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Prized Pieces of Land: The Impact of Reconstruction on African-American Land Ownership in Lower Richland County, South Carolina

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Prized Pieces of Land: The Impact of Reconstruction on African-American Land Ownership in Lower Richland County, South Carolina

Description
This report is divided into five sections. The first section assesses the promise of Reconstruction for black South Carolinians in the years after the Civil War, and it situates this case study of the South Carolina Land Commission within that historical context. The second section examines in turn the seven tracts of land sold by the Land Commission in Lower Richland County. The research indicates that in two of the tracts, Hickory Hill and Hopkins, African-American families were able to purchase and retain significant acreage for well over a century. Section three offers some concluding observations, as it presents a set of recommendations for preserving the extant properties of Lower Richland County associated with the Land Commission sales and for interpreting this history to public audiences through museum exhibits and educational programming. The primary and secondary sources consulted in this study are listed in section four as a guide to further reading.

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Carrie Giauque of the Public History Program at the University of South Carolina served as our Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Education Consultant. When the spring semester began in January 2009, she alone among the seminar members (including the instructor) had the technical knowledge to implement the crucial georectification process. She gave a presentation on GIS and georectification to orient the whole class to the concept and then worked closely with the two-person “map team” to generate these indispensable visual databases. In addition, she prepared the corrected and revised September 2009 digital version of this report.

To assist future researchers we have deposited copies of this final report at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, the Richland County Public Library (both the Main Library in Columbia and the Eastover Branch), Congaree National Park, Lower Richland High School, Hopkins Middle School, Kensington Mansion, Historic Columbia Foundation, and South East Rural Community Outreach.

We thank all who assisted us in this project but note that none of these individuals or organizations is responsible for the conclusions and historical interpretations in this report.
Executive Summary

Reconstruction was a period of particular promise and influence for black South Carolinians. They held high political office, initiated sweeping reforms aimed at racial equality, and inaugurated a statewide public school system, among other achievements. Less familiar is the story told in this report of an innovative program unique to South Carolina intended to make land acquisition possible for newly freed men and women. Even though few buildings and structures survive from these early Land Commission parcels, a good portion of the African-American property ownership in Lower Richland County today can be traced to this Reconstruction-era state program.

This report is divided into five sections. The first section assesses the promise of Reconstruction for black South Carolinians in the years after the Civil War, and it situates this case study of the South Carolina Land Commission within that historical context. The second section examines in turn the seven tracts of land sold by the Land Commission in Lower Richland County. The research indicates that in two of the tracts, Hickory Hill and Hopkins, African-American families were able to purchase and retain significant acreage for well over a century. Section three offers some concluding observations, as it presents a set of recommendations for preserving the extant properties of Lower Richland County associated with the Land Commission sales and for interpreting this history to public audiences through museum exhibits and educational programming. The primary and secondary sources consulted in this study are listed in section four as a guide to further reading.

The appendices in section five contain a description of the mapping methodology of the project, a spreadsheet database listing the original purchasers of Land Commission parcels in Lower Richland County, a spreadsheet database of African Americans who were able to complete their purchases and receive title to the land, and a list of the current tax map numbers of Land Commission parcels that have remained in the same African-American families. Finally, in reference copies of this report is a compact disc with the georectified maps that provided the basis of the research.
The origins of this project can be traced to a hot July afternoon in 2007 when a delegation of twenty-one university and college teachers from all over the United States stepped out of the air-conditioned comfort of their chartered bus onto the grounds of the Harriet Barber House near the small town of Hopkins in rural Lower Richland County, South Carolina. They were greeted by a large painted sign that informed them:

The Harriet Barber House, the home of Reverend Samuel Barber and his wife Harriet McPherson Barber, is significant for its association with the South Carolina Land Commission during the late nineteenth century. Samuel Barber purchased a 42.5 acre parcel of land in Richland County, part of the tract known as the Hopkins Turn Out Tract, at $5.00 per acre. The land on which the house is located has remained in the same family since May 24, 1872. It appears that it is the only existing house in Lower Richland County built on land that was purchased by former slaves who took advantage of this program. The property was officially entered in the National Register of Historic Places in April of 1986. The Harriet Barber House Restoration Project received the first $25,000 grant from the Richland County Conservation Commission in 2006.

The stop at the Harriet Barber House was part of a one-day excursion to Lower Richland County and one of a number of similar site visits over a four-week-long summer institute funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and organized by the co-directors of the University of South Carolina’s Public History Program, Constance Schulz and Robert Weyeneth. Professors Weyeneth and Schulz had designed the institute – entitled “African-American History as Public History: South Carolina as a Case Study” – as a way to promote greater racial and ethnic diversity within the public history profession. The idea was to use African-American historical resources in South Carolina, from museums and historic sites to archival repositories, to illustrate how university faculty could teach public history to their undergraduates. The hope was that a focus on African-American history would be especially appealing to African-American faculty, who would be recruited to the institute (and to the gospel of public history) in significant numbers. This indeed proved to be the case, and this delegation of college faculty is now in a position to help their undergraduate students understand what public history is, to inspire them to see public history as a potential career path, and to ask them to consider the value of graduate training in public history.

The University of South Carolina summer institute sowed some seeds of diversity within the profession – which will take time to grow – but this educational experiment had one immediate and unexpected consequence: it encouraged the university’s Public History Program to contemplate future collaborations in Lower Richland County. Robert Weyeneth had long made African-American heritage preservation an emphasis of his research and teaching, and the program had a lengthy track record of undertaking community-based public history projects, both close by in Columbia’s historic neighborhoods and further afield in Aiken, Chester, Florence, and Kershaw counties. Conveniently, the Harriet Barber House was only a dozen miles from the university’s campus in Columbia and, intriguingly, was located in a rural area historically linked with African-American life and culture that was increasingly threatened by development pressures. The possibilities for “nearby history” projects seemed endless.

In May 2008 a group of seven potential community partners, heritage professionals, and
university faculty spent a day together brainstorming about how undergraduate and graduate history courses at the University of South Carolina could help support local historic preservation and environmental initiatives. The group included Mary Sherrer, director of the Scarborough-Hamer Foundation at Kensington Mansion in Eastover; Tracy Swartout, superintendent of Congaree National Park; Marie Adams and Mary Kirkland of the Harriet Barber House Restoration Project and South East Rural Community Outreach (SERCO); Betsy Newman of South Carolina Educational Television; and Professors Thomas Lekan and Robert Weyeneth of the USC history department. The result of this planning meeting was three senior seminars and one graduate seminar offered in the Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters. In the undergraduate seminars almost fifty history majors completed senior theses in classes on “Nearby History,” “Exploring Local Public History,” and “Exploring Local Environmental History.” All the topics were focused in some way on the history of Lower Richland County specifically or the Midlands of South Carolina generally. The graduate seminar was an historic preservation practicum entitled “The Lower Richland County African-American Heritage Project.” This report is the culmination of the research in that graduate seminar.

The visit to the Harriet Barber House in July 2007 again proved an important catalyst. The sign that had greeted the visiting college faculty inspired many questions that invited further historical research. What was this little-known South Carolina Land Commission? By contrast, it is well known that the federal government had failed to follow through on promises of “forty acres and a mule” to newly freed slaves after the Civil War, but had South Carolina (ardent defender of slavery during the sectional crisis and the first state to secede after Lincoln’s election) actually attempted to provide land and thereby a means of economic livelihood for freed men and women? Could Lower Richland County be a case study of the impact of the South Carolina Land Commission? If so, how many African-American families in Lower Richland County were able to purchase land under this program? Are any of these family parcels still intact? Has any other building, besides the Harriet Barber House, survived to the present? What could Lower Richland County and the South Carolina Land Commission tell us about the largely misunderstood story of Reconstruction in the United States?

Answering these questions was the task posed to twelve graduate students in the USC Department of History who participated in the course in the Spring 2009 semester: Elizabeth Almlie, Angi Bedell, Ashley Bouknight, Amanda Bowman, Lee Durbetaki, Keri Fay, Haley Grant, Benjamin Greene, Nathan Johnson, Amanda Roddy, Sarah Scripps, and Morgen Young. The class began with some intensive library and archival research to identify relevant primary and secondary sources at local repositories. In fairly short order, specialized teams emerged to target specific research resources and push the general project forward. Plats of land purchases were located at the state archives in the records of the South Carolina Land Commission. With the guidance of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Education Consultant Carrie Giauque, the “map team” of Ben Greene and Amanda Bowman took responsibility for scanning the historical maps and then digitally matching them to their modern equivalents to create “georectified” versions with multiple layers of historical data. As important as anything, the map team was able to identify a significant number of original Land Commission purchases where the historic property lines seemed to correspond with modern tax map parcels. The next step was to establish whether the parcel, or a portion of the parcel, had continued in ownership by the same
family – and whether that family was African-American. (The Land Commission had sold real
estate to both blacks and whites, but the seminar was interested in the impact of this
Reconstruction agency on the freed men and women of Lower Richland County.) Lee Durbetaki
coined the phrase “unbroken provenance” for the continuity we hoped to find in the lineage of
African-American purchases, and the term stuck. A “chain-of-title team” consisting of Lee
Durbetaki, Amanda Roddy, and Sarah Scripps, assisted at times by Liz Almlie, Angi Bedell, Keri
Fay, Nate Johnson, and Morgen Young, mastered the arcane and frustrating research challenges
of the Richland County Register of Deeds to discover multiple dead ends but also to unearth
several nuggets of great value. Liz Almlie, Angi Bedell, Haley Grant, and Morgen Young
came the “census team” that delved deeply into the family relationships of people who were
strangers to them, looking for the elusive connections that we sought between the land and
subsequent generations. Ashley Bouknight, Angi Bedell, and Nate Johnson established
themselves as the “newspaper team,” assisted by Haley Grant, Amanda Roddy, and Morgen
Young. Together they exhausted the available issues on several online databases for The State
from 1891 to 1922 and December 1987 to the present, as well as for the Columbia Star from
October 2004 to the present. In addition, they looked at scattered issues from thirteen different
newspapers that covered African-American news in Lower Richland County from 1865 to 1965.
Especially useful were The Light (1916-1928), The Southern Indicator (1903-1925), and The
Standard (1919-1927). Haley Grant shouldered the responsibility of serving as the contact for
directing specific research questions to our community partners.

Nate Johnson, Keri Fay, Morgen Young, Lee Durbetaki, and Liz Almlie wrote important
analytical sections in the overview presented in the first section of this report. Amanda Bowman
and Ben Greene composed the overviews for each of the seven tracts. Liz Almlie, Angi Bedell,
Ashley Bouknight, Keri Fay, Haley Grant, Nate Johnson, Sarah Scripps, and Morgen Young
wrote the narratives for the families that are highlighted in the Hickory Hill and Hopkins tracts.
Haley Grant, Nate Johnson, and Amanda Roddy brought the story to a conclusion with the
summary observations in section three. Liz Almlie and Amanda Bowman seek to carry the story
into the future with their list of historic preservation recommendations, and Ashley Bouknight,
Amanda Roddy, and Sarah Scripps devised a compelling set of recommendations for interpreting
this history through educational programs and exhibits. Morgen Young compiled the useful
bibliography and guide to further reading. In the appendix in section five, the mapping
methodology is clarified by Amanda Bowman. Lee Durbetaki regularized and made sense out of
the two spreadsheets in the appendix. The map team of Ben Greene and Amanda Bowman
present their georectified maps on the attached compact disk, along with the current tax map
numbers of family members with unbroken provenance. Morgen Young took the initiative to
locate and caption the images incorporated into the report. Angi Bedell oversaw final production
as our general editor. The entire class read and commented on all sections of the report. It has
been a team project in the best sense.

The methodology that the class developed for identifying family parcels with unbroken
provenance might be briefly summarized by way of conclusion. The records of the South
Carolina Land Commission located at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History
provided a manuscript list of individuals who purchased a plot of land from the commission, as
well as the location of each plot in Lower Richland County. Plots that seemed to warrant further
investigation were identified by comparing the original Land Commission survey plats at the state archives with modern-day property divisions available online through the Richland County Tax Assessors office. The class discovered that the vast majority of the original Land Commission parcels had been subdivided and had little or no relation to the original parcels. However, some Land Commission parcels were wholly intact in Lower Richland County today. In addition, some parcels were identified that preserved the external boundaries of the original Land Commission purchases even though they had been internally subdivided. Finally, the class researched the history of ownership of all parcels of interest, looking to establish that they are owned today by familial descendants of original purchasers.

In summary, the report identifies the stories of ten African-American families whose members currently own land in Lower Richland County that can be traced to purchases originating with the South Carolina Land Commission in the 1870s. We fully expect that there may be other African-American families with this genealogy of land ownership in Lower Richland County. This report is a preliminary effort intended to acknowledge the importance of the South Carolina Land Commission in the history of Lower Richland County – and in Reconstruction South Carolina – and to invite further research on the role of other families that we were unable to discover and recognize in the short span of one semester.
Section I.

The Promise of Reconstruction
A. Overview of Reconstruction in South Carolina

The United States was a deeply transformed nation after the Civil War. The four-year conflict had resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of men and cost millions of dollars in destruction. It left in its wake a ravaged landscape and a weary people.

