

CREATING A COMMEMORATIVE SITE ON THE HERITAGE AND MEMORY
OF COTTON PICKERS IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA:
A COMMUNITY DRIVEN MOVEMENT

by
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Figure 1. Sharecropper's house optioned, Arkansas. Ben Shahn, photographer. 1898-1969, Library of Congress, call # LC-USF33- 006047-M1 [P&P] circa 1935.

This body of research is dedicated to the legacy of elders and ancestors (Grandmama'nem) who once sat in their log cabin, surrounded by cotton fields, and imagined a brighter day not for themselves, but for their progeny. This I offer as a token of respect, honor and appreciation for all who have and will shape our past.

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I acknowledge all the folks who were kind, generous and respectful of me while embracing this most difficult course of study to honor the cotton pickers of the world, but particularly in the American South. I owe a debt of gratitude to them and therefore pay homage to those who brought us this far along the way.

This body of research is to acknowledge the elders and ancestors who once sat in their log cabin, surrounded by cotton fields, and imagined a brighter day not for themselves, but for their progeny. They may have been enslaved in America or just worked as though they were. This dissertation honors the legacy of those people. This effort is not only to thank them for their work but also to make a deliberate attempt to give them the dignity of proper research, sincere analysis and truthful documentation.

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Regarding public history, my overall goal is to present evidence that empowers the Cotton Picker narrative; include traditionally excluded points of views; and to demonstrate inclusiveness as an ideal method of obtaining a collective wisdom in America and throughout the world.

I specifically would like to thank Dr. Carroll Van West for planting the “seed” that my love of African American cultural studies was worthy of a PhD. By his invitation into the program at Middle Tennessee State University and his unwavering support every step of the way, I have become what I have always sought to be, a scholar of African American culture and heritage.

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ABSTRACT

Interpreting the impact of the cotton culture in the Mississippi Delta presents challenges few scholars have addressed and few public historians have ever addressed. Cotton pickers of pre-and post-Reconstruction eras are rarely depicted in public arts exhibits, history exhibits, or educational institutions. When interpreted the myopic recollections of the planter society dominate, thereby relegating cotton pickers to an insignificant role. Such marginalization ultimately distorts the memory of American history, giving cause for reconsideration of the “American exceptionalism” narrative, and our collective commemoration of “greatness.”

In a general sense, historians do explore memories of a particular narrative in order to provide an interpretive depiction that is truthful, thorough and done with integrity as mandated by this discipline. However, when it comes to the complex mosaic of the Mississippi Delta, only the parameters of this narrative have been documented and or promoted in recent years.¹ The National Park Service substantiates this position in reports that no contemporary historian has written a historical synthesis of the Mississippi Delta, in the context of America’s growth and development, even as “what people love about America has come from the [Mississippi] Delta.”²

This dissertation gives voice to this historical void by addressing the growth of the American economy and cultural heritage through the lens of Mound Bayou,

¹ National Park Service, “Heritage Study: Lower Mississippi Delta Region,” *United States Department of the Interior*, 2 (1998): 3.

² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

Mississippi. This work looks at all of its developmental stages that support the charge and the necessity to build a historic site about cotton pickers in that location based on what is determinably an authentic and truly exceptional American narrative.

John Bodnar defines memory as “a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past and its present, and, by implication, its future.”³ The proposed Cotton Pickers National Memorial is a step forward to correcting the national memory of the Mississippi Delta and its agricultural way of life.

³ John Bodnar, “Public Memory in an American City: Commemoration in Cleveland,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 76.

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INTRODUCTION

“The chattel slavery plantation system was necessary as a central key pillar of industrial capitalism. Without slavery no cotton, without cotton no modern industry, hence no America!”¹

In 2009, I moved to the place famed songstress and Civil Right activist Nina Simone called “Mississippi Goddamn,” also infamously known as “The Most Southern Place on Earth,” i.e., the Mississippi Delta.² As a San Francisco native I had much to learn about Mississippi, the Mississippi Delta, and the South overall, but specifically its cotton-pickin’ culture. Along the way, I searched for the uniqueness of the South. I discovered cotton. My eyes opened when my own family and friends (old and young) from the South shared their stories about cotton. I experienced firsthand the quieted yet still painful memories of cotton.

Two of the major challenges of this study were choosing on which cotton pickin’ narrative to focus and, on becoming a “public historian” where in the world shall we build the world’s first and only Cotton Pickers Monument and National Memorial. Once the emotional component was removed and after considering cotton as the lucrative commodity it once was and still is in many parts of the globe, it became obvious that the documented but still little known narrative of cotton aficionado Benjamin Montgomery far outweighed the others.

¹ Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 46.

² James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 175-177.

The main argument of this study is to demonstrate how through interpretive dialogue historians and truth seekers can assess authentic cultural investments and thereby achieve the requisite knowledge for sustainable change. Hence the questions:

- 1) In what ways did Benjamin Montgomery provide leadership to the historic Davis Bend plantation estate; and to what extent did he provide a philosophical framework for America's first incorporated all African American township, Mound Bayou?
- 2) How did Benjamin Montgomery's expertise enable Mound Bayou and its citizens to achieve cultural and economic success, thereby allowing them access to ownership of, and agency within America's Cotton Kingdom of the Mississippi Delta?
- 3) Does Benjamin Montgomery's legacy of estate management and cotton production prove significant and worthy of honor? If so, is he deserving of the kind of historic site sustained by the National Park Service?

My journey into this multi-layered narrative begins with the chapter "From Davis Bend to the Mound Bayou." This chapter explores the social, economic and political structures of the plantation enterprise once owned by two brothers, Joseph and Jefferson Davis, and subsequently by Benjamin Montgomery. Joseph Davis, an independent and fair-minded idealist, worked until the end of his life to create a utopian society for enslaved Africans based on the idea of a "cooperative community." The Davis brothers' definition of a "cooperative community" was one rooted in their time and place. They

viewed community as their family and their slaves and their combined interactions with the world. The cooperation was limited by race and by bondage. The Davis brothers allowed their slaves a degree of independence not found in many other southern plantations but in return they expected obedience and subservience. By working within such a system, both groups could prosper, in unequal ways certainly, but both would/could benefit. Jefferson Davis, the younger brother, grew and developed his political and entrepreneurial skills under the auspices of Joseph. Jefferson Davis ultimately became the President of the Confederate States of America, leading the charge to fight a battle of secession to maintain slavery as the status quo in the United States of America. Ironically the same influential teachings and principals of a “cooperative community” espoused by Joseph Davis allowed unprecedented privilege and access of the Davis’ enterprise to the enslaved Benjamin Montgomery, his wife, son and other members of his enslaved community. The enormity of this ideological chasm between Joseph and Jefferson regarding Benjamin and the others was not evident when considering the lucrative and highly successful cotton enterprises the Davis Brothers allowed Benjamin to operate. Benjamin Montgomery managed the 11,000-acre empire of cotton production, distribution and marketing embracing Hurricane, Brierfield, Ursino, Lake Pleasant and Palmyra Landing plantations.

By studying the plantation system owned by the Davis brothers in contrast to other cotton plantations in the South, it is clear how Davis Bend became what can be

considered an “imagined community.”³ The essential ideal was cooperation, unequal yes but the African Americans understood that they were allowed opportunities denied in most other plantations. Benjamin Montgomery’s business acumen countered the generally accepted narrative portrayed about African Americans in the southern plantation culture. This study reveals the foundational footing implemented by the builders of Mound Bayou, as inspired by Benjamin Montgomery’s quest for self-determination, and in deference to Joseph Davis’ utopian vision for a cooperative community. It advances evidence supporting an argument that a revised narrative that tells the whole story about the American South is essential to fully appreciate America’s greatness. This narrative promises to significantly alter the public memory of the Mississippi Delta region, and the making of the Cotton Kingdom, and will supersede the non-inclusive myth of a benevolent and genteel American South that was completely operated and controlled by white southern gentlemen and their white political cohorts.

The Davis Bend plantation depended on the technical knowledge and honesty of African American men like Benjamin Montgomery who lived, worked and died on cotton plantations in the American South. The Davis Bend plantation also served as the ideological and financial nucleus of the world of the Confederacy’s president. It is indeed ironic that the people Jefferson Davis proclaimed to be too unintelligent, unsophisticated, unskilled and childlike to manage their own lives were in fact and in deed able to manage the business finances and personal dwellings of the President of the Confederacy.

³ Angel David Nieves and Leslie M. Alexander, eds., *We Shall Independent Be: African American Place Making and the Struggle to Claim Space in the United States* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008), 107.

Benjamin Montgomery's genius in negotiation and compromise became evident early on when he convinced Joseph Davis of his intellect by his mere appearance and later in life when he bequeathed the ideological framework to successfully negotiate land deals to establish a township of formerly enslaved people. The drive, determination, and discipline embraced by the "cooperative community" still encompasses the town of Mound Bayou, making it an appropriate location for a national memorial site in honor of people who planted, picked and spun cotton, i.e., Cotton Pickers.

To support this notion of a national memorial site in the Mississippi Delta are an array of scholars that include: monument creator Ed Dwight, historians William Holden in his *Occasional Papers on Mound Bayou*, and Dolores Hayden in *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Their scholarship serves to broaden the practice of public history via public art and preservation. By reorienting the writing of history to spatial and cultural struggles it is possible to give voice to those once neglected. Mound Bayou resident and public historian Milburn Crowe shared his reflections in *The Mound Bayou Mississippi Story*. By speaking to the recognition of heritage tourism as an economic development tool, he worked tirelessly to tell the "authentic" stories for residents and visitors to learn and appreciate a true depiction of Mississippi Delta's history through the lens of Mound Bayou.⁴

The second chapter, "Mound Bayou An Oasis in the Most Southern Place on Earth" explores the establishment of the intentionally separated community, which also embraced the earlier concept of cooperation in that the black leaders understood that they

⁴ Milburn Crowe and John Marting, *The Mound Bayou Mississippi Story* (Cleveland, MS: Delta State University, 2010).

could achieve limited freedoms in the economic and cultural matters if they accepted a far lesser role in the political arena. A related question concerns the impact of separation on the agency of African Americans in the Jim Crow South, in particular how that agency lent critical influence, opportunity and expertise to the historic Cotton Kingdom. Revisited are the utopian principals of Joseph Davis's community of cooperation, Benjamin Montgomery's business strategies of white appeasement, and his political compromises for the sake of survival, safety and sanctity of his "imagined community."

The remarkable legacy of Mound Bayou is that it did survive and thrive in the midst of Black Code Laws and the Jim Crow South to become home to the third largest cotton producer in the South. This process made Mound Bayou essential to what Sven Beckert describes as the "Global Cotton Empire" due to the cooperative exchanges between England, New York, New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta.⁵ Documented testimonies further reveal how white planters utilized Mound Bayou's railway connection to export cotton, not because they wanted to lend support to the new and growing community, but because tags indicating an origin from Mound Bayou yielded higher prices on the domestic and international trade markets. This fact contributes immensely to the acquired wealth of the Delta planters and the significance of the unappreciated, unheard, and unknown narratives of Mound Bayouians to America's Cotton Kingdom.

The chapter concludes with an analysis of the South's fairness (or the lack thereof) to laborers, sharecroppers and tenant farmers, comparing that record to Montgomery's belief that laborers' morale and productivity improves in equal measure to

⁵ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage, 2015), viii, 282, 352.

fairness in the distribution of proceeds. The Montgomery philosophy proved true when comparisons are made between Mound Bayou and the morale and productivity of neighboring cotton planters, all of whom employed a primarily African American labor force. Moreover, the on-going lack of return on the sweat equity investments to these and other workers has negatively informed public memory. However, these testimonies and others further the need to establish proper places of respectful memory throughout the South.

The third chapter, “Missing Voices, Missing Places” identifies cotton (production) as the central theme of memory and narrative for a historical site. This chapter also explores the relationship between the laborers and the work, broadly conceived, and the shaping of memory in the Mississippi Delta as well as the ideology and practices of a “southern exceptionalism” that constructs the South as an ideal society that is central to the American narrative. This chapter surveys historical records and artifacts that give voice to the missing people of Mound Bayou in the Mississippi Delta memory. Narratives and personal primary sources interpret the significance of recorded documents provided by southern historians, public personalities and the author’s supplemental materials. Most importantly, this chapter provides contextual meaning to contemporary voices and assesses what they may, or may not, add to the narrative of the Cotton Kingdom. These authentic voices are central to the fundamental purpose of the *Cotton Pickers of America Monument and National Memorial* project. This is not to be just a gleaming monument made of bronze, but also a repository of the things residents

believe matters to them, to their families, and their communities. By doing so, it becomes a community effort to build a historic site in Mound Bayou.

In general, the research and findings of this study speak to the need for a more balanced approach to understanding the landscape of work represented by the Mississippi Delta. This analysis also demonstrates that if hard work is discounted and by any means disenfranchised, only few benefit. For disenfranchised people the lack of dignity and respect about their work leads to resentment and yet another missed opportunity for real and substantial progress. Only through an expanded narrative can the world appreciate a balanced and necessary outcome for relevant and sustainable public projects. This chapter is a significant component to the argument of agency, with respect to place making and securing the community's voice in history.

Most of the images found in this study are either housed in the Library of Congress (LOC); Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH); or the Mississippi Historic Preservation Division (MHP). Many are surviving historical portraits and landscapes by Aurelius P. Hood, and Dorothea Lange, as well as photographs taken by the author. The poetic narratives and theatrical structures of Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Solomon Northup, and Zora Neale Hurston's revolutionary works give dignity to the chronicles of the everyday lives of people in the South. The narratives in this chapter, in addition to others, incorporate context, clarity and substance to the overall argument this study presents. It is important to note that in spite of some progress, the images of dependent, uninformed, primitive souls in need of supervision and guidance

prevail and are commonplace in popular contemporary literature, cinema, academe, and broadcast/print news about the Delta.

This chapter also draws upon the Mississippi Archives and History and Mississippi Historic Preservation Division for traditional research materials. Legislative petitions, newspapers, pamphlets, speeches, lectures, correspondence, and documentations of meetings from the Sovereignty Commission, the White Citizens Council, the Delta Council, the Mississippi legislature and others were reviewed and considered for contextual placement. These sources offer glimpses into the systematic and deliberate inclusion of the planter elites and the nearly complete exclusion of the laborers' (cotton pickers particularly) voices. The cooperation between political officials and the white supremacist organizations is apparent in policies complicit with manipulative efforts to suppress the undesirable voices of the non-elite, primarily impoverished people. This collection of material delivers sound documentation of how the "social betters" of Mississippi have operated politically since Reconstruction.

The fourth chapter explores "The Pursuit of a National Park Designation." It presents the case for a national park unit in Bolivar County Mississippi nearby the town of Mound Bayou. In 2016, the National Park Service (NPS) celebrates its century-old policy to include *the* most exceptional places that best depict *the* American historical narrative. According to its website, the NPS focus is primarily on those places where civic unrest molded the American spirit and impacted the heart, soul and minds of its people. This chapter reviews the process by which a national park property is designated, and discusses how Mound Bayou's push for a *Cotton Pickers of America Monument and*

National Memorial will work in conjunction with the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) along with other NPS affiliates and programs.⁶

The Omnibus Federal Land Management Act signed by President Obama in 2009, created the MDNHA. This federally mandated unit provides a platform to tell great stories of the Cotton Kingdom by the cotton pickers. Key aspects of the Cotton Kingdom's interpretive history are discussed by challenging stakeholders to present their truths about their community. Proudly, U.S. Senator Thad Cochran and U.S. Representative Bennie Thompson, both from Mississippi, urged passage of the MDNHA passing and have proven to be invaluable resources to the organizers of the Cotton Pickers of America Monument project.

Overall, this chapter makes the case not only for this monument, in this particular place, but also for monuments to other such contributions that are lacking in the national historic preservation effort. Through interpretive discussion historians and truth seekers can assess authentic cultural investments, and thereby achieve the requisite knowledge for sustainable change. Since Mississippi is home to other NPS properties, instruments are in place to navigate between government agencies, interest groups and public historians. In addition, potential sources of funding from public entities and private sources are identified.

This dissertation should prove useful in facilitating discussions about the role of heritage tourism as a source of economic development and cultural enrichment for Mound Bayou, the Cotton Kingdom, and the South at large. It is clear that the field of

⁶ Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, *Management Plan* (Cleveland: Delta Center for Culture and Learning, 2014), xiii.

cultural heritage tourism is one where public historians need to take leadership roles, without prejudice and without personal agenda. The scholarship, due diligence, and integrity of this work comprise an unapologetic tribute to the laborers and the work done previous to my existence on Earth; as well as to the continuous work of preserving and protecting their legacy. In the endearing words of Dr. John Jarvis, Director of the United States National Parks Services, regarding this project, “It is time!”

The conclusion, “The Cotton Pickers of America Monument—It is Time,” connects Davis Bend, Mound Bayou, the Mississippi Delta, and the Cotton Kingdom to the NPS, MDNHA goals, mission(s) and objectives and to the prevailing research and philosophical ideals of Khafre, Inc. Khafre, Inc. is a Mississippi community-based not-for-profit 501c3 organization charged with leading the effort to build the Cotton Pickers Monument and National Memorial. The addendum presents with Khafre, Inc.’s strategic plan and provides numerous support documents and educational and promotional material that outline the lifestyle and cultural elements in celebration of the “complex mosaic” of the Mississippi Delta. An essential part of the plan includes partnering with Mississippi Valley State University, Middle Tennessee State University, the local school districts and other universities, museums, and educational centers. The desire to create a great and sustainable change reaches far beyond the scope of these organizations. Nevertheless, Khafre, Inc.’s work relies on the trust and support of individuals who share in the vision to usher a new spirit of imagination onto the southern landscape, a spirit that is humane, fair, honest, cooperative and inclusive.

Exploring beyond just the parameters of existing public memory helped determine that cotton is, in deed and in fact, the key source of today's great society. Cotton, its legacy, its tradition, and its influence are soaked in unaccountable and historic pain and bloodshed throughout the world. The opportunity costs of slavery are both incalculable and unknowable, and its proceeds continue to provide financial comforts to the powers-that-be along with the inclination to forgo peace, love and the wellbeing for the working majority, in the pursuit of selfish monetary profits for a few. This study, however, offers one possible solution, in its advocacy of a community-driven historic preservation movement. This dissertation is prepared in a manner that intentionally includes the voices of the non-elite Cotton Pickin' people of the Mississippi Delta. They will be seen as well as heard in future deployments of national parks in public places of significant struggle and progress.

CHAPTER I

FROM DAVIS BEND TO MOUND BAYOU

“The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then went back into slavery.”¹

W.E.B. Dubois

Scholars have documented the story of the Davis family and the Montgomery family and what they achieved both separately and combined at the Davis Bend of the Mississippi River from the 1830s to the 1870s. This chapter relies on the prior work of historians William J. Cooper, Janet Sharp Herman, Emory Thomas, Herbert G. Ruffin, II, Thavolia Glymph and Milburn Crowe to summarize that that history and those relationships as a precursor to the establishment of the African American community of Mound Bayou in the 1880s.

The historical and scholarly narrative begins with two southern-born brothers, Joseph and Jefferson Davis, who were sons of Samuel Davis and Jane Cook Davis, farmers near Augusta, Georgia.² When Joseph Emory Davis, the oldest of ten children, was born on December 10, 1784, the United States of America was still a loosely formed confederation of states. Nine years later, in 1793, Samuel and Jane Davis relocated the family to Kentucky only a year after its statehood to raise their children in a land of supposed agricultural promise. By 1808, when Jefferson Davis was born, Joseph the elder brother had moved on to pursue a career in law. Joseph became an attorney and read law

¹ Quoted in Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 618.

² William J. Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2000), 5.

for the states of Kentucky and Mississippi.³ Nine years later, he became the delegate for Jefferson County to the Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1817, where he took on a leading role in the creation of the new state's constitution.⁴



Figure 1.2. Joseph E. Davis. Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Like their father, brothers Joseph and Jefferson would find their fortune on the southern frontier, but in Mississippi rather than Kentucky. In 1820, at the age of 36, Joseph Davis moved to Mississippi's then capital, Natchez, and quickly became an active participant and leader in both the local and statewide legal community.⁵ In 1827, Joseph married Eliza Van Benthuisen and decided to retire from law and take plantation agriculture as his professional challenge in the Mississippi Yazoo Basin area on the outskirts of Vicksburg. With considerable earnings, political status and entrepreneurial skills, Joseph Davis began to build one of the richest plantations in the South.⁶

Choctaw Indians once controlled this part of the Mississippi Delta, but when European settlers arrived in the early nineteenth century, they saw endless economic

³ Ibid., 16.

⁴ Janet Sharp Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 4.

⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

⁶ Ibid., 52.

potential.⁷ For those who doubted the Delta could ever be cleared, tamed, and farmed did not understand the determination, greed, and cruelty of those who came to build a cotton empire.⁸ During this era, cotton was king, the crop of choice, and the mark of success for planters.⁹ Indeed, twenty years after Mississippi's founding, in 1817, the Yazoo Basin emerged as the most promising place in the Cotton South.

Joined by his younger brother Jefferson, Joseph Davis wanted to translate his wealth into an acknowledged and sophisticated role in Mississippi's new society. He developed an outstanding private library, which Jefferson used to his great advantage.¹⁰ The Davis brothers thrived in Mississippi to become owners of 11,000 acres of land south of Vicksburg along the Mississippi River in the Yazoo Basin. They called it Davis Bend.¹¹ This estate became home to five plantations: Hurricane, Brierfield, Palmyra Landing, Hershena, and Lake Pleasant, all used primarily for the production of cotton.¹²

⁷ James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 139, 144-145.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 6.

¹⁰ Cooper, *Jefferson Davis*, 5.

¹¹ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 6.

¹² Interview with Mr. George Johnson, Mound Bayou, Mississippi, September 1941, "American Memory: Ex-Slave Narratives," *American Folklife Center*; accessed July 5, 2015, <http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc9999001/4777a.mp3>.

Joseph operated the 1,200-acre Hurricane Plantation. Jefferson made the 800-acre Brierfield Plantation his home.¹³ The brothers harvested up to 1,265 bales of cotton annually on the various plantations.¹⁴

The word plantation conjures many images, some positive, and most negative. It was a place where the planter's elite class lived life lavishly, enslaved hundreds of African people and produced thousands of bales of cotton, annually. According to the 1850 census, Joseph Davis owned 242 enslaved people. By 1860, the number of enslaved people owned by Joseph Davis was 355-365. Collectively, the Davis brothers owned 466-468 enslaved workers, who mainly tilled, planted, chopped and picked the cotton on Davis Bend plantation.¹⁵ According to Hermann, Joseph Davis was one of only nine men with more than three hundred enslaved laborers, in the state of Mississippi.¹⁶

The "Old South" stereotype fits Davis Bend in some ways and in many others it does not. Historian Janet Sharp Hermann states, "Joseph Davis was a man of system, good order and large wealth."¹⁷ Both Joseph and Jefferson made innovative and revolutionary strides in their plantation management methods. They adapted social planning ideas popularized by the British reformer Robert Owen. Joseph met Owen

¹³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁴ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 22-23; *Vicksburg Daily Times*, September 26, 1870.

¹⁵ "Warren Co. Mississippi Largest Slaveholders from 1860 Slave Census Schedules, and Surname Matches for African American on 1870 Census," Rootsweb, an Ancestry.com Community, transcribed by Tom Blake, February, 2002, accessed July 17, 2014, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ajac/mswarren.htm>; Hermann cites a slight variance in the number of enslaved people, see *Pursuit of a Dream*, 26.

¹⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷ Ibid., 52.

during one of Owen's tour to the United States in the 1820s. Owen convinced Joseph Davis of a paternalistic system in which it was in the owner's best interest to treat slaves humanely. In doing so the enslaved would be more satisfied and productive laborers. Owen believed that forced labor would never be as profitable. Convinced of the argument, Joseph and Jefferson Davis sought to create a different model of slavery one that Herbert Ruffin II calls "a community of cooperation."¹⁸



Figure 1.3. "African Wedding at Hurricane Plantation." Photograph from the J. Mack Moore Collection, Old Court House Museum, Vicksburg, MS.

Joseph Davis owned people, whom he never called "slaves." Instead he referred to them as "servants." His brother Jefferson Davis' owned 111-113 enslaved people; what he called them is lost to historical documentation.¹⁹ The Davis' "model" enabled enslaved/servants to operate their own schools, officiate weddings, manage businesses,

¹⁸ Herbert G. Ruffin II, "Davis Bend, Mississippi (1865-1887)," Black Past.org, accessed July 17, 2014, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/davis-bend-mississippi-1865-1887>.

¹⁹ Rootsweb, an Ancestry.com, accessed July 17, 2014, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ajac/mswarren.htm>.

and to become well-read and literate professionals who serviced and addressed their own concerns. The people were treated as quasi-citizens empowered to preside over a court of law that for the most part managed the disciplinary needs of the plantation. Their justice system was in the truest sense a jury of their peers, meaning enslaved Africans sat in judgment of other enslaved Africans. Only on rare occasions did either of the Davis brothers intervene on these proceedings. The white overseers were not permitted to use the whip, or to sexually exploit or beat the enslaved servants. Overseers had only “partial power” to maintain order and implement disciplinary methods.²⁰ Neighboring plantation owners sarcastically called the enslaved servants of Davis Bend, “Mr. Davis’s free [N]egroes.”²¹

Enslaved people at the Davis Bend plantation experienced working conditions with comfortable quarters, decent clothing, medical care and dental hygiene not known to any other slave-holding plantation, or most poor white southern communities, during that time.²² Most notably, both Joseph and Jefferson Davis treated workers with dignity and respect, never doubting their inherent humanity, honesty, and intelligence. Joseph, in particular, hoped to show that a higher functioning community could be achieved within the framework of slavery. Both Davis brothers encouraged all workers to not only develop their individual skills but to enjoy the residual economic benefits they earned.

²⁰ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 13, 31; *New Orleans Times Democrat*, February 18, 1902; For a different viewpoint, see Phyllis M. Sanders, “Jefferson Davis: Reactionary Rebel, 1808-1861” (PhD diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1976).

²¹ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 31; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 58-60; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005), 80-81.

²² Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 31.



Figure 1.4. Davis Bend Plantation Marker. Photograph by William M. Sturkey.

Joseph and Jefferson Davis manifested what most white southerners viewed as a flawed paternalistic worldview. The more acceptable view by their contemporaries was one whereby an elite class decided the fate of their allegedly inferior enslaved workers. They could not accept the idea of free slaves without strict paternalistic control. Equality and freedom, to the Davis brothers and other white southerners, did prove to mean one thing for white people and something totally different for the Africans in their midst.

Most notable was Jefferson Davis' physical and perhaps mental transition from the plantations to great political prominence as a United States Senator for Mississippi and the Secretary of War before serving as President of the Confederate States of America. The Confederacy evolved out of protest and distrust that Northerners would protect the Southern interest regarding property, specifically the "right" to own people as

human property and having unlimited access to an unpaid labor force.²³ The “cornerstone” of the Confederate belief system, according to the Confederate Vice President Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, was “the great truth that the [N]egro is not equal to the white man, that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition.”²⁴ Paternalistic or not, immoral or not, Jefferson Davis as President was determined to maintain the slavery system in the United States of America, for what appear to be obvious reasons ... a legion of free labor and the potential wealth it accumulates.

Deviating from his brother’s philosophical leanings, and those he himself practiced on the Davis Bend Plantations, Jefferson Davis’ political stance appears contradictory even before joining the Confederacy. In a statement on February 29, 1860, Jefferson Davis told fellow US Senator William H. Seward of New York:

The condition of slavery with us is, in a word, Mr. President, nothing but the form of civil government instituted for a class of people not fit to govern themselves. It is exactly what in every State exists in some form or other. It is just that kind of control, which is extended in every northern State over its convicts, its lunatics, its minors, [and] its apprentices. It is but a form of civil government for those who by their nature are not fit to govern themselves. We recognize the fact of the inferiority stamped upon that race of men by the Creator, and from the cradle to the grave, our Government, as a civil institution, marks that inferiority.²⁵

²³ Jefferson Davis, “Jefferson Davis’ First Inaugural Address, Alabama Capitol, Montgomery, February 18, 1861,” *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, vol. 7, 45-51, transcribed from the Congressional Journal, vol. 1, 64-66, accessed August 2, 2014, <http://jeffersondavis.rice.edu/Content.aspx?id=88>.

²⁴ Quoted in Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty: An American History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2014), 398. Also see Emory Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865* (New York: Harpers, 2011).

²⁵ Jefferson Davis, “Jefferson Davis’ reply in the Senate to William H. Seward Senate Chamber, U.S. Capitol, February 29, 1860,” *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, Vol 6, 277-84. Transcribed from the *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 916-18.

In his 1861 inaugural address, President Jefferson Davis espoused his belief that a wrong had been inflicted on the South. He and other plantation owners were not evil; to the contrary, he proclaimed they were an agricultural producer of cotton, the raw material necessary for industries across the world.²⁶ Jefferson Davis stated his belief that the true Confederate policy was one of peace and free trade as sanctioned by the Founding Fathers. Commerce, he believed, was the essential driver of the Confederate's secessionist movement. Davis insisted:

It is alike our interest, and that of all those to whom we would sell and from whom we would buy, that there should be the fewest practicable restrictions upon the interchange of commodities. The cultivation of our fields has progressed ... our exports, in which the commercial world has an interest scarcely less than our own ... Obstacles may retard, [but] they cannot long prevent the progress of a movement sanctified by its justice, and sustained by a virtuous people. Let us invoke the God of our fathers to guide and protect us in our efforts to perpetuate the principles, which they were able to vindicate, establish and transmit to their posterity and with a continuance of His favor, we look forward to success, to peace, and to prosperity.²⁷

According to Jefferson Davis, the Confederacy was a reaction to philosophical differences between the principles established by the Founding Fathers in the U.S. Constitution and those insisted on by his brother and northern legislators of the present. He argued: "The controlling power in the Government is hostile to that species of property on which our commercial prosperity depends, and the disturbance of which would involve us in total ruin."²⁸ Southerners, in other words, wanted only what the

²⁶ Davis, *First Inaugural Address*.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid..

founding fathers had fought for: “We have the same rights. If the colonies could secede from Britain, why can't we secede and create our own independent nation?”²⁹

Before Jefferson Davis’ attempt at secession, let’s take a look at how slaves lived and were treated on the Davis Bend plantations. Benjamin Thornton Montgomery and his family are great examples.



Figure 1.5. Benjamin Thornton Montgomery. The Black Inventor Online.

Benjamin Thornton Montgomery was an African in 1819. He was sold at a slave sale in Virginia to a trader who transported him to Natchez, Mississippi, and resold him to Joseph Davis. A story in the *New York Times* on September 17, 1893, reported twelve-year-old Montgomery’s appearance impressed Joseph Davis and he then “purchased him.”³⁰ What he apparently found important about his appearance was that “he was a

²⁹ Foner, *Give Me Liberty*, 149.

³⁰ “Story of Ben Montgomery: Jefferson Davis’s Private Secretary-and Slave,” *New York Times*, September

pure African, with not a taint of white blood in him. But, his face was uncommonly intelligent.”³¹ Shortly after being sold, Montgomery attempted to escape. According to the *New York Times* article, Montgomery and Joseph Davis then reached a mutual understanding that if Benjamin promised not to run away, he could continue to learn to read and write, and earn his own money.³² Joseph Davis’ general rule was that “the less people are governed, the more submissive they will be to control.”³³

Intelligent, for certain, in that he chose to survive, Montgomery decided to become a faithful and loyal “servant” for Joseph Davis. He observed and learned the cotton transactions taking place on the Davis’ plantations. Montgomery advanced his skills to become highly literate with demonstrated near genius intellect and business acumen. The enslaved Benjamin Montgomery eventually negotiated to live a quasi-free life along with his wife Mary Virginia Lewis Montgomery and their five children.³⁴

Benjamin and Mary Montgomery made the utopian experiment at Davis Bend plantation work to their advantage. Opportunities at this “model-community” permitted Benjamin to “buy his wife’s time, as a plantation worker, from Joseph Davis, which allowed Mary to remain at home, work occasionally as a paid seamstress, and raise their

17, 1893, accessed August 1, 2014, <http://query.nytimes.com>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² John H. Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 104; Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 17-18.

³³ Milburn Crowe, ed., “Mound Bayou History: Prelude to Mound Bayou: Davis Bend,” *The Voice* 4 (July 1971): 8, 4.

³⁴ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 19.

children.”³⁵ Mary, Benjamin and their children all had access to Joseph Davis’ extensive library, just as Jefferson had done.³⁶ “Like all who were faithful as slaves, Montgomery possessed the confidence and respect of the white people” to achieve independence and responsibilities of few parallels in the archives of American slaveocracy.³⁷

For example, Benjamin Montgomery was authorized to receipt all goods or sign both Joseph and Jefferson Davis’s name to any bill of lading, thereby becoming in essence the most powerful man on the Davis Bend Plantation.³⁸ He was remarkably quick with his analysis and calculations and his honesty was impeccable. Before he “belonged” to the Davis brothers, for eighteen months he had worked through the old-time arithmetic, which was the standard at that time, in the common schools of the South. This achievement came during the time when it was popular among whites to believe that Africans were incapable of analytical thinking, writing, or doing any type of mathematical equations.³⁹

In 1842, Montgomery negotiated the rights to operate a small dry goods store on the grounds of the Davis Bend Plantation. He was then empowered to serve all customers (white and enslaved servants) who wanted to “trade poultry and other items in return for

³⁵ Ibid., 20-22.

³⁶ John N. Ingham and Lynne B. Feldman, eds., *African-American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 38-40.

³⁷ *Charleston Daily News*, September 24, 1867, reprinted from the *New York Tribune*.

³⁸ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 19.

³⁹ Ingham and Feldman, *African-American*, 230; Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 102-103.

dry goods.”⁴⁰ Although initially dependent on Joseph Davis’ financial backing, his business did not take long to thrive on its own. He negotiated his own line of credit with New Orleans suppliers and wholesalers. Montgomery developed his own accounting system and readily knew his profits and losses. He also brokered deals with numerous businesses in Vicksburg and as far away as Natchez. Impressed by the effective and efficient manner in which he operated his store, both Joseph and Jefferson Davis “placed Montgomery in charge of overseeing the purchasing and shipping operations on all cotton production” of the various plantations on Davis Bend.⁴¹ Montgomery’s day-to-day responsibilities included: purchasing necessary supplies and material for the entire estate, supervising the accounting records, and shipping of the cotton, and depositing all monies received.⁴²

Benjamin Montgomery emerged as the most favored and influential African American person on the Davis Bend Plantation, in Mississippi, and perhaps in the entire south. Historian Janet Hermann concluded: “Benjamin Montgomery was probably one of the most well-respected and influential people of enslavement on any plantation” in American history.⁴³ On his own account, “he financed an extraordinary biracial education experiment, in which a white tutor of his employ taught the Montgomery and

⁴⁰ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 19.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Tom Blake, ed., “Warren Co. Mississippi Largest Slaveholders from 1860 Slave Census Schedules, and Surname Matches for African American on 1870 Census,” Rootsweb, an Ancestry.com Community, February, 2002, accessed July 17, 2014, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~ajac/mswarren.htm>.

⁴³ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 21.

Davis children in a single classroom.”⁴⁴ He and his wife passed on the significance of literacy, cooperation and the interest in acquiring knowledge to all their children, particularly their son Isaiah Thornton Montgomery. He too grew to understand the significance of the Davis Bend mandate and demonstrated a willingness to form a successful cooperative community. Granted, this situation was highly unusual for the time and place. But it was the intended consequence of the Davis’ “new society.”

Like his father, Isaiah T. Montgomery also rapidly rose to legendary status on the Davis Bend complex and ultimately throughout the South. He began his work “as Joseph’s personal assistant and clerk at the age of ten until the beginning of the Civil War in 1861.”⁴⁵ He proudly acknowledged being Joseph’s most dependable teenage servant.⁴⁶ By the Civil War Isaiah had had some formal education in the plantation school that his father established, but he admitted to taking full advantage of the access he had to Joseph Davis’ library.⁴⁷ Moreover, he read diligently both in the library and what came through the mail. He recalled having “a great deal of access to reading material and daily interactions with educated people with a fair knowledge of history and current events; as well as a keen sense of the English language and composition.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid., 20-22.

⁴⁵ Ibid; Herbert G. Ruffin II, “Montgomery, Isaiah T. (1847-1924),” accessed July 17, 2014, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/montgomery-isaiah-1847-1924>.

