

A Study of African-American Culture
in Southwest Missouri in Relation to
the George Washington Carver National Monument

by
Lori Peterson



Submitted to
National Park Service
Midwest Archeological Center
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Prepared by Lori Peterson
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Foreword

In recent years scholarship in southern history and culture has grown tremendously and been profoundly reshaped. Significantly revised interpretations based on new research and altered perspectives have transformed how scholars understand traditional subjects such as plantation economics and political leadership. At the same time scholars have come to give more attention to previously neglected topics such as slave families and slavery in the non-plantation rural South. In this manuscript, Lori Peterson incorporates the outpouring of new scholarship to present a fresh look at the cultural, social, economic, and political forces that helped shape the personality and outlook of George Washington Carver, one of the leading scientists and humanitarians and most influential African Americans of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Peterson's research uniquely considers how the cultural forces of the 1860s and 1870s Southwest Missouri, and in particular Carver's own white adoptive parents, shaped Carver's attitudes toward race, social class, and achievement. Carver, born into slavery and orphaned, was reared by Moses and Susan Carver, prosperous and hardworking small farmers who held negative but ambivalent attitudes toward the institution of slavery. Although the Carvers themselves counted a slave among their property, George Washington Carver was educated, encouraged, and given leisure time by his adoptive parents to

explore his wide-ranging academic interests and to develop his talents in painting and handicrafts.

Peterson weaves together data from WPA slave narratives, Census records, county histories, and newspapers in an attempt to reveal the complexities, ambiguities, and inconsistencies of race relations in Southwest Missouri before, during, and after the Civil War. Slavery in the hilly terrain of Southwest Missouri was very different from slavery in the Plantation South. There were far fewer slaveholders, and those who did own slaves owned very few. A far higher proportion of these slaves were women and children, and nearly a third of the slaves were classified in the 1860 Census as mulatto. Slaves in Southwest Missouri learned multiple skills because they worked in a diverse agricultural setting, growing a variety of crops and performing a range of tasks. Slaves in the area appreciated that their life circumstances were better than slaves in the Deep South. Commitment to the institution of slavery was not strong in Southwest Missouri, even among slaveholders. The Scotch-Irish hill people who came from Appalachia and the South to settle the counties of Southwest Missouri brought with them a strong sense of individualism and suspicion of authority. They felt little loyalty to political parties, the Union or to the Confederacy. The large number of political parties prior to the Civil War active in the area attests to the people's political diversity and individualism.

The Civil War and its aftermath intensified existing

political divisions among whites in Southwest Missouri, but the War only solidified white resentment and violence toward African Americans. Lynchings and mob activity resulted in mass outmigration from counties of Southwest Missouri. Despite widespread racism and racial violence after the Civil War, it was not unusual for white families in Southwest Missouri to accept government payments for taking both black and white orphans into their homes.

It was this environment that shaped the character of George Washington Carver, one of the 19th Century and early 20th Century's most prominent African American scientists and humanitarians. Carver learned about crops and good farming practices from Moses Carver. Susan Carver taught Carver an appreciation of handwork and cooking skills. Carver, as a young man witnessed brutal lynchings of African Americans and the flight of African Americans from the Ozarks. But he recognized at the same time that African Americans in the Ozarks had both kinship and work ties with white people that raised their skills and understanding of the potential and limitations of human nature to a level of complexity far different from that of African Americans reared in the Deep South.

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Part I
African-American Culture
in Southwest Missouri
1860-1870

Note on Sources

The bulk of materials published on slavery and the influence of the Civil War upon African Americans has focused primarily on areas where the plantation economy flourished, areas with high concentrations of slaves and with farmers literate and wealthy enough to leave substantial records of their culture. Consequently, the history of the slaves who lived in less densely populated areas remains largely untold. Born into slavery and raised by his former masters after the war, George Washington Carver and his brother Jim grew up in such an area. Moses and Susan Carver who moved to Southwest Missouri in the 1840s and who took George and his brother Jim into their home after the kidnapping of their mother, were typical in many ways of small farmers of the area. Moses was born in Ohio in 1812, Susan in Illinois in 1814 (Fuller 1955a:3). They moved to Newton County with Moses' brothers Richard and George in response to the preemption Act of 1891 which allowed small farmers to purchase and develop land at very low prices (Goodspeed Co. 1888:169). And it was with them that George and his brother Jim were born as slaves and where they were reared as the Carvers' children in the years following the Civil War. An understanding of the complexity of the institution of slavery in this region is critical to an understanding of George Washington Carver and the multifaceted life he led.

In the opening of his study on slavery in Yell County,

Arkansas, John Solomon Otto reasons that the imbalance in the treatment of slavery is due in large part to the greater availability of sources from the plantations. In areas where cash crop plantations predominated, he says, "the wealthier planters were far more likely to leave a written legacy of letters, diaries, and account books than the farmers of the back country South--the highlands areas, where rough topography and poor transportation limited cash crop agriculture" (Otto 1980:3). Information left in travel journals also focuses on plantation regions, as he notes, because "visitors to the Old South invariably toured the plantation belt, which contained most of the region's railroads, stage lines, and navigable rivers" (1980:35). Surviving newspapers, another important source for historians, are also limited in the hills "since prominent lowland journals were more likely to survive than obscure back country papers" (1980:35). This tendency on the part of scholars to use more readily available sources of the plantation belt often results in generalizations about slavery that may not apply to all geographic areas and limits our perspective of the institution as it existed outside of the Deep South.

In applying findings in plantation regions to all slaveholding areas, "historians," Otto says, "may have obscured the diversity that existed in Old South slavery" (1980:35). This study on African-Americans in Southwest Missouri is, in part, an attempt to bring the culture of

slaves in the southwestern Missouri Ozarks out of this obscurity. Local-level studies are possibly the most effective means of understanding the diversity of slavery and its aftermath. Elinor Miller and Eugene Genovese's collection of case studies provide examples of how public records can be used to reconstruct the social histories of more remote areas where isolation and low literacy rates have made written records scarce. Here they call for "deeper research into the South's constituent parts" to increase our understanding of an institution which they say "remains severely circumscribed by the level of generalization on which we have been working" (Miller and Genovese 1974:2).

public records

Such studies necessarily rely heavily on public records including the county returns of the federal census, a source which James Bonner claims to be "perhaps the most reliable data available for a comprehensive study of the submerged half or two-thirds of population," "a Domesday Book as rare as anything in the Anglo-Saxon annals" (Miller and Genovese 1974:30;31). This study will incorporate information from 1860 and 1870 county returns for Barton, Jasper, McDonald, and Newton Counties. These records, available at the State Historical Society in Columbia, are especially helpful for the Ozark mountains of Southwest Missouri where both slaves and slaveholders were largely

illiterate and left few clues to their past.

The population census provides the name, age, gender, and race of every free inhabitant in each household; identifies individuals able to read and write, able to vote, and considered insane; and lists personal property values and real estate values of heads of household. The slave schedule lists the gender and age of slaves below the names of the owner and records the number of slave cabins. The agricultural schedule lists acreage of developed and undeveloped land, livestock raised, crops grown, and total value of farms. The industrial schedule lists the name of each business, source of power, number and wages of employees, amount and kind of materials used, as well as the amount and type of products produced. These records will be used here to determine the average age of slaves, average number of slaves held by slave owners, and ratios of female to male slaves. (See Tables 1-3.) Otto suggests combining information in these schedules to "determine the composition of the county's slave force, and assess the slaves' contribution to the county's agriculture" (1980:39).

Other public records that have proved helpful include marriage records and probate records. While loss of records due to fire and inconsistency in methods of record-keeping from county to county make parallel study of all the area's counties ineffective, each isolated piece of information adds to our understanding of the region as a whole. As

black couples were required to be legally married after the war, many marriage records can be found for the years soon after the war. These often include the names and ages of children born prior to the legal marriages. The children were then "legitimized." Probate records frequently record the fates of slaves upon their owners' deaths, such as Newton County's Jonathon Ross who willed "my son David Ross to receive my Negro boy Henry," or Peregrin Scott who willed "freedom to my colored woman Sylvia" (Vineyard n.d. (a):2,6). Transcriptions of county court records compiled by the Works Progress Administration and available at the Western Manuscripts Collection in Columbia, Missouri, also provide valuable information on individuals. These have been most helpful in determining how the courts handled the problem of jobless African-Americans after the war as in the case of Newton County's William Wright who was allotted funds for "the maintenance of Milly, a colored pauper" (WPA n.d.:folder 15440).

WPA slave narratives

Though diaries and journals of African-Americans in Southwest Missouri during this time period are scarce--I've found none--the slave narratives collected by the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration, and since published in a series edited by George Rawick (1972a, 1975), provide a large number of first person accounts of former slaves. Information from the Missouri narratives

will be relied on heavily to supplement statistics found in public records. Compiled during the years 1936-1938, this collection consists of over 10,000 pages of typescript from over 2,000 interviews with former slaves. A wonderful and largely untapped wealth of information, the narratives do present certain problems. Though George Rawick has published an unedited edition of the entire collection, they have not yet been thoroughly indexed, making the study of a particular issue or, in this case, of a specific geographic region, very difficult. This problem is compounded by the fact that most of the Missouri interviewers omitted questions in their transcriptions, creating unanticipated shifts in the flow of the narratives.

In the introduction to the Supplementary volumes of his collection, George Rawick cautions us to observe "the same reasonable care that competent scholars usually take with any historical source" (1975:xxix). "First," he says, "the slave narratives do not generally provide a reliable source for those seeking to study black speech patterns and black English" (1975:xxix). The vastly different methods interviewers employed in recording dialect can be misleading. Instructions to interviewers, who were not trained linguists, regarding dialect leave much room for individual discrepancies. Citing such authors as Zora Neale Hurston, Erskine Caldwell, and Ruth Suckow as examples of those who have made "truth to idiom be paramount, and exact truth to pronunciation secondary," the instructions sent to

interviewers encourage a "simplicity in recording dialect" (Rawick 1972b:176). Editors are told to retain "turns of phrase that the flavor and vividness" such as "piddled in de fields" or distinct pronunciations such as "marsa" for "master" but to avoid overuse of dialect that would detract from meaning such as constant "Ah" for "I" or "uv" for "of" (1972b:176-77).

He also explains certain "systematic biases" existing in the narratives, the first of which would lead to a strongly biased view of the treatment of slaves. On "matters concerning . . . the sexual exploitation of women, whipping and punishment," the surviving versions of the interviews may be "heavily biased in the direction of grossly exaggerating the humaneness of the institution" (1975:xxxix-xxxi). The slave narratives were often censored at the state level before they were sent to Washington, and controversial topics may have been avoided or omitted in transcription by the interviewers. The former slaves may also have felt inhibited during discussion of such subjects because the majority of the interviewers were white--Rawick lists Grace White as the only Missouri interviewer known for certain to have been black--while the former slaves were "blacks, almost invariably very poor and totally destitute, and often dependent upon public charity and assistance from white-dominated charities and public officials" (1975:xxxi). A woman identified only as "the wife of Charles Douthit" of Farmington, Missouri very directly

expressed her fear of the interviewing process: "They want ta find out how dey treated de ole slaves so's dey'll know how to treat the young 'uns when dey makes dem slaves." The brief remainder of her interview supports Rawick's theory that fear may have caused slaves to hide the negative aspects of slavery: "My mother uz treated so good dat she stayed an worked fur de Missus til de Missus died. . . . I was down dare las week, an I calls hit home" (Rawick 1972a:107).

The former slaves had strong motives to downplay the worst aspects of slavery. The economic climate of the 1930s also contributed to an almost nostalgic attitude towards slavery on the part of many former slaves who could "look back on their youth under slavery as a time when they at least managed to have something to eat" (Rawick 1975:xxxii). The former slaves had very mixed opinions concerning their present state. Hanna Allen of Fredericktown expresses nostalgia, saying "I was better off dan de free people. I think dat slavery taught me a lot" (Rawick 1972a:10). Also unhappy with freedom as she experienced it, Rhody Holsell of Fredericktown, Missouri says she believed "it would been better to have moved all de colored people way out west to dem selves" (Rawick 1972a:194). When asked to tell his experience in slavery, W. C. Parson Allen of Fredericktown staunchly says "I ain't sayin' nothing" (1972a:19). Louis Hill, however, resented that "de slave had made what de white man had" and believed "de government should have made

some provision for de slaves when dey turned dem loose" (1972a:189). Non-committal in many responses, Joe Higginson of Sedalia eagerly invited the interviewers inside, claiming simply he was "so happy to have company" (1972a:173).