Yet, from such devastation also came hope. Enslaved African Americans throughout the South were emancipated as Union military forces invaded southern territory and defeated Confederate armies. After the war ended in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment permanently abolished slavery, guaranteeing freedom to roughly four million African Americans who, just four years earlier, could only dream of it. Even though many of the political and economic gains these newly freed men and women achieved would be systematically revoked during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they succeeded in creating “an autonomous black social and cultural life, which…ranked among the most enduring accomplishments of Reconstruction.” They enjoyed a newfound ability to “pursue their own agenda,” free of white claims to corporal ownership and all the limits those claims had placed upon them. They engaged in activities which unmistakably demonstrated their freedom: forming independent communities and institutions, educating themselves, working towards economic independence, owning land and property, and exercising political rights. Illustrative of African-American perceptions of freedom, their endeavors embodied the hopes and promises of the era.¹

Organizing themselves into structured communities was of the first order for freed men and women throughout the South. The establishment of a stable family life became the basis of these communities, though just bringing together families proved difficult for many African Americans. The process frequently involved searching for family members who had been separated from each other during enslavement, either from slave sales or trades. These searches usually ended in disappointment, but sometimes they were successful. African Americans also focused on “liberating their families from the authority of whites.” The harsh conditions of enslavement along with the constant threat of separation had placed considerable strain on familial ties. Secondary to the authority of white slaveholders was the parental authority of black fathers and mothers, which was undermined and devalued during slavery. With freedom, African Americans hoped to rebuild these values and emphasize the centrality of family life to the black community.²

The development of independent black churches further strengthened black communities. Although many white churches allowed African Americans to worship with white parishioners during Reconstruction, they still relegated black parishioners to a second-class status. Across the board, African Americans therefore withdrew from biracial congregations to establish their own churches, which soon dotted the landscape of the South. Churches became the only institution where African Americans could truly feel free from white control. They not only served as places for African Americans to practice their faith, but they also were social centers for local

communities. The ministers of these churches likewise became post-war black leaders. They mobilized entire communities to offer charitable services to the neediest African Americans. Orphanages, soup kitchens, employment agencies, and relief funds were just a few services that promised self-help from within the black community.\(^3\)

![African-American church built by its members.](image)

African-American church built by its members. Formed in 1867 after 108 black parishioners withdrew from a biracial congregation, this church was typical of efforts to establish separate African-American churches. Courtesy of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Freed men and women also considered education imperative to collective self-improvement. They associated the ability to read and write with freedom because white southerners had denied them access to education during slavery. As soon as they received the chance, African Americans established private schools for themselves and their children in any available facility. They packed classrooms full of eager students and placed those adults with the most formal schooling at the front of the class as teachers. Similar to ministers, teachers were considered leaders who often played multiple roles within the black community. For example, a teacher might be asked to mediate the sale of a farmer’s crops or to serve on a county board. Specific reasons why black southerners wanted an education were usually intertwined with the issues they faced in everyday life—they might want to become literate so they could read the Bible or they might feel it was necessary to master basic arithmetic in order not to be cheated out of money when they took their crops to market. In part due to education’s clear implications for collective self-improvement, many white southerners refused to financially support black schools. As a result, many of these schools were forced to run on private funds or seek aid from the federal government; however, white opposition hardly caused African Americans to lose their appetite for education. Just five years into Reconstruction, they spent an astounding one million dollars on education. Efforts to sustain their schools were supported to a large degree by the federal

\(^3\) Foner, Reconstruction, 88-96. For more on the separation of black and white churches, see Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
government, which spent more than five million dollars on black education within that same timeframe.⁴

A crowded classroom in South Carolina. African-American families enthusiastically enrolled their children at local schoolhouses during Reconstruction. Educating a child was an economic sacrifice for many parents, who needed the child to take care of younger siblings or work on the family farm. 
*Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.*

Just as freed men and women established independent churches and schools, so they maintained a separate social sphere from white southerners. Of course, these separate spheres were not impermeable. They often came into contact, requiring blacks and whites to interact in various daily situations. Once freed, however, African Americans tried to remain independent of whites to the best of their ability.⁵

The creation of separate spheres arose mostly out of black attempts to escape the social and labor relations of the old plantation system. Fundamental to African-American concepts of freedom was the understanding that they would no longer toil under white authority. Black southerners attempted to reject any form of labor that resembled working on plantations. They interpreted their newfound freedom to mean that they could set the conditions of their own labor and avoided entering into labor contracts, such as sharecropping, with whites. Black southerners even shunned cash crops, such as cotton, which still carried memories of enslavement. Although

white southerners often misconstrued their refusal to work under white management as “indolence” or “laziness,” African Americans simply desired to farm their own fields for their own subsistence. And although some black southerners emigrated to the North or moved closer to urban areas for better economic—and often educational—opportunities, the vast majority remained in the rural South, farming their own land where possible. In South Carolina, for instance, seventy-seven percent of blacks worked in agriculture by the end of Reconstruction.⁶

![Farmers in the field](image.jpg) F.W. Farmers in the field. Families needed all members to help on their farms in order to keep them running. This often meant that children had to forego their education during the harvest and planting seasons. *Courtesy of the Charleston Museum.*

Goals of self-employment were ideological and not economically feasible in the long term for most African Americans. Many had to enter into some sort of contractual agreement with white southerners, sometimes their former owners, in order to find land and work. Throughout South Carolina’s coastal lowcountry, for instance, “a labor renting system” emerged, “whereby freedpeople agreed to work two or three days a week for a landlord in exchange for ‘the right to reside on and cultivate particular tracts of plantation lands’.” They then farmed for self-subsistence on the side or worked in some other type of vocation. Although not ideal, blacks could at least manipulate the terms of such agreements to maintain a degree of autonomy which was unattainable during slavery.⁷

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Ideally, African Americans could avoid labor contracts by raising the capital to purchase their own plot of land. If freed men and women possessed property, they could farm it without fearing that white southerners would exploiting their labor. Ownership of land thus became a goal for nearly all black southerners—it enabled their self-sufficiency, symbolizing their autonomy and a departure from the old plantation system. By the end of the Civil War, rumors had circulated throughout freed populations that the federal government was planning to subdivide large plantations into smaller plots to be distributed among freed men and women. These rumors, including the oft-quoted "forty acres and a mule," probably arose due to General William T. Sherman's Field Order 15, which temporarily settled freed blacks on confiscated rebel property in the lowcountry. The federal government, however, rescinded Sherman’s orders in 1865 and many African Americans were told they could not own the land on which they had previously settled.8

Despite the revocation of Sherman's orders, freed men and women argued that the federal government should somehow be involved in the realization of black land ownership. The enforced redistribution of southern land to former slaves “seemed a logical consequence of emancipation” in the opinions of many African Americans for they had worked the land while enslaved, but they did not reap its benefits.9

It was understandable that freed men and women believed the federal government should make land available to them, for many of them were heavily dependent on its services after emancipation. In 1865, the creation of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly referred to as the Freedmen's Bureau, strove to aid former slaves through education, health care, and employment agencies. Failing black schools and hospitals often turned to the bureau for financial aid, and black laborers often relied on it for protection from the exploitation of white planters. Besides the bureau, the passage and enforcement of new federal laws sought to establish African Americans as equal citizens. Enactment of the Fourteenth Amendment granted them citizenship and the Fifteenth Amendment extended voting rights to the men. The military occupation of former Confederate states, along with the installment of military governors, ensured that white southerners could not overturn these new amendments, or return African Americans to slavery.

The threat of re-enslavement seemed very real for many newly freed men and women. Resentment among white planters over the loss of their work force ran deep, partially explaining why the federal government was reluctant to assist with black land ownership. Many white South Carolinians adamantly refused to treat African Americans as equal citizens and lashed out at their ambitions to own and farm land. The state's Black Codes, passed by whites in late 1865, imposed a "strict set of regulations" on African-American labor and social life which plainly resembled a return to enslavement. Although the codes recognized abolition, African Americans were expected to work as field hands or domestic servants, unless they had a license from a judge for a different occupation. They were required to work from sunrise to sunset and could be charged with vagrancy if caught unemployed by white officials. Fortunately for African Americans, South Carolina's military governor invalidated the laws by 1866, but the codes

8 Foner, Reconstruction, 104-106.
9 Foner, Reconstruction, 105.
clearly demonstrated white attempts to control black labor.10

The federal government did equip African Americans with the means to protect themselves from such hostility by giving them full political rights. The Reconstruction Acts of 1867, later backed by the Fifteenth Amendment, ensured that African-American men could vote and hold office, regardless of race or ancestry. These new black voters overwhelmingly tended to vote for the Republican Party, which was not unusual considering the fact that Abraham Lincoln, the party’s first president, was seen by many former slaves as the “Great Emancipator.” Representative of this tendency, at least ninety percent of 100,000 black voters were members of the Republican Party in 1869.11

In South Carolina more than any other southern state, freed men took advantage of their newfound political rights. Constituting sixty percent of the state’s voting population, they elected 73 African Americans out of 124 total delegates to the 1868 Constitutional Convention.12

Over the entire span of Reconstruction, at least 315 African Americans—men such as Richard H. Cain, Francis L. Cardozo, Robert Carlos DeLarge, Robert Brown Elliott, Richard H. Gleaves, Joseph H. Rainey, Alonzo J. Ransier, and Robert Smalls—held public office in South Carolina. Of those whose antebellum status is known, 88 were freedmen and 131 were slaves, indicating that the majority of black government officials had been enslaved beforehand.13 It can be assumed that their experiences as slaves shaped their ambitions and policies once in office. They, more than any other politicians, knew what freed men and women needed to fulfill the hopes of Reconstruction. They funneled money into government programs and organizations which provided services for former slaves—a stronger militia for security on the home front, monetary compensation for Ku Klux Klan attacks, an orphanage for parentless children, and land for those who could not afford to purchase from private owners.14 In the judgment of one historian, their efforts succeeded in "the passage of more legislation to improve the condition of the freedmen than was accomplished in any other state."15

14 South Carolina General Assembly, Report of the Joint Investigating Committee on Public Frauds and Election of Hon. J.J. Patterson to the United States Senate, Made to the General Assembly of South Carolina at the Regular Session 1877-1878 (Columbia: Calvo & Patton, State Printers, 1878). This primary source was written from the perspective of white Democrats who opposed these programs and helped to terminate many of them. Although the text is filled with racial biases, it gives modern readers an idea of what black legislators aimed to accomplish and how their efforts were perceived by many white South Carolinians.
15 Rubin, "Reconstruction," 780.
The first vote. This 1867 wood engraving from Harper’s Weekly newspaper shows the progress of African Americans since emancipation. Freed men from various occupations—farmers, merchants, soldiers—proudly practiced their right to vote as citizens. Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Furthermore, most of the black legislators in South Carolina owned land, suggesting a significant relationship between land ownership and political activism. In fact, African Americans who held onto land were more likely to register, vote, and run for office than those who did not.\(^\text{16}\) Black legislators in South Carolina therefore appreciated the powerful symbolism of land ownership and its potential for racial uplift. At the 1868 convention, delegate Richard Cain argued that, without owning land, freed men and women could not elevate themselves much higher than their status as former slaves. Despite having established strong black communities, they could “know nothing of what is good and best for mankind until they get homesteads and enjoy them.”\(^\text{17}\) His political comrades agreed with him. Through the authority of the state government, they tried to extend the means for land ownership to their fellow freed men and women, creating what became known as the South Carolina Land Commission.

B. Overview of the South Carolina Land Commission

Congressional Reconstruction began with the passing of the Military Reconstruction Acts in March 1867, which called for African-American males to vote for or against a convention to reorganize the state government. Despite attempts by southern white Democrats to block African Americans from voting, 66,418 African Americans voted unanimously for a convention and an embrace of Republicanism, on November 19 and 20, 1867. The South’s traditional leaders—planters, merchants, and Democratic politicians—bitterly opposed the Reconstruction legislature and “black supremacy.” They could not accept the idea of former slaves voting, holding office, and enjoying equality before the law.

Nevertheless, the Constitutional Convention met in Charleston on January 14, 1868, to discuss among other pressing issues a land distribution program in the state of South Carolina. Seventy-six of the one hundred and twenty-four delegates were African American and they initially hoped to petition the United States Congress for a loan to purchase plantation lands for redistribution to landless people. Little attention was paid to South Carolina’s request in Washington and no money was granted, but on March 27, 1869, the South Carolina legislature established the Land Commission on its own. The original appropriation from the legislature was $200,000, and in March of 1870, another $500,000 was appropriated for lands to be purchased by the Land Commission. This was made possible by the overwhelming presence and voice of African Americans in the legislature, and South Carolina would become the only southern state to promote the redistribution of land for the benefit of freed men and women, as well as landless whites.

The Land Commission consisted of an Advisory Board made up of the governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general, and state controller, who chose the Land Commissioner. The job of the Land Commission was to purchase plantation land and subdivide it into plots no more than 100 acres and no less than 25 acres. The program was financed by the public sale of state bonds, and the capital generated was used to purchase the privately owned lands. The purchasers, which included both African Americans and whites, were expected to pay the land taxes and six percent interest annually on the principal of the loan during the first three years. After three years and compliance with all rules, the purchaser would receive a certificate of purchase and begin payments on the full purchase price. To stop speculation, it was required that at least half of the land be cultivated within five years. The title was received only after the entire amount, plus six percent interest, was paid in full. Purchasers were required to make final payments within eight years of receiving the certificate of purchase or forfeit the land.

White feelings were mixed about the Land Commission program. Many Democrats called for a repeal of the bill, while poor whites, who were intended to be included as purchasers along with

20 Bleser, The Promised Land, xiii.
African Americans, refused to participate. Though many plantation owners vocally protested the sale of land to African Americans, they continued to sell their land to the Land Commission. Many had abandoned their land for the duration of the war. The sheer depression, devastation, and debt many ex-Confederates found themselves in made selling to the Land Commission very appealing as a form of economic relief.

The first Land Commissioner was Charles P. Leslie. Under Leslie, land was often left unsurveyed prior to its sale. The surveyor himself, Benjamin Jackson, complained that not a single plat was ever found to be accurate, and boundary lines were extremely difficult to locate because many plats had not been surveyed in some fifty to one hundred years. African-American Secretary of State, Francis L. Cardozo, brought charges of corruption against Leslie, but he was never indicted. Robert DeLarge, an African American, became the second Land Commissioner once Leslie was forced out of office in 1870. Records from the DeLarge era seem to have disappeared, making subsequent research in the records of the Land Commissioner in this period challenging.

Francis L. Cardozo. As secretary of state, Cardozo effected changes within the Land Commission that enabled it to sell land to far more families than had previous commissioners. Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.
When accusations of corruption began circling around DeLarge himself, the duties of Land Commissioner were passed to the Secretary of State, Francis Cardozo, in February 1872. Cardozo rescinded the previous act of 1869 which required a purchaser to live on the land for three years before receiving a certificate of purchase; now any person who could begin the payments was given a certificate. Cardozo also removed corrupt officials and began the lengthy task of going through the Land Commission records, which had been plagued by falsification and were in dire need of reorganization. With the capable Cardozo at the helm, 5,008 families—approximately 3,000 more families than in 1871—had settled on Land Commission tracts by 1872.\(^\text{22}\)

By 1876, Democrats had regained control of many former Confederate states including South Carolina. These Democrats called themselves Redeemers, since they claimed to have “redeemed” the South from corruption, misgovernment, and “black rule.”\(^\text{23}\) The Redeemers launched an investigation that condemned the Land Commission and by 1878 relegated all Land

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23 Foner, *Give Me Liberty*, 552.
Commission sales to the Sinking Fund Commission, which would use future land sales to pay down state debt. Under the Sinking Fund Commission, blacks who defaulted on their payments were to be evicted. Fewer African Americans took up certificates of purchase and many who had already settled on lands were evicted or had to forfeit their lands because of a strict collection schedule implemented by the Sinking Fund. By 1890, as many as 14,000 African-American families had settled on Land Commission lands in South Carolina as a whole, but only 960 had received titles to 44,579 acres of the 118,436 acres available. The rest of land, now being sold in large parcels, was sold to whites, and by 1890 the sale of lands had ceased and the program was bankrupt.

Those black South Carolinians who were able to retain their land most likely employed one of three land management strategies explained in Elizabeth Bethel’s Promiseland, a case study of African-American lands received from the South Carolina Land Commission in Abbeville and Greenwood counties. Each strategy was dependent on age and domestic situation, but the three strategies included: family farming, a cultivation style limited to operator-owned land; owner-renter farming, in which portions of the land were rented out to others for farming; and landlord farming, which was based on tenancy and/or the employment of wage laborers. Employing similar strategies enabled multiple families in Lower Richland County to retain their land holdings and receive deeds from either the Land Commission or the Sinking Fund.

Although corruption marred the South Carolina Land Commission from the start and the only previous study done has emphasized such corruption, the dedicated and courageous leadership of Francis Cardozo highlighted the determination of African Americans to see such a promise through. This report highlights ten parcels originally granted by the South Carolina Land Commission which remain essentially unbroken in Lower Richland County today.

