TO ANY OTHER FUTURE EDITOR:

I made two typescripts of the Atkins letters, one with spelling and punctuation exactly as in the original letters, and another with spelling and punctuation more or less standardized for clarity in reading. No words were changed in either typescript, nor were any words moved about, but punctuation and correct spelling were inserted in the second typescript to make some of the letters (especially those written by Joseph Atkins) readable when otherwise they would not have been. A final editor of the material would need to decide whether to use the original form of the letters, with errors intact, or the corrected account, which allows for a much more readable manuscript. It is possible that the standardized version could be used in the text of the book, for the ease and sanity of the general reader, and the original, often difficult version of some of the letters placed in an appendix for the interest of scholars. The attached typescript is the corrected version, the original version being currently preserved only on old-style floppy disks.

The 1886 diary of James Lewis Adams is not in complete typescript. Only four months are typed and printed in this version: January, April, June and September. I have the complete diary typed onto floppy disks which I cannot access with my present computer, but it is possible that I can have the old floppy disks copied onto modern disks for access by MS Word and thus produce a complete typescript of the diary. Otherwise, it will be necessary to retype the remaining eight months from the original diary manuscript. I do not have any of the letters, diary, or introductory material on modern disks. All the typed copies were made onto old-style floppy disks which are now obsolete, and only those attached were printed out when a printer for those disks was available.

Finally, the manuscript as of the below date is not complete, but may be considered nearly so. There are still several individuals who are mentioned in the letters and diary who are yet to be identified and a final check for accuracy of the information presently given needs to be made.

A friend, who is an MD with special interest in mid-19th Century medicine, suggests that James Lewis Adams likely suffered from high blood pressure, according to the symptoms which he recorded, a condition which was neither diagnosed nor treated in his day.

Joseph H. H. Moore

22 May 2006
OAK LAWN: WAR-TIME LETTERS OF THE ATKINS FAMILY
AND THE PLANTATION DIARY
OF
JAMES LEWIS ADAMS

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
JOSEPH HENRY HIGHTOWER MOORE
CONTENTS

PART ONE

LETTERS OF THE ATKINS FAMILY

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTERS

I Thomas Washington Atkins
II Oak Lawn
III The Atkins Family
IV Adams' Mills
V Plantations and Crops
VI Towns, Villages and Settlements
VII Society and Culture
VIII Honorables and Squires

THE LETTERS

\[\text{I} \quad 1856-1860 \quad \text{II} \quad 1861\]
III 1862
IV 1863
V 1864

PART TWO

THE PLANTATION DIARY OF JAMES LEWIS ADAMS

INTRODUCTION TO THE DIARY

I James Lewis Adams
II Oak Lawn After the War
III Post-War Towns and Churches
IV Plantation Neighbors
V 1886

J. L. ADAMS' DIARY FOR 1886

I January
II April
III June
IV November
(Four Months Only Enclosed)
PART ONE

LETTERS OF THE ATKINS FAMILY
INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTERS

