

RECEIVED

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

RECEIVED

FEB 12 1993

# National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

JUN 2 1993

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

Ald. Historical Commission

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

## A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Plantation Houses of the Alabama Canebrake and their associated outbuildings (1818-1942)

## B. Associated Historic Contexts

The Development of the Alabama Canebrake from the Pre-European Settlement Period to 1942

## C. Geographical Data

The boundaries of the Canebrake were determined by examining United States Geological survey maps and determining the location of the unique soil composition of the region. This map was expanded to include planters and plantations mentioned in John Witherspoon Dubose's work, "Chronicles of the Canebrake," planters who comprised the "Canebrake society." Thus the area has been defined as lying within portions of Perry, Hale and Marengo Counties including Township 20 North, Range 3 East, 4 East, and 5 East; Township 19 North, Range 3 East, Range 4 East, Range 5 East; Township 18 North, Range 4 East and Range 5 East; Township 17 North, Range 4 East and Range 5 East; Township 16 North, Range 5 East and Sections 1-18 of Range 4 East; Township 18 North, Range 3 East (lying east of the Tombigbee and Black Warrior Rivers) and Township 17 North, Range 3 East, Sections 21-26.

See continuation sheet

## D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official

Date

5-25-93

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date

Kathleen Andrews

7/13/93

---

## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

---

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

### Introduction

The historic context information in this Multiple Property Documentation form for the Plantations of the Alabama Canebrake and their associated outbuildings (1818-1942) is presented as a single developmental history narrative organized into four distinct historic periods (which are presented under the subheadings "Native American Era to 1817," "The Vine and Olive Colony, 1817-1830," "The Rise and Establishment of the Plantation System, 1830-1865," "Reconstruction, Recovery, and Diversification, 1865-1942.") Seven thematic areas are addressed in this contextual statement through a single chronological treatment. This multiple property nomination and most of the identified historic themes span several or all of the area's developmental periods. The seven thematic areas are: Agriculture, Architecture, Ethnic Heritage - Native American and African American, Exploration and Settlement, Religion, Social and Cultural History, Transportation.

### Overview Statement

In the early 1900s, John Witherspoon Dubose penned "Chronicles of the Canebrake," a brief history of a particular region of Alabama. Dubose defined the Canebrake region of Alabama as roughly 650 square miles of territory, lying within Greene (now Hale), Marengo, and Perry counties, with its east-west boundaries being the town of Uniontown and the city of Demopolis. According to Dubose, the southern boundary was the town of Dayton while the northern point of the area was Greensboro. Within these loosely defined boundaries prior to the Civil War, Dubose wrote of a society whose "wealth, culture, and power were unsurpassed throughout the state." Dubose's "Chronicles" are filled with romanticism and nostalgia; while the author characterizes the inhabitants of the region as cultured and powerful, actually in comparison, there is no evidence to indicate that the residents of the Canebrake were more so than the residents of other areas of Alabama. Yet several factors existed in the Canebrake region during the antebellum period which resulted in the recognition of the area as one of the wealthiest regions of the state, a land of plantation owners who took pride in calling themselves "Canebrake Planters," a term which for them, embodied wealth, power, dignity and honor. In the 1820s, the Canebrake along with the rest of Alabama's Black Belt, was discovered to be an extremely fertile region, unusually suitable for the cultivation of a blight proof variety of cotton; it quickly became an area of wealthy planters and large plantations which were worked by scores of African slaves. Census evidence does indicate that in regard to cotton production and slave ownership, Greene (now Hale), Marengo, and Perry counties, portions of which comprise the Canebrake region, were ranked among the top counties in the state. In regard to per capita wealth, by 1860, Marengo and Greene counties ranked second and third respectively with Perry ranked eighth while land acreage per farm tended to be much higher than in other counties. Too, the region was populated by large numbers of settlers from the eastern seaboard who were of the Episcopal faith, a religion which historically, according to Rector Stewart McQueen, has been associated with form, ceremony, wealth and culture by other protestant faiths. Therefore, in the 1820s and 1830s, as the newly opened Canebrake lands became renown for their fertility and as the plantation system evolved, the terms Canebrake and Canebrake planter, from 1830 to 1865, were synonymous with wealth and culture. Indeed, historian Winston Smith notes, "When American planters from Virginia and the Carolinas bought out the French farms, the Canebrake became the very seat of Black Belt aristocracy." <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>John Witherspoon Dubose, "Chronicles of the Canebrake," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, IX (Winter, 1947), p. 475; Ella Storrs Christian, "The Days That Are No More," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XIV, (1952), p. 331; Clanton W. Williams, "Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum Alabama," *Alabama Review* (October, 1948 and February, 1949). (In comparison of slave labor, Marengo, Greene, and Dallas counties were in the top three of all Alabama counties in regard to percentage of slave ownership from 1830-1860. Perry County was in the top ten for the same years. Average farm size for Marengo and Greene counties in 1860 were 310.90 and 304.47 acres respectively, only Dallas County ranked higher. Perry County, which is composed proportionately of more of the upper coastal plain lands, ranked eighth in farm size with 271.65 acres per farm.); Stewart McQueen, Rector, Church of the Holy  See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     1    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd.)

The Canebrake region is located in the heart of Alabama's Black Belt prairie and encompasses parts of present day southern Hale, northern Marengo, and southwestern Perry counties. Recognized for the richness of the soil and the length of the growing season, the Black Belt prairie is a region of marked physiographic diversity, bordered on the west by the broad floodplains of the Black Warrior and Tombigbee Rivers, to the north by the gently rolling hills of the upper coastal plain, and to the south by the sandy Chunnennuggee Hills which provide an eight mile buffer between the prairie and the flatwoods. Stretching across Alabama, the Black Belt prairie forms a crescent from Bullock County on the central eastern region of the state to Sumter County and on into the state of Mississippi to the west. Originally part of an inland lake, the Black Belt soil is characterized as sticky, calcereous clay underlain with a blue lime rock (referred to either as Selma chalk or rotten limestone) at a depth of twenty feet. Where the rotten limestone lays atop the surface unmixed with the sandy drift, it would yield, on disintegration, a gray or greenish-gray clayey calcereous soil. However, when mixed with vegetable matter, the soil becomes black or very drab in color, hence the origin of the term Black Belt. Too, this clay is almost impervious, containing no pebbles or concretions. Some historians tend to view the Canebrake region as synonymous with the Black Belt, using the two terms interchangeably. But geographically, the Canebrake is a distinct region, recognized for its unique soil composition and vegetation.<sup>2</sup>

The Canebrake encompasses approximately 650 square miles which lay within naturally defined boundaries. The northern boundary lies at the foot of the coastal plain in central Hale County; these rolling hills to the north sweep to the east across central Perry County and are characteristically less fertile than the prairie lands of the Black Belt. To the south, the Chickasaw Bogue (a wet, marshy area) divides the fertile prairie from the Flatwoods region while to the west, the Black Warrior and Tombigbee rivers separate the Canebrake from the western Black Belt. An analysis of the soil composition of the Canebrake region finds that certain soils such as the Bienville and Sumter types, rest atop the rotten limestone. These soil types are very alkaline in nature, as opposed to other sections of the Black Belt prairie which tend to have an acidic base. The

---

Comforter, Montgomery, Alabama, in Church Record (Episcopal), XII (April, 1903), no. 4. (McQueen found that other protestant faiths viewed the Episcopalians as "lacking in fervent piety, were morally lax, too superior in their attitudes toward other religions, and entirely too close to the much despised Roman Catholic Church."); Stuart Harris, Perry County Heritage, (Marion, AL: Perry County Historical and Preservation Society, 1991), p. 65; Winston Smith, Days of Exile, (Tuscaloosa, AL: W. B. Drake and Son, 1967), p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Glenn N. Sisk, "Alabama Black Belt: A Social History, 1874-1917." (Typewritten, 1952, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, AL), p. 8; Unites States Department of the Interior. Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo County, 1880, Faunsdale Beat; Erhard Rostlund, "The Myth of a Natural Prairie Belt in Alabama: An Interpretation of Historical Records," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 47 (December 1957).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   2  Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd.)

soil composition is conducive for the tremendous growth of hardwood forests (including oak, ash, hickory, sweet gum, and in particular, varieties of red cedar trees which thrive in the region) though conspicuously absent from the landscape are varieties of pine and magnolia which fair poorly in the alkaline soil of the Canebrake. Too, a variety of cane once flourished on the alkaline Canebrake lands. The cane, from which the area derives its name, was not unique to the region. Both D'Iberville and Ann Royall in their respective journals, describe similar varieties of cane throughout Alabama and the species has been identified as far north as Kentucky. The specific type of cane found in the Canebrake should not be confused with the more common bamboo or river reeds; this particular type of cane grew, on the average, to six or eight feet in height, and five to eight inches in diameter. The cane required a shallow soil bed, such as that found resting atop the rotten limestone base, and a good supply of water, which it drew from the clayey nature of the soil. As opposed to bamboo, whose root structure may extend several feet, the cane grew in thick, dense "brakes" or thickets, its roots extending only a few inches before sprouting another plant. According to early maps of Alabama, the cane was probably thickest along the moist banks of Prairie Creek which stretches eastward from the Black Warrior River toward the Perry County line, through the center of the Canebrake region. The cane existed in Alabama for several hundred years until the early 1830s when two events occurred which lead to its demise. First, the cane seemed to react to a genetic time clock, flowering and then dying, concluding its life cycle. Too, due to the influx of settlers and the establishment of farms and cotton plantations in the first half of the nineteenth century, vast sections of land were cleared of the cane, and the planters discovered that the vegetation, with large and wide two to three inch leaves, made excellent cattle fodder. The cane from which the region took its name was eradicated by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest inhabitants of the Canebrake region were of course, Native Americans but in 1817, four townships within the region were granted to French Bonapartist exiles for the establishment of a colony with the purpose of raising grapes and olives. Marengo County, named in honor of the French defeat over the Austrians in Marengo, Italy was formed in 1817. Greene County (portions of which now comprise Hale County) and Perry County were both formed in 1819. The French colony struggled for over a decade, finally ceasing to exist by 1830. From 1830 until 1860, the Canebrake was the destination for large numbers of settlers from the eastern seaboard, particularly from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia and experienced its greatest population growth during this period. These settlers established vast plantations operated by large numbers of African slaves. The three counties which fell partially within the boundaries of the Canebrake were leading cotton producing areas with large numbers of slaves and slave holding families. The Canebrake enjoyed its greatest prosperity from 1840 until 1860 and witnessed the arrival of the railroad in 1857. After the Civil War, which ended the institution of slavery, the Canebrake

---

<sup>3</sup>George Stridikus, interview, Alabama State Extension Office, Auburn University, Auburn, AL, July 22, 1992; Ann Royall, Letters from Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL:University of Alabama Press, 1969) 1880 Federal Agricultural Census, United States Department of Agriculture, Faunsdale Beat; S. Augustus Mitchell, "A New Map of Alabama with its Roads and Distances," (Philadelphia, PA, 1840); "A New Map of Alabama with its Roads and Distances from Place to Place along the Stage and Steamboat Routes," (Philadelphia, PA: Thomas, Coperthwait, & Co., 1850).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   3  Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd.)

remained an area of large farms and plantations with the planters operating on the tenant and sharecropping systems. The region experienced a short-lived economic revival in the late nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries with the return of the profitability of cotton farming, a revival which ended with the infestation of the boll weevil in 1911. The population continued to fall in the rural areas as well as most cities, towns, and communities in the area after 1900. After the 1910s, due in part to the effects of the boll weevil, the labor shortage, and the food production policies during World War I, the Canebrake underwent sweeping agricultural diversification with large tracts of former cropland converted to pasture for livestock. The Canebrake remains an area of farmland, still recognized for the fertility of its soil. Today, however, the area is known more as a livestock producing region rather than for the cultivation of cotton. Too, the area is experiencing a small return of economic strength with the establishment of a relatively new agricultural enterprise, catfish farming.

#### Native American Era to 1817

The earliest known inhabitants of the present day Canebrake region were pre-historic mound builders during the Late Miller II subphase (AD 450-600), most of whom settled along the high ground above the various creek floodplains. These sites provided protection against normal seasonal flooding as well as fertile soils and available water from the adjacent streams. The inhabitants during this period usually set up farming camps not far from more permanent base camps, a number of which were located along the Big Prairie Creek. Excavations along Cottonwood Creek, a tributary of Big Prairie Creek, indicate the existence of a number of small farmsteads from this era, unique in Alabama in that they are the first instance of site location in clay soil.<sup>4</sup>

After the Late Miller II subphase, there appears to have been a long period of abandonment with archaeological findings suggesting that the next period of inhabitation occurred in the Alabama River phase of the Protohistoric period from 1550-1700, an inhabitation probably associated with the historic Choctaw Indians. Choctaw occupation sites consisted of fortified villages on high hills and ridges and isolated farmsteads located among cultivated fields in valleys. The Choctaws lived in western Alabama and in central and northern Mississippi and the Canebrake region was actually the middle ground that lay between the borders of that tribe and the militant Creeks, who controlled central and eastern Alabama. This would explain the absence of large Choctaw settlements on the eastern bank of the Tombigbee River. The name Tombigbee is a derivation of a Choctaw word for coffin-maker, the trade of a tribesman who lived on the banks of the river.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Tim S. Mistovich, "Archaeological Investigations at the Faunsdale Sites," (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama, Office of Archaeological Research. 1985).

<sup>5</sup>Mistovich, p. 6-18. Ned J. Jenkins and Richard A. Krause, *The Tombigbee Watershed in Southeastern Prehistory*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1986), p. 22.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   4  Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd.)

The first European who is known to have entered the Canebrake area was Hernando De Soto, the famous Spanish explorer who passed through the region in 1540. De Soto entered the area at the southern end of Marengo County, passed along a ridge near Old Spring Hill, turned north toward the canebrakes and the prairie and moving westward, crossed the Tombigbee. Several of the large mounds located north of Demopolis have been mentioned as the possible sites for Mauvilla, the large Indian city that De Soto destroyed in that year. The Black Warrior River which meets the Tombigbee near Demopolis, is named for the great chieftain, Tuscaloosa, who was killed by De Soto. <sup>6</sup>

In the early eighteenth century, the French from Mobile began to travel up the Tombigbee to trade with the Choctaws at "Ecor Blanc" or White Bluff, the name given to the present site of Demopolis due to the presence of tall white chalk cliffs which towered over the river. In 1735, Jean Baptist Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville established Fort Tombeche on the Tombigbee River, just north of Ecor Blanc. The French had decided to establish a fort among the Choctaws for several reasons: first, as a depot for the 1736 expedition against the Chickasaws; second, as a barrier against English traders trying to trade with the Choctaws; and third, as a military and trading post. The establishment of the Fort would keep the Choctaws loyal to the French alliance and prove to be a barrier to English expansion. Fort Tombeche proved to be an important outpost for travellers and settlers well into the next century. The French were forced out of the fort by the Treaty of Paris of 1763 and on November 22, 1763, British Lieutenant Thomas Ford took possession of the structure. In 1766, the British troops abandoned the site and in the winter of 1768, the British agent left, ending the British occupation there. In 1815, George S. Gaines, the United States Choctaw Factor, traveled up the Tombigbee and erected a new trading house, soon building a profitable business with the Indians. At this location, Gaines and a group of settlers met with the Choctaw chiefs in October, 1817, and signed a treaty by which the Indians, represented by the stately chief, Pushmataha, agreed to give up their tribal lands on the eastern side of the Tombigbee, effectively opening up large tracts of land for hundreds of settlers. <sup>7</sup>

In the early decade of the nineteenth century, the lower reaches of the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers were the destinations of a great number of settlers who were flocking to the newly opened lands in the Mississippi Territory. By 1817, two families, the McIntoshes and the Nobles, were residing at White Bluff and near the present site of Greensboro, lived Caleb Russell and a group of Tennesseans. Just south of the white chalk bluffs was the village of Jefferson, a small town which had been settled in 1810 by veterans of the Revolutionary War and north of Ecor Blanc was the Hill of Howth, the home of Colonel John McKee. The homes of the McIntoshes and the Nobles

---

<sup>6</sup>Lucille Griffith, Alabama: A Documentary History to 1900 (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1987) pp 4-9; Smith, pp. 16-21.