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24 Bleser, The Promised Land, 131-133.
25 Bleser, The Promised Land, 144-158.
27 Bleser, The Promised Land, 145.
C. The South Carolina Land Commission in Lower Richland County: The Case Study

1. Planter Sales: Origins of Land Commission Lands in Lower Richland County

The responsibility for purchasing plantations and other large tracts of land fell to the Land Commissioner. Once tracts were obtained, surveyors subdivided the land into marketable parcels. Though the Land Commissioner’s responsibility was to locate appropriate land to purchase, the final decision to procure particular tracts lay with the Advisory Board. A majority vote to purchase a tract moved the process forward once the Land Commissioner submitted the title of land to the attorney general. The attorney general then inspected the title to determine its validity, and once that was established, the state treasurer purchased the plantation or tract of land.

To identify land suitable for the program, the Land Commission sent out formal requests. Many planters throughout South Carolina sent letters to the Land Commission requesting the purchase of their tracts. (Land owning families, once wealthy, were often drowning in debt following the Civil War and looked to the sale of their land to the state agency as a form of economic relief.) Mortgaged land was not considered acceptable for purchase, which disqualified many planters. In addition, the agency called for only purchasing large landholdings and thus many applications received by the Land Commission for small farms were denied. The Land Commission received a number of requests from African Americans who asked to purchase lands from specific plantations in and near their own communities.

Approval of purchases in each county had to be obtained from members of the Advisory Board and often by recommendations of members who lived in the specific county in question. The majority of board members were not originally from South Carolina and were unfamiliar with much of the land and therefore could often be misinformed regarding the quality of land under discussion. If no board member resided in a county where new land was being examined, respected Republicans in the area would serve as land appraisers, making recommendations to the Advisory Board. Almost half of the land purchased by the Land Commission was located in the counties of Charleston, Colleton, Georgetown, and Beaufort. While it may appear that the Advisory Board favored the lowcountry, in fact the board focused on the area because it contained the largest percentage of African Americans, the highest number of available plantations, and the lowest land costs per acre.

Despite the focus on the lowcountry, Richland County was well represented in purchases.

29 Bleser, The Promised Land, 35.
30 Bleser, The Promised Land, 36.
31 Bleser, The Promised Land, 37.
32 Bleser, The Promised Land, 38.
33 Bleser, The Promised Land, 43.
34 Bleser, The Promised Land, 83.
made by the Land Commission: 9,402 acres were acquired for a total sum of $61,081.\textsuperscript{35} This amount placed Richland County third behind Colleton County with 14,160 acres for $69,276, and Charleston County, with 25,180 acres for $106,892.50.

Seven tracts were purchased in Richland County by the South Carolina Land Commission between 1869 and 1870: Adams, Back Swamp, Diseker, Hickory Hill, Hopkins, Hunt, and O’Hanlon.\textsuperscript{36} Many of these lands were originally held by Lower Richland planter families, but the tracts were deeded to the Land Commissioner by third parties.

Richland County planter James Pickett Adams sold 482 acres of his 500-acre tract in 1870 for a sum of $2,892 to South Carolina Governor Robert K. Scott.\textsuperscript{37} This land was originally deeded to Adams by his father Robert on July 14, 1848. The 1850 Census listed Adams as a planter residing in Richland County, owning five slaves.\textsuperscript{38} By the 1870 Census his real estate was valued at $15,000 and his personal estate at $2,000.\textsuperscript{39} The land sold to Governor Scott in 1870 was to

37 Deed Book F, page 39, Richland County Register of Deeds.
extend only as far as Dry Branch, thus allowing James Adams to maintain ownership of 18 acres. Adams likely experienced financial hardships following the Civil War and sought economic relief through the sale of his land. However, unlike many planters in South Carolina, Adams held onto a portion of his original land. Governor Scott, a member of the Advisory Board, then sold the entire tract to Land Commissioner Robert DeLarge for the same cost he acquired the property. The land is referred to as the J.P. Adams tract in Land Commission Records.

A record from the Land Commission does not exist for the original seller of the Back Swamp tract to the Commission. Reports from the Land Commission detailing the specific selling price and acreage for each original tract do not include Back Swamp. The tract is mentioned in a report from the commission to the General Assembly in 1872 with a description of the tract as containing seven lots. A second record from the same report details the total acreage of lands purchased and the accompanying costs for each county in the state. However, if one were to compare the total cost and acreage for Richland County according to the Land Commission and calculate the sum of individual prices of acres, those figures would be almost identical. This leaves Back Swamp a tract acknowledged briefly by the commission, but unaccountable regarding original cost and acreage.

Sheriff Phineas F. Frazee sold the Diseker tract to Land Commissioner Robert C. DeLarge in 1870. The 440-acre tract was put up for public auction on January 3, 1870, due to a dispute by members of the Hopkins family in the Court of Common Pleas. According to the deed, William Hopkins submitted a Bill of Complaint against English Hopkins, Amy Hopkins, Sarah Hopkins, Simeon Rawls, and Ed Gillmore on November 19, 1869, regarding the sale of real estate consisting of seven tracts of land. The source of the dispute is not known, but William Hopkins was once a prominent planter in the Lower Richland community. Those he filed a complaint against over the Diseker tract included his daughter, Amy Hopkins, and his former overseer, Simeon Rawls. In December of that year a judge decreed the tract of land known as the Diseker tract be sold by the county’s sheriff. At a public auction the following January, Land Commissioner DeLarge produced the highest bid for the property, paying $1,760 for the acreage.

The Hickory Hill tract was sold to Commissioner C.P. Leslie by Sheriff Phineas Frazee in 1869. According to the deed granted to Leslie, the tract known originally as the Hickory Hill plantation and measuring 712 acres was owned by James R. Pringle. Thomas B. Clarkson filed a court complaint against Pringle due to an unpaid mortgage and demanded his land be foreclosed. The Hickory Hill tract was indeed foreclosed and the lands sold at public auction by Frazee on December 16, 1869. Charles P. Leslie was the highest bidder, acquiring the land at a cost of $5,874.

The 1,830 acres that comprised the Hopkins tract passed through many hands before they

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41 Deed Book E, page 555, Richland County Register of Deeds.
42 Census, 1850. The deed research for this report indicates that 449.25 acres were actually sold in the 440-acre Diseker tract. The discrepancy of 9.25 acres might be the result of the resale of Lot 3 and of Lot 2 consisting of 20 acres. Or, it might be the result of inaccurate surveying or careless record-keeping.
43 Deed Book F, page 27, Richland County Register of Deeds. The deed research indicates that 750.6 acres were actually sold in the 712-acre Hickory Hill tract, but resale of parcels accounts for the difference.
were sold to the Land Commission in 1870. According to deed records, Fanny H. Adams received the property from her father James Uriah Adams under the condition that if she married she would give the estate to a male relative. In 1867 Adams, addressed as a spinster in the deed, married John Shoobbred, a planter from Charleston County. With their union came the understanding that Fanny would sell her real and personal estate to her brother Joel R. Adams, a Richland County planter. Joel Adams then became the trustee of Fanny’s estate and saw the sale of the “Hopkins Turn Out” tract to Julius G. Huguenin, his brother-in-law, for a sum of $7,000. Huguenin came from a wealthy family in Beaufort County and married Mary Hopkins Adams in 1860. The couple moved from Huguenin’s family estate in the lowcountry to Columbia following the outbreak of the Civil War. They eventually settled at Whitehall Plantation in Gadsden. Huguenin sold the land to the Land Commission for a cost of $12,810 in 1870. According to deed records, Huguenin purchased and sold numerous properties in Richland County throughout the 1860s and 1870s. Following his death, Mary Huguenin continued to acquire and sell properties well into the 1910s.

Thomas J. LaMotte sold the Hunt tract to C.P. Leslie in 1870. LaMotte was a magistrate and notary in Richland County. Alfred M. Hunt previously owned the tract of land, but he declared bankruptcy on December 31, 1868. The following May, LaMotte was appointed assignee of Hunt’s estate. The land was sold at public auction on December 6, 1869, and Commissioner Leslie purchased the property for a total cost of $1,635. The deed granted to Leslie described the land as on the nature of the Congaree River, known as the “Weston tract,” measuring 774 acres in Richland County. In other Land Commission records it is referred to as the Hunt tract and shall be referred to as such in this report.

The O’Hanlon tract was the largest property acquired by the Land Commission in Richland County. The plantation originally belonged to James O’Hanlon, but upon his death, his property was sold. Samuel L. Jones and Jesse Reese served as executors of O’Hanlon’s will, selling the tract to C.P. Leslie in 1870 for $36,125. The deed described the property as bordering the Congaree River, Radford’s Creek, and Cabin Branch, with a total acreage of 5,160. The tract actually contained 5,164.5 acres, but in computing the price to be paid, four and a half acres were excluded to compensate for the ground occupied by the Adams’ dam erected between 1840 and 1845.

Although many of the tracts sold to the Land Commission were originally owned by planter families, it is evident that the Civil War took its toll in Richland County. Third parties

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44 The 1860 Census listed James U. Adams as a farmer residing in Gadsden, South Carolina, with a real estate worth of $125,000 and a personal estate totaling $340,000.
45 Deed Book E, page 534, Richland County Register of Deeds.
48 Deed Book E, page 494, Richland County Register of Deeds.
49 Grantee and Grantor Indexes, Richland County Register of Deeds.
51 Census 1860; Census, 1870.
52 Deed Book F, page 28, Richland County Register of Deeds.
53 Deed Book K, page 150, Richland County Register of Deeds.
orchestrated the majority of the sales. The purchase of James P. Adams’ land by the state’s governor illustrated the remaining influence of the planter class in Richland County, as well as the desperation of many southerners to relieve their financial stress following the Civil War. Julius G. Huguenin, though from a planter family in the lowcountry, acquired the Hopkins tract as a means of personal investment and sold the land to the state. Thomas LaMotte was a civil servant, who according to deed records acquired and sold numerous properties throughout the county, many of which had been seized by the county due to bankruptcy. Phineas F. Frazee served as the county’s sheriff whose duties included disposing of land that had been foreclosed upon due to failure to pay taxes or whose ownership was under dispute by family members in the Court of Common Pleas.54

2. African-American Purchases: Overview of Land Sales in Lower Richland County

Freed men and women in Lower Richland County purchased some 6,310 acres of land from the

54 Middleton interview.
South Carolina Land Commission, mostly between 1870 and 1872. The lots they purchased ranged in size from 6 to 108 acres. Most individuals or families purchased a single lot, but there are several records of a single lot being purchased jointly and many records of a single purchaser acquiring more than one lot. Commission lands in Lower Richland County were priced between two and ten dollars per acre, around seven dollars per acre being the most common price. Nearly 180 freed men and women purchased commission lands in Lower Richland County, buying an average of 55.67 acres at an average price of $333.71, not including interest. Of the nearly 180 purchasers, 39 of these succeeded in making full payment and received clear title to their land. Their holdings, some 1,399 acres in all, represented just over twenty-two percent of the total freed men and women’s purchases in the county. Although most of the remaining buyers managed to pay at least the first year’s interest, they were unable to pay off the principle and subsequently forfeited their purchases.  

Patterns of land purchase varied between the seven Land Commission tracts in Lower Richland County. Only a single freedman bought land in the Back Swamp tract and only two in the Hunt tract. The O’Hanlon tract showed the strongest sales in terms of both total acres sold (2,978) and number of purchasers (84). Lot sizes were largest in the Hunt and Adams tracts, averaging 61.5 acres and 55.25 acres, respectively, and smallest in the Hickory Hill tract, where

Sample record of payments. This is an example of the Land Commission records that tracked freed men and women’s payments on the principal and interest costs of the lots of land they sought to purchase. Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

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55 Bleser, The Promised Land, 84.
56 These numbers are slightly inflated because in several instances the same lot is recorded as being sold to multiple buyers. For purposes of comparison to the other tracts in the county, however, the difference is insignificant.
the average settler purchased 27.8 acres. Land was least expensive in the Hopkins tract at an average of $4.34 per acre and most expensive in the Hickory Hill tract at an average of $8.20 per acre. Total purchase prices averaged highest in the Adams tract at $337.54 and in the O’Hanlon tract at $253.22. The average total purchase price was lowest in the Diseker tract at $142.02.

Rates of land retention also varied by tract. Retention was worst in the O’Hanlon tract, where less than five percent of purchasers received clear title and just over three percent of purchased acres were paid off. Settlers in the Hickory Hill tract, in a striking contrast, succeeded in retaining nearly fifty-three percent of their purchased acres and forty-six percent of the purchasers received deeds. Nearly thirty-eight percent of the acres purchased by settlers in the Hopkins tract were retained, with thirty-five percent of purchasers receiving deeds. Thirty-three percent of the purchased acres in the Diseker tract were retained, and thirty-eight percent of settlers received deeds. Thirty-eight percent of the acres purchased in the Adams tract were retained, and forty-three percent of settlers received deeds.

Sample deed application. As land ownership passed from former planter families to African-American families, records like this one kept by the Land Commission detailed the transfers of property. Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

The findings of this report indicate that the settlers of the Hickory Hill and Hopkins tracts were most successful in retaining all or part of their land to the present day. Such a result might well be expected as these two tracts were the only ones to combine a relatively high retention rate with a large number of purchasers. The success of the individual settlers, however, was clearly dependent on any number of other factors.
D. A Snapshot of Lower Richland County, 1865-1890

As national and statewide events after the Civil War did much to determine possibilities for freed men and women, the local community daily affected the experience of the residents of Lower Richland County. Though historical accounts of life in Lower Richland County after the Civil War are sparse, it is possible to gain a small sense of the life that surrounded these newly freed African-American families as they pursued the purchase of land.57

Following the Civil War, most of Lower Richland County’s plantations were split up into small individual farms, including those sold by the Land Commission. Between 1860 and 1870, both the amounts of livestock and crop production in Richland County had decreased by half, likely because of the Civil War.58 By 1870, most of the farms listed in census records had improved only a small portion of acreage, had a horse or mule, a few cattle, and swine, and most were growing Indian corn with maybe one other crop in small quantities.59 The visual nature of those small farms was certainly highlighted by the building of fences after the 1877 “stock law,” which required livestock to be penned on their land instead of wandering across lands in a communal way.60 As black farmers worked hard and established independent families, Richland County’s population increased faster than Columbia’s alone, and most of the population outside of Columbia resided in the more fertile Lower Richland County.61 The rural portion of the county was very active and growing during the post-war period in trying to make up for war losses; freed men and women sought to make up for lost time.

With the fall of the institution of the slave plantation, many villages and towns grew around the already established railroad depots. By the mid-1870s, Kingville, Acton, Eastover, Gadsden, Hopkins Turnout and Clarkson’s (or Wateree) were all depot stations, had post offices and emerging village life.62 The second official “urban center” in Richland County after Columbia, Eastover was incorporated by the state legislature in 1880; its boundaries extended one half mile around the depot.63 This depot-centered village life around depots focused on agricultural commerce and trade, but in the surrounding rural areas appeared schools, churches, and small industries.