⁴⁶ Neil R. McMillen, “Isaiah T. Montgomery, 1847-1924 (Part I): The Life and Times of Isaiah T. Montgomery,” assessed on June 3, 2014, <http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/articles/55/isaiah-t-montgomery-1847-1924-part-I>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ William Holden, Jr., “The World and the Mind of Isaiah T. Montgomery: The Greatness of a Compromised Man,” Isaiah T. Montgomery Studies Project, Inc., Occasional Paper for the Delta Research

Benjamin and Isaiah Montgomery used their intelligence and access to Davis Bend resources to develop marketable skills such as “land surveying, techniques for flood control and the drafting of architectural plans.”⁴⁹ Benjamin Montgomery, for example, became a skilled mechanic and an innovative inventor. He ambitiously and eagerly applied his talents not only to the needs of the plantation but his own business operation. Montgomery was able “to calculate the differences in the depths of water in different spots throughout the River,” and then he developed a “steam-powered propeller that cut into the water at different angles, thus allowing the boat to navigate more easily through shallow waters.”⁵⁰ By solving this navigation issue, Benjamin Montgomery ultimately became one of the true engineering pioneers in American history.⁵¹ Joseph Davis filed a patent on Benjamin Montgomery’s behalf for the steam-operated propeller on June 10, 1858, but the U.S. Attorney General's office denied the request. Federal officials ruled that the inventor, “Benjamin Montgomery, was a slave and therefore not a citizen of the United States; and, not eligible to apply for a patent. Later, both Joseph and Jefferson Davis attempted to patent the device in their names.”⁵² Unfortunately, the patent office denied the application once again, “on the grounds that neither slaves, nor their owners

and Cultural Institute Mississippi Valley State University; Leon F. Litwack and August Meier, eds., *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 291-298.

⁴⁹ Gaius Chamberlain, “Benjamin Montgomery,” *The Black Inventor Online*, Adscape International, LLC., last updated November 26, 2012, accessed August 1, 2014, <http://blackinventor.com/benjamin-montgomery>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Litwack and Meier, *Black Leaders*, 296-300.

⁵² Chamberlain, *Benjamin Montgomery*.

could receive patents on inventions devised by slaves,” and because neither Davis brother was the “true inventor.”⁵³ As late as June 28, 1864, the patent office again rejected Montgomery’s application, even though he was now filing as an emancipated person, this time citing a previous patent registered in 1838.⁵⁴ Though Benjamin Montgomery did not receive a patent for his invention, various authors honor him for paving the way for future inventors, particularly African Americans.⁵⁵

In April 1862, when the steady incursion of Union troops occupied the entire Mississippi Delta region from New Orleans to Vicksburg, Joseph Davis abandoned his plantations and took with him several slaves, including Isaiah Montgomery.⁵⁶ The opportunity for safety behind Union lines proved another falsity of the cooperative community model. As soon as the Davis Bend slaves had the opportunity to choose for themselves, nearly all opted for freedom over slavery.⁵⁷

⁵³ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 18. Ironically, while functioning as President of the Confederacy, “Jefferson Davis signed into law the legislation that would allow [an enslaved person] to receive patent protection for their inventions.” Section 50 of the Confederate Patent Act (1861) acknowledges that a slave could be the original inventor of patents. It is interesting to note that the Confederate States of America issued patents to African Americans before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. On July 14, 1885, Sarah E. Goode became the first African American woman to be granted a patent, Patent #322,177, for the cabinet (folding) bed. “Sarah Goode Becomes First African-American Woman to Receive a Patent,” July 14, 1885,” assessed on April 5, 2015, <http://worldhistoryproject.org/1885/7/14/sarah-goode-becomes-first-african-american-woman-to-receive-a-patent>.

⁵⁴ Meters, Photo-Uyhograpmer, Washington D C., John Ericsson, of London, England. Specifications of Letters Patent No. 588, February 1, 1838.

⁵⁵ Litwack and Meier, *Black Leaders*, 296-300.

⁵⁶ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 38.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

Both Confederate and Union soldiers raided the plantations on Davis Bend and used them as a temporary base.⁵⁸ Joseph Davis watched from a distance as his cooperative community disappeared to places unknown as quickly as physically possible. According to Janet Hermann, “Confederate forces burned his cotton; Union raiders destroyed Hurricane [Plantation],” with some exceptions like the mansion; but, with great intent and purpose the Union soldiers stripped Jefferson Davis’ Brierfield Plantation, including its mansion.⁵⁹ Benjamin Montgomery, who stayed behind to control the operations of the Davis Bend properties, became a resident in Joseph Davis’ Hurricane Plantation mansion. He struggled to provide for the remaining slave community by extending management opportunities to them and other newly arriving emancipated workers. Ultimately, they too were forced to flee and close all operations during the spring of 1861.⁶⁰

In the course of the Union occupation, the commander of the Union’s Mississippi fleet, Admiral David D. Porter, thought Benjamin Montgomery to be “an ingenious mechanic” and gave him brief employment. Porter also helped the Montgomery family to find new opportunities in Cincinnati, Ohio.⁶¹ Isaiah Montgomery returned to the plantations on Davis Bend and served as Admiral Porter’s personal assistant.⁶² In late

⁵⁸ Ibid., 39-64.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 37-39.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 43-44; McMillen, *Isaiah T. Montgomery, 1847-1924 (Part I)*.

⁶¹ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 41-42.

⁶² Ibid.

1863, Isaiah contracted a dangerous case of dysentery and federal officials sent him to his family in Ohio.⁶³

As economic and social structures collapsed in the South between 1863 and 1865, a growing number of destitute refugees flocked to Davis Bend for safe haven.⁶⁴ The military first operated the plantations as an extended contraband camp; after the war the Freedmen's Bureau took control. Under military occupation, Benjamin and his family returned and re-negotiated and re-established a new general store at Hurricane and called it "Montgomery and Sons." Isaiah Montgomery took on the role of bookkeeper and assumed correspondence responsibilities.⁶⁵

Once Union General Ulysses S. Grant understood that African Americans had been and were effectively operating the Davis Bend plantation, even before the war, he agreed with Benjamin Montgomery that the arrangement should continue. Federal officials worked out labor leases between the government and freed people. By 1865, the newly emancipated enslaved people created a legal system and method of governing (much like they had before) that now included elected officials. Outsiders, again in very similar fashion, called Davis Bend "General Grant's Negro Paradise."⁶⁶

Seventy emancipated men were given thirty acres each and furnished by the government with needed agricultural supplies (including mules). Historian Milburn

⁶³ Ibid.; McMillen, *Isaiah T. Montgomery, 1847-1924 (Part I)*.

⁶⁴ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 42-45.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 157-159; McMillen, *Isaiah T. Montgomery, 1847-1924 (Part I)*.

⁶⁶ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 61-107; James T. Currie, ed., "Freemen at Davis Bend, April 1864," *Journal of Mississippi History*, 46 (May 1984): 120-129.

Crowe wrote in a 1971 edition of *The Voice* that the men were free of debt at the end of 1864 and made profits that ranged from \$500 to \$1,000.⁶⁷ Federal officials were so impressed that they decided to expand the program in 1865, and ordered all whites from Davis Bend proper. By late September 1865, over 1800 African Americans were organized into 181 associations. Each association or company required members to pay for provisions needed to operate effectively. A school board formed and free medical services were available for all those who could not afford treatment by an outside physician.⁶⁸ The members of the re-established Davis Bend colony produced an income of nearly \$400,000 by the year's end. After expenses, Crowe reports "they showed a clear profit of nearly \$160,000, an average of \$880 per company."⁶⁹



Figure 1.6. Hurricane Garden Cottage at Davis Bend Plantation. Photograph from the J. Mack Moore Collection, Old Court House Museum, Vicksburg, MS.

⁶⁷ Crowe, ed., "Mound Bayou History, 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 5.

This capability was revealed to the Superintendent of the Freedmen Bureau, who oversaw the transference of land and authority to Benjamin Montgomery and the other freedmen. The residents resided on the property in what was termed “Home Farms” for one year prior to the Davis Bend properties’ return of ownership to Joseph Davis.⁷⁰ Home Farms were situated on 5500-acres of what was formerly Hurricane and Brierfield Plantations that the Freedman’s Bureau divided into separate parcels ranging from five to one hundred acres. Officials reserved 500 acres for a Home Farm for socially disadvantaged orphaned children, the aged and infirm and the incompetent, thriftless and transients.⁷¹ Under the guidance and direction of Montgomery, former slaves learned to work the rest of the 5000 acres as freed self-sufficient people.⁷² The Freedmen’s Bureau, which by that time had expelled all white speculators from the entire peninsula, initiated this system of self-government throughout the remaining Davis Bend properties.

The war, of course, did not have such a positive ending for Jefferson Davis. Union troops captured him. A trial led to three and a half years of imprisonment for his role in the Confederacy. President Andrew Johnson pardoned his brother Joseph and the federal government returned his property at Davis Bend to his control in January, 1867, after the expiration of Home Farm leases to the freedmen.⁷³ However, Joseph was elderly and nearly insolvent and chose not return to Davis Bend or the Mississippi Delta.

⁷⁰ Vernon Lane Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi 1865-1890* (New York: Harper & Row, 1947), 40.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Ben Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War: A Narrative History* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 143; Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 37-60; Stephen V. Ash, *The Black Experience in the Civil War South* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2010), 78, 83; Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 40.

⁷³ Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 41.

Although Mississippi's "Black Code" was in place in 1867, which forbade the sale of land to African Americans, Davis secretly agreed to sell Hurricane and Brierfield to Benjamin Montgomery and sons.⁷⁴ This transaction by all accounts is a testament to the fortitude and tenacious commitment of both men to the ideals of fairness and a "cooperative community." The terms of the transaction involved 4,000 acres of the Davis Bend plantation and other properties, at \$75.00 per acre, based on a ten-year-term loan for \$300,000.⁷⁵ This agreement effectively transferred control of the essential areas of the Davis Bend properties, including the former Confederate president's land and financial base, to the very people the Confederates fought the war to disempower and control. As result, the Montgomerys created a "place" owned and operated by Africans in a new American society under the presumptive notion of freedom. This exchange began a new chapter in the history of the South, the place that historian James Cobb called "The Most Southern Place on Earth."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Jud Sage, "Mississippi Black Code," *Arkansas Narrative*, Vol. 8, (1972): 175- 179, accessed June 29, 2016, <https://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/122/recon/code.html>; also see Mississippi Narratives: Slave Narratives-A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interview with Former Slaves, Library of Congress Federal Writers' Project 1936-1938, vol. IX, , accessed June 29, 2016, <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/mesnbibVolumes1.html>.

⁷⁵ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 104.

⁷⁶ James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 175-177.



Figure 1.7. Slave quarters at Jefferson Davis's Brierfield. (Courtesy Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-10971).

The Montgomerys, now landowners, did not bother to change the plantation's name but wasted no time placing their imprint on the land. Benjamin Montgomery announced: "The undersigned (Montgomery) having secured for a term of [ten] years the Hurricane and Brierfield plantations proposes to organize a community composed exclusively of colored people, to occupy and cultivate said plantations, and invites the cooperation of such as are recommended by honesty, industry, sobriety, and intelligence in the enterprise."⁷⁷ Montgomery's plan was to lease the property to other newly emancipated farmers. Montgomery also invested in the plantation's infrastructure by building new river levees. His commissary, Montgomery and Sons, furnished the farmers with most of their agricultural and household supplies. The commissary was enlarged to

⁷⁷ Secretary of State, Register of Commissions, 1871-1874, 45, MDAH, Microfilm Roll 1542, archives call #287.8/Ad1c.

incorporate “a smoke house, a [sawmill], a gin, and a [private] dock” for shipping and loading.⁷⁸ Despite a promising start, cholera rocked Davis Bend in 1867. Davis Bend residents were soon in debt.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the residents managed to ship “more bales of cotton than any of their white neighbors” and competitors in the region.⁸⁰ In general terms, the reaction to their success from their neighbors was never warm, nor helpful. It is accurate and verifiable to say, the hatred and resentment from many whites throughout the State of Mississippi started at the beginning of their enterprising establishment and never ceased. An unnamed white neighbor told one newspaper in 1866: “All we have to say on the subject is that we would prefer not to be a planter adjoining or adjacent to one of these colonies.”⁸¹

In September 1867, U.S. General Edward Ord appointed Benjamin Montgomery Justice of the Peace at Davis Bend. The appointment made Montgomery the first official public office holder in Mississippi.⁸² Fearing negative, even violent, white reaction to his appointment, Montgomery told his son Isaiah that he should assure troubled whites that his father had no intention to consider cases involving white people.⁸³ Montgomery’s gesture of appeasement was a well-measured and calculated response for the time. He

⁷⁸ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 116.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 109-142.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ “Mound Bayou Movement: History of Mound Bayou,” *Mound Bayou Movement, Inc.*, last modified October 2010, accessed January 24, 2014, <http://www.kinglyheirs.com/MoundBayouMovement>.

⁸² Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 145; *Jackson Weekly Clarion*, September 19, 1867; Jefferson Davis, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis: June 1865-December 1870, Vol 12* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 213.

⁸³ Johnson, *History Mound Bayou*.

did, however, remain intimately involved in securing the Black voice and stabilizing their control on the Davis Bend Plantation. Ultimately, he “locked horns with whites [about] securing a postmaster of African descent [for] Davis Bend,” which he did successfully achieve.⁸⁴ In addition, he sent his nephew Benjamin Green to all political meetings pertinent to Davis Bend throughout the State. He thereby remained astutely aware of the state’s political activities. Moreover, residents of Davis Bend were encouraged and made certain to educate themselves about all elections relating to them and voted solidly Republican.⁸⁵

On October 29, 1870, a Monroe, Louisiana newspaper reported on the success of the Montgomery and Sons enterprise, which had received \$500 for the best single bale of the premium cotton crop of 1870 raised in the United States.⁸⁶ Within a decade, the Montgomerys were among the plantation South’s largest and most successful cotton producers. They were literally walking in “high cotton.” With all of their success, the Montgomerys established a second mercantile store in Vicksburg and bought the Palmyra Landing plantation, which “increased their holdings and labor force to more than 5,500 acres and 1,000 field hands.”⁸⁷ Milburn Crowe concluded that “by 1869, the Davis Bend community was on their feet, shipping twice as many bales of cotton as in 1867. The

⁸⁴ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 195-215.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ “Cotton at the St. Louis Fair,” *Ouachita Telegraph*, Monroe LA (October 29, 1870), assessed March 15, 2015, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85034336/1870-10-29/ed-1/seq-4.pdf>.

⁸⁷ McMillen, *Isaiah Montgomery Pt I.*; Darryl Johnson, ed., “History of Mound Bayou,” *Mound Bayou Movement*, accessed, March 4, 2014, <http://www.orgsites.com/ms/moundbayou/index.html#email>.

census of 1870 listed Montgomery financial worth as \$50,000, though others closer to the facts claimed his wealth was at least \$200,000.”⁸⁸

Also in 1870, Joseph Davis passed away. That unfortunate event along with the persistent negative reinforcement and what he believed was a position of disempowerment amongst his peers in Mississippi, forced Benjamin Montgomery to alter his plan of appeasement. Realizing the colony’s greatest challenge resulted from their successful business and financial management, his revised plan called for a more tactical strategy of political accommodation. He decided not to push for what whites would perceive as political and social equality. For example, on the issue of African American suffrage, Benjamin Montgomery claimed that it was “of doubtful utility” at that time of their development.⁸⁹ Since the discussion of suffrage and other political topics might precipitate a violent white reaction, such discussions were discouraged.⁹⁰ Montgomery saw this tactical maneuver as timely and a way to establish stability, peace and safety for the residents of Davis Bend. As history shows, it was a strategy with measured success, as determined only by the time, the people, and the place.

On January 20, 1871, Benjamin Montgomery purchased the nearby Ursino Plantation from “its bankrupt owner Robert V. Wood, for \$100,000,” adding an additional 1,557 acres to the Montgomery family’s enterprise.⁹¹ In 1873, Montgomery

⁸⁸ Crowe, “Mound Bayou History,” 5; Holden, “The World and The Mind of Isaiah T. Montgomery.”

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 148.

reportedly paid \$2,447.09 in taxes for the year.⁹² Davis Bend had now been fully re-established under the ownership of Benjamin Montgomery. Hence, the tactical strategy worked. This was the second coming of the “community of cooperation” and an ideal model of how an “imagined community” works to the benefit of all concerned. The significance of these and future outcomes is attributable to the Davis Bend experiment and vision of a “new society.” The truly remarkable narrative of Benjamin Montgomery and other residents demonstrate the capacity to not only take care of property and businesses but to exercise honest and competent dealings of self-determination and agency.⁹³ The hard-working people who sought equality, justice, and race pride demonstrated that when given a chance, economic investment, and equity they would maintain top producers status and would play a central role in making the Mississippi Delta, a bona fide “Cotton” Kingdom.

⁹² Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 42; Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 199.

⁹³ Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 40-42



Figure 1.8. Mr. and Mrs. Isaiah T. Montgomery, taken during celebration of their wedding anniversary May 11, 1921. She was the former Martha Robb of Vicksburg, Mississippi.⁹⁴

In 1872, Isaiah Montgomery, now 23 years old, married Martha Robb, who was born of a slave mother near McNutt, Mississippi, in May 1852. He moved his bride into their new home on the Hurricane Plantation where she assisted him in overseeing the day-to-day activities of the family business. Benjamin's younger son, Thornton, operated the family's Vicksburg store and was found to be "well read and an agreeable talker."⁹⁵ The Montgomery women played a role as well. The matriarch Mary Montgomery worked as the overseer of all the women workers, including her daughters. Soon the family took on the elite planter lifestyle, providing elegant dinners for visitors and friends. The Montgomery daughters were accomplished piano players, "wore the latest fashions, and

⁹⁴ Crowe, "Mound Bayou History," 7.

⁹⁵ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 208.

attended [Oberlin] College, in Ohio.”⁹⁶ In the words of many of their contemporaries the Montgomerys lived and entertained in Victorian style and fashion.

Now that the Montgomerys had full possession of all the Davis Bend enterprises, they diversified their agricultural products, worked on land improvement and conservation, and maintained their status as one of the largest cotton producers in the South.⁹⁷ Montgomery and Sons continued to win prizes for the best quality cotton. Their products took a first place at the 1870 St. Louis Fair, and received other awards and recognition at the Cincinnati Exposition in 1873 and the Philadelphia Exposition in 1878.⁹⁸ Even the neighboring “white people [often] remarked that they were the best planter[s] in the county and perhaps in the state.”⁹⁹

On Christmas day 1868, near the end of his term in office, President Andrew Johnson pardoned Jefferson Davis and all those who fought for the Confederacy.¹⁰⁰ Johnson’s action restored the former Confederates’ civil and property rights while adding presidential immunity from being charged with treason.¹⁰¹ Jefferson Davis, unrepentant for his part, stated: “It has been said that I should apply to the United States for a pardon,

⁹⁶ Ibid., 166-169.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 151-152.

⁹⁸ Ibid.; S.D. Smedes, *Memorials of a Southern Planter*, 313-314, cited in Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi*, 42.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

but repentance must precede the right of pardon, and I have not repented.”¹⁰² In spite of his unrepentant sentiments Jefferson Davis was released from prison, with federal courts ruling in his favor that the 14th Amendment exempted him and others from any further punishment for treason. However, immunity did not allow Davis to re-establish himself as a politician or to hold a political office.¹⁰³

Over 100 years later, however, President Jimmy Carter signed a Congressional Joint Resolution that symbolically restored Jefferson Davis’ full rights as a United States citizen.¹⁰⁴ The resolution enacted S. J. Res. 16 as Public-Law 95-466 was approved on October 17, 1978.¹⁰⁵ In so doing, the federal courts (including the Resolution sent forth by President Carter) largely ignored the integrity of Montgomerys and the millions of others who invested their sweat equity in labor to maintain unrepentant southerners plantations, like those of Davis Bend. Left with few provisions most became landless,

¹⁰² Charles Paul Freund, “Jefferson Davis Finally Brought to Account,” *Newsweek* (8/21/15), <http://www.newsweek.com/jefferson-davis-finally-brought-account-364807>, accessed August 21, 2015.

¹⁰³ National Constitution Center (NCC), *The Pardon of Jefferson Davis and the 14th Amendment* (Washington, DC, National Constitution Center, 2014), accessed November 1, 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/pardon-jefferson-davis-14th-amendment-163609181.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Jimmy Carter, *Restoration of Citizenship Rights to Jefferson F. Davis: Statement on Signing*, S. J. Res. 16 into Law October 17, 1978, by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29993>; Constitution Daily, “The Pardon of Jefferson Davis,” *Constitution Center Blog*, October 17, 2014, accessed January 3, 2016, <http://blog.constitutioncenter.org/?s=jefferson+davis+pardon>.

¹⁰⁵ Jimmy Carter’s statement said: “In posthumously restoring the full rights of citizenship to Jefferson Davis, the Congress officially completes the long process of reconciliation that has reunited our people following the tragic conflict between the States. Earlier, he was specifically exempted from (sic) resolution restoring the rights of other officials in the Confederacy. He had served the United States long and honorably as a soldier, Member of the U.S. House and Senate, and as Secretary of War. General Robert E. Lee’s citizenship was restored in 1976. It is fitting that Jefferson Davis should no longer be singled out for punishment. Our Nation needs to clear away the guilts and enmities and recriminations of the past, to finally set at rest the divisions that threatened to destroy our Nation and to discredit the principles on which it was founded. Our people need to turn their attention to the important tasks that still lie before us in establishing those principles for all people.”

without financial promise or proceeds for their centuries of loyal productive harvest.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps that was the final chapter of the American Civil War.

In 1872, Isaiah Montgomery once again served as the informal counsel and diplomat to white neighbors. As manager of the Hurricane Plantation, he dealt with agents and suppliers from New Orleans to St. Louis as his father had previously.¹⁰⁷ For several years after the war until his death, Joseph Davis was one of the “good guys” the Montgomery family could depend on to quietly support their plans, but by 1873, a seven-year period of decline at the plantation was underway.¹⁰⁸ By 1880 cotton was worth sometimes less than nine cents per pound compared to the wartime high of one dollar per pound.¹⁰⁹ Compounding the misery, the river location of the Davis Bend plantation meant that floods were a constant issue.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, Davis Bend became an island. As result, many of Montgomery’s tenants did as Joseph and Jefferson’s parents had done nearly a half century prior, moved their families to a land with more agricultural promise.

In 1874, the recently pardoned Jefferson Davis began legal proceedings to reclaim Brierfield Plantation.¹¹¹ Bringing suit against his brother Joseph Davis’ estate claiming though there was no deed, title or any written documentation of his rights to the property,

¹⁰⁶ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 201-204, 206-207, 211.

¹⁰⁷ Ruffin, “Davis Bend, Mississippi.”

¹⁰⁸ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 195-215.

¹⁰⁹ Darryl Johnson, ed., “History of Mound Bayou,” *Mound Bayou Movement*. <http://www.orgsites.com/ms/moundbayou/index.html#email> (accessed September 5, 2014).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ McMillen, *Isaiah T. Montgomery Pt I*.

¹¹¹ Johnson, *History Mound Bayou*.

he argued his occupation and development since 1835 gave him legal authority to the land, “or its value in terms of the notes due to the [Joseph] Davis estate.”¹¹² It was one thing for the antebellum plantation to embrace a “cooperative community” because the African Americans were slaves, producing for his family. The plantation was now land worked by free black man, a totally different situation. Not surprisingly, the white controlled courts resolved the case Jefferson Davis’ favor in June 1878 and the title reverted to his family’s estate. Though Davis claimed the lawsuit was not personal or against the Montgomerys, he never publicly apologized or stated his intentions, if not personal or retributive.¹¹³ A newspaper reported “Joseph Davis had been sincere in his dealings with the Montgomerys.¹¹⁴ [However], Jefferson Davis only wanted to keep his property safe, until the storm of indignation against him in the North blew over, at which time he hoped to get it back.”¹¹⁵

Benjamin Montgomery died on May 12, 1877, at the approximate age of 58.¹¹⁶ His wife Mary followed him in death in 1885.¹¹⁷ Both were buried in the Davis family

¹¹² Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 201-2; Johnson, *History Mound Bayou*.

¹¹³ Cooper, *Jefferson Davis*, 673-678.

¹¹⁴ Johnson, *History Mound Bayou*.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 205; Estate of Benjamin T. Montgomery, Deceased, File No. 3029, Probate Docket, Chancery Court, Warren County, Mississippi.

¹¹⁷ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 212.

cemetery on Hurricane Plantation.¹¹⁸ Their gravesites are about 4 miles west of Immanuel Baptist Church, off Highway 61 south of Vicksburg.

Foreclosure on Davis Bend began in 1880. Only 10% of the residents from the 1870 census were still residents at the time. Though the Montgomerys were not able to pay the \$300,000 principle debt owed to Joseph Davis, one can only imagine the result of federal confiscation had the property not been transferred to the Montgomerys at the end of the war. Although Brierfield Plantation and all of Davis Bend were once again in the hands of Jefferson Davis¹¹⁹ the fact is that due to the extensive levee building upriver and the continual floods caused by them, in combination with the steadily decreasing cotton prices among other constraints the Davis Bend estate never regained their prewar status and prosperity. The current conditions of Davis Bend are dilapidated.¹²⁰

The Montgomerys left Davis Bend. Benjamin Green moved to the East; Thornton sought opportunity in the Dakota Territory south of Fargo and reportedly became “the largest colored farmer in the Northwest.”¹²¹ He had become disillusioned about the Negro prospects in the Deep South and believed it was necessary to leave Mississippi and try his luck in the Great Plains. He was able to buy land cheap and pursue a life where, “a man was judged by his skill and industriousness rather than by the color of his skin.”¹²² In

¹¹⁸ McMillen, www.mshistory.k12.ms.us.

¹¹⁹ Cooper, *Jefferson Davis*, 678.

¹²⁰ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 212; Old Court House Museum, Vicksburg, MS, Research files, Mississippi History Now, Date recorded: March 19, 1986, last modified June 13, 2011, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://weblog.liberatormagazine.com/2011/06/past-promised-lands-davis-bend.html#.U-UjTRbGIdo>.

¹²¹ Hermann, 220.

¹²² *Ibid.*

September 1884, the *Fargo Daily Argus* reported that Thornton Montgomery was indeed “a most worthy man.”¹²³

Isaiah and other former Davis Bend residents went to Kansas. There they established a community called Redmonsville, which later became incorporated by the city of Topeka. Isaiah Montgomery returned to Davis Bend to salvage the family’s fortunes. Unfortunately, the foreclosure suit brought by Jefferson Davis squashed all hopes of financial residuals from the Davis Bend enterprise. By 1886, all the Montgomerys had left and the experiment was over.¹²⁴ Isaiah then moved on to Vicksburg where he set up another commercial trade business.¹²⁵ Isaiah Thornton Montgomery and Benjamin Thornton Green decided to stay on in the Mississippi Delta. They were determined to continue the legacy of Davis Bend, the “cooperative community” concept, and the ultimate goals of Benjamin T. Montgomery, in order to establish and maintain an all-black town. For in late 1887, Isaiah and cousin Ben seized on yet another opportunity to give Davis Bend one more chance.

The shifting relationship between the Davis brothers and the Montgomerys established social and cultural traditions that would shape the region well into the twentieth century. Benjamin Thornton Montgomery was the central beam of light that shone the path to greatness as a true genius of a man, a husband, a father, an uncle and mentor to thousands. He demonstrated to many generations the dignity of a planter-philosopher and gentleman farmer.

¹²³ Ibid.; *Fargo Daily Argus*, September 23, 1884.

¹²⁴ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 212.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 219.

What comes next? History reveals the legitimate offspring of Davis Bend was soon to come, in the name of Mound Bayou, Mississippi.¹²⁶

*“Cultural ideas continue to live in the black imagination—
despite relatively brief moments in the sun.”¹²⁷*

Robert Bland

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Robert Bland, “Past Promised Lands: Davis Bend, Mississippi,” *The Liberator Magazine*, June 13, 2011, exclusive feature assessed on November 6, 2014, www.liberatormagazine.com.

CHAPTER II

MOUND BAYOU: AN OASIS IN THE MOST SOUTHERN PLACE ON EARTH

“Outside of Tuskegee, I think I can safely say there is no community in the world that I am so deeply interested in as I am in Mound Bayou.”¹

Booker T. Washington

The founders of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, established the town as an oasis of empowerment, and a place for experimentation in the re-defining of the African identity in America. It became a settlement on July 12, 1887; and on February 23, 1898, it became one of the first townships to be incorporated by Africans in America after Reconstruction.² It was in “Pursuit of a Dream,” as history professor Janet Sharp Hermann discusses in her book of the same name. In the first chapter, I reviewed Hermann’s narrative of the near utopian community on Davis Bend, a complex of plantations once owned by Joseph and Jefferson Davis and later by its manager Benjamin Montgomery. The story reflects the dream and the clash of two brothers; one with a vision of utopia for a minimally governed community of cooperation; and the other the President of the Confederacy who led the southern-slave holding states into the “battle of all battles,” the American Civil War. Leading the fight to maintain “a certain way of life” and privilege for white southerners, while at the same time having been involved in an experiment that empowered enslaved Africans and encouraged them to become educated,

¹ Quoted in Milburn Crowe and John Marting, *The Mound Bayou Mississippi Story* (Cleveland, MS: Delta State University, 2010), 3.

² Some argue Mound Bayou was the third oldest town by African Americans to incorporate after Brooklyn, IL, considered the oldest incorporated in 1829, whose motto is: “Founded in 1829, by chance, sustained until July 8, 1873, when it became incorporated by the courage of their convictions”; and second to Eatonville, FL, incorporated on August 15, 1887; Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *America’s First Black Town: Brooklyn, Illinois, 1830-1915* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 84-89.

independent and prosperous business-minded people is not an often-told story about Jefferson Davis.³ Why? Perhaps because the story of the Davis and Montgomery families is in stark contradiction to the prevailing narrative in the Mississippi Delta.

Prominent in the Davis Bend Plantation narrative is Benjamin Thornton Montgomery, who owned and operated the Hurricane Plantation store. Here was where slaves could bring goods they produced in their own time—poultry and vegetables were commonplace—to exchange for commercial items that they could not make. African Americans were not the only patrons. White plantation families traveling between Vicksburg and Natchez were also known to stop and trade. Montgomery's role as store manager gave him the opportunity to learn much about the cotton business, and how to keep it supplied and profitable. These managerial experiences proved invaluable at the later Mound Bayou. Cotton was king there as well and African Americans increasingly viewed the settlement as a safe enclave within the cotton kingdom.⁴ Cotton, above all other industries, was the crucial element, for “cotton hunters,”⁵ as Benjamin Montgomery called them, socially exploited the economic experimentation taking place in the post-antebellum South for history's first globally integrated manufacturing complex. The key factors and locations in this matrix were New York's Wall Street; overseas textile factories; New Orleans' distribution and shipping industry;⁶ and of course the Mississippi Delta for its fertile soil that sustained crops and the narrative that fed this integrated complex and inspired writers and trailblazers for generations. Mound Bayouian historian

³ Hermann, *The Pursuit of a Dream* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 22-26, 102, 193.

⁴ Ibid, 38-44.

⁵ Ibid, 102-3.

⁶ Beckart, *Empire of Cotton*, 79.

and resident Milburn Crowe, University of Illinois Professor Matthew Holden, Jr., Janet Sharp Hermann, Neil McMillian, and Vernon L. Wharton are among those who have documented how Mound Bayou became, in spite of all opposing forces, an oasis in the most southern place on Earth.

Ultimately, after years of court battles, the Montgomery family lost all rights to Davis Bend in 1880. By that time, due to stress and understandable disappointments, Isaiah Montgomery was in poor health and did very little for the next two years. He nearly died.⁷ However, Isaiah's work was just beginning. According to historian Joel Nathan Rosen "his health recovered and so did his appetite for yet another experiment in race building."⁸ This time, his approach combined a bit of Joseph Davis' philosophical musings, combined with the principal teachings of Robert Owen and the managerial training of his father Benjamin Montgomery. Isaiah Montgomery meshed these philosophies and managerial styles into a workable strategy to achieve success in the Mississippi Delta.⁹ Influenced mostly by his father's unprecedented ability to transcend enslavement, he was as historian Joel Rosen interpreted, "a headstrong and virtually incorrigible runaway."¹⁰ Isaiah Montgomery inherited his father's ingenuity and used it to form the ideological framework of Mound Bayou. Isaiah understood that the Davis family's faith in an agricultural utopia when the labor was slave was neither possible nor desirable. Nor could such a world be solely dependent on tenants, as his father had

⁷ Ibid., 212.

⁸ Joel Nathan Rosen, *From New Lanark to Mound Bayou: Owenism in the Mississippi Delta* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2011), 9; Thavolia Glymph, "The Second Middle Passage: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom at Davis Bend, Mississippi" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 1995), 33-40.

⁹ Rosen, *From New Lanark to Mound Bayou*, 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 96.

thought. Land-owning, property-owning African Americans could create such a world, however.¹¹ This deductive reasoning gave Isaiah Montgomery the agency to be creative and to determine a revised tactical strategic method for Mound Bayou.

Isaiah Montgomery's unique brand of guile, experience, and intellect prepared him for the opportunities Mound Bayou offered. In partnership with his cousin Benjamin Thornton Green, they implemented a distinct plan and vision for "an all-black colony of autonomous landowners, who farmed on their own account."¹² This would ultimately become what Chicago School sociologist E. Franklin Frazier termed "a Black Bourgeoisie community."¹³ In many respects, Owen's principals and Davis' belief of improving self for the good of the community, through a "liberalized" environment and the "illusion of freedom," actually became the foundation of the Montgomery-Green strategy.

Not bound with a plantation mentality that enslaved the minds of many African Americans, Isaiah Montgomery and Benjamin Green proved to be the most innovative beneficiaries of the Owen-Davis-Montgomery paradigm. They embraced the reality that with freedom came labor, competition, and the decimation of the plantation labor system. Montgomery and Green realized that free and self-determined people needed to have a tangible stake in the experiment through ownership opportunities. What we now call a

¹¹ McMillen, *Isaiah T. Montgomery*.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie: The Book That Brought the Shock of Self-Revelation to Middle-Class Blacks in America* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 10; For two other authoritative works on the African American experience in Mississippi since the 1865, see Vernon Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi 1865-1890* (New York: Harper Touchbooks, 1965) and Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990). McMillen's assessment picks up where Wharton leaves off and discusses the period 1890-1940.

sweat-equity strategy, a brand of cooperative ownership, is the foundation upon which Mound Bayou was established.



Figure 2.1. Isaiah T. Montgomery, 1847-1924.
Photographs courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Land ownership was not enough. Mound Bayou residents needed better transportation for their products. Montgomery and Green sought out a railroad connecting them to Memphis to the north and to Vicksburg to the South. The negotiation involved a train depot to be located in the Yazoo Delta of Northwest Mississippi for the Louisville, New Orleans, and Texas Railway (L. N.O. & T.).¹⁴ The L. N.O. & T., was a Class I railroad, with annual operating revenue of at least \$1 million of freight and passenger services. L. N.O. & T., chartered by the Commonwealth of Kentucky in 1850, survived both war and economic dislocations during Reconstruction to emerge as a profitable line moving cotton from the Deep South to the rest of the nation.¹⁵

¹⁴ George H. Drury, *The Historical Guide to North American Railroads: Histories, Figures, and Features of more than 160 Railroads Abandoned or Merged since 1930* (Waukesha, Wisconsin: Kalmbach Publishing, 1985), 178–182; Kenneth M. Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 43.

¹⁵ Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit*, 43.

In 1882, C.P. Huntingdon formed the Louisville, New Orleans and Texas Railway to serve as a connector between two other Huntingdon-controlled lines: the Southern Pacific and the Chesapeake, Ohio & Southwestern. The railroad also connected with the regionally powerful Louisville and Nashville, which was “a 6,000-mile system serving thirteen states, including Mississippi.”¹⁶ The L. N.O. & T. Railway also consolidated other smaller companies. The portion to become Mound Bayou was completed in October 1884.¹⁷

In the fall of 1886, after several months of site surveys along the railroad route, a civil engineer accompanied Montgomery and his investors to determine a town site for the settlement of the proposed all-Black colony. The chosen site included a prehistoric Indian mound at the confluence of two bayous, a heavily wooded area with cane breaks and thick undergrowth. Many of the trees reportedly stood over 130 feet high, and the cane stalks grew to over 25 feet high. The bayous and nearby pools of stagnant water were swarming with poisonous snakes, making the waterways equally as noxious. To clear the site, Montgomery’s company hired watchmen to look out for the many wild animals, while others worked to deforest the area. These challenging conditions almost made the whole endeavor impossible.¹⁸

According to Hermann, the pioneers departed on trains Memphis bound, for sleeping at night, and then would transfer to the Vicksburg-bound train the following morning. Why? They did this in order to have relatively restful night. Montgomery gave

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Tony Howe and David S. Price, *Mississippi Rails, Mississippi's Railroad History & Heritage, 2009*, accessed August 10, 2013, <http://www.msrailroads.com/LNO&T.htm>; R. S. Cotterill, “The Louisville and Nashville Railroad 1861-1865,” *American Historical Review* 29, no. 4 (1924): 700–715.