<sup>7</sup>"Jean Baptist Le Moyne. Sieur de Bienville and the Establishment of Fort Tombeche, 1736-1740." private paper, n. d. ; Griffith, p.29 ; Smith, 15-44; George J. Leftwich, "Colonel George Strother Gaines and Other Pioneers in Mississippi Territory," (Jackson, MS: Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series, 1916), pp. 442-56.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     5    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

were described as being small cabins made of rough hewn cedar logs covered with cypress boards.<sup>8</sup>

Today, throughout the Canebrake, there are only a handful of reminders, place names actually, that this country was once inhabited by Native Americans. Obvious reminders are the Chickasaw Bogue, a swampy land near Dayton along the southern boundary of the Canebrake which separates the prairie land from the Flatwoods. The Black Warrior and the Tombigbee Rivers, the western most boundaries of the region, are both, of course, of Indian derivation. Too, remains of aboriginal settlers have been located near the small community of Prairieville. Since the area was a borderland between two Indian tribes and was sparsely settled, it is not surprising that there is not more tangible evidence of early Native American culture.

**The Vine and Olive Colony, 1817-1830**

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte was overthrown and the Bourbon monarchy restored to the throne of France. An initial act of Louis XVIII was to order the arrest in July of 1815, of a number of high ranking Bonapartists and to banish thirty-nine followers of Napoleon from Paris. Charged with treason, several Bonapartists were court martialed. The majority of prisoners and sympathizers expected to be exiled but when Marshal Ney, a confidant of Napoleon, was executed, the Bonapartists realized the time had come for them to flee from France. The United States of America was a logical destination and eventually, a large number of exiles gathered in Philadelphia, a city which by 1816, already boasted a sizeable French population. Several French families which were residing in Philadelphia at the time of the Bonapartist's arrival, had earlier fled the slave insurrections on Santo Domingo. In 1791, African and mulatto slaves of the West Indies, led at times by Toussain L'Ouverture began a revolution against their white masters who were eventually forced to flee from the islands. Many of French colonists of the West Indies sought refuge in America, particularly at Philadelphia. These refugees included the Bayols, Chaprons, Fourniers, Martinieres, Noels, Ravesies, and Stollenwerks, all of whom were later to settle on the Canebrake lands in Alabama.<sup>9</sup>

During the fall and winter of 1816, the French emigrants were already discussing the possibility of establishing a settlement somewhere in the unclaimed land in the southwestern territories of the United States. High ranking Bonapartists such as General Charles L'Allemand and his brother General Henri L'Allemand, General Count Charles Desnouettes, and General Rigaud, formed a company in order to purchase land on the American frontier. The goal of the company was to establish a French colony which would raise grapes and olives. The company used several names such as the French Agricultural and Manufacturing Society, Society for the Cultivation of the Vine and Olive, French Emigrant Association, Tombecbe Company, and Tombigbee Company, but the name, The Vine and Olive Colony, was most often used. When the colony formally received its

---

<sup>8</sup>Smith, pp. 20-21.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     6    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

constitution in the fall of 1816, General Charles L'Allemand and other company officers dispatched agents to locate suitable lands for the cultivation of grape vines and olive trees. <sup>10</sup>

The Bonapartists soon discovered that the most abundant and available tracts of land lay in the South and West. At first, the agents sought land around Pittsburgh and the western sections of Pennsylvania. They subsequently realized, however, that in order to obtain the large tract of land needed to support the colony, they would have to push further west and south. On the recommendation of Dr. Samuel Brown of Kentucky, a physician who had travelled extensively in France as well as the United States, the Bonapartists began to consider a site for the colony near the confluence of the Tombigbee and Black Warrior rivers in the Mississippi Territory. Dr. Brown thought the climate and the soil of the region were similar to France and, coupled with the close proximity to the cities of Mobile and New Orleans, with their large French populations, made the site seem ideal. <sup>11</sup>

The French immigrants secured the assistance of some of America's most influential politicians, including Thomas Jefferson, President James Monroe, and Henry Clay. With the help of these men, Congress approved an act on March 3, 1817 which granted four contiguous townships of land in what was then known as the Alabama Territory since the recent formation and admission of the western half of the Mississippi Territory as a state. The specific townships cited in the grant were Township 18 Range 3 East and Townships 18, 19 and 20 Range 4 East which formed a backwards L, the extreme horizontal line touching present day Demopolis and the extreme vertical line touching Greensboro. The financial arrangements for the French were more than generous. Congress authorized the sale of land at \$2.00 per acre payable in fourteen years without interest. There were two stipulations to the grant: (1) that no grantee could patent more than one section or 640 acres and (2) that no grantee could claim clear title to his property until all grantees had lived up to the agreement. The rationale behind limiting the amount of land a grantee could claim was simple; it reduced the chances for land speculation and quick profits. Over a period of several months during 1817, the emigres began their migration to their land grant. In the summer of 1817, a large group of the Bonapartist exiles, under the leadership of General Count Charles Lefebvre-Desnouettes, chartered a schooner, the *McDonough*, to take them from Philadelphia to Mobile. Included in this company were some of France's leading aristocrats and professional men, including Joseph Lakanal, a noted French intellectual; Simon Chaudron, an editor and poet; General Baron Charles Francois L'Allemand; Colonel Jean Jerome Cluis; General Count Bertrand Clausel; and the colony's lawyers, George Stewart and Charles DeBrosse. <sup>12</sup>

The Bonapartists arrived in Mobile during a period that witnessed the spread of Alabama Fever, a disease (characterized by some writers as a disease) prevalent in the neighboring states to own good

---

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-30; Griffith, pp. 69-73.

<sup>12</sup>Smith, p. 29.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     7    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

rich land lying within the boundaries of the state. The fever compelled scores of people and their families to "pull up stakes" and move to the newly opened tracts of land. Joseph Baldwin observed, "Marvellous accounts had gone forth of the fertility of its virgin lands...Emigrants came flocking in from all quarters of the Union, especially from the slaveholding states." The rise in the population of what would soon become the state of Alabama in the first decades of the nineteenth century reflects the extent of the Alabama Fever. In 1800, the eastern part of the Mississippi Territory which would eventually form Alabama contained a population of only 1,250 residents; ten years later it was 9,046. In these first two decades of the nineteenth century, most settlements were located along the lower Alabama and Tombigbee River basins. After the signing of the Treaty of Fort Jackson, however, which opened up extensive acreage of former Creek Indian lands, a large rush of settlers entered the state venturing further up the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers. By 1820, the recently created State of Alabama boasted a population of 127,901. <sup>13</sup>

The French land grant lay near the confluence of the Tombigbee and Black Warrior Rivers and after a river journey up the Tombigbee with stops at Fort Stoddart, Fort Montgomery, and St. Stephens, the Bonapartists arrived by barges at Ecor Blanc or White Chalk Bluffs. Most of the passengers disembarked here while a few ventured further up the river to Fort Tombebee and the Choctaw Trading house. At Fort Tombebee, the settlers met with George Strother Gaines, the United States Choctaw Factor who encouraged the Bonapartists to settle along the White Bluffs. The land which greeted the Bonapartists was as foreign to them as they were to the country. Stretching before them was a thick wilderness of hardwood forests and dense canebrakes, broken only by occasional prairies. The large patches of cane were so dense that it reduced the ability to travel more than one or two miles per day. Colonel Parmentier, Secretary for the Colony, soon wrote to a friend, "White Bluff is one of the finest situations I ever saw in my life, and the lands lying around it are of the finest quality. Nature here offers us everything. If we know how to profit by these advantages we must be happy." Quickly, small patches of land, from one to five acres, were cleared where grape vines and olive trees were planted. Town lots were soon laid off and selected, and cabins were erected. As the town of White Bluff, a name which was soon changed to Demopolis (a Greek translation of "city of the people"), began to take shape, more Bonapartists began to arrive and a charter for the government of the city was created. <sup>14</sup>

On February 7, 1818, the Alabama Territorial Legislature formed a county from the territory included in the Choctaw Treaty of 1816 which encompassed the Vine and Olive Colony lands. In honor of the French Bonapartists, the new county was named Marengo, commemorating Napoleon's victory over the Austrians at Marengo, Italy, while the county seat was given the name of Linden, recognizing Hohenlinden near Munich, Germany where Napoleon defeated the Austrians in 1800. Although Linden was not part of the original French tract, a portion of the colony lands did lie within Marengo County with the remainder lying in Greene County,

---

<sup>13</sup>Griffith, pp. 134-135; James G. Baldwin, Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi, (New York: Sagamore Press, 1957), p. 60, first published in 1853.

<sup>14</sup>Smith, pp. 39-43. Hamner Cobbs, "Geography of the Vine and Olive Colony," *Alabama Review*, XIV (April, 1961), p. 86.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     8    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

immediately to the north. Unfortunately, the colony, which had such a promising beginning, soon encountered the first of a series of setbacks. In 1818, the territorial census for Marengo County listed 1164 whites, 533 African slaves, and three free blacks, totaling 1700 people. Of this number, less than 200 were French emigres, most of whom lived within Demopolis. On November 10, 1817, the U. S. General Land Office recognized the need for an official survey of the area near the confluence of the Tombigbee and Black Warrior Rivers. When the survey was completed on August 3, 1818, it revealed that the city of Demopolis lay just outside the four townships and the colonist soon realized that the town site would have to be abandoned. The settlers soon made the move from the east bank of the Tombigbee to the south bank of the Warrior, a distance of approximately a mile and a half and plotted out a new city which they named Aigleville.<sup>15</sup>

Each settler in Aigleville received three land allotments: a town lot, a garden plot, and farmland some distance from the city limits. The town consisted of a main street that ran north and south along which were located the cedar log cabins of the settlers. Although the town was small, it was designated as a stop on the Huntsville to St. Stephens post road. These homes were described by William Adams, a treasury agent in a report to the Secretary:

“The owner or some one on his or her account, built on the allotment a log cabin of a common height for such kind of buildings, hewed down inside and out, covered with a good board or shingle roof, laid with a plank or puncheon floor, with a log chimney, and made quite comfortable for a building of the cabin kind. The smallest cabin which I examined was 16 x 18 feet on the outside; and the largest, 19 x 23 feet. Every building had enclosed about it from one to five acres of land, and cost the owner from 85 to 100 dollars, varying in price according to the size of the cabin and the quantity of land cleared and enclosed.”

The removal of the settlers to Aigleville proved to be unsatisfactory. Hordes of American settlers were pouring into Demopolis and while Aigleville was within close proximity to Demopolis (a mile and a half), the new settlement lay in the southwestern corner of the four townships, a great distance from most of the farm allotments. Many of the settlers soon realized that in order to survive in the colony, they would have to actually move to their farm sites. There now arose on the townships, small communities named Cedarville, Hollow Square, Arcola, and Canebrake Square.<sup>16</sup>

Arcola was located on the Black Warrior River, fifteen miles north of Demopolis in the northeast quarter of Section 4, Township 18, Range 3 East and became one of the largest French settlements in the Canebrake. In the early 1820s, French engineers laid out a road that ran eastward from Demopolis and then turned north to Arcola, over a stream named French Creek. Today, Hale County Road 2 which follows the route laid out by the French, is still known as the Arcola Road. Too, French settlers established an early ferry site here, due to the frequent floodings in the spring

---

<sup>15</sup>Smith, pp. 45-53.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-81.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     9    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

and winter months. The Chaprons, Ravesies, and Stollenwerk families settled at Arcola in 1820, choosing to establish cotton plantations rather than plant the vine and olive trees. These families which had operated large scale, slave run plantation operations in Santo Domingo, were knowledgeable of and experienced in the management of large farming interests and recognized that in order to thrive on the prairies, a large labor force was needed. Whereas the Bonapartists emigres viewed their residency at the colony as temporary, the French settlers from the West Indies, who had long ago given up the idea of returning to France, were determined to make their permanent homes in the Canebrake. By 1830, at a time when most of the Bonapartists had sold their Canebrake lands and moved away, Frederick Ravesies, Francis Stollenwerk and George Stewart, were some of the largest and wealthiest slave holders in the area. Arcola was to become a town of some minor importance during the later formation of the cotton plantations and was noted as having several streets, a ferry, a warehouse, and a mill.<sup>17</sup>

An integral part of the life of the colonists was communication with the port city of Mobile, from which practically all of their supplies were shipped up river by barge and later, by steamboat. On May 18, 1819, the first steamboat arrived in Demopolis carrying Madame Re, a wife of one of the colonists. Due to the swiftness of the river, early steamboats could not travel further upstream than Demopolis and hence, the city quickly became a major shipping and receiving port. In 1825, a delegation of the Vine and Olive colony was invited to dine with Lafayette, the great French patriot, when he landed in Cahaba. Lafayette's secretary later wrote of the colonists "I should judge that they were not in a state of great prosperity. I believe their European prejudices, and their great inexperience in commerce and agriculture, will prevent them from being formidable rivals of the Americans for a length of time." The secretary was very perceptive for even as early as 1825, the declining fortunes of the Vine and Olive colony were evident.<sup>18</sup>

The demise of the Vine and Olive colony did not rest solely on the inexperienced hands of the French aristocrats and military officers. The Canebrake lands upon which the colonists settled were notoriously short of fresh water. The principal creeks in the French grant were the Big Prairie, Little Prairie, Cottonwood, French, German, Limestone, and Hines. By late summer and early fall, however, these creeks were often dry. There were no springs in the prairies and the settlers had to rely on rain barrels and cisterns carved out of the white chalk. In 1827, a severe drought killed most of the grape vines. The olive trees perished with every winter frost. By 1827, the colonists were planting more cotton and corn than grapes and olives. In addition, except for the planters from the West Indies who utilized slave labor, the colony experienced a shortage of labor. The French knew very little about the actual cultivation of olives and grapes and proved to be clumsy farmers. Early in the settlement of their land grant, the Bonapartists had imported a number of German redemptioners to work the fields in return for their passage from Germany to America. According to Gaius Whitfield "the Germans proved to be more of a burden and expense than an assistance, for they disregarded entirely the obligations of their contract." For all

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 69-71. United State Department of Interior. Alabama Census, Greene and Marengo Counties, 1830.