Though statistics on schools at the time were compiled for the whole county, which included Columbia, some observations can be made. Most of the smallest schools in the county had from one to three teachers, and it is likely that the earlier Lower Richland schools were that size. As the following families’ stories show through information from census records, many children of

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57 Historically Lower Richland County has been called Lower Township and as Fourth Township.
59 United State Census, Original Agriculture, Industry, Social Statistics, and Mortality Schedules for South Carolina, 1850-1880, Seventh Census, 1870 (South Carolina Archives Microcopy Number 2).
60 Moore, Columbia and Richland County, 230.
61 Moore, Columbia and Richland County, 210.
63 Moore, Columbia and Richland County, 230.
freed slaves were able to attend school for some months of the year; others spent all their time helping their families on their farms and did not go to school. In 1871, Richland County’s thirty-four free common schools were attended by 1,995 black students and 421 white students. Of those thirty-four schools that belonged in the school district, only four were actually owned by the school district. Of the fifty-nine teachers listed, only eleven of them were black and thirteen of them were northerners. In Lower Richland County, as well as for decades to come, many of its black schools were small, local, and closely affiliated with religious congregations that lent space for classrooms until freestanding schools could be built. Other educational ventures, such as the American Union Literary Club for black residents in Gadsden organized by Aesop Goodson, also appeared.

The first black pastors in Lower Richland County were ordained on November 12, 1865, shortly after the end of the Civil War by the white pastor of Beulah Baptist Church. The first two black churches were led by these newly ordained black leaders, one of whom was Reverend William Weston Adams. Eleven members split off from Beulah to form Shiloh Baptist in 1866 and 565 formed New Light Beulah Baptist in 1867, both at times led by Reverend Adams. In the next two decades, there were eighteen more black congregations formed in communities around Lower Richland County, though often one pastor would serve the churches of two neighboring communities until more ordained ministers could be installed. Most of these new churches were Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal denominations. Several of the earliest churches were directly connected to black families that bought land from the Land Commission. As will be explained later in the report, Hercules Smith in the Hickory Hill tract sold some of his land to establish the St. Phillip A.M.E. Church. The Reverend Samuel Barber also led the foundation of the St. John Baptist Church in the Hopkins tract, which was built on land originally purchased by Ephraim Neal.

Industry in Lower Richland County was limited after the Civil War, as was characteristic of such a rural area. The census for 1880 only lists one lumber company near the Congaree River and Cedar Creek owned by a man named Clarkson which employed three people, and seven flour or grist mills scattered through the area that together only employed sixteen people at most for the year.

The political history of Lower Richland County at this time is also sparsely documented but nevertheless revealing. In rural areas, social spaces often became political spaces during and after slavery. The depots, mills, post offices, and stores were likely gathering places for political involvement of the ordinary farmer. There was a branch of the Grange organized around the Cedar Creek area to educate and advocate agricultural production. Several leaders of the black community in Lower Richland County served in the state legislature, including Aesop Goodson.

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64 Annual Report to the General Assembly, 1871, Records of the State Superintendent of Education, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
65 Moore, Columbia and Richland County, 262.
67 United State Census, Original Agriculture, Industry, Social Statistics, and Mortality Schedules for South Carolina, 1850-1880, Seventh Census, 1870 (South Carolina Archives Microcopy Number 2).
from Gadsden and James Davis from Hopkins. In 1876, James Davis, an independent Republican who served in the lower house of the General Assembly from 1870 to 1872, appeared at a meeting of the Richland Democratic Club and spoke against the campaign of Wade Hampton for governor. William M. Lowman was also a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, representing Richland County from 1876 to 1878. Another instance of a political gathering happened earlier in Hopkins Turnout, in September 1867, said to be held in celebration of the passing of civil rights legislation, where three whites and three blacks spoke to the assembled crowd about the future of political representation for the area. In 1882, as the “redeemed” legislature manipulated representative districts, it attempted to include the areas in South Carolina with the highest black populations in one district so that there would be only one black representative; the seventh district extended along much of the coast and inland to include Lower Richland County, populated by new land-owning black farmers thanks in part to the South Carolina Land Commission. When blacks formed a South Carolina branch of the Colored Farmers’ Alliance in June 1889, sub-Alliances were formed in Gadsden and Mill Creek to participate in populist activism, as they were in fifteen black communities across the state. Though it is very difficult to tell how extensive involvement was, the political education of some of the former slaves is evident in the quick ordainment of black church leaders and the formation of a literary club, as well as more direct political organization.

In the transition between enslavement and freedom for residents of Lower Richland County, the seven tracts of the South Carolina Land Commission provided a significant opportunity to establish independent families and communities. Land ownership was a foundation on which the establishment of churches, schools, businesses, political organizations, and other aspects of family and community life could be built.

68 Moore, *Columbia and Richland County*, 264.
69 Lowman was one of five representatives from Richland County who served in the 52nd General Assembly from November 28, 1876 to March 22, 1878, along with Andrew W. Curtis, Charles S. Minort (later John Cheves Haskell), Robert John Palmer, and James Wells. See: Walter Edgar, et al., eds., *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), I, 427.
70 Moore, *Columbia and Richland County*, 228n.
71 Moore, *Columbia and Richland County*, 269.
Section II.

The Seven Land Commission Tracts in Lower Richland County
A. The Adams Tract
Historic Appearance

The Adams tract comprised roughly 482 acres located southwest of the township of Gadsden. This tract had belonged to the plantation of J. P. Adams, and, according to the original survey plats of the South Carolina Land Commission, the land was largely uncultivated and forested with mostly old growth pine. The tract was bordered on the northwest by Cedar Creek, one of the four main tributaries of the Congaree River in Lower Richland County. The Indigo Branch flowed into Cedar Creek and ran through the original seven parcels of the Adams tract from east to west. Both early settlers and the large-scale planters that arrived in the area in the late eighteenth century experimented with indigo in the low-lying swamp region along the Congaree, lending this waterway its name.\(^{72}\)

The tract was bounded on the west and south by the plantation of J. Weston and on the north and east by the remainder of the J.P. Adams plantation. The original survey plat maps include plans for the undeveloped “road to Gadsden,” the present day Old Bluff Road. Located two miles east of the Adams tract, the town of Gadsden rose following the completion of the South Carolina Railroad in 1842 which connected Charleston with the capital of Columbia. Gadsden, little more than a rail depot, had established a post office by 1851.\(^{73}\)

Parcels Purchased by African Americans

The Adams tract comprised 482 acres and was originally divided into seven parcels. These parcels were purchased from the South Carolina Land Commission between June 1870 and December 1874. Of the seven original purchasers, only three were able to secure a deed. The size of the parcels ranged from 44 to 67 acres. None of these original purchasers could be traced to modern descendents. The Adams tract has been subdivided to such an extent over time that no current parcel maintained a significant portion of the original Land Commission parcel.

Current Appearance

The land that was once the Adams tract is bound on the north by Old Bluff Road, just east of the entrance to Congaree National Park. Garrick Road is the only modern day street to enter the historical tract, running north-south along the eastern boundary.

The South Carolina Land Commission parcels of the Adams tract have been subdivided into numerous small properties, though the original parcel boundaries remain basically extant. The land, though privately owned, is mostly uninhabited and undeveloped. Dense pine forest along the border of Congaree National Park covers this land. Despite its location along the swamp boundary, the soil is characteristic of the Sandhills region, which would explain the predominance of pine. The Indigo Branch is no longer extant, and the land of the current tract is devoid of the numerous ponds and pools that characterize Congaree swampland. Compared to


much of the surrounding region, the Adams tract does not appear fertile, and one wonders whether the “Indigo Branch” was in fact a misnomer.
B. The Back Swamp Tract
Historic Appearance

The Back Swamp tract comprised approximately 380 acres located a mile and a half west of the town of Hopkins. The tract was originally part of the larger Back Swamp Plantation owned by James Hopkins. Not surprisingly, the original South Carolina Land Commission survey plats designate the property as swamp land. Much of the northern part of this tract had already been cultivated as rice fields at the time of the Land Commission survey.

The survey plats show the Back Swamp Creek running from north to south through the western half of the tract on its way to Cedar Creek. The tract was bordered on the north and east by the remainder of the James Hopkins’ plantation, on the west by the land of Paul Chappell, and on the south by the Myers estate. The original survey plats indicate a slave cemetery located in the northeast corner of the tract.

Parcels Purchased by African Americans

The Back Swamp tract contained 377.55 acres and seven original parcels. Although one parcel was sold, none of the land was ever deeded, indicating that any land purchases were forfeited.

Current Appearance

Although the Back Swamp Creek still exists, it would seem that the land has lost much of its swampy characteristics, as aerial photographs show dirt roads and grass fields with scattered forest along the creek bed.

Back Swamp Road skirts the northern border of the tract, and current property lines bear no relation to the partitions of the South Carolina Land Commission. The slave cemetery indicated in the original Land Commission survey is currently located on the property of Theodore Jenkins.
C. The Diseker Tract
Historic Appearance

The Diseker tract, comprised of roughly 440 acres, was located one mile northeast of the Hopkins tract. The original South Carolina Land Commission survey plats show the land to have been largely uncultivated with sparse oak and pine forest. Plans for what would become Horrell Hill Road are shown on these plats. The tract was bordered on the east by the Cedar Grove Plantation of John Reese. The Wilmington, Columbia, and Augusta Railroad, completed in 1870, skims the southwestern corner of this tract.

Parcels Purchased by African Americans

The Diseker tract contained 440 acres divided into nine original parcels, ranging in size from 20 to 44.5 acres. Parcels were purchased between August 1870 and November 1875. There were thirteen original purchasers, demonstrating that some of these parcels were subdivided. Five of these purchasers succeeded in acquiring a deed from the South Carolina Land Commission. Presumably the rest of the land was forfeited. None of these original purchasers could be traced to modern descendents. The Diseker tract was subdivided to such an extent that no current parcel maintained a significant portion of the original Land Commission parcel.

Current Appearance

Today the Diseker land is residential and has been subdivided into numerous small property holdings. Principal streets running through Diseker land include Horrell Hill Road (north of the CSX rail line), Crossing Creek Road, and Motley Road. Development in this area is suburban in nature rather than rural, lying between the township of Hopkins and Garners Ferry Road (U.S. 378).

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74 As mentioned in a previous footnote, deed research indicates that 449.25 acres were actually sold in the 440-acre Diseker tract. The discrepancy of 9.25 acres might be the result of the resale of lots, inaccurate surveying, or careless record-keeping.
D. The Hickory Hill Tract
Hickory Hill Tract, Richland County, South Carolina
1. Overview of the Hickory Hill Tract

Historic Appearance

The Hickory Hill tract comprised roughly 712 acres between Tom’s Creek and Griffins Creek, an area lying approximately one mile to the southeast of the present day town of Eastover. Stoeber’s 1872 Geological and Agricultural Map of Richland County designated this area as containing “good” land. Soil in Hickory Hill has loamy clay characteristic of the upper coastal plain interspersed with the more common sandy soil of the Sandhills which dominates much of Lower Richland County. The flat and fertile land perhaps explains the relative success of this tract.

Tom’s Creek formed the western border of this tract and the original South Carolina Land Commission survey plat shows partial cultivation with pockets of dense oak and pine forest. The Wilmington, Columbia, and Augusta Railroad was completed in 1870 and runs through the northern part of the Hickory Hill tract along already established property lines. The construction of this railroad gave rise to the town of Eastover and employed many freed African Americans, just as the earlier South Carolina Railroad had given rise to the towns of Hopkins and Gadsden. Eastover developed into a regional hub, and presumably the town offered commerce and postal service for the inhabitants of Hickory Hill.

The fertile soil may have made possible the cultivation of a greater variety of crops. Small scale farmers in this region would have cultivated corn, peas, beans, and sweet potatoes. Out of the seven tracts in this study, only Hickory Hill still demonstrates active and widespread agricultural activity.

Parcels Purchased by African Americans

The Hickory Hill tract contains 712 acres divided amongst 38 parcels. Twenty-eight land purchases were made from June 1870 until as late as October 1878. Only thirteen deeds were secured from the South Carolina Land Commission. The size of the parcels ranges from 13 acres to 52.75 acres.

Current Appearance

Hickory Hill, located twenty-five miles southeast of Columbia, presents a far more rural setting today than the other historical tracts in this study. There is a vast stretch of farmland and uncultivated private land separating Eastover from the metropolitan area of Columbia. Many of the current property lines demonstrate unbroken provenance with property purchased from the South Carolina Land Commission during the 1870s.

The aptly named Hickory Hill Road runs north-south through the western part of the historical tract, maintaining the integrity of many, but not all, of the original parcel divisions. There are several small subdivisions along this road in the northern portion of the historical tract. The area

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75 Moore, Columbia and Richland, 172.
retains a rural aspect, with scattered homes enjoying a sense of isolation due to the alternation of cultivated fields and undeveloped pine forest.

2. The Renty Drayton Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

The Renty Drayton parcel is located at the current address of 1500 Hickory Hill Road. There are no extant buildings on the property.

Drayton Family Parcel. The land currently owned by descendants of Renty Drayton is outlined in blue. Courtesy of Richland County GIS.

The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

In 1879, Renty Drayton received the title for Lot 23 of Hickory Hill from the State of South Carolina. For $150, he purchased 36.5 acres of usable farmland.76 Renty was a former slave

76 Deed Book M, page 324, Richland County Register of Deeds. Deeds spell the name Renty Drayton although the spelling on the gravestone is Rentie Draton.
who worked for Richard Singleton prior to emancipation. Renty purchased his land later in life, when he was around fifty-four years of age. Farming was a family enterprise for Renty and his wife, Sarah. By 1880, Renty, Sarah, and several of their eight children were actively working the land. Even through the 1880s and 1890s, when several other Land Commission purchasers were losing their holdings, the Draytons managed to hold onto their lot. To this day, Renty Drayton is listed as the owner of the land, even though both Sarah and Renty have passed away. According to the staff at the Richland County Register of Deeds office, a parcel of land will remain in an owner’s name, even posthumously, until the title is reviewed in Probate Court.

Headstone of Renty Drayton. Renty Drayton is buried next to his wife, Sarah, at St. Phillip AME Church near Eastover. Courtesy of Sarah Scripps.

Renty’s great-granddaughter, Susie Drayton Cureton, currently maintains the land. Susie remembers living on the parcel while she was growing up as a child. Susie’s father farmed the land for most of his life. Her family resided on one half of the property, and her Aunt Rosa Monday’s family lived on the other half. For the past fifteen to twenty years, Susie has rented out the land to

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78 Census, 1880.
local farmers. Although she now resides in Columbia, Susie still frequently attends St. Phillip AME Church, the site where Renty and Sarah are now buried.\textsuperscript{79}

Not only has the land remained in the Drayton name, but its physical appearance has remained largely intact and untouched. Currently comprised of over 30 acres, the Drayton lands are mostly cleared for farming, with the exception of a tree line on the western perimeter. The lands are divided in half by Drayton Head Road, and its borders still are recognizable to the original Hickory Hill Lot 23.\textsuperscript{80}

3. The Isaiah Fay Family Parcels

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

Hickory Hill tract Lot 1 has not remained intact, but has been subdivided into seven parcels. Although the original Lot 1 is not intact, descendants of Isaiah Fay do own some of the subdivided lots.\textsuperscript{81} Two of the properties are located on the west side of Hickory Hill Road. One of the subdivided pieces has a physical address of 1720 Hickory Hill Road. Hickory Hill Lot 15 has also been subdivided from its original acreage. The only parcel thought to remain in the family is 140 Alice Johnson Road.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{IsaiahFayHickoryHillLot15.jpg}
\caption{Current view of portion of Isaiah Fay's Hickory Hill Lot 15, Eastover. Today the property is subdivided into three parcels and intersected by Alice Johnson Road. \textit{Courtesy of Haley Grant.}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{79} Susie Drayton Cureton, interview with Sarah Scripps, April 9, 2009.
\textsuperscript{80} Richland County Tax Assessor’s website.
\textsuperscript{81} Isiah is another common spelling of Isaiah Fay’s name, but for the sake of continuity, the spelling Isaiah will be used in this report. This also applies to the spelling of Isiah Fay, Jr. as Isaiah Fay, Jr.
Isaiah Fay received the deed to the Hickory Hill tract Lots 7 and 15 on February 24, 1875. An accidental state error occurred when Fay first purchased his lands. Though the state granted Fay Hickory Hill Lot 7, he was mistakenly issued a deed for Hickory Hill Lot 1 and settled the land. In 1878, the state conveyed Hickory Hill Lot 7 to Nancy Desaussure. Isaiah Fay was legally granted Lot 1 in April of 1886. Eventually, Lot 7 was conveyed to Nancy Desaussure by Isaiah Fay. In subsequent years, Isaiah’s land would pass onto some of his sons: Isaiah Jr., Champion, Mallie, and Wesley Fay.

