BRILL

JOURNAL OF GLOBAL SLAVERY 6 (2021) 156–178

Journal of Global Slavery
brill.com/jgs

"Known To Be Equal to the Management"

The Modernising Planter and the Enslaved Overseer

Laura Sandy | ORCID: 0000-0002-2054-8159
University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK
l.sandy@liverpool.ac.uk

Gervase Phillips | ORCID: 0000-0002-6522-5417
Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK
g.phillips@mmu.ac.uk

Abstract

Enslaved overseers have largely been neglected in the extant historiography of plantation slavery. At best they have been pushed to the margins of the literature, their numbers and their significance downplayed. Yet, as large plantations diversified over the latter years of the eighteenth century, and as relations between established planters and independently minded and aspirational white overseers became prone to mistrust and friction, many prominent modernizing planters, including both Washington and Jefferson, began to experiment with unfree managers. They often proved to be skilled, dependable and, even under the pressure of the Revolutionary War, resilient. Yet their presence raised serious questions within plantation society too; they challenged white racial hegemony, and their 'loyalty' was a conditional and contingent quality. They occupy a unique place in the story of plantation management, one that challenges orthodox conceptions of race and power in the slave South.

Keywords

slavery – overseers – Virginia – South Carolina – plantation

The words "manager" and "overseer" have a deep historical connection to one another. Both enter the English language in the latter half of the sixteenth century. "Manager" was derived from the Italian word *maneggiare* and was orig-

inally strongly connected to equestrianism. According to Thomas Blundeville's 1566 text on horsemanship, it "is as much to say in Englishe, as to handle with skill, as when we saye he can handle his horse or weapon verye well …"[1] Yet the word swiftly acquired wider usage, concerning the direction of "a business … a handling, a negotiation or affaire, a trade, an exercise."[2] At much the same time "overseers" appeared in the documentary record. They supervised staff in manorial kitchens, directed laborers on large construction projects, and, under the 1598 Poor Law, provided relief and employment for the destitute.[3] With England poised to embark on its first colonial ventures in North America, the overseer was thus well set to provide the management for the institution that would emerge as the economic engine of the first British empire: the "plantation."[4]

Overseers, as has been recognized by historians such as R. Keith Aufhauser, were important figures in the emergence of modern labor management in North America. Their practices of operational reporting, organization of work into distinct tasks, incentivization to promote effective performance, and coercive discipline as a response to poor performance prefigured the basic principles of twentieth-century "scientific management." Recently, historians such as Caitlin Rosenthal have stressed that the modernity of these practices was inherent in the brutality of plantation slavery, for example in the punishment of those who failed to achieve production targets: "the soft power of quantification complemented the driving force of the whip."[5]

---

1 Thomas Blundeville, *The fower chiefyst offices belongyng to horsemanshippe* (London: Wyllyam Seres, 1566), Second Book, Folio 40.

2 John Florio, *A Worlde of Wordes, or Most Copious and Exact Dictionarie in Italian and English* (London: Arnold Hatfield for Edw. Blount, 1598), 214.

3 See J. Earwaker, ed., *The Court Leet Records of the Manor of Manchester*, vol. 11 (Manchester: Henry Blacklock, 1885), 114; Marjorie McIntosh, "Poverty, Charity, and Coercion in Elizabethan England," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 3 (2005): 457–479; John Nelson, *The Histories and Antiquities of the Parish of Islington* (London: n.p., 1823), 158–159.

4 As a consequence of colonization, the word "plantation" came to be linked with modernity and ultimately to signify what Sidney Mintz described as "a politico-economic invention, a colonial frontier institution, combining non-European slaves and European capital, technology, and managerial skill with territorial control of free or cheap subtropical lands in the mass, monocrop production of agricultural commodities for European markets." Amy Clukey and Jeremy Wells, "Plantation Modernity," *The Global South* 10, no. 2 (2016): 1–10; Sidney Mintz, "Caribbean Society," in David L. Sills, ed. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 2: 311.

5 Keith Aufhauser, "Slavery and Scientific Management," *Journal of Economic History* 33, no. 4 (1973): 811–824; Caitlin Rosenthal, "Slavery's Scientific Management: Masters and Managers," in Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 62–86.

The overseer was an indispensable figure in the management of plantation enterprises. Beyond the planting of crops and the supervision of agricultural labor, they undertook a range of essential duties.[6] They distributed rations and supplies to the enslaved and took responsibility for their health. They managed the personal relationships and social lives of the communities in which they lived, organizing marriages, arranging festivals and celebrations, and settling disputes. They ensured that the physical boundaries of the plantation were respected; they tracked runaways and drove away trespassers. They kept accounts, took stock, and wrote regular and detailed reports to planters and their agents. As plantations diversified in the latter half of the eighteenth century, they took on responsibilities for new manufacturing ventures, such as nail factories, cooperages, mills, distilleries, and smithies. By this date, many overseers were themselves accomplished artisans: carpenters, masons, gardeners, and millers. Not only did they supervise the enslaved performing specialist skilled labor, they trained them too.[7]

---

6 The fullest study to date is Laura Sandy, *The Overseers of Early American Slavery: Supervisors, Enslaved Labourers, and the Plantation Enterprise* (New York: Routledge, 2020). A number of other books have some valuable discussions of colonial overseers, notably Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607–1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). Enslaved overseers in this period have not hitherto received detailed coverage and have generally been dismissed in passing. See, for example, Tristan Stubbs, *Masters of Violence: The Plantation Overseers of Eighteen-Century Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018), 27–28. The majority of work on overseers has concentrated on the antebellum era. This is useful from a comparative perspective, but their conclusions cannot be securely pushed back to the colonial period. See, for example, William Kauffman Scarborough, *The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966); Mark Schantz, "'A Very Serious Business': Managerial Relationships on the Ball Plantations, 1800–1835," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 88, no. 1 (1987): 1–22; Charles Steffen, "In Search of the Good Overseer: The Failure of the Agricultural Reform Movement in Lowcountry South Carolina, 1821–1834," *Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 4 (1997): 753–802. Useful material can also be found in Michael Wayne, *Death of an Overseer: Reopening a Murder Investigation from the Plantation South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Nathaniel Wilcox, "The Overseer Problem: A New Data Set and Method," in Robert Fogel, et al., eds., *Without Consent or Contract: Evidence and Methods* (New York: Norton, 1992), 84–109.