If possible biases are taken into account, however, Rawick says the narratives have many important uses and can be trusted on issues where there was less motive to skew information. Uses he suggests and which will be employed here include evidence on women who did field work during slavery, provisions for slaves residing in slave cabins, and family relations. I have found the narratives also to be a rare source of information on the lives of children who lived as slaves. Since this project began in 1936, 75 years after the start of the Civil War, most of the former slaves still lucid at the time of the interviews were children in 1865, and their stories reveal much concerning relationships between parents and children, the duties of children, the clothing of children, and offer a unique perspective of the Civil War.

The Missouri narratives can be found in two published volumes, both edited by Rawick. The first is in Volume 11, and the second is in Volume 2 of the Supplement, a collection Rawick combined after a thorough search for all narratives that may have been "hidden" from the authorities in Washington in local libraries and historical societies. While a large percentage of the Missouri narratives never made it to Washington, Rawick says that this was more the

result of disorganization that any intentional attempt to prevent their being seen. Some tasks of the Federal Writer's Project in Missouri, he says, were "farmed out to the county Historical Surveys which were collecting county records and doing local histories and which were not usually part of the Writer's Project" (1975:xvii). These may still be found in the Western Manuscripts Collection in Columbia, Missouri.

The narratives from the counties involved in this study will be used as much as possible, and narratives of slaves in similar circumstances in other areas in Missouri will also be examined.

county histories and local newspapers

Local and county histories have also been extremely valuable. The biographical and anecdotal information in the histories compiled by the Goodspeed Company record history at a time when the events immediately before and after the Civil War were still relatively recent. While these histories focus primarily on the wealthier individuals who were able to afford subscriptions to the histories and thus contribute material, they are still incredibly useful--it was the wealthier men who were most likely to own slaves. Another drawback to these early histories is the racist bias of the authors and contributors. Roger Abrahams addresses this issue in the opening of his study on corn-shucking traditions, saying that "dealing with accounts which are

suffused with racist language and perspectives may create a problem for those readers offended by the stereotypical portrayal of blacks of an earlier era" but that the "grotesque portraits and patronizing descriptions" must be overcome by the "analytic procedures developed recently by social historians and folklorists" to "allow access to the materials of everyday life and encourage us to get beyond this initial repulsion to the materials" (Abrahams 1992:xv). These early historians have made many unintentional contributions to our understanding of race relations in the late 19th century.

Local newspapers have been useful in the compilation of information on Southwest Missouri though more often larger nearby papers such as those in Springfield or Kansas City report significant events in the less densely populated areas in Barton, Jasper, Newton, and McDonald Counties. More recent newspaper articles addressing aspects of local history are also very useful, especially the series written by Ward Shrantz on Jasper County history for the Carthage Press.

Slavery in the Missouri Ozarks

demographics

Born at some point during the Civil War--accounts as to the exact year vary--George Washington Carver did not experience slavery himself, but was affected in many ways by the social and economic situations the institution had created and left in its aftermath. Study of the demographics of slavery in Southwest Missouri shows that Moses and Susan Carver were typical of this area's slaveholders in owning a very small number of slaves, a phenomenon determined largely by the area's economic and agricultural development. Arguing that "the nature of crops raised locally and the distance from markets did not make the mass employment of slave labor economically profitable," Shrantz says that it was primarily newcomers to the area, and wealthy newcomers at that, who owned slaves. He dates the earliest known slaveholder in Jasper County to 1837 with "the coming of the Chenault family" (Shrantz 1949c:"Slavery Days").

As in Yell County, Arkansas, the subject of John Solomon Otto's study of highland slaves (1980), farmers tended to grow a large variety of crops and raise animals rather than producing cash crops as cotton and tobacco which would require intensive slave labor. The resulting demographics Otto discovered here are also true of Barton, Jasper, Newton, and McDonald counties in Missouri. Jasper

County's James Wilson, for example, with only 4 slaves in 1860 owned more than any other slaveholder in Mineral Township (U.S. Census 1860:Schedule 2). A successful farmer, Webb likely employed his slaves in the production of his rye, Indian corn, wool, Irish potatoes, butter, and molasses, as well as in the maintainance of his milk cows, cattle, sheep, swine, mules, and horses (U.S. Census 1860:schedule 4). The diversity of livestock and agricultural products did not require the same magnitude of slave labor as the labor intensive production of cash crops along the plantation belt. The small numbers of slaves in the area reflect this phenomenon. Almost half of the slaveholders in Barton, Jasper, Newton, and McDonald Counties owned only one slave, and slaveholders themselves constituted a very small percentage of the population. The majority of the remaining slaveholders owned between 2 and 4, and only three owned over 15. (See Table 1.)

Their small numbers drastically changed the experience of slaves in Southwest Missouri. The advantages of more intimate relations between owner and slave likely included better treatment. However, a disadvantage sensed by many may have been the lack of interaction with other slaves common on plantations. When asked about recreational activities and if he danced, Jasper County's Charlie Richardson answered vehemently, "No! No games, no play, only work" (Rawick 1972:295). The highland slaves' social life was intertwined with that of the owners, as they accompanied

their masters to church, entertained the masters' children, worked alongside their masters in the fields. Due to their smaller numbers, highland slaves did not have the opportunities to engage in corn-shuckings, Saturday night dances, Christmas holidays and other activities unique to slave culture in the Deep South that gave plantation slaves a sense of distinct identity.

The high percentage of children in these counties reflects both the economic hardships of the area and a tendency of farmers to invest in the future. Slave children cost a great deal less than adults and appreciated in value as they grew. A list of Jasper County's slave owners in 1861 taken from the records of the tax assessor, John Horback, and now available in the Joplin Public Library, provide the number and valuation of each owner's slaves. When the information of these records is combined with data from the 1860 slave schedules which give the gender and age of each slave, we find a significant discrepancy between the value of children and adults: Patrick Raney's 5 year old female slave was valued at \$250 where Edward Way's 21 year old female slave was worth \$600. Similarly, Lilburn Arthur's 8 year old male slave, valued at \$300, is worth significantly less than William Board's 15 year old male slave valued at \$700. Lack of funds combined with an awareness that relatively small investments would grow consistently and considerably in value may explain why approximately half of this region's slave property in 1860

were under the age of 15. (See Table 2.)

Otto argues that "yeoman slaveholders may have been more concerned with the appreciation of slave property than with yearly returns on an investment," allowing farmers to "endow their descendants with human capital that would continue to appreciate in value" (1980:47).

Similar factors may also explain the relatively high ratios of women to men in this area. With the exception of Newton County, and that an exception by only a narrow margin, the slave population in this region was predominantly female. (See Table 3.) Women were considerably less expensive than men and, able to bear children, were also an investment in the future. Moses Carver reflects this tendency to invest in the future. Having purchased George's mother, both female and very young (13 years), he would have eventually had two adult men to help tend his farm. An 18 year old female slave owned by Joseph W. Mulugin, valued at \$600, cost considerably less than a 26 year old male owned by Thomas Prigmore and valued at \$800. The small numbers of slaves in the area, necessarily creating more intimate bonds between owner and slave, as well as the higher percentages of women and children, make for an experience far different from that of plantation slaves.

treatment of slaves

As these statistics show, the institution of slavery

was vastly different in the less densely populated Ozark mountains. Ward Shrantz examines the reasons for these differences and how these differences affected the experiences of slaves and slaveholders in Carthage, Missouri. It would appear that because of the necessarily intimate master/slave relationships, the close proximity to free states, and the constant threat slaves faced of being "sold South" that ante-bellum racial tensions were held at bay and that slaves consequently received better treatment. Arguing that the treatment of slaves in Southwest Missouri was milder than that in other areas, Shrantz says that due to the relatively small numbers of slaves, the owners "naturally thought of them as individuals known to him and his family. They were thus, apparently, treated as 'bond servants' rather than slave property" (Shrantz 1949c: "Slavery Days").

Reluctance of Carthage slave owners to separate slave families is an example of this preferable treatment. Shrantz says that "the owner's interest and concern for them is shown best in county official records of wills" and cites as an example the will of William M. Chenault which he acquired from Frank R. Birkhead:

As by brother, John R. Chenault, owns the wife and children of my Negro man Peter and as I believe it wrong to separate said Negro man from his wife and children, I therefore will and bequeath said Negro man to my brother, John R. Chenault, absolutely.

[Shrantz 1949c:"Slavery Days"]

An important motive slaveholders had for kind treatment to slaves Shrantz notes, is the "nearness to the frontier and non-slavery Kansas" (Shrantz 1949c:"Slavery Days"). Shrantz cites David Gibson as a slaveholder who lost a valuable slave due to poor treatment. He quotes from an interview with Albert Gibson, the slave's son as it appeared in the Press July 21, 1941: "My father's work displeased the master and he knocked him flat with a shovel. When my father was able to get on his feet again he ran from the field, mounted a horse belonging to his master and rode away" (Shrantz 1949c:"Slavery Days"). The slave was never seen again. Katherine Lederer discusses the many Greene County slaves also fled to Kansas in hopes for freedom (Lederer 1986:5). John Doake, whom Lederer identifies as a Springfield slave trader, printed the following notice for two runaway slaves:

Runaway from John S. Doake on the 21st inst., two NEGRO MEN; LOGAN 45 years of age, bald-headed, one or more crooked fingers; DAN 21 years old, six feet high. Both black. I will pay ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS for the apprehension and delivery of LOGAN, or to have him confined so that I can get him. I will also pay TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS for the apprehension of DAN or to have him confined so that I can get him.

[Missouri Historical Society 1857:Slaves and Slavery Collection]

Fear of being "sold South" was another possible reason for less hostile relations between master and slave. Shrantz explains that slaves who could not be managed were sold "well below the market value" to buyers who came once a year, buying slaves to work the Southern plantations. "Their profit" Shrantz says, "lay in buying at bargain prices undesirable characters no one in this region wanted, taking them South and selling them to plantations at full prevailing prices for able-bodied slaves" (Shrantz 1949c:"Slavery Days"). The more taxing work on the plantations and stories of ill-treatment "drained away the turbulent element which might have required harsh treatment to keep it in subjection" and "very likely the fear of being 'sold South' had a repressive influence on the minds of any border line individuals" (Shrantz 1949c:"Slavery Days"). Lorenzo Greene also refers to this practice as "the ultimate legal form of social control open to the master" (Greene et. al. 1980:39). Former slave of Fredericktown Harriet Casey's account of "niggerbreakers" in Farmington who "would take care of de slaves who were hard to handle" illustrates the harsher ways of dealing with slaves along the river (Rawick 1972a:73). Fillmore Taylor Hancock, former Greene County slave, explains that his uncle was sold when his master was angry with him for running away when he tried to whip him. "Ol Marse sure got mad when my uncle run. So he sold him to a man named Dokes -- a nigger trader ob dat neighborhood. Dokes brought niggers an'sold

dem on de block in St. Louis" (Rawick 1972a:154). Threats of selling slaves away from the Ozark hills were intended to prevent disobedience in slaves.

While Charlie Richardson's father was not sold because of poor conduct, the demand for slaves in Southern states can be seen by his account of his step-father's sale:

There was some buyers from south Texas was after to buy my step-Pappy for two years runnin', but the Marster would never sell him. So one time they comes up to our place at buying time (that was about once every year) and while buying other slaves they asked Mat Warren if he wouldn't sell my step-Pappy, cause he was a sure 'nough worker in the field --the best man he had and he could do more work than three ordinary men.