<sup>18</sup>Smith, pp. 121-122.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     10    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

practical purposes, by 1830, the Vine and Olive colony had ceased to exist. Most of the colonists moved to Mobile, a few returned to France, and others were scattered throughout Alabama at Cahaba, Huntsville, Montgomery, and Selma. Since there was no consecrated cemetery in Demopolis, most of the colonists, who were Catholics, were buried in Mobile. Too, some French colonists, such as the Ravesies, the Chaprons, the Stewarts, and the Stollenwercks, intermarried with the protestant settlers moving into the area. The land allotments, which had been set aside for the cultivation of the grape vines and olive trees, were abandoned or transferred to the cotton planters who were arriving in the Canebrake during the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>19</sup>

Very little exists of the built environment of the French colonists. A single dwelling in Greensboro, constructed in 1821 by Thomas Noel, is the only structure remaining which has been identified with the Vine and Olive colony. As with the Native Americans, most of the reminders are place names which have been retained throughout the county. The most obvious reminder is the name of Marengo County, itself, named for the French victory at Marengo, Italy. Linden, the county seat (recognizing Napoleon's victory at Hohenlinden) and Moscow, while not actually in the Canebrake region, recall the early days of the Vine and Olive colony. The French christened city atop Ecor Blanc, Demopolis, contains Desnouettes Street while Arcola, Cedarville, Hollow Square, and Canebrake Square were all early Vine and Olive settlements. Too, the French and German Creeks take their name from these early settlers and their redemptioners. The experiences of the Vine and Olive colony have been romanticized by writers and historians alike. Hamner Cobbs once wrote, "Thanks to the French influence, the Canebrake residents live just a bit easier than almost any other people in the South. There is less of the puritanical; even at this late date, the people are still known for their gaiety. There are no more horse races; there are no Bonapartists to parade their finery; the lavish balls are few and far between - but there still is imbued in the people the idea that life, at least in part, is to be lived today and not saved for the hereafter." It is difficult to determine if the French "Cavalier spirit remains," if the colonists actually imbued the incoming settlers with certain morals, values, or ideals. One fact, however, indicates that there was a perception that the French colonists stood in sharp contrast with some other settlers. The French were almost exclusively Roman Catholic, a religion which was viewed (along with the Protestant Episcopal church of the settlers arriving from the eastern seaboard) by some protestant faiths, as being morally lax and lacking in fervent piety. It was this perception among the more conservative religious faiths which gave rise to a mystique that the Canebrake, settled by the Bonapartists exiles and then by the landed gentry families of the eastern seaboard, was an area rich in the traditions and trappings of Old World and New World aristocrats.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 60, 124. Gaius Whitfield, Jr., "The French Grant in Alabama, A History of the Founding of Demopolis," *Transaction of the Alabama Historical Society*, 1899-1903, IV (1904), pp. 341.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-130. A comparison of the four townships with the list of patentees illustrates that by 1830, large tracts of land had already been purchased from the French by settlers from Virginia and North and South Carolina, particularly in Township 18 Range 3 East and Range 4

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     11    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)**The Rise and Establishment of the Plantation System, 1830-1865**

The rise in population in Alabama during the 1810s owes its existence to the economic and social readjustments made necessary in the country by the War of 1812. With the defeat of Great Britain, the United States consolidated its position on the North American continent, including the lands of the Mississippi Territory. Settlers began relocating to the Mississippi territory and by 1813, the Tennessee River bend and the lower Tombigbee River had a combined population of about 13,000. In 1815, following the Treaty of Fort Jackson, which removed the Creek Indians from large sections of the territory, settlers soon started arriving in Jackson, Lauderdale, Limestone, and other counties, and by 1817, the white population passed 30,000, resulting in a call for Congress to establish the Territory of Alabama. In 1817, the lower regions of south Alabama, consisting of Mobile, Baldwin, Washington, and Clarke Counties, claimed twenty to thirty-five thousand people in the territory. In 1819, at the time of statehood, Alabama's total population was 79,000 and in little less than a year, the population had a spectacular increase to 127,000. From 1820 until the Civil War, the state's population increased about 200,000 each decade. Newspaper writers noted a steady stream of wagons crossing the Chattahoochee River from Georgia and a steady stream of settlers crossing the Tennessee River into Alabama. Nevertheless, in the period just after Alabama achieved statehood, the major settlements were still located in northern Alabama or the lower reaches of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers.<sup>21</sup>

Prior to 1830, settlers to Alabama were suspect of the fertility of the Black Belt region, not only because of the extremely muddy condition of the top soil following seasonal rains, but they believed the region to be unhealthy and fever ridden. The low-hanging mists, noticeable in some areas of the area, were believed to cause "swamp" fevers. In the early 1830s, however, an upland blight proof variety of cotton was introduced in Alabama and the Black Belt region proved to be extraordinarily suited to the cultivation of this particular variety. In the Canebrake, the introduction of the upland cotton plant and the forfeiture of the lands by some members of the French Vine and Olive colony at extremely low prices (\$1.25 per acre) stimulated the settlement of the region. In addition, the water shortage which had plagued the Bonapartists, was solved through the creation of elaborate cisterns and the boring of deep wells, sometimes to a depth of 600 feet. Farmers and planters in the Canebrake and throughout the Black Belt now learned that the clayey, unhealthy black soil could be turned to their advantage. The production of cotton became the chief

---

East.

<sup>21</sup>Weymouth Jordan, Antebellum Alabama Town and Country (Tallahassee, FL: The University Presses of Florida, 1957), p. 22; Griffith, p. 21.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     12    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

interest to the large number of planters and farmers moving into the region, an interest which played a major role in Alabama's rise as a major cotton producing state. <sup>22</sup>

While settlement of the Canebrake region escalated after 1830, there were a number of settlers in the region who arrived during or just after the creation of the Vine and Olive colony. In 1817, Caleb Russell and a small group of Tennesseans had established themselves on land near Greensboro while in 1818, the Wood brothers settled on the future site of Uniontown, although the area remained known as Woodville for a short time. There, a post office was soon established and the community was officially named Uniontown at the suggestion of Philip Weaver, a planter from Uniontown, Maryland. In that same year, settlers from Georgia and the Carolinas had moved into the Uniontown area. Robert Withers, another Maryland native, purchased his land along the Black Warrior River from the French Bonapartist Frenage in the late 1820s while Joseph Blodgett Stickney secured the site for his plantation, Cedarwood, just west of Greensboro, as early as 1818. In 1818, Israel Pickens of North Carolina, a land agent and future two term governor of the state, wrote, "We had shelter in our own little log house, which I raised last summer when I came out to examine the land. By scuffling about, we have already made it quite comfortable." In addition, before 1830, the Cockes, Vaughans, Montagues, and Randolphs of Virginia, the Hobsons, Crooms, and Pickens families of North Carolina and the Witherspoons and Glovers from South Carolina had all purchased tracts of land from the former French colonists. Allen Glover and J.R. Witherspoon were the largest slave owners in the Canebrake region in 1830, each owning over 100 slaves. Ravesies, Cocke, and Withers each owned over 50 slaves. <sup>23</sup>

The success of the Canebrake planters lay in the existence of the African slave system. In 1820, Marengo County had a total population of 2,933, 29.53% of which were slaves. Greene County's 1820 population was 4,601 with a 36.75 % slave population while of Perry County's total population of 3,713, 26.61% were African slaves. In 1828, Marengo County ranked 16th in the state in percentage of slave population. Greene and Perry ranked 5th and 18th, respectively. During the 1830s, the numbers of slaves being brought into the state began to increase dramatically. In January of 1835, George Featherstonhaugh, an Englishman traveling through Alabama, was able to write, "In the course of the day we met a great many families of planters emigrating to Alabama and Mississippi to take up cotton plantations...we passed at least 1,000 Negro slaves all trudging on foot..." By 1840, the slave population of Marengo County comprised 68.94% of the total population, the highest in the state; of a total population of 17,264, 11,902 were slaves. Greene followed closely behind in second place with 68.39% while Perry was 9th with 54.19% of the total population consisting of slaves. In 1860, 67.72% percent of Marengo County residents owned slaves, (6th among all counties in the state) yet the county ranked first in regard to slave population (slaves represented 78.31% of the total population), reflecting that the slave populations held per family were proportionately higher than in other Alabama counties. In Greene County in 1860, a higher

---

<sup>22</sup>Jordan, pp. 32-34.

<sup>23</sup>United States Department of the Interior. Federal Census of 1830; Dubose, p. 556, p. 572; Smith, p. 131-136; W. E. W. Yerby, History of Greensboro, (Northport, AL: Colonial Press, 1963), p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     13    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

percentage of families owned slaves (78.30%) which comprised 76.47% of the total population (3rd highest percentage in the state). Perry County ranked 9th in both percentage of families owning slaves and in the slave percentage of the total population. Clearly, the economy of the Canebrake was entrenched in the African slave system.<sup>24</sup>

Settlers to the Canebrake region usually came by the shortest, most direct, and most travelled route, the Southwestern Line of the U. S. Mail Coaches which stretched from Fredericksburg, Virginia to Milledgeville, Georgia. At this point, the line connected at Macon, Georgia and carried the settlers to Montgomery where barges on the Alabama River were boarded, heading for the former capital city of Cahaba. At Cahaba, they proceeded west across the Black Belt prairied lands to the Canebrake, experiencing the richness and difficulty of the deep soil. Dubose notes of the journey, "we struck the interminable and bottomless prairied lands to day. As the horses pull one foot out of the mud to sink another up to the knee, the suction pops like a pistol, and sometimes the shoe is left behind. The wagon axles, even and anon, sweep the road like a drag. Men must follow every wagon and every wheel with paddles to scrape off the adhering mud so that the wheel may turn at all." The Dubose's journey took 44 days, covering the approximately 600 miles from Society Hill, South Carolina to McKinley, Alabama. Some settlers, however, opted to travel along the nation's interior water system. In 1845, Dr. Thomas Harrison, after bringing his slaves to Faunsdale plantation, returned for his wife in Edenton, North Carolina. The Harrisons then travelled to New York and then by boat along the Ohio River, down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, across to Mobile and then up the Tombigbee to Demopolis. Joseph Stickney took a more direct route, chartering a schooner in Pamlico, North Carolina to transport his slaves, farm implements, and an iron hand mill around the Florida coast to Mobile. Stickney then returned overland to bring his wife and family by coach to his plantation near Greensboro.<sup>25</sup>

The initial lure of the Canebrake was, of course, the availability of cheap and fertile land. Arriving in Huntsville in 1830, Captain Reuben Vaughan, Jr. found the government lands from the Cherokee cession selling at public outcry in Huntsville brought \$100.00 an acre. In comparison, the townships of the former Vine and Olive colony were advertised for sale by the United States government for \$1.25 per acre. Over the next five years, from 1830 to 1835, the majority of Canebrake lands lying within Marengo, Greene, and Perry counties was purchased although some land was bought intermittently until 1852 when all of the region, except a few acres

---

<sup>24</sup>Williams, pp. 64-73, pp. 280-293; Walter Brown Posey, ed. "Alabama in the 1830s as Recorded by British Travellers," *Birmingham-Southern College Bulletin*, XXXI, (Birmingham, 1938) pp. 29-30.

<sup>25</sup>Alice V. D. Pierrepont, Reuben Vaughan Kidd, Soldier of the Confederacy, Privately printed, 1947, p. 63; John Witherspoon Dubose, "Recollections of the Plantation," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* (Spring, 1930), p. 73; Dubose, "Recollections of the Plantation," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* (Summer, 1930), p. 109; Dubose, "Chronicles of the Canebrake," p. 482.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     14    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

still owned by the state was privately owned. By the 1850s, land values had increased to \$25.00 per acre for top quality plantation cropland.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the lure of cheap and fertile lands, other settlers were enticed to remove to the Canebrake for other reasons, namely family associations which were strong within the area. From Virginia, Reuben Vaughan and his sons, Alfred, Samuel Watkins, and Ingram, and his sons-in-law, Henry Duggar, A. J. Kidd, and Robert Montague bought contiguous plantations near Prairieville. Samuel, Israel, and James Pickens from North Carolina settled south and west of Greensboro. George W. H. Minge and David Minge, along with their brother-in-law, Richard Adams, purchased adjoining plantations east of Uniontown near what would become the Faunsdale community. In addition, there were brothers Kimbrough and John H. Dubose, William and Samuel Fitts, John and Richard Walthall, Alfred and Durant Hatch, James and Amos Manning, Hudson and James Ware, and John and Richard Napier. Census records indicate that Marengo was settled primarily by settlers from Virginia and South Carolina while Greene County was an area favored by North Carolinians. Even as early as 1822, Samuel Strudwick, residing near Arcola, in a letter to Thomas Ruffin, described the community of emigrants at Greensboro as the "Carolina Colony," in reference to the majority of North Carolinians comprising the town's population. Similarly, the majority of Perry County residents, especially in the southwestern panhandle, were from Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>27</sup>

While the majority of these early settlers perhaps viewed their tenancy on their plantations as lifelong, the population in the antebellum Canebrake, and indeed throughout Alabama, was extremely mobile. Cotton planters as well as small farmers were ever willing to move to wherever prospects appeared brighter. Robert Montague arrived in the Canebrake in 1830, establishing his plantation two miles east of Prairieville. In 1853, Montague removed his family to the virgin croplands of Northern Louisiana. Joseph Selden, upon his arrival in 1853, had his choice of plantations, noting that a number of gentlemen "were selling out and going to Texas." From his arrival in 1834 until 1853, Henry Tayloe moved three times, from a plantation located just north of Uniontown to Prairieville, and then on to Gallion. Undoubtedly, the greatest growth in the Canebrake occurred from 1830 to 1850 with the ten years before the Civil War witnessing a dramatic increase in population growth. From 1820 to 1830, Marengo County's population increased by only 5,000, to 7,700. From 1830 to 1840 and from 1840 to 1850, the population increased over 10,000 each decade and stood at 27,831 in 1850. By 1860, Marengo County's population had increased by only 4, 000 to 31, 171 by 1860. Experiencing a jump of 15, 000 in population from 1830 to

---

<sup>26</sup>Letter and deposition of Joseph Selden, Hendersonville, Tennessee. Dated August 29th, 1884. Selden recounts his journey to Alabama, the purchase of plantation near Uniontown, his marriage, his cotton production, and his business transactions for over three decades; Pierrepont, pp. 63-66; Jordan, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup>Dubose, "Chronicles," various pages; Williams, p. 288 -289. Census Records for Marengo, Greene, and Perry Counties, 1830-1860.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number       E       Page       15      Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

1850, Greene County actually witnessed a decrease in its 1860 population of 582 residents, falling from 31, 441 to 30, 859.<sup>28</sup>

By 1850, the entire Canebrake region, as characterized by Dubose, was a district entirely fenced in plantations ranging from the smallest of 380 acres to the largest of from 1,280 to 2, 560 acres. The differentiation between farm and plantation is difficult. Some historians have characterized a plantation as a large farm of five hundred or more acres with a work force of over twenty. Thomas Abernathy described the planter as someone who raises cotton with corn as a subsidiary crop while a farmer raised corn with cotton as his subsidiary crop. Canebrake planters principally raised cotton as a cash crop but also raised large amounts of corn and sweet potatoes. In the Canebrake, plantations usually consisted of over 500 acres of improved or cultivated land and a smaller acreage of unimproved land. For example, Ivey Lewis had 900 acres of improved land and 300 acres of unimproved lands, valued at \$50,000. His Bleak House plantation was worked by 109 slaves (valued at \$109, 490.00), who were guided by John Walker, an overseer. On his plantation, Lewis had horses, mules, cattle, oxen, sheep, and swine, valued at \$8, 790 and raised corn, oats, sweet potatoes, and hay, as well as producing honey and butter. In 1860, the 313 bales of cotton raised on his plantation netted 10 cents per pound, providing Lewis with an income of approximately \$15,650.00. The largest landowner and slaveholder in the Canebrake region was John Collins who owned 361 slaves in 1860 with a value of \$346,510.00. Collins' land holdings of 2800 acres of improved and 2242 acres of unimproved land, were worth \$201,680. Collins' 1860 cotton crop produced 750 bales, worth \$37,500.00. Alfred Hatch and his 173 slaves at his New Bern plantation at Arcola cleared 400 bales of cotton, 10,000 bushels of corn, and 5,000 bushels of sweet potatoes from his 2,000 acres of improved land. The cotton crop alone netted Hatch an income of \$20,000. Edward Baptist, on the other hand, owned only 400 acres of improved land, worked by 54 slaves, producing 138 bales of cotton in 1860. Baptist, however, earned additional income as a Baptist minister. <sup>29</sup>

It was not unusual for a planter in the Canebrake to own more than one plantation. In addition to his Bleak House plantation, Ivey Lewis owned the Hermitage, Moss Grove, and Belle Fleur plantations. Alfred Hatch owned a plantation at Arcola in the western edge of the Canebrake as well as considerable lands to the east near the town of Newbern, near the Perry County line. The main plantation, upon which the planter resided, would include the necessary dwellings, agricultural buildings, and those outbuildings essential for the production, storage, and preparation of foodstuffs for the planter, his family, and slaves. Too, if cotton was raised on the main plantation, it would contain the slave quarters, barns, sheds, gins, presses, and all buildings and structures relative to the production of the staple crop. The Vaughan plantation,

---

<sup>28</sup>Robert S. Gamble, The Alabama Catalogue: A Guide to the Early Architecture of the State, (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1987), p. 10; United State Department of the Interior. Compendium of Federal Census Information, Alabama Counties, 1820-1940. Dubose, "Chronicles," various pages; Selden, private letter.

