Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1860

DISSERTATION

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By

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Abstract

This study examines the use of slave labor by the Charleston Orphan House, an institution widely acclaimed to be the first public orphanage for white children in the United States. The institution, which was founded in 1790, hired, purchased, and acquired through natural birth, gift, and bequest more than 100 slaves before the Civil War. All of the slaves worked in domestic labor of one sort or another. From 1790 to 1803, the orphanage utilized hired slave labor alone, but in 1804 it purchased its first group of slaves. This study traces the challenges that the officials of the institution faced between 1790 and the eve of the Civil War, and their efforts to face many of these challenges through hiring and buying slaves. The study pays particular attention to the institution’s quest to provide a service to poor and orphaned white children in part through the use of slaves.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to the One who makes all things possible. Matthew 19:26
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Professor Stephanie Shaw, for her guidance and also the members of the dissertation committee, Professors Kenneth Going and Ousman Kobo. The Institute for Southern Studies at the University of South Carolina, The College of Arts and Sciences at The Ohio State University, and the Graduate School at The Ohio State University provided research grants and/or fellowships which helped make the completion of this research possible. Dr. Nicholas Butler, public historian at the Charleston County Library, and the staff of the Charleston Archive and South Carolina Room at the library also provided professional and friendly assistance. The consistent encouragement and support of my family members, colleagues and friends were also exceedingly helpful. Special thanks to: Robert Knight, Larry and Mabel Ferguson, Gabrielle F. Cannick, Lauren Ferguson, Larry Ferguson, Kathleen Ferguson, Melissa Pawlikowski, Bethany P. Kim, Margaret and Oliver Sanders, Jan Durant, Dr. Deveonne Cooke, and Anita Dawson-- your belief in me made all the difference.
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Introduction

In 1799, some of the owners of slaves working at the Charleston Orphan House angrily informed the Steward of the orphanage that they would take their slaves “away, unless they are paid their Hire.” Alarmed, the Steward informed Alexander Alexander, a member of the Board of Commissioners who had been assigned to visit the Orphan House that week, of the slave owners’ threat. Perturbed, yet fearful of losing the institution’s valuable slaves, Alexander reported the threat to the other Commissioners and remarked with some derision, “The City Council and the Commissioners must be sensible that the Institution cannot be supported without servants.”

Alexander’s remarks epitomize the importance of slave labor to the Charleston Orphan House, an institution that has been widely acclaimed as the first public orphanage for white children in the United States of America. Founded in 1790 in Charleston,

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1 The Commissioner’s name is rendered correctly. His first and last names are the same.
2 Minutes, Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 12 April 1799, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina (hereafter cited as OH Minutes).
3 The claim that the Charleston Orphan House was the first public orphanage for white children in the United States has been made by many scholars (e.g. Barbara L. Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 121; Newton B. Jones, “The Charleston Orphan House, 1860-1876,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 62 no. 4 (October 1961): 203; *History and Records of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1860*, abstracted and compiled by Susan L. King (Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1984), 1; and John E. Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House: Children’s Lives in America’s First Public Orphanage* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 206n 6. Kindle Edition e-book.), but it appears to have originated with Benjamin Joseph Klebenar. In 1954, Klebenar published an article in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* on the history of poor relief by the City of Charleston (see Benjamin Joseph Klebaner, “Public Poor Relief in Charleston, 1800-1860,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 55 no. 4 (October 1954): 210). Though the Charleston Orphan House was tangential to his study, he acknowledged it as “the first municipally supported orphan asylum in the United States.” Klebaner referenced the following work as the source of his claim: Homer Folks, *The Care of Destitute, Neglected, and Delinquent Children* (New York,
South Carolina, the Orphan House fed, clothed, and sheltered over 2,000 poor and orphaned white children before the Civil War. During the same time period, the Orphan House hired, purchased, and was given, through charitable donation and bequest, numerous slaves. These slaves cooked, cleaned, and washed the clothes of the child inmates and of the white men and women employed as the children’s primary caregivers, and also performed other domestic duties. Seldom mentioned in the literature on the orphanage, these slaves are part of the hidden history of the Charleston Orphan House. They are also part of the hidden history of institutional slavery in the United States. This study resurrects the Orphan House slaves from obscurity, and by extension sheds light upon a little known aspect of the American slave experience: the use of slave labor by public institutions.

Though extensive records pertaining to the Charleston Orphan House are available at the Charleston Archive in Charleston, South Carolina, the literature on the

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1902), 9. A copy of this work (published at an earlier time than the work Klebaner consulted) is accessible on-line and shows that Folks’ actual statement concerning the Charleston Orphan House was, “So far as known, the only public institution for children, not forming part of an almshouse, existing in 1801, was the Charleston, S.C. orphan house.” (see Homer Folks, The Care of Destitute, Neglected, and Delinquent Children, Monographs on American Social Economics, Department of Social Economy for the United States Commission to the Paris Exposition of 1900, 8-9. Google Play e-Book [http://books.google.com/ebooks/app#reader/RSIKAAAAIAAJ/GBS.PA1 [accessed June 11, 2013]]. Folks rendered this statement within the context of a discussion on institutional care for needy children. He acknowledged that in most nineteenth-century cities, impoverished, abandoned/orphaned, and delinquent children were sent to the city’s almhouse. He cited the city of Charleston as an exception due to the existence of the Orphan House. It appears that Klebaner interpreted Folk’s statement as a claim that the Charleston Orphan House was the first municipally-supported orphanage in the United States. Additional research into the history of American orphanages may substantiate this claim, but in the meantime, it may be more accurate to say that the Charleston Orphan House is believed to have been the first publically-supported orphanage for white children in the United States. Benjamin Joseph Klebaner, “Public Poor Relief in Charleston, 1800-1860,” The South Carolina Historical Magazine, 55 no. 4 (October 1954): 210. “By-Laws of the Orphan House of Charleston, South Carolina (Charleston, SC: n.p., 1861), 7. Internet Archive e-Book [http://archive.org/details/bylawsoforphanho00char [accessed June 27, 2013].
institution is thin. Several works on poverty in Charleston and on poor and orphaned children in early America mention the Charleston Orphan House; archivists in South Carolina have published a few works about it; and a popular history of the orphanage was produced during the 1990s. But until the publication of John E. Murray’s study of children’s lives at the orphanage, a scholarly monograph had not been written. Murray’s work is an excellent study of the children admitted into the orphanage between 1790 and 1860. In addition to its strong prose, the study is notable for its original use of sources: letters written by impoverished parents requesting admittance of their children into the Orphan House. Though the institution was called an orphanage it admitted both orphaned children and the children “of Poor distressed and disabled parents who are unable to

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5 The Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House occupy approximately 81 linear feet of space in the Charleston Archive at the Charleston County Public Library in Charleston, South Carolina. The collection consists of documents related to the activities of the institution from the time it was founded in 1790 until its removal from the City of Charleston in 1951 and relocation to an area north of Charleston, now incorporated as the City of North Charleston. The records pertaining to the early national and antebellum eras were consulted for this study, especially the minutes of the weekly meetings of the Board of Commissioners, the weekly reports of the Stewards and Physicians of the orphanage, correspondence, financial records, and two lists of slaves owned and hired by the orphanage, compiled ca. 1818 and ca. 1833.

support and maintain them.”

The letters written by poor parents that are at the center of Murray’s study shed light upon a group of southerners nearly as neglected in the literature as the slaves who worked at public and private institutions: the urban white poor.

Murray’s investigation, through these letters, of the private lives of the urban white poor, reveals several important observations about the role of the Charleston Orphan House in Charleston’s society. His principle argument is that, “In assuring poor whites of elite concern for their children, the Orphan House served a political function as important as its social welfare function. It did more than merely process vulnerable children.” Murray further contends that the Orphan House “brought all levels of white society together.” It did this by “[attracting] the poor who needed it to care for their children, and the artisanal and mercantile classes who wanted those children to work as apprentices, and the wealthy elite who oversaw those efforts to care for young people.”

Murray also notes that, “the Orphan House itself bought, sold, and rented slaves,” and references to the slaves are scattered throughout the text. But due to the study’s focus on

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7 Founding Ordinance, Minutes, no date, in volume pertaining the period 18 October 1790-9 August 1795.
8 John E. Murray, The Charleston Orphan House: Children’s Lives in the First Public Orphanage in America (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), Kindle Edition e-book. Murray notes that poor white in Charleston “lacked the numbers and ostentation that might have placed them in the written historical records.” “These whites were too poor to own slaves,” he further states, “and in many cases too poor even to maintain their own abode. By a variety of estimates they constituted between 15 and 20 percent of the white population, or perhaps 8 to 10 percent of the city as a while. The historiographical section of the introductory chapter of Murray’s work also provides additional information on the place of the urban white poor in the literature on antebellum-era working class families, children, and poor whites throughout the South. Murray, Charleston Orphan House, preface, 5-8.
the child inmates of the Orphan House and their families, discussion of the slaves’ lives and labor is tangential.\(^9\)

Despite the scholarly attention to the inmates who lived at the Charleston Orphan House, it is nearly impossible to consider the development of this important institution without considering the place of slavery in its history. Slaves have been critical to the development of public and private institutions, yet, a distinct body of literature does not exist on slavery at these institutions.\(^10\) Still, as Jennifer Oast, author of a recent PhD dissertation on institutional slaves notes, “Institutional slaves . . . and their work undergirded a large number of charitable, religious, and educational institutions . . . before the Civil War.”\(^11\)

The Charleston Orphan House was both a charitable and educational institution. Poor and orphaned white children lived there on the bounty of the city and received a rudimentary education. The work of slaves at the Orphan House was primarily domestic. They cooked food for the inmates of the orphanage, cleaned the house in which the inmates and officers (i.e. white employees) resided, washed the children’s and officers’ clothes, and cared for the grounds, garden, and outbuildings on the Orphan House lot.

Work usually began upon the rising of the sun and ended with its setting. It was

\(^9\) For Murray’s references to enslaved workers at the orphanage see Murray, *Charleston Orphan House*, 3-4, 14, 25-27, 55, 58, 93, 97, 98.

\(^10\) Save passing references to slaves in institutional histories, work on institutional slavery is still developing. Scholarly interest in the topic flowered after Brown University announced in the early 2000s that it had formed a committee to investigate the University’s past ties to slavery. For information about this announcement and the academic community’s reaction to it see “Brown University to Consider Reparations on Account of the Institution’s Past Ties to Slavery,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (hereafter *JBHE*) 43 (Spring 2004): 18-20 and “Brown University Confronts Its Past Ties to Slavery,” *JBHE* 53 (Autumn 2006): 33-34. Also, a copy of the committee’s critical report on the issue is available on-line at [http://brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/#](http://brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/#) [accessed 15 May 2013].

physically arduous and divided according to gender. It was also affected by changes in the population of slaves owned by the orphanage due to sale and by shifts in the slave’s productivity due to inefficiency, sickness, childbirth, and death. Each of these transitions resulted in the purchase or hire of additional slaves. The latter situation was particularly thorny for the Orphan House because the institution had a history of indebtedness to the owners of hired slaves. Throughout the 1790s, the City Council of Charleston, which was responsible for covering the institution’s expenditures, fell delinquent in payment of wages to the owners of hired slaves. Some, like the ones cited above, threatened to remove their slaves from the employment of the Orphan House before the terms of their contract ended, but others decided to weather the storm in hopes of better times. In light of these circumstances, in 1804 the institution opted to purchase slaves. Its original intention was to keep them in perpetuity and replace all hired slave workers with them and their future children. This did not work however, for reasons discussed in chapters four and five of the text; slave hiring continued to take place at the Orphan House throughout the 1850s.

The fourth through fifth chapters of the dissertation also discuss the lives and labor of the slaves through the lens of work and health. The third chapter traces the growth of the enslaved population over time to illustrate how the orphanage moved from an exclusively hired slave population to one comprised of both hired slaves and owned slaves. The other chapters -- one and two-- concern the history of slavery in Charleston and the history of the Charleston Orphan House and, as such, provide a larger context within which to view slavery at the Orphan House.
In sum, this study sheds light upon the centrality of slave labor to public and private institutions, generally, and to the Charleston Orphan House in particular. Though scholarship on slavery at such institutions is limited, the labor of slaves on behalf of charitable, religious and educational institutions was not unimportant. In the case of the Charleston Orphan House, the work of enslaved persons helped make it possible for the City of Charleston to provide a public welfare service to poor white families and orphaned white children. It is hoped that this study will inspire additional research into the lives and labor of slaves owned and employed by public and private institutions, and by so doing expand our understanding of slavery in America.
Chapter 1: Slavery in Charleston

Slavery has deep roots in Charleston, South Carolina. Established in 1670 as a port town in the British colony of Carolina, Charleston was initially located at Albemarle Point on the west bank of the Ashley River. In 1680, the town was moved across the river to a peninsula bordered by the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, which empty into the Atlantic Ocean. Originally settled by colonists from England and Barbados, Charleston became home to many others, including French Huguenots, Scots-Irish, Jewish immigrants, slaves, and free people of African-descent. The earliest groups of slaves were imported from British Caribbean colonies and neighboring colonies on the North American mainland. But, upon the turn of the eighteenth century, slaves began to be imported from Africa. Between 1706 and 1739, at least 32,233 enslaved Africans entered South Carolina, most through the port of Charleston. Additionally, by the eve of the American Revolution, more than 40% of all slaves brought into British colonial North America had entered the region through the port of Charleston.¹

Charleston, itself, had a sizeable enslaved black population during the colonial through antebellum eras. Historian Philip Morgan calculated it to be just under 1,400 in 1720, more than 4,450 in 1760, and 5,833 in 1770. Census records place the slave population of Charleston during the early national era (1790-1819) at between 7,000 and

12,000, and during the antebellum era (1820-1860) from just under 12,700 to just over 19,500 (see Appendix A, Table 6). This sizeable population, supplemented by slaves on nearby plantations, worked in a variety of occupations that undergirded the town’s shipping-based economy. The region’s chief exports, during the colonial era, were beef, pork, rice, deerskins, timber, and naval stores (i.e. tar, pitch, rosin, and turpentine). Enslaved blacks helped raise the livestock, grow the rice, procure the deerskins (through trade with Indians), fell the trees, and produce the naval stores that were shipped to the British mainland, and throughout British America. Rice continued to be exported throughout the antebellum era, and cotton, primarily from the upcountry, was exported too. Slaves worked on the docks in Charleston as stevedores and piloted ships in and out of the harbor. The transportation of crops from plantations to the city also depended upon slaves. Additionally, enslaved men worked in the ship-building and ship-repairing industry.²

Slaves also worked in other sectors of the economy during the colonial through antebellum eras. Several historians have noted their domination of Charleston’s public markets. According to Philip Morgan, “The lower market (on the Bay) . . . was a particular haunt for slave vendors.” There, male slaves butchered and sold meat, and female slaves sold “divers things” ranging from dry goods, to cakes, to rice, and more. Though restricted by law as to what they could buy and sell, market slaves were highly

enterprising and often made special arrangements with their owners to increase their retail profits. Robert Olwell explains:

The Negro Act of 1740 permitted slaves to attend the market to buy or sell on behalf of their masters provided they carried tickets “particularly enumerating” what was to be bought or sold. From the beginning, however, slave marketeers sought to do more. Many worked out an arrangement with their masters by which they not only sold their master’s produce but used their earnings to purchase goods in their own right and resell them for their own personal profit. After they paid their master an agreed-upon “wage,” these slave marketeers could retain whatever surplus they earned.

One contemporary observer complained bitterly of this practice, saying, “[T]hose Negroes and other slaves, being possessed of large sums of money, purchase quantities of flour, butter, applies [sic], &ca., all [of] which they retail out to the inhabitants of Charles Town, by which means leading lazy lives, . . . free from the government of their masters.”

The fact that many slave market vendors were women further complicated the matter. Gender stereotypes and norms of the time period held that women who operated in the public sphere were contemptuous and insubordinate to authority. The vocabulary used to describe these slave market women underscores this fact. Grand juries, newspaper editorialists, and commonplace observers described slave market women as “loose, idle and disorderly,” “insolent,” “abusive,” “notorious,” and “impudent.” One critical

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4 Citing the work of historian, Natalie Davis, Olwell explains that like Charleston’s enslaved market women, women “who protested against authority . . . in early modern Europe” were often described as “disorderly.” He goes to say that, “Market women in eighteenth-century England were portrayed in the same way. A description of bread riots in England in 1807 observed that “women are more disposed to be mutinous; they stand less in fear of law, partly from ignorance, partly because they presume upon the privileges of their sex, and therefore in all public tumults they are foremost in violence and ferocity.” Olwell, 104.
observer even wrote, “I have known those black women to be so insolent as even to *wrest* things out of the hands of white people, pretending they had been bought before, for their masters or mistresses, yet expose *the same* for sale again within an hour after for their own benefit.”

Market slaves were not the only slaves described as inappropriately independent in Charleston; slaves who worked out on hire were described that way too. The practice of slave hiring involved leasing one’s slaves to an employer for a specified period of time. Two forms of this practice existed in Charleston: slaveowner-based hire and self-hire. In the former case, a slaveowner would make arrangements with an employer for one or more of their slaves to be hired by the day, week, month, or year and the employer would pay the slaves’ wages directly to the owner at specified intervals. In the latter arrangement, a slave found his or her own employment, received wages directly, and paid his or her owner a specified portion of the wages, usually weekly or monthly. Generally, self-hired slaves evoked the most complaint. *An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves*, a law passed by the colonial legislature in 1712, explains why. The twenty-eighth clause of this text reads:

And whereas, several owners of slaves used to suffer their said slaves to do what and go whither they will, and work where they please, upon condition that their said slaves do bring their aforesaid masters so much money as between the said master and slave is agreed upon, for every day the said slave shall be so permitted to imploy himself, which practice hath been observed to occasion such slaves to spend their time aforesaid, in looking for opportunities to steal, in order to raise money, to pay their masters, as well as to maintain themselves, and other slaves, their companions, in drunkenness and other evil courses; for the prevention whereof, *Be it enacted* by the authority aforesaid, That no owner or master or mistress of any family, after the ratification of this Act, shall suffer or permit any

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5 Olwell, 114.
slave to do what, go whither, or work where, they please, upon condition aforesaid, under the penalty of the forfeiture of five shillings for every day he, she or they shall suffer any slave to do as aforesaid; *Provided nevertheless*, that nothing in this Act shall be construed or intended to hinder any person from letting their negroes or slaves to hire, by the year, or for any lesser time, or by the day, so as such negro or slave is under the care and direction of his master, or some other person by his order intrusted with the slave, and that the master is to receive the whole of what the slave shall earn.⁶

In other words, legislators outlawed the self-hire practice because it allegedly led slaves to engage in licentious behavior.

Despite of the passage of this law, and others, throughout the colonial era, the practice continued. By the Revolutionary Era, enforcement of the law was so lax that Henry Laurens, a prominent legislator and resident of Charleston, could write without qualm to his brother James, “Ishmael-- brought in 30/ [i.e. 30 shillings]. Said he earned as a porter. I gave him the money together with a reprimand which he thought a good couplet-- he is to go to service 3d July, with Robt. Pringle Esq. at £7 per Month.” Though Ishmael had violated the law by finding his own employment, Laurens only reprimanded him and even allowed him to keep the money that he had earned.⁷

In 1783, after the conclusion of the American Revolution and the incorporation of Charleston as a municipality, a new law was passed to regulate slave hiring. No mention of self-hire was made in this law, which suggests that city legislators opted not to continue the colonial-era prohibition on it. The new law also differed from colonial-era laws in that it required slave owners to purchase a badge, or ticket “from the Corporation

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of this City.” Clearly designed to generate income for the city government, the 1783 law specified the prices of badges by occupation. For example, the highest price badge was assigned to enslaved butchers who worked on hire. It cost 40s, or forty shillings, per year. The lowest priced badge went to a group of slaves whom the city government designated as “all others” (see Table 1).  

Table 1. Prices of Slave Badges in Charleston by Occupation, 1783

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Price of Badge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>40 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter, Bricklayer, Cabinet-Maker, Painter or Glazier, Gold or Silversmith</td>
<td>20 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor, Tinman, Tanner or Currer</td>
<td>15 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariner, Cooper, Shoemaker, Barber, Hatter, Ropemaker, Turner, or any other Handicraft Tradesman</td>
<td>10 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>5 shillings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 1783 law remained in force until 1789, when it was repealed. The impetus for the repeal appears to have been the difficulty legislators had in enforcing it. In 1786, legislators had passed a new law that exacted stiff penalties against individuals who failed to purchase badges from the City before allowing their slaves to work out on hire.

The law specified

That from and immediately after the passing of this Ordinance, every Negro working out on hire shall wear the Badge received from the City Clerk, on some visible part of his dress; and the constable or any other person or persons are hereby authorized to command any negro applying for hire or working out, to produce his or her badge, and upon refusal or not being able to produce one

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legally obtained for the year in which the demand shall be made, immediately to convey such negro to the Warden of the Workhouse [i.e. the city’s jail for slaves and free blacks], who is hereby commanded to receive and secure such negro. And the constable apprehending such negro . . . shall within three hours after delivering him or her to the Workhouse, give notice thereof to the Clerk of the City Council, who shall thereupon immediately issue a notice to the owner or person having charge of such negro.”

After the slaveowner or guardian was notified, the Warden of the Workhouse had to await the order of City Council to determine whether to release the slave. Only “by warrant from the Clerk of Council” could he release such a slave. In the absence of the warrant, he was to subject the slave to “hard labour for the space of one year and one day, and then . . . [sell him or her] at public auction.” Only after the slaveowner paid all fines and the Warden of the Workhouse received “his fees and the expences [for] attending the keeping and maintaining of” the slave, as well as any commissions earned from the sale, could the City Treasurer pay the slaveowner the balance of money earned from the sale of the slave.  

Cleary a prohibitive law, the 1786 law appears to have evoked a negative response from slaveowners in the city. No tumultuous protests occurred, but revenues from the sale of slave badges plummeted. The fiscal report for the year 1 September 1785 to 1 September 1786 shows earnings of £302.5s on the sale of slave badges. The report for fiscal year 1 September 1787 to 1 September 1788, however, shows earnings of just £112.4s.6d. [one-hundred-and-twelve pounds, four shillings, and six pence]. In other words, the law seems to have had the reverse effect of its intent. Legislators had hoped that it would compel slaveowners to buy new badges each year, as they were supposed to,
but the new law perhaps drove them away from the practice all together. Thus, it appears
that, with few people obeying the slave badge law, legislators abandoned it in 1789. 10

By 1800, however, slave badge laws were back in force. The prices of badges,
now recorded in dollars and cents, ranged from $1-$6. In 1800, the city brought in
$4,192.66, less the cost of making the badges. Over the next six decades, revenue from
badges increased. From 1800-1810, $17,301.25 was brought in from the sale of badges;
during the next decade, the sum was $29,372.35. The decade of the 1820s saw a return of
$53,524.44, and during the 1830s, badge sales yielded $91,297.95. Lastly, from 1840 to
1860, badge sales brought in more than $155,000 to the city’s treasury. 11

Typically, the city employed a single person to make the badges each year and
paid him according to contract. In 1800, Ralph Atmar Jr., a goldsmith and engraver,
made the badges. Charles Prince, a tinman, made badges throughout most of the next
seven years. The prices these two men charged are not available in city records. 12 It is
unclear who made badges in 1804, 1808, and 1809, but in 1810 John Joseph Lafar, a
silversmith, won the bid for the contract. He was the city’s exclusive badge-smith until
1831, and he charged, on average, $372.81 for his labor each year. In 1832, Lafar lost the
contract to Peter and John Mood, silversmiths, but in 1833 he regained it. Thereafter,
until 1854, Lafar, the Moods, and another silversmith, William M. Rouse, alternately won
contracts with the city. In 1855, another artisan, William O’Connor made badges for the

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10 “State of the Receipts an Expenditures of the Corporation from the 1st day of Sept, 1785 to the 1st day of
Sept. 1786,” Charleston Morning Post, September 4, 1786; “State of the Receipts an Expenditures of the
City Corporation, from the 1st day of Sept, 1787 to the 1st day of Sept. 1788,” City Gazette, September 4,
1788.
12 It is known, however, that the City advanced Atmar $100 in fiscal year 1 September 1799 to 31 August
1800. Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins, 71.
city, and yet another, W.B. Veronee, made them in 1856. Thereafter, until 1860, Veronee and Rouse made badges, alternately, for the city.\(^\text{13}\)

The income derived from the sale of slave badges certainly bode well for the city, but the city was not alone in its quest to make money from the widespread practice of slave hiring. As Jonathan Martin notes, “The men and women who hired out slaves in South were, for the most part, trying to make money.” Several classes of slaveowners hired out slaves. Owners who possessed more slaves than they could use at home, comprised one class. Edmund Taylor, a resident of Richmond, Virginia, serves as example. In 1852 he wrote to a hiring agent, that he needed to hire out one of his house servants “simply because I have no use for him at home.” Other slaveowners hired out their slaves in order to supplement their incomes. Schoolmasters, plantation overseers, and recent retirees fit into this category. Yet, another group of slaveowners hired out slaves in order to pay off debts. As Martin explains, “Slaves, their value measured by the amount of work they could do in a week or a month or a year, became walking and talking banknotes, transferred from place to place by owners who needed to pay off doctors’ bills, accounts at dry goods stores, loans from neighbors, and other arrears.” Indebtedness could also occur after death, and executors of estates often hired out slaves to pay off a decedent’s accounts.\(^\text{14}\)

Another group of slaveholders who hired out slaves were those who wanted either to train a slave in a certain occupation or provide them with additional training in their current occupation. Martin suggests that these types of owners “used hiring to bring their

\(^{13}\) Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins, 81, 82, 85, 116, 118,119,134, 157.

