Complicating the Narrative: Using Jim's Story to Interpret Enslavement, Leasing, and Resistance at Duke Homestead

Jennifer Melton

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COMPICATING THE NARRATIVE: USING JIM’S STORY TO INTERPRET ENSLAVEMENT, LEASING, AND RESISTANCE AT DUKE HOMESTEAD

by

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ABSTRACT

In the antebellum South, an enslaved person was more likely to be leased out than to be sold during his or her lifetime. Despite its ubiquity, leasing of enslaved people is rarely interpreted at historic sites and is not widely understood by the general public. In this project, I examine leasing and resistance to slavery in North Carolina through the lens of Jim, an enslaved man leased by Washington Duke at the property that is now Duke Homestead State Historic Site. While Duke is famous in North Carolina as founder of the American Tobacco Company, he was a yeoman tobacco farmer in the pre-Civil War South. Duke leased Jim to work on his 250 acre tobacco farm, but Jim resisted enslavement and escaped from Duke twice in 1863.

Jim’s story challenges popular notions of both the enslaved experience and white complicity in slavery. His story demonstrates that the enslaved experience was much more diverse than representations of plantation slavery indicate. Jim experienced the uncertainty that comes with being leased out and resisted his dual enslavement in numerous ways, including running away. Furthermore, his story reveals that white participation in slavery was much more extensive than simple statistics of slaveowning suggest. White North Carolinians did not have to own enslaved people to profit off the bodies of enslaved people, and Duke’s wealth was built – at least in part – on Jim’s exploited and stolen labor.

This thesis gives a narrative history of Jim’s story, the context of leasing, and strategies of resistance by enslaved people. It also provides interpretive
recommendations for telling his story at Duke Homestead. Interpreting Jim’s story not only provides an important element to the narrative told at that site, but it also provides a corrective to the wider story North Carolinians tell about their history. Jim’s story helps to make that wider narrative more inclusive by illuminating a lesser understood experience of black North Carolinians while also challenging minimizations of white North Carolinians’ role in slavery.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

In June of 1863, an enslaved man named Jim escaped from the property now known as Duke Homestead, which was then the farm of Washington Duke. Jim had been simultaneously enslaved by two men: James Cox, a wealthy planter who owned him, and Washington Duke, a small farmer who rented his labor. Washington Duke is today famous in North Carolina as the founder of the American Tobacco Company – at one time, the largest tobacco company in the world – as well as for his family’s association with Duke University and Duke Energy. In 1863, however, he was a yeoman farmer. While we do not know the specifics, at some point, Jim was either captured or returned to Duke’s farm. In October of that same year, he again ran away, perhaps seeking his freedom, taking refuge in the surrounding woods, or returning to his home on James Cox’s plantation.

Jim experienced what many enslaved people in antebellum North Carolina experienced – his enslaver “hired him out.” While enslavers typically used terms like “hiring,” Jim was essentially leased. Cox and Duke entered into a contract where Jim would live with and work for Duke for the period of one year in exchange for Duke’s

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1 Historically, enslavers – both owners and hirers – used the terms “hiring” and “hiring out.” However, this suggests some choice on the part of the enslaved as well as wages going directly to the enslaved person, a very rare occurrence in agricultural settings, although more common in urban centers, particularly among skilled artisans. I have chosen to use the terms “leasing” and “renting of labor” to more accurately describe Jim’s experiences. For more on self-hiring and its predominant occurrence in urban centers as opposed to agricultural settings, see “Working Alone” in Jonathan D. Martin, Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).
payment to Cox. Jim received no payment and no choice in the arrangement. Instead, James Cox and Washington Duke forcibly relocated him away from his family and loved ones to Duke’s farm. While leased to Washington Duke, Jim was dually enslaved, with both of his enslavers – owner and lessee – exerting power and control over him. Jim was forced to negotiate between the twin pulls of these enslavers and worked to leverage the relationship between his owner and the man who leased his labor to his own benefit.

In the antebellum South, an enslaved person was more likely to be “hired out” or leased than to be sold during his or her lifetime.² It is difficult to estimate proportions of hiring or leasing, and estimates vary based on location and time period. However, historians have estimated that at any given point, anywhere from 5-10% up to one third of enslaved people were leased out at any given time.³ This lease could be for a short term, a few days or weeks, but was often for the period of one year. Given its frequency, leasing is a critical aspect of the enslaved experience, deserving of both further study and interpretation. In a state like North Carolina, understanding leasing is particularly important given that there were fewer large plantations compared to other southern states. While enslaved people did labor on large plantations, particularly in the eastern part of the state, many also labored on small farms in the piedmont or the west where there may be only a few enslaved people on one property. For yeoman farmers, like Duke, who did not own slaves, many still profited from enslaved labor by leasing enslaved people.

Exploring slavery only through the lens of slave ownership risks underestimating both the

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³ Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 8.
widespread nature and level of white participation in slavery as well as flattening the experience of enslaved people.4

Despite its ubiquity, the leasing of enslaved people is rarely interpreted at historic sites and is not widely understood by the general public. The story of Jim, later known as James Cox, provides a unique opportunity to interpret this phenomenon.5 Jim’s story challenges popular notions of both the enslaved experience and white complicity in slavery. His story demonstrates that the enslaved experience was much more diverse than more commonly interpreted representations of plantation slavery indicate. Jim experienced the uncertainty that comes with being leased out and resisted his dual enslavement through work slow-downs, truancy and absenteeism, and attempted self-emancipation. Furthermore, his story reveals that white participation in slavery was much more extensive than simple statistics of slaveowning suggest. White North Carolinians did not have to own enslaved people to profit from the bodies of enslaved people, and Duke’s wealth was built – at least in part – on Jim’s exploited and stolen labor.

Today, Duke Homestead operates as a State Historic Site, interpreting the period in which Washington Duke lived on the property. Opened as a historic site in 1979, for


5 “Jim” was the name used in all records prior to emancipation. It should be noted, however, that all of these records are from the perspective of enslavers, either slaveowners or lessees. After emancipation, in census records and the Freedmen’s Marriage Record, the name “James Cox” was used. I am inclined to use “Cox” or his full name “James Cox,” to refer to him, particularly as this was the name he used when he was able to choose a name to give a census taker or to record in a marriage document. However using the name “James Cox” is complicated by the fact that his first enslaver was named James Cox and his second enslaver was the first enslaver’s son, James W. Cox. Further, “Jim” is the name he was called for his time at Duke Homestead. For clarity’s sake, I have chosen to use the name “Jim” throughout this report, even as I acknowledge that that choice is imperfect.
much of its history, the Homestead leaned heavily into an interpretation of Duke as a self-made man. In fact, it was not until 2014 that the site mentioned enslaved people by name in the tour manual. More recently, Duke Homestead has worked to better interpret slavery and incorporate stories of enslavement into the tours and exhibits at the site. Duke Homestead Staff added Jim to the tour manual in 2016, and guides are instructed to mention that Duke used rented enslaved labor. However, the tour manual currently does not interpret his resistance and does not contextualize his story within the larger story of the leasing of enslaved people in North Carolina. The State Historic Sites website for Duke Homestead also mentions that Washington Duke rented enslaved labor, but it leaves Jim unnamed and undermines that point by also stating “Duke worked hard at farming, performing most of his duties without the benefit of slaves.” Despite an acknowledgement that Duke used enslaved labor, and despite the sites increased efforts to better interpret slavery, there is still a tendency to promote the idea of the Duke as a self-made and independent yeoman farmer.

Interpreting Jim’s story at Duke Homestead not only adds an important layer to the narrative told at that site, but it also provides a corrective to the wider story North Carolinians tell about their history. Jim’s story helps to make that wider narrative more

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inclusive by illuminating a lesser understood experience of black North Carolinians while also challenging minimizations of white North Carolinians’ role in slavery.

This report explores Jim’s history both at Duke Homestead and elsewhere. Using the papers of James W. Cox and the papers of his business partner, W. B. Fort, held at the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, as well as census records, other government records, and newspaper accounts, I attempt to reconstruct the story of Jim’s life – where he lived, what work he engaged in, what he experienced, and how he resisted enslavement. While his experience when leased by Washington Duke is most relevant to Duke Homestead, I have also sought to understand his experience before and after his time on the property, to paint a more complete picture of his life.

To best understand the significance of Jim’s experiences, I have sought to contextualize his story by exploring the leasing of enslaved people more generally in the North Carolina piedmont. By looking at other similar instances, we can get a picture of the larger system of leasing, which can help us fill in the archival gaps of Jim’s story and give context to visitors at Duke Homestead when interpreting his story.

Given the distinct compositions of each of the North Carolina regions, I have limited my contextual research to leasing within the piedmont. North Carolina can be divided roughly into three regions: the coastal plain, the piedmont, and the mountain region. Each region had a distinct demographic and social pattern. The eastern part of the state had the highest concentration of enslaved people and a higher percentage of the planter class. The western part of the state had the fewest enslaved people and was fairly isolated from the rest of the state in the antebellum period. The piedmont, the counties lying between these two regions, was dominated by white yeoman farmers, some of
whom were slaveowning and some of whom were non-slaveowning. To provide context to Jim’s story, I look at hiring contracts, account books, and census records to understand the system of leasing in the piedmont.

This report focuses on Jim’s experience but also looks at the experience of Washington Duke. In doing so, I am seeking to illuminate both the experience of enslaved people, especially Jim, as well as the system of slavery. I begin with a brief biography of Jim before discussing his experience of being leased out and his resistance to enslavement, including his attempted self-emancipation during the Civil War. I then move into a discussion of Washington Duke and the ways in which yeoman farmers exploited leased enslaved labor to benefit from slavery and access the privileges of the slaveholding class. I end with recommendations for interpreting Jim’s story at Duke Homestead.
CHAPTER 2

JIM’S EXPERIENCE: LEASING AND RESISTANCE

2.1 JIM, LATER JAMES COX (c. 1830 – c. 1885): A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Jim was born into slavery in Kinston, Lenoir County, North Carolina. His first enslaver was James Cox, a wealthy planter who enslaved 30 people in 1830. While Jim’s date of birth is unknown, he was likely born between 1826 and 1835. In 1837, James Cox deeded Jim and the 29 other people he enslaved along with land to his 30-year-old son, James W. Cox. Jim spent his childhood and adolescence on the Cox plantation, likely engaging in agricultural labor, cultivating crops like corn, peas, and sweet potatoes.

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10 Draft Deed of Gift from James Cox to James W. Cox, 1 June 1835, Folder James Cox 1820s – 1830s (1 of 4), Box 6, W. B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; Will of James Cox, 7 May 1826, Folder Misc. Papers 1820s – 1850s, Box 23, W.B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. The 1826 will includes most of the enslaved people listed on the 1835 Draft Deed of Gift. However, Jim does not appear on the 1826 will but does appear on the 1835 Deed of Gift, suggesting he was born in the interim.


12 1850 United States Federal Agricultural Census, Statistics for Lenoir County, North Carolina. These were the top three crops grown in Lenoir County.
James W. Cox leased out enslaved people as early as the 1840s, and the first extant record of Jim being leased out was in 1860, where Cox leased him to Thomas B. Morris, a yeoman farmer in Orange County. From that point until emancipation, he was leased out to various other yeoman farmers in Orange County, including Washington Duke, William Walker, William Lunsford, and David Parrish. While leased out at these sites, Jim experienced isolation, uncertainty, and abuse. He engaged in multiple forms of resistance, including work slow-down, running away temporarily, and even attempting self-emancipation.

Jim’s attempt at self-emancipation was ultimately unsuccessful, and at the Civil War’s end, he was enslaved on William Lunsford’s property in Orange County, NC. After emancipation, Jim took the name James Cox and married his wife Martha, whom he met while enslaved on Lunsford’s farm. Jim continued to live in Orange County for the rest of his life, first as a laborer in Lunsford’s household and later as a farmer, likely a sharecropper farming tobacco. While Jim’s date of death is unknown, no record of him

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14 Letter from Washington Duke to James Cox, 27 October 1863, Box 1, Folder 4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; Hiring Contract for Jim between James W. Cox and William D. Lunsford and David Parrish, Folder 1860s – 1870s, Box 3, W. B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

15 See Sections 2.2 and 2.3 for a more detailed discussion of Jim’s experience of being leased out and his strategies of resistance.


17 1870 US Census, Mangum Township, Orange County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, p. 6, Dwelling 33, Family 33; digital image. www.ancestry.com; 1880 US Census, Mangum Township, Orange County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, p. 29, Dwelling 256, Family 261; digital image,
exists after the 1880 census, and his wife, Martha Cox married Umphrey Nance in 1886, suggesting he died before that date. \(^{18}\) (See Appendix A for a timeline of Jim’s life.)

