The Negro Patch Revisited: Another Look at Its Structure and Function in the Antebellum South

By Tsutomu NUMAOKA

Throughout the antebellum South, most slaveowners, to one degree or another, allowed slaves to keep small plots of land or more extensive grounds, usually to grow their own vegetables, cash crops, and/or raise small livestock. Scholars in the field of slaves' "internal economy" have so far led others in discussing such "land for slaves' own use,"* regarding it as one of the essential foundations upon which the slaves' autonomous economic activities rested.¹ According to them, the land developed outside the power and influence of slaveowners. They seem to take it for granted that the practice of allocating land to slaves for raising their crops and/or livestock was just a "custom" by slaveowners, a "customary" right for slaves. Hence, they have insisted that the slaveowners left everything pertinent to the management of the land to the slaves themselves.² There is no denying that such an interpretation has led the scholars to a common tendency to oversimplify or not to clarify the types and functions of the land slaves used. Discussion has focused disproportionately family-unit gardens or patches and there are some cases when the topic is discussed without even identifying the type of the land.³

However, there is considerable evidence to show that individual slaveowners' policies towards the land, whether directly or indirectly, influenced the slaves' economic activities. Needless to say, it depended entirely upon the masters' judgement whether slaves should be allowed to have their own land or not; what kinds of crops and livestock slaves were permitted to raise; whether slaves could trade their produce outside the estates or not. What is more important on the subject of slaveowners' attitudes towards the land is: what kind(s) of land did the slaveowners allow the slaves to have and with what policy/strategy in mind; and moreover, how and to what extent did the land(s) work? This issue has been left untouched or only summarily dismissed by the scholars who have tried to demonstrate the economic autonomy of slaves.

This paper will concentrate on the use of the "Negro Patch" on Somerset Place Plantation, located on the northeast shore of Lake Phelps in eastern North Carolina (see Figure 1). The purpose of this paper is to examine and elucidate how the Negro Patch worked for the master, not just for the slaves. Before starting the main discussion, a reconsideration of the types of land slaves used for themselves will be given from a point of view of slaveowners. An investigation of the Negro Patch will, in a limited sense, only be able to tell us about a negro patch, and one that was in some respects very unique. But with the approach of analyzing the Negro Patch in a larger perspective, that is, by taking into view a number of slave gardens and
patches in variety throughout the antebellum South, an investigation of one negro patch will, in a larger sense, be able to shed some new light on the character and meaning of such varieties of land under slavery in the antebellum period.

* * *

The fundamental feature of slavery, in the relationship of slaveowners to slaves, lay in the fact that slaveowners tried their best to induce slaves who abhorred working to labor diligently. Almost all of the slaveowners, to a greater or lesser extent, inflicted physical abuse, such as whipping, branding, incarceration and the death penalty, upon errant slaves, but most of them realized its limitations. The slaves' own land can basically be thought of as part of the slaveowners' wide ranging incentive and reward system designed to motivate them to work. But unlike prizes and gifts such as clothing, cash and special holidays, the slaveowners
concerned continued to participate, in one way or another, in slaves’ activities on the land after “giving” it to slaves. The land was adroitly incorporated into slaveowners’ systems of slave labor management. The diversity of the land—in its forms and functions—reflected the slaveowners’ constant exertion to try to cultivate slaves’ voluntary will to work. A sketch of this from slaveowners’ perspective will be useful before discussing the Negro Patch on Somerset Place.

The family-unit gardens, having been disproportionately focused on by the historians of slaves’ internal economy, were indeed one of the typical types of land in the antebellum South. The testimonies of former slaves, such as “each cabin had a little garden plot and the slaves could raise some vegetables or cotton, a few chickens or a pig for themselves,” “[e]ach family had a garden, we raised what we wanted,” can be found without difficulty in the interviews with ex-slaves conducted by the Federal Writers’ Project in the 1930s. The slave families with gardens, usually adjacent to their houses, with about half an acre to several acres, commonly planted turnips, beans, onions, potatoes, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and other vegetables, and often included corn and watermelons. Poultry and livestock, typified by chickens and pigs, were often raised there, too. To be sure, supplementation of the regular diet by slaves themselves not only improved their diet, but reduced ration costs for the owners. The practice also might have had an effect of preventing slaves from stealing market crops and livestock from their masters. Yet, there were other intentions hidden behind the slaveowners’ actions: to make slaves feel a strong attachment for their homes, and, what was more important, to make them have an interest in working.

The vegetables which the slave families grew gave their diet—apt to be stale and monotonous—freshness as well as variety. The flowers sometimes planted in their gardens, as those in their masters’ gardens, must have given a cheerful, “home-like” appearance, and the herbs also grown there in some cases were used for their “home remedies.” Knowing a beneficial effect of the gardens on his own system of labor management, Tom Norris, the master of Queen Elizabeth Bunts, Georgia, encouraged his slaves to tend their garden plots. “When the crops were laid by we were given time off to improve living conditions at home, and were required to have a vegetable garden and also a flower garden,” recalled Bunts. According to George W. Harris of North Carolina, “when we got sick our mother doctored us with herbs which she had in de garden.” The slave families with their gardens certainly had “more than a passing interest” in their homes. Their gardens surely brought some comfort and peace of mind to the family members.

For slaveowners, particularly the entrepreneurial, capitalistic ones, motivating their hands to work was the more serious matter of concern. After much deliberation, most of them chose a policy of permitting their slaves to trade or sell the surplus crops and livestock raised in their gardens within and/or outside the estates. Despite fully acknowledging the bad influence on the minds of slaves of letting them participate in the market economy, the slaveowners permitted or overlooked the slaves’ economic activities seeking their own maximum plantation profit. This was not a custom, but rather a policy by slaveowners to motivate slaves’ interest in working and to encourage their industry. A slave living in a cotton plantation on the Mississippi River reports: “Each family had a garden, the products of which, together with eggs,
fowls and bacon, they frequently sold, .... Most of the families bought a barrel of flour every year. The manager [agent of the absentee owner] endeavored to encourage this practice, and that they might spend their money for flour instead of liquor."  