\(^{14}\) Martin, 85,74-76
vision of what slaves should be— from the skills they should possess to the diligence they could display— ever closer to reality.” Yet, he acknowledges that this “reverie [could] invariably [be] interrupted by either a resistant slave or a contemptible hirer.” These two kinds of individuals were often linked, for some slaveholders hired out slaves whom they considered intractable. At times, such slaves proved more well-behaved while on hire (likely because they were happy to get away from an owner they did not like), but at other times, they proved just as unmanageable. In these cases, a hirer might treat the slave poorly. But some hirers were, by nature, contemptible, and some slaveowners actually sought to hire their slaves to such people as punishment. Martin explains, “the promising return these owners hoped to secure through hiring was duly chastised slaves— slaves who, they hoped, no longer talked back or ran away.”

Another class of slaveowners who hired out slaves were “widowed or single, white women who lived alone” and married women whose husbands were away from home for long periods of time. These women “relied heavily on income earned by renting out their slaves,” Martin asserts. “Often, the annuities produced by slave hiring were the only source of financial support these women could claim.” Also, economic necessity often drove these women to become expert speculators and hagglers over prices. One female resident of North Carolina used her knowledge of local hiring trends to bargain with three applicants for the hire of her slave, Peter. She refused to receive less than $30 per month for Peter because she said, “[I] hear fellows go for about $50 this year.” Though the participation of white women in the marketplace was generally controversial

15 Ibid., 77-79.
during the early national and antebellum eras, it appears to have been tolerated throughout South in the case of slave hiring.\textsuperscript{16}

Financial records kept by the City of Charleston support Martin’s observations about female owners of hired slaves. Throughout the antebellum era, the City of Charleston hired slaves to work in various capacities, including as scavengers, or trash collectors. Few monthly statements of account for the City of Charleston survive from the antebellum period, but one extant statement shows that ten women hired slaves to the City’s street department from July to December 1849. In all, twenty-two people leased slaves to the city for this purpose during the last half of 1849. The amount each person earned depended upon how many slaves were leased to the city and whether the slaveowner simply provided an individual slave or a slave with a horse and cart. Slaves with horses and carts typically earned more money per month than individual slaves. Most female owners, therefore, supplied the city with such slaves in order to maximize their earnings. For example, from August to November 1849, Miss H. L. Ramsay hired a “horse, cart, & negro” to the city for about 25 days each month. She earned $148.50 for the entire period, or about $36.50 per month. Had she chosen to hire a slave without a horse and cart to the city, she would have earned only $48 throughout the entire period of hire, because the city’s rate for individual slave scavengers was $12 per month. Clearly, the hire of slaves to the city’s street department could be a lucrative endeavor.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 83-84.
\textsuperscript{17} Statement of Receipts of Expenditures by the City of Charleston, From the 1\textsuperscript{st} July 1849 to 1\textsuperscript{st} July 1850 (Charleston, SC: n.p., 1850), 5, 7,19, 21, 39, 49, 51, 61, 63, 75, 77, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Library, Charleston, SC.
Few city departments hired as many slaves as the street department, but the City of Charleston hired slaves to work in other capacities as well. A well-documented group of slaves leased to the city is the contingent that worked under the supervision of the Board of Fire Masters. Of them Bernard Powers writes,

Charleston’s fire department was made up of two segments. One segment consisted of volunteer companies that were staffed by whites and used the best equipment. The city or ward engine companies, as the other component was known, consisted of black slaves that were hired by the city. In 1848 there were eight hundred hand-powered engines and one elevating ladder unit which were operated by 243 slaves, under the management of 23 whites.

The volunteer and city companies appeared to have “carried on many of the same functions,” but at times the slaves simply helped the volunteer companies fight fires by supplying them with water. At other times, the slaves “relieved them when the major portion of a fire had been subdued.” City records indicate that “in keeping with racial etiquette,” the members of the volunteer and city companies received different rates of pay for their services. It was possible for each company to augment their pay by being the first one to arrive at the scene of a fire. The city awarded a monetary prize to the company that earned that distinction. Accounts from a fire that occurred in September 1848 show the prize to have been $20, and, interestingly, it was awarded to both a volunteer and city company because both arrived at the scene of the fire at the same time.18

Another group of slaves hired by the city worked in municipal institutions. Ordinances passed in 1807 and 1812 suggest that slaves worked at the Poor House and

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18Powers, 12-13; “Expenses of Fires September 7th, 23rd, and 24th 1848,” Minutes of the Board of Fire Masters, Records of the City of Charleston Fire Department, 1848-1979, Box 1, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.
the Marine Hospital, but the details of their services are not clear. The principal public institutions in the city during the nineteenth century were the Poor House, Marine Hospital, and Orphan House. Between 1790 and 1860, the Charleston Orphan House hired at least seventy-five slaves and purchased or acquired fifty-six others through natural increase, gift, and bequest. 19

The Orphan House slaves were primarily domestic workers, which according to a survey of slave occupations in 1848 was the most common occupation among all Charleston slaves. The survey also shows that slave men and women worked in forty-six other occupations. The gendered division of labor was acute among slaves. Men and women shared some occupations, such as cooking and common labor, but men, alone, worked in the building, navigation, furniture, locomotion, and unclassified mechanical trades. Likewise, women worked exclusively as fruiters, hucksters, market-sellers, and pastry-cooks. The gendered division of labor was also apparent among healthcare workers and graveyard attendants. Women worked as nurses, while men were employed as sextons. Similarly, both men and women worked in the clothing industry, but women worked exclusively as mantua-makers (dress makers) and seamstresses. Men alone worked as boot and shoe makers, barbers, and tailors (see Table 2). 20

Table 2. Occupations of Slaves in Charleston, 1848

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category (categories determined by the census takers and have not been altered)</th>
<th>Occupation, Number and Gender (names and spelling of occupations original to the census)</th>
<th>Total, by Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Contributing to Building | Bricklayers, 68 males  
Carpenters, 110 males  
Painters, 9 males  
Plaisterers, 16 males  
Wharf builders, 10 males | Male: 213  
Female: 0 |
| Contributing to Clothing | Barbers, 4 males  
Boot Makers, 4 males  
Mantua-makers, 4 females  
Seamstresses, 20 females  
Shoe makers, 2 males  
Tailors, 36 males  
Washer-women, 33 females | Male: 46  
Female: 57 |
| Contributing to Food | Bakers, 39 males  
Butchers, 6 males  
Confectioners, 4 males  
Cooks, 11 females, 3 males  
Fishermen, 15 males  
Fruiters, 1 female  
Gardeners, 3 males  
Huxters, 11 females  
Market-sellers, 6 females  
Pastry Cooks, 1 females  
Cigar makers, 5 males | Male: 75  
Female: 30 |
| Contributing to Furniture | Cabinet maker, 8 males  
Tinners, 3 males  
Upholsters, 1 male | Male: 12  
Female: 0 |
| Contributing to Health | Monthly nurses, 2 females  
Sextons, 1 male | Male: 1  
Female: 2 |
| Contributing to Literature | Book binders, 3 males  
Printers, 5 males | Male: 8 |
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category (These categories were determined by the census takers and have not been altered.)</th>
<th>Occupation, Number and Gender (The names and spelling of occupations original to the census.)</th>
<th>Total, by Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to Locomotion</td>
<td>Coachmen, 15 males Coach makers, 3 males Draymen, 67 males Saddlers, 2 males</td>
<td>Male: 87 Female: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to Navigation</td>
<td>Boatmen, 7 males Sailor, 43 males Ship Carpenters, 51 males</td>
<td>Male: 101 Female: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified Mechanics</td>
<td>Black-smiths, 40 males Brass-founders, 1 male Coopers, 61 males Mechanics, 45 males</td>
<td>Male: 147 Female: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified Residue of Blacks</td>
<td>Apprentices, 8 females, 43 males House Servants, 3,384 females, 1,888 males Laborers, 378 females, 838 males Porters, 35 males Stevedores, 2 males</td>
<td>Male: 2,806 Female: 3,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superannuated and Disabled</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Males: 38 Females: 54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from J. L. Dawson and H. W. DeSaussure, Census of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, For the Year 1848, Exhibiting the Condition and Prospects of the City, Illustrated by Many Statistical Details, Prepared Under the Authority of the City Council, (Charleston, SC, 1849), 34. Google Play e-Book [accessed May 16, 2013].

The diversity of slave occupations and the fact that many had jobs that were performed beyond the confines of their owners’ homes, gave rise to the practice of “living-out.” As the term implies, slaves who “lived-out,” lived apart from their owners. A system of laws was put in place, during the early national and antebellum eras to
regulate the practice of living-out. The earliest of these, passed in 1783, forbade slaves from renting or hiring “any house, [or] room . . . within this City, on his or her own account.” In 1806 this law was finessed to allow slaves who had written permission from their owner to rent living spaces, but if they were caught without such a note (which also had to describe “the place, which such slave or slaves is or are allowed respectively to occupy, reside, or sleep in” and had to specify “the time during which the aforesaid permission or permissions is/or are granted”), “any Warden or other officer of the city” could enter their residence and forcibly commit them to the Workhouse or Guardhouse where they would remain until their owner paid the fines and costs related to their imprisonment. It appears that such laws did not hinder the practice of living-out and the practice continued well into the antebellum era. According to Bernard Powers, “Approximately 15 percent of all Charleston’s slaves lived away from their masters by 1861.”

The fact that some slaves were allowed to live-out meant that private meetings of slaves were possible; so, in 1806, in attempt to prevent large numbers of slaves from congregating in any person’s house, or at all, lawmakers enacted a measure that limited the number of “grown negroes” assembling in “any house, building or lot within the city” to seven, unless a white person was present. Furthermore, no more than seven adults were allowed to gather in the streets, lanes, alleys, and public places of the city unless they were attending a funeral or “a white person is with them.” In contrast, slaves were allowed to have parties, without restriction of number, so long as they obtained

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21 *The South Carolina Weekly Gazette*, November 28, 1783; Powers 24.
permission for the Warden of the ward in which the party was to take place. But there
were restrictions on how long they could gather for these events. Ordinances enforced
from 1806 to 1844, stated that “no such assembly” could continue beyond “ten o’clock at
night, from the twentieth day of March to the twentieth day of September, nor later than
nine o’clock at night, from the twentieth day of September to the twentieth day of
March.” Anyone failing to comply with the law would be arrested, and the owner of the
house, building, or enclosure in which the event took place would have to pay a fifty
dollar fine.22

As with parties, there were no restrictions on the number of people who could
assemble for religious gatherings, but in 1836 City Council declared that it would no
longer “be lawful for slaves, or persons of color to assemble and meet together for
religious worship, even in the day time, except in the presence of one or more responsible
male white citizens, who shall have resided at least two years in this State . . . [and were]
approved of in writing by the Pastor of the Congregation to which such slaves or persons
of color may belong.” To make sure that churches complied with these regulations, the
ordinance also required the names of the white men “to be reported to the Intendant
[Mayor], together with a description of the places where, and the hours during which
such meetings are to be held.” As a final measure, the information presented to the
Intendant had to be approved by City Council.23

22 Digest of Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston, From the Year 1783 to July 1818, 178-182.
23 George B. Eckhard, comp. A Digest of the Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston, From the Year
1783 to Oct. 1844, To Which are Annexed The Acts of the Legislature Which Relate Exclusively to the City
of Charleston (Charleston: Walker & Burke, 1844), 176-177. Charleston County Public Library, Charleston
South Carolina.
The great precaution City Council took in 1836 to prevent blacks from meeting alone for religious purposes stemmed from deep-seated fears among white Charlestonians that slaves would use religious gatherings to plan insurrections. In 1822, an insurrectionary plot was uncovered that had ties to the African Church, an all-black congregation founded in 1818 by defectors from white Methodist churches. This plot, known today as the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy, had revolutionary implications. Trial records indicate that Vesey and his followers were going to “overpower the city guard . . . take control of the arsenals . . . fire the town in several places and slay all the whites.” Though the plot was discovered before it could be executed, the alleged conspirators were brutally punished. Vesey and thirty-five others received the death penalty; thirty-seven were banished; and many others were sentenced to whipping and imprisonment.24

Plots to overthrow the system of slavery in Charleston were punished severely by public officials, but so were everyday crimes. Richard Wade observes in his seminal study of urban slavery that slaves’ behavior was regulated through “the lash and the law.” Wade recounts, for example, the case of an enslaved girl in Charleston, who was convicted in 1837 of repeatedly attempting to burn a building down. Her sentence was “to receive twenty lashes on the first three Fridays of three successive months, and to remain in the stocks each time; then to remain five years in solitary confinement.” That same year, another slave, Sarah, was accused of stealing thirteen yards of linen. She was

24 Powers, 29, 21, 32.
sentenced to “two whippings of twenty stripes and two weeks solitary confinement in the workhouse.”

The Workhouse was Charleston’s public jail for blacks. It was a notorious place of punishment and hard labor. The Duke of Saxe Weimar, who visited Charleston in 1825, described, in the detail, some of the punishments prisoners of the Workhouse were subjected to:

In the basement story [of the Workhouse] there is an apparatus upon which the negroes, by order of the police, or at the request of their masters, are flogged. The latter [i.e. the masters] can have nineteen lashes inflicted on them [i.e. the negroes] according to the existing law. The machine consists of a sort of crane, on which a cord with two nooses runs over pulleys; the nooses are made fast to the hands of the slave and drawn up, while the feet are bound tight to a plank. The body is stretched out as much as possible, and thus the miserable creature receives the exact number of lashes counted off!

The Duke noted, however, that floggings had decreased within the past year, because “a tread-mill has been erected a back building of the prison, in which there are two tread-wheels in operation.” Each accommodated “twelve prisoners.” Their task was to work the mill, which was used to grind corn, and “thereby contribute to the support of the prison.” The Duke described the operation of the treadmills as follows:

Six tread at once upon each wheel, while six rest upon a bench placed behind the wheel. Every half minute the left hand man steps off the tread-wheel, while the five others move to the left to fill up the vacant place; at the same time the right hand man sitting on the bench, steps on the wheel, and begins his movement, while the rest, sitting on the bench, uniformly recede. Thus, even three minutes sitting, allows the unhappy being no repose.

The Duke also observed that, “The signal for changing is given by a small bell attached to the wheel . . . [and] [t]he prisoners are compelled to labour eight-hours a day in this manner.” To make sure that the slaves worked as long and hard as they were supposed to “a person . . . armed with a cow-hide stands by the wheel.” Though both forms of punishment--flogging and labor upon the treadmills--were physically taxing, the Duke learned that “The negroes entertain a strong fear of the tread-mills, and regard flogging as the lighter evil!”

Yet, corporal punishment did not only occur at the Workhouse. Private slaveowners whipped slaves at home as well. During the 1930s, former Charleston slave Susan Hamlin remembered a brutal whipping that Clory, the washerwoman in her owner’s household, received at the hands of their owner, Edward Fuller. Fuller was president of the First National Bank in Charleston and lived on St. Phillip’s Street. Hamlin remembered that “One day our missus gone in de laundry an’ find fault with the clothes.” Clory, whom Hamlin described as “very high-tempered,” was so angered by Mrs. Fuller’s remarks that she picked her up and threw her out of the door of the laundry room. “Dey had to sen’ fur a doctor,” Hamlin explained, “’cause she [Mrs. Fuller] was pregnant an’ less than two hours de baby wus bo’n.”

After this incident, Clory begged to be sold, saying that she had not meant to cause serious bodily harm to Mrs. Fuller, but as Hamlin recalled, “our master ain’t neber

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want to sell his slaves.” So, instead he inflicted a “brutal whippin’” upon Clory. Hamlin noted that Clory was “a mulatta,” or a very light-skinned person, but after the beating “dere wasn’t a white spot on her body.” “Dat was de worst I ebber see a human bein’ got such a beatin’,” Hamlin said. “I t’ought she wus goin’ to die.” Yet, to Hamlin’s surprise, Clory recovered. She never fell into the graces of the “missus” of the house, however. Eventually, Edward Fuller put Clory out to work on hire, in order minimize conflict between her and his wife. Hamlin recalled that Clory was happy to be hired out, because she did want to be “‘round missus” either.28

Hamlin recounted several other stories about the mistreatment of slaves in her narrative. In her estimation, owners generally had little regard for slaves’ physical well-being or feelings. For example, she recalled that

One night a couple married an’ de next mornin’ de boss sell de wife. De gal ma got in de street an’ cursed de white woman fur all she could find. She said: “dat damn white, pale-face bastard sell my daughter who jus’ married las’ night” an’ other t’ings. The white ‘oman treaten’ her to call de police if she didn’t stop, but de collud woman said: “hit me or call de police. I redder die den to stan’ dis any longer.” De police took her to Work House by de white woman orders an’ what became of ‘er I never hear.

Hamlin punctuated this story with the following remark: “All time, night an’ day, you could hear men an’ women screamin’ to de tip or dere voices, as either ma, pa, sister, or brother wus take without warnin’ an’ sell. Sometime mother who had only one chile wus separated fur life. People wus always dyin’ frum a broken heart.” 29

Hamlin’s recollections indicate very strong emotional bonds between members of slave families. At another point in her narrative, Hamlin even speaks fondly of slave

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28 Ibid., 234-235
29 Ibid., 235-236.
marriage ceremonies--and she is careful to call unions between slave men and women “marriage” even though slave marriages were not recognized by law. “All slaves,” she said, “wus married in dere master house, in de livin’ room where slaves an’ dere missus an’ mossa wus to witness de ceremony. Brides use to wear some of de finest dress an’ if dey could afford it, have de best kind of furniture.” In this instance, Hamlin noted, slaveowners were actually kind to their slaves. “Your master nor your missus objected to good t’ings,” she said.30

Other evidence the stability of slave family units in Charleston is slaves’ involvement in churches. According to Bernard Powers, “Slaves attended church in families, and in church, as one observer . . . pointed out, they ‘make the most formal and particular inquiries after each other’s families.’ ” Powers further notes that, “Many slaves married in Charleston’s churches” and in some cases, when slaves were separated from their spouses by sale, they “requested permission from the church to remarry.” Yet, he carefully concludes that

On balance, the slave family in Charleston was subject to tremendous centrifugal pressures. Family formation and maintenance must have been greatly hampered by the low ratio of males to females in the slave population. In 1861 there were only 77.7 males for every 100 female slaves in the city. In addition and more importantly, it was the master who ultimately held sway over the family’s destiny, and the auction block was all too familiar to Charleston’s slaves.31

The sale of slaves in Charleston occurred in numerous places-- at slave brokers’ businesses, at the home of private slaveowners, on slave ships, and until 1856, at a public auction site north of the Old Exchange Building (or customhouse). After 1856, public

30 Ibid., 234
31 Powers, 26.
sales occurred at Ryan’s Mart (today known as the Old Slave Mart). This building, located on Chalmers Street “was originally 44 by 20 feet, and there was a 22 by 18 foot yard in the rear.” Within, there was “a salesroom with a 20-foot ceiling,” designed so that on sale-days “the auction table, about 10 feet long and 3 feet high, might be placed lengthwise . .. and allow ample room for the spectators to pass in and out and stand either inside of the building or in the street, according to weather.” Behind the main building was a holding pen for the slaves awaiting to be sold. Designed like a jail, with iron bars on the windows “and bolts and locks on every door,” it was a discomfiting and fearful place for slaves about to face the equally frightening auction block.  

Though slave sales were a familiar sight to residents of Charleston, visitors found them shocking and, at times, revolting. Adam Hodgson, a visitor from Britain in 1820 wrote with great distress about a slave sale he witnessed “in a public street” in Charleston. He recounts:

Turning from a fashionable promenade . . . I came suddenly in sight of at least 80 or 100 Negroes sitting on a large heap of paving stones; some with the most melancholy and disconsolate faces, and others with an air of vacancy or apathy, apparently insensible to what was passing around them. Several merchants and planters were walking about, examining the unhappy creatures who were to be offered for sale. A poor woman, apparently about 28 years of age, with a child at her breast, her two little boys, from four to six years old, and her little girl, about eight composed the first lot. They were mounted on a platform (with the auctioneer) taking hold of each other’s hands, and the little boys looking up at their mother’s face with an air of curiosity, as if they wondered what could make her look so sad. The mother then spoke a few words, in a faultering voice, to the auctioneer, who repeated them aloud, in which she expressed a strong desire to be

purchased by some one [sic] who lived near Charleston, instead of being sent to a distant plantation. They were put up with all the ordinary auction slang, and finally knocked down to 350 dollars each. As soon as they came down from the platform, many of the Negroes crowded about the mother, inquiring if she knew who had bought her, or wither she was going; but all she knew of her future destiny was, that a new owner had obtained possession of her and her offspring for 350 dollars each. I could not stay to see the repetition of the sad process on the person of a field labourer, who composed the next lot, and who appeared depressed and dejected beyond what I had conceived.33

This enslaved woman’s desire to remain near Charleston perhaps indicates an attachment to her children—she must have been glad that they were sold together—and possibly to a husband who was owned by a different person but lived in the city. As previously discussed, slaves in Charleston married, even though the marriage was not recognized by law. This young woman may have been married and wanted to be sold to someone living near Charleston in order to be within reasonable travelling distance of her husband. Historian Emily West found evidence of marriages across plantations in South Carolina, and evidence exists that suggests the same phenomenon occurred with slave couples in cities or in cases where one spouse lived in the city and the other on a plantation.34 For example, ex-slave Susan Hamlin testified that “My pa b’long to a man on Edisto Island [an island near Charleston],” while she, her mother, and siblings belonged to Edward Fuller, a resident of Charleston. Likewise, Susan Nelson, a former Charleston slave, remarked that, “My father belonged to Judge Prioleau,” of Charleston.

34 West calls this phenomenon “cross-plantation marriages,” and claims that 34% of all South Carolina plantation slaves whose narratives were recorded by the WPA were involved in such relationships. Emily West, “The Debate on the Strength of Slave Families: South Carolina and the Importance of Cross-Plantation Marriages” Journal of American Studies 33 no. 2 (August 1999): 221-222.
She does not say who her mother belonged to, but her distinction that it was her father who was owned by Prioleau suggests that her mother was not.  