2.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING LEASED OUT

“Slave hiring” in North Carolina was a varied practice that manifested itself in a number of ways. In some instances, especially in urban centers, enslaved people, particularly skilled workers and artisans, engaged in self-hiring. They were expected to remit to their slaveowner a certain amount of money per year, but they had the latitude to choose their hirers and negotiate wages and were often able to keep a portion for themselves. Thus enslaved people engaging in self-hiring had some amount of autonomy compared to many other enslaved people. In other instances, enslaved people were leased out to large companies or in industrial work. Antebellum tobacco factories, iron works, and railroads all leased enslaved people. In still other instances enslaved people were leased out by slaveowners to individual lessees who paid the cost of the lease directly to the slaveowner. Each of these situations had distinct characteristics and defining circumstances. Jim’s experiences fit into the latter type – he was leased out year by year, with lessees paying his owner, James W. Cox, for his labor. \(^{19}\)

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Cox, a wealthy planter in Kinston in Lenoir County, North Carolina, was known to lease enslaved people out in the neighboring counties, and by 1860, frequently leased enslaved people out in Orange County, particularly in Chapel Hill and what was then the hamlet of Durham’s Station. While we do not know how exactly Duke and Jim’s other enslavers came to lease him, it is likely that Jim was leased out in one of the hiring auctions that dotted North Carolina in late December and early January of each year. In December 1863, Cox drafted a notice that he had “several negro men to hire out on the 26th instant at Durham.”

Hiring auctions operated much the same way as sales auctions, and at such auctions, enslaved people were typically leased out for a term of one year. For example, William Joyner, a wealthy planter and politician in Franklin County, North Carolina who leased out enslaved people belonging to the estate of Thomas Richards yearly, was one of many such people who used the auction system to facilitate that leasing. On December 29th, 1855, Joyner wrote a contract hiring B.J. Blackley to “serve as auctioneer in hiring out negroes belonging to the estate of said Richards.”

Narratives of formerly enslaved people also remark on the ubiquity of hiring auctions, noting the trauma that came with the annual potential separation. Harriet Jacobs, enslaved in Edenton, North Carolina wrote of hiring auctions in her widely read Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: “Hiring-day at the south takes place on the 1st of January.” On New Year’s Eve, “[enslaved people]…wait anxiously for the dawning of

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20 James Cox Notebook, Oversize Volume SV-3653/4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. Cox used a notebook to draft this advertisement, just as he used it to write out rough drafts of contracts and letters. While the actual advertisement is no longer extant, as numerous contracts exist of Orange county residents hiring enslaved people from Cox, it is likely he posted or placed the advertisement in a local newspaper.

day. At the appointed hour the grounds are thronged with men, women, and children, waiting, like criminals, to hear their doom pronounced.”

Moses Grandy, a formerly enslaved man who wrote of his experience in bondage, also spoke of the hiring auction: “When I became old enough to be taken away from my mother and put to field-work, I was hired out for the year, by auction, at the Court House, every January.”

Leasing was often a traumatic experience for enslaved people, destabilizing family relationships and isolating people from their loved ones. The isolation of leasing was similar to the trauma of separation that came when enslaved people were sold apart from one another, but the temporary aspect of leasing added both a frequency and element of uncertainty to the process. Enslaved people were often leased out year after year, so they were faced with the near constant threat of separation and removal from what was familiar. When leased by a non-slaveowning yeoman farmer, that isolation was exacerbated.

Jim experienced that isolation and uncertainty that came with being leased. In some cases, Jim was leased to farmers like William Lunsford, who owned other enslaved people, with whom he was able to develop new relationships. However, in other locations, like T.B. Morris’s property, he was the only enslaved person living the property, and he faced greater isolation. Regardless of potential companions at sites

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24 T.B. Morris does not appear on the 1860 Slave Schedule of the US Census for Orange County.
where he was leased, the act of leasing separated him from family and loved ones and excluded him from familiar support networks.

Similar examples of this traumatic separation can be seen throughout the piedmont region. In Iredell County, an enslaved woman named Edy and her two children, Bob and Joe, experienced separation as a result of leasing. Edy, Bob, and Joe were owned by A.K. Simonton, a minor, and leased out year by year by Simonton’s guardian J.F. Alexander. In the years 1851-1853, Edy and both of her children were leased to Robert Simonton, a relative, but in 1854, Alexander separated Bob from Edy and Joe, leasing Bob to R.N. Freeland and leasing Edy and Joe to John Walker. While Bob’s age is not recorded, he was likely a small child. Freeland had paid $61 in 1853 to lease an enslaved man named Lee, and in 1854, when he leased Bob in addition to Lee, he paid $68. The low additional price for Bob suggests that Freeland did not anticipate exploiting much labor from him, compared to Lee. He would have been old enough to be separated from his mother but not nearly old enough to provide as much labor as Lee. Alexander, Freeland, and Walker forcibly separated this family and with the yearly term of each contract, Edy, Joe, and Bob were uncertain whether they would be reunited.25

Slaveowners and leasers were not oblivious to the trauma that they were inducing among enslaved people by separating them their loved ones. In 1837, Benjamin Robinson of Fayetteville wrote to Alexander McDowell, seeking to lease an enslaved man: “I am desirous of hiring a young un-married man or boy of age and size to attend to

the horses, drive, and of fair character” (emphasis added). Similarly, in 1856, N. Graham wrote to Thomas McDowell about Bob, an enslaved man he had leased from McDowell, “Old Bob exhibits a great deal of affection for his wife & whether it is real or feigned I would be pleased to gratify him by hiring his wife during his time with me.”

These accommodations that these enslavers made and sought should not be seen as benevolent but are instead part of a system in which enslavers exhibit a racist paternalism towards enslaved people while simultaneously attempting to maximize the labor they could exploit from them. By seeking unmarried men or attempting to lease a married couple, lessees worked to minimize potential resistance from enslaved people that would undermine the labor they were leasing. This accommodation served to further prop up the slave system and allowed enslavers, including yeoman lessees, to continue to profit from such enslavement.

Despite the uncertainty and isolation that often came with being leased out, enslaved people still managed to make connections and persist in establishing and maintaining relationships. While leased to William Lunsford, Jim married his wife, Martha. While the marriages of enslaved people were not legally recorded, after emancipation Jim and Martha recorded their marriage in the Freedmen’s Marriage Records, stating they had been living as married people since 1865. While leasing

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27 Letter from N. Graham to Thomas McDowell, 8 March 1856, 82, T.D. McDowell Papers, 1735-1925, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
destabilized relationships and isolated enslaved people, in Jim’s case, it also
paradoxically allowed him to establish new relationships.  

2.3 RESISTING ENSLAVEMENT

Like many enslaved people, Jim resisted his enslavement, using tactics that included work slow-downs, damaging crops, engaging in truancy and absenteeism, up to attempting self-emancipation. In September, 1860, Thomas B. Morris, who leased Jim from James W. Cox wrote to Cox complaining of Jim:

Yesterday morning I had occasion to correct your boy Jim. Soon afterwards he left the premises and I have not seen or heard of him since. I should have written you about it yesterday morning, but did not know that he was gone until it was too late. I put him in the woods to splitting rails & he was three days splitting 138 rails. I put him next to sprouting & insted (sic) of using his grubbing hoe he took his axe after idling the day off and cut down sprouts not larger than your little finger. I bore with his laziness until yesterday morning, he came in to feed my horses after sunrise & I could bear it no longer. I gave him a decent whipping and he has left me. I hope if he has not gone to you that he will do so. You can use your own pleasure as to whether you send him back or not. If you are not satisfied that he has been very indolent since he has been here I can give you abundant proof of that fact. If he should come to you, you can either send him back or send my note.

Morris complained of Jim’s “laziness” and “indolence,” specifically singling out slowness to split rails and damaging crops during sprouting. This fits well within the spectrum of what scholars such as John Hope Franklin and Stephanie Camp call “day to day resistance” or “everyday resistance.” While not as extreme or as overtly defiant as running away, sabotaging crops or tools or working slowly was a way in which enslaved

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29 Letter from T. B. Morris to James W. Cox, September 1860, Folder 1860s – 1870s, Box 3, W. B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
people could assert some measure of power, express discontent with individual enslavers, and undermine the totality of slavery. Jim’s “idling” and his damage of crops should not be seen as merely happenstance, but was instead a form of resisting his enslavement, undermining the power that his enslaver, in this case a lessee, attempted to assert over him.

Not only did Jim resist enslavement through working slowly and damaging crops, but he ran away from multiple enslavers, including both Morris and Duke. While popular conception of running away usually evokes escaping north to freedom, most runaways did not achieve emancipation. Indeed, most were not even intending to do so. More often, running away meant staying away from work for a day, hiding in the woods for a few days or weeks (known as “lying out”), or seeking out loved ones enslaved at other locations. Most runaways were away temporarily and returned of their own accord.

For enslaved people who were leased out, running away also often meant returning to a slaveowner either seeking loved ones remaining at the slaveowner’s property or seeking protection from abuse. Scholar Johnathan Martin has explored the “triangular” arrangement of the leasing system, with enslaved people, slaveowners, and lessees each a point on this triangle. While lessees sought total control over enslaved people, slaveowners also wanted to ensure the continued profitability and condition of the people whom they saw as their property. Enslaved people, understanding this conflict


31 Franklin and Schweninger, Runaway Slaves, 98; Camp, Closer to Freedom, 54.
between slaveowners and lessees, sought to leverage this point of tension to negotiate for better conditions. Many enslaved people achieved their goal by appealing to slaveowners when they suffered violence or intolerable working conditions from those who rented their labor.  

Morris seemed to have suspected Jim was pursuing this strategy when he ran away, suggesting that he may have returned to Cox. Morris also attempted to prevent Cox from taking Jim’s side if Jim were to complain of abuse, as he promised that “If you are not satisfied that he has been very indolent since he has been here I can give you abundant proof of that fact.” Morris may have had cause for this concern. Cox had taken the side of an enslaved person over a lessee in previous leasing arrangements. In February, 1859, F. Thompson of Haw Branch wrote to Cox about the enslaved man Joe, owned by Cox and leased to Thompson:

I am unwilling to pay the full amount of the note that I gave you for the hire of Joe – for the reason that when Joe ran away from me you took the liberty to give him a pass & furthermore when I implored (sic) a man to bring him to me you protected the negro…you had no rite (sic) to give him a pass after taking my note for him – he was absent from me 12 days & if you are willing to deduct from the note 12 days of his hire then I am willing to pay the balance.  

Thompson was frustrated not only at Joe for running away, but also at Cox for protecting Joe. Thompson did not own Joe, but he did participate in his enslavement through leasing, and during the period of that lease, he wanted total control of Joe, equal to that of

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32 Martin, *Divided Mastery.*

33 Letter from T. B. Morris to James W. Cox, September 1860, Folder 1860s – 1870s, Box 3, W. B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

34 Letter from F. Thomson to James W. Cox, 17 February 1859, Folder James Cox 1840s – 1850s, Box 6, W. B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
a slaveowner. His letter demonstrates the conflict that Martin describes between slaveowners and lessees, and Joe’s actions in returning to Cox demonstrate the ways in which enslaved people were able to leverage that tension for their own protection. When Jim ran away from Morris, it is unclear if he did, in fact, go to James Cox seeking redress, or if he returned to Morris on his own accord. Either way, his absenteeism was a way that he could assert his own power even within a dehumanizing and brutal system that sought to deprive him of agency. It was a direct response to the individual violence that Morris enacted against him and also to a system that allowed such brutality.

Jim also engaged in what appears to be absenteeism or “lying out” when he was leased to Washington Duke. On October 27, 1863, Duke wrote to Cox:

> Having to brake (sic) up and go into the service, I let Mr. Wm E. Walker have your boy Jim until his time would be up. He, Jim, went to sulking last night and is absent this morning. His clothes is gone. I expect, therefore he will go see you. If he should you will please send him down to Mr. Walker who will take care of him until his time is up. Unless he should runoff.

Duke’s use of the word “sulking” is telling, suggesting that Jim may have been reacting to the change in lessee or to something else that happened while at Duke’s property. Duke’s expectation that Jim would return to James Cox may have been based on knowledge of Jim’s past behavior or just the frequency with which this happened in leasing arrangements.

October 1863 was not the first time that Jim ran away from Washington Duke’s farm. There is a reason that Duke ended his October letter to Cox with “unless he should runoff,” distinguishing it from “sulking.” Four months earlier, in June 1863, Jim had run

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35 Letter from Washington Duke to James W. Cox, 27 October 1863, Box 1, Folder 4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
away with three other enslaved people: Green, who was enslaved by Washington’s brother William J. Duke; his wife Lear; and a child. That time, however, Jim was attempting self-emancipation by escaping to Union lines. On June 15, Washington Duke wrote to James W. Cox that “Your boy Jim left me last night as two or three negroes in the neighborhood left. I think they are trying to get to Yankee lines.” William Duke placed a runaway ad in the Weekly Raleigh Register in an attempt to recapture them:

Ranaway from the subscriber, on the 14th inst., Green, a bright mulatto boy, about 5 feet 8 inches high, stout build and quick spoken. He was accompanied by a negro woman, Lear, (his wife,) belonging to W.P. Ward, who had a child with her, and also by boy Jim, belonging to J.W. Cox. They are no doubt endeavoring to make their way into the enemies lines, and have gone through Franklin, where they may remain some time, as Green has acquaintances there. Fifty Dollars reward will be paid for each of them if taken up and delivered to the owners, or confined in Jail so they get them.