7 Examples of the range of duties outlined in this paragraph can be found, for instance in the plantation records of George Washington, *Diaries of George Washington*, 1732–1799, edited by D. Jackson and D. Twohig (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1976–1979), (hereafter, DGW), 1: 306; *Papers of George Washington*, 1732–1799, edited by D. Twohig, et. al (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1982) (hereafter, *PGW*) 7: 148–151. *DGW*, 4: 141–142; *PGW*, Colonial Series, 7: 131–132, 143–146, 148–151; Paul Wilstach, *Mount Vernon: Washington's Home*

Yet, while overseers may have been important figures in the development of modern management practices, they were not necessarily *respectable* ones. "Overseer" was not simply an occupational category. Characteristically of early modern English agrarian identities (such as "yeoman" or "drover"), the role also carried distinct connotations of status within a community.[8] Initially, those who directly managed plantation labor tended to be drawn from the same class as those they supervised; many were former indentured servants.[9] They were "the meaner sort," neither economically independent nor expected to rise much above the "station" into which they had been born.

In both the Chesapeake and the Carolinas that situation would change. A tension emerged between some of the capable, skilled, and ambitious overseers employed to manage increasingly complex plantation enterprises and their status-conscious planter employers. The latter were protective of their authority and resentful of those who did not know their place and bargained over their wages and conditions.[10] The hardening of racial ideologies, as enslaved Africans and their descendants took the place of European indentured servants in the fields, complicated social relations further. Overseers were no longer simply managers but also the upholders of the racial hierarchy upon which planters' wealth and prestige depended.[11]

As they struggled to maintain their authority over restive and aspiring white employees, planters proved willing to flout the laws designed to uphold that hierarchy and use the enslaved in the place of white men as managers. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, expanding and diversifying planters were keen to profit from the modern techniques that were then transforming England's agrarian economy. They required overseers who met their occupational needs: skilled agriculturists, able to direct others and to usher in change and maintain stability. To achieve the latter, overseers needed to remain in post for long periods of time. Though the law dictated that the overseer should be a white man, at times, to meet all these demands, planters looked inward to their quarters and to those among the enslaved who might prove to be an "Excellent Leader and indeed a good overseer."[12]

---

and the Nation's Shrine (New York: Doubleday, 1916), 134–135. For further examples see, Sandy, *The Overseers of Early American Slavery*, 70–90.

8 Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy, 1500–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 36–37.

9 Robert Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, ed., Louis Wright (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 272.

10 Sandy, *The Overseers of Early American Slavery*, 134–192.

11 Sandy, *The Overseers of Early American Slavery*, *passim*.

12 William Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia,*

This was a significant development. It firmly establishes the emergence of the profit-maximizing planter presiding over a complex, diversified agricultural enterprise organized according to recognizably modern management practices.[13] It is highly suggestive, too, of a hitherto unrecognized relationship between the English agricultural revolution and the rising incidence of the employment of enslaved overseers in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Those planters, such as George Washington, who were keenest to benefit from the latest developments in the science of agricultural improvement often proved the most open to employing mixed teams of free and enslaved overseers. Yet, for a society based upon brutal racial subordination, enslaved managers were also the source of a paradoxical tension. They were promoted on the basis of qualities (technical ability, work ethic, capacity to lead others, honesty) that white society generally denied that their race possessed.[14] Elevating such individuals to positions of managerial responsibility clearly violated leg-

from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1969), 2: 481, 3: 451, 436, 460, 336; John Mercer, *An exact abridgement of all the public acts of Assembly of Virginia, in force and use, January 1, 1758: together with a proper table* (Glasgow: John Bryce and David Paterson, 1758), 239, 246; Thomas Cooper and David McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia: A.S. Johnson, 1836–1841), 2: 363, 3: 193, 272, 4: 97, 175; Watson and Uxv. Cockes, *Legal Papers of Nicholas Wythe, 1740–1759*, no. 564, Special Collections Library, University of Virginia (hereafter, UVA). Also quoted in Philip Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 220. For more on George Washington and Landon Carter's use of enslaved men as overseers, see "Landon Carter's Crop Book," *William and Mary Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1912): 14–15; John Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799* (Washington, DC: US George Washington Bicentennial Commission, 1931–1944), (hereafter *WGW*), 32: 472, 474–476; *PGW*, Colonial Series, 9: 241–242.

13 While historians of management in continental North America have shown some awareness of the modernity of plantation management practices, their interest has largely focused on the antebellum period. See for examples, Joseph Razek, "Accounting on the Old Plantation: A Study of the Financial Records of an Ante-bellum Louisiana Sugar Planter," *The Accounting Historians Journal* Vol. 12, No. 1, 1985, 17–36; Jan Richard Heier, "A Content Comparison of Antebellum Plantation Records and Thomas Affleck's Accounting Principles," *The Accounting Historians Journal* 15, no. 2 (1988): 131–150, and Richard Fleischman, David Oldroyd and Thomas Tyson, "Plantation Accounting and Management Practices in the US and the British West Indies at the End of their Slavery Eras," *Economic History Review* 64, no. 3 (2011): 765–797. For a more far-ranging approach, however, see Caitlin Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018).

14 For similar evidence of the technical ability of enslaved people that challenged racist stereotyping, see Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

islation designed to uphold white supremacy, yet pragmatic and self-interested planters often proved willing to do so. Indeed, their value to planters allowed enslaved overseers to leverage their positions into improved material conditions, greater personal autonomy, and even wages. And their presence on plantations created inevitable friction with hired white managers, who recognized all too readily the challenge to white authority that they represented.

The situation was not wholly without precedent. In the seventeenth century, Africans, or those of African descent, had sometimes been responsible for managing labor on American plantations. Yet, conversely, that evidence also points to how quickly the relationship between race and servile status had been established.[15] The court records of Virginia in 1669, for example, include the case of Hannah Warwick, a white indentured servant who had fled her plantation, where she was under the authority of "a negro overseer." While this case provides an early example of an African American in a position of authority over a racially mixed group of laborers, it also provides a clear indication that race was the crucial factor in determining status and authority. Warwick was not punished for absconding, arguing successfully that she was not bound to obey a person of color. Historians have concluded that this case was indicative of a rapidly evolving legal framework in British North America that consigned Africans and their descendants to the permanently degraded and inheritable status of chattel slaves. In short, it established that "blacks were not to be masters of whites," as this was considered to be "a violation of the natural order."[16] This legal framework placed plantation overseers at the forefront of the racial subordination of enslaved African Americans and, thus, perforce, legally required them to be white. Following suit, a "deficiency law" was passed in South Carolina in

15 George Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 15–48; James Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 143–166; Alden Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 136–176. The paradoxes inherent in the use of the enslaved in positions of authority in the context of racial slavery began on the slave ships themselves: see Stephanie Smallwood, "African Guardians, European Slave Ships, and the Changing Dynamics of Power in the Early Modern Atlantic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2007): 679–716.

