pattern of the Negro slaves in the United States, with especial emphasis on holiday activities and special festive occasions, providing such sociological interpretations as appear relevant to the facts collected in the materials.
CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF CARNIVALS AND FESTIVE ACTIVITIES
IN WORLD CULTURES

A. Historical Role

Religion and the Church have been the institutions which, more than any others, have originated and perpetuated festival celebrations throughout the period of recorded history. In ancient times man's ignorance of the universe and his physical environment led him to initiate exorcising rites and ceremonies in order to propitiate the unknown powers of good and evil. Elaborations on such rites and ceremonies later assumed festival proportions as they gained popularity and assumed importance.

During the reign of Paganism many festivals and festive occasions were observed by the populace of many lands. Festivals were an important part of communal life. The Christian Church could not afford to dismiss these festivals and festive activities from the routine life even when it had triumphed over Paganism.

Paganism displayed its greatest tenacity in Rome, and there were many reasons why it should do so. The old Paganism in Hellas and the near East had been closely connected with the state and when it ceased to be the privileged religion it had no common center around which to rally. In Rome it was otherwise. Its stronghold was the Senate, and all the elements of opposition to Christianity could group themselves around that venerable assembly. The Senate had lost its powers but its prestige
remained and the Emperors were wary of attacking its dignity. It re-
represented the grandeur of ancient Rome and was the heir defender of
old Roman traditions. The city was full of monuments of Rome's great-
ness. The Senate took pride in preserving these witnesses of the past
splendours of the Imperial city and in seeing that the old ceremonial
rites were duly performed in spite of anti-pagan legislation. And so,
in spite of the idiots and efforts of the sons of Constantine and of
the successors of Julian, paganism was the state religion of Rome down
to 383. Its worship was performed according to the old rites. The days
consecrated to the old gods and others added in honour of the newer Ori-
ental deities, were the Roman holidays. Every year on January 27th the
Praefectus urbi went down to Ostia and presided over games in honour of
Castor and Pollux. All these costly ceremonies, sacrifices and shows
were provided for out of the Imperial treasury. They were part of the
state religion and the Senate was determined that they should receive
due reverence. The Emperor might be a Christian but he was, neverthe-
less, Pontifex Maximus, the official head of the old pagan religion,
and they believed themselves justified in performing its rites in his
name.

The Emperor Gratian delivered the first effectual blow against
this state of affairs. About 375 he refused to assume the pagan office
of Pontifex Maximus. Furthermore, he enforced his order that the great
pagan ceremonies and sacrifices should no longer be defrayed out of the
Imperial treasury in 382. He took from the ancient priesthoods of Rome
the emoluments and immunities which they had enjoyed for centuries. From
the Senate House he removed the statue of Victory and its altar on which
incense had been duly burned since the days of Octavius. The last great
battle for the official recognition of paganism raged over these de-
crees for ten years. The pagan party in the Senate fought every inch
of ground against the advancing tide of Christianity. But paganism was
not destined to gain even a temporary victory. Perhaps, as Augustine
said, it only desired to die honorably. The world had outgrown pagan-
ism. If the dying world was to be requickened, it was not paganism with
its many gods, rites, ceremonies and vicious gladiatorial spectacles
that could bring salvation. So it slowly, almost unconsciously, passed
away before the advancing tide of Christianity.¹

Though Christianity triumphed in its struggle against paganism, the
latter was so strong in its influence that the Christian Church was forced
to incorporate some of its manifestations into the Christian rituals and
ceremonies. As a survival technique Christianity culled some of the fes-
tival activities from the pagan religion and doctored them up with Christ-
ian principles and ideology. The people were so accustomed to the festi-
vals, carnivals and celebrations of the pagan religion that they would not
be satisfied without a similar medium of expression under the new Christ-
ianity. Therefore the Church was quick to transform pagan festive activ-
ties over to Christianity. It would be futile to find a pagan source
for every Christian saint and festival, but a study of hagiographic lit-
erature reveals that a very large amount of heathen reminiscences, and
even formal adoption, are exhibited in the Christian Church.

Christianity found means of reconciling many pagan festivals to which
the populace was devoted, both in town and country, to the prevailing Christ-

¹The Cambridge Medieval History. Edited by H. M. Gwalkin and J. P.
ian sentiment. It was evil to fete Maecurus or Ceres, but there could be no harm in rejoicing publicly over the vintage and the harvest. The Lupercalia themselves were changed into a Christian festival by Pope Gelasius. Many of the tutelary deities became patron saints. The people retained their rustic processions, their feasts and their earthly delights. The temples were left standing, and became the public halls where the citizens could meet, or exchanges where the merchants could congregate, while the statues of the gods looked down from their niches undisturbed and unheeded.¹

In order to survive the Christian Church found it expedient to lift religious and moral bans from the lives of the people so as to ease certain tensions that are inevitably built up under continuous repression. The Church recognized the utility of the pagan festivals from the beginning as a safety valve in the lives of the people. Relaxations of social codes often result in the saving and even the strengthening of the existing social order. With the temporary removal of the normal restraints in some festive occasion sanctioned by the law and the Church comes the required relief and a willingness to return to the normal order when passions are spent.

Psychological patterns are important considerations in this connection. The temporary obligations of class distinctions and the innocuous fraternization of masters and slaves, characteristic of the Roman Saturnalia and Lupercalia, assured the popularity of festive occasions among the populace. These relaxations of the social codes were paralleled in the servants' ball and similar feudal institutions of England. Because of the flare for ostentatious habiliments, the transitory illusion of afflu-

¹Ibid., p. 117.
ence and luxury afforded by largesse to the populace operated as a pow-
erful element in the appeal of regularly recurring and chartered festi-
vities. Authorities of a religious and legal nature recognized that
psychologically they served as safety valves against the dangerous effects
of continuous restraint. Their concern for the provision of amusements
and pleasures, cloaked under the veil of benevolence, was really set against
a selfish but practical psychological background. They knew that the in-
istitution of entertainments and festivities suited to the tastes and in-
terests of the multitudes would be a valuable means of allaying disaffec-
tion, of turning the edge of disloyalty and of distracting the popular
mind from dangerous or more serious interests. The history of organized
sports may be traced to an origin similar to that of festivals, that is,
to primitive rituals having a magico-religious purpose. Used as a most
suitable outlet for exuberant vitality sporting festivities have played
a significant role in the history of the world, for such vitality may
well have flowed into more perilous channels.

On the psychological point of view Briffault states:

Collective festivals, the symbolism of pageantry and cere-
monials are among the most powerful means influencing the psy-
chology of crowds and will doubtless always serve their purpose
as the most concrete expression of collective emotions and loy-
alties. The chief disadvantage attaching to such collective ex-
pressions lies in the inevitable tendency of formalism and rit-
ual to take the place of genuine feeling and conviction and in
the hypocrisies which frequently attends the customary, formal
or compulsory participation of the individual in regulated ex-
pressions of sentiments which he may not always share.¹

The social utility of such relaxations of social codes in safeguard-
ing the established order is acknowledged in specific removals of social
restraints through all eras of the world's history. The popularity of

¹Robert Briffault, "Festivals", The Encyclopedia of the Social
Roman office-holders was largely dependent upon their liberality in tolerating and even instituting popular festivals. Civil and religious leaders have long recognized the utilitarian ends which festive occasions could serve and did not fail to take advantage of the fact to further the significance of their own institutions in the lives of their constituents. Makers of religious doctrine have emphasized the need of festive activities and have sanctioned festival license in such institutions as the Carnival in preparation for the mortifications and privations of Lent. Pre-Lenten festivities still abound in the Catholic countries of the world. The period of Carnival is well known as a time of merrymaking and pleasure, indulged in by the inhabitants of Roman Catholic countries, in anticipation of the abstemious period of Lent. Carnival begins on Twelfth Night or Epiphany (January 6) and ends on Ash Wednesday. Selden remarks: "What the Church debar one way, she gives us leave to take out in another. First, we fast, then we feast; first there is a Carnival, then a Lent". In these long periods of revelry there is a remembrance of some of the license of the Saturnalia of the Christian Romans who could not forget their pagan festivals. Milan, Rome and Naples were celebrated for their carnivals, but they were elaborated to their highest perfection at Venice.

In modern Rome, the masquerading in the streets and all out-of-door amusements connected with Carnival are limited to eight days, during which the grotesque maskers pelt each other with sugar plums and bouquets. These are poured from baskets from the balconies down upon the maskers in carriages and afoot; and they, in their turn, pelt the company at the windows.

In Paris, the Carnival is principally kept on the three days pre-

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ceding Ash Wednesday; and upon the last day, the procession of the Boeuf-gras or Government prize ox, passes through the streets; then all is quiet until the Thursday of Mid-Lent, on which day only the revelry breaks out wilder than ever.¹

The Catholic South American countries and Mexico still observe an elaborate calendar of holidays, festivals and celebrations. In Tepotztlan, Mexico, there are 28 major celebrations during the year.²

The New Orleans Mardi-Gras stands today as one of the last vestiges of this ancient type of celebration in the United States. It is, however, an important institution for the people of New Orleans and many persons from other states and regions go to New Orleans to witness the Carnival spectacle.

A great deal of licentiousness abounded at the pagan carnivals and festivals. There is no intention to intimate that licentiousness and unbridled satisfaction of lusts were the main characteristics of festivals after the Catholic Church adopted them. Extreme license and orgiastic indulgences derived from the early primitive rituals were subjected to moderating regulations by both religious and political authorities. Regulation, however, signified tolerance and even sanction by these institutions. The Catholic Church adopted the festival in spite of its licentious character just as it did other pagan observances, in order to remain popular and not lose status with its constituents. Carnival feasts, however, in which the participants wore masks and were often dressed in white shrouds to represent ghosts (the pierrots and pun-

¹Ibid., p. 65;
chinellos of later times) excited the repeated denunciations of the clergy. Notwithstanding clerical denunciation and opposition festivals and carnivals have prevailed inside and outside the Church, with and without religious sanction.

Given sanction by the religious institutions holidays, festivals and carnivals have become deeply embedded in the social patterns of the peoples of primitive and modern societies. Ceremonies and rituals in primitive cultures often deviated a bit from strictly religious settings before the advent of the Roman Catholic Church. Concern for the fertility of the human race and for the fruitfulness of the sources of food has supplied the motives for many traditional rituals and has given rise to ideas which have become embodied in religious systems.¹ By magico-religious rites the elements are prevailed upon to multiply humans and food sustenance in abundance. Human fertility and soil fertility are very closely connected in primitive cultures. Primitive cultivation, which is relegated to the hands of the women in many primitive societies, is held to be dependent for its success upon their magical skill and more particularly upon their fecundity.² A prolific woman or one who is actually pregnant is thought to have peculiar powers of increasing the soil's fertility. Barrenness constitutes disqualification as a tiller of the soil.

The role of festivals in primitive cultures hinged largely upon the primitive philosophy of nature which indicates their gross igno-


²Ibid., p. 190.
ance of certain commonly accepted natural laws. There were always ceremonies and rituals and festivals invoking rain, abundant fertility and general conditions conducive to abundant production of food in an agricultural society. Sowing time and reaping season were signals for festive and exorcising activities.

Primitive agricultural societies in all parts of the world have been recorded as observers of seasonal festivities and ceremonies invoking some unknown forces of nature to be considerate in the production of food and in the extension of human fecundity. In illustration, Edgar L. Hewett cites the Pueblo Indians of the American Southwest. "Their elaborate system of calendar observations," says he, "was never reduced to diagrammatic form, though a few of their elementary symbols relate to such."¹ Drama dances accompanied the turning of the water into irrigation ditches in the spring, the preparation for planting of the seed, germination and growth ceremonies, rain invocation, maturation and protective rituals, harvesting and thanksgiving celebrations, occupying the entire agricultural season, from early spring to late fall. These were followed by a shorter cycle of hunting or winter ceremonies, all constituting an ever recurring round of events to get and keep the food quest on an assured basis.²

Agricultural rituals and festivals are often accompanied by sexual license, another indication of the close association of soil fertility and human fecundity in the minds of primitive men. Sexual license is a prominent feature of the agricultural festivals of seed and harvest times. Thus among the Pipeles and the Musquaki Indians ritual coitus was timed

²Ibid.
so as to coincide with the planting of the seed. Some of the tribes of Africa observe similar festivities at which times the sex mores are completely forgotten temporarily. Among the Bantu, men and women who are ordinarily modest in behavior and speech are said to abandon themselves to licentiousness during these agricultural festivals. The harvest festival in India, too, is the signal for general license, and such license is regarded as a matter of sheer necessity. Agrarian populations in southern Algeria resent any outside interference with the licentiousness of their women on the grounds that such restrictions would be prejudicial to the success of their agricultural operations. "The ritual promiscuity of the primitive agrarian festivals is presented in more advanced cultures by the license of the festivals of Bubostis in Egypt and the ritual obscenity of the Greek Thesmophoria, the Roman Saturnalia, the Dionysian festivals, which have passed into the uses of southern and western Europe as carnival festivities, May Day and mid-summer feasts."

Agricultural civilizations observe seasonal feasts, the chief of which usually take place at the summer and winter solstices, that is, at the times when the sun arrives at the point farthest north or south of the equator, namely the 21st of June and the 22nd of December. The dates of the observances are subject to considerable variation. The Celtic festival of Samhain, for instance, which was celebrated in Ireland on the 31st of October, was observed in Gaul at the beginning of January. Sometimes the incidence of periodic festivals is determined by the rotation of crops, necessary in early stages of agriculture, as in the instance of the Greek Trieterica, or three-yearly festival.

In Europe certain specific festivals and celebrations merit more

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1 Robert Briffault, Ibid., p. 191.
2 Ibid., pp. 198-200
than passing attention because of their popularity and importance. The Roman feast of sowing, known as the *Saturnalia*, was characterized by licentiousness and frivoly. It began on the seventeenth of December and originally lasted three days but was gradually extended to the first days in January. When the Catholic Church adopted the pagan Saturnalia it constituted what was known as the *Feast of Fools*. Under Christian auspices the boisterous revelry was under the mock presidency of a personage known, in various European countries, as the Lord of Misrule, the Abbot of Unreason, and the Boy Bishop. Some of the traits of this character have been transferred to the adopted Teutonic Santa Claus. The guisers, or Christmas waits, of Scotland still wear miter-shaped caps of brown paper. Because of severe ecclesiastical denunciation the Lord of Misrule was suppressed in Scotland in 1555, and the Feast of Fools succumbed to repeated condemnations of church councils. Protestantism was always keenly opposed to the pagan festivals in church ritual. Protestant leaders were very astute in scenting out the pagan character of church festivals and in waging war against their chartered license. May Day festivals, once among the most popular in England, were all but suppressed by Puritan zeal. In like manner the weekly feast of rejoicing, or Day of the Sun, taken over by the early church from current Roman Mithraic usage has, like the continental Sunday, been the object of the fierce denunciations of Puritanism, and the observance of the Sabbath on Saturday, which had been severely condemned by the early Christian Church and tradition for its judaizing tendency, was adopted and with strange inconsistency transferred to Sunday. Early Puritan opposition to Christmas and other church festivals led in time to their neglect.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 200.
Although the numerous festivities and certainly the clandestine debauchery which formerly characterized festival occasions have disappeared, vestiges of these celebrations still remain in many countries of the world. The Carnival is yet observed in all Catholic countries. In Italy the cities of Rome, Venice and Naples exhibit a picture of resplendent gayety during the Carnival season and even in the United States the city of New Orleans preserves the last vestige of the Carnival festivities. Such observances are held in South American countries where the brilliance of the Carnival activities is surpassed only by the color in the costumes worn by the participating citizenry.

In Panama the Carnival extended, in 1941, from Washington's Birthday until the dawn of Ash Wednesday, February 26, when the revelers attended the burial of the "Sacred Sardine." The 1941 streamlined edition of the Carnival in Panama emphasized the native flavor and historical background of the pre-Lenten Carnivals of past centuries on the isthmus. But the Carnival cannot escape cosmopolitanism because present-day Panama is one of the most cosmopolitan places in the world. Furthermore, the Carnival had its origins in old Spain and Africa as well as aboriginal Panama. The Spanish Colonists and the African slaves they brought here to serve them and the native Indians they conquered, all contributed to the Carnival that has survived through four centuries.¹

Though festival and carnival observances have lost some of their original connotations and significance they still play an important part in the social life of modern societies. Commercial interests involved in the celebration of festive seasons and occasions have long operated as po-

tent factors in the preservation and perpetuation of old observances and have served as an impetus to serve new ones. But there are deeper and more significant reasons why holidays, festivals, carnivals and celebrations have survived through primitive and modern societies.