In the United States Census of 1880 Isaiah was near thirty-five years of age, living with his wife Matilda Fay, and their ten children. Isaiah’s seventy-year-old mother, Diana Fay, was also a household member. Isaiah’s occupation was listed as a farmer. Matilda and the older children worked as farmhands. By the 1900 census, Isaiah and Matilda were the parents of fourteen

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82 Deed Book J, page 626, Richland County Register of Deeds.
83 Deed Book P, page 574, Richland County Register of Deeds.
84 Deed Book R, page 44, Richland County Register of Deeds.
85 Census, 1880. In this record Isaiah Fay is found as Isaih Fay.
children, ten of whom were still living. Residing with them was their son, Mallie, daughter, Annie, and a ten-year-old granddaughter, Lula Jenerette. Isaiah was again listed as a farmer. He owned his farm, which was mortgaged.\textsuperscript{86}

\textbf{Isaiah Fay Family Parcel Lot 15.} The land currently owned by descendants of Isaiah Fay is outlined in blue. \textit{Courtesy of Richland County GIS.}

Though most of the tracts have been subdivided, family descendants of Isaiah Fay still reside on much of the lands. For example, Champion Fay heirs-at-law are the registered owners of a parcel located off of Hickory Hill Road. A descendant, Harriette Jenerette owns the 2.3 acres parcel at 1720 Hickory Hill Road. The Malley Fay estate owns land on the west side of Hickory Hill Road.\textsuperscript{87}

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\textsuperscript{86} Census, 1900. In this record Isaiah Fay is found as \textit{Isah Fay}.  \\
\textsuperscript{87} Malley Fay is sometimes seen as Mallie Fae, as on his gravestone.
\end{flushright}
4. The William H. Hodge Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

The parcel is situated on the south side of Timbleside Road, adjacent to the subdivided lot of Oliver Tucker (also part of the original Land Commission parcel) at 218 Timbleside Road, in Eastover. Three large buildings are located on the larger parcel, with the remainder of the land consisting primarily of large, uncultivated fields. Oliver Tucker’s property, located on the northwest corner of the original lot, has two buildings including a three bedroom home built in 1940.

The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

William Hodge received a deed for Hickory Hill Lot 2 from the Sinking Fund in 1881, paying $102.50 for 20.5 acres. Although census records provide several listings of “William Hodge/Hodges,” it is most likely that William Hodge was born in Lower Richland County in 1851.88 His

88 According to the 1870 federal census, William Hodges was an eighteen-year-old farmer who lived with his father, Charles. Other people by the name of William Hodges are found in 1880 and 1900 federal census data. However, Land Commission purchases indicate that a Charles Hodges first purchased the land, and William Hodge received the deed, making William most likely the son of Charles. Both “Hodge” and “Hodges” are seen in the records, but this report uses William Hodge as his name due to the fact that the Land Commission deed is awarded to William
The land currently owned by descendants of William Hodge is outlined in blue. *Courtesy of Richland County GIS.*

father, Charles Hodges, was a former slave who worked for Grace W. Davis prior to emancipation. Charles was the first person to attempt to purchase Lot 2 of Hickory Hill, beginning payments on the property in 1870 when he was sixty years old. Ultimately, however, it was Charles’s son, William, who received the deed. By 1880, William and his wife, Malia, had at least seven children living with them on the land. Neither William nor Malia could read or write.

The heirs of William Hodge have maintained ownership of the land to this day. In addition, Hodge lands were subdivided only once, providing a family member, Oliver Tucker, with one acre of the land in 1964. Surprisingly, when the land was divided, the deed stated that “this

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Hodge. To view William Hodge’s deed from the Sinking Fund, see Deed Book P, page 365, Richland County Register of Deeds.

90 Although other records do not confirm a definite familial relationship between Oliver Tucker and the Hodge family, the heirs of William Hodge’s estate, including one heir named Ben Tucker, gave Oliver Tucker one acre of land in exchange for “love and affection,” which suggests a close relationship. See Deed Book 391, page 293, Richland County Register of Deeds.
 acre is a portion of the twenty-one acres of land registered in the Clerk of Court in the name of William H. Hodge. Grantor and date are not known by the grantees of this deed.91 This statement perhaps

suggests that although the land has remained in the Hodge family for several generations, the heirs of William Hodge are unaware of the parcel’s origins with the Land Commission. Currently, the lands of the Hodge family remain in use as a family residence, with large portions still consisting of open fields.

5. The Hercules Smith Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

The current parcel is a portion of the original Lot 8 from the Hickory Hill tract. It is split in half by Hickory Hill Road.

The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

Hercules Smith purchased two lots from the Hickory Hill tract from the South Carolina Land Commission in 1872. He bought Lot 8 in its entirety and half of Lot 10 for $346, a total of 34.60 acres. Hercules’s land was bordered by that of Isaiah Fay, who owned Lot 7 and later by that of

91 Deed Book 391, page 293, Richland County Register of Deeds.
Nancy Desaussure who acquired that same parcel in 1886.\textsuperscript{92} James Walker owned the remaining half of Lot 10.\textsuperscript{93}

A former slave, Hercules Smith had belonged to plantation owner James Uriah Adams.\textsuperscript{94} His birth year was estimated to be 1835. Hercules and his wife Mollie were said to have been very industrious people.\textsuperscript{95} They afforded the purchase of the lots from the Land Commission after years of saving money.

Hercules also owned Lot 20 of Hickory Hill for a time. He purchased the parcel of 24 acres from John Carter in 1878.\textsuperscript{96} Carter acquired the lot from the state the previous year.\textsuperscript{97} In 1897,

\textsuperscript{92} Deed Book U, page 586, Richland County Register of Deeds.
\textsuperscript{93} Deed Book K, page 255, Richland County Register of Deeds.
\textsuperscript{94} Middleton, “List of Former Slaves.”
\textsuperscript{95} Billie Viola Woodard, interview with Morgen Young and Nate Johnson, March 27, 2009.
\textsuperscript{96} Deed Book L, page 547, Richland County Register of Deeds.
\textsuperscript{97} Deed Book K, page 616, Richland County Register of Deeds.
Hercules sold half an acre to St. Phillip AME Church in Eastover. The $270 cost of the land was paid by the congregation of the church and the lot was deeded to the trustees, which included other original Land Commission purchasers such as Isaiah Fay and Cain Green.\(^{98}\)

Hercules and Mollie used the acreage as a farm as early as 1880.\(^{99}\) According to census records, Hercules worked as a farmer and his wife and several of his children labored as farm hands. The Smiths had eleven children, but only five survived to adulthood. Twenty years later, Hercules owned the farm free of mortgage.\(^{100}\) Hercules continued to farm the land until his death, sometime between 1900 and 1910. After Hercules’ death, Mollie continued to own and work the farm.\(^{101}\) She eventually remarried a man by the name of Jenerette.\(^{102}\)

Hercules and Mollie raised their son Hercules, Jr. to become an active leader in Lower Richland County. Hercules, Jr. learned to read and write, indicating that his parents, despite their own illiteracy, recognized the value of education and instilled similar values in him.\(^{103}\) It was probably this upbringing that inspired Hercules, Jr. to become a schoolteacher in his adulthood. In 1891, he passed an examination to teach the third grade and, later, he sought to improve his teaching skills through a summer seminar at Benedict Institute in Columbia.\(^{104}\) He was simultaneously involved in Lower Richland politics, until the revised South Carolina Constitution of 1895 placed severe restrictions on African-American political rights. In fact, just four months before the constitution passed, Hercules, Jr. had helped to nominate Republican delegates to the Constitutional Convention. He and three other African Americans, including his brothers-in-law Joseph Sherman Collins and Hampton W. Woodard, represented Eastover during the nomination process.\(^{105}\)

When the Eastover men’s political careers ended in disappointment, they turned to their family farms in Lower Richland County for economic success. Joseph Sherman Collins, in particular, accumulated an impressive amount of land from which he generated significant wealth. He had married Hercules, Jr.’s sister, Rinah Smith, in 1886, and had three children with her.\(^{106}\) Following the tradition of Rinah’s parents, education was stressed in the family. Daughters Kate and Gertrude went on to serve as public school teachers in Lower Richland and Arthur became a prominent dentist in Columbia.\(^{107}\) As Eastover’s first black postmaster and a “thrifty” individual, Joseph saved enough money to purchase 138.91 acres from Amie S. Weston of Wateree Plantation in 1901 and began a large-scale farm.\(^{108}\) Between 1909 and 1923, he used income from the farm to purchase more land from white planters, including 626.27 more acres

\(^{98}\) Deed Book AA, page 307, Richland County Register of Deeds.  
\(^{99}\) Census, 1880.  
\(^{100}\) Census, 1900.  
\(^{101}\) Census, 1910.  
\(^{102}\) Woodard interview.  
\(^{103}\) Census, 1900.  
\(^{104}\) [Columbia] \(\textit{The State} \), October 13, 1891; August 18, 1900.  
\(^{105}\) The \(\textit{State} \), August 10, 1895, p. 8.  
\(^{106}\) Census, 1900.  
\(^{107}\) Census, 1910; Woodard interview.  
\(^{108}\) Woodard interview; Deed Book AE, page 447, Richland County Register of Deeds.
from Weston and 139 acres from “Captain” Bradford, who ran a local railroad company.\footnote{Woodard interview; Deed Book BL, page 444; Deed Book BB, page 203; Deed Book BO, page 357; Deed Book AV, page 478; Deed Book BZ, page 529; and Deed Book CJ, page 198, Richland County Register of Deeds.} Joseph used the land to farm crops such as corn, soybean, rye, and barley, besides operating a store and cotton gin on the property.\footnote{Woodard interview.}

Joseph used the land to farm crops such as corn, soybean, rye, and barley, besides operating a store and cotton gin on the property.\footnote{Woodard interview.}

Rinah inherited some of her own land, as well. When her father Hercules passed away, his original Land Commission lot was subdivided into smaller parcels, from which Rinah received a 7.29 acre parcel. Furthermore, when Joseph passed away in 1924, he passed the titles of all of his land to her.\footnote{Deed Book 282, page 129, Richland County Register of Deeds.} Rinah had difficulty maintaining Joseph’s farm, however, and called on her son, Arthur Joseph Collins, for his assistance. Born in 1889, Arthur was well-educated and a professional dentist. He had earned a bachelor’s degree at Claflin University in Orangeburg and later received his D.D.S. degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1913. He returned to Columbia afterwards and opened a dentist’s office downtown at 1510 Main Street.\footnote{Arthur Bunyan Caldwell, \textit{History of the American Negro and His Institutions} (Atlanta: A.B. Caldwell Publishing Company, 1919), 98-99.} Despite his professional status as a dentist, Arthur answered his mother’s request, agreeing to work on the farm in between appointments with patients. Joseph had taught Arthur how to farm as a young boy and Rinah had always stressed the historic importance of the land, so he did not

\textbf{Headstones of Hercules (note the alternative spelling) and Mollie Smith.} Hercules and his wife are buried at St. Phillip AME Church in Eastover. The church is located on half an acre of Smith’s land, which he sold to trustees of the church in the late nineteenth century. \textit{Courtesy of Morgen Young.}
question his obligation to continue the farm. A local newspaper reported that he worked the fields “with boyish cheerfulness.”

Out of all the family land, Rinah considered the 7.29 acre parcel from Hercules to be her “prized piece of land.” She conveyed the 7.29 acres to Arthur and his sisters, Katie C. Scott and Gertrude C. Woodard, in 1954, asking them never to sell the land if possible. To ensure its survival in the family, Rinah deeded portions of the land to her grandchildren. The land passed from Arthur to his sister Gertrude. Gertrude operated the land with her husband. The couple lived on a 500-acre portion near Eastover, located off Joe Collins Road. The family continued to hold ownership of portions of the original Hickory Hill lots but lived and worked on the land acquired by Joseph Sherman Collins. The Woodards diversified the farm, raising goats, cattle, pigs and most recently poultry on the property. Their son Joseph Woodard Sr. inherited the farm.

113 *The Light*, June 6, 1925, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina. Arthur Collins was also active as a member of the NAACP Columbia branch, according to the NAACP papers, South branch department files, reel 19, page 00329, Thomas Cooper Library.
114 Woodard interview.
115 Deed Book 282, page 129, Richland County Register of Deeds.
116 Woodard interview.
117 Woodard interview.
Joseph married Billie Viola. The Woodards had four children, all of whom inherited shares of the land from Rinah and Joseph Collins. Billie stressed the pride her children hold in the land. The farm where Billie Woodard currently resides, though not an original purchase from the Land Commission, still maintains historical significance in Lower Richland County. Deemed a Century Farm by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, it has been owned and operated by the same family for nearly 125 years. Currently, the Woodards operate Vale Woodard, Inc. on the land. Billie and her children have no intention of selling this farm, nor the remaining portion of the Hickory Hill lot. Billie maintained she would always “hold onto the land.”

The original parcel purchased by Hercules Smith from the Land Commission remains in the same family, now owned by one of Smith’s great-great-grandchildren. Ownership of the land passed from Arthur Collins to Gertrude C. Woodard in 1965, and then to Joseph C. Woodard in 1978. Joseph C. Woodard, Jr. acquired the property in 1990. Joseph Woodard Jr. maintains

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118 Woodard interview.
119 Woodard interview.
120 Deed Book D31, page 731, Richland County Register of Deeds; Richland County Assessor’s website.
121 Richland County Tax Assessor’s website.
ownership of the property and leases it out for agricultural purposes. The parcel is a portion of Lot 8 of the Hickory Hill tract purchased by Hercules Smith in 1872. It has remained as a farm and in the same family for over 130 years.

122 Woodard interview.
E. The Hopkins Tract
1. Overview of the Hopkins Tract

Historic Appearance

Ownership of the roughly 1,830 acres which comprised the Hopkins tract passed through a variety of families before being sold to the South Carolina Land Commission by Julius Huguenin in 1870. The tract was bounded on the east by the Cabin Branch (of Cedar Creek), and its fork with the Horsepen Branch marked the southeastern corner of the tract. The Horsepen Branch meanders through the southwest section of Hopkins tract and was used to demark property boundaries in the original South Carolina Land Commission survey plats.