16 H. McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Virginia, 1622–1632 and 1670–1676* (Richmond: Richmond Colonial Press, 1924), 513; Helen Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1926), 1: 59; A. Leon Higginbotham, *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process: The Colonial Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 29–30; Anthony Parent, *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 118; Alejandro de la Fuente and Ariela Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 31.

1712 that penalized plantation owners "wherein six negroes or slaves shall be employed without one or more white person living and residing on the same plantation."[17]

Despite the tightening bonds of racial servitude, references to enslaved overseers dot the documentary record. In 1731 and 1732, Virginia planter Edmund Bagge recorded that Cromwell, an enslaved overseer, had yielded good crops and high profits. Furthermore, where white overseers had failed to force the enslaved to produce bigger crops, Cromwell had succeeded by allowing the enslaved to work "at a pace more of their own choosing."[18] In the 1740s, fellow Virginian William Fauntleroy reduced his overheads by using two enslaved men, Liverpool and Generall, as overseers on two of his smaller quarters. He was not disappointed with the results of the experiment, and, as a consequence, was able to expand his operations.[19] Virginian Henry Lee owned "Tom, a Negro man slave" who "managed several years as an overseer" in the 1760s. As well as a successful supervisor of slavery, according to Lee, Tom was physically strong, and could "read, and play on the fiddle."[20] In 1766 George Washington began his own practice of employing a combination of free and enslaved overseers to manage his properties. For Washington, this was a strategic innovation that transformed management structures on his estate in the long term. Between 1766 and his death in 1799, at least seven enslaved men served in this capacity. Morris, the first of these to be appointed, managed Dogue Run Farm until his death in 1795.[21] Washington appears to have been at the forefront of this innovation, and his example was soon discussed and emulated by other planters. Indeed, in 1796 Landon Carter relayed to then-President Washington his motivations for the experimental use of enslaved overseers on his plantations. "Harassed thus by frequent disappointment" with hired overseers, Carter divulged that he "resolved to strike out another plan" akin that implemented by Washington in the 1760s and 1770s. He decided to use enslaved

17 *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 2: 363; 3: 193, 272; 97, 175; Linda Roper, "The 1701 'Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves': Reconsidering the History of Slavery in Proprietary South Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2007): 402.

18 May 1731, April 1733, *Edmund Bagge Account Book, 1726–1733*, John D. Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (hereafter, CWF); Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit*, 288.

19 *William Fauntleroy Letterbook and Account Book*, 1735–1774, CWF; Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit*, 510.

20 *Virginia Gazette*, 9 March 1769.

21 George Washington's "Memorandum List of Tithables," 1760–1774, *PGW*, Colonial Series, 6: 428, 7: 45, 139, 227–228, 313, 376–377, 442–443, 515–516, 8: 104, 356–357, 220–221, 479–480, 9: 54–55, 238–239, 10: 137–138.

overseers, independent of white supervision, to run some of his plantations. In the closing decade of the eighteenth century, Thomas Jefferson experimentally assigned the full range of duties associated with overseeing to the enslaved "Great George." The experiment went well, and within a few years Jefferson explicitly used the title "overseer" for those enslaved managers who followed in George's footsteps. By the close of the eighteenth century, enslaved overseers were frequently integral to the management structures of large plantations.[22]

It should be noted that, while the language was not always explicit, making any precise quantification of the incidence of enslaved "overseers" extremely problematic, the phenomenon of increased managerial authority devolving to the enslaved was also evident in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Rice planter Ralph Izard noted that "where you make a most to the hand and really good crop, there is no overseer, but only a Black Driver." Similarly, when another South Carolinian advertised two "fine Drivers" for sale, he revealed that they had exercised "sole management" of his plantations and produced "as large Crops the Hands under their Care, as any Managers whatsoever."[23] The South Carolina driver was, in fact, often an overseer. When compared with white overseers, the enslaved were not simply viewed as equivalent, and publicly advertised as "known to be equal to the management" capabilities of their white counterparts, but they were frequently considered to be superior. In 1784, Alexander Rose posted an advertisement in the *Gazette of the State of South Carolina*, which praised an enslaved man named Jonathan as having "more general or better knowledge of planting" than the majority of "White Men" in the state. Later in the decade another planter, who claimed to have purchased "perhaps one of the most valuable Negroes" in the Lowcountry, broadcasted the use of an enslaved man to manage his plantation without a white overseer present. With the enslaved at the helm, "any manager or overseer" was unnecessary; the enslaved overseer could direct plantation operations very profitably, independent of white supervision.[24]

Given the significance of the overseer in the policing of racial slavery, this transfer of managerial authority to African Americans, often in breach of colo-

22 Carter, "Landon Carter's Crop Book," 14–15; Lucia Stanton, *Free Some Day: The African-American Families of Monticello* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); James Bear, ed., *Jefferson at Monticello: The Private Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1967), 51.

23 Charles Pinckney to Ralph Izard, 26 December 1794, *Manigault Family Papers*, South Carolina Historical Society (hereafter, SCHS); *South Carolina Gazette*, 16 May 1774.

24 *Gazette of the State of South Carolina*, 20 December 1784; *Columbian Herald*, 26 March 1789; John Graham to James Grant, 1 March 1768, *Papers of James Grant*, National Archives Scotland (cited in Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 343).

nial or early national laws, demands explanation. There was certainly no lessening of commitment to the racial order in the second half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, those who promoted the use of enslaved overseers left unequivocal testimony regarding their racial prejudices. After half a century as a planter, George Washington, for example, asserted that, in terms of labor management, "Negroes will either idle or slight their work if they are not closely attended" by an overseer.[25] In order, therefore, to understand why Washington and his peers overcame their racial scruples and flouted the laws of racial slavery in employing enslaved overseers, attention must turn to their pressing need for efficient and reliable managers. "Careful" overseers were crucial to their efforts to boost productivity and benefit from the lessons being taught by the eighteenth-century English agricultural revolution.

