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The Negro in Meriwether County, Georgia as reflected in the Meriwether Vindicator, 1873-1910

Josie Spencer Roberts Walls

Atlanta University

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to relate the political, economic, social and educational history of Negroes as seen through the eyes of the editors of the Meriwether Vindicator from 1873-1910. This period in which the major editor, William Tinsley Revill lived, and wrote deals with the enfranchisement of the Negro by Radical Republicans of Reconstruction through the subsequent disfranchisement of the Negro by the "Reformers" of the New South. It is an era that also deals with the frustrations and pentup hatred experienced by the whites during this transition.

Even though it is the tragic story of the villains into which normally good white men turned "to keep the Negro in his place," it is also the story of the Negro—his suffering and most of all his ability to adjust to his alien situation. The whites, however, were of two groups: (1) the anti-Negro—who capitalized on the fears and frustrations of the poor whites, and (2) those who accepted the status quo because of so-called "political expedience." Both groups, however, suffered "a guilt feeling that was not easily delineated, as every Southerner knows only too well."¹

The study will show how the Meriwether County Negro survived during this turbulent period of Reconstruction, which can be rightly called a

"social revolution"; his political and social activities and the economic progress of several selected Meriwether Negro families.
CHAPTER I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MERIWETHER COUNTY

Meriwether County was originally a part of Troup County, but was laid out as an independent county on December 14, 1827. The new county, which is 27 miles long, and 17 miles wide, was named in honor of General David Meriwether, who was a prominent member of the Georgia Legislature, Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives, and several times a member of Congress. Greenville, the county seat of Meriwether, was named for General Nathaniel Green in 1828. At first Harris City was suggested as the county seat, but by popular vote, Greenville was selected after General Hugh Ector, Meriwether's first legislator, sold the property on which Greenville now rests.2

Meriwether County is and always has been a predominantly agricultural county. The farmers of Meriwether deal with three phases of agriculture: livestock, consisting of swine and beef dairy cattle; farming, consisting of such money crops as cotton, corn and pepper; orchards, consisting of peaches and pecans and truck farms consisting of garden vegetables, sweet potatoes and watermelons.

In 1850, the last complete census record found by the writer, there were 8,492 whites, 8,004 slaves, and two free Negroes (ages 10 and 12 years).3 In 1900 the population was 25,248, but by 1910 it had declined

2Meriwether Vindicator, May 1905. Hereafter cited as Vindicator.
3Georgia, Meriwether County, Census Report 1850.
Meriwether County seemed to have had its share of public officials. Three of her native sons became governors of Georgia. Two of them, William Yates Atkinson (1894-1897), and James Meriwether Terrell (1902-1907), were born in Meriwether County and received their elementary and secondary schooling under the tutelage of the editor, William T. Revill. Atkinson moved to Newnan, Georgia and was elected Governor from that city. He served in the legislature and was Speaker of the House in 1892. He became governor in his 39th year and died in 1899 in his 45th year. Terrell, who resided in Meriwether County all of his life, also served in the legislature and succeeded Atkinson as Attorney General of Georgia and served from 1892-1902. During a recent "tour of homes" his house was opened to the public. John Marshall Slaton (1911-1921; 1913-1915) was born in Meriwether County, December 25, 1866. He attended the University of Georgia (M.A. 1886) and was subsequently admitted to the bar. At the time of his election he was living in Atlanta where his parents had taken him at an early age.

From the very formation of the County in 1828, there have always been a representative and senator from Meriwether. In an editorial, the editor summed it up rather astutely: "it is frequently charged that Meriwether wants the whole political earth. What county has given the

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4Vindicator, May, 1905.
5Ibid., August, 1889.
6Ibid., September, 1902.
state more illustrious men than Meriwether? This is a fine soil in which to grow great men. When we have the men and Georgia needs them, why shouldn't we, as patriots, offer the commonwealth our services?"8

William Tinsley Revill, the first editor of the Vindicator, was born in Meriwether County in 1836 and died in Greenville, Georgia, May 9, 1904, in his sixty-ninth year. After attending schools in the county, he went to Emory College in Oxford where he finished first in his class of 24 members in 1858.

He taught at Burke County, Georgia, Tuskegee, Alabama, and later at Greenville where he built up a promising high school. Other positions that he held were Clerk of the House of Representatives of Georgia, legislator from 1875-76, Warrant and Minutes Clerk during two years of Governor Atkinson's administration, County School Commissioner, Post Master 1881, cashier of the Greenville Banking Company, Keeper of Public Buildings and Grounds by appointment of Governor Terrell and legislator-elect for 1904.

For thirty-two consecutive years, from 1872 to 1904, he was owner, publisher and editor of the Meriwether Vindicator which was considered one of the most influential weekly journals of the state. When he died, the Atlanta Journal stated that "no editor has more faithfully labored for the good of his constituency than has the editor of the Meriwether Vindicator," and the Atlanta Constitution commented that "Colonel Revill was one of the Old Guard of Georgia weekly journalism who has been a power in the battles for democracy and for the people." Also upon his

8 Vindicator, April 2, 1897.
death, Governor J. M. Terrell ordered the state flag be displayed at half mast for a period of ten days.9

Judge Henry H. Revill, the son of William Tinsley Revill, was born in Greenville, July 4, 1872 and died May 27, 1961. He was admitted to the bar in 1898. He served as Judge of Greenville Court for 22 years; was a member of the legislature; was secretary to Attorney General J. M. Terrell; and was private secretary to Governor W. Y. Atkinson. For twenty years he was superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School. During forty years of this time, Judge Revill was editor and owner of the Meriwether Vindicator. Both father and son advocated what they conscientiously believed to be right, regardless of the opinion of others. This was the policy of the Vindicator.

9Ibid., May 9, 1904.
CHAPTER II

POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE NEGRO

A. Background

Before the history of the Negro as reflected in the Meriwether Vindicator can be effectively related, a brief summary of Reconstruction must be given. Upon the death of Lincoln and the lack of diplomacy on the part of Andrew Johnson in implementing his Plan of Reconstruction, the Radical Republicans put their own plan into effect. Under this plan the Negro was suddenly faced with freedom, citizenship and enfranchisement. Many historians, especially revisionists, have agreed that this was too gigantic a step for the Negro all at once. Even some leading Negroes expressed the same feeling. According to the leading papers of the day, "Negroes were still slaves at heart. They had been emancipated; but they had retained all of the habits acquired during slavery which had to be unlearned."

This is why many leading Radicals felt that some sort of training school for Negroes should be instituted. Some of the Radicals believed that it would be essential to give Negroes not only civic and political rights, but some initial economic assistance. Kenneth Stampp sums up

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the reason for Negro suffrage and the Freedmen's Bureau very astutely:

These four million people had emerged from bondage in complete destitution, without land, without shelter, without legal claim even to the clothes on their backs. Neither Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation nor the Thirteenth Amendment had required masters to make any settlement with their former slaves, for past services or provided economic aid from the public treasury. In the words of Frederick Douglass "The freedmen was sent away empty handed, without money, without friends and without a foot of land to stand upon. Old and young, sick and well, they were turned loose to the open sky, naked to their enemies."\(^2\)

These untrained, unlettered and penniless Negroes were suddenly placed on equal footing with their fellow man on paper—with laws that had to be enforced by the military governments. However, in Georgia, Radical Reconstruction had ended by 1872. This then is the period in which the editor of the *Vindicator* lived and wrote.

Stampp stated further that "no great social revolution ever took place without causing great temporary loss and inconvenience. There was after all, only one way that Negroes could learn to live as freemen, and that was for them to start living as free men—to make mistakes and profit from them."\(^3\)

Marshall Douglass Staunton in an editorial that appeared in the *Vindicator* supported this idea by saying that "Negroes, are essentially imitative and if by their own efforts, they seek to raise themselves from poverty, and attain excellence of good citizenship, give them a chance, sell them lands and let them be honest, industrious and systematic, and you yourselves reap the reward."\(^4\)

\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 122-123.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 123.

\(^4\)Editorial, *Vindicator*, May 2, 1879.
B. Political Participation

The Negroes of Meriwether County seemingly fared better politically than most Negroes of other parts of Georgia and the South. They were actually nominated, placed on the ballot and voted for along with other candidates. This does not mean, however, that everything was ideal for them. As will be revealed in subsequent editorials and articles, there were the usual prejudice, misunderstandings and intolerance that can be found in the average white community. Even though no Negroes from Meriwether County won seats in the State legislature, they received heavy votes in districts with a large concentration of Negro voters. During the election of 1874 in which the editor himself ran for and was elected representative on the Democratic ticket, he gave the political efforts of the Negro good coverage.

Last Saturday colored delegations from different districts of the county assembled in the courthouse and after placing Abe Terrentine in the chair proceeded to select candidates for the legislature....We were informed that Jake Harris, Dock Reed and Gidion Flemister were nominated and all three made speeches accepting the same. All are colored. Jake Harris was once elected coroner. Dock Reed is a teacher in the 7th District, while Gidion Flemister is a citizen of the middle ninth.5

During this time Negroes in Meriwether County and other parts of the South voted almost strictly Republican. Yet by 1874 there seemed to be some degree of disenchantment among Negroes everywhere. The editor mentioned how Frederick Douglass threatened to breakup the Radical party because of the treatment of P. B. S. Pinchback, Negro senator-elect from Louisiana by the U. S. Senate in its refusal to seat him. "Douglass is a power in the land," asserted the editor, "and when he

5Ibid., September 18, 1874.
sounds the alarm the children of Ethiopian Israel will betake themselves to their tents and concoct a general stampede which may break a good many political slates.”

The editor, as did all other white Democrats of the period, suggested that Negroes change their voting pattern and stop being "dumb-driven cattle." He stressed that Negroes would learn that their friends were the Democrats and former masters and not the Radical Republicans who had used them for selfish purposes. He even alluded to a Fourth of July Speech of Frederick Douglass in which he rebuked the Negroes for being "tools of the Republicans party and having been used, tricked and fooled, sold and plundered by the Carpetbaggers."

The empathy that Negroes on the national scene had developed for the Republican party was emphasized by the editor. While other Negroes were rebelling at being used as tools, the Meriwether Negroes were still remaining loyal to the Republican party. This loyalty was observed rather sarcastically by the editor when commenting on later political activity of the Negro.

Jake Wimbish and Albert Fletcher two negroes who cannot read and write are candidates for the legislature. Is not the bare mention of this fact enough to induce every man to go to the polls and vote for Roper and Taylor? Give Jake Wimbish and Albert Fletcher such a defeat next Wednesday that they will never dare to run for "de legislater" again. Every since freedom "come out" Jake Wimbish has had a great overpowering desire to run for the Legislature. Squelch him next Wednesday so that he will be satisfied to remain in private life forever hereafter.

Jake Wimbish was defeated but he was not "squelched" as will be shown in later political events of the Meriwether Negro. The results of

6Ibid., February 27, 1874.
7Ibid., August 28, 1874.
8Ibid., September 29, 1876.
the State election in Meriwether County in 1876 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colquit (Governor)</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norcross (Governor)</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewster (State Senator)</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beall (State Senator)</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roper (Legislature)</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor (Legislature)</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimbish (Legislature)</td>
<td>Negro Republican</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher (Legislature)</td>
<td>Negro Republican</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fletcher and Wimbish received their votes primarily from Greenville (Eighth District), getting 250 of the 332 votes cast. Even though many Georgia Negroes voted for or rather sold their vote to the Democratic Party, the Negroes of Meriwether County continued to remain loyal to the Republican Party.