The South Carolina Railway, which ran through the heart of Hopkins tract, instigated growth in the region. Completed between Charleston and Columbia in 1842, the railroad spurred the town of Hopkins Turnout, so named for the turntable that was used prior to the completion of the Columbia segment. The construction of the railroad employed many whites and free blacks, and the turnout lived on as a rail depot. During Reconstruction, newly freed men and women purchased Hopkins tract land from the South Carolina Land Commission, forming a new community alongside the rail depot that was the foundation for the present-day town of Hopkins. Amidst the emerging community, the land was largely put to agricultural use.

Parcels Purchased by African Americans

The Hopkins tract was comprised of 1,830 acres divided among 43 parcels. Hopkins land was purchased from the South Carolina Land Commission between May 24, 1872 and January 17, 1884. Of the forty original purchasers, fourteen individuals received a deed for the land. The parcels ranged in size from 10 to 105 acres, with an average of 42.25 acres.

Current Appearance

The modern town of Hopkins, situated on the outskirts of Columbia, is centered on the land of the Hopkins tract. Lower Richland Boulevard marks some of its southwestern boundary, while the Cabin Branch still denotes the eastern boundary. The current Hopkins Elementary School sits in the middle of the historic tract. Horrell Hill Road marks the western and northern boundary.

Dense urban growth has come to characterize the western part of the historical tract, notably along Horrell Hill Road and Crosshill Road and surrounding Hopkins Elementary School. Though nearly all of the original Land Commission parcels have been subdivided into numerous sections, many of these partitions maintain the integrity of the original property divisions. Some of the original properties remain wholly undivided.

Despite the concentrated population, there are several fields under cultivation and some large areas of cleared land, tillable soil, and mixed pine and oak forest, notably in the eastern and northern portions of the historic tract.
2. The Hagar Alston Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

The current physical address is 1349 Crosshill Road. A house built in the last twenty years stands on the property.

The Unbroken Provenance of theParcel

Hagar Alston purchased Lots 6 and 23 of the Hopkins tract in 1879. She bought 43.75 acres for a total cost of $131.20. The following year she was granted a deed for the land from the State of South Carolina. At the time of purchase, her immediate neighbor to the first lot was Sailor

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123 Richland County Tax Assessor’s website.
124 “Land Commission Records,” South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
125 Deed Book, M390 1880, Richland County Register of Deeds.
Foose, who owned Lot 7. Amanda Edmonds bordered Hagar’s second lot, having purchased Lot 22 in 1876.

Hagar was born in February 1835 and her husband Brazil in 1822. Both were owned at one time by the Chappell family, a Lower Richland plantation family. Paul Green Chappell owned Brazil, while Hagar belonged at one time to his grandfather Hicks Chappell. Upon Hicks Chappell’s death in 1836, he left Hagar and two other slaves five dollars annually.

Hagar and Brazil were farming their land as early as the 1880s. At the time, the Alstons were raising eight children. By 1900, Brazil died and Hagar was left a widow. She, however,

126 Deed Book, M307 1879, Richland County Register of Deeds.
127 Deed Book, P151 1884, Richland County Register of Deeds.
128 Census, 1880.
129 Marie Adams interview with Morgen Young, March 30, 2009.
131 Montgomery, “Richland Loses Old Friend.”
132 Census, 1900.
maintained ownership of her original parcels of land. Hagar was unable to read or write, yet all of her children still living with her were literate. Her eldest son worked as a miller of grits, while others of working age served as farm laborers on their mother’s farm.

By 1910 Hagar Alston owned her land free of mortgage.\textsuperscript{133} Her occupation, according to census records, was listed as “own income” and her land described as a farm. Two grandchildren occupied her household, Fred and Nellie Alston. Fred worked as a farm laborer on her land. Her neighbors included her sons Israel and Sam Alston. Both men worked as farmers on rented lands.

Hagar was a successful woman farmer who was very involved in the community. She donated lumber that built the Hopkins meeting hall in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{134} African-American men in the community gathered often in that hall to discuss community affairs. Many Alstons resided in the Hopkins community, and Hagar’s son Cyrus worked at the Gorman Brothers’ store.\textsuperscript{135} Hagar Alston died on September 10, 1919.\textsuperscript{136} She lived her entire life in Lower Richland.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image1.png}
\caption{Hopkins meeting hall. Hagar Alston donated lumber for the construction of the community’s meeting hall. Her success as a woman in Hopkins was recognized by many. \textit{Courtesy of John B. Barber, Jr.}}
\end{figure}

Following her death, Lot 6 of Hagar’s land passed to her son Israel. He operated it as a farm, planting such crops as cotton, potatoes, and sugar cane.\textsuperscript{137} He was known as a very successful

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{133} Census, 1910. \\
\textsuperscript{135} Adams interview with Young. \\
\textsuperscript{136} South Carolina Death Records, 1821-1955. \\
\textsuperscript{137} Marie Adams, “Israel Alston History,” \textit{St. John Baptist Newsletter.}
\end{flushright}
farmer in the community. He later ran a successful trucking business and further distinguished himself as an entrepreneur in Hopkins. Israel married Portia Barber, herself a descendent of an original Land Commission purchaser. Portia was the daughter of John Benjamin and Mamie Holley Barber and a granddaughter of Samuel and Harriet Barber. Israel and Portia had one child, Johnie B. Alston.

Following his father’s death in 1957, Johnie inherited the land. He understood the historical significance of the land and often spoke of it to his family. For a time, he ran a farm on the property. He worked most of his life as a building contractor, constructing the current house that stands on the property. Following his death in 2007, his wife Ernestine inherited the property. She currently resides at 1349 Crosshill Road in Hopkins. This property still occupies most of the original Lot 6 of the Hopkins tract, with only a few portions carved out of the original boundaries. She has no intention to sell the land, acknowledging its rich history and desiring to maintain its ownership within her family.

3. The Harriet Barber Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

This parcel is generally bounded by Old Creek Road, Gene Drive, and Sulton Johnson Road, with Lower Richland Boulevard and Barberville Loop running through the original parcel. Current addresses in this parcel include 105, 111, 116, and 117 Barberville Loop; 6401 and 6417 Lower Richland Boulevard; and 115 Old Creek Road.

The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

Reverend Samuel Barber, a former slave, made the first payment on the land in 1872, and his wife, Harriet Barber, also a former slave, received the deed to 42.5 acres, Hopkins Lot 35, from the State of South Carolina, in 1879. Reverend Barber was a minister, a farmer of corn and cotton, and a well digger. It is said that he was freed prior to emancipation due to his skill as a well digger. Harriet was a farm laborer and laundress. It is likely that the Barbers earned the money used to purchase the property from these occupations. Sam and his sons built the home that still stands today, known as the Harriet Barber House, at 116 Barberville Loop, around 1880, with additions made in subsequent decades. The property was likely divided prior to Sam and Harriet’s death and gifted to their children, who then passed the properties on, further dividing...
the parcels, to their heirs. At least one large parcel was sold to the unrelated McCracken family, probably prior to 1910. The land was and is relatively flat with deciduous and pine trees and
tillable soil suitable for farming. The Horsepen Branch and Cabin Branch of Meyers Creek fork to the southeast of the property within walking distance. The land was farmed until the 1960s.146

Reverend Samuel Barber founded St. John Baptist Church near Hopkins.147 Half-brothers Sam Jr. and John Barber raised their families and farmed on the property in the early to mid-1900s. John became a Baptist minister and educator. Sam Jr. was also a well digger and beekeeper.148 At least three more houses were built on land bounded by the original parcel by 1930. A smokehouse stood near the Harriet Barber House until the 1980s, used in its earlier years to store smoked hams, drying onions, feed corn, and canned goods.149

146 Adams interview with Bedell.
148 Adams interview with Bedell.
149 Adams interview with Bedell.
Harriet Barber House, late 1940s. Naomi Daniels Jackson holding Johnny Barber’s daughter, WeTonia. The young boy is Sandy Hagood. Courtesy John B. Barber, Jr.

Harriet Barber House, 1970s. John and Mamie Barber’s sons, Sandy, Ulysses, Melvin, Johnny and Odell standing in front of the smokehouse that was torn down in the 1980s. Courtesy of Marie Adams.
The next two generations of descendants were predominantly educators, having received their primary education at segregated schools in Hopkins as children and secondary education at Booker T. Washington High School in Columbia. Several sons migrated to Detroit, Michigan, following military service, where they worked in the automotive industries. Only one son, Ulysses, remained in South Carolina and graduated from Allen University. His daughters graduated from Hopkins High School in Hopkins and Benedict College in Columbia. One daughter received her masters degree from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and the other daughters received masters degrees from the University of South Carolina.\footnote{Adams interview with Bedell.}

For his commitment to education in the Lower Richland community, John and Mamie’s son, Ulysses R. Barber, received awards and honors, including Richland One Teacher of the Year and having the auditorium at the Hopkins Middle School named after him. His daughters, Marie Adams and Mary Kirkland, are actively involved in the preservation of the history in this region, spearheading efforts to restore the Harriet Barber House and forming South East Rural Community Outreach.

\textbf{Reverend John Barber.} He and his wife Mamie raised eleven children in the Harriet Barber House. In addition to farming the property, he was a public school teacher for about forty-five years and a Baptist preacher for over sixty years. \textit{Courtesy of Marie Adams.}
The Amanda Goodwin Edmonds Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

The original outer border of Hopkins Lots 21 and 22 is intact, bounded by Edmonds Farm Road on the south and Horsepen Branch Lane on the west. The current street addresses include 1042, 1054, and 1060 Edmonds Farm Road, all currently owned by the Edmonds family.151

The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

Amanda Goodwin Edmonds purchased a 32 acre lot, Lot 22, in Hopkins for $64.00 and received a deed to the land in 1884 from the Sinking Fund Commission. Amanda’s father, John Wilson, had already purchased two adjoining lots to Amanda’s, Lots 16 and 21, totaling 41 acres. John Wilson purchased these lots for $164.00 and received a deed from the Sinking Fund Commission in 1881. Amanda was a member of the St. John Baptist Church and her marriage to Daniel Edmonds was apparently a second marriage, as four children are listed as Goodwins and stepchildren of Mr. Edmonds on the 1880 census. The Edmonds household also included a

151 Richland County Tax Assessor’s website.
forty-year-old woman, Harriet Banna, and her nine-year-old daughter who were listed as servants on the 1880 census.\textsuperscript{152}

The Edmondses were listed as farm workers through the 1930 census and in November 1935, with Amanda’s death at the age of eighty-two, the land was passed on to her children: sons Douglas, McDaniel, John, and Allen, and daughters Charity Sims and Francis Blakely. The inheritance also included the 41 acres purchased by her father John Wilson, Lots 21 and 16, of which Amanda was listed to be the lawful heir of and for which she had paid taxes for some fifty odd years.\textsuperscript{153} In 1942, Douglas bought out his brothers and sisters for $5.00 and took sole possession of 16 acres of his grandfather’s original 41 acres.\textsuperscript{154} Again in 1946, Douglas bought

\textsuperscript{152}Census, 1880.\textsuperscript{153} Deed Book DZ, page 463, Richland County Register of Deeds.\textsuperscript{154} Deed Book FD, page 386, Richland County Register of Deeds.
out his brothers and sisters for $1.00 and took sole possession of his mother Amanda’s original 32.06 acre lot, Lot 22. 

Headstone of Douglas Edmonds from the Zion Benevolent Church Cemetery. Douglas Edmonds was the son of Amanda Goodwin Edmonds and was deeded the land, along with his brothers and sisters, upon his mother’s death. Courtesy of Nate Johnson.

In 1948, to perhaps ease the burden of so much land, lots were subdivided between multiple families, the Smiths, Richardsons, and Middletons. Today 1060 Edmonds Farm Road includes 6.28 acres of the original Lot 22 purchased by Amanda Edmonds’s father John Wilson. In addition, 1042 Edmonds Farm Road is a portion of Douglas’s land deeded to his son, Wilbert Sr., in 1971 and Wilbert Jr. in 1972 for $5.00, “love and affection.”

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155 Deed Book GL, 386, Richland County Register of Deeds.
156 Deed Book D217, 801, Richland County Register of Deeds.
157 Deed Book D239, 818, Richland County Register of Deeds.
5. The Noah Garrick Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

There is no current address for the property. The land is located approximately at 180 Sulton Johnson Road, near the southeastern end of the road.

The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

Noah Garrick bought Lot 36 of the Hopkins tract from the South Carolina Land Commission in 1879. The lot contained exactly 25 acres, costing him $100.\(^{158}\)

Noah was about thirty-four at the time of the purchase. He and his first wife Mary married directly after the Civil War in 1866 and had four children together, just two of whom lived into adulthood. The small family all helped to farm the 25 acres of land.\(^{159}\) Noah was successful enough to purchase nearly 60 more acres from adjacent lots. Of the new acreage, he gave about 45 acres to his half-brother Sulton Johnson and kept 15 acres for himself, increasing his holdings to 40 total acres.\(^{160}\) As Noah aged well into his sixties and his children moved away from Hopkins, he maintained the farm along with his second wife Betty.\(^{161}\)

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158 Deed Book M, page 308, Richland County Register of Deeds.
159 Census 1900.
160 Alma Garrick Macer, interview with Nate Johnson, April 17, 2009; La’Nona Garrick Rivera, interview with Nate Johnson, April 17, 2009.
161 Census, 1910; Rivera interview.
Noah was able to continue the farm probably due to his son Stepney. Stepney moved to downtown Columbia as an adult, yet he continued to assist with the business end of his father’s farm. In 1896, he and his wife Annie married and had four children together, named Julian, Annie, Herdicine, and Stepney, Jr. Stepney was listed as a “teamster” on the 1900 census, meaning that he carted goods—possibly produce from Noah’s farm and other Lower Richland farms—for sale at local markets.

By 1920, Stepney and his son Julian purchased two lots on Wheat Street in downtown Columbia from Cecelia Goodwin and her daughter, Marion G. Dickson. Stepney may have known the two women generally from Hopkins—where they also were from—or more specifically from Zion Benevolent Church in Hopkins, where both families were parishioners.