The theory of the festival and that of the calendar run parallel at many points. There are many schemes for time measurement and the category of astronomical time is only one of several concepts of time. Such concepts differ in the fields of philosophy, psychology and economics. The calendar, representing the systematic recording of time "expresses the rhythm of the collective activities, while at the same time its function is to assure their regularity."¹ An operational definition of expressions of time in common usage shows that social phenomena and events are frequently adopted as a frame of reference so that units of time are often fixed by the rhythm of collective life.² These rhythms of collective life were originally based on natural phenomena such as the spring, summer, autumn and winter seasons, rainy seasons, dry seasons and the like. Social and religious life came to be regulated by, and to center around these natural calendars. Fairly common were New Year's festivals at sowing time and especially at harvest time. In the far North winter is the time of festivals because labor rests at that time. Hence the popularity of the yuletide.

Among peoples who are a bit more understanding of natural phenomena than primitives, a short period not depending upon natural phenomena but on the exigencies of social life may become a means of time measurement. Thus Sorokin and Merton are experimenting with a measurement of "Social Time."²

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The collective rituals from which festivals derive for the most part involve participation of the social group, clan, tribe or family in activities which are held to affect the interests of the whole group. One of the chief interests of primitive groups was the exorcising of supernatural agencies thru magical operations. Festivals, celebrations and ceremonies for this purpose were very important to the primitive peoples. Primitive collective rituals, designed primarily for this purpose have sometimes retained that original character in the later phases of culture as in the majority of purely religious festivals and in those connected with agriculture. Commonly, however, the magical function of collective ritual has undergone decay, and other purposes have come to acquire greater interest and importance.¹

As the ritual aspects of exorcising activities become less emphasized because of increasing knowledge of social phenomena festivals and celebrations are derived often embodying part of the ritual or at least a reminiscence of it. As festivals and religious observances multiply and acquire a life of importance independent of their connection with seasonal occupations, and as social life increases in complexity, a more exact system of time measuring becomes necessary. Therefore, attempts were made to establish calendars which would assure the regularity of the festival occasions. This task naturally fell to the priests who were not only the possessors of knowledge but the directors of those religious festivals on which the calendar rested. It was the privilege of the Jewish high priests to announce the intercalary months and thereby to fix the time of celebration of the chief feasts.

The 365 1/4 day calendrical system emanates from Egypt and was adopted

by the Romans under Julius Caesar. About this same time the seven-day
week became popular, and with the prescription of the celebration of
Sunday Christianity introduced over a wide area the boon of regularly
recurring rest days. The Christian Church was responsible for the sur-
vival of a troublesome feature of the luni-solar system—the designa-
tion of the Easter celebration. Christianity inherited the movable
Easter and its connection with the full moon from Judaism. The Jewish
rule was remodelled so that the Easter festival was held on the first
Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox. This per-
mits variations of 35 days in the date of Easter. Not only is this
variation a source of annoyance to the laymen but the "fixing" or stabili-
zation of this religious festival has been a major concern of all cal-
endar reformers of the modern world, and a solution of the difficulty is
still to be found.¹

Thus the observance and celebration of certain important festivals
and festive activities has been a basis for time measurement for many
centuries. The close relation between the stories of the festival and
the calendar suggests the important place of festivals and celebrations
in world cultures. In all continents and among all peoples will be
found evidences of festival occasions some of which have been recorded
and others have been handed down by word of mouth. Festive activities
of many kinds have come to be an essential part of the social and reli-
gious life of societies on all levels of civilization. So powerful has
been their influence that the Christian Church of Western Civilization
did not dare omit certain manifestations of pagan festivals from their

¹Martin P. Nilsson, "Calendar", The Encyclopedia of the Social
rituals and routine. The Church banked heavily upon the provision of
and sanction of festivals to which the populace was accustomed as a
survival technique. Having originated in collective ritual felt to be
a necessity in the lives of men and given sanction and encouragement
by their religious institutions, festivals and festive occasions have
fixed themselves into the social patterns of primitive and modern men.

B. The Setting of Slave Festivities in the United States

Holidays and festivals have had a long history in the New World
although the history is uncharted at many points. Holidays were once
"holy" days and the designations of the religious institutions of the
indigenous peoples of the American Continents. Now holidays are days
set aside for anniversaries of different kinds and may be either civil,
religious or legal, the latter being established by legislative act.
Festivals were originally feasts of a religious character at which mirth
and enjoyment were the order of the day. Holidays and festivals are
products of collective ritual and have survived or died in accordance
with the needs and desires of the people. Although holidays and festi-
vials have lost much of their religious significance since the time of
the indigenous Indians of South and North America, they are still fla-
vored with a universality and fervor reminiscent of religious holidays
and festivals of ancient times.

In the United States the Indians have provided the only examples
of festivals of indigenous peoples. On their small reservations at
various points in the United States Indians even today observe some of
the festival activities long observed by their ancestors. The Europeans
who settled in the territory of the Indians brought with them their holi-
day and festival traditions and established them in their new habitat.
With the shrinking of the indigenous Indian population went the widespread observance of their holidays and religious festivals until they remain only on the small reservations which the government has set aside for Indians in various states.

Therefore the Negroes of plantation slavery days were largely affected by the holiday and festival customs of Europeans in their holiday and festival activities. A knowledge of the origin of Negroes in the present study of holidays and festivities in the United States is secondary to the knowledge of their history in the United States itself in relation to the economic, political and social situation. But a knowledge of the provenience of the Negroes in the New World is basic to the study of New World Negro cultures and therefore must receive cursory attention. Herskovits hold that the comprehension of the cultural equipment with which the slaves entered upon their lives in the Western Hemisphere is essential in any successful attempt to utilize the materials gained from investigations of their present-day life for an analysis of the processes of cultural change and of the results of culture contact.¹

In the month of August, 1619, a Dutch man-of-war sailed up the James River until it reached the small Virginia Colony at Jamestown. The Dutch trader sold twenty Negroes to the tobacco planters, and Negro slavery was thus introduced into the English-American colonies.² There can be no doubt that these first Negro slaves came from Africa as did those who followed them in increasing numbers during the decades after. But, as

¹Melville J. Herskovits, "On the Provenience of New World Negroes", Social Forces, XII (December, 1933) 247-262.

²J. Winston Coleman, Jr. Slavery Times in Kentucky (Chapel Hill, 1940) p. 4.
Herskovits points out, geographic references to the African continent have always been very indefinite and vague so much so that it is even difficult to say whether the slaves came from the coasts or the hinterland of the Gold, Ivory and Slave Coasts. Through intensive personal research Herskovits concludes that the preponderance of Negro slaves derived in the forested coastal regions of West Africa.¹

Of the origin of the African slaves entering the United States during the period of slave trading W. E. B. DuBois presents a tenable summary in his Black Reconstruction in America.

In origin, the slaves represented everything African, although most of them originated on or near the West Coast. Yet among them appeared the great Bantu tribes from Sierra Leone to South Africa; the Sudanese, straight across the center of the continent, from the Atlantic to the valley of the Nile; the Nilotic Negroes and the black and brown Hamites, allied with Egypt; the tribes of the great lakes; the Pygmies and the Hottentots; and in addition to these, distinct traces of both Berber and Arab blood. There is no doubt of the presence of all these various elements in the mass of 10,000,000 or more Negroes transported from Africa to the various Americas, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century.²

Although of vastly diversified geographic areas, political and social and religious institutions, the culture of the slaves entering the United States was African. It was far different from that of the English-American colonies in philosophy and manifestation. Many distinct tribes of vastly different characteristics abound in Africa. Language, tribal organization and government, institutional mores and traditions were of an entirely different sort than those of the new born country which they were destined to help mold. Perhaps one of the common denominators of West African culture was the cooperative work within


the tribes. A primitive kind of communal life has existed for centuries in Africa. The land and its products were held in common with the king as the arbiter in the matter of use and distribution of tracts. And no small part of this African heritage manifested itself in the magico-religious rituals and festive occasions which were so significant to them in their native land.

With a heritage essentially different from that of their new masters and an inability to speak the English language the African slaves embarked upon a not too certain career in agricultural America, the land of the pioneers. The planting of tobacco from 1620 onwards became a profitable enterprise for the white settlers in Virginia. Indentured slaves who were brought to America proved to be an economic loss. These servants shipped from England often died of their toil. Therefore throughout the seventeenth century from 1620 onwards there was an increasing demand in the states of the eastern seaboard for Negro labor. To do the dirty, fatiguing work of opening up the temperate and sub-tropical regions of North America, the Negro seemed a useful immigrant.¹

It was primarily an economic impulse which fastened slavery so hard and fast on the South. The North did not find slavery profitable economically and so it gradually ebbed away of its own disutility. In the South where fertile soil was abundant and the climate congenial, vast expanses of virgin earth were brought under the plow. Plentiful cheap labor was a problem from the beginning. Importation of African slaves furnished a solution to the problem. Furthermore, the crops of the South were those best cultivated on a large scale in order to realize a profit. The South-

ern regional society and culture takes its patterns and symbols from cotton, tobacco, sugar, rice, apples, peaches, citrous fruits, lumber, naval supplies, river transportation, cattle and oil—but especially from cotton. The introduction of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793 brought a great impulse to the then waning system of slavery. The rapid improvement of machinery for the manufacture of cotton cloth in England added its weight to the expansion of the slave regime in the South.

Cotton culture thus became a profitable crop for slave labor as indicated in the rapid increase in the amount of cotton exported. Fourteen bags were shipped to Europe in 1785. In 1789 the number of bags increased to 842 and the rise in exports continued to 200,000 pounds in 1791, 6,000,000 pounds in 1795 and 17,000,000 pounds in 1800. Thus the institution of slavery became an indispensable instrument of Southern economics. The economic aspect of slavery, concentrated into the great cotton plantations, began to dominate the thinking and the political outlook of the South. Gradually the slave population became concentrated in large aggregations, and the slave owners slowly usurped the dominant roles in the political, social and economic life of the region.

Into this largely rural situation were cast the cultural lot of the Negro slaves. Changes in their own African social heritage were controlled by the circumstances of the rural scene. In this the slaves were not alone, for the whites who were their masters and the remaining non-slave-owners in

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1S. A. Botkin, "Folk and Folk Lore", *Culture in the South* (Edited by W. T. Couch) (Chapel Hill, 1935) p. 573.


the population were equally affected but, of course, in keeping with their relation to the system. "So deeply has the culture of cotton entered into the mode of life of the American South that the whole area is characterized by activities and attitudes which have grown up about the cultivation of the plant. First of all, the cotton plant lays down an annual cycle of activities concerned with the planting and cultivating, gathering and marketing of the crop which in turn has its effect upon the social life and institutions. Thus the school, Church and other community agencies find their season of intense activity during the two respites of cotton culture, for a few weeks in the late summer between the last chopping and the first picking and for two or three months in the winter between the last picking and the preparation of the ground for the next crop."1 And, it was during these short periods that both the slaves and the whites were relatively free to engage in leisure time activities and to give expression to culture traits typical of Southern culture.

Although the greater portion of the holidays and festivities considered in this study have the rural background just described, a smattering of the slave population dwelt in urban areas of the North as well as the South. In colonial times slaves were known to have resided in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Providence and Hartford. That these slaves, too, engaged in some types of amusement and festivities is indicated by their imitating the habits of the whites with whom they were in close contact—often much closer than the contacts of slaves and masters on the Southern plantations. The occupations of these Northern slaves were largely of a domestic character, although some of them were known to be artisans of one kind or another. Slaves often furnished the music for the dances and entertainments of the

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whites and sometimes participated in the merriment in some Northern cities. Slave participation in the recreational schemes of colonial American cities of the North will be elaborated upon in the description of the Pinksterfest of New York, a Dutch survival, and the Election of Mock Governors and Christmas festivities in New England.

In Southern cities, too, the slaves enjoyed limited participation in the revelry of holidays and festive occasions. New Orleans has long been the scene of the Mardi Gras, a French survival, in which Negroes participated then as well as now. They developed and perpetuated their own characters and costumed them in as much splendour as they were capable. Charleston's Negro population is known to have enjoyed liberties in the holiday revelry. While the slaves participated in pleasures which were highly tinted with an African flavor and accompanied with boisterous drunkenness and debauchery, the free Negroes assumed a more gentile expression of their holiday merriment. These free Negro inhabitants of Charleston were largely artisans by trade and formed a class apart; their entertainment was always a more perfect imitation of the white pattern than that of the slaves. A member of the free Negro class would immediately lose status upon the association with or the participation in some social function directed by the slaves.¹

With the description of the rural and urban situations with reference to the slaves, the setting of slave holidays and festivities is complete. Although embedded deeply in the plantation economy of the South, slave culture, with particular reference to the holidays and festive occasions, could not be viewed in its proper perspective without the consideration

¹Personal interview with Horace E. Fitchette of Claflin College, Orangeburg, South Carolina, March, 1941.
of his scattered presence in the cities of both North and South. In the
chapters that follow the emphasis will be placed upon the role of slave
holidays and festivities in the rural South.
CHAPTER III

ENTERTAINMENTS AND AMUSEMENTS AMONG THE SLAVES

Many general statements have been written with reference to the lot and the degree of happiness allowed the Negroes under the slave regime. They vary from such quotations as "Slavery was on a whole a happy and complete life for the Negro"1 to the opposite extreme which held that the life of Negro slaves was miserable, contemptible and almost unbearable. In attempting to describe the entertainments and amusements of the slaves one must reckon with the fact that the happiness or the suffering of the slaves depended quite substantially upon the disposition of the master and those of his retinue. The disposition of the slave is also to be considered although he is generally thought to have had a care free disposition and to have taken advantage of every opportunity for rejoicing. The truth about the amount of freedom for amusements is somewhere between the two extremes and probably struck a medium between an extremely enjoyable existence and an intolerably miserable one. The degree of freedom and license for entertainment and amusement varied not only between individual plantations, but between localities and from region to region. It is for that reason that the entertainment and amusements in different sections and states shall be examined.

In the early history of the Negro in the South segregation and contact similarly affected his culture, as the very traits which are now being perpetuated or eliminated from the whites, with resulting loss, sur-

vival, or transformation of his African heritage. Although the slaves were quick to imitate the acts of the whites in their social behavior, there remained in their institutions of recreation and amusement an African tinge. In the transformation of their African institutions the recreational and entertainment activities, along with their religious expressions, kept a large part of their original fervor and spirit. Substitution of new patterns for old, imitation of white counterparts and the survival of African customs did not affect all parts of Negro culture equally as segregation and contact did not operate uniformly in Negro life. Throughout the history of the South a strange inconsistency can be noted in the patterns of segregation and contact. Such patterns varied in time and space. From the social control exerted by the dominant whites in order to bring the Negro into participation in plantation work and society followed the tendency of "The Negro to take over English practices in regard to the direct maintenance and perpetuation of life, while in things relating to pleasure, his customs seemingly have more of an African turn." Not at all concerned with the social history of their entertainment and amusements, the slaves engaged whole-heartedly in their own kind of dancing, singing, story-telling and general merrymaking.

The slaves in the quarters had a life of their own. It was peculiar in its own distinctive way. There was much hospitality and sociability, much dancing, laughing, singing and banjo-strumming when the day's work was done. This was the native home of the plantation melody and clog dance. There was little that was morose or gloomy about the slave, either

1B. A. Botkin, "Folk and Folk Lore", Culture in the South (Chapel Hill, 1938) p. 577.

2Ibid.
at work or at rest. He was, under reasonable conditions and treatment, almost invariably happy and contented, polite and respectful to his superiors and visiting strangers.\(^1\) The Negro slave's life was one of suffering certainly, but in it there were times which yielded entertainment and amusement whose delights were all the keener because of their infrequency. He had his holidays and his social seasons. Slave holidays coincided with those of the whites and the festive activities were often patterned after those of the over-lords. Not infrequently the holiday merriment was supervised and encouraged by the masters. Although the slave holidays coincided with those of the whites little attention was paid to traditional national holidays except Christmas, Good Friday and Easter. In some regions the slaves engaged in harvest festivals that coincided with Thanksgiving.

Of the slaves in Georgia Gordon states that Negro slaves had their own recreation and entertainments; that parties and entertainments of the Negro slave regime were really the happiest things in the slave system.\(^2\) Their parties, he states further, were often ludicrous imitations of the ones of similar kind given by the masters, but the slaves enjoyed them immensely and they served to enliven their lives. Barn parties were also popular among the Georgia slaves; these were general get-togethers at which the slaves danced, sang and played games. Such parties attracted the slave inhabitants from many miles distance. At these gatherings there was Negro music strummed on the guitar, banjo or "beat out" on the bones, washboards, tin utensils or anything that would produce a rhythm. Much of the music was improvised and created for specific occasions. The white people liked

\(^1\)J. Winston Coleman, Jr., \textit{Slavery Times in Kentucky} (Chapel Hill, 1940) p. 76.

to dance as social recreation and the colored people followed in this same pleasure. Dancing of many varieties was common and the parties were hilarious but harmless for the most part, quite within the bounds of decency, law and order.\textsuperscript{1} Story telling was a form of recreation and entertainment which the slaves created for themselves. This was useful in small groups and was very important as a means of recreation in the family circles. The art of the story teller has been immortalized in the Uncle Remus stories which are included today in the anthologies of American literature.