Jim, Green, and Lear’s attempted self-emancipation fits in with the larger trend of enslaved people self-emancipating during the Civil War. In February of 1862, Union General Ambrose Burnside invaded mainland North Carolina, capturing New Bern. Shortly thereafter, the Union army also occupied Washington, Beaufort, Morehead City, and Plymouth alongside earlier occupations of Roanoke and Hatteras Island, where they remained through the end of the war. With the Union occupation, these cities attracted thousands of formerly enslaved refugees who emancipated themselves and sought refuge behind Union lines, where they established extensive freedmen’s communities. As early

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36 Letter from Washington Duke to James W. Cox, 15 June 1863, Box 1, Folder 4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.


as March of 1862, General Burnside wrote that New Bern was “overrun with fugitives from the surrounding towns and plantations.”39 While Union forces retained nominal control over much of the eastern coast of North Carolina, strongholds of Union authority were limited to New Bern, Beaufort, Morehead City, and few areas in the Outer Banks. It was to these places, particularly New Bern, that enslaved people escaped throughout the war, seizing their freedom in the ultimate resistance of the slave system.40 Most enslaved people who sought freedom in Union-occupied territories came from places in the immediate surrounding towns and areas. However, some came from even further. In his study of Civil War refugees in North Carolina, historian David Silkenat notes that formerly enslaved black refugees sometimes came from distances of hundreds of miles, noting at least one incident where fugitives from Alabama made it to Union territory in North Carolina. By May 1863, 8,500 formerly enslaved black refugees had arrived and were residing in New Bern.41

The Union occupation in 1862 was an initial pull factor for enslaved people, but historian Stephanie Camp argues that the Emancipation Proclamation, effective in January 1863, also further spurred enslaved people to seize their freedom. She quotes Union officer C.B. Wilder, stationed at Fort Monroe in southwestern Virginia, just over the North Carolina border, who wrote that “many courageous fellows [came] from long distances in rebeldom, [because they] knew all about the Proclamation (sic) and they

39 Quoted in Silkenat, *Driven from Home*, 16.


41 Silkenat, *Driven from Home*, 60.
started on the belief in it.” Enslaved people, including Jim, Green, and Lear, would certainly have heard about the Emancipation Proclamation, even as they remained in bondage, and it may have served as further encouragement to seize their freedom by escaping to Union-occupied territory.

Stephanie Camp argues that self-emancipation during the war was a natural extension of resistance tactics used and knowledge gained in the antebellum era. “Antebellum everyday forms of resistance were the furtive prehistory that made the visible, and historically charismatic, wartime movement possible,” she argues. “During the war, enslaved people—most of all those closest to Union lines—built on an infrastructure of knowledge and practice developed in the prewar years.” Jim took earlier resistance tactics of work slow-down and truancy a step further during the war by attempting escape, and he, Green, and Lear used their knowledge of the landscape to facilitate that escape.

Jim, Green, and Lear, particularly Jim and Green, would have developed extensive knowledge of the landscape in the pre-war years. Enslaved people’s mobility was intensely regulated. Yet despite the culture of surveillance and tight control, enslaved people – although men more than women – were able to access some mobility, traveling within their neighborhoods and sometimes even further afield. Leasing in particular, as in Jim’s case, gave enslaved people an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the surrounding area. Indeed, many people leased out were allowed to

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42 Quoted in Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 119.

travel to the lessee’s property on their own, learning the neighborhood as they traveled.\textsuperscript{44} Further, enslaved people, particularly men, could be sent on errands and carry messages from place to place, gaining familiarity with the landscape through their work.\textsuperscript{45} Jim’s earlier enslaver, his lessee, Thomas Morris, wrote to James W. Cox that he had sent Jim into the woods to split rails. He also wrote that it was more than a day before he noticed Jim’s absence.\textsuperscript{46} Jim had opportunity to go into the woods unsupervised and could gain knowledge of the landscape and neighborhood through that work.

Enslaved people also traveled to new locations as they were relocated from place to place during particularly busy seasons when enslavers sought additional labor. Yeoman farmers, in particular, often leveraged kinship networks to acquire temporary additional enslaved labor.\textsuperscript{47} The fact that Jim, Green and Lear ran away together, suggested that Washington and William Duke shared enslaved labor in this way. While Green and Lear were married and knew one another prior to their escape, there is no clear explanation for how they made the acquaintance of Jim. A shared work environment is the most logical explanation. While Washington Duke owned no enslaved people and leased Jim in 1863, his brother William enslaved nine people, including Green.\textsuperscript{48} Perhaps

\textsuperscript{44} Franklin and Schweninger, \textit{Runaway Slaves}, 136.


\textsuperscript{46} Letter from T. B. Morris to James W. Cox, September 1860, Folder 1860s –1870s, Box 3, W. B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

\textsuperscript{47} Eugene D. Genovese, “Yeomen Farmers in a Slaveholders’ Democracy,” \textit{Agricultural History} 49, no. 2 (1975): 331–42.

William Duke sent Green over to Washington Duke’s farm to help with a busy time in the planting season, especially given that tobacco was an extremely labor intensive crop.

Duke planted a variety of subsistence crops, but through the 1850s and 1860s, he increasingly planted tobacco. Bright tobacco, a particularly mild varietal, was growing more profitable at mid-century and piedmont farmers in North Carolina were increasingly growing and selling it, shifting the locus of tobacco production from Virginia to North Carolina. Tobacco was also a sensitive crop to frost, and required farmers to sow the seedlings in covered plant beds before transplanting the seedlings to the field in the spring. Transplanting depended on weather, but could take place anywhere from last frost in March or April until July. Farmers typically waited until a particularly heavy rain that soaked the fields and made the seedlings easy to transplant. Transplanting was one of the most labor intensive times in the crop schedule, so it is likely that in this period Washington Duke may have sought to borrow labor from his brother.\textsuperscript{49} Its likely time – late spring – also corresponds to the period before Jim, Green and Lear’s escape in June. The sharing of labor not only allowed Jim and Green to make one another’s acquaintance, but also allowed them to gain more knowledge of the landscape as they traveled between the Duke brothers’ properties.

New Bern was forty-five miles from Kinston, where Jim was born, and the towns were connected by the Kinston Road. Jim’s spent his youth and early adulthood on Cox’s Kinston plantation. Given both Jim’s likely familiarity with the area as well as the fact that this was the largest freedmen’s community and the site where most self-

\textsuperscript{49} For more on tobacco planting and harvesting in the antebellum period, see Drew A. Swanson, \textit{A Golden Weed: Tobacco and Environment in the Piedmont South} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
emancipating fugitives escaped to, it is likely that New Bern was Jim, Green, and Lear’s intended destination, although the possibility that they were attempting to reach other Union strongholds in North Carolina or Virginia cannot be excluded. Further, the Dukes suspected that Jim, Green and Lear would travel through Franklin County, east of Orange County towards the coast, because Green knew people there and had familiarity with the area. As Jim, Green, and Lear made their way from Durham to Franklin County on to New Bern, they would have relied on their knowledge of the geography gained through work and travel in the previous years (See the map in Figure 1 for relative locations of Duke Homestead, Franklin County, James W. Cox’s plantation, and New Bern).

While we do not know the details, Jim, at least, never arrived in New Bern. It is possible that he returned to Duke or Cox of his own accord, but it is equally possible he was captured by one of the slave patrols. Present throughout the antebellum period, slave patrols surveilled, enforced, and regulated slave mobility. Recognizing the increase in flight and self-emancipation, slaveowners and the Confederate government increased slave patrols in the eastern part of the state as early as 1861. Whatever the manner, Jim found himself back on Washington Duke’s property by at least October of that year. But this was not the end of his resistance to enslavement, as he ran away at least one additional time.

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50 Silkenat, *Driven from Home*, 22.
CHAPTER 3
YEOMAN FARMERS AND THE LEASING OF ENSLaved PEOPLe

While this thesis has thus far focused on understanding Jim’s story from his perspective and his experiences, understanding the role that Washington Duke played in the system of leasing enslaved people is also valuable. Washington Duke’s leasing of Jim demonstrates how yeoman farmers, members of the middle class in North Carolina, used leasing to access the economic and social benefits of enslavement even when they did not directly own slaves. Duke was the eighth child of John Taylor Duke and Dicey Jones of Orange County. As a young boy, after his parents died, he lived with his older brother, William J. Duke. When he reached adulthood, he first rented land, but when he married Mary Caroline Clinton in 1847, her parents gifted him with his first 72 acres. Over the next fifteen years, he slowly expanded his landholdings, and by 1863, the year he leased Jim, he had acquired 250 acres of land.\(^{51}\)

Washington Duke was by no means poor. His land ownership indicates his relative financial success compared to that of many of his neighbors. According to Robert Kenzer’s seminal study on social relations in Orange County, approximately forty

percent of free heads of household in the county owned no land. Duke’s ownership of land made him more financially solvent than landless whites. However, he also had not achieved the highest levels of social and economic status that the planter class reached. He embodied that role in the middle, the upwardly mobile yeoman farmer that dominates white memory of North Carolina.

Yeoman farmers were small landholders who typically owned few or no slaves. Definitions of yeomanry are shifting and inexact. Indeed, definitions for some regions may differ from definitions in other regions based on land quality, availability, and demography. Bill Cecil-Fronsmen’s study of social class in antebellum North Carolina noted the difficulty of setting rigid boundaries for yeomen or middle-class North Carolinians, especially given the distinct differences of land and slaveowning between the coastal, piedmont, and mountain regions. He chose to use the term “common whites,” including poor, landless whites, landowing non-slaveholders and small slaveholders in one category. Other historians have sought to define yeomen, despite its difficulty. Stephanie McCurry defined yeomen in the South Carolina low country as farmers who owned up to 150 acres of land and up to nine enslaved people. Steven Hahn’s work on the Georgia upcountry used a definition with larger amounts of land and


fewer enslaved people: up to 200 acres of land and up to five enslaved people. Charles Bolton, who examined poorer whites in the North Carolina piedmont eschewed an acreage definition for a value, defining yeomen as landowners whose real estate holdings were valued at under $5,000.

While definitions are shifting, what is consistent in definitions of yeomanry is that the yeoman farmer owned land and worked his land, either with the assistance of family labor or perhaps, while owning or using some enslaved labor. Land ownership separated him from poorer whites, and the fact that he also engaged in direct agricultural work rather than managerial work distinguished him from the planter class. In areas where slavery and slaveowning was more widespread and more dominant (e.g. the South Carolina low country in McCurry’s definition), the number of enslaved people is higher with landownership lower. In areas where there were fewer enslaved people and slaveowning was less common (e.g. the North Carolina piedmont and Georgia upcountry, using Bolton’s and Hahn’s definitions), the inverse is true, and yeomanry typically applies to people with larger amounts of land but fewer enslaved people. While Washington Duke’s landownership is greater than many definitions of yeomanry, the fact that he worked his own land and his low levels of slave ownership place him squarely within the yeoman class.

Washington Duke demonstrated the yeoman farmer’s desire to achieve – at least in his own mind – the benefits of enslavement through either owning or leasing. His

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participation in the enslavement of others also demonstrates the relative fluidity of slave ownership and leasing. The distinctions between slaveholding and non-slaveholding yeoman were neither exact nor rigid, and yeomen may have entered and departed the slaveowning or slaveholding class at multiple points in their lives.

In 1855, Washington Duke purchased a woman named Caroline for $601 at auction from the estate of Daniel Turrentine. By 1855, Duke’s first wife, Mary, had died, and he had married his second wife, Artelia Roney. He also had four young children, including his two youngest with Artelia, who were toddlers.\(^{57}\) He likely purchased Caroline as an enslaved domestic worker who could perform cooking, cleaning, and childcare tasks, though she may have engaged in agricultural labor as well. While we do not know her age, we can infer from her price that she was young, perhaps an adolescent. Of the ten other people sold at that auction, only two were sold for lower prices than Caroline. Purchasing young enslaved people, especially women, was often a way for yeomen to enter the ranks of slaveowning, because their lower prices meant they were more accessible to potential slaveowners who had less liquid cash.\(^{58}\) Furthermore, owning or leasing a woman who performed domestic tasks in lieu of the household’s white women provided an intangible status symbol for those white women as leisure and managerial status over enslaved people was an indicator of status.\(^{59}\)


\(^{58}\) Stephanie McCurry notes in *Masters of Small Worlds* that yeoman farmers in her study disproportionately owned women and children and few adult men.

\(^{59}\) Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 107.
No information survives on what happened to Caroline after 1855, but by 1860, Duke does not show up on the 1860 slave schedule as a slaveowner. Duke entered the slaveowning class by purchasing and enslaving Caroline, but he may have been either unable or unwilling to maintain ownership over her. To regain access to the financial benefits of using enslaved labor, Duke rented Jim’s labor in 1863. Duke had hired labor before. The 1850 census shows that a free man of color, Alexander Weaver, lived in the Duke household as a hired laborer. Duke had demonstrated the possibility of hiring free people to work on his farm, but instead of continuing to hire free labor, he chose this time to lease enslaved labor. In doing so, Duke collaborated in Jim’s enslavement, using Jim’s exploited and stolen labor to farm his land and build his wealth.