<sup>29</sup>Dubose, "Chronicles," p. 480; Griffith, p. 142; United States Department of the Interior. Marengo County Census of 1860.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     16    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

Myrtle Grove, consisted of the main house, the slave "quarters," corn cribs, stables, overseer's house, chicken houses, kitchens, barns, carriage house, lye hoppers, hog pens, cow lots, a gin house, a mill, and cemented cisterns. The main house and the outbuildings were described as being "constructed of hewn cedar logs as it was before the days of weatherboarding or plastering." The cisterns were a necessity on all plantations in the Canebrake due to the shortage of water in the summer and fall months. Behind the vegetable gardens, melon fields, and orchards, which were often enclosed by a wooden snake rail fence, were located the vast cotton and corn fields. Too, a planter might also own a plantation some distance from his seat of residence. These plantations were usually strictly devoted to the production of cotton, consisting of an overseer's house, the quarters, and only the buildings and structures essential for the maintenance of a large labor force, such as a kitchen and storage bins for foodstuffs, and the raising and storage of the staple crop. For example, General Willis Bocock resided at his wife's plantation, Waldwic, but owned two nearby plantations maintained by overseers. One plantation consisted of 900 acres of improved land, was worked by ninety-three slaves and yielded 250 bales of cotton. The other plantation consisted of 460 acres of improved land and was worked by only 34 slaves. In addition, Bocock's wife had inherited from her second husband, not only the main plantation, Waldwic, but one further south in the Flatwoods. Similarly, Andrew Calhoun resided at Tulip Hill but employed Andrew Walker as an overseer for his nearby plantation, Cuba. Joseph Selden employed a series of overseers at his Fairhope plantation before actually moving to the plantation and constructing a dwelling house. Today, the Canebrake contains numerous plantation structures from the antebellum period including dwellings and outbuildings. These range from vernacular log structures to high style dwellings. Over 20 plantation main houses have been identified with a number of significant outbuildings (barns, sheds, slave houses, dovecotes, smokehouses, coolers, kitchens, and other structures).<sup>30</sup>

Overseers and slaves were housed on the plantation where they worked; typically the field hands resided in the "quarters" near the cotton fields. House servants or those connected with responsibilities other than field work, usually resided within closer proximity to the main house as was described at Myrtle Grove and is found at Waldwic and Faunsdale plantations. On the main plantations, slave populations usually contained large numbers of domestic servants. Of the sixty-one slaves Joseph Selden received from his father-in-law as a wedding gift, only twenty-one were classified as field hands, the others were either too young to work in the field or were domestic servants, which included nurses, cooks, personal servants, gardeners, butlers, coachmen, and various helpers and apprentices. Slaves were usually allowed to raise chickens for their own use and had their own vegetable plots. On the Waldwic plantation, the slaves from the quarters were allowed to come up to the main house on Sunday mornings or Sunday afternoons while the house servants were not allowed to go the quarters without permission. Once a month, the quarters were cleaned, and female slaves were given time every week for washing and mending.

---

<sup>30</sup>Pierrepoint, p. 138; Will Book B, Hale County Probate Office, Hale County Courthouse, Greensboro, AL; Selden letter; Dubose, p. 591-592. Interview and letter of Mrs. Ivey F. Lewis, Petersburg, Virginia, February 18, 1992.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number       E       Page       17      Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

In the winter time, slaves were given one hour of rest during the day but in "hot weather, hands must have two hours rest at 12 o'clock" as Willis Bocock dictated at Waldwic.<sup>31</sup>

The strictly working plantations, those upon which the master and his family did not reside, were often owned by planters who lived in the four communities on the edges of the Canebrake: Demopolis, Greensboro, Uniontown, and Dayton. The Crooms, Smaws, Nelsons, and McCrarys all chose to reside in Greensboro while the Whitfields, Glovers, and Lyons lived in Demopolis. David McCrary, a wealthy merchant from Greensboro, owned two plantations near Dayton, nearly twenty miles from his town-house. McCrary's 1300 acres of cropland yielded 376 bales of cotton in 1860. Too, plantations were owned by planters who lived outside the state of Alabama as absentee landlords. The Tayloe family of Virginia was perhaps the region's largest absentee landholder. In the early 1830s, the five sons of Capt. John Tayloe of Mount Airy plantation in Virginia united to purchase large tracts of land in the Canebrake. Henry A. Tayloe moved to Alabama to oversee the family's interests. These plantations were strictly working farms rarely visited by their owner but rather managed and operated by overseers. As their children came of age, the original investors of the Tayloe family turned their property over to their sons who moved into the region to manage their father's estates. With the construction of a main house for the planter and additional outbuildings, such as a kitchen, laundry, carriage house, cooler, dairy, and perhaps, a chapel or school, these working plantations shifted to include more activities than just the production of cotton. However, if the working plantation did not encompass an attractive house site, planters would often acquire additional property upon which to erect a dwelling house. Joseph Selden had to purchase an additional tract at his Fairhope plantation to obtain a suitable house site for his elaborate Carpenter Gothic mansion.<sup>32</sup>

The overseer played an important role in the Canebrake society and overseer positions were highly sought after in antebellum Alabama. According to census records, almost all Canebrake plantations employed one overseer per plantation, even the main plantation on which the planter resided. Often, overseers in Alabama came from the less fertile pineywoods and flatwoods sections of the state but just as often, they were the sons of planters who wanted experience in running a large plantation. General Willis Bocock wrote twenty explicit instructions for his overseers to follow, including that when "the employer is absent he write to his employer at the end of every week an account of matters on the place, sending at the end of every month a report of his stock, etc" In addition, Bocock's overseers were directed to "notice houses, fences, and gates. Keep everything in good condition and repair; waste nothing; take care of everything, especially when likely to be scarce." Overseers earned a salary of about \$500.00 per year although Robert Morgan earned \$1,200.00 annually at his position on the Windsor plantation of Benjamin Tayloe. With a

<sup>31</sup>Selden letter, 1884; Pierrepont, pp. 107-108.

<sup>32</sup>Dubose, pp. 522-523. Dubose notes that the Tayloe family owned Oakland, Faunsdale, Walnut Grove, Windsor, Sindson, and Elmwood. Benjamin Ogle Tayloe reputedly visited his plantation only once. In addition to Henry A. Tayloe, additional family members included John W. Tayloe, Thornton Tayloe, and George Tayloe. See also, V. Gayle Snedecor, Snedecor's Map of Hale County, 1870; Selden letter, 1884;

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     18    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

steady salary, overseers often saved enough money to purchase their own slaves and plantations. John Collins, the area's wealthiest planter in 1860, began as overseer for Henry Tayloe in 1834. By 1860, his estate was valued at well over \$500,000.00 and was managed by his nephew Charles Collins, who acted as overseer.<sup>33</sup>

Cotton was cultivated in Alabama as early as 1772 but by 1805, the territory which would become Alabama only produced 500 bales. By 1820, cotton production had increased to 25,390 bales, most of which was produced in southern Alabama, but just six years later, total cotton production in the state yielded 120,000. By 1850, Alabama was first in cotton production with more than 225 million pounds (451,453 bales) produced each year and the ten counties of the Black Belt accounted for 35.4 percent of the total yield. That year, Marengo County ranked third in total cotton production with 26,396 bales while Greene County placed fourth with 20,544 bales. By 1860, Alabama's cotton yield had increased by 75.31 percent to 791,964 bales, second only to Mississippi and Greene and Marengo Counties were both producing between 45,000 and 50,000 bales of cotton per county each year. The average price per pound for middling upland cotton from 1850 to 1860 was just over ten cents, with a typical bale of cotton (500 lbs.) worth \$50.00. With 500 acres in cultivation, yielding 100 to 200 bales, the sale of cotton allowed Canebrake planters an average yearly income of from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year. Joseph Selden netted \$8,250.00 in 1855, \$11,750 in 1856, and \$15,977.00 in 1857. In 1860, per capita wealth for Marengo County residents was \$5,542.81, second in the state, while per capita wealth in Greene County was \$5,421.40. Perry County per capita wealth was \$3,037.10 (8th in the county ranking). In addition to the income from the sale of their staple crop, planters earned extra income from the sale of corn and fodder as well as the hiring out of their surplus of workers. In January of 1855, the *Alabama Beacon* of Greensboro announced hiring day, "the first day of January is a very important day in this region of the country - and especially with those who have to hire Negroes. Greensboro usually presents a more active, business-like appearance on that day, than on any other during the year." Male slaves usually brought from \$150 to \$200 per year while women and boys brought from \$90 to \$100.<sup>34</sup>

Canebrake planters shipped their cotton down the Tombigbee and Black Warrior Rivers to Mobile, usually from the river port of Demopolis or the steamboat landings at Millwood or Candy's Landing on the Black Warrior. These river landings were usually linked to the inland communities by small roads. Robert Withers operated a stage or four horse hack to carry

---

<sup>33</sup>Griffith, p. 148; Dubose, "Chronicles," p. 548-554; United States Department of the Interior, Census for Marengo County, 1860. Canebrake Planters in Marengo County employing overseers included Benjamin Tayloe, Francis Lyon, Andrew Calhoun, David Minge, Joseph Selden, John Davidson, William Fitts, Samuel Fitts, Thomas Harrison, Issac Croom, Thomas Gholson, James Vaughan, Ivey Lewis, Henry Tayloe, Josephine McRae, J. W. Tayloe, James Dubose, Willis Bocock, Dr. Samuel Reese, and David McCrary.

<sup>34</sup>Albert James Pickett, History of Alabama and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the Earliest Period (Birmingham, AL: Roberts and Son, 1851, reprint ed., Birmingham: Birmingham Book and Magazine Company, 1962), pp. 326 and 469. Selden letter, 1884: Williams, pp. 70-71; Griffith, pp. 152-159.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     E     Page     19    

Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

passengers and merchandise from his inn at Millwood to Greensboro. Yerby however, notes that some planters transported their cotton overland to the Alabama River city of Cahaba, the former state capital. But transportation in the Canebrake occurred across miserable, almost inaccessible roads, especially in the winter and spring rains. The two east-west towns of the Canebrake, Uniontown and Demopolis were linked by the Upper Demopolis Road and the Lower Demopolis Road which branched off toward Dayton. Additionally, the Canebrake was serviced by two post roads, the Demopolis to Arcola to Greensboro route established in 1832 and the Marion to Prairieville by Uniontown route. Stage coaches followed the mail routes, stopping at the crossroads at Canebrake Square (Prairieville). The town was a point on the U. S. Mail Route, serviced by stage coaches traveling from Tuscaloosa to Mobile. By 1848, however, steps were underway to improve transportation in the area with the establishment of the state's first plank road system. Incorporated on March 4, 1848, the Canebrake Plank Road System built a plank road, the first such enterprise in the state, which stretched from Demopolis to Uniontown. The plank road was extended to Cahaba for the state auditor's report of 1861 "acknowledges receipt from the Cahawba and Woodville Plank Road Company of \$10,386.23, a loan of trust fund held by the state." Plank roads were privately owned wagon roads which were surfaced with planks of wood. The Canebrake road proved expensive to maintain and was never a very successful business enterprise. Much more successful and of course, important to the economic development of the Canebrake was the establishment of the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad. Included in the list of incorporators for the company were Canebrake planters Joseph R. John, James Price, and Richard Adams. Authorized by the state legislature to establish a railway line from Cahaba to Uniontown, the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad was in service to Uniontown by 1857. The terminus of the line was changed to Selma and plans were made to extend the railway to the Mississippi border. Early in the Civil War, the Alabama legislature changed the name of the company to the Selma and Meridian Railroad Company with plans to "unite at Meridian with the rail road now completed at Vicksburg, on the Mississippi River." By 1862, the line had been extended to Demopolis, cutting across the center of the Canebrake. Along this line, communities and flag stations appeared including Tayloe, Alfalfa, Van Dorn, Macon, and Faunsdale, which was named for the nearby plantation of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Harrison. Faunsdale would quickly become one of the most important crossroad communities in the Canebrake region. Meanwhile, the Marion, Cahaba, and Greensboro Railroad was in service by February 8, 1860, and in 1858, a rail line from Uniontown to the community of Newbern was under construction. <sup>35</sup>

Religion was an important part of plantation life in the Canebrake. In his History of Greensboro, Yerby notes "It was then, even as now. The Methodist and Baptist preachers followed in the wake of all settlements, no matter how remote from the throbbing pulse of the great outside world." The Episcopal Reverend Francis Hanson notes in his journal that a building in Canebrake Square (Prairieville) was used as early as 1830 by several denominations for religious services. The Episcopal Church was a major denomination in the Canebrake and is largely responsible for helping to perpetuate the mystique of the Canebrake planter. For example, in his *Chronicles*, Dubose notes that the village of Dayton was located on the southern boundary of the Canebrake district but the residents of the town differed from the rest of the region. "The difference between the

---

<sup>35</sup>Yerby, pp. 2-25. Pierrepont, pp. 69-70; Harris, pp. 45, 162-165.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     20    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

character of the society made by the resident cotton planters of the Canebrake and those of that calling comprising the bulk of the citizens of Dayton, was to be attributed to church affiliation." The Protestant Episcopal church had not fared as well in the Dayton community as it had in Demopolis, Greensboro, Uniontown or in the prairies. Indeed, only one family of the town was of the Episcopal faith. In Dayton, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, and the Baptists held regular services, each in its own building. For Dubose, there was a certain distinction between the Episcopal church and the other protestant faiths. "To the license allowed to entertainments of that kind (dancing) by the Episcopal Church was not, in those times, favored by evangelical churches. Naturally, the wealthy and refined people of Dayton drew a line against incorporation in Canebrake society measurably." Rev. Hanson observed that the Episcopalians in the area were viewed with some suspicion. "For although the members of the Church were generally persons of education, intelligence and influence, and in uniting themselves to the church showed that they were superior to popular prejudice, and had some firmness and decision, and were generally exemplary in their conduct. Popular prejudice surrounded the Church like a wall; it is not easy to overcome the hostility, bigotry or the prejudices of ignorance." As Episcopal rector Stewart McQueen noted, "Their form and ceremony, their association with wealth and culture, and their less emotional approach to religion set the Episcopalians apart from the other southern denominations, and laid them open to criticism by the more popular churches. It was felt that they were lacking in fervent piety, were morally lax, too superior in their attitude toward other religions, and entirely too close to the much despised Roman Catholic Church."<sup>36</sup>

For the most part, the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian faiths were located in the cities and communities on the fringes of the Canebrake. In 1843, the various religious denominations of Uniontown banded together to build a community house of worship. By 1850, the Baptists had small congregations in Uniontown and Dayton, and had impressive buildings in Greensboro and even the small community of Newbern. Similarly, the Presbyterians were prominent in Greensboro, Demopolis, and Newbern while the Methodists had a stronghold in Dayton where they erected an impressive Greek Revival structure. The Methodists also had sizeable congregations in Demopolis and Uniontown, where they too erected an impressive Greek Revival church in 1857. In Greensboro, the parish of St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church was formed although it was not incorporated until 1840. In addition, Episcopalians had established Trinity Church in Demopolis and Holy Cross of the Union Parish in Uniontown. Yet it was the establishment of small congregations on the prairies which were unique to the Episcopal faith. St. Andrew's served the community of Prairieville, St. Michaels served the community near Faunsdale, and St. John's in the Prairies on the Robertson plantation served the Episcopalians of the northwestern Canebrake. While Dubose characterized the three rural churches as parishes, there were never any distinct parish boundary lines established by the Episcopal Diocese. Too, Episcopalians often erected plantation chapels for the religious instruction of their slaves. Harriet Amos, in her article *Religious Reconstruction in Microcosm*, noted that slave chapels were erected for services at Faunsdale, Athol, Waldwic, Brame, and on the plantations of James Dubose and Henry Tayloe. Rev. Hanson wrote that St. Michael's church was the only one known to him in which "the

---

<sup>36</sup>Yerby, p. 3; Dubose, "Chronicles," pp.607-608; Pierrepoint, p. 71; Sisk, p. 8.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     E     Page     21    

Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

---

servants compose the larger part.”<sup>37</sup> Other denominations, did however, support evangelical missions in the rural areas. The Uniontown Methodist Church supported the Uniontown mission for the “instruction of black people.” The missionary, J. W. McCann made regular calls to the plantations and later, established in the area, the Cottonwood Mission on the Cottonwood creek near Uniontown. These missionaries also preached and provided religious instruction for planter families as well. McCann taught Sunday School, once or twice a month on the 16th section land near the Cedar Grove and Roseland plantations, estates owned by the Fitts and Walker families, both of whom were Methodists. Yet the Episcopal ministry dominated the Canebrake. The majority of the planters who lived on their plantations in the region were Episcopalian and in comparison with the other planters, were the wealthiest in the area. A number of congregations formed prior to 1865 are still functioning and several area churches constructed prior to 1865 have survived.<sup>38</sup>

In 1860, the nativities schedule of voters in Marengo County reflected that the 1540 voters represented 20 states and 10 foreign countries. While the highest percentage of the voters had been born in Alabama, large numbers of voters hailed from North Carolina (294), South Carolina (213), Georgia (150), and Virginia (139) as well as Germany (26), Ireland (21), Switzerland (6) and France (5). Most of the first generation immigrants resided in the four major towns of the Canebrake. Census records find first generation immigrants working as shoemakers, cabinet makers, masons, carpenters, teachers, laborers, and seamstresses, among other occupations, usually residing in the towns and communities on the fringes of the region. Some immigrants however, worked on the plantations, usually as domestic servants or as tutors. Miss Deiker and Prof. Milte, both of Germany, and Prof. Raillard were employed as tutors and music instructors at the Faunsdale plantation. Miss Wilson of England served as governess to the Browder children while Mary Fenningham of Ireland was employed as a seamstress in the James DuBose household. The Chaprons, Stewarts, and the Ravesies had been born in France, but they were familiar, through their residence in the West Indies, with the slave/plantation system. Gottlieb Breitling, of Germany, was one of the few first generation immigrants in the Canebrake, without

---

<sup>37</sup>Harriet Amos, “Religious Reconstruction in Microcosm at Faunsdale Plantation,” *The Alabama Review* (October, 1989), pp. 243-269. Yerby, p. 91-105.