Editor Revii1 seemed to be particularly pleased when there was some dissension among Negroes during the election of 1880. Because of this dissension, which was aggravated by the actions of four Negro men, there was little participation that year. The editor wrote:

Jake Harris was once elected coroner, George Lovejoy is a pretty fair carpenter, Abe Terrentine was formerly a porter in the Savannah custom house, Drake, according to Hamps Gates, is a "Traveler", but does all this give these four colored men the right to meet in secret session, bolt the doors, exclude everybody else and fix up a ticket for county officers? Well, yes, they can fix up a ticket for themselves, but they represent nobody else. As they refused to admit the other colored men into their private caucus, let the colored men refuse to touch their ticket.10

This did not stop Negroes from taking part in future elections, however. In the election of 1882 Negroes were most active. They met in their Republican convention and nominated a white and black republican—R. W. Granger and James Russell, respectively for the legislature. They

9Ibid., October 6, 1876.
10Ibid., December 4, 1880.
also agreed to support Lucius J. Gartrell for governor. Even though the Negroes lost, there was a sizeable gain over the last election as the following returns indicate.

Stephen (Governor) Democrat----------------------1219  
Gartrell (Governor) Republican---------------------984

State House Offices

Barrett (Secretary of State) Democrat-------------------1245  
Pledger, W. A. (Negro, Secretary of State) Republican-----935  
Wright (Comptroller General) Democrat-------------------1245  
Snelson (Negro, Comptroller General) Republican-----928  
Speer (Treasurer) Democrat-----------------------------1246  
Bowers (Treasurer) Republican--------------------------932  
Anderson (Attorney General) Democrat------------------1248  
Darnell (Attorney General) Republican------------------929  
Martin (State Senator) Democrat------------------------1235  
Brantley (State Senator) Republican--------------------899  
Atkinson, T.A. (Legislature) Democrat-------------------1233  
Sutton (Legislature) Democrat--------------------------1263  
R. W. Granger (Legislature) Republican------------------733  
James Russell, (Negro, Legislature) Republican---------896

Negroes campaigned and voted in subsequent elections. At times they opposed white men who later became governors of Georgia. By 1886, however, Negro voter participation had almost dwindled to nothing. In the 1886 election as compared with the 1884 election everyone, surmised the editor, seemingly decided to stay home.

For Representatives of Meriwether County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1884</th>
<th>1886</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J.M. Terrell (Governor of Georgia 1903-07)</td>
<td>J.M. Terrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.C. Trash</td>
<td>1221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Russell (Negro)</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Florence (Negro)</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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11Ibid., October 6, 1882.  
12Ibid., October 3, 1884, October 9, 1896.
Although no Negroes actually ran for office in the next three or four elections, they still held party caucuses and conventions. The *Vindictor* related how they met and elected Abe Terrentine and Joiner Wimbish as delegates to Atlanta. When the Populist party was popular in Georgia there was little evidence of Meriwether County Negroes voting for the Populists. Even the attempt by national Negroes to form a party of their own had little effect on them. Yet this possibility seemed to worry the editor of the *Vindictor*. His concern was based on the fear that a Negro third party would induce either party to make concessions to it; especially if said party polled heavily. His fears were voiced thus: "Turner and Washington say that they might not select candidates if they secure an appropriation. Hanna and his school of politicians would readily grant the appropriations and take votes in payment."\(^{13}\)

Negroes played a major part in the 1894 gubernatorial election in which the standard bearer of the Democratic party was William Y. Atkinson, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Populist candidate was James K. Hines, a member of the Atlanta bar. "Stuffed ballot boxes, double voting, and purchase of Negro votes at one dollar each was the order of the day."\(^{14}\)

There is ample evidence that Negro votes were eagerly sought by the Populists and Democrats who outdid themselves by pointing out what their parties had done for the Negroes and were still doing. In an effort to smear Judge Hines, the Democrats published his voting record in the Georgia

\(^{13}\)Ibid., June 15, 1900.
\(^{14}\)Saye, op. cit., p. 329.
House. One very obnoxious measure was the "Slavery Bill" that was introduced by Billy Peek in the Georgia House on July 24, 1885. Judge Hines voted for its passage, but it was lost. This bill was designed to actually force Negroes to work for unpleasant landlords. It said in essence:

That from and after passage of this act, any farm laborer under contract written or verbal, to labor on the farm for the space of twelve months in succession, who shall, with out just cause or provocation, leave said farm or refuse to do such farm work as is necessary to the preparation of the land, or the cultivation of the crops or the gathering or harvesting of the same or marketing of the same, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction shall be punished according to section 1410 of this code. But in all cases the jury shall be the judge of what is just cause or provocation.15

This bill was fought bitterly by Negroes and some whites.

Governor Atkinson won the election of 1894, and when he ran for reelection in 1896, Negroes were high in their praise for him. The editor of the Vindicator, who was Governor Atkinson's former teacher, was so pleased that he was lavish in his coverage of the Negroes' support for Governor Atkinson. The Negroes advocacy for the governor's re-election was summed up "Well done, good and faithful servant."

This can be attested to by the statement by R. A. Carter of Augusta, which the Vindicator was pleased to publish.

R. A. Carter Tells why the Negroes Supported Governor Atkinson

1. On Education (advocates equal opportunities for all)
2. On Chain gang (insists on just and humane treatment. Punishes guilty party)
3. On Lynch Law (condemns lynching and asked for a law to be passed empowering the governor to punish sheriffs who let prisoners be taken from them)
4. Investigated case of one Adolphus Duncan twice convicted of the crime of rape and had him pardoned.16

15Vindicator, September 14, 1894.
Even with this endorsement of the Democratic governor, some Meriwether Negroes still clung to the Republican party. There was evidence, however, that they were being used by local whites to perpetuate their own ends. According to the editor, one such person was A. H. Freeman. In commenting, he voiced his sentiments thus: "Republican Mass Meeting, A. H. Freeman Boss. His colored tenants, well drilled, run the machine while he watches like an overseer, to see the work well done. His Horror of ways that are Dark, and Tricks that are shady are illustrated by his works." The editor conveyed the idea that there were white men in Meriwether who were willing to sacrifice the Caucasian race to the Negro for their own political aggrandizement.

By 1896, the Populist Party ceased to be much of a threat by advocating fusion with the Democrats. Fusion was urged by such popular Negro leaders as William Pledger of Atlanta, a leading Republican and Booker T. Washington. Pledger felt that Negroes needed to fuse because they could not look for any political offices from the Republicans. Washington, on the other hand, urged merger to improve race relations. In an alleged letter to a prominent North Carolina Negro, Washington wrote:

White Man Negroes' Best Friend

Is there any reason why the Negroes in the South should continue to oppose the Southern white man in his politics? Is this not the source of nearly all of our trouble? Unconsciously we seem to have gotten the idea into our blood and bones that we are reacting in a manly way to oppose Southern white men with our votes.

In summing up his feeling toward Negro votes and the Democratic

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17Ibid., July 24, 1896, August 19, 1896.
18Ibid., April 14, 1899.
party, the editor used the saying of Hill, an old ex-slave, who came to the \textit{Vindicator} with a Republican ticket and said, "Boss they has given me a ticket and I wants to know is it right. The white folks feeds me and I wishes to vote with them."\textsuperscript{19} The editor commented that "if the negroes of the South would realize as Hill, has done, that the white people of this section are their best friends and refuse to heed to the northern southhater, an era of good feeling between the races would result."\textsuperscript{20}

C. General Attitude of Editors toward Negro Appointments

The Republican policy of appointing a few Negroes to federal positions in Georgia and the South caused strong reaction among white Southerners. They were especially critical of the Presidents who made the appointments. Even though there was no actual appointment in Meriwether County, ill feelings were engendered by the rumored report of a Negro census taker being appointed to Meriwether. This was curtailed, however, when "On May 29, 1899 Congressman Adamson sent a wire to Washington barring the appointment of a Negro census taker in Meriwether."\textsuperscript{21}

The editor of the \textit{Vindicator} gave several reasons why whites in Meriwether did not want a Negro census taker. The most prevalent one was that it would permit a Negro man going into the homes of white people while the men and older boys were away. This would lead to, according

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., August, 1899.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{21}Clarence A. Bacote, "Negro Officeholders in Georgia Under President McKinley," \textit{Journal of Negro History}, XLIV (July, 1959), 233.
to the editor, unnecessary trouble between the two races.

We have never had any trouble between the white people and the negroes, and we have determined that the negro shall always receive just and fair treatment at our hands, but we do not proposed to have negroes appointed census enumerators if there is any way to prevent it....The whites and blacks have been at peace with each other since the reconstruction era. There have been no commissions of nameless crimes "raping" on the one side and no lynching on the other.22

The editor also alluded to the fact that Albert Terrentine, a prominent Negro politician of Meriwether County, was partly responsible for a Negro census taker not being appointed in Meriwether County. Since Terrentine was a member of the Republican State Executive Committee, all appointees would need their endorsement before being appointed by the district supervisor. Terrentine said: "I would not have the position myself and have no intention of indorsing[sic]any negro in Meriwether County for the position...."23 It is interesting to note here, however, that Terrentine was very cognizant of the feelings engendered in the white community upon the mere possibility of such. According to Terrentine, when a woman census enumerator was suggested, the Congress-man admitted that a "negro enumerator was obnoxious to the whites of Meriwether County."

Considerable newspaper coverage was given to the appointment of J. H. Lofton as postmaster of Hogansville, a fourth class post office with a population of about five hundred, which resulted in violence and bodily harm to the incumbent.24

22Editorial, Vindicator, June 2, 1899.

23Ibid.

Lofton's appointment really alarmed the whites of Meriwether because Hogansville was only a few miles away from Greenville. Another factor was that Lofton was somewhat "persona non grata" with the whites as expressed by the editor.

Loftin, sic the negro postmaster of Hogansville, taught a colored school in Meriwether last year. He was represented then as the most uppity colored pedagogue that the county has ever known. He seems to be one of the fellows that is bigger than the position he fills.25

All subsequent comments were colored by this bias opinion of Lofton and were referred to as the "Hogansville Affair." The whites of Hogansville were so enraged over having a Negro postmaster that a group of men tried to assassinate him. Failing in that they burned his post office and when he opened one in the Negro district, they boycotted it completely. When these incidents brought down federal inspectors from Washington, the whites of Hogansville and neighboring counties became even more incensed. They blamed everyone and everybody for their inconveniences except themselves. The editor of the Vindicator amassed both historical and Biblical examples to justify his stand. He equated the objections of the people to Lofton's appointment to the objections of the colonists to the Royal governors. According to him, the president kindled fire that started the trouble with his appointment of a postmaster objectionable to the people. He likened it to the following statement attributed to Moses, "If fire breaks out and catch in thorns so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field be consumed therewith; he that

25Vindicator, September 24, 1897.
kindled the fire shall surely make restitution."26

The incident finally died down and was settled by the lifting of the blockade and the fighting of the "Cuban War", according to the editor. He asserted that "the lifting of the blockade was a direct result of the Cuban War."27 The burning of Lofton's post office which resulted in another appointment in Washington and his leaving Hogansville were also contributing causes to the quietening of the "Hogansville Affair."28

Another issue that received mention in the Vindicator was the "Indianola Affair" which concerned the appointment of Mrs. Minnie E. Cox, the Negro postmistress of Indianola, Mississippi, and the subsequent closing of the Indianola post office when the "white trash" as they were called by President Roosevelt, refused to accept Mrs. Cox. The people organized a private mail service and defied Roosevelt who finally lifted the blockade about a year later when Mrs. Cox resigned and a white Democratic postmaster was appointed.29

The editor of the Vindicator blamed President Roosevelt for this appointment, but a true account of the appointment is given by Willard B. Gatewood.