But the Marster tried to git rid of that buyer agin by saying I don't take no old offer of \$2000 for Charlie, an' I won't sell under \$2,055. The buyer he said right quick like. "Sold right hare." [Rawick 1972a:294]

This instance illustrates the lengths traders would go to in acquiring strong slaves and shows the looming threat that encouraged slaves to remain docile.

family

Family life for most slaves, especially during the tumult of the Civil War, was, at best, unstable. Separation

caused by selling slaves away as well as the practice of renting slaves, which will be discussed in more depth in the next section, separated many families. Richardson elaborates on the sale of his step-father to slave traders from Texas, saying that the separation "like to broke my Mammy up, but that's the way we slaves had it. We didn't let ourselves feel too bad, cause we knowed it would come that way some time. But my Ma she liked that Charlie and she feeled it mos'" (Rawick 1972a:294). The combination of intense grief and hopeless resignation must also have been felt by many separated families.

As Lorenzo Greene notes, "many slave children were the result of interracial sexual unions, sometimes rapes, between masters and their slave women" (1980:38). The number of slaves identified by race as mulatto ("m") in the slave schedules suggests that miscegenation was common in Southwest Missouri. In 1860, Newton County census records showed 141 or 32% identified as mulatto, Barton County 8 or 38%, McDonald County 22 or 31%, and Jasper County 89 or 28%. Betty Abernathy former slave of Cape Girardeau County, represents many who called their fathers "master": "Ole Massa' John Abernathy was mah daddy. Old Massa' was mean to his cullud folks and so was 'Ole Missis Willie'" (Rawick 1972a:6).

The fact that most slaveholders owned only one slave provides evidence that few families lived together. Though some slaveholders, such as Jasper County's John Chenault,

did respect the family bonds of slaves and in their wills demanded that they not be separated, it was not until 1865, that marriages and families were legally acknowledged.

work

Greene says that "the majority of Missouri's slaves worked as field hands on farms, but many others were valets, butlers, handymen, carpenters, common laborers, maids, nurses, and cooks" (1980:25). The diversity of skills developed by Missouri slaves, especially in rural Missouri, gave them a tremendous advantage in the early years of freedom over slaves confined to the production of a single crop.

Records show that many slaveholders rented slaves to farmers, a practice explained by former slave Sarah Shaw Graves of Nodaway County in Northwest Missouri: "Allotted means sumethin' like hired out. But the slave never got no wages. That all went to the master. The man they was allotted to paid the master" (Rawick 1972a: 129). Graves' terminology in explaining the practice shows how deeply the idea of slaves as property was engrained: "Yes'm when a slave was allotted, somebody made a down payment and gave a mortgage for the rest. A chattel mortgage." Greene explains that "hiring slaves out was . . . a profitable gain for Missouri masters. Not only did they receive payment for the slaves services, but they did not have to feed or house the slaves since that was the responsibility of the hirer"

(1980:26). The advantage of the employer in this "rented" labor lay in the fact that "wages for slaves were usually less than those paid to whites for similar work" (Greene et. al. 1980:26). The ill effects of this practice were felt by a number of Southwest Missouri slaves.

In cases where the owners and employers lived far apart, the practice of "hiring out" slaves split families in much the same way as actually selling them. For example, the 1860 slave schedules record that the slaves living with David Hersick in Granby Township of Newton County were owned by Mrs. Cunningham Laws of Lawrence County. The grief of separation caused by hiring out is described by Sarah Graves, former slave of Nodaway County, who was separated from her father in Kentucky "'cause he was allotted to another man. . . . They never wanted mama to know, 'cause they knowed she would never marry so long she knew where he was. Our master wanted her to marry again and raise more children to be slaves" (Rawick 1972a:129).

Others in Newton County, the county with the most thorough records of this practice, who were rented out by their owners to employers in the same county include slaves hired by M. F. Crouch and owned by George Barker and two young boys employed by Nancy Chitwood and owned by M. E. Rutledge (U.S. Census 1860:Schedule 2). Mary Bell of St. Louis County was hired out as a child to "a Presbyterian minister when I was seven years old, to take care of three children. I nursed in dat family one year. Den Miss Diggs

hired me out to a baker named Henry Tillman to nurse three children. I nursed there two years. Neither family was nice to me." And, again, the practice split families: "Miss Diggs owned my mother and all her children" (Rawick 1972a:26).

Both slaves worked by owners and those rented to employers experienced a wide variety of work that would later help them adapt to the harsh world left in the wake of the Civil War. Fil Hancock, a former Springfield slave, says that on his owner's 375 acre farm he helped grow "corn, oats, wheat, rye, and clover." And these were not all, but are listed only as the "main crops" (Rawick 1972a:154).

The work of women was also diverse. Some were responsible for household chores. A small number, such as Mariah Watkins with whom Carver lived during his stay in Neosho, served as midwives. And a good many worked in the fields alongside men. Sarah Graves of Nodaway County explains that "my mama worked in the field, even when I was a little baby. She would lay me down on a pallet near the fence while she plowed the corn or worked in the field." In addition to this intense physical labor, Graves' mother made wool, a process requiring her to "shear the sheep, wash the wool, card it, spin it and weave it" (Rawick 1972a:130). When she wasn't engaged in her own work, she would "carry water for the field hands" and her daughter followed suit long after the war: "Yes'm. I worked in the fields and I

worked hard too. Plantin' and harvestin' in those days was really work" (Rawick 1972a:131). Annie Bridges, former slave of Sikeston Missouri shares a similar story of her mother: "Ma muthah plow'd in de fiel' an' ud leave her baby layin' at one end of de fiel', while she plow'd clear ta de odder an' kum back" (Rawick 1972a:44).

Though children were largely investments in the future, slaves as young as four years of age were engaged in work. As children constituted almost half of the slave population in the Barton, Jasper, Newton, and McDonald Counties, examination of typical duties throughout Missouri would be especially helpful. Nursing children was a common task assigned to children, especially to young girls. Mary Divine of St. Louis County explains that "at 4 years old I had to nurse old man George's son, Joseph's baby, and de baby was most big as me, but I nursed it just de same honey. . . . I nursed dat baby for two years, too, and it sure was crazy 'bout me. I loved it too, yes, I did. Den after two years dey sent me to work for de old man's oldest son, Jacob. Dey made me do all de cardin' and spinnin', make ropes and ply lines, two cuts a day, was my task . . . " (Rawick 1972a:103).

Though care of children was generally designated to the girls, boys were not exempt. Charles Gabriel Anderson of St. Louis "used to nurse de white folks children when I was a little boy. I made a better nurse dan most girls, so jest kept on at it till I was old enough to be a field hand"

(Rawick 1972a:21). Likewise, William Black of Hannibal says his duty was to "take his children to school and go after dem of an evening. In the mean time I just piddled around in de fields" (Rawick 1972a:32). Richard Bruner of Nelson remembers "being a water-boy to de field hands before I were big enough to work in de fields. I hoed tobacccer when I was about so high" (Rawick 1972a:59). James Monroe Abbot of Cape Girardeau had the torturous duty of keeping flies from disturbing his dying master: "All dat time he made me stan' side o' his bed--keepin' de flies offen him, I was jes seben yar old" (Rawick 1972a:1). He relates a story of his mother's dismay when the master finally died and and the young James proclaimed repeatedly "By God, he's daid" that reveals his joy at being relieved of his tedious duties (1972a:1).

free blacks

William Parrish summarizes the limited legal rights of free Missouri blacks prior to the war:

In pre-Civil War days, Missouri's free Negroes had the right to own property, including slaves, and to sue and be sued. They could testify in court against another of their own race but not against whites. Except for these rights, however their actions were closely circumscribed either by law or custom. [1973:145]

A constitutional amendment in 1847 declared it illegal to

teach any black, slave or free, to read or write. To further prevent the advancement of free blacks, the Missouri General Assembly "had begun to restrict the immigration of free Negroes into the state as early as 1825" (Parrish 1973:145). Such hindrances led Greene to assert that "the distinction between free blacks and slaves was often vague" (Greene et. al. 1980:62).

Surviving records document a small number of free blacks in Southwest Missouri. According to county records available at the Joplin public library, John Morgan and James Madden were free blacks in Jasper County. The 1860 Census records a James Maddin [sic], a 69 year old farmer identified as black and living with his wife Nancy and children Julia, W.C., Nancy and Melissa. Maddin possessed no real estate.

Occasionally slaves were granted freedom in the wills of their owners. Newton County probate records cite that on November 4, 1858, Peregrine Scott of Grand Falls, willed "freedom to my colored woman Sylvia" (Vineyard n.d.(a):6). According to the same records Scott died on March 7, 1859, and if his request was granted, Sylvia experienced freedom for several years before most Missouri slaves.

Civil War

wartime politics

Since Missouri was key to numerous pre-war issues, its political alliances were critical to the direction of the war. As John Blassingame notes, "Missouri's admission to the Union in 1820 was perhaps the most important catalyst in arousing latent sectional animosities, Missourians led the South's fight for 'Bleeding Kansas' in 1854-58, and Dred Scott was a Missouri slave" (1964:327). The seemingly ambiguous status of Missouri as a slaveholding Union state makes clear political boundaries difficult to draw. In a chapter appropriately titled "Missouri in Two Nations," William Parrish discusses the tensions resulting from Missouri's stance as a Union state while a Confederate sympathizer held office of governor. The issue of slavery was especially complicated as pro-slavery attitudes and Unionist sympathies were not mutually exclusive. Parrish notes that many Unionists argued against secession to protect the institution of slavery, that "secession would harm rather than protect Missouri's slave property, for with so much free hostile territory around her, the temptation for flight might be nearly irresistible" (1973:8). The southwest corner of the state which included a number of German and Irish immigrants was especially complicated. Both the German and Irish groups were simultaneously "antislavery and to a considerable extent anti-Negro"

(Parrish 1973:7). Parrish argues that such combinations of sentiment resulted in a tendency to vote "against extreme solutions." Missouri voters backed neither strong secessionists nor Republicans but leaned toward candidates with cloudy political agendas, running as "Conditional or Constitutional Unionists, Unconditional Unionists, and States' Rights or Anti-Submission" (1973:6). These parties allowed for numerous combinations of opinion of issues which were not options in the dominant parties.

The battle at Wilson's Creek, approximately ten miles southwest of Springfield, was a decisive one in determining public opinion in this part of the state, strengthening Confederate control. Following the Confederate victory, "the Union forces retreated all the way to Rolla, 100 miles north of Springfield" (McPherson 1988:352). The battle seemed to have strengthened Confederate confidence as an early McDonald County History suggests: "After their success at Wilson's Creek, Confederate bands visited every nook in the county, deprived all Federal sympathizers of their arms and carried any grain, provisions, cattle" (Goodspeed Co. 1888:42). McPherson states that "nearly three-quarters of the white men in Missouri. . . who fought in the Civil War did so on the side of the Union" but few Republican votes were cast in the southwest (1988:293).

Of Barton County, the northern-most county discussed in this study, Van Gilder asserts that "most were sympathetic with the seceding states, their former homes" (1972:9). The

majority of Barton County votes, 76, were cast for Bell with 28 for Lincoln (Van Gilder 1972:9). Confederate sympathies only increased in counties further south nearer the seceded Arkansas. An early McDonald County history boasts that "in 1860 John D. Henry and Nathan D. Sherer were the only two men in McDonald County who voted for Lincoln" (Goodspeed 1888:42). Similarly, Shrantz uses citations of Confederate flags as well as the departure of "young men of federal sympathy" as evidence of Jasper County's Southern sympathies (Shrantz 1949c:"Confederate Flag").

To appease slave-holding Unionists Lincoln denied any intention to abolish slavery, declaring his primary motive to preserve the Union. John Blassingame explains how on September 22, 1862, Lincoln "issued his preliminary emancipation proclamation, but he implicitly excluded the loyal slaveholding states from its purview" (1964:328). Effective in retaining Missouri's support for the Union, this exclusion of Missouri from the Emancipation Proclamation made life especially difficult for the state's slaves. Despite Missouri's alleged support for the Union, "slavery died hard, especially in the areas of rural and southern Missouri" (Parrish 1973:150).

black soldiers

Despite offers of \$300 to loyal slaveholders who allowed the recruitment of their slaves and the option for loyal slaveholders drafted to send slaves as substitutes,

slaveholders in Missouri "stubbornly resisted all attempts to enlist their slaves" (Blassingame 1964:335). Due to what Blassingame judges an "ineffectual recruiting system," Missouri "furnished only 8,344 Negroes to serve in five regiments" (1964:338). These numbers do not accurately reflect, however, the contribution of Missouri's black population to the Civil War. "A majority of the Negroes, recruited in Kansas, Illinois, and Iowa," Blassingame notes, "were runaway Missouri slaves" (1964:338). Recruiters based in Kansas had the greatest impact on slaves in the Southwest.