Such a slaveowners' policy was pursued even more actively and daringly in the "Negro Patches"—often termed "Nigger fields," "Negro grounds" and the like. These patches or grounds were usually allocated individually to "every" slave who desired to cultivate crops for sale and not just for home consumption. The land usually had poor soil and was mostly some distance from the masters' houses. It was not rare that the land was located on the skirts of the estates. But sometimes masters assigned each slave a "piece of good land" in the plantation field, primarily for stimulating slaves' motivation to work.  

This was another type of land for slaves, just as typical as family-unit gardens. Benjamine [sic] Henderson described the negro patches on a small Georgia farm where he was born in 1858, one that comprised 250 acres and had only five slaves: "The master of the Henderson plantation, as well as other plantation owners', allowed their slaves to work individual cotton patches; when the cotton was picked he paid them their price for the amount they had raised."  

Reflecting clearly the slaveowners' intention of maintaining the morale and instilling the motivation to work hard amongst the slaves, these patches were naturally included as an integral part of the system of incentives and rewards. A planter in South Carolina wrote in the De Bow's Review in 1858: Those slaves "who are disposed to be industrious have gardens and poultry."  

In order to encourage "good behavior" and also to appeal to their "better interest," Ebenezer Pettigrew, a noted scientific agriculturalist in North Carolina, allowed his slaves to plant their individual plots of ground and gave them cash rewards from the sale of their crops. James Hamilton Couper, a large-scale rice planter in Georgia, also employed a similar policy of individual plots. He experimented with the negro patch as a common field for three years, but in failure, and resumed his policy of individual plots for each slave. Randall Lee, born about 1860 in South Carolina, recalls that "each of his best Negro m[e]n" got a pig to raise for himself and family, and concludes that "it helped to solve the feeding problem and also satisfied the slaves."  

Many slaveowners devised other good uses for such private fields. Some owners even let "each child capable of working" have a little patch. This practice must have been enforced not only to make an efficient use of even the child labor force, but, at the same time, to acclimatize him to the practice of cultivation for himself, which was to yield industry to him when he grew up. Some owners also anticipated or often demanded that older slaves should support themselves by producing their subsistence crops with their own hands. But the result was so often more than what the owners had expected. "The old slaves," remarked Elias Thomas, a slave in North Carolina, "had patches they tended, and sold what they made and had the money it brought." Cash crops as well as subsistence crops were indeed commonly raised. This shows how the patches motivated even the elderly, who were retired from plantation labor, to work energetically to improve their living.  

Many records also reveal that not only age but also sex could be a basis for allowing slaves land for their cultivation. Male slaves were relatively in a close position to get land—particularly land for individuals—if they desired. It was largely because slave men were considered more fit than women with regard to time to spare and
quality of work for working in tobacco, cotton or corn patches: “De mens wukked in dem patches of deir own on Sadday evenin’ whilst de ’omans washed de clothes and cleaned up de cabins for de next week.” As was often the evening scene with slave husband and wife, “[w]hen dey got f’um de fields at night, de ’omans spun, mended, and knit, and de mens wukked in deir gyardens and cotton patches.” But, of course, their family members, women and children, often helped the men in their patches. As a means to make the undeveloped land into the fields fit for cultivation, many owners would often allow each slave—sometimes each slave family—a piece of land as large as he could tend, after cutting wood in the new land adjoining the estates. Usually the slave could use the ground for a few years, and when it “bec[a]me fit for the plough, the master [took] it, and he [was] removed to another new piece.”

The third type of land for slaves’ own use, which has been largely ignored but should be considered, was a rather extensive piece of land collectively owned by a particular group of slaves or all the field hands. The crops on these land were, as a rule, cultivated on equal terms by everyone or by some other working arrangement. The crops harvested were also divided equally among them. This kind of land, therefore, might be called “collective” or “common” land. The progressive planter James Couper, for example, experimented with this type of “collective enterprise” with his slaves. To improve the character of slaves and increase their motivation to work, he chose twenty-five men who showed industry and good conduct, and rewarded them by allotting a fifty-acre plot to them. He admitted his failure in this practice three years later; it failed probably because of “their holding the property in common,” his lack of supervision and the incentives for them. James Henry Hammond of South Carolina directed his overseers to follow the regulation on the negro patch: “A field of suitable size shall be planted in pindars [ground-nuts or peanuts], & cultivated in the same manner as the general crop, the produce of which is to be divided equally among the work-hands.” Though a review of the literature thus far has failed to elicit a confirmation of how pervasive this type of land was throughout the South, this was certainly one of the types of land which slaves used and also which slaveowners, especially progressive and entrepreneurial ones, must have thought much of, for what the slaveowners were covetous of was a harmonious collective work force with good motivation.

It should be also pointed out here that many slave testimonies do not offer us clear information with regard to the types of land they tended. For example, an ex-slave from South Carolina reports: “All de slaves had dere gardens on my marster’s plantation. He made dem do it, and dey liked it.” Pet Franks, born about 1841 in Mississippi, recalled: “All de Niggers … had dey own patches where dey could plant what ever dey wanted to.” According to a slave born in Alabama, “all the slaves” had their own gardens “during the growing season.” “All those who desired to were permitted to raise chickens, watermelons and vegetables,” said Juliah Rush, born in 1828 on Saint Simons Island, Georgia. These testimonies do not tell us what types they were, but give us a reasonably accurate idea of the critically important nature of the slaveowners’ fundamental attitude toward the land. That is, the slaveowners did their utmost to induce the self-motivated working spirit in every slave.

In view of this, it was only natural that, in practice, each of the three types of land surveyed above did not function independently. On many plantations and farms, slaveowners had two or
more types of land, and they were connected in function with one another. It is, in a sense, reasonable, because slaveowners' policy on labor management was converged to bring out a highly motivated slave labor force. Even more complicated, slaveowners' plantation gardens—very often called "big gardens" by slaves—in which various kinds of vegetables were raised primarily for white households and house servants, could frequently be used also by field hands almost freely. These slaveowners' gardens, needless to say, had an influence on the slaves' practical use of the land they could cultivate. A clear understanding of the land for slaves like this is requisite to an analysis of the Negro Patch on Somerset Place Plantation.