Mrs. Minnie M. Cox was first put in office by Benjamin Harrison when no white Republican in the area qualified for the job. After the Democratic interlude of Grover Cleveland, William

26Ibid., October 1, 1897.
27Ibid.
29Vindicator, January 30, 1903.
McKinley reappointed her in 1897 and on January 25, 1900, McKinley raised her from fourth class to third class—for a full four year term. Both Senators from Mississippi approved her appointment and three prominent white citizens of Indianaola served as her bondsmen.30

The appointment bothered no one until a few whites began clamoring for Mrs. Cox's job. They argued that the Coxes, who were college graduates, were both employed by the Federal government; however, Mr. Cox was an employee in the Railway Mail Service, and the couple also had extensive business and farming interests. The real reason, however, was that Mrs. Cox was a Negro. This was played upon by politicians who used this issue "the closing of the postoffice" to win various state offices. Prominent among these was Governor J. K. Vardaman of Mississippi. Roosevelt finally yielded and allowed the postoffice to be re-opened after he reduced it to a fourth class status.

Still another appointment that caught the editor's attention was the selection of William D. Crum, a Negro physician of Charleston, South Carolina, as Port Collector of that city. This, too, was one of those appointments in which the local officials and businessmen were the prominent objectors. Crum, whom the Senate would not confirm, maintained his position by being kept in office by President Roosevelt through interim appointments. He held his position from 1903-1909. "This alone shows that Crum was not particularly interested in eating from the 'Federal pie' because he served almost two years without pay."31 When Crum


resigned at the refusal of President Taft to reappoint him, the editor of
the Vindicator wrote:

Crum, the negro collector of Port at Charleston has
resigned. Collector of Revenue Rucker, of Atlanta should be
compelled to walk the same plank. It is a great outrage that
these important offices should be filled by buck negroes. If
Mr. Taft wants to convince the South of his great love for this
section let him at once get rid of the papsuckers in the South.32

There were other minor Negro officeholders (appointed and elected)
that were given more than a cursory treatment by the editor of the
Vindicator. He criticized both Frederick Douglass and Bishop Henry
McNeal Turner for using their positions and influence to gain federal jobs
for relatives and friends.33

The editor summed up the attitudes of whites by printing this excerpt:
"President Taft has intimated that he will appoint no negroes to Federal
offices in the South. We are willing for Boston and New York to enjoy
the luxury of negro office holders. The South is not selfish."34

D. Negro Disfranchisement

Of all the wrongs meted out to the Negro, disfranchisement was the
worst and most unforgiveable. Election laws and new or revised state
constitutions ostensibly written to disfranchise "ignorant Negroes"
eventually led to the total disfranchisement of all Negroes—both ignorant
and educated alike. But the editor of the Vindicator was more truthful
when he said that the laws that were passed were designed with but

32Vindicator, March 12, 1909.
33Ibid., July 21, 1876, April 13, 1877 and August 10, 1906.
34Ibid., March 5, 1909.
one purpose in mind: "to perpetuate the rule of the white man and to pave the way for white supremacy."³⁵

To most whites of this period Negro disfranchisement was the surest way to "white supremacy". The true temper of the white supremacy movements was evident in the words of Gesnard Williams and Thomas Heflin of Alabama: "no negro is the equal of the least, poorest, lowest down white man I ever knew and I believe that God Almighty intended the negro to be the servant of the white man."³⁶

Negro disfranchisement began in the South with the Mississippi Plan in 1890 and was followed by Louisiana and South Carolina. Other Southern states followed in their wake especially when the Federal government seemed to acquiesce in the matter. Articles from the Vindicator alluded to "what is going to be the outcome of the movement in the Southern states to eliminate the negro from politics?" According to the editor, "these atrocities had not even been referred to and Republican leaders had made it clear that there would be no attempt to cut down the Congressional representation of the South on account of the taking of the ballot from the hands of negro voters."³⁷

Several newspapers of the day voiced their sentiments for and against Negro disfranchisement. In speaking against Negro suffrage, the Philadelphia Sun stated that:

Never was a worse political mistake made in this country

³⁵Ibid., April 7, 1899.


³⁷Vindicator, April 7, 1899, November 23, 1870.
than when the Republican party with the selfish gains of securing permanent control in the southern states, armed the ignorant negro population with the suffrage....The equality of the two races has been established on paper, but it cannot be maintained in practice. The weaker race must bind to the stronger. This is a law that no act of Congress can repeal.38

The New York Sun summed up the sentiment against disfranchisement of the Negroes very well, by referring to disfranchisement as being the "Great Revolution" in the South. It expressed fears "that with no national obstructions to the wholesale disfranchisement of a great body of citizens, this may establish a precedent which may be used for the restriction of suffrage elsewhere and on other grounds."39

Disfranchisement of Negroes in Georgia, however, was not accomplished until 1908. Before that time several attempts were undertaken to write into the constitution disfranchisement measures. Notable among these was the Hardwick Bill of 1899. Even the editor of the Vindicator had not become fully convinced that the Negro should be disfranchised. His allusion to the "Hardwick Bill: as being designed to restrict Negro suffrage was killed "dead, dead, dead by a vote of 137 against and 3 for; Georgia is not ready to place herself in line with North and South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana," attested to his tacit support of Negro suffrage.40

The Hardwick Bill had been defeated, however, partly because of the

38Quoted in Ibid., November 25, 1898.
39Quoted in Ibid, December 9, 1898.
40Ibid., December 1, 1899.
staunch opposition of leading Negroes of the day. Both Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and Booker T. Washington had threatened to "stump the country" against the Hardwick Bill. The Vindicator's editor cheapened his integrity by equating the Sam Hose lynchings which occurred in Coweta County, April 28, 1899, with the ballot disfranchisement thus: "Had this canvassing ardor been displayed against the nameless outrage that led to the Sam Hose lynchings the ballot disfranchisement crusade might never have been inaugurated."

Sincere efforts toward Negro disfranchisement were not made in Georgia, however, until about 1905 and during the gubernatorial election of 1906. Many Georgians felt that there was little need for constitutional amendments, since the white primary had virtually disfranchised the Georgia Negro. This was evident in Meriwether County with the meeting of the Democratic Executive Committee on March 11, 1904. The sole purpose of this meeting was for a "primary to be held on the 20th of April, 1904 at which time only white democratic voters having registered in 1903 and 1904 ten days before said primary shall have an opportunity to cast their votes."

The use of the white primary as a means to restrict Negro suffrage was favored in Georgia largely because many political leaders felt that the white primary, along with literacy test and intimidation, was the most formidable barrier of all. An editorial appeared in the Vindicator.

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41 Ibid., November 24, 1899.
42 Ibid., March 11, 1904.
A white primary protects the right of the white voters and eliminates the negro. As is well known, the Constitution of the United States prohibits the disfranchisement of any class on account of color. So it follows that an educational disqualification would have to be resorted to. This would cut out a host of caucasians and permit an equally large number of negroes to vote. The present method puts Mr. Negro entirely out of the question.

This educational disqualification disturbed many whites because they felt that northern philanthropists would provide schools for educating the Negroes throughout the South. Southern politicians actually entertained these fears. They truly believed and led the people to believe that Northerners would educate the Negro to continue to maintain control over the whites through the Negro vote. The editor made this assertion in the Vindicator: "Education of the negro through the money of yankee southern haters; in order that he may vote, and through them to control the South for the Republican party."

With the approaching of the gubernatorial election of 1906, Meriwether County whites became increasingly interested in preserving the White Primary in Georgia. Several articles appeared in the Vindicator alluding to the fact that white Democrats should vote in the White Primary for representatives who would support whatever programs that the governor initiated to keep perpetual control of the white man intact. One of these strongly urged the white man to vote because:

The opportunity to forever free the state of Georgia from danger of negro rule is now offered the men of the state. The

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44Vindicator, October 27, 1905.
people of Georgia are going to perpetuate the white man's control of the state, rescue the government from the power of corporations and restore it to the people. Unless we have a legislature that will help accomplish these objects the governor can do nothing....

The principal candidates in the gubernatorial race of 1906 were Hoke Smith and Clark Howell. While both supported disfranchisement of the Negro, they differed as to the method of disfranchisement. The Vindicator supported Clark Howell, publisher of the Atlanta Constitution.

Hoke Smith, publisher of the Atlanta Journal, was supported by Tom Watson, a staunch Negrophile during the Populist movement in Georgia and even as late as the presidential election of 1904, who became an equally staunch Negrophobe during the election of 1906. Both Hoke Smith and Tom Watson were "turncoats" so to speak in terms of their treatment of the Negro. As early as 1904, Watson, who controlled a large personal following, promised to lend his support to any Democrat "who would endorse disfranchisement of the Negro by writing the white primary into the law of the state." Neither this program nor Watson himself had appealed to Smith in the past. The two men had been bitter critics of one another in the 1890's. Smith had not openly championed the disfranchisement of the Negro. He had always preached and practiced support of the Democratic party as the safeguard of white home rule. However, it may be that he was "yielding to expediency in using the issue as a stalking horse for political preferment."

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46 Ibid., March 23, 1906.


Needless to say, both men were shrewed politicians who changed their views to their advantage. "Negro disfranchisement was part of the platform Smith announced in June 1905. In September, Watson keeping his pledge added his forces to those of Smith."\textsuperscript{49} With these two as cohorts there was little wonder that Hoke Smith was elected.

Examples of Tom Watson's strategy can best be illustrated by the following observation. When the People's Party, better known as the Populist party, needed votes, Watson called for a united front between Negro and white farmers. Watson framed his appeal this way:

Now the People's Party says to these two men, "you are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings. You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves you both. You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary which beggars both.\textsuperscript{50}

It is clear from the history of Watson's life that this was a reversal of all of his policies. Yet it was expedient that he adopt this attitude in order for the third party movement to succeed. However, one gets another startling change in his career. An editorial attacking Booker T. Washington epitomized this change. "What does civilization owe to the negro? Nothing! Nothing! NOTHING!!"\textsuperscript{51}

Hoke Smith's reversal was almost as spectacular. Smith presented disfranchisement to the voters as nothing more than a step to carry out legally and openly an objective accomplished by violence and subterfuge.