I
THOMAS WASHINGTON ATKINS

THE CENTRAL FIGURE in this correspondence of the Atkins family and their friends is Thomas Washington Atkins. Ironically, not a syllable from his own hand is known to survive, but in these letters and notes to him, extending from 1856 to 1863, when he was age twenty to twenty-six, aspects of his character and personality come to light. He was a popular and funloving young man whose range of correspondants included a diversity of personalities. He emerges through the letters as a devoted son, a dear brother, a handsome cousin, a warm friend and jovial companion, and a respected leader of men in battle. That he possessed wit and a sense of humor is clearly revealed in the letters; that he was a young gentleman of intelligence and breeding and an educated man whose humane regard for his fellows extended to all ranks and classes of men is also evident. His normal human trepidation in the face of war is humorously shown in a pencil sketch which he made of himself, with astonished eyes and mouth drawn back in mock-horror, at Camp Stephens in Griffin, Georgia, when the votes of his company were tallied and he was elected captain of the Doyal Volunteers, Company A, 53rd Georgia Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia. From this sketch, too, it is revealed that he wore his hair trimmed short and a beard that extended to his shirt-collar, according to a fashion of the day.
Thomas Washington Atkins was born at Oak Lawn, his father's plantation in Henry County, Georgia, on 6 November 1835. He was educated in local academies and may have attended a school in Monroe, Georgia, or Franklin College (the University of Georgia) in Athens. In 1860, at the age of twenty-four, he was a student of medicine in the home of his cousin, Dr. John W. Adams, at Double Cabins in Spalding County. Also resident in the Adams household that summer, besides Dr. Adams' wife Nancy, age twenty-seven, and young daughter Rowella, age six, was James E. Stallings, a school teacher. Dr. Adams, then age thirty-two (or twenty-nine, depending on differing census data) and James Stallings, age twenty-one, both appear in the Atkins correspondence. The young wife and daughter of Dr. Adams had died by 1862, when he was courting Miss Marcella F. Holmes of Griffin, as his correspondence in that year refers only to an infant son surviving from his first marriage.

Although several letters and notes date from 1856, the Atkins letters began in earnest in the fall of 1860 when Thomas Atkins left Double Cabins to enter a series of lectures at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. The completion of his courses granted him the degree of Doctor of Medicine in the spring of 1861, whereupon he returned to his home just as the newly-formed Southern Confederacy was entering the War Between the States. He remained in Georgia, pursuing his medical studies and beginning practice, until the spring of 1862 when he entered the Southern army.
Accompanying him to the battle front in Virginia were his body-servant Sam and his warm friend and brother-in-law Thomas Colquitt Andrews, a member of the same company. War-time letters from home were sometimes addressed to both Tom Atkins and Tom Andrews jointly. This segment of the family correspondence comes to an abrupt halt in the spring of 1863, shortly before both young men fell mortally wounded in the Battle of Gettysburg.
THE OAK LAWN PLANTATION of Thomas Atkins' father, Joseph Atkins, stood some three miles north of Double Cabins in the Lowe's District of Henry County. The nearest places of trade were Bear Creek Station, a small village that was later to become the town of Hampton, approximately six miles northwest of Oak Lawn on the Macon & Western Railroad, and the city of Griffin, on the same railroad some eight or nine miles southwest of Oak Lawn. McDonough, the seat of Henry County, was some ten miles northeast of Oak Lawn, but by 1860 the Atkins family and others of their neighborhood seldom conducted business there other than specific court-house matters relating to the payment of taxes and the filing of deeds. Having been bypassed by the railroad, McDonough was a small place whose trade after 1840 had gone mostly to Griffin and to Jonesboro in Fayette (later Clayton) County.

Joseph Atkins settled in Henry County in 1826, when the courthouse village of McDonough was the only local trade center and more important business had to be transacted in the new town of Macon on the Ocmulgee River some sixty or seventy miles distant to the southeast. First river barges and later steamboats connected Macon's trade with the coast and Georgia's principal city of Savannah. Henry County, created from the Creek Indian land cession
of 1821 and first opened to settlement in 1822, was an untamed wilderness when the Atkins arrived. The new country was distributed to Georgians by a land lottery in which parcels of 202-1/2 acres of land called land lots were surveyed from larger units called land districts and distributed by lottery draws held at the state capitol in Milledgeville. The opening of homesteads required the removal of virgin forest, except in places where old Indian fields lay or in bottomlands long covered by beaver ponds in which the trees had gradually died and rotted away. Early houses and outbuildings were ordinarily built of logs and later refined by a covering of clapboards or replaced entirely by new frame structures. It was a country for young men who were starting families, although elder relatives often accompanied their children and grandchildren to the new lands. This migration was impelled by the exhaustion of soil fertility in older regions and by natural population increase which made long-settled lands difficult to acquire as competition for space and ownership sharpened generation by generation.