¹⁸ Charles Stringer, Jr., “Jewel of the Delta-Mound Bayou, Mississippi” (BA thesis, California State University Monterey Bay, May 2002), 11.

speeches along the way to boost their determination to undertake the monumental task of carving a township from the swampy land. Montgomery recalled: “I told them ... that they might as well buy land and own it and do for themselves what they had been doing for others folks for two hundred and fifty years.”¹⁹ The small band of men who joined the effort to build Mound Bayou kneeled and prayed for guidance and strength to succeed in their monumental undertaking.

Montgomery, in his inherited wisdom, would turn to his brethren and cry out, “Why stagger at the difficulties that confront you. Have you not for centuries braved the miasma and hewn down forests like these at the behest of a master? Can you not do it for yourselves and your children unto successive generations that they may worship and develop under their own vine and fig tree?”²⁰ It was a true test of pioneer survival skills, and some of the settlers did not pass the test. For those who did persevere, it took unprecedented will and discipline.

Recognizing the needs and the entrepreneurial opportunity, Isaiah’s mother Mary Montgomery and Benjamin Green set up a “groundhog sawmill” service for the settlers.²¹ By October 1887, they had cleared eighty to ninety acres and built their first log cabins. The railroad records show twenty-seven names of families who purchased land in Mound Bayou within the first three months of settlement.²² It is estimated that more than one

¹⁹ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 222.

²⁰ Neil R. McMillen, *Isaiah T. Montgomery, 1847-1924 (Part I)*, *The Life and Times of Isaiah T. Montgomery*, Mississippi History Now, last modified February 2007, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/55/isaiah-t-montgomery-1847-1924-part-I>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² The 1880 and 1890 census were valuable tools in part because they were the only U.S. censuses

hundred families were residents of Mound Bayou within the first year of settlement.

By the late 1880s, Mississippi Delta cotton planters were at the mercy of world markets, weather conditions and now pending competition from Mound Bayou. Compared to the dominant sharecropper system, Mound Bayou residents thrived through cooperative ownership and were not dependent on sharecroppers. This system stood in stark contrast to that of their white neighbors. The largest cotton plantations organized sharecroppers into work gangs of twenty to sixty men and women. They set out early every morning every day of the week except Sunday to work in cotton fields from daybreak to night fall (kin to k'aint). They toiled under the supervision of "boss men" who functioned as the new generation of "overseers" in a slave-inspired free-market system.²³ Former slave Solomon Northup recalled the work of a cotton picker in his book, *Twelve Years a Slave*. He described the annual seasonal "plowing, planting, picking cotton ... pulling and burning stalks." Fall harvest, or "picking time," is when the greatest demands on the plantation lay. Whole families worked in crews and brought along the children and all other available hands to the fields.²⁴

In spite of the odds against them, the settlers were determined and found the strength to work together and ultimately carved a haven for themselves and their families. The actual deal the Montgomerys negotiated to purchase the land was for 840 acres of basically swampland in Bolivar County, in the Mississippi Delta, at \$7.00 an acre. The going rate was \$6 per acre, for poor upland pineland in Alabama in cotton-land, during

available for the last two decades of the 1800s. Most of the original 1890 population schedules were destroyed in a fire at the Commerce Department in 1921.

²³ Lynne M. Ringey Barolet, "Deconstructing Social Class: Theoretical And Historical Contexts For Conversations In Family Therapy Education" (PhD diss., University of Florida, 2002), 114-116.

²⁴ Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (New York: Derby and Miller/Penguin Group, 1853), 116.

the period 1830-50. However, going rate for prime (cleared) cotton land in the Mississippi Delta was \$35-\$40 per acre, due to its highly enriched alluvial soil. Usually the lots in need of clearing, draining and preparation, plus the transporting of enslaved labor and supplies, would cost in the range of \$20-\$30 per acre.²⁵ They agreed to pay 50 cents per acre down payment with five annual payments covering the remainder of the purchase price at an interest rate of 8% per year.²⁶ The total paid to establish the new frontier was \$5,880.00, which by known standards of the day was a very good deal! In so doing, the Montgomery and Green became agents for the railroad company, selling to African American potential landowners the proverbial forty acres (without the mule). The price for each 40-acre plot of land averaged at \$8-9 per acre, with a \$40 entry fee.

In February 1888, the women and children began to settle into their homes. That spring the families planted the first crops of cotton and corn. That same spring Martha Montgomery worked jointly with Benjamin Green to set up a sawmill and a supply store. Later that year Martha Montgomery, Mrs. Benjamin Green and other enterprising women with Green's assistance established the first cotton gin in town.²⁷ The newly acquired land had indeed become the second chance to establish a laboratory of self-empowerment.

By 1889, when Mound Bayou's depot for agricultural products and passenger services was in full operation, "L. N.O. & T. operated 74 locomotives, 36 passenger cars,

²⁵ Alfred H. Conrad, John R. Meyer, "Economics of Slavery in the Ante Bellum South," *Journal of Political Economy* LXVI, no. 2 (April 1958): 100.

²⁶ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 222.

²⁷ Herman, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 222-223.

9 baggage mail & express trains, 1232 box, 50 stock, 499 flats, 115 coal, 41 cabooses, 308 other.”²⁸ By the turn of the century Mound Bayou exported \$30,000 in cotton freight annually (3,000 bales of cotton), and sold \$6000 in passenger service. The residents owned 5,000 acres of rich prime farm and timber land, with an estimated commercial value of \$20,000. Mound Bayou residents attribute a relatively small amount of the cotton freight to neighboring planters.²⁹

With important access to railway distribution, combined with land ownership and the expertise in developing their cotton production, uninhibited, Mound Bayou residents quickly established themselves as part of the Delta’s looming Cotton Empire. The dream was to ultimately achieve the highly desired status of “patriarchs of the Cotton Kingdom” as previously established in Natchez, Mississippi.³⁰ In many ways the businesses demonstrate the point that James Silver argued in his book *Mississippi: The Closed Society*: that some whites wished to offer support to Blacks but feared white wrath and retaliation.³¹ Consequently while some neighboring farmers patronized the business efforts in Mound Bayou, most avoided any sort of economic relationship even though it was in their best interest to ship cotton and other products from the Mound Bayou railway depot. It was done, but it was done under a veil of secrecy. This is a testament to the reality that patronage by white farmers was not encouraged, but could not be avoided.

²⁸ Stringer, “Jewel of the Delta-Mound Bayou,” 11.

²⁹ Eulah L. Peterson, “Mound Bayou Mississippi: The Jewel of the Delta,” November 10th, 2007, accessed July 8, 2014, <https://storycorps.org/blog/mound-bayou-mississippi-the-jewel-of-the-delta/>.

³⁰ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 221-243.

³¹ James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), 85, 151.

Mound Bayou thereby became a land of promise not only for African Americans but also for their neighboring whites willing to take a chance.

MDAH sources also show records of the “official” dates for Mound Bayou’s incorporation as an all-African-American township, as of February 23, and August 5, 1898; making it one of the oldest in the nation. The first petition was filed on February 18, 1898:

As of historical interest in being the first instrument of its kind ever granted to Negro people in the South, probably anywhere else, we take pleasure in presenting below the petition, the proclamation, and the certificate of incorporation of Mound Bayou.³²

Next came the governor’s signature of the petition on February 23, 1898:

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greetings:
Whereas, a petition signed by two-thirds of the electors resident within the limits proposed for the village of Mound Bayou, in the County of Bolivar, has been presented to me setting forth the metes and bound of the said Village, and stating the number of inhabitants to be one hundred and eighty-three (183), and the said petition having been posted in three conspicuous places within the limits of the said proposed village for three weeks, as required by law: --

Now, therefore, I, A.J. McLaurin, Governor of the State of Mississippi, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the constitution and laws of the State, do issue this my proclamation, and do hereby declare the said village of Mound Bayou in the County of Bolivar incorporated, with limits and boundaries as follows: so wit--...

A.J. McLaurin, Governor
J.L. Power, Secretary of State.³³

Finally the Secretary of State issued a Certificate of Charter, on August 5, 1898:

³² Aurelius P. Hood, *The Negro at Mound Bayou, An Authentic Story of The Founding, Growth and Development of The Most Celebrated Town In The South, Covering A Period of Twenty-Two Years* (Nashville: A.M.E. Sunday School Union, 1909), 49.

³³ *Ibid.*, 48.

I, J.L. Power, Secretary of State, do hereby certify that the Charter hereto attached, incorporating the Village of Mound Bayou, in Bolivar County, Mississippi was, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 93 of the Annotated Code, 1892, recorded in the Book of Incorporations in this office.

Given under my hand, and the great seal of the State of Mississippi hereunto affixed, this **5th day of August, 1898.**
J.L. Power, Secretary of State.³⁴

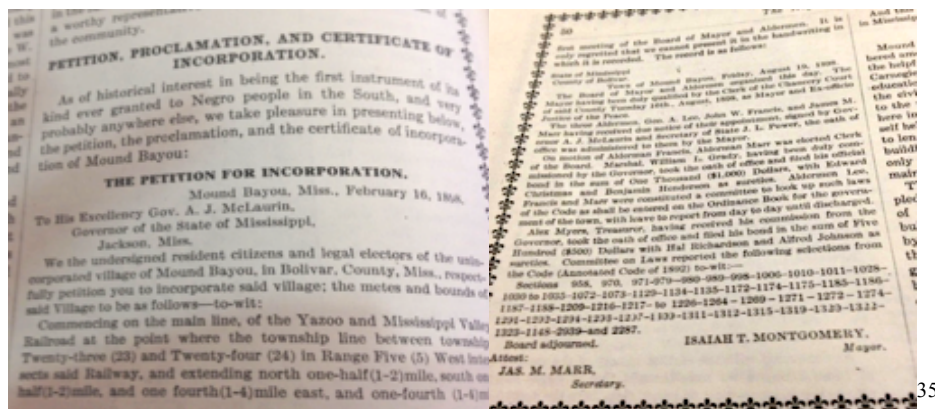


Figure 2.2. Aurelius P. Hood, *The Negro at Mound Bayou, An Authentic Story of The Founding, Growth and Development of The Most Celebrated Town In The South, Covering A Period of Twenty-Two Years.* Image acquired from Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.3. The Negro at Mound Bayou, An Authentic Story of The Founding, Growth and Development of The Most Celebrated Town In The South, Covering A Period of Twenty-Two Years – Courtesy of James Loewen and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 49.



Figure 2.4. Mound Bayou Family. Courtesy of James Loewen and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division.

The first three years following incorporation were difficult, but the community successfully sustained the vision of self-empowerment. Much like their ancestors throughout Western Africa, they smartly integrated their cash crop with sustenance plants. The community managed to survive from timber, cotton and corn sales. By 1907, Mound Bayou had become the center of a thriving agricultural community producing about 3,000 bales of cotton annually and over half of the corn and animal fodder needed by the residents.³⁶ According to Sven Beckart's global study to interplant cotton with food and other sustenance crops is indeed a good and sound decision.³⁷

Another smart decision was to maintain the community's prominence as depot administrator for the L. N.O. & T. Railroad. The depot provided Mound Bayouians important access to the railway for their award-winning cotton production and distribution business. Along with land ownership, Mound Bayou residents established

³⁶ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 223.

³⁷ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing, 2014), 15.

themselves as a major contributor to the global cotton commercial market. They became major competitors to other wealthy planters, particular those in Natchez, Mississippi.³⁸

In so doing, Montgomery, Green and several other landowners from Mound Bayou relished in the luxury of becoming some of the patriarchs within the historic Cotton Kingdom.³⁹ In 1891 there were about 500 residents in the vicinity; in 1893 there were 183 living in the town proper. By 1900 two-thirds of the owners of land in the Delta bottomlands (near Mound Bayou) were black farmers. The town had grown to 287 residents; an additional 1500 lived in the vicinity on farms.⁴⁰ However, a study of the 1900 census of Mound Bayou shows 650 households living in the town proper. By 1907, twenty years after its inception, the town was thriving with a total population of 4000 residents.⁴¹ At its height, Mound Bayou was home to 3 schools, 40 businesses, 6 churches, a train depot, a newspaper, 3 cotton gins, a cottonseed oil mill, a zoo, the Carnegie library, a bank, a swimming pool, a sawmill, a Farmers Cooperative and Mercantile Company, and a hospital.⁴² (See Figures 2.5 through 2.20)

As part of this venture, Isaiah Montgomery in 1890 also helped to found Campbell College, which maintained campuses at Vicksburg and Friars Point. The sponsor of the college, which was controlled and operated by African Americans, was the

³⁸ D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1968), 136-61; Andrew L. Slap and Frank Towers, *Confederate Cities: The Urban South during the Civil War Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 192-3.

³⁹ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 221-243.

⁴⁰ Kenneth M. Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 53.

⁴¹ Shana Walton, Ed and Barbara Carpenter, eds., *Ethnic Heritage in Mississippi: The Twentieth Century* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi and Mississippi Humanities Council, 2012), 100.

⁴² Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit*, 53.

African Methodist Episcopal Church. Montgomery became the second president of Campbell College in 1892, putting in place policies and systems that facilitated its move to Jackson in 1898. Campbell College became incorporated into Jackson State College in 1965.⁴³

Mound Bayouians were strongly committed to education. To demonstrate their commitment, the cousins Montgomery and Green set aside a tract of land and donated it to the city in 1892, exclusively for the community's educational purposes. They designed the project to "supplement the inadequate curriculum of the public schools."⁴⁴ Their solution was to launch the Mound Bayou Normal and Industrial Institute, which was built and sustained with tuition based enrollment and financial assistance from the American Missionary Association (AMA). The school offered high school-level instruction including vocational and domestic arts, language, history, science, math and music.⁴⁵

The efforts of Mrs. A.A. Harris, through the orders of the General Baptist State Convention, established Baptist College (Mound Bayou Industrial College) that was built between 1900 and 1904. Other founders along with Harris were Mrs. V.L. Alexander, Mrs. M.C. Collins and Mrs. M.D. Crawford. These women, as well as their husbands were prominent members of Mound Bayou, who worked tirelessly to develop schools and other businesses.⁴⁶ Once again, community people were given credit for all the early successes.

⁴³ E. J. Stringer, "The Founding of Mound Bayou Normal and Industrial Institute" (B.A. thesis, Mound Bayou Industrial College, 1990), 11-12; Julie L. Kimbrough, *Jackson* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 1988), 88.

⁴⁴ Maurice Elizabeth Jackson, "Mound Bayou: A Study in Social Development" (Master's thesis, University of Alabama, 1937), 34.

⁴⁵ Stringer, "The Founding of Mound Bayou," 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.



Figure 2.5. Mound Bayou Depot. Russell Lee, US Government photographer for the US Farm Security Administration took photographs in 1939. All photos are in public domain. Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.6. The Louisville, New Orleans, and Texas railway line ran through the center of Mound Bayou, and enhanced their growth and development. The old track bed is still visible, though the rails have been removed.



Figure 2.7-2.8. Four cotton gins at Mound Bayou's peak: Thompson Gin, Sanders Gin, Presley's Gin, Jones, Jones & Jones.



Figures 2.9-2.13. City of Mound Bayou downtown buildings. Most of downtown buildings were destroyed in a fire in 1941, but many buildings illustrated that the community appreciated beautiful architecture, such as Isaiah T. Montgomery's house, and churches. Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.10.



Figure 2.11.



Figure 2.12.



Figure 2.13.



Figure 2.14. Isaiah Montgomery home was built in the Queen Anne style, which was very popular in Mississippi as the railroads expanded between 1880 and 1910. Montgomery's house, with its Square Doric columns, gables, and porch running the width of the house, and partially down one side, must have been an imposing sight when the train passed through. The house faced directly toward the railroad tracks.

Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figures 2.15. Isaiah Montgomery home (side view), Mound Bayou, Mississippi. Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.16. George W. Creswell's residence, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division. Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.17. Eugene P. Booze's residence, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division. Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.18. Reverend Will Ivory's residence, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division. Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.19. Mrs. M.E. Ellison's residence, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division. Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.20. Resident unknown. Photograph courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Aurelius P. Hood, mayor of Mound Bayou (1901-1908), produced a manuscript entitled *The Negro at Mound Bayou: Being an Authentic Story of the Founding, Growth and Development, of the MOST CELEBRATED TOWN IN THE SOUTH, Covering a Period of Twenty-Two Years*. With help from the A.M.E. Sunday School Union, Hood acknowledged and paid tribute to the people, the places and the numerous other accomplishments of Mound Bayouians. The photographs in Figure 2.21-2.31 are images of Mound Bayou in earlier years from Aurelius P. Hood's publication.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The original 122 page manuscript is at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; General Research and Reference Division, Harlem, New York.

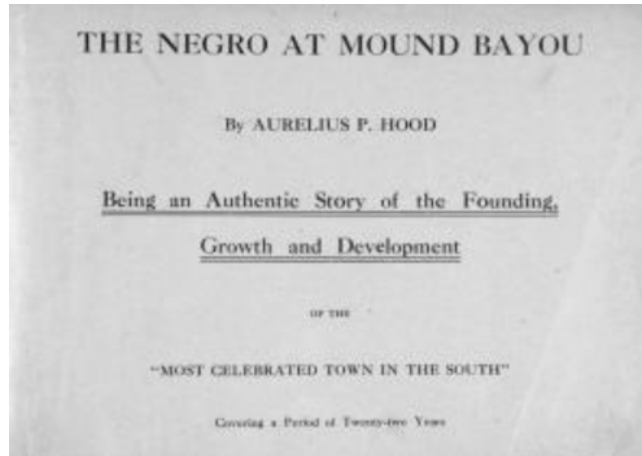


Figure 2.21. Cover page of Aurelius P. Hood’s publication.⁴⁸



Figure 2.22. E. P. Powell selling cotton, circa 1910, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division.⁴⁹



Figure 2.23. Mount Bayou Oil Mill and Manufacturing Company, circa 1910, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division.

⁴⁸ Hood, *The Negro at Mound Bayou*, 67-79.

⁴⁹ Ibid



A field of pease eye grown under the direction of colored Demonstration Agent Jas. A. Booker (on left), Mound Bayou, Miss., 1918.

Figure 2.24. Men working in the field, in Mound Bayou.

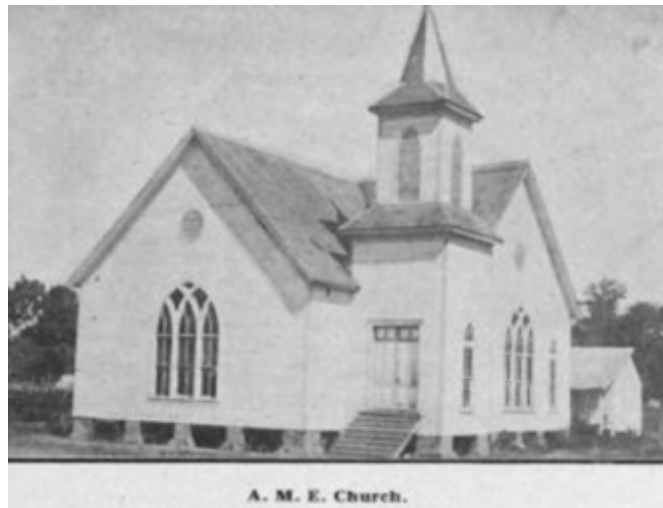


Figure 2.25. A.M.E. Church (close exterior view).



Figure 2.26. AME Church (long exterior view).



Figure 2.27. A.M.E. Church congregation entering (exterior view).



Figure 2.28. A.M.E. Church congregation assembled (interior view).

In an age of rigidly enforced racial separation, the self-segregating tendencies of many conservative African Americans allowed them to express with pride “not a single white person resides or owns property within [Mound Bayou’s] limits.”⁵⁰ As the village grew and its commercial establishments expanded, Montgomery and other town leaders called it the “Negro capital of Mississippi.”⁵¹ President Theodore Roosevelt thought Mound Bayou to be an “object lesson full of hope for the colored people.”⁵² “Booker T.

⁵⁰ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 224.

⁵¹ McMillen, “Isaiah T. Montgomery, Pt I.”

⁵² *Ibid.*

Washington described Mound Bayou as both a school and an inspiration.”⁵³

Montgomery’s community seemed to be the very model of a successful separate economic development, a vibrant example of the “group economy” that allowed African American dollars to be circulated in a closed economic order for self-sustaining and self-perpetuating endeavors.⁵⁴

The town of Mound Bayou indeed became a critical asset to America’s Cotton Kingdom and was an oasis for African Americans throughout the country. Mississippi and the rest of the country, however, chose instead to ignore these accomplishments and continued to legislate historically vile racist acts of hatred, and segregation through Black Code campaigns, and Jim Crow policies waged on in housing policies and land ownership throughout the country.⁵⁵ For example, Neil McMillen discusses the tense racial situation in Amite County in 1902, stating, “leading farmers ... declared it to be bad policy to sell land to [N]egroes.” Elsewhere in Mississippi signs were posted on African Americans-owned land that read: “If you have not moved away from here by sundown tomorrow, we will shoot you like rabbits.” “All Negroes get out of this county.”⁵⁶

The dogged pursuit of success and the sophisticated skills of negotiation, marketing and agricultural production gives substantial evidence and reason for Mound

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Mc Millen, *Dark Journey*, 120; Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Racist Housing Policies That Built Ferguson,” *The Atlantic* (October 17, 2014); Also see, Tom C. Clark and Phillip B. Perlman, *Prejudice and Property: An Historic Brief Against Racial Covenants* (Nashville, Fisk University Press, 1947); and, Charles S. Johnson, *Backgrounds to Patterns of Negro Segregation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943).

⁵⁶ Quoted in McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 120. See also “White Caps and Bull Dozers” WPA History: Hinds County and in the Jackson Daily Clarion-Ledger, February 9, 1911.

Bayou's insistence on self-segregation in the midst of a protracted hostility against them and others throughout the South.⁵⁷ Encapsulated in the Mound Bayou's sustainability was the self-proclaimed "promise" of self-help, race pride, economic opportunity, and social justice. They vowed to have a self-segregated community designed to have minimum contact with whites, until it could be demonstrated that integration was a viable option for African Americans and their perpetual struggle freedom, justice and equality.⁵⁸ Mound Bayou's relatively quick and skillful establishment of its infrastructure enabled the residents to live this way, independently, in a relatively muted hostile Jim Crow environment for a brief, but impactful, moment in the sun.⁵⁹



Figure 2.29. Cashier's office - Bank of Mound Bayou.

⁵⁷ Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 376.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 240.

⁵⁹ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1941), 60, 71; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 76; Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, 175-177.



Figure 2.30. Charles Banks at desk.



Figure 2.31. Bank of Mound Bayou.

Steady encouragement from African American leaders continually streamed into Mound Bayou. Booker T. Washington said, “Outside of Tuskegee, I think I can safely say there is no community in the world that I am so deeply interested in as I am in Mound Bayou.”⁶⁰ Washington also declared the planned opening of Mound Bayou’s cotton oil

⁶⁰ Crowe and Marting, *Mound Bayou Mississippi Story*, 3.

mill and manufacturing company, “the largest and most serious undertaking in a purely commercial and manufacturing enterprise in the history of our race.”⁶¹

The proposed plans were presented to Charles Banks (see figure 2.30), a successful businessman from the neighboring town of Clarksdale, Mississippi. Recognizing the opportunity, Banks moved to Mound Bayou with the plan of even greater accomplishments for the thriving town. He was a master in strategic planning, an accomplished business negotiator and capital fundraiser. Banks became involved in Mound Bayou politically and economically. He worked with Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute to find investors and business opportunities in Mound Bayou. Of course, as with most “outsiders,” some thought Banks was as a shrewd manipulator and a con man working in his own self-interest.⁶² D.H. Jackson, a chief lieutenant of the “Tuskegee machine” believed that Banks’ efforts were intended to support economic development in Mound Bayou and were aligned with the philosophical teachings of Washington. That being in the spirit of “racial uplift,” Jackson believed Banks recognized the need to subvert the racism that accompanied Negroes everyday life in Mississippi.⁶³

⁶¹ Booker T. Washington, “Extracts from an Address at the Opening of the Mound Bayou Cotton-Oil Mill,” (Nov. 25, 1912), cited in Booker T Washington Papers, 1912-14, XII, eds., Louis Harlan and Raymond W. Smock (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 55.

⁶² Robert C. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners: Black Economic Success in North Carolina, 1865-1915* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 128.

⁶³ Vernon Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi 1865-1890* (Praeger: New edition, 1984), 199-215; David Jackson, Jr., *A Chief Lieutenant of the Tuskegee Machine: Charles Banks of Mississippi* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 24-35, 121-135, 155.



Figure 2.33. Charles Banks. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture/General Research and Reference Division.

Charles Banks ultimately became “one of the chief figures in Booker T. Washington’s national Negro Business League;” and, the man Washington described as “not, by any means, the wealthiest, but I think I am safe in saying ... the most influential, Negro business man in the United States;” [and] “the leading Negro banker in Mississippi.”⁶⁴ Washington also proclaimed Banks as the single individual that taught him the value of common sense in dealing with conditions, as they existed in the South.⁶⁵ Banks’ most significant accomplishments were the establishment of the Bank of Mound Bayou, the Mound Bayou Cotton Oil Mill, and the formation of the Mound Bayou State Bank. The resourceful Mr. Banks had also played a key role in finding financing for a town library, in 1909, with secured funds from Andrew Carnegie.

⁶⁴ Booker T. Washington, *My Larger Education* (Garden City, N.Y., 1911; reprint, Heraklion Press, 2013), 207-8. Quoted from “Mound Bayou Cotton Men Find Cooperative Pays,” *Chicago Defender* (December 12, 1942), 13; William Mychael Sturkey, “Heritage of Hub City” (PhD diss., University of Memphis, 1997), 230.

⁶⁵ Washington, *My Larger Education*, 207-8.



Figure 2.34. Booker T. Washington at the opening of the Cotton-Oil Mill; Photographs courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



Figure 2.35. Carnegie Library in course of construction at Mound Bayou, Miss. ([1910]). Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division. Image ID: 1149612.

As the 1911 decline in cotton prices impacted the entire region, the Bank of Mound Bayou's daily operations too were negatively affected. Banks, however, believed

the institution had sufficient assets to remain open. Despite his protests, state regulators forced the bank's closing in 1914.⁶⁶ Neighboring white-owned banks predictably raised interest rates on the Mound Bayou borrowers. Black farmers were placed in the unfortunate situation, whereby they were forced to use white-owned gins for their cotton harvest; and, of course, this crippled the economic self-sufficiency of Mound Bayou.



Figure 2.36. Bank of Mound Bayou (1910); Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / General Research and Reference Division. Image ID: 1149613.



Figure 2.37. Bank of Mound Bayou (2014). Photo courtesy of Khafre, Inc., Archives.

⁶⁶ Hood, *The Negro at Mound Bayou*, 7.



Figure 2.38. Mound Bayou Bank Building marker. Photo courtesy of Khafre, Inc., Archives.

It took about a year for Bank and other Mound Bayou investors to start a new financial institution, the Mound Bayou State Bank, to leverage a payment to the original community investors of the Bank of Mound Bayou. Banks played yet another critical role in developing the Mound Bayou economy along the general lines of the philosophical teachings of Benjamin Montgomery and the fundamental principles of Mound Bayou’s founding members.



Figure 2.39. Mound Bayou State Bank certificate. Photograph from archival collection Mound Bayou Historical Preservation Society.

As Booker T. Washington acknowledged, Mound Bayou’s economy was established, but it existed within the wider American economy making the desirable “complete separation” impossible. Richard America makes this argument in his study of

the black economy. He looked at the combined economic forces of African Americans and correctly determined that the African American economy, even in Mound Bayou, was a subsystem of the American interdependent economy.⁶⁷ When the cotton prices tanked once again in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, Mound Bayou farmers were not immune. Black and white farmers alike in the Delta lost their hard-earned land and became tenants. The Depression in the Delta began long before the Great Crash of 1929.

Hard times came in spite of the promise of the Cotton-Oil Mill that was the largest in the state when it opened in 1912. Mound Bayou leaders had hoped that by milling cottonseeds and producing a new product that prosperity and greater self-sufficiency could be possible through new technology.⁶⁸ At the opening ceremony educator Booker T. Washington noted:

I congratulate every white and black citizen of Mississippi on the launching of this great manufacturing enterprise, the greatest of its kind in the history of our race. I congratulate you because it is located in the heart of the black belt of the South where black people and white people are side by side, to work out their destiny and prove to the world that it is possible for two races different in color to live together, each promoting the happiness and welfare of the other.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Richard America, *Developing the Afro-American Economy* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1977), 29-31.

⁶⁸ Memphis Commercial Appeal, November 27, 1912.

⁶⁹ Crowe and Marting, *Mound Bayou*, 9.



Figure 2.40. Mound Bayou Cotton-Oil Mill. Photograph from archival collection Mound Bayou Historical Preservation Society.



Figure 2.41. Mound Bayou cotton gin. Photograph from archival collection Mound Bayou Historical Preservation Society.

The Mound Bayou Cotton Oil Mill ran successfully for ten years. The Julius Rosenwald and Anna T. Jeanes Fund supported the vision to develop legitimate businesses and educational programs to show the African American youth ways in which communities throughout the South can be an inspiration to them and to prepare them for a better future. Julius Rosenwald, President of Sears, Roebuck, and Co., provided loans to fund the cotton-seed-oil mill. Charles Banks accompanied by Booker T. Washington successfully appealed, “our people are cotton-growers; what ever money they make is from handling cotton. ... there is a great demand for cottonseed oil and meal, as well as

husk; oil mills were earning from 15-40 percent on their investment.” This is logic Benjamin Montgomery would view with favor.⁷⁰

However, the mill closed in 1922, not due to any fault of Mound Bayouian investors, but to the indiscretion of B.B. Harvey, a Memphis-based cotton mill owner / broker who defaulted on a \$25,000 loan bond that Julius Rosenwald had invested in to support the mill.⁷¹ The mill’s failure had a direct impact on the Mound Bayou State Bank. Then the crash in the price of cotton came in 1923. Foreclosure was imminent for many businesses throughout the state and the Delta became a place with an early start on the Great Depression that swept the nation in the 1930s. In spite of hardships, the town was determined to maintain itself as an all-African-American township and to preserve its historical significance as a cooperative community.⁷²

Mound Bayou’s resilience and commitment served to inspire repeated campaigns that reinvigorate the community to improve their lives and of African Americans in the Delta. In 1929, the Mound Bayou Foundation began a resettlement program to attract new residents and convince former Delta residents to come to Mound Bayou. Greater African American independence through land ownership was the goal. The group wanted to raise one million dollars, which would be used to revitalize the town.⁷³ But

⁷⁰ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 239.

⁷¹ Peter M. Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 159.

⁷² Charles S. Aiken, *The Cotton Plantation South Since the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 161.

⁷³ Crowe, *History of Mound Bayou*, 13-15.

twelve years into the revitalization program, which was boosted by various New Deal initiatives, 1941 brought a destructive fire that destroyed most of the city center.⁷⁴

In 1942, Mound Bayou saw another rebirth with the dedication of the Knights and Daughters of Tabor's Taborian Lodge and Hospital. Under the leadership of Sir P.M. Smith and with his generous \$100,000 investment, Mound Bayou was able to build a world-class healthcare facility known as the Taborian Hospital. Taborian Hospital was one of few African American controlled and operated hospitals in America. The sole purpose for its existence was to provide quality health care to the too often neglected African American population of the Mississippi Delta.⁷⁵



Figure 2.42. Image of Taborian Hospital. Photo courtesy of MDAH.

The Taborian Hospital attracted Drs. Phillip Moise George and Theodore Roosevelt Mason Howard. Both were educated at several of the nation's most prestigious schools and proved to be irreplaceable figures in the actual restructuring of Mound Bayou. Combined with its progressive educational system, and its relentless spirit Mound

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Thomas J. Ward, *Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 163-164.

Bayou. This time medical technology and public health initiatives seemed to promise new opportunities for progress and community development. Dr. Howard, for example, opened a second health care facility, the United Order of Friendship Medical Facility. He also spearheaded the opening of a community recreational complex called Goodwill Park. The complex included a zoo and a swimming pool, both of which allowed access to all African Americans who, due to the Jim Crow policies, did not have access to “public” swimming pools. Howard became president of the Magnolia Life Insurance Company, which employed famed Civil Rights martyr Medgar Evers, who also relocated his family to Mound Bayou. As direct result of Dr. Howard’s efforts, Mound Bayou, between the years 1940 to 1950, realized population growth in excess of 50%.⁷⁶ This growth facilitated the building of new businesses that included a new hotel, several restaurants and other enterprises.



Figure 2.43. On the left, Mayor Darryl Johnson and Tim Howard (son of TRM Howard) at TRM Howard highway dedication; right photo crowd (including Drs. David Beito shown) gathers around official sign to be placed on Old Highway 61, in Mound Bayou. Photo taken by C. Sade Turnipseed. Courtesy of Khafre, Inc., Archives.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 135, 164; “History of Mound Bayou,” Mound Bayou Movement, accessed July 6, 2015, <http://www.kinglyheirs.com/MoundBayouMovement/History.html>.

Many of Mound Bayouians' homes and small businesses were among the finest in the Delta. In the early 1950s Mound Bayou openly retook the mantle of leadership for African American people in the state of Mississippi. The successes realized throughout the Mississippi Delta are yet again testaments to Benjamin Montgomery's influence in management of land cooperatives and wealth distribution. This research reveals how the histories of African American cooperative developments in this Delta place rely on the understanding that people, community needs, and social institutions play an important role in economic development, land ownership, and community growth.⁷⁷ The town of Mound Bayou thus formed and became a model for other African American community leaders and organizations to adopt. It became an uncompromising concept for African American cooperatives that pursued independence, self-empowerment, and land ownership.⁷⁸

Such was the case in 1951 when Dr. T.R.M. Howard, along with several residents of Mound Bayou, and other Mississippians, formed the Mississippi Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL). NAACP leaders were concerned that the RCNL accepted the doctrine of "separate but equal."⁷⁹ But the RCNL viewed its strategy as an adaptation of W.E.B. DuBois' "talented tenth" philosophical approach to Black social progress in the America. Whereby, to isolate oneself permits the ability to grow, learn and blossom undisturbed, into a well-groomed cadre of talent enabled to better function

⁷⁷ Bruce Reynolds, "Black Farmers in America: 1865-2000, The Pursuit of Independent Farming and the Role of Cooperatives," *United States Department of Agriculture Rural Business-Cooperative Service*, RBS Research Report 194 (October 2002): 20.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 4.

⁷⁹ John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 33.

as leaders in the Black world. The discourse was also in alignment with the Indianola, Mississippi-based White Citizen Council who considered themselves “the watchdog of the state’s public schools, colleges and universities.”⁸⁰ However according to Howard, the RCNL’s strategic goals were:

To guide our people in their civic responsibilities regarding health, education, religion, registration and voting, law enforcement, tax paying, the preservation of property, the value of saving, and in all things, which will make us stable, qualified, conscientious citizens.⁸¹

Mound Bayou entered the national spotlight once again in 1955, following Emmett Till murder in nearby Money, Mississippi. Hundreds of out-of-state reporters converged on the Delta to cover the murder. Most found refuge as boarders within Mound Bayou. Suddenly, in the height of the Civil Rights Movement, Mound Bayou found itself as a literal media darling, at least of the mainstream national media. The NBC television newscast, Huntley and Brinkley, covered the town’s history in 1962. The national exposure stemming from this celebration led to yet another renewal of the spirit of hope for new incentives and programs in Mound Bayou.

These days there is an effort underway to revitalize the historic city called the Mound Bayou Movement (MBM). Current mayor Darryl Johnson created and now sustains the effort. It is a yet another example of the continuum of the undying spirit of Benjamin, Mary, and Isaiah Montgomery, Benjamin Green and other founding pioneers.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 61.

⁸¹ “Prospectus of the First Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Regional Council of Negro Leadership” (Mound Bayou, MS: Mississippi Regional Council of Negro Leadership, May 2, 1952), 1-18, in Julius E. Thompson, *Lynchings in Mississippi: A History, 1865-1965* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006), 223.