Duke’s leasing of Jim was not at all uncommon for middle-class whites in North Carolina, who attempted to use temporary enslavement of men and women to build their wealth and help them access higher social status. White middle-class North Carolinians often sought to use enslaved labor rather than free labor. For capitalist-minded middle class whites, enslaved labor was often – at its crudest – cheaper than free labor.

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60 There has been some speculation, especially by descendants wishing to exonerate Duke from the sins of slaveowning, that Duke purchased Caroline in order to free her, but there is no evidence of Caroline’s emancipation, and that is extremely unlikely. Duke does not appear on the 1860 Slave Schedule of the Census, but of note, he also does not appear on the 1860 Agricultural Census, so it is possible that census workers simply failed to record him that year. After the war, Washington Duke employed an African American woman named Caroline Barnes as a live in domestic worker, and it is possible she and the enslaved Caroline are the same person. For more information on memory of Duke, Caroline, and slavery, see Rachel Kirby, “Interpreting Historic Site Narratives: Duke Homestead on Tour,” Master’s Thesis, University of North Carolina, 2016.


Perhaps for Washington Duke, a year of Jim’s labor was cheaper than Alexander Weaver’s labor.

Examination of the 1860 Slave Schedule of the Federal Census demonstrates that numerous other yeoman farmers in Orange County leased enslaved people, just as Washington Duke did. Enslaved people had been recorded in some fashion by census takers since the first federal census in 1790. However, it was not until 1860 that census administrators instructed census takers to record whether or not enslaved people within a household were owned or “hired” by the head of household. Despite these instructions, Jonathan Martin notes that census takers were inconsistent in their recording of this information. Known nexuses of hiring and leasing like Charleston, for example, show shockingly low levels of leasing according to census records. The Slave Schedule for Orange County is similarly inconsistent. Of the more than 500 households with enslaved people documented by census takers, only thirteen show leased enslaved people. This is surely under reported. At the very least, based on handwriting and style of recording, there were at least two census takers for Orange County, only one of whom recorded whether enslaved people were leased.

Despite its inconsistency and underreporting, the 1860 Slave Schedule for Orange County is still a valuable record. Of the thirteen households listed as leasing enslaved people, all but one were individuals who owned between 0 and 5 enslaved people and had estates of less than $5,000. The one outlier was actually a corporate enslaver, Webb and Whitted, a tobacco factory. A number of these yeoman farmers owned no enslaved people and all of their enslaved labor was leased. One such man was William Cabe.

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63 Martin, Divided Mastery, 7.
Cabe owned a $600 estate and no enslaved people, but in 1860, he hired five enslaved people – an adult woman with four children, ages 11, 8, 4 and an infant. It was not unusual for children or mothers with very young children to be leased out for low prices. In fact, mothers with infants or toddlers might be leased for the cost of their clothing, housing and food only, or even at a “low bid,” meaning that the lessee was actually paid a small sum by the slaveowner to feed, clothe and house the enslaved mothers and children.\textsuperscript{64} Enslavers typically forced older children – in this case, likely the 11-year-old and 8-year-old – to engage in labor, but smaller children, like the infant and 4-year old were unable to labor. Because the lessee was expected to feed and clothe children who did not engage in labor, he likely was able to benefit and profit from the enslaved labor of the unnamed woman and older children at a comparatively lower price. Just as yeoman farmers disproportionately owned women and children, many, especially less wealthy yeomen, also chose to lease women and children.\textsuperscript{65}

For yeoman farmers listed in the 1860 Slave Schedule who were already slaveowners, leasing meant they might access other types of labor that were out of their financial reach to purchase. A.W. Gay, for example, was a physician and farmer who owned a $3,000 estate, including three enslaved people, and leased one enslaved person. This put him above William Cabe in both economic and social status. However, the three enslaved people he owned were all women. The leased enslaved person was an adult man. While women engaged in both domestic and agricultural work, adult men could

\textsuperscript{64} Martin, \textit{Divided Mastery}, 58.

typically perform more difficult tasks or produce higher outputs than women could. By owning women and leasing a man, Gay was able to access different kinds of labor through leasing without having to spend the amount required to purchase an adult enslaved man. Gay continued to lease an adult man throughout the early 1860s. In 1864, Gay leased an enslaved man, Jim Slick (not to be confused with Jim) from James W. Cox.

Leasing of enslaved people not only gave many yeomen access to the slaveholding class, but its flexibility meant it was a low-risk endeavor for these farmers. If yeomen felt they could not pay the note for the hiring contract or were otherwise unable or unwilling to use the labor of the enslaved person they leased, it was fairly easy to shift the hiring contract to a neighbor. This was the case in October of 1863, when Washington Duke enlisted in the Confederate Navy. “Having to brake up [sic] and go into the service I let Mr. William C. Walker have your boy Jim until his time would be up,” he wrote to James Cox. No longer able to exploit Jim’s labor, Duke sought to receive compensation for the remaining months of Jim’s lease by sending him to William Walker. D.B. Efland acted similarly with regard to enslaved people Joseph and Tempy. Writing to James Cox in February, 1863, Efland detailed his efforts transfer their leases:

I have seean [sic] out for places for your boy and girl. Mr. Robert Faucett will take your boy, Joseph at 60 dollars and Samuel W. Faucett his son will take your woman Tempy at 50


67 Hiring Contract for Jim Slick between James W. Cox and A. W. Gay, 22 December 1864, Folder James Cox 1860s – 1870s, Box 8, W. B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

68 Letter from Washington Duke to James Cox, 27 October 1863, Box 1, Folder 4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
dollars…and keep them until the 25th of Dec 63 and will return said negroes at Chapel Hill on that day.\textsuperscript{69} 

In addition to connecting yeomen with neighbors by shifting hiring contracts, leasing of enslaved people in North Carolina also often took place within existing kinship networks of white North Carolinians, with wealthier farmers or planters enabling their comparatively poorer or less wealthy family members to access the financial and social benefits of enslavement.\textsuperscript{70} Jim’s story, while not an explicit example of slave leasing between family members, suggests cooperation among family members of different economic statuses as it is likely that Washington and William Duke shared labor during the planting season as noted above.

Robert Kenzer, in his examination of Orange County in the nineteenth century, asserted that “rural neighborhoods in Orange County defined social status not in strict economic terms but through family and kinship ties.” He argued that “ownership of land and slaves was never the sole measurement of social status…people of average or even no means could perceive wealthy planters in familial rather than class terms, because they often possessed common ancestors.”\textsuperscript{71} However, while Kenzer’s argument that kinship superseded economic status is compelling, it does not account for how poorer and middle-class whites could leverage kinship ties in order access the use of enslaved labor. In other words, it is not that enslavement is unimportant in determining class, but that people of different classes used kinship ties to become enslavers. Poorer and middle-

\textsuperscript{69} Letter from D.B. Efland to James Cox, 10 February 1863, Box 1, Folder 4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

\textsuperscript{70} Eugene D. Genovese, “Yeomen Farmers in a Slaveholders’ Democracy,” \textit{Agricultural History} 49, no. 2 (1975): 331–42.

\textsuperscript{71} Kenzer, \textit{Kinship and Neighborhood}, 2.
class whites could gain temporary access to the slaveowning class by leasing or
borrowing enslaved laborers.

Slave leasing and borrowing could happen on a short term basis according to
temporary need of the lessee or for longer periods, including months or years. On
February 10, 1842, The Hillsborough Recorder reported that sixteen-year-old Morris
Mason of Chatham County, which borders Orange County, had died in a farming
accident. Mason had been hauling “house logs” alongside two enslaved men belonging
to his brother-in-law, P.C. Merritt, when the log slipped and crushed him. The fact that
Mason worked alongside enslaved people indicates that he belonged to the yeoman class,
as planters did not engage in such direct work alongside enslaved people. The newspaper
article does not elaborate on the nature of the arrangement between the Mason and
Merritt family or tell us much about the two enslaved men. They were hauling logs for a
house, so they may have been borrowed or leased to help with the specific task of
building a house, or they may have been laboring in that task within the context of a
monthly or yearly leasing arrangement. Either way, the Mason family had leveraged
their family ties with the Merritts in order to benefit from the enslaved labor of at least
two unnamed men.72

A similar arrangement existed between the Gray and Ramsay families of Iredell
County in the piedmont, although over a much longer period of time. Beginning in 1829,
John W. Gray and his wife Nancy Gray leased a woman named Vira from David
Ramsay, Nancy’s brother. According to the 1830 census, David Ramsay’s household

had five enslaved people, and John Gray’s household had one enslaved person, a woman between the ages of ten and twenty-three. At that time census takers did not distinguish between people owned or hired in a household, so it is almost certain that the enslaved woman recorded was Vira. The leasing contract was for one year, and Ramsay continued to lease Vira out to the Grays until 1845, although after John’s death in 1840 subsequent leasing contracts listed Nancy as lessee. Beginning in 1839, the leasing contracts also included Vira’s three children. The 1840 census shows that Nancy Gray was head of a household that included four enslaved people – a woman between the ages of ten and twenty-three, a boy under the age of ten and two girls under the ages of ten – apparently Vira and her three children. Given the ages in the 1830 census and 1840 census, Vira was a young adolescent when she was first leased out to the Grays, no older than thirteen years old, and at some point between 1830 and 1839, she gave birth to three children.

The Grays were not slaveowners themselves, but they were able to gain access to the slaveowning class and benefit from the enslaved labor of Vira by taking advantage of their kinship with a slaveowner, Nancy’s brother David Ramsay.73

In addition to leasing enslaved people from wealthier family members, middle-class white North Carolinians also used kinship networks to share the cost of leasing enslaved people. In December of 1864, Squire Umstead and DeWitt Umstead, father and son in Orange County, leased Solomon and Washington from James W. Cox, the same man who owned Jim. “We or either of us promise to pay James W. Cox…one thousand

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dollars for the hire of his two boys, Solomon and Washington” stated the contract they
signed. By this point in the Civil War, high rates of inflation had caused the price of
goods and services, including the lease of enslaved people, to skyrocket, which accounts
for the high price the Umsteads paid to lease Solomon and Washington. Squire Umstead
was a fairly wealthy farmer who owned 864 acres of land along with four enslaved
people in 1860. His son Dewitt Umstead, farmed 100 acres in the 1860s and owned no
enslaved people, though the 1860 slave schedule does show him leasing a fourteen-year-
old enslaved boy. While Squire Umstead’s land holdings arguably place him out of the
range of the yeoman farmer class, his son DeWitt’s acreage and lack of slave ownership
situate him well within the yeoman class. By collaborating to hire Solomon and
Washington, Squire and DeWitt Umstead shared the benefits of their enslaved labor
while also sharing the risk and burden of the cost. For DeWitt, especially, as the
younger, less wealthy person, collaborating with his father allowed him to access the
benefits of two enslaved laborers, instead of the one person he leased in 1860.  

Washington Duke’s lease of Jim allowed him to access the social, financial, and
material benefits of the slaveholding class. Even if he could not afford to purchase an
adult enslaved man, the leasing of Jim gave Duke additional labor to cultivate crops,
including critically, the profitable cash crop of tobacco. He benefitted from the flexibility

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74 Hiring Contract for Solomon and Washington, Box 1, Folder 4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889,
Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

75 1860 US Census, Orange County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, p. 69, Dewit C. Umstead,
Carolina, Population Schedule, p. 131, Squire D. Umstead, Dwelling 927, Family 927; digital image,
of leasing, shifting Jim’s lease to a neighbor when he was entered the navy, and he
leveraged kinship networks to gain additional labor during busy times of the planting
season.

Figure 3.1 1854 Map of North Carolina with approximate locations of key sites in Jim's
life.
CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Historian Ira Berlin, in his essay “Coming to Terms with Slavery in Twenty-First-Century America,” wrote

What makes slavery so difficult for Americans, both black and white to come to terms with is that slavery encompasses two conflicting ideas – both with equal validity and with equal truth, but with radically different implications. One says that slavery is one of the great crimes in human history; the other says that men and women dealt with the crime and survived it and even grew strong because of it.76

What follows are interpretive recommendations that seek to grapple with these two seemingly conflicting ideas: accounting both for the ways in which enslavers attempted to dehumanize those they enslaved as well as the ways in which enslaved people continued to assert their humanity, even within such a brutal system. To that end, these recommendations are based on three main interpretive goals: 1) to show the diversity of enslaved people’s experiences, 2) to demonstrate that enslaved people used multiple strategies to resist enslavement; and 3) to reveal the widespread white complicity and participation in slavery, even when white people did not directly claim ownership of enslaved people.