The slave auction that Hodgson observed was typical of the antebellum period, but during the early national period, prior to the abolition of the Transatlantic slave trade by Congress in 1808, the sale of slaves on slave-ships was far more common. One observer of a slave-ship sale that took place in 1804 found the scene just as emotionally draining as Hodgson had found the sale in 1820--and, apparently, this individual was a native of Charleston. The individual wrote:

I hardly believe myself in my own country.--Slavery I detest; and I have seen a horrid share of it. This port has for some time past, been opened for the importation of negroes. Several ships crowded with wretched victims are now at the wharves. I have been on board of them during the hours of sale, and felt all the horrors which the abominable traffic could inspire. One scene I shall never forget: Three young girls of the same country, of the same family, who had probably never been separated, who were comparatively happy, even as slaves, while together, were brought upon deck, and one of them selected and bought by a planter. With the most piercing anguish, she received her master’s habilaments [sic], and stood ready to leave every thing [sic] dear to her. She appeared to be overloaded with horror and dismay, at the separation from her two friends. They looked wishfully at her, and she at them. At last, they threw themselves into each other’s arms, and burst into the most piteous exclamations. They hung together, and sobbed and screamed, and bathed each other with their tears. At length they were torn asunder by the unfeeling whites, and the planter’s purchase dragged from the ship. But at parting, one of the girls took a string of beads with an amulet from her neck, kissed it and hung it on her friend’s. This was too much! I was afraid my emotions would be noticed, and I left the spot.

The anguish that this young slave girl and the woman Hodgson saw displayed at being sold suggests the plight of slaves in Charleston, South Carolina. Like slaves throughout the South, they lacked control over many aspects of their lives, including where to live and whether to remain close to family. Though slave hiring granted a measure of control over their labor, it was still a contract that had to be negotiated with an individual who typically had a vested interest in the slaves’ labor but not in all the aspects of their private lives. The diversity of jobs held by slaves in Charleston also displayed the readiness of private citizens to exploit slaves’ labor as much as possible, and the public government relied on slave labor too, to clean the streets and work in municipal institutions. The work of Charleston’s slaves in one municipal institution, the Charleston Orphan House, is particularly striking because it catered to poor and orphaned white children, children whose natal families typically did not own slaves. Yet the long-standing existence of slavery in Charleston and the role of slaves as Charleston’s dominant and most numerous laboring class made them a logical choice for the Charleston Orphan House. Slavery, indeed, had deep roots in Charleston. It originated in the colonial era, grew into a pervasive system of labor that undergirded the private sector during the early national and antebellum eras, and branched into the public sector through use of slaves at Charleston’s premier public institution, the Charleston Orphan House.
Chapter 2: The Charleston Orphan House

In 1783, the state legislature of South Carolina incorporated the City of Charleston and gave the City Council of Charleston charge of “the care of the poor.” From this charge, the Charleston Orphan House was eventually born, but until its founding in 1790, the City had other modes of dealing with impoverished and orphaned white children. Aid from the City of Charleston came in three ways. First, single parents or families who could not afford to own or rent a home could board at the Poor House, a facility that also served as a workhouse for the unemployed, a hospital for the impoverished, and an asylum for the mentally insane. Second, impoverished people could apply for “outdoor relief,” a pension that enabled them to buy food and clothing. Third, they could apply for room, board, and education for their children in the homes of private families and at local boarding schools. In the case of orphans, this service was provided when their situation came to the attention of the City through the application of the Commissioners of the Poor (a civic body), a neighbor, family member, or concerned citizen.¹

In 1788, the city’s system of care for poor and orphaned white children came under review by John Robertson, a member of City Council and a Commissioner of the Poor. He deemed the system incommensurate with its cost and recommended that City

Council revise the program by petitioning the Board of Trustees of the Charleston College Academy (now the College of Charleston) to board the children on its property. When the College’s Board of Trustees refused this request, Robertson suggested that councilmen investigate the propriety of building an orphan house. In September 1790, a committee to investigate the matter was appointed, and upon the conclusion of its study recommended that “a part of the city lands [be] appropriated as a site for the erection of” a public orphanage “and until such buildings were completed . . . a suitable house [should be] rented and furnished for the accommodation” of the orphans. In concurrence with the committee’s recommendation, City Council passed an ordinance on October 18, 1790 establishing the Charleston Orphan House. The official document described the institution as “An Orphan House in the City of Charleston [created] for the purpose of supporting and Educating poor Orphan Children and those of Poor and disabled parents who are unable to support and maintain them.”

The ordinance stipulated that a Board of Commissioners, elected by City Council should govern the orphanage. Initially consisting of nine members, the Board of Commissioners met weekly to deliberate over the affairs of the orphanage. Among their many duties was the selection of “Assistants, Nurses, and Domestics,” to work in the orphanage and care for the child inmates. Over time the number of assistants, nurses and

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3 In 1821, City Council approved a resolution by the Board to change the number of Commissioners to twelve. This number was maintained throughout the remainder of the antebellum period. By-Laws of the Orphan House of Charleston, South Carolina (Charleston, SC: n.p., 1861), 9. Internet Archive e-Book http://archive.org/details/bylawsoforphanho00char [accessed June 27, 2013].
domestics changed, but in 1790, when the institution was founded, the Commissioners
appointed four nurses, one assistant, and two slaves who worked in domestic service.
Though the Commissioners held ultimate sway over all of the workers-- officers and
slaves--, the Steward and Matron, the principal officers of the institution, governed the
nurses, assistants, and slaves on a daily basis.4

As the chief officers of the institution, the Steward and Matron had many other
responsibilities as well. One of the Steward’s duties was to procure food and other
supplies for the inmates, officers, and slaves at the orphanage. According to institution’s
founding ordinance, he was to contract with “Butchers, Bakers, and other persons
employed to furnish such articles as may be necessary” for “the use of the Children and
other persons residing in the Orphan House.” He also had to distribute these items once
they were delivered to the Orphan House. Additionally, he was to “keep a book of fair
and regular Accounts of all receipts and expenditures” and a register of inmates admitted
into the orphanage, with their “names, persons, Country and Parentage” and the names of
“persons to whom they were . . . bound” when they came of age to learn a profession or
trade.5

The Matron’s primary responsibility was to oversee the domestic economy of the
institution. This meant that she had to make sure the imates’ “Cloaths were properly
made, washed and preserved,” that their rooms were kept clean, and that their food was
“wholesome, cleanly and well-prepared.” Until a schoolmistress and sewing mistress

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4 Founding Ordinance, Minutes, no date, in volume pertaining the period 18 October 1790-9 August 1795,
Box 115, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston
County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina (hereafter cited as OH Minutes).
5 Ibid.
were hired, she also taught “the Children to read and sew.” Furthermore, the institution’s founding ordinance charged the Matron with “preserv[ing] order and decorum at table and elsewhere and . . . conduct[ing] the Children regularly to some place of Worship on the Sabbath.6

The Matron’s duties did not end there, however. As mentioned above, she also oversaw the work of the assistants and nurses. Interpreting the term “assistants” broadly, the Board of Commissioners appointed various people to serve in this capacity. In October 1790, they elected an “Assistant Matron,” who helped the Matron “teach the children to read and Sew” and sat “at one end of the Table” during meals. The Assistant Matron also saw that “the Children are kept clean and in good order, and that the Nurses do their duty.” Two months later, the Commissioners selected another assistant, a mantua maker, or garment seamstress “to reside in the Orphan House and teach the Children.” This appointment not only relieved the Matron of full responsibility for the children’s instruction in sewing, but it also provided a means of preparing the children’s clothing in-house. For many years thereafter, the majority of the children’s clothing was made at the orphanage by the mantua maker (later called the Sewing Mistress) and the older female inmates.7

The founding ordinance also required the nurses to help make the inmates’ clothes, and wash and iron them. They also had to “Comb their Heads every morning, sleep in the Room with the Children under their care, [and] keep them and the Rooms clean and in good order.” Within a few months of opening the institution’s doors,

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6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.
however, the Commissioners hired two “negro women,” slaves, to wash and iron, thereby relieving the nurses of this duty. Two other slaves worked at the institution at that time, “A Negro Man to Cook and a Negro Woman to assist in the kitchen.” Orphan House records clearly indicate that they belonged to one of the Commissioners of the Orphan House, Arnoldus Vanderhorst (who also served as Intendant, or Mayor, of the city at that time). Vanderhorst’s slaves remained employed for at least two years, and other slaves followed them. The lives and labor of the slaves hired and owned by the Orphan House are discussed in detail below, but suffice it to say at this point, from its beginning the Charleston Orphan House relied upon slaves to meet its domestic needs.8

The work of the white officers was important too. The Commissioners expected the men and women hired by the institution to adopt a paternal or maternal role toward the inmates. Yet, during its first few years of existence, the Orphan House encountered considerable trouble with its officers, especially with the nurses. In June 1791, the Matron “complained generally” to the Commissioners, at their weekly meeting, “of the Conduct of the Nurses of the House, particularly on Saturday night last.” She claimed that she “received such abuse after retiring to rest . . . [that she was] obliged to get out of bed.” After a brief investigation, the Commissioners found her charges “groundless.” But in September when she approached the Board again with a complaint, the Commissioners took her charges seriously and took immediate action in response to them. This time, she “informed the Board, that Nurses Griffin & Manning are both addicted to liquor, & the

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8 Ibid.; OH Minutes, October 25, 1790.
former when intoxicated is very abusive.” The board “resolved that Mrs. Manning be immediately discharged and Mrs. Griffin be discharged at the end of her quarter.”

The swift dismissal of these nurses underscores the seriousness with which the Commissioners of the Orphan House undertook their duty of caring for the City’s orphaned and destitute children. Barbara Bellows, a historian of benevolence in antebellum Charleston, describes the leadership style of the Commissioners of the Orphan House as “A unique blend of Christian charity and southern liberalism.” They perceived themselves, as “‘God’s substitutes on earth’ [and] accepted benevolence as an incontrovertible part of their roles as Christians and citizens,” she asserts. Yet, service on the Orphan House board also reflected the social and economic prestige of board members. The members of the first board, elected in October 1790, were all distinguished by the title of “Esquire,” denoting their training as lawyers. Furthermore, as aforementioned, one of the board members, Arnoldus Vanderhorst, was Intendant of the city. Vanderhorst was also governor of the state of South Carolina from 1794-1796. Subsequent Commissioners also served as Intendants of Charleston and held other civic roles such as members of the state legislature, governors of the state, and judges. Most were merchants, attorneys, planters, or physicians. As highly placed members of the community, the Commissioners had high expectations for the officers of the institution,

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9 Barbara L. Bellows, Benevolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 124-125; OH Minutes, October 25, 1790. The fact that Griffin was given until the end of the quarter to leave was a courtesy on the part of the Commissioners, likely born of the lesser charges leveled against her. Also, nurses employed by the Orphan House were paid quarterly (their annual earnings were capped at £15); so the Commissioners were allowing her to work until the end of the quarter in order to receive payment for the full quarter.
and might have felt that their personal reputations were on the line when an officer misbehaved.\textsuperscript{10}

Bad behavior among the inmates was also seldom tolerated. According to a set of rules and regulations adopted in 1791, the Matron was to take note of the “Morals and conduct of all the Children, and if any of them Should be so unfortunate, as to appear Irreclaimibly vicious, She is to report the same to the Commissioners, in order that they may pursue such steps as may be necessary.” The most common punishment for refractory children was whipping, but in other cases children were confined to the Orphan House enclosure for a period of time, rather than being allowed to venture beyond the gates on errands for the officers or on weekends to visit family or friends.\textsuperscript{11}

The fact that some children had family or friends to turn to in the city sometimes mitigated the degree of punishment they received. For example, in July 1792, a mother of two inmates, a boy and a girl, complained to the Commissioners that her daughter “had been cruelly beaten.” Consequently, she told the Commissioners that she wanted to remove “both her Son and daughter” from the home. The Board granted her request, though it believed, after conducting “the fullest and most mature investigation” of the incident that “the child had misbehaved, & had received such moderate correction as was necessary, for supporting the discipline & good order of the house.”\textsuperscript{12}

The return of parents’ children to them--whether because of ill-treatment or other reasons-- was far from the norm during the 1790s. This is in part due to the fact that when

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{10} Bellows, 133, 122; Extract of City Council Minutes, October 25, 1790, OH Minutes, no date; Walter J. Fraser, Jr., \textit{Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern City} (Columbia: University of South Carolina, Press, 1989), 443.
\footnote{11} OH Minutes, July 28, 1791.
\footnote{12} OH Minutes, July 12, 1792.
\end{footnotes}
a child was admitted into the Orphan House their parent or guardian had to sign an indenture form, binding the child to the orphanage. This form was enforceable by law; thus when a parent or other person sought to remove a child from the Orphan House, they had to sign a legal document releasing the child from the Commissioners’ care and binding. In other words, the procedure was not as simple as handing a child back to his or her parents.¹³

In fact, the procedure for admitting a child was not simple either. The child’s parent or a consenting adult first wrote a letter of application seeking admission into the orphanage. The letter usually explained the child and/or parent’s destitute situation and indicated that the child, parent, or consenting adult desired to improve the child’s condition in life. Each letter was evaluated by the Commissioners, and if they deemed additional information was needed, they interviewed the applicant and the applicant’s acquaintances or neighbors to corroborate the story. In some cases, the Commissioners needed proof of the child’s age and residency status. Early in the orphanage’s history, the Commissioners adopted a rule that only children between the ages of three and fourteen would be admitted into the orphanage and that they had to be born in the city of Charleston or have resided there for two years in order to be admitted. At times, exceptions were made to this rule, such as during the mid-1790s when a slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue brought thousands of refugee planters into Charleston. Considering this a special case, the Commissioners welcomed the children of refugees without question.

Generally, though, the Commissioners maintained their position on a child’s residency status.\textsuperscript{14}

Once all questions relating to the suitability of the child for admission were addressed, the Commissioners made their decision. Once, admitted the child moved into the Orphan House. Even though letters of application from parents of inmates indicated reluctance to part with their children, most considered it better than the alternatives: boarding their children with strangers so they could take a job as a sailor, wet nurse, or domestic servant or moving into the Poor House -- a grim alternative indeed since Charleston’s Poor House was home not only to paupers but also to the insane and critically ill persons.\textsuperscript{15}

Life for the inmates at the Orphan House followed a relatively strict schedule. Each day of the week, except Sunday, they arose at “the time appointed by the Matron,” combed their hair and washed their faces. Then they got dressed and went to breakfast, which was served at seven o’clock each morning during the summer and eight o’clock during the winter. After breakfast, which lasted an hour, they proceeded to school. Instruction occurred until one o’clock in the afternoon, when dinner was served, and, when school resumed, it lasted from two to five o’clock in the afternoon. On Sundays, prior to a chapel’s being built on the Orphan House property, the children, accompanied by the Matron and Steward, attended various Protestant churches in the city in rotation.


After church, they were permitted free time, but unless they had special permission, they had to return to the Orphan House before the evening was out, for the rules specified that “No child is to sleep out of the House, or otherwise to be absent, but by the particular permission of the one of the Commissioners.”

The Orphan House chapel was constructed in 1802, eight years after the Orphan House itself was built. Both required a considerable outlay of funds, which the City did not fully possess; thus contributions were solicited from the citizens of the Charleston. Fundraising for the Orphan House, for example, which was located on a lot bounded by Boundary (now Calhoun), St. Phillips, and Vanderhorst Streets, began in June 1791. By September 1793, £1839.3.9\(^{1/2}\) had been raised by religious congregations, societies, and individuals. Construction on the building, which was designed by Thomas Bennett, the father of a future Commissioner and grandfather of another, began in 1792. It cost several thousand pounds to build (the estimate on the supplies alone was £2200) and took two years to complete.\(^{17}\)

When the officers and inmates-- who had been housed at several different facilities in Charleston during its construction (including a rented house on Ellery, now Market, Street and a boarding school run by Phillip Besselieu, the first schoolmaster of the institution)-- moved into the building in October 1794, they might have marveled at its size. Standing four stories tall with sixty-four rooms, the Orphan House had two wings of 65 x 30 feet each, connected by a central structure (spanning 40 x 40 feet) that served

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\(^{16}\) OH Minutes, July 28, 1791.

\(^{17}\) Donations of Charitable Persons, Private Accounts, 1792-1821, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina.
as a meeting hall. Built of brick, the height of the edifice from the foundation of the first floor to the ceiling of the fourth story was 69½ feet and the roof was covered with slate. The doors and windows of the orphanage were faced in stone, and a cupola, replete with a ball and weather vane, adorned the center of the structure. The grandeur of the building prompted one resident of Charleston to describe it as “the most magnificent edifice of the kind of which the new world can boast.” Yet, even upon its opening in October 1794, the center steps leading to the main entrance had not yet been covered with stone, the interior of the building had not been painted, and the property lacked a brick wall. ¹⁸

The lack of a brick wall proved particularly troublesome because it facilitated the inmates’ departure from the Orphan House without permission. By August 1795, absconding had become so frequent that the Commissioners were obliged to take out an advertisement in the newspaper to request help from local citizens in returning inmates to the orphanage. “Some of the Children of the Orphan House frequently go about the Streets, & impose upon the citizens, by informing them, they are in want of Victuals, and other necessaries, and being by them supplied, they absent themselves for days together, to the great injury of the institution, to the ruin of themselves, & to the inconvenience of the citizens.” Thus, the Commissioners urged the citizens, “not to furnish them with provisions, as they have abundance at home.” The Commissioners also established a means of helping residents discern whether or not an inmate had permission to be on

leave from the orphanage. “No child shall hereafter be absent without a ticket in writing, signed by the Master, Matron, Steward, or one of the Assistants,” they wrote. In the meantime, the Commissioners resolved to refurbish the wooden fence that enclosed the Orphan House property in lieu of a brick wall. It was “taken down, champered & made higher.” “One large & one small gate,” was also added to it, “with sufficient locks & fastenings.”

Yet, in August 1796, one year after the gate had been refinished, the interior of the Orphan House still lacked paint and the center steps had not been finished. Furthermore, City Council had become delinquent in payments to persons with whom they contracted to supply the orphanage with wood, clothing, and foodstuffs. Several contractors had even refused to fulfill the Steward’s requests for provisions until the City’s accounts were paid in full. Under these distressing circumstances, the Commissioners of the Orphan House met with City Council to discuss a grievance they had over the way the City had disposed of a £50 bequest given to the institution by Dr. Samuel Miller in April 1796. The City had invested the £50 in stock in order to create an endowment for the orphanage. Though the Commissioners did not object to the establishment of an endowment they objected to investment of this particular bequest in stock, “the annual income whereof,” they estimated, “will not produce [£]3 per annum.” The money would have been better used, they argued, in “enabling us to satisfy some of the important demands that had accrued and are even yet accruing on so extensive an

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[19] OH Minutes, August 23 1795.
undertaking.” Thus, the Commissioners proposed that the stock be transferred to them so they could dispose of it as they saw fit.\(^{20}\)

On August 1, City Council reached a decision on the disposal of Miller’s bequest and decided to maintain its original resolve to invest the money in stock for the purpose of creating a fund for the Orphan House. Believing that Council had grossly erred “in attempting to raise a fund, when they can neither furnish the means for finishing of the Orphan House; or have been enabled to afford it a regular support,” the Commissioners unanimously resolved to resign. In a lengthy letter written to the members of City Council, which the Commissioners ordered the Chairman to publish in the local paper, the Commissioners explained that

> It is with extreme concern we find ourselves impelled to relinquish our Stations as Commissioners of this House, for whose prosperity we shall ever entertain the most anxious solicitude. If there be any being whose wants demand aid in preference to those of others, it is the forsaken Youth, who has been nurtured in ignorance, or habituated to scenes of profligacy and impiety. In howmuch we have been disposed to promote an Establishment for the reception, maintenance and education of such unhappy foundlings, this Stately Fabric, our Journals, and other Books of reference (which have ever been free for public inspection) will now and heretofore amply testify for us. But unexpectedly restrained by you, in the performance of our fond pursuits, we are now virtually compelled by your final resolve of the 11\(^{th}\) Instant, wither to abandon our Orphan Charge, or consent to become such mere mechanical powers in the Hands of the Corporation, as to be ever conformed to an absolute subserviency to their Wills; however they should be regarded, as offering a deliberate and indelicate outrage to our feelings, or as superseding the Obligations of Law, and the limits of sound policy.

The Commissioners concluded by notifying Council that, “Before however we relinquish a Trust we have the Confidence to believe we had discharged with the strictest fidelity, and to the general satisfaction, we are ready-- nay anxious-- to meet every inquiry or

\(^{20}\) OH Minutes, 4 August 1796, 26 February 1795, 17 May 1795, 5 May 1796, 19 May 1796.
investigation of conduct; and for this purpose as well as to prevent any immediate injury by our sudden removal, we shall continue to view ourselves as Commissioners until Thursday next, the 18th Instant, at 3 o’clock P.M. from and after which Day and hour, we shall consider ourselves as having resigned.”

True to their word on August 18, 1796 the Commissioners, many of whom had been in office since the Orphan House opened in 1790, resigned from their posts. This is the only resignation of Commissioners known to have occurred during the early national and antebellum eras, and eventually, the city was able to remedy the financial troubles of the Orphan House. In 1808, it created a public endowment (endorsed by law) for the institution which consisted of “the donations and bequests made by benevolent persons for the benefit of the Orphan-House, and also all monies or property of any kind . . . arising from escheated estates.” The fund included Miller’s legacy and was held in trust by “the Intendant, the Chairman of the Commissioners of the Orphan-House, and the City Treasurer.” The money could be invested in “such stock, bank shares, or other estate, as may be most beneficial” to the Orphan House, and any interest arising from these investments could be spent on behalf of institution; but the trustees were not allowed to expend “the principal sums” of the investments. City Council also supplemented the money earned from investments with annual appropriations to the Orphan House. From 1817 and 1821, it spent between $12,000 and $17,000 on the institution’s operating expenses (e.g. staff salaries, and food, clothing and provisions). In the 1830s and 1840s that amount averaged $14,052 a year. From September 1859 to August 1860, it reached

21 OH Minutes, 14 August 1796.
an all-time high of $34,784.18--likely the result of the high number of children in the house: just over 200.  

The orphanage’s public endowment was supplemented by a “private fund” held in trust by the Commissioners of the orphanage. The existence of this fund evoked considerable controversy because it was not approved by legal mandate. The Commissioners, however, insisted that it was necessary. As one of the Commissioners explained during a debate with City Council in 1840, the account existed because “no provision was made in the Ordinance [establishing the institution] for any purposes beyond maintenance and education.” Therefore, when emergencies arose and the Commissioners needed to spend money on the inmates, or when the inmates deserved “rewards for good conduct” the Commissioners had nothing to offer except verbal consolation or praise. Additionally, the Commissioner explained, there were times when inmates “who having served their apprenticeship with fidelity and diligence [and] were about to commence their trade or occupations in life” needed assistance in buying “some necessary implements & tools for their trades.” Without money at their disposal, the Commissioners had no recourse than to offer “good wishes . . . [as] cold substitutes . . . for well timed assistance.” Further, the Commissioner argued, upon observing, “this deficiency of power and means in the Commissioners” beneficent members of the

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22 Digest of Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston, From the Year 1783 to July 1818; To which are Annexed, Extracts from the Acts of the Legislature Which Relate to the City of Charleston (Charleston, SC: n.p.), 1818), 199-200. Google Play e-book http://books.google.com/ebooks/app#reader/EU04AAAAMAAJ/GBS.PA198 [accessed May 13, 2013]; Murray, Charleston Orphan House, 21; Annual Statement of Accounts for the City of Charleston 1 September 1829-31 August 1860 Charleston Mercury and Courier. Exact statistics on the number of the children residing in the orphanage are unavailable prior to 1794, but John Murray estimates the number of children to be about 50 in 1790, about 100 in 1800, and nearly reaching 200 during the 1820s. By 1850 it had once again decreased to about 100, but during the 1850s it rose steadily until it reached just over 200 in 1860. Murray, “Fate of Orphans,” 526.
community “made donations and bequests to the Commissioners for the time, personally as Trustees, to carry out their benevolent intentions & constituted them their agents or Trustees to effectuate their views.” Thus, the private fund arose. Eventually, controversy over the “private fund” died down, and in 1861, the Commissioners boasted, in newly revised by-laws approved by City Council, that $76,775.98 was in the “private fund” alone. This was nearly fifty percent of the amount in the public endowment ($168,489.60).  