The legacy of utopian possibilities is perpetual. Mound Bayou stands again on the precipice of another renaissance. With all of its truth and history there is a demand for new audiences. Hermann's *Pursuit of a Dream* concludes that Mound Bayou was indeed "a near utopian community."⁸² Though utopia meant different things to different people, Booker T. Washington's *The Negro in the South* transcribed a conversation held with a farmer from Mound Bayou:

Mr. Washington, we [are] making great progress in our community. It is not the same as it used to be. We [are] getting to the point where nearly all the people in my community own their own pigs."⁸³ Washington asked why he was so interested in his neighbors owning their own pigs. The Negro farmer said: "I feel that when all my neighbors own their own pigs, I can always sleep better every night."⁸⁴

This farmer's words demonstrate how "Montgomeryism" (Montgomery's philosophical thought) lived in the ideal of ownership and shared agency. In 1910, *Century Illustrated Magazine* journalist Hiram Tong observed:

The Negro colonist of Mound Bayou owns his land, or rents it at standard rental from Negroes. He [the Negro] hauls his cotton to the gins of Mound Bayou, stores it in the warehouses, and sells it in the market of Mound Bayou. He [the Negro] buys his fertilizer and his livestock he owns and building materials he gets at the Mound Bayou lumberyard. He [the Negro] purchases his calico, his jeans and his furniture from the Mound Bayou general emporium. He [the Negro] even reads his news by the week in the Demonstrator, Mound Bayou's paper. He [the Negro] takes his physic from a Negro doctor and gets his new teeth from the Mound Bayou dentist. They are expensive teeth, for his penchant is toward gold crowns and other glittering dentistry. Finally, [the Negro] is buried by a Mound Bayou undertaker; the profits of all his transactions go to his race. His industry and thrift contribute to the prosperity of his race, his town,

⁸² Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 213-215.

⁸³ W. E. Burghardt DuBois and Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in the South / His Economic Progress in Relation to his Moral and Religious Development* (The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Negro in the South), 138-141. Kindle.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

and indirectly to his own welfare. He [the Negro] has become, ... a race-builder.⁸⁵

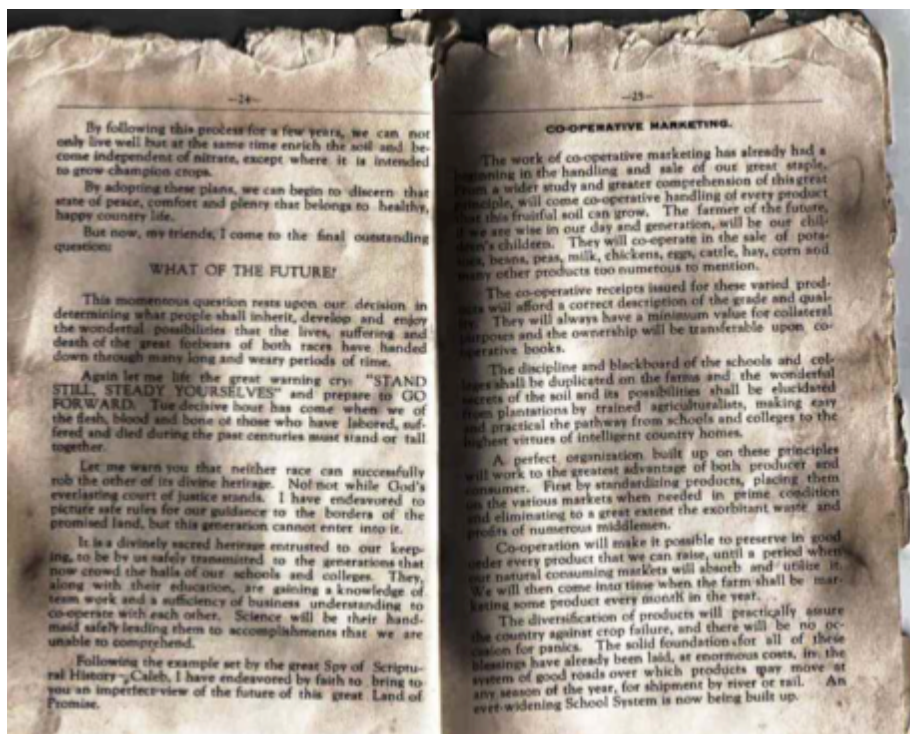


Figure 2.44. Excerpt: *What of the Future of Mound Bayou* written in early 1900s by Mound Bayou co-founder Isaiah T. Montgomery.

One hundred years later William Mychael Sturkey concludes with a similarly powerful statement in his dissertation:

Mound Bayou thrived. In its early days, it was like a dream come true, fulfilling many of the broken promises of Emancipation and Reconstruction. Just twenty-five years after Montgomery bought that first parcel of land, the town and its outskirts were home to 9,000 citizens. They developed an impressive network of black businesses, including banks, insurance companies, and cotton and lumber mills that cleared approximately \$600,000 in annual transactions (nearly \$13 million today). The city continually attracted outside attention for its economic success. The Blacks who lived in Mound Bayou asked little of the whites [that] ran Mississippi. They turned inward to help themselves and develop a thriving community of their own that became a national civic icon of black progress and potential.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Hiram Tong, "Pioneer of Mound Bayou," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 79 (January 1910): 392.

⁸⁶ William Mychael Sturkey, "The Heritage of Hub City: The Struggle for Opportunity in the New South, 1865-1964" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2012), 24.

These comments echo those of historian Vernon, L. Wharton, who concluded in 1947: “Thus, the idea of an all-Negro town, often discussed by Benjamin Montgomery with [both Joseph and] Jefferson Davis, reached its fulfillment several years later at Mound Bayou.”⁸⁷ Despite the relatively brief moment in the sun, Mound Bayou continues to find realization of the Davis Bend dream; and it continues to live in the African American imagination.



Figure 50. C. Sade Turnipseed on proposed site for Cotton Picker’s Monument, Khafre, Inc Archives, 2015.

⁸⁷ Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi*, 42.

CHAPTER III

MISSING VOICES, MISSING PLACES



Figure 3.1. C. Sade Turnipseed picking cotton for the first time. Courtesy of Khafre, Inc., Archives.

“This is for the forgotten, the silenced. It is for the ‘me’ who feels story-less – for the ones whose names have been stripped from their legacies. ... My work is also largely a personal endeavor to make and mend myself – It is about shared legacies, collective remembrance and my place on the continuum of it all.”¹

Brianna McCarthy

We have seen how cotton, its legacy, its tradition, and its influence are soaked in unaccountable, historic pain and bloodshed throughout the South and indeed throughout the world. The opportunity costs of slavery are incalculable and for the most part

¹ Angelique Nixon, “Black Futures and Spirit Guardians in Brianna McCarthy’s ‘Vétiver Night Women,’” *ARC-Art Recognition Culture*, online magazine; June 15, 2015, accessed July 2, 2015, <http://arcthemagazine.com/arc/2015/06/black-futures-and-spirit-guardians-in-brianna-mccarthys-vetiver-night-women/#sthash.sSMyp9Rf.dpuf>. In this online article Brianna McCarthy stated: “This work is a shared burden, a purge, a thanksgiving. ‘ My ancestors made sure I was born the color of their eyes’ (‘sight’ nayyirah waheed). That said, I could not imagine the purpose of anything I make or my expending the energy to make it, were it not to empower and uplift Black people or people of color. I would like to think that if one person can emerge from the pattern and distress of oppression due to any output from me, then there is some point to doing this. I aim to challenge the perceptions of beauty and value, which exist around women of color, particularly women of the Diaspora.”

unknowable, and its proceeds continue to provide financial comforts to the powers-that-be; along with the inclination to forgo peace, love and the wellbeing for the working majority, in the pursuit of selfish monetary profits for a few. That wealth stimulated the modern economy and industries of all kinds. It also aided inventions that improved the condition of mankind around the world.

In 1860, Thomas Prentice Kettell editor of the London-based *Democratic Review* wrote a book entitled *American Southern Wealth and Northern Profits*. He argued:

That system of slavery, with many modifications, has prevailed down to the present time; and all the wealth or capital existing has been the result of slave labor, or of the working of capital originally derived from slave labor. The history of the wealth and power of nations is but a record of slave products. The monuments of antiquity, the magnificence of the modern world, the power of states; the position of nobles and the fortunes of individuals, are the results of slave labor—the accumulations from forced servitude.

Kettell emphasized that England had gotten rich from slavery, linking that to the colonization of India and the creation of two sources of raw materials that allowed England to take on the gigantic operation of clothing the world through its dominant cotton textiles industry.² He looked at English banks and their credit system as a crucial financial underpinning for the American South's slaveocracy.³ Kettell pointed out that,

² Thomas Prentice Kettell, *Southern Wealth Northern Profits: As exhibited in Statistical Facts and Official Figures: showing the Necessity of Union to the Future Prosperity and Welfare of the Republic* (New York: George W. & John A. Wood, 1860), 24.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

“the extent of this operation may be estimated by the figures furnished by the census and Treasury returns.”⁴

Historian Sven Beckert concurs, “cotton was the world’s most important manufacturing industry,” between the years 1000 to 1900 CE, or for approximately nine hundred years.⁵ The Cotton Kingdom in Europe and America reached its zenith during the years 1760-1861. These ten decades also witnessed the capture and sale of millions of African people to become enslaved laborers in the global cotton trade industry.⁶ This integration of the world economies contributed to the creation of “cotton nationalism,” which according to Beckert also became “a major theme of the twentieth century anti-colonial struggles.”⁷

Africans in their own right traditionally grew cotton as part of their local economies, but not as part of a massive international market. The European slave trade changed that as it took people primarily from the Western regions of Africa to Europe, South America, the Caribbean, and the southeastern shores of America. The saga of “missing voices and missing stories” thus begins with the importation of monies from England and the enslaved labor of these Africans.

Dr. David Livingstone, the Scottish missionary and African explorer, writing to Lord Wodehouse on May 12, 1859, observed that the production of cotton in Africa is “analogous in character to that of the United States, and equally available for our

⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁵ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014), 110-113.

⁶ Ibid., 497-499.

⁷ Ibid., 399.

purposes [in England]. Cotton is cultivated largely [in Africa], and the further we went the crop appeared to be of the greater importance ... Every one spins and weaves cotton. Even chiefs may be seen with the Spindle and bag.”⁸ Livingstone was not the first European to note the prevalence and skill of cotton production on the west coast of Africa. The production reportedly went through five production stages, all with their hands, before the loom was implemented. As with most people who dwell along the equator, in supremely hot environments, time was not an issue. The leisure of the process is what was most treasured by the Africans. However, English businessmen saw this as an opportunity to encourage them to increase production by producing cotton workers who could work within a more hurried European-type timeframe.

To planters and cotton exporters who profited from the cotton empire, such as Jefferson Davis, nothing seemed amiss with slavery as the labor system of cotton; it was, as Davis said, “the will of God.”⁹ This peculiar human trade and enslavement of Africans was considered, by the many involved in the business of Slave Trading, a good thing for Africans. European promoters, whose dogmatism presented as an improvement for the African condition, swore it was necessary to “Christianize Africans.”¹⁰ Jefferson Davis opined that slavery meant “the Africans increased from a few unprofitable savages to millions of efficient Christian laborers.”¹¹ Such claims that Christianity justified slavery

⁸ Kittell, *Southern Wealth Northern Profits*, 31.

⁹ Jefferson Davis, *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881), 517-518; This edition is an unabridged republication of Jefferson Davis’s memoir.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 160-161.

egregiously denied the human rights of millions of Africans, for nearly eighteen generations. Historian Edward Baptist emphasizes that American slavery was “the massive and cruel engineering required to rip a million people from their homes, brutally drive them to new, disease-ridden places, and make them live in terror and hunger as they continually built and rebuilt a commodity-generating empire.”¹²

Slavery officially began in America in 1619, and for all practical purposes, the next 250 years, enslaved Africans and their descendants along with other people considered immigrants and economically disadvantaged worked to produce cash crops for the American economy without receiving any tangible benefits or financially sustainable returns. With the growing demand for cotton in Europe, enslaved and low waged people in the American South produced ever-increasing amounts of the product.¹³ The first recorded shipment of American-slave-picked cotton to Liverpool, England was reportedly in 1784. According to cotton historian George Bigwood, the consigned cargo consisted of eight bales.¹⁴ This is the beginning of what Beckert terms the Global Cotton Empire.¹⁵

Aided by “new technology” such as that provided by James Watt’s steam-engine developed in 1763-5, James Hargraves’ spinning jenny developed in 1764, and Eli

¹² Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), xviii-xix.

¹³ David Kennedy, *The American Pageant: The South and the Slavery Controversy, 1793-1860* (New York: Houghton Mifflin College Div., 13th ed. 2006), 154, 286, 345.

¹⁴ George Bigwood, *Cotton: Staple Trades and Industries*, vol. II (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1918), 7.

¹⁵ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 79.

Whitney's cotton-gin developed in 1794, (see figures 3.2-4) the foundation was laid for an industrial revolution in the United States, with the South and its cotton pickers providing the raw materials. As cotton flourished, the demand for more land for cotton cultivation pushed American political leaders, such as President Andrew Jackson, to provide new lands through the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and later the annexation of Texas, during James K. Polk's administration.¹⁶ "King Cotton" thus became the backbone of the American and British trading relations and sustained both economies for generations to come.



Figure 3.2. "The First Cotton Gin" engraving from *Harper's Magazine*, 1869. This carving depicts a roller gin, which preceded Eli Whitney's invention by approximately 70 years.¹⁷

¹⁶ Theda Purdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (New York: Viking, 2007), 76-77.

¹⁷ Angela Lakwete, Merritt Roe Smith (Eds.), *Inventing the Cotton Gin: Machine and Myth in Antebellum America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 182; Lakwete studies the myths that surround the Eli Whitney cotton gin and "discovers that gins existed for centuries before his 1794 invention. Her study explores the tool as an artifact of global history, but also as a barometer of Southern industrial development."

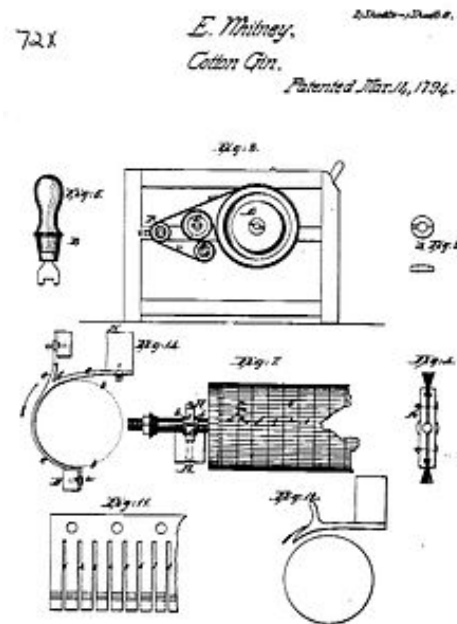


Figure 3.3. Cotton Gin Patent. It shows sawtooth gin blades, which were not part of Whitney's original patent. Circa March 14, 1794. U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

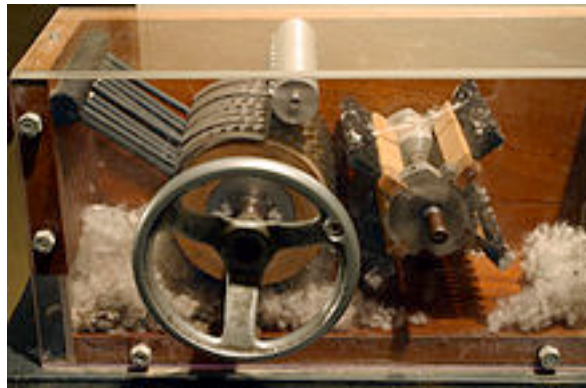


Figure 3.4. Cotton Gin on display at Eli Whitney Museum.

With abundant sources of raw materials, British manufacturers looked at the ever-growing laboring class as its physical backbone for prosperity, along with its dominant

shipping industry.¹⁸ For textile manufacturers, American cotton was as “exceptional” as its vision to overpower and conquer new land(s). Planters adapted the hybrid version from two Native American species of *Gossypium hirsutum* and *Gossypium barbadense*, which scientists classify as a superior cotton strand due to the long, strong, and fine fibers of the two.¹⁹ The colloquial termed “cotton fiber” was generated through an extended history of human intervention and natural selection; botanists consider it as a very important and distinct textile fiber.²⁰ This cotton strand was appealing in the international marketplace because of its relatively inexpensive price due largely to the unpaid labor force in the southern cotton fields of America.

The institution of slavery was the “engine of labor” that propelled the expansive cultivation of cotton in the southern region. More specifically, slavery and cotton was crucial to the creation of the Mississippi Delta.²¹ The cotton pickers were the first links in the supply chain, but were left in the dirt without thought of neither protection nor a monument of gratitude ... or any other significant token of appreciation.

American cotton production expanded commercially from a 1830 production total of 750,000 to a remarkable 2.85 million bales—almost a four times increase—twenty

¹⁸ Kittell, *Southern Wealth Northern Profits*, 42, 146-147.

¹⁹ Ran Hovav, et al, “Parallel Domestication, Convergent Evolution and Duplicated Gene Recruitment in Allopolyploid Cotton,” *Genetics* 179 (July 2008): 1725-1733; C. L. Brubaker and J. F. Wendel, “Reevaluating The Origin Of Domesticated Cotton: *Gossypium-hirsutum* Malvaceae,” *American Journal of Botany*, 81, No. 10 (Oct., 1994): 1309-1326; J. F., Wendel and R. C. Cronn, “Polyploidy and the Evolutionary History of Cotton,” *Advances in Agronomy* (2003): 139–186.

²⁰ Quoted in Hovav, et al, “Parallel Domestication”; H. J. Kim and B. A. Triplett, “Cotton Fiber Growth in Planta and in Vitro. Models for Plant Cell Elongation and Cell Wall Biogenesis,” *Plant Physiology* 127, no. 4 (December 2001): 1365.

²¹ James Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 7– 10.

years later.²² The number of slaves kept apace, from an estimated 700,000 in 1790 to around 3.2 million in 1850.²³ By 1860, two-thirds of the global supply of cotton was provided by the southern states including approximately 80% of the British market.²⁴ Thus, technology increased European demands, and skilled forced slave labor turned the South into the world's first agricultural powerhouse.²⁵ As cotton cultivation continually increased and continental European consumers became more dependent on its production the bond of exchange between the South and Europe solidified even more so the economic relationship.²⁶ In turn that economic tie spurred the growth of slavery and a western-centered capitalist system into incalculable and unknowable dimensions.²⁷

Then came the secessionist movement and the devastating Civil War. As Sven Beckert writes, "Once slave plantations were dismantled [cotton's] vital contribution to the construction of industrial capitalism would be written out of our collective memory."²⁸ Many southern whites may have wanted to forget how their wealth and economy was established, but Delta African Americans, like those from Davis Bend, will never forget.

²² Parke Pierson, "Seeds of Conflict," *America's Civil War* 22, 4 (September 2009): 2.

²³ N. Jeremy Smith, "Making Cotton King," *World Trade* 22, 7 (July 2009): 82.

²⁴ "Cotton – a History," *New Internationalist*, 399 (April 2007): 18-19.

²⁵ Paco Underhill, "The Cotton Gin, Oil, Robots and the Store of 2020," *Display & Design Ideas* 20 no. 10 (2008): 48.

²⁶ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 114.

²⁷ Mary B. Rose, *Networks and Business Values: The British and American Cotton Industries Since 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30.

²⁸ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, xviii.

Reconstruction brought changes to this dynamic, ever so briefly. The planter class, northern banks, and European businessmen remained united, and soon reestablished their powerbase. But now emancipated laborers who gained a taste of political and economic opportunity too wanted a position of authority, power and agency. The Reconstruction period created the possibility of new opportunities for former slaves. But as history reveals, it became a time of desperation and even despair for all members of the Mississippi “closed society.”²⁹ According to University of Mississippi professor James W. Silver, Mississippi’s closed society actually began in 1850 and remained as late as 1950. This was the social system wherein residents were “obliged” to accept and or believe in white supremacy. Nearly all White and Black people in Mississippi held this system of repression, or else they reaped the barbaric consequences of that “closed society.”³⁰

The role that white supremacy played in creating the American narrative is impossible for any honest social observer to ignore. Property, education, culture and a shared pathology of the “closed society” shaped much of American polity, economically and socially. For those opposed to slavery, Reconstruction was a moment and opportunity whereby re-distribution of wealth dispensed equitably would have (coulda/shoulda) been the righteous thing to do. Taking into account the national wealth gained by the painful toil and sweat equity investments into cotton production, the opportunity for “freedom and equality for all” rested on the scope and capacity of our Nation’s moral compass. But,

²⁹ James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 6-7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Reconstruction proved to be just a moment, an “unfinished revolution” ... and “a missed opportunity.”³¹

The history of politics in the Delta during the Reconstruction era provides additional insight into this missed opportunity. African American men quickly became the electorate majority in Mississippi.³² To keep political control, white Republicans granted their African American supporters considerable influence in party affairs.³³ Republican policies often favored economic empowerment and social justice of all those who held a genuine yearning for democracy and freedom.

African American men understood that the alliance with white Republicans was necessary but also problematic.³⁴ Whites would never accept what was called Negro rule. Their majority and loyalty to the party made it possible for Republicans to rule and for African Americans to take seats in the Mississippi legislature and many positions in local government. As result, a new Mississippi State Constitution allowed public school systems to be created for students that ranged in ages five to twenty-one, as well as provisions to protect the civil rights and voting freedoms of all citizens.³⁵

³¹ Rick Halpern and Enrico Dal Lago, *Slavery and Emancipation* (Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 8; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

³² Frank R. Parker, et al, *Mississippi, in Quiet Revolution in the South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 136–37.

³³ Michael Perman, *Emancipation and Reconstruction: 1862-1879* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1987), 66-67; John Ray Skates, *Mississippi* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1979), 114-115; Jean Harvey Baker, David Herbert Donald, and Michael F. Holt, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 600; “Mississippi Passes a State Civil Rights Bill,” *Jackson (MS) Weekly Clarion*, February 27, 1873.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Mississippi Department of Archives and History, *Mississippi History Timeline*, accessed December 23, 2014, <http://mdah.state.ms.us/timeline/zone/1868/>.

In 1869, Mississippi voters elected an African American, Hiram Rhoades Revels, to the United States Senate. The 42 year-old Revels, an educator from Natchez and Civil War veteran, walked into Congress and took his seat to rousing applause.³⁶ Revels appeared to be just the beginning of an African American revolution in representative government.³⁷ Revels wrote to a friend: “We are in the midst of an exciting canvass.... I am working very hard in politics as well as in other matters. We are determined that Mississippi shall be settled on a basis of justice as well as political and legal equality.”³⁸

Mississippi’s decision to fill one of its Senate seats with Revels, a Civil War veteran who organized two African American Union regiments for a Union Army, and fought in the Battle of Vicksburg, was a historic step.³⁹ But not all Congressmen liked sharing the floor with a proud black man. Some asserted that Revels did not meet the citizenship test that a Congressman had to be U.S. citizen for nine years, since

³⁶ Kenneth Potts, “Hiram Rhoades Revels,” in Jessie Carney Smith, ed., *Notable Black American Men* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Research, Inc., 1999): 145; Elizabeth Lawson, *Gentleman From Mississippi: Our First Negro Congressman, Hiram R. Revels* (Canada: self-published, 1960), 14; Kenneth Williams, “Revels, Hiram Rhoades,” in Henry Louis Gates, Jr and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, eds., *American Negro Biography 18* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 367-369; Maurine Christopher, *Black Americans in Congress* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976): 3; Julius E. Thompson, “Hiram R. Revels, 1827–1901: A Biography,” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1973): 36–37. Hiram Revels was born to free black parents in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Revels became an educator and minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and moved to Natchez, before becoming the first President of Alcorn College in 1871.

³⁷ Julius E. Thompson, “Hiram Rhodes Revels, 1827–1901: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of Negro History* 79, No. 3 (Summer, 1994): 298.

³⁸ Lawson, *Gentleman From Mississippi*, 13.

³⁹ Robert C. Byrd, *The Senate, 1789-1989*, Vol. 2, 100th Cong., (1st session, 1991), S. Doc.100-20; For more about the chronological order of United States Senators from Mississippi, see Senate Historical Office, “U.S. Senators from Mississippi,” accessed 5 March 2015, <http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/oneitemandteasers/chronology.htm#chronology=y17871800>. See also *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–2005* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006): 180.

emancipation had been recent and emancipated slaves were not “legal” citizens until 1866. Revels, however, was born a free man and had been a voter in Ohio for many years prior; furthermore, the recently ratified Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution clarified his citizenship. Therefore, it was proved that Revels was a citizen of the United States.⁴⁰

Hiram Revels’ term was for only a little more than a year. In 1871 he returned to Mississippi, and became president of James L. Alcorn College, now known as Alcorn State University. James L. Alcorn, the university’s namesake, was a Whig who opposed secession but then fought in the Confederate army. After the war, Alcorn became a Republican and gave strong support for the full civil rights of the emancipated. In 1870, Alcorn was elected as the state’s Republican governor.⁴¹

In 1873, under the administration of Adelbert Ames, the second governor of the restructured Mississippi, Republicans passed their version of the federally mandated Civil Rights Bill (a law every state was required to pass to be in compliance with the Fourteenth Amendment). It is interesting to note that the 13th Amendment to the Constitution banned slavery in 1865, but was not filed in Mississippi until February 7, 2013, when Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann filed the paperwork to address the oversight.⁴²

⁴⁰ Hiram R. Revels Biography: Academic, Minister, U.S. Representative (1827-1901), accessed April 3, 2015, <http://www.biography.com/people/hiram-r-revels-9456129>; “First African American Senator,” *Senate History 1851-1877* (February 25, 1870) accessed May 5, 2015, <http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/FirstAfricanAmericanSenator.htm>.

⁴¹ David G. Sansing, “James Lusk Alcorn: Twenty-eighth Governor of Mississippi: March 1870 to November 1871,” accessed May 4, 2015, <http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/index.php?s=extra&id=131>.

⁴² Adam Edelman, “After Oversight, Mississippi Ratifies 13th Amendment,” *New York Daily News*,

According to historian Neil McMillen, African Americans made many post-Reconstruction accommodations on suffrage to appease whites. One arrangement, which began in Mississippi in 1875, known as “fusion,” when white Democrats and African American Republicans cooperated to elect biracial and bipartisan slates of candidates. This “alliance of unequals” ultimately excluded African Americans from offices of significance because whites still had the authority to veto any “unacceptable” candidate.⁴³ The political arrangement permitted “the Negroes to have some of the offices, and the whites, of course [held on to] the best ones.”⁴⁴

As was common in the southern states, the end of Reconstruction in Mississippi coincided with the rise of sharecropping as the new labor system for cotton production in the Mississippi Delta. As the work of Edward Baptist suggests, the story shifted from slavery to sharecropping. This transformation ushered in the largely uncompensated cotton pickers’ narrative that offers a more nuanced story of the global cotton empire. The perspective Baptist takes allows the reader to appreciate the restructuring and redistribution of a social structure that could have redefined the southern region of America. It had the potential to re-establish the South in accordance with what many fair-minded people believe are the precepts and constitutional principles of the Founding Fathers. Instead, the post-slavery, post-Reconstruction southern strategy adopted served

February 18, 2013.

⁴³ McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 60.

⁴⁴ Ibid.; Christopher Waldrep, “Substituting Law for the Lash: Emancipation and Legal Formalism in a Mississippi County Court,” *Journal of American History* vol. 82, 4 (March 1996): 1425-1451, (accessed March 21, 2016), www.academicroom.com/article/substituting-law-lash-emancipation-and-legal-formalism-mississippi-county-court+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=safari.

to maintain a socio-political-economic structure that gave credibility, and substance, to a capitalist system of inequity.⁴⁵ Delta planters only had to shift terms, phrases and the general language in their narrative of dominance and superiority to convince others that a fundamental change in their thinking had occurred in the South. No longer were they to be called masters, or overseers; they were boss, e.g., “yes sir boss.” No longer were the laborers enslaved, they were ‘croppers, tenants, or day laborers, even called “my people.” The more genteel (or gracious) considered their laborers inferior family members, and not much else.

Thus, except for isolated places, such as Mound Bayou, African American laborers became unheard voices, in often-unseen places. What contemporary scholars must determine (both qualitatively and quantitatively) in constructing the American historical narrative is how socio-political systems served planters and their laborers differently and for conflicting business goals and economic purposes. For the planter the terms were designed to give sustenance to a socio-economic position that benefited a certain class of investors that maintained solid control of the inequitable social system in the Cotton Kingdom and throughout the South. For laborers, the working arrangement of the sharecropper, tenant farmer and day laborer was intended to establish a means to a respectful place in society. For the first time in their lives this opportunity of legally making an income was made available to most of them. It meant the economic well-being and security of their families. Hard work was not their complaint. Issues of honesty, education, fairness and respect were, and still are, their central concerns. Both entities, the

⁴⁵ Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, 148-150.

laborers and the planters, knew what was required to establish a healthy family structure. Even though considered inferior family members plantation laborers simply wanted to create a safe and stable place for themselves.⁴⁶

This large looming reality shapes the significance of the Mound Bayou Railway business deal. Outside capital (the railway company, as the investor) worked constructively with African American entrepreneurs to create a place, stable, safe, and reflective of their accomplishments. The powers of capital investors were not lost on Montgomery and Green. They looked to the future as entrepreneurs and “cooperative” landowners. Montgomery and many of the settlers became deeply reliant on the railway just as many neighboring planters, became reliant on northern banks and foreign cotton investors. Montgomery, like other planters, renegotiated new contractual terms on behalf of their clients, as appropriate, for the continual building of Mound Bayou. If by chance a man and his family failed to realize the terms of the land lease arranged in the contract, another family was sought, put in their place, and encouraged to keep the Mound Bayou experiment on track.⁴⁷

At Mound Bayou, Montgomery tested the ideals of Americanized capitalism, as he enabled indebted landowners to become independent workers and facilitated Mound Bayou’s access to the “global web of commerce, agriculture, and industrial production.”⁴⁸ If given a fair and honest chance, Montgomery and others believed they could make

⁴⁶ John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 132–133.

⁴⁷ McMillen, *I.T. Montgomery*, part II.

⁴⁸ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, ix.

cotton into the thread that knits a different narrative, one where they too realized a life of leisure, comfort and prosperity.⁴⁹

The pioneering men of Mound Bayou committed themselves to the sacrifice of sweat equity labor, but not as sweat equity investors offering little to no return. This time as honest investors in an Americanized capitalistic endeavor with a bit of civic leanings that provided opportunity and fairness for workers and owners alike. In the early phases, their primary means of subsistence was timber sold to the railroad for staves and cross ties. Women and children played a major role by helping with the cotton harvest. Some men did find it necessary to also sharecrop cotton on neighboring plantations as supplemental income. Some men sent their families to work as domestics for planters nearby. By so doing, they were able to sustain themselves, while gaining a bit of cash and “keeping the wolf from the door.”⁵⁰

The memory of work and maintaining a safe homestead environment was perceived, managed and achieved differently in the Delta region. Simon Gaiter and his family, for example, were among the original settlers to Mound Bayou. He recalls:

When I started to Mound Bayou, I had \$175 in total cash assets, and after purchases of land and provisions, I had left only ten dollars. I planted a garden, set my wife and children about to clear up land at \$4 per acre. While, I myself went into the woods and engaged in getting out stave boards. In the fall, most of the women and children of the neighborhood went to Shelby [the neighboring white community] and picked cotton, [as day laborers]. In 1889, I picked cotton for the Blanchard Brothers, white planters, and I rolled logs at night and made staves in the day.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Sven Beckert, interviewed on The Diane Rehm Show, WAMU 88.5, National Public Radio, extracted on Monday December 22, 2014.

⁵⁰ “Every Decrepit Negro Reflects on White Supremacy,” *Cleveland Gazette*, September 20, 1890.

⁵¹ Simon Gaiter interview (date unknown), excerpt taken from “Mound Bayou Movement: History of

Mrs. Minnie Heathman Smith-Holt (date unknown), a white resident from a neighboring town, offered the following reflection about her time in the Mississippi

Delta:

Money never seemed to be a problem in our household ... we were happy in our freedom to range the hillsides and gullies and cool spring branches; papa had his garden and mama her church the Baptist whose services she rarely missed throughout their life ... Papa, in semi-retirement began to come into focus more clearly to his family than ever before. We soon knew that he was the head of the family and that he was a strong though stern, but also a kindly force therein ... we lived well, but never ostentatiously, for he disapproved of display of wealth ... we continued to live well, and he [papa] made frequent advances to all his children of cash money, in anticipation of their inheritance. Around the year 1900, there was a very handsome home a few blocks from where we were living which papa bought ... He gave us [me and my husband Warner Holt] a home and they were always happy to be with us and we to be with them.⁵²

James Curry, a former enslaved laborer, gave voice to the work of his mother and other enslaved people, who had labored for the plantation owner:

My mother's labor was very hard. She would go to the plantation owner's house in the morning, take her pail upon her head, and go away to the cow-pen, and milk fourteen cows. She then put on the bread for the white family breakfast, and got the cream ready for churning, and set a little child to churn it, she having the care of from ten to fifteen children, whose mothers worked in the field. After clearing away the family breakfast, she got breakfast for the slaves, which was taken at twelve o'clock. In the meantime, she had beds to make, rooms to sweep and clean. Then she cooked the white family dinner. Then the slaves' dinner was to be ready at from eight to nine o'clock in the evening. At night, she had the cows to milk again. This was her work day to day. Then in the course of the week, she had the washing and ironing to do for the master's family—and for her husband, seven children, and herself. She would not get through to go to her log cabin, until nine or ten o'clock at night. She would then be so tired that she could scarcely stand; but, she would find one boy with his knee out, and another with his elbow out, a

Mound Bayou," last modified January 2, 2013, accessed 9/11/ 2013, <http://www.kinglyheirs.com/MoundBayouMovement/History.html>.

⁵² Mrs. Minnie Heathman Smith-Holt interview (date unknown) excerpt from "Mound Bayou Movement: History of Mound Bayou," January 2, 2014, accessed September 11, 2013, <http://www.kinglyheirs.com/MoundBayouMovement/History.html>.

patch wanting here and a stitch there, and she would sit down by her light, a wood fire, and sew and sleep alternately, often till the light began to streak in the east; and then lying down, she would catch a nap and hasten to the toil of the day.⁵³

In times more recent, Clifton Smith became a landowner near Mound Bayou.

Smith, an African American, said with glee, “Times have changed!” The land Smith owns is the Cane Mount Plantation. The plantation, which dates to the mid-1850s, sits on 1000 acres and includes an antebellum brick mansion situated among moss-covered trees. The mansion has galleries on three sides that features small bells, which were used to summon enslaved servants and field workers.⁵⁴

These stories and thousands of others generated in and around Mound Bayou inspired numerous scholars, residents and observers to document its unique narrative about the buildings, the land, and its people as examples of the somewhat limited, but real potential for prosperity in Mound Bayou. Former resident and University of Illinois Professor Matthew Holden became a Mound Bayou scholar, writer and trailblazer. Holden’s passion was the impetus and purpose of his nearly sixty years of research on Mound Bayou, the Montgomerys and the Greens. His study grew from an “occasional paper” about Isaiah T. Montgomery into a considerable narrative and context for African American social and political empowerment in the Delta.⁵⁵ Holden does not hesitate to interject his personal observations and commentary about the Delta, particularly when

⁵³ Curry is quoted in Blassingame, 132–133.

⁵⁴ Ron Harrist, “Black Farmer Buys Plantation Formerly Worked by Slaves,” *The Clarion Ledger Jackson Daily News*, December 14, 1975, Section A, 8.

⁵⁵ Matthew Holden, Jr., “*The World And The Mind Of Isaiah T. Montgomery: The Greatness Of A Compromised Man*” (Occasional Paper for the Delta Research and Cultural Institute, Isaiah T. Montgomery Studies Project, Inc. Mississippi Valley State University), 8.

discovering, determining and analyzing the memory of the Delta and the Mound Bayou legacy.⁵⁶

One of Holden's tenacious arguments pivots on the infamous decision made by Isaiah Montgomery during the Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1890. The ironic and tragic situation is that Isaiah Montgomery was the only Black elected representative allowed into the 1890 Mississippi Constitutional Convention (see figure 3.3). His legislative assignment was to the Committee on Elective Franchise.⁵⁷ African Americans were, as mentioned previously, mostly Republicans and the voting majority, but that did not necessarily always prove to their benefit. Montgomery was unduly pressured to make a series of decisions that closely mirrored those that faced his father twenty-five years earlier. Isaiah's father, Benjamin Montgomery, taught him the significance of compromise. But the negotiation method he advocated rested on the ability to achieve a "win win" outcome.