Opportunities for slave merrymaking and festivity hinges to a large degree on the legend of "Southern hospitality"---a world famous institution. Often living upon isolated plantations, with vast expanses of soil---cultivated and fallow---and virgin green forests between their estates and the nearest neighbor, the planters had great need of entertainment and amusement. It was often found that one of the most satisfactory diversions for them and their families consisted in elaborate entertaining of visitors, who were comparatively few and far between. Any occasion that offered the slightest excuse for a social gathering was the signal for feasting and entertaining. Negro slaves, especially the domestic servant variety, with characteristic skill and diplomacy, unobtrusively worked themselves into these happy occasions.

If visitors were to be entertained on birthdays and weddings celebrated the slaves somehow persuaded their masters that they were members of the family and deserved consideration consisting of fancy clothing, better food, and holidays---insofar as the last named were compatible with the minimum amount of service required by the masters for the proper entertainment of guests. So the slaves entered into the spirit of cavalier gayety which existed in Georgia among the larger planters, especially in and around Savannah. It is a fact that many of the masters did not consider these occasions fully successful unless the slaves had enjoyed a 'good time' as well as the more favored members of the household.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 23.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 22.
Still illustrative of the general amusement patterns among the slaves in Georgia is the following quotation from Flanders:

The monotony of plantation routine was relieved by various amusements in which the Negroes participated. Long rollings, corn-shuckings, and dances were jubilant times for the sable population of the cotton belt. On Sundays they might hunt, fish, work for themselves, visit, sleep, or go to religious services. Negroes have ever been passionately fond of music and dancing, "when they are not mad with protestantism," a writer of the early nineteenth century remarked. Some planters allowed their slaves to have four or five dances a year, and certainly one at Christmas. Usually the Negroes imitated the whites in their dances, but on the rice coast they had two of their own: the Bull Canter, a general dance consisting in the rapid movement of the feet back and forth; and the sioca, a voluptuous dance imported from San Domingo. The evangelical churches, such as the Baptists and Methodists, were opposed to such worldly delights, and many a fiddle and banjo was silenced by their missionaries. Lyell states that twenty violins were hushed on the Hopetown plantation of Couper by Methodists missionaries, who finally effected a sort of compromise by allowing the slaves, when at prayer meeting, to move rapidly around in a circle, joining hands "in a token of brotherly love, extending first the right, then the left hand."

To labor was the essential role of the Negro slave in Southern society, therefore the recreational pattern was determined largely by the occupation of the slave and the amount of work and the time consumed in the completion of his task. Since slavery the annual work contracts between landlord and sharecropper ran not for three hundred and sixty-five days but for fifty-one weeks, from New Year's to Christmas; for every hireling went home for his traditional holidays. The slaves worked in the summer from daybreak to sundown. In winter the domestic

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1 Ralph B. Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia* (Chapel Hill, 1933) p. 171.

servants frequently worked until ten o'clock in the evening, carding, knitting, spinning, weaving and sometimes getting 'rations' ready for the hands the next day. To allay the monotony of their rigorous toil the field hands would gather frequently at night in the 'quarters' and shuffle around to the sound of a banjo or the beating of a tin pan, that furnished music not so classical, but yet served the purpose of providing a rhythm to which their tired bodies swayed in time.

Dancing for the pure joy of dancing was an important part of the slaves' recreational activity. A large proportion of the slaves engaged in it in spite of the fact that it was condemned by the church. In Maryland "dancing was considered a very wicked amusement for a church-member, although more than one of the colored people stated that it was no harm for a church member to dance if he did not cross his feet"1

Speaking of dancing among the slaves of Kentucky Coleman states:

They loved to dance and often performed without music or other accompaniment except "patting"--that is, patting the hands on the knees or clapping them together, and this they did to perfection, giving and keeping perfect time to the dance. These dances consisting of shuffling of the feet, swinging of arms and shoulders, and swaying of the body in a peculiar rhythm known as the "Double Shuffle", "Heel and Toe", "Buck and Wing" and "Juba" and "dance Jim Crow" were truly inspiring:

"Once upon the heel tap,
And then upon the toe,
And ev'ry time I turn around
I jump Jim Crow."2

Saturday and Sunday nights were often evenings of great enjoyment as all slaves were comparatively free at these times. Sunday nights

2J. Winston Coleman, Jr., Slavery Times in Kentucky (Chapel Hill, 1940) pp. 76-77.
did not constitute any bar to the playing of the ordinary "ring plays", as they were not considered dancing unless the feet were crossed. Strenuous dancing in which the feet were often crossed was left to "sinnuz", as non-members of the Church were denominated, and of which there were large numbers.

Perhaps the periodic parties were the most popular of slave festivities at which affairs the belles and beaux could be seen at their best. Parties were frequently given with practical objects in view such as the making of bed quilts. Bed-quiltings would attract slaves from the neighboring plantations and all would gather around to make adequate disposition of the rags which had been carefully salvaged from the "big house" in a much-to-be-desired quilt.

"Molasses stews" or "candy-pulls" were popular on some plantations and were held at frequent intervals. Upon these occasions a great brass kettle of black molasses was put on the open fire to stew. At the proper time it was taken off and permitted to cool. Then, after the merry-makers had scrupulously washed their hands the pulling would begin. The candy would be pulled until almost white and large quantities would be designated for the master and his household while the slaves consumed the remainder.

Watermelon feasts were sometimes permitted by the planters who lived at too great a distance from the market to make transportation of melons profitable. Watermelons were raised for home use only. Frequently, in the height of the watermelon season, permission would be granted the slaves to have a grand feast to which the slaves for miles around were invited. Much singing and dancing went on at these feasts, also.

Apparently, dress did not play a conspicuous part in the enjoyment of the plantation parties. The attire of the field hands was indeed
simple to the point of monotony with the linsey-woolsey dress and bed-ticking pantaloons being the chief styles. The dressing of the women's hair was even then a problem of deep concern. For days before a scheduled party the hair of the females was tightly wrapped with white strings, to be unloosed on this momentous occasion, when it would show itself in long, dangling "curls" for those of the long strands and close-cropped "waves" for those whose hair had failed to reach desirable lengths. In the matter of dress the house servants were often the envy of the part. They attended these affairs attired in the cast-off finery of an indulgent mistress, and would be resplendent in ribbons representing all the hues of the rainbow. Sometimes an especially favored lady's maid might be seen dressed in the cast-off silk that had done duty on many a "state occasion" for the lady of the "great house". Such extravagance on the part of a female slave would excite the jealousy of less favored damsels. The swains would look askance until all would become cosmopolitan in the mazes of the country dance. Occasionally the young masters and mistresses would attend the slaves' parties. Although the slaves expressed their appreciation and delight at the masters' presence, such honors would serve as a check upon the exuberance of the participants.

The plantation parties would start off with a general greeting and conversation. Telling tales, some of them calculated to "freeze the young blood, and cause each particular hair to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine" was a common mode of entertaining. Next would come the guessing of riddles propped by the more erudite portion of the company or "pulling handkerchiefs" for kisses, "fruit in the basket," "walking the lonesome road", "I'm in the well", and "fishing" were devices for getting a kiss from some fair one. In the play, "I'm in the well", a gentleman would make the startling announcement that he was in the well. Some sympathizing friend would ask, "How many feet deep?" and it is surprising how many feet deep a fellow could get in the well, if some pretty girl asked the question. He would then be asked, "who will you have to pull you out?" He would then answer, "Miss so and so," and the lady mentioned would be expected to kiss him as many times as he was deep in the well. This was certainly
a most pleasant way to be rescued from drowning. By this effort the lady would get into the well herself and have to be rescued in like manner. The plays I have mentioned, "Buff" and many others are similar in character. In lieu of what we call the Grand March there was a play known as "Walk ole John the Blind Man." Now, as to what this meant I must plead my entire ignorance, nor have I found a single old person able to enlighten me. The ladies and gentlemen would lock arms, march around the room and sing:

"Walk old John the Blind Man, so long and fare you well,
How you know he's a blind man? So long and fare you well,
'Cause he ain't got but one eye, So long and fare you well."

To make a variation in the march they would sometimes have one in front without a partner, form a line and sing:

"Come all ye young men in your youthful days,
Come look to the Lord in your sinful ways,
You will be happy, you will be happy,
While we are growing old."

At this each lady would "let go" the arm of her escort, and take that of the next gentleman in front. Thus the odd fellow would get a partner, and leave some other fellow odd to take his chances at the next round.

Strange to state while many of these plays by their wording show their historical connection but few show any marks of the plays of our mother country. Perhaps "I don' los' de dairy key" comes as near to the plays of Africa as any I can name. A ring was made, and one placed in the middle to try to break out by force.

A play requiring a little skill, but good staying powers and agility of limb, was known by the rather peculiar name of "Peep Squirrel." Two gentlemen would stand on the floor some distance apart, facing each other. A lady would get behind one and a gentleman behind the other. The company would sing the following lines while the lady and gentleman would suit the action to the word, each line and action being repeated:

"Peep, squirrel, eddle, deedle, deedle dum
Walk along squirrel, eddle, deedle, deedle dum
Hop along squirrel, eddle, deedle, deedle dum
Run that squirrel, eddle, deedle, deedle dum
Catch that squirrel, eddle, deedle, deedle dum."

If the gentleman finally caught the "squirrel" he was entitled to a kiss.

Another favorite ring play that shows its English origin was known as "King William was King George's Son." All of the party would form a ring by joining hands, and one was placed in the center. All would sing
"King William was King George's son,
And from the royal rock he sprung;
Upon his breast he wore a star,
Three gold rings, and a glittering crown,
Go choose the East, go choose the West,
Go choose the one that you love best.
If he's not here to take your part,
Choose another one with all your heart.
Down on this carpet you shall kneel
Jes horz de grass grows in de fisl'
Salute your bride and kiss her sweet,
Rise again upon your feet."

The play would then repeat itself, the lady or gentleman leaving the center having chosen another to "go choose the east, etc. It was exceedingly amusing to hear them sing, "An all de royal race he run", or "Star go ringing, and a-thundering, whap", or "three gold rings and a glittering crown", without any regard to sense or rhyme.

Another favorite play was after this fashion: a lady and gentleman representing the father and mother would be seated in two chairs, and around them would be grouped nine young ladies, supposed to represent nine charming unmarried daughters. Two young men would then join hands and come marching up to the group singing:

"Here come two drunkards, two drunkards we are,
Come courting your daughters so young and so fair,
Can we get lodging here, oh, here
Can we get lodging here?"

Notice the candid admission of the suitors that they are "two drunkards", and the equally candid statement that they are seeking "lodging", which in many instances in this day would not be an unfair statement of the case. It might be supposed that parents blessed with nine daughters unmarried would not be too particular in the selection of husbands, but such was not the case, and the mother or father would sing

"I have but nine daughters, set down by my side,
And none of you drunkards can one a bride;
You can't get lodging here, oh, here,
You can't get lodging here."

The disappointed suitor would then become very independent and exceedingly insulting to hate parents and daughter and sing,

"Two cents for your daughter; and less for yourself,
We'll take a step backward and better ourselves,
Since we can't get lodging here, oh, here,
We can't get lodging here."

This change of front would have the desired effect upon the hearts of the parents, and the father would rise, take one of the young
men by the hand, and welcome him to a seat beside one of the fair ones. The leader would then take another young man and get him off in the same way. When all of the daughters were married off, the groom would be privileged to salute his bride.¹

The general entertainment and amusement of the slaves which have been described were supplemented by various pleasures which differed by individual plantations. Periodic hunting and fishing trips were not without the experience of the work-burdened slaves. Many were their festive activities upon special occasions such as holidays. Although the slaves engaged in recreational activities after work hours most all the year round, there were special times during the week when the bondsmen were free to work for themselves and to engage in recreational activities of their own liking. The masters' plantation rules decreed such times of respite from toil.

On the rice estate of P. C. Weston in South Carolina in 1856 the plantation rules concerning holidays were as follows:

No work of any sort or kind is to be permitted to be done by Negroes on Good Friday, or Christmas Day, or on any Sunday, except going for a doctor, or nursing sick persons; any work of this kind done on any of these days is to be reported to the proprietor, who will pay for it. The two days following Christmas day, the first Saturdays after finishing threshing, planting, hoeing, and harvest are also to be holidays, on which the people may work for themselves. Only half task is to be done every Saturday, except during planting and harvest, and those who have misbehaved or been lying up during the week.²

On the Preston plantation the times for special festivities and holidays were therefore laid down by decree. The slaves availed themselves of these occasions to engage wholeheartedly in dancing, singing and playing. Although many of the plantations were not so formal about rules

¹Daniel Webster Davis, "Echoes From A Plantation Party", The Southern Workman, XXVIII (February, 1899) 54-59.

concerning the times of recreation and merriment, it was the custom to
give the slave Saturday afternoons and Sundays for their own use as long
as such use did not violate any of the plantation rules.

Just after the harvesting of the crops on many plantations was the
signal for merriment of a variety of sorts. Masters sometimes invited
the slaves to the big house for feasting and frolicking and the slaves
themselves sponsored their own entertainment and amusement. Yells of
sheer ecstasy, singing, and shuffling of feet on the cabin or barn floors
would last long into the night. After the emancipation the Negroes often
had a little money after the cotton was picked and sold. It was the time
of year when a few new articles were added to the scanty family wardrobe.
A party was in the offing and the new garments were flashed in display.
The following poem catches the spirit of these post-harvest attitudes
and although the slaves seldom had cash money, the spirit of the poem is
very typical of what went on during the antebellum period.1

Cotton Is All Done Picked

I's gwine up ter town an' spen' my money—
Cotton is all dun picked;
I's gwinter eat bread an'lasses an' honey—
Cotton is all dun picked.
I wucked mighty hard while de sun was hot—
Cotton is all dun picked;
An' I's arned all de money what I hab got—
Cotton is all dun picked.
White man sets on de fence an' figures—
Cotton is all dun picked:
He's got a mighty knack fur ter cheat po' niggers—
Cotton is all dun picked.
An' er rake away de leaves, an' we'll all hab a dance;
Tune up de banjer—pling, plang, plung;
Look purt fur de pinch-bug; watch fur de ants;
Tune up de banjer—pling, glang, glung.

1Opie P. Read, "Cotton Is All Done Picked", Harpers New Monthly
Magazine LXXV (November, 1887) 971.
De mules hab gone in de fiel' fur ter graze—
Cotton is all dun picked;
An' aroun' de sun dar is a thick haze—
Cotton is all dun picked.
De white boy goes ter de woods an' shoots—
Cotton is all dun picked;
An' de black boy struts in a new par o' boots—
Cotton is all dun picked.
Oh, de 'taters am sweet, an' de 'simmons is ripe—
Cotton is all dun picked;
An' I sets on de long an' smokes my pipe—
Cotton is all dun picked;
An' er roas' de ole 'possom, an' er po' de grease,
Make er nigger's mouf go clip, clap, clop;
Jes han' ter de ole man a mighty big piece,
Make er nigger's mouf go flip, flap, flop.

In her collection, Old Time Darky Plantation Melodies, Natalie Taylor Carlisle writes "another gay melody which was and perhaps still is particularly popular at cotton picking season is called "Sallie's Red Dress."

During cotton picking time cash is more plentiful than at any other time and thoughts naturally turn to bright new clothing. The melody reads

Oh, oh! You can't shine!
Oh, oh! You can't shine!
Oh, oh! You can't shine!
Sallie's got a red dress!
Buttoned behind!
Sallie's got a red dress
Buttoned behind!

When the whole story is known about the social conditions of Negroes in slavery, it is found that their lives were "not without laughter."

There were several occasions when the slaves were given an opportunity to celebrate and enjoy social intercourse. Although their express purpose in the southern society was to labor, the monotony of arduous toil was very often broken with holidays and festive occasions. These the slave, in his imitative manner, enjoyed immensely, and many were the amusements, though simple, in which he engaged, with and without the

1Natalie Taylor Carlisle, op. cit., p. 142. Publication of the Texas Folk-Lore Society (Austin, Texas, 1926)
master's sanction. Such entertainment provided an essential counterpart to a life fraught with hardship which would probably have been unbearable otherwise.

In the description of the holidays and festivities of the slaves there are certain special occasions which should receive more than passing attention. Because of their widespread presence and importance in slave life some of these will be considered in detail. It is doubtful if any description written today could adequately portray the importance, in its relation to the affairs of the community, which the old-fashioned corn shuckings assumed during the antebellum era. In the border states and many of the upper Southern states corn shuckings were the means by which a large part of the social life of the community, both slave and master, was carried on. Corn shuckings and their attendant gatherings were the one big event of the farming season and corresponded with cotton picking season in the deep South. Their arrivals were eagerly awaited by the inhabitants of all ages. Corn shuckings were not limited to the small farms of the middle and upper Southern states for most all the plantations of the South had their corn fields where corn was the livestock and for the preparation of meal for the slaves.