* * *

Josiah Collins III (1808-1863), the owner of Somerset Place Plantation, ran the plantation from 1830 to 1861. According to the will of Josiah Collins I (1735-1819), all the lake property including Somerset Place Plantation was "loaned" to Josiah II (1763-1839) "during his natural life," but he actually let his son, Josiah III, manage the Somerset Place in 1830; hence, young Collins, age twenty one, now became the plantation owner of 3,000 acres of land and the master of at least 229 slaves. With subsequent strenuous efforts, he enlarged his plantation further. He had 12,400 acres of land—1,500 acres of improved land—and 288 slaves in 1850, and 14,500 acres of land—2,000 acres of improved land—and 328 slaves in 1860.19

His greatest economic concern was seeking maximum profit. With his scientific, progressive, and enterprising practices, Collins produced a prodigious amount of corn commercially with considerable success and came to be known as one of the leading commercial corn planters in antebellum North Carolina. According to census data in 1850 and 1860, Collins produced 30,000 bushels of corn in 1850, and again another 30,000 bushels in 1860. Difficult to match, only a few planters in North Carolina yielded more than 60,000 bushels of corn within the same time frame.20 He devoted the better part of his energies to increasing labor productivity, the remarkable quantitative increase of which was effected by his decisive way of management, such as: (1) the orderly sustenance of a good drainage system, (2) the operation of a marvelously streamlined working series with the help of water power and machinery, and (3) a generous use of manure and fertilizers in planting crops.21 A variety of additional efforts to increase labor productivity vis-à-vis the actual day-to-day experience of slave labor were also attempted. Into this profit-seeking scheme the Negro Patch was incorporated.

The slaves on Somerset Place were allowed two different kinds of their own land. One kind was a small garden patch allotted to family units around slave cabins (see Figure 2). It is exactly this kind of slave garden to which historians in the field have very often referred. The other was an extensive piece of land which Collins called a "Negro Patch." The following discussions will focus on the Negro Patch, but first, a brief look at the family-unit gardens and the Collins' plantation garden seems warranted since the two were connected, in one way or another, to the Negro Patch for the benefit of Collins as well as his slaves.

In the small gardens located just behind their quarters, Collins' slaves grew family units of vegetables mainly, with some consisting of corn as well.22 The vegetables grown there were usually consumed by their own slave families. Occasionally, however, the vegetables which had
been produced as cash crops according to a fixed schedule, or any surpluses, were traded with their master. In the summer of 1848, for example, a slave named Ben traded a certain amount of onions with Collins for $1.00. Collins’ Daybook on the page of July 31 reads: “By pd [paid] Old Ben fr [for] Onions fr [for] House [§]1[,].00.”23 As onions worthy of $1.00 correspond to “2 Bush[e]l Meal,” “10 Chick[e]ns,” “4 Goslings” or “4 Geese” in the Daybook, it turns out that a considerable amount of onions, probably produced for trading from the outset, was traded with Collins.24 As Uriah Bennett, a field hand at Somerset Place, recalls later, Collins seldom permitted his slaves to go off the plantation: “For months and months, at a time, we were never allowed off the farm, sometimes we would get as far as the gate and peep over. We were told that if we got outside the Padirollers [patrollers] would get us.”25 Apparently from this, Collins chose the alternative of handling the slaves’ produce from their gardens within his own plantation, instead of giving the slaves permits for trading outside the plantation.

Among the records of illegal trading between whites and slaves from 1830 to 1844, two cases were found in which Josiah Collins’ slaves had been involved. This did not concern Josiah III. It concerned his father Josiah II.26 In one case showing clear evidence of his slave Charles’ trying to buy a pig from neighboring John Thompson’s slave in 1854, Josiah III interrogated
Charles and a few of the other slaves involved, and wrote to Thompson immediately as well to reveal the real facts. By policy such as this, Collins established a closed plantation society with rigid social stratum. Only within this plantation were the slaves permitted to trade their produce for needed clothing, tools and implements, livestock, and other personal articles.

As mentioned earlier, not only vegetables, but also subsistence crops like corn were grown in their garden patches. It seems that the corn crop was raised on a rather small scale, however, because a large amount of corn was produced in their Negro Patch. When George Pumppelly Collins (1835–1903), the fourth child of Josiah III, returned from the Civil War to Somerset in 1865, he found the negroes had planted corn. After mid-February of 1863, when Somerset’s slaves were declared to be free by a commander of the Union garrison at Plymouth, Washington County, the freed slaves expanded their garden patches to focus on growing corn for their own consumption and also “in anticipation of the coming of their families.” It is a well-known fact that during the Civil War the movement to plant food crops such as corn and wheat instead of cotton and tobacco spread throughout the Confederate States; it is interesting to note that not only Confederate agriculturalists, but also the slaves who remained on their owners’ estates carried out a plan of food crop production for their own families who were returning.

The relation of Collins’ plantation garden to the slave gardens should not be overlooked. Generally, it was common, or rather natural for slaveowners, who did not permit their slaves to have any kind of their own land, to supply vegetables for their slaves. Seemingly contradictory, it was also not at all rare that the slaveowners who did allow slaves to have their own gardens still gave them lots of vegetables, often all the vegetables they needed, which were produced from masters’ big gardens. For these owners, the garden patch was not a mere provision ground for slaves. It meant more than that: It was the very place to make slaves cultivate assiduity in working, a spirit of self-motivation and an interest in their homes. This was the reason why slaves were not rebuked so much by the owners if they cultivated crops other than vegetables, and quite a few owners allowed their slaves to have “Negro Patches” or “Nigger fields” in addition to garden patches. Also for the slaves, such practices by their masters were welcomed, because the slaves could craft their own definite plans for planting crops. Donaville Broussard, an ex-slave from Texas, born in 1850, reports: “De slaves had dey own li’l gardens and raise’ veg’tables, but dey didn’ plant much peas and co’n cause dey git all of dem dey want from ol’ marster’ co’nfiel.” Conversely, there were, of course, cases where moderate planting and greater provisions of vegetables generated a welcome interest in slaves’ cultivation of other crops such as corn and wheat.