<sup>38</sup>Dubose, “Chronicles,” The following are a list of some Episcopalian planters and corresponding 1860 worth in real estate and personal property when known. John H. Price (\$136,480), Andrew Calhoun (\$174,000), David Minge, (\$172,912), Kimbrough Dubose (\$226,540), Louisa Harrison (\$332, 162), R.H. Adams (\$320, 400), George Minge (\$163, 580), James Browder (\$124,180), Ivy Lewis (\$159,490), Henry Tayloe (\$176,790), Josephine McRae (\$162, 335), J. W. Tayloe (\$213,175), James Dubose (\$149,510), Willis Bocock (\$212,000); “Quarterly Minutes of the Uniontown Methodist Church, Uniontown Methodist Church, 1860; Stuart Harris, *Southern Historical Records*, XIII, St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, pp. 1-48; Harris, “Perry County Heritage,” p.79.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number       E       Page       22      Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

prior experience of the workings of a plantation, to rise to the status of planter, amassing a 1200 acre estate by 1860.<sup>39</sup>

While the Canebrake was inhabited by settlers from several different states, writers and historians have credited the Virginians with giving the region a certain cultural distinction. In the early 1900s, the Montgomery Advertiser captured this attitude best:

“Virginia gave form and color to life in the Canebrake of Alabama. To this day...the form and color of the plantation life of the Old Dominion State endures...The Virginian with the lares and penales in the wagon train that followed them, pressed onto the black cane covered hammocks of West Alabama. They were the wealthiest class of immigrants that came into pioneer Alabama. The Virginian who looked for a site for his plantation home on the Canebrake ridges oftentimes had in the wagon train that awaited his selection the heritage of two centuries. The Virginia immigrants were not only richer in worldly goods than their fellow immigrants, but they were fresh from a country where education and culture were held in higher esteem and where the ideals for the metal graces were higher than in any other rural section of the United States. The Virginians came from a section where family tradition was perhaps stronger than even the law of the land and the family traditions were built upon the older English standards of honor transplanted upon American soil and after two centuries of Virginia life they had been consecrated into governing laws for individuals and for families.”

There is no factual information to enforce the writer's claim that Virginians were more prominent, more cultured, or wealthier than their neighbors. While several prominent, landed slave holding families of Virginia (Cocke, Boccock, Tayloe, Randolph, Harrison, Vaughan, Minge, Selden, Adams) had settled in the area by 1860, families from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, and Tennessee held real estate, property, and securities comparable to that of the Virginians. Too, the assertion is not grounded in an association with a particular religious denomination for while the Virginians were, for the most part, of the Episcopal faith, numbers of settlers from Maryland and the Carolinas were of the same faith. Additionally, the Virginians were not necessarily better educated than other planters for a comparison of alma maters of Virginia planters and those from other states, finds that the educational achievements of the two groups were similar. The contribution to the Canebrake mystique regarding the influence of the Virginians, was a combination of the trappings of wealth and the traditions of the native states of the planters which were transported from the cultural hearths of the eastern seaboard to the frontier lands of the Alabama Canebrake. The cultural hearths of the eastern seaboard, such as Virginia and the Chesapeake/Albermarle Sound area,

---

<sup>39</sup>W.C. Tharin, “A Directory of Marengo County for 1860-61,” ( Mobile:Farrow and Dennett, Printers, 1861), p. 71; United States Department of the Interior. State Census Population for Marengo County, 1860;

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ E Page \_\_\_\_\_ 23

Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

were frequently regarded as areas of wealth and sophistication in comparison to the more recently settled states of the lower south.<sup>40</sup>

While private tutors and instructors appear on the censuses from 1840 to 1860, a number of area schools began appearing in the region in the 1840s and 1850s. In 1838, Ella Storrs Christian described Uniontown as "a bar-room, a few houses, without a school" but by 1860, the town boasted a male and female academy, as well as one of the first public schools for African-Americans. Male and female academies were also located in the towns of Demopolis, Dayton, and Greensboro. The Dayton Male Academy was described as consisting of two large rooms with blackboards. Area planters also sponsored the establishment of Southern University in Greensboro in 1857, erecting an imposing Gothic Revival building. But education was not restricted to the planter families. The rent of the 16th section land to a few non-slave holding farmers, named Powers and Hopper, supported a small school for their children, with W. B. Jones, as the teacher. These non-slave holding families comprised a small minority of residents in the Canebrake and were usually employed by the planters. Census records indicate the employment of white laborers and workers by planters in positions other than overseers. Joseph Selden employed three laborers on his plantation who had previously worked for David Minge for \$500.00 per year while several white families worked on the plantation of Willis Bocock. None of the private or public school buildings, constructed prior to 1865, are known to be extant.<sup>41</sup>

In 1860, Demopolis, Greensboro, and Uniontown were small towns whose economy was tied to plantation economy. Demopolis contained a population of about 1,200 and contained "seven dry goods, two drug and several grocery and confectionery stores; two hotels; two livery stables; a gin, mill, carriage, wagon, harness, saddle, shoe, boot, tin and jewelry establishments, numerous smith and wood shops; one Methodist, one Episcopal and one Presbyterian church; one Masonic lodge, one printing establishment which published the Canebrake Gazette, and several male and female schools." Uniontown boasted several churches, two school houses, two blacksmith shops, and several department stores, all located on the main street. Greensboro was characterized as the "social locality" of the local cotton planters. As early as 1824, a newspaper had been published in Greensboro and the pages of the *Alabama Beacon* carry advertisements for numerous stores, merchants, laborers, lawyers, doctors, and other professional men. In addition to Dayton, which was decidedly smaller than these other towns, these four municipalities served the plantation area. Arcola and Millwood were important river landings while Cedarville, Laneville, and Hollow Square were mere crossroads communities, distinguished by a general store. Faunsdale and Newbern, both located on railway lines, began to thrive in the early 1860s while , Alfalfa,

---

<sup>40</sup>Will Sheehan, "Virginia gives color to the Canebrake," *Montgomery Advertiser*, n. d. The article was probably written between 1904 and 1907 when Sheehan was a contributing writer for the *Montgomery Advertiser*; Dubose, "Chronicles," various pages; Unites States Department of the Interior, Census for Marengo, Greene and Perry Counties, 1860.

<sup>41</sup>Dubose, "Chronicles," p. 591. Christian, p. 64; Yerby, p. 78-90; Selden letter; United States Department of the Interior, Census Records for Marengo County, 1860.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     24    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

Tayloe, and Van Dorn were nothing more than flag stations for the railroad. The community of Canebrake Square had been renamed Macon, and then in the 1850s, Prairieville, and was described as having, in 1860, three or four residences, the post office, a general store, a so-called "Hotel," a blacksmith, warehouses, and a wagon shop.<sup>42</sup>

At the onset of the Civil War, the Canebrake was unified in its support for the Southern cause and planters quickly formed military units and companies. On February 1, 1861, the *Canebrake Herald* published the roster of the Canebrake Rifle Guards, composed mainly of men from the Uniontown and Faunsdale areas. Greensboro, Dayton, and Demopolis all had locally formed companies and regiments. Joseph Selden outfitted his own artillery company, Selden's Battery, while A. H. Otey was captain of the Independent Troop of Uniontown. Nevertheless, the Civil War years were relatively quiet in the Canebrake. W. L. Fleming noted that the entire Black Belt "was the richest as well as the least exposed section of the state and fared well until the end of the war. The laborers were negroes, and these worked as well in war time as in peace. Immense food crops were made in 1863 and 1864 and there was no suffering among whites or blacks. Until 1865 there was no loss from Federal invasion...in the portions of the counties untouched by the armies there were supplies sufficient to last the people for a few months. A few fortunate individuals had cotton, which was now bringing fabulous prices, and it was the high price received for the few bales not confiscated by the government that saved the Black Belt from suffering as it did the other counties."

Examples of cotton confiscation after the Civil War are found at the John Collins plantation where Federal troops seized 400 bales worth \$80,000. Joseph Selden not only lost 160 bales of cotton stored on his plantation but was required by Federal authorities to gin and pack an additional forty bales to fulfill his original subscription to the Confederate government of 200 bales. Selden, however, recouped his loss when he was selected by Federal officers to gin and press all of the damaged confiscated cotton. Selden's plantation gin and press were located near the railroad which proved a convenient and easy shipping point. Selden was paid in cotton for his services which netted the planter, \$18,000.<sup>43</sup> In his *Recollections of the Plantation*, Dubose writes on June 1, 1865, "The war is over...but for the revolutionary influence of the Freedmen Bureau, the community would be without a ripple of excitement." Marengo, Greene, and Perry counties now contained a freedmen population of over 60,000 and without the control over their former labor forces, the Canebrake planters began to use different labor methods to run their large farming interests.<sup>44</sup>

A significant number of resources of the antebellum plantation period are extant in the Canebrake and account for a large number of the historic resources in the region. The high number of

---

<sup>42</sup>Tharin, p. 101; Dubose, p. 567, 573; Yerby, pp. 36-49. V. Gayle Snedecor, *Snedecor's Map of Greene County, 1856*, W. S. Hoole Special Collections, University of Alabama. V. Gayle Snedecor, *Snedecor's Map of Hale County, 1870*, Author's collection; Pierrepoint, p. 69-70.

<sup>43</sup>Yerby, pp. 36-50; Harris, 189-192; Selden letter, 1884; Dubose, p. 457;

<sup>44</sup>Dubose, "Recollections," p. 118; Williams, p. 71.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   E   Page   25  

Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

residential buildings, plantation dwellings and complexes, religious edifices, laborer dwellings, and farm structures and outbuildings which are significant from this period, 1830-1865, reflect the growth and prosperity of the Canebrake during this era. In addition, the crossroad communities of Prairieville, Newbern, and Faunsdale date from this era and evidence of some of the flag stations along the railway, such as Gallion, are still detectable. All that remains of the communities of Laneville, Arcola, Cedarville, and Hollow Square are the names that now dot maps given to certain areas.

### Reconstruction, Recovery, and Diversification, 1865-1942

The wealth that was apparent in the Canebrake region vanished with the emancipation of the slave. In the years preceding the Civil War, the greater portion of the Canebrake planter's personal wealth was reflected in the numbers of slaves. For example, in 1860, Willis Bocock's real estate was valued at \$70,400, while his personal property, which included slaves, held an estimated value of \$141,600. In 1870, Bocock's real estate and personal property was estimated to be worth only \$26,000. Alfred Hatch's net worth in 1860 was valued at over \$500,000; in 1870, its value was approximately \$40,000. In the Canebrake and indeed, throughout the Black Belt, there were several interrelated factors which affected the postbellum development in the area. As early as 1850, there were reports that the large scaled clearing of land and the repeated planting and harvesting of cotton had resulted in soil deterioration. The slave system had exploited the fertile lands, and as Thomas Owen noted, "although the Black Belt had been in cotton for only four decades at the time of the Civil War, the wasteful methods of the plantation system had already brought even the rich waxy soil of that section to the edge of exhaustion by 1860." By the 1850s, the Canebrake planters in the area were already searching for more fertile croplands in Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. By 1854, Dr. Thomas Harrison had already purchased large acreage in Louisiana while Thomas Gholson had sold his Canebrake lands and established plantations in Mississippi. Similarly, Robert Montague had sold out as early as 1854, moving his family and slaves to Louisiana. Joseph Selden noted in a letter from 1884 that upon his arrival in the Canebrake in 1853, he had no difficulty in finding plantation lands as "a number of planters were selling their lands and going to Texas."<sup>45</sup>

Another factor, indeed probably the most important one in the demise of the antebellum plantation system, lay in the unavailability of labor. B. F. Riley argued that the plantation system in Alabama ended with the close of the Civil War.

"The demoralization incident to the great civil war, the shattered system of labor, the destruction of agricultural implements and machinery, and the incapacity of Southern planters to accommodate themselves to this chaotic state of things, served to bring [our] vast agricultural interests into disrepute."

---

<sup>45</sup>United State Department of the Interior, Census for Marengo County, 1870; Harrison Papers, Faunsdale Collection, Special Collections: Birmingham Public Library; Dubose, "Chronicles," p. 605-606. Thomas Owen, History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography (Chicago: 1921), 4 vols. I, p. 584; Sisk, p. 15.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number       E       Page       26      Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

While some historians argue that the Civil War and the emancipation of the slaves effectively destroyed the antebellum plantation, others argue that the plantation system, although altered, continued. After the war, plantation owners struggled to find a labor system which allowed them to continue farming as they had before the war. At first, planters opted to hire the freedmen as wage laborers in gang systems, which in the years immediately after the Civil War, with high cotton prices, they were able to do. Poor harvests, however, in 1865, 1866, and 1867, depleted the planters ready cash and the gang system, which was not popular among the freedmen, was abandoned in most areas by 1867. Robert Somers, an Englishman making a tour of the Southern states, remarked that in the country in Marengo County, farming had been disrupted by the unavailability of labor.