Upon these happy occasions the slaves from the neighboring plantations would gather at a certain plantation to shuck out "Massa so-and so's corn!" The slaves lifted their voices in song as they worked in pairs or in groups. The moonlight nights, which were chosen for shuckings whenever possible, rang with the melodies and rich harmony of the black workers. They sometimes raced to see who could work the fastest. Prizes were not infrequent for those who shucked out the greatest number of shocks. At the feasts and the merriment that always followed the
shucking of the master's corn the names of the outstanding workers were mentioned and eulogized.

The masters were glad to have the slaves, who shucked their corn voluntarily without compulsion from their masters, gather at their homes and shuck out their crop. They always furnished food and drink for the slaves after work in the field was done. In fact, the black workers were often fortified with "cawn liquor" provided by the host when they went into the field to shuck out the corn. An old steer would sometimes be killed or a few hogs would provide meat for a barbeque. The wife and the neighbors wives of the host would make huge cakes and would see that every slave worker received a generous slice. All was washed down with punch or liquor. When the occasion was over both the slaves and the master's household had enjoyed themselves immensely. Before going away the slaves would very courteously thank their host for a happy evening and ask him to invite them to his "cawn huskin" next year. They would often decide whose crop they would shuck out next and the time when this would be done.

Corn huskings were known as "husking bees" in some localities but the activities carried on were the same as those at the corn huskings. The master would often send a slave on horseback to the neighboring plantations and ask the planters to allow their slaves to come and help with the corn shuckings. It is remarkable how the masters would cooperate in allowing the slaves to participate in these events. They held it as a duty to comply with the neighbor's request and the slaves held it a pleasure.

In his Slavery Times In Kentucky, Coleman presents a very vivid description of the social importance and the activities which were typi-
ocal of the corn huskings, although his description has its specific setting in the state of Kentucky. In many sections of Kentucky there were a number of small farmers or planters who had cut a few slaves, or field hands. These farmers usually raised large crops of corn and could, with their limited force, complete their work in due season, except the shucking. Therefore the institution of "corn huskings" or "husking bees" arose. Coleman's portrayal of the corn husking in Kentucky follows.  

"Unless corn is gathered promptly after it is dry enough to crib," explained an old farmer of Madison County, "there is likely to be considerable loss—in fact, the longer the corn remains in the shock the greater the loss." It was the custom, in many parts of the Bluegrass, to send someone around the neighborhood on a horse and pass the word about that there would be a corn shucking on a certain night at some neighbor's plantation, and those notified would be expected to come and shuck out the corn on that night. All the neighbors were invited to be on hand with as many of their slaves as would volunteer or might be persuaded to come. If an invited neighbor could not attend, he was expected to send as many men as he could, for the crop had to be shucked out that night, or not at all.

On Walter Norris' farm, in Madison County, neighboring planters and their slaves were eager to attend the corn shucking, which had been set for a certain moonlight night in the fall of the year. "Our Negroes are fond of going to corn shuckings", wrote Judge Cabell Chenault in his diary. "I understand that tomorrow night they will set a night to shuck out Colby McKinney's crop, and on that night they will arrange for another crop, and so on until every man who is short of hands will have his corn shucked." Mr. Norris, the host, was expected to be at a little expense, but that was trivial. He would have several gallons of whiskey on hand, costing him but fifty cents per gallon, and would prepare a good supper for the shuckers and his neighbors who might come.

Everything was ready on the appointed night for the big event of the neighborhood. Presently, the host, Mr. Norris, upon hearing a great volume of song several hundred yards off, remarked as he entered the yard: "Those singers are my welcome guests tonight, and I must be out to greet them." Nearer and nearer the singers approached, and the harmony was beautiful. "At first I believed that all the Negroes in the community had gotten together, for it

1J. Winston Coleman, Jr. Slavery Times in Kentucky (Chapel Hill, 1940) pp. 70-77.
seemed to me that they were only the men from the Chenault plantation." After a friendly greeting from Mr. Norris, they passed towards the residence.

"The night was pleasant," continued Judge Chenault, "and the moon by this time was shining brightly. The Negroes began to drop around on the grass and joke one another, first about one thing and then another, but all in the best of humor."

Presently there came the sound of voices that appeared to be half mile or so away. The Negroes sprang to their feet as if by the order of a commander. There was much speculation as to who the Negroes were. Then, one of them, straining his ears, exclaimed: "I catch de voice ov one ov'em, it's Lariumore's Pleas." At this moment off to the northwest, but much closer, other voices were heard. Nearly everyone present recognized the voice of Noland's Allen. Still farther to the northwest, more singers were heard, and someone said: "That bunch mus' be Marse Jack Martin's niggers." Other groups on their way to the shucking were heard from a distance. One of the slaves ventured: "All ov 'en niggers 'll git togeadder out yonder at de forks ov de road; den you'll heah some singin' shottin' 'nough."

When the singers had all reached the yard, Mr. Norris greeted them with a friendly "howdy" and then returned to the front porch, rapped for order and said: "Men, you have done me the kindness to come here tonight to shuck my corn. I have only three hundred shocks. I am unable to tell how many there are of you, but I imagine you will not have to shuck over three shocks each if you finish my crop." Upon being asked if they would like something to drink first: "Yas, sah; yas, sah; we all's mighty thursty" came the replies from all over the yard, and, as soon as served, they filed off to the field. It was agreed that the shucking was to be done in pairs; two men to a shock, and the best workers, according to custom, were to receive special mention at the supper.

As the pairs were shortly arranged, the leader gave the command to "start your song," and a hundred voices answered from all parts of the field as each man grabbed a stalk for shucking. As they worked away, their favorite Negro melodies filled the air. Such songs as Foster's Massa's in the Cold, Cold, Ground and Old Blank Joe were the most popular.

About nine o'clock, word came to the white folks that the slaves had completed their task. "The field is finished," reported a small boy, "and they'll be here in a few minutes." Soon the corn shuckers began filing into the yard, as merry and as cheerful as when they started to work. .......

Drinks were served from stone jugs, and there was plenty to eat for all; but "the food vanished like dew before sunshine." Soon the Negroes began to say "Good night, Marse Norris", and "Thank you, Miss Norris, fur de good supper. Call on us 'gin w'en yo' all got mo' corn to shuck," and off they went towards their homes singing as merrily as when they came.

......Sometimes at these corn shuckings the Negro songs were gay and rollicking and contributed much to the rhythm and flow
of work:

"Ole Dan Tucker he got drunk,
Fell in de fish an' kicked up a chunk,
A red-hot coal got in his shoe,
An' oh, Lawd a-Mussy, how de ashes flu."

Another well-known and popular song was often heard:

"I started home, but I did not pray,
An' I met ole Satan on de way;
Ole Satan made one grab at me,
But he missed my soul, an' I went free."

In some of the slaves' refrains, there is a marked resemblance to the modern "swing" songs:

"Shoo, shoo, sugar rag roo--
Show me the hole where the hog went through."

Often in these old melodies, the Negroes delighted in mentioning their white folks:

"Massa an' Missus hab gone far away,
Gone on dey honeymoon a long time to stay,
An' while dey's gone on dat little spree,
I'se gwine down to Charles-Town a purty gal to see."

And another:

"Ole Massa take dat new brown coat,
An' hang it on de wall;
Dat darkey take dat same ole coat,
An' wear it to de ball,
Oh, don't you hear my true love sing?"

Many of the slave songs were more or less local in their origin and use, and in the Bluegrass region these were popular:

"Heave away! Heave away!
I'd radder co't a yaller gal,
Dan work for Henry Clay,
Heave away, yaller gal, I want to go."

"Eliza Jane" was a favorite song with field hands:

"You go down de big road
An' I'll go down de lane,
Ef you gits dar befo' I does,
Good bye, Liza Jane!"

In Kentucky where the institution of slavery was not so deeply entrenched because of the nature of the agricultural economy of the "Blue-
grass State" the corn huskings were very significant in the social life of slave and master. But in more southerly regions corn huskings often assumed much greater proportions than in Kentucky. In the cotton producing states where slaves were more abundant, the corn crops for stock and slave consumption were much larger and the occasions of corn husking were more elaborate. In North Carolina, for instance, though more noted for tobacco culture perhaps, many masters habitually gave corn huskings as a social event for the neighborhood slaves as a reward to their own hands for work well done during the growing season. At these huskings, too, the occasion was replete with barbecue, brandy and whiskey. After the corn had been shucked and the food cleared, dancing would begin to the tune of scraping fiddles and throbbing banjos. The slaves were very fond of these musical pieces. In almost any slave gathering at least one could be found with a musical instrument. When they had tired of frolicking to this primitive music the slaves would bid the host a courteous goodnight and retire in an orderly fashion. A very simple affair was the "cawn huskin" but it sufficed to furnish untold enjoyment for slaves and masters in all parts of the antebellum South.

Mock Elections.—One of the special festivities carried on by Negroes during the period of slavery at scattered points of the country was the mock election in which the slaves imitated the white population in electing a governor. From all available evidence it appears that the custom was confined to a few New England towns in the States of Rhode Island and Connecticut in the early days of slavery in the 1

United States.

A newspaper article of unknown origin strikes the keynote of the festivities on the great election day.¹

ATTENTION, FREEMEN!

There will be a general election of the colored gentlemen of Connecticut, October first, twelve o'clock, noon. The day will be celebrated in the evening by a dance at Warner's tavern, when it will be shown that there is some power left in muscle, cat-gut, and rosin.

By order of the Governor,

From Headquarters.

It is not easy to set the origin of this slave festivity either in terms of time or of place but the following notice shows that more than ten years before the Declaration of Independence it was well established.

Hartford, May 11, 1766.

I, Governor Cuff of the Negro's in the province of Connecticut, do resign my Governmentship to John Anderson Negro man to Governor Skene. And I hope that you will obey him as you have done me this ten years past when Colonel Willis' Negro Dayed I was the next. But being weak and unfit for that office do Resine the said Governmentships to John Anderson.

---

I, John Anderson having the honour to be appointed Governor over you I will do my utmost endeavours to serve you in Every Respect and I hope you will obey me accordingly.

JOHN ANDERSON

Governor over the Negro's in Connecticut.

Witnesses present:

The late Governor Cuff, Hartford. John Jones.
Quackow. Fraday.
Peter Wadsworth.
Titows.
Pomp Willis.

Since the colored Governor had no legislative or executive functions, and since no public records were kept of the meetings and elections it is impossible to determine exactly how long Hartford was the seat of the colored Government in Connecticut. But before 1800 the high office and its attendant festivities had drifted to the old town of Derby. The first Governor from Derby was Quash, a native African. He was a man of immense size and herculean strength. Quash was the slave of Mr. Agar Tomlinson at Derby Neck. When he was called to the high office of Governor his dignity was so sensibly affected that it was commonly said that "Uncle Agar (Mr. Tomlinson) lived with the Governor": Quash held the office many years. His ability and faithfulness to his master were vouched for in the will of the latter, probated in 1800, by which Quosh and his wife, Rose, were given their freedom, their little house, the use of a certain tract of land, a bar was to be built, he was to have a yoke of oxen, a good cow, and necessary farming implements.¹

Following Little Roman, who was Lieutenant under Quosh, came Eben Tobias to the office of Governor. Tobias had a son, the Honorable Eben D. Bassett, who was well-educated and who, during the Civil War, exerted himself successfully in enlisting colored soldiers. Through President Grant's administration he served the United States diplomatic service creditably as minister to Haiti. He said of himself

My success in life I owe greatly to that American sense of fairness which was tendered me in old Derby, and which exacts that every man, whether black or white, shall have a fair chance to run his race in life, and make the most of himself."

The little Connecticut town of Seymour, originally called Chusetown, and later Humphreysville, had a noted Governor in Juba Weston; he was

¹Ibid., p. 536.
"quality" among the colored people by reason of having been owned by General Humphreys, Juba served a number of years as Governor of the colored people, and his sons Nelson and Wilson were likewise honored. Wilson Weston was the last known Governor of Connecticut and held the seat until a few years before the Civil War.

In Rhode Island where slaves were still numerous, each town held its own election to which the slaves looked forward with great anxiety and which is said to have been marked by as violent and acrimonious party spirit as among the whites. It was day of festivity for the blacks. The owners, in accordance with their wealth and station, were expected to furnish their slaves with money and fine apparel and the Negroes assumed powers and pride and rank according to their masters' station in life. As the number of slaves diminished, these mock elections became less general and, towards the end of the 18th century, finally disappeared.¹

Although it is known that Election Day of the Negro Governor was an event of great festivity, the election formalities have not been preserved with accuracy save in one instance. Upon this occasion, the election of Eben Tobias to the Governorship, it was a test of wind and muscle, the successful candidate being the person who first climbed a steep and almost unscaleable sand bank. On the day of his victory Eben Tobias was decked with feathers and flying ribbons. As nearly as possible, the slaves followed the white customs.

In Connecticut during colonial times, it was the custom for every freeman to go up to Hartford to cast his vote for Governor. Although this custom could not continue with increased settlements, "election

"week" became a time when no one willingly failed to put in his appearance at the capital, Hartford. People of distinction from all parts of the state were assembled. With them naturally came many colored men in attendance on their masters, and those of all grades made it the pivot of the year.¹

Election day—not the day of vote casting, but of the inauguration of the governor—was one of great festivity. The governor-elect was met outside the town by the militia and escorted to the State-house. Later the gay procession attended divine service by some eminent clergyman. Afterward came the feasting and the election ball.²

The colored people, peculiarly alive to this effect of pomp and ceremony, made every effort to be present upon these festive occasions. An interesting and curious evidence of the African's appreciation of the elective franchise is found in their imitation of the whites in the election of a Governor of their own at regular Election Week in Rhode Island and Connecticut.

In Connecticut, they assembled at Derby, Oxford, Waterbury, or Humphreysville, as was ordered. The Governor and his escort were nattily attired in "uniforms" which were anything but uniform. These were hired, borrowed or improvised for the occasion. They assembled outside the village and paraded through the streets with appropriate fanfare of fife and drums and proceeded to the town tavern which was designated as

¹Ibid., p. 534.
²Ibid., p. 535
the center of festivity. The Governor-elect then dismounted from his steed and delivered the gubernatorial address from the tavern porch, after which the attendant "troops" trained. Whole slave families, including the babies, turned out for the election of the Governor and the latter were considered no handicaps at the hilarious election ball which followed the supper which was served for fifty cents.

In New Haven, Hartford and the intervening towns the feasting and dancing often lasted throughout the night and sometimes until noon the following day. Though the slaves were not strict prohibitionists in the matter of spiritous liquors, their indulgence was limited. The Governors pleaded for moderation in drink and they were usually obeyed.

Thus, for fully a century the custom of Mock Elections of Negro Governors was observed in New England. Utilizing their peculiar tendency toward pomp and ceremony, the slaves imitated the activities of the whites at real election time. Since the economics of the North did not support a slave system the first few thousand slaves that were imported either died out or were sold to the South where slavery was more profitable. With the shrinking of the slave population in New England this colorful event passed from the lives of the slaves. Just prior to the Civil War, Wilson Weston was elected the last Negro Governor of Connecticut. With him the festivity died. But, in its day of popularity, the mock election of a Negro Governor was one of the most entertaining of slave festivities in the North.

Pinkster Festival.—Another of the special festivities of a local character, apparently confined to the state of New York, was the Pinkster-feest or Pinkster Festival. Pinksterfeest was the Whitsuntide festival day of the Dutch and was popular during early colonial times. The Pinkster festival was participated in by the Negro slaves during the month of
May. On Pinkster Day, the colored people of the community would gather for miles around as they were granted their freedom for a week in order to observe the Pinkster festival. Merriment and hearty good-feeling ran high at these occasions.

"The Pinkster festivities commenced on the Monday after Whitsunday, and now began the fun for the Negroes, for Pinkster was the carnival of the African race."\(^1\) As was customary in so many of the Negro festival activities, the Pinkster Festival was dominated by a central figure. In this venerable New York observance the center of attraction and the leader of the festivities was a huge fellow named Charley who was called "Charley of Pinkster Hill", and "King of the Blacks". In all the activities of the Pinkster Festival Charley was the principal actor.

Charles originally came from Africa, having in his infancy been brought from Angolo, in the Guinea Gulf region. Besides being a powerful physical specimen and a very loquacious person, Charley insured his being the center of attention at the Pinkster festival by decking himself out in resplendent regalia.