Like most of the large-scale planters in the antebellum South, Collins, in a more than four acre plantation garden (see Figure 2 and 3), raised “all kinds” of vegetables, including potatoes, turnips and peas from the “Potatoe Patch,” “Turnip Patch” and “new pea field,” respectively, for his whole plantation. He “fed [his] slaves on … vegetables” in plenty. Accordingly, there seems to have been no need of his slaves’ raising vegetables in their gardens. But actually Collins permitted his slaves, like Ben, to trade vegetables with him. This was nothing but a policy to motivate slaves to work for the master who knew all about their hatred towards “compelling power.” Collins, seemingly kind enough, purchased “Garden Seeds … for Negroes”
FIGURE 3  HOUSE AND GROUNDS AT SOMERSET PLACE

10. Storehouse  11. Hospital  12. Slave Quarters for Domestic Servants or Craft  
House  16. Field Hand Quarters  17. Somerset Canal

Source: Derived from “Somerset Place: An Antebellum Plantation Community”  
( Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department  
of Cultural Resources)

Notes: 1. The walkway located on the east side of a row of buildings, such as the  
hospital, slave quarters, chapel, and ration storage, clearly divided the  
living spaces of whites and blacks. The overseer’s house was right where  
both spaces met.
2. More field hand cabins were located in a line along Lake Phelps (see Figure 2).

on at least one occasion.38 Aptly, again, it was also practiced to make them feel an interest in working. Collins did not use this kind of incentive aid as an excuse for direct intervention in the slaves’ economic activities. He gave indirect aid to his slaves to heighten their will to work. Thus, the slave gardens at Somerset Place did not develop independently from the influence of
the slaveowner. They could be considered a reflection of Collins’ policy on the plantation labor management. What Collins truly sought was the self-directed spirit and the motivation for voluntary work, which would surely have good practical results in “Collins’ corn”—another of his plantation innovations—fields of his own.37

The slaves on Somerset Place had another kind of ground they could use. Collins named it “Negro Patch.” The record of the Negro Patch first appears in “A Memorandum Book” which covers the years 1838 to 1839. On a page under the heading of “Crop at Somerset Place—Fall of 1838,” Collins takes notes on the yield from each of fourteen corn fields. The Negro Patch was among those fields. Collins recorded, with admiration, as “55 Acres Negro Patch Sound Corn 160 bls. Rotten 53 bls. [—] Yield pr. acre nearly 4 Bbls. !!!!.”38 Even the advanced and scientific planter was surprised at the high productivity per acre. Considering that Collins must have allotted the land of poorer soil to the slaves, the yield above can be understood as entirely the result of the slaves’ positive exertion. That is why the Negro Patch continued to work well for at least fifteen years.39

Firstly, an examination of the location and the type of land of the Negro Patch is in order. These questions are very important, because they remain unsettled. The fifty-five acre Negro Patch on Somerset Place is thought to have been located right near the slave quarters. For example, Wayne K. Durrill, in a long academic report on Somerset Place in 1981, explained that slaves “cultivated a ‘Negro Patch’ of corn which covered fifty-five acres, probably in the relatively poorer soil just north of the line of slave cabins along the Lake.”40 By examining the Negro Patch together with other plantation fields, we can locate its position relative to other fields.

As was often the case with large planters, they divided their own extensive arable land into many fields of suitable size. According to the Memorandum Book, 810 acres of land, consisting of fourteen fields, were cultivated to produce corn in 1838. Each field was 57.9 acres on average. The “North Boundary Field” and “Adam [Cut] Field” were both the same size as the Negro Patch.41 The “Plantation Record from January 1850 to July 1853” gives more information on this question. According to this account, slaves often did the same kinds of work in two or more fields among Negro Patch, North Boundary, Adam Cut and “83 Acre Field” at the same time. It says, for example: “5 Ploughs in Indian Town[,] 3 in N Boundary, 6 in field F[,] 1 in Negro Patch,” “4 Ploughs in Adam Cut & N Boundary[,] 1 in Negro Patch.” Also the same slaves often did their work in two or more of these fields at a time: “Women cleaning 3ft ditches in Adam Cut & Negro Patch,” “9 Ploughs in Negro Patch & 83 acre,” “Balance of hands replanting corn in 83 acre, Negro Patch[,] Adam Cut & N. Boundary (see Table 1).”42 This means these fields were almost undoubtedly next to one another, some distance away from the slave quarters. Judging from the names of these two fields, the North Boundary and the Adam Cut, the Negro Patch must have been located to the north along the main canal—the symbol of the Somerset Place at its founding in Josiah I’s days, which was completed by digging and cutting through the swamp at the cost of many African lives (see Figure 4). The soil around the Negro Patch was certainly poorer, since the soil a few miles north of the Collins’ mansion house was somewhat more sandy and had less organic matter in it. Hence, Collins estimated that slaves would produce much less corn per acre.43
**FIGURE 4 PLAN OF FARM LAND AT SOMERSET PLACE, 1837**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>74½</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12¾</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20½</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30½</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22½</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28¼</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44½</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23½</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27½</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41½</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21½</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>28½</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43½</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22¼</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Plan of Josiah Collins’ Farm at Lake Phelps, Josiah Collins Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Notes: 1. This farmland was surveyed in 1821. This copy was made in 1837. The original copy was plotted from a scale of 40 poles to an inch.
2. For the buildings and facilities in lot No. 1 see figure 2.

The next problem concerns the type of land of the Negro Patch. A clue to the solution is also found in the Plantation Record. The Negro Patch was referred to fifty times in the record. Collins recorded the activities of the slaves’ work in the Negro Patch along with those in other plantation fields (see Table 1). Slaves evidently worked in the Negro Patch in the daytime, and their labor seems to have been arranged into the routine work just like the labor in the other fields. He recorded, for example, on May 30, 1851: “9 Ploughs in field E—6 do in 74 acre—1 do in Negro Patch—Balance thinning & replanting in 83 acre—stopped by rain from 12 till 4 o'clock.” This practice was also applied in the case of their Saturdays' half-day of labor: “15 Ploughs in fields E & G—1 do in Negro Patch & 83 acre—Balance hoeing corn in field E—All stopped at 12 o'clock.” Permitting slaves to make their own crops during the regular day’s work was not so exceptional among slaveowners in the 1840s and 1850s. A small planter in Alabama reported in 1860: “I have a field called the ‘negroes' field,’ and I work it as I do mine.” A Virginia planter offered a more detailed description of a piece of “good” land which slaves could use on their own account: “When the land is broken up for my crop, the negro is allowed time to break up his also; and when my crop is planted or cultivated, his is also; and when mine is gathered, he gathers his, and measures it in my presence, and I commonly become the purchaser.”
Another point we can read from the record is that unspecified field hands in different numbers engaged in the routine work in the Negro Patch. From December 16 to December 20 in 1850, for example, a different number of unspecified hands plowed the patch every day: 2 hands on the 16th; 4 on the 17th; 9 on the 18th; “[b]alance of women,” probably meaning dozens of women, on the 19th; 11 on the 20th.47 Unquestionably, this means that the Negro Patch was not assigned to specific hands.