\textsuperscript{49} Atlanta Journal, September 24, 1907, quoted in the Vindicator.
\textsuperscript{50} Quoted in C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 380.
The Negro voter was ignorant and easily corrupted in the discharge of his civic duty. Good government and reform would be promoted by withholding from him a duty he was incapable of performing. In developing this, Smith reiterated his belief that "the wise course is to plant ourselves squarely upon the proposition in Georgia that the Negro is in no respect the equal of the white man and that he cannot in the future in this state occupy a position of equality." 52

The editor of the Vindicator published several articles which supported this changeover. At times Hoke Smith was a perfect negrophile in saying that there was no need for Negro disfranchisement in Georgia because of the virtual harmony among Negroes and whites. He intimated that even though there was little Negro voting, the whites were not anti-Negro. "We are", in Smith's own words, "doing all we can in our power to elevate the negro. We have good nine months grammar schools in Atlanta for negroes and I believe that Booker Washington's plan for the education of the negro race is a good one...." 53

Later on, however, in discussing the disfranchisement issues at Sandersville, Hoke Smith showed his other side by declaring that: "...election managers could require colored voters to explain a constitutional sentence containing a Latin phrase, while a single English sentence could be propounded to the white voters." 54 The editor commented that "this

52 Atlanta Journal, September 24, 1906 quoted in the Vindicator.
53 Quoted in the Vindicator, February 2, 1906.
54 Ibid., March 16, 1906, June 1, 1906.
was a true index of Hoke's career. What he can not secure by fair means he is ready to secure by foul methods."\textsuperscript{55}

The views of the whites of Meriwether County and Georgia were expressed in certain subsequent editorials. In one dealing with Secretary of War Taft, the editor mentioned that Taft advocated Negroes getting a good education, because it would be impossible for any state to establish a disfranchisement law that would withstand the Fifteenth Amendment if challenged in court. That an educational ban would eventually bar as many whites as Negroes is clear since this would be the only one acceptable by the Supreme Court. In commenting on Taft's speech the editor said, "these utterances from a man who slated to become the head of the Supreme Court of the nation are very significant."\textsuperscript{56}

Another article gave the Vindicator's reasons for supporting Clark Howell. Some of these reasons were his "belief in the education of the masses of the white people and the supremacy of the caucasian race." Howell also believed that even though the clothing of the Negro with the right to suffrage "was a crime against the South it was an act of the federal government and could be repealed only by repealing the Fifteenth Amendment." And like many whites he believed that any statute passed by Georgia that could be legal would disfranchise whites as well.\textsuperscript{57}

The final argument which explains why the Vindicator was against Hoke Smith sums up the feelings engendered in many whites of that day by

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Ibid.}, April 13, 1906.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Ibid.}
Hoke Smith Disfranchisement Plan.

Hoke Smith's disfranchisement scheme will deprive the poor white man of the ballot and put him at the mercy of the richer class and educated negro. We will vote for no man for governor who is in favor of placing the unfortunate white man who is poor and uneducated below the educated negro....This is the only method that the poor whites have to protect themselves from oppression and wrong to defeat Hoke Smith.58

All of these arguments were to no avail--for Hoke Smith was elected governor, despite the support given to Clark Howell by the Meriwether Vindicator. Smith even carried Meriwether County by a margin of 1015 to 616 for Howell. There was no breakdown of votes by races given in Meriwether; however, it seemed that Meriwether Negroes, whose voting power had been virtually eliminated by the White Primary, like Negroes all over Georgia, ceased to be a political threat to the "Solid White South." By 1908 Georgia had joined her sister states of the old confederacy in completely disfranchising the Negro by amending the State Constitution.

58Vindicator, August 10, 1906.
CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEGRO

Meriwether County Negroes seemed to have enjoyed some measure of economic freedom, especially land ownership. In 1879 the following county statistics appeared in the Vindicator.

The freedmen own 3,432 acres of land valued at $9,216. They own $1,330 worth of town property. Their property of all kinds is estimated at $38,640. The number of colored defaulters is put down at 43. White polls, 1295; colored polls, 133; white and colored 2538.

In 1883, the Vindicator reported the polls of Meriwether amount to 2469; 1282 white and 1179 black. 293,749 acres of land are returned at $928,306 - $151,462 being owned by colored people. Town property is valued at $50,293. The value of stock is $191,500 - $29,293 possessed by colored owners.

Even though these figures show that Negroes of Meriwether County owned only about one-eighth of the county's property, they seemingly fared as well as Negroes elsewhere. According to John Hope Franklin,

It was difficult for Negroes to purchase desirable farm lands even if they had the capital. With the destruction of the institution of slavery, whites looked upon land as their only important capital investment; and they were reluctant to sell land to Negroes, whom they did not want to enjoy the power that came from the ownership of land in the South.

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1 Meriwether Vindicator, July 25, 1879.
2 Ibid., August 10, 1883.
There was also evidence of both whites and Negroes being at the extreme bottom rung of the economic ladder. A local notice substantiated this fact. "Meriwether supports about forty paupers. Of this number, thirty-two are white and eight are colored. It takes annually for their support about $600, an average of fifteen dollars each."4

The major occupations of the Negroes were sharecroppers, small and large farm owners, wage hands, an occasional blacksmith, mail carrier, shoe repairer, carpenters, school teachers and preachers.

From evidence of Negro ownership, it seems that the whites of Meriwether County had accepted Marshall Douglass Staunton's advice. "These Negroes are among you and will remain with you if by their effort they seek to raise themselves from poverty, and attain excellence of good citizenship, give them a chance, sell them lands and let them be honest, industrious and systematic, and you yourselves reap the reward."5

Frederick Douglass' advice in 1879 for Negroes to stay put was also heeded by Meriwether Negroes. Douglass said "Colored men are too fond of pulling up stakes and moving from place to place. This readiness to 'git up and git' has wrought mischief and a rolling stone gathers no moss."6 The Negroes of Meriwether, however, seemed to have stayed put and gathered moss. They were given a chance and they bought land.

Among Negroes, school teachers and preachers were held in the highest esteem; yet, farmers and other independent workers were given more

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4 *Vindictor*, February 22, 1878.
coverage by the editor of the Vindicator.

To corroborate this claim and to emphasize the economic independence of Meriwether freedmen, the economic histories of several families from different sections of the county have been chosen. About half of these families purchased their land just after the end of Reconstruction in Georgia. Most of this land remained in the same families for at least twenty years and some until the present time. Amazing as it may sound, evidence shows that most of the land owned by the freedmen was bought and paid for, and free from any incumbrances upon their deaths. The evidence shows further that, in all but a few cases, the heirs through their executors sold this land within a few years after the freedmen's deaths. Another interesting feature is that, with only a few exceptions, these men were all active politicians.

Jack Wilson, a prosperous farmer in the White Sulphur Springs community, was the most phenomenal of all. He owned at one time 2,900 acres of land. According to the records, Wilson purchased 600 acres of land in 1874 and 1200 acres in 1876. The 1200 acre lot was bought by Wilson as the highest bidder from Mrs. N. B. Gates' executor for $3,500. This money was paid in full in cash. In 1891 Wilson secured a loan of $2,560 from the LaGrange Trust Company and purchased an additional 1100 acres. However, the record shows that Wilson received a Q.C.D. (Quit Claim Deed) from the bank and sold the property for $5,000 all in the same day two years later on December 28, 1893.

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7 Georgia, Meriwether County S. S. Deed Book O, pp. 607-636.
8 Ibid., Deed Book X, p. 332.
9 Ibid., Deed Book Y, pp. 422,423.
During his lifetime Wilson received a considerable amount of newspaper coverage. Excerpts from the articles praised Wilson for being both a prosperous farmer and a good citizen.

Jack Wilson, colored living near the Sulphur Springs, has bought and paid for 700 acres of land since the war. He will make this year 60 or 70 bales of cotton which is of the Jefferson Moina variety; 1,500 or 2,000 bushels of corn; has 10 or 12 mules and raised his own meat...Jack is not only in a prosperous condition but conducts himself as a good citizen should.10

Another article also attested to the fact that "he had bought and paid for more than 1,000 acres and was a most successful farmer. He has eleven plows and employs about 25 hands."11 Fifteen years later, an entry appeared still substantiating the good "character" of Wilson:

The ginnery of Jack Wilson, colored near Sulphur Springs, was destroyed by fire last Monday. The fire was the result of an accident and caused by friction of machinery. Ten bales of cotton and a large quantity of cotton seed were burned. There was no insurance. The loss is a heavy one to Jack Wilson who is an industrious and worthy man.12

Wilson died on January 31, 1896, leaving his land (1,100 acres) to his widow, Nancy Wilson, Willie Dickinson (son of his daughter Leila Dickinson), and his two sons Jack, Jr. and Dolford (Adolphus).13 His other land remained intact until his executors, James Ogletree and Adolphus Wilson (a son), sold it April 5, 1898 for $6,000 only eighteen months after Wilson's death in 1896. Thus ended the saga of Jack Wilson.14

10 Vindicator, August 17, 1877.
11 Ibid., May 7, 1880.
12 Ibid., October 25, 1895.
14 Georgia, Meriwether County, S. S. Deed Book No. 3, p. 165.
George Lovejoy, who was brought as a slave from Virginia by S. Hatton Lovejoy in 1843, purchased two acres of land within the city limits of Greenville in 1871. This property remained in his family until 1966 when his heirs sold it to John H. Grant, a Negro undertaker in Greenville.

Lovejoy was a carpenter, storekeeper and a politician. It is believed that he was the Lovejoy slave who built Windsor Hall, a famous home in Meriwether County during the late 1840's, for J. M. C. Robertson. It is reputed that when he finished with the two story house "there was not enough room left to build a chicken coop." 

Evidence of his operating a store was alluded to in the Vindicator: "George Lovejoy, colored, appeals for a share of public patronage. He says he will keep fresh meats and will be glad to supply the people of Greenville and vicinity with what they want in his line."

Lovejoy had several children, many of whom were active in religious, political and educational affairs of Meriwether County. His oldest son, Reverend John Dosson Lovejoy, who was born November 28, 1863, was educated in the three month government schools of the day, and eventually became a District Superintendent of the Griffin District of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Like his father, he was a carpenter and grocer.

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15 Information received from two of his granddaughters, Misses Mattie and Ada Lovejoy, two retired school teachers of Greenville, Ga., July 9, 1970.
16 Georgia, Meriwether County, S. S. Deed Book N, p. 226.
17 Ibid., Deed Book 76, p. 95.
18 Meriwether Vindicator, November 19, 1870.
19 Ibid., October 11, 1889.
Lovejoy's daughter, Louisa Lovejoy, received a scholarship to study at Atlanta University. The editor commented on this in the Vindicator.

Louisa Lovejoy, colored of Greenville, has received a scholarship in the Normal Department of Atlanta University. Thirteen others were selected out of a list of 96. The successful competitors receive free tuition and bind themselves to teach for the same length of time in the public schools.21

According to Clarence Bacote, this was not the usual scholarship based on academic achievement, but instead, was a part of an appropriation granted to the University under certain conditions: That "Atlanta University should educate, free of tuition: one pupil for every member of the House of Representatives who were to be nominated by the House members."22 As a result of this training, Miss Lovejoy was one of the highest paid teachers in the county during the last quarter of the 19th century.

One son, J. R. Lovejoy, was a distinguished businessman.23 Two other sons, Sam and Banister, were active in politics and were outstanding citizens. Both of them purchased land during the early part of the 20th century. Banister's daughters, Misses Mattie (Sister) and Ada Lovejoy, retired schoolteachers, still live in the home that Banister purchased from Abel Terrentine executors in 1901.24

Another interesting family were the Terrentine brothers, Albert and

21 Meriwether Vindicator, October 24, 1879.
24 Georgia, Meriwether County S. S. Deed Book 8, p. 488.
Abel, both mail carriers. Abel, the one whom the editor gave more coverage to, was the more active of the brothers, and seemingly the best liked Negro man in Meriwether County. As early as 1873 he purchased one and a half acres of town property from one Willie McClendon; he also purchased an acre of land from the Methodist Church in 1884.

There is evidence, supported in a "Local Topics" article, that Abe, as he was called, was interested in real estate. "Abe Terrentine is a thrifty and highly respected colored citizen of Greenville. He has just built two nice cottages in the suburbs of town and has rented them to good tenants." This property was sold in an "Executors Sale" in 1891 to perfect titles. Another piece of property of his was not sold until his widow's death in 1910, while other property was sold to the Lovejoys. When Terrentine died, the editor wrote a long obituary:

Abel Terrentine, former servant of the late Dr. Terrentine, died in Greenville, Wednesday morning at 10 o'clock. Abe, as he was known far and near, was born in Henry County, April 5, 1833, brought to Greenville in 1837, married his present wife in 1869. He was respected by everybody, and believed to be an honest man and a sincere Christian. After he became free he remained with his old mistress, provided liberally for all her wants even more carefully than when he was a slave. This he did until her death. As a mark of respect, seven white gentlemen--seven of the best men in Meriwether--from town and country carried the coffin to Abe's late residence last Wednesday, and carefully placed the remains therein. The funeral was preached Thursday morning by Rev. Bolling H. Sassanett pastor of the white Methodist Church.