There had been nothing wrong with its previous Constitution of 1868, except that it let African Americans vote. Governor Vardaman regarded this as a "Negro problem," and plainly stated, "In Mississippi we have in our constitution legislated against the racial peculiarity of the Negro ... When that device fails, we will resort to something else."⁵⁸ History professor Vernon Lane Wharton also makes clear in his 1947 book, *The Negro in Mississippi — 1865-1890*, that the push by white Democrats for a new constitution in 1890 was done with no intent to comply with the 1870 Congressional mandate that any

⁵⁶ Ibid, 9.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Quoted in NAACP, *Annual Report for 1920*, 29 in McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 43.

new state constitution had to preserve African American male suffrage and the right to hold elected office.⁵⁹



Figure 3.5. The 1890 Mississippi Legislature, Isiah Montgomery pictured on bottom row (right) in the faded photo. Mississippi Department of Archives and History Collection, Call Number: PI/1994.0017.

The proceedings of the Mississippi 1890 Constitutional Convention were published in the September 1890 edition of the *New York World*. The article noted that Republican Marsh Cook, a white representative from Jasper County, stood with Montgomery against the racist leanings of the white supremacy political stronghold in

⁵⁹ Vernon Lane Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi—1865-1890* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 206.

Mississippi. They stood together in protest to support issues they believed were fair to their constituents. Both men would pay for deviating from the white supremacists' status quo agenda. Cook received death threats due to his pro-Black equality advocacy and was later murdered. Montgomery, on the other hand, believed that by giving his support to the Democratic delegation, African American Mississippians would gain favor from legislators, and they would find a way to bridge the widening and deepening gap between the two races and their respective communities.⁶⁰

The convention's president S. S. Calhoun had made the agenda clear: "We came here to exclude the Negro ... Nothing short of this will answer."⁶¹ The white leaders were under no illusion about the goal and intentions of the Convention. Their challenge was evading the legal intent of the 15th Amendment, which prohibited disallowing African American men from voting. The decision made was to write into the Mississippi Constitution several insurmountable restrictions that made it extremely difficult for African American men to register in order to vote.⁶² Under the pretext of eliminating ignorance, the delegates proposed a measure to "purify the ballot."⁶³ Calhoun's and other white supremacy legislators' ingenious method of lawfully disenfranchising black voters, was to use the infamous poll tax and literary tests. According to William Alexander Mabry, the tests disenfranchised about 123,334 Negroes, and about 11,889 whites. This left a white voting majority of more than 40,000 instead of a 70,000 potential Negro

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 40-41.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865: No North No South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2005), 177.

advantage.⁶⁴ These measures were taken, in addition to the barbaric bloodshed, bribery, and ballot box stuffing to repress and discount the Negro majority.⁶⁵

While a few northern newspapers expressed concern, nothing stopped the white supremacy movement to disenfranchise the Negro community's vote. African Americans were not protected by the law and felt helpless politically. Montgomery, Cook, Calhoun, and the rest of the body politic knew proper public education would eradicate the illiteracy issue. Montgomery's strategy therefore was to provide education for his constituents and hoped that other communities would follow his lead. He understood that the delegates' insistence on tighter voter requirements would be applied against African Americans but he thought that with proper education black voters in time would meet the requirements.⁶⁶ But Montgomery did not perhaps grasp—or knew he could not stop--the venom many white leaders had against the black vote. James Kimble Vardaman, the later Governor of Mississippi (1904-1908) and U.S. Senator (1913 to 1919), stated unequivocally: "There is no use to equivocate or lie about the matter, Mississippi's convention was held for no other purpose than to eliminate the [N]igger from politics; not the ignorant -- but the [N]igger."⁶⁷ In 1907 Vardaman, advocated that "if it is necessary every Negro in the state will be lynched; it will be done to maintain white supremacy."⁶⁸

⁶⁴ William Alexander Mabry, "Disenfranchisement of the Negro in Mississippi," *Journal of Southern History* 4 (August 1938): 318-333.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 43-46.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 43; Ralph Wormser, *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004), 70.

⁶⁸ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The House of Percy: Honor, Melancholy, and Imagination in a Southern Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 179.

After 1890 and until Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965, “only whites held elective office in Mississippi, and Blacks were denied state appointments even as notaries public.”⁶⁹ When Benjamin Montgomery was appointed Justice of the Peace at Davis Bend back in 1867 he faced a set of predicaments and decisions that had to be made to ensure the safety and security of his constituents. Isaiah Montgomery thought that similar nuanced approach to local politics would work in Jim Crow Mississippi. He took his father’s methodology, *political non-involvement and taking the moral high ground*, and used it in hopes to appease his white colleagues.⁷⁰ He naively hoped that their Christian spiritual beliefs would bring forth a progressive and enlightened outcome to this situation. He failed. In his autobiography, Montgomery shared his thoughts on this situation, by recalling his father’s words: “Regarding the suffrage question as of doubtful utility, the discussion of it and other political topics is more likely to produce contention and idleness than harmony in the community, such discussions will be discouraged.”⁷¹

Isaiah Montgomery voted for the measure to “purify the ballot,” thus overturning the accomplishments of Reconstruction and restricting the rights to vote solely to literate adult males, meaning white men. Montgomery realized the challenges of a literacy

⁶⁹ Bill R. Baker, “Catch the Vision: The Life of Henry L. Whitfield” (Jackson, 1974), 109, in McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 60; However, there is one exception that is notable in the case of Minnie Cox who became the Post master in Indianola, Mississippi. She was the first and only African American to hold the office after Reconstruction, until 2012 when another female by the name of Annette Turner was appointed. For more information see: <http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/events/2012/oct/29/community-reception-for-postmaster-annet/?et=2308>.

⁷⁰ McMillen, *Isaiah T. Montgomery*, Pt-I.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

restriction would severely impact the people he represented. Montgomery proclaimed: “if intelligence is to be made a test of suffrage, I insist that the White man shall submit to the same requirements that are imposed upon the Black man ... I accepted the [measure] as the beginning of the end of the great race question.”⁷² Montgomery thought he had no other option but to agree. At a time when Mississippi Governor James Vardaman had the authority to say publicly, “[white Mississippians] are not going to let Niggers hold office.”⁷³

Montgomery’s acquiescence and appeasement demonstrated that reasonable compromise died with slavery. Historian Neil McMillen concluded: “Leading [Negro] Mississippians after 1890, however, were characteristically men of caution ... and counseled patient [Negro] acceptance of what they thought to be the best White terms available ... regarding social and political rights.”⁷⁴ Though as William Holtzclaw suggested, this was a time when “a people who cannot vote in a republic are at the mercy of those who can.” Negro leaders in Mississippi’s quick response was “that suffrage ... was secondary to the [Negro] Mississippian’s immediate, practical need to lay hold upon the opportunities that are all around him and to make the best of them.”⁷⁵

Self-determination and fierce resistance to the white supremacy mandate went missing in Mississippi during this time period. There were a few exceptions, Negro leaders like Jackson attorney Samuel Alfred Beadly, whose appeal against the “tyrannous public

⁷² Jim Frasier, *Mississippi River Country Tales* (Grana: Pelican Publishing, 2001), 107.

⁷³ William F. Holmes, *The White Chief: James Kimble Vardaman* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 100.

⁷⁴ McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 299.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 298; Holtzclaw, *Present Status of the Negro Farmer in Mississippi*, 344.

opinion” decried that black Mississippians had been made “alien enemies in the land of their nativity.”⁷⁶

Isaiah Montgomery effectively helped to eliminate the hope and progress of the mandate for the social and political empowerment held by Negroes in Mississippi and to some extent throughout the country. As virtuous as Isaiah Montgomery’s intent might have been, the approach was outdated, fatally flawed and subsequently proved to be his ultimate failure. Times had changed and so should have this particular strategy of appeasement. While Mound Bayou was doing its best to demonstrate progress, Montgomery’s willingness to negotiate by offering up suffrage as the proverbial sacrificial lamb compromised essentially everything the community stood for. Their political influence was significantly diminished. This limited Mound Bayou’s capacity to continue along its trajectory of building a highly successful and economically stable community. McMillen also concluded that Montgomery “bought immunity from white interference in the affairs of Mound Bayou with the coin of black suffrage.”⁷⁷ Most would rather that Montgomery had left the room, or fought harder if he chose to stay, in protest of the entire agenda to disenfranchise African Americans and poor Whites. Instead, Montgomery chose to negotiate for what he believed was beneficial for his constituents. The end-result is the lingering perception that Isaiah Montgomery “sold out” African Americans and poor people.

⁷⁶ Samuel Alfred Beadle, *Lyrics of the Underworld* (Jackson, 1912), quoted in Jordan’s, “Samuel Alfred Beadle,” 54.

⁷⁷ Neil R. McMillen, *Isaiah T. Montgomery, 1847-1924 (Part II)*, Mississippi History Now, An Online Publication of the Mississippi Historical Society, (February 2007), <http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/57/isaiah-t-montgomery-1847-1924-part-ii>, accessed February 9, 2015.

Isaiah Montgomery tried to wage a damage control campaign by notifying a northern newspaper that the suffrage restrictions did not “wholly suit” him but in his assessment he worked for the best possible deal.⁷⁸ Montgomery's hopes for racial cooperation, however, did not become reality for nearly one hundred years. The *Cleveland Gazette*, who took up the cause for Cook, called Montgomery’s “defense of the monstrous franchise provision ... a disgrace to the race and to our civilization, and wished he had never been born.”⁷⁹ The public endorsement of disenfranchisement by Montgomery, though done in hopes of trading collective rights for protection from white encroachment and violence on his constituents, was a gross misjudgment of the racial realities of Mississippi. Isaiah’s faith in the spirit of good intentions ultimately misguided his actions. “Montgomery laid his sacrifice on the burning altar of liberty,” concluded Edward L. Ayers; but his “peace bush” burned to no avail.⁸⁰ His attempts of appeasement helped to institutionalize the problem—race would be at the heart of all political decisions in the state.⁸¹

Holden concedes that Montgomery’s appeasement strategy failed, , but points out how much African Americans like Montgomery would yield to retain even the mere

⁷⁸ Isaiah Montgomery, “Isaiah Montgomery Tells His Own Story,” *New York World* (September 27, 1890).

⁷⁹ *Cleveland Gazette*, September 27, 1890.

⁸⁰ Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 148.

⁸¹ “The Political Sellout Isaiah T. Montgomery,” *US Slave: Slavery in the new world from Africa to the Americas*, last updated September 10, 2012, accessed January 9, 2014, <http://usslave.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-political-sellout-isaiah-t.html>.

appearance of civil rights and equality.⁸² Isaiah Montgomery's vote, though only one of 137, did count immeasurably throughout the race-conscious world. Whites interpreted it as a green light for decades of African American disenfranchisement. Montgomery realized, albeit too late, that the suffrage question was legally open to fraud and flawed interpretation by white polling officials. Montgomery's political compromise meant nothing to whites; it meant even less to African Americans and his political career and leadership role came to an end.

The 1890 constitution was only part of the "Mississippi Plan"—the other part was racial violence, indeed to keep illiterate people and even literate African Americans voiceless. Due to the legacy of enslavement, African Americans had not been permitted to be openly educated and therefore most could not read. The literacy test alone excluded 60% of voting-age African American men. It also permitted exclusion because the circuit clerk of every county subjectively and arbitrarily selected passages from the Constitution and other places, for interpretation that were complicated and highly technical that even most citizens could not answer. Contrastingly, the same clerks would pick "simple phrases" for white men to interpret.⁸³ The 1890 Constitution, thereby "enshrined white supremacy in the basic law" of Mississippi.⁸⁴

⁸² Holden, *The World and the Mind Of Isaiah T. Montgomery*, 143.

⁸³ William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins, Robert Korstad, eds., *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South* (New York: The New Press, 2001), 309.

⁸⁴ James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic sites Get Wrong* (New York: Touchstone, 2007), 374.



Figure 3.6. Booker T. Washington in a public meeting in Mound Bayou, circa 1905. Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

In an attempt to correct his mistake, Isaiah T. Montgomery asked Booker T. Washington for assistance in retaining the right to vote in 1901. Montgomery and other community leaders like Charles Banks began working behind the scenes to continue the fight against bigoted treatment in both the Democratic and Republican parties.⁸⁵ In 1904, at the age of 57, Montgomery was elected to serve as a delegate from Mississippi to the Republican National Convention, where he still retained a degree of respect.

Washington, for his part, had never lost interest in the success of Mound Bayou (see figure 3.5). In 1905 he convinced President Theodore Roosevelt to give a stump speech in Mound Bayou while the President was passing through on the L, NO & T Railroad enroute to Onward to shoot bears (see figure 3.6). At great political risk, Teddy Roosevelt agreed to stop so that he could greet the people of the Delta's unique all-Negro town. He had his picture taken shaking hands with Negroes, and named the town "The Jewel of the Delta." In doing so he confirmed white Mississippians' suspicions about the Republicans and Teddy Roosevelt, in particular, as being kindly to African Americans,

⁸⁵ Leon Litwack and August Meier, eds., *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 299-301; Jackson, *A Chief Lieutenant*, 284.

which was considered unacceptable behavior in the minds of the white supremacists, particularly in Jefferson Davis' territory, the stronghold, the Mississippi Delta.⁸⁶



Figure 3.7. President Theodore Roosevelt on a bear hunt expedition. Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Isaiah Montgomery's quest for redemption continued. He was present on February 12, 1909, when the Lincoln Farm Association dedicated a permanent memorial in Kentucky. President Theodore Roosevelt gave the major address and Isaiah Montgomery was invited to place a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation into the memorial's cornerstone. Isaiah Montgomery thereby became once again the "official voice" of the emancipated people, this time during the centennial of Lincoln's birth.⁸⁷ At the dedication ceremony, Montgomery proclaimed:

⁸⁶ Gene Dattel, *Cotton and Race in the Making of America* (Lanham, MD: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 2009), 332.

⁸⁷ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 235.

At this the birthplace of the immortal Lincoln, I speak as one of the four million slaves that received the priceless boon of liberty through a stroke of his pen; and as a representative of ten millions of Negro citizens of our beloved country. . . I deposit this proclamation: First, on behalf of ten millions of grateful people, who will ever remember the noble man who espoused their helpless cause, without hope of fee or reward. Second, on behalf of a free and united people still impressed with the presence of grave and unsolved difficulties, yet alike cherishing the life and example of this great man looking upward full of hope, with an abiding faith in the great Author of our national destiny.⁸⁸

Many observers wondered how was it possible that in light of the political and socio-economic consequences that African Americans faced, an honor of this magnitude would be bestowed upon Montgomery. Most assuredly, many twentieth and twenty-first century African American historians and socially conscious thinkers have repudiated Montgomery for being on the platform espousing views that emphasized self-liberation. Their larger point of contention was that Montgomery was selected to be the voice of the emancipated people, when, in the minds of many, he compromised that liberty with his 1890 vote. Their criticism speaks to the political significance and resiliency of Montgomery, as well as his social and economic status, which was held in high regard amongst his white colleagues. African American contemporaries, such as W.E.B. Dubois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Marcus Garvey, Mary Church Terrell and so many others who were extremely vociferous in the clarion call for social justice, advocated resistance, not

⁸⁸ Carl Howell and Don Waters, *Images of America: Hardin and LaRue Counties-1880-1930* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 115; Sally Heinzl "The Racial Politics Behind the Repeal of Illinois' Black Law," (paper presented at the Wepner Symposium, Illinois, October 20, 2012); "From the WPA Slave Narratives: Isaiah T. Montgomery, Born 1847 Warren," *Mississippi Narratives from the WPA Records* (The Federal Writer's Project of "The Works Progress Administration." For the State of Mississippi:MSGenWeb Library), <http://msgw.org/slaves/montgomery-isaiah-xslave.htm>.

appeasement.⁸⁹ These attitudes countered Montgomery, Charles Banks and Booker T. Washington's strategies for progress. There were many actively writing and organizing against disenfranchisement and for racial equality and empowerment of African Americans, but were not willing to neither adopt nor accept the policy of acquiescence when harm and ridicule faced them.

The year 1890 was a turning point for all in Mississippi. Federal Reconstruction had brought the vote to African American men. African Americans were then able to organize, gain control of the Mississippi legislature and elect two U.S. Senators a lieutenant governor, and a number of state officials. African American citizens voted in large numbers; but whites maintained control of almost all state and local offices, thereby maintaining status quo. The 1890 Constitution restored white supremacy to the Mississippi government Professor Holden asserts, "The idea that African American political power in the Delta could approximate white power prior to the 1960s is nonsense."⁹⁰ Holden believes political power means, at the minimum, the following five capabilities:

1. A group's freedom to compete for or ability to influence nominations for office;
2. The ability to win the elective offices;
3. The ability to influence some decisions about who gets appointive offices;
4. The capability to protect members of its own group [from all enemy forces], if they are threatened; and,
5. The capacity to minimize or reduce symbolic insults from government, or achieve favorable substantive outputs.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Paula J. Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions* (New York: Amistad, 2008), 170.

⁹⁰ Holden, *The World and the Mind Of Isaiah T. Montgomery*, 10.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

According to Holden, a powerless group like recently emancipated and poorly educated African Americans could reach none of the five objectives outlined. Helen Bevel emphasizes: “Mississippi cut the percentage of black voting-age men registered to vote from over 90% during Reconstruction to less than 6 percent in 1892.”⁹² According to Silver, “The Mississippi Negro did not vote, did not serve on juries ... [and] attended inferior schools ... [all in the effort] to keep the black man in his place.”⁹³ Southern states in general copied this approach to the point where soon a mere 3% of voting-age African American men were registered to vote.⁹⁴ Fifty years later the situation was even worse. In 1940, less than 1% of African American men and women were registered to vote in Mississippi.⁹⁵ By Holden’s definition, African Americans’ disenfranchisement had rendered them ineffective to influence government policy.⁹⁶

Does this really mean Mississippi African Americans were socially and politically powerless until the 1965 Voting Rights Act? Yes it does. It took nearly a century for Mississippi to re-establish itself as a place where African American officials could dominate the legislative body. Currently, Mississippi has more African American public officials than any other region in the country. It was a long journey, with many circuitous

⁹² Helen L. Bevel, *The Nonviolent Right To Vote Movement Almanac: Celebrating 50 Years of Progress* (Institute for the Study and Advancement of Peace, 2013), 113.

⁹³ Silver, *The Closed Society*, 84-85.

⁹⁴ Bevel, *The Nonviolent Right To Vote Movement Almanac*, 358.

⁹⁵ “Race and Voting in the Segregated South,” *Constitutional Rights Foundation*, last updated 2015, accessed June 6, 2015, <http://www.crf-usa.org/brown-v-board-50th-anniversary/race-and-voting.html>.

⁹⁶ Holden, *The World and the Mind Of Isaiah T. Montgomery*, 196.

rivers to cross before Isaiah Montgomery's dream for African American suffrage could be realized.

Holden's premise, however, is antithetical to the fundamental principle of "Montgomeryism" and what most race-conscious people believed—self-realization and self-determination were the motivating forces that stimulated many race men and women of that day. For example, take the work of Marcus Garvey who embraced a "universal confraternity among the race."⁹⁷ Garvey also established a network for African people to build educational institutions and work internationally for the better conditions and treatment of African people everywhere. The dictums, "Up, up, you might race ... accomplish what you will" and "Africa for the Africans" were the mottos used to fuel the flames of the African empowerment movement throughout the 1900s.⁹⁸ The UNIA to its credit in four years as an organization grew to influence more Negroes worldwide than any other movement ever, excluding religion. The timing was just right ... if only Montgomery trusted his inherited instinct to adapt, revise, modify prescribed methods handed him for Negro empowerment. In the spirit of what Benjamin Montgomery instructed regarding a cooperative self-determination, Marcus Garvey, who too was a Booker T. Washington supporter, proclaimed, "We [the UNIA] have grown into a mighty

⁹⁷ Marcus Garvey, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Vol. I: 1826-August 1919*, ed. Robert A. Hill (University of California Press, 1983), lix; Marcus Mosiah Garvey was the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and African Communities (Imperial) League, both founded in Jamaica.

⁹⁸ Ronoko Rashidi, "A Hundred Years of Marcus Garvey," *Atlantic Black Star*, (May 25, 2014); John Henrik Clarke, *The Impact of Marcus*, accessed February 2, 2016 from Hunter College Africana/Puerto Rican/Latino Studies website; Marcus Garvey, *Selected Writings and Speeches of Marcus Garvey*, ed. Bob Blaisdell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 45.

power, a mighty force, whose influence is being felt throughout the length and breadth of the world [and] is known as the greatest moving force among Negroes.”⁹⁹

According to historian Mary Rolinson, Garvey found it necessary to develop this movement, this force, based on southern experiences because “he saw blacks identifying with nations and organizations that did not recognize or value their loyalty and sacrifice.” This force, therefore, became an “actively southern-focused strategy.”¹⁰⁰ Garvey devised his plan of action to “restore the dignity of the millions of people of African ancestry, who formed oppressed segments of society.” The plan was one of “African redemption,” and became known as “Garveyism.”¹⁰¹ Garvey identified the South because he believed it to be the “character-making center of the Negroes.” He understood that the horrific treatment experienced by African Americans in the South, “made more real [N]egro men and women that [have] been made anywhere else, but, paradoxically, it [is] the part of the world where [N]egroes [have] suffered most within the pale of civilization.”¹⁰²

The Garveyism ideal was for African Americans in all parts of the world to be free of a white controlled economy.¹⁰³ This vision resonated most peculiarly with African Americans in the Mississippi Delta. Bolivar County, specifically, was home to more divisions than any other county in the USA. There were two divisions in Mound Bayou

⁹⁹ Garvey, *Selected Writings and Speeches*, 45.

¹⁰⁰ Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

and seventeen countywide.¹⁰⁴ This was a movement of ideas, vision, and courage that led to self-determined solutions. For all concerned, it was a “fiercely nationalist ... philosophy for racial improvement in the long term.”¹⁰⁵

The movement had indeed embraced the Southern experience regarding social subordination, economic dependence and repeated political betrayal and unapologetically addressed the seemingly insurmountable problems faced by African Americans on a daily basis. Rolinson concedes in her argument that cotton pickers, and the like, were people almost never considered to be thinkers and agents of their own destiny. There was no doubt in the minds of Garveyites that a “historical recovery project was in order” and that African redemption was the pathway.¹⁰⁶

While acquiring the skills necessary to build a nation, millions of Garveyites remained clear and specific about their goals and intent to return to their motherland, Africa.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, most did not ever see the shores of Africa, nor did they ever capture sufficient political power to facilitate a proper exodus from America. Unfortunately, African Americans have never sustained any long-term plan of escape from their ever-present enemy, white supremacy.¹⁰⁸ Nor can it be determined that any significant political power has ever been sustained to make significant changes for African Americans in the former Cotton Kingdom, and in the words of human rights

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 22. 109.

¹⁰⁷ Garvey, *Selected Writings and Speeches*, iv.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 17.

activist Nina Simone, “Mississippi Goddam.”¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, they were able to build some semblance of a nation in their all-Black townships and self-sufficient communities. In a significant, but also brief moment in the sun, Mound Bayou became the refuge that many Garveyites and other race-first people sought.



Figure 3.8. Willie “Po’ Monkey” Seaberry in unincorporated Bolivar County, Mississippi outside of Mound Bayou Photo by Will Jacks. Permission granted by Wiljax, Inc.

In spite of it all, Montgomery held on to his dream for Mound Bayou to be the African American community that thrived in a region that had the richest most productive cotton-growing soil in the nation (see figure 3.7). One of the best historic documents about Isaiah Montgomery’s seventy-seven years of fight for African Americans is an article written by Hiram Tong in 1910. Tong called Mound Bayou itself, an enduring

¹⁰⁹ Nina Simone, “Mississippi Goddam,” *Nina Simone in Concert* (1964); The words of the song include the following lyrics: Alabama's gotten me so upset / Tennessee made me lose my rest / And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam. See complete lyrics online, <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=14188>.

monument to the “genius of the Negro race.”¹¹⁰ When Montgomery died on March 5, 1924, in his Mound Bayou home, Walter Sillers, Sr., a white conservative planter-politician gave the eulogy and buried him in a tomb that white contributions funded. He was neither widely mourned, nor praised but by few people beyond his circle of family and friends. Too many never forgave him for the 1890 debacle.

The Mound Bayou story is complex, one of intertwined lives and political issues that are best understood in the context of time and place. Isaiah Thornton Montgomery believed he could speak for aspiring freedmen. He was one among them who hoped for full citizenship, given the promises of Reconstruction and their collective “genius” abilities. He could and did ultimately speak for the generations against the morally corrupt system of Jim Crow’s Black Code policies. Montgomery was a man of an era that diminished African American opportunities. Coming of age during the Civil War and experiencing all the conflicting, contradictory and confusing times of Slavery, Reconstruction, post-Reconstruction, Black Code laws, and Jim Crow segregation, Montgomery spent his life treading the water of the rising tides of a radical unrelenting white racist society. If only he had the innovative talents and wherewithal of his father, he may have been able to invent a political machine that navigated the sweltering political terrains of Mississippi, G.D.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Hiram Tong, “The Pioneers of Mound Bayou,” *The Century Magazine* (January, 1910): 390-99.

¹¹¹ For Mississippi’s Black Code, see Act of Nov. 25, 1865, 1865 Miss. Laws 82; Act of Nov. 22, 1865, *ibid.*, 86; Act of Nov. 24, 1865, *ibid.*, 90; Act of Nov. 29, 1865, *ibid.*, 165; and Act of Nov. 24, 1865, *ibid.*, 66; On the similarity of the Black Codes to slave codes, see, for example, William C. Harris, *Presidential Reconstruction in Mississippi* (Baton Rouge, 1967), 121-40; William Cohen, “Negro Involuntary Servitude in the South 1865-1940: A Preliminary Analysis,” *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 42, No. 1 (Feb., 1976):31-60; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 204-5; Donald G. Nieman, “The Freedmen’s Bureau and the Mississippi Black Code,” *Journal of Mississippi History*, 40 (May 1978): 93-96; Joe Gray Taylor,

All things being said, Montgomery and the many other Mound Bayouians can proudly claim what they sought to become: aristocratic, educated, articulate, prosperous, self-determined, planter-businessmen and women, they became. The collective instinct of Mound Bayouians was to hold on to an instinctively known African tradition of not just depending on one thing, like growing cotton, but also other sustainable commodities and business interests to buy, trade, consume “cooperatively” in order to maintain their way of life, as free independent people. These are people whom by all intents and measures were intentionally locked out of the American mainstream, yet overcame a multiplicity of mistakes, miscalculations and betrayals to build, symbolically, the most significant township of great African accomplishments in Mississippi. They perhaps never fully established the cooperative community grounded in concepts of dignity, progress, harmony, and love—but no other group has managed to do that in the American South, yet.

CHAPTER IV

THE PURSUIT OF A NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATION



Figure 4.1. Road sign on location of future site for the Cotton Pickers' Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center, Mound Bayou, MS, Highway 61 Courtesy of Khafre, Inc., Archives.

“Negro emancipation was incomplete, for it did not give the freed Negro land. Freedom that has no economic base is a bogus freedom. In a world in which souls are not discarnate there can be no freedom without some degree of power, including economic power.”

Reinhold Niebuhr¹

Many people of culturally diverse persuasions settled the United States of America. They represent significant contributors to the nation's historical narrative. Americans brought with them or borrowed their political ideals, cultural systems, agricultural techniques, games, names of places, and food. But they can claim one idea as

¹ Reinhold Niebuhr wrote after visiting Mississippi in 1937. Quoted in Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 109.

uniquely theirs: the concept of “national parks.”² Yellowstone National Park came first in 1872. Two generations later, in 1916, Congress established the National Park Service to administer the country’s growing number of national parks.³ Countries all over the world have emulated the American system in designating the most beautiful scenery, the highest mountains, the tallest trees, and the most important historic sites—as national parks.⁴

Another American-derived model of value is a new one, named Critical Race Theory (CRT). It is an effective tool for social science analysis and legal exploration that I have adapted here as a way for understanding the centrality of race in Southern culture.⁵ CRT is an approach that provides historians and truth seekers a critical analytical framework that allows the role of narratives to play a central focus regarding race and the social construct. The CRT approach offers a peculiar lens, and or method, through which the observer may deconstruct, challenge and make sense of social and racial inequalities in a given society.⁶ American social scientists coined the term but cannot yet decide on a common definition. Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic and others use CRT to

² Ken Burns, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, Washington, DC: WETA and The National Parks Film Project, LLC, last updated, March 9, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/> (accessed August 11, 2015).

³ For an overview of the creation of the National Park Service, see Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 4th edition (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010).

⁴ Runte, 163-164.

⁵ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

explore the reality of racism in America.⁷ Delgado and Stefancic explain, “CRT begins with a number of basic insights. One is that racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society. Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture.”⁸ Scholars also suggest that one must not “reductively position” racial ideology as simply analogous to class-based discrimination, but address its constrictive role in the composition and culture of American institutions.⁹ Professor Charles Lawrence informs us that we all speak from a perspective shaped by race.¹⁰ The issue, according to Lawrence is “not all positioned perspectives are equally valued, equally heard, or equally included. Some positions (voices) have historically been oppressed, distorted, ignored, silenced, destroyed, appropriated, commoditized, and marginalized and all of this, not accidentally.”¹¹ Conversely, Lawrence further explains that the law systematically privileges whites in their “positioned perspective” and accommodating narratives.¹²

CRT is in form and practice “scholarly resistance” with hopes of “wide-scale resistance.”¹³ The model may be compared to current approaches in the National Park

⁷ Derrick Bell, “Who’s Afraid of Critical Race Theory?” *University of Illinois Law Review* (1995): 893-910.

⁸ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, xvi.

⁹ Nicola Rollock and David Gillborn, “Critical Race Theory (CRT),” *British Educational Research Association* (2011): 2.

¹⁰ Bell, “Who’s Afraid,” 901; Charles R. Lawrence, III, “The Word and the River: Pedagogy as Scholarship as Struggle,” *Southern California Law Review*, 65 (1992): 2231, 2282-83.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Bell, “Who’s Afraid,” 900-01.

Service that emphasize the importance of multiple narratives in defining distinct landscapes and landmarks.¹⁴ The CRT approach has proven invaluable to this researcher's compilation of Cotton Pickers' narratives from the Mississippi Delta.¹⁵ Historically, one-sided views previously shaped the deeply held convictions of the American South, leaving on the margins such groups as the sharecroppers and tenant farmers of the Delta. The truth of the matter is that many hands were involved in making the Cotton Kingdom and in the making of the great American society. Today there is no reason to focus just on the white hands of plantation owners and merchants. Through CRT, however, scholars can understand how institutional and societal racism constricts outside voices, thoughts and ideas of inclusion, particularly when making decisions about monuments and memorials in public spaces. The concern here, in its most basic sense, is how to structure the argument to create a definitive narrative and public space that empowers the disenfranchised American laborers of cotton production.

Utilizing the CRT method as an analytical tool to examine interpretive sites, cultural symbolisms and contributing narratives provides a useful technique for giving voice to criticisms and developing a clearer understanding of how Americans saw (see) their history(ies) and how Americans can still challenge traditionally held views that discriminate, evoke hate, and discourage inclusion. "Those who can create the dominant historical narrative, those that can own the public memory, will achieve political and

¹⁴ For other perceptive studies, see Kimberle Crenshaw, et. al., eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1995); Francisco Valdes, et al. eds, *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

¹⁵ Using a CRT approach means that researches turn to first person accounts, storytelling, folk narratives and allegory, along with creativity.

cultural power ... [because they thereby interpret] the story of all groups,” argues historian David W. Blight.¹⁶ As Delgado and Stefancic emphasized, “If race is not real or objective, but constructed, racism [bias] and prejudice should be capable of deconstruction.”¹⁷ The overall goal of CRT, as with this research, is consider “all-inclusiveness” as the best way to grasp the collective wisdom of the people of the Mississippi Delta.¹⁸

According to historian John Blassingame’s argument in *The Slave Community*, enslaved cotton pickers were freed only to become sharecroppers. However, most often they defied the landowners and law enforcement officers and regularly left plantations if working conditions were unsuitable and untenable. This stance of resistance was done in untold numbers to affirm their control over their own lives. Blassingame’s case for resistance proved vital in constructing a case that depicts the sharecroppers’ agency as empowered people who fought to spend time with their families; and, worked tirelessly to protect and retain their rights over their children.¹⁹ Sharecropper men and women tried, but because of the state and federal policies in place, they were often unsuccessful in their efforts to seclude their children and protect themselves from the physical and sexual assault waged by terrorist groups and their tactics.²⁰ Living in a hostile legal and political

¹⁶ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Belknap Press, 2000), 349-350.

¹⁷ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 43.

¹⁸ Bell, *Who’s Afraid*, 901-902.

¹⁹ John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972; rev. ed., 1979), 133.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 186-188.

environment their choices were to persevere with vision, trust, and hope for a brighter day, or to become racist terrorists themselves. Most chose the former.

The stories and oral histories explored by Blassingame revealed that before publication of his book, “historians have never systematically explored the [day-to-day] life experiences of American slaves.”²¹ He decried how scholars to that time had focused so much on the slave owner, distorting scholarly understanding of plantation life.

Blassingame claimed that the past dominant narrative “strips the [en]slaved of any meaningful and distinctive culture, family life, religion, or [wo]manhood. Although the sharecroppers were legally no longer slaves, in a real economic sense they were socially enslaved by the sharecropping system, because if they tried to leave the plantation they would be arrested for [vagrancy, or for] not paying their debts.”²² This is the classic definition of debt peonage.

Within the Cotton Kingdom, the goals of slave owners, plantation owners, and corporate investors were/are to make as much profit as possible. However, African American experiences in the Cotton Kingdom were/are a protracted struggle against profit seeking “cotton hunters” and “redeemers” that sought to exploit their labor.²³ As

²¹ John W. Blassingame, “Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems,” *Journal of Southern History* 41 (November 1975): 490; For further readings on this subject: Al-Tony Gilmore, ed. *Revisiting Blassingame's The Slave Community: The Scholars Respond* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); William Issel, “History, Social Science, and Ideology, Elkins and Blassingame on Ante-bellum American Slavery,” *The History Teacher* 9 (November 1975): 56–72; Peter Kolchin, “Reevaluating the Antebellum Slave Community: A Comparative Perspective” *Journal of American History* 70 (December 1983): 579–601.

²² Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, 191.

²³ James Gilbert Cassedy, “African Americans and the American Labor Movement,” *Prologue* 29 (Summer

discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, indentured servants, tenant farmers, and other field workers historically held very different, though often undocumented, goals and objectives from the profiteers. They like all living beings wanted to provide a livelihood for their families and maintain ties to their community. They too felt deserving of attaining “the American dream.” These people worked within an undemocratic, unjust, capitalistic system and chose to hold on to their dignity the best way they could. Their legacy is their sweat equity investment and trust in the American ideal.

To recognize that legacy is the genesis of the idea to establish a monument to the cotton pickers of the Mississippi Delta. It would, in part, achieve a key goal of the National Historic Preservation Act: to preserve what really matters in American history. It also would help the National Park Service achieve institutional goals of the twenty-first century for a more meaningful, inclusive park system for all Americans to enjoy and be engaged in ... including the cotton pickers, as identified in the 2011 NPS report *Call to Action*.²⁴ The National Park Service is now in the 100th year of its mandate to maintain stewardship and provide enjoyment of historically relevant special places.²⁵ The NPS specifically states as its core purpose a policy and desire for inclusion of the most exceptional places; most recently included were places associated with the Civil Rights

1997). This special issue is out of print, but is available online: <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/american-labor-movement.html>. For deeper research, see Tab Lewis, “Labor History Sources in the National Archives,” *Labor History* 31 (Winter-Spring 1990): 98-104; Monroe N. Work, ed., *Negro Year Book* (Tuskegee, AL: Tuskegee Institute Publishing Company, 1922).

²⁴ National Parks Service, *Call to Action Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement Report* (August 2011), <http://www.nps.gov/calltoaction/PDF/DirectorsCalltoAction.pdf> (accessed January 24, 2015).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Movement of the twentieth century.²⁶ In these public spaces, children, students of American history, and seekers of truth learn about the people who worked tirelessly to give us their best and to build the nation. They made such an impact on the American system that monuments and public spaces are dedicated with respectful acknowledgements due to them and/or their efforts.