From these facts, the Negro Patch can be regarded as a kind of common field. It was not a negro patch on a family or an individual basis.48 Even though it was a common field, the Negro Patch was not a field which the slave community was entirely responsible to manage for themselves. In the daytime, the slaveowner was deeply involved in the management of the Negro Patch. It was a new variation of the communal-negro patch.

The daily experience of slaves’ work on their own land has been generally unknown to a large extent. Ironically for the slaves on Somerset Place, however, the Plantation Record reveals how Collins’ slaves worked in their Negro Patch. They were not entirely free from Collins’ control; it was ingeniously arranged into his own system of labor management. Despite this, work on the patch carried much benefit for the slaves besides the acquisition of their own crops. If we examine the record carefully, we find Collins managed the Negro Patch very skillfully and successfully.

First, frequently during the slack season, slaves could clean and dig the ditches and furrows in the Negro Patch as part of their daily plantation labor. For example, on November 21 in 1850, Collins recorded: “All hands carrying corn from Barn & shelling till 10 oclock—Balance of day 24 hands cleaning out tap ditches in Negro Patch, Adam Cut & North Boundary.” Also he noted as follows: “Women cleaning 3 ft[.] ditches in Adam Cut & Negro Patch,” “Balance of Women cleaning stable yard[,] cleaning furrows in Negro Patch,” “Men cutting 3 ft[,] ditches in Negro Patch,” “digging 3 ft[,] ditches in Negro Patch & Burning log heaps in Tuscarora [Field],” “Bringing up wood & digging ditch in Negro Patch.”49 As his estate around Lake Phelps was swampy, the smooth operation of the drainage system—a complicated network of a canal, drains, ditches, and tap ditches—was for Collins a primary concern of his plantation. The work of cleaning, raking, digging, and cutting the furrows and ditches was arduous and wearying indeed. Nevertheless, his slaves could keep the drainage system of their patch in good order during daylight hours for plantation labor. Since keeping the system in good condition allowed them to grow good crops of their own, the slaves must have had a vested interest in performing the job well.

Second, the record indicates that slaves could use machines and wagons to cut and haul wheat even in the Negro Patch during harvest. On June 19 in 1850, two slaves, probably women, worked “Machines [in] Cutting Wheat in Negro Patch” till 12 o’clock. A week later, slaves used “6 Waggons” in “hauling wheat from Negro Patch.”50 By using machines and wagons, slaves could harvest their own wheat efficiently without hard labor. This can be regarded as a physically substantial benefit to slaves whose master adeptly operated the highly mechanized production system.

For slaves, however, a sense of impartiality acknowledged behind this machine use must have been accepted with pleasure. The practice of doing the same kinds of work, such as the
drainage work, simultaneously in different fields—including the Negro Patch—also greatly helped to foster a sense of impartiality towards Collins in the minds of his slaves. Such impartiality as this—the spiritual and moral benefit from Collins’ impartial treatment—was the third benefit his slaves received.

Fourth is the sense of freedom, which Collins’ slaves enjoyed to a considerable extent while working in the fields, especially in the Negro Patch. This was largely the result of the labor arrangement (discussed later) Collins adopted. It suffices to say here that he divided his labor force into so many small units that it became next to impossible for him to establish a method of exercising close supervision over his slaves. As a result, his field hands could often evade the forced labor under the cruel overseers in the fields and, therefore, enjoyed some sense of liberation. Collins’ hands presumably could also easily hide and rest in the corn field, as seen in other corn plantations. Jacob Branch, born a slave in Louisiana, for example, recalled: They “[n]ever ‘low us to res’ ’cep’n sometimes us git a long distance out in de fiel’ and lay down in a co’n row and ketch a nap.”51 In the Negro Patch, especially, these feelings became more pronounced, since they could also be free of the slave drivers’ superintendence, which can be seen in the following: “Aleck with gang at same work in 74 acre [field],” “Aleck’s gang still picking partridge pea,” “Dick with 5 Men & balance of Women digging 3 ft. ditches in Gallows field.”52

From Collins’ point of view, all this was essentially derived from his own policy/strategy, to increase labor productivity to achieve the maximum profit in crop production. He took advantage of the skills and knowledge the slaves acquired for his own interests. Such labor-saving machines as reapers, thrashers, cutters, and harvesters were fragile and a little difficult to use in the fields, which were studded with stumps here and there. But the use of new or improved agricultural machines and implements in the Negro Patch, without doubt, made his slaves take an interest and some contentment in the efficiency of those labor means. This small but important part of his policy, in its turn, facilitated an extraordinarily smooth operation of the salient mechanized production system as a whole. Despite the still limited adoption of labor-saving machines in the antebellum South, female slaves as well as male slaves at Somerset Place could use machines and improved instruments in their daily work for Collins with no trouble. Following are examples: “2 Machines Cutting Lake Side fields—8 Women tying to [e]ach Machine,” “Women in Machine House—Thrashing & Measuring Wheat,” “2 Men & 2 Women with Lime Machine.”53

Edmund Ruffin, a preeminent agricultural reformer in Virginia, visited Somerset in 1839 to observe the conditions of reclamation and drainage of the land. Even agronomist Ruffin was surprised to see that the whole operation of the drainage was kept “very perfect.”54 It is doubtful whether slaves could maintain the drainage system in such good order, if they had not been permitted to dig, cut and clean the ditches and furrows in the Negro Patch during daytime labor.

A fairly impartial treatment of slaves by Collins brought about an intangible but great benefit to him. There is no doubt that Collins could enhance their motivation to work with a sense of impartiality issuing from his economic interests. Having his slaves work frequently in both the Negro Patch and the plantation fields without clear distinction was an effective way of gaining
the most out of their labor. This practice produced good labor results in the plantation fields, as well as in the Negro Patch. From the earlier days of slavery it was well-known among slaveowners that slaves showed a marked tendency to "cultivate [their own land] much better than their [m]aster." The slaves could not help but work hard in all of these fields, because the devotion to work hard only in the Negro Patch would bring about a lack of uniformity in the labor results among these fields.