First, by interpreting Jim’s story, Duke Homestead can help demonstrate the diversity of enslaved people’s experience by highlighting a lesser known aspect of enslavement. While plantation slavery is most widely interpreted at historic sites across the country, enslaved people labored in cities, in factories, and as at Duke Homestead, on small farms in the context of leasing. Public historians Kristin Gallas and James DeWolf Perry argue that a key theme of interpreting slavery at museums and historic sites is understanding that the enslaved experience was not monolithic. Visitors should come away from historic sites understanding that enslaved people had different experiences at different times and different places, and that those experiences also varied based on age and gender. Gallas and Perry further argue that the most effective way to convey diverse enslaved experiences to visitors is through the use of individual narratives. When appropriately contextualized within local and regional stories, individual narratives are powerful and allow visitors to make a deeper, often emotional connection to history.\(^\text{77}\) Duke Homestead can help visitors make those connections and understand that history by interpreting Jim’s unique story.

Secondly, Duke Homestead can demonstrate the multiple ways in which enslaved people resisted their enslavement. As Ira Berlin argues, interpreting slavery should encompass themes of violence and exploitation but also themes of resistance and survival among enslaved people. \(^\text{78}\) Interpretations that only focus on one of those themes are incomplete and ineffective. Further, just as the overall experiences of enslaved people


\(^{78}\) Berlin, “Coming to Terms with Slavery,” 6.
were not monolithic, neither were their strategies of resistance. Jim’s story is unique in that there is documentation of the ways he utilized a range of resistance efforts, from the everyday strategies to attempts at self-emancipation. Of critical importance in demonstrating resistance is interpreting Jim’s story from his own perspective, not simply the perspective of Washington Duke. Doing so reminds visitors of the agency of historic actors, including enslaved people. Jim should be the subject of his own story, and Duke Homestead should strive to foreground what Jim experienced and what actions he took.

Finally, Duke Homestead can reveal the widespread and multifaceted nature of white complicity in slavery through interpreting Jim’s story. Despite the myriad of ways in which antebellum white people of many classes profited from the exploited labor of enslaved people, white memory today often portrays the yeoman as an independent farmer, who achieved success on his own merits. In a state like North Carolina where there were fewer large plantations than areas in the Deep South, white North Carolinians often characterize their forebears as modest farmers who are free from the sins of slavery. Scholar George Hovis has written about constructed memory of the yeoman farmer:

“Like most Americans, over time North Carolinians have sought to put the best face on their history; family by family, in the minds of twentieth century descendants of small slave holders, how quickly ‘fewer slaves’ became ‘no slaves’—especially in the Piedmont.”

Jim’s story directly challenges that myth of the independent yeoman. Leasing, specifically, shows how supposedly independent white yeoman farmers could

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participate in enslaving people, even when they did not claim direct ownership of those enslaved people.

Duke Homestead consists of two main parts of the site: the historic buildings and structures in one part and the museum in the other. Duke Homestead actively interprets the historic buildings, including the house, the two tobacco factories, the packhouse, and the curing barn, by providing guided tours around the property. These tours focus specifically on the Dukes’ tenure at the property, 1852 – 1874. The museum uses passive interpretation to interpret the broader history of tobacco in North Carolina from the pre-colonial era to the present, including Washington Duke’s association with that history, although it is not the main focus of the museum. The following recommendations suggest specific ways that Duke Homestead can add interpretation of Jim’s story into its guided tour, programming and website.

4.1 GUIDED TOUR

Since 2014, Duke Homestead has increasingly worked to interpret slavery at its site. The site added Caroline, the young woman Washington Duke enslaved, to the tour manual by name in that year. The current tour manual, revised in 2016, specifies elements that guides are required to highlight as well as an outline of the tour (see Appendix B). The manual requires that guides identify Caroline as well as mention Washington Duke’s use of rented enslaved labor on the site. The outlined tour starts in the vestibule of the visitor’s center and museum where there is a panel that includes a family tree and identifies the family members who lived at this site from 1852 – 1874. This panel also includes Caroline in addition to the Duke family members, but Jim is not included. After the vestibule, the tour proceeds to the curing barn, then the packhouse,
past the small factory and into the large factory before completing the tour inside the house. Caroline and her labor is discussed in the vestibule, the curing barn and the house. Jim is only mentioned briefly in the area of the curing barn, where guides discuss the practice of farming tobacco: “The Dukes also rented the labor of an enslaved person named Jim during 1863.”

Jim’s story should be woven into the main tour at the site, so that it is part and parcel of the narrative told at Duke Homestead. There are multiple instances throughout the tour in which guides can mention or reference his story, but the curing barn, the space in which guides discuss the process of tobacco farming, is the most appropriate place to delve into the details of Jim’s experiences at the property, including information about the context of the leasing of enslaved people as well as Jim’s resistance to enslavement. Guides should mention that Duke’s leasing of enslaved labor was very common among yeoman farmers and that it was a way in which middle class farmers, who may not have been able to afford to purchase enslaved people, could access the financial and material benefits of enslavement. Leasing Jim’s enslaved labor meant that Washington Duke could plant and harvest greater amounts of tobacco, building his wealth by exploiting Jim’s labor. Critically, as noted earlier, guides should discuss Jim’s experiences from his own perspective, mentioning that Washington Duke was just one farmer who leased his labor, and that Jim was moved from farm to farm throughout Orange County as different yeoman farmers leased him on an annual contract. Finally,

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81 For more on the importance of weaving the narratives of enslaved people into the main tour, rather than solely in segregated spaces or separate tours, see Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002).
guides should say that like many enslaved people, Jim resisted enslavement in many ways, including working slowly, intentionally damaging crops, and running away. Sometimes those periods of running away were intentionally temporary, but at least once, as in the 1863 escape attempt with Green and Lear, Jim attempted to free himself (see Appendix B for exact suggested additions to the tour manual).

4.2 PROGRAMMING

Duke Homestead has also worked in the last few years to increase discussion of slavery at the site through programming. In the spring of 2019, Duke Homestead hosted a series of programs on the African American experience in tobacco farming and production. One of these programs focused specifically on the connections between slavery and tobacco, and discussants highlighted Jim and Caroline. In the guided tour, interpreters are constrained by time limits and the sheer breadth of information they need to convey, which limits how deeply they can discuss Jim’s story. Programming presents an opportunity to explore the details of Jim’s story and illuminate the unique aspects of his experience and resistance to enslavement.

One program could focus on the system of leasing of enslaved people. This program could highlight Jim’s story, but also discuss the leasing of enslaved people throughout the North Carolina piedmont. Another program could focus on Jim’s and other enslaved people’s resistance. This program could explore the everyday resistance of work slowdown and temporary running away, but could also explore freedom-seeking. For additional programmatic support, Duke Homestead could partner with Stagville State Historic Site, particularly on a program on resistance. Stagville is another state historic site less than ten miles from Duke Homestead. Owned by the Bennehan and Cameron
families, it was once one of the largest plantations in North Carolina where over 900 enslaved people lived and labored. Partnering with Stagville provides an opportunity to interpret numerous other instances of resistance. It also provides a unique opportunity to compare and contrast the enslaved experience on a large plantation and on a smaller farm.

4.3 DIGITAL INTERPRETATION

Digital interpretation provides a flexible and low-cost way to interpret enslavement broadly and Jim’s story more specifically. The current website run by State Historic Sites provides a brief history of the site focusing on four areas: “Cultivation of a Tobacco Empire,” “From Seed to Leaf,” “Imprints and Furrows, and “Washington Duke the Farmer.” These pages focus on the history of the American Tobacco Company, the development of brightleaf tobacco, the process of growing and curing tobacco, and Washington Duke’s history at the site, respectively. The fourth page, “Washington Duke the Farmer” mentions enslavement, including leasing, but minimizes slavery at the site and does not mention Jim and Caroline by name. This page should be edited to make it clear that Washington Duke used enslaved labor, both through leasing and purchase of enslaved people. It should also name Jim and Caroline, specifically. See Appendix C for the content of this web page with suggested edits.

In addition, Duke Homestead should add an additional web page to the history section of their site that specifically details the history of enslavement on the property.

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This section would cover Jim’s and Caroline’s experience in detail as well as give the context of slavery in the North Carolina piedmont more broadly. This context would include discussion of both resistance to enslavement as well as the system of leasing of enslaved people. See Appendix D for a draft web page.

4.4 NETWORK TO FREEDOM

The final interpretive recommendation is that Duke Homestead apply for inclusion in the Network to Freedom. The Network to Freedom is a program run by the National Park Service that recognizes sites, programs, archives, and facilities associated with the Underground Railroad. Under this program, connection with the Underground Railroad is interpreted as a site associated with freedom-seeking, whether or not it was part of a coordinated route. A historic site like Duke Homestead is eligible for inclusion in the Network to Freedom as a site of a documented escape attempt, in this case Jim’s attempted escape in June 1863. Inclusion in the Network to Freedom will provide Duke Homestead with grant opportunities as well as interpretive support from the National Park Service. See Appendix E for a completed application to the Network to Freedom.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The story of Jim, later James Cox, and Washington Duke is one of many stories of enslavement in North Carolina, but it provides a unique opportunity to interpret the leasing of enslaved people and their resistance. Jim’s story demonstrates that even when yeomen did not own enslaved people, they still often profited from the exploited and stolen labor of enslaved people through leasing. In today’s conflicts over Confederate monuments – including the removal of Silent Sam at the University of North Carolina, less than 20 miles from Duke Homestead – it is not uncommon to see a white supporter of those monuments cite erroneously low figures of white slave ownership, often deployed in social media memes. These assertions are often paired with a declaration that said supporter’s ancestors were never slaveowners.84 In a broader sense, scholars like Fitzhugh Brundage have explored how black and white memory of the antebellum South has functioned in conflict with white southerners engaging in efforts to portray slavery either as benevolent or to minimize white participation in slavery.85

White attempts to distance their families or communities from historic participation in slavery is not just about the past but also about the present. Racial


inequality today is inextricably linked to the historic travesties of slavery and Jim Crow. When white southerners minimize the impact of slavery, they also downplay the necessity and communal responsibility of addressing present-day racial injustice. Progress and reconciliation are dependent on full understandings of the past.

More importantly, by interpreting Jim’s story, Duke Homestead demonstrates that black North Carolinians, including enslaved black North Carolinians were active participants in shaping North Carolina’s history; the development of the state’s history is a result of the contributions of all North Carolinians, including black and white, enslaved and free. Further, Jim’s story demonstrates that enslaved people were not passive victims of the system of slavery but active agents in their own stories. Jim’s story is one of resistance and survival, even in the face of brutality and dehumanization. While the site is named “Duke Homestead,” it must interpret the stories of all the people who lived there, not just the Dukes.

Historical narratives are important; they are not just about the past but about how we understand ourselves in the present. In an era of rising racism, re-segregation of schools, and disenfranchisement of people of color, it is crucial that we understand the story of race in our past. Understanding where we are necessitates understanding how we got here. Public history does not cure racism and does not automatically create racial equity, but it can provide an important first step in providing common ground, in helping all people understand the place from which we came, the place from which we can work. Duke Homestead has the unique and important opportunity to help provide that common ground by interpreting Jim’s story.
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   1850 U.S. Census Population Schedule
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   1870 U.S. Census Population Schedule
   1880 U.S. Census Population Schedule
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APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF JIM’S LIFE

c. 1830: Jim is born in Kinston, NC and enslaved by James Cox. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but based on James Cox’s 1826 will as well as draft and fully executed Deeds of Gift, it was between 1826 and 1835.

1837: James Cox deeds Jim and 29 other enslaved people to his son, James W. Cox. Jim spends his childhood and adolescence on the Cox plantation, likely working in agricultural work.

1860: Jim is leased to Orange County yeoman farmer, Thomas B. Morris. The contract is for a period of one year.

September 1860: Jim runs away from Morris’s farm after being beaten. He may have been absent a short period and returned to Morris on his own or he may have gone back to the Cox plantation seeking protection or returning to loved ones.

1861 – 1862: Jim’s whereabouts are unknown. He may have been leased in Orange County or if Cox was unable to secure a lease, he may have been with Cox in Orange County or on the Cox plantation in Kinston.

1863: Jim is leased to Washington Duke. The contract is for a period of one year.

June 1863: Jim runs away along with Green (enslaved by Washington Duke’s brother, William Duke) and Green’s wife Lear (enslaved by W. P. Ward) and with Lear’s child.
Duke suspects they are going towards Union lines (likely in New Bern) through Franklin County. Jim’s attempt at self-emancipation is unsuccessful. He is either captured or returns to Duke on his own.

**October 1863:** Duke enters into the Confederate Navy and sells his possessions. He transfers Duke’s hire to William Walker, another yeoman farmer. Jim again runs away but either returns to Walker or Cox.

1864: Jim’s whereabouts are unknown. He may have been leased in Orange County or if Cox was unable to secure a lease, he may have been with Cox in Orange County or on the Cox plantation in Kinston.

1865: Jim is leased to William Lunsford and David Parrish in Orange County, NC, who share in exploiting his labor. He resides on Lunsford’s farm where he meets his wife, Martha.

**April 1865:** With the end of the Civil War, Jim is emancipated. He continues to live and labor on Lunsford’s farm.

**August 8, 1866:** Jim records his name as James Cox when he records his marriage to his wife, Martha, in the Freedmen’s Marriage Records. They state they had been living together as a married couple since 1865.