25 Ibid., Deed Book N, p. 496.
26 Ibid., Deed Book V, p. 59.
27 Vindicator, October 28, 1887.
28 Ibid., July 10, 1891.
29 Ibid., March 4, 1910.
When writing of race relations years later, the editor, Henry Revill, commented in his famed "Fireside Flashes" on whites acting as pallbearers for Negroes:

Greenville furnished the first example of southern white men acting as pallbearers for a dead negro. Abe Terrentine, after the war, took it upon himself the care of his former mistress... who was brought to poverty by the war.... Abe was a good negro, a noble representative of the antebellum slave. When he died a few years ago his body was carried to the grave by the most prominent white citizens in the city.

The "Christian South" has always been the best friend of the negro race. The northern bloody-shirters have used the worst element of the negro race as a political instrument to humiliate the people of this section.

Most of the Terrentines have either died out or moved away; at present, there are only a few distant cousins remaining in Greenville. The Terrentine property remained in the family for a period of forty years.

Newton Hood, of Jones Mill, was an unlettered Negro farmer who bought 202 1/2 acres of land from one James Fuller in 1873. Ten years later he bought an additional 130 acres from L. J. Milam. Upon his death, fifteen years after the first purchase, he had paid for all of it. This news item appeared in the "Local Topics": "The will of Newton Hood, colored, was admitted to probate last Monday. The estate owns 319 acres of good land, five mules, cows, hogs etc. and is out of debt. The estate is worth about $4,000." Most of this property was sold by his executor at the behest of his oldest sons eighteen months after Uncle Newt's death.

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31Ibid., February 18, 1910.
32Georgia, Meriwether County S. S. Deed Book O, p. 652.
33Ibid., Deed Book 5, p. 407.
34Vindicator, June 8, 1888.
death.\textsuperscript{35} The writer was unable to learn why.\textsuperscript{36}

From his obituary it was learned that "Uncle Newt", as he was called, was about 62 years old when he died in 1888. Both he and his father, London Hood, were former slaves of Mrs. M. A. Hood. "Uncle Newt", in the words of the editor, "was respected as an honest man by all who knew him. By industry and economy he left a comfortable home and farm for his family."\textsuperscript{37} Like Abe Terrentine, quite a number of Uncle Newt's white friends attended his funeral.

Hamp Gates was the first Negro blacksmith in Greenville. By 1884 he had bought several town lots of three quarters of an acre or more; indeed, when Greenville was trying to get a railroad, Gates was one of the first donors. The editor alluded to this in the "Local Topics": "Hamp Gates, a colored blacksmith of Greenville, says he will give $250 to build a railroad to Greenville. Abe Terrentine, another colored man, will give as much. If everybody else would do as well, we would have the cars in Greenville in less than 12 months."\textsuperscript{38}

When Gates died in 1889 after a lingering illness of one year, the editor commented on how he had run a blacksmith shop for years and by "industry and economy Gates had accumulated quite a competency".\textsuperscript{39} His widow sold his tools and the shop. According to the records, however, he sold two lots before his death, but he left free of incumbrances one

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\textsuperscript{35}Georgia, Meriwether County, \textit{Deed Book W}, p. 628. \\
\textsuperscript{36}The writer is presently living on part of the land that he once owned. \\
\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Vindicator}, June 8, 1888. \\
\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Vindicator}, May, 1883. \\
\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, January 28, 1889.
\end{flushright}
lot near the square on Griffin Street. His wife and two sons, Hamp, Jr. and Mack, sold this property to one J. T. Smith in 1910. The records reveal further that the sheriff of Meriwether County is the present owner of this lot.\textsuperscript{40} The writer was able to locate a granddaughter of Hamp Gates, Sr., Mrs. Katie Watson, but she could not remember anything about him.

Jacob Harris was a shoemaker. When Greenville was burned in 1891 this article appeared in the paper. "Jacob Harris, colored shoemaker, saved his tools and materials, but lost his building."\textsuperscript{41}

Rev. D. Joiner Wimbish, the pastor of two of the oldest Baptist Churches in Meriwether County, was active in political, economic and religious affairs. He, too, bought land which his heirs sold later and then moved to Atlanta. He was also, at one time, the owner and operator of a restaurant. This was substantiated in the "Local Topics": "We return thanks to Rev. Joiner Wimbish for a nice supper of o'possum sent us before the mail came in Tuesday night. It was greatly relished. Success to Joiner and his restaurant."\textsuperscript{42}

Reverend David Alexander was a minister and a prosperous farmer near Warnerville. He too was given some very favorable coverage in the paper.

Rev. David Alexander, a colored Baptist preacher, living near Warnerville has a fine farm and works a large force. His plantation is paid for and his annual profits are estimated at $1200. Like Jack Wilson, his stock are well fed, well taken

\textsuperscript{40}Georgia Meriwether County, Deed Book, p. 630.

\textsuperscript{41}Vindicator, January 9, 1891.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., November 8, 1888.
care of and are as good as is to be found on any farm in the county. Everything moves smoothly on the farm of these two colored agriculturists and both are good and orderly citizens. Reverend Alexander bought his land as early as 1875 from one George M. Bowen, and most of it still remains in the possession of his heirs.

Kit Wimbish, another prosperous Warnerville farmer, purchased 275 acres of land from one Olin W. McGehee in 1883. Even though there were no news items concerning Wimbish, the bulk of his land remains intact among his heirs. In 1901 he sold several acres to Compton Miles and Edmon Wimbish, both Negroes and relatives of Wimbish.

Warnerville, which is known now as Mt. Sinai, was and still is a haven for Negro land ownership. It seems as if the Negroes took the advice of Booker T. Washington who said:

> Cast down your buckets where you are...Cast them down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions, remembering that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life.

The editor alluded to Washington's Atlanta Exposition speech in commenting on Negro farmers thus: "Booker T. Washington, the colored orator, thinks that there is quite as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. There is certainly more profit in the general average." As previously stated, it seemed as if the editor was quite pleased to relate the success of Negroes in agricultural pursuits.

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43Ibid., May 7, 1880.
44Georgia, Meriwether County S. S. Deed Book 0, p. 321.
46Ibid., Deed Book 3, p. 641.
48Vindicator, November 29, 1895.
CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL HISTORY OF THE NEGRO

A. Religious Activity

Meriwether county Negroes were as deeply rooted in religion and the church as any other group. To them religion was a panacea for all their earthly woes, sorrows and problems that they could not cope with. They had been indoctrinated with this belief from slavery. The belief of a "hereafter" was made to order for the work weary slave. According to Francis Simpkins:

The slaves were taught such scriptural injunctions as "Servant obey thy masters." "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's"; and "well done, thou good and faithful servant." They were also taught that it was the duty of the Christian to endure tribulations and trials of this world in order to gain the blessings in the world to come. These teachings helped to keep the Negroes satisfied with their earthly position.1

Even though they did not have as much material wealth as their white brethren, they built churches, sponsored schools and took care of their preachers. The Methodist Episcopal Church of Greenville, Rust Chapel, was the oldest active church in the county. As early as 1882 this excerpt appeared in the Vindicator.

We learn from a communication of R. S. Lovinggood, the teacher at the colored methodist church in Greenville, that

the revival of that church commenced on the 24th of August and closed on the 24th of September. The colored pastor, Rev. J. C. Holmes, was aided with four days preaching by the presiding elder, R. T. Kent. The attendance was large, the congregation containing persons living fifteen miles distant. Sixty-seven were added to the church, forty-eight of them being baptized. Some of the most hardened were converted. The colored people generally seem to be delighted with their pastor, who with their teacher, seems to be setting a good example before their race.2

Such items as the memorial services for President Garfield and the District Conference of the Methodist church also appeared in the paper. Reverend Joiner Wimbish's Red Oak and Springfield Baptist churches were mentioned also. Two news items appearing the same day read thus:

The Cabin Creek colored Baptist association met in Greenville last week, the introductory sermon being preached by Rev. H. Glass. Rev. W. H. Lowe was elected moderator. Many friends were present and spoke favorably of the effort.

Rev. W.S. Ramsey, colored visiting minister to the association, preached two very fine sermons in the white Baptist Church last Sabbath. Some of the leading citizens of the town were out to hear him and we are pleased to commend the sermon and the preacher.3

The editor continued to be verbose in his coverage of religious activity. "Reverend Joiner Wimbish, the pastor of the colored Baptist Church at Red Oak, near Jones Mills, closed his meeting there last week and reports 65 additions to the church. He specially notes the fact that good order prevailed and no 'blind tigers' were prowling about."4 Even though the editor reported the religious activity of the churches, he also reported incidents when some Negroes used the church grounds for frolicking. These incidents will be dealt with under the heading "Crime

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2Vindicator, October 6, 1882.
3Ibid., October 12, 1888.
4Ibid., August 28, 1891.
and Lynching."

Negroes utilized their churches in other ways. When the cyclone came through Greenville in 1893 and destroyed both schools, white and colored, the members of the Methodist Church put forth much effort in building a new school. The editor noted this fact.

The colored people on Methodist Hill are going ahead in putting up another school house. They are ahead of whites in this respect. The colored Methodists have up a new building which is larger and more handsome than before. It is being used for school and church purposes.5

Another example of the editor's pleasure in reporting religious news is evident in this excerpt. "The colored Methodists have been carrying on nightly meetings for several weeks and the singing borne to our room by the evening breezes has been delightful. The meetings have been well conducted and their services orderly."6

Both the Negroes and the editor felt that the power of prayer could even convert the most hardened criminals. When George McCrary was sentenced to be hanged, the editor commented, "The colored people held service at the jail last Sunday at the request of George McCrary who is to be executed today. Large numbers were in attendance and George seemed to be greatly interested in the services."7

There was religious activity going on in other Negro churches of the county, but the editor did not comment on any of them. These churches, as did all Negro churches, served as a haven for homecomings, revivals

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5Ibid., March 24 and August 18, 1893.
6Ibid., September 20, 1895.
7Ibid., October 25, 1895.
and anniversaries. Furthermore, they either built or sponsored schools. In many instances these were the only school sites for Negro children until state owned buildings could be erected.

Some of these churches and their dates of founding are Trinity C. M.E. Church 1874, Durand, Georgia; Piney Grove Baptist Church 1882, Haraisan, Georgia; and Mt. Sinai Baptist Church 1878, at Warnersville of which the Reverend David Alexander was the first pastor. 8

B. Social Activity

Social Activity for Negroes was diverse and varied, and ran the gamut from county fairs to turnouts of secret and benevolent societies. Attending frolics and taking advantage of excursions (known to the Negroes as "scursions") were other means of entertainment. Going to revivals, associations and regular Sunday meetings also served as media of entertainment for the Negroes.

The "County Fair" not only served as a means of enjoyment, but gave Negroes a chance to display their farm products. This was especially true of Meriwether as revealed in the following communication:

Mr. Editor:

Please announce to the colored people of Meriwether County that there will be a fair of the colored people at LaGrange on the 8th and 9th days of November next to which to colored people of surrounding counties are invited to bring the products of their industries and get the premiums offered.... 9

The Saturday night frolic was also a typical means that Negroes used to release pentup emotions and frustrations. Unfortunately, these affairs

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8 Conversations with elderly residents of each community, June 23, 1970.
9 Vindicator, October 25, 1878.
would sometimes result in stabbings or killings or both. The "scursions" was still another means whereby some Negroes escaped to a lost weekend.