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162 Census, 1900.
163 Deed Book CA, page 263, Richland County Register of Deeds; Deed Book CA, page 351.
164 Both Stepney Garrick and Cecelia Goodwin are buried at Zion Benevolent Church, 201 Meeting House Road, Hopkins, South Carolina. For Cecelia Goodwin’s obituary, see Columbia’s The Light, June 6, 1925, page 4.
In any case, Stepney and Julian soon opened a grocery store at 1330 Wheat Street, where they likely sold produce from Noah’s farm.\textsuperscript{165}

Noah passed away on October 9, 1925.\textsuperscript{166} His third wife, Minerva, left the title of his 40-acre farm to Stepney and Stepney’s sister-in-law Pauline. Pauline lived in Jersey City, New Jersey, however, so Stepney looked after the farm on his own.\textsuperscript{167} Neither Stepney nor any subsequent generations lived on the land in Hopkins. Instead, they leased it to other families. These families usually agreed to care for the property rather than pay rent to the Garricks.\textsuperscript{168}

Stepney passed away in 1954, leaving the 40 acres to his adult children, who collectively held title to the land.\textsuperscript{169} Stepney, Jr. was mostly responsible for continuing the farm at this time. Every Thursday, he traveled with his children down to Hopkins to check on the farm. He raised hogs and chickens on the land, and kept a goat for milk. He farmed mostly vegetables, including cucumbers, watermelons, tomatoes, string beans, and black-eyed peas. After experimenting with cotton once, he found that the crop exhausted the soil of its minerals and did not try planting it again. Stepney, Jr. also dug a well on the property and installed a pump, which delivered ice-cold water that was “crystal clear” and “as sweet as sugar,” according to the memory of his daughter Alma.\textsuperscript{170}

\begin{center}
Death certificate of Noah Garrick. After Noah passed away in 1925, the Garrick family ceased to live in Hopkins. They held onto the land, however, and continued to use it for agricultural purposes. Courtesy of Alma Garrick Macer.
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{165} Columbia, South Carolina City Directory, 1926 (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., 1926).
\textsuperscript{166} Macer interview.
\textsuperscript{167} Deed Book CP, page 194, Richland County Register of Deeds; Rivera interview.
\textsuperscript{168} Macer interview. One of the families who rented were the Barbers, though it is unclear what their relation was to the Barbers mentioned previously in this report.
\textsuperscript{169} Deed Book 157, page 342, Richland County Register of Deeds.
\textsuperscript{170} Macer interview.
A wood-frame, two-bedroom house stood on the property, raised above the ground on cinder blocks. It is not clear how old the house was, but it dated at least to Stepney, Sr.’s time. It had a kitchen and living room with a large fireplace between the two. There was no modern plumbing inside -- a pump fed water to the sink and an outhouse was the only private facility. The building no longer stands today.

Stepney, Jr. and his siblings heavily anchored themselves in Columbia’s black community, becoming especially prominent within the city’s educational system. Both Annie and Herdicine were schoolteachers who married other educators. Annie was the founder and principal of Bethel School. She married Theodore J. Hanberry, the dean of Benedict College and a prominent member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). By 1971, Annie was promoted to supervisor of County School District No. 2. Herdicine taught at several schools over her lifetime and was married to Benjamin R. Harrison, a lifelong teacher at Booker T. Washington High School. Stepney, Jr. taught history classes in Chester before becoming a mail carrier for the United States Postal Service. His wife Mary was a teacher at Booker T. Washington and C.A. Johnson in Columbia and Webber High School in Eastover.

The 40 acres in Hopkins eventually passed to Frederick H. Garrick, son of Stepney, Jr., in 1973. In 2009, Frederick still held title to the original 25 acres that his great-grandfather Noah purchased from the state 130 years ago. Three large sheds stand on the property and a few acres are still used for farming, though most of the acreage is described as “timber land.” Nobody resides there today. Its original boundaries are preserved entirely intact. The property serves not

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171 Macer interview.
172 Columbia, South Carolina City Directory, 1954 (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., 1954); Columbia, South Carolina City Directory, 1971 (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., 1971); NAACP papers, South branch department files, reel 19, page 00499; Macer interview. For brevity’s sake, this list of schools where the Garricks worked is incomplete.
just as an exceptional example of the legacy of Reconstruction, but also as an example of land in Lower Richland County maintained by a family living in downtown Columbia.\footnote{Richland County Tax Assessor’s website.}  

6. The William Harris Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

The current physical address is 6411 Cabin Creek Road.

![William Harris Family Parcel Lot 1. The land currently owned by descendants of Isaiah Fay is outlined in blue. Courtesy of Richland County GIS.](image)

The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

William Harris purchased the 55 acre Hopkins tract Lot 14 in 1872 for $275.00.\footnote{South Carolina Land Commission records} William Harris was listed as a laborer in the 1880 census. Harris was born in 1840 and was forty years old...
in 1880. A widower, he was the father of two school-aged children. William Harris is not found in any other census records.\textsuperscript{175} A 1927 plat map from a court case involving a neighbor’s estate made reference to the Estate of William Harris, so it is assumed that he was deceased by the mid-1920s.\textsuperscript{176} Chain of title research shed little information on sales history of the land. The present owner is listed as the William Harris Estate. Contact with the family has been limited, but it is believed that the family owning and occupying the land today are descendants of William Harris. The land today retains its original boundaries.

William Harris Estate. A plat map for the Miley Harris estate in 1927 shows the location of the William Harris estate immediately to the south. \textit{Courtesy of the Richland County Register of Deeds.}

7. The Ephraim Neal Family Parcel

General Boundaries or Current Street Addresses

The parcel is bordered by Ault Road, Cedar Creek, and the Southern Railroad tracks.

The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

After moving from the home of his parents, Jim and Tena DeVeaux on the Neal Plantation of Eastover, Ephraim Neal purchased the first 40 acres of the total 74 acres of land within the Hopkins tracts from Abigail Swygert in 1881.\textsuperscript{177} In order to purchase the last 34 acres, Ephraim

\textsuperscript{175} Census, 1880.  
\textsuperscript{176} James C. Covington, \textit{Plat of the Estate}, April 7, 1927, Richland County Register of Deeds.  
\textsuperscript{177} Tena Deveaux is also listed on the grantor index as the purchaser of half of Lot 26 in the Hickory Hill tract. The second half of Lot 26 was purchased by Peter Deveaux, Ephraim’s brother. According to family tradition, Ephraim Neal gave one acre of land to St. John Baptist Church after buying the land from Swygert. However, the deed does not specify whether or not Swygert was the one who gave/sold the land to the church. According to deed book M323, in 1879 Abigail purchased 75.5 acres from the state for $188 for Lots 30 and 31 of the Hopkins tract.
farmed, cut lumber, and cleared trees for the railroads.\footnote{178}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{nealParcel.png}
\end{center}

**Neal Family Parcel.** The land currently owned by descendants of Ephraim Neal is outlined in blue. *Courtesy of Richland County GIS.*

As time passed, Ephraim gifted his land to his sons, J.W. and Green B. This land remained intact until 1909 when the brothers gave 24.67 acres to another brother, Weston Peter Neal. The land remained divided in this matter until 1947 when the heirs of Weston Peter Neal’s estate gave 4 acres to his nephew, Choatte, and sister-in-law, Clara Neal. The heirs of J.W. Neal’s estate (his sons, Jessie, John, Fred, and Earl) gave one acre to St. John Baptist Church, which is still in existence today.\footnote{179}

This land is only one of several property purchases by Swygert from the state and the Sinking Fund in 1870s and 80s. According to deed book N596, in 1881 Swygert sold Ephraim Neal 74.5 acres for $188, minus one acre sold to St. John's Church in Hopkins. It would make sense that it was Ephraim, considering it was his church and Swygert was white and thus not likely a member; Deed Book A, page 304-05, Richland County Register of Deeds.\footnote{178 Deborah Scott Brooks, “Plowing, Praying, Paying, and Poisoning: The Lower Richland Family Thrives”, *The Columbia Star*, January 9, 2009.}

\footnote{179 Deed Book A, page 304-05, Richland County Register of Deeds.}

St. John Baptist Church, Columbia, South Carolina. A portion of the land owned by St. John was donated by the Neal Family. Courtesy of Deborah Scott Brooks.
Ephraim and his wife, Eliza Eikenheotter settled on these Hopkins tracts to raise their five children, James, Jessie W., Weston P., Joseph, and Green Berry. As times were hard during the Great Depression, the Neal family lived together in the family home for many years past the 1930s. These arrangements were important to them as they were known for wanting to preserve the sanctity of communities and families. This is possibly why Jessie W. built an L-shaped home on the family land next to his father and Choatte Rufus Neal (C.R.) purchased about forty acres in an adjacent parcel that has remained in the family since 1911. For years, distant relatives remember sitting on the large porch of the L-shaped home listening to music played on a graphophone.¹⁸⁰

Father and son pastors. J.W. Neal and W.H. Neal each served a term as pastor of St. John Baptist Church. Courtesy of Deborah Scott Brooks.

F. The Hunt Tract
Hunt Tract, Richland County, South Carolina

Legend
- Railroad
- Road
- Streams

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Historic Appearance

The Hunt tract comprised 774 acres that had been included within the bankrupt estate of Alfred Hunt. J.P. Leslie, commissioner of the South Carolina Land Commission in 1870, purchased the property himself before transferring it to the Land Commission. The Congaree River forms the southern border of the Hunt tract, while Cedar Creek forms the eastern and northern borders. The original Land Commission survey plats shows the “Bed of Old” river forming the western border, a waterway that is not extant. The original survey plats also indicate numerous streams and creeks meandering throughout the tract. Due to the diffused nature of the water and its location next to the Congaree, the land is presumed to be floodplain. This environmental situation might explain the lack of land purchases.

Parcels Purchased by African Americans

The 774 acres of Hunt tract were divided into 21 parcels. The South Carolina Land Commission records indicate that only two individuals purchased land in the Hunt tract. Legislator Aesop Goodson bought Lots 16 and 17, comprising 75.5 acres for $226.00 in 1880. Jerry Williams bought Lot 15, comprising 47.5 acres, for $142.50 in 1870. Neither purchaser completed payment.

Current Appearance

The historic Hunt tract is now located within the boundaries of Congaree National Park along the Congaree River. It has never been developed.
G. The O’Hanlon Tract
O'Hanlon Tract, Richland County, South Carolina
Historic Appearance

The O’Hanlon tract comprised approximately 5,165 acres. The tract was located at a bend in the Congaree River just past the point where Raeford’s Creek (today Mill Creek) enters. It was the largest of the Land Commission tracts in Lower Richland County, extending from the Congaree River to near the present day Old Bluff Road, a distance of over two miles. Unlike the other tracts, O’Hanlon was situated at a significant distance from both the railroads and from the other tracts, perhaps explaining its relative lack of success in sustaining the permanent inhabitation of families. This low-lying area would have largely been floodplain, and numerous creeks and small ponds are shown on the original survey plats.

Parcels Purchased by African Americans

The O’Hanlon tract contains 5,164.5 original acres divided into at least 170 original parcels. Land was purchased from the South Carolina Land Commission between January 1870 and May 1887. Though there were about seventy-eight original purchasers; only fifteen of those completed making payments and secured a deed for their land.

Current Appearance

Although eighty-four individuals attempted to purchase land in the O’Hanlon tract, only four deeds were ever received, and today any significant trace of the lots they once owned has been all but erased. Currently the land is primarily divided into several large parcels of land owned by the Clarkson Family Trust, the Mill Creek ASC General Partnership, the Little Clayton PTRN ASC, and William Thomas Koon. Highly fragmented records make it impossible to determine exactly when the land passed from the purchasers from the Land Commission into the hands of these current property holders, but it is safe to say that the majority of the land was consolidated by the mid-twentieth century.
Section III.

Assessing the Past and Moving Forward
A. Conclusions: The Impact of the South Carolina Land Commission in Lower Richland County

Reconstruction was a time of rebirth and new freedoms for formerly enslaved African Americans. They were freed from bondage, granted citizenship, and given political rights. They formed strong communities, established churches, and educated themselves. Despite these successes, however, the disappointments of the era have been most often remembered. The expectation that the federal government would provide former slaves with “forty acres and a mule” went unfulfilled. Landless, most African Americans lived in poverty and had no choice but to labor under contracts with white planters. The federal government’s failure to create an effective land ownership program ranked among the most notorious failures of Reconstruction.

As this report has shown, the South Carolina Land Commission assumed the task of making land available to former slaves when the federal government proved unable or unwilling to do so. South Carolina’s attempt to make land ownership feasible for former slaves—an attempt spearheaded by black legislators—has become a forgotten aspect of Reconstruction. Though the South Carolina Land Commission did not give away “forty acres and a mule,” it succeeded in creating a program that truly benefited newly freed men and women.

Land purchases gave African Americans an opportunity to support themselves and gain an economic foothold where they had once toiled for another’s economic prosperity. In Lower Richland County, 39 African Americans received clear title to 1,399 acres of land from the South Carolina Land Commission. These individuals – women as well as men – purchased land and used it to achieve a level of economic stability. They started small farms on the land, raised families, and formed communities. As they aged and died, they passed the title to their surviving family members, who usually continued the farm. Remarkably, ten families continue to own largely intact parcels of land that date to these Land Commission sales.

African Americans who purchased land on the Hopkins or Hickory Hill tracts were most likely to hold onto their lots and pass them onto successive generations. These tracts contained the best quality soil, in contrast to tracts such as Back Swamp or O’Hanlon. The land’s suitability for farming was a major reason these families were successful.

Their success in holding onto land might also be explained by the fact that two towns—Hopkins and Eastover, respectively—were nearby. Because both towns were already established before freed men and women began purchasing land in the area, the Land Commission cannot be credited with their origins. It can be claimed, however, that the ability of individuals and families to maintain land depended on their proximity to these towns. They economically benefited from being closer to the towns, which served as their nearest point of commerce. Railroad depots in the town centers provided places to export produce from their crops.

The towns of Hopkins and Eastover grew as more freed men and women settled in the area. If African Americans lived in or near the towns, they were sure to have frequent opportunities to interact with each other and participate in social events and local politics. The multi-layered social structures of both towns certainly created a deeper sense of community, accompanied by a
commitment to heritage. This deeper sense of community may also explain why the families highlighted by this report have held onto land the longest. As the research shows, many descendants of these families emerged as community leaders, ministers, politicians, and educators. Even as they moved away to larger communities, such as Columbia, they continued to maintain their family land and remained involved in Hopkins and Eastover.

It is also important to acknowledge that many African-American families in Lower Richland County retained Land Commission parcels for as long as one hundred years. These families fell beyond the scope of this report, which has focused on unbroken provenance from Reconstruction to the present day, but their cases should not be forgotten. They offer additional evidence of families who were able to carve out viable farms and successful lives in Lower Richland County because of the Land Commission.

The Isaac Harris and Cain Green families are just two examples of families that held onto land for nearly one hundred years before selling it. Isaac Harris purchased Lots 13 and 17 from the Hopkins tract in 1872 and the lands remained in the Harris family for fifty years. A 1926 court order sold Lot 13 and divided up Lot 17. As late as 1968, Harris family members still owned part of Lots 13 and 17 before selling it outside of the family. Similarly, Cain Green purchased Lot 21 of the Hickory Hill tract in 1877. His descendants owned subdivisions of the original parcel and were able to pass the land down until the 1970s, when all subdivisions were sold outside the family.

The South Carolina Land Commission gave African Americans in Lower Richland County a means to rise up out of the bonds of landlessness. They were able to farm and build homes on their own land. Despite the internal problems and charges of corruption faced by the Land Commission, the experiment worked to an impressive and significant degree.