Though Missouri's official recruitment for black soldiers was less than successful due to political division in the state, many black soldiers, especially those from Southwest Missouri, entered the war through other channels. Parrish explains how Kansas Senator James "Jim" Lane prided himself on his success in "kidnapping or enticing Missouri slaves" to fill the colored regiments, how "he armed them without any Federal authority and sent them back into Missouri to seek more recruits from their fellows" (1973:56).

Other efforts included Brigadier General Thomas Ewing's plan to "break the spirit of the rebel sympathizers" (Blassingame 1964:329). Blassingame discusses his order on August 18, 1863, "to provide a military escort for all slaves who wished to escape to Kansas. Any slave who enlisted was sent to Kansas City, Missouri." He goes on to

state that "the plan was so effective that in a few weeks the border counties were practically devoid of slaves" (1964:330).

Former slave William Black tells how his father and other Hannibal slaves found protection in the Union army: "Dey enlisted de very night dey got Kansas City and de very next morning de Pattie owners were dere on de trail after dem to take dem back home, but de officers said dey were now enlisted U. S. soldiers and not slaves and could not be touched" (Rawick 1972a:30). Former slave Richard Bruner's account also reflects tension between Confederate soldiers and their former slaves fighting for Kansas Union troops: "I was a runaway nigga; I run away when I was about grown and went to Kansas. When de war broke out I joined de 18th United States Colored Infantry, under Capt. Lucas. I fit three years in de army. My old Marsa's two boys just older then me fit for de south" (Rawick 1972a:60).

The influence of black regiments in Southwest Missouri is seen vividly in William Pearson's brief history of Sherwood, a former village in Jasper County. His account also speaks of the enlistment of Jasper County blacks and local hostility towards them:

A regiment of colored troops--the first Kansas colored infantry--took stations at Baxter Springs about this time and began to make occasional trips into Jasper County. Included in their number were quite a few Jasper County Negroes. Reports. . .

speak of these Negro soldiers as forming a well-disciplined and efficient regiment, but they were bitterly hated by the society. [Pearson n.d.:7-8]

It was the invasion by this troop that decided the battle resulting in Sherwood's ultimate destruction. Once the third largest town in Jasper County, the town of Sherwood was burned to the ground during this battle on May 19, 1863, by Union soldiers from the First Kansas Colored Infantry. The troop was under the command of Col. James M. Williams (Attoun 1992:"Gone But Not Forgotten").

war at home

Though many former slaves fought for the Unionist cause, accounts from former Missouri slaves provide evidence that racism and the resulting danger to slaves was rampant on both sides. Slaves feared the approach of Confederate and Unionist troops alike. The narrative of former Missouri slave Joe Casey provides one example: "My old master run when dem blue jackets. Dey made me kill chickens and turkeys and cook for 'em" (Rawick 1972a:77). Similarly, George Bollinger, former slave of Bollinger County, tells how the "Yankees" came during a festive corn-shucking. The slaves hid in the shucks attesting to a fear of Union troops, a fear proved well-founded by the troops orders to ride through the corn shucks. Bollinger says, "When dey hurd dat, our men com out. Dey looked funny wid shucks 'en silks in dey hair. Den de sojers ask's 'em things 'en iff'n

de answers didden seem right dey hit 'em over de haid wid dere guns" (Rawick 1972a:41). Perhaps Betty Brown of Cape Girardeau best summarizes the experience of slaves caught in the middle of a war fought more for political and economic motives than for the abolition of slavery:

Blue belly Yanks, dey had fine blue coats an the brass button all ovuh the front o' 'em, shinin' like stahs. Dey call us "little cullud folks," "cubs," and dey burn down Jonesburg. Yes'm we seed Jonesburg down in ashes. Dem Blu-coats wuz devils, but de gray-coats wuz wusser. Dey turn over our bee-gums an'dey kill our steers, an' carry off our provisions, an'whu dey couldn't carry off dey ruint.

[Rawick 1972a:54]

Possibly more threatening than the organized Union and Confederate soldiers in Southwest Missouri was the damage caused by guerrilla warfare. In his history of Barton County, Van Gilder notes that near the border of "Bleeding Kansas," "blood also was spilled in Missouri" as "bands of guerrillas, pro-slavery bushwhackers in Missouri and anti-slavery jayhawkers in Kansas were formed and both open battle and attacks from ambush developed" (1972:7). Van Gilder says that "the many bands of guerrillas" often "preyed upon partisans of both sides, including defenseless women and children" (1972:9). Damage was so great, he says, that at one point "not more than six resident families

remained in the county" (1972:9). Parrish ascribes the influx of slaves to St. Louis in the winter of 1861-62 to "the fighting in Southwestern Missouri and northwestern Arkansas" (1973:71).

While destruction by guerrillas affected all residents in the area, hostility towards the relatively small number of slaves and former slaves seems to have been especially strong. Greene explains how the "guerrillas terrorized blacks to retard enrollment," citing as an example "the infamous guerrilla leader William Quantrill who threatened to kill anyone answering Lincoln's call for volunteers" (1980:81). Blassingame also speaks of "widespread disloyalty and guerrilla warfare on the Kansas-Missouri border" and guerrillas who "blocked attempts of slaves to enlist" (1964:329,336). Betty Brown of Cape Girardeau tells of "bushwackers" and "Ku Kluxers" who go roun' killin all de cullud men an' bayanettin' de cillern. . . . Dey sho' wuz bad" (Rawick 1972a:54).

Early Years of Freedom

family

Many children whose parents were kidnapped by bushwhackers or soldiers or whose fathers left to fight in the war, found themselves, like Carver, freed yet orphaned in 1865. Census records in 1870 indicate that other families, like Moses and Susan Carver's, raised black children along with their own. The household of H. L. Testerman, a McDonald County farmer, for example, includes Testerman's wife Isabella, four sons, three daughters and 14 year old Mary Brannum, identified by race as mulatto and by profession as servant. J. L. Lamance, McDonald County merchant, listed in his family three daughters, two sons, and 10 year old mulatto servant Julie Brannum. County Census returns show that C. B. Walker's household included the following members designated "black" or "mulatto" (U.S. Census 1870:Schedule 1): 16 year old Isa Carter, 16 year old Henry Brannum, and 7 year old James Carter, who would have been slaves ages 11, 11, and 2 respectively at the close of the War in 1865.

Marriage records of 1865-1870, show the stability of families and couples who did survive the war. McDonald County records the marriages of black couples John and Margaret Wallace in 1867 and of Joseph and Mary Wallace in 1867. The latter were the parents of three children whose names appear below their parents in the marriage record: Fanny Jane aged 10, Joseph M. aged 7, and William Henry 1

year (Woodruff 1971:Book A). Newton County records also include numerous marriages in the years shortly following the Civil War. The number and ages of the children attest to the stability of families begun years before marriages were legal. Henry H. Simmons and Anna Hudson, "persons of color with 1 child," were married on December 7, 1865. Vincent Isbell and Fanny Hudson, "persons of color with 6 children, 4 girls, 2 boys" were also married on December 7, 1865 (Vineyard n.d.[b]:3). Marriages not listing children include Washington Carter to Nancy Crumongton on December 13, 1866 (Vineyard n.d.[b]:8).

The marriages performed after the war were often formalities to make relationships begun prior to the war legally binding. Smoky Eulenburg complains of the Missouri law requiring couples married informally years before to be legally married for a fee when "de squire came around and we had to get married all over again under de new constitution. It would cost \$5" (Rawick 1972a:112).

jobs

Due to the nature of agriculture and industry in Southwest Missouri, the slaves performed a vast array of tasks enabling, them to perform a wider variety of work in freedom than former plantation slaves. The variety of jobs held by former hill slaves suggest a tremendous adaptability, a versatility George Washington Carver demonstrated to an extreme degree by serving as cook,

running a small laundry business, farming on a homestead, painting, and ultimately becoming a symbol of resourcefulness and industry to small farmers throughout the South. Coming from a region where cotton was never as important as in the Deep South, Carver had been exposed to many types of agriculture. As Ayers notes, "in the parts of the Upper South where climate and soil provided more congenial circumstances for livestock and food crops. . . farmers took advantage of the opportunities" (1992:191). And during the reconstruction their resourcefulness helped the Ozark subsistence farmers: "As a result the areas of the South most intensely devoted to cash crops witnessed the least attractive side of producing for the market" (1992:191).

Trained in slavery to perform a number of tasks, Ozark slaves were far more likely to develop careers as craftsmen and artisans than plantation slaves. An example is the successful career of McDonald County's Joseph Wallace. A blacksmith by profession, Wallace ran one of McDonald County's five industries listed in the industrial schedule for 1870 (U.S. Census 1870). Another resourceful Southwest Missourian was former slave Nelson Danforth, who told an interviewer he had supported himself in Springfield "by making baskets, chairs . . . and by hunting, which was his main occupation" (Rawick 1975:160).

A huge mining area since the 1840s, Southwest Missouri provided many jobs working the mines, jobs likely filled by

a number of former slaves. Very few narratives from Southwest Missouri exist, but interviews with former slaves who worked in other mining areas in Missouri can perhaps give us some idea of their experiences. Louis Hill, for example, went to Valle Mines, Missouri to work for Mr. Boyer, "a Frenchman" and "dug mineral, zinc, etc. I got 50 cents a day. He did all de diggin and I 'coached' it from de head of the drift to de shaft. I had a little car on wheels day run on a wooden track. I reckon I worked for him 'bout two years." If Hill's account is typical, women also worked the mines: "My mother would go out to de big dirt pile called 'scrappin' and would pick out de zinc and lead chunks and little pieces" (Rawick 1972a:187). He continues, explaining that "purt near every Saturday we would take de ore down to Furnace Town and get it weighed and get a check for it" (Rawick 1972a:187). Several years later Hill "went to Mine La Motte and worked on de furnace. My first work at dat place wass at \$2 a day and later on I became a 'charger' and got \$2.50 a day," an amount he claims "was good wages then" (1972a:185). But the work had its costs when he "got mine sickness or lead colic from workin' in de furnace and had to quit" (1972a:188).

Hill's method of dealing with this sickness also attests to the versatility of Missouri slaves. Unable to work the mines as he had most of his life, he "worked at sawing wood, chopping wood, and at a soda factory and beer depot and peddled ice and delivered soda and beer to Knob

Lick, Synit, Graniteville and Bonne Teere" (1972a:188).

Joe Casey of Festus also provides information on work in mining areas: "We stayed dere free and I went out in de diggin's in de tiff at Valle Mines. Some days I made \$5 and some days made \$2. . . . Den went to Mineral Point and worked for de tiff and mineral" (Rawick 1972a:77). His master helped him after the war and let them stay in the same cabin they had inhabited during slavery.