Charles' costume as king was that of a British brigadier—ample broadcloth, scarlet coat, with wide flaps, almost reaching to his heels, with broad tracings of bright, gold lace. His small clothes were of yellow buckskin, fresh and new, with stockings blue, and burnished silver buckles to his well blacked shoe. And when we add the three-cornered, cocked hat, trimmed also with gold lace, and which so gracefully sat upon his noble, globular pate, we complete the rude sketch of the Pinkster king.\(^2\)

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\(^2\)Ibid.
The King of the Blacks amused the participants in the Pinkster festivals with his antics and his show of physical power. An old resident of Albany, New York recalls pleasant memories of his boyhood and the frivolity of Pinkster Hill, indicating at the same time, what Charley did to amuse his audience upon these merry occasions.

I remember those gatherings with delight, when old King Charley, a darky of charcoal blackness, dressed in his gold-laced scarlet coat and yellow breeches, used to amuse all the people with his antics. I was a light boy and on one occasion Charley took me on his shoulders and leaped a bar more than five feet in height. He was so generously "treated" because of his feat that he became gloriously drunk and hour afterward, and I led him home just at sunset....

On Pinkster Day Charley and his followers would decorate themselves with Pinkster blummies—the wild azalea, or swamp apple. There would always be a parade and the procession would start at Charley's master's house at 82 State Street, Albany. The Negroes erected booths where gingerbread, cider and apple-toddy were freely dispensed. The days and evenings of this week of festivity were spent in sports, in dancing and drinking, and love-making to their hearts' content. On Pinkster Day the Negroes made merry with games and feasting, all paying homage to the kind, who was held in awe and reverence as an African prince. In the evening there was a grand dance, led by Charles and some sable beauty, to the music of a cringing fiddle.

The Pinkster festival appears to have been confined to a few New York cities and especially to Albany. The festival was largely dependent upon one character, Charley of Pinkster Hill, King of the Blacks. When a festivity is built around a single character there is a tendency toward the dissolution of the observance when the central figure is removed from his position of prominence by death, senility or other causes. The last Pinkster Day parade was held in 1822. King Charley died two years later.

and soon thereafter the Pinkster celebration fell into discard.

Christmas Festivities.-- The holiday and festive season during the slave regime culminated in the celebration of the nativity of the Holy Child. Because of the almost unbridled hilarity which accompanied the Christmas season among the slaves, the event lacked the sanctity of a religious observance. "These noisy celebrations would seem more appropriate in commemorating the birth of Napoleon or an Alexander the Great. They totally misrepresented the mission of a Buddha or a Christ." The slave had his longest respite from work, his greatest opportunity for complete relaxation and recreation during the yuletide season. At Christmas the work of the year had been completed; cotton had been picked, ginned and sold; corn had been cut, husked and ground into meal for stock and slave use. Christmas was a time of relentless merrymaking as no thought was given to the plowing season which would begin directly after New Year's. The whole South relaxed, imbibed alcoholic spirits and caroused. The imitative slaves were in their glory for a period from two or three days to a whole week after Christmas day and they amused themselves thoroughly in what was even then considered "a most peculiar manner." Festive activities varied, of course, from plantation to plantation and from region to region. A general observation is, however, that the Christmas season was long and anxiously awaited in the slave quarters and when it came the slaves were always prepared to enjoy it with more elaborate entertainment and more spirited festivity than at any previous social event of the year. The merriment of the corn huskings and the harvest festivals was far surpassed in the Christmas revelry in all sections of the stronghold of slavery.

The sound of scraping fiddles, twanging banjos and shuffling feet was to be heard on every hand, in the slave quarters and the "Big House" too, resounded with merriment and dancing often to the tune of a slave's instrument.

As far back as colonial times the slaves have played an important part in the Christmas festivities of the nation. In the cities of New England and the Middle States slaves bowed their creaking fiddles for many a sumptuous affair for their masters and in the South no festive occasion was complete without the presence of slaves in some capacity. In December, 1778 the new colonial settlers at Louisville, Kentucky would have been deprived of their accustomed Christmas frolicking had it not been for the ingenuity of a black slave named Cato.¹

According to the custom of the times, the celebration of this first Christmas in their new quarters was to be a feast and dance. With the river teeming with fish and the woods full of game, it was easy enough to have the feast, but the matter of music for the dance presented a more difficult problem.

Cato, a slave, had furnished the music at all festive occasions during the summer and fall, but age and hard usage had left only one string on his dilapidated fiddle. All efforts of the usually resourceful Cato to find a satisfactory substitute for "cat gut" had resulted in utter failure. Hair from a horse's tail had emitted the most unearthly screeches when Cato's black hand wielded the bow. Deer sinews gave out only hoarse moans "like the melancholy hoots of a night owl," sad as the hearts of old and young as they anxiously witnessed the results of Cato's patient but futile experiment.

On Christmas Eve, just when things looked darkest for the terpsichorean part of the celebration, a boat loaded with traders on their way to Kaskaskia tied up at the new landing for repairs. The next day, with true Kentucky hospitality, the voyagers were invited to the feast and after dinner the news quickly spread around that one of their number, a Frenchman, was a skilled violinist.

Almost within the twinkling of an eye, a large place was cleared on a smooth dirt floor and tall backwoodsmen in fringed buckskin hunting shirts and moccasins and the stockade girls in linsey dresses and stout brogan shoes stood eagerly awaiting the first strains of music.

But the Frenchman knew nothing but the fashionable music and intricate figure-dances of his native land, with which these sons and daugh-

¹J. Winston Coleman, Jr. Slavery Times In Kentucky (Chapel Hill, 1940) pp. 11-14.
ters of the frontier were wholly unfamiliar. Obligingly he tried to teach them the branle, but his pupils, willing though they were, got out of time and figure. Then he showed them the stately minuet and played the music for it, but the participants hopped rather than glided, and, instead of bowing gracefully, "bobbed their heads up and down in quick succession like geese dodging a shower of stones."

In a last despairing effort to improvise a dance suitable to the music in his repertoire, the Frenchman suggested and attempted to illustrate certain other movements, but all in vain. By this time the dancers were thoroughly confused, disorganized and discouraged, while the baffled Frenchman stood against the wall, his fiddle under his arm, a picture of complete frustration, rage and despair.

At this critical moment, "a charcoal face with ivory teeth between thick lips, grinning from ear to ear," bounded into the room, flourishing a battered bow, his trusty fiddle clutched tightly in the other hand. Secretly Cato had traded the Frenchman four raccoon skins for fiddle strings, and now he walked up to the foreigner, and with the finest tact and politeness asked if he might play while Monsieur rested. Gladly the Frenchman assented, and Cato, tucking his rehabilitated instrument under a black pudgy chin, swung into the familiar strains of the old Virginia Reel. Instantly the atmosphere and spirit of the rude, improvised ballroom changed as if by magic. Discouragement, uncertainty and awkwardness vanished. Quickly and naturally the dancers fell into position, selected their partners, and, without prompting, wheeled and turned, bowed and circled with assurance and ease. Then, other pieces were played with varied tempo, in quick succession—pieces which had tickled the toes of backwoodsmen since childhood—jigs, hoedowns, shuffles and pigeon-wings—until past midnight, when need of sleep broke up the party, and the weary revelers showered thanks upon old Cato who had given their holiday such a happy ending.

Much more interested in their own pleasure than that of their masters the slaves created amusements for themselves, and spent the greater portion of the period between Christmas and New Year's making merry in their own inimitable fashion. These festivities were not without authoritative sanction for the masters encouraged andabetted the slaves in this short respite from the toil of the year.

In North Carolina during antebellum days "Christmas was the holiday which the slaves enjoyed most, for it was a general custom to give the hands a rest from the labors of the field for three or four days, or even from Christmas until New Year's or until "Old Christmas," which was celebrated in North Carolina with the firing of guns and fireworks on January 6th. Masters were usually liberal in issuing passes at this time,
and the slaves made little journeys to town and to near-by plantations, visiting relatives and former masters. The slave usually had more money at Christmas than at any other time of year. No matter how straitened or how penurious, the master seldom failed to distribute money as well as presents on Christmas morning while the slaves gathered about happily shouting "Christmas gif'1!" The presents were usually gay head cloths for the women and "hands of tobacco" for the men, barbecued pork, molasses, and weak liquor. On a South Carolina plantation which Captain Hall visited in 1829 the slaves had three days at Christmas, "when they have plenty of beef and whiskey." At the end of the holiday, they were often "completely done up with eating, drinking and dancing."

Christmas was the time for endless dancing. Fiddles, banjos, tin pans and other crude instruments throbbed long into the night and many were the times that the dawn found the slaves tirelessly cutting "de pigeon-wing" or "doin' a hoedown." From Edenton, North Carolina, in 1824 comes a statement from Dr. James Norcom explaining the liberty and license exercised by the slaves in his section of the state at that time.

During the season of Christmas our slaves have been in the habit of enjoying a state of comparative freedom; of having dances and entertainments among themselves; and of celebrating the season in a manner almost peculiar to this part of the world. These festivities are not only tolerated by whites, but are virtually created by them; for without the aid voluntarily contributed by their masters, their servants would be destitute of the means of making or enjoying them. Although trifling evils sometimes result from these extraordinary indulgences, they continue to be tolerated and practiced. It is so to be regretted that drunkenness is too common on these occasions; but this also is habitually overlooked and never punished, unless it becomes outrageous or grossly offensive.

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2 Manuscript in Legislative Papers, June 18, 1824. (North Carolina)
3 Ibid.
Slave owners in Kentucky were no exception to the rule when it came to rewarding the slaves for the endless toil of the year by releasing the social restrictions and lifting the work assignments at Christmas time. This season was a much-longed-for festivity and the respite from work was eagerly awaited by both young and old. An Ohio traveler, W. H. Venable, visiting Montgomery County, Kentucky during the winter of 1858 related an incident illustrating how much the slaves enjoyed the merry yuletide in this state.¹

On Christmas day, the streets of Mt. Sterling were thronged with colored folks, dressed in their Sunday apparel, and bent on pleasure. We were told that it had long been the custom in Kentucky to grant the slaves absolute freedom from duty on Christmas and, indeed, to allow them large liberty during the entire holiday week.

In the state of Mississippi "practically every slave enjoyed a day of freedom at Christmas, and the period was sometimes extended to a week. The average was about four or five days."² Plantation owners everywhere bequeathed the slaves complete freedom at these times. No case has been noticed of a slave being compelled to work Christmas day. Slaves wandered freely about the countryside, visiting neighborhood relatives and friends and neighboring plantations to visit former masters. It was said that most of the slaves considered the holidays incomplete unless one day was spent in a neighboring town.³

The distribution of presents and luxuries at Christmas time was a bright spot in the lives of the work-worn Negroes. This was the custom

¹J. Winston Coleman, Jr. Slavery Times In Kentucky (Chapel Hill, 1940) pp. 68, 69.
²Charles Sackett Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (New York, 1933) pp. 21-22.
³Ibid.
on many estates all through the South. In Mississippi, in one instance, the donation of gifts to slaves amounted to "a thousand or fifteen hundred dollars' worth of molasses, coffee, tobacco, calico, and 'Sunday Tricks', which averaged about eight or ten dollars a slave. Tobacco, so freely distributed at the yuletide season, was usually distributed at shorter intervals at the rate of one pound a month per slave. It was bought by the hogshead and was frequently of an inferior grade designated in the market as "Negro Tobacco."¹

In the extreme western edge of the cotton belt, in some portions of Texas, the early white settlers observed Christmas in much the same way as did the Negroes in the eastern section of the cotton belt. Mary D. Lake describes such a Christmas in her article "Pioneer Christmas customs of Tarrant County" (Texas).¹ She intimates that a crude type of fireworks was used to add zest to the gayety. Wagons went to Marshall and Houston for "luxuries" such as coffee and sugar, signifying a prosperous Christmas. Hunting and fishing made contributions to the season in food and sport. Music and dance played an important part in the early Christmas celebration. Musical instruments were not easily had but a French harp or a common fiddle would go as far as an orchestra goes now. Everybody had coffee and eggnog. For very many of these simple people Christmas without a flowing bowl of eggnog along with clove-scented apple dumplings and rich mince pie would not have been Christmas.

That the slaves of Tarrant County were a part of the Christmas festivities is indicated in the closing paragraph of Mary Lake's article.

Christmas came to the slave quarters as well as to the "big house." In that day every home had a large open rock fireplace, for stoves were not available. The Negroes were promised a holiday lasting as long as the yule log, that they might bring in would burn. They had

great fun in vying with each other as to who could bring in the largest log. Frequently it would require the efforts of several to bring in one. The "quarters" were always eagerly astir on Christmas morning, for it was the custom that the master would remember each Negro in some fashion. The shouts of "Christmas Gif', Marse John," "Christmas Gif', Marse Charles," "Christmas Gif', Miss Julie," have rung down through the years, and we recall a day that is gone.1

Unbridled hilarity and merrymaking were the keynote of Christmas celebrations among the slaves all over the South. Between Christmas and New Year's they attempted to capture the spirit of freedom and frivolity that had been denied them most of the year. Once on the rampage there was no letting up until their energy had been spent in tireless festivity. So was the general pattern of holiday festivity at Christmas among the slaves. But, in a small isolated section of North Carolina the slaves had a "peculiar" method of celebrating the yuletide season. In this section we find traces of the only known "Christmas mumblings" among slaves in the United States.

Christmas Mumblings.-- In Eighteenth Century England mumplings were popular at Christmas time. Marchers would parade through the streets garbed in unique costumes and wearing masks so as to bar personal identification. The stalwart colonists who settled in some sections of New England carried on this custom in the New World although the Puritans in many new settlements suppressed the observance of Christmas as a day of frivolity. The jealousy which the Puritans entertained of the celebration of Christmas Day, as connected with Popish usages, caused that day not only to lose its sacred character, but even to be entirely undistinguished in many New England towns. These citizens hated Christmas as a "wanton Bacchanallian" feast. Any person who observed the day

1Ibid., p. 111.
in Massachusetts not only incurred the disapproval of the clergy, but was subject to a fine of five shillings. On December 25, 1621, the newcomers who had recently arrived from England on the Fortune excused themselves on the ground of conscientious scruples from going to work with the original Pilgrims. When Governor Bradford returned at noontime, he found them "pitching ye barr" and playing at stoole-ball." Thereupon he ordered them to stop "gaming or revelling in ye streets," declaring that it "was against his conscience that they should play and others work." With the coming of many Anglicans in the closing decades of the 17th century, the Puritans became even more determined to permit no observance of Christmas. On Christmas Day, 1685, at the time of the new regime instituted after the revoking of the Massachusetts charter, Judge Sewall wrote in his Diary, "Carts come to town and shops open as usual. Some somehow observe the day, but are vexed I believe that the Body of the People profane it, and blessed be God no authority yet to compel them to keep Christmas under the protection of Governor Andros, Sewall forbade his son to accompany a party of friends to the services. But the temptation to join the Christmas festivities soon proved too much even for members of the most conservative religious groups and congregations. Of this sacrilegious tendency Cotton Mather sadly wrote "I hear a number of young people of both Sexes, belonging, many of them, to my flock, have had on the Christmas-night, this week, a Frolick, a revelling feast, and a Ball, which discovers their Corruption, and has a tendency to corrupt them unto eternal Hardness of Heart."2

In spite of the Puritanical restrictions upon the celebration of


2 Cotton Mather, Diary (Massachusetts Historical Society. Colls., sec. 7. pp. 11, 146.)
Christmas, the English mummmings custom carried over into New England according to the following account:

When my mother was a girl (she was born about 1752, and died at the age of 95 years) maskers came to houses and entered with a prologue, each making a speech. The performance included a prologue, combat, cure, and questions. I remember the following lines:

Here comes I who never came yet,  
Great head and little wit,  
And though my wit it is so ill,  
Before I go I'll please you still.

Next came questions and evasive answers:

'How wide is this river?'  
'The Ducks and the geese they do fly over.'

The asker was a traveler coming over. All were maskers in disguise, with swords, etc. At this time Christmas was not kept.

The author, W. W. Newell, believes that probably every other colonial city in America had the same usage, and kept it up until a period much later than that indicated for Boston. That these maskings were survivals of the Roman Saturnalia, is the opinion of this informant. No evidence has been found to substantiate the opinion that other cities on the American mainland observed such customs at Christmas, but in Newfoundland similar customs, no doubt English carry-overs, are found.

Around New Harbor, Newfoundland, in 1892 Christmas was a popular season for weddings. Evidence indicates that the whole Newfoundland country observed the yuletide as the time for marriage. At New Harbor it was an established custom to obtain some new garment at Christmas; at Scilly Cove, it seems, new garments were purchased at New Year's also. The lighting of bonfires characterized the Christmas Eve festivities at Fogo. Up until a few years prior to 1892 the twelve days of Christmas were kept as entire holidays as far as possible by many of the inhabitants.