1870: James and Martha Cox are listed in the federal manuscript census as living in William Lunsford’s household in Mangum, Orange County, where they are listed as “laborers.”
1880: James and Martha Cox are listed in the federal manuscript census in their own household in Mangum where they live with Philice Waller and her children, but they have no children of their own. He is listed as a farm laborer, suggesting he is a sharecropper rather than owning his farm.

c. 1885: Jim, now known as James Cox, dies some time before 1886. He last appears in the historical record in the 1880 census, and his widow, Martha Cox marries Umphrey Nance in 1886.
APPENDIX B

CURRENT TOUR SCRIPT, REVISED 2016, WITH RECOMMENDED EDITS

(Suggested additions are in bold)

Excerpted from the Duke Homestead Volunteer Manual

Tour Objectives

Duke Homestead and Tobacco Museum Mission Statement:
To preserve and interpret the history of the Washington Duke homestead and the North Carolina tobacco industry.

Guided Tour Topics and Talking Points
- Below is a suggested Duke Homestead tour outline
- You may structure your tour differently if you would like, but your changes must be approved by the Assistant Site Manager
- All Duke Homestead tours must cover the following topics:
  - Family/People information: A general introduction to Duke family genealogy as it pertains to the site, including Washington Duke, his wives, his children
    - The Duke’s purchase of young enslaved girl, Caroline in 1855
    - Duke’s lease of an enslaved man named Jim in 1863
  - Work on the Homestead:
    - A general explanation of 19th century tobacco farming (including flue curing)
• Washington’s use of rented/“hired out” enslaved labor to make tobacco farming possible

• The establishment of W. Duke and Sons in 1865 and its growth while on the Homestead; including basic pipe tobacco manufacturing processes in 3rd Factory
  o Life on the Homestead: Information on the Duke house and general 19th century farm life in Piedmont North Carolina
  o After the Homestead: Brief summary of why the Dukes leave the Homestead, and the post-Homestead growth of their tobacco business culminating with the dissolution of the American Tobacco Company monopoly in 1911.

• You should also be prepared to talk about:
  o Basics of the Civil War, including the cause (slavery)
  o Duke family philanthropy (e.g., support for Trinity College, support for other local institutions, Duke Endowment)
  o Other non-tobacco Duke businesses (e.g., Duke Energy, textiles)
  o The creation of Duke Homestead State Historic Site

Getting Started

• Greet Visitors in the lobby and introduce yourself as the guide. Ask them to follow you into the Vestibule where there is a family tree.

Vestibule Talk

• Make sure the visitors all situate themselves so that they can see you and the family tree board. Ask where everyone is visiting from and what brings them to Durham. (This can help you gauge their interest in the site and why they are here)

• Explain that before you begin the tour, you will give them a quick introduction to the Duke family

• The Dukes eventually become tremendously successful in several fields, most notably as the owners of the largest tobacco company in the country, American Tobacco Company. This family shaped the growth of Durham, and their businesses shaped not only Durham, North Carolina, the US, but the entire world. But, they began as small farmers here in rural North Carolina.

• The Dukes lived on this farm from 1852-1874.

• Washington moved to this area in 1842 when he married his first wife, Mary Caroline Clinton.

• They had two sons together; Sidney Taylor Duke (born in 1844) and Brodie Leonidas Duke (born in 1846).
• In 1847 Mary Caroline died. In 1852 Washington married Artelia Roney. They had three children together: Mary Elizabeth Duke (born in 1853), Benjamin Newton Duke (born in 1855) and James Buchanan Duke (born in 1856).

• Another person who would have been in the Duke household during these years was Caroline, a young enslaved girl. Washington Duke purchased Caroline in 1855, when she was just 11 or 12 years old. Caroline most likely would have done most household chores so that Artelia could devote most of her time to caring for the children.

• In 1860, the census shows no enslaved persons on this property. We are unsure of what happened to Caroline. However, at least one other enslaved person, a man named Jim (known as James Cox after emancipation), lived here in 1863, when Washington Duke rented his labor, a process known as “hiring out,” by which he paid Jim’s slaveowner for a year of Jim’s labor. It is possible that Washington Duke leased the labor of other enslaved people, too, but we only have documented evidence of his lease of Jim.

• August 10, 1858: Sidney dies from Typhoid Fever. Artelia catches the disease while caring for him and dies 10 days later.

• This is everyone who was on the homestead before the Civil War when we begin our story. We will start by talking about life for the Duke family on a small farm.

• Before we begin, are there any questions? Invite visitors to always ask questions. After answering questions, lead the group to the Tobacco Curing Barn.

Tobacco Curing Barn

• Bring the group out to the curing barn.

• Explain that before the Civil War the Duke family would have been considered small or subsistence farmers. For this family Tobacco would have been considered a cash crop, grown and sold to bring in an income.

• Washington Duke started growing tobacco in 1859-1860. At that time, he sun-cured tobacco, because he “knew nothing of the present methods” meaning charcoal and flue-curing.

• As one of their crops tobacco was very labor intensive (describe enough of the below process to illustrate this)
  • Tobacco was incredibly difficult to grow – farmers had to work on their fields, the crop, or their equipment every single month of the year.
  • Harvesting (or Priming) the tobacco leaves took place during the fall. But unlike other crops, you’re not done after harvest. Tobacco farmers are also responsible for curing tobacco before they can sell it.
• Tobacco Curing Process
  • The flue curing process evolved in the mid-1800s and grew after that. This barn is an excellent example of a flue-curing barn from this area in the late 1800s.
  • Tobacco leaves are brought to the barn in tobacco sleds or slides, and the tobacco leaves are looped onto sticks and hung in the barn.
  • Process is 24 hours a day for 6 or 7 days
• It made sense for Washington Duke to get into tobacco farming in the 1850-60s
  o Bright leaf tobacco was becoming more popular, and growers in the Piedmont NC/Southside VA were developing methods to get consistent results
    ▪ What is bright leaf – tobacco that cures golden yellow when cured, and is less harsh when consumed (smoked, especially) than other types – BUT, bright tobacco was only achieved by the right combination of seed variety, soil, and curing method.
  o Tobacco was much more valuable than other crops; for ex. he might have gotten several times more for tobacco than wheat (depending on the quality)
• Enslaved labor - mention how Caroline might have worked with the family during the busy seasons. The Dukes also rented the labor of an enslaved person named Jim during 1863.
  o Even small farmers often got additional labor to grow a labor-intensive crop like tobacco by renting or borrowing the labor of enslaved people from wealthier relatives or neighbors. This was known as “hiring out,” but was essentially leasing. By leasing, small farmers like Washington Duke who could not afford to purchase an adult enslaved man, could still exploit enslaved labor to help them grow more tobacco and gain more wealth.
  o In the most common arrangement in the NC piedmont, leasing contracts were for the period of one year, starting in late December or early January
  o Like many enslaved people, Jim used a number of strategies to resist enslavement. He sometimes intentionally worked slowly and damaged tools or crops. Sometimes he temporarily ran away. While we often think of running away as enslaved people running North to freedom, the vast majority of enslaved people never reached freedom. In fact, most of them didn’t intend to. They stayed in the woods for days, weeks or even months or visited loved ones on other properties.
Sometimes they were captured and returned, but other times they returned of their own accord.

- At least once, Jim did attempt to seize his freedom. In June of 1863, he ran away from this property along with a man named Green, who was enslaved by Washington Duke’s brother William, and Lear, Green’s wife. Duke suspected they were trying to reach Union lines, likely New Bern where there was a large freedmen’s community. We’re not sure exactly what happened, but Jim’s escape attempt was unsuccessful, and he was back at this farm by October of that year.

- Ask if there are any questions and proceed to the Packhouse

**Packhouse**

- Explain use of the ordering pit to put moisture back into the leaves after they had been cured.

- Explain the grading of these leaves, once the leaves are in order; leaves were graded by color, size, texture—the brighter the color the better.

- Explain how when there were enough leaves of the same grade to fill the palm of a hand, the prettiest leaf was wrapped around the top, making a hand of tobacco. The hands would be stored in the top part of the packhouse until the farmer was ready to go to market. The farmer would take a wagon like the one near the packhouse and would display the hands on baskets like the one hanging on the wall.

- Explain that the Dukes would have grown other crops. In combination with growing tobacco this meant that the Dukes were working hard as small farmers, though we would never consider them poor.

- After a few years of farming, Washington Duke decided to start manufacturing tobacco, which would yield higher profits. But, the outbreak of Civil War changed everything.

- Ask if there are any questions about farm life for the Duke family.

**Transition from Farm life to Business – Civil War – front of Pack House**

- Basic Civil War context – war begins in 1861, North Carolina secedes from the US and joins the Confederate States of America

- Civil War: In 1864, Washington and Brodie were conscripted into Confederate service. Washington has to make arrangements for his property here. Already interested in switching from farming to manufacturing, he converted as many of his assets as he could to cured tobacco. The younger children go to live with their
Roney grandparents, and Washington works out some sort of deal where other people will tend the farm in his absence. The details are unclear.

- Washington served in the Confederate navy and was captured in Richmond VA just a couple weeks before the Confederate surrender. Brodie served through the duration of the war as a prison guard at Salisbury Prison.
- Washington was paroled and dropped off by ship in New Bern, NC. Without any other mode of transportation, he walked 134 miles back to his farm.
- Washington returned as a tobacco manufacturer, and started “W. Duke & Sons” in 1865 with his children (Brodie, Mary, Ben, and Buck) now in their teens. He still planted some tobacco in order to process it.
- Ask if there are any questions about the Civil War and explain that you will now go to their factory buildings.

**Third Factory**

- Bring the group outside of the Third Factory.
- Before entering the Third Factory, point out the First Factory. In 1865, Washington started his first company, W. Duke & Sons, in a converted corn crib, where they processed their tobacco into their first product, Pro Bono Publico, a pipe tobacco.
- The most popular forms of tobacco in this time period are plug/chewing tobacco, pipe tobacco, and snuff.
- Washington Duke loaded their tobacco into a wagon and drove around North Carolina peddling their wares to local general stores.
- As the business grew, they moved into a stable, and then by 1869 had made enough money to afford to build a two-story custom made building for processing tobacco.
- (Move inside 3rd Factory) Inside the factory, explain the process of manufacturing smoking tobacco. This was done by flailing the tobacco leaves with sassafras sticks, pulling out the stems which were used for fertilizer, and then grinding up the leaves. **Demonstrate the process, if your group seems interested, allow 3 volunteers to try (1 per step)**
- This would be work that Washington Duke and his children would have done in the first and second factories. We believe that by the time they built the Third Factory, they were hiring outside labor.
- Washington Duke’s daughter, Mary, was in charge of initially filling and hand-labeling all of their bags of tobacco. This labor was eventually hired out as their business grew.
The Dukes manufactured their pipe tobacco on this property until 1874. In that year they moved into the growing city of Durham. Once they moved into Durham, their business began to compete with other local tobacco companies.

We’ve seen what the Duke’s work was like, now we will take a look at how they lived. (Or another transition of your choosing!)

Farm House

Bring the group in through the swept yard to the front of the house. Remind visitors that Washington Duke completed the house in 1852 and that the family lived here until 1874.

Tell the group that you have to bring them around to the back of the house to enter through the bedroom. The bedroom door must be opened from the inside. Have them walk up the ramp and meet you at the door while you go through the kitchen. (Both front and bedroom door must be opened from inside)

Open the bedroom doors, greet guests and ask them to please NOT touch anything in the house – everything they see is original to the time period and it is our job to keep those things in good shape. Let them know there are modern chairs in each room if someone needs/wants to sit down.

Bring them into the bedroom.

Remind visitors that Washington Duke and his family lived in this house both as farmers and later as tobacco manufacturers. As their lives changed and their business became successful, their home would change as well.

The first part of the house (two rooms downstairs and two upstairs) along with a separate kitchen is a part of the 1852 home. Visitors will see changes reflected not only the additions to the house but the items as well.

Start in 2 rooms of the original 1852 house:

Bedroom: point out the marble furniture which was owned by extended Duke family members in the mid-1870s, but similar to something that Washington Duke could have bought in this time. This is a good example of how their wealth would have changed. You can also mention that some things do not change – there was no indoor plumbing and hygiene might have been harder to maintain. Here you can speak to the tooth brushes (teaching collection) and the chamber pot. You can also mention that aside from the bedroom being a sleeping space, it was a space for birth.

Parlor: Again, a part of the original build, the Parlor would have been a social and public space. There is also a door to the upstairs bedrooms. Most likely the children and perhaps Caroline would have slept in those rooms. For safety reasons, visitors cannot go upstairs.

Next you will move tours into the addition.
• Dining room: late 1860’s addition to the home, place for eating but also for projects, place for early education - kids went to school in Durham followed by the New Garden School which is today Guilford College.

• Kitchen: part of the original home but would have been separate before the addition, construction is different from rest of house because of specific kitchen issues (heat, smells, air flow), stove purchased in 1870 - a sign that they have more wealth.

• For house tours, be familiar with artifacts! You will get questions!

After Duke Homestead

• Bring visitors out of the kitchen behind the house. Leave the house doors open until the end of your tour. Remind them that the Dukes lived here as farmers and then later tobacco manufacturers until 1874.