Washington's Mount Vernon estate provides an excellent example of this context. In the late 1750s, Washington faced both a highly volatile market for tobacco and the chronic soil exhaustion caused by the tobacco plant. In response, he moved to diversify his enterprise and began to grow wheat. Eventually, he would cultivate over sixty different crops. His approach was informed by his voracious reading of the latest literature on agriculture. He ordered books from England by authorities such as Thomas Hale and Jethro Tull, and had a long personal correspondence with the "agricultural improver" Arthur Young, all the while developing his own expertise in soil improvement, crop rotation, and animal husbandry. Mount Vernon also became a site of manufacture, producing its own cloth, bricks and whiskey, and Washington adapted his labor management practices to promote the latter.[26]

Such developments were not only taking place in Virginia. Lowcountry South Carolina planters also "restructured plantation production, labor, management, and organization" in this period. Theirs was a mixture of experiment and diversification, in particular integrating indigo, which needed more careful, scientific management, and incorporating other crops, such as wheat and corn. Thus, it was often the *modernizing* southern planter who had recourse to the enslaved overseer.[27] Henry Laurens purchased Samuel Massey in 1764 for £1,200 South Carolina currency, approximately four times the price of a prime

25 *PGW*, Retirement Series, 1: 194–195.

26 Alan and Donna Jean Fusonie, *George Washington: Pioneer Farmer* (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 1998); Rodney Loehr, "Arthur Young and American Agriculture," *Agricultural History* 43 (1969): 43–56.

27 Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5, 210–218.

field hand.[28] Massey was both literate and skilled, being "well versed" in "methods of construction." Laurens entrusted him with wide-ranging duties: writing reports on plantation operations and the performance of overseers (including free ones), reviewing inventories, overseeing construction work, and conducting business in Charleston. Straddling the color line, Massey arbitrated in disputes between white overseers and the enslaved. His role in the expansion of his owner's plantation enterprise was acknowledged by the latter's son. When Massey died in 1796, James Laurens lamented, "Alas poor fellow! What shall I do without you?" Like his father, he relied on Massey and felt that his passing was "a very great loss."[29]

The extent to which Laurens had depended upon Massey indicates that planters could not effect changes in plantation economics unaided. Even those whose political careers were less diverting than those of Washington or Laurens could not master the full range of skills necessary to expand productivity within a diversified enterprise. Artisans and craftsmen were needed for both self-sufficiency and commercial ventures, as were experienced farmers to implement the planting of new crops according to new methods. Outlying farms and newly established plantations needed on-site oversight and regular operational reporting to the planter. Perhaps most important of all, however, was the need for competent managers who could deliver these radical transitions utilizing the established enslaved labor force. And here arose the planters' dilemma: how to secure and retain the services of capable and skilled overseers, who would be compliant, content with the low status associated with the occupation, and long-serving, and who would not make unreasonable demands in terms of wages. Attempting to find a solution, planters in both the Chesapeake and Lowcountry contravened their society's racial mores and promoted talented enslaved people to overseers and managers.

This is not to suggest that, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it became impossible for planters to hire capable white overseers and forge effective and mutually beneficial working relationships with them. In South Carolina, John McCullogh's success as an overseer was rewarded by his employer

28 *PHL*, 4: 202, 5: 574. Although, precise values and exchange rates fluctuated throughout the eighteenth century, approximately £1 Virginia currency was equivalent to £5–6 South Carolina currency between 1740 and 1776. John McCusker, *How Much is that in Real Money? A Historical Commodity Price Index for Use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 2001), 61–70, 71.

29 *PHL*, 4: 202, 241, 5: 574, 15: 301–307, 8: 66–67, 9: 414, 16: 30, 389; Harold Syrett, et al, eds., *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 3: 605–608; 15: 304–307. Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 215–216, 228, 250, 360.

with salary increases and other benefits that enhanced his lifestyle and status. When McCullogh decided to leave, he "did not wish to serve anybody as an Overseer after," but instead wished to prosper as an independent planter.[30] Similarly, Virginian Caleb Stone, who worked as an artisan-overseer from 1774 to 1777, was duly rewarded with a generous salary and other benefits. After four years he left overseeing, first to establish his own carpentry business and later graduating to planting.[31] Men of McCullogh's and Stone's caliber were not content with the station and pay of an overseer in the long term. The fault line between overseer ambition and planter expectations became apparent during negotiations around pay. Virginians John Violet and Joseph Cash, both acknowledged as "good overseers," pushed for increased wages over two successive years. Having granted them salary rises after the first year, their employer was "fully resolved" not to concede again the following year. Yet, unable to find equally qualified replacements who would settle for the salary he was offering, he was forced to relent and meet their demands. Plantation account books reflect that some overseers were offered or bargained for pay rises, evidence of planters' efforts to retain the most capable.[32]

The potential for conflict between planter and white overseer was not restricted to wages and terms. It was also fostered by clashes over status, the exercise of day-to-day authority, and disagreements concerning access to plantation resources. Planters were often disdainful of the social pretentions of overseers and their families. "I was sorry to see his wife act the part of a fine lady in all her wearing apparel with at least two maids beside her own girl to get dinner and wait upon her …," sneered Landon Carter, after visiting the home of one of his overseers, "I would rather have seen the diligent, industrious woman."[33] They also interfered in the overseer's handling of the enslaved.

30 *PHL*, 11: 378, 12: 85, 542, 855.

31 *PGW*, Colonial Series, 9: 238–239, 341, 10: 137; *PGW*, Revolutionary War Series, 2: 65, 480; Caleb Stone Contract, 8 February 1773, Series 4, General Correspondence, *George Washington Papers*, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw443341/ (accessed June 2015), Library of Congress (hereafter, LC); Fluvanna County, Virginia, *Will Books*, 2, O.S., 52, 118; Robert Dalzell and Lee Dalzell, *George Washington's Mount Vernon: At Home in Revolutionary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 142–145, 155; Mesick, Cohen, and Waite, "Building Trades," *Mount Vernon: Historic Structure Report* (unpublished report for the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, February 1993), 2–43.

32 *PGW*, Retirement Series, 1: 120, 260, 271, 320–321, 339; *Mount Vernon Farm Ledger*, 1794–1796: 81, 1797–1798: 25–26, 107–108, Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington, Mount Vernon (hereafter, MV); Sandy, *Overseers of Early American Slavery*, 134–177, 322–334.

33 Jack Greene, ed., *Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752–1778* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1965), (hereafter, *DLC*), 2: 727–728.