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Enough wood was cut and stored to last until the Epiphany. In 1892 many of the denizens did so up to New Year's Day. These preparations for the celebration of Christmas are said to be old English customs. The Monday after the Epiphany was called by the country folks 'Plough Monday' as they then returned to their usual labors, after the festivities of Christmas; devoting the morning of that Monday to overhauling and ordering their ploughs and other agricultural equipment. The agricultural strain appears again in the regulation of festive occasions among the indigenous peoples of a land. The afternoon of 'Plough Monday' was given over to a final Christmas frolic.¹

The Christmas "Fools" and "mummers" of Newfoundland are of more immediate concern. They are recorded to have been active in Newfoundland as late as 1886 or 1887. The festivities of these mummers were of a local character, appearing to be a survival, but not known to be recorded as observed in England. The laboring classes in the days of these festivities had enlarged privileges granted them, if not by positive law, at least by well-established custom. So folly was 'crowned and disorder had license.'

The 'Fools' in question might be seen about the streets from Christmas Day to Twelfth Day. Their activities were tolerated and even encouraged until the disguise which they used became a cloak by which to revenge some petty spite upon an unsuspecting neighbor. Then they were ordered to be numbered, and finally were allowed out only on condition that they should appear unmasked. This was the official command that terminated this old custom in St. John's. According to the account it was not a statu—

atery law but merely the will of a stipendiary magistrate. Some years after they ceased to appear.

It was the custom for the 'Fools' to attire themselves in the most elaborate costumes with voluminous decoration. An account written by William Whittle describes one such fool as having a cap decorated with "a full-rigged brig." His milk-white shirt sleeves were literally covered with ribbons; his pantaloons were of the heaviest broadcloth; and his cap surmounted with the "full-rigged brig." The fools were very secretive about the costumes each was going to wear, as the identity of each of these characters was to be entirely unknown. Odd costumes were discussed for weeks on street corners, at firesides, and at friendly parties, but each one kept his secret in regard to his own dress.

Whittle also alludes to the common English custom of the "mummers" or maskers:-

Those who did not live previous to the "Fire" (1846) never saw this grand celebration, when some two or three hundred of the most stalwart fellows that ever trod the deck of a ship donned their silk dresses, their costly bonnets and rich laces, and, marshalled by their escorts, promenaded the streets, calling upon the governor, the clergy, and the mercantile fraternity. So important were these celebrations deemed by our ancestors, and such was the earnestness bestowed upon their preparation, that the most costly garments were loaned from the wardrobes of the 'finest ladies in the land' for that purpose.¹

The reign of the mummers, like that of the 'Fools' was ended as a result of a street row between them and the spectators, in which the latter received the worst of the encounter. For these fools were composed of the 'bone and sinew' of the town. The spectators often tried to disrobe or unmask a fool but they were all dispersed by a few well-placed knocks with the handle of the "sailor-fool's" swab. The 'Fool's escorting the "ladies" were attired in blue trousers, with gold or red stripes on the

¹Ibid., pp. 63-65.
sides, their white shirts covered completely with artificial flowers and ribbons, while from their sides hung swords which were loaned them from the barracks for the occasion. Young men and boys in feminine attire, extravagantly dressed, were thus escorted through the streets. One of the older customs was to drag a yule log along with them.

The foregoing accounts of mummings and maskings during the Christmas season on the American continent during the 18th and 19th centuries are activities participated in by whites alone. There are no accounts of Negro slaves having been among the frolickers. In the coastal region of North Carolina during the same period of the Newfoundland mumming festivities a similar but more unique festivity was in vogue. Perhaps it was also a bit more grotesque. The maskers in this state were Negroes, slaves and former slaves, who appeared in the towns of Wilmington, Hillsboro, and Edenton. Comparisons of the Christmas mumming activities in this small section of North Carolina with those of the Newfoundland account indicate some striking resemblances. But perhaps the parallel is more marked between the mummings in the British West Indies and those of Newfoundland during the 19th century, especially in the matter of costumes.

Prior to the Civil War and about twenty years thereafter mumming or masking festivities characterized the celebration of Christmas by the Negro slaves and subsequent freedmen. A point of significance is that the grotesque performance is of a local character and was found in the United States only in the Wilmington section of North Carolina. Why the custom should have taken root here and nowhere else on the American mainland is a matter of conjecture. If it was survival of English mumming pageantry it should have been dispersed throughout a larger part of the colonies and states of English origin. Why were not the white inhabitants engaged in these grotesque pursuits if they were of English origin? The parallels noted for Newfoundland were going on at the same time but there is no ob-
vious connection between Negro slaves of North Carolina and the white 'fools' and 'mummers' of Newfoundland. One plausible explanation of the Negro slave mumming festivities in Eastern North Carolina at Christmas is the connection between Wilmington, as a shipping center of the 19th century and the British West Indies Islands. Christmas mumming are a part of the Jamaican and Bahaman yuletide celebration among the colored population. Immigrants from these British Islands might well have established the custom in North Carolina coastal towns.¹

In North Carolina's peculiar Christmas celebration the pattern of mumming pageantry took the form of an activity called John Kunering, reminiscent of the Roman feast days which were sometimes spent in mummeries, stage plays, dancing and such interludes, wherein fiddlers and others acted lascivious effeminate parts, and went about the towns and cities in women's apparel. It was such a festivity which Horatio Smith alluded to in reporting that in the South "The Negroes every winter enjoy a week's recreation, including Christmas and New Year's, during which they prosecute their plays and sports in a very ludicrous and extravagant manner, dressing and masking in the most grotesque style, and having, in fact a complete carnival."² The sources on the subject of the John Kuners in North Carolina and the British West Indies refer to the custom as John Kuners,³ jonoconers,⁴ John Canoes⁵ and junkanoes.⁶ From the descriptions

¹Unpublished materials and manuscripts of Ira De A. Reid.

²Horatio Smith, Festivals, Games and Amusements, Ancient and Modern (New York, 1941) pp. 114, 352.

³Frank English Cox, "Whence and Whither", (Editorial) Raleigh News-Observer, (December 13, 1936)

⁴Ibid.

⁵Petitions to Governor of North Carolina in behalf of a slave, George, North Carolina Legislative Manuscript, 1824. (In Archives of N. C. Historical Society).
of the characters in these festivals, there can be no doubt that all these
titles signify the same grotesque institution of masked pageantry.

There are several points of similarity in the accounts of the Kuners
in North Carolina. It is agreed that the custom was on a small scale, in-
cluding the immediate environs of the Wilmington-Hillsboro-Edenton vicinity
and that the origin of the festivity is obscure. It seems that the Kuners
came into town in small groups of three or four, six or eight and sometimes
as many as twenty would appear. In Wilmington there is one account of the
Kuners riding into town on horseback. An editorial in the Raleigh News-Ob-
server cites a woman who recalled a vivid childhood experience with the Kun-
ers as three awful creatures coming up the street straight past her home on
horseback. They wore indescribable clothes, and their set, unmoving faces
were grotesque enough to strike terror to the stoutest of hearts.¹ This ap-
pears to be the only instance in this area in which the Kuners had steeds.

The conventional story is that the Kuners walked and danced through
the streets in small groups from house to house singing in regular cadence
to an African rhythm furnished by primitive instruments of cows' horns,
bones, tambourines, and drums. All wore masks and were especially careful
that their identity remained unknown. An alternative to a mask was a painted
or soot-blackened face. The writers who have preserved this North Carolina
custom agree that the costumes were most extravagant and that white people
donated materials for costumes and other properties that went with the occa-
sion. In each party there were some young men or boys dressed in women's
attire. The Kuners sang, danced and marched about the principal streets
of the towns on Christmas morn, collecting pennies from the crowds wherever

¹Frank English Cox, "Whence and Whither", (Editorial) Raleigh New-Ob-
server, (December 13, 1936).
they performed. The Kuners were eagerly awaited, particularly by the children; and as the first sounds of their song were heard, the children, with a sprinkling of adults, rushed out to the front yard and leaned over the cast iron fence to await the arrival of the well remembered figures of a previous Christmas season.

Strange as were the rhythms made in these dances, stranger and more nonsensical were the words chanted as the Kuners moved.

Hahi Lowi Here we go!
Hahi Lowi Here we go!
Hahi Lowi Here we go!
Kuners come from Denby!

Where Denby is, no one is certain. The chant, shouted in regular cadence, could be heard for blocks and the accompaniment of the rattle of bones, the blowing of cows' horns, and the tinkle of triangles added the air of gruesome mirth which frequently goes hand in hand with celebrations of "the folk".¹

Of utmost importance and of unexcelled hideousness was the leader of the Kuners. This worthy was always attired in an especially elaborate costume often with a presumptuous headpiece of some sort. A note of similarity is struck here between the "full-rigged brig" of the Newfoundland mummers and the "Houseboat John Canoe" of the Jamaican Negroes. The leader of the band of Kuners often carried a raw-hide whip with which he prevented interference from urchins in the streets; he was greatly feared by small boys. Once the group of masqueraders had assembled in front of a house, the leader stood out in front of them and sang the verses of his cryptic song. The constituents joined in at the refrain while they rattled

their bones, made of beef ribs, and made noises upon the cows' horns, triangles, drums and an occasional jews-harp. The total effect of such instrumentation was anything but harmonious. The Kuner songs, proceeded to tunes not so remarkable for their melody but for the marked rhythm which unmistakably suggested the rhythm of African tom-tom beats. The leader's solo voice sang the first line and alternate lines to the refrain giving an effect similar to the contemporary Negro work songs or camp meeting songs. The pattern for singing the Kuner songs was often like the following:

Solo: Young gal go ROUN de corner!
Chorus in Harmony: My true love gone DOWN de land!
Solo: Wet on de grass where de djew been poured!
Chorus: Hey, me lady, go DOWN de road!
Go DOWN de road; go DOWN de road!
My true love gone DOWN de lane!

Most of the Kuners are alleged to have been young swains and beaus of the plantation. One of the Kuner songs describes the arrest of a Negro known as Beau Bill, whose offense in plantation days before freedom, was the conducting of a dance hall.

Old Beau Bill was a fine old man,
A riggin' and a roggin' in the world so long;
But now his days have come to pass,
And we're bound to break up Beau Bill's class.

REFRAIN
So sit still ladies and don't take a chill
While the captain of the guard house ties Beau Bill.¹

¹Ibid.
Contributions were solicited from the spectators of the grotesque spectacles. After the song, one of the dancers, performing "chicken in the bread tray" or "cutting the pigeonwing", would approach the street audience with his hat or tambourine outstretched. Having collected a quantity of large copper pennies, the Kuners danced off down the street to the next group of expectant children.

When the collection did not meet their expectations they would ironically sing as they went on their way,

Run, Jimmie, run! I'm gwine,
Gwine away, to come no mo'.
Dis am de po' house.
Glory Habbilulum!

The Kuners had disappeared down the street with their song and dance. Until the closing decades of the 19th century their departure down the streets would be farewell only until the next Christmas but the Kuners are now no more. They passed with the dying decades of the 19th century, with macassar oil and the rockaway; the new century knows them not, and their existence is now merely a matter of tradition, an epic of folklore not well recorded. The reasons for the dissolution of the Kuners bands at Christmas are as vague as the description of their origin. In North Carolina the only known survival of this festivity is the "Kuner face" used as a mask Hallowe'en. Perhaps the custom "just died out" with disuse. The writer presumes that with the Emancipation and subsequent Reconstruction with its attendant struggle for status in the Negro community many slave institutions were cast into disuse. An aged Negro woman of Wilmington whose brother is suspected of having been a Kuner stated that the preachers with their powerful influence finally succeeded in abolishing the custom. In their opinion it tended to degrade the Negroes in the eyes of the white
people of the community. No matter what the reason for its abrupt ending in the 1880's the Kuners are no longer a Negro institution in North Carolina. Their grotesque mummery is now to be regarded as a picturesque memory of a relic of slavery.
In a system such as the American slave regime the safety and welfare of the dominating group depends upon strenuous methods of social control. The huge plantations of the South were scattered over a broad expanse of territory. Several miles separated the plantation "big house" from its nearest neighbor. In most instances the slave population greatly outnumbered the whites in the household of the planter. From the beginning of the slave system, therefore, it was necessary for agrarians of the South to instill fear into the hearts of the plantation slaves. Since rigorous methods of control were absolutely concomitant with the safety of personal property and life, the white Southerners devised ingenious measures for social control of the black slaves who often outnumbered them in a specified geographic territory. A suppression-psychology arose with the increase in use of slaves and the spread of the plantation system. At first the slaves were held in check by measures taken by private owners. With the spread of the slave system this method of social control proved impractical and dangerous. The local authorities then took it upon themselves to prescribe the social activities and movements of the black bondsmen. Finally the legislatures in the several states attempted to stabilize the job started by the private planters in the interest of the protection of their lives and property.

It appears that the main concern of the planters was that aggregates of Negroes were to be feared. They felt that as long as the Negroes on a single plantation did not contact "learned niggers", preachers, and o
ganizers on other plantations. Insurrections were to be feared only when Negroes aggregated and exchanged ideas. So restrictive measures were aimed at the control of slave movements and aggregations.

The festival, carnival and holiday activities depended upon meetings of the slaves in groups. Restrictions placed upon the movements of slaves by the masters interrupted the pattern of festive activities on every hand.

The private owners of the slaves on the Southern plantations often laid down laws concerning the times when Negroes might be free of their toil in the interest of recreation. But with increasing fear of slave insurrections these same masters laid down decrees concerning the movement of slaves and restricting the aggregations for social activities.

In the cities where there were also some domestic and artisan workers the municipal government regulated or attempted to control the comings and goings of slaves. In 1813 an acting mayor of New Orleans bewailed the fact that the Negroes were disobeying the ordinances of that fair city and carousing unlawfully in the following account:

You are witnesses like myself, gentlemen, to the contempt of your own ordinances: that the slaves are not policed, that they congregate daily in the saloons and fill the "carrefours" (probably colloquial, meaning not clear), loafing every evening in crowds at the doors of these places of dissipation; that they not only indulge to excess in gambling and dancing which you have forbidden, but they gather in great crowds at numerous houses in the city and the suburbs, and to the great scandal of the astonished public they give among themselves balls lasting far into the night; and finally, that these balls are patterned upon those of the whites, since the slaves enjoy the same brilliant light of lustres and lamps, dance to the sound of the same instruments, and have spirituous liquors and refreshments of every kind.1

1This is an extract from an address of Recorder Missonet, acting Mayor, to the New Orleans City Council, November 4, 1813. Quoted in A Documentary History of American Industrial Society. Vol. II pp. 153-154.
Slaves living in urban areas were much less restricted in movements because of their living close together in huts which made surreptitious gatherings easily maneuvered. There were always small stores in the community operated by poor whites who were willing to sell to the slaves liquor and encourage gambling and dancing. Some of these storekeepers were even members of the vigilantes, patrols and guards whose duty it was to see that Negro aggregations were broken up and that the slaves were punished for infractions of these ordinances. The populace often complained of the laxity and poor quality of these men who had the safety of the whites in hand. So ineffectual were the city guards and so disorganized were the patrols that the town slaves had little difficulty in amusing themselves together.