• We’re not sure what happened to Caroline. In his will, Washington Duke left property to Caroline Barnes, who may have been the same Caroline that he enslaved, although we can’t be sure. Jim was leased out to other farmers in Orange County until the end of the Civil War. After emancipation, he married his wife Martha, and they lived in Mangum for the rest of his life, working as sharecroppers farming tobacco until Jim died around 1885.

• Washington Duke ran the business until 1880. At 60 years old, he retired and handed control of the company to his youngest sons, Benjamin and James Buchannan. Explain how competition from W.T. Blackwell’s company, which made Bull Durham, led the Dukes to start making and selling more cigarettes in the 1880s. In 1881 they hired European immigrants from NY to roll them by hand, and were able to produce 3 to 4 cigarettes per minute. In 1884, Buck Duke invested in the Bonsack machine, which could roll 200 cigarettes per minute.

• The Dukes could make and sell more cigarettes than their competitors could. They were also willing to spend more money on advertising than any other company. In this way, they forced the competition to merge with them, forming the American Tobacco Company, which controlled 90% on the tobacco industry in the United States. James Buchannan Duke, the youngest Duke, became the President of the company.

• The American Tobacco Company continued to exist as a Trust until 1911 when the Supreme Court used the Sherman Antitrust Act to break American Tobacco up into smaller companies, establishing the modern tobacco industry as we know it.

• Today we know the Duke name not only for the family’s role in tobacco and business history, but for the footprint they left on the world. Around Durham, you will see their influence, most notably in Duke University, named for Washington Duke after a major gift from JB Duke in 1924.
• A conclusion statement that fits your style!
• Ask visitors if they have any questions.
APPENDIX C:

“WASHINGTON DUKE THE FARMER” WEB PAGE

WITH RECOMMENDED EDITS

(Suggested edits are in bold and suggested deletions are marked with a strikethrough)

URL: https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/duke-homestead/history/washington-duke-farmer

WASHINGTON DUKE THE FARMER

The favorable publicity associated with the cultivation of bright tobacco stimulated Orange County farmers to begin growing it as a cash crop in the late 1850s.
When his cotton crop failed, Washington Duke turned (in 1859) to the cultivation of tobacco, which he continued during the next few years until his farming operation was interrupted by the Civil War.

Washington Duke had left home around the time of his twenty-first birthday to take up tenant farming. The son of Taylor Duke, a farmer and respected neighborhood leader who served as captain of the local militia and also as district deputy sheriff, Washington was the eighth of ten children. His basic education was gleaned from behind the handles of a plow in the rugged, rural setting into which he was born in the year 1820. As a young man, family and church exercised the most influence over him and throughout his life both his family and the Methodist faith would remain important. Years later his son, James B. Duke, remarked: "My old daddy always said that if he amounted to anything in life it was due to the Methodist circuit riders who frequently visited his home and whose preaching and counsel brought out the best that was in him."

On August 9, 1842, Washington Duke married Mary Caroline Clinton. Two children, Sidney Taylor and Brodie Leonidas, were born to the couple, but in November 1847, Mary Caroline passed away. Left with two small sons to raise, Duke continued as a farmer, raising such crops as corn, wheat, oats, and sweet potatoes. He had acquired his first land in 1847 from the estate of his father-in-law and had purchased additional property until he now had accumulated over three hundred acres.

Washington turned his attention to providing a substantial home to shelter his family and completed the residence--now called Duke Homestead--in time for his marriage to Artelia Roney of Alamance County on December 9, 1852. The family soon increased from four to seven members with the births of Mary, Benjamin, and James
Buchanan Duke. Duke worked hard at farming, performing most of his duties without the benefit of slaves. Though records indicate that he owned only one slave, a female housekeeper, it is known that he participated in the common custom of hiring slave labor from larger farms and plantations.

Life was running smoothly for Washington Duke when in 1858 misfortune struck again. His fourteen year old son, Sidney, became ill with typhoid fever; while trying to nurse the boy back to health, Artelia Duke also contracted the disease. Both she and Sidney died. Once again Duke faced the responsibility of raising his family alone. He managed with the aid of Artelia's sisters, Elizabeth and Anne, who volunteered to help run the household—moved to the Homestead to help care for the family and run the household.

Before the Civil War, Washington Duke exploited the labor of enslaved people to help run his household and farm. He purchased one enslaved person, a young woman named Caroline in 1855, and leased the labor of at least one enslaved man named Jim in 1866. Duke likely purchased Caroline to help with domestic tasks, like cooking, cleaning and caring for the children. She also may have helped on the farm during the busy seasons. Duke leased the labor of Jim, paying his slaveowner James W. Cox, for a year of his labor. Jim was involved in growing and processing tobacco for sale. Find out more about Jim and Caroline here [link to new webpage: Enslavement at Duke Homestead].
Mary Duke, Benjamin Duke, and James Duke

Washington Duke apparently joined the Confederate Navy Army in late 1863 or early 1864. Though he was a Unionist who opposed secession and remained unsympathetic to the Confederacy, Duke was unable to remain aloof for long from personal participation in the war. Because of a shortage of troops the Confederate government enacted conscription laws which forced men up to the age of forty-five to join the service. Thus Washington was compelled to join the navy and had to make arrangements for his family and farm before he entered the service. He sent his children to the Roney home in Alamance County, except for Brodie who accompanied him into the service.

Duke decided to sell all his farm belongings and had converted all his means into tobacco by the end of 1863. It is not clear whether he sold or rented the homestead; however, he was to receive payment in leaf tobacco which was to be stored on the property.

During his brief military career, Duke was captured by Union forces and imprisoned in Richmond, Virginia. At the end of the war the Federals US officials
released and shipped and transported him to New Bern, North Carolina. Lacking money and transportation, the veteran Duke walked back to his homestead—a distance of 135 miles.
APPENDIX D: 
RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL WEBPAGE

Enslavement at Duke Homestead

At least two people were enslaved at what is now Duke Homestead: Caroline, who Washington Duke purchased, and Jim, whose labor he leased. When we think of slavery, we often think of large plantations, but people were also enslaved in cities and on small farms. In 1860, over 5,000 people were enslaved in Orange County, and many of them labored on small farms like Duke Homestead.

Caroline’s Story

Record of Sale of Caroline. Washington Duke purchased her for $601 from the estate of Daniel Turrentine in 1855
Washington Duke purchased Caroline in 1855. Based on the amount he paid for her, she was probably young, perhaps 11 or 12 years old. By enslaving her, Duke separated her from her family and loved ones. On a small farm like Duke Homestead, she was probably the only enslaved person living there, so she was alone and isolated. Caroline performed tasks like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children, but she may have also worked in growing and harvesting crops during the busy season.

We’re not sure what happened to Caroline after 1855. Washington Duke does not appear as an enslaver on the 1860 Slave Schedule of the Census. He may have sold Caroline, or she may have died when Artelia and Sidney Duke died of typhoid fever in 1858. Or the census taker may have simply failed to record Duke’s enslavement of Caroline.

We do know that when Washington Duke died in 1905, he left property to his housekeeper, an African American woman named Caroline Barnes, who was about the same age that the enslaved young woman, Caroline, would have been. After emancipation, many formerly enslaved people continued to work in the same kinds of work they had been forced to do before the war. They often stayed on the same properties working in similar tasks for their former enslavers, although they had the new power to negotiate wages. Is Caroline Barnes the same Caroline whom Washington Duke enslaved? It is very possible, but we can’t be sure.

**Jim’s Story**

Jim was born into slavery around 1830, growing up on James W. Cox’s plantation in Kinston, North Carolina. Starting around 1860, he was “hired out” (leased) to small farmers in Orange County. Leasing of enslaved people was very common in the North
Carolina piedmont. In the usual arrangement, smaller farmers would lease the labor of an enslaved person from a wealthier planter for a set period of time, usually one year.

Leased enslaved people like Jim were separated from family and loved ones and moved to new enslavers every year, year after year. While on Washington Duke’s property, Jim worked in farming tasks, like growing and curing tobacco.

When he was leased out, Jim continually resisted enslavement. In a letter to his slaveowner James W. Cox, T.B. Morris, who leased his labor in 1860, complained that Jim worked intentionally slowly and damaged crops, both common ways that enslaved people resisted slavery.

Jim also ran away at least three times, once from Morris in 1860 and twice from Washington Duke in 1863. Most enslaved people who ran away were actually not running north to freedom. Instead, they would hide in the woods temporarily or run towards loved ones enslaved on other properties.

At least once, however, Jim did try and escape to freedom, what we could also call “self-emancipation.” In June of 1863, six months after the Emancipation Proclamation, Jim ran away with three other people: Green, enslaved by Washington Duke’s brother, William; Lear, Green’s wife; and Lear’s child. They were trying to reach Union lines in New Bern, 140 miles away, where thousands of other people had escaped to and self-emancipated. We aren’t sure exactly what happened, but Jim, at least, never reached New Bern, and was back at Duke Homestead by October, 1863.

Jim continued to be leased out until the end of the war. When emancipation came, he was living at William Lunsford’s farm, who had leased his labor. After the war, Jim took the name James Cox. He married his wife, Martha, whom he met while
enslaved by Lunsford, and lived the rest of his life in the Durham area, working as a tobacco sharecropper.

Runaway ad placed by William Duke in the Weekly Raleigh Register after Jim, Green and Lear ran away in June, 1863.

Harper's Weekly illustration of formerly enslaved people seizing their freedom and traveling to New Bern, 1863. Thousands of formerly enslaved people escaped to Union-held territories, including New Bern, during the Civil War
APPENDIX E

NETWORK TO FREEDOM APPLICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL INFORMATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resubmission:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>☒ Yes ☐ No</td>
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<tr>
<td>☒ Site ☐ Facility ☐ Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (Of What You Are Nominating): Duke Homestead State Historic Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Street Address:</td>
</tr>
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<td>2828 Duke Homestead Rd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Boundaries of Site/Facility: Address Not for Publication?</td>
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<td>Is there a website?</td>
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<tr>
<td>☒ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a visitor phone number?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☒ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Tell us in 200 words or less what is being nominated and how it is connected to the Underground Railroad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duke Homestead State Historic Site is nominated as a site connected to the escape of an enslaved man named Jim. Jim was owned by Kinston, North Carolina based planter James W. Cox. However, in 1863, Washington Duke leased him from Cox. Jim lived on Duke’s farm, what is today Duke Homestead, laboring in the cultivation of tobacco. In June, 1863, Jim ran away from Duke’s farm along with three other people: Green, enslaved by Washington Duke’s brother William J. Duke; Lear, Green’s wife; and Lear’s child. They sought to reach Union lines in eastern North Carolina, most likely attempting to reach New Bern, the stronghold of Union power at the time and the site of the largest freedmen’s community in North Carolina during the war. Ultimately Jim, at least, was unsuccessful, and he was either captured and returned to Duke’s farm or returned on his own accord by October, 1863. Nevertheless the property that is now Duke Homestead is significant as a site of freedom-seeking and Jim’s attempted self-emancipation.
Julie Herczeg, Site Manager  
(919) 627-6990  
julianne.herczeg@ncdcr.gov

SITES

In addition to the responses to each question, applications must also include the following attachments:

1) Letters of consent from all property owners for inclusion in the Network to Freedom (see sample in instructions)
2) Text and photographs of all site markers
3) Original photographs illustrating the current appearance and condition of the site being nominated
4) Maps showing the location of the site

All attachments supplement, but do not replace the text.

S1. Type:
- Building
- Object
- Landscape/Natural Feature
- Archeological Site
- Other (Describe):

S2. Is the site listed in the National Register of Historic Places?
- Yes
- No

If yes, what is the listing name?
Duke Homestead and Tobacco Factory

S3. Ownership of site:
- Private
- Private, Non-profit (501c3)
- Public - Local Government
- Public - State Government
- Public - Federal Government

S4. Type(s) of Underground Railroad Association (select the one(s) that fit best):
- Station
- Kidnapping
- Legal Challenge
- Association with Prominent Person
- Escape
- Rescue
- Maroon Community
- Historic District/Neighborhood
- Church
- Destination
- Transportation Route
- Commemorative Site/Monument
- Cemetery
- Military Site
- Archeological Site
- Other (Describe):

S4a. Describe the site’s association and significance to the Underground Railroad. Provide citations for sources used throughout the text. Timelines are encouraged.

Jim was an enslaved man owned by James W. Cox of Kinston, Lenoir County, NC. In 1863, Cox “hired him out,” essentially leasing him to Washington Duke in what was then Durham’s Station, Orange County, North Carolina and what is today Duke Homestead State Historic Site.