This chapter emphasizes the case for a national park called “Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecropper Interpretive Center,” so that voices of the cotton pickers can become a permanent and respected part of the national narrative. Along with all other worthy recipients of honor, they offer clear, explicit, and deferential reflections on the personal responsibilities we all have to make a better future for the next generation. The cotton pickers’ narrative shall render truth to the notion that hard work within the American social structure leads to success. The memorial provides sustenance to a model that continually serves as an ever-present ‘aide memoire’ on how vigilance, commitment and vision works in attaining the America dream. These are the folks who through their labor make America ‘exceptional.’

The American narrative embraces the belief that an individual has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as spelled out in the Declaration of Independence. . . The Constitution, Americans believe, enshrines and protects these core beliefs, which were derived from the lessons of history. Our historic landmarks, in turn, are public places reflect this country’s faith and admiration of the Declaration, the Constitution, and the history and traditions of the culture.

²⁶ National Historic Landmarks Program, *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2008).

On July 20, 1951, the Secretary of the Interior authorized the emblem of an arrowhead housing a Sequoia tree and bison to become symbolic of the National Park Service. The representation of vegetation and wildlife, with the mountains and water in the background are reflective of the parks' scenic, recreational, and western United States orientation.²⁷ Missing is the history: the people, the economy, and events that created this nation. Take for instance, Thomas Durant's essay, "The Relevance and Applicability of the Marxian Theory of Capitalism to American Plantation Slavery" that cites an *American Farmer Magazine's* estimation:

A single enslaved person could tend six acres of cotton and eight acres of corn. The prime cotton picker in the early 1800s was a healthy 16 to 30-year-old male, who could pick 500, or more pounds of cotton per day, which could generate \$53,280 per year. A plantation with 50 such prime enslaved workers could generate a gross income of \$2.7 million, a small fortune in the early 1800s.²⁸

After the Civil War American cotton production, as discussed earlier, expanded dramatically. Many former slaves remained tied to the land by tenancy and sharecropping. Thirty years after Fort Sumter, this labor system produced double the amount of cotton.²⁹

Can the voices of the cotton pickers become part of the National Park Service?

Dr. Jonathan (Jon) B. Jarvis, who on October 2, 2009 became the 18th Director of the

²⁷ The U.S. Patent Office registered the NPS official emblem on February 9, 1965.

²⁸ Thomas Durant and David Knottnerus, eds., *Plantation Society and Race Relations: The Origins of Inequality* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing Co., 1999), 19.

²⁹ Sven Beckert, "How Cotton Remade the World: The Civil War cotton shock didn't just shake the American economy," *Politico Magazine* (January 30, 2015): accessed February 8, 2015, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/01/civil-war-cotton-capitalism-114776>.

NPS stated, “It is time.”³⁰ To the project’s credit, Dr. Jarvis acknowledges that nothing has been done to officially recognize the contributions of the southern cotton laborer. Nor has the NPS developed or considered any substantive plans to accommodate a museum dedicated exclusively to the legacy of enslaved African Americans. Dr. Jarvis also proclaimed America's national parks are the gifts from past generations. Eighteen generations of cotton pickers tilled, planted and picked cotton by hand for this and future generations to enjoy. Is this story part of the national narrative? Is this significant enough join the hundreds of National Park Service properties that are preserved “for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations?”³¹ Indeed, “it is time” something must be done.



Figure 4.2. Cotton in the Delta, circa 2014. Courtesy of Khafre, Inc., Archives.

According to its website, “the National Park Service administers many programs and cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource

³⁰ John Jarvis, comments made at MTSU Field Study luncheon, Seattle, WA, May 2011.

³¹ National Park Service website, <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm> (accessed August 11, 2015).

conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.”³² Only one NPS unit, thus far, recognizes parts of the enslaved cotton pickers’ story. Debbie Smith, Chief of Historic Landscapes at the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training in Natchitoches, Louisiana, stated,

I thought you might be interested to know of Oakland Plantation National Historic Site in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. The park interprets plantation life up until the 1960s, including the story of enslaved and sharecroppers who worked the plantation. A child that grew up on the farm, the son of a sharecropper, is now one of the park’s most dedicated volunteers. He was also the force behind furnishing and interpreting one of the sharecropper’s homes, in fact, the house he lived in on the plantation. I wish you well with your effort to create monuments honoring cotton pickers and sharecroppers in the American South.³³

However, there are far too few monuments, museums and public places reflecting the whole stories factual to American history. According to a recent study by Ben Wofford, a researcher at *Politico Magazine*, there may only be one contender, a “meager” federally funded slave *memorial*,³⁴ but still not fully representing the enslaved as people who picked the cotton. This particular exhibit in Philadelphia is entitled “The President’s House: Freedom and Slavery in the Making of a New Nation.” Robert Morris, a slave trader for whom the house is named, once owned the house.³⁵ “This is the country’s only congressionally funded memorial on federal property to explicitly honor some of America’s early slaves,” according to Wofford.³⁶ National Park Service superintendent

³² Ibid.

³³ Deborah Dietrich-Smith, email message to author, February 29, 2016.

³⁴ Wofford, *The Memorial Where Slavery is Real*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

Martha Aikens added that the exhibit was there for a reason, to disassociate slavery from American freedom. She explained “that creating a memorial would inappropriately append the narrative of slavery to an exhibition, the nearby Liberty Bell Center, that was intended to convey the memory of freedom; this, in turn, would cause a dissonance between the two features, potentially causing confusion for visitors.”³⁷

That being the case and the basic sentiment of this particular NPS official, this study includes the many buildings and structures in Mound Bayou that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The register acknowledges the city’s “statewide” significance under Criterion A, which is in association with Community Development and Planning, Ethnic History: Black, Commerce and Social History. Mound Bayou’s National Register historic district lists the Isaiah T. Montgomery home, along with 34 contributing, and 17 non-contributing properties.³⁸ Along with Montgomery’s house, the district includes Taborian Hospital, Bank of Mound Bayou, Mound Bayou graveyard, and privately held public land. In 1979, Mound Bayou also received limited federal funds for a city park, from a Land and water Conservation Fund Grant.³⁹

Dr. Jarvis recently promised “to promote the contributions that national parks and programs make to create jobs, strengthen local economies.”⁴⁰ He continued by saying, “We must use the collective power of the parks, our historic preservation programs, and

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Mound Bayou Historic District, Bolivar County, Mississippi,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

³⁹ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Comment by Jon Jarvis, National Parks Service, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/descrip.htm> (accessed January 3, 2015).

community assistance programs to expand our contributions to society in the next century.”⁴¹ To achieve that long sought after promise of truth, justice and fairness for all, NPS intends to “create and deliver programs, activities, and services that honor, examine, and interpret America’s ‘complex’ but true heritage.”⁴² With Mound Bayou’s historical significance already established, the NPS’s re-commitment to the ideal of stewardship and public engagement should ease the process for the Cotton Picker Monument and Sharecropper’s Interpretive Center project to develop into a National Park Service unit within this historic township.

The proposed project is technically a National Memorial that fits within the contextual classification of a “Second-Century” national park and contributes well to the previously recognized designations. In accordance with the *Call to Action Report*, *this project is in alignment with and charts the commitment to advance the NPS mission*. The *Call to Action* report essentially connects real people to real parks and helps real communities like Mound Bayou protect the specialness of their place, their people, and their culture. It also allows them to articulate their story, in Mound Bayou’s case their journey from slavery to entrepreneurship in Davis Bend and to emancipation and economic success in Mound Bayou. To allow the presence of places like Mound Bayou in the National Park Service and to permit this special site access to resources that rebuild economic and cultural sustainability, in actuality would facilitate their pursuit of an imagined community within the American dream.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

The Mound Bayou community and all of its well-wishers are eager to leverage the NPS partnership, particularly relating to cultural development and economic stimuli. To fully utilize resources never available to them will unleash a cache of historical and scientific scholarship critical to the educational offerings in and around the Mississippi Delta community. This opportunity could create another “unbiased translation of the complexities of the American experience.”⁴³

When tourists from around the world come to the Mississippi Delta, they look to see life as it really was—and in places like Mound Bayou still is—to get in touch with the locals in order to have an experience of real authentic American life in the South the life that produced blues, spirituals and country music. The “authentic experience” in Mound Bayou easily avoids what Dean MacCannell called “staged authenticity.”⁴⁴ Some local critics cite the Blues Trail Markers, from the Mississippi Blues Commission as the example. These structures are in strategic places that attract visitors, who are then susceptible to a superficial understanding of the people and place. The feelings held by many residents are that the staged presence is designed to promote tourism, but neglects to capture a remedy for the authentic pain and suffering of Delta plantation workers. The implications are that tourists and visitors are not seeing or hearing the authentic voices of the people.

MacCannell’s assessment is true in many parts of the Delta. Currently, there are plans to help develop more substantive offerings through the Mississippi Delta National

⁴³ NPS, *Call to Action*, 5.

⁴⁴ Dean MacCannell, “Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings,” *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (November, 1973): 589-603.

Heritage Area (MDNHA), Civil Rights Trail, and Country Music trails. These efforts are designed to ensure tourists “a more authentic experience,” while also exhibiting local acceptance and appreciation for the cultural significance of the region.⁴⁵ In this scenario, context and understanding are the essentials for an authentic Cotton Picker experience.

The management plan for the National Heritage Area describes the Delta as:

The land where the Blues began, where Rock and Roll was created and where Gospel remains a vibrant art. It is an agricultural region where cotton was once king. And, where precision-ag rules today. It is a place that saw the struggles of the Civil War and the cultural revolution of the Civil Rights Movement. It is the home of the Great Migration, and a land of rich culinary, religious, artistic and literary heritage.⁴⁶

The MDNHA in its mission statement indicates a willingness to foster “preservation, perpetuation and the celebration of Delta’s heritage through a climate of collaboration and sustainable economic development and a comprehensive and continual system of engagement and education, led by an inclusive network of partners, institutions and residents toward achieving a regional vision.”⁴⁷

Dr. Rolando Herts, the Heritage Area administrator, understands the need to create opportunities to save the special places of the Delta and maintain the vibrant [healthy] traditions, by “enhancing cultural pride in communities, and social transformation, appreciation, and understanding of the Delta’s past and supporting

⁴⁵ *Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area: Management Plan, March 2014* (Cleveland, MS: Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University, 2014), 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

economic contributions to the American story.”⁴⁸ Herts reassures the MDNHA focus is on five specific themes as specified in the management plan:

1. The Mississippi Delta and the Land It Embraces:

This involves how the Delta was formed and the people who inhabited there along with interpretive narratives about early explorers from around the world, primarily Europe. How the land transformed due to the agricultural centers and the impact of floods.

2. The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound:

The Delta culture is embraced and contrasted with international music. Origins of the Blues a uniquely African sound and how it emerged in the cotton fields of America are important narratives in this context.

3. Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights:

Through the peculiar institution of slavery; its impact on the Civil War and the Great Migration and where we are as a community today are important to considerations, e.g., (Freedom Summer, Emmett Till, MS Freedom Democratic Party, Civil Rights leaders ...)

4. Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Well spring of Creativity:

Revealed through literature, the arts (including culinary), the spirit of the place and the religions practiced are heard and often felt in the musical culture.

5. The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities:

Allowing this experiment to explore the extreme paradoxes and venture through the historical lifestyle of aristocracy of the planter class and the sharecroppers and tenant farmers.⁴⁹

To engage and become a viable partner within the MDNHA charge, each potential partner takes on the responsibility of developing local plans and approaches that reflect the goals and strategies of the collective:

⁴⁸ Ibid.; Radio/television interview with Dr. Rolando Herts, WNBC-33, July 10, 2015.

⁴⁹ *Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area: Management Plan*, 12.

- Creating a community-driven network to support grassroots historic preservation, tourism, educational projects and recreational activities in their respective community.
- Fostering pride of place and stewardship
- Supporting economic development through regional heritage conservation.⁵⁰

The preservation, interpretation, and restoration efforts underway in Mound Bayou potentially extend the benefits of MDNHA and complement NPS's conservation initiatives. Capturing the Cotton Kingdom and Global Empire narratives are central to the Cotton Pickers Monument project. In so doing, the collective efforts will most assuredly inspire the Mississippi Delta region to better realize its place in the making of a more perfect union. The overall intention is to offer renewed hope to individual residents, especially the children, while at the same time help NPS meet the changing and unmet cultural and historic preservation needs of our country.

The NPS website proclaims, "Today, the National Park Service preserves more than 27,000 historic structures in national parks, as tangible reminders of our nation's past."⁵¹ There are 394 national parks and "programs that support community-based conservation and historic preservation."⁵² It is the position of this study and the scholarship thereof that Mound Bayou given its historic and cultural significance is the perfect site to be incorporated as the next member of the NPS in its centennial year of 2016, or soon thereafter.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 2.

⁵¹ National Parks Service, <http://www.nps.gov/americasbestidea/templates/sustainingplaces.html> (accessed July 7, 2015).

⁵² National Parks Service, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/descrip.htm> (accessed January 3, 2015).



Figure 4.3. Cotton Pickers of America (cropped), image by Ed Dwight. Courtesy of Khafre, Inc Archives.

KHAFRE, Inc is the Mississippi-based 501 (c) 3, non-profit organization, whose critical role is to lead the effort in the building of the Cotton Pickers Monument and National Park in Mound Bayou. As one of the organizations currently partnering with the MDNHA effort, Khafre, Inc's expressed strategy for development is to secure its funds through private donations and federal grants programs, such as the Department of the Interior and to seek a permanent place in the NPS system.

The NPS is a Federal agency with the authority to enter into agreements with organizations like, Khafre, Inc. NPS's responsibility is to "ensure that all agreements are managed in accordance with federal law and regulations responsibly." Agreements with Khafre, Inc allow the NPS to work cooperatively to further the NPS mission. The types of agreements that KHAFRE, Inc will pursue with the National Park Service, include, but are not limited to:

- Challenge-Cost Share authority
- Challenge Cost-Share Agreement
- Challenge Cost-Share Program (CCSP)
- Cooperative Agreement
- Discretionary Assistance

- World Monuments Fund (WMF)
- Centennial Project
(For descriptions see APPENDIX C)

As work continues toward building the legacy of utopian possibilities, Mound Bayou, with all of its truths and historical narratives within reach, stands on the precipice of another transformative renaissance. The Mound Bayou Movement (MBM) is yet another example of the continuum of the undying hope and spirit of Benjamin Montgomery. The plan embraces MDNHA, Khafre, Inc, and NPS's *Call* to bring revitalization to this historic city. The MBM plan also embraces the "big idea" required to create a margin of excellence. Mound Bayou is also partnering with the Historic Black Towns and Settlement Alliance (HBTSA) in association with the University of North Carolina (UNC). Under the auspices of historians and mayors of historically black communities, Dr. Bill Ferris is helping to design restoration plans that structurally align Mound Bayou with other historic African American towns, settlements and cities throughout the nation. The hope is to not only restore Mound Bayou's precious status as "the Jewel of the Delta" but also promises to bring even greater glory than seen before to all the HBTSA.⁵³

Countless memorials and museums are dedicated to our slave-owning founders. But, what is at issue is that "150 years after the Civil War, there exists no federally funded museum dedicated solely to the memory of African-American slaves and the

⁵³ Kim Weaver Spurr, "UNC Forges Partnership with Historic Black Southern Towns," *The College of Arts and Sciences at UNC Chapel Hill Newsletter* (2015); also see archivist Chaitra Powell's post on her visit to Hobson City and Tuskegee, Alabama, <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/shc/index.php/2014/12/23/next-stop-the-great-state-of-alabama/> (accessed May 3, 2015).

system under which they toiled.”⁵⁴ As historian Eric Foner remarked in the *New York Times Magazine*, “If the Germans built a museum dedicated to American slavery before one about their own Holocaust, you’d think they were trying to hide something.”⁵⁵

The National Park Service possibility inspires people in Mound Bayou to continue their pursuit of a dream regarding conservation and historic preservation with confidence, because they hope a partnership with the United States government is possible. They realize this kind of partnering establishes a very special place for collective expressions as human beings first and where and how certain values were formed as Americans second. With the building of the Cotton Pickers Monument, and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center, the National Park Service can most effectively and efficiently deliver on its message to future generations. These narratives reflect the basic fundamental truths upon which our economy was established.

⁵⁴ Wofford, “The Memorial Where Slavery Is Real.”

⁵⁵ David Amsden, “Building the First Slavery Museum in America,” *The New York Times Magazine*, February 26, 2015, accessed August 2, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/magazine/building-the-first-slave-museum-in-america.html?_r=1.



Figure 4.4. Cotton Pickers of America (side view), image by Ed Dwight. Courtesy of Khafre, Inc., Archives.

**COTTON PICKERS OF AMERICA
LOOKING FOR A BRIGHT SIDE**

Hermon Johnson

*As we think back ... on the black man's plight
All the way back ... to the cotton sack
Picking and praying ... singing and remembering
The blues was created ... in the cotton patch
But we knew there is a bright side somewhere
There is a bright side somewhere
They couldn't know that we could ever find it
But there is a bright side somewhere
Now this is a tribute ... to Black sharecropping
On the Mississippi ... Delta side
Saying we'll never go back ... to sharecropping
Cause we know ... there is a brighter side
Yes we know there is a bright side somewhere
There is a bright side somewhere
We must never rest, until we find it*

*Cause there is a bright side somewhere
 Now sharecropping ... meant moving up
 That's what many of us ... thought
 Only a sophisticated ... form of slavery
 Just a wish ... we somehow bought
 Still we knew there is a bright side somewhere
 Now we bring tribute ... to those Black farmers
 Those who owned ... some land as a rule
 Had a little bit of hope, yet much disappointment
 Never got the 40 acres, nor the mule
 But there is a bright side somewhere
 There is a bright side somewhere
 We can't rest until we find it
 There is a bright side somewhere
 Now we must compliment ... our noted sculpture
 None other than ... Mr. Ed Dwight
 For helping us ... always remember
 How we got away ... from the cotton sack
 Cause he knew there was a bright side somewhere
 There is a bright side somewhere
 He won't rest until we find it
 Cause there is a bright side somewhere
 Just one more thing ... before we go
 Let's all pray God ... will help make this so
 Too many of our dreams ... just fade away
 Let this be the sunshine ... from that brighter day
 For god knows there's a bright side somewhere
 There is a bright side somewhere
 We can't rest until we see it
 in the Mississippi Delta right here!⁵⁶*

What can the people (person) of good will and intent do to combat the systemic bias our country has historically experienced towards the poor and the cotton pickers?

We must have the courage to build monuments and public spaces as examples of word,

⁵⁶ Hermon Johnson, Khafre, Inc founding board member, Mound Bayou former city council member, and father of the current mayor Darryl Johnson, wrote this poem for the Cotton Pickers of America community meeting held in Mound Bayou's Facilities Building, September 7, 2010. In attendance were the Mound Bayou city officials, land/business owners, Ed Dwight (monument developer), Eric Davis (landscape architect), several regional NPS Superintendents and staffers from Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

work, and deed. Until the goal of fairness and equity is demonstrated and etched in proverbial stone, there is no greater accomplishment for a just and well-balanced society than to present to its public, the awareness that we, as a human family, shall devote our energies toward life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness FOR ALL.

Western writer Wallace Stegner described the creation of national parks “the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.”⁵⁷ Upon this ideal our truth, justice and righteousness depend ... It is upon this truth I rely. It is time to say “thank you” to the cotton pickers of America. Let us be the generation that honors them with a monument and a national park dedicated solely to them.

The wonder is that so large a supply of cotton could be procured from one source, the United States [Mississippi Delta] ... and when we reflect ... this great wealth to European manufacturers and merchants, ... had also catapulted the United States onto center stage of the world economy, [thereby] building the most successful agricultural industry in the States of America, which has been ever contemplated or realized.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Stegner quoted in National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/americasbestidea>.

⁵⁸ Thomas Bazley, “The Cotton Question: A Glance at the Cotton Trade,” I. Smith Norman and William Dana, eds., *The Merchant’s Magazine and Commercial Review*, 45 (November, 1861): 474.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION



Figure 5.1. Plantation Cotton Field, Library of Congress.

*“England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her, save the South. No, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares to make war upon it. Cotton is King.”*¹

South Carolina Senator James Henry Hammond, 1858

In 1937, W.E.B. Dubois said of Mound Bayou: “I saw only here a chance to study an historical group of black folk and to show exactly what their place was in the community.” He added: “We must study, we must investigate, we must attempt to solve; and the utmost that the world can demand is not lack of human interest and moral conviction but rather the heart-quality of fairness, and an earnest desire for the truth despite its possible unpleasantness.”² Professor Karl Paul Reinhold Niebuhr observed that in general “every execution of moral judgments in history [is] inexact because of its necessary relation to the morally irrelevant fact of power.”³

¹ James Henry Hammond, “Cotton is King on the Admission of Kansas, Under the Lecompton Constitution,” Speech Before the United States Senate March 04, 1858, *Selections from the Letters and Speeches of the Hon. James H. Hammond, of South Carolina* (New York: John F. Trow & Co., 1866), 311-322.

² W.E.B. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), 58.

³ Niebuhr quoted in David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Belknap Press, 2000; rev ed. 2002), 4.

Those who lived too cautiously splatter the history of the freedom struggle before, during and after the Civil War with the gore of gruesome tales about failed utopian experiments and social movements that were stymied by those who dreamt too dangerously or by those who lived too cautiously. The slave experience and the lives of those who prospered from their suffering are at the heart of this study. It is fundamentally clear that many people still hold attitudes that should have died on the battlefields of the Civil War.

For more than one hundred years, tall white classical columns topped with stalwart Confederate soldiers, numerous interpretive sites, historical monuments, National Military Parks, and museums depicted the history of and informed local residents and tourists about the South. There are over 1,325 historic monuments and markers dedicated to commemorate and interpret the Vicksburg campaign of the Civil War. Only one of the monuments is in tribute to the African American men who fought in the war. Vicksburg is an excellent example of a typical Civil War-era historical site and its omissions and limitations underscore the argument made by this research.

Vicksburg is also the home of sacred monuments, statues, and historical reminders of the Davis Bend Plantation located twenty miles south. In this instance, none of the historic monuments and markers mentions the name or any contributions made by Benjamin Montgomery. Given Montgomery's significant work this oversight represents a classic case of negligence regarding public history and historic preservation in America. As David Goldfield reminds us in *Still Fighting the Civil War* (2002), the preserved Civil War landscapes have precious few remembrances of Africans in America, enslaved,

empowered or otherwise, thus almost eliminating the possibility of a counter narrative even being imagined by a visitor.

As long as we have politics of race, we will have politics of memory.⁴ Americans are still working through the politics of memory. Slavery and its painful memories are intractably attached to cotton, sharecropping, inequities and the politics thereof.⁵ There is no doubt that cotton fueled the growth of this country, meaning that America's success is a by-product of its cotton pickin' history.

"Mississippi Goddam" is indeed the most southern place on Earth, and a musical score that gives voice to the often-neglected roots of regional identity and memory. Like James C. Cobb's seminal work, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: Roots of Regional Identity*, Nina Simone's inspired lyrics chronicle the essence of memory in a manner that further justifies the case for a Cotton Pickers Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center as a National Memorial in the Mississippi Delta. This is the place where antebellum conditions and racial traditions are preserved and observed daily. No other place on Earth can better depict the epicenter of America's painful history than the Mississippi Delta. The argument Simone and Cobbs make is pivotal to this study and provides a cornerstone to "the cotton obsessed, Negro obsessed" narrative of the South.⁶

The historical patterns of declining population, poverty and unemployment in rural America create special challenges for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area's (MDNHA) efforts to its management goals. However, its many partners are

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 357.

⁶ James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 153.

working tirelessly to revitalize Delta communities. We all realize that establishing educational centers based on Mississippi Delta's authentic culture and heritage is a viable way to create new job opportunities by building new businesses and attracting more tourists, but the stories and interpretive sites must hinge on authenticity and the truth.⁷

This study presents with those truthful authentic voices that made possible the development of numerous cultural contributions significant to the Mississippi Delta. Adapting an approach from Critical Race Theory allows activists to better understand and critique the American narrative about race, politics of memory and, therefore, effectively challenge views of denial about slavery, cotton, and other painful truths. Essentially, stories help seekers of truth and justice identify discriminatory mindsets that can be deconstructed, if we choose, particularly those that stem from former plantations and white supremacy.

With a spirit of confidence, readers of this study will have evidence to contradict images portrayed in the popular culture works of filmmaker D.W. Griffith and writer Thomas Dixon. These two came of age during the height of the "Lost Cause" movement and introduced to the world fiercely racist epics depicting the heroism of the Ku Klux Klan and tribulations of a victimized South. Dixon's novel *The Clansman* was published in 1905. Griffith took the book and translated it into the racist film *Birth of a Nation* in 1915.

Griffith and Dixon's work commonly portrayed enslaved people in a totally misleading fashion, as contented people comfortable with their place in society. These works and other popular culture produced by whites during this era portrayed African Americans in a similar way, as people who did not want freedom and knew very little

⁷ *Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan*, 29.

about what to do with agency if ever given to them. People like Benjamin Montgomery (in Davis Bend), Isaiah Montgomery (in Mound Bayou), Booker T. Washington (at Tuskegee), W.E.B. DuBois (in *The Crisis*), Marcus Garvey (as leader of UNIA), Mary McLeod Bethune (Bethune-Cookman College), Ida B. Wells-Barnett (international anti-lynching campaign) and too many others to list clearly dispute this “truth.” Yet in the early twentieth century, by utilizing powerful imagery, selective narratives, enormous advertising, and political endorsements the writers and filmmakers successfully portrayed “emancipation as America’s greatest and most dangerous disaster.”⁸

The overarching message of southern apologist’s racist propaganda was, “The young north, ... has never known—the awful suffering of the white man during the dreadful Reconstruction period. ... God ... anointed the white men of the south ... to demonstrate to the world that a white man must and shall be supreme.”⁹ The use of films to “teach the north” especially became an effective and efficient medium to perpetrate the myth of white supremacy in a potential closed society. Need we even say *Gone with the Wind*? So much so that the image of African Americans as a deprived, unaccomplished, dreadful soul remained, till today, in the minds of many Southerners, including African Americans, as demonstrated in the so-called “plantation mentality” prevalent in the Mississippi Delta.

We now must insist that the National Park Service live up to its promises to undo much of the spiritual damage done to enslaved people of America by appropriately marking and interpreting the Delta’s past. The proposed Cotton Pickers of America Monument as a national historical site has the potential of changing misguided

⁸ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 395.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 394.

perceptions that serve to impede America's growth, progress, opportunities of success, and the benefits thereof. It has been an unfortunate misstep that many monuments reflect what appears a deliberate philosophical exclusion, which continually serves to undermine America's true potential for greatness, as a whole nation.

Benjamin Montgomery and Joseph Davis are exceptional examples of Americans who embodied the symbol of good intentions and of hope and freedom for all Americans. Their prodigies, Jefferson and Isaiah, may have fumbled on the precepts, but their fundamental goals remain in play unencumbered for future generations to re-imagine, if only we will. The Mound Bayou founding settlers, through their collective vision and works, disproved the prevailing notions about the incapacity of some of our most gifted and enlightened citizens. Aurelius P. Hood, author, and mayor of Mound Bayou (1901-1908), stated with authority in 1910, "The Mound Bayou effort must not fail ... a reputation of a race is at hazard."¹⁰

None of the findings in this study reveal defeat for the imagined cooperative community. Setbacks and disappointments yes, but defeats no. The utopian dream shared by Joseph Davis and Benjamin Montgomery has been achieved, if only for a brief moment, but still lingers in the sun to be realized once again. The main impediment to the sustainability of their dream was the socio-economic and political instruments not being fully available to them, as witnessed by Isaiah and Jefferson.

Isaiah Montgomery accepted a compromised political system because he like many others felt the lack of political organization for Blacks provided him and the few other officials no other choice, but to acquiesce, and to compromise. Montgomery never

¹⁰ Millburn Crowe, "Portrait of a Black Town Mound Bayou: Past, Present and Future," *Mound Bayou's The Voice* 4 (July 1971): 12.

publicly admitted the betrayal of his colleagues during the 1890 Conference, but it was felt. In a private letter written in 1904 to Booker T. Washington, Montgomery admitted that he understood that white rhetoric about fairness was a sham and that his opponents wanted “nothing less than a retrogression of the Negro back towards serfdom and slavery.”¹¹ It was Jefferson Davis, post Civil War, once again.

Isaiah Montgomery, Jefferson Davis and many others came to realize that only with armed federal intervention could protect and allow for a color-blind political system to exist in the white supremacist South. But in Isaiah Montgomery’s case, by remaining silent, he allowed the misunderstandings and defamation of his character to plague his legacy for over a century. White conservatives applauded his sacrifice as an “act of statesmanship” but African Americans in the twentieth century dismissed him as a race traitor. Mississippi politician Sidney Redmond declared Montgomery would always be remembered as the “Judas of his people.”¹²

Isaiah Montgomery’s decision to compromise on the 1890 Mississippi Constitutional Convention provision contributed to the reversal of the progress made during Reconstruction and indeed proved devastating for the Negro suffrage movement. While his faith in mankind was faulty, and his statesmanship proved to lack the qualities of discernment of others’ intention Isaiah’s motivations and strategies are much too complex to be covered in their entirety in this analysis. However, it is clear that he attempted to put into practice a methodology used successfully a generation prior at Davis Bend. In the final analysis, the decision to acquiesce and accommodate the white

¹¹ McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 109.

¹² Anthony Appiah, Henry Louis Gates, eds., *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 56.

supremacist strategy was a huge mistake, and without question, the most controversial decision of Isaiah Montgomery's life.

Despite Isaiah Montgomery's shortcomings, the re-structured Davis Bend colony known as Mound Bayou found success for a people of vision and purpose, but a success limited by Jim Crow realities. Mound Bayouians, molded in the image of Benjamin Montgomery and Joseph Davis, but given life by Isaiah Montgomery and Benjamin Green, gave the ideal of an imagined cooperative community its second and then a third chance to show what African American independence could create.

During the Reconstruction era, Americans witnessed former slave owners like Joseph Davis delivering on a promise of fairness and equality by selling property to the emancipated Benjamin Montgomery. However, Jefferson Davis lived and died unrepentant for his part leaving the Davis Bend estate in perpetual ruin. Despite the tragic end of Davis Bend, the memory continues to live on in Mound Bayou. Many historians will note that by every measure significant to formerly enslaved men and women, Reconstruction was a failure in most instances. By illuminating the imagined "cooperative" community concept, we are able to retrace and recover this great narrative, with its victories and traumatic losses, to visualize what is still politically and socially possible.

The work, the product, the success that transformed the essential raw material of American manufacturing success into the Global Cotton Empire is still due its monument, which is why artists such as sculptor Ed Dwight want to be involved. The U.S. government, which in 2001 paid a record \$4 billion in subsidies to cotton farm owners in America, and continue to offer similar relief programs should understand the

need to supply laborers an equal portion of the subsidy.¹³ The resources are there and the value firmly established. The only thing lacking is this formal request and the will to provision a special place dedicated to the cotton laborers.

Lest we forget, slavery and sharecropping were at the center of the most dynamic manufacturing complex in human history. British colonial bureaucrat Herman Merivale noted as early as 1839 that “the greater part of our cotton [is] raised by slaves ... and Manchester’s and Liverpool’s opulence is as really owing to the toil and suffering of the Negro, as if his hands had excavated their docks and fabricated their steam-engines.”¹⁴ South Carolina Senator James Henry Hammond, himself a cotton planter, confirmed, “Cotton is king.”¹⁵

Americans proclaim, then and now, a commitment to fairness and a willingness to operate in accordance with the United States Constitution. However, for the deliberately disenfranchised laborers of the cotton fields the commitment and promise of fairness, equality and justice, for the most part, has rarely been realized.

Marcus Garvey embraced race as an organizing principle, so did Benjamin Montgomery, and so am I. Like Montgomeryism and Garveyism, much of this ideological study is derived from intertwining some of the most important African and European thinkers, scholars, and visionaries emanating from the nineteenth century. The findings of this research enter into a contentious academic arena for that reason.

Nevertheless, I hope all can appreciate that this study enriches our understanding of the

¹³ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 438.

¹⁴ Sven Beckert, “How Cotton Remade the World,” *Politico Magazine* (January 30, 2015), <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/01/civil-war-cotton-capitalism-114776.html#ixzz3QRZxQRsN>, July 9, 2015.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

complexity and significance of a diverse and far-reaching African American contribution, which more often than not leans toward justice and a spirit of cooperativeness with intent to elevate social consciousness. I further hope that like Garveyism this work becomes an intellectual history that plays a significant role in solidifying the philosophical strength of Montgomeryism and the endurance of generations of African Americans in their struggles for dignity, fair treatment, and self-determination.¹⁶

The myth of the beneficent genteel Old South has proven to dominate this nation's memory for far too long. So, as we collectively work to make America a more perfect union, let us be mindful that it is time to expand the narrative, indeed! There is one critical question that remains: Why would anyone of moral fortitude and courage question the integrity of the work and accomplishments of those gifted mortals, known as Cotton Pickers or, their worthiness of a monument in a historic place like Mound Bayou? This study concludes they are worthy and in fact, among America's greatest treasures.

Everywhere, W.E.B. Dubois saw and admired the forward-looking, hopeful attitudes of black communities ... He found energy and alertness ... new ambition and determinedness.¹⁷

¹⁶ Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 23.

¹⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 393.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

KHAFRE, Inc
2012-2017 Strategic Plan



Figure A.1. Cotton Pickers of America Monument statue design.

“Transforming America, one monumental step at a time”

KHAFRE Inc.

POB 64

Indianola, MS 38751

www.khafreinc.org

662.347.8198

© Approved by the Core Board of KHAFRE, Inc. June 30th 2012

INTRODUCTION

KHAFRE Inc is not for profit 501c3 organization that was officially incorporated in September of 2009, by the Mississippi Secretary of State. The purpose of the organization is to provide educational, lifestyle and cultural programs, build monuments and memorials to honor, celebrate, and recognize the rich and complex history of the Mississippi Delta and to positively impact the quality of life of those living in the Delta, especially the disproportionately poor African American community. Understanding that this organization desires to create great change that is far beyond the reach of one organization, we endeavor to be a networking hub that works with and connects non-profit organizations, educational institutions, legislators, and individuals of consciousness for the purpose of establishing a social movement that fundamentally transforms the Delta and ushers in a renaissance and renewal of the human spirit. To assist us in realizing success in this bold journey, we put forth our roadmap for the next five years, starting with the board approved vision and mission of the organization.

VISION

KHAFRE, Inc was established to be the epicenter of a social movement that will cause a powerful, positive and profound shift in the very trajectory of the African American experience in the Mississippi Delta; a shift that will necessarily reverberate throughout the state of Mississippi, the United States of America and beyond. As a result of the monumental programs, activities, initiatives and efforts of this social-justice and purpose driven force, individuals of ALL races, ethnicities, and social statuses will embrace the dignity endowed to them by their Creator, understand their worth and embrace the value of their lives to their families and communities, dream the powerful dreams that come from an empowered and true understanding of their ancestry and heritage, and cast off the plantation mentality, as a result of fallowing the fields of their minds and planting the seeds of hope in their souls. KHAFRE exists to transform lives, build communities of equality and operate as a hub of hope – one that seeks out, connects and strengthens

individuals, organizations and groups of consciousness inside and outside of the Mississippi Delta.

MISSION

To realize its' critically important and intentionally bold vision, KHAFRE Inc. will build monuments and memorials, offer programs and workshops around education, health, and history, provide resources to the formal and informal educators in the Delta, engage in community outreach and connection, and operate as a repository and distributor of information on the history, beauty, and talent of and within the Mississippi Delta, all for the overarching purpose of improving the quality of life of her sons and daughters.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

- 1) Build monuments and memorials:
 - a. Creation of the *Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center*
 - b. Develop a *Sharecroppers Home Museum* exhibit(s) housed within an authentic "Shotgun" house
 - c. Establish a long-term partnership with da' House of Khafre Cultural Arts Center, in Indianola
 - d. Create a *Sharecroppers Memorial*, in Monteux, France
 - e. Create a *Sharecroppers Memorial*, in West Africa
 - f. Develop *African and African American Legacy Trees* – one in Mississippi; and one in West Africa
- 2) Offer programs and workshops around education, health, and history:
 - a. As part of *Healthy U*, conduct healthy cooking workshops for the children of the Mississippi Delta- *Healthy U*, is a cooking and gardening workshop designed to help young people of the Mississippi Delta to better understand how and why the maintenance of healthy lifestyle choices, and eating/cooking habits are important to their health, wellness and

productivity at home, school and in the community. Our desire is to see young people in the Mississippi Delta facilitate a Healthy U awareness campaign throughout the region.