In fear of an impending uprising of slaves in South Carolina a group of Charleston citizens sent a "Memorial of the Citizens of Charleston to the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of South Carolina" in 1822. A propos of the attitude of this citizenry is their introductory statement in the memorial:

At a moment of anxiety and in a season of deep solicitude, resulting from the recent discovery of a projected insurrection among our colored population, your Memorialists submit to you the following considerations:

Under the influence of mild and generous feelings, the owners of slaves in our state were rearing up a system, which extended many privileges to our Negroes; afforded them greater protection; relieved them from numerous restraints; enabled them to assemble without the presence of a white person for the purpose of social intercourse or religious worship; yielding to them the facilities of acquiring most of the comforts and many of the luxuries of improved society; and what is of more importance, affording them means of enlarging their minds and extending their information; a system whose establishment many persons could not reflect on without concern, and whose rapid extension, the experienced among us could not observe but "with fear and trembling," nevertheless, a system which met the approbation of by far the greater number of our
citizens, who exulted in what they termed the progress of liberal ideas upon the subject of slavery, whilst many good and pious persons fondly cherished the expectation that our Negroes would be influenced in their conduct towards their owners by sentiments of affection and gratitude.\footnote{1}

The above quotation clearly describes the concern of the citizen memorialists about the matter of slave privileges of assemblage without white tutelage or observation. They proposed certain restrictive measures in the body of the memorial to the state legislature. At present the fourth recommendation which concerns the ineffective operation of the city guards whose duty it was to disperse all Negro assemblages if they were without a white person in attendance is in point. This fourth recommendation states:

The next topic to which your memorialists would invite the attention of the legislature, is the organization of a regular, efficient military force, in lieu of the City Guard, as at present constituted. The City Guard, as now organized, are of little benefit to the city. Most of them are shop-keepers or retailers of spirituous liquors to the Negroes. It is therefore their interest and it is notorious that this interest induces them to permit such of the Negroes as are their customers, to pass unmolested through our streets after the bell has rung, and the watch has set. Independently of this circumstance, the members of the Guard are employed in some occupation throughout the day, and when the night comes are totally incapacitated from serving as sentinels. In such a city as ours, where there is a large population, we should be extremely vigilant; a regular well disciplined force, well officered, and distinct from the body of the citizens, generally, should be kept on duty night and day. It is of equal importance to the city and country that such a body be organized, for insurrections, though they may break out on the plantations, must necessarily have their origin in the city. We should always act as if we had an enemy in the very bosom of the State, prepared to rise upon and surprise the whites, whenever an opportunity be afforded.\footnote{2}

The state legislatures tried to take up the job where the private and municipal auspices fell down. State governments often subsidized the patrol system whose aim was to control the Negroes and to suppress any anticipated insurrections. Georgia established a patrol system as

\footnote{1}{\textit{Effects of Negro Plots on Public Sentiment}, A Documentary History of American Industrial Society Vol. II, Plantation and Frontier, pp. 103-117.}

\footnote{2}{Ibid.}
early as 1765. The act of this year was called: "An Act for the establishment and regulation of Patrols, and for preventing any person from purchasing provisions or any other commodities from, or selling such to any slave, unless such slave shall produce a ticket from his or her Owner, Manager, or Employer."\(^1\)

It appears that the time of greatest concern among the whites about slave insurrections was during the Christmas season when the slaves were allowed their freedom from work in all Southern states. This was a period of complete relaxation from work for the black bondsmen and they were wont to enjoy themselves in the extremest of pleasures during this period. Dances were held and frivolous folly was the keynote of the season. The planters took the greatest precautions during this period especially after an insurrection had been quelled recently in some other Southern state. Negro outbreaks in other states always aroused Georgians and put them on guard. The following editorial appeared in the Federal Union, Milledgeville, Georgia, on December 23, 1856:

Patrols should sweep through every county in Georgia, between this and New Year, and all assemblages of Negroes be dispersed. The patrols system is an excellent one, and our friends in the country should see to it at once, that efficient bodies of men be dispatched through their neighborhoods to look after suspicious characters. Our city police should keep a strict watch upon the movements of the Negroes during the Christmas holidays, and particularly at night, provide against all assemblages of Negroes. These precautionary steps are called for by events that have lately transpired in neighboring and other Southern states, showing well concerted plans among the Negroes in some localities, to rise in insurrection during Christmas. Forewarned is forearmed.\(^2\)

Another editorial appeared in the Southern Watchman (Athens, Georgia News Journal) on January 1, 1857. A rumored insurrection among the slaves did not materialize. It had been scheduled presumably for the Christmas

\(^1\)Ruth Scarborough, The Opposition to Slavery in Georgia Prior to 1860 (Nashville, 1935) p. 82.

holidays of 1856 but for some reason no results were in evidence. The introductory statement of the editorial is as follows:

We believe our citizens have generally recovered from the 'fright' into which some of them were thrown by the report that an attempt at insurrection was to be made by the Negroes throughout the South during the Christmas holidays.¹

The patrols were kept busy in many sections attempting to disperse all assemblages of slaves in times of stress. Congregations of worshipers were not immune to the cracking whips of the patrolmen. For it was thought by the whites that the seeds of insurrection were sown in many clandestine meetings of the church brethren. They felt that "radical nigger preachers" and anti-slavery agitators had their best opportunities for arousing the slave from his state of diffidence at such gatherings.

The Georgia Grand Jury of Houston County, in 1849, called the attention of the public to the "frequency with which large crowds of Negroes are permitted to assemble, ostensibly for the purpose of religious worship, and more especially the practice of permitting these crowds to be addressed by Negro Preachers, or Exhorters." It was recommended that meetings be allowed only occasionally, and never without an efficient patrol being in attendance. "Slave congregations of this sort were often boisterous, and therefore nuisances, and might be used as a cloak to rascality."²

In addition to legislative acts limitations on the movements of slaves and curbs on their activities were desired by individuals. Some were very vocal about the situation. Concerning the amount of freedom the slaves enjoyed at Christmas time in Mississippi a citizen wrote a

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²Ralph B. Flanders, Plantation Slavery in Georgia (Chapel Hill, 1933) pp. 236-237.
letter to the Woodville, Mississippi "Republican", September 17, 1825. In this missive he aired his dislike for the custom in that state of allowing the slaves to wander about the country at Christmas. It seemed that his complaints were based largely upon the fact that the slaves entered into a spirit of frivolousness at this period. Many of them showed signs of having imbibed an overdose of some alcoholic beverage. He reminded the readers of the paper that, shortly before, it had been necessary to guard a religious service with a band of armed men. After this incident a meeting of citizens had appointed a "committee of vigilance to aid in keeping down meetings of slaves in the corporation." He therefore advised slaveholders to "keep them at home as much as possible, that they may know nothing else but their master's farm." It was the opinion of the concerned citizen that it would be better for the masters to send the slaves to the field Christmas day, if no other way could be discovered to keep them at home. His suggestion was that masters grant holidays at different times, so that all slaves would not be free to roam unrestrained on the same day..."1

Disturbed by slave insurrections in other states and by a few sporadic uprisings in their own state, Kentucky citizens became imbued with the fear of slave gatherings, no matter of what import. In the border states where the slaves were not so numerous, they were comparatively well satisfied with their lots. Rumors of plots and uprisings, similar to the Denmark Vesey affair in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia placed the Kentucky planters on their guard.

1Charles Sackett Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (New York, 1933) p. 80.
Movements of Negroes, apparently innocent, were not always understood. Scraping fiddles, twanging banjos, strumming guitars and shuffling feet in the slaves' "quarters" on Saturday nights were thought to be a sinister ruse covering preparations for escape or insurrection. The planters clamoured for more severe laws against the assembling of Negroes, against their becoming literate, and against any form of anti-slavery agitation by white men. It was felt by many Kentucky citizens that slaves should be restrained from prowling about at night and that they should be prevented from congregating after dark in large groups. Patrols were organized in this state also. Such mounted patrols, of "discreet and sober men", went about at night watching the movements and particularly the gregarious habits of the slaves. This institution was based on "good Negro psychology", for his superstitious fear of the "spirits" of the night was well known. The patrols were composed of poor whites who were severely detested by the Negro slaves who looked down upon them with disdain. Negro catching, Negro watching and Negro whipping constituted the favorite sport of many youthful whites.1

Some of the colloquialisms bestowed upon the patrols or patrollers were "patrole", "padaroe", "paderole" and "patter-roll", but the sobriquet most used and perhaps best suited was "patteroller". The familiar lines, "Run, nigger, run; run a little faster; run, nigger, run, er de patteroll 'il catch yer," were literal admonitions to the black man. One version of the "patteroller" song runs:

Run, nigger, run, de patterroll catch you,
Run, nigger, run, fo' it's almos' day.
Massa is kind an' Missus is true,
But ef you don' mind, de patteroll catch you1

In an effort to strike back at the "patterollers", the slaves, on occasion, were known to stretch wild grape vines, or hempen ropes across

1J. Winston Coleman, Jr., Ibid., p. 97.
the roads at night in such a fashion that the obstruction would strike a mounted man about his waist. In this way many of the mounted horse-
men, while furiously galloping down some dark road, were oftentimes rudely upset and thrown from their horses. To such an extent was this trick practiced that travel on foot came to be considered the only safe method for the scouting patrollers.¹

The wanton malice of the patrols of poor whites threw many a wrench into the wheels of the slaves' amusements in Kentucky. During the winter of 1830 an itinerant school master, Henry Hensley opened a country school. The following winter a "big snow" caused him to close his school, but he planned to open it in the spring. Hensley was something of a musician and thought that since he was renting a building for school purposes, he would hold a "Negro frolic there on the night of February 27, 1831. His eager audience came from the neighboring plantations and farms; to these slaves the word had been sent over the marvelous slave "grapevine telegraph" system. Forty slaves made surreptitious departures from their quarters and assembled at the Hensley school house to "frolic, make merry, and dance." This innocent form of amusement was against the peace and dignity of the commonwealth, as no slaves were allowed to assemble away from their own plantation at night, and under no circumstances, without their masters' knowledge and consent.

Word finally reached the captain of the patrol to the effect that "a nigger frolic" was in progress at the school house. This worthy hastily assembled his "patterollers" and deputized divers other citizens, to the

¹Ibid.
number of fifteen or more to break up the assemblage of slaves.

Surrounding the house the "patterollers" implored the slaves to surrender. But the slave merry-makers realized that a very exacting punishment lay in store for them if they were caught. They refused to surrender and proceeded to extinguish the lights, making the most of their opportunity to escape under the cover of the darkness.

Two pistol charges of "balls and buck-shot" were fired point-blank into the room by the "patterollers", whereupon the frightened slaves became confused and jumped through the windows. Some hapless slaves were caught and tied; some broke through the ceiling and hid themselves in the oasts. When order was restored, it was found that Charles, the slave of John Brand, had been "shot through the head and died instantly," and several others lying about on the floor were suffering from gun-shot wounds.\(^1\) Thus, the intended evening of frolic and dance ended in pandemonium.

Kentucky came in for its distasteful share of participation in the rumored slave insurrection of 1856 which has been mentioned in the discussion of Georgia restrictions on Christmas activities of the slaves. During the first week of December of that year rumors of slave plots spread into Henderson County, on the Ohio River, where it was believed that the holidays would unloose open revolt upon the whites. Another Christmas Day plot was revealed by a Negro boy in Campbellsville, in Taylor County, where considerable discontent existed among the slaves. Many other plots of insurrections were uncovered during the Christmas season of this year. One particularly concerned with the Christmas festive activities of the slaves in Bath County is in point. It appears that forty slaves, fully armed, were arrested at a colored festival. Their plan was to assemble all the slaves at White Oak Creek and then to fight

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 103.
their way into Ohio.\textsuperscript{1} Incidents of this kind made the masters wary of any sort of slave celebration during the Christmas vacations while rumours of insurrection were going about. The merriment of the slaves was curtailed to a large extent by such restrictions upon their movements and activities.

Slave life on the plantations was "not without laughter". Many were the occasions when work was put aside at the behest of the master. The black bondsmen were then permitted to indulge themselves in whatever amusement best suited their fancy. In the slave quarters the shuffle of dancing feet could then be heard to the feeble tunes of some decrepit stringed instrument, with the beating on tubs or rattling of bones thrown in for the percussion rhythm section. The Christmas season was the time when the slaves were permitted freedom from their work for the longest period of time and it was at this time that they made the greatest use of this coveted respite. But the time soon came when the masters had to lay down laws to the effect that slaves caught aggregating off their own plantations at night without permission and supervision of the master or his representative were subject to severe punishment. For the protection of the master and his household these precautionary measures were absolutely necessary in many instances after the slave populations outnumbered the whites on the plantations.

In the cities the municipal governments attempted to establish City Guards and other municipally controlled agencies to deal with the problem of slave aggregations, whether for innocent or nefarious intent. The city guards were invariably ineffective in the restraint of the slaves, since many were shiftless hangers-on at the community store and in some cases

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 109.
the owners of the stores themselves who sold "spiritous liquors" to the
slaves and who permitted them to go and come as they pleased through the
towns and villages at night.

The state legislatures attempted to bolster up the work of the local
law enforcing agencies by legislating against assemblages of slaves without
the presence of some white person. Systems of partols were organized
throughout the South; it was the duty of these poor white men to disperse
any aggregation of slaves if it were not properly authorized by the masters.
The holiday and festival activities of the slaves were greatly curtailed
by such restrictions upon their movements. In spite of these restrictive
measures the slaves enjoyed much freedom on the holidays and made merry
to their hearts content, since it was only in times of stress that the
whites enforced the laws restricting aggregations for purposes of amusement.
CHAPTER V.

"FORGOTTEN MEMORIES OF NEGRO FESTIVALS" ¹

The slave holidays and festivities described in this excursion into folk and cultural sociology have had their setting in the urban and rural South of the United States. Characterized by an abundance of fertile agricultural and forest land extending from the level Southeastern Atlantic Coastal plain westward across the Mississippi, whose delta basin claims the richest of black alluvial soil, to the broad cotton plains of Texas, interrupted only by the low southern extremes of the Appalachian range and the Ozark Plateau region, the rural South was the plantation home of the vast majority of Negro slaves. Urban life in the South centered around a few sprawling cities, none of which had a population of over a hundred thousand. Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah and New Orleans were important as shipping centers of export for the staple products of the South and ports of entry for needed goods of exchange.

Most of the festive occasions discussed took place in the 18th and 19th centuries after the black bondsmen had lived outside their native habitat from one hundred to two hundred years. During the interim between their "forced immigration" into the United States and the times of the festive occasions discussed, a process of acculturation went on. Was the social life of the slave distinctly African after a century of contact with a different race, a complex culture and economy—and particularly was the pattern of holidays, festivals and celebrations

¹Ira De A. Reid, "Forgotten Memories of Negro Festivals," Unpublished manuscript.
African in character? If traits of an African culture had survived in the festive activities of the Negro slaves over this period, why had they done so? If the native African institutions had been invaded by new ones and the elements of African heritage faded imperceptibly into a pattern not African and yet not American, what were the causes of such changes?

One of the universals underlying the culture contacts of strange races and peoples is the transfer of culture elements and the blending of heritages into a new culture organization. In the contact one or both of the cultures may be corrupted, that is, modified and enriched, through the incorporation of elements borrowed from the other, accompanied by adaptation of social structures or even fundamental changes. Resultant changes in the economic order are accompanied and followed by changes in the more basic elements of the culture. The religious—supercstitious system of both cultures may become disorganized and corrupted by the introduction of practices and beliefs of each. This supra-natural system is often seriously weakened as a prop to the political and economic order and as an instrument of control of individual behavior. Ultimately there comes a more or less complete change in the social organization itself through the destruction of the native institutions and the traditional patterns of life.1

The steps in the process of altering the native order, and the period of time required for its destruction vary with the cultures in contact and the historical conditions in which the contacts take place. But

the final result is inevitable. The introduction of foreign elements disorganizes and changes at the same time that it enriches the culture. The competition that arises between the native and the adopted elements may result in the selection of one and the discarding of the other. Or, these may be a blending of the two into an artifact superior to either in the particular situation. Finally a dual system may be perpetuated—a persistence of the old in competition with the new. This appears to be the case, at least for a longer time than another phases of culture, with regard to religious practices, super-natural beliefs, and such other immaterial elements of culture as lie close to the emotional center of group life.¹ Festivals, celebrations and holiday festivities, which may not be connected directly with the religious system would come under this category. In the attempt to answer the questions posited on the survival and disappearance of certain African vestiges in festival and holiday festivities these principles of race and culture contact must be used as a framework.

In the New World acculturation has been a very rapid process because of the miraculous industrial change and growth of the country itself. The Negro slaves imported from the Gold, Ivory and Slave Coasts and the Congo region of West Africa were quick to respond to the culture traits of Western Civilization. They soon became an integral part of the economic system of the South, for without slaves there could have been no great plantation economy on which Southern economic life was based. From the earliest period of slavery the Negroes began to participate on the

¹Ibid., p. 12
fringe of American culture. The slaves were located culturally in what might be called an "interstitial area." Their insitutions could not remain African and appeared not to become American, yet steadily changing, in the process of becoming—forever on the periphery of the culture of their African ancestors on the one hand and that of the New World on the other. The Negroes were isolated in more ways than one: economically they were destined to be a penniless group of bondmen, earning their bread "by the sweat of their brows"; socially the slave was an inferior piece of chattel property with no rights as a human; racially his was a deplorable lot—a caste of black men never to rise to the equal of a white. Combined, these aspects presented a cultural isolation on the plantations of the masters and in the urban communities of Negroes as well.

There are two sets of factors which warrant examination in regard to the character of the slave holidays and festive activities. These sets of factors will answer two questions: were the slave festivities on the holidays and festive occasions survivals of African heritage; or, were they imitations of an established social pattern? On the one hand cultural isolation resulting from economic, social and racial isolation would seem to insure the survival of African traits in these festivities, for there is a tendency to retain social patterns based on the non-material culture elements such as religion and recreation. Over against this consideration is that of the close spatial proximity and the relationship existing between master and slave which accounted for the rapid process of adaptation to the new culture as did the natural tendency for humans to imitate and through imitation arrive at the observed status of their economic betters. Evidence seems to indicate that
both sets of factors came into play during the process of slave acculturation and especially with reference to slave holiday and festive activities.