In 1773, Henry Laurens clashed with William Gambell over the latter's brutality in this area. Gambell, who delivered large and profitable crops, took umbrage, left his post, and, without difficulty, secured a similar position elsewhere.[34] In other instances, access to plantation resources and the personal activities of overseers caused friction. In 1798, Virginian Alexander Spotswood dismissed Roger Farrell, despite acknowledging that he had "never had a better overseer." The problem was that Farrell had "many connections and acquaintances near him" who visited and fed their horses on Spotswood's grain.[35] Then there were, inevitably, some overseers who actually did conform to planters' negative stereotypes. In 1737, Virginia planter John Baylor accused his former overseer, Philip Easter, of a litany of misdemeanors: "Neglect" and theft of crops and seed, loss and misuse of stock and horses, "driving the negroes off," fraudulent accounting and reporting, and the misappropriation of his employer's resources for use at his own plantation.[36]

Other seemingly qualified appointees were simply not equal to the peculiar challenge of managing enslaved labor and integrating new crops and agricultural techniques. In his letters to Washington in the 1790s, Carter recounted the frustrations he encountered while attempting to introduce modern practices on his plantation. He had employed an experienced Scottish farmer as his overseer, but found that the latter "could not make the slaves exert themselves to modern labor," and, like many experienced men, "he required wages that nothing less than my whole could pay." On this occasion, the white overseer did not meet his employer's expectations and economic imperatives. Consequently, "the experiment ceased for some years."[37] Carter's eventual solution to this problem was the same that many of his peers were arriving at: "… choosing out two of the most confidential of my slaves, I fixed them off with a small farm each." The move to "confidential" (a term Carter used to describe particularly trusted and capable slaves) enslaved managers did not result in an immediate increase in productivity, which Carter blamed on the legacy of his Scottish ex-employee; an "indifferent overseer." Yet he was optimistic about what his new enslaved overseers might achieve, "bound as they are to follow my directions" and cost- effective into the bargain, for "the venture does not set so much at stake."[38] The enslaved overseer offered a combination of advantages; obedi-

34 *PHL*, 8: 88, 109, 365, 634–635, 647, 9: 100, 157, 162–163, 463, 575–576.

35 *PGW*, Retirement Series, 2: 570, 571, 3: 6, 35, 218, 219–220.

36 Almanac, Collection 34/178/1–3, SCHS; Charge against Philip Easter, legal and financial papers, series II, box 2, *Baylor Family Papers 1653–1915*, UVA.

37 Carter, "Landon Carter's Crop Book," 14.

38 Ibid, 15.

ence, low cost, "bondage" to the estate, and proven capacity to carry out managerial duties. This is evident, for example, in Washington's comments on the enslaved man Davy Gray, his longest-serving overseer, free or enslaved: "Davy carries on his business as well as the white Overseers, and with more quietness than any of them, with proper directions he will do very well and probably give you less trouble than any of them."[39] The practical and fiscal gains, essentially, explain their increasing presence on plantations from the mid-eighteenth century, in particular those owned by modernizing planters.

There were also some situations in which powerful contingent factors beyond the planter's control shaped the decision to appoint enslaved managers. During the American Revolution, it became very hard to recruit proven and experienced white men to isolated and vulnerable plantations. In 1782, George McCall wrote of the situation on Clydeside, his Virginia plantation, that, "Having no Overseer this year, I am Commander in chief myself, and old Joe is my aid." Joe was an enslaved man, the appellation "old" possibly indicative of a long-established relationship between this planter and a venerable and trusted "confidential" bondsman. Even in these unfortunate circumstances, the choice proved sound: "To give the old man his due he has hitherto behaved himself well, and has his plantation in very good order."[40] In 1783, an enslaved overseer was advertised for sale in a South Carolinian newspaper. The vendor noted his particular worth, in that "during the invasion of the country, [he] never went with the British, and had the address to prevent any [slaves] going who were under his care."[41] Sale was a poor reward for the services this man had rendered but, it would appear, for the planter at least, that "loyalty" was a quality that could be commodified. Indeed, considering the performance of men such as 'old Joe' and Davy Gray, the employment of enslaved overseers becomes

39 *DGW*, 4: 252; *PGW*, Colonial Series, 6: 217–220; *PGW*, Colonial Series; 8: 290, 362–364; *PGW*, Presidential Series, 7: 40–45. Entries for 7 January 1770, 9 April 1770, George Washington Ledger A, 1750–1772, *George Washington Papers, Series 5, Financial Papers: General Ledger A*, 1772, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw500001/ (accessed, August 2017), LC; Entries for 25 December 1773, 22 April 1781, 16 February 185, George Washington Ledger B, 1772–1793, *George Washington Papers, Series 5, Financial Papers: General Ledger B*, 1793, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw500002/, (accessed August 2017), LC; Entries for 18 January 1798, 16 February 1799, George Washington Ledger C, 1790–1799, *George Washington Financial Papers Project*, http://financial.gwpapers.org/?q=content/ledger-c-1790-1799, (accessed June 2017), UVA; Entry for 24 March, Manager Ledger (James Anderson), 1798–1800, MV; *WGW*, 32: 472, 474–476; *PGW*, Presidential Series, 12: 631–637, 13: 220–226.

40 George McCall to Archibald McCall, 3 August 1782, "The Correspondence of Archibald McCall and George McCall, 1777–1783," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 73, no. 4 (1965): 440.

41 *South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser*, 10 June 1783.

entirely explicable in terms of planters' self-interested pragmatism. Whether challenged by the need to modernize their plantation business, by ambitious and sometimes fractious employees, or even by the catastrophe of war, planters found enslaved overseers to be competent, dutiful, and inexpensive.

Recovering a full understanding of the motives of the enslaved who took on these roles is complicated by the lack of direct testimony from these men. Nevertheless, by considering the changing context of plantation slavery, it is possible to locate enslaved overseers' actions within the fluid and malleable processes of negotiation that defined owner/slave relations. The labor extracted from the enslaved of the "plantation generation" drove the expansion of large-scale agricultural enterprises as the southern colonies were transformed from "societies with slaves" to "slave societies." They were principal actors in the shifting patterns of economics that came with crop diversification and the production of manufactured goods. By the mid-eighteenth century, enslaved craftsmen began to displace white men from skilled occupations. Some of these craftsmen were able to self-hire, earning money in their own right, travelling beyond the plantation, and engaging in trade and exchange to improve their own and their family's material welfare. These changes in the economic and productive activities of the enslaved had their inevitable corollaries. However abject their status, they were indubitably members of the society in which they lived. They were increasingly likely to have been born in America and to speak English as their first language.[42] They were, within the limits imposed by their bondage, conscious of their self-worth and protective of their customary rights.[43] These circumstances bred some degree of opportunity. A hierarchy emerged within the slave quarters, and the favored, "confidential" slave became a significant figure on the plantation. To Henry Laurens, they were trusted "watchmen" and "friends" and from their ranks enslaved overseers would be recruited.[44]

The benefits of such a role were largely material. The records of Mount Vernon provide evidence of this renumeration, in money and kind. Enslaved overseers such as Morris, Will, and Davy Gray would receive small sums of money

42 Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 135–141.