A sense of freedom resulted from the labor system Collins adopted. In spite of the labor direction he gave them, Collins frequently let his slaves take responsibility for their own work in the fields, just like the labor under the task system. The labor system adopted by Collins was a gang system, but, in Philip D. Morgan's words, it was a gang system where "the gangs were small and relatively unsupervised." Morgan also explained this system, writing, "The labor force on such plantations could be divided into as many as six or more units, each composed of about one to five slaves ... there were so few slaves in a group that the notion of their being driven is probably inappropriate. In practice, such an arrangement might closely approximate individual tasking." This can be readily illustrated in table 1. Each group was mostly composed of less than ten slaves. There were often cases when each group consisted of one to three slaves, an arrangement approximating to "individual tasking." It is estimated that Collins had about 124 field hands in 1850, consisting of 69 males and 55 females (see Table 2). Collins, therefore, divided 124 hands into many small groups and let each small group accomplish its work within a fixed time. They actually performed a variety of more than one hundred tasks throughout the year.

Collins adopted this labor arrangement, largely because he was raising such labor-extensive crops as corn and wheat. Compared to staple crops like cotton, corn and wheat crops needed less continual care. According to 1840 statistics, for example, only 69 and 35 slave labor-hours, as opposed to 135 hours for cotton, were required to grow and harvest an acre of corn and wheat respectively. Also, a single field hand could raise twenty to thirty acres of corn or wheat, in comparison with eight acres of cotton per hand. The superintendence of slaves was imperfect and impossible. This was closely related to the fact that Collins tried to cultivate the slaves' self-direction, motivation and sense of agency to work hard in the fields.

* * *

The dominant characteristics of Collins' management of the Negro Patch were that he granted slaves the following: (1) the entire Patch for all the field hands, (2) allowance of daytime labor on it, and (3) ingenious permission to work it in combination with other plantation fields. This method reminds us again of the policy adopted by a planter in Virginia cited before. As he eloquently described, "[w]hen the land is broken up for my crop, the negro is allowed time to break up his also; and when my crop is planted or cultivated, his is also; and when mine is gathered, he gathers his, and measures it in my presence, and I commonly become the purchaser." The same can be said with Collins. Collins strove to draw out the slaves' self-motivated and active will to work in his fields by trying to treat the Negro Patch as equally as possible with his plantation fields. We can fully surmise that it helped greatly to reduce not
only the discontent and frustration against the coerced, unremunerated labor which smoldered in the slaves' mind, but also the tension or friction between the slaves and the slaveowner, especially when over an issue such as the ownership of the Negro Patch.

These problems lying between slaveowners and slaves were the crux of what every slaveowner had to face as far as retaining the slave labor system was concerned. Like Collins, many slaveowners in the antebellum South who allotted slaves their own land must have expected a considerable effect of this policy in motivating slaves to work. However, most of them could not maximize the full extent of such a policy, largely because they produced such labor-intensive crops as cotton. They were aware that a clear separation of labor hours for slaves’ own benefit from those of the masters’ benefit was unavoidably apt to drive slaves to skimp on their hours of daytime labor for their masters. Despite this recognition, they could hardly permit their slaves to cultivate their land in the daytime. The number of slaves required to work day-labor on the Negro Patch was considered by labor-intensive cotton planters to be a serious loss of work force. In this context, the Negro Patch at Somerset Place can be considered a type of land which tended to emerge in corn producing areas and was made best use of by large, commercially producing corn planters.

It can not be said, of course, that the Negro Patch was wholly responsible for such an amazing economic prosperity on Somerset Place Plantation, but it is pretty safe to say that the Negro Patch created a strong impetus to the smooth operation of all the plantation labor. Collins’ admiration, “nearly 4 Bbls !!!!” must have been repeated over and over again until just prior to the invasion of Federal Forces into Albemarle Sound country.

NOTES

Special thanks to a Niigata Sangyo University research fellowship (1994-1995) for providing the entire funding for my research in North Carolina. To the staff members of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, and the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, I also express my genuine appreciation.

1. “land for their own use” will be referred to as simply “their own land” or “their own private land” which, although still belonging to the master, could be used by slaves.
The Negro Patch Revisited: Another Look at its Structure and Function in the Antebellum South


3. Scholars in the field have generally overemphasized the extent to which slaves could maintain the autonomy of a slave family and a slave community, as scholars did in the 1970s; the only difference in emphasis lies not in the cultural but in the economic autonomy. It seems that Peter Kolchin alludes to this point in his book review on R. McDonald’s Economy and Material Culture of Slaves. See Journal of American History 81 (March, 1995), 1704-1705. See also John Campbell, “As a Kind of Freeman? Slaves’ Market-Related Activities in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860,” Slavery & Abolition 12 (May, 1991), 131-169; Lawrence T. McDonnell, “Money Knows No Master: Market Relations and the American Slave Community,” in Winifred B. Moore, Jr., Joseph F. Tripp and Lyon G. Tyler, Jr., eds., Developing Date: Modernization in a Traditional Society (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988), 31-44. Campbell emphasizes “the complex and contradictory nature” of market participation for slaves, while McDonnell stresses the negative aspect of slaves’ independent economic activities which brought about “division and conflict... between haves and have-nots” in the slave community.

4. For the ownership of land used by a slave, it was not the property of the slave. More precisely, the slave had the usufruct of the land, not ownership of it. This was the right not only to use, but also to enjoy the profits and powers or advantages over the land belonging to another person. Such land recognized as usufruct by the master was the slave’s peculium. Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 182-183; M.I. Finley ed., Slavery in Classical Antiquity: Views and Controversies (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1960), 11; Lichtenstein, op. cit., 424.


20. Seventh Census of the U.S., 1850: Washington County, N.C., Agriculture Schedule, 165; Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Washington County, N.C., Agriculture Schedule, 149. The survey of the yield of corn by individual farmers in both 1850 and 1860, who produced corn in counties covering the basin of the Roanoke River, and the area of Albemarle Sound in the eastern coastal plain region in North Carolina, shows that Collins produced the fourth largest corn crop total in both those years, next to Samuel Williams in Bertie County (75,000 bushels), David Clark (69,500 bushels), Thomas P. Deveraux in Halifax County (66,000 bushels). For further information see Numaoka, “Josiah Collins III,” 35, 50.