“Slavery was dense in this prairie region in the time before the war and now there is a great scarcity of negro labor. A spirit of roving and the demand for labor on the railways, have carried away the blacks in thousands. The planters have been able to grow but small patches of corn and cotton on their teeming lands. Hundreds of acres on every plantation of rich arable soil are lying idle, and enjoying a long fallow...<sup>46</sup>”

Gradually, the landowners abandoned the gang labor systems and sharecropping and tenant farming systems were adopted. In the tenant system, planters furnished the tenant a dwelling and the land while the tenant was responsible for furnishing the labor, and some of the stock, tools, and seeds. The planter received anywhere from a third to a fourth of the crop. In the sharecropping system, the cropper and his family farmed a certain tract of land for the planter who, in return, provided the family with housing, tools, seed, fuel, stock, and feed. The planter usually insisted the tenants and sharecroppers plant cotton which had an established market. In the 1880s, it was almost the universal practice on the larger farms for the landlord to furnish all necessary supplies except the laborer's board and to receive one-half of all the crops. In Perry County, there were at least four different types of laborers including wage hands, cash renters, sharecroppers, and renters on "fourths." Usually, the planter issued credit to the croppers from his plantation store or from the local "furnish" merchants who advanced the planters seed, fertilizer, implements, food, and anything else needed to make a crop. Once the crops had been harvested and sold, the planters would usually settle up with the merchants who had accepted a mortgage on the crop in return for an extended line of credit. The furnish merchant became, to the post war south, what the cotton factor had been in the antebellum days, the planter's financial backer. Soon, the small Canebrake towns of Dayton, Faunsdale, Prairieville, and Newbern became financial as well as agricultural centers with the creation of large merchandise stores. Often the furnish merchants were planters or former planters themselves. At Prairieville, John Collins' descendants opened a large mercantile business while the Wilkins family, allied with the Minge and Adams families, opened a mercantile in Faunsdale. The Walthall family at Newbern began a ginning business around which grew up warehouses and a merchandise store. Newbern and Faunsdale were both located on railway lines and as Glenn Sisk notes in his social history of the Black Belt, these

---

<sup>46</sup>B. F. Riley, Alabama As It Is, 2nd. ed. (Atlanta: Constitution Publishing Company, 1888), p. 116-120. Robert Somers, Southern States Since the War (New York: Macmillan Company, 1871), pp. 158-159. Sisk, pp. 22-28.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     27    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

small communities were necessary to serve the local farm areas, and their contact with the outside world was measured by their nearness to a railroad station. <sup>47</sup>

The legal basis for the tenancy and advancing systems were the crop lien laws which were passed on January 15, 1866. The law provided that a person could secure the "necessary team, provisions, and farming implements, to make a crop," by securing a lien on the crop. The lien, which took priority over all other mortgages and liens, would be repaid after the harvesting and sale of the crop. The lien laws progressively gave more and more control to the landlord or planter. For example, in 1883, the "anaconda" mortgage gave the planter or landlord the right to not only take the tenants crops, but his personal property as well. The "anaconda" mortgage gave the planters much more control over their tenants. According to Sisk, by 1880, the tenancy and sharecropping systems were well established in the South and by the 1890s, 90 percent of the cotton workers in Alabama were tenants and sharecroppers. In the Canebrake, the cash tenant system proved to be more popular among the planters than the sharecropping system. In Marengo County, by 1900, of the 4,154 farms operated of African-Americans, only 381 owned their property; 2,693 were classified as cash tenant farmers while 900 were identified as share tenants. The ratio was somewhat higher in Hale County where of the 4,154 farms identified as farms of African Americans, 2,231 were operated by cash tenants while 900 were occupied by tenants on the share system. Similarly, Perry County had 2,664 cash tenants and only 524 share tenants. <sup>48</sup>

On January 30, 1867, the Alabama State Legislature created Hale County, named for Stephen Hale, a Confederate soldier from nearby Eutaw, from portions of Greene, Marengo, Perry, and Tuscaloosa Counties. The creation of Hale County effectively divided Greene County in two parts divided by the Black Warrior River. Marengo lost considerable territory, including all of the land which had comprised the original French land grant. Census records therefore indicate that Marengo, Perry, and Greene counties had a significant decrease in overall county populations. Since Sisk and other historians note that there was no significant outward migration of blacks after the civil war, the decrease in population in the three counties, portions of which comprised the Canebrake region, was the result of the creation of Hale County. In 1870, Marengo's populations stood at 26,151 while 21,792 people lived in the newly formed Hale County. Perry County's population had fallen from 27,724 in 1860 to 24,973. By 1880, Marengo's population had increased to 30,890 (7,277 white to 23,613 black) and by 1890, stood at 33,095. Hale County's 1880 population was 26,553 (4,903 white and 21,650 black) and by 1890, it had increased only to 27,501. In 1880, Marengo County planters, tenants, and croppers had 80,790 acres under cultivation in cotton, yielding 27,211 bales and 43,876 acres of corn, yielding 698,009 bushels. In Hale County, the 69,995 acres planted in cotton yielded 18,093 bales while the 43,254 acres in corn yielded 595,185 bushels of corn.

---

<sup>47</sup>Sisk, pp. 22-28; Interview with Mrs. Joe Davies, Prairieville, AL, September 22, 1991; Interview with T. A. and Robert Walthall, Newbern, AL, December 10, 1991; Memorial Record of Alabama (Madison, WI: Brant and Fuller, 1893), p. 262.

<sup>48</sup>Sisk, pp. 22-28.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     28    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

By 1890, Hale County's population had risen to only 27,501 and Marengo's population had increased to 33,095. Perry County's population had decreased from 30,741 to 29,332.<sup>49</sup>

In his Alabama As It Is, Riley notes that in 1888, Marengo planters and farmers had tilled land amounting to 169,097 acres. The majority was planted in cotton (80,790 acres) and corn (43,876 acres) but oats, sugarcane, tobacco, sweet potatoes and rice were also being raised. A similar situation was found in Hale County with the greater portion of acreage (140,072) being devoted to cotton and corn but with wheat and rye also being raised in addition to rice and sweet potatoes. While Perry County reflected similar agricultural interests, Riley as early as 1888, begins to mention the improvements made in livestock and the increasing amount of attention given to the cultivation of hay and fodder crops.<sup>50</sup>

Yerby notes that for a period of almost twenty years after the Civil War, enterprise and progress were scarce in the towns of the Black Belt. "The hammer and the saw had been unknown for nearly a quarter of a century." Following 1884, however, a number of new structures were being built. For Greensboro, which had been selected as the seat of government for newly created Hale County, there had been some economic activity as early as 1869, when the town of and the county government issued \$15,000 worth of bonds to aid in the construction of a railway to connect the city with the town of Newbern and the Selma, Marion, and Memphis Railroad. The railway was completed on November 4, 1870 and with its completion, Greensboro became a major shipping area. Soon after the completion of the railway, A. H. Ravessies, son of the French colonist, constructed a cotton warehouse near the Greensboro Depot.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1880s and 1890s, as the iron and steel industry in Birmingham burst upon the state, towns within the Black Belt recognized the need for some type of industry, whether it be a mill or factory. The early industry in the Canebrake region was tied to agriculture and timber. While there was not much timber in the Black Belt, there were numerous saw mills in the sandy sections nearer the Flatwoods. Cotton gins were located throughout the region, at every crossroads, village and town. In the 1880s, however, an important industry appeared in the Canebrake with the arrival of the cotton oil mill. By 1886, five cotton oil mills were located in the Black Belt with one at Demopolis. In 1897, the Uniontown Cotton Oil Company, the oldest industry in Perry County, was formed and by 1899, Faunsdale and in 1903, Greensboro acquired cotton seed oil mills. The Uniontown mill manufactured cotton seed oil, cotton seed meal, and cotton linters and hulls, which were shipped to all parts of the United States. In 1900, Uniontown had three large ginneries, two cotton warehouses, the oil mill and the Ella White Cotton Mills in Uniontown, which eventually had a capital of

---

<sup>49</sup>United State Department of the Interior, Agricultural Census for 1920; Jesse M. Richardson, ed., Alabama Encyclopedia 2 vols. ( Northport, AL: The American Southern Publishing Company, 1965), p. 129.

<sup>50</sup>Riley, pp. 130-136, 143-145.

<sup>51</sup>Yerby, pp. 119-120, 69-72, 76.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     29    Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

\$175,000., operated 10,000 spindles and consumed 4,000 bales annually. Around this industry, grew up the Canebrake's only mill village. The cotton was bought locally from the area planters and the mill employed approximately 150 people. Demopolis boasted two large saw mills, two planing mills, a wagon factory, a stave factory, a spoke and fellow factory, the Alabama Portland Cement Company, three cotton gins, a compress, and three large cotton warehouses. Still, the industries in the Canebrake remained tied to the production, storage, ginning, and the compressing of cotton. <sup>52</sup>

While cotton continued to be the major cash crop, changes were occurring in the basic management of the plantations in the Canebrake. An example would be the large farming operation of Mr. Edwin Glass of Uniontown, a large furnish merchant who engaged in cotton farming, becoming one of the largest cotton producing planters in the area around the turn of the century. Glass cultivated 1,500 acres yet he owned less than sixty acres of land. Glass, who raised only cotton, rented the rest of his acreage from other area planters and utilized wage labor rather than the tenant or sharecropping systems. Because of his interest in an area mercantile, Glass had the ready capital to pay wage laborers as opposed to other area planters who had to rely on credit. Glass paid a yearly rental on an acre of land ranging from \$2 to \$2.50 per acre while wage labor in the Canebrake commanded \$8 per day. Around 1910, however, as the labor force became more scarce, Glass was forced to pay his laborers \$12.00 per day. <sup>53</sup>

The years from 1900 to 1920, however, witnessed the decline of Black Belt cotton production. From 1910 to 1920, cotton production dropped in the Black Belt by seventy-one percent as opposed to the thirty three percent reduction in the state as a whole. Several factors contributed to the overall decline of cotton production: 1.) the loss of the African-American population; 2.) decline in productivity of the soil through long and ruthless cropping, the failure to fertilize, and the lack of erosion prevention; 3.) the infestation of the boll weevil; 4.) the food production programs of World War I which encouraged the raising of food products rather than cotton. The population losses in the first three decades of the twentieth century were dramatic, especially in the small towns and crossroad communities of the Canebrake which were hurt by the decline of agriculture and losses of the African-American labor force who were leaving in large numbers, hoping to find better economic opportunities and fairer social treatment in the towns and cities of the north. Faunsdale and Newbern, with their oil mills, gins, and warehouses, and strategic locations on the railroad, actually witnessed an increase in population from 1900 to 1910, but the effects of the boll weevil and the war industry, resulted in both communities losing large numbers of residents. Faunsdale's population dropped from 3,812 in 1910 to 2,703 in 1920; Newbern dropped from a 1910 population of 2,084 to 1,469 in 1920. Dayton was especially hard hit, losing almost half of its 1900 population by 1920 as did the old French established crossroad community of Cedarville, whose population decreased from 3,070 in 1900, to 1,581 in 1920. Prairieville, Sawyerville, Greensboro, Uniontown, and Laneville all fell victim to the hard economic and agricultural climate in Alabama in the

---

<sup>52</sup>Sisk, pp. 532-533; Will Sheehan "Canebrake An Ideal Field For Farming Operations," *Montgomery Advertiser*, July 1, 1905.

<sup>53</sup>*Montgomery Advertiser*, July 1, 1905.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number       E       Page       30      Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

early 1900s. Too, families were moving off of the plantations and into the cities to take advantage of city services, such as running water, electricity, and telephone services. Greensboro and Uniontown both had electricity and city water systems by 1900 while Greensboro was able to offer its residents local and long distance telephone service by 1907.<sup>54</sup>

The difficulties in agriculture had created an interest among Canebrake planters in the possibilities of crop diversification. In 1905, Professor Spillman of Auburn University addressed an assembly of cotton planters in Uniontown in regard to the arrival of the boll weevil. Spillman warned the farmers that the insect had already infested the cotton crops of Texas and would eventually reach the fields of Alabama. In the fall of 1910, the boll weevil crossed the Alabama line for the first time and by 1911, had infested the southwestern portion of Marengo County. By 1912, it had crossed Marengo, Greene, Hale, and Wilcox counties, and had spread into Perry, Dallas, and parts of Lowndes and Montgomery counties. The boll weevil was especially destructive in the Black Belt; in the Black Belt, due to heavy spring rains and the clayey nature of the soil which retained water, crops were often started considerably later than other areas of the state. This prevented early crop maturity which hampered the destructiveness of the weevil. However, with the establishment of the Canebrake Experiment Center just north of Uniontown, planters began to witness the economic benefits of producing a variety of crops as alternatives to cotton. The Experiment Station was a project of the United States Department of Agriculture which operated a model farm on the plantation of General William Mumford. Judge W. H. Tayloe, the son of Henry Tayloe, an early Canebrake planter, contacted the Agriculture Department in regard to establishing an experiment station in the area as early as 1885. The experiment station operated on forty acres of land with a "modern farmhouse, barns and lots and conducted over three hundred experiments in regard to crop diversification." Soon area planters were witnessing the economic benefits of livestock production, in particular cattle, sheep, and hogs, and the raising of crops, such as alfalfa, corn, oats, sorghum, Johnston grass, and other forage crops. Additionally, in 1936, Amzi Rankin purchased the former plantation of the Kimbrough Dubose near Faunsdale and began a major dairy and cattle operation which is still owned and operated by the family today.<sup>55</sup>

In Hale County, the crop diversification and the raising of livestock was stimulated by the creation of a cattle ranch by W. M. Murphy. In 1906, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industry noted that in that year, three old cotton plantations, comprising 2,600 acres, had been transformed into a ranch, upon which were planted "mellilotus, Johnson grass, hairy vetch, and Bermuda grass." The labor on the ranch consisted of white men, as opposed to African-Americans; these men worked 1,100 head of cattle, of registered Herefords, Short Horns, and Polled Angus breeds. By 1920, beef cattle in Marengo County number 20,180 head with a combined worth of \$586,210. In 1911, western capitalists purchased twenty thousand acres of prairie lands to sell in small tracts to potential investors in the west. John Henry White of Birmingham, the founder of the Ella White

---

<sup>54</sup>Sisk, p. 459; United States Department of the Interior, Agricultural Census of 1920; Yerby, pp. 119-1390, 193.

<sup>55</sup>Montgomery Advertiser, July 1, 1905; Interview with Jim Rankin, Faunsdale, September 3, 1991.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     E     Page     31    

Canebrake Plantations  
Historic Context (cont'd)

Cotton Mills, offered 10,000 acres of land in 1910 to promote the immigration of white settlers into the region. Judge W. H. Tayloe formed the Lillietayloe Land Company, and began to advertise the "wonderfully rich" lands around Uniontown to prospective white settlers. Similarly, the Robertson Banking Company of Demopolis advertised that it would "take the lead in helping farmers to sell their large plantations in small tracts to prospective small white farmers." By 1920, the total number of Marengo County farms had dropped from 6,621 in 1900 to 6,004. Of the 6000 farms, 1,434 were owned and operated by white farmers while 4,566 were operated by African-Americans. Where the average plantations before the Civil War comprised 500 acres, the greater portion of the farms in 1900 (2,588), consisted of between 20 and 50 acres. There were only fifty-nine farms of over 1,000 acres in 1920 and only ninety-nine farms of 500 to 999 acres. 1,974 farms comprised less than fifty acres while 650 contained more than 100 acres but less than 500.<sup>56</sup>

During the agricultural depression of the 1920s, the cattle industry collapsed and the Canebrake, as well as the rest of the Black Belt returned to cotton production during the twenties. By 1930, the populations in Marengo, Hale, and Perry counties had all increased by a few hundred yet the days of the large cotton plantations worked by large labor forces had come to an end. The black outmigration continued and planters witnessed the further dwindling numbers of their once large labor pool. After World War II, the counties of the Canebrake continued to lose large numbers of their residents. By 1980, Marengo County's population had dwindled to 25,047, less than its 1850 population. From 1930 to 1980, Hale County lost 40.6 percent of its total population, falling from 26,265 to 15,604 while Perry County lost 43.1 percent of its population, dropping from 26,385 in 1930 to 15,012 in 1980.<sup>57</sup>

A variety of historic resources are present in the Canebrake from the period 1865-1942. These range from agricultural buildings such as isolated silos, barns, lots, and sheds to entire farm complexes. Additionally, remains of the Canebrake Experiment Station are evident along with commercial and institutional buildings such as the Ella White Cotton Mill and surrounding village, the cotton seed oil mills, gins, warehouses, and mercantiles. Numerous dwellings, churches, and educational structures from this era are also extant. This period accounts for the majority of historic properties within the Canebrake region today.

---

<sup>56</sup>Sisk, pp. 453-454, 460-470. United States Department of the Interior. Agricultural Census of 1920, Marengo County.

<sup>57</sup>Sisk, pp. 553-554. Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama's Population 1930-1980. July 1983.

---

## F. Associated Property Types

---

I. Name of Property Type Plantation Houses of the Alabama Canebrake (1818-1942)

II. Description

A plantation house is defined in this multiple resource nomination as being the residence of the owner or master of a plantation and his family. Plantation houses are located throughout the entire Canebrake region, usually in the center of or on the edge of a large tract of land. However, some plantation houses may be located in clusters near to or adjacent to small communities or nearer one of the four towns on the fringes of the region. A variety of plantation houses are present throughout the Canebrake region, vividly conveying the 19th and 20th century history of the region and the early development of the plantation house from a material culture perspective. Examples of plantation houses remain from as early as 1820 and provide, with increasing frequency, evidence of residential and plantation developmental patterns until 1942. Resources range from vernacular forms to "high style" dwellings, encompassing a number of styles, forms, and trends.

III. Significance

Many of the plantation houses of Alabama's Canebrake are significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with the developmental themes agriculture; ethnic heritage - African-American; and social and cultural history. Most are also significant under National Register Criterion C for embodying architectural styles, forms, trends, methods of construction, and artistic values from the history of the region from 1818 to 1942.

In regard to the developmental theme of agriculture, the plantation houses of the Canebrake reflect information about the formation and operation of the agricultural way of life, characteristic of the area from 1818 to 1942. While most of the houses date from the 1840s to the 1850s, examples of plantation houses exist from as early as 1820, allowing a view of the progression and evolution of the plantation house in the antebellum years. The plantation houses convey information about plantation life and the changes which occurred in those two areas over a forty-five year period.

IV. Registration Requirements

To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a plantation house in the Alabama Canebrake should retain integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting and workmanship.