43 Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 136–137; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 328; Max Edelson, "Affiliation without Affinity: Skilled Slaves in Eighteenth Century South Carolina," in Jack Greene, et al., eds., *Money, Trade and Power: The Evolution of South Carolina's Plantation* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 217–255.

44 Carter, "Landon Carter's Crop Book," 15; James Laurens to Alexander Hamilton, 19 April 1785, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 3: 605–608, 15: 304–307; Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 161.

each year as "encouragement," alongside more generous food rations and larger quarters. Although the cash paid was a comparatively small amount, the trend over time was upwards. On the eve of the Revolution, Washington's enslaved overseers were receiving about the tenth of the annual sum paid to a free overseer, enough to significantly enhance their material circumstances.[45] Interestingly, the situation of Washington's enslaved overseers during the war itself furnished a telling example of the capacity and willingness of the enslaved to use whatever leverage they could in negotiating better terms. In early 1781, the British sloop *H.M.S. Savage* had anchored in the Potomac and demanded supplies from Mount Vernon. To Washington's chagrin, not only did his plantation manager provide the enemy with victuals but seventeen of his slaves, led by Frederick, an enslaved overseer, fled to the British. In the aftermath of this disconcerting incident, Washington, rather than distrust his enslaved overseers, rewarded those who had remained loyal. Thus, enslaved overseers who remained in their posts during the war, like Morris, began to receive salaries rather than merely bonuses, which further increased as the war proceeded. It is difficult not to assume some connection between these events and to conclude that enslaved overseers, like planters, concluded that loyalty might have its price.[46] This incident also points to the risks of generalizing about the relationship between the enslaved overseer and other enslaved people. Frederick appears to have exploited his position to lead others in an act of resistance. His fellows chose not to escape and restrained others from doing so as well.

45 See Memorandum List of Tithables, 1760–1774, *PGW*, Colonial Series, 6: 428, 7: 45, 139, 227–228, 313, 376–377, 442–443, 515–516, 8: 104, 356–357, 220–221, 479–480, 9: 54–55, 238–239, 10: 137–138. *PGW*, Colonial Series, 8: 18, 290; Entry for 13 May 1795, Account for William Pearce, Mount Vernon Farm Ledger, January 1794–December 1796, MV. The cost of a "[Coffin] for Old Morace" was recorded. Entries for 24 December 1767, 25 December 1768, 7 January 1770, 9 April 1770, General Ledger A, 1750–1772, Series 5, Financial Papers, *George Washington Papers*, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw500001/ (accessed, August 2017), LC; Entries for 25 December 1773, 14 December 1776, 21 February 1779, 22 April 1781, 16 February 1785, General Ledger B, 1772–1793, Series 5, Financial Papers, *George Washington Papers*, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw500002/ (accessed, August 2017), LC; Entry for 13 May 1795, *Manager Ledger* (William Pearce), 1794–1797, MV.

46 Entries for 25 December 1773, 14 December 1776, 21 February 1779, 22 April 1781, 16 February 1785, General Ledger B, 1772–1793, Series 5, Financial Papers, *George Washington Papers*, LC, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw500002/ (accessed, August 2017), LC; Entry for 13 May 1795, Manager Ledger (William Pearce), 1794–1797, MV. George Washington to Lund Washington, 30 April 1781, Series 4, General Correspondence, *George Washington Papers*, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw427961/ (accessed April 2018), LC. George Washington to Lund Washington, 30 April 1781, Series 4, General Correspondence, *George Washington Papers*, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw427961/ (accessed, April 2018), LC.

Whether their motives were genuinely "loyalty" to Washington, or simply an awareness of the dangers that flight entailed, we cannot know. What is apparent is that the individual decisions made by enslaved overseers were of enormous significance to the discipline of the plantation workforce.[47]

The benefits that accrued to the enslaved overseer should also be understood with regard to their wider families. White overseers and their wives effectively formed supervisory partnerships on plantations. The women frequently took on responsibility for areas requiring management, such as the dairy, livestock, the garden, textile operations, the health and welfare of children, and catering for hired laborers. Furthermore, they trained the enslaved in these labors and in other skilled occupations.[48] The wives of enslaved overseers and other reliable, proficient enslaved women occupied similar positions. Landon Carter, impressed by George, one of his enslaved overseers, pondered what might improve his performance and concluded "by putting a woman under his particular management to help him I may effect a great thing."[49] Other modernizing planters clearly appreciated the advantages that could be gained by fostering husband-wife managerial partnerships. Hannah, the wife of Morris, Washington's first enslaved overseer, took responsibility for feeding the white farm hands hired at busy times, such as harvest.

Those enslaved couples who followed in Morris and Hannah's footsteps worked actively to leverage their contribution to the plantation into greater material and financial reward. The role of "Granny," with responsibility for the care of pregnant women, attending births, the health of enslaved new mothers and their infants, and general welfare of the enslaved, was recognized as an important one.[50] When advertising for white overseers, those whose wives

47 Historians of both the antebellum period and the Caribbean have looked at the question of relationships between the enslaved in positions of authority and their fellows. This is suggestive, but more work is needed specifically on the colonial period. See Randy Browne, *Surviving Slavery in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Trevor Burnard, "'Impatient of Subordination' and 'Liable to Sudden Transports of Anger': White Masculinity and Homosocial Relations with Black Men in Eighteenth Century Jamaica," in Thomas A Foster, ed., *New Men: Manliness in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 134–155; David Doddington, *Contesting Slave Masculinity in the American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 49–88, and William Van Deburg, *The Slave Drivers: Black Agricultural Labor Supervisors in the Antebellum South* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979).

48 Laura Sandy, "Homemakers, Supervisors, and Peach Stealing Bitches: The Role of Overseers' Wives on Slave Plantations in Eighteenth-Century Virginia and South Carolina," *Women's History Review* 21 (2012): 473–494.

49 *DLC*, 1: 385.