22. There are no records found in Josiah Collins Papers indicating where the slave gardens were located in the plantation.

In a pioneering and outstanding academic report on Somerset Place Plantation, Wayne K. Durrill confuses slave gardens with the Negro Patch in their locations, types and functions. Wayne K. Durrill, “The Black Community at Somerset Place, 1786-1870: A History and Recommendations for Site Development,” (report, Historic Sites Section, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, 1981), chapter 2 and 4.

23. Daybook of Josiah Collins from January 1848 to [July 1856] (A.B. 265.2) thereinafter cited as Daybook, 1848–1856, July 31, 1848, Josiah Collins Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh (hereinafter NCAH) (Underline in citation as per the original).

24. Daybook, 1848–1856, July 31, July 19, August 2, 9, 1848, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.


26. Slave Records: Criminal Actions Concerning Slaves, 1830–1844, Chowan County, October 13, 14, 1830; April 10, 11, 1839, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh.

27. “Examination of Negroes, 1854” in Slave Records (P.C. 417.8), Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH. For information on the means of getting money for slaves see Daybook, 1848–1856, December 30, 1848, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH; Daybook, July 1856–February 1867 (but actually up to June, 1863 and January and February only in 1867), March 19, 1858, September 21, 1859, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH; Durrill, “Black Community at Somerset Place,” chapter 2.

28. According to Uriah Bennett, the “field hands were separate from those in the [mansion] house. No other slaves were allowed to go to the house. If you wanted to see the master, you had to see the servant, and the servant told the master.” An archaeological excavation to research the site of Somerset Place in the early 1950’s demonstrates that Collins tried to firmly imprint a rigid social stratum system in slaves’ minds by painting the mansion house, the kitchen storehouse, the bath house, and other buildings such as the slave chapel and the slave quarters with different kinds of colors. Needless to say, the layout of the plantation also clearly reflects the stratification of their living space (see Figure 3). Uriah Bennett interview, SFP in FSA Papers, NCAH; William S. Tarlton, *Somerset Place and Its Restoration* (Raleigh: Division of State Parks, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development, 1954), 57–58; Durrill, “Black Community at Somerset Place,” chapter 2.

29. George P. Collins to Anne C. Collins, June 5, 1865, Anne Cameron Collins Papers # 3838, SCH; George P. Collins to Paul C. Cameron, June 19, 1865, Anne Cameron Collins Papers # 3838, SCH.


34. Plantation Record from January 1850 to July 1853 (A.B. 265.6) (hereinafter cited as Plantation Record, 1850-1853), May 1, June 1, July 9, August 3, 7, 16, 27, October 21, 1850, July 7, August 2, 11, 12, 13, 18, 1851, August 2, 1852, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH (microfilm used). For the area of Collins’ plantation garden, see “History of Somerset Place” (Raleigh: Department of Conservation and Development, Division of State Parks). 3. According to this report, archaeological excavation revealed the area of the garden, though Uriah Bennett observed it had “two or three acres.” Uriah Bennett interview, SFP in FSA Papers, NCAH.

35. Uriah Bennett interview, SFP in FSA Papers, NCAH.


37. Collins developed a new variety of corn as a result of “mixing some six different varieties” and sold as “Collins’s corn.” Josiah Collins to L. A. Edmondston, March 24, 1860, Letterbook, 1858-1861 (P.C. 417.2), 349, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH. See also “Report of the Commissioner of Patents, for the Year 1850, Part II. Agriculture” in Executive Documents 2nd Sess. 31st Cong., vol. 6, pt. 2, 1850-1851 (Washington: Office of Printers to House of Reps., 1851), 376; Henry King Burgwyn, Sr. Typescript Diaries, 1844-1848, (P.C. 515.1), October 29, November 6, 1844, NCAH; Henry King Burgwyn, Sr. Typescript Diaries, 1840-1842, (P.C. 515.1), April 11, 1840, March 27, 1841, NCAH.

38. Memorandum Book (P.C. 417.12), 7, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH (Underline in citation as per the original.).

39. Plantation Record, 1850-1853, December 10, 1852, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.

40. Durrill, “Black Community at Somerset Place,” chapter 2. See also note 22.

41. Memorandum Book, 7-9, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.

42. Plantation Record, 1850-1853, May 7, 16, 1851. August 23, December 23, 1850, May 21, 1851, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH. See also January 14, June 20, 21, 22, July 3, August 22, 23, December 17, 18, 1850, April 11, 12, 16, 22, May 10, 19, 20, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, July 1, November 24, 29, 1851, February 12, 1852, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.

43. The area north of Collins’ plantation was called Newland, where poorer yeoman farmers had been settled. The soil around there was somewhat sandy and had less organic matter in it, compared to the soil near Lake Phelps. W. A. Davis, Soil Survey of Washington County, North Carolina (Washington, D.C., 1912), 15, 16.

44. Plantation Record, 1850-1853, May 30, 31, 1851, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH. See also table 1, particularly, January 14, June 19, 20, August 23, November 21, December 16, 23, 1850, April 11, 12, 16, 22, May 7, 10, 21, 24, 28, 29, July 1, 11, 24, 1851.


46. Ibid., 275, 270.

47. Plantation Record, 1850-1853, December 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 1850, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.

48. See note 22.

49. Plantation Record, 1850-1853, November 21, August 23, December 19, 1850, March 31, April 5, December 10, 1852, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.

50. Ibid., June 19, 26, 1850, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH (Underlines in the citation as per the original). The record shows not only mechanic slaves, but also field hands, including women, operated machines, such as the wheat cutter, wheat thrasher and lime spreader. For information on female hands using machines see Ibid., June 17, August 21, October 21, 1850, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.


52. Plantation Record, 1850-1853, April 23, May 18, 20, 1850, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH. See also April 26, 27, May 23, 24, 31, June 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 1850, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.