- b. Teach children the intricacies and fundamental skills necessary for success in the television and radio broadcast industries, through the *Youth Empowerment Show (Y.E.S.)*
 - c. Expand the *Youth Leadership Lecture* series that engages the youth of the Mississippi Delta in intimate dialogue with celebrities, professionals, legislators, and individuals of great influence and consciousness
 - d. Expand the work of the *Young Publishers Network (YPN)* to increase opportunities for the youth of the Mississippi Delta to publish works of literature
 - e. Establish the *Young Publishers Global Network (YPGN)* to include participants from around the world in the development of youth created works of literature
 - f. Expand the partnership with *Teach for America* to produce youth led plays and educational showcases
 - g. Expand the strategic partnership with the *Children's Defense Fund* to provide consultation and technical support for the *Youth Empowerment Show*
- 3) Provide resources to the formal and informal educators in the Delta:
- a. Expand the strategic partnership with *Mississippi Valley State University* to conduct symposia and workshops that provide intellectual and professional development specific to Mississippi Delta culture
 - b. Establish a cadre of professional development experts, specific to K-12 education, that provide voluntary training to K-12 educators
 - c. Develop workshops and programs designed to empower informal educators, students of all ages, and community leaders to teach the youth of the Delta in both formal and informal education

- 4) Engage in community outreach and connection
 - a. Expand the strategic partnership with the *Delta Health Alliance* to ensure a greater and healthier quality of life for all communities in the Mississippi Delta
 - b. Expand the strategic partnership with *Middle Tennessee State University* to support the development of the monument and provide educational opportunities for students in the heritage preservation program
 - c. Expand the strategic partnership with the *B.B. King Museum* and the *Mississippi Arts Commission* to co-produce cultural projects and programs
 - d. Expand the strategic partnership with *Club Ebony* to co-produce cultural projects and programs
 - e. Expand the strategic partnership with *Mississippi Center for Justice* to offer workshops and lectures to the youth of the Mississippi Delta regarding self-empowerment and appreciation of their ancestry and legacy
 - f. Expand the strategic partnership with the *Mississippi Action for Community Education (MACE)* to deliver the world's oldest annual Blues and Heritage festival, in Greenville, MS
 - g. Establish a music exchange that connects American Blues musicians with traditional musicians of traditional African music, all across the continent of Africa and the Caribbean
 - h. Establish additional partnerships, as appropriate and necessary, to ensure that Khafre, Inc is able to further deliver upon its mission and realize its vision
- 5) Operate as a repository and distributor of information about the Delta:
 - a. Establish a database of information on the history of the Delta to include the Blues and other musical traditions, the cotton industry and African-American culture
 - b. Based on the development of the database, establish a marketing campaign and distribution system to share the information with educational institutions, legislators, media outlets, children and the public at large

To work towards the accomplishment of these twenty-six strategic objectives, the Board has extensive operational planning in place with accountability structures, timelines and metrics for success. We are working as a team to identify the immediate, short-term, mid-term and long-range priorities and will be adjusting our efforts accordingly. Additionally, with the myriad of sources of revenue currently available to the organization, as well as funds that will be coming as we move forward with this plan, board members and the staff of KHAFRE are in a position to speak to all the initiatives and to respond to questions from funders, legislators, media, or the public at large.

King “Pharaoh” Khafre reigned during the 4th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt and is credited for building the second largest pyramid and the Great Sphinx of Giza transforming the landscape of Egypt. Khafre, Inc is working to transform America, one monumental step at a time

A MESSAGE FROM OUR HONORARY CO-CHAIR



Figure A.1. Dr. Maya Angelou, Honorary Chair of Khafre, Inc. Khafre Inc. Archives.

Cotton Pickers

by Maya Angelou

“Scarred, rough, chained Black hands full of fluffy cloud-like white cotton, a poignant picture of American History. We have all come far, former Black slaves and former White slave owners. All trying to live free and fair lives in our American present. We have far to go, but let us be proud that we have come this far with courage. We must not be crippled with guilt, or with hate. It is imperative that we remember our history for it is true, one who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it.”

© October 10, 2012

COTTON PICKERS OF AMERICA MONUMENT SHARECROPPERS INTERPRETIVE CENTER PROJECT OVERVIEW



Figure A.2. Cotton Pickers of America Monument statue design.

KHAFRE, INC

“Transforming America, one monumental step at a time”

HEADQUARTERED IN THE HEART OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

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ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

KHAFRE Inc is not for profit 501c3 organization that was officially incorporated in September of 2009,
by the Mississippi Secretary of State.

MISSION

To realize its' critically important and intentionally bold vision, KHAFRE Inc. will build monuments and memorials, offer programs and workshops around education, health, and history, provide resources to the formal and informal educators in the Delta, engage in community outreach and connection, and operate as a repository and distributor of information on the history, beauty, and talent of and within the Mississippi Delta, all for the overarching purpose of improving the quality of life of her sons and daughters.

PRIMARY ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL

- 1) Build monuments and memorials:
 - a. Creation of the *Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center*
 - b. Develop a *Sharecroppers Home Museum* exhibit(s) housed within an authentic "Shotgun" house
 - c. Establish a long-term partnership with da' House of Khafre Cultural Arts Center, in Indianola
 - d. Create a *Sharecroppers Memorial*, in Monteux, France
 - e. Create a *Sharecroppers Memorial*, in West Africa

- f. Develop *African and African American Legacy Trees* – one in Mississippi; and one in West Africa

PROJECT PROPOSAL

COTTON PICKERS OF AMERICA MONUMENT / SHARECROPPERS

INTERPRETIVE CENTER AND HISTORICAL TRAIL

1. *The Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center* – the flagship project of Khafre, Inc. This project, like none other, documents the history of field hands, landowners, and the usually forgotten mule that worked from “kin to kain’t” (can see in the morning to can’t see at night), and their truth and reconciliation about the “Old and New South.” Khafre, Inc shall facilitate the building of a monument that will be approximately 25 feet tall; and, will be seated on approximately 20 acres of prime cotton/“blues” land along Highway 61, just outside Mound Bayou, in Bolivar County. This Monumental project presents an opportunity to not only give dignity to those who made cotton “king,” but also to say “thank you” to grand-mama-nem and those who with their “sweat equity investments” made cotton production the number one industry in America, for nearly two-hundred years. Personal narratives and artifacts will be used in the telling of this remarkable history.

2. *Sharecroppers House Museum* – the exhibit(s) will be housed within an authentic “Shotgun” house in the eighteen counties, of the Mississippi Delta (initially); thereby, creating a “*Cotton Kingdom Historical Trail*” throughout the Mississippi Delta. Our

hope is to extend the Historical Trail to all regions of the Delta. Each location's relevance to the "Cotton Kingdom" is interpreted within each specific Museum.

THE PLAN

Khafre, Inc is working with Ed Dwight, a renowned monument developer, based in Denver, CO, Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) professors Dr. Carroll Van West and Dr. Rebecca Conard and several other advisors to create the design parameters needed to gain immediate attention, national exposure and above all meaningful financial support from notably individuals, Washington, D.C. and regional sponsors. We have included in this proposal a design concept, by Mr. Dwight that includes a historical museum/gift shop/learning and community development center that ensures the entire plan has an institutional dynamic. This plan we believe will garner significant investments, regionally, nationally and perhaps internationally as well.

This proposed concept enhances a myriad of areas that are related to systemic growth in the Mississippi Delta. The Center, with regard to economic development, will provide opportunities for other businesses to be located near this new tourist area, which not only celebrates the agricultural contributions of African Americans, but all cotton pickers of the American South.

THE MONUMENT

The overall theme is to include in visual, graphic, and textual form, a rigorous history of the African American "Cotton Picking" and farm labor experience in the Mississippi Delta. This will include a monumental central theme, as well as a "History Walk" through the slave experience, from arrival in America through the intense struggle & dark

days of hopeless despair of the slave consciousness, to the limited freedom accorded by Emancipation, to the hope of the Movement initiated by the Black visionaries that gave so much for the ultimate freedom of all.

THE SHARECROPPERS HOUSE MUSEUM

The Sharecroppers House Museum will be a classic example of the historical structures actually used, during the “Cotton Kingdom” era. Sharecropping implies that the landowner supplied the capital, land and lodging, while farmers worked the land. The harvest was then divided, reportedly into equal shares, but in reality it generally favored the landowner. This practice common in Delta has had an impact on its people since Reconstruction. Thus, for Sunflower County, it is a noteworthy agricultural and socio-economic phenomenon as well as historical fact. The Museum will include films, photographs and other documents showcasing the key artifacts needed for sharecropping. The museum will also host various didactic itineraries and activities for schools and universities. Its book and gift shop will provide access to samples of locally made culinary arts and souvenirs.

Both the Sharecroppers House Museums (aka, Cotton Kingdom Historical Trail) and The Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center are intended to increase awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the difficult life lived by cotton pickers and farmers in the American South. It is also important that visitors to historic sites, structures, and landscapes have an opportunity to investigate significant interpretive artifacts of the cotton industry and gain a greater appreciation of the sharecroppers’ experience. The goal is to preserve the legacy of the Mississippi Delta

“Cotton Kingdom” and give dignity back to those who built it but may have lost it along the way to and from the cotton fields.

THE COMMITMENT

By exposing youth to certain life changing experiences and ideas, we lay the foundation for monumental projects that inspire them to create programs and become leaders in their communities. The goal is to encourage healthy environments, based on true historical facts that enable our children to become more courageous, confident, ambitious and productive in the Mississippi Delta; thereby, becoming empowered and engaging citizens of the world.

THE SHOTGUN HOUSE

The plan for the Shotgun House is for it to be a living history museum. The house will be the attraction with a showcase of life as it was once lived by its inhabitants around the turn of the century.



Figure A.3. Shotgun house in the Mississippi Delta, circa 2012. Khafre Inc. Archives.

This recreation of a shotgun house typifies early 20th century urban workers' dwellings throughout the South. Usually one room wide and three rooms deep, there would have been a living room, then a bedroom and finally a kitchen. The shotgun house was inexpensive to build and occupied a small amount of land. The name of this style of house is derived from an African word "to-gun" meaning a place of assembly. Folk etymology, however, attributes the name to the fact that you could shoot a shotgun straight through the house because of its arrangement. What is common to all shotgun houses is the lack of an interior hallway; the rooms open one into another via doors, saving interior space.

THE SITE, THE PEOPLE, THE CULTURE

Where Mound Bayou, Mississippi intersects with the blues highway (HWY 61) is prime cotton land. Two ex-slaves from Davis Bend, Warren County, Mississippi, founded Mound Bayou on July 12, 1887. Isaiah T. Montgomery and Benjamin T. Green led the migration from Davis Bend. They, along with others, purchased land from the Louisville, New Orleans, and Texas Railway (L.N.O.T.) Company. Mound Bayou was a land of promise for African Americans. Self-help, race pride, economic opportunity, and social justice were encapsulated in this “promise.” It was a self-segregated community that fostered self-governance. Early on, Mound Bayou had a railway station, post office, cemetery, bank, six churches, historic homes, retail stores, and several schools. Its economy depended heavily on the production of cotton, timber, and corn. Politically, co-founder and mayor, Isaiah T. Montgomery and Charles Banks worked with Booker T. Washington to maintain the growth of Mound Bayou. President Theodore Roosevelt visited Mound Bayou and called it the “Jewel of the Delta”...the key example of prosperity in the Mississippi Delta.

From 1907 to 1915, the cotton industry and the railroad center allowed Mound Bayou to flourish grow. The 3,500 people currently living in and around the city of Mound Bayou are very aware of their glorious past and are currently exploring ways to reinvigorate their community and forge a new empire, to honor the “Cotton as King” era. Too much of their story is unknown to most people in the South and throughout America. The proposed site of the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers

Interpretive Center is located just outside the city limits. Thus, visitors to the Monument will have the opportunity to tour this historic city.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The educational opportunities are endless. Embedded in the Monument design are story boards, plaques, oral history narratives and stimulating visual images that capture the essential interpretations of the South, during this era in American history. As outlined in the attached design concept, visitors to the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center will be welcomed to a Central Plaza lined in *Legacy Bricks* that lead to the iconic sculptural remembrance of an enslaved family, in typical clothing for picking cotton: a tribute to the enslaved laborers and sharecroppers. We expect that students of all ages will be impacted by these images and be spurred to explore the entire Center in search of their relationship to these experiences.

The Center will serve as a magnet, drawing students and faculty from schools and colleges/universities from around the country to visit and conduct research concerning economic disparity. It will be located near several institutions of higher learning in this regard, namely Delta State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Alcorn State University Extension and Demonstration Farm, Mississippi State University Agricultural Research Facility, Mississippi Delta Community College, and Coahoma Community College.

Relative to academic citizenship, the Center will provide avenues for middle, high school, and college students to participate in community service learning associated with

educational advancement and economic development. College students will be paired with younger students to work on scientific projects related to the modernization of cotton manufacturing and agriculture. The Center will bridge these experiences for students between the arts and sciences, and enhance the overall educational development for lifelong learning, and appreciation of African American heritage as seen through the dimensions of the cotton industry.

Khafre Inc staff will work with public/private/home schools and university professors to generate curriculum that is appropriate for their respective students. A virtual site will also be developed to accommodate distance-learning capabilities.

TIMELINE / PROJECTED BUDGET

We anticipate an approximate three-year timeframe once construction begins. A projected cost for the Monument's construction is \$26 million dollars.

The Building of a National Park
THE COTTON PICKERS' MONUMENT PROJECT
Conference Proposal



Figure A.4. Cotton Pickers of America Monument statue design (CROPPED). Khafre, Inc. Archives.

A monument that pays homage to Cotton Pickers and Sharecroppers does not exist in the United States of America, nor any place else in the world. There is no documented “official” honor, nor historical acknowledgment of the people who literally tilled the path to global economic greatness, particularly America, Britain and France. Somewhere along the way buried in the tear-soaked soils of the American South, the respect and honor for these peoples’ hard-earned investment was lost. The movement to establish the *Cotton Pickers of America Monument*, *Sharecroppers Interpretive Center* and the Trail of the Global Cotton Empire is underway for the purposes of erecting a series of monuments, interpretive signage and National Parks that offer a small token of appreciation for tireless work of millions of people around the world.

Khafre, Inc leads the international charge to honor the people who built the great “Cotton Kingdom” of the Mississippi Delta and West Africa. In 2012, Dr. Maya Angelou gave voice to the movement; and in 2014 BB King sign on as Honorary Chair for the effort to honor the people who planted, chopped and picked the way to a great “Cotton Kingdom” in the Mississippi Delta; and Global Cotton Empire.

The history of cotton includes the blues narratives of: slavery, Reconstruction, capitalism, global exchange, shipping, railways, pickers (sharecroppers, day laborers, and tenant farmers), planters, distributors, consumers, and bankers. Their collective stories give significance to the investment of some of the hardest-working people, with the least amount of return. Their commitment to work reflects dignity, pride and a distinct vision of promise for future generations.

Khafre, Inc would like to present either an individual presentation or a panel that includes Ed Dwight and C. Sade Turnipseed, on this subject, during your upcoming conference. Our scholarship and presentation shall serve as a reminder to your audience that a monument is an ever-present sign of respect and appreciation for those whose hope for a brighter day wore thin, while working from kin to kain’t (can’t see in the morning to can’t see at night), in the cotton fields throughout the world, particularly in the American South and specifically in the Mississippi Delta AKA “The Cotton Kingdom;” making the Global Cotton Empire the most important manufacturing industry in the world for over two centuries.

For more information:
KHAFRE, INC, C. Sade Turnipseed, Executive Director,
sade@khafreinc.org, 662.347.8198

The Cotton Pickers

The Music, The Culture ... The Monument

A monument that pays homage to Cotton Pickers and Sharecroppers does not exist in the United States of America, or anywhere in the world. There is no documented “official” honor, nor historical acknowledgment of the people who literally tilled the path to America’s greatness, in the global economy. Somewhere along the way buried in the tear-soaked soils of the American South, the respect and honor for their hard-earned sweat equity investments were lost. *The Cotton Pickers of America Monument, Sharecroppers Interpretive Center makes the case for building a monument and a National Park* that offers a small token of appreciation for their tireless, and still, uncompensated work.

In 2012, Dr. Maya Angelou gave voice to the movement to honor the people who planted, chopped and picked the way to a great “Cotton Kingdom” in the Mississippi Delta; and Global Cotton Empire.

The legacy of cotton pickers includes the narratives of: sharecroppers, day laborers, tenant farmers, weavers, spinners, planters, distributors, consumers, and bankers. Their collective stories give significance to the music; and, the investments made by some of the hardest-working people with the least amount of return in world history. The commitment to work reflects dignity, pride and a distinct vision of promise for future generations. Their integrity and sense of purpose are what ultimately made cotton manufacturing the most important industry in the global market exchange; and cotton “the fabric of our lives,” for nearly two-hundred years ... Thanks to Dr. Maya Angelou, B.B. King, Ed Dwight and all the others who have joined with Khafre, Inc to celebrate the culture and contributions of Cotton Pickers, e.g., the Blues, Spirituals and Gospel music that kept us grounded to a special spiritual source ... for survival sake.

We would love to tell you more about this effort, please contact:

Professor C. Sade Turnipseed, Executive Director, KHAFRE, INC,
sade@khafreinc.org, 662.347.8198 ~ www.khafre.org ~ www.cottonpickers.us

APPENDIX B
ENDORSEMENTS

- **MAYA ANGELOU: TRIBUTE TO COTTON PICKERS**
- **BB KING SUPPORT LETTER**
- **BOBBY RUSH SUPPORT LETTER**
- **THAD COCHRAN, U.S. SENATOR, MS SUPPORT LETTER**
- **CONGRESSIONAL AWARD BY BENNIE THOMPSON, MS CONGRESSMAN**
- **MOUND BAYOU SUPPORT LETTER**
- **BOLIVAR COUNTY PROCLAMATION**
- **ST LOUIS ART MUSEUM LETTER OF SUPPORT**

COTTON PICKERS
by Maya Angelou

October 10, 2012

“Scarred, rough, chained Black hands full of fluffy cloud-like white cotton, a poignant picture of American History. We have all come far, former Black slaves and former White slave owners. All trying to live free and fair lives in our American present. We have far to go, but let us be proud that we have come this far with courage. We must not be crippled with guilt, or with hate. It is imperative that we remember our history for it is true, one who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it.”

© 2012, Khafre, Inc



June 27, 2014

I, B.B. King, endorse the project "Cotton Pickers of America". I give my permission to use my name on your stationary as other prominent people have including the recently deceased Dr. Maya Angelou.


B.B. King

October 20, 2015

Hi this is Bobby Rush, I'm glad you got in touch with me. It's an honor to be asked to serve on the board of the Cotton Picker's project.

To the Cotton Pickers of America, Inc,

My name is Bobby Rush, I'm glad you ask me to be a part of your great-great culture monument that I relates to so well, being a country boy raised on a farm picking Cotton and all of that kind of stuff. I spoke to someone not long ago that asked me would I be willing to be on the board. I said yes then I say it now. I just need a little more information what and when, you can use my name. But would like for someone to call text get in touch somehow to give me more in depth details about the hold matter hope my name will be some help to the KHAFRE INC.

Yours Truly,

BOBBY RUSH

THAD COCHRAN
MISSISSIPPI

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2402

COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS
RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
COMMITTEE ON
RULES AND
ADMINISTRATION

October 12, 2012

Dear Friends,

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you as you break ground for the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center.

You are to be commended for your efforts to commemorate and enlighten us about the legacy of generations of Mississippians whose work in farming cotton and in agriculture make up a good part of our state's history. The educational focus being taken by this nonprofit organization also presents us—young and old alike—with an opportunity to build on the history and cultural heritage of the Delta.

As we work to make the Delta a better place to live and work, we can be enriched by recognizing the hardships of the men, women and children who toiled this rich earth. Their labors in the cotton fields helped establish and maintain a strong agriculture industry in Mississippi. Many of the successes we see today were built in good part with the dedication of previous generations.


My best wishes are with you all today as you take a significant step toward these goals by breaking ground for this monument and interpretive center.

Sincerely,



THAD COCHRAN
United States Senator




Congressional Record
 PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

House of Representatives
HONORING DA'HOUSE OF KHAFRE
HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON
 OF MISSISSIPPI
 IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2012

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Indianola, Mississippi minority owned business, da' House of Khafre. Owned and operated by, Ms. C. Sade Turnipseed and Mr. Robert Terrell, Jr.

In 2010 da' House of Khafre opened to offer people from around the State of Mississippi and the world a place to gather and hear musicians play authentic blues and spiritual music while enjoying delicious teacakes and other delicacies. Prior to its grand opening legendary bluesman David "Honey Boy" Edwards of Shaw, Mississippi visited da' House of Khafre to bless its humble beginnings. Upon his visit, Edwards predicted that people were going to come from all over the world to see da' House of Khafre, honor its heritage and partake in the various activities and delicious food that is known throughout the Mississippi Delta.

da' House of Khafre is home to the historical Wall of Fame of Indianola, where visiting musicians from around the world, including Ghana, Norway, Japan, and France have signatures engraved in the wall which is held as a staple in the community.

Artists from these countries and many others have performed on da' House of Khafre's historical Front Porch stage where the music room door of legendary bluesman Sam Chatmon from Hollandale, Mississippi is gracefully hinged. The Chatmon's door, traditional quilts, African art, and the sweet smell of soul food provide a rural sophistication and ambiance that is reminiscent of the rich culture of the Mississippi Delta.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing da' House of Khafre and its owners, Ms. C. Sade Turnipseed and Mr. Robert Terrell, Jr. for their commitment to preserving the rich, history and heritage of the Mississippi Delta.

**A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT BY THE CITY OF MOUND BAYOU FOR THE
COTTON PICKERS OF AMERICA MONUMENT**

BE IT ENACTED BY THE MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF MOUND BAYOU, MISSISSIPPI:

WHEREAS, the Cotton Pickers of America Monument documents Mississippi's history truthfully, in the "New South"; in recognition of the people who prospered from the cotton business and, in honor of the folks who planted, chopped, and picked it.

WHEREAS, Khafre, Inc. is a nonprofit organization as defined under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended; and operates as an equal opportunity, non-profit organization which does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, or national origin; and whose purpose is to erect monuments that honor and celebrate Mississippi history and culture, including music, writers, and other artistic expressions.

WHEREAS, the National Park Service considers a new national park area based on four criteria and the City of Mound Bayou holds a standing in each area:

- 1) It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource; i.e. cotton production.
- 2) It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage; i.e. the post-slavery prominence and promise of African Americans not only in the cotton industry but other outstanding social and political accomplishments.
- 3) It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study; i.e. cotton fields become a theme park and site for state of the art Sharecroppers' Interpretation Center.
- 4) It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of the resource; i.e. the home of I.T. Montgomery, railroad station, gin mills, cotton fields, and gravesite.

WHEREAS, a Motion was made by Alderman Shelton Woodley, at the July 6, 2010 regular meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of said City. The motion was dully seconded by Alderman Linda Collins.

The Vote was called for and cast as follows:

Alderman Clifton Alderman Collins Alderman Henry

The Motion unanimously carried.

"Yea" Alderman Spann "Yea" "Yea" Alderman Woodley "Yea" "Yea"

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Mound Bayou respectfully supports the aim of Khafre, Inc. to say thank you for the first time to those who made cotton "king" and the number one industry in America, for over a hundred years.

SO RESOLVED THIS the 6th day of July, 2010.

ATTEST: _____ Sabrina C. Morton, City Clerk
 _____ Kennedy V. Johnson, Mayor

CERTIFICATE OF CLERK

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI COUNTY OF BOLIVAR

I, Sabrina C. Morton, the undersigned Clerk for the City of Mound Bayou, Bolivar County, Mississippi, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct copy of that certain ordinance of like tenor and effect, passed on the 6th day of July, 2010, by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Mound Bayou, Mississippi as fully as the same appears and remains of records in my office.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto fixed my signature on the 6th day of July, 2010.

_____ SABRINA C. MORTON, CITY CLERK

PROCLAMATION

**of the
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF BOLIVAR COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI
in support of the
COTTON PICKERS OF AMERICA MONUMENT and
SHARECROPPERS INTERPRETIVE CENTER and
COTTON KINGDOM HISTORICAL TRAIL**

WHEREAS, Khafre, Incorporate is a Mississippi non-profit corporation, whose mission is to offer educational workshops, seminars and conferences that celebrate the Mississippi Delta, and

WHEREAS, the flagship project of Khafre, Inc is the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center, and Cotton Kingdom Historical Trail and

WHEREAS, the Monument will include a visual, graphic and text form of the history of the American cotton picking, sharecropping and overall experience of farm labor in the Mississippi Delta, and

WHEREAS, the Interpretive Center will serve as an abundant source for learning about the history of cotton and the blues; the objective strategies of the enslavement and sharecropper experience; as well as provide a series of sites to allow visitors to visualize the rural setting of cotton picking and sharecropping, and

WHEREAS, the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center and Cotton Kingdom Historical Trail will capture the local significance of the cotton picking and sharecropping experience, it will also highlight the national significance on the cotton industry and the national economy, and

WHEREAS, the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center and Cotton Kingdom Historical Trail will be located in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, a town built by tow former enslaved African Americans, and

WHEREAS, the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center and Cotton Kingdom Historical Trail will attract local, national and international tourist and serve as a venue where Mississippi artists and writers can showcase their talents and celebrate the impact of the blues, southern literature, and the overall southern culture and its impact on American culture.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF BOLIVAR COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, that we do hereby support the establishment of the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center and Cotton Kingdom Historical Trail and acknowledge the potential growth of our local tourism economy by establish of the same

RESOLVED AND ADOPTED, this the 2nd day of July 2012.

SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

March 4, 2013

Khafre Inc. C. Sade Turnipseed P. O. Box 64 Indianola, MS 38751

Dear Ms. Turnipseed,

On behalf of the entire Saint Louis Art Museum staff and St. Louis community I want to thank you for a most captivating program. The Museum was delighted to present *Roots & Migration: Celebrating Art and History of the Mississippi Delta* inspired by your initiative to erect a national Cotton Pickers of America Monument Complex. Your vision and passion to share the history and legacy of the Mississippi Delta with America, and the world, was evident in your extraordinary presentation. As you shared your research and personal narratives, everyone understood that you were sharing America's story.

I applaud you and Khafre, Inc. for making education an integral part of the master plan. While many older generations still have ties to the South, younger generations are less knowledgeable and need greater exposure to this part of American history. Everyone must understand the enormous impact that cotton had on the economy and social systems in this country. With the completion of the Monument Complex, you will greatly increase the awareness, knowledge, and appreciation for those who labored before us.

Gaining the support of renowned American sculptor Ed Dwight is an achievement for which the project will immensely benefit. Everyone in the audience from the youngest to the oldest hung on his every word as he shared his visual plan and description of the Cotton Pickers of American Monument Complex.

The African American community of the St. Louis metropolitan area has a strong connection to Mississippi, as many migrated from Mississippi to the Midwest. Thanks to your efforts, we were able to expand the "Roots and Migration" story to include visual artist John Rozelle whose work is often inspired by the South and Tullia Brown Hamilton who authored *Up from Canaan: The African American Journey from Mound Bayou to St. Louis*. The audience was captivated by visionaries whose stories of our past and present will lead to a better understanding of our future.

We wish you much success in making the Cotton Pickers of American Monument Complex a reality. Joined by many St. Louis individuals, I am committed to assisting you in seeing this project to its completion and celebrating its grand opening to America!

Sincerely,

Renée Franklin

Renée Franklin, Community and Public Programs Director

One Fine Arts Drive, Forest Park St. Louis, Missouri 63110-1380 Telephone 314.721.0072
Facsimile 314.721.6172 www.slam.org

SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

PARTNERSHIPS

- **MVSU**
- **Da House of Khafre**

SPECIAL EVENTS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Jennifer Freeman, Interim Director of Communications and Marketing, (662) 254-3577.

MVSU HOSTS COTTON KINGDOM SYMPOSIUM AND AMERICAN ANCESTRAL CELEBRATION

ITTA BENA (October 8, 2012) – Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) will host the “*Inaugural Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium and American Ancestral Celebration*”, October 11 and 12, 2012 on the campus of MVSU. The two events are a collaboration between Khafre, Incorporated and MVSU. Khafre, Inc. is an organization whose mission is to build monuments and memorials, develop educational workshops, and programs that focus on topics that preserve the quality of life within the Mississippi Delta. The University is always looking for ways to expose students, faculty, staff and the Delta community to academic and historical programs.

The “*Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium*” will have stimulating discussions and historical presentations on leading-edge research, innovative practices, and foundational values of the cotton industry and lifestyle.

Invited guest participants include: honorary chair Dr. Maya Angelou, monument developer Ed Dwight, national spokesman Clifton Taulbert, internationally acclaimed economist Dr. Julianne Malveaux, retired Vice President University of Massachusetts system and Mississippi Blues Commissioner Dr. Edgar E. Smith, and Mississippi Blues Foundation Board Member Dr. Joseph Martin Stevenson.

“The partnership with “The Valley” validates the notion that a tribute and monument to sharecroppers and cotton pickers are not just timely, but is significant on many levels. Honoring the legacy of “grandmamma-nem” in an academic arena gives license to further scholarship and international acceptance,” said C.Sade Turnipseed, executive director, Khafre, Inc.

“Congratulations to Ms. Turnipseed and the board members of Khafre, Inc. Their mission to honor the legacy of those who have made the Mississippi Delta an American treasure is commendable,” said University President Donna H. Oliver.

Oliver also said, “The University wishes the organization future success, and looks forward to partnering to create innovative educational opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the community.”



KHAFRE, INC. & MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

presents

The First Annual

SWEAT EQUITY INVESTMENT IN THE COTTON KINGDOM SYMPOSIUM

October 11-12, 2012

**COTTON PICKERS OF AMERICA MONUMENT COMPLEX
GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY**

AMERICAN ANCESTRAL CEREMONY

Cotton Pickers Ball

The First Annual **SWEAT EQUITY INVESTMENT IN THE COTTON KINGDOM SYMPOSIUM**

Mississippi Valley State University
Business Education Building

Thursday, October 11, 2012
C. Sade Turnipseed, Khafre, Inc., Presiding



8:30 am	Registration opens	Monroe Golden's "The Cotton Pickers" historical exhibit (on display in lobby)
9:00	Welcome	Dr. Donna H. Oliver , MVSU President
9:10-9:15	Symposium Overview	C. Sade Turnipseed , Khafre, Inc., Executive Director
9:15-9:45	SESSION I: COTTON, BLUES AND DELTA HERITAGE (15 MINUTES EACH) Dr. Anna Hammond , Provost and Executive V.P. MVSU, Moderator	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Willie Shepard, former Cotton Picker, veteran and entrepreneur • Dr. Edgar Smith, Director Mississippi Blues Commission's Benevolent Fund • Dr. Luther Brown, Director of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, and Manager of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area during the planning phase 	
9:45-10:15	DISCUSSION	
10:15-10:25	Break	
10:25-10:30	Traditional Spiritual	Jaribu Hill , Esq.
10:45-11:30	SESSION II: UNCOMPENSATED LABOR AND COTTON AS CURRENCY (15 MINUTES EACH) RESEARCH PAPERS: Dr. Kathryn Green , History Coordinator, Dept Of Social Sciences, MVSU Moderator	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jaribu Hill, Esq., Mississippi Workers Center, "Badges and Incidents of Slavery—A Legacy of Uncompensated Labor and Exploitation" • Paul E. Spears, Sr. BSH, "The Effects of the Sharecroppers Farming System on the Education of African-American Youth in Northwest Sunflower County" • Dr. Micah Rueber, Asst. Professor of History, MVSU - "Folding Money: Cotton as Currency in 19th Century Mississippi" 	
11:30 - 11:50	DISCUSSION	Clifton Taulbert , " We Celebrate Their Survival! " (Read by Dr. Eulah L. Peterson)
12:00-1:00	LUNCH BREAK	Art Talk by Robert Ketchens "Sharecroppers Strike of 1939" 2010-11 Series (14 pieces)

CONCESSIONS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE IN FOYER

KHAFRE, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Maya Angelou, Honorary Chair
 Hermon Johnson, Board Chair
 Joseph Martin Stevenson, PhD
 Valerie Simpson, PhD
 Christopher W. Shults, PhD
 Oilye Brown-Shirley, PhD
 Catherine Gardner
 Eulah L. Peterson, PhD
 Heather McAlear, JD
 Leo Turnipseed, MA

ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Carroll Van West, MTSU Center of Historic
 Preservation, Director
 Dr. Rebecca Conard, MTSU Public History
 Program, Director
 Mary Francis Shepard, Queen of Jook
 Cheryl Taylor, Executive Director,
 Delta History Museum
 Sylvester Hoover,
 Delta Heritage Specialist
 Marvin Haire, PhD
 Arthur Marble,
 Mayor of Indianola (past)
 Sherry Nelson, WABG-TV
 Robert Terrell, Cultural Arts Activist
 Rev. Charles Thomas, Educator
 Val Ward

KHAFRE, INC. STAFF

C. Sade Turnipseed,
 Executive Director/Founder
 Linda Rule, Special Projects Director
 Mary Roberts, Youth Programs Director

STEERING COMMITTEE

Rev. Darryl Johnson, Owner,
 Professionals Florist
 Dr. Elaine Baker, City Revitalization
 Task Force
 Cheryl Line, Manager of Tourism,
 Bolivar County
 Linda Stout Coleman,
 Parents 4 Public Schools
 Mr. William Crockett, Superintendent,
 Mound Bayou Public Schools
 Rev. Larry Haywood, Mound Bayou
 Area Ministers
 Mr. Pedro Woods, Owner, Peter's Pottery
 Mr. Sampson Williams, Civic
 Representative, Little Mound Bayou
 Ms. Lynette Criss, President,
 American Legion Auxiliary
 Ms. Jarvis Malone, Student,
 John F. Kennedy Memorial High School
 Sis Donella Hartman,
 St. Gabriel Mercy Center
 Mr. Louis Sanders, Mound Bayou
 Area Farmers
 Mr. Earl L. Carmiche, Civic Representative
 Mr. Henry Perkins, Mayor, Winstonville, MS
 Ms. Bonita A. Conwell, President,
 SRBW Women in Agriculture
 Mrs. Willena S. White, Civic Representative

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Ed Dwight Monument Developer/Designer
 Eric Davis, Architect
 Clifton Taubert, Writer/Historian
 Jerry Radmond, Principal and
 Sr. Design Director, Redmond Design
 Janbu Hill, Legal Consultant
 Dr. Stephanie Toothman, Associate Director,
 Cultural Resources, National Park Service
 Kaiser Brown, Certified Public
 Accountant—Banks, Finley,
 White & Company
 Kenneth H. P'Pool, Deputy State Historic
 Preservation Officer for Mississippi and
 Director of the Historic Preservation Division
 of the Mississippi Department
 of Archives and History
 Pam Chatmon, WABG-TV
 Cissy Anklar, Interpretive Center
 Museum Consultant
 Will Hooker

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Bennie Thompson, Congressman District 2
 Kennedy Johnson, Mayor of Mound Bayou
 Mound Bayou, Board of Alderman
 Trina George, Director
 Rural Development, Mississippi
 Richard Coleman, Supervisor District #3
 Demick Simmons, Mississippi State Senator
 Robert Jackson, Mississippi State Senator
 David Jordan, Mississippi State Senator
 Willie Simmons, Mississippi State Senator
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 Richard Coleman, Supervisor Bolivar County
 Preston Billings, Supervisor Bolivar County
 Larry King, Supervisor Bolivar County
 James McBride, Supervisor Bolivar County
 Donny Whitten, Supervisor Bolivar County
 Linda Coleman, Mississippi State
 Representative, Bolivar County
 Johnnie Thomas, Mayor Glendora
 Kathleen Jenkins, NPS, Natchez
 Mike Madell, NPS, Vicksburg

**NO WONDER
 THEY WERE STRONG.
 THEY HAD AN ENTIRE COUNTRY
 ON THEIR BACKS.**

662.347.8198 (PHONE)
 info@khafreinc.org (E-MAIL)
 www.khafreinc.org (WEB)



Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom



Sweat Equity Symposium (MVSU campus)

14000 HWY 82 West Itta Bena, Mississippi
Will be held in the Business Education Auditorium, Free Event.
Thursday 10/11/12 @ 9am

American Ancestral Celebration (MVSU campus)

At the pond in front of the Harrison Auditorium (and gymnasium). Featuring African drumming and candle light vigil in honor of our ancestors who picked cotton in the American south (bring a white candle). Free Event.
Friday 10/12/12 @ 6pm

Plan now to join us in Itta Bena, at THE VALLEY, for the first annual Khafre, Inc., "Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom" symposium. Khafre, Inc is all about building out monumental projects that allow reflection, reconnection, and renewal. This will be two days of stimulating discussion about leading-edge research, innovative practices, and foundational values.

