D. The Hickory Hill Tract
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.](image)

**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. 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.

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

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.\(^{79}\)

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.\(^{80}\)

### 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.\(^{81}\) 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.

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79 Susie Drayton Cureton, interview with Sarah Scripps, April 9, 2009.
80 Richland County Tax Assessor’s website.
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.
The Unbroken Provenance of the Parcel

Isaiah Fay received the deed to the Hickory Hill tract Lots 7 and 15 on February 24, 1875.\footnote{Deed Book J, page 626, Richland County Register of Deeds.} 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.\footnote{Deed Book P, page 574, Richland County Register of Deeds.} Eventually, Lot 7 was conveyed to Nancy Desaussure by Isaiah Fay.\footnote{Deed Book R, page 44, Richland County Register of Deeds.} 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.\footnote{Census, 1880. In this record Isaiah Fay is found as Isaih Fay.} By the 1900 census, Isaiah and Matilda were the parents of fourteen
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 Isah Fay.
\textsuperscript{87} Malley Fay is sometimes seen as Mallie Fae, as on his gravestone.
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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

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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.
father, Charles Hodges, was a former slave who worked for Grace W. Davis prior to emancipation. \(^89\) 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. \(^90\) Surprisingly, when the land was divided, the deed stated that “this

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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

![Current Hodge family parcel.](image)

Current Hodge family parcel. Although most of the Hodge parcel consists of uncultivated fields, several houses are also located on the property. Courtesy of Sarah Scripps.

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,
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.  

Hercules and Mollie used the acreage as a farm as early as 1880. 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. 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. She eventually remarried a man by the name of Jenerette.

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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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. Between 1909 and 1923, he used income from the farm to purchase more land from white planters, including 626.27 more acres.

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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] The State, October 13, 1891; August 18, 1900.
105 The 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.¹⁰⁹
Joseph used the land to farm crops such as corn, soybean, rye, and barley, besides operating a
store and cotton gin on the property.¹¹⁰

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.¹¹¹ 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.¹¹²
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

¹⁰⁹ 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.
¹¹⁰ Woodard interview.
¹¹¹ Deed Book 282, page 129, Richland County Register of Deeds.
¹¹² Arthur Bunyan Caldwell, History of the American Negro and His Institutions (Atlanta: A.B. Caldwell
Collins maintained ownership of a portion of her father’s original purchase from the Land Commission. She understood the historic significance of the land and deeded acreage to her grandchildren to ensure it always remained in the family. *Courtesy of Billie Viola Woodard.*

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.

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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.