By 1861, much had changed at the Orphan House. Not only had the private fund increased, but the size of the main building had also been enlarged. In 1853 under the direction of W. J. Bennett, grandson of the home’s original architect, an extensive renovation project began. From that time until autumn of 1855, the inmates, officers and slave workers received temporary domicile at a new Alms House that had been recently erected by City Council. During their absence, an additional story and square footage was added to the building, so that when they returned in 1855, the building had five stories and measured “236 feet long by 76 feet wide, with an extension in the rear 90 feet long by 31 feet wide.”  

The front of the building also got a face lift. Whereas during the 1790s it had a fairly simple front with few embellishments, in 1855 the central portion of the building was adorned with “an Italian portico projection of Corinthian pillars, between which are  

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arches supporting a Corinthian entablature and balustrade.” The wings on either side of the central section were “perforated on the several stories by windows with characteristic embellishments” and the entire building was “surmounted by a Mansard roof, the attic windows projecting from the first slope of the roof, with moulded pediments.” Additionally, a belfry was located “above the roof of the central section . . . constructed for the city alarm bell.” The belfry itself was also grandiose in appearance. It was “supported by an octagonal stage, in the center of which rises the main cupola, being two stories high: on the first story there are four porticos of Corinthian columns with rustic blocks, surmounted by entablature and pediment;” and the second story had perforations “on the four sides in which is suspended the alarm bell.” Lastly, the cupola was topped with a square dome in which “a figure of Charity,” the Greek goddess, rested.25

Besides these changes to the exterior of the building, renovations to the interior occurred as well. The original building had sixty-four rooms which were dispersed as follows: the storeroom, two kitchens, two washrooms, and two dining rooms were located on the first, or basement, level; the Commissioners’ meeting room and a school room were on the second floor; and bedrooms for the inmates and officers were located on the third and fourth floors. The renovated house, however, was arranged in the following manner: the basement story had “three dining rooms, pantry, storeroom, three play-rooms, three chambers, kitchen, laundry, engine room, two plunge baths and dressing rooms; the second floor had a “vestibule, reception room, office, [and] tablet or memorial hall” along with “schools, class-rooms, sewing department, parlor, principal

and teachers’ chambers, store room, [and] bathrooms.” The third story contained the “Board of Commissioners’ room, assembly room, library, four dormitories, lavatories, chambers for matrons and other rooms; the fourth story had “five dormitories, lavatories, chambers for matrons, etc.;” and “the fifth (or attic) story contains hospital, convalescents’ dining room, quarantine apartments, lazaretto, apothecary’s apartment, chambers for hospital matron and employees not accommodated in the lower stories, store rooms, bath rooms” and more. Furthermore, the building was “heated principally by steam,” and steam was used in “cooking, in the children’s kitchen, and [in] washing and drying clothes in the laundry.” Lastly, a “waterworks” system was installed in the house that conveyed water to the kitchens, laundry room, and bathrooms.26

Clearly, the Orphan House of 1855 was an improvement upon the original building, and, according to the Commissioners, the “extensive additions and improvements” to the building necessitated “changes in the economy of the Institution.” One of these changes was the addition of an engineer to the list of officers. This individual had charge of the waterworks and steam-based heating system of the house. He also oversaw repairs to these systems and to the other cooking and washing appliances. Lighting in the house was supplied by gas, and “coal and other fuel” supplied the steam engine and boiler. The engineer kept a daily account of the amount of gas and other fuel consumed by the house and “submit[ted] the said account to the Steward weekly,” who in turn “laid it before the Board” for their review.27

27 By-Laws of the Orphan House of Charleston, South Carolina, 7-8, 26-27.
The organization of the education department also changed after the renovations of 1855. Agnes K. Irving, an acquaintance of W. J. Bennett, had been hired in 1854 to take over the education department and she completely revised it. According to Bennett, who delivered a report in 1857 on the progress of the school under Irving’s leadership, the former system had been “jagged and pitted by unsatisfactory results and ill-defined duties, positions, and prospects.” The former system had been based on models of education created by Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell. Both claimed to be specialists in the education of poor children, and free schools throughout the United States (as well as private “charity” schools) that offered education at a reduced rate, utilized Lancaster and Bell’s systems of education. The principle features of both men’s systems was that a schoolmaster or schoolmistress, assisted by older students, presided over a single classroom with children of various ages and educational levels. Bell’s model differed from Lancaster’s only in that it included instruction in the Anglican religion. Neither man believed that poor children should be educated at a high cost or that they should be taught much more than basic literacy and math skills, such as reading and addition and subtraction. The benefit of the Lancasterian and Bell systems of education were that they enabled schools to educate large numbers of children at a relatively low-cost because the older students were not paid, but a draw-back was that the student-to-teacher ratio was quite high. For example, at the Orphan House during the 1820s, the student-teacher ratio was 120:1 for the boys, and 60:1 for the girls. Another draw-back was that the older student-assistants were often only one or two years ahead of the children they were instructing; thus learning occurred haphazardly at best. The new system, adopted in the
late-1850s, however, was properly organized so that instead of being lumped into a single classroom “under the care of one [school]master,” the children were now divided into two groups: those requiring primary-level education and those requiring more advanced education. The former group comprised the “Primary School,” the latter, the “Grammar School.” Also, for most classes, teachers were employed instead of student-assistants.28

Children attending the Primary School were assigned to one of five classes, depending on their knowledge and comprehension of reading, writing and arithmetic. Each class followed a specific curriculum that was progressive in orientation. For example, those assigned to the first class learned how to recognize and form “letters and figures from the hand frame.” Using a “numeral frame,” they also learned the “elements of arithmetic viz. counting, numerating, adding [and] subtracting in the simple numbers.” Additionally they received instruction in “Juvenile Tables, Common things, [and the] Rules of the School.” Lastly, they were provided with “Slates & pencils for amusement when not engaged in recitations.”29

Once admitted to the second class, they continued to perform the work assigned in the first class and also were “taught Reading and Spelling lessons from the lesson cards.” The use of slates for amusement was still allowed, but by the fourth class, students were actually “Writing on Slates from Copy-boards.” They also began studying “Outline Maps” in the fourth class and continued reading David B. Tower’s First Reader, which had been introduced in the third class. By the fifth and final class of the Primary School, the children were expected to be able to read Tower’s Second Reader, copy figures from

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28 Murray, Charleston Orphan House, 105, 94; OH Minutes, June 25, 1857.
29 OH Minutes, June 25, 1857.

53
the blackboard, do computations on the blackboard, and write “words on Slates.” Instruction in “Primary Geography” and “Juvenile Arithmetic” also occurred at this stage.  

From the Primary School, children progressed to the Grammar School, where over the course of three classes, they acquired proficiency in reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic. They also read two history texts by Samuel Griswold Goodrich (Peter Parley’s United States History and Peter Parley’s Universal History) and learned new vocabulary by reading Worcester’s Dictionary. Cornell’s Intermediate Geography supplemented the work they continued to do with outline maps. In the third and final class of the Grammar School (designated the “8th Class” in the school’s organizational schemata), students received a special treat: they were given singing lessons twice a week in order to participate in the school choir.  

A school of this design required numerous instructors; therefore at Irving’s suggestion the Orphan House employed two groups of women to teach the children: monitors and teachers. Monitors were advanced students who instructed children enrolled in the first two levels of the Primary School. As Bennett explained in his report, though monitors were reminiscent of Bell and Lancaster’s student assistants, they were employed at these levels because “the hand-frames with letters and balls, and the lesson boards are used in these classes, and not books.” Teachers were only needed in classes what utilized

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30 Ibid.
books, thus three of the six teachers employed by the orphanage taught the third through fifth classes of the Primary School.  

Teachers were also employed in the Grammar School, and the principal, Agnes Irving, taught some of the advanced classes. She also oversaw the entire school and trained the teachers. The teachers themselves were recruited from among the cohort of females “graduates” of the institution. In 1857, these were not formal graduates since the new system of education had only been in existence for two years. Rather, they were either young women who had been bound out as apprentices during their adolescent years and had returned to the institution to teach, or they were female inmates who were beyond the age to be bound out, but remained in the institution for the explicit purpose of becoming teachers. Bennett described these women as “advanced Girls” who during their time at the orphanage “evinc[ed] intellect and School-tact.”

Bennett’s report on the new organization of the school also delineated the amount spent by the education department each year since Irving took control. It had decreased each year even though the number of students increased. In 1854, when Irving assumed control, 150 of the 188 children residing in the Orphan House attended the school (the others were either not of school age or too ill to attend). Sixty-one of these students were enrolled in the first class of the Primary School. By 1857, the total number of children in the orphanage was 264, 233 of whom attended school. But only nine of these students were in the “Alphabet Class.” Furthermore, the cost of educating each student had decreased. In 1854, the orphanage spent approximately $24 on the education of each student.

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32 OH Minutes, June 25, 1857.
33 Ibid.
child. By 1857, that number had fallen to $9.60 per child. The annual cost of books had also decreased (from $300 in 1854 to $150 in 1857), and the salaries of persons employed by the school, despite an increase in employees, had gone down by $1000 (from $3,300 in 1854 to $2,300 in 1857). Clearly, Irving was not only an efficient administrator, but a frugal one as well.\textsuperscript{34}

Frugality was very important to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, who boasted in 1861 that the “cost of the whole establishment for 1860 as charged by the City Treasurer is $34,734.18, and for 1861 is $35,078. 19, evincing a uniformity of expenditures, which itself speaks of economy.” Indeed, by mid-nineteenth century, the Charleston Orphan House was an economically and educationally efficient institution. It had undergone considerable renovations that increased its capacity to serve the community of Charleston as an asylum for poor and orphaned white children. The City councilmen who had established the school in 1790 might not have recognized the building’s physical structure in 1860, but they would have recognized, as Henry A. DeSaussure, one of the longest serving Commissioners, expressed in a speech delivered at the institution’s sixty-sixth anniversary, the manner in which the Commissioners of the orphanage sought to govern the institution in order to enable it to “realize the best hopes of the philanthropist and the Christian.” They also would have applauded the “[p]ublic confidence [that] appears to have been reposed in the management of the institution.” In 1855, when DeSaussure made his speech, about 2,000 children had passed through the doors of the orphanage since it opened in 1790; and by 1861 that number had increased

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
by 340. Despite the trials of the 1790s, the Charleston Orphan House had become an institution of great value to the community, perhaps even surpassing the expectations of state legislators who in 1783 gave the City Council of Charleston responsibility for “the care of the poor.”

35 OH Minutes, September 7, 1861; Henry A. DeSaussure, Oration, 66th Anniversary Celebration.
Chapter 3: The Orphan House Slaves

Though the Charleston Orphan House was lauded as a benevolent institution by the white community of Charleston, the black community, particularly its slaves, might have seen it as just one more place that was immured in the oppressive culture of slavery that existed in the city of Charleston. During the 1790s through 1850s, the orphanage hired, purchased, and acquired through gifts and bequests at least 108 slaves. It also gained twenty-one slaves through natural increase. From the time the institution was established, until 1803, the Orphan House only utilized hired slave labor, but in 1804, it purchased ten slaves, with the intent of phasing out all hired slave workers. Unexpected losses in the community of slaves owned by the orphanage through untimely death and sale thwarted this intent, however; thus the Orphan House fell back on hired slave labor, and throughout most of the antebellum era used a combination of owned and hired slave labor at the orphanage.

Slave hiring began at the Charleston Orphan House in 1790 when the Commissioners resolved to employ “a Negro Man to Cook, and a Negro Wench, to assist in the Kitchen.” This decision was made at the first meeting of the Board, on October 25, and Arnoldus Vanderhorst, chairman of the Board and two-term Intendant of Charleston offered two of his slaves for the jobs. Expressing a desire “of promoting so laudable an Institution,” he offered “a Young Negro Wench” free of charge for two years and “a
Negro Man who is a good Cook” at the rate of “Twelve pounds p[e]r Annum.”

Contemporary evidence suggests that this was considerably less than the standard rate of pay for slaves who worked as domestic laborers. During the late-1770s, for example, the owners of some slave domestics in Charleston were paid £60 to £90 per year. This suggests that, in Vanderhorst’s opinion, the slaves were offered upon charitable motives.

The Commissioners seemed to think so too and “the thanks of the Board were unanimously given” to him. ¹

Slave hiring continued at the Orphan House over the next month, but this time an ad was placed in the newspaper for the slaves. On November 25, the Commissioners ordered the Matron to “hire two Negro Women by the year, to wash and Iron the Childrens Cloathes and keep the Orphan House Clean and in good order.” The ad stated that “Two Negro Wenches, Capable of washing, plain ironing, and keeping the house clean,” were wanted. They would “hired by the year, and be paid quarterly or monthly, as agreeable to the owner.” Applications were to be sent to the Steward of the orphanage.

The result of the search is not recorded in the minutes, but, if these women were hired, then as of December 1790, four slaves would have been working at the Charleston

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¹ Minutes, Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, October 25, 1790, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina (hereafter cited as OH Minutes). Vanderhorst served as Intendant from 1785-1786 and from 1790-1792, Walter J. Fraser, Jr., Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern City (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 443. Henry Laurens, who leased slaves in 1775 on behalf of his brother, John, while John was abroad, stated that he hired out Auba and her child to a local schoolmaster for £90 a year. She likely worked as a domestic servant for him personally and helped clean the school. Likewise Laurens hired out Statira as a house servant for £60 per year, Jonathan Martin, Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 24.
Orphan House: one cook, one apprentice washer/ironer, and two females responsible for washing, ironing, and cleaning the house.²

Two years later, in May 1792, the Commissioners again granted the Matron permission to hire “a wench to wash.” Again, it is not clear if anyone was actually hired to fill this position, but subsequent records prove unequivocally that other slaves were hired in 1792. One of these was a male slave whose owner, in September of 1792, was paid £9.4.2 for one month of labor. He had been hired to landscape the property upon which the new Orphan House was being built. Then, on December 4, Arnoldus Vanderhorst “supplied the Orphan House with a[nother] Cook, for which the Board agreed to pay him Five pounds pr quarter.” Lastly, on December 6, the term of employment for Vanderhorst’s female slave came to an end. Upon her release, the Commissioners ordered “another . . . to be hired in her Stead.”³

Hiring continued in January 1794. Financial records indicate that as of January 9, 1795, the Orphan House owed Robert Limehouse £7.10 for “6 months hire of [a] wench.” It also owed Sarah Lesesne, £3.15 for “1/4 qr.” that is, approximately one month service “of [a] wench,” and it owed John Brownlee £3.14 for “1/4 qr.” service of a “wench.” Lesesne’s payment was actually two months overdue, and Brownlee’s was overdue by about one week. Some indication of how these slaveowners might have been affected by the delinquent payments can be gleaned from their occupations and slaveholding status. Robert Limehouse was shopkeeper who, in 1800, owned six slaves. Lesesne was a widow who owned four slaves in 1790. Brownlee, a merchant, owned ten slaves in 1790 and

² OH Minutes, November 25, 1790; City Gazette November 30, 1790.
³ OH Minutes, May 10, 1792, September 15, 1793, December 6, 1792.
twelve in 1800. Based on historian Philip Morgan’s calculation that the two largest
groups of slaveowners in Charleston in 1790 and 1800 were those who owned 1-9 slaves
and those who owned 10-19 slaves, Limehouse, Lesesne, and Brownlee were fairly
typical slaveholders (see Table 2). Also, Limehouse and Brownlee had fairly lucrative
professions, so they may not have been seriously affected by the late payments. In fact,
based on one historian’s estimation that most urban slave owners only needed two slaves
(“a cook and housemaid”) at least and eight at most (including, in addition to the cook
and houseman, “a laundress, a children’s nurse, a seamstress, a milkmaid, a butler, a
gardener, and a coachman”), it appears that Limehouse and Brownlee may have been
leasing superfluous slaves. Lesesne’s status as a widow however, might have made her
more dependent on her slave’s earnings than Brownlee and Limehouse. 4

The owners of slaves employed by the Orphan House in August 1796 were also
fairly typical urban slaveholders. Chloe, one of seven slave women hired by the Orphan
House in August 1796, belonged to Robert Gibson, a saddler who owned ten slaves in
1790 and seven in 1800. Mary, another hired slave, belonged to J.H. Harris the school
master of the Orphan House. A woman named Hannah also belonged to him, and he
owned four slaves in 1790.

4 OH Minutes, January 9, 1795; Ancestry.com, People and Professions of Charleston, South Carolina,
1 eds. Bernard Bailyn, Donald Fleming, and Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1984), 190; Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and
Control of Negro Labor as Determined By the Plantation Regime (New York: D. Appleton and Company,
[accessed June 3, 2013]; Martin, 83.
Table 3. Pattern of Slaveholding in Charleston, 1790 and 1800

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Estate</th>
<th>No. Slave Owners, 1790</th>
<th>No. Slave Owners, 1800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-9 slaves</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19 slaves</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 slaves</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49 slaves</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+ slaves</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Another hired slave named Hannah belonged to John Edwards, a shopkeeper who owned nineteen slaves in 1790. And two other women named Hannah belonged to John Brownlee and Robert Limehouse, whose occupations and slaveholding status have been previously discussed.5

A Mrs. Toole, owner of Syvlia, yet another hired slaves in 1796 may have been a widow, and perhaps a recent one, for Orphan House records reveal that she actually resided at the orphanage in August 1796, along with twenty-seven other city residents who lost their homes to a fire that blazed through the city in June. Toole cannot be located in contemporary city directories of census records; therefore it is possible that she lost her husband in the 1796 fire. But it also possible that she was a newcomer to the city. If she was a widow, then she likely depended on Sylvia’s labor for financial sustenance.

Alexander Petrie, the owner of Sampson and Cain, the lone male slaves working at the institution in August 1796, may have had a similar story. He is listed in the 1796 city

5 OH Minutes, August 18, 1796; Ancestry.com, People and Professions of Charleston, South Carolina, 1782-1802, database on-line (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2006); Ancestry.com 1790 United State Federal Census, database, on-line (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2010); Ancestry.com 1800 United State Federal Census, database, on-line (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2010). It is unclear whether the two women leased to the orphanage by Limehouse and Brownlee were the same as the two women leased in 1794 because the names of the latter women are not provided in the records.
directory as a “gentleman”, and in the 1801 directory as a “factor.” The first listing suggests that Petrie might have been a bachelor. It also suggests, from the standpoint of a social title, that he might have been a man of leisure who had inherited so much wealth that he did not have to work. His occupation in 1801 supports the latter assumption. “Factors” were individuals who loaned money to people or managed the business affairs of others. If these any of these assumptions are correct, then, he might have leased Sampson and Cain to the orphanage to diversify his already substantial income or, he might have used slave hiring as means of keeping unneeded slaves busy.  

Data on slaves working at the Orphan House for the rest of the 1790s is incomplete. A list of slaves employed by the institution from August 1799 to July 1818, shows one slave, a gardener named Sam, working at the Orphan House in August 1799, but based on previous hiring patterns it is unlikely that he was the only slave. The same list shows that by 1800, two other enslaved people, Phillis and Dye, were working at the orphanage. Phillis was a cook and Dye was a washer. Again, given the number of slaves employed in previous years, other slaves probably worked at the Orphan House in 1800. Between 1800 and 1803 twelve more slaves were hired by the institution (see Appendix C, Table 11).  

The average tenure of employment for hired slaves at the Orphan House from 1799 to 1803 was 2.3 years, and considering the fact that slave hiring agreements typically were made on a yearly basis, it is surmised that a high degree of stability existed

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7 “Servants of the Orphan House Institution,” Registers of Staff, Slaves, and Children, 1791-1831, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina, reel 10, microfilm.
among the hired slaves (see Table 3). Yet, such stability came at a price. Most female
slaves employed by the orphanage earned $7 a month, and most males earned $10 per
month; and in all, seven slaves were hired by the Orphan House between 1799 and 1803.
Though the tenure of employment of each slave varied, if one includes all slaves hired
each year in calculations, then an average of $267 was spent on the wages of hired slaves
each year (see Table 4). An examination of the amount of money earned by Sam, Phillis
and Dye during their tenures of employment provides a more precise account of the
institution’s spending over the long-term. Sam, who earned $10 per month, worked at the
Orphan House from August 20, 1799 to March 14, 1803; thus he earned $440 during his
entire term of employment. Phillis and Dye each earned $7 per month. Phillis was
employed from February 10, 1800 to February 21, 1805 and earned $420 throughout her
period of employment. Dye’s term of employment began on February 10, 1800 and
ended on July 2, 1803. Her earnings amounted to $294 during her term of employment.
Thus, the cost of employing these three slaves alone over a four year period was $1,154.

It is appears that the high cost of hired slave labor led the Commissioners to ask
City Council, in 1804, for permission to purchase slaves “for the use of the institution.”

8 According to Jonathan Martin, “Across the South and throughout the antebellum period, slaves were
customarily hired out from January 1 to December 25, but there were countless possible variations on this
norm, depending upon the needs of hirers and the work to be done.” He further explains that “Contracts
clearly noted the specific dates on which slaves should be returned to their owners.” Martin, 96.
9 “Servants of the Orphan House Institution.”
Table 4. Slaves Hired by the Orphan House, 1799-1803

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Dates Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>August 12, 1799- March 14, 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillis</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>February 10, 1800- February 21, 1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dye</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>February 10, 1800- July 2, 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>July 6, 1800- May 21, 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amey</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>January 21, 1803- November 20, 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>March 1, 1802- March 20, 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>April 12, 1803- May 28, 1803</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: “Servants of the Orphan House Institution,” Registers of Staff, Slaves and Children, Records of the Commissioners of the Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina, reel 10, microfilm.
Table 5. Wages of Hired Slaves, 1799-1818

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Female Slaves</th>
<th>Number of Male Slaves</th>
<th>Average Wage of Female Slaves per month</th>
<th>Average Wages of Males Slaves per month</th>
<th>Average cost of Wages per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$7</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$7</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$7</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$7.20</td>
<td>$9.60</td>
<td>$120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$28.20</td>
<td>$49.60</td>
<td>$267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Same as Table 4

Indeed, Council approved of their request with financial savings in mind. On November 2, it passed the following resolution:

Resolved,
That the City Treasurer be and he is hereby empowered to dispose of as much Orphan House Stock as will purchase nine African or new Negroes for the use of the Orphan House, the price not to exceed Three hundred Dollars per Head-- That the Commissioners of the Orphan House be authorized to purchase the said Slaves, and that the Intendant when requested by the Commissioners, do draw an order on the City Treasurer for the amount of the purchase money, and that the Commissioners continue to hire Negroes for the Orphan House as usual, until in their opinion, the Slaves to be purchased, shall be capable of doing the duties required of them in the Orphan House.

Clearly, City Council envisioned the new slaves as replacements for the hired ones. Even after the slaves were purchased for the sum of $3,043.50 (the extra cost being attributed to the purchase of ten slaves rather than nine and the inclusion of blankets for the slaves), City Council boasted in an annual statement of accounts that the purchase of the slaves...
would result in “an annual savings of about six hundred dollars” for the Orphan House.\(^\text{10}\)

Yet, contrary to City Council’s expectations, the savings were never realized. Hired slaves were not phased out at the orphanage. After a brief period of decline, their numbers actually increased.\(^\text{11}\)

The period of decline began shortly after the ten slaves were purchased. The purchase occurred on November 9, 1804 and by November 15, Frederick, a common laborer who had been employed since March 1803, was let go. Another slave, Chloe, absconded on November 29, saving the Commissioners the trouble of having to dismiss her. The remaining hired slaves-- Phillis, Mary, Tim, Jenney, Amey, Hannah, Patty, and Rheuben-- were dismissed over the next two years. Phillis and Mary were let go in February 1805; Tim and Jenney were released in May of the same year; and Amey was let go in November 1805. In 1806, dismissals began with Hannah in March, followed by

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\(^{10}\) Five male slaves and five females slaves were purchased on November 9, 1804. The males cost “$275 each and the females $270 exclusive of blankets.” Also, the annual statement of accounts shows that the Commissioners based their calculation of the institution’s annual savings on the following premises: In order to make the purchase, the City sold stock that was held in the institution’s name. It estimated that the interest on the stock, had it not been sold, would have been $178.29 per year. They also estimated that “hire of ten Negroes would not cost less than $778.22 per year.” Thus, the cost of ten hired slaves, less the annual interest on stock, amounted, roughly, to a $600 per year savings. OH Minutes, November 15, 1804; “City Accounts,” Charleston Times, September 1, 1807.