Court records suggest that former slaves without work were dealt with in much the same way as poor whites. Newton County Court on Saturday November 11, 1865 it was "ordered by the court that William Wright be allowed two dollars per week for maintaining Milly, a colored pauper, and that a warrant issue to him for the same" (WPA n.d.:folder 15440). The same day he was awarded "eight dollars to be by him expended in procuring clothing for Milly." On February 5, 1866, it was ordered that Wright "be allowed five dollars per week" for maintaining Milly another three months. Miss Mildred Fergenson was awarded by the Jasper County Court on May 16, 1866, the more substantial sum of two hundred dollars "for keeping Cloe a black woman one year" (WPA n.d.:folder 10897). This practice was not reserved for blacks. Keeping the county's poor in the homes of wealthier community members seemed to be the standard method of helping people, black and white, back on their feet. McDonald County Court, for example, ordered on November 5, 1867 that Lucinda Pouge "be allowed seventeen

and 50/100 dollars for pay of keeping a pauper to date" (WPA n.d.:folder 12785). Two men by the name of Holt appearing in the 1870 population schedule as a part of Moses Carver's household were likely examples of this practice. After the establishment of Newton County's poor farm, this practice was partially replaced. In February 1869, for example, the Newton County court awarded Joshua Masser eight dollars "for conveying a pauper colored woman to Poor Farm" (WPA n.d.:folder 15441).

schools

Accounts of former slaves demonstrate the extreme importance placed on education, an opportunity denied by law prior to the war. Some even equated their spiritual well-being with education as Emily Camster Green, former slave of Cape Girardeau, suggests: "I cud a been a spiritualis woman if I'd had a little education. I allus had visions an'us see thing but I nebber know'd whut dey mean" (Rawick 1972a:141). Similar sentiment is shown in the following verses from a song quoted by former slave Susan Rhodes of St. Louis:

When I can read my titles clear,
To mansions in de sky,
I'll bid fare well to every tear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

Should earth against my soul engage,

And fiery darts be hurled,
Then can I smile at Satan's rage
And face a frowning world. [Rawick 1972a:287]

Though Missouri law required the establishment of separate schools in areas with a prescribed number of black children, difficulties finding teachers, the tremendous distances between black schools, reluctance of local officials to enforce state laws, and disorder wrought by the war on the public school system as a whole hindered the education of many former slaves during Reconstruction. County histories show, however, that over time a number of schools for black children were established in the latter nineteenth century.

All formal education was brought to a halt during the war as many school houses were used by the military, and the general havoc prevented normal sessions. The history of Newton County Schools compiled by the Newton County Historical Society claims that there were no schools in Newton County from 1862-66 and that "on November 1, 1866, there were only a few school buildings still standing" (1991:12).

In 1866 Newton County schools Superintendent H. W. Goodykoontz reported 367 black male, 15 colored female, 1,423 white male and 1195 white female students with only 8 log buildings and 1 frame building [NCHS 1991:12]. With the reconstruction of school systems for white students, new schools for black students were created such as the school

in Neosho attended by Carver which was built in 1872 (NCHS 1991:8,9). Another school for black children "was in operation at that time in the area north east of Newtonia and was maintained by the Cedar Bluff and Jolly Schools" (NCHS 1991:8-9).

McDonald County schools underwent similar destruction. Superintendent A. M. Tatum reported "486 white male and 431 female children, six male teachers" to hold classes in the adequate remaining "two frame and nine log school buildings" (Goodspeed Co. 1888:61). No schools for black children are recorded in Goodspeed's history. Probably none existed due to the small number of children, less than the legal requirement for the establishment of a separate school. Statistics for 1886 record only "2 colored males of school age" (Goodspeed Co. 1888:61).

According to an early history of Carthage schools prepared by the Works Progress Administration, "the history of schools is broken" from the beginning of the Civil War until 1868. Though this history does not list specific schools or teachers for black schools, these schools were apparently established. A report by the Carthage Public Schools in 1882 records that 80 of the 1340 children "between 6 and 20 years of age" attending public schools during the preceding year were "colored" (WPA n.d.:folder 21989). Jasper County's school buildings were also used for Sunday School for black children on Sundays much as the Locust Grove school in Diamond which Carver attended on

Sundays. In 1870, it was "ordered that E. P. Searle be allowed to use the schoolroom for singing school purposes and for teaching a Sabbath school for colored children" (WPA n.d.:folder 21989).

Faced with numerous hardships in Reconstruction Missouri, not the least of which was lack of adequate schools, newly freed black Missourians learned to read and write in a number of different ways. Former slave Lula Chambers, who moved to Joplin around 1900, discusses the difficulties of early black schools: "Right after de war dey sent colored teachers through de South to teach colored people and child, do you know, dem white folks just crucified most of 'em" (Rawick 1972a:82). Former Missouri slave Louis Hill "larned ta read at Mine La Motte when a white man taught me in evenings at da mine between shifts" (Rawick 1972a:185). Harriet Casey of Fredericktown learned to read from her sister, who "come and got me after freedom and learned me de alphabet. De first thing I ever learned to read was, 'I see you Tom. Do you see me?'" (Rawick 1972a:74)

churches

Gaston Hugh Wamble offers an interesting discussion of changes taking place in Missouri Protestant churches after the Civil War, showing that "prior to the Civil War whites and Negroes shared a common religious life in many Protestant churches of Missouri" though "by 1880, however,

Negroes had withdrawn and organized independent churches" (1967:321). The causes and effects of this separation reveal much about race relations before and after the War. Wamble argues that prior to the Civil War the churches had an equalizing force on the races, explaining that with few exceptions "churches admitted Negroes and whites by the same means" and that "churches observed the same policy in restoring whites and Negroes who, having been excluded from fellowship, showed a penitent attitude and promised to amend their ways" (Wamble 1967:324, 325). Especially in the rural Ozarks, slave religion was closely integrated with that of the masters. Wamble ascribes the "conspicuous decline of Negro membership" after the war partially to the fact that "many Negroes simply moved away, apparently leaving rural areas for the cities" (1967:334). Those that remained appear to have taken great measures to establish a complete separation from white authority that could not be found in other elements of society.

Evidence exists that a small number of blacks in Southwest Missouri retained membership in predominantly white churches. Goodspeed's history of Newton County, for example, includes the names of Sarah Anderson and Eliza Brown, both identified as "colored," as "probation members" of the Methodist Episcopal church established in Newtonia in 1871 (1888:21). Though no exclusively black churches are recorded in this history, a desire for separation is evident: "In January, 1878, the African Methodists gave a

reception with a view of providing funds for the erection of a church building" (1888:222). Likewise a "colored Sabbath-school, organized at the Baptist Church in May, 1870, was presided over by J. H. Price, Jr., with John House, assistant, and Philip Givens, secretary" (1888:226). Later accounts show that their efforts were eventually successful. According to a bulletin prepared by Neosho Second Baptist Church, Philip Givens served as the first minister of in 1876 (Neosho Second Baptist Church 1976). Three lots were purchased initially for \$200 and in 1896 a new church was built with \$500 borrowed from American Baptist Home Mission. At this time the church merged with Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. Early members include J. M. Clendenon who served as church clerk, Mrs. Della White, Miss Ora and Ophelia Baker (Neosho Second Baptist Church 1976).

Perhaps due to the larger black population in Greene County, Springfield's Washington Avenue Baptist Church was established as early as 1867 (Lederer 1986:30). It appears to have taken a few years more before similar churches appeared along southern Missouri's western border. Several black churches, however, were eventually established in early post-war Jasper County. A bulletin prepared by Joplin's Unity Baptist Church traces its origins to the uniting of two black churches founded around 1881: the first was Second Baptist Church where Reverend H. H. Curtis served as pastor, and the second was St. John the Baptist Church where W. S. Blake served as pastor. Charter members

included Mrs. Ida Murray, Jefferson Pierce, Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Sears, Katie Harper, Mr. and Mrs. George Hubbard, Mrs. Murray, Mr. Cooper, and Mr. and Mrs. Ellis Bland (Unity Baptist Church n.d.:3). The earliest recorded church in Jasper County, however, is perhaps the African Methodist Episcopal Church organized in 1872 in Joplin. An early history of Jasper County describes the church's Reverend John Dorsey as "an affable Christian gentleman" who "labored zealously and earnestly to accomplish spiritual success" and lists the following "constituent members: Green Crawford, George Sears, David Graham, Mary McGee, Lina Engliah, Alfred Wollard, Sadie Cole, Bettie Richey, Mary Mitchell, Alice Williams, Prince Barnett, John McCrutcheon, Mary Dennick." The same history states that only one of these founding members was still with the church in 1893 (Mills and Company 1883:429). Plagued by early problems establishing stability, the church "was prompted to rent a house to hold services in" (1883:429).

Through this separation, Wamble argues, blacks could gain a sense of freedom not allowed them by white-controlled institutions:

. . . because church life is voluntary, it offered an avenue for Negroes to exercise their new freedom. In civil affairs Negroes had to wait for legislative and judicial procedures to take their course before scuring and exercising civil liberties; they could take immediate--and unilateral--action in religion. . . .

They imitated institutional patterns with which they were familiar. They construed freedom, it seems, largely in terms of what they understood to be the priveleges of whites. [1967:343]

Edward Ayers echoes this idea, noting the otherwise unavailable opportunities for leadership available to black ministers: "Black ministers were central figures in their communities, with a relative importance far greater than that of their white counterparts" (1992:164). At another level, the desire for separation from white churches evidenced by Southwest Missouri's former slaves is a small manifestation of deeper, irreconcilable racial tensions that led to tragic consequences for many blacks and the ultimate flight in terror of those remaining.

public lynchings

As discussed in a previous section, prior to the war blacks in rural Missouri enjoyed a relative safety in comparison with plantation slaves of the delta region. Yet even then, hints of racism can be seen that viciously surfaced with the threat posed by newly freed blacks after the war. Joplin's refusal to acknowledge the possibility that "a Negro slave boy owned by John C. Cox, first settler in Joplin limits, uncovered some heavy rocks while digging for fish bait" and was thus the first to discover lead in Joplin serves as an example (Shaner 1948:2). Numerous accounts contradict this story, denying credit to the slave

(thought to be named Pete), including claims by white residents David Campbell and William Tingle. An example of more overt hostility can be seen in the records of "Crimes and Accidents" in Goodspeed's history of Newton County. Prior to 1856, a slave belonging to Mrs. Armstrong of Neosho was burned at Carthage. According to this brief report the owner "went up to Carthage to talk with her old slave, and afterward witnessed his dreadful execution" (Goodspeed Co. 1888:198). Such events were relatively rare in pre-Civil war Southwest Missouri, giving the impression that racism was not a significant threat in the peaceful Ozark mountains. The Civil War was a pivotal point, however, revealing previously subdued tensions between supporters and antagonists of black equality. As Michael Fellman states, "for a tantalizing historical moment. . . the white community in Missouri disagreed on the race issue" (1988:50).

The precarious balance quickly and fatally gave way to violent antagonism toward the small, vulnerable black community. Shaner describes Joplin's reaction to the murder of officer Theo Leslie, allegedly killed by "a tramp negro named Tom Gilyard" in 1903:

The search for Gilyard was exciting, and he was not captured until the second day by Lee Fullerton and M. R. Bullock near Castle Rock. The negro had been shot in the leg by Leslie and carried a gun.

Fullerton and Bullock disarmed the negro and took

him to the Joplin jail.

The town was in a frenzy, the streets were crowded and they surged to the jail. . . . Gilyard . . . was hanged to a telephone pole, after being beaten and mistreated. While he was being strung up three shots were fired into his body by men in the mob.

That night unruly mobs gathered and raided the negro quarters, destroying property and driving the negroes from their homes. [1948:67-68]

Katherine Lederer describes a similar, possibly even more horrifying, scene in Springfield, where Horace B. Duncan and Fred Coker were accused of raping a white woman. The initial arrest and release occurred on Good Friday, April 13, 1906:

On Saturday night, they were rearrested and dragged out of the county jail by a mob of several thousand men and boys. They were hauled forcibly to the Public Square, where they were hanged and burned beneath a replica of the Statue of Liberty. A crowd estimated at 6,000 men, women, and children looked on. Unsatiated, the mob went back to the jail, brought Will Allen back, gave him a mock trial, and repeated the ritual. [Lederer 1986:3]

Following this incident, Lederer says, "hundreds of blacks left Springfield forever" though the event was quickly forgotten in the publicity of the April 18 San Francisco earthquake (1986:4).

According to Burt Purrington, lynching "was viewed as a kind of frontier justice where court systems were not yet firmly established or where they were not regarded as a functioning form of justice" (Purrington 1987:60). As a mining community Joplin was subject to large numbers of fortune-hunting travelers and lacked sufficient means of controlling crime. Newly freed blacks, as serious threats to "the preservation of the South's social, political, and economic status quo," were made targets of this "frontier justice" for "crimes" as trivial as "trying to act like a white man" or "making boastful remarks" (Purrington 1987:60-61). According to Purrington, these two incidents, the "Easter and Tug-of-War Lynchings," symbolized the fear experienced daily by Southwest Missouri blacks and were primary causes in the "Black Exodus from Southwest Missouri."

flight from Ozarks

In the life of George Washington Carver, we can see the conflicting forces controlling the lives of the region's black residents. The tremendous diversity of skills required for the survival of Southwest Missouri farmers was equally necessary for their slaves. Ironically, Carver's Ozark home provided him with the very skills he needed to escape the same region's intense hatred of his race. Statistics compiled by Russell Gerlach show the drop in the black population from 1860 to 1980. Greene County dropped

from a 12.6% black population in 1860 to 1.6% in 1980; Jasper County from 4.9% to 1.2%; Newton from 4.6% to .4%; and Barton County from 1.1% to 0 (Gerlach 1986:60, 62, 67, 53).