The Savannah Tribune reported in an editorial that

In most instances these excursions were frequented by the worst element of Negroes which did the race much harm. The Reverend J. W. Carter, pastor of the Boulevard A.M.E. Zion Church in Atlanta, said "...Enough money is spent in one season by Negro excursions to buy one fourth of the Indian territory". When Negroes returned home from such excursions they usually found themselves with insufficient money to pay their rent, to buy food, and to provide for their children.10

The excursions certainly increased the Negro's indebtedness to the white man since he would spend most or all of his weekly earnings during these trips which were little more than gambling and drinking orgies. Excerpts from the following article lends credence to this fact.

Twelve Killed on Excursion Train

There was a negro excursion over the Southern Railway from Warm Springs to Atlanta last Saturday. There was a general fight and riot between the colored passengers in which twelve were killed. Meriwether Negroes figured prominently in the battle.

A crap game was started as the train left Warm Springs Saturday morning and was continued as it left the terminal station in Atlanta at a late hour Saturday night. The fight was at its worst between here and Atlanta. Before McDonough was reached, five negroes were dead and three others were dead when the train passed Griffin, while three more are said to have died after they reached home. Accurate information is hard to obtain although it is said one other negro was found dead at Flint River.11

Even with the killings and crap games the excursions held a morbid attraction for the Negroes. Many of them would borrow the dollar to


11Vindicator, June 23, 1905.
take the trip. Sometimes they would barely have standing room.\textsuperscript{12}

Revivals, associations and regular Sunday meetings allowed Negroes to see acquaintances and relatives that had not been seen for months or perhaps as long as a year or more. Then, too, the Negroes had been accustomed to this sort of gathering during slavery and it was only natural that they continued doing so.

Secret societies were another means whereby Negroes received social entertainment and at the same time a measure of economic independence. "Not only this, but since the Negroes had practically withdrawn from politics despite the rantings of white political demagogues to the contrary, the lodges gave him a sense of "belonging" and of being "somebody" even if it meant only within his race."\textsuperscript{13} However, to the whites, they were simply sources of irritation. Due to the hatred that many Southerners felt toward the Union League during the Reconstruction period, any league or society was viewed unfavorably. According to John Hope Franklin, the Union League worked this way:

The usual procedure of the Union League to get its program going was for a representative of the organization to go into a community to begin enrolling Negroes in a branch of the League. Then the organizer would initiate the enrollees into the secrets and mysteries of the Union League. This was followed by what one organizer called "their quiet instruction....into their rights and duties....They were catechized on the meaning, importance and methods of registering and voting. They were warned about the danger of "falling into the trap" laid by former Confederates who might try to win their votes by "kindness, fraud, or intimidation". They were also urged to stand up for their rights and to conduct themselves as the equals of their former masters.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12}Interviews with Mr. & Mrs. J. H. Phillips and O. P. Parks, Gay, Georgia, June 23, 1970.


Small wonder then that whenever whites learned of a secret organization and regardless of how insignificant or innocent it may be, they feared some sort of conspiracy. Their fear was further engendered by their belief in the power and sway that the colored ministers held over their "flocks". According to Stampp, a Florida carpetbagger reported to Thad Stevens, "The colored preachers are the great power in controlling and uniting the colored vote, and they are looked to, as political leaders with more confidence than any other source of instruction and control." The editor of the Vindicator voiced his fear in an editorial: "The colored society, organized in Griffin on the 4th with Reverend J. H. Grant, colored president for the state, is claimed to be a temperance and benevolent society and not a labor organization."

Articles of this nature did not, however, deter the Negroes from organizing benevolent societies. There are at least two statewide and one independent society, organized during this period, that still have several chapters in Meriwether County. Typical of the histories of these organizations is the "Progressive Brothers and Sisters of Light" with at least thirteen chapters in Meriwether County.

In the year of our Lord, 1881 on September 19th at Orchard Hill, Georgia, Spalding County, a group of men who had been inspired to do something to alleviate the suffering of their fellow men came together to organize what we now call the "Progressive Brothers and Sisters of Light". These simple farmers were possessed with a burning desire to do whatever they could to care for the sick and bury the dead. These organizers were Sam H. Jones, N. E. Jones, E. D. Jones, Sidney Proth,

16Vindicator, July 8, 1887.
George Wilson, Julius Fuller, Samuel Beeks, Silas Bivins, Solomon Williams, John Willis, and Reverend L. W. Ogletree. They are gone but not forgotten; they go down in history as the organizers and Fathers of a Progressive Brothers and Sisters of Light in America.  

Other lodges are the UBI and the Sweet Home Lodge. Each of these lodges was organized in Meriwether around 1909-10 with dues of fifty cents per month and a designated assessment of thirty cents or more upon the death of a member. Sweet Home Lodge, an independent, paid as high as $225 per death as late as 1965.  

The ill feelings engendered by these lodges were summed up in this editorial.  

The negro lodges throughout the county are sources of evil. They stand in the way of good feeling between the races. The doctrine taught the ignorant negroes in these secret orders is subversive of the best interest of both races. Remove the menaces of negro societies and great good will result.  

The economic success of these lodges was also an added source of irritation to local whites. Since funeral homes were a monopoly of the whites, any deviation was looked upon as impertinence. Whites were accustomed to Negroes coming to them to have their relatives buried. These burials were charged to the already over-burdened accounts of the Negroes, and then these poor "ignorant Negroes" would have to work out this added indebtedness. The benevolent societies were changing this practice, and this alone far outweighed the political implications. When Representative E. H. McMichael of Marion County introduced a bill in the Georgia   

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18 Sweet Home Lodge (Gay, Georgia), Minutes, 1965, p. 245.

19 Vindicator, October 6, 1906.
legislature on July 13, 1907, to break up Negro Secret Lodges, the editor said "Race prejudice is engendered and fostered by these lodges and promoters of these institutions have grown rich by playing upon "ignorant negroes" for their own aggrandizement."20

In defense of his bill, McMichael said that the primary purpose of his bill was to eliminate the "fo-day (Before Day) clubs and "Star Light" societies that existed in the rural areas and which fomented race hatred. He accused some Negro leaders (he called them rascals) of organizing the ignorant element in the rural areas into secret societies and advising them to take aggressive action against the whites. He cited the case of a Negro lodge boycotting "good white farmers" who testified in court against one of its members. His main desire was to protect the "good" Negro from the "wiles" and the wicked designs of a few scoundrels of his own race who would arouse ambitions which can never be gratified...."

In commenting, Bacote said "that even though the bill failed to pass, it represented the pentup meanness of certain individuals who used the advantage of their office to inflict every type of proscription upon a defenseless group of people."21

The annual turnouts of the lodge which were always resplendent with members dressed in the paraphernalia of their local lodges furnished a great outlet for social gatherings by the Negroes. Even funerals furnished a source of morbid entertainment for them. The editor made mention of one such turnout:

20Ibid., June 21, 1907.
The burial of Lizzie Terrentine, colored, Monday, by a colored benevolent society drew a large crowd. Not only were all the members of the society present, but a large number of colored people outside the order were in attendance. A La Grange Hearse drawn by four horses headed the procession. The society officers wore their uniform. The ceremonies were quite lengthy.22

C. Educational Activity

Education among Meriwether County Negroes was commensurate with the times and that of Negroes elsewhere in the South. There is evidence that as early as 1876 Negroes were attending the "three month schools" provided for by the State. However, Negro schools in Meriwether County did not come in full bloom until 1881 at the beginning of the twenty-five year tenure of R. M. McCaslan, County School Commissioner. Prior to that there was only an occasional school made up by colored teachers for Negro students and these were mostly held in churches.23

Even with only a scattering of schools, the Negro teachers were subjected to the strictest kind of auditing. This educational notice is quoted in part to substantiate the fact:

...The above Trustees are requested by the Board of Education to visit all of the schools in their respective districts and report to the board all the pupils in attendance between the ages of 6 and 18 years of age, also, the number of children within said ages in their respective districts, white and colored. First report is desired to guard against fraudulent accounts by teachers and second to insure the county its full proportion of the poor school fund from the state.24

By order of the Board
John W. Parks, Chr.
A. H. Freeman, Sec.

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22Vindicator, May, 1901.
23Ibid., October 6, 1876.
24Ibid., August 7, 1878.
To set up a school, a teacher would procure the names of a certain number of students, then appear before the County School Commissioner for an examination in order to obtain a license to teach. She would teach for the allotted time and then prepare and present her books for auditing to receive her pay. This procedure was an annual affair, and prior to the opening of a school a public notice such as this one would duly appear in the paper stating that "All persons desiring to be examined and licensed as teachers in the public schools for 1881 are requested to meet me in Greenville next Tuesday, the 14th of June," R. M. McCaslan C.S.C. 25

Then when the term of three months was over or near completion another notice as this would be printed: "All teachers of public schools having accounts for 1875 against the Board of Education of Meriwether County are required to render them in, on or before the 8th day of December 1875 to be audited."—A. H. Freeman C.S.C. 26

After these accounts were audited a notice would appear in the paper listing names of teachers and their accounts and the amounts to be paid for four months schools. In 1881 there were forty-six white teachers whose highest salary was $228 (Mrs. M. J. Franklin) and the lowest $18 (P. M. Blakely); and the same year there were nineteen Negro teachers whose highest salary was $154 (Rev. W. S. Ramsey) and the lowest $22 (Miles Bonner). This is the gist of the notice. "The following accounts have been examined by the County School Commissioner, who thinks he will

25 Ibid., June 10, 1881.
26 Ibid., November 26, 1875.
be able to pay fifty cents on the dollar or half of the amounts of the several accounts."  

The type of text books used was strictly adhered to in order to maintain some degree of uniformity among the schools and especially to control the curricula of Negro schools. The whites of Georgia and Meriwether County meant to be positive that "Yankee educated teachers, ignorant of social conditions of the South would not teach their students that former owners had been cruel taskmasters who wished to restore slavery."  

In 1883 a notice appeared stating that the time of teaching to public schools of Meriwether County had been changed to the first four months: January, February, March, and April. "All public schools must be closed out by the first of May. Four months are given in which to run three months of sixty-five days." Schools had previously been open during June, July, August, and September.

The County School Commissioner would occasionally give a report on the breakdown of students, white and colored. Below is an example of one such report:

**Public School Item**

Teachers of the Public Schools assembled early at the court house last Monday to receive their pro-rata shares of the Public Schools Funds. Last year there were 73 schools, in this county this year 83. The amount distributed was $5,098.

- Number of students: 3173
- Average Daily Attendance: 1861

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27Ibid., December 23, 1881.


29*Vindicator*, December 21, 1883.
Number of Whites--------------------------1743
Number of Colored------------------------1430
Number of White Males--------------------919
Number of Colored Males------------------714
Number of White Females------------------824
Number of Colored Females---------------716

The commissioner paid 68 cents on the dollar on accounts audited, last year he paid 75 cents. The previous year he paid 50 cents. The highest amount paid to whites was $158 and the lowest being $4. The highest amount paid to the colored was Louise Lovejoy $84 and the lowest J. S. Bowdin $5.30

By 1888 the number of schools in the county had declined and the attendance of the Negro children had been reduced drastically. This was due in part to a decided change in the attitude of the whites toward the education of the free men and the free men's own attitude. The whites resented the idea of tax supported schools. They were wary of universal education because there was the ever present fear of mixed schools. According to Simpkins:

Mixed schools were not to be tolerated; hence, if universal education were to be effective, two school systems would have to be established—one for whites, the other for blacks. Many of the whites resented taxes to support Negro schools. The experiences of Reconstruction convinced them that educating the blacks would only make them unfit for the subordinate role assigned them in Southern society. It was generally asserted, 'An educated Negro is a good plowhand spoiled.' Indeed, the smattering of education the average Negro received improved neither his efficiency nor his moral; his initial enthusiasm for 'book learning' was succeeded by a dull indifference and a general reluctance to attend school at all.31

The commissioner's report for the term of 1888 substantiated the above quote.