On the question of African survivals in Negro life William R. Bascom presents a clear-cut, logical and quite tenable position in a discussion of acculturation among the "Gullah" Negroes.\(^1\) This group of Negroes is isolated spatially and socially even today, and has been affected by American culture to a lesser degree than many Negro groups in the United States. Not withstanding their cultural isolation for generations resemblances to specific African tribes and culture traits are very rare. For the most part the similarities are to those elements which are common to West Africa as a whole--to the common denominators of West African culture--and not to those aspects of culture which are distinctly African or traceable to any particular tribe of West Africa. It is therefore difficult to determine what particular West African cultures have contributed to the condition of the Negroes in the United States. It is now recognized that the differences in the general pattern of the cultures of Africa and Europe were not so great. Certain fundamental patterns characterized the Old World culture which included that of both Europe and Africa. Similarities between fundamental aspects of European and African cultural patterns has further complicated the problem of assessing the relative influence of these areas in the culture of American Negroes. Since most African traits of a specific nature have disappeared, the Negro institutions which remain are those which differ

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from European forms only in their African flavor. From a scientific point of view the resemblances in American Negro culture to elements of African culture might well be rejected as too general and too indefinite to prove diffusion. The result of contact of the Negroes with whites, both in slavery and after freedom, seems to indicate that in cases where there was a difference or a conflict between African and European customs, the African customs have given ground to the new culture. But where the institutions had similar manifestations in Europe and Africa, they have survived, retaining an African stamp.

The pattern of slave holiday and festive activities was a part of a fundamental pattern of holiday and festival activities characteristic of Europe and Africa established first under Paganism and later adopted by the Roman Catholic Church to insure the latter's survival. The description of slave holidays and festivities in the United States points to the conclusion that there was an African flavor in these institutions. The wild ecstasy and excitement prevailing in the general entertainment and amusements of the slaves were characteristic of the African temperament and reminiscent of pagan celebrations. Some of the dancing was definitely reminiscent of the wild, sensuous, exhausting tribal dancing reported among African peoples. Professor Botkin says that although the slaves were quick to imitate the acts of the whites in their social behavior, there remained in their institutions of recreation and amusement an African tinge. In the transformation of their African institutions the recreational and entertainment activities, along with their religious expressions, kept a large part of their original fervor and spirit. From the social control exerted by the dominant whites in order to bring the
the Negro into participation in plantation work and society followed the tendency of "the Negro to take over English practices in regard to the direct maintenance and perpetuation of life, while in things relating to pleasure, his customs seemingly have more of an African turn."  

"Negroes have ever been passionately fond of music and dancing, when they are not mad with protestantism," a writer of the early nineteenth century remarked. Usually the Negroes imitated the whites in their dances, or at least devised their own adaptations of white routines. But on the rice coast of Georgia the slaves had two of their own: the sicca, a voluptuous dance imported from San Domingo; and the Bull Canter a general dance consisting of the rapid movement of the feet back and forth. In Negro music even today the African rhythm and beat is well marked. The music used by the slaves for their general entertainment and amusements was played on banjos, guitars and fiddles. These instruments furnished the melody and some rhythm. And the melodies were not African but adaptations of subjects relative to their work and their environment and imitations of some white strains. But the rhythm, furnished largely by crude percussion instruments such as drums, washboards, tin pans and tubs, and the patting of feet, was definitely African. The syncopated beat which is still prevalent in American jazz music leaves no doubt of an African influence. So addicted were the slaves to syncopated rhythms that many of the corn-huskings, harvest festivals and Christmas dances were held with only "patting" or "clapping" for

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1B. A. Botkin, "Folk and Folk Lore," *Culture in The South* (ed.) W. T. Couch (Chapel Hill, 1938) p. 577
music, i.e., patting the hands on the knees or clapping them together, keeping perfect rhythm. To this rhythmic music the slaves executed such routines as the "Double Shuffle," "Heel and Toe," "Buck and Wing," and "Juba."

In the matters of entertainment, play and amusement vestiges of African heritage are more apparent in some localities than in others. To attribute causation factors to this situation is simply a matter of conjecture. It appears to be probable that since for over fifty years before the Civil War the majority of slaves had been born and reared in the United States, it could not have been direct contact with African slaves that accounted for survivals of distinct Africanisms in some localities more than others. Two assumptions may be made after excluding this possibility. The first is that for reasons not known Negroes in certain areas kept a more complete cultural isolation than those of other areas and the second, that the slaves near ports of entry from the West Indies Islands were influenced by West Indian colored peoples who came to the United States under varying circumstances and conditions. Some of these were imported as slaves prior to 1808; others sailed the cargo ships making port at Wilmington, Charleston and Savannah; still others escaped the bondage of the Indies to come to the United States to try to re-establish themselves. Of those groups that maintained a rather complete cultural isolation the sea-island and coastal lowland peoples of South Carolina and Georgia are the most noted. The most peculiar instance of what appears to be an African survival in the way of festivals is the John Kuners celebration at Christmas in the towns of Edenton, Hillsboro and Wilmington, North Carolina. To attribute the existence of this routine of mummary in North Carolina during the 18th and 19th centuries to the process of diffusion of African elements is not absolutely positive in the light of the
fact that at the same time Christmas mummary was a fact in England, New-
foundland and in parts of New England. As was pointed out in a previous
chapter a "full-rigged brig" affair adorned the heads of the mummers in
Newfoundland just as the slaves of Jamaica used a head-gear shaped like
a house-boat in their John Canoe dance at Christmas time. ¹ But research
into the John Kuners celebration seems to indicate diffusion from Africa,
through the West Indies and into the United States. The celebration ap-
ppears to have appeared in each of these areas in the order named. With
the slaves it came to the West Indies Islands, particularly to Jamaica
and the surrounding islands. It became incorporated into the Christmas
festivities of these islands and the stories of the slaves' marching
through the streets of Nassau on Christmas morn attired in elaborate
costumes and hideous masks, dancing and singing the John Canoe songs, are
well preserved.² The Gomboy festival, the miracle plays and the dancing
of the "Set-Girls" are also aspects of West Indian festivals in which the
slaves were the participants and in which the African flavor was exhibited
in the temperament of the natives, the intensity and fervor of the festi-
vities.³ Slaves imported from the West Indies apparently brought the cus-
tom to the United States. Perhaps the John Kuners celebration existed in
parts of North Carolina other than those recorded in this research. The
custom may have died in the early adjustment of imported Negroes to Ameri-
can plantation life or it may have lived for a time in other localities
but has escaped the attention of the historians of antebellum life. It

¹"Christmas 'Fools' and 'Mummers' in Newfoundland," Journal of Ameri-
can Folk Lore VI (January, 1893) 63-65.
²Kenyon Gambier, "The Buccaneers of the Bahamas," The Saturday
Evening Post CXVII (February 7, 1925) 73-74.
³Richardson L. Wright, Revels in Jamaica, 1682-1838 (New York, 1937)
is not known that the John Kuners custom ever existed in other states and cities. There are no available records showing that the custom ever existed in Charleston, for instance, which was a port of entry for ships sailing from the West Indies. The Kuners celebration could have come over with the slaves who entered Charleston port but in this city such festivities were very early looked down upon by free Negroes and mulatto Negroes who opposed all social entertainment and amusement that was not a good facsimile of some established white custom. They insisted that only the "common niggers" perpetuated such African survivals, and they sought to discourage all activities in which the native character was well marked.

In Wilmington, Hillsboro and Edenton the John Kuners festival existed until the waning years of the 19th century. On Christmas morning small groups of six or eight or a dozen slaves would dance down the streets, garbed in rich costumes and hideous masks secreting their identity. A leader led the singing and dancing; he was the central figure and his costume the most elaborate. In Africa a parallel of this leader-superiority exists even today in the entertainment and amusement pattern. The singing of contemporary Negro spirituals in the United States gives the leader much the same position. He sings the opening line after which the group joins him in the refrain. The Kuners sang, danced and pantomimed for street audiences composed largely of children with a sprinkling of adults. Collections were solicited from the observers amidst a chorus of song from the Kuners; this done they danced off down the street to appear not again until next Christmas day. But the close of the 19th century witnessed the disappearance of the John Kuners celebration, gone was Christmas mummery in North Carolina. "Kuners faces," the false faces or masks used today at Hallowe'en, reminiscent of the masks worn by the John Kuners, are the only survival of this custom in Wilmington,
Edenton and Hillsboro. This was probably the last festival of distinctly African influence that remained of the plantation system.

In suggesting the economic and social causes for the disappearance of the Kuners celebration perhaps the two most plausible reasons were the ending of the plantation slavery and the education of the Negroes. Emancipation of the slaves doomed the plantation system as it then existed to certain disaster and with the freeing of the slaves came the gradual adjustment and reshaping of institutions among both the owner class and the slave populations. The period of Reconstruction was also a period of destruction for institutional forms. It took time for the evidence of these changes to appear; for several decades after the Emancipation there was little change in the pattern of Negro life in some localities. Many refused to leave the plantations of the masters and stayed on working and living with the same relationships in force that prevailed when plantation slavery was in full sway. Thus for twenty years or more after the close of the Civil War the John Kuners celebration was still observed. It was last heard of in 1886. By this time the Negroes were accustomed to freedom and were making adjustments to their new economic and social status. The quarters were disintegrating as the habitat of all the Negro workers on the plantation and so was the life in the quarters as it had been known for two centuries and more. No longer fettered to the circumscribed existence on the master's plantation the Negroes began to search for a new way of life in which economic and social betterment were the goals. Education was responsible in a large measure for the changes in the economic and social thinking of the freedmen. Formal education began to spread during the Reconstruction period. Schools for Negroes reared their heads in every Southern state and the Negro and white teachers sought
to give the Negroes an intellectual emancipation. The spread of protest-
antism and the rise of the Negfo preacher added to the education of the
former slaves and now that the scope of his preaching could be enlarged
without fear, he became a more important figure in the community life of
the freed Negroes. In many localities it was the Negfo preacher who ex-
horted the church members to refrain from doing anything that would make
them lose caste in the eyes of the whites. Thus the preacher influenced
the Negroes to give up usages that were of an African flavor. He was
not aware that such an exhortation was a bit contradictory and in consist-
ent, for although these preachers had adopted Protestantism from the
whites and imitated their services as closely as possible, a religious
fervor reminiscent of African temperament and superstitious character
typical of African religious life still pervaded their sermons. Never-
theless the discard and reshaping of some slave institutions can well be
laid at the door of the itinerant Negro preachers.

The disappearance of the John Kuners celebration in North Carolina
is said to have been a result of Negro preachers' exhortations to desist
from such activities as would perpetuate the Negro as a member of a de-
graded social caste. A woman whose brother was alleged to have been a
Kuner (the Kuners' identity was always carefully concealed) said that
she believed the custom ceased to exist in Wilmington because "the preach-
ers with their powerful influence finally succeeded in abolishing the cus-
tom; in their opinion it tended to degrade the Negroes in the eyes of the
white people of the community."

It would appear then, that largely as a result of economic, social,
racial and therefore cultural isolation, the slave holiday and festival
activities were tinged with a strain of the African, especially from the
point of view of the fervor of the participants, the character of the ac-
companying music and, in some localities, a festival which is itself apparently an African diffusion. It would be difficult to say anything more far-reaching about the character of slave holidays and festivals with respect to African survivals. The pattern of festivals and holidays was definitely European in origin since these occasions among the slaves coincided with those of the whites. Many of the activities on these days were also imitations of white festivities and it is only of the slave temperament, rhythmic music, the John Kuners festival and perhaps a few others, that can plausibly be attributed to African survivals with any degree of certainty.

In all human relations there is a tendency for people to imitate those who are in the social and economic classes directly above them. During the era of plantation slavery close spatial proximity existed between masters and slaves. In the beginning of the slave trade the relationships existing between slaves and white were much closer than they were after the first hundred years of slavery. Forty years after the first slave was imported on a Dutch vessel slavery was still an occasional problem and had not materialized into a fundamental system of the plantation economy. Small numbers were imported until "Cotton became king" in the South. The very fact of these small numbers meant that acculturation could begin under very favorable conditions. In Virginia African blacks held a status intermediate between slavery and servitude for more than fifty years, with the possibility of freedom always present as an incentive to learning the ways of the white man. Such close spatial proximity made it quite easy for the blacks to imitate white civilization. The

slave population was more or less forced to adopt the economic pattern of the white man but in some matters of social life and social institutions there was a choice for the slaves between their own African institutions and those of the New World.

Southern hospitality was a famous institution even during the period of slavery. The whites are said to have taken advantage of any excuse to hold an entertainment or celebration of some sort. Weddings, birthdays, the laying-by of crops and holidays furnished occasions for feasting, dancing, revelry, and general merriment. Slaves were always on hand to assist in such festivities, often furnishing the music for dancing. Thus the slaves were observers of the recreation and entertainment pattern of the whites and perhaps no group was more diligent in the immediate imitation of what they considered desirable among the white masters. From the beginning of slavery, even before it became a widespread institution, whites not only tolerated but often encouraged the slaves in their imperfect reproductions of white festive activities. Perhaps the master class was familiar with the value of such recreational, holiday and festival activities as a "safety valve" for the slaves who were under the constant grind of seemingly incessant toil. Therefore many planters considered an occasion of merriment incomplete unless the slaves were also provided for in some entertainment pursuit. Yet, for forty years prior to the Civil War many restrictions of a personal, municipal and state authority were placed upon the holiday and festive occasions of the slaves. Though it was an indirect sort of restriction, it was effective in prohibiting and circumscribing the pattern of slave entertainment and amusement. Primarily the restrictions were aimed at the prohibition of slave aggregations which they believed to be a threat to the
security of their lives and properties since the slaves were often in the majority on the plantations. A great deal of anti-slavery and abolitionist activity was widespread in the South during the pre-war years and a number of slave uprisings had actually materialized and had been quelled in such states as Virginia, South Carolina and Kentucky. It was therefore in the interest of personal safety that action was taken to restrict the gathering of slave without white supervision. Systems of patrols and city guards were established for the purpose of preventing the slaves from aggregating. Many masters and local authorities were lax in the enforcement of restrictive measures except in times of stress; besides, the slaves were ingenious at making surreptitious departures from the environs of the home plantation in the "dead of night" to attend a gathering for the purpose of "dancing the night away."

That the slaves adopted a pattern of holiday and festival activity which was a good imitation of the established pattern of the in-group is indicated very strongly by the evidence. Were it not for the fact of historical records showing the origin of the slaves in Africa, the slave holidays and festive activities could be explained entirely in terms of European survivals and as a pattern imitated from their white masters. Even a festival such as the John Kuners festival of Southeastern North Carolina could probably be explained with reference to only European survivals in the New World as indicated by Christmas mumming in Newfoundland and in parts of New England.

If, then, slave holidays and festivities in the United States were a part of the established pattern in the South and not a specialized one, why did these festivities not survive? The answer lies in the disintegration of the established pattern. Slave holidays and festivities were
integrated into and predicated upon the South's system of slavery and the plantation economy. With the close of the Civil War came the end of the system of chattel slavery on the Southern plantations. It took several decades for the slaves to grasp the full meaning of their legal emancipation and for them to begin on a large scale to avail themselves of the advantages of education that were opening up to them. The disintegration of established patterns of behavior and the re-ordering of slave institutions paralleled the fall of the slave system although there was a lag of a few decades. Slave life was no longer circumscribed in the "quarters" and the slave was no longer refused education of a formal kind. Through education and wider contacts with whites in urban areas as well as rural communities the Negroes learned to want more of the things that would help them become more like the members of the in-group. The Negro preachers now delivered sermons wherever they could command an audience. Although many of these ministers were conservative and often the decoys of white people in the interest of social control over the Negroes, many aided in establishing the self-respect of the freedmen. It was largely through their influence that many customs which were considered degrading to the race in the eyes of the whites were discarded. From the pulpit of the Negro protestant church have come many sermons in the interest of raising the social and economic standards of Negroes to those of the whites.

Directly following the Civil War during the period of Reconstruction Negroes began a slow exodus from the plantations to the city and from the South to the North in the interest of economic and social improvement. Naturally the institutions perpetuated through the period of slavery would be altered or discarded as a result of these changes in the social and economic structure.
Thus, slave holidays and festivities passed from the American scene with the 19th century. The shuffling of black slave feet upon the "quarters" floor and the rhythmic music of banjos, guitars, fiddles and crude tympany are heard no more. The Kuners have ceased to dance down the streets of Wilmington, a last vestige of a colorful slave custom. Facts on the origin, the importance of African influence and the specific causes for the disappearance of slave festivities may be destined for everlasting oblivion, but the memory of the once popular slave customs lingers on. A few secular-dance sings, the role of "the leader" in the singing of spirituals and the rhythm expressed in American jazz remain as vestiges of a lore unrecorded, in many phases, and unsung. And to the attitude of the Southerners toward the recording of historical events a large portion of the ignorance on the pattern of slave holidays and festival activities is due. Folklorists and historians have neglected a wealth of rich material for their art, for a more colorful picture than that of the slave holiday and festive occasions cannot be imagined. More extensive and more intensive research on the problems of slave acculturation and especially the pattern of holiday and slave festivities would no doubt yield a contribution to folk sociology and to the understanding of life in the South during the period of slavery in the United States.
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