The majority of African-Americans fled to areas with much larger black populations such as Chicago and St. Louis, leaving behind what Purringon calls "a legacy of lynchings" which "has been long and painful indeed," a legacy that demands further attention to the too often forgotten history of Southwest Missouri's black heritage.

Part II
Influence of Southwest Missouri
on George Washington Carver

Overview

scope of study

The first part of this study addressed the ways of life experienced by slaves and freed blacks from 1860 to 1870 in Southwest Missouri as a whole. The purpose of this second section is to place Moses Carver's farm and George Washington Carver's early childhood into this larger context in order to discern how George Carver's experiences in Diamond, Missouri compared with the circumstances of others in similar situations.

Born during the Civil War, George lived with his mother and his older brother, Jim, in a slave cabin on the Carver farm. George and his mother were kidnapped and taken into Arkansas when he was still a small baby. George was returned to Moses, but Mary was never found. After the abolition of slavery, Moses and Susan took George and his brother Jim into their home and raised them as their own children, George staying until he moved to Neosho in order to attend a school for black children and Jim, stronger and more able to work, staying to help on the farm. From Neosho, George moved to Fort Scott, Kansas where he witnessed a lynching on March 26, 1879, the horror of which made him flee immediately. After briefly maintaining a homestead, being rejecting to school on the basis of his color, and working numerous jobs as a clerk, cook, and housekeeper, George eventually was able to continue his

education at Simpson College in Iowa, supporting himself with a small laundry business. He had enrolled to study art and music but eventually pursued agriculture more earnestly and transferred to State Agricultural College at Ames, Iowa. After he earned his degree in 1896, Booker T. Washington offered him the position of Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station at Tuskegee, Alabama. It was at Tuskegee that Carver made his most well-known contributions to agriculture, discovering ways of growing and utilizing such crops as the sweet potato and the peanut that would not wear out the soil as cotton had. His later life has been extremely well-documented, but information on his early life consists primarily of hearsay. Though the exact details of Carver's early life are sketchy, the work of numerous biographers and scholars have provided us with a great deal of information that contributes to an understanding not only of Carver himself but of life for the small black population in Southwest Missouri.

Due to the scarcity of written records left by farmers in the Ozarks combined with the destruction of existing records wrought by the Civil War, there are numerous areas of contention surrounding George Washington Carver. Though Carver named as his father a neighboring slave who was "killed shortly after my birth while hauling wood to town on an ox wagon" (qtd. in Kremer 1987:20), there is some dispute as to who his father was (McMurry 1981:10). Likewise there is discrepancy as to the exact year of Carver's birth. The

1870 census shows that Carver must have been born in 1860. Stories of his kidnapping as a six-week old baby, however, suggest he was born in 1864 (Merritt 1929:11-12). Carver himself cites 1865, saying he was "about 2 weeks old when the war closed" (Kremer 1987:20). Moses Carver's heritage is also an area of dispute. Early biographers as Rackam Holt (1943) and Raleigh Merritt (1929) assume he was of German descent, while research by Robert Fuller (1955) and genealogical research by Rose Carver Danner (1931) suggest British origins.

Perhaps even more significant than the discrepancies in this factual data are the vastly different reactions to Carver when he achieved fame in later years. Kremer succinctly explains how social and historical factors have contributed to diverse receptions of Carver as a symbol of progress to African-Americans during this century:

The very qualities that made him a hero to Americans of the 1940s and 1950s made him suspect among blacks and liberal whites in the 1960s and early 1970s. He was an "Uncle Tom" we said. . . , pronouncing him to be a subject unworthy of serious scholarly study. [Kremer 1987:2]

The lack of ascertainable facts clouding his early life and the multi-faceted life Carver led in later years allow for such conflicting views to emerge and exist simultaneously. As Kremer notes "Carver was not completely hero or myth. Instead, he was an extraordinarily complex man living in an

extremely complicated society" (Kremer 1987:2). The study of this complicated society adds much to our understanding of the man and what he came to symbolize for many diverse groups of Americans.

Study of slavery and early freedom in the Missouri Ozarks helps clarify some of the ambiguity surrounding Carver that has confronted biographers and historians. Conversely, information supplied by Carver and uncovered by Carver's biographers contributes to the limited amount of available information on Missouri's black population in the late nineteenth century, adding to our understanding of a people who have left the region with few traces of how they lived and how they were affected by Missouri's ambiguous status as a slaveholding Union state.

The slave narratives collected by the Works Progress Administration during the 1930s (Rawick 1972 and 1975) offer opportunities for direct comparison to Carver's own biographical statements in interviews with biographers and in his correspondence and writings currently housed at the George Washington Carver National Monument in Diamond, Missouri and The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Probably born during the tumult of the Civil War, Carver was in the same age group as the former slaves interviewed and the lack of certainty as to the exact date is true of countless others. Likewise, the attitudes towards Southwest Missouri's black population reflected in early county histories, newspaper accounts, court records and other

sources used in Part I of this study are the same attitudes that affected Carver and helped form the views he held his entire life, views that brought him both harsh criticism and praise depending on the stage in American history and the perspective of the critic.

Linda McMurtry explains the myth surrounding Carver in part as the result of a "vision of racial harmony in the South shared by workers in the interracial movement." "For them," she says, "Carver became a symbol both of the fruits of tolerance and the ability of Afro-Americans" (1981:265). The very traits that made him popular among the interracial movement, however, were looked down upon by many activists who saw his acceptance by the white population as an impediment to black progress. Kremer writes that "Carver's solicitousness of whites offended his Tuskegee colleagues" (1987:8). Kremer goes on to say that eventually hostility towards Carver gave way to a "mystique" that "gave Americans what they seemed to need most: tangible success" (1987:11).

His tolerance which simultaneously alienated him from more radical black activists and elevated him to a symbol of racial harmony for others can be attributed in part to the role of whites in his life in Missouri when he was one of a very small number of blacks and where the majority of influential figures in his life, both positive and negative, were white.

Following a brief outline of biographical studies on Carver will be an examination of how Carver's life reflects

elements of slavery in the Missouri Ozarks and how he came to symbolize so many different things to so many different people. The diversity of work required of Ozark slaves and farmers combined with Carver's own personal initiative and ability helps account for George Carver's remarkable versatility as he moved from one occupation to another to meet his needs. The census records show that in the variety of his produce and livestock Moses Carver's farm was typical of farms in Newton County and that George Carver would have been accustomed to versatility from a very early age. His skills were perhaps even more versatile than most because of his illness which forced him to spend more time learning tasks from Susan Carver and left him leisure time to pursue his interests in music and art. The relatively small number of black influences on Carver and the positive influence of Moses and Susan helps account for his later acceptance of white approval that he was criticized for by activists.

A study of the Civil War and its effects on Moses Carver and George will follow, examining stories surrounding Moses Carver, including Moses' being hanged by bushwhackers searching for gold and the kidnapping of George and his mother, Mary. Biographers and former neighbors seem to agree that while Moses Carver owned slaves, he shared abolitionist sentiments, an ambiguous stance but not an uncommon one in this area bordering free Kansas to the west and Confederate Arkansas to the South. Like many others in the area, the Carvers suffered far less from the conflict

between North and South than from the damage wrought by guerrilla warfare. Growing up in this geographic region where the Civil War could not be reduced to two sided issues may have been a factor in Carver's tendency later to not see complicated issues in terms of black and white but to approach problems with the goal of offering practical help to anyone who needed it.

The study will conclude with an analysis of Carver's flight from Missouri in light of problems in his region. Carver shared a great deal with the majority of blacks living in the area who were driven from their homes by the fear of lynchings. Methods of "frontier justice" operating in Southwest Missouri fell heavy on the small black population who had attained the skills to adapt to numerous circumstances but did not have the numbers to defend themselves. The paradoxes that have puzzled Carver's biographers and brought a strange combination of fame and resentment are the paradoxes of a people caught in a web of racial tensions and complicated politics.

Carver's biographies

The sources of information concerning Carver's early life are often vague and built largely upon hearsay and speculation, resulting in discrepancies as to the date of Carver's birth, the identity of his father, his loyalties to Moses and Susan. At a time and in an area where written records were rare, little could be gleaned from documented

sources. Discrepancies in George Washington Carver's biographies reflect the scarcity of concrete facts and the politically and emotionally charged issues that surround his life. While we may never be able to completely separate fabrications from fact, what emerges instead is a history of perceptions of Carver that reflect the changing and delicate dynamics his life came to symbolize.

Based more on legends that have developed around Carver's early life than on ascertainable facts, the earliest published biographies tend to idealize Carver and his accomplishments. Rackam Holt's George Washington Carver: An American Biography (1943) was the most influential early full-length work dedicated to Carver. While it did much to draw attention to Carver's accomplishments, Kremer argues that the idealization of Carver impeded serious study. "Holt's book," he says, "reflected the view of Carver held by most Americans during the two decades after his death: it pictured him as a flawless, superhuman hero. Holt romanticized and mythologized her subject in an uncritical account of his rise from slavery to fame" (1987:2).

Historian Robert Fuller acknowledges the impact of Holt's work, saying that "the bulk of her findings are substantially true and that "where her statements are plausible, if unverified, we are inclined to accept them on the strength of her long association with Carver and his reminiscences" but that "there are some errors of facts and

there is much that is distressingly vague, clothed in literary embellishment" (Fuller 1958a:4). Her embellishments, such as her description of George's illness during which "Mary poured honey she had doctored with tansy into his mouth" (Holt 1943:2), were characteristic of many published works of the time. Dr. George Washington Carver: Scientist by Shirley Graham and George D. Lipscomb (1944) takes the idealizations even further, fabricating extensive passages of dialog and inventing detailed scenes to illustrate George's love of nature as in the following passage in which George worries excessively over the fate of a fish:

Once he had caught a boy pulling one of the fish out on a string. The fish would have died! The boy ran away frightened out of his wits by the ferocious little dark bit of humanity which had leaped at him from the woods. Yes, he had to go and free those baby fishes. They were large enough now to take care of themselves, but not when they were hemmed in as he had them. [Graham and Lipscomb 1944:31]

The many directions Carver's life took allowed just as many areas of emphasis for biographers. The very titles of biographical works suggest the different ideals he represented. Ethel Edward's Carver of Tuskegee (1971), for example, emphasizes his influence as a teacher just as Raleigh Merritt's From Captivity to Fame (1929) emphasizes

his rise from slavery. For others, Carver's religious life offered inspiration, making him a symbol merging science and Christianity. In Saint, Seer and Scientist: The Remarkable Story of George Washington Carver of Tuskegee, Alabama, J. H. Hunter addresses the religious aspects of Carver's life and work, describing him as a "humble, devout Christian man whose achievements in so many fields have been . . . a boon to mankind" (Hunter 1939:Foreword).

An unpublished paper by Barry MacKintosh expresses the resentment felt by those who believed Carver's fame was to some extent undeserved. He attempts to counter idealized views by Holt and others by examining Carver's accomplishments in terms of their scientific merit, arriving at the conclusion that "George Washington Carver was less significant for what he did than for what the public believed of him and for what he symbolized. His agricultural education and extension work at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama of rural Southern blacks was praiseworthy but unspectacular in nature or impact" (MacKintosh 1974:7). Kremer says that MacKintosh's often harsh assertions that Carver's works were greatly overrated result in part from a failure to understand the complexities of the man and of the society in which he lived.