\(^{11}\) OH Minutes, November 15, 1804 ; “City Accounts,” Charleston Times, September 1, 1807 ; “Slaves belonging to the Orphan House Institution,” Register of Staff, Slaves and Children, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina. It is clear, from the records that these slaves were African-born, but little is known of the African origin of these slaves. Their bill of sale cannot be located in the Orphan House records or in the comprehensive on-line database of South Carolina Bills of Sale compiled by South Carolina Department of Archives and History (i.e. “On-Line Records Index,” http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/). Another potential source of information on the origin of the slaves, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces), yields little information without a bill of sale. The database shows at least three slave ships (the Susan, Active, and Macclesfield) arriving in Charleston near the time the slaves were purchased, but without a bill of sale it is impossible to determine which of these ships the slaves arrived on.
Patty in May, and Rheuben in June. But, before the year 1806 was over, the Orphan House rehired Amey and Tim.12

The decision to rehire Amey (in March 1806) and Tim (in June 1806) was made because of circumstances related to the health and work assignments of the newly purchased slaves. On August 11, 1806, the Commissioners noted the nature of these circumstances:

On a suggestion from the Intendant and Committee of Council made to the Board, whether a retrenchment in the expences of hiring negroes for the Institution “cou’d not be made.” The Board took the same into consideration, and Report that some time past one of the Africans belonging to the House died, another was placed under, and is constantly with the Weaver, learning that trade. So that at present there is two Cooks, and five washers and Scourers (one of which is hired) and one Gardener is also hired, and two laborers Africans, that there is not at present more persons employed than there was for years past, they further report that at present there is three of the African women pregnant; they therefore conceive that the number cannot be dispensed with, nor any retrenchment in that part of the expences of the Institution can be made at present.

Thus, Amey was hired to take the deceased female slave’s place and Tim was hired to take the place of the male slave who was apprenticed to the weaver. Thereafter, slave hiring increased with rapidity. In fact, at least thirty-one slaves were hired by the orphanage between 1808 and 1818 (see Appendix C, Table 1).13

Additionally, between 1812 and 1844 the Orphan House purchased five other slaves, all women. The purchase of these slaves amounted to an investment that the Orphan House Commissioners likely desired to receive a return on in the form of productive labor by the slaves. Yet, in their estimation, two of the slave women, Charlotte and Flora, proved too unproductive to keep. Charlotte, a washer was purchased in 1813

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12 “Servants of the Orphan House Institution.”
13 OH Minutes, 11 August 1809.
from Hugh Maguire, a merchant tailor who resided on East Bay Street. He likely sold Charlotte to the institution in response to an advertisement placed in the Charleston City Gazette and Advertiser for “four young and healthy NEGRO WOMEN, who are complete washers and ironers.” Yet, within three years of the purchase, Charlotte was deemed, by the Commissioners, to be “in a great degree useless” and she was sold, with her child. Flora, another washer, was purchased in 1820. In 1830 she was sold, with her husband Jack and their child Bob, for allegedly being “of no use to the institution.”

Jack was one of six male slaves given to the orphanage in 1812 by William Johnson Jr., a member of the Board of Commissioners (1804-1807 and 1811-1816) and an Associate Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1804-1834). Prior to Jack’s being sold, two of the other slaves donated by Johnson were sold, and the circumstances surrounding their sale, suggest that Johnson’s donation had been made for unscrupulous reasons. In 1813, a mere year after donating the six slaves to the Orphan House, Johnson spearheaded an investigation of how many slaves the Orphan House actually needed at the time. He calculated that “there will be necessary for each Wing . . . One Labourer, One Cook, [and] Three Washers.” He also determined that two laborers would be necessary to attend the garden and one slave (who was already employed in that capacity) would be needed “For the Loom.” Therefore, he recommended reducing the current contingent of adult slaves owned by the orphanage from thirteen to eight. The five slaves

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14 Servants of the Orphan House Institution”; Ancestry.com. City Directories for Charleston, South Carolina For the years 1803, 1806, 1807, and 1813, database on-line (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2006); City Gazette 13 June 1813, 23 August 1813, 3 September 1813; Steward’s Report, week of 12-18 September 1813, 29 August-4 September 1813, for 19-25 September 1813, week of 2-8 January 1814, 22-28 May 1814, Superintendent’s Weekly Reports, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive at the Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC; Minutes 1 July 1813, 15 July 1813; “Servants of the Orphan House Institution;” OH Minutes 1 August 1816.
to be gotten rid of, he proposed, were “Boston, Kate, Pompey, Caesar, and Bob.” Three of these people--Pompey, Caesar, and Bob--Johnson had actually given to the institution. In the end, only two of the slaves he donated--Pompey and Harry--were sold, (and Kate and Boston were too) but Johnson’s suggestion to sell his former slaves suggests that they might not have been valuable to him in the first place.  

In contrast to Johnson’s donation, slaves given to the orphanage in subsequent years appear to have been given with benevolent intentions in mind, though the slaves’ themselves probably disliked being separated from their communities. Despite the obvious discomforts of being relocated to a new home and new work environment, they were fortunate that were donated along with family members. The first of these families was Affy and her three children, Clara, Sam, and Maria. They were bequeathed to the institution in 1829 by Levi Walbridge. Walbridge was a school teacher who, in 1816, lived on King Street. The orphanage’s financial records show that he bequeathed $2,000 to the institution in 1829. This could have been actual cash or the monetary value of Affy and her family. In 1853, another enslaved family was donated to the Orphan House. A family of eight, they consisted of Jacob, his wife Septima, and their children: Mary, Nancy, Emma, Susan, Louisa, and Martha. William Aiken Jr., a prominent rice planter, politician, and Commissioner of the Charleston Orphan House, gave this family of slaves to the institution after they were bequeathed to him by Ann H. Dart.  

16 William Aiken Jr. served as a Commissioner of the Orphan House from 1850 to 1856. He also had an extensive political career. One scholar described his public service as follows: “Over a twenty-year span
Dart, a spinster, who resided on Tradd Street, died in July 1852. She owned seven slaves in 1840--possibly the same family that she bequeathed to Aiken (to whom one more child had been born by the 1850s). It appears that she wanted to keep the family intact after her death, for she stated in her will that, “I give and bequeath unto the Honble William Aiken absolutely my negro servants Jacob and his wife Septima and their Children . . . and their future issue and encrease.” However, Aiken had little use for Dart’s former slaves. He owned 700 slaves in 1850, most of whom worked on his 3,300-acre rice plantation on Jehossee Island, thirty miles south of Charleston. Aiken also had a residence in Charleston (now known as the Aiken-Rhett House) and a summer home in Flat Rock, North Carolina. 17

Correspondence between Aiken and the Commissioners of the Orphan House indicates that Aiken initially offered the slaves to the orphanage upon conditions that would have ensured that the family stayed together. He informed the Commissioners that should they accept the donation, they would have to, “pay to her [i.e. Dart’s] administrator Mr. [William Roper] Brailsford, the amount of indebtedness to the Estate of Benj. Dart, being about nine hundred dollars, for which the family is made liable” and he

from 1838 to 1857, Aiken served successively as state representative, state senator, governor, and spent three terms in the U.S. Congress, where he narrowly missed being elected Speaker.” James M. Clifton, “Jehossee Island: The Antebellum South’s Largest Rice Plantation,” Agricultural History 59 no. 1 (January 1985): 56.
17 Clifton, 56, 59; Will of Ann H. Dart, Wills of Charleston County South Carolina, 46: 139, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina, typescript, emphasis added; date of Ann Dart’s death obtained via ancestry.com, http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&new=1&MSAV=0&msT=1&gsfn=ann&gsln=dart&mswpn=&ftp=Charleston%2c+South+Carolina&mswpn=21847&mswpn_PInfo=8-%7c0%7c1652393%7c0%7c2%7c3245%7c43%7c0%7c552%7c21847%7c0%7c&msbdy=1786&uidh=ic5&gss=angs-g&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=217632&recoff=10+12&db=WebSearch-4109&indiv=1 [accessed June 15, 2013].
added that “the Commrs. of the Orphan House, & their successors in office, will agree that these negroes, & their descendants cannot now, or ever be sold, or separated, but are forever to remain Servants of the Institution.” Although Aiken’s statement suggests that the Commissioners were purchasing Dart’s slaves, in reality they were not. Dart, as stated above, gave and bequeathed the slaves to Aiken in her will, but, in her will, she also appointed William Roper Brailsford the executor of her estate and stated that “I order and direct all my just and lawful debts to be paid as soon after my decease as convenient.” The $900 debt of the “Estate of Benj. Dart,” must have been one of those debts.

Benjamin Dart’s relation to Ann Dart is unclear. Since Ann describes herself in her will as a “spinster,” the two could not have been married. Thus, the most one can surmise is that Benjamin was a relative (perhaps her father) and that he had appointed her executor of his estate-- an estate that included the slave Jacob and his family--when he died. ¹⁸

Upon receiving Aiken’s letter, the Commissioners declined to agree to the conditions placed upon the slaves, but they resolved, “That if . . . Aiken shall see fit, to make the donation without conditions, so that the Board shall have the absolute ownership of the Property, they are willing to accept the Donation & pay the Legacy charged upon it.” They transmitted a copy of the resolution to Aiken and on December 2, 1853 Aiken tendered his reply: “I have concluded to agree to the terms suggested in the Resolution of the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, & I now offer the family of Negroes, unconditionally.” The tone of Aiken’s response suggests that he experienced some qualms about making this decision, but, ultimately, conceded to the

¹⁸ Minutes 10 November 1853, 24 November 1853, 15 December 1853; Will of Ann H. Dart; Minutes 29 Dec 1853.
Commissioner’s request. The Orphan House records show that Jacob and his family were the last slaves acquired by the orphanage by gift or bequest.  

Slave purchases by the Orphan House ceased before the acquisition of Jacob and his family. The Orphan House continued to hire slaves during the 1840s through 1850s, however. Between 1841 and 1848, on average, six slaves were hired by the orphanage each year. This is similar to the number of slaves hired prior to the purchase of the institution’s first slaves. Comprehensive data on slave hiring after 1848 is not available, but the records do confirm the presence of at least four hired slaves at the orphanage between 1850 and 1851, and financial records show payments to “Servants & Laborers & Washers” throughout the rest of the 1850s.

In sum, the process of populating the Orphan House slave community during the 1790s through 1850s was quite dynamic. During its first decade of existence, the Orphan House only utilized hired slave labor; then in 1804, it purchased its first group of slaves. By so doing, officials hoped to save money by phasing out the hired workers. Initially, the Commissioners reduced the number of hired slaves, but in the end this process proved futile. Slave ownership, evidently, produced a less stable workforce than the Commissioners imagined. Some slaves owned by the orphanage died, others experienced pregnancy at the same time, and others were sold for alleged unproductiveness. In many cases, slaves were hired to take their places. The Commissioners’ insistence upon having the “absolute ownership” of the slaves donated to the institution by William Aiken in

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19 Ibid.
20 OH Minutes December 12, 1850, January 9, 1851, November 27, 1856, February 19, 1857, May 21, 1857, and August 20, 1857.
1853 suggests that they were well-aware of the ups-and-downs of slave ownership and wanted to make sure they had a way out, if necessary. In November 1804, when the Commissioners of the Orphan House purchased ten slaves “for the use of the Institution,” they might not have recognized the Pandora’s Box they unleashed by selecting this category of slave workers. Slaveownership was commonplace in Charleston, but the Orphan House, as a municipal institution, had to be cognizant of the stability of its domestic workforce. City Council simply lacked the money to continually purchase new slaves, so when a slave got sick or died, had a baby or was sold for poor work habits, the Commissioners had to fill his or her place with hired slave labor, which, ultimately, allowed them to fill their labor needs without having to commit substantial institutional funds.
Chapter 4: Slave Labor at the Charleston Orphan House

Whether slaves working at the Charleston Orphan House from 1790 to 1860 were hired or owned by the orphanage, they each had a specific job to do. Generally, female slaves worked as washers or cooks and male slaves worked as outdoor laborers or gardeners. In select cases, some male slaves, such as a weaver owned by the institution and a tailor temporarily hired by it, contributed to textile production at the House, but, generally, this work was performed by a white seamstress hired by the orphanage and the older female inmates of the House. Data pertaining to slaves hired and owned by the orphanage during the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries show that work for the Orphan House slaves was physically arduous and time consuming.

As was the case for most slave domestics, work began at the crack of dawn before the inmates and officers of the House awoke. Laborers--a generic term used by the administrators of the Orphan House to designate slaves who performed various kinds of manual labor at the Orphan House--generally repaired to the wells and cisterns on the Orphan House property as the sun came up in order to draw water for the cooks and washerwomen. While the laborers drew water, the cooks and washerwomen assembled in the kitchens and washrooms located on the ground floor of the main Orphan House building and started fires in the large fireplaces over which they would sweat and toil for the rest of the day.
The job of washerwoman was most common among Orphan House slaves. Of the 108 slaves owned and hired by the orphanage between 1790 and 1860, forty-one were washerwomen. Contemporary accounts show that, during the early years, washing was a multi-step process that involved lifting heavy tubs of water, moving clothes around with large sticks in tubs of in boiling water, and scrubbing them in hot water filled with suds made from lye-based soap. One housekeeping manual from the era instructed women to wash flannels, a popular winter clothing material among Orphan House inmates, “in suds as hot as the hand can bear.” Clearly, this process was not only laborious but, quite possibly, physically painful.¹

Washerwomen’s duties at the Orphan House grew over time, and by November 1839, a special committee of Commissioners began to investigate “certain evils existing” in the West Wing laundry department. The “evils,” according to several female officers, were that some of the women submitted more clothes to be washed than was allowed by the rules of the laundry department. According these rules, “each female officer pr week [was allowed] 20 pieces in winter & 22 in summer.” The committee found that according to the log book kept by the officers, “the quantity has never or seldom been exceeded.” But, it also found, during the final week of the investigation, “a discrepancy in the number set down in the Book (last week) & the number which the washer woman [assigned to the wash the female officers’ clothes] said she had to wash.” The washer said she was given “180 pieces” to wash. “The Books says 124 pieces,” noted the committee.

To determine if this was a normal occurrence or just a fluke, on December 5, the last day of the investigation, the chair of the committee “counted the pieces . . . myself” and found they numbered 150. He noted, however, that, “The Book records, (less 15 pcs.) 135.”

Observing that this was clearly more than the officers had recorded in the log book, Francis Lance, the chair of the committee offered his estimation of how many clothes a “good Washer Woman can wash and iron . . . pr. Day.” He placed the number at “2 dozen [24 items] pr Day or 12 doz. [144 items] in the week.” Therefore, he wrote, “if the full compliment of Clothes allowed were sent out [i.e. 186 items per week], she [i.e. the washer woman] would have 3½ doz. [42 items] more than is right.” As it stood, she had received ½ dozen more items than was right.

Lance offered several suggestions to remedy the problem, none of which actually took the concerns of the slave washerwoman into consideration. First he “propose[d] to make the Matron alone responsible for [supervising] the Washing. Let each officer send the Wash Room on Monday at 8 o’clock A.M. her Bundle marked with the number of pieces, the Matron to count & register them.” Second, he suggested that the “officers . . . report to the Matron if the Washing be not well done or in time: She to correct it; & in case of neglect on her part, then the officer who has complained to her, can do so to the

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2 Minutes, Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 5 December 1839, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina (hereafter cited as OH Minutes).

3 Ibid., emphasis original. In December 1839, seven female officers worked in the West Wing of the orphanage. At the time of the investigation, each submitted 7 items of clothing per week, for total of 140 pieces per week. Additionally, five other women lived in the West Wing and submitted clothes to be washed. These individuals were Mary and Sarah Gurfin, two deaf inmates who could not find placements outside of the home; Louisa Manno, the daughter of Mary Manno, a female officer; and Harriet Gitsinger, a young woman who lived with Mary Phelps, another female officer (the relationship between Phelps and Gitsinger is unclear). At the time of the investigation, Mary and Sarah each submitted 10 pieces of clothing per week; Louisa submitted 7; and Harriet submitted 8. Thus, the committee tabulated “the full compliment of clothes” to be, “say 15 ½ dozen” or 186. OH Minutes 5 December 1839, 20 February 1840.
Board, through the Visiting Commissioners.” Third, Lance recommended that “the
Matron . . . be required to report to the Board, whenever any of the officers attempt
directly or indirectly to evade any of the established rules on the subject.” Lance further
recommended that the enslaved washers of the institution be sent to “Mr. H. Wesner,” a
local mechanic, to receive instruction “in the use of Soda, to wash.” “This mode of
washing embraces a great Economy in the use of Soap & Time” Lance wrote, and,
according to Wesner, would enable the women to wash “each 15 dozen per Day.” On
December 19, 1839, the committee’s report and Lance’s recommendations were accepted
by the Board.⁴

The decision to send the enslaved washerwomen to Wesner, a mechanic, to learn
how to wash clothes more efficiently, was made because the women were now using
washing machines. Today washing machines are time- and labor-saving devices, but
during the nineteenth century they were cumbersome contraptions, essentially consisting
of a large barrel with a hand-cranked wringer. The technology behind nineteenth-century
washing machines was so underdeveloped that many white women considered hand-
washing to be a better alternative. In fact, Catherine E. Beecher, author of a popular
housekeeping manual published in 1868, so despised washing machines that she did not
even mention them in the section of her manual on washing. Instead, she described the
process of washing clothes by hand; thus, the use of washing machines at the Charleston
Orphan House in 1839 was novel.⁵

⁴ OH Minutes, 5 December 1839.
⁵ OH Minutes 30 August 1832; Cowan, 44 and “Washday,” a picture essay following page 150.
The Superintending Ladies, a group of volunteer women who were appointed by the Commissioners to visit the Orphan House weekly and report upon the domestic needs of the institution, can be credited with this spirit of innovation. In 1809, they recommended “that two washing Machines be bought” because “the whole of the washing for the East wing is in vain attempted to be done by one African washer woman [who was washing clothes by hand].” Her co-workers, they explained, two other slaves owned by the institution, had died in the preceding four years. Less than a month after purchasing machines, however, one Commissioner observed during a visit to the Orphan House that, “The washing machines . . . can never be made use of, they are much too small, and are easily put out of order. They will certainly rather impede, than facilitate the object for which they were purchased.” Therefore, he recommended that “they be got rid of, and that another negro to assist [with] the washing be hired.” He urged that this be done soon, because “so many Children are sick in the House.” “Sickness, it is well known,” he wrote, “adds a great increase to the washing in private families [:] how much more to such an Institution as the Orphan House, can very readily be conceived.”

The fact that this Commissioner had more faith in an enslaved washerwoman than in the new washing machines suggests several points. First, it supports the observation of women like Catherine Beecher, who found the technological limitations of washing machines cumbersome. Second, it suggests that the slave women may have deliberately

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6OH Minutes, 7 August 1809, 14 September 1809. Orphan House records indicate that Superintending Ladies, also referred to as the “Ladies Commissioners” or simply the “Ladies,” were volunteering at the Orphan House as early as 1801. Their duties were never formally spelled out by the Commissioners but their function is clearly derived from the numerous recommendations they made the Commissioners about the institution’s domestic economy. Minutes, 23 April 1801.
misused the washing machines in order to maintain control over their work. They were used to washing clothes by hand, and it was easier to control the pace of labor when washing by hand. As Lance’s report indicates it was common knowledge that “a good Washer Woman can wash and iron” 24 pieces of clothing in one day. The thought of having to wash 15 dozen items in one day— even with the aid of a machine and “soda”— might have been overwhelming to the slave women. Though, the Commissioner writing in 1809 likely would not commiserate with the slave women on the subject of productivity, he clearly had a preference for washing clothes that differed from the Superintending Ladies. The Superintending Ladies appeared to be more concerned about efficiency than about the comfort of the slave washerwomen. They were willing to experiment with new technologies that did not have completely positive reviews. It appears that they believed that if washing machines could increase the number of clothes washed by the slave women each day, in a house “as large” as the Orphan House, then they should be used.7

In later years, the Superintending Ladies tried to introduce washing machines into the “Laundry Department” again. In 1831, they recommended that “two washing machines be purchased for the use of the house.” This time, the Commissioners agreed. In March 1832, the machines were delivered to the Orphan House. Both machines were placed in the East Wing of the orphanage, where the boys— who had more suits of clothes than the girls— lived. In accordance with the Ladies’ recommendation, the boys were

7 Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth In Nineteenth-Century America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 28; Founding Ordinance, Minutes, no date, in volume pertaining the period 18 October 1790-9 August 1795, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina.
enlisted “in rotation” to help two of the slave washerwomen work the machines. The Ladies also recommended that “two additional Washing Machines be purchased for the House,” and that these be placed in the girls’ West Wing. But they did not suggest that slave women work them. Instead, “as an experiment” the Ladies recommended “that the 3 black Washerwomen [hired by the institution] be discharged, and an active White Woman be . . . employed on the West Wing.” Like the slave washerwomen in the East Wing, the white woman would be “assisted by as many Girls in rotation as the Ladies may deem necessary.” Perceiving this arrangement as a means of preparing female orphans for the kind of the work they might be required to do as apprentices in a household once they reached a proper age to be bound to a master or mistress, the Commissioners agreed to these proposals.

This arrangement worked well for a few years, and periodically, an additional white woman or a “Coloured Washerwoman” (likely a free person of color) was hired to assist the female children and white laundress. But in July 1833 the Commissioners received a report from George Logan, the physician of the orphanage, which linked washing to an epidemic of ophthalmia (an eye disease) among the children of the orphanage. He wrote

How far the occupation of Washing may be prejudiced will depend upon the foregoing considerations [i.e. whether phthisis or scrofula (archaic terms for tuberculosis) affected the child or occurred in the child’s family medical history], as well as upon the age and constitution of the child. Diseases of the eyes have been considered among those peculiar to Laundresses. The exertion required in lifting and carrying Tubs, the steam of the water, frequent welling of the hands, may be injurious to those who are under twelve years of age. The business of a Laundress must certainly prove hurtful, to Scrofulous subjects, in as much as they

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8OH Minutes, Sept 1, 1831, February 16, 1832, March 1, 1832, June 14, 1832.
are liable to glandular obstructions, and consequent swellings, which may thereby be accelerated and aggravated. The same evil effects will be experienced by Phthisical [sic] Constitutions, as well as children predisposed to Catarrh [a respiratory disorder] and some other complaints. With this view of the subject, and under the apprehensions expressed, I beg leave to advise certain exceptions with respect to ages and constitution, in the Washing Department.

In response, the Commissioners ordered “the children whose eyes are affected separated from the rest, and sent to the Hospital” on the Orphan House lot, but they did not suspend the other female children’s involvement in washing, nor did they draw a link between the ailments described by Logan and the health of the slave washerwomen; the slave washerwomen could have suffered from the same physical disorders as the child inmates.9

Four years after Logan’s report, however, the “experiment” with the female inmates and white washers came to an end. But, it ended for reasons other than health. In November, a committee “appointed to take sundry matters under their Consideration” recommended that the “office of Laundress” be abolished. The committee recalled that the “great inducement with the Commissioners to employ a Laundress, was the opportunity which would be afforded to instruct the Girls in washing and ironing.” The plan, though well-intentioned, was now “impracticable” because the female inmates of the institution were being “put out of the Institution so young that there is scarcely at any time a sufficient number qualified to engage in this labor.” Furthermore, the committee observed, “that the duties in this department might be performed with very little additional expense and the dispensing of the services of this officer would be a savings of

9 OH Minutes, July 5, 1832, October 26, 1832, November 1, 1832, February 28, 1833, March 21, 1833, October 24, 1833, June 19, 1834, January 7, 1836, July 11, 1833; July 25, 1833.
upwards of $300.” Therefore, they recommended that “this office be discontinued, and the Matron and Steward be authorized when necessary to employ temporary and occasional assistance in the washing department.” The Commissioners adopted the committee’s recommendations, and slave washerwomen resumed employment as the sole washerwomen at the institution. Much later in the institution’s history, after extensive renovations were made to the building in 1855 and the laundry department was modernized, white washerwomen were hired again, but slaves continued to work as well.  