53. Plantation Record, 1850-1853, June 17, August 21, October 30, 1850, Josiah Collins Papers, NCAH.

54. Farmers’ Register (Petersburg, Virginia), vol. 7, no. 12 (December, 1839), 727.


57. In computing the number of field hands on Somerset Place in 1850, field hand equivalent ratios were found in Richard G. Lowe and Randolph B. Campbell, *Planters & Plain Folk: Agriculture in Antebellum Texas* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1987), 159–161. The age and sex data for computing were obtained from the Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850; North Carolina, [Slave Schedules], Rutherford, Sampson, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Tyrrell, Union, Wake, Warren, Washington, Watauga, Wayne, Wilkes, and Yancey Counties (Washington: National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1964). The field hand equivalent rating on Somerset is 0.428, which is a little lower than 0.464 for the entire slaves of Washington County. This figure was computed out of the data from J. D. B. De Bow, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, Publishing Printer, 1853), 305–307. For examples showing the rate of the number of field hands to the total number of slaves on individual plantations, Rawick, ed., vol. 7, Okla. Narr., 335; vol. 12, pt., Ga. Narr., 49–50, 130, 289; Ball, *Slavery in the United States*, 146.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/14</td>
<td>Monday &quot;Men still at Western cutting logs 15 Women cutting Reeds &amp; Briers— Rest of Women with Children picking up Chunks in Negro Patch &amp; 83 acre 2 Carts hauling wood—2 Men went around Lake Gate Canal taking out Chunks—2 hands burning coal—&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/19</td>
<td>Wednesday &quot;9 Ploughs in Lower Rice field till 8 o'clock—2 Machines Cutting Wheat in Negro Patch till 12 o'clock 1 balance of day—binders as before 16 cradlers till 8 o'clock—balance of hands picking cheat from wheat till 8 o'clock—rest of day binding hauling &amp; stowing in Machine house&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/20</td>
<td>Thursday &quot;Same Plough work as yesterday—Balance of hands cutting, shucking tying hauling &amp; stowing wheat from 74 acre Negro Patch &amp; Adam Cut Harvest still—&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/26</td>
<td>Wednesday &quot;6 Waggons hauling wheat from Negro Patch—Machine &amp; balance of hands in 83 acre &amp; Indian Town field Harvest&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/6</td>
<td>Saturday &quot;13 Ploughs in Gallows field—8 waggon's hauling wheat from Indian Town Part of hands Thrashing &amp; part raking wheat in Negro Patch—&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>Monday &quot;14 ploughs in Gallows field—3 waggon's hauling wheat from Barn to Machine House—Part of hands Thrashing—Part raking wheat in Negro Patch—Balance setting up corn in Gallows &amp; Billet fields&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/9</td>
<td>Tuesday &quot;4 Ploughs in Potatoe Patch 10 Hands hillin potatoes—Balance Thrash-ing &amp; raking wheat in Negro Patch—&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/23</td>
<td>Friday &quot;Women cleaning 3ft ditches in Adam Cut &amp; Negro Patch, Men Cutting 3 ft ditches in Billet field&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/21</td>
<td>Thursday &quot;All hands carrying corn from Barn &amp; shelling till 10 oclock—Balance of day 24 hands cleaning out tap ditches in Negro Patch, Adam Cut &amp; North Boundary—5 Men hauling straw from Barn—Women loading &amp; unloading waggon's—&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16</td>
<td>Monday &quot;2 ploughs in Negro Patch—Balance of men with women cleaning Hogs—stopped by rain—Balance of day shucked corn &amp; put hogs in pens—&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/17</td>
<td>Tuesday &quot;4 ploughs in Negro Patch—2 in 83 acre—Balance of men cutting &amp; salting pork—Women gleaning corn at Western—&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/18</td>
<td>Wednesday &quot;9 Ploughs in Negro Patch—2 do in 83 acre—Balance of Men Cutting Wood —Women gleaning corn at Western—5 hands frying fat&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/19</td>
<td>Thursday &quot;Same ploughs as yesterday—Balance of Men with part of Women cutting hauling &amp; bringing up wood Balance of Women cleaning stable yard cleaning furrows in Negro Patch and frying fat&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20</td>
<td>Friday &quot;11 Ploughs in Negro Patch—Balance of Men with part of women getting wood—Balance of women fixing corn in Barn—&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/23</td>
<td>Monday &quot;9 Ploughs in Negro Patch &amp; 83 acre Balance of Men at Western cutting logs Women cleaning out tap ditches in field C Burning grass &amp; pulling up stalks in field F&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/9</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/22</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/7</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/10</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/14</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/16</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/20</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/22</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/23</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/24</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/26</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/27</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/28</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/29</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5/30 Friday  "9 Ploughs in field E—6 do in 74 acre—1 do in Negro Patch—Balance thinning & replanting in 83 acre stopped by rain from 12 till 4 o'clock Balance of day 15 ploughs in 83 acre"

5/31 Saturday  "15 Ploughs in fields E & G—1 do in Negro Patch & 83 acre Balance hoeing corn in field E All stopped at 12 o'clock"

7/1 Tuesday  "15 Ploughs in field F—Adam Cut & Negro Patch—Balance of hands killing Chintz Bug—"

7/11 Friday  "All hands laying by Corn in Negro Patch & 83 acre—"

11/24 Monday  "Same work [Gathering & hauling corn] from 83 acre & Negro Patch"

1852

2/10 Tuesday  "12 Ploughs in Negro Patch—children & part of women fanning corn & pulling up stalks—rest of hands grubbing in field below Indian Town"

2/12 Thursday  "11 Ploughs in Negro Patch 2 in Adam Cut—Balance of hands hauling & spreading manure—"

3/31 Wednesday  "9 Ploughs & 6 Markers in fields G & H—Men cutting 3 ft ditches in Negro Patch—Women levelling ditch bank of Lake Gate Canal & cutting reeds in field H—"

4/5 Monday  "Harrowing & planting corn—digging 3 ft ditches in Negro Patch & Burning log heaps in Tuscarora"

4/6 Tuesday  "Same work as yesterday"

12/10 Friday  "Bringing up wood & digging ditch in Negro Patch"

Source: Plantation Record from January 1850 to July 1853. Josiah Collins Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

* Underlines shown as per the original.

**TABLE 2  NUMBER OF FIELD HANDS ON SOMERSET PLACE PLANTATION IN 1850**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Number of Slaves</th>
<th>Field Hand Equivalent</th>
<th>Field Hands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males and females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under 10</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males and females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males 15 to 49</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females 15 to 49</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males 50 and over</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females 50 and over</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>288</td>
<td></td>
<td>123.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Field Hand Equivalent Rating = 123.3 ÷ 288 = 0.428)