50 For the significance and extent of the skills of women in specific gendered roles, see, for

were "clever in the care of sick Negroes" and medical practices were highly prized.[51] The wives of enslaved overseers who performed such roles were, therefore, also recognized as a great asset. In Virginia, those who supervised births, either free or enslaved, usually received about ten shillings per labor. Susanna Bishop, the wife of a war comrade of Washington's who worked as an overseer, had supervised the births of many enslaved children.[52] When the role became available at Mount Vernon, Kate, the wife of Will, the enslaved overseer of Muddy Hole farm, seized the opportunity and confidently petitioned for the job. Washington recorded, "When I was at home, an application was made to me by Kate at Muddy hole (through her husband, Will) to serve the Negro Women (as a Grany) on my estate." Kate asserted "that she was full as well qualified for this purpose as those into whose hands it was entrusted" in the past. Once satisfied with her credentials, the pragmatic planter was willing to "commit this business to her." It proved a wise decision. Kate's capacities extended to medical procedures for which, previously, Washington had paid a physician. One ledger recorded that she was given the money to buy "Scissors to cut the Tongues [the frenum] of Young Children." Securing the role of Granny was by no means the limit of Kate's enterprise; she also raised livestock which she sold to Washington.[53] Kate's example neatly illustrates a number of important factors that were shaping plantations in the latter half of the eighteenth century: the movement of enslaved people into skilled and managerial roles previously held by free white employees, the development of slave enterprise, and the significance of familial relationships in shaping managerial practices on plantations, epitomized by the effective partnership of Will and Kate of Muddy Hole.

The leverage that Will and Kate could bring to bear in negotiations with their owner is also illustrative of the relationship between plantation management and the dynamic institutional framework of chattel slavery. The extent to which the existence of enslaved overseers conflicted with colonial society's racial hierarchy was particularly clear. It reflected planters' self-interest and exposed the fault lines of class that existed within slave societies. The flouting of laws was not even obscured. As well as plantation papers, announcements

---

example, Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

51 *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston), 1 November 1799.

52 *PGW*, Colonial Series, 7: 482, 8: 5, 70, 169, 222, 250, 521, 527, 557, 9: 1, 53, 58, 10: 19–20, 39, 168, 194, 196; "Hard Money pd. on Act. of General Washington," *Lund Washington Account Book*, 109–110, 112, 125–126, 133, 136, 140, 143, 148, 150, 155, MV.

53 *PGW*, Presidential Series, 16: 573–576. Series 5, Financial Papers: Ledger B, 1772–1793, *George Washington Papers*, https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw500002/ (accessed, August 2018), LC.

of slave auctions and newspaper advertisements openly boasted of the abilities of the enslaved who could independently supervise the "whole" of their owner's "plantation business," with "no [white] overseer" or manager present.[54] As Lowcountry planters diversified their plantations, the value of those who were adept at new techniques and able to direct others increased. South Carolinian Hagar, an enslaved woman who had been in a sexual relationship with her white overseer, who was dismissed from this post for his transgression, proved to be a successful indigo-maker. Her owner found the relationship between Hagar and the white overseer "extremely offensive" and "very hurtful," both to his business "Interest" and to his morals. Nevertheless, he admired the enslaved woman's dexterity, "honesty," and "care of Negroes." As a consequence, he upgraded her to supervisor and instructor of indigo production, effectively using her as an artisan-overseer.[55]

Planters proved willing to pay high prices for individuals known to be capable managers. Indeed, Henry Laurens, as well as paying £1200 for an enslaved manager, Massey, paid £600 for another enslaved overseer (a price twice that of a prime hand).[56] This practice was not completely uncontested. As Philip Morgan has noted, some local Lowcountry authorities, such as the Grand Jury of Georgetown District, expressed considerable disquiet over "the number of plantations in this district not having any white persons on them."[57] Yet, in a significant, if seldom recognized, manifestation of the planters' growing political dominance within slave societies, these concerns were articulated, but appear to have made little difference to planters who appointed slaves to management roles. Enslaved overseers were, by the close of the eighteenth century, common figures within the management hierarchy of plantation enterprises.

The politics of this development most commonly played out within the bounds of plantations themselves. William Wiethoff has pointed to rivalry between white and enslaved overseers that was evident during the antebellum period, and the concomitant negative impact on both the status and pay

54 Carter, "Landon Carter's Crop Book," 14–15; *WGW*, 32: 472, 474–476; Charles Pinckney to Ralph Izard, 26 December 1794, *Manigault Family Papers*, SCHS; *Columbian Herald*, 26 March 1789; *South Carolina Gazette*, 16 May 1774; *WGW*, 32: 472, 474–476; *PGW*, Colonial Series, 9: 241–242; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 222, 343; Philip Morgan, "Black Society in the Low Country, 1600–1810," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 118.

55 *PHL*, 3: 248, 5: 83, 125; Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 237.

56 *PHL*, 4: 202, 5: 574.

57 Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 222, 343; Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry," 118.

of the former.[58] Yet his analysis, drawn from sources from the early and mid-nineteenth century, did not chart the emergence of this rivalry in the eighteenth century. As noted, at this time some recruits to the overseeing profession were highly skilled, ambitious, and independently minded individuals whose interests did not always neatly align with those of their employers. Enslaved overseers not only challenged the social status and depressed the wages of white overseers, they were often the eyes and ears of the planter himself.[59] Planters such as Landon Carter and Henry Laurens are known to have discharged (allegedly) dishonest white overseers based upon the testimony of enslaved managers.[60] The potential for friction was obvious. In Virginia in 1768, a white overseer named James Bishop railed against his employer, Hartwell Marable, who had given an enslaved man, "steward Robin," responsibility for reporting on the performance of his overseers. Bishop demanded that his employer visit the plantation himself, or at least "send a white man" to check up on him and make an inspection. If Robin were sent again, Bishop fumed, he would "tie him up and give him fifty lashes." Outraged by the insinuation that his word could not be "taken before a negro," he threatened resignation.[61]

Bishop's outburst graphically illustrates the tensions generated by the presence of enslaved overseers in plantation management hierarchies. Yet that presence within a slave society is not so paradoxical. It was in the self-interest of the politically dominant planters to secure managers who were skilled, tractable, and relatively low-cost. In particular, modernizing planters, keen to develop their businesses, boost productivity, and reform their agricultural practices, understood the possibilities offered by promoting proven 'confidential' slaves. The difficulty posed both by recruiting and securing the long-term services of suitably qualified yet "loyal" (cheap and obedient) free overseers made such a policy attractive. For the enslaved, the position of overseer offered economic and social opportunities: improved material conditions and more control over their day-to-day lives. However, this was not a simple meeting of mutual interests. "Good" and "loyal" enslaved overseers might well find themselves on the auction block, commanding a high price. While planters, having promoted the enslaved to overseeing positions, knew that they might find themselves in negotiations with them over rewards, conditions, and, access

58 William Wiethoff, "Enslaved Africans' Rivalry with White Overseers in Plantation Culture: An Unconventional Interpretation," *Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 3 (2006): 429–455.