**Association and Location**

The plantation house must have been built within the defined geographical boundaries of the Canebrake between 1818-1942. The property must have a demonstrated association with and have the potential to yield some degree of information for at least one of the following thematic areas: agriculture, architecture, ethnic heritage-African American, and/or social and cultural history as identified within the single historic context developed for the Canebrake. If a plantation house has been moved from its original location and relocated within the defined boundaries of the Canebrake, it will remain eligible for listing in the National Register. Relocated structures must retain a high degree of architectural and/or historical significance and must retain a high degree of integrity in regard to original design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and setting.

See continuation sheet

---

See continuation sheet for additional property types

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     F     Page     32    Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)**II. Description (cont'd.)**

Antebellum plantation houses were usually constructed by slaves, a number of which were master craftsmen. Evidence indicates, however, that some architects and master builders were working in the Canebrake from the 1820s until 1865. Early construction in the Canebrake region, from 1818 to the mid-1830s, was usually based on log construction and several plantation houses utilizing log construction have been identified. These include Battersea, the Robinson-Porter house [destroyed, 1991], Altwood, and Roseland. There are known examples of log buildings having been incorporated into larger residential structures, usually without any evidence of the log structure from the exterior, such as found at Roseland, Altwood, and Battersea. Only one existing frame plantation house, Cedarwood, the home of Joseph Stickney, has been identified as a being constructed prior to 1830. Historical research materials exist which indicate that log single pen, double pen or saddlebag dwellings were constructed in the Canebrake although none have been identified so far in this study as existing plantation houses. More commonly found in this survey are the log dogtrot structures, two single pen log dwellings connected by an open breezeway. Log dogtrot buildings characteristically featured exterior end chimneys. Examples of early log dogtrot dwellings with later frame additions have been identified, again examples being the Roseland plantation and Altwood, which began as a log dogtrot structure but was quickly remodeled into an interpretation of a Tidewater cottage. Examples of buildings utilizing two story log construction in the Canebrake have also been identified. The two story log structures were typically one room deep with exterior end chimneys, with an open dogtrot containing a central stair. This particular construction method resulted in the creation of the easily discernible I-house form. The Robinson-Porter house which was destroyed in 1991, was a rare example of a two story log dogtrot structure.

Plantation houses of frame construction in the Canebrake date from the earliest days of the formation of the plantations. After 1840, frame construction however, was more frequent. Plantation houses were based on common or familiar plans and were sheathed in simple weatherboarding. It is not surprising that with the influx of settlers from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, many of the buildings reflect the architectural forms and styles of the South Atlantic states. A form common in the Canebrake was the I-house, usually three to five bays in width. While most I-houses were constructed utilizing central hall plans with rear shed rooms or ells, one I-house, the inn at Millwood Landing, has been identified in the region utilizing a hall and parlor plan with a salt box roofline, reminiscent of the Chesapeake/Albermarle sound area of its builder, Robert Withers. The I-house remained a popular form and after the 1830s, with increasing frequency, examples of this form were adorned with Classical and Greek Revival porticoes. Examples of I-houses found in the Canebrake include Borden Oaks, the Prowell-Poole house in Dayton, and the Liver House near Prairieville.

Three regional examples of Tidewater influenced cottages have been identified, two of frame construction and the other based on log construction. Cedarwood and the "slave quarter" at Millwood Landing are frame structures while Altwood, one of Alabama's few Black Belt Tidewater influenced cottages, is, as noted earlier, of log construction. All three of these structures have center hall plans with exterior end chimneys while Altwood features dormer windows.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     F     Page     33    Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)

Regional examples and interpretations of three and five part Palladian inspired structures were also constructed in the Canebrake. Weyanoke (destroyed) has been identified as the only known example of a true five part plan house in Alabama while research has recently identified the possibility of another plantation house with a five part composition, Oakleigh, the Randolph plantation (destroyed). Three part plan plantation houses include Faunsdale and Honeysuckle Glen (destroyed). Faunsdale features a two story central block with flanking one story wings; this particular structure is reminiscent of the Randolph-Semple house in Williamsburg or The Rowe in Charles City County, Virginia. Honeysuckle Glen and Umbria, a raised Classical Revival cottage, were perhaps designed by William Nichols, a prominent architect in Alabama who designed the state capitol building in Tuscaloosa and is the earliest known architect practicing in the Canebrake region.

The presence of high style residential buildings in the Canebrake increased after 1850 when plantation houses were based on local interpretations of the predominant architectural styles. While there are a number of plantation dwellings which are fine examples of a particular style, more commonly found are local interpretations of prevailing styles and trends. Too, these dwellings reflect the increasing use and popularity of nineteenth century pattern books. Greek Revival details such as dentil work, modillions, door and window surrounds, Doric and Ionic columns, and an adherence to symmetry were features of a number of buildings in the Canebrake. Both one and two story frame residences were constructed utilizing elements and details of the Greek Revival. Pitts' Folly and Cedar Haven are two dwellings which can clearly be labeled Greek Revival structures. Norwood [destroyed], a raised cottage, featured Greek Revival detailing as did Battersea before it was remodeled in the late nineteenth century. Westwood, the Price plantation house north of Uniontown, is an interesting blend of classical and romantic architecture. With the Gothic Revival style, the decoration was more exuberant, although again, very few "stylistically true" residences were built in the Canebrake. More often, traditional house forms were embellished with decorative bargeboard, finials, balconies, bannisters, and cast iron work. Gothic Revival plantation houses included Forest Hill [destroyed], Waldwic, Fairhope, and New Hope [destroyed]. Forest Hill was seemingly lifted from the pages of A. J. Downings *The Architecture of Country Houses* while a number of details and ideas from the work of Samuel Sloan are embodied in Fairhope. The Italianate style was perhaps the rarest architectural style in the Canebrake. Only three plantation houses in the area today, reflect an Italianate influence, Hawthorn, Rosedale, and Hedge Hill. Ingelside, now known as Rolling Rock farms, may have been an Italianate styled dwelling before undergoing an extensive remodeling. The basis for the design of Hawthorn was clearly Samuel Sloan's plan for "A Southern House" from his pattern book, *Sloan's Victorian Buildings*. Indeed, several of the plantation dwellings constructed in the 1850s reflect the influence and designs of the premier Romantic architects of the era, including A. J. Downing, Samuel Sloan, and Richard Upjohn.

Lattice work is a common feature found on a number of frame plantation houses in the region, used either as a screen or as a decorative device on porches. Those plantation houses which incorporate or which at one time featured some lattice work include Faunsdale, Waldwic, Cedar Grove (removed), Cedar Haven, Cedar Crest (removed), and Norwood [destroyed]. Two plantation houses which fall within the category of the cottage orne, reflecting the popularity in the mid-19th century for dwellings which evoke a rustic or pastoral setting are Rosedale, the Norfleet Harris

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F Page 34Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)

plantation house and the Morisette-Tunstall-Sledge House, both feature decorative porch supports while Rosedale is embellished with an Italianate styled tower.

Brick construction, in regard to the building of plantation main houses, appears to have been rare in the Canebrake. Only one brick plantation house has been identified as being constructed between 1818 and 1865. The Alfred Hatch house is a rare Greek Revival temple form structure with a tetra-style portico. This structure was previously listed in the National Register.

After 1865, while construction of plantation houses in the Canebrake occurred with less frequency than the years preceding the Civil War, those which were constructed often reflected a continuation of forms and stylistic details prevalent during the antebellum years. The I-house form is seen again in the Craighead-Jones house near Siddonsville and the Allen house in Old Spring Hill. Too, Greek Revival detailing is seen again in the postwar plantation house constructed by members of the Charles Collins family. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, however, plantation houses with increasing frequency reflected detailing, massing, and forms commonly associated with Victorian architecture, in particular the Queen Anne style. A Queen Anne "influenced" cottage is located on the Floradale plantation near Gallion. Due to the depressed agricultural climate in the Canebrake after the 1920s, few plantation houses were constructed from this time through 1945.

In the Canebrake, most plantation houses are located in a plantation complex, that is a grouping of buildings consisting of a plantation main house with outbuildings and support structures. Set back some distance from the nearest road, behind pastures and/or orchards, the main house usually rests in a grove of trees, most typically cedar trees, with the outbuildings lying to the sides and to the rear of the main house. Rarely are any buildings or structures located in front of the main plantation house, and indeed, in this survey, no outbuildings were located in front of the plantation house at any complex. Coolers, kitchens, smokehouses, and carriage houses are usually located within close proximity to the main house. Servants dwellings, those reserved for domestic servants rather than the "quarters" for field hands, are generally found to be within close proximity as well. While most plantation houses are found in a farm complex, occasionally a plantation house will be isolated.

The majority of plantation main houses are occupied and remain as single family dwellings. Too, they are still a part of moderate to large farming interests. Most of the plantation houses are well maintained and some are even occupied by descendants of the original builders. There are examples of some buildings which are vacant or have been abandoned and are threatened with demolition by neglect. Due to the depressed agricultural economy of the region, a number of the plantation main houses have been lost over the years from neglect while some owners are no longer financially able to properly tend to the upkeep of their historic properties.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F Page 35Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)**III. Significance (cont'd)**

In regard to African-American ethnic heritage, blacks comprised 70 percent of the population of the Canebrake in 1865 and maintain a majority of the present population. African-American were an integral part of the plantation system, first as slaves and then as tenants and sharecroppers. The plantation houses, for often constructed by African-Americans and were also the buildings in which they worked and around which their lives centered. These buildings provide information about the daily routine and the work place of the African-Americans from the early years of settlement in Alabama until 1942.

In terms of significance in regard to social and cultural history, many of the antebellum plantation houses provide information concerning the settlement and development of the Canebrake from 1818-1865. A number of dwellings and buildings dating from this period illustrate the settlement patterns and convey a sense of the formation and development of the plantations and plantation system which occurred during this time period.

In terms of architectural significance, the plantation houses reveal information regarding the various forms and styles, construction methods and techniques, and craftsmanship utilized by the residents of the area from 1818-1942. Certain forms reflect the transportation of particular house forms from the cultural hearths of the eastern seaboard to the frontier lands of Alabama. While high style residential buildings exist, the majority of these types are local interpretations of particular styles, reflecting the influence of pattern books and of popular styles and trends in the architectural field. Some of the existing plantation main houses are large and imposing structures and substantiate the fact that the area was populated by prominent landowners. Other plantation houses are modest, reflecting rather a more accurate account of the average plantation dwelling than the image which has become fixed in the popular mind of a typical southern plantation house.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     F     Page     36    

Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)

---

## IV. Registration requirements (cont'd)

### Design, Materials, and Workmanship

The plantation house must retain most of the components and details which identify it as a building constructed from 1818 to 1942. While all plantation houses have undergone changes from 1818-1942, these resources should retain forms, floorplans, and materials and retain as much of their appearance from this period of significance. High style dwellings should retain a high degree of their original components and stylistic detailing. Apparent on all buildings should be the original construction materials and/or examples of local craftsmanship. No building will be eligible if it has been subjected to significant changes, alterations, or renovations which has left the building to be totally unrecognizable in regard to its appearance from the period of significance (1818-1942).

### Feeling and Setting

Plantation houses in the Canebrake, must convey a feeling of a plantation house associated with one or more of the thematic areas of the historic context. Too, the setting must retain as much of the qualities from the period 1818-1942. But certain buildings may be eligible despite substantial losses in the area of setting. A singular plantation house which is no longer associated with a plantation complex or has suffered substantial losses in regard to the area of integrity of setting may be eligible. Similarly, a plantation main house which has no contributing outbuildings or support structures which help to identify it as a part of working plantation or which has suffered substantial losses in the area of integrity of setting may be eligible if it retains a high degree of design, materials, and workmanship.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F Page 37Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)**I. Subtype: Associated Outbuildings of Plantation Houses of the Alabama Canebrake (1818-1942)****II. Description**

An outbuilding is defined in this multiple resource nomination as any structure or building which was or remains part of a plantation complex and was used for domestic, commercial, social, educational, religious, cultural, agricultural, or any other purpose which may pertain to the development and evolution of a plantation in the Canebrake from 1818-1942. Due to the continued change and evolution of the plantation and the plantation system, outbuildings were constructed from the earliest days of formation and development of a plantation to the present. Plantations may have a variety of outbuildings which range in date from 1818 until the 1940s, clearly reflecting the change and adaptation of agricultural practices over a 150 year period. Outbuildings may include, but not be limited to domestic secondary structures (dairy, smokehouse, storage pit, storage shed, kitchen, garage, overseer's residence, or other dependencies) or those buildings or structures associated with agriculture/subsistence (processing, storage, agricultural field, animal facility, horticultural facility, agricultural outbuilding, or irrigation facility). In addition, plantation complexes often included buildings such as schools or chapels as well as professional and commercial structures, offices or apothecaries. The existence of professional or commercial structures is evident on those plantations where the plantation owner chose to practice a secondary vocation (lawyer, minister, or doctor) in addition to the role of planter.

Typically, early outbuildings in the Canebrake are single pen log structures with side gable roofs and detailing commonly found on log buildings in the southeast, such as half dovetail notching techniques. Characteristically, they have an oblong floor plan, sometimes with an exterior brick chimney centered at the gable side. The front entrance is centered on one of the short sides. No log outbuildings were identified in the initial survey but log outbuildings have been identified in other areas of the Canebrake, a log smokehouse at the Beazley farm and two log outbuildings at the Robinson-Porter place. Frame construction in regard to outbuildings is more prevalent in the Canebrake and the plan of most outbuildings is quite simple; a rectangular or square single room with a gable roof. While most frame outbuildings are plain and relatively unadorned, some buildings, especially those closest to the main house may be embellished with decorative detailing. The slave cabins at Faunsdale and three outbuildings at Waldwic are embellished with scalloped bargeboard, board and batten wall material, and Gothic detailing. Brick was used mainly for foundations and chimneys, although a brick kitchen building was constructed at the Hatch house at Arcola, which itself is a unique brick plantation house. Too, coolers, buildings with deep basements for the storage of perishable items, contain brick lined cellars.

Outbuildings identified in this survey and subsequent multiple resource nomination were a combination kitchen/laundry building, separate kitchens and laundries, slave cabins, tenant houses, a cooler, a privy, barns, a carriage house, smokehouses, storage facilities, a plantation office, equipment shed, an overseer's house, a doctor's office, and a dovecote. The pattern of arrangement for outbuildings in the surveyed area was for the most part, quite uniform in that the outbuildings were located to the side and to the rear of the plantation main house. Of those

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F Page 38Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)

plantation complexes which were surveyed, only Faunsdale, Cuba, Cedar Haven, and Rosedale have a collection of significant outbuildings. Altwood, the Morisette-Tunstall-Sledge house, and Cedar Grove have no significant outbuildings while the Cedar Crest plantation house rests in the middle of a modern dairy farm complex. Due to limited accessibility and research materials, no conclusions regarding patterns of arrangement in regard to outbuildings were drawn from Roseland (the Norfleet Harris house) and Ash Grove.

All of the surveyed plantation complexes can be labeled as working plantations, that is each was the center of a large farming interest which produced a staple crop (in this case, cotton) and which was worked by a large slave/tenant/sharecropper labor force. With the exception of Cuba and possibly, Ash Grove, each plantation was also the principal residence of the planter and his family. Typically, a working plantation complex might have contained a main residence, slave "quarters," tenant houses, corn cribs, stables, an overseer's house, chicken houses, kitchens, barns, carriage houses, smokehouses, coolers, lye hoppers, hog pens, cow lots, a gin house, a cotton shed, a mill, and cemented cisterns. Today, of those plantation complexes surveyed for this nomination, the outbuildings which have survived are usually those which are located within close proximity to the main house and which have been used either as originally intended or which been adapted for another purpose. For example, on the Faunsdale Plantation, the collection of outbuildings flank the house to the east. At this complex, a kitchen/laundry building lies within close proximity to the location of the original dining room. A cook's house was located nearby. The carriage house and two slave cabins are positioned at a slightly further distance from the main house. Until the incorporation of modern kitchens and bathrooms into the main house, detached kitchens and privys were continuously utilized through much of the early twentieth century. Plantation families continued to employ servants and therefore, early slave cabins were in turn occupied by tenants who served as domestics in the planter's household. Too, with the arrival of the automobile, carriage houses were converted into garages. Most of the existing outbuildings are not utilized as they were originally intended. Indeed, most are used for storage, are vacant, or have been abandoned. Cuba and Faunsdale Plantations contain significant collections of outbuildings which are still being utilized, although not for their original purpose. The outbuildings of Cedar Haven and Roseland plantations have been abandoned and are falling into ruin.