The earliest fully documented study on Carver is an unpublished report entitled "The Early Life of George Washington Carver, Parts I and II" by Robert Fuller in collaboration with Merrill J. Mattes (1958a). Frustrated by

the "strangely checkered career of Carver's childhood" and the "romantic haze" that developed around him (1958a:2), Fuller relies heavily on interviews with Carver's contemporaries from Newton County as well as on census records, Federal land records, early letters written and signed by Carver, plat maps of the area, and existing school records. Kremer asserts that this study remains "the best narrative of Carver's early life" (1987:197). Fuller also conducted a study on Moses Carver's family challenging the assumption of Carver's German descent held by Holt and Lipscomb and offering as thorough as possible a family tree based on oral interviews, cemetery grave stones, and official records (1955a).

Other unpublished studies include Anna Coxe Toogood's "Historic Resource Study" housed at the George Washington Carver National Monument (1973), another thoroughly documented examination of Carver's early life that also provides analysis of the available sources on the topic. Information on the Moses Carver house can be found in "Historic Structures Report for Moses Carver Late Period Dwelling" (NPS:1963) and Charles Porter's "Report of Investigation of George Washington Carver's Birthplace at the Old "'Diamond Grove' Plantation Near Diamond, Newton County, Missouri" (1943).

Linda McMurry's George Washington Carver: Scientist and Symbol is the most recent published full length work offering a thorough account of Carver's life (1981),

documenting events in his life and offering explanations for his rise to fame. She observes the difficulties in "separating the real George Washington Carver from the symbolic portrayals of his life" and attempts to show that "Carver was more than a folk saint; he was a real person with all the complexities and contradictions inherent in human nature, and these were exaggerated by the fact that he was black in a white America" (1981:vii-viii).

While Carver has been studied extensively in numerous biographies and all of his writings and correspondence have been collected at the Carver National Monument in Diamond, Missouri and at the Tuskegee Institute Archives in Tuskegee, Alabama, his life remains somewhat enigmatic. The addition of information on other slaves and former slaves in the region, the narratives collected by the Works Progress Administration, and various public records all suggest that much of the misunderstanding surrounding Carver that has resulted in such diverse accounts of his life stem in part from the ambiguous status of slaves in the area he was born. Like others in the area, both the nurturing and hostility came from whites, creating the "vicious circle" Kremer says he "never learned to escape" (Kremer 1987:8).

The objective of this project is neither to prove or disprove existing theories as to Carver's influence or origins nor to provide a thorough analysis of his life but to add to the wealth of material on Carver by trying to understand how conditions in Southwest Missouri from 1860 to

1870 affected George Washington Carver, how Carver's life in turn can add to our understanding of the black population in Southwest Missouri, and how the complexities emerging in biographies can be clarified by an understanding of the society in which he was reared.

Carver and the Missouri Ozarks

Kremer very accurately observes that Carver "defies easy categorization" (1987:17). The adaptability that allowed him to move through life as a painter, launderer, musician, teacher, and agriculturist eluded biographers as Barry MacKintosh who complained that Carver was not as effective a scientist as he has been given credit for. This versatility is characteristic of slaves and former slaves from the area who had to adapt to a variety of tasks in a region which did not lend itself to any single cash crop and in a region where owners usually held only one or two slaves to perform a wide variety of tasks.¹ The adaptability of Ozark slaves posed a threat to the area's white workers and contributed to the hostility towards Southwest Missouri's black population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the same time period Carver himself fled from Missouri to attend school in Iowa.

influence of Moses Carver

Moses and Susan Carver were among the earliest settlers in Newton County, moving to Newton County to take advantage of the Preemption Act of 1841 and buying 160 acres of land in Marion Township (Goodspeed Co. 1888:169). (See Fuller 1955a:3 for full account of the Carvers' land purchases.) This act was passed in 1841 to provide incentive to small

farmers to settle in the west, allowing farmers who improved land for six months to buy it at \$1.25 an acre (McMurry 1981:4). According to McMurry the land chosen by Moses and his two brothers, who also moved from Illinois, lent itself well to a variety of crops, including both prairie and timberland and having an abundant water supply with two springs and a creek near the house. Moses and Susan lived in a one room hewn-log cabin with the three children of Moses' brother whom Moses and Susan raised after his death (McMurry 1981:4). Moses and his brothers were among the first of many to be attracted to the terrain of Newton County. Between 1840 and 1860 Newton County's population grew from 2,790 to 9,319.

Though we have these few facts of the Carvers' history from the county returns of the federal census and Newton County land deeds, there has been controversy regarding the origins of Moses Carver, Holt and other early biographers suggesting German heritage, Fuller British. Raleigh Merritt makes numerous references to the Carvers' German heritage, as do Graham and Lipscomb who frequently speak of "Frau Carver" and invent extensive passages of German dialogue between Moses and Susan. In an autobiographical sketch George Carver himself says that Moses Carver was "a German by birth" (qtd. in Kremer 1987:23). In a study on the Carver family Robert Fuller found no solid evidence to uphold the theory that the Carvers were of German descent.

Milton Rafferty says that "most of the stock that

settled Missouri came from the British Isles," but that "Germans were the major immigrant group from the mainland of Europe" (Rafferty 1981:38). He goes on to say that between 1830 and 1850, which includes the dates the Carvers are believed to have moved, large numbers of Germans immigrated to the Ozarks (1981:38). Though the claims of Carvers' German descent are plausible, Fuller explains that "Carver" is listed as a British family name (Fuller 1955a:2), a possibility strengthened by Danner's assertion that the Carvers were of English-Quaker stock and not German" (Danner and Danner 1931:5). Possibly, early biographers emphasized the possibility of German heritage because of the belief that Germans were abolitionists and successful farmers. Milton Rafferty states that the "similarity of soil, climate, and vegetation to conditions in their homeland" made the Germans "successful farmers" (Rafferty 1981:38). Later biographies such as McMurry's focus on more immediate origins traced to Ohio and Illinois (1981:4).

McMurry notes that the Carver farm more than doubled in value between 1840 and 1860, the 1860 agricultural census listing a cash value of \$3000 (1981:5). At this point when his need for help was greatest, Moses' nieces and nephews had moved away and potential hired help were attracted to available land on which to start farms of their own. According to McMurry it was these difficulties combined with their age that led Moses and Susan to purchase thirteen year old Mary from a neighbor in 1855 "despite his reputed

philosophical opposition to slavery" (1981:5). Moses Carver was fairly typical as a slaveholder in Newton County, falling into the 77% of slaveholders owning one or two slaves in 1860 (See Table 1). He also fell into the majority of the area's slaveholders in buying a female who was relatively young (See Tables 2 and 3). The census records show also that Moses Carver was one of several slaveholders in the area to keep children orphaned during the War and raise them as their own. Being only one of two children on a farm where survival depended on adaptability and diversity, George Carver was exposed to various farming techniques and to the value of resourcefulness and innovation that he would demonstrate throughout during his brief homesteading venture in Ness County, Kansas (McMurry 1981:27-28), his work with agriculture in Ames Iowa (McMurry 1981:31-46), and his final success at Tuskegee, Alabama (McMurry 1981:145-158).

As McMurry notes, "Southwest Missouri in the 1860s was hardly an auspicious place for the development of black genius" (1981:4). Opportunities for education were limited, George Carver having to leave his home to attend a school for black children in Neosho and hostility towards the black population growing at an alarming rate following the Civil War. Other aspects of the area, suggest that Carver thrived not entirely in spite of, but in part because of, his exposure to ways of life in this region. The census records show that Moses Carver was typical of other farmers in the

area in growing a wide variety of produce as well as raising a variety of livestock. The 1860 and 1870 agricultural census records for Newton County show that he raised horses, cows, mules, sheep, pigs, oxen, and poultry. He grew Indian Corn, oats, Irish Potatoes, hay, Flax, Wool, rye, beeswax, honey, and molasses as well.

Fuller's interviews with residents who knew Moses Carver show an even wider range of skills and activities. James Robinson discusses his ventures in raising horses: "He did have a lots of horses. That's how he made his money, raising horses, selling them and bringing the money back, burying it" (Fuller 1958a:23). We are also told that he built different types of fences such as the stone wall around the cemetery, walnut tree fence, and a picket fence (Fuller 1958a:23; Toogood 1973:40).

Though Moses Carver was typical of other small farmers and slaveholders in the area in many ways, the ways he differed may also help explain George Carver's later life. Linda McMurry says of the Carvers that "their industriousness and relative prosperity won them the respect of their neighbors, but Moses, especially, was considered eccentric" (1981:7). George's musical interest possibly came from one of Moses' "eccentricities." Moses was spoken of highly for his playing of the violin, giving George early exposure to music which he developed throughout his life. According to Olive Lennon "he played the violin and he could play the organ and most any of those musical instruments"

(Fuller n.d.(c):Box 2 Tape 6).

Moses also differed from his neighbors in that he did not regularly attend church, but McMurry says that "his membership in the Masonic Order suggests that he was not an atheist" (1981:7). She explains the significance of this decision on his reception in the community, saying that "since the church was the center of most social activities in Diamond, as in other small towns, Moses could easily have been considered antisocial" (McMurry 1981:7). Kremer says that while there is nothing to account directly for the almost mystic element in George Carver's religious beliefs, he was exposed to a variety of approaches to religion and early on was encouraged to think independently. He "had gotten a good dose of regular Bible reading during his stay with Mariah Watkins" and was also influenced by Moses who "had been a free thinker who distrusted organized religion" (1987:6).

He was remembered as having what McMurry calls "an uncanny rapport with animals," a characteristic that doubtless helped him in his training and raising of racehorses (1981:7) and that perhaps made George more aware of his own skill with plants. Delmar Goodwin remembered "Uncle Moses had some pet squirrels and they would run up and down his chair" (Fuller n.d.(b):Box 1 Tape 12). Likewise, Ida Brock recalled he had a "big bulldog that was his pet and he cherished that dog so much" (Fuller n.d.(a):Box 1 Tape 12). Moses was an independent thinker in

his religious and political beliefs, a musician, and an industrious farmer, all traits instilled in George at a very early age.

influence of Susan Carver

According to Nellie Edwards, Mary was sold to the Carver's by the Bayneham family in order to help Susan:

That's the only one I ever knew of their selling.
The one they sold to Mr. Carver because they felt
sorry for Aunt Sue and they knew she needed help.
That was why he bought her, because she was
getting old. [Fuller 1958(b):Box 1 Tape 10]

Though most biographical works acknowledge that due to George Carver's frail health (McMurry 1981:13), he spent more time with Susan while his brother Jim helped Moses more, little information about her has been recorded.

Because she died in 1892, the residents interviewed by Fuller in the 1950s remembered little about her. Sarah Smith for example, remembered Moses quite well but "didn't know Aunt Sue, she died and he married again" (Fuller 1955c:Box 1 Tape 1). In a rare description of Susan, Anna Cox Toogood quotes Mary Lou Hardin, a contemporary of the Carvers, as saying Susan was "a good old-fashioned mother" (1973:30), a telling statement given Susan had no children of her own. If "good old-fashioned" was the standard for Newton County mothers, Susan treated her nieces, nephews, George, and Jim as her own children and earned the respect

of her neighbors in her method of rearing them.

It was with Susan that George learned to weave, knit, and sew. In an autobiographical sketch written in 1897 Carver takes pride in the fact that he "knit Chrochet, and made all my hose mittens etc. while I was in school" (Kremer 1987:22).² Samples of his lace and crochet collection are on display at the Tuskegee Institute (Toogood 1973:30).

Mr. Forbes Brown, a boyhood contemporary of Carver, attributes George Carver's success to the lighter tasks required of him working with Susan:

. . . had he been normally strong, Moses Carver would have expected him to perform his full share of labor on the farm, leaving little time to follow the course he did. Instead, Mose was most considerate, permitting George to perform only modest chores and to assist Mrs. Carver in the housework. Such activities, afterwards, proved a great blessing, as he used them to great advantage in earning his living expenses while acquiring knowledge. [Fuller 1958(a):30]

Fuller's interviews with Carver's contemporaries suggest that Moses pampered George by allowing him to work with Susan. But accounts by former slaves show that slave children frequently worked with the female of the household, watching children, sewing, and helping with various household chores.³ The accounts suggest also that working with women did not necessarily entail substantial amounts of

free time and that most slaves who helped their mistresses or children who helped their mothers (as is closer to George's case after the war) would likely not have had the leisure to pursue music, painting, and private meditations as George did. Research done by Lillian Schlissel based on the diaries of pioneer women who moved west shows that wives of early settlers frequently "not only performed their womanly tasks but also took over men's work when necessity arose" (1992:4). A diary entry by Helen Carpenter, written during a difficult move, suggests that women from Missouri typically had an even greater load:

Some women have very little help about the camp, being obliged to get the wood and water. . .make camp fires, unpack at night and pack up in the morning--and if they are Missourians they have the milking to do if they are fortunate enough to have cows. [Schlissel 1992:78]

Susan's obligations would not necessarily have always been easier. But due to his illness, George was relieved of physically taxing chores by Susan, as well as Moses, thus having time to develop a far wider range of skills and interests than other children in the area.