As the foregoing discussion of the work performed by washerwomen (and their job title), indicates, this job was only performed by women--primarily slaves--throughout the period under study. It was also regulated by women---the Superintending Ladies, Matron, and female officers of the Orphan House. Slave men at the Orphan House, however, generally worked under the supervision of male officers. The laborers, for example, worked under the supervision of the Steward. According to a report made by the Steward in 1816, laborers

. . . are kept constantly employ’d in the following manner. Dick & Isaac in the Garden & assisting in Cutting Wood, & one of them, one day in the Week to Scour the House. Bob & Jack to Grind Corn, Cut Wood, Carry Water, Clean the Yard & Wash the Back Houses [i.e. out buildings]. two & sometimes three days in the Week, Jack is sent to Scour the House, after the Corn is Ground.

Another group of male laborers, the gardeners, also worked under the Steward’s supervision, though one gardener, hired early in the Orphan House’s history (1793-1795)

10 OH Minutes, November 23, 1837; History and Records of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1860, abstracted and compiled by Susan L. King (Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1984), 16; OH Minutes, September 29, 1859.
worked under the supervision of his owner, Robert Squibb, a famed horticulturalist who published the American south’s first garden calendar and for a time was the head gardener at the institution.\footnote{Steward’s Report, week of February 18-24, 1816; OH Minutes November 14, 1793, December 11, 1794, January 22,1795, March 26, 1795.}

Although a gendered division of labor existed among washerwomen and laborers, both men and women worked as cooks. According to the institution’s rules and regulations, breakfast during the summer had to be served at seven o’clock in the morning, and during the winter, when there was less daylight, it had be ready by eight o’clock. The children’s meals consisted of grits with butter or molasses for breakfast, beef and rice for dinner and bread and/or leftovers for supper. Though these meals were simple, they were arduous to prepare owing to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cooking technology. During this time period, cooking involved lifting heavy cast-iron pots onto an iron trammel or lugpole that was set over a blazing hearth. Cooks had to constantly tend the fire to prevent it from going out, from burning the food in the pots, and from burning themselves. Grains, like the grits the children were served for breakfast, were boiled slowly in water until they reached a mush-like consistency. The meat and rice that the children received for their afternoon meal were prepared in the same way, and thus achieved a stew-like consistency.\footnote{OH Minutes; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, \textit{More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave} (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 23, 21-22.}

But, the cooks’ job did not end after the serving of the last meal. The dishes had to be washed and the pots and pans scoured. According to a popular housekeeping manual of the time, washing dishes was a multi-step process. First the leftover grease
from cooking was to be put “into the grease-pot” and “whatever may be on the plates,” to be scraped “into the slop-pail.” Second, the “nicest articles” were to be washed first “in hot suds,” and “all metal articles” from this lot were to be wiped dry as soon as they were washed. Also, the dishes, once washed, were to be stacked neatly in a pail of hot “rinsing water,” and, afterward placed “to drain on the waiter.” When they had drained, they were to be wiped dry, and “put in their places.” Third, greasy dishes were to be washed. One could use the same pail of water as the nice dishes, but not before adding more hot water to the pail. Lastly, “milk pans, buckets, and tins,” were to be washed in fresh water. Most of these items were supposed to be rinsed, dried, and put up in their places after being washed, but to prevent rusting and copper poisoning, metal teapots and tins were supposed to be dried “before the fire.” In 1796, the Commissioners complained that some slaves were not careful washers, but the real problem was the worn state of the dishes used by the inmates of the orphanage. Even in the midst of their complaints, the Commissioners had to admit that “there is great Difficulty in keeping clean” the tin pans out of which the children of the orphanage ate.¹³

Yet, even the slaves did not always perform this work without complaint. In 1811 and 1812, the Steward, Matron, and a Visiting Commissioner for the week reported Boston, one of the slave cooks purchased in 1804 was insolent, inattentive, and lazy. And others were apparently, at least sometimes, uncooperative. Among cooks hired in 1810 and 1811 there were several problems. On November 26, 1810 the Orphan House hired Mary, a slave cook, from John Walton. They dismissed her on December 2, 1810 and on

¹³ Beecher, 318; OH Minutes 15 September 1796.
December 5, hired Tyrer, belonging to Peter Cravat. Tyrer only remained employed by
the orphanage until January 19, 1811. Another slave cook belonging to Peter Cravat,
Fanny, was hired on January 23, in Tyrer’s stead, but Fanny only remained employed
until February 22, 1811. On February 28, Peggy, belonging to Bartholomew Carrol, took
Fanny’s place. She too, only worked for a very short amount of time: until March 7,
1811. The records indicate that another hired slave cook was not hired again until March
1812. Among the possible reasons for this rapid turnover were dissatisfaction with the
slaves’ work, and an inability among Orphan House officials to remedy it short of
replacing them. It should also be noted, however, that only after these slave women had
been hired and summarily dismissed did complaints about Boston’s lack of productivity
surface. Either Boston became uncooperative after the women were hired and fired--
perhaps because the work load-- or the women had been carrying his weight all along.
Whatever the case, Boston’s lower level of productivity eventually got him removed
from this work. On January 30, 1812, the Commissioners decided that “the man at
present hired for outdoor work be discharged and that Boston supply his place and that
the Steward be directed to hire a Woman Cook, to supply the place of Boston.”

Boston continued to be “unproductive” as an outdoor laborer. His inclination, as
the Steward put it, to do “Little work,” might not have been a sign of laziness, however.
It might have been his way of protesting his change in occupation. Scholars have noted
the distinctions between “house slaves” on plantations and “field slaves,” in part because

14 Steward’s Report, week of July 28- August 3, 1811; OH Minutes, January 22, 1812; “Servants of the
Orphan House Institution,” Registers of Staff, Slaves, and Children, 1791-1831, Records of the
Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library,
Charleston, South Carolina, reel 10, microfilm.
house work, though it was laborious, had some advantages over outdoor work. At least, house workers were protected from the weather. Another privilege house slaves, especially cooks, enjoyed --though their owners regarded it as malfeasance-- was opportunities to take for themselves or their families extra food from the meals they prepared for the owners. Orphan House records indicate that slave cooks periodically took extra food from the kitchen.\(^{15}\) In 1826, when making their calculations regarding the cost of food purchased each year by the Orphan House, the Commissioners ordered the Matron to inform them, “Should any article of diet be purloined after it has been delivered to a cook.” The Commissioners also instructed her to make sure that “victuals are . . . properly cooked” and if not “to report the same to the Commissioner for the week, that a remedy be provided for it.” Though Boston was no longer owned by the orphanage in 1826-- he was sold in 1813--, it appears that the Commissioners thought the slave cooks still had to be carefully monitored.\(^{16}\)

Another male laborer, whom the Commissioners deemed difficult to manage because of his low productivity, was Tom. Tom was a child or young teenager at the time of purchase in 1804, and, in 1805, was apprenticed to John Steele, a white weaver employed by the orphanage. In 1809, upon the completion of his apprenticeship, Tom, now about 15, became the sole weaver at the institution. The purpose of the position of weaver was to reduce the cost of clothing the inmates of the institution and to supply the

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\(^{15}\) Each adult Orphan House slave received ½ lb of meat per day, 2 cups of grits, and 2 cups of rice. According to the Steward, molasses and sugar were also given occasionally “when [slaves] were attentive to duty.” This amount of food, though typical of food given to slaves on plantations, was not enough for a grown man or woman.

\(^{16}\) Cowan, 23; Beecher, 318-319; Steward’s Report, week of 28 July- 3 August 1811; OH Minutes, 22 January 1812, 30 January 1812, 7 August 1826, 5 December 1846; Steward’s Report, week of 9 February- 15 February 1812, week of 9 May-15 May 1813.
house with tablecloths and other household linens. Most of the cloth utilized by the Orphan House throughout the early national and antebellum eras was purchased, but Tom’s work was still considered important. Yet, Tom did not produce enough. The first complaint occurred on March 29, 1810—only months after Tom assumed the position. At that time, the Visiting Commissioner for the week noted that “The weaver . . . weaves four yards per day, which however is not sufficient.” In April 1810, the Steward added that “There is no check on the Weaving department, which is liable to much abuse.” And in December 1810, another Visiting Commissioner said that “the Weaver does much less than he ought to do. He usually furnishes no more than Eleven yards of Cloth per Week—Whereas he ought to weave five yards a day.”17

Some clue as to why the Orphan House administrators may have thought that Tom was inefficient is provided by a survey of Tom’s development and productivity while apprenticed to John Steele. In November 1807, a special committee of Commissioners was appointed to “enquire into the situation of the Weaver’s department, and report thereon” to fellow Board members. They reported “That they had examined into the present situation . . . and had conferred with the Weaver [i.e. John Steele], . . . and find that he has for a considerable time past resided out of the House, and attends

17 Minutes 27 December 1810, 5 December 1811, Steward’s reports for the weeks of 8-14 December 1811, 15-21 December 1811, 22-28 December 1811, 5-11 January 1812, 26 January-1 February 1812, 8-14 March 1812, 24-30 May 1812, 28 June-4 July 1812, 2-3 August 1812, 6-12 September 1812; Minutes 12 November 1812; Steward’s report for the week of 28 August- 3 September 1814; Minutes 24 November 1814, Steward’s report for the weeks of 25-31 December 1814, 15-21 January 1815, 10-16 December 1815, 21-27 January 1816, 19-25 May 1816; Minutes 13 March 1817, 20 March 1817, 10 April 1817, 17 April 1817; Murray, 48,
only occasionally to inspect into the work done therein by the negroes employed.”¹⁸ The committee, therefore, recommended that “in future his Rations be discontinued, and that after the present fiscal quarter, his Salary be affixed at One hundred Dollars per annum.” Steele agreed to these changes, but apparently made no change to his behavior, because in January 1808, the Commissioners ordered the Steward to “make enquiries, and report to the Board at their next meeting, [on] the quantity of weaving done in the house within the last six months, and the present state of the weaving carried on in the house.” They also asked the Steward to find out “whether any task is allotted to the weaver [that is, Tom] and performed by him.”¹⁹

On January 28, 1808, the Steward, quoting the Weaver, reported that “during the last year, there was about eight or nine hundred yards of Cloth wove, and that the negro belonging to the House, and under his [the weaver’s] instruction would be able to weave as much Cloths, as the House could furnish him with thread.” Dissatisfied with this vague (and somewhat cocky) response, the Commissioners ordered Steele to “furnish the Board, at the next meeting, with the quantity of yards of Cloth, the negro now under his instruction weaves per day.” They further ordered him to “in future report to the Board at the end of each quarter of the year, the number of yards he [Tom, the apprentice weaver] shall weave.” At the Board’s next meeting on February 4, “Steele. . . reported that the

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¹⁸ It is unclear who the other “negroes” working in the weaving department were besides Tom. All of the slaves purchased by the Orphan House in 1804 had been assigned to other occupations-- laborer, cook, and washerwomen-- and only one hired slaves, a washerwoman named Amey was employed by the Orphan House in November 1807. It is possible that they were supplied by John Steel, the white weaver who oversaw the department (though from a distance, as the Commissioners’ report revealed). It was common practice among white artisans to hire slaves to assist them in their laborers; perhaps Steele employed this approach. “Servants of the Orphan House Institution.”

¹⁹ Minutes 19 November 1807, 21 January 1808.
negro boy now under his instruction in weaving, cou’d weave with care, and usually did weave 4 yards of plain Cloth [per] day, and 3 yards of twilled.” Steele’s response, though more precise than his first report, was still tentative. He said that Tom “cou’d weave with care, and usually did weave 4 yards of plain Cloth . . . and 3 yards of twilled” (emphasis added).20

In October 1809, a little more than a year after his productivity was evaluated as an apprentice, Tom became the official weaver of the institution, and Steele was dismissed. It appears that the decision was made, not on account of an improvement in Tom’s level of productivity, but on account of the amount of time Tom had spent as an apprentice--“four years” the Steward noted (emphasis original)--and that he “Now Receives full Rations from the institution.” The Steward, however, expressed some reservations about Tom’s readiness to work apart from Steele. During the week in which Steele was discharged from his employment as weaver, the Steward wrote in his weekly report that “The Office of Weaver is now abolished in consequence of one of the Africans having learn’d the Trade, and is now supposed to be fully qualified to carry it on, under the direction of the Matron and the Spinner.” The word “supposed” suggests the Steward’s disbelief that Tom was actually ready for the job. Furthermore, a few weeks before the Commissioners resolved to release Steele, the Steward informed them that “very little attention is apparently paid to the weaving department, and that the single loom now erected, is not always employed in weaving for the house.” This observation is even more significant than the first, in terms of illuminating possible reasons why the

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20 Minutes 21 January 1808, 28 January 1808, 4 February 1808.
Commissioners and officers, in later years, complained about Tom’s level of productivity. It is possible that Tom wove “so little” cloth for the institution, simply because he was unsupervised. Equally plausible, because he wove cloth for people not affiliated with the institution, is that Tom may have used his skills and his time for his personal economic benefit.21

If this is true, then Tom joined the ranks of numerous other slaves in the American South, and in South Carolina in particular, who opted to control their labor by diverting some of it for personal use. Loren Schweninger notes that on plantations in South Carolina where the task-system (a method of working whereby individual slaves were given a specific quota of work to do each day, rather than working in gangs) prevailed, “Slaves were allotted time after their daily tasks had been completed or on weekends, to cultivate their own crops, raise hogs, cattle, poultry, and horses, and to buy, sell, and trade these crops and livestock.” Though some planters objected to the latter activities-- buying, selling and trading livestock and agricultural produce-- most did not. They “believed that such economic activities . . . provided incentives to the slaves, reduced mistreatment of livestock, decreased sabotage of farm machinery, and acted as a safety valve against discontent.” They did, however, “monitor closely these domestic economic arrangements; and . . . enacted a comprehensive code dealing with slaves buying and selling.” This same type of allowance can be seen in the case of Charleston’s market women. Though their assigned job was to buy and sell goods on behalf of their

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21 Steward’s Report, week of November 19-24, 1809, October 1-7, 1809.
owners, they often bought and sold goods on their own account, sometimes inflating the prices of the latter goods in order to increase profits.22

Unlike plantation owners, the Commissioners and officers of the Charleston Orphan House did not want Tom to work for himself. In fact, in November 1809, when a resident of Charleston applied to the Commissioners for permission to have “the Weaver . . . weave a quantity of yarn for a Carpet,” the request was flatly denied. Apparently, Tom, who at that time had only been functioning as the official weaver of the institution for about a month, had established a reputation in the community as someone who could and did weave for persons not affiliated with the institution. Indeed, since the person making the request thought it proper to ask the Commissioners for permission to allow Tom weave the carpet, it is possible that Steele formerly made such arrangements while Tom was under his supervision. When Steele was dismissed, any requests for Tom’s labor would have had to go to the Commissioners of the Orphan House.23

Though no further mention of individuals requesting Tom to weave cloth for them exists in the records, it is certainly possible that Tom continued weaving for his own benefit clandestinely. That he was an enterprising individual who was inclined to find ways to improve his condition, is also indicated by the fact that in April 1811, the Commissioners discovered that he “keeps fowls and raises chickens in his Room within the House.” Most slaves owned and hired by the Orphan House lived in quarters behind


23 Minutes, 30 November 1809.
the main Orphan House building, but the weaving room was located within the Orphan House, and it appears that Tom slept in the same room in which he worked. Upon discovering that Tom kept chickens in his room, “the Board directed the Steward to have Tom chastised at the Workhouse for his misbehavior, and to remove without delay the nuisance of Poultry from the Room, occupied by the said Fellow.” The principle reason why Tom was sent to the Work House to be “chastised,” or whipped, was likely not because he kept chickens in his room-- though the Commissioners deemed the practice a health hazard (the word “nuisance” was generally employed during the nineteenth century in regard to unhealthy substances)--, but probably because of the manner in which he likely obtained the chickens. Orphan House slaves were not given chicken as a daily food allowance, nor were they allowed to keep them for their own use and benefit. The Orphan House, however, owned chickens, and kept them in a coop located near the slave quarters. Thus, Tom either obtained the chickens by taking them from the chicken coop in the Orphan House yard or bought them at market. Both of these activities were illegal. Obviously, stealing was a crime, and slaves were not allowed to buy, sell or trade anything without their owners’ permission; thus, Tom’s activities warranted punishment.24

By April 25, 1811, about a week after the whipping, Tom was back at the Orphan House and laboring upon the loom. One can only imagine that he resumed his duties begrudgingly. His level of productivity at that time or over the next several months is not recorded, but it appears that it did not increase, for in early December, the

24 Minutes 18 April 1811, 25 April 1811.
Commissioners ordered “The Matron to make a Weekly Report to the Steward of the number of yards of Cloth wove by the Weaver each week, and at that the Steward also make a weekly report of the same to the Board.” In this way, the Commissioners established a double-check on Tom’s weaving. The Steward’s first report, delivered at the end of week spanning December 8-14, 1811, stated that Tom had woven 12\(\frac{3}{4}\) yards of cloth, or about 2 yards per day. Likewise, during the following week, Tom wove a piece of cloth that “Measured 12\(\frac{1}{2}\) yds.” But, a change occurred during the last week of December 1811. The Steward notified the Board that “Tom, the Weaver, has not wove any Cloth, the week, ending this day [December 28].” Furthermore, during the first week of January 1812, when the Steward went to measure the cloth that had been woven, “Tom . . . refused to take it out of the Loom, for that purpose.” Clearly, Tom desired and chose to control his productivity in spite of the surveillance that the Commissioners had imposed to try to make him work harder. In fact, when one considers that Christmas Day occurred during the week in which he did not weave anything and that the week in which he refused to take the cloth out of the loom included New Year’s Day, it appears that Tom not only sought to control his labor but also his leisure.\(^25\)

Tom’s pattern of “low” productivity continued throughout the rest of 1812 until, in November, the Board “determined to hire [him] out . . . at twelve dollars per Month.” This move suggests a desire on the part of the Commissioners to find a more profitable way of utilizing Tom’s labor. Tom did not last long as a hired slave, however. By January 1813, he was back at the Orphan House. The circumstances of his quick return are not

\(^{25}\) OH Minutes February 4, 1808, March 29, 1810; Steward’s Report, week of December 8-14, 1811, week of December 15-21, 1811, week of December 22-28, 1811, week of January 5-11, 1812.
recorded, but it is possible that his pace of work was unsatisfactory to his employers as well. Still, the Orphan House officials were unwilling to part with Tom. In March 1813 John Steele, Tom’s former instructor, wrote the Orphan House to inform them that he had heard that Tom “does not render you any Service” and, therefore, would like “to purchase the Negro man Tom on certain conditions.” The conditions were that Steele would “take him at a fair price and all the thread Spun” by the female inmates of the institution would be sent to him and woven “at the Cusimary [sic] price of the Country as part payment.” Steele concluded his letter by saying that, “I am certain [sic] no person Could get the Saim [sic] use of him that I Could.” Despite Steele’s confident assurance, the Commissioners decided not to sell Tom, and the Orphan House continued to employ Tom as the institution’s weaver, though he continued to weave the same unsatisfactory amount of cloth per day. Once again, during the second half of 1814 they hired him out, but in March 1817, they removed him from the occupation of weaver reassigned him as a gardener. The change occurred after a report, given by the Steward in March 1817, revealed that from January 20, 1815 to February 8, 1817, Tom only “wove 1148 yards of Cloth.” But a week after being given this new assignment, Tom was given the task of “Scouring.”

Ultimately, Tom, in the Commissioners’ opinion, proved problematic for more than his labor productivity. One evening in June 1819, while waiting to scour the dishes,

26Correspondence 11 March 1813, Minutes 15 April 1813; OH Minutes, November 12, 1812; Steward’s Report, week of January 24-30, 1813, week of April 11-17, 1813, week of June 20-26, 1813, week of July 25-31, 1813, week of August 4- September 4, 1813, week of October 24-30, 1813; Jonathan Martin, Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 79; Steward’s Reports Aug 28- Sept 3, 1814; OH Minutes Oct 27, 1814; Steward’s Reports Nov 13-19, 1814; Minutes Nov 24, 1814; Steward’s Reports Nov 20-26, 1814; Minutes Dec 8, 1814; Steward’s Reports Dec 25-31, 1814; OH Minutes, April 10, 1817, April 17, 1817.
Tom “grossly [verbally] insulted one of the Nurses, in the Children’s dining Room; and . . . threatened to beat her.” The Commissioners noted that his “conduct requires immediate reprehension,” but no account of Tom’s punishment is recorded. A clue to his behavior, however, is found in the Commissioners’ minutes for July 15, 1819. On that day, the Commissioners “Resolved, That Jack a Negro man, be employed by this Board to undertake to cure the fellow Tom . . . from the Vice of Drunkeness.” Jack, the man hired to help him overcome his drinking problem was given a month to “effect a cure.” The terms of his contract further stated that if he was successful “he shall be paid the Sum of $20, but in case of failure, he is not to receive anything.” Ultimately, Jack was unsuccessful. Tom continued to drink for the rest of his life and allegedly died from “intemperance” in 1828, when he was only about thirty-six years old.27

City laws strictly forbade the sale of alcohol to slaves without their owners’ permission, and owners would not have endorsed slaves purchasing it. Yet, Tom obtained alcohol; so the question is how and from where? His early practice of weaving for other people, and the location of the Charleston Orphan House provide clues. In November 1809, shortly after Tom assumed the position of weaver at the orphanage, Elizabeth Bounetheau submitted an application to the Board for “the Weaver to weave a quantity of yarn for a Carpet.” The Board refused the request, but Tom could have performed this kind of work for his own benefit and invested any such funds in alcohol.28 As for the source of the whiskey, it likely lies in the location of the Orphan House. The Orphan

27 OH Minutes June 17, 1819, July 15, 1819, February 14, 1822; Steward’s Report, week of December 22-28, 1811, week of December 29, 1811-January 4, 1812; City of Charleston Health Department Records: January 1821 through December 1828, George K. Bennoitt, transcriber (Charleston: n.p., 1997), 94, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina.
28 OH Minutes, November 30, 1809.
House was located on Boundary Street, a street that marked the northern edge of the city limits. Just beyond Boundary Street was community known as the “Neck.” Since it was beyond the city limits, it was not subject to the municipal laws that forbade the sale of liquor to slaves, and it was full of groceries (i.e. small stores that sold a variety of goods, including alcohol) and tippling houses (a bar or saloon-like establishment). Given the orphanage’s location, Tom could have simply crossed the street and ventured into the Neck to enjoy a drink. Accounts from the time period indicate that slaves flocked to the Neck at night and on Sundays, when they were not required to work. One person wrote with derision, in a letter to the editor of a newspaper in 1845, that the Neck was “infested with the lowest and vilest grog shops, poisoning and destroying our colored population.” In these shops, slaves fraternized, gambled, and, sometimes got drunk.29

Drinking also affected the behavior of several other enslaved workers at the Charleston Orphan House, prevented them from working, and eventually caused them to be sold. Jack, a slave given to the Orphan House in 1812, was sold in 1830 for “intemperance and ill conduct.” In 1819, Jack was imprisoned for two weeks in the Work House for alleged “Misconduct.” Four years later, in June 1823, the Commissioners reported that, “A charge of great Enormity [sic] [has been] brought against Jack.” Though they declined to report in writing what the incident was, they noted that, “The case is exactly as stated verbally to the Board at the last Meeting.” The Commissioners further observed that they “enquired of the Steward respecting Jack’s general Character, who

[i.e. the Steward] represents . . . as orderly and sober, tho’ like many others, rather lazy.’”

Having received this information, the Commissioners, “directed that an Eye be kept on Jack to prevent his going off; and in case of any such indication, that he be immediately lodged in the work House for safe keeping till the meeting of the Board.” In the meantime, the Board ordered Jack to be “corrected at the Work House” for his current offense, “and then retained there for a Week, or ‘till he be well again.”

Even after being committed to the Workhouse, Jack’s indulgence in alcohol apparently continued. In August 1825, he found himself confined to the Work House again, in consequence of being “drunk for several days,” and over the next two years, he suffered various health challenges that the physician attributed to alcoholism. In June 1826, for example, he experienced “a violent fit” induced, the physician believed, “by habitual intemperance,” and in December 1827, he “severely injured his Spine by a fall,” that might have occurred while he was drunk. The spinal injury prevented him from working for five months. He, thereafter, worked without incident until 1830, when he fell yet again and “contused his hand severely.” At this point, the Commissioners decided that they had had enough. They wrote City Council for permission to sell Jack “either at public or private sale, as soon as possible.”