Number of Schools--------------------------57
Number of Pupils---------------------------2279
Average Daily Attendance--------------------1660½

30Ibid.
31Simpkins, op. cit., p. 363.
The editor also expressed the views of the whites of Meriwether County and elsewhere in the South toward the schools of higher learning. One of the main targets was Atlanta University. He gave vent to his views in this editorial.

The colored Atlanta University receives from the State of Georgia $8,000 to aid in the education of the colored children of the state who attend this colored institution. The "social equality" idea is said to be a distinctive feature of this school and has been a course of annoyance to many for several years. The visitors recently appointed by Gov. Gordon to examine into the workings of this colored State University report that they find a number of white children mingling with the colored children in the same classes. The majority of those pale faces are presumably the children of the white northern teachers. Others are such children that have been induced to enter this school in violation of the state laws which declare that white and colored children shall be taught in separate schools. That this is a clear attempt to violate public law will be promptly and properly looked after by the legislature is no doubt.

According to Clarence Bacote, the allegations that "Yankee" teachers at Atlanta University were guilty of alienating their pupils against the state and native whites had caused the House to appoint a special committee to investigate the principles, methods and practical operations of Atlanta University. Some displeasure was expressed by

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32 *Vindicator*, February 8, 1889.

the committee when it observed the white teachers eating at the table with their pupils. However, they had to accept President Edmund Asa Ware's answer in response to their questioning on social equality that "in discharging their duties as Christians and educators the teachers were color blind". Although strong opposition was expressed to the $8,000 appropriation, the school continued to receive it from 1874 to 1887 under certain stipulations. One being that "Atlanta University should educate, free of tuition, one pupil for every member of the House of Representatives who were to be nominated by the House members."34

Meriwether County benefitted from this allocation. Louise Lovejoy, who was alluded to in the "Selected Families" of Meriwether County, received such a grant in 1879. Thereafter, Miss Lovejoy was either the highest paid Negro teacher or among the highest paid ones in the County. The writer was unable to find any kind of derogatory remarks concerning her tutelage of Negro children.35

Several factors were responsible for the decline of Negro schools and school enrollment. One was the inability of the State to pay for five months of teaching. This was supported by the editor of the Vindicator:

...There will not be enough money from the school fund this year to pay the teachers in full for five months service. The pay will be for about four months. Teachers, therefore, should make supplemented contracts with their patrons for pay for the additional month, unless they are willing to perform five months labor for the pay of four.36

It takes little imagination to realize that very few Negro parents were able to supplement any of their teachers.

34Bacote, The Story of Atlanta University, pp. 74-76.
35Vindicator, October 24, 1879; December 21, 1883.
36Ibid., February 6, 1891.
The second factor in decreased school attendance was that of emigration. Negroes as well as whites, were leaving Meriwether County. In 1903 the editor reported that "School attendance in Meriwether County is 350 children less than 10 years ago. Since January, 1903, 78 white families have moved and 150 colored families have moved." This decline has been rather constant ever since.

Even during this time there was an attempt made for the teachers to upgrade themselves. The State Commissioner of Education requested that all teachers attend an Institute. Pursuant to this request, Meriwether County School Commissioner McCaslan sent out the following notice: "...All teachers of the County, white and colored, are required to attend the session of the Teachers' County Institute, to be held at Greenville on the 5th Saturday (the 30th) of January."38

The editor of the Vindicator, who died a few years later, summed up his attitude and the attitude of most whites of the day toward Negro education with critical editorials toward grants made to Institutes of higher learning for Negroes. This attitude was that "poor white boys" should receive some sort of assistance to enable them to get an education.

The whites' attitude was revealed even more vividly in an article written by the late editor's son, Judge Henry Revill, who became editor a few months after his father's death in 1904. Compared to his father, he seemed to be more prejudiced. He headed his article "Two Incidents Worth Recording." One of them dealt with the teasing of an old Board

37 Ibid., September 18, 1903.
38 Ibid., January 22, 1892.
of Education member, John Meacham, by a young colored boy. The gist of
the story was that when this board member, whose frail appearance and
long hair gave him a rather patriarchal appearance, passed the young boy,
the latter said "Good morning Grandpaw" (no reply) "why don't you speak
to me Grandpaw?" (still no reply) Mr. Meacham felt that this showed ingrati-
tude and widening of the friendly relations between the races. He implied
that if he had been a younger man he would have horsewhipped the boy.

Mr. McCaslan went to the school and when he had recognized the boy
upon the description given him by Mr. Meacham "a black, round bullet
headed nigger about 14 or 15 years old," he called him before the class
and had the teacher to punish him. Afterwards he lectured the teacher
and her pupils thus:

You all ought to know the money that pays your school teacher
here and every other colored school teacher is paid by the white
folks not the Yankees--but Southern whites. The Yankees have
started some nigger colleges, but not one out of a hundred of you
colored folks can or do go to college, but nearly all of you go
and ought to go to school. It's the Meriwether white folks that
pay the taxes that enable you to get your education and it is a
shame and perfectly outrageous for this boy to sass that old white
haired man who was driving through cold going to a meeting in
Greenville to see about your education for which he does not
receive a cent of pay.

Teacher, I want you to teach your scholars politeness and
good manners and to be respectful to the Southern white folks
who are your best friends; and if I ever hear of any more bad
manners on the part of your children, I'll see that your license
is taken away and you shall never teach another school in Meri-
wether County.

To the other incident, Revill wrote about:

...An "uppity" negro preacher dressed in a "jim swinger" coat
approached the Commissioner and demanded; "Can you tell me where
to find McCaslan, the County School Commissioner." "No, I can't
tell you where to find McCaslan, but you are talking to Mr.
McCaslan. Where are you from, and what do you want?" "I am from
Ohio, and was educated up North, and have got a school made up in
this county and come to you to get a license." "Well, no such
impudent negro as you can teach in this county, and I will write
to all the neighboring County Commissioners and you will get no
license to teach meanness and devilment in any of them. You
and your sort had better go back to the Yanks. You won't thrive
in this climate.39

In commenting on the two incidents the editor related that the
preacher came back sometimes later, thanked Mr. McCaslan for the lesson
in politeness, was then given a school and was still teaching and uni-
versally liked by both the whites and his own race. In the editor's
words "Almost the old time antebellum relations would exist between
whites and blacks if all commissioners had Major McCaslan's good 'hard
horse common sense'."40

B. Crime and Lynching

The crime rate among Meriwether Negroes, like that of Negroes every-
where, was very high. Many and varied reasons produced this sort of
behavior. Among these were too much gambling, too free use of the
"blind tigers", and the carrying of pistols and knives. These habits,
which were tolerated by the whites, were carried to the extreme by the
impulsive Negro. Their criminal record, according to one historian,
...was the natural result of innate weaknesses and the working
of the caste system. As a part of his very genuine Americanism,
the Negro, more impulsive and less self controlled than the white
man, seemed naturally prone to violence....The savage severity
with which "the white folks law" prosecuted Negroes accused of
crimes against white men logically evoked acts of brutal retali-
ation. On the other hand, this law allowed blacks to carry
knives, pistols and razors, and to use them on members of his
own race with comparative impunity.41

Whenever Negroes congregated in large numbers, no gathering, not

39Ibid., January 3, 1908.
40Ibid.
41Simpkins, op. cit., p. 508.
even school and church services, was immune to the "blind tiger". Once Negroes began drinking, guns and knives would start flashing. Result—a murder or a stabbing. The editor was quite verbose in reporting such news. Some of them were:

Last Tuesday night at an exhibition at the colored Methodist Church, Allen Hinton, colored, drew his knife and flourished it in a reckless manner and finally stopped the exercise by chasing the colored schoolmistress out of the house. Allen was brought to bay by the teachers 'parient' and turned over to the Colonel Favors.

The negroes had a week's meeting at the church near Jones Mill last week. Whiskey was sold openly and pistols were fired recklessly by the drunken Ethiops. Several rows occurred Sunday. Let the next grand jury give the matter a thorough investigation. The whole neighborhood was disturbed by the drunken orgies.

When the writer commented on the last article, this type of behavior was attested to by various persons to have lasted as late as the early 1930's; the reason being that the location of the church itself made it feasible for this sort of behavior.

As previously stated the Negroes' criminal nature was encouraged or at least condoned by the white man. Laws were so constructed that there were three types of crimes involving Negroes and three degrees of punishment: (1) crimes committed by Negroes against whites, maximum penalty; (2) crimes committed by Negroes against Negroes, minor punishment; (3) crimes committed by whites against Negroes, no punishment.

Comments such as "A nigger got shot in the store of our friend "Ab" a short time since. As no fire arms were used on the occasion, it

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42 Vindicator, October 6, 1876.
43 Ibid., October 7, 1898.
44 Some of these persons were Mr. & Mrs. J. H. Phillips, oldest property owners in Gay; Mr. and Mrs. John Grant—undertaker and L. B. Walls, writer's husband.
remains a mystery in what manner he got shot. No inquest held. The ferocity of mob law which is being discussed later will show the savagery with which real and imagined crimes against whites were handled.

Pistol toting and "blind tigers" seemed to have been very prevalent among Negroes. The editor voiced strong opinions on this condition. This was due mostly to the expense incurred by the court in handling these cases. Many editorials were devoted to condemning the use of cards, whiskey and pistol toting. Such excerpts were "The negro pistol toter continues to get in his daily work. The chain gang is the only remedy", and "The safety of our women and children as well as our men is largely dependent upon the enforcement of the laws regulating the use of pistols and 'blind tigers'.

In reporting on the use of the "blind tiger" the editor had to admit that the Negro was being supplied by a white person or persons. This was evident by the fact that whenever the Negro was given a fine it was promptly paid by a white man. On one such occasion the editor commented that 'whenever a fine is imposed--big white friend promptly pays it--and there we are again where we started--for these negroes 'cat's paws' are too well trained to squeal.'

In summing up his attitude on Negro crime the editor wrote thus:

"Liquors, Cards, Pistols, Dead Negro."

The records of Meriwether Superior Court emphasize the importance of enforcing the law against gambling. At every session

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45 _Vindicator_, February 7, 1873.
46 _Ibid_, October 4, 1907.
47 _Ibid_, September 11, 1908.
of this court there have been from two to a half dozen murder trials which originated from negro gambling frolics.

On the occasion of every "skin game" there is the ever present jug of liquor, pistols and usually a dead negro. Then the taxpayers are called upon to shell down the coin to pay the expenses of a murder trial. Two of the four murder cases tried at the last session were caused by gambling frolics, and the other two were directly traceable to the blind tiger.