Cotton Pickers Ball

It's a "black tie" affair!

"Overalls or period-piece and (cotton pickin') attire" are encouraged!

Featuring Gospel/Soul Singer LACEE

Also storytelling by Helen Sims, "In the spirit of Fannie Lou"

Located in the Harrison Auditorium (and gymnasium)

on MVSU's campus

Friday 10/12/12 @ 7pm

Advance tickets \$25 are available at the MVSU box office, da' House of Khafre, or online at khafreinc.org.

Student tickets \$5 with school photo I.D. at the door.

Silent auction of cotton pickin' art

Food will be provided

Presented by Khafre, Inc in conjunction with MVSU. For more information about the symposium please contact C. Sade Tompkins 662.347.8998 sade@khafreinc.org for the Cotton Pickers Ball contact Linda Rake 662.635.3331 rookie01@yahoo.com



2 N D A N N U A L
**SWEAT EQUITY INVESTMENT
 IN THE COTTON KINGDOM**
 S Y M P O S I U M

Join Khafre, Inc. on the beautiful campus of Mississippi Valley State University for the
 2nd Annual
"SWEAT EQUITY INVESTMENT IN THE COTTON KINGDOM SYMPOSIUM"
 OCTOBER 17, 2013 | 9:00 A.M.
 MVSU SOCIAL SCIENCE BUILDING | FREE ADMISSION

AMERICAN ANCESTRAL CELEBRATION
 OCTOBER 18, 2013 | 6:00 P.M.
 WEST LAKE
 Featuring African drumming and candle light vigil in honor of
 our ancestors who picked cotton in the American South. (Bring a white candle)
 FREE ADMISSION

COTTON PICKERS BALL
 OCTOBER 18, 2013 | 7:00 P.M.
 IT'S A "BLACK TIE" AFFAIR
 MVSU ROYAL ROOM
 Featuring: Otis Clay, Marshall Thompson and Syl Johnson
 Storytelling by Helen Sims, "In the spirit of Fannie Lou" There will be a silent auction of "Cotton Pickin" art.
 Over-alls or "Cotton pickin" attire is encouraged
 *Food will be provided

Advance Tickets Are \$25 At The MVSU Cashier's Window And Online At Khafreinc.Org. Student Tickets Are \$5 With ID At The Door.
 For More Information About The Symposium,
 Please Contact C. Sade Turnipseed At 662.347.8198 Or Email Her At Sade@Khafreinc.Org.
 For Information About The Cotton Pickers Ball,
 Please Contact Linda Rule At 662.635.3311 Or Email Her At Linda@Khafreinc.Org.

 MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE
 UNIVERSITY

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION The 3rd Annual

Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium and Cotton Pickers Ball

**Mississippi Valley State University • Itta Bena, Mississippi ~and~ da' House of
Khafre • Indianola, MS**

Now accepting abstracts/proposals • Deadline: October 17, 2014 Conference website:
www.khafreinc.org

Plan now to join **Khafre, Inc** in Itta Bena, MS at **Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU)**, for the third annual ***“Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium”*** on ***FRIDAY NOVEMBER 7, 2014***. Khafre, Inc is all about building monumental programs that allow reflection, reconnection, and renewal. This will be a day of stimulating discussion about historic preservation, leading-edge research, innovative practices, and foundational values. The one-day event concludes with a good-old-fashion “black-tie” (or period-piece costume) ***“Cotton-Pickers’ Ball and Ancestral Celebration”*** at da’ House of Khafre located at 300 Main St. Indianola, MS. Khafre, Inc in conjunction with Mississippi Valley State University continues to organize the USA’s premier interdisciplinary professional meeting on Mississippi Delta cotton, sharecropping, and its cultural significance in America and throughout the world. The three overlapping designations lend to a broad array of topics, both “cultural” and “economic:”

- National parks at all levels: federal, state/provincial, county, and city
- Culture; the visual and performing arts, including music, dance, tapestry, sculpture and paintings
- Sacred burial sites, cotton fields, shotgun homes and juke joints, private land-plantations, prison farms/industrial complexes Want to share your work, your ideas, and your *ideals about the Southern narrative* with the larger academic and cultural communities? The *“Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium”* is the place to do it. We invite abstracts and proposals from people who want to:
 - present a paper/poster/ poem/song/dance/Tribute to the Ancestors, or an exhibit
 - conduct an inter-generational interview/exchange/discussion (w/ grand-mama-nem, or former cotton pickers), or organize a workshop. This wide variety of options makes for an exciting, informative and uniquely diverse symposium. To submit your idea(s), go to: **www.khafreinc.org** and follow the links. **The deadline is October 17, 2014. Plan to join us in the Mississippi Delta!** We look forward to welcoming you to the place where America’s Root Music and Culture was born!

C.Sade Turnipseed, Executive Director ~ sade@khafreinc.org ~662.347.8198 **Eulah Peterson, PhD**, Conference Coordinator ~ info@khafreinc.org
Linda Rule, MA ~ Cotton Pickers Ball Coordinator ~ linda@khafreinc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The 4th Annual Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium at MVSU Reaches New Heights

Indianola, MS (October 26, 2015)—Mississippi **Valley State University (MVSU)** in collaborative partnership with **Khafre, Inc** forge ahead once again to organize America's premier interdisciplinary meeting on the Cotton Kingdom, sharecropping and the cultural significance of Cotton Pickers to the success of the American economy. **The 4th Annual Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium** will be held Thursday November 12, from 9:00 – 3:00pm, in the MVSU Social Sciences Auditorium, located at 14000 HWY 82, West Itta Bena, MS. This year's theme: "*Cotton Sacks and Freedom Quilt Narratives*" substantiates the viability of the sweat equity investment made through labor and cultural contributions by Cotton Pickers and other Plantation Workers. The following evening, Friday November 13, the "**Cotton Pickers Ball**" shall be held at 7:00pm, in da' House of Khafre, located at 300 Main Street, Indianola. All are encouraged to attend both events in costume attire worn in the cotton fields, such as "overalls and straw hats, etc."

The 1st Annual Historical Narrative Competition enhances this year's Symposium. Mississippi Delta high school seniors and MVSU students will compete for a trophy and gift card provided by Khafre, Inc and Lost Pizza, Company. The rules are simple: address this year's theme; constructed on presentation board; use any material: paper, cloth, photos, etc.; and include a synopsis describing the quilt's narrative. All projects must be delivered to the MVSU Social Sciences office "T" by 5:00pm November 5th, (or call organizers to arrange for pick up). The participants must also attend the Symposium to present their quilt narratives about "Freedom."

Confirmed participants include: Senator David L. Jordan, as keynote speaker; Dr. J. Janice Coleman, Professor of English, Alcorn; retired teacher and cotton picker Mr. Monroe Golden; Dr. Elizabeth Evans, Asst. Professor, Public Policy, MVSU; Dr. Alpha Diarra, National Cotton Spokesman of Mali, West Africa. Dr. Roy Hudson, Former MVSU President; Mr. Sterling Plumpp, MVSU Visiting Professor/Poet; Ms. Bettye Farmer, MVSU Professor of English; and others.

The MVSU Sweat Equity Singers lead by Dr. John Weiss will perform, and Greenwood native now Spelman College student Brandice Brown along with MVSU students Lyric and Morgan Johnson perform neo-soul and classical gospel music at the Symposium and Ball. Field hollers will be the ambient sounds heard throughout all events. Local storyteller Helen Sims will pay tribute to "the Spirit of Mama Lula."

Hollandale folk artist Dorothy Hoskins will showcase recent multi-media work on Cotton Pickin' and Sharecropping in the American South. Maya Angelou, B.B. King former Honorary Chairs of Khafre, Inc, will be acknowledged during the **American Ancestral Celebration**, with a pouring of libation beginning at 6:30pm, at da' House of

Khafre. Immediately following the Ancestral Celebration we will begin the good-old- fashion "Cotton Pickers Ball." This is a "black-tie" affair, however, everyone is strongly encouraged to wear overalls, period costumes, or other "cotton pickin' attire." Betty's Place will provide an elaborate selection of gourmet appetizers and "field food;" and a silent auction of art will be on display in support of the **Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center** project.

Dr. William B. Bynum, Jr. will be on hand to present the official welcome; and, Dr. Constance Bland, V.P. of Academic Affairs will present the official closing remarks to an expected audience of 500+ faculty members, students, high school seniors, and community members from the Delta.

Mississippi Valley State University, as a Carnegie Classified Master's University provides comprehensive undergraduate and graduate programs in education, the arts and sciences, and professional studies. The

University is driven by its commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, service, and research--a commitment resulting in a learner-centered environment that prepares critical thinkers, exceptional communicators, and service-oriented, engaged, and productive citizens. MVSU is fundamentally committed to positively affecting the quality of life and creating extraordinary educational opportunities for the Mississippi Delta and beyond.

KHAFRE, Inc. is a not for profit 501(c)(3) organization. To realize its' critically important and intentionally bold vision, KHAFRE, Inc. will build monuments and memorials; offer educational programs, and health and history workshops. Khafre, Inc. also provides resources to the formal and informal educators in the Delta, engages in community outreach, and operates as a repository and distributor of information on the beauty and talent of and within the Mississippi Delta, all for the overarching purpose of improving the quality of life of her sons and daughters.

The partnership formed between MVSU and Khafre, Inc validates the notion that a tribute and monument to sharecroppers and cotton pickers are not just significant, but long over due. Honoring the legacy of "grandmamma-nem" in a university setting gives artistic and academic license to the pursuit of gaining more scholarship and international acceptance, of the contributions and sweat equity made by the people who picked cotton throughout the American South," said Professor C.Sade Turnipseed, Executive Director of Khafre, Inc. As part of Khafre, Inc's historic preservation efforts, a permanent marker will be placed on the MVSU campus in honor of cotton pickers from the Mississippi Delta, and those who worked the repurposed cotton plantation for higher learning, MVSU.

The Symposium is free admission. Advance Cotton Ball tickets are available at da' House of Khafre. Student tickets (\$5 with picture student ID, only) will be available at the door. Cotton quilts and corporate sponsors are welcomed.

Let us make history together!

... It is time!

For more information, please call: 662.347.8198 www.khafre.org ~ www.mvsu.edu

###

SWEAT EQUITY OF THE COTTON KINGDOM SYMPOSIUM, 2015

RECAPITULATION

On behalf of the organizing committee for the 2015 Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium, I thank the MVSU family for the phenomenal support and generous contributions making this year's event truly remarkable!

The Symposium opened with a riveting recital of the "Cotton Pickers Prayer" by Brandice Andea Brown, student of performing arts from Atlanta-based Spelman College. Sponsored by Dr. Curressia Brown, Acting Chair of the MVSU Business Department, the Prayer set the tone and ensured a blessed day of cultural reflections and historical scholarship. To be explicit, a huge hug and warm embrace are in order for those who not only understood the concept "One Valley" but contributed in numerous ways making the 4th Annual Symposium the best thus far:

MVSU Social Sciences Department is greatly appreciated for their participation. Particularly, Dr. R. Mushi, Chair of Social Sciences, for his leadership and impromptu assistance in the delivery of Malian Cotton Consultant Dr. Diarra's paper on African textiles in antiquity, which was partially translated from French to English by Dr. Kathryn Green. A special award is in order for Ms. Shakia Bell, Office Manager, for the hard work and consistent effort to make sure everything goes well in the SS Department. To Ms. Kai Osborne for the mandatory attendance of ALL of her political science classes. And of course to Dr. Elizabeth Evans for her personal stories and authentic accounts of going "From the Field to the Classroom," which was delivered in a session moderated by vice president of Academic Affairs Dr. Constance Bland, substantiating the significance of countless monumental lessons learned on cotton fields and plantations throughout the Mississippi Delta AKA "The Cotton Kingdom."

The MVSU English Department, too, showed up and showed out with presentations organized by Dr. Lin Knutson and moderated by English students Ms. Sequaria Lewis, and Mr. Javon Edmond. Their challenge was notable given the substantive contributions of Mr. Sterling Plumpp, Ms. Bettye Farmer and Dr. Roy Hudson, who in the session entitled, "Cotton, Place and Delta Heritage" remarked on the cultural contributions that they never forgot and the people who they will never forget.

The special performance by Dr. John Weiss and the Sweat Equity Singers of Hall Johnson's "Ain't got Time to Die" simply amazed the nearly four-hundred-member audience by going operatically to places unexpected. Other members under Dr. Weiss' tutelage include the dynamic duo, Lyric and Morgan Johnson, who stunned the audience with an incomparable gospel performance . . . in fact they along with Ms. Barbara Baymon's solo performance of "When Black Folks Shout" were so spectacular that they can be considered the best ever!

Perhaps most notable were the cultural research projects contributed by MVSU students of the World and Modern History classes. Tybalus Toolie, who did an Oscar-worthy performance as "The Waterboy;" the volunteers that hosted the high school seniors

visiting our campus; and, those who performed as docents in Gallery 3, where African and African American traditional quilts and textiles, were on display curated and arranged by Khafre, Inc Special Projects Director Linda Rule. A special thanks goes to Gladys Fant in the MVSU Sponsored Programs Division, who solicited her church members and made a great contribution of five (5) American traditional quilts. Beyond all else, *The 1st Annual Historical Narrative Competition* participants proved exceptional in their interpretation of the “Cotton Quilts and Freedom Narratives” themes onto poster board presentations of art. The participating MVSU students were: Jylen Grayson (1st Place Award), LaJaris Pates, Na’Kaila Sandidge, and Derry Skinner. The 1st place winner was determined by MVSU’s SGA President Brandon, along with official judges composed of MVSU faculty, staff: and community members Professor Ronald Minks, Dr. Ronald Love, Dr. J. Janice Coleman, Shakia Bell, Dr. Richard Mushi, Linda Rule and Cassandra Krah. These posters will remain on permanent display in History Instructor C. Sade Turnipseed’s office in the Social Sciences Building.

Additional highlights came from MVSU alumni Senator David L Jordan, who delivered the most impactful keynote address imaginable discussing “From the Mississippi Cotton Fields to the State Senate;” Professor of English at Alcorn State University Dr. J. Janice Coleman delivered the key message of Freedom via quilts narratives in tribute to B.B. King and the musical legends from the cotton fields. Monroe Golden, who for the past four years represented “the authentic voice” of the Cotton Pickers; and, Mr. Robert Terrell for his superb stage management skills. To cap off the day, Harvey Jackson Jr’s Gentry High School Choir literally blew the roof off the building with their stellar performances!

The teamwork of our MVSU Public Relations Department, as expected, did not disappoint. Under the leadership of Maxine Greenleaf and the artistic genius of John McCall, participants were able to take with them the ideal illustration of this year’s theme on the souvenir program and poster designs. On previous occasions Ms. Wanda Young extended the services of the MVSU media to assist in the promotion of this year’s Symposium.

Participating students and members of the audience received complimentary lunches sponsored by MVSU’s Academic Affairs, the President’s Office and the Social Sciences Department. And, as usual Mr. Tommy Verdell and the Facilities team led by Mr. Vanderbilt Dixon were everything for everybody and set up a fantastic stage designed by Special Events Manager, Cassandra Krah. The security of all was experienced due in large measure to the MVSU Police team under the leadership of Chief Leron Weeks and officer Simpson. Other sponsors for this year’s events included community partners: Khafre, Inc., the Sunflower Consolidated School District featuring Harvey Jackson Jr. and the Gentry Choir, Lost Pizza, Co., Doc’s Trophy’s, Staplcotn, Embassy of Mali, Dr. Curressia Brown and Family, Helen Sims, J. Janice Coleman, da House of Khafre, Linda Rule, Gladys Fant, Ms. Connie Hearn, Ms. Mary Mays and of course, Grandmama’nem. As associate vice president of Academic Affairs Dr. Kathie Golden, stated in her closing remarks, so many "thank yous" are in order and have already been said; but do know we here at The Valley appreciate the work and effort to realize the vision of One Goal. One Team. One Valley by actually bringing it into manifestation ... and so it was Thursday,

November 12, 2015!

Respectfully submitted,

C.Sade Turnipseed, History Instructor MVSU History Program – Social Sciences
Department;
Executive Director, Khafre, Inc founding organization of the Cotton Pickers of America
Monument Project

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NEXT YEAR'S SYMPOSIUM and COTTON
PICKERS BALL NOVEMBER 10 AND 11TH 2016. THE THEME WILL EVOLVE
AROUND COTTON AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY**

For more information:

Call 662.347.8198
or visit www.khafre.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE ECONOMY OF THE COTTON KINGDOM AND THE CONFEDERATE SOUTH

Indianola, MS (May 18, 2016)—**Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU)** in collaborative partnership with **Khafre, Inc** forge ahead once again to organize America's premier interdisciplinary meeting on the Cotton Kingdom, sharecropping and the cultural significance of Cotton Pickers to the success of the American economy. **The 5th Annual Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium** presents with topical issues and images depicting ***THE ECONOMY OF THE COTTON KINGDOM AND THE CONFEDERATE SOUTH***. This year's theme further substantiates the viability of the sweat equity investment and cultural contributions made through labor by Cotton Pickers Planters and other Plantation Workers. The annual event takes place in Itta Bena, on MVSU's campus in the Social Sciences auditorium Thursday, November 10th @ noon for a special brownbag "art-talk" session featuring renowned artist John Jones; and a full day of stimulating lectures, dramatic performances, and visual arts on Friday, November 11, beginning 9:00am.

South Carolina native and resident John Jones will present the keynote address for this year's Symposium. Mr. Jones is a world famous artist who has traveled extensively artistically displaying and discussing his scholarly research entitled, ***Confederate Currency: The Color of Money***. The book investigates the importance of slavery in the economy of the South. Artist John W. Jones has researched and documented over 126 images of slavery that were depicted on Confederate and Southern States' money. The juxtaposition of the framed Confederate Currencies with the acrylic paintings inspired by the slave images on the currencies makes a very powerful statement on the contribution of enslaved Africans to the American economy. In these paintings, as John says, "history informs art, which in turn artfully reveals more history."

The book's notoriety exploded when the exhibition was reviewed in over 261 media publications, including: Time Magazine, The New York Times, CNN, PBS, San Francisco Chronicle, Sacramento Bee, and Associated Press, along with numerous other media outlets who gave coverage to its 2002 release. Thus far, Jones and his team have presented throughout the United States, but never before in Mississippi.

MVSU and the Khafre, Inc team are excited and extremely proud that Mr. Jones has accepted the invitation to come to Mississippi, for the first time, and to display his highly acclaimed exhibit. "The voices of African Americans who labored in the cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta have lay silent for too long. The Cotton Symposium provides a forum for their stories, contributions and legacies and to be learned," stated Dr. Constance Bland, VP Academic Affairs at MVSU. In addition, this year's Symposium will feature a scholarly panel from Mali, West Africa and other international leaders in the cotton industry.

A Call for Participation is underway to attract the interest of private collectors and archivists who may have access to confederate dollars, antebellum (or post-antebellum) plantation currency that features cotton production or agriculture (of any form). In addition, the **2nd Annual Historical Narrative Competition** enhances this year's Symposium. Mississippi Delta high school seniors and MVSU students will compete for a trophy and gift card provided by local businesses. The rules are simple: address this year's theme; constructed on presentation board; use any material: paper, cloth, photos, etc.; and include a synopsis describing the currency's narrative ... more details will follow. Local businesses are encouraged to participate with sponsorships and gift certificates for the best poster presentations. Both the student research projects and the celebrated works of Mr. Jones will be on public display on the MVSU campus throughout the symposium and afterwards for the remainder of the month of November in da' House of Khafre, located at 300 Main Street, in downtown Indianola, MS.

Mississippi Valley State University, as a Carnegie Classified Master's University provides comprehensive undergraduate and graduate programs in education, the arts and sciences, and professional studies. The University is driven by its commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, service, and research--a commitment resulting in a learner-centered environment that prepares critical thinkers, exceptional communicators, and service-oriented, engaged, and productive citizens. MVSU is fundamentally committed to positively affecting the quality of life and creating extraordinary educational opportunities for the Mississippi Delta and beyond.

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The partnership formed between MVSU and Khafre, Inc validates the notion that a tribute and monument to sharecroppers and cotton pickers are not just significant, but long over due. Honoring the legacy of "grandmamma-nem" in a university setting gives artistic and academic license to the pursuit of gaining more scholarship and international acceptance, of the contributions and sweat equity made by the people who picked cotton throughout the American South," said Professor C.Sade Turnipseed, Executive Director of Khafre, Inc. As part of Khafre, Inc's historic preservation efforts, a permanent marker will be placed on the MVSU campus in honor of cotton pickers from the Mississippi Delta, and those who worked the repurposed cotton plantation for higher learning, MVSU.

Let us continue to make history together!

For more information about Symposium registration, participation and sponsorship, please contact Prof. C. Sade Turnipseed, cassie.turnipseed@mvsu.edu, or 662.347.8198
www.khafreinc.org ~ www.mvsu.edu

###

ABOUT JOHN JONES

and *Confederate Currency: The color of money, images of slavery in Confederate and southern states currency*

John W. Jones' artistic investigation of a time when slavery and currency were one makes a powerful statement about the contribution of enslaved Africans to the American economy. In bringing these images to the foreground, he reveals a story few history books tell. Yet, these bold acrylics do more than translate the engravings of slave labor enshrined in our monetary system by banks of the South. Hanging in juxtaposition, paintings and currencies create an intriguing and compelling experience of discovery.

Confederate Currency: The Color of Money tells a story which, though set in 19th century America, speaks profoundly to the national dialogue today. The book creates a poignant, provocative and illuminating focal point for engaging such issues as slavery, reparations, racial profiling, racial healing, institutional racism and discrimination.

The book is published in conjunction with the three-year traveling exhibition: *Confederate Currency: The Color of Money, Depictions of Slavery in Confederate and Southern States Currency*.

The 176-page book with 162 full color pages is edited by Gretchen Barbatsis, a professor of Telecommunication at Michigan State University. Richard Doty, a numismatist and curator of American History at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC and author of *America's Money-America's Story* and *Money of the World* provide additional scholarly essays. Wilmot Fraser, a Professor of African American Studies, retired from Cheney University Pennsylvania, and co-author of *To Be or Not ... to Bop—Memoirs of Dizzy Gillespie*. Jack McCray is a writer, book reviewer and copy editor at *The Post and Courier* newspaper of Charleston, SC. Donald West is an instructor of History, Humanities and Government at Trident Technical College in Charleston, SC.

The scenes are explosive to the mind's eye.

These images of slavery in Confederate and Southern states currency as painted and depicted by Mr. Jones' brings to life a part of American history many people today may not know anything about factually, or may secretly tend to deny existed for whatever reason(s).

Noted historian Dr. Fraser in his contribution to the book, "Studying and Painting 'Blood Money' In the New Millennium" cites, and very correctly, the skills and sensitive visions

of Mr. Jones' artistic powers of observation, draftsmanship and colorful expression, and how they became crucial in extracting from the dehumanized engravings the essential humanity of their subject matter. After reading, few could argue with Dr. Fraser's astute observations.

The subject of slavery, no matter how "touchy" it may be viewed, is a terrible and ugly blot on the soul of America's historical legacy, and that's something no one can deny. But it's still history all the same, complete with the bitterness, both White and Black.

SOURCE:

<http://www.colorsofmoney.com>

<http://www.amazon.com/Confederate-currency-images-slavery-southern/dp/0972282319>,
(accessed April 17, 2016)

**CALL FOR PAPERS / PRESENTATIONS
THE ECONOMY OF THE COTTON KINGDOM AND
THE CONFEDERATE SOUTH**

The 5th Annual

Cotton Kingdom / Sweat Equity Symposium and Cotton Pickers Ball
Conference website: <http://cottonpickers.us/symposium/> ~ 662.347.8198

Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) in collaborative partnership with **Khafre, Inc** forge ahead once again to organize America's premier interdisciplinary meeting on the Cotton Kingdom, sharecropping and the cultural significance of Cotton Pickers to the success of the American economy. This year's theme: ***"THE ECONOMY OF THE COTTON KINGDOM AND THE CONFEDERATE SOUTH"*** will stimulate two days of discussion about historic preservation, leading-edge research, innovative practices, and foundational values. Plan now to join Khafre, Inc in Itta Bena, MS at MVSU, for the fifth annual ***"Cotton Kingdom / Sweat Equity Symposium."*** This year's event begins with a special brownbag "art-talk" session featuring renowned artist John Jones, **Thursday, November 10th @ noon**; and a full day of stimulating lectures, dramatic performances, and visual arts on **Friday, November 11**, beginning at 9:00am.

A Call for Participation is underway to attract the interest of private collectors and archivists who may have access to confederate dollars, antebellum (or post-antebellum) plantation currency that features cotton production or agriculture (of any form). In addition, the **2nd Annual Historical Narrative Competition** enhances this year's Symposium. Mississippi Delta high school seniors and MVSU students will compete for a trophy and gift card provided by local businesses. The rules are simple: address this year's theme; constructed on presentation board; use any material: paper, cloth, photos, etc.; and include a synopsis describing the currency's narrative ... more details will follow. Local businesses are encouraged to participate with sponsorships and gift certificates for the best poster presentations. Both the student research projects and the celebrated works of Mr. Jones will be on public display on the MVSU campus throughout the symposium and afterwards for the remainder of the month of November in da' House of Khafre, located at 300 Main Street, in downtown Indianola, MS.

Khafre, Inc is all about building monumental programs that allow reflection, reconnection, and renewal. The agency and resistance of these narratives will also reflect on the subtle and continuing impact of cotton on life in the Delta and throughout the South. The one-day event concludes with a good old fashion "black-tie" (or period-piece costume) ***"Cotton-Pickers' Ball and Ancestral Celebration"*** at da' House of Khafre located at 300 Main St. Indianola, MS.

The three overlapping designations lend to a broad array of topics, both "cultural" and "economic:"

- Culture; the visual and performing arts, including music, dance, tapestry, sculpture and paintings, burial sites, cotton fields, shotgun homes and juke joints, private land-

- plantations, prison farms/industrial complexes
- The determined spirit to be free and independent; and the accommodating vision to do the work for future generations
- National parks at all levels: federal, state/provincial, county, and city

Want to share your work, your ideas, and your *ideals about the Southern narrative* with the larger academic and cultural communities? The *Cotton Kingdom Symposium* is the place to do it. We invite abstracts and proposals from people who want to:

- present a paper/poster/ poem/song/dance in Tribute to the Ancestors, or an exhibit
- conduct an inter-generational interview/exchange/discussion (w/ grand-mama-nem, or former cotton pickers), or organize a workshop.
- Student Historical Narrative Competition

This wide variety of options makes for an exciting, informative, and uniquely diverse symposium. To submit your idea(s), go to: www.khafreinc.org and follow the links. **The deadline is Friday, October 21, 2016.**

Plan to join us in the Mississippi Delta! We look forward to welcoming you to the place where America's Root Music and Culture was born!

For More Information, Please Contact:

C.Sade Turnipseed, Khafre, Inc

sade@khafreinc.org ~ 662.347.8198 ~ <http://cottonpickers.us/symposium/>

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

COTTON PICKERS OF AMERICA MONUMENT AND SHARECROPPERS INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Khafre, Incorporated was organized December 2009 in the State of Mississippi, as a 501(c) (3) not for profit organization. A nine member Board of Directors, which has appointed Professor C. Sade Turnipseed to serve as its Executive Director and to administer day-to-day operations, governs it. Khafre, Incorporated seeks to carry out its mission/purpose, which is to offer educational workshops, seminars, and conferences that celebrate the Mississippi Delta culture and its contribution to world culture. It will oversee all aspects of planning, programming and production of all projects.

Khafre, Inc., in collaboration with Ed Dwight, noted sculptor and monument developer, has organized a grassroots effort to create the Cotton Pickers of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center in Bolivar County, MS. The proposed Monument complex will be located west of Mound Bayou, MS, and a short distance from HWY 61 on West Mound Bayou Road. It will honor those who planted, chopped, and picked cotton in America for hundreds of years. The Complex is seen as a way to say "Thank You" to all who helped to make cotton king and will be the first monument that gives significance to the "cotton picking" legacy of America. Our honorary chair is Dr. Maya Angelou and Clifton Taulbert is serving as a national spokesman.

Mound Bayou will greatly benefit from this project. Historically, Mound Bayou was a leader in the Delta with their cotton industry and helped Bolivar County lead the world in cotton production, during the 1920s. Many cotton producers looked to farmers in Mound Bayou for guidance in methods for bringing in a quality product. The Cotton Pickers of America and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center will provide an opportunity to tell our story and give recognition to our ancestors for the major role they played in cotton production in this area.

UPCOMING PROJECT EVENTS

Sweat Equity Investment in the Cotton Kingdom Symposium

Thursday, October 11, 2012—9:00 am MS Valley State University, Itta Bena, MS

Monument Ground Breaking Ceremony

Friday, October 12, 2012—12:00 N Brown-Shirley Ancestral property, Mound Bayou, MS off
HWY 61

Ancestral Drum Ritual, Libation, and Circle Prayer

6:00 pm MVSU Campus

Cotton Pickers Ball

7:00 pm Harrison Auditorium/Gymnasium, MVSU Campus Advance Tickets: \$25 Student
Tickets: \$5 (with student ID) at the door
~ Black Tie or "Cotton Pickin" Attire ~

**PETITION OF SUPPORT FOR THE COTTON PICKERS OF AMERICA MONUMENT
AND SHARECROPPERS INTERPRETIVE CENTER**

I/We, the undersigned, a Mississippi Delta resident, do support the grassroots efforts of KHAFRE, Inc. (non-profit 501 (c)3), in collaboration with Ed Dwight (monument developer) to create the Cotton Pickers' of America Monument and Sharecroppers Interpretive Center, in Bolivar County, MS. I also understand the proposed Monument complex may be an appropriate addition to the National Park System.

APPENDIX D

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC SITES, NATIONALLY (CIRCA 2015)¹

- African Burial Ground National Monument, New York
- Booker T. Washington National Monument, Virginia and Boston
- African American National Historic Site, Massachusetts
- Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, Kansas
- Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Louisiana
- Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site, District of Columbia
- Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument, Ohio
- Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water trails Network Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia
- Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia
- Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, Ohio
- Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas
- Fort Scott National Historic Site, Kansas
- Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, District of Columbia
- George Washington Carver National Monument, Missouri
- Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia,
- Florida Hampton National Historic Site, Maryland
- Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia and Maryland
- Independence National Historical Park, Pennsylvania
- Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve: Louisiana, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon,
- Jim Crow Museum, Big Rapids, Michigan
- Washington Lincoln Memorial, District of Columbia
- Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, Arkansas
- Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, Virginia
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial District of Columbia
- Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, Georgia
- Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, District of Columbia
- Museum of African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA
- New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, Louisiana
- Nicodemus National Historic Site, Kansas
- Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial, Ohio
- Petersburg National Battlefield, Virginia
- Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, Richmond, CA

¹ National Parks Service, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/descrip.htm>; <http://www.nps.gov/nr//travel/culturaldiversity/textonly.html>.

- National Battlefield Park, Virginia
- Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, Alabama
- Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, Florida
- Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, Alabama
- Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site, Alabama
- Virgin Islands National Park St. John, Virgin Islands

National Park Service: Highlighting Cultural Diversity:

- History, Culture, and People
- Historical Themes
- African-American History Along the Golden Crescent of the Atlantic Coast
- Legends of Tuskegee
- Our Shared History - African American History
- Celebrations of Women's History
- Celebrations of National Hispanic Heritage
- Confinement and Ethnicity: Japanese Americans and World War II
- Celebrations of Asian-Pacific Heritage

Mississippi National Parks Units in Mississippi

Brices Cross Roads National Battlefield Site, Baldwyn, MS	National Battlefield Site
Shiloh National Military Park, Corinth, MS	National Military Park
Gulf Islands National Seashore, Gulf Breeze, Florida and Ocean Springs, MS, FL	National Seashore
Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez, MS	National Historical Park
Natchez Trace Parkway, Tupelo, MS, AL, TN	Parkway
Tupelo National Battlefield, Tupelo, MS	National Battlefield
Vicksburg National Cemetery, Vicksburg, MS	National Cemetery
Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg, MS	National Military Park

APPENDIX E

NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE AGREEMENTS

- **“Challenge Cost-Share Authority**— authorizes the NPS to enter into agreements with cooperators for the purpose of sharing costs or services in carrying out authorized functions and responsibilities of the Secretary with respect to any unit or program of the national park system, any affiliated area, or any designated National Scenic or Historic Trail. This authority allows the agency to negotiate and enter into cooperative agreements with any State or local Government, public or private agency, organization, institution, corporation, individual, or other entity. A cooperative agreement may be utilized if there is substantial involvement in the project on the part of the NPS. This section principally gives authority for joint-funding arrangements entered into with non-federal partners (“cooperators”), although it also addresses “sharing...services in carrying out authorized functions and responsibilities...this authority must also be read in conjunction with the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977 and other authorities to ensure that a Challenge Cost-Share agreement is not used when a procurement contract would be most appropriate.”
- **Challenge Cost-Share Agreement** – An agreement entered into between the NPS and any cooperator for the purpose of sharing costs or services in carrying out a public purpose with respect to any unit or program of the national park system, any affiliated area, or any designated national scenic or historic trail. Approved projects under the Challenge Cost-Share Program must demonstrate a public benefit and may result in either a cooperative agreement or a procurement contract. An SF-424 is also required.
- **Challenge Cost-Share Program (CCSP)** – A program established in 1993, seeks to support Increased participation by neighboring communities and qualified partners in the preservation and improvement of National Park Service natural, cultural, and recreational resources; and in all other authorized Service programs and activities--both outside or inside park lands, and on national trails as defined under the National Trails System Act (*16 U.S.C. §1241-51*). The maximum Federal share for Regular Projects and National Trails System Projects is \$30,000. The maximum Federal share for Lewis and Clark Projects is \$250,000. An equal amount of eligible and allowable matching share of cash, goods, or services from non-Federal sources is required; NPS Agreements Handbook, Chapter 8; Tawana Jackson, Heritage Preservation Services, NPS GRANTS.
- **Cooperative Agreement** – A written legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the NPS and a state or local government, tribal government, or other non-federal recipient in which the principal purpose is to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to the state or local government or other recipient to stimulate or support a public purpose authorized by federal statute. Substantial involvement is anticipated between the NPS and the state or local government or other recipient during performance of the contemplated activity. A cooperative agreement may be entered into to accomplish various projects or tasks anticipated and initiated over a span of one to five years. Such a cooperative agreement shall establish the general scope of the agreement, as well as its

essential elements and the estimated funding. Either a bilateral modification or a task agreement would then be issued to authorize specific project commencement and funding.

- **Discretionary Assistance** – Most NPS cooperative agreements are considered to be discretionary. Discretionary cooperative agreements are defined as those agreements that lend themselves to competition. All assistance awards are discretionary unless otherwise earmarked by Congress for a particular source. Discretionary assistance awards are made to a limited number of selected recipients based on criteria chosen by an agency for a specific program. Programs with limited eligibility, e.g., Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (*CESUs*), and matching or cost-sharing requirements may still be considered discretionary in nature as they contain competitive components; NPS Agreement Handbook Memorandum Number 2, Modified 5/31/05 –5.
- **World Monuments Fund (WMF)** is the foremost private, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic art and architecture worldwide through fieldwork, advocacy, grant making, education, and training. Since the founding in 1965, the New York-based WMF works with local communities and partners to stem the loss of more than 300 important and irreplaceable monuments.
- **Centennial Project**
The National Park Service turns 100 on August 25, 2016, and everyone can take part in the celebration! The centennial will kick off a second century of stewardship of America's national parks and engaging communities through recreation, conservation, and historic preservation programs.

APPENDIX F**PHOTO OF PO' MONKEY AUTHORIZATION EMAIL**

On Feb 23, 2016, at 12:24 PM, wiljax, Inc. <info@wiljax.com> wrote:

Hi Ms. Turnipseed,

So long as the image is only used in the dissertation and isn't published anywhere else, and as long as proper credits are attributed to the image I'll be happy to let you use the photo. I do want to be careful about where and how often it is published as I'll be including it in an upcoming book about Mr. Seaberry.

Will your dissertation be a single printed piece or a web version?

I can allow the image in a few copies of a dissertation but not in a published book.

Kindly,

Will Jacks