Jack went on the market in February 1830, with his wife, Flora, and their child Bob. Flora had been purchased in 1820 and had given birth to four children while in the possession of the orphanage; only Bob, however, had survived. Like Jack, Flora suffered

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30 OH Minutes February 11, 1830, May 6, 1819, June 19,1823.
31 OH Minutes August 18, 1825; Physician’s Report, June 18, 1826, December 12, 1827, December 20, 1827, December 27, 1827, January 3, 1828, January 31, 1828, April 3, 1828, February 11, 1830; OH Minutes February 18, 1830.
from frequent bouts of illness that prevented her from working, and, according to the physician, she too was afflicted with intemperance. In 1827, the physician observed that her drinking habit had severely weakened her ability to engage in hard physical labor. This observation came out in July when the Steward presented a “complaint” to the Board “respecting Flora” and asked for permission to subject her to the treadmill in the Work House. The Commissioners suggested that he consult the physician first because of Flora’s ill health. From that consultation, the Steward learned that, “The Physician is of the opinion that it would be prejudicial and dangerous to subject Flora to the Tread Mill: Such being the State of her constitution induced by intemperance.” The Physician further recommended that, “it [is] absolutely necessary However, to the preservation of her life, that she should be kept out of the way of indulging in her destructive habits.”

It is unclear whether the Commissioners were able to carry out the doctor’s orders, but subsequent physician’s reports indicate that Flora suffered from various illnesses that prevented her from consistently working. Thus, it was without qualm that the Commissioners put her up for sale in February 1830, along with her husband and three-year old child. It was difficult to find a buyer however. In March 1830, someone offered $450 for the family, but the Commissioners rejected it-- perhaps thinking the offer was too low. Yet, two months later, when the family still had not sold, the Commissioners resolved to sell them for $400 “if . . . [that] can be got for them.”

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32 OH Minutes, June 28, 1827, July 5, 1827.
end, “the negroes Jack, Flora, and her child” were sold for $405 and the money was paid over to the City treasurer.  

Though Jack and Flora were sick, the Commissioners sold them at least in part because they were underperforming workers. Other low performing slaves were also sold. As has been previously stated, Boston, a cook who was purchased in 1804, was sold in May 1813 for alleged laziness and inattentiveness. Pompey and Harry, given to the institution in 1812, were also sold in 1813 because their labor was deemed unnecessary. Charlotte, a washerwoman purchased in 1813, was sold with her child in 1816 because they “are in a great degree useless.” On two occasions, the Commissioners even ultimately attempted to sell Tom. The first attempt occurred in 1822, at which time they sought “to place the said negro man Tom in the hands of the Auctioner . . . [to be] disposed of to the best advantage.” When they could not find a buyer, Tom was returned to the Orphan House. In May 1823, the Commissioners attempted yet again to sell Tom, and placed in him Work House, to “be there retained ‘till sold.” Once again, their efforts were met with no success and in July they resolved to bring him home and “put [him] under the Charge of the Steward.” As already noted, Tom continued in the possession of the orphanage until his death in 1828.

33 OH Minutes February 11, 1830, February 18, 1830, January 27, 1820; “Slaves Belonging to the Orphan House Institution; “Slaves belonging to the Orphan House Institution,” Register of Staff, Slaves and Children, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina, microfilm, reel 10; Minutes June 28, 1827, July 5, 1827; Physician’s reports for March 13, 1828, December 19, 1828, June 26, 1829; Minutes March 5, 1830, May 13, 1830, May 20, 1830.

34 Steward’s Report, week of July 28- August 3,1811, week of February 9-15, 1812, week of May 9-15, 1813; OH Minutes, July 1,1813; Steward’s Report, week of September 12-18, 1813, August 29- September 4, 1813; OH Minutes August 1, 1816, February 14, 1822, February 21, 1822, March 21, 1822, May 29, 1823, July 3, 1823.
Allegedly intractable, unproductive, and superfluous slaves, certainly proved challenging to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, who relied upon enslaved workers to supply the domestic needs of the institution, but perhaps the greatest challenge they faced was the fugitive slave. Two of the slaves owned by the orphanage between 1804 and 1860 ran away. Both of these individuals were born at the institution and, they were siblings. They ran away nearly twenty years apart, however. The first of these individuals, Mary was born in 1807, and the story of her flight begins in November 1824. At that time, she was nearly eighteen years old and had been working at the orphanage as a washer from the time she was sixteen. She was an exceptionally skilled washer, having been taught the “art of Washing and Ironing and clear starching,” by a free black woman to whom the Commissioners had bound her to as an apprentice.35

By August 1822, she was back in the employ of the Orphan House, working as a washer. Evidently, the first two years of her employment as at the Orphan House were uneventful. But on December 2, 1824, the Commissioners noted that Mary had runaway. Consequently, they resolved, “That the Steward do advertise the Wench Mary as a run away, having absconded some days past.” The ad began running in The Charleston Mercury on December 4, 1824. Six months later Mary was apprehended, in Bibb County, Georgia by slave catchers. On May 5, 1825, “Df. Dupont & Mf. Artope appeared before the Board to support their claim for certain expences incurred by them in the recovery of

35 “Slaves belonging to the Orphan House Institution,” Register of Staff, Slaves and Children, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina; OH Minutes 17 February 1820, 1 August 1822.
the slave Mary.” Mary’s motivation for fleeing to Georgia is not stated in the Orphan House records. However, information pertaining to the place in Georgia where she was found suggests that she absconded in hopes of reaching Indian country and gaining her freedom. The jail at which she was found was located in Bibb County, a region in southwest Georgia near the edge of Creek Indian settlements. Also, Fort Hawkins, an Indian trading post established in the early 1800s, and the town of Macon were located in this county.

In 1824, when Mary absconded, Macon was merely a frontier town that had been established one year before she arrived. To emphasize just how “rural” the town of Macon was, one scholar noted that the first steamboat did not arrive there until 1833. Furthermore a survey of contemporary railroad maps reveals that no railroads existed during the mid-1820s to connect Macon with places in Georgia that bordered South Carolina, like Augusta and Savannah. Postal roads, however, had been established, and Mary probably followed them. Perhaps even she received the assistance of other slaves along the way. In fact, after Dupont and Artope appeared before the board, the Commissioners resolved to write a letter to the “Postmaster of Bibb County, Georgia, and learn of him what steps had better be taken by the Board respecting the Wench Mary who

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36 A survey of extant Charleston City Directories for 1803-1820 yielded three men with the surname Dupont. None were found with the last name Artope or similar spellings such as Astope. Each of the men named Dupont were listed in the 1813 directory. One, J. B. Dupont was a Boot & Shoe Maker, the other, Joseph Dupont, was the owner of a Crockery and Glass Store (Joseph Dupont), and the other, John Dupont, was a planter and Master of the Workhouse. Clearly, the most likely person to have assisted in the capture of Mary was the third individual, John Dupont. His experience as the manager of Charleston’s jail for slaves certainly would have prepared him for the rigors of tracking down and apprehending a fugitive slave.

37 OH Minutes, August 1, 1822, December 2, 1824; *Charleston Mercury*, December 4, 1824; OH Minutes May 5, 1825, October 20, 1825; Map of Georgia, 1823 [http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/histcountymaps/bibbhistmaps.htm](http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/histcountymaps/bibbhistmaps.htm), [accessed 17 June 2013]; Minutes 17 February 1820, 1 August 1822, 2 December 1824
is said to be in that Gaol.” The postmaster’s response is not recorded, but subsequent entries in the Commissioners’ journals indicate that they were instructed to arrange for Mary to be transferred to another jail and sold.38

In June 1825, the Commissioners authorized “Messrs Cuthbert & King . . . to sell the Wench Mary, now in the Jail in Forsyth Georgia.” It is likely that these men were slave brokers in Georgia.39 Considering the lengthy distance between Forsythe and Charleston (present maps estimate it at 288 to 311 miles), it would have been more practical to employ brokers in Georgia than in South Carolina to carry out the sale. By October 1825, the sale was accomplished. A statement of accounts prepared by the treasurer of the Orphan House Board on October 20, states that the Board, with funds supplied by City Council, paid Dupont $50 “for going after Mary.” It also notes that gross earnings from her sale amounted to $294.33 and net earnings, after paying Dupont, totaled $244.33.40

In June 1844, eighteen years after Mary was sold for running away, her brother, Sampson, met the same fate. His age, at that time, is unclear because the exact date of his birth is not provided in Orphan House records. A list of slaves owned by the institution compiled ca. 1829 states his age as three-years-old. This suggests that he was born in 1826. If this is true, then he would have been eighteen years old in 1844, but the records describe him as “a boy” up until the time of his sale. Generally, the Commissioners applied this term to male slaves under the age the fifteen. Thus it is possible that an error

39 The firm of Cuthbert and King is not listed in contemporary Charleston city directories.
40 OH Minutes, June 23, 1825, October 20, 1825.
was made on the list compiled in the late-1820s and Sampson was younger than eighteen when he absconded. Regardless of his age, it is clear that he was a frequent offender in the area of running away; for on February 29, 1844, the Commissioners noted in their journal that Sampson had “again runaway.”

The Commissioners’ reaction to Sampson’s flight in February 1844 indicates that their patience with him, in consequence of his frequent flights, had run out. They told Council that they desired to “sell him as soon as he should be recovered, & further should he be taken during the Recess of the Board, [they desired that] the Chairman [of the Orphan House Board] be authorized to place him in the hands of a Broker for Sale.” On March 6, Council granted the Commissioners’ request and on in May 1844, Sampson was “recovered” and placed in the Workhouse for punishment. Though he “evinced much contrition & promised future good conduct,” the Commissioners proceeded to put him on the market for sale, and in June 1844, sold him “for four hundred dollars, free of charges.”

It is certainly tragic that Sampson and Mary were both sold for running away, and their loss may have critically affected the work routines of the remaining slaves at the Orphan House. Mary’s runaway ad indicated that she was “smart and active, and an excellent washer and ironer.” She may have been the only slave woman at the orphanage who knew how to “clear starch,” a skill she had learned while working as an apprentice. Although, it is unclear what Sampson’s work assignment was in 1844, at an early age he had worked as a personal servant to Hannah Browning, the institution’s School Mistress.

41 OH Minutes, June 27, 1844, February 29, 1844.
42 OH Minutes, February 29, 1844, March 14, 1844, May 23, 1844, June 27, 1844.
Sampson began working for Browning in 1832, when he was about six-years-old. His young age suggests that Browning merely used him for light work, but it is possible that after she left the employ of the Orphan House in 1838, Sampson was placed under the tutelage of one of the male slaves to work in more demanding areas. In any case, his sale, in 1844 when he was about eighteen, amounted to the loss of a young man at the prime age for productivity. 43

In sum, the labor of the Orphan House slaves as cooks, washers, gardeners, common laborers, and in, one instance, a weaver, undergirded the domestic economy of the orphanage. The heavy-lifting, chopping, and cleaning that laborers did kept the Orphan House clean and kept fires in the kitchens and washrooms going so that the cooks and washers could do their jobs. Furthermore, grinding corn into grist enabled the cooks to efficiently prepare meals for the orphaned children. But, at times, pressures from the Officers of the institution for higher levels of productivity prompted protest on the part of the slaves. This protest manifested in the form of work-slow downs, verbal complaints, and alleged unwillingness to work. Some slaves ended up facing the auction block for their oppositional behavior--especially running away--while others were retained by the orphanage until their deaths. Still, the work of the orphanage had to go on, and as long as a slave was in good health and of sound mind, it was expected that he or she would work- and work hard, at that.

43OH Minutes, June 14, 1832.
Chapter 5: Sickness, Birth and Death among Slaves at the Charleston Orphan House

On August 3, 1837 George Logan, the physician of the Charleston Orphan House, noted in his weekly report to the Commissioners that, “The Institution has sustained a loss-- the decease of Serv’t Betty. She was an humble and faithful servant & while her strength permitted diligent in her labour. She had however, for a long time been infirm & sunk under a general decline of health.” Betty’s death and lengthy illness underscore a special challenge the Commissioners of the Orphan House faced in maintaining desired levels of labor productivity. Sickness and death among slaves inevitably caused disruptions in work routines. Typically, when an adult slave died, he or she was quickly replaced with another laborer. For example, in October 1808 when Amelia died, the Orphan House employed Sukey, a hired slave, two days later. Likewise, in January 1810 when Harry died, Tim, a slave who belonged to the Steward of the orphanage, was hired in his place. At times, however, the orphanage did not hire anyone to take a slave’s place after he or she died. This appears to have been the case with Betty, for there is no evidence in the available records that a hired slave woman replaced her after her decease.¹

¹ Physician’s Report, August 3, 1837, Superintendent’s Weekly Reports, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston, South Carolina (hereafter cited as Physician’s Report); “Slaves belonging to the Orphan House Institution,” Register of Staff, Slaves and Children, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina” (hereafter cited as “Slaves belonging to the Orphan House Institution); “Servants of the Orphan House Institution,” Registers of Staff, Slaves, and Children, 1791-1831, Records of the Commissioners of the Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County
Yet, death was not the only disruption of work among slaves at the Orphan House; illness was too. As George Logan attested, Betty worked until she became too sick to work. Though the exact date of Betty’s departure from the slave workforce is not noted, a physician’s report from July 6, 1837 notes that, “Negroes Betty and Affy have been sick & confined to their beds. They are not better.” A subsequent entry made one week later informs that, “Affy has recovered, [but] Betty has had Catarrh superadded to her recent illness & continues very sick.” Lastly, on August 3, the physician noted Betty’s decease, in consequence, he believed, of a “general decline of health.”

Affy, the slave woman mentioned in the July 1837 reports with Betty, also showed a decline in health over time. In June 1846, George Logan wrote,

We feel much concern in noticing the gradual declension in [the] health of Negro Affy for two months past. She has no disease of a definite Form, but Debility. She has been mother of many children most of them the property of the institution. She has attained to that period of life when the constitution is sometimes materially disordered. I would respectfully advise in the instance of Affy a suspension of the accustomed occupation at least for a month or two.

Logan’s diagnosis of Affy’s condition was likely correct. Frequent pregnancies and any difficulty during delivery certainly had an effect on a woman’s health during the nineteenth century and on her productivity. Also, Affy’s frequent births meant that she often missed time off from work during her “confinement” period. During the eighteenth-and nineteenth-centuries, a pregnant woman’s “confinement” or “lying-in,” generally began at the onset of labor contractions prior to delivery and ended when a woman returned to work. The length of confinement period for slaves varied from place to place.

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Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina, reel 10, microfilm (hereafter cited as “Servants of the Orphan House Institution”).

2 Physician’s Report, July 6, 1837, July 20, 1837, August 3, 1837.
and owner to owner, but during the confinement period, slave women were exempt from work. Logan’s descriptions of Affy’s physical conditions, however, in consequence of her frequent periods of parturition, indicate that Affy’s condition required more relief than normal, however.3

Illness regularly caused Orphan House slaves to miss work, and, at times, these absences required the hire of additional slaves. For example, when Bob became “dangerously ill” in late-January 1816, the Commissioners ordered the Steward to hire “a Negro Man, to do the duty of Bob, during his Sickness.” Likewise, in July 1820, a hired female slave worked for five days as a washer “in place of Rose who is sick.” Then in September 1820, another “Washer Woman” worked for twelve days “in place of Sue who has a bad finger.” Each of these were individual cases of illness that were easily remedied by employing hired slaves to work temporarily until the slaves recovered, but, at times, a number of slaves became ill at once and it was too difficult (and expensive) to hire slaves in their place. This occurred especially during epidemics of contagious disease, measles being one.4

At least four epidemic, or large-scale, outbreaks of measles occurred at the Charleston Orphan House during the 1800s. During the first outbreak, which occurred in 1813, nine “hands” were reported sick on September 30, 1813. By October 14, all slaves,

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4 Minutes, Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, February 1, 1816, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina (hereafter cited as OH Minutes); Cash Book, July 15, 1820, September 2, 1820, Financial Records, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina.
except one, had recovered. But the disease struck the slave community again in November and December when two slaves fell ill. This brought the total number of slaves afflicted with measles in 1813 to eleven. During the second outbreak of measles, which occurred in 1820, the slaves were spared--likely because all of the slaves owned by the orphanage at that time had been exposed previously to the disease. But in 1829, during the third outbreak, “Several young negroes of the Institution,” (born after the first and second outbreaks), developed measles. Also, in that year, “Affy and her [three] children,” each of whom had been given to the institution in April 1829, became afflicted with the disease. Then in 1848, Affy’s family once again became the victim of measles when it struck the Orphan House for the fourth time. This time, her two youngest children, born in 1837 and 1840, contracted the disease.5

It also appears, from the physician’s records, that Affy and her family had a history of tuberculosis. This debilitating disease was little understood by nineteenth-century physicians, but the application of current medical knowledge to Affy and her children’s symptoms strongly support the supposition that they were afflicted by the disease. In 1842, a few years before Logan recommended that Affy be temporarily exempted from work on account of her “material constitution” being “disordered,” he noted that, “She is constitutionally Scrofulous.” During the nineteenth century, scrofula was considered a skin disorder that resulted in glandular swellings beneath the skin. People who were “constitutionally Scrofulous” displayed these swellings constantly,

especially in the neck region. The consensus among physicians today is that cases of scrofula were generally misdiagnosed cases of tuberculosis. A common symptom of miliary tuberculosis (or tuberculosis that affects organs other than the lungs) is glandular swelling in the neck and other places in the body. Several other physician’s reports support the assumption that Affy had tuberculosis. In January 1843 she was “afflicted with Rheumatism (of the muscles of her Neck, to which she is predisposed),” and in May 1843, Logan reported that “Negro Affy, has been again confined with the Effects of a Cold, (glandular swellings). She is however, much better today.”

Though Logan reported Affy better in May 1843, her symptoms indicate otherwise. Furthermore, at least two of her eight children showed signs of being afflicted with tuberculosis. Logan noted in August 1842, that Sam, Affy’s second born son, “has been afflicted with Scrofulous abscesses of this thigh. He was when younger seriously afflicted in his neck & he continues [to be].” Considering Affy’s health history, Sam’s “scrofulous abscesses” were likely manifestations of miliary tuberculosis. Additionally, in 1856, Maria, Affy’s third oldest child, died of “consumption” another nineteenth-century term for tuberculosis. According to the physician’s reports none of Affy’s other children displayed signs of “scrofula” or “consumption,” but at least three of her other children died at young ages of debilitating illnesses that might have been masking

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tuberculosis, especially if *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacterium that cause the disease was transmitted from mother child at birth. But the Orphan House physician did not make such a link. He reported that one of Affy’s children allegedly died from marasmus, a wasting disease associated with malnutrition; another allegedly died from “a spasmodic disease” described as “not similar to cholera;” and the other from “convulsive fits.”

There are, of course other possible causes of death for Affy’s children. As the case attributed to marasmus suggests, one plausible cause is malnutrition. Kenneth and Virginia Kiple have identified a strong association between nutritional health and mortality among slave children. They argue that the poor nutritional health of slave mothers-- due the consumption of foods (provided by white slaveowners) that were high in carbohydrates and fat and low in vitamins and minerals--placed slave children at a nutritional disadvantage at birth. The period of breastfeeding did not correct the imbalance because the mother’s nutritional status remained the same. Nor did the period of weaning help because “the custom was to wean slave children to a diet even higher in carbohydrates and lower in proteins than that of their parents.” This diet consisted, in most cases on plantations, of cornbread, hominy and pork fat.

According to the Kiples, the connection between poor nutrition and slave child mortality is that certain diseases, including tetany, kwashiorkor, marasmus, and rickets have an etiology which includes the kinds of nutritional deficits that slave children

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7 Physician’s Report, week of August 4-11, 1842; *City of Charleston Health Department Records: January 1853 through December 1857*, George K. Bennoitt, transcriber (Charleston: n.p., 1997), 85, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina; Physician’s Report, August 25, 1831, week of September 22-29,1836,  April 4, 1844.
possessed. Though tetany was unknown to nineteenth-century physicians, the Kiples suggest that deaths attributed by physicians to convulsions, teething, lockjaw, and tetanus were likely cases of tetany. Tetany, which is “characterized by hyperirritability of the neuromuscular system,” is associated with calcium-magnesium deficiency. Symptoms of the disease include “convulsions and spasms of voluntary muscles,” that cause wrist and ankle joints to be drawn inward and the head to be drawn back. The Kiples suggest that nineteenth-century physicians might have deemed these symptoms as indicative of lockjaw or tetanus. They also notes that contemporary clinical descriptions of cases of death attributed to teething have similar symptoms to tetany.

Kwashiorkor, a disease caused by protein-calorie deficiency, was also not known to nineteenth-century physicians. It is marked by distention of the belly. The Kiples assert that planters’ and travelers’ descriptions of “the sleek, plump” slave children on plantations were really descriptions of children afflicted by this disease. Rickets and marasmus, on the other hand, were recognizable diseases to antebellum physicians, though their causes were generally misunderstood. Rickets, the Kiples point out, has a similar etiology to tetanus, but it manifests in deformed bones and other skeletal disorders. Any of these illnesses could have afflicted Affy’s children.

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8 The Kiples also include Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or SIDS in their list of childhood diseases with a nutritional etiology. They acknowledge, however, that their association of SIDS with nutritional deficiency is based upon their personal observation that “The convulsions and respiratory difficulties resemble, at least to a layman, nutritional tetany,” and upon the work of a single doctor, J. L. Campbell, who found that “magnesium deprivation growth syndrome . . . closely approximates SIDS.” Since these observations are mere hypotheses, the Kiples discussion of the relation between SIDS and poor nutritional health is not included in the above discussion of probable nutritional causes of slave child mortality. Kenneth Kiple and Virginia Kiple, “Slave Child Mortality: Some Nutritional Answers to a Perrenial Puzzle,” Journal of Social History 10 no. 3 (Spring 1977): 295-296.