Too, with increasing improvements in technology and the diversification of the agricultural economy, few of the agricultural outbuildings from the period of significance have survived. The cemented cisterns disappeared with the arrival of county water systems. The extensive animal lots and pens, necessary for the production of foodstuffs which were essential to the maintenance of a large labor force, have vanished. With the collapse of the cotton based economy and the emphasis on animal husbandry and livestock breeding, which requires extensive pasture lands, the structures necessary for the production of a staple crop, the gins, mills, and storage facilities, have been torn away. Few barns have survived and those are utilized today more for storage than for the shelter of animals. Still, the patterns of arrangement for new buildings tends to follow the original scheme. For example, at Faunsdale Plantation, two new storage facilities, structures important to the catfish industry, have been positioned within close proximity to the contributing outbuildings and contribute to the overall feeling of a working plantation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F Page 39Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)**III. Significance**

Many of the associated outbuildings of the plantation houses of Alabama's Canebrake are significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with the developmental themes agriculture; ethnic heritage - African Americans; and social and cultural history. Most are also significant under National Register Criterion C for embodying architectural styles, forms, trends, methods of construction, and artistic values from the history of the region from 1818 to 1942.

In regard to the developmental theme of agriculture, the associated outbuildings of the plantations of the Canebrake reflect information about the formation and operation of the agricultural way of life characteristic of the area from 1818 to 1942. While most of the significant outbuildings date from the 1840s and 1850s, examples of plantation outbuildings exist from as early as perhaps 1835, allowing a view of the progression, evolution, and transition of the plantation and the agricultural economy of the Canebrake region from 1818 until 1942.

In regard to African-American ethnic heritage, blacks comprised 70 percent of the population of the Canebrake in 1865 and indeed, maintain a significant majority of the present population. African-Americans, first as slaves and then later, tenants and sharecroppers, comprised the large labor force for the plantation system until outmigration in the 1920s. The plantation complexes were not only constructed by African-Americans but were the buildings in which they worked and around which their lives centered. These buildings provide information regarding the daily routine and the work place of the African-American from the early years of settlement until the 1940s.

In terms of significance in regard to social and cultural history, many of the plantation houses provide information concerning the settlement and development of the Canebrake from 1818-1942. The complexes and the outbuildings convey a sense of the formation, development, and operation of the plantations and the plantation system which occurred during this time period.

In terms of architectural significance, the associated outbuildings of the plantation houses of the Canebrake reveal information regarding the various forms, construction methods, techniques, and craftsmanship utilized by the planters of the area from 1818-1942. The outbuildings exemplify the vernacular agrarian architecture of the Canebrake, clearly reflecting the utilization of particular forms for specific purposes. While most of the outbuildings are simple, plain structures, some are adorned with stylistic detailing, reflecting the influence of prevailing architectural styles on simple vernacular structures.

**IV. Registration Requirements**

To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a plantation house in the Alabama Canebrake should retain integrity of association, design, feeling, location, materials, setting and workmanship.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F Page 40Canebrake Plantations  
Property Type (cont'd)**Association and Location**

To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, associated outbuildings of plantation houses of the Alabama Canebrake must have been built within the defined geographical boundaries of the Canebrake between 1818 and 1942. Historical evidence must exist which clearly identifies that a particular outbuilding is or was part of a plantation that was formed or developed between 1818-1942. Too, the property must have a demonstrated association with and have the potential to yield some degree of information for at least one of the following thematic areas: agriculture, architecture, ethnic heritage - African American, and/or social and cultural history as identified within the single historic context developed for the Canebrake. If an associated outbuilding of an antebellum plantation house has been moved from its original location and relocated within the defined boundaries of the Canebrake, it will remain eligible for listing in the National Register. Relocated outbuildings must retain a high degree of architectural and/or historical significance and must retain a high degree of integrity in regard to original design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and setting.

**Design, Materials, and Workmanship**

Associated outbuildings of plantation houses of the Alabama Canebrake must retain most of the components and details which identify it as a support structure or building constructed from 1818 to 1942. All outbuildings should retain their original form, floorplan, and materials and retain as much of their original appearance from the original date of construction. Apparent on all outbuildings should be the original construction materials and/or examples of local craftsmanship. No outbuilding will be eligible if it has been subjected to significant changes, alterations, or renovations which has left the building to be totally unrecognizable in regard to its original appearance.

**Feeling and Setting**

Associated outbuildings of plantation houses of the Alabama Canebrake must convey a feeling of an outbuilding associated with one or more of the thematic areas of the historic context. Too, the setting must retain as much of the qualities from the period 1818-1942.

**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

This Multiple Resource Nomination of Antebellum Plantation Houses of the Alabama Canebrake and their associated outbuildings (1818-1942) is the result of a multi-stage process, involving of survey component and subsequent compilation of the Multiple Resource Nomination. At the beginning of the project, United States Geological Survey maps were examined and an analysis of planters and plantations mentioned in John Witherspoon Dubose's *Chronicles of the Canebrake* was conducted to determine the boundaries of the region. Recognizing that the Canebrake region was divided into the three parishes of the Episcopal church (more of an arbitrary division since there were never any definitive parish boundary lines established), the survey team proposed to conduct an intensive thematic survey of a small area in the northeast corner of the Canebrake region of Alabama, an area more commonly referred to as St. Michael's Parish. The scope of the intensive thematic survey was to identify all historic resources of plantations formed before 1860 and to document antebellum plantation houses and the associated outbuildings of those plantations in that particular region. To be eligible for inclusion in the identification and documentary process, the plantation must have been developed before 1860 and contain some resources which date from this period. The survey team conducted extensive research of archival material and public records to identify the location of plantations developed before 1860. All outbuildings on the plantation which predate 1942 were documented and plantation houses which are postbellum were documented if the plantation was formed and contained other resources which predate 1860.

See continuation sheet

**H. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Form Prepared By**

name/title Jeff Mansell; Melanie Retz/AHC Reviewer - 205/242-3184

organization Cahaba Trace Commission date February 8, 1993

street & number Route 1, Box 147 telephone (205) 665-7982

city or town Brierfield state Alabama zip code 35035

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     G     Page     41    Canebrake Plantations  
Summary/Identification-Evaluation

The fieldwork for the survey project took place during the summer and continued through the fall of 1991. During the intensive thematic survey, every passable road was traveled and every structure in the defined project area was examined in an attempt to locate those structures which could clearly be determined to be or have been part of an antebellum plantation complex in the Alabama Canebrake. For those properties which the survey team felt were eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the principal surveyor completed the long version of the Alabama Survey Form, photo-documented the structure with black and white 35mm film and color slides, and noted the location of the property or district on U. S. G. S. maps. For structures which the survey team felt were not eligible, were inaccessible, or which sufficient information was unavailable to make an eligibility determination, the principal surveyor completed a short inventory form, describing the resource, and documented the structure with black and white photography and color slides when possible. Subsequently, contact sheets were developed from the black and white negatives. For those properties determined to be eligible for nomination to the National Register, a completed individual nomination form for each property was compiled.

During the course of the field work, the principal research assistant was examining archival material, public records, and primary and secondary sources for the compilation of the associated historic context component of the multiple resource nomination. The context was developed over the course of eighteen months with an aim to provide an historical overview necessary to understand and evaluate not only the antebellum plantation and associated outbuildings but other property types as well. While the initial project area for this multiple property nomination was that small region in the northeast corner of the Canebrake known as St. Michael's Parish, the project director was during the same period, conducting an intensive survey of the Canebrake area which lies in Hale County. Too, the project director had previously surveyed that area of the region which lies in Perry County. Therefore, through these different surveys, it is possible to compile a more complete and accurate overview of the entire region and the resources found therein.

Those properties, all of which are located in Marengo County, which were surveyed and were determined to be eligible for nomination to the National Register include:

- Faunsdale Plantation
- Cedar Grove Plantation
- Roseland Plantation
- Cedar Crest Plantation
- Altwood
- Cedar Haven Plantation
- Cuba Plantation

Those structures which were surveyed but were determined to be either ineligible for listing in the National Register or about which sufficient information was unavailable were:

- Ash Grove
- Rosedale (the Norfleet Harris house) - Hale County
- Morisette-Tunstall-Sledge house - Hale County
- Craighead-Jones house

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     G     Page     42    

Canebrake Plantations  
Summary/Identification-Evaluation

---

Rosedale and the Morisette Tunstall Sledge house are probably eligible for listing to the National Register. Access to the Rosedale site was prohibited by the current owners and information regarding the Morisette-Tunstall-Sledge house is unavailable. Ash Grove has undergone extensive remodeling and is abandoned and deteriorating. The Craighead-Jones house is believed to be a post bellum structure and has also undergone extensive remodeling.

In Hale County, those structures which have been covered in other surveys include:

- Borden Oaks
- Battersea
- Waldwic
- Hedge Hill
- Ingleside
- Bermuda Hill - The Liver House
- Hawthorn
- Atkins' Ridge
- Brick Spring
- Two residences associated with the Collins family
- The log outbuildings on the Robinson-Porter place
- Log smokehouse on the Beazley farm
- Dr. John Avery's office at Contentment

In Perry County, the structure which has been covered in other surveys is  
The Chambers-Shaw house

The area of the Canebrake which has not been surveyed is the remaining portion of the study area which lies in Marengo County. This area lies south of Hale County and to the southwest and west of the initial study area.

**Archaeological Component:** While no formal archaeological study has been conducted in the Canebrake, an archaeologist from the University of Alabama has surveyed portions of the geographically defined area and has determined that the region has the potential to yield significant information regarding the formation, development, and operation of the antebellum plantation and 19th century antebellum plantation life and culture. The archaeologist examined the plantation sites of Norwood and Weyanoke and felt that the sites had the potential to yield significant information. Norwood, a plantation house documented by the Historic American Building Survey in the 1930s, and Weyanoke, an important five part plan Classical Revival dwelling, were the centers for large antebellum plantations. Both dwellings have been destroyed but the sites remain intact. The archaeologist also examined land maps of resources outside the initial project area and examined sites of plantations in other areas of the Canebrake and found the other sites to be significant in their potential to yield information. Additionally, the region has the potential to yield significant information in regard to the seven themes identified in the historic context, in particularly the three developmental themes of agriculture, ethnic heritage-African American, and social and cultural history.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number     H     Page     43    

Canebrake Plantations  
Bibliographical References

---

Bibliography

"A New Map of Alabama with its Roads and Distances from Place to Place along the Stage and Steamboat Routes." Philadelphia, PA: Thomas, Coperthwait, & Co., 1850.

"Alabama's Population 1930-1980." Alabama Department of Public Health, 1983.

Alabama Tract Book Records. Secretary of State Office, Montgomery, Alabama.

Census:       1820 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Greene, and Perry Counties  
              1830 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Greene, and Perry Counties  
              1840 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Greene, and Perry Counties  
              1850 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Greene, and Perry Counties  
              1860 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Greene, and Perry Counties  
              1870 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1880 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1890 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1900 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1910 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1920 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1930 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1940 Federal Population Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1860 Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo, Greene, and Perry Counties  
              1870 Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1880 Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1890 Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1900 Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1910 Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1920 Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties  
              1930 Federal Agricultural Census of Marengo, Hale, and Perry Counties

Amos, Harriet. "Religious Reconstruction in Microcosm at Faunsdale Plantation." *Alabama Review*. October, 1989.

Baldwin, James G. Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi. New York: Sagamore Press, 1957.

Christiain, Ella Storrs. "The Days That Are No More." *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XIV 1952.

Cobbs, Hamner. "Geography of the Vine and Olive Colony." *Alabama Review*, XIV April, 1961.

Davis, Mrs. Joe. Interview with author. September 22, 1991.

Dubose, John Witherspoon. "Chronicles of the Canebrake." *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, IX, Winter, 1947.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ H \_\_\_\_\_ Page 44 \_\_\_\_\_

Canebrake Plantations  
Bibliographical References (cont)

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Recollections of the Plantation." *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, 1930.
- Gamble, Robert S. The Alabama Catalogue: A Guide to the Early Architecture of the State. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1987.
- Griffith, Lucille. Alabama: A Documentary History to 1900. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1987.
- Harris, Stuart. Perry County Heritage. Marion, Alabama, privately printed, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "St. Andrew's Episcopal Church." *Southern Historical Records*, XIII.
- "Jean Baptist Le Moyne. Sieur de Bienville and the Establishment of Fort Tombeche, 1736-1740." Private paper, n.d.
- Jenkins, Ned J. and Richard A. Krause. "The Tombigbee Watershed in Southeastern Prehistory." Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1986.
- Jordan, Weymouth. Antebellum Alabama Town and Country. Tallahassee, FL: The University Press of Florida, 1957.
- Leftwich, George J. "General George Strother Gaines and Other Pioneers in the Mississippi Territory." Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series, 1916.
- Lewis, Mrs. Ivey F. Interview of February 18, 1992.
- McQueen, Stewart. "Minutes of the Episcopal Church in Alabama." *Church Record*, XII, April, 1903.
- Memorial Record of Alabama. Madison, WI: Brant and Fuller Publishers, 1893.
- Mitchell, S. Augustus. "New Map of Alabama with its Roads and Distances." Philadelphia, PA: 1840.
- Mistovich, Tim S. "Archaeological Investigations at the Faunsdale Sites." Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama, Office of Archaeological Research, 1985.
- Owen, Thomas. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography. Chicago, IL. 1921.
- Papers of the Faunsdale Collection. Southern Collection of the Birmingham Public Library.
- Pickett, Albert James. History of Alabama and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the Earliest Period. Birmingham, AL: Birmingham Book and Magazine Company, 1962.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number H Page 45

Canebrake Plantations  
Bibliographical References (cont)

Pierrepont, Alice V. D. Reuben Vaughan Kidd: Soldier of the Confederacy. privately printed, 1947.

Posey, Walter Brown, ed. "Alabama in the 1830s as Recorded by British Travellers." *Birmingham Southern College Bulletin XXXI* 1938.

Rankin, Jim. Interview with author. September 3, 1991.

Richardson, Jesse M., ed. Alabama Encyclopedia. Northport, AL: The American Southern Publishing Company, 1965.

Riley, B. F. Alabama As It Is. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta Constitution Publishing Company, 1888.

Rostlund, Erhard. "The Myth of a Natural Prairie Belt in Alabama: An Interpretation of Historical Records." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Winter 1957.

Royall, Ann. Letters from Alabama. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1969.

Selden, Joseph. Private letter, 1884.

Sheehan, Will. "Virginia Gives Color to the Canebrake." *Montgomery Advertiser*, n.d.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Canebrake an Ideal Field for Farming Operations." *Montgomery Advertiser*, July 1, 1905.

Sisk, Glenn N. "Alabama Black Belt: A Social History, 1874-1917." Typewritten copy, Birmingham Public Library, n.p., 1952.

Smith, Winston. Days of Exile. Tuscaloosa, AL: W. B. Drake and Sons, 1957.

Snedecor, V. Gayle. "Snedecor's Map of Hale County, 1870." privately published.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Snedecor's Map of Greene County, 1856." Tuscaloosa, AL: W. S. Hoole Special Collections, The University of Alabama.

Somers, Robert. Southern States Since the War. New York: Macmillan Company, 1871.

Stridikus, George. Interview, July 22, 1992.

Tharin, W. C. "A Directory of Marengo County for 1860-61." Mobile, AL: Farrow and Dennett Printers, 1861.

Yerby, W. E. W. History of Greensboro. Northport, AL: Colonial Press, 1963.

Walthall, Robert and T. A. Interview with author. December 10, 1991.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     H     Page   46  

Canebrake Plantations  
Bibliographical References (cont)

---

Whitfield, Gaius Jr. "The French Grant in Alabama: A History of the Founding of Demopolis."  
*Transaction of the Alabama Historical Society, 1899-1903.* 1904.

Williams, Clanton W. "Presidential Election Returns and Related Data for Antebellum  
Alabama." *Alabama Review*, October, 1948 and February, 1949.