This report is the culmination of a semester of research, but the project of documenting African-American land ownership in Lower Richland County should not be considered complete. With the Civil War sesquicentennial approaching in 2011, there are multiple opportunities to preserve and present this history. The sesquicentennial will witness a resurgence of public interest not just in the Civil War but in the Reconstruction era. Various programs therefore should be made available to the public telling the history of the South Carolina Land Commission. These programs can set the commission’s story within the larger context of Reconstruction, focusing on how the war brought freedom to four million slaves who otherwise would not have possessed the ability to purchase land.
B. Preserving the Legacy: Historic Preservation Recommendations

Historic Properties

- **Research, document, and evaluate historic properties.** Historic properties can include buildings, outbuildings, archeological sites, landscapes, and traditional cultural sites. On agricultural properties that are included in this report, more investigation can be done to find buildings or historic landscapes—such as fences, tree lines, and field boundaries—that date to the original South Carolina Land Commission families. If surviving sites have integrity to convey their historic character, they should be evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register recognizes historic properties that are significant on a local, state, or national scale. Besides nominating properties to the National Register, writing a multiple property submission as a context document for properties associated with the Land Commission will be helpful for those writing nominations in the future. Even if properties are not eligible for the National Register, documenting them before they are gone is still very important. The Harriet Barber House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a good example for other sites seeking to represent the history of the area because of its restoration and interpretive work.

Archeology

- **Investigate history below the ground.** The historical record of life as a newly freed slave with the chance to own land can be further investigated through an archeological excavation of an early home site. It can reveal more about the common objects available for consumption, home-use, or farm work. Archeologists might look for remnants of house and barn foundations, fence posts, outbuildings, wells, and scattered materials left and buried. The study of this material culture can show links between families and communities, as well as how freed men and women used resources from the old plantations or from new markets in their villages and in Columbia.

Cemetery Preservation

- **Preserve existing cemeteries.** Cemeteries are valuable sources of historic information about the beliefs and values of the community. Documentation of known gravesites, existing gravestones, funerary objects and other memorials, and the landscape of the cemetery can be done through photographs, drawings, Geographic Information Systems mapping technology, and gravestone transcription. If gravestone repair is necessary, it should be done with great attention to the historic material and its compatibility with modern repairs. For more information on repairing gravestones consult a qualified archeologist or preservationist. See contacts listed below.

- **Research ruined, hidden, or grown-over cemeteries.** Non-invasive archaeology can be done to discover locations of unmarked graves and study in-depth the visible grave markings on the surface. Trained archaeologists can use remote-sensing to determine
grave locations by using technology to send sonar through the ground and then read the feedback. They also can use work done on other cemeteries to make historical comparisons about life in the cemetery’s community.

South Carolina State Historical Markers Program

- **Erect official state markers.** Few existing state historical markers in Lower Richland County commemorate African-American history. Text for future markers can be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office for editing and approval, and approved markers are included in the online database and future published guidebooks. The cost of producing and erecting the markers is, however, left to private endeavor. Here are suggestions for future markers as a starting point:

  - Harriet Barber House
  - South Carolina Land Commission
  - African-American Reconstruction legislators

Preservation Education

- **Develop, print, and make available a brochure of resources for community members on preservation.** The brochure could include a statement on the importance of historic preservation and community history and resources for future work. The brochure could include the following organizational contacts with expertise in certain areas of archaeology and preservation that can provide guidance and advice for community preservation projects.

  - **Preliminary contacts:**

    South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism
    Al Hester, Historic Sites Coordinator
    Phone: (803) 734-0154
    Fax: (803) 734-1017
    E-Mail: ahester@scprt.com

    David Jones, Archaeologist
    Phone: (803) 734-1521
    Fax: (803) 734-1017
    E-Mail: djones@scprt.com
• **Encourage archival preservation of family and local histories.** There are very few archival resources available to historians about life as freed men and women in Lower Richland County. Depositing family documents and photographs in a repository such as
the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina would benefit future researchers. Some libraries and archives accept digital scans of historic documents and images which would make the information available to researchers without taking the materials from family descendants.

- **Involve the community.** Unless the nature or location of the historic property is sensitive information, involve the community in the preservation work. The value of preservation and archaeology should especially be included in work with school-age children.

**Funding and Resources**

- **Seek money and assistance to restore, rehabilitate, and protect historic properties.**
  - The *South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office* website has excellent information on many grant and tax incentive programs, as well as being a source of advice and technical assistance for preservation projects. See the website for more details: http://shpo.sc.gov/grants/.
  
  - The *National Trust for Historic Preservation* has a website to help people involved with preservation projects. They break down their suggestions into the categories of: For Commercial Buildings, For Historic Homes, and For Non-Profits and Public Agencies. Most of these programs have eligibility requirements for determining “historic” buildings. See their website for more information: http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/.
  
  - The *U.S. Department of Agriculture-Housing and Urban Development-Rural Development* office has various loans and grants available for housing and low-income housing rehabilitation. Many of these programs require working through sponsoring governmental or non-profit organizations and/or having matching funds. See this website for more information: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/.
  
  - The *South Carolina Conservation Bank* provides some grant money to qualified entities for rehabilitation projects of historic properties. The Merchants Bank building in Eastover, which is listed on the National Register, has received one of these grants for its restoration. See these websites for more details on the Conservation Bank and which qualified entities operate in Lower Richland County: http://sccbank.sc.gov/, http://sccbank.sc.gov/entitlandtrust.html.

- **Seek out help and resources for historic and natural landscapes.** The *Congaree Land Trust*, also one of the Conservation Bank’s qualified entities, advocates for conservation and can hold conservation easements, which are legal documents that lay out certain protections for the land and are tied to the property’s deed. From their website, “Conservation easements protect land from inappropriate development while maintaining traditional uses such as agriculture, forestry, wildlife management, and recreational
pursuits like hunting and fishing. By limiting uses of their land, landowners may be eligible for income and estate tax benefits.” The Congaree Land Trust and many other organizations and state offices also work together on the Cowasee Basin Focus Area that similarly encourages conservation easements and provides technical assistance to property owners. http://www.congareelt.org/.
C. Interpreting the Legacy: Museum and Education Recommendations

Exhibitions Opportunities

- **Strengthen community partnerships.** The research generated by this report would be an excellent supplement to exhibits and programs already in place at local museums and libraries. Potential opportunities include:
  
  - Work with sites in Lower Richland County to expand interpretive materials. With its focus on the history of continuous land ownership within the same family, the Harriet Barber House is an ideal starting point for this type of expansion.
  
  - Partner with local museums that treat South Carolina history to create a temporary exhibit on the impact of the Land Commission. Potential partners include, but are not limited to, the South Carolina State Museum and McKissick Museum.
  
  - Collaborate with Congaree National Park to develop a visitors center exhibition related to the Land Commission. Now located within the boundaries of the park, historic Hunt tract would be an excellent area of further research for such an exhibit.
  
  - Work with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, a primary partner in developing plans for statewide remembrance of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, to develop temporary web-based or physical exhibitions and programming. This will shed new light on the story of the Civil War in South Carolina by expanding the narrative of the war to Reconstruction and the impact of the unique Land Commission program.

- **Create a traveling exhibit.** Due to the relative lack of artifacts currently associated with this research, a text panel and/or photographic exhibition would be the most feasible medium. Such an exhibit would be ideal for traveling to local institutions, such as schools, libraries, churches, museums, and community centers. Centered on the impact of the South Carolina Land Commission in Lower Richland County, the exhibit would inform viewers of the lasting impact of Reconstruction in their own area.

- **Develop an interactive website.** Design a website that would allow people greater access to the history of Lower Richland County. The website could include a virtual tour of historic sites, an overview of the Land Commission as well as Lower Richland County, and links to other websites for additional information.

Educational Outreach

- **Produce a driving tour.** Because the focus of this project deals with the landscape of Lower Richland County and the areas studied are not necessarily in close proximity to each other, a driving tour would offer the best way for the public to discover and engage in the history of the South Carolina Land Commission. A pamphlet including a map, highlighting historical sites of interest, would be the primary resource for this tour. Such a pamphlet could be distributed to state and local visitor centers and museums. At select
sites, or available online for download, an audio version via mp3 player, cellular phone, or CD could be provided to interested visitors. At some sites, like the Harriet Barber House, visitors would be encouraged to leave their cars and walk around, allowing them to engage more fully with the sites.

- **Design lesson plans.** Lesson plans could be developed that combine this research with the South Carolina statewide curriculum standards for social studies and history. This will help students connect broad historical concepts, such as Reconstruction, with their own lives through the study of relevant local history. This approach would be particularly effective for seventh grade students as they study South Carolina state history. To further disseminate this information to teachers, a copy of this report could be submitted to the South Carolina branch of Teaching American History, a national educational initiative which helps teachers gain access to information and skills to make history more engaging for their students.

- **Organize a lecture series.** Lecture series would offer another avenue for disseminating research to both the general and academic public. Collaborations with university departments, such as African-American Studies, Archeology, or History, as well as with local libraries and other community partners could generate increased awareness of this topic via forums of discussion. The University of South Carolina, local historically black colleges, the Richland County Public Library system, and the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation department are just some of the partners who may facilitate such programming.

- **Solicit outside funding.** Seek out funding opportunities from statewide or federally funded grants, philanthropist organizations, and area businesses to fund further outreach programs that highlight the Land Commission’s impact in Lower Richland County. Starting points might include South Carolina Humanities Council grants, which fund community collaboration with humanities professionals or grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which has grants for museums and libraries engaging in community partnerships and outreach.

**Academic Research and Collaboration**

- **Conduct oral history interviews.** The initial interviews conducted for this report uncovered the wealth of community connections and memories among residents of Lower Richland County. These interviews emphasized that this medium of research is exceptionally viable for the area, and could fill additional gaps left by the written record. Topics otherwise inaccessible might include how the land was used, what it meant to its owners, the ways in which communities formed around Land Commission purchases, and memory—or lack of memory—of the Land Commission.

- **Research white land ownership connected to the Land Commission.** Exploring the impact of the Land Commission on white residents of Lower Richland County would offer an excellent comparison and allow greater understanding of the ways in which race affected purchasing ability and retention. Such a comparison might also shed light on the interracial relationships within Lower Richland County during and after Reconstruction.
• **Explore tenant farming in connection to Land Commission lands.** Although this report focuses on land ownership, further research could explore the Land Commission’s impact on tenant farmers. Such research could answer questions pertaining to the relationship between African-American land ownership and tenant farmers’ ability to secure more equitable farming contracts.

• **Collaborate with the Public History Program.** The University of South Carolina offers a graduate Public History Program in which students specialize in museums and historic sites, archives, and historic preservation. Students developed this report while taking the Historic Preservation Practicum, a course offered every two years within the Public History Program. Through both courses and student-led projects, public history students can expand upon this report through more comprehensive research. Internships could provide students with opportunities to conduct further research, produce exhibits, organize archival materials, and develop public programming.
Section IV.

For Further Reading
Books


Bryant, Lawrence C. *South Carolina Negro Legislators.* Orangeburg: South Carolina State College, 1974.


**Websites**


*South Carolina’s Civil War Sesquicentennial.* http://sc150civilwar.palmettohistory.org.

*South East Rural Community Outreach.* http://www.serco-sc.org.

**Repositories**

South Carolina Department of Archives and History
8301 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC
Secretary of State Reports
South Carolina Land Commission Records
South Caroliniana Library
   University of South Carolina
   910 Sumter Street, Columbia, SC
   Published Materials
   Manuscripts Division
   Visual Materials
   State and Local History
   Family Histories
   South Carolina Newspapers

Richland County Judicial Center
   1701 Main Street, Columbia, SC
   Register of Deeds Office
   Probate Court

Richland County Public Library
   1431 Assembly Street, Columbia, SC
   Walker Local History Room
   South Carolina Newspapers
   Images

Thomas Cooper Library
   University of South Carolina
   1322 Greene Street, Columbia, SC
   Maps
Section V.
Appendices
A. The Mapping Methodology

The methodology used for this project consisted of georectifying historical maps with current maps. Georectifying is a process that allows users to transfer paper maps and other images into an ArcGIS (geographic information system) layer. Individuals doing georectifying commonly obtain data from aerial photographs with which to compare the images they want to be georectified. For this project, South Carolina Archives and History staff scanned historical plat maps of Lower Richland County obtained from their holdings. These scans were then georectified to aerial photographs of Lower Richland County.

When georectifying a map, the person must choose a series of ground control points that are usable in both layers, the historical scanned map layer and the present day layer. These points build a polynomial and at least four points are needed to prevent stretching and skewing of the maps. These four points should be placed in approximately the four corners of the map, and then more points can be chosen. After the geometric transformation, the image is likely skewed. Resampling must be completed by using a trial-and-error method of choosing more points to get the best map alignment. Once the maps have been georectified, georeferencing can be done to evaluate the georectified image. Georeferencing takes image space and converts it to real world space.

Once the maps were georectified, the map team for this project compared the historical plots in the scanned tracts with the current plots from the aerial photographs. They also used the Richland County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) website. This website allows its users to look at current parcels in the historical tracts. The map team was then able to identify the current parcel number and use it to find the current owner and current address from the Richland County GIS website. In some cases they were able to trace the current parcel back several years, with the name of the seller and the year.

Due to the available time in which to complete this project and in order to maximize each research group’s efforts, the map team decided to use the boundaries of the historic parcels to see if they matched up with the boundaries on the current map of the aerial photographs. The map team chose this methodology because if the boundaries remained the same on current maps, it meant there was a greater chance that owners and/or developers had divided the historic parcels among the original purchaser’s family, or that the entire lot is currently owned by a descendant. From here the map team determined which families originally received a deed from the South Carolina Land Commission to narrow down the search.
B. Spreadsheet of Original Purchasers in Lower Richland County

The information in the following spreadsheet was gleaned from the various records of the South Carolina Land Commission, including certificates of purchase and annual reports to the state’s General Assembly, located at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. The records of the Land Commission are in no small state of confusion, and contain a great deal of contradictory and inaccurate information. Whenever possible, the records of the Richland County Register of Deeds (formerly the Register of Mesne Conveyance) were used to corroborate the records of the Land Commission. In compiling this spreadsheet, the deed records were regarded as the most authoritative source. Misspellings of purchasers’ names were corrected by examining federal census records and with the assistance of knowledgeable community partners. Census records were also used to verify the race of the purchasers whenever possible. Data corroborated by more than one of the Land Commission records was retained in cases where no outside sources were available to verify the information.

The Land Commission records gave contradictory information most frequently for the number of acres in the parcel, the purchase price, and the price per acre. In the absence of corroborating sources, figures were retained that could be mathematically reconciled, as the records were usually consistent on at least one of the above items. It should be noted that there are many purchases for which the numbers do not add up. This is generally the result of multiple incomplete records for the transaction, each of which gave perhaps one or two of the above items. In these cases, with no way to determine the accuracy of any of the figures, the conflicting information was left to stand. Total purchase prices do not appear to include interest, although that cannot be definitively claimed for all purchases. Indeed, the inclusion or partial inclusion of interest in the purchase price may explain some of the inconsistencies.

Serial information within a single field is separated by commas. Conflicting information within a single field is separated by forward slashes.
## Original Purchasers in Lower Richland County

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<th>Tract Name</th>
<th>Lot #</th>
<th>Name of Purchaser</th>
<th># of Acres</th>
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<th>Date of Sale</th>
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C. Spreadsheet of African-American Deed Recipients

The following spreadsheet lists African Americans in Lower Richland County who succeeded in making full payment on their purchases from the Land Commission and received clear title to their lands.

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# D. Tax Map Numbers of Parcels with Unbroken Provenance Currently Owned by African Americans

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E. Compact Disc with Georectified Maps

Reference copies of this report have a compact disc attached following this page.