Will the good citizens longer tolerate the whiskey and gambling? Break these up and murder trials will cease. It is up to the citizens of the county to stop these two evils.48

Negro excursions were another cause of criminal cases against Negroes in Meriwether County. They too were a combination of "whiskey, pistols, and cards." On most of them a crap game would get started and shortly a disturbance would errupt which would lead to murder. After one such excursion occuring in 1905, which was alluded to under entertainment, twelve Negroes were killed and three Meriwether County men were arrested. In commenting on this the editor wrote "negro excursions should be prohibited by the legislature or else the excursionists compelled to give up their razors, pistols and liquor before boarding the train."49

During the period under examination there were six legal hangings, all Negroes. Five of the six, occurring between 1843 and 1859, were public ones. The first hanging occurred in 1843 when a man was convicted of the rape of a white woman; two men were hanged in the fall of 1851; one man was hanged in 1857, the fifth, occurring in 1858 or 1859, was a woman—reputed to be Sarah Parks—for killing an overseer.50 The sixth was "One George McCrary who was hanged for the murder of a brother in

48Ibid., March 5, 1909.
49Ibid., May, 1905.
50Ibid., June, 1905, and comments from Mr. & Mrs. J. H. Phillips of Gay, June 23, 1970.
Lynching, one of the evils of the country and especially the South, was exclusively applied against Negroes. Lynch law took a savage toll of Negro life with the number rising and falling during certain decades like the mercury in a thermometer. Lynching was seemingly the cure-all for Negro crime. It was a sequel to so-called legal hangings. Here too, the Negro was murdered at the slightest pretext. One historian wrote

Mob execution became a weapon of white supremacy, an instrument of race injustice more summary and biased than the established courts with their traditions of deliberation and comparative impartiality. Lynchings were considered necessary remedies for deeds of unrestraint. Almost any offense was likely to be considered sufficiently sinister to lead to lynching.

Lynching did not become a political issue in Georgia, however, until the administration of Governor Atkinson. Before then, in Meriwether County and elsewhere, whenever a lynching occurred it was just another "dead nigger." This can be ascertained from the news article below.

Will Hood, a colored youth of seventeen, attempted rape upon a young white lady near Warnerville last Monday night. After committal trial Tuesday, he was taken from the bailiff Tuesday night by parties unknown and hanged to a tree near White Oak Creek at Warnerville.

Even though this was the only known lynching that occurred in Meriwether County, several lynchings occurred in neighboring counties and other parts of Georgia. In expressing his views on lynching, the editor wrote that "lynch law is the outgrowth of the law's delays and lack of enforcement of the law's penalties. Speedy trial, certain execution of

51 Ibid., October 28, 1895.
52 Simpkins, op. cit., p. 509.
53 Vindicator, May 20, 1887.
the law's penalties insure good order and prevent mob violence.\textsuperscript{54}

The strongest stand against lynching was taken by Governor W. Y. Atkinson, a native of Meriwether County and a pupil of the editor, who gave the following special message to the General Assembly:

\ldots That you may fully appreciate the enormity of the wrong done by so called lynch law to the reputation of the state, to civilization and to the rights of man...men seem to forget that each man who engages in a lynching violates the law against murder and that the penalty is death upon the gallows.

As the result of the failure of the sheriff to form a posse and arrest two murderers in Screven County.

I recommend this law:
1st. That a law be enacted that will provide a penalty for the failure to obey the summons of a sheriff to act as a posse comitatus.

2nd. That it be made the duty of the solicitor general in every case where he has reason to believe that an arresting officer has failed to make an arrest when it was in his power to do so, to draw a rule nisi against him, so that the facts on trial warrant it, he may be punished as prescribed in section 3957 to wit: Fined, imprisoned or removed from office in the manner prescribed by the Constitution....

If these measures herein and heretofore suggested by me do not meet with your approval, I most earnestly ask that you devise others and enact them into law....I can not believe that I ask in vain when I present these things to the representatives of the people of Georgia, and seek such legislation as well as save our state from further humiliation and disgrace....\textsuperscript{55}

Needless to say, the legislature was surprised at this address.

As lynching continued in Georgia and elsewhere there had to be some justification. In most cases the reason given was rape of white women by Negro men. This excuse was continued even when evidence was presented showing that there were other reasons.

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Ibid.}, August 23, 1895.

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid.}, November 8, 1895.
More frequent than rape as a cause for mob violence was the murder of a white man. Other causes extended from crimes as serious as arson to those that seemed trivial to outsiders, but important to Southerners interested in "keeping the nigger in his place." Among the minor offenses were slapping children, using offensive or boastful language, and seeking political or other employment not deemed proper for members of an inferior caste....

Nevertheless the white Southerners still clung to the idea of the unmentionable crime.

In Warm Springs, Meriwether County, Georgia, the Georgia Bar Association met to discuss the subject of lynching. During the entire discussion the central theme was "that too much must not be expected of human nature." In commenting the editor wrote:

There was not one apologist for the crime of lynching; there was not one voice raised up in defense of mob law; every speaker stood for the vindication of the majesty of the law and of the constitution. Still there was no attempt to disguise the fact that it is not always possible to adhere strictly to the letter of the law when the crime is of that particularly heinous character which most speedily appeals to the mob law for vengeance.

The whites of Meriwether County even went so far as to justify lynching on the basis of Negro action. This was quickly refuted, however, as can be seen from the response to the following news item:

John Henry Reeves—negro arrested on warrant sworn out by negro girl, Dony Martin—charging him with rape. John was released on bond then compromised the terms with Dony's father and skipped town. There was talk of a lynching among the negroes.

Opponents to the lynching, all Negroes, sent an affidavit to the

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56 Simpkins, op. cit., p. 509.
57 Vindicator, July 16, 1897.
58 Ibid., August 6, 1897.
editor pleading for law and order and just disposition of the case.
This was signed by the following: "For law and good government, we are, A. N. Terrentine, S. Lovejoy, A. S. Knight, John Jossey, and B. F. Lovejoy."

A lynching that occurred in Newnan, Georgia, the home of ex-Governor Atkinson, stirred the emotions of both white and black. In commenting on the lynching the editor said "Sam Hose was lynched two miles from Newnan, Georgia after pleas from both Ex-Governor Atkinson and Judge A. D. Freeman were ignored. The tortures that were inflicted on him were the most severe human minds could invent. Another negro was lynched upon Sam Hose's implication of him."

Governor Allan D. Candler of Georgia also went so far to say that the Negro ministers and teachers could stop lynching because of their influence. In his message he said:

Teach your congregation and your pupils that white people who give you employment, who pay the taxes that support your schools, who go on your bonds and see that you have fair trial in courts of justices in ten thousand cases to every one lynching--that these people are your best friends, and that you should hold sacred their families. Teach them that the one crime for which lynching is condoned is inhuman, brutal and drives all good men and women, white and/or black, to irresistible madness. This done, the unmentionable crime will begin to cease and lynching will finally die a natural death.

Southerners were like blind men grasping at a straw when it came to a justification of lynching. They alluded to every real and imaginary act of insolence and impertinence by the Negro. Never once did they see

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59Ibid., August 13, 1897.
60Ibid., April 28, 1899.
61Ibid., June 9, 1899.
any probable relations in the race hatred and intolerance that were fed
the poorer whites concerning the Negro during the period of his dis-
franchisement.

Yet, they could see any act by a Negro as being a contributing cause
to lynching and a deterioration of race relations. Two such instances
were the dining of Booker T. Washington with President Roosevelt and
the escorting of John Wanamaker's daughter to a reception in Saratoga.
Both of these acts were played upon by Southern newspapers. In comment-
ing the editor wrote "This uncalled for, unnecessary social confab be-
tween Teddy and Booker will be regarded as a sort of presidential license
to every Sam Hose representative to start a crusade of lust."62

Another argument used to justify lynching was the fact that they
were dealing with a new Negro. Many whites felt that the new Negroes,
who never knew the bonds of slavery or were slaves only as children, had
neither love or respect for the white race. They seemingly had "no
truck", so to speak, for this type of Negro.

Editor Henry H. Revill, in the beginning of his famous "Fireside
Flashes" gave this excerpt on what was soon to be called the new Negro.
His statement exemplified the thinking of the average white man in Meri-
wether County and throughout the South.

The ante-bellum—the oldtime negro is rapidly passing and
will soon be extinct. His passage from the earthly stage severs
the tie that binds the affection of the South to the Negro.
The modern buck with his smattering of education, lawlessness
and hatred of the whites, and the ebony-hued female with her

62Ibid., September 25, 1903.
total lack of moral chastity, and dislike of the superior race, excite an emotion in the caucasian breast—the antithesis of that entertained for the oldtime Negro.

The state ought to appropriate a sum of money to procure a master to chisel out of sable marble, a true type of the negro of the old South, to be placed in the capital of Georgia. The devotion of the Southern white man for colored mammies and uncles of the olden time will follow the last one of the class into the great beyond.63

The editor, like most white men of that day, could not understand what was taking place before their eyes. He could not understand that this was a New Negro.

To Dr. Alain Locke, "the old Negro—the 'uncle' and the 'mammy'—had long been something of a myth, having given place to a New Negro with a spirit to seize, even in the face of an extortionate and heavy toll a chance for the improvement of conditions." S. Laing Williams, a strong Bookerite stated that "the New Negro had risen from 'dependence to independence', and hence had become conscious of his worth. This New Negro, 'unlike his grandfather, is sensitive to wrongs, whether under injustice and is fretful to discrimination'.64

There was no longer the so-called ante-bellum Negro, if one ever existed except in the minds of the ante-bellum southerner. Truly a New Negro had emerged. This was typical of the Meriwether Negro as of any other kind.

63Ibid., December 16, 1910.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

According to Clarence Bacote

The post-Reconstruction period in Georgia was a fluid one that saw the emergence of a new kind of Negro community and a new set of customs and laws designed to define the place of the Negro in Southern society. Slavery as a legal institution was dead. In its stead there developed a system of control geared to white supremacy and dependent upon both legal and extra-legal sanctions that in fact maintained the subordination and separateness of the Negro. This system which many recent students have come to refer to as caste or castelike, had a multiplicity of effects upon not only the course and quality of relations between the races but also upon the character of the Negro community itself. The situation was aggravated and intensified by the rivalry that existed between the Negro and poor white, a heritage from the days of slavery.

This rivalry was reflected in all aspects of Southern life whether it be political, social or economic. While some Negroes acquired a degree of economic independence, many, along with the poor whites were victims of the share cropping system. In the field of education, an ambitious start was made by the establishment of Negro Colleges by Northern missionary associations and the Freedmen's Bureau. These schools, however, reached only a few and the Negro masses were denied educational opportunities because the South faced "the impossible task of educating two races out of the poverty of one." Yet behind the walls of segregation, some collective spirit developed and as a consequence significant developments occurred in social, economic, and cultural matters. The significance this improvement in status or at least the designs for advance on the part of the Negro, is underscored by the fact that it aroused anxiety and even envy on the part of the whites who were concerned about keeping the Negro in his place.1

This synopsis applies to Meriwether County also. The political, social and economic behavior of the Meriwether Negro was colored by the

behavior of the whites of Meriwether County. Even though the Negroes gained a measure of economic independence this too was geared by the white man's attitude. The older "so-called antebellum Negro" was able to purchase land more readily than his present day counterparts. While on the other hand, only a few Negroes actually held office in the County, they voted and ran for office but were never elected. Their education too was hampered by the dual system of the South.

Editor Henry H. Revill stated the feelings of most of the whites in Meriwether, Georgia and the South when he said that the "ante-bellum—the oldtime negro is rapidly passing and will soon be extinct." He, like all other Southerners, could not understand that the so-called ante-bellum Negro permitted this myth to exist in order to maintain a certain semblance of obeisance and as a "survival expediency". He could not see that this so-called New Negro, unlike his grandfather, would not accept the status. Truly a New Negro had emerged in Meriwether and throughout the South.

\[2\text{Vindicator, December 16, 1910.}\]
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