After the Civil War, Washington Duke manufactured tobacco and went on to found the American Tobacco Company, at one time, the largest tobacco company in the world. In 1863, however, he was a yeoman farmer. Duke was the eighth child of John Taylor Duke and Dicey Jones of Orange County. As a young boy, after his parents died, he lived with his older brother, William J. Duke. When he reached adulthood, he first rented land, but when he married Mary Caroline Clinton in 1847, her parents gifted him with his first 72 acres. Over the next fifteen years, he slowly expanded his landholdings, and by 1863, the year he leased Jim, he had acquired 250 acres of land.⁸⁶

In 1855, Washington Duke purchased a woman named Caroline for $601 at auction from the estate of Daniel Turrentine. By 1855, Duke’s first wife, Mary, had died, and he had married his second wife, Artelia Roney. He also had four young children, including his two

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youngest with Artelia, who were toddlers. He likely purchased Caroline as an enslaved domestic worker who could perform cooking, cleaning, and childcare tasks, though she may have engaged in agricultural labor as well. While we do not know her age, we can infer from her price that she was young, perhaps an adolescent. Of the ten other people sold at that auction, only two were sold for lower prices than Caroline. Duke does not appear in the slave schedule of the 1860 census. No information survives on what happened to Caroline after 1855, but by 1860, Duke does not show up on the 1860 slave schedule as a slaveowner.

Duke leased Jim from James W. Cox for the year 1863, and while he was on the Duke property, Jim would have engaged primarily in agricultural labor. In June of 1863, Jim ran away from the property with three other enslaved people: Green, who was enslaved by Washington’s brother William J. Duke (also living in Orange County, NC); his wife Lear; and a child. Duke suspected they were attempting to reach the Union army. On June 15, Washington Duke wrote to James W. Cox that “Your boy Jim left me last night as two or three negroes in the neighborhood left. I think they are trying to get to Yankee lines.” William Duke placed a runaway ad in the Weekly Raleigh Register in an attempt to recapture them:

Ranaway from the subscriber, on the 14th inst., Green, a bright mulatto boy, about 5 feet 8 inches high, stout build and quick spoken. He was accompanied by a negro woman, Lear, (his wife,) belonging to W.P. Ward, who had a child with her, and also by boy Jim, belonging to J.W. Cox. They are no doubt endeavoring to make their way into the enemies lines, and have gone through Franklin, where they may remain some time, as Green has acquaintances there. Fifty Dollars reward will be paid for each of them if taken up and delivered to the owners, or confined in Jail so they get them.

Jim, Green and Lear’s attempted self-emancipation fits in with the larger trend of enslaved people self-emancipating during the Civil War. In February of 1862, Union General Ambrose Burnside invaded mainland North Carolina, capturing New Bern. Shortly thereafter, the Union army also occupied Washington, Beaufort, Morehead City, and Plymouth alongside earlier occupations of Roanoke and Hatteras Island, where they remained through the end of the war. With the Union occupation, these cities attracted thousands of formerly enslaved refugees, who emancipated themselves and sought refuge behind Union lines, where they established extensive freedmen’s communities. As early as March of 1862, General Burnside wrote that New Bern was “overrun with fugitives from the surrounding towns and plantations.” While Union forces retained nominal control over much of the eastern coast of North Carolina, strongholds of Union authority were limited to New Bern, Beaufort, Morehead City, and few areas in the Outer Banks. It was to these places, particularly New Bern, that enslaved people escaped throughout the war, seizing

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88 Duke does not appear on the 1860 Slave Schedule of the Census, but of note, he also does not appear on the 1860 Agricultural Census, so it is possible that census workers simply failed to record him that year. After the war, Washington Duke employed an African American woman named Caroline Barnes as a live-in domestic worker, and it is possible she and the enslaved Caroline are the same person, although that is not certain.

89 Letter from Washington Duke to James W. Cox, 15 June 1863, Box 1, Folder 4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.


92 Quoted in Silkenat, Driven from Home, 16.
their freedom in the ultimate resistance of the slave system. Most enslaved people who sought freedom in Union-occupied territories came from places in the immediate surrounding towns and areas. However, some came from even further. In his study of Civil War refugees in North Carolina, historian David Silkenat notes that formerly enslaved black refugees sometimes came from distances of hundreds of miles, noting at least one incident where fugitives from Alabama made it to Union territory in North Carolina. By May, 1863, 8,500 formerly enslaved black refugees had arrived and were residing in New Bern.

The Union occupation in 1862 was an initial pull factor for enslaved people, but historian Stephanie Camp argues that the Emancipation Proclamation, effective in January, 1863, also further spurred enslaved people to seize their freedom. She quotes Union officer C.B. Wilder, stationed at Fort Monroe in southwestern Virginia, just over the North Carolina border who wrote that “many courageous fellows [came] from long distances in rebeldom, [because they] knew all about the Proclamation and they started on the belief in it.” Enslaved people, including Jim, Green, and Lear, would certainly have heard about the Emancipation Proclamation, even as they remained in bondage, and it may have served as further encouragement to seize their freedom by escaping to Union-occupied territory.

Jim, Green and Lear, particularly Jim and Green, would have developed extensive knowledge of the landscape in the pre-war years, which would have assisted them in their escape. Enslaved people’s mobility was intensely regulated. Yet despite the culture of surveillance and tight control, enslaved people – although men more than women – were able to access some mobility, traveling within their neighborhoods and sometimes even further afield. Leasing in particular, as in Jim’s case, gave enslaved people an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the surrounding area. Indeed, many people leased out were allowed to travel to the lessee’s property on their own, learning the neighborhood as they traveled. Further, enslaved people, particularly men, could be sent on errands and carry messages from place to place, gaining familiarity with the landscape through their work. One of Jim’s earlier enslavers, a lessee, Thomas Morris, wrote to James W. Cox that he had sent Jim into the woods to split rails. Jim ran away from Morris, but it was more than a day before he noticed Jim’s absence. Jim had opportunity to go into the woods unsupervised and could gain knowledge of the landscape and neighborhood through that work.

Enslaved people also traveled to new locations as they were relocated from place to place during particularly busy seasons when enslavers sought additional labor. Yeoman farmers, in particular, often leveraged kinship networks to acquire temporary additional enslaved labor. The fact that Jim, Green and Lear ran away together, suggested that Washington and William Duke shared enslaved labor in this way. While Green and Lear were married and knew one another prior to their escape, there is no clear explanation for how they made the acquaintance of Jim. A shared work environment is the most logical explanation. While Washington Duke owned no enslaved people and leased Duke in 1863,
his brother William enslaved nine people, including Green. Perhaps William Duke sent Green over to Washington Duke’s farm to help with a particularly busy time in the planting season.

Duke planted a variety of subsistence crops, but through the 1850s and 1860s, he increasingly planted tobacco. Bright tobacco, a particularly mild varietal, was growing more profitable at mid-century and piedmont farmers in North Carolina were increasingly growing and selling it, shifting the locus of tobacco production from Virginia to North Carolina. Tobacco was also a sensitive crop to frost, and required farmers to sow the seedlings in covered plant beds before transplanting the seedlings to the field in the spring. Transplanting depended on weather, but could take place anywhere from last frost in March or April until July. Farmers typically waited until a particularly heavy rain that soaked the fields and made the seedlings easy to transplant. Transplanting was one of the most labor intensive times in the crop schedule, so it is likely that in this period Washington Duke may have sought to borrow labor from his brother.100 Its likely time – late spring – also corresponds to the period before Jim, Green and Lear’s escape in June where they may have made one another’s acquaintance. This sharing of labor not only allowed Jim and Green to make one another’s acquaintance, but also allowed them to gain more knowledge of the landscape as they traveled between the Duke brothers’ properties.

Their likely destination, New Bern, was forty-five miles from Kinston, where Jim was born, and the towns were connected by the Kinston Road. Jim’s spent his youth and early adulthood on Cox’s Kinston plantation. Given both Jim’s likely familiarity with the area as well as the fact that this was the largest freedmen’s community and the site where most self-emanipulating fugitives escaped to, it is likely that New Bern was Jim, Green, and Lear’s intended destination, although other Union-held areas in eastern North Carolina and Virginia cannot be ruled out. Further, the Dukes suspected that Jim, Green and Lear would travel through Franklin County, east of Orange County towards the coast, because Green knew people there and had familiarity with the area. As Jim, Green, and Lear made their way from Durham to Franklin County on to New Bern, they would have relied on their knowledge of the geography gained through work and travel in the previous years.

While we do not know the details, Jim, at least, never arrived in New Bern. It is possible that he returned to Duke or Cox of his own accord, but it is equally possible he was captured by one of the slave patrols. Present throughout the antebellum period, slave patrols surveilled, enforced, and regulated slave mobility. Recognizing the increase in flight and self-emancipation, slaveowners and the Confederate government increased slave patrols in the eastern part of the state as early as 1861.101 Whatever the manner, Jim found himself back on Washington Duke’s property by at least October of that year.

Jim’s attempted self-emancipation in June 1863 was not the end of his resistance to enslavement. Jim also engaged in what appears to be absenteeism or “lying out” when he was leased to Washington Duke. On October 27, 1863, Duke wrote to Cox:

Having to brake (sic) up and go into the service, I let Mr. Wm E. Walker have your boy Jim until his time would be up. He, Jim, went to sulking last night and is absent this morning. His clothes is gone. I expect, therefore he will go see you. If he should you will please send him down to Mr. Walker who will take care of him until his time is up. Unless he should runoff.102

100 For more on tobacco planting and harvesting in the antebellum period, see Drew A. Swanson, A Golden Weed: Tobacco and Environment in the Piedmont South (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
101 Silkenat, Driven from Home, 22.
102 Letter from Washington Duke to James W. Cox, 27 October 1863, Box 1, Folder 4, James W. Cox Papers, 1741-1889, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
The next time Jim appears in the historic record is in a hiring contract between James W. Cox and William Lunsford and David Parrish. Cox had leased Jim out to Lunsford and Parrish for the year 1865. At the Civil War's end, he was enslaved on William Lunsford’s property in Orange County, NC. After emancipation, Jim took the name James Cox and married his wife Martha, whom he met while enslaved on Lunsford’s farm. Jim continued to live in Orange County for the rest of his life, first as a laborer in Lunsford’s household and later as a farmer, likely a sharecropper farming tobacco. While Jim’s date of death is unknown, no record of him exists after the 1880 census, and his wife, Martha Cox married Umphrey Nance in 1886, suggesting he died before that date.

S5. Provide a history of the site since its time of significance to the Underground Railroad, including physical changes, changes in boundaries over time, archeological work, or changes in ownership or use. Be sure to describe what is included in the present application and how that compares to what the site was historically.

Washington Duke owned the property from 1852 – 1874, and the current house on the property was built in 1852. Duke bought and sold parcels of land, but by 1863, the year of Jim’s escape, the house and outbuildings stood on 250 acres. By that year the property contained the house, a curing barn, and a packhouse (all extant) as well as a small factory that was later torn down. The current small factory on the property is a reproduction constructed in the 1930s. A large factory, still extant, was built circa 1870.

The Duke family sold the property in 1874 and it went through a series of owners. In 1931, Duke University acquired the homestead and the current property which contains two parcels totaling 43.83 acres. In 1973, Duke University deeded the property over to the State of North Carolina, and in 1979, Duke Homestead was opened as a State Historic Site open to the public.

S6. Include a bibliography or list of citations for sources used through the document. Discuss the reliability of historical sources of information and briefly discuss how you used them.

The main documentary sources for Jim’s escape attempt are letters from Washington Duke to James Cox found in the James W. Cox Papers in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina as well as a runaway ad placed in the Weekly Raleigh Register. Additional documents about Jim’s experiences with other lessees are found in the W.B. Fort Papers in Southern Historical Collection (Fort was Cox’s associate and business partner). While solely from the perspective of enslavers, these documents provide vital information on when Jim escaped, who he was with, and where his enslavers suspected he was going. I have contextualized these primary sources using secondary work on the resistance and escape of enslaved people as well as refugees in North Carolina during the Civil War.

Primary Sources:

103 Hiring Contract for Jim between James W. Cox and William D. Lunsford and David Parrish, Folder 1860s – 1870s, Box 3, W. B. Fort Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.


Secondary Sources:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S7. Describe current educational programs, tours, markers, signs, brochures, site bulletins, or plaques at the site. Include text and photographs of markers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duke Homestead provides guided tours of its historic buildings and structures. In these tours, guides discuss the process of cultivating tobacco in the 19th century, including the use of enslaved labor. Guides discuss Caroline’s experiences and mention that Duke also rented the labor of Jim. With this new research, the tour will be revised to include more information about Jim and his resistance to enslavement, including running away, as well as the context of leasing of enslaved labor.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S8. Describe any local, State, or Federal historic designation, records, signage, or plaques at the site.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duke Homestead, as a site associated with the Civil War through Washington Duke’s military service is part of the North Carolina Civil War Trails Program and has a wayside marking that participation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| S9a. Is the site open to the public? | ☑ Yes ☐ No |
| Days and Hours of Operation: | Tuesday – Saturday, 9am – 5pm |

| S9b. If open, describe accessibility conditions under the Americans with Disabilities Act. |
| Visitors are allowed to enter the large tobacco factory and the house. The house has a ramp installed to allow access for those with limited mobility. |

| S10. Describe the nature and objectives of any partnerships that have contributed to the documentation, preservation, commemoration, or interpretation of the site. |
| Duke Homestead State Historic Site is part of the Division of State Historic Sites, under the aegis of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. |