59 Ibid; Sandy, *The Overseers of Early American Slavery*, 134–177, 238–239.

60 *DLC*, 1: 524; *PHL*, 8: 287, 365.

61 James Bishop to Hartwell Marable, 27 August 1768, *Major- Marable Papers*, CWF.

to patronage, they no doubt also recognized that promotion to management allowed them to demand higher sale prices for them. Plantations were complex businesses, and the development of their labor regimes foreshadowed many of the characteristics of what would later be termed "scientific management." The case of the enslaved overseer is a reminder of how intensely political such management actually was, with the wielding of influence and authority shaping individual performance and promotion. Despite the enormous constraints that faced them, individuals such as Samuel Massey, "steward Robin," Hagar, and Will and Kate of Muddy Hole secured and leveraged their managerial positions, demonstrating how "equal to management" they proved to be.

Works Cited

Aufhauser, Keith. "Slavery and Scientific Management." *Journal of Economic History* 33 (4) (1973), 811–824.

Bear, James, ed. *Jefferson at Monticello: The Private Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1967).

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Beverley, Robert. *The History and Present State of Virginia*, ed. Louis Wright (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947).

Blundeville, Thomas. *The fower chiefyst offices belongyng to horsemanshippe* (London: Wyllyam Seres, 1566).

Browne, Randy. *Surviving Slavery in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

Burnard, Trevor. "'Impatient of Subordination' and 'Liable to Sudden Transports of Anger': White Masculinity and Homosocial Relations with Black Men in Eighteenth Century Jamaica." In *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 134–155.

Carney, Judith. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Carter, Landon. "Landon Carter's Crop Book." *William and Mary Quarterly* 21 (1) (1912), 11–21.

Catterall, Helen. *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1926).

Clukey, Amy, and Jeremy Wells. "Plantation Modernity." *The Global South* 10 (2) (2016), 1–10.

Dalzell, Robert, and Lee Dalzell. *George Washington's Mount Vernon: At Home in Revolutionary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Doddington, David. *Contesting Slave Masculinity in the American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Edelson, Max. *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Fett, Sharla. *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Fleischman, Richard, David Oldroyd and Thomas Tyson. "Plantation Accounting and Management Practices in the US and the British West Indies at the End of Their Slavery Eras." *Economic History Review* 64 (3) (2011), 765–797.

Florio John. *A Worlde of Wordes, or Most Copious and Exact Dictionarie in Italian and English* (London: Arnold Hatfield for Edw. Blount, 1598).

Frederickson, George. *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Fuente, Alejandro de la, and Ariela Gross. *Becoming Free, Becoming Black* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Fusonie, Alan, and Donna Jean Fusonie. *George Washington: Pioneer Farmer* (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 1998).

Heier, Jan Richard. "A Content Comparison of Antebellum Plantation Records and Thomas Affleck's Accounting Principles." *The Accounting Historians Journal* 15 (2) (1988), 131–150.

Higginbotham, A. *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process: The Colonial Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

Loehr, Rodney. "Arthur Young and American Agriculture." *Agricultural History* 43 (1969), 43–56.

McIntosh, Marjorie. "Poverty, Charity, and Coercion in Elizabethan England," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35 (3) (2005), 457–479.

Mintz, Sidney. "Caribbean Society." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

Morgan, Philip. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Morgan, Philip. "Black Society in the Low Country, 160–1810." In *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, eds. Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983).

Nelson, John. *The Histories and Antiquities of the Parish of Islington* (London: n.p. 1823).

Overton, Mark. *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy, 1500–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Parent, Anthony. *Foul Means: The Formation of Slave Society in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Razek, Joseph. "Accounting on the Old Plantation: A Study of the Financial Records

of an Ante-bellum Louisiana Sugar Planter." *The Accounting Historians Journal* 12 (1) (1985), 17–36.

Roper, L.H. "The 1701 'Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves': Reconsidering the History of Slavery in Proprietary South Carolina." *William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (2) (2007), 395–418.

Rosenthal, Caitlin. "Slavery's Scientific Management: Masters and Managers." In *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, eds. Sven Beckett and Seth Rockman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

Rosenthal, Caitlin. *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018).

Sandy, Laura. *The Overseers of Early American Slavery: Supervisors, Enslaved Labourers, and the Plantation Enterprise* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

Sandy, Laura. "Homemakers, Supervisors, and Peach Stealing Bitches: The Role of Overseers' Wives on Slave Plantations in Eighteenth-Century Virginia and South Carolina." *Women's History Review* 21 (3) (2012), 473–494.

Scarborough, William Kauffman. *The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966).

Schantz, Mark. "'A Very Serious Business': Managerial Relationships on the Ball Plantations, 1800–1835." *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 88 (1) (1987), 1–22.

Smallwood, Stephanie. "African Guardians, European Slave Ships, and the Changing Dynamics of Power in the Early Modern Atlantic." *William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (4) (2007), 679–716.

Stanton, Lucinda. *Free Some Day: The African-American Families of Monticello* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Steffen, Charles G. "In Search of the Good Overseer: The Failure of the Agricultural Reform Movement in Lowcountry South Carolina, 1821–1834." *Journal of Southern History* 63 (4) (1997), 753–802.

Sweet, James. "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought." *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997), 143–166.

Van Deburg, William. *The Slave Drivers: Black Agricultural Labor Supervisors in the Antebellum South* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979).

Vaughan, Alden. *Roots of American Racism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Walsh, Lorena. *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607–1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

Wayne, Michael. *Death of an Overseer: Reopening a Murder Investigation from the Plantation South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Wiethoff, William. "Enslaved Africans' Rivalry with White Overseers in Plantation Culture: An Unconventional Interpretation." *Journal of Black Studies* 36 (3) (2006), 429–455.

Wilcox, Nathaniel. "The Overseer Problem: A New Data Set and Method." In *Without Consent or Contract: Evidence and Methods*, eds. Robert Fogel, Ralph Galantine, and Richard Manning (New York: Norton, 1992), 84–109.

Wilstach, Paul. *Mount Vernon: Washington's Home and the Nation's Shrine* (New York: Doubleday, 1916).