10 Ibid., 293-294, 296-297.
They could also have afflicted adult slaves at the orphanage as well. For example, when Jenny, a cook who was purchased by the Orphan House in 1816, died in December 1833, George Logan attributed her death to “anasarca and debility.” Nineteenth-century physicians defined anasarca as “the effusion of serum into the meshes of the cellular tissue.” In other words, anasarca was generalized edema, or swelling of the body due to excess accumulation of fluid in the tissues. Today, physicians know that one of the causes of anasarca is severe malnutrition and protein deficiency. It is possible, therefore, that the cause of Jenny’s death was malnutrition and anasarca was a symptom.\textsuperscript{11}

Other causes of death among Orphan House slaves do not have such clear links to nutrition. Respiratory illnesses regularly claimed the lives of children and adults alike. James allegedly died of “a pneumonic condition” in January 1814 and Charleston was reported to have died in 1829 from “dropsy connected with a pulmonary complaint” (dropsy is an old term for edema). Also, two slave children, born to Flora, succumbed to respiratory ailments. The first of these was born in July 1823. The child’s name is not disclosed in the records, but the physician of the orphanage noted that, it died in February 1824 of “catarrh connected with the symptomatic effects of dentition.” In August 1826, John, another child born of Flora died. Logan attributed John’s death to rickets, “accelerated by a violent cold.”\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{12}Physician’s Report, January 13, 1814, March 26, 1829, January 4, 1810, February 19, 1824, week of August 17-3, 1826; City of Charleston Health Department Death Records: January 1821 through December 1828, George K. Bennoitt, transcriber (Charleston: n.p., 1997), 94, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina.
The arrangement of slaves’ living spaces at the Orphan House, and the lack of a “hospital,” or sick room, for the slaves, may have facilitated the transmission of air-borne diseases. Early records indicate that slaves lived in one or more houses in the garden. In 1801, their living quarters may have been appropriated for storage space for lumber, and they may have been forced to move into other spaces. A letter from the Superintending Ladies to the Commissioners in April explains the case as follows: The Matron needed to use “part of the Cupola [or attic story] for “a lumber room,” because the current lumber room was “much wanted as a Bedroom for the use of the Girls, who are greatly increased in number.” “Should this . . . be inconvenient,” the Ladies wrote, “we beg leave to propose . . . that one of the Houses in the Garden (at present occupied by Negroes) may be given up for the above purpose, as we understand they (the Negroes) can be otherwise accommodated.” The response of the Board to the Superintending Ladies’ petition is not recorded, but considering the fact that only four slaves worked at the institution in 1801—all of whom were hired--, it is possible that the Superintending Ladies envisioned finding space for the slaves in the main Orphan House building.¹³

It is unclear where the slaves would have lived in the main building, which was already pressed for space, but scholars have noted that, in the absence of distinct quarters, urban slaves often found places to slept on the floor of a bedroom, in attic chambers, and even in doorways. Additionally, another arrangement was to have slaves sleep in space above detached kitchens.¹⁴ Thus, it is possible that the slave, if they were forced to move,

¹³ OH Minutes, April 23, 1801.
¹⁴ In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Charleston, kitchens were often built separately from houses because of the constant threat of fire arising from smoking chimneys and the proliferation of wooden buildings in the city. But the Orphan House kitchens were on the ground-floor of the main building, serving
were housed in the kitchens or washroom. Earlier, in 1806, one slave had been temporarily domiciled in a washroom, but he was sick. John Noble, the physician assigned to work at the Orphan House before Logan, lodged the slave there in order to quarantine him, but this would have been an uncomfortable, hot, noisy and unsanitary place for the sick slave to be. Also, the presence of this sick, presumably contagious individual, in the washroom may have engendered the ire of the washerwomen. The nature of a washerwoman’s work was hazardous enough; thus, the Orphan House slave washerwomen likely did not like being exposed to more dangers by having to work in a temporary sick room.15

Whatever the outcome of the situation concerning the lodging of slaves in 1801, by the 1830s their lodging was firmly established. At that time, and well into the 1850s, the slave quarters consisted of a two-story building located behind the East Wing of the orphanage. By 1838, it had fallen into disrepair and the Commissioners resolved to have it remodeled to look like a newer building located behind the West Wing. Remodeling began in July 1839 and resulted in extensive structural changes. The terms of the contract that the Commissioners executed with described the changes:

Carpenter’s Work viz., Altering the two Gable ends of Roof wash paint two Hips, & boarding said hips ready for Tinning or Slating, Framing a pediment for Front wall corresponding with the West Building. Fixing circular Fan light sash painting roof & pediment and boarding the East and West sides of Roof ready for tinning or slating.

a practical purpose because it allowed the cooks to transport the food easily to the children’s dining rooms which were also on the ground floor. Bernard L. Herman, “Slave and Servant Housing in Charleston, 1770-1820,” *Historical Archeology* Charleston in the Context of the Atlantic 33 no. 3 (1999): 91, 97.

Hewing out the Brick work of all the doors & windows of said building; Putting new door & window panes . . . to correspond to the West Building. Fan light sash to door frames. Pannel-doors, Pannel shutters to the windows. Finishing the inside of north room for the Steward[.] Architraves to the door & two windows frames sash steps, beads & casings. Putting up a piazza on the west broad side of Kitchen forty feet long & eight feet wide, with floor, twined columns, rails & banisters, cornice to piazza roof covered with boards ready for tin or slate. Parapet on top of roof. Finding hinges & locks for doors, hinges & bolts & back fasteners & such buttons for shutters for both stones & fixing a trap door to the inside of Piazza floor for cleansing out drains.16

Certainly, these changes enhanced the physical appearance of the Orphan House slave quarters and perhaps provided a few additional comforts such as a piazza, but the piazza incorporated an outdoor privy for the slaves, as the addition of “a trap door” for easy access to drains attests. Also the interior of the building did not get a makeover. The dimensions are the building were not recorded, but an illustration from the time period shows that it had two stories with two rooms on each floor. A hospital for the children of the East Wing and a kitchen were located on the first floor. The slaves’ bedrooms were on the second floor. The slaves owned by the orphanage lived in one room and the “Stewards Servants,” evidently hired slaves, lived in the other room. On average, eight slaves were owned by the institution and nine slaves were hired during the time period that the drawing is believed to have been made (ca. 1842). The presence of this many people living in close contact in a single room may have facilitated the spread of contagious disease.17

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16 OH Minutes, July 25, 1839.
17 Undated early-nineteenth-century pen and ink diagram of the interior of the Orphan House with notations indicating the uses of various rooms, Miscellaneous Records, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina; Steward’s Reports, December 9, 1841- July 20, 1848, Superintendent’s Weekly Reports, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston, South Carolina. I estimate the date on the diagram to be 1842 because the drawing provides the names of the white nurses
The location of the quarters and the distribution of slaves among rooms may have also affected the social labor (i.e. housework for family and care of children) of the slave women, but Orphan House records disclose little information to enable one to draw links between housing and this aspect of women’s lives.\textsuperscript{18} The reproductive labor of Orphan House slave women is documented, however, and the records show that childbirth, as in the case of Affy, affected the health and labor productivity of pregnant women. In regard to their work schedules, typically, pregnant slave women owned by the orphanage were “confined” about two weeks before giving birth; thereafter they were given from one to two months of maternity leave. For example, on January 31, 1814, Sue gave to birth to Joseph, her fourth of eight children. Three weeks earlier, on January 8, the Commissioners had deemed her “so far advanced in a state of pregnancy as not to be able to” work. The Steward’s cash book of receipts and expenditures shows that on March 19, a payment of $4.00 was made to the midwife who attended Sue. This suggests that her confinement lasted from January 8 to March 19, which constitutes about 2½ months. Likewise, when Sue had another child, Charles, in 1811, a slave woman was hired temporarily to take her place. The hired woman was discharged in August, which suggests that Sue had a one-month reprieve from work after giving birth to Charles.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} For a discussion of social and reproductive labor among enslaved women see Leslie A. Schwalm, \textit{A Hard Fight For We: Women’s Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 47-72.

\textsuperscript{19} “Slaves belonging to the Orphan House Institution,” Register of Staff, Slaves and Children, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina; Steward’s Report, week of January 2-8, 1814, Superintendent’s Weekly Reports, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston, South Carolina; Cash Book, March 19, 1814, Financial Records, Records of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston, South Carolina.
The case of Sue, illustrates the fact that, at times, the Orphan House hired slaves to work temporarily for pregnant women during their time of parturition and post-partum rest. Though the slaves of the Orphan House received consistent medical care, it appears that many, like Betty, suffered from recurrent illnesses. Others also were afflicted by respiratory diseases, the spread of which might have been facilitated by close living-spaces and unsanitary living or working conditions. Additionally, tuberculosis seems to have been a common affliction among one family of Orphan House slaves. The spread of this disease may be attributed to close quarters as well, but it may also have been transmitted from mother to child. In any case, sickness, death and childbirth among Orphan House slaves affected work productivity and ultimately lessened the ability of the Orphan House to rely exclusively upon the slaves owned by the orphanage to perform domestic duties. Hired slaves were, thus, utilized to fill gaps in work typically performed by slaves owned by the institution.

Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina; Steward’s Report, week of July 7-13, 1811, week of August 18-24, 1811.
Conclusion

The Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House are noticeably silent about enslaved workers after 1860. Nearly every three months from 1860 to 1865, the quarterly statement of accounts by the Steward shows a lump-sum payment to “Servants, Laborers and Washers,” but neither an itemized list of slaves’ wages nor a list of their owners is provided. Also, it is possible that some of the recipients of payments, during the Civil-War era, were not slaveowners. A special report recorded by Commissioners’ in the minutes for September 1859 shows that white and black washerwomen worked at the orphanage. The status of the black women is unclear, but, clearly, the white women were free. It is uncertain whether the orphanage continued to use a mixed-race force of washerwomen during the war years, but it is clear that the orphanage returned to its 1830s practice of employing a white woman to oversee laundry operations at the institution. In 1861, the Commissioners boasted that a single “officer directs the Laundry operations, who with the aid of eight washers and machinery of the department receive, wash, iron, assort and return punctually and properly four thousand seven hundred to five thousand pieces weekly, or about fifty dozen or six hundred pieces to each hand.” “It may doubted,” they continued, “if any Laundry in the Country can shew better results and at less cost than this.” They further expressed pride in the productivity of the cooking department, which was led by two white women. “One cook prepares all the food for three hundred and sixty children,” they wrote, “and the other for
the rest of the household including the sick.” In this report, the Commissioners also mention the presence of “four Servants” at the Orphan House. It is not clear what their duties were at the Orphan House, but given the fact that in previous records the word *servant* was used as a euphemism for *slave*—they likely were slaves.¹

While it is clear that the Orphan House continued to hire slaves throughout the Civil War period, it is unclear whether the Orphan House continued to own slaves. If it did, then these slaves and, perhaps the hired slaves, moved with the inmates and officers of the Orphan House to Orangeburg, in August 1863, when Union troops began shelling the city of Charleston. They moved to a former seminary for girls in Orangeburg, which had been secured in late-1862, in case an attack on Charleston rendered evacuation necessary. They remained there for the duration of the war. Entries by the Commissioners are particularly sparse for this period; thus little is known of life and work at the Orangeburg facility. One can only wonder about the responses of the Orphan House slaves when Sherman marched through the midlands of South Carolina, where Orangeburg is located, after his famed “march to the Sea. In other locations, when Union lines appeared, slaves often “disappeared” or left.²

Further research may reveal the fate of Orphan House slaves during the Civil War, but one thing is certain: on April 9, 1865, at the conclusion of the Civil War, slaves

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¹ For examples of quarterly reports see Minutes, Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, May 24, 1860, August 20, 1860, November 20, 1860, February 20, 1861, November 20, 1861; Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Charleston Archive, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina (hereafter cited as OH Minutes); OH Minutes September 29, 1859, September 7, 1861.

owned and employed by the Charleston Orphan House, along with all other slaves in the American South, received freedom. Of particular interest to scholarship on the Orphan House after the Civil War, would be whether or not formerly enslaved workers continued to work at the orphanage. What we do know is that from 1790 until the war, over 100 slaves helped sustain the Charleston Orphan House. This study as shown that, initially, slaves were hired by the orphanage as cooks, but, eventually, slave women were hired to wash clothes and male slaves were employed as common laborers. In 1804, ten slaves were purchased by the Orphan House, and from that point on, the number of slaves hired and owned by the institution began to grow, so that by the late-1850s at least seventy-five slaves had been hired and fifty-six others had been purchased by the institution, born to slave women owned by it, and given or bequeathed to it.

It appears that the Commissioners of the Orphan House found the ownership of slaves challenging. If a slave owned by the institution did not work at the level expected by the Commissioners or ran away, the Commissioners had little recourse, they believed, than to sell the slaves. Slave sales, however, disrupted work routines at the Orphan House by reducing the total number of people in the work pool. Orphan House officials tried to mitigate this by temporarily hiring new slaves. The same principle was applied when slaves owned by the institution got sick, died, or recovered after giving birth to children. Had the orphanage stuck with a completely hired slave labor force, as it had employed during the 1790s, it would still have had replace workers, even if only temporarily. Still, whether with hired or owned slaves, the Charleston Orphan House depended upon domestic workers to meet its inmates’ needs. Further research on the use of slaves at
public institutions may reveal whether slavery at the Charleston Orphan House was unique or not, but this study has shown that slaves at the Orphan House provided services to this institution and its inmates that were essential to its functioning. Commissioner A. Alexander’s remark in 1799 that “the Institution cannot be supported without servants” appears to have been correct. Slaves certainly contributed to the domestic economy of the Charleston Orphan House during the institution’s formative years and throughout the antebellum period.
Appendix A: Population of Charleston

Table 6. Population of Charleston, 1720-1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>3441</td>
<td>20012</td>
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<td>3237</td>
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Appendix B: Slaves Owned by the Charleston Orphan House

Table 7. Slaves Purchased by the Orphan House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Purchased</th>
<th>From Whom Purchased</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Cook &amp; Laborer</td>
<td>Died March 29, 1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Cook &amp; Laborer</td>
<td>Sold June 30, 1813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Weaver &amp; Laborer</td>
<td>Died December 3, 1828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>Died March 7, 1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>Died January 2, 1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Washer</td>
<td>Sold June 30, 1813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Washer</td>
<td>Died week of July 27- August 2, 1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Washer</td>
<td>Died May 16, 1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Washer</td>
<td>Died October 18, 1808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>November 9, 1804</td>
<td>an African slaver</td>
<td>Washer</td>
<td>Died August 1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>July 10, 1813</td>
<td>Hugh Maguire</td>
<td>Washer</td>
<td>Sold August 1816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>August 3, 1813</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Washer</td>
<td>Died ca. July 1838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette (Jenny)</td>
<td>August 2, 1816</td>
<td>Alpheus Baker</td>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>Died December 16, 1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>ca. January 27, 1820</td>
<td>Richard Moore</td>
<td>Washer</td>
<td>Sold May 1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagar</td>
<td>October 11, 1844</td>
<td>John W. Gilchrist</td>
<td>Washer &amp; Laborer</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8. Slaves Acquired by Gift or Bequest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Acquired</th>
<th>From Whom Acquired</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pompey</td>
<td>June 6, 1812</td>
<td>Given by Judge Johnston</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>Sold September 1813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caesar</td>
<td>June 6, 1812</td>
<td>Given by Judge Johnston</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>Died May 27, 1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>June 6, 1812</td>
<td>Given by Judge Johnston</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>Sold September 1813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>June 6, 1812</td>
<td>Given by Judge Johnston</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>Sold May 1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James (Jim/Jemmy)</td>
<td>June 6, 1812</td>
<td>Given by Judge Johnston</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>Died January 8, 1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>June 6, 1812</td>
<td>Given by Judge Johnston</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>Died ca. May 1816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affy</td>
<td>April 2, 1829</td>
<td>Bequeathed by Levi Walbridge</td>
<td>Dining room attendant &amp; Washer</td>
<td>Died July 10, 1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara (9 yrs old when bequeathed)</td>
<td>April 2, 1829</td>
<td>Bequeathed by Levi Walbridge</td>
<td>Washer upon reaching age 16</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam (7 yrs old when bequeathed)</td>
<td>April 2, 1829</td>
<td>Bequeathed by Levi Walbridge</td>
<td>Apprenticed to a plasterer at age 15 and thereafter a laborer at the Orphan House</td>
<td>Sold ca. August 1849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Event</th>
<th>Bequeathed</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria (3 yrs old when bequeathed)</td>
<td>Bequeathed by Levi Walbridge</td>
<td>Childcare Attendant at age 13 (under the supervision a Nurse employed by the orphanage); eventually became a laborer at the Orphan House</td>
<td>April 2, 1829</td>
<td>Died August 10, 1856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Family of Eight Negroes</td>
<td>Given by Governor William Aiken</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>December 29, 1853</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Children Born to Women Owned by the Orphan House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Sex</th>
<th>Mother’s Name</th>
<th>Date Born</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>September 22, 1806</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Died July 19, 1807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>December 17, 1806</td>
<td>Washer upon reaching age 15</td>
<td>Sold October 1825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amey</td>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>June 19, 1808</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Died January 28, 1809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suky</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>April 21, 1809</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Died March 4, 1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>July 27, 1811</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Died May 22, 1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>January 31, 1814</td>
<td>Steward’s attendant upon reaching age 9</td>
<td>Died March 16, 1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>September 26, 1814</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Sold w/ Charlotte August 1816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 9 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>November 14, 1817</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>December 11, 1818</td>
<td>Died December 7, 1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>April 19, 1820</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>June 28, 1821</td>
<td>Died June 19, 1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>July 3, 1821</td>
<td>Died August 25, 1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male (name unknown)</td>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>July 28, 1823</td>
<td>Died February 15, 1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>March 1825</td>
<td>Died August 20, 1826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampson</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>1826</td>
<td>School Mistress’s attendant upon reaching age 6 Sold June 1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pompey</td>
<td>Affy</td>
<td>January 1830</td>
<td>Died August 21, 1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Affy</td>
<td>March 28, 1832</td>
<td>Died week of Sept. 22-29, 1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name &amp; sex unknown</td>
<td>Affy</td>
<td>ca. August 11 1836</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>Affy</td>
<td>week of September 21-28, 1837</td>
<td>Died March 29, 1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>Affy</td>
<td>October 2, 1840</td>
<td>Died May 26, 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgeana</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>ca. July 1852</td>
<td>Died May 26, 1854</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10. Slaves Hired by the Orphan House, 1790-1798

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Sex</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Wage</th>
<th>Date(s) Employed</th>
<th>Owner’s Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male (name unknown)</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>£12 per year</td>
<td>October 25, 1790</td>
<td>Alexander Vanderhorst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>apprentice cook &amp; washer</td>
<td>none¹</td>
<td>October 25, 1790</td>
<td>Alexander Vanderhorst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>November 1790</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>November 1790</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>May 1792</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male (name unknown)</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>£9.4.2 for one one month of service</td>
<td>August-September 1792</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name &amp; sex unknown</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>£5 per quarter</td>
<td>2 December 1792</td>
<td>Alexander Vanderhorst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>cook &amp; washer</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>December 1792</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>£7.10 due Nov. 22, 1794 for 6 months of service</td>
<td>June-November 1794</td>
<td>Robert Limehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (name unknown)</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>£3.15 due Nov. 25, 1794 for 1⁄4 of a quarter of service</td>
<td>ca. October 1794</td>
<td>Mrs. Lesesne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 10 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
<th>Date of Service</th>
<th>Employer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female (name unknown)</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>£3.14 due Jan. 1, 1795 for ¼ of a quarter of service</td>
<td>ca. December 1794</td>
<td>John Brownlee &amp; Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (name unknown)</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>none&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Robert Squibb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name &amp; Sex unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>£10 due Sept. 3, 1795 for undisclosed period of service</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Susannah Besselieu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name &amp; Sex unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>£11.10 due for 20 weeks of service</td>
<td>5 Sept.- 5 Dec. 1795</td>
<td>John Cunningham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampson</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August 1796</td>
<td>Alexander Petrie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cain</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August 1796</td>
<td>Alexander Petrie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August 1796</td>
<td>Robert Gibson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August 1796</td>
<td>John Brownlee &amp; Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August 1796</td>
<td>Robert Limehouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August 1796</td>
<td>J. H. Harris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August 1796</td>
<td>J. H. Harris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August 1796</td>
<td>Mrs. Toole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>August-September 1796</td>
<td>John Edwards, Esq.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name &amp; Sex unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>£16.2 due January 20, 1798</td>
<td>January 1798</td>
<td>Sarah Jesse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Wages per month</td>
<td>Dates Employed</td>
<td>Owner’s Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>$10 per month</td>
<td>August 12, 1799-March 14, 1803</td>
<td>Bartholomew Carroll</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillis</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>February 10, 1800-February 21, 1805</td>
<td>Bartholomew Carroll</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dye</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>February 10, 1800-July 2, 1803</td>
<td>Bartholomew Carroll</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>$10 per month</td>
<td>July 6, 1800-May 21, 1803</td>
<td>George Air</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amey</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>January 21, 1803-November 20, 1803</td>
<td>Andrew Holmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>March 1, 1802-March 20, 1803</td>
<td>Anna Warley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>April 13, 1802-November 29, 1804</td>
<td>James Gibson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>April 13, 1802-February 21, 1805</td>
<td>Alexander Robinson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Salary and Duration</th>
<th>Term Dates</th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>gardener and laborer</td>
<td>$10 per month (gardener); $8 per month (laborer)</td>
<td>March 1, 1803-May 20, 1805 (gardener) June 4, 1806-March 1, 1805 (laborer) January 26, 1810-November 20, 1810 (laborer)</td>
<td>Benjamin Cudworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>April 12, 1803-May 28, 1803</td>
<td>Nathaniel Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>washer and cook</td>
<td>$9 per month (washer) $8 per month (cook)</td>
<td>March 24, 1803-May 20, 1806 (washer) March 23, 1816-February 3, 1814 (cook)</td>
<td>John May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheuben</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>$9 per month</td>
<td>March 28, 1803-June 3, 1806</td>
<td>John May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>$9 per month</td>
<td>March 28, 1803-November 15, 1804</td>
<td>John May</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Employer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>July 20, 1803-March 10, 1806</td>
<td></td>
<td>John Brownlee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>November 28, 1803-August 20, 1804</td>
<td></td>
<td>John McDowell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amey</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month during first 5 yrs of service&lt;br&gt;$6 per month during last two months of service</td>
<td>December 12, 1803-November 20, 1805&lt;br&gt;March 10, 1806-August 1810&lt;br&gt;December 3, 1810-May 20, 1811&lt;br&gt;August 21, 1811-May 20, 1812&lt;br&gt;May 21, 1813 to August 181</td>
<td>Margaret Holmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenney</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>August 21, 1804-May 20, 1805</td>
<td></td>
<td>Benjamin Cudworth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Employer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sukey</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>October 20, 1808 - May 20, 1809</td>
<td>John Steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancey (aka. Moll)</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>September 27, 1809 - April 21, 1812</td>
<td>John Smyth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>September 27, 1812 - December 23, 1815</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>August 27, 1810 - November 20, 1810</td>
<td>Judith Tobias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>November 26, 1810 - December 2, 1810</td>
<td>John Walton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrer</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>December 5, 1810 - January 19, 1811</td>
<td>Peter Cravat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanny</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>January 25, 1811 - February 22, 1811</td>
<td>Peter Cravat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>February 28, 1811 - March 7, 1811</td>
<td>Bartholomew Carroll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>$10 per month</td>
<td>March 18, 1811 - August 20, 1811</td>
<td>Charles Kiddell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Pay Rate</td>
<td>Dates of Service</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>March 20, 1811 - August 1811</td>
<td>John Smyth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>May 23, 1811 - July 23, 1811</td>
<td>David Kearron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>July 24, 1811 - March 28, 1811</td>
<td>Elizabeth Robertson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan</td>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>$12 per month</td>
<td>September 2, 1811 - September 28, 1812</td>
<td>Mrs. McPherson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>$10 per month</td>
<td>October 7, 1811 - February 22, 1812 March 14, 1811 - May 20, 1816</td>
<td>Sarah Faesch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrer</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month during first three months of service $7 per month during last four months of service</td>
<td>February 5, 1812 - September 26, 1812</td>
<td>Agness Leadbetter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>April 21, 1812 - April 23, 1812</td>
<td>John McDowell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Period of Service</th>
<th>Employer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>May 4, 1812-October 31, 1812</td>
<td>John Duncan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bess</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>May 1, 1812-November 20, 1813</td>
<td>John Duncan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>December 21, 1813-unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan</td>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>$12 per month</td>
<td>September 2, 1811-September 28, 1812</td>
<td>Mrs. McPherson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>$10 per month</td>
<td>October 7, 1811-February 22, 1812</td>
<td>Sarah Faesch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March 14, 1811-May 20, 1816</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrer</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>February 5, 1812-September 26, 1812</td>
<td>Agness Leadbetter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>during first three months of service</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>during last four months of service</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>April 21, 1812 - April 23, 1812</td>
<td>John McDowell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biner</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>November 21, 1812 - February 20, 1813</td>
<td>Alphey McKewn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>July 12, 1813 - August 12, 1813</td>
<td>Thomas Cochran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette (a.k.a Jenny)</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>$6 per month during first 23 months of service; $7 per month during last nine months of service</td>
<td>February 8, 1814 - August 1, 1816</td>
<td>Alpheus Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillis</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>August 8, 1814- unknown</td>
<td>John Duncan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>December 24, 1815- unknown</td>
<td>Ann Coram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>$10 per month</td>
<td>May 21, 1816- January 20, 1818</td>
<td>Alpheus Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinah</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6 per month</td>
<td>July 25, 1817- unknown</td>
<td>Eve Johnston</td>
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Continued
Table 11 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Employer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>$10 per month</td>
<td>January 26, 1818-unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td>John Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$6.50 per month</td>
<td>June 1, 1818-July 1, 1818</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth Peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>$10 per month</td>
<td>July 17, 1818-unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mary Nolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>washer</td>
<td>$7 per month</td>
<td>July 13, 1818-unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td>Martin Strobel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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