Civil War

Moses Carver's political views

While the southwestern counties were overwhelmingly Confederate, individual opinions on the issues involved are far more complicated. Moses Carver, a slaveholder whose neighbors claim "was opposed to slavery," was no exception (Fuller 1958b: Box 1 Tape 10). From this and other observations of early Newton County residents, McMurry's description of Moses Carver as "a slaveowning Unionist" seems accurate and as such Carver embodied the paradox of Missouri politics during the Civil War (1981:8).⁴ Though in Southwest Missouri's minority as a Unionist, Moses Carver typified the region's residents in his seemingly contradictory stance on slavery. McMurry writes that "the tension was felt by everyone along the border but must have been especially intense for people like Moses Carver who . . . were caught in the middle" (1981:8).

guerrilla warfare

Perhaps more significant in George's life and in his perceptions of the Civil War was the wreckage wrought by guerrilla warfare. In an autobiographical sketch written in 1922, Carver remembers most vividly that "at the close of the war the Ku Klux Klan was at its height in that section of Missouri" (Kremer 1987:23). The grueling experiences of Moses Carver at the hands of invaders substantiate the claim made in History of McDonald County that in Southwest

Missouri "Yankees and Southerners rushed hither and thither plundering friend and foe alike" (Goodspeed Co. 1888:42).⁵

The two Civil War stories told most frequently to Fuller during his interviews with Newton County residents both involve raids by outlaws. The first of these occurred in the fall or winter of 1863 when Carver refused to tell invaders the location of his money and was consequently strung from a tree with hot coals put to his feet. Nellie Blanche Bayneham Edwards offered the following account:

Those bushwhackers hanged that 'ole Moses Carver there on his own farm to get him to tell where he had money buried. Of course he couldn't tell because he didn't have it. Aunt Sue she was a brave soul -- his wife. There he was hanging dying and she got a knife and she cut that rope and got him down. Saved his life. [Fuller 1958(b):Box 1 Tape 10]

According to McMurry, this incident left Carver "both with scars and a distrust of people" and that afterwards he "kept his money buried in different places all over the farm" (1983:11).⁶

A later attack in which George and his mother Mary were kidnapped was far more devastating to the Carvers. Moses sent Union scout John Bentley, who was familiar with the region's guerrilla bands, into Confederate Arkansas to find them. Though Mary was never found, Bentley did return with George and according to legend was rewarded with one of

Moses Carver's race horses. In an autobiographical account written around 1897 Carver recounts his understanding of this episode:

My sister mother and myself were *ku klucked*, and sold in Arkansaw and there are now so many conflictinng reports concerning them I dare not say if they are dead or alive. Mr. Carver the gentleman who owned my mother sent a man for us, but only I was brought back, nearly dead with whooping cough with the report that mother & sister were dead, although some say they saw them afterwards going north with the soldiers. [Kremer 1987:20]

Carver was one of many slaves orphaned during the Civil War and who suffered severely at the hands of invaders. Nellie Edwards tells how "those people out of the hills. . .those rough men. . .could get by and could do those things and it would be blamed onto the North" (Fuller 1958(b):Box 1 Tape 10).

His early exposure to the trauma wrought by unrestrained violence helps account for his later refusal to become actively involved with more radical activists and his life-long commitment to advancing his race entirely through peaceful means. As a teacher he emphasized the importance of personal initiative and the need to "rise to the full height of your possibilities," encouraging each of his

students to "take his share of the world and [let] other people have theirs" (letter to L. Robinson qtd.in Kremer 1987:85).

Carver and Post-Civil War Race Relations

influence of the white community on Carver

Perhaps the greatest irony of Southwest Missouri lies in the discrepancy between the relatively hospitable environment provided for slaves prior to the war and the intense hatred fueled by the Ku Klux Klan that resulted in a mass exodus of the black population in the years following.⁷ During Carver's childhood in Diamond Missouri, he had very limited contact with other black children or black role models. With the exception of the Watkinses and his brother Jim, his influences were primarily white. Nellie Edwards, granddaughter of a neighboring slave owner, remembers having played with George as a child, saying she "hadn't any idea I was playing with a lad somebody that was going to be famous someday" (Fuller 1958(b):Box 1 Tape 10).

Booker T. Washington portrays Carver as a neglected orphan who "was allowed to grow up among the chickens and other animals around the servants' quarters, getting his living as best he could" (Washington 1911:225-6). Instead of perpetuating this negative image of his early childhood with Moses and Susan, Carver maintained throughout his life that "Mr. and Mrs. Carver were very kind to me" and he goes on to say "I thank them so much for my home training" (qtd. in Kremer 1987:21).

His life was so dominated by white influences that an encounter with a black choir, long after he had left

Diamond, was a monumental event as he describes in a letter to Claude Bell dated 1941:

The first group of colored people that I ever saw in my life was a group of singers from Fisk. I was out in Western Kansas and they came and sang. I was just a mere lad at that time and the vision and impression has never left me. I thought it was the nearest to heavenly music I had ever heard in all of my life. [Kremer 1987:148-9]

His letters and autobiographical sketches indicate that he was well aware of the violent racism that had developed in the same region in which he had been nurtured. Perhaps the most significant event was a lynching he witnessed in Fort Scott, Kansas. In an undated note to biographer Rackham Holt, Carver explains that he remained in Fort Scott "until they linched a colored man, drug him by our house and dashed his brains out onto the sidewalk. As young as I was, the horror haunted me and does even now" (Kremer 1987:149). Similar episodes even closer to Carver's birthplace in Joplin and Springfield were witnessed by countless others who fled the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (See pages 50-53 for discussion of lynchings in Springfield and Joplin.) Soon after he found himself a victim of racial prejudice after being accepted to Highland College by mail and being turned away when he arrived because he was black (McMurry 1981:24).

Another deeply disturbing event in his life occurred when a black colleague, Nelson Henry, arrived in Ramer, Alabama with white photographer, Frances Johnston. He explains in a letter to Booker T. Washington how immediately a mob was "being made up for the night to take Mr. Henry" (Kremer 1987:150-51). Helping Henry escape from this gruesome scene instilled in Carver an even deeper awareness of the hatred involved in racial tensions and a fear of violence wrought by those who "were thoroughly bent upon bloodshed" (Carver qtd.in Kremer 1987:151).

In a chapter entitled "Carver: Black Man in White America," Gary Kremer describes the conflicting views Carver had of positive and negative white figures in his life, saying that "on the one hand, it was whites who raised him and helped him, and even loved him. On the other hand, he saw how irrational and vicious--even deadly--white wrath could be" (Kremer 1987:151). Instead of strengthening animosity of the white race, however, these contradictions instilled in Carver a belief that racial stereotypes in all forms should be avoided and that people, white and black, should be judged according to their individual contributions to society. Kremer explains that "he viewed human beings of all races as members of a God-created family and was troubled by whites who refused to share that vision" (1987:151). In a letter to friends Mr. and Mrs. John Milholland dated 1905, Carver expresses this view, lamenting the fact that "Southern people seem to have a way of working

over those who would be our friends under more favorable circumstances" and praises the family for never "taking any other stand than that a 'man's a man'" (Kremer 1987:151).

Carver's approach to racism

Carver's critics dismissed him as being too passive in his views such as Irving Menafee who said he "never did think too much of Dr. Carver cause all the things he put out mostly benefited white people" (qtd. in Kremer 1987:9). Even Booker T. Washington, in a letter criticizing Carver's career at Tuskegee dated 1911, accuses Carver of not taking stands and advises him that "pursuing a policy of trying to please everybody. . .has not resulted in success; and such a policy seldom does result in success" (Washington 1972:Vol. 10, 593).

Carver's method of addressing racial issues was to increase awareness of racist ideas in hopes of removing them, as in a letter to the Peanut Growers' Association which planned to advertise "Pickaninny" peanuts. The letter, dated 1929, opens rather apologetically, asking the reader to "pardon me for making these suggestions" but states explicitly the source and the reasons for his disapproval, explaining the "unpopularity" of such "caricatures" among black people, providing examples of unsuccessful advertisements that employed racist appeals in the past, and ending with an emphatic request the company not advertise with "an ugly cartoon" (Kremer 1987:155).

His goal of transcending racial distinctions also involved educating white and black audiences alike on the contributions to society made by black Americans. An example can be found in a letter to Carter Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life, dated 1929, in which he asks Woodson to send "a list of the pictures books, etc., that you handle with reference to colored people" (Kremer 1987:155). Carver planned to make these materials available to children at black schools and to use them during his visits when speaking to white and black audiences.

Carver was confronted with the effects of racism from infancy when his mother was stolen during the Civil War and throughout his life, as he witnessed the brutal deaths of others of his race and as he struggled to gain an education in the face of such hostility. An understanding of the positive influences in his life, most significantly Moses and Susan Carver, helps explain how he maintained a positive outlook on humanity, his belief that his race did not have to prevent him from attaining even the highest goals, and his refusal to harbor resentment based on color against the white race. In significant ways Carver's story, with all its misunderstandings and ambiguities is the story of the black population driven from Southwest Missouri, whose lives, like Carver's, were influenced in positive as well as negative ways by a predominantly white world.

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1. See pages 23-28 of this paper for further discussion of the work required of Southwest Missouri slaves.
2. Kremer states his editorial policy in editing of Carver's writings as follows: "I have not violated the integrity of Carver's inimitable writing style, nor have I altered his form in any way. Carver was often inattentive to niceties of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. . . . Reading Carver's letters today one gets the feeling that he wrote with such passion and intensity that slowing down to ensure proper syntax or rules of agreement would have sapped his writing of its vigor. The ideas could not wait to get out" (Kremer 1987:xi).
3. See page 26-28 for work performed by slave children.

4. See pages 30-32 of this study for a fuller discussion of Missouri's politics during the Civil War.

5. See page 36-37 of this study for discussion of guerilla warfare in this region of the state.

6. That Moses Carver had gold hidden on his property was a widely held belief among the area's residents. Many believe that Carver's second wife married him in hopes of finding this treasure, including Sarah Smith who said that "she couldn't dig his gold up and she left. . ." (Fuller interviews: Box 1 Tape 1).

7. See page 53 for discussion of flight from the Ozark region.

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1860. Schedule 3. McDonald County
1860. Schedule 3. Newton County.
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1870. Schedule 2. McDonald County.

1870. Schedule 2. Newton County.

1870. Schedule 3, Agriculture. Barton County.

1870. Schedule 3. Jasper County.

1870. Schedule 3. McDonald County.

1870. Schedule 3. Newton County.

TABLE 1

Numbers of Slaves Owned by Slaveholders

County	1		2-4		5-9		10-14		15-19		Total
Barton	6	55%	5	45%	--	--	--	--	--	--	11
Jasper	45	43%	38	37%	16	15%	5	5%	--	--	104
McDonald	11	44%	7	28%	6	24%	1	4%	--	--	25
Newton	52	40%	48	37%	23	17%	5	4%	3	2%	131

TABLE 2

Ages of Southwest Missouri Slaves

County	14 and under		15 and above		Total
Barton	10	48%	11	51%	21
Jasper	151	48%	164	52%	315
McDonald	40	56%	32	44%	72
Newton	229	52%	214	48%	443

TABLE 3

Gender of Slave Population

County	female		male		Total
Barton	17	81%	4	19%	21
Jasper	180	57%	135	43%	315
McDonald	47	65%	25	35%	72
Newton	216	49%	227	51%	443