The original Joseph Atkins homestead in Henry County was Land Lot 235 of the 3rd Land District. His brother-in-law and cousin John Adams, later of Adams' Mills, settled at the same place and it was recalled in the 1880s that the Atkins and Adams built their houses in the same yard until about a year later, when John Adams moved to a separate home some two miles from the original
settlement, in which Joseph Atkins and his family remained.

Both the Atkins and Adams properties lay along the waters of Towaliga Creek in the southern part of the county and both benefitted from a kind providence. The Towaliga River Basin of Henry County, including much of the Cabin District in what became Spalding County, proved a fertile ground. Settlers of the area in and around Lowe's Militia District prospered to the extent that a majority of the largest planters and slaveowners of Henry County lived in this neighborhood and it became a black-belt district in a non-black-belt county. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s original parcels of 202-1/2 acres were combined into larger units as the local plantation system developed. Most Georgians who got land in the Henry County lottery chose not to settle their grants and eventually offered them for sale. Others who did settle occasionally determined to move westward as newer lands were opened. It was in this way that large plantations developed in Henry County.

As did most of his neighbors, young Joseph Atkins started out modestly. The Henry County Tax Digest for 1831 shows him with 219-1/3 acres of land and he paid tax on two slaves. His fortunes increased over the next twenty years to the extent that by 1850, according to the Agricultural Census of that year, he was in possession of 230 acres of improved land and 760 acres of unimproved land, giving him a total of 990 acres, and the census of
1850 shows him with a total of nineteen slaves of all ages. By 1860 he had 440 acres of improved land and 640 acres unimproved, making a total of 1,080 acres, on which he had a total of twenty-eight slaves. He added slightly more to these holdings and at the time of his death in 1866, the Oak Lawn lands amounted to 1,132-1/2 acres.

The "big house" at Oak Lawn was built on the original homestead tract and likely dated from the family's settlement in 1826. As originally built the house contained a center hall with a large room on either side and two or three shed rooms off the rear. The kitchen was located in the side yard south of the house, to which it was connected by a passageway. The style of construction was that defined by Henry County historian Vessie Thrasher Rainer as a raised-roof cottage, consisting of a main floor with a long raised loft in the attic overhead. This attic or loft was evidently never walled or ceiled on the inside and was likely used for the dry storage of food products and other items, but its space was such that it could have provided two additional rooms with a passage if future need called for it. It was reached by a steep, narrow, enclosed stair which made a 90-degree turn at the bottom, with a small door opening into the downstairs front hall. Many houses of this type were built by first-generation settlers in Henry County and their owners ranged from plain middle-class farmers to wealthy planters. It was a vernacular form whose origins lay primarily in
the 18th Century and may best be defined as a variation of the type of architecture now known as the Plantation Plain Style.

The large room to the left of the center hall at Oak Lawn was clearly intended to serve as the sitting room and dining room for family and guests, as it boasted a handsomely-designed mantel carved in a sunburst pattern of the Adam or Federal style. The chimneys serving both main rooms were on the gable-end or side walls of the house. To the right of the fireplace in the family room was a door opening onto the passage leading out to the kitchen. When Joseph Atkins' wealth had increased by 1850 or 1860, an ell was built on the right front of the house to contain a separate parlor, and the former family room became the dining room. It was probably at this time that the original front porch was altered and cornices added to the rooflines and trim to the porch uprights, giving Oak Lawn's front entrance the appearance and feeling of a romantic Gothic cottage of a type popular in the middle and latter 19th Century. The porch followed the ell of the new addition and thereby enclosed the front garden on two sides, its remaining two sides certainly being enclosed by picket fences. In the surrounding yard was the park of large oak trees from which, at least by the 1850s, the plantation was given its name. The main house at Oak Lawn was standing unmaintained, and used for the storage of hay, as recently as 1967, but was gone within a few years after.
The diary of James Lewis Adams, nephew and son-in-law of Joseph Atkins, refers to bricks falling from the chimneys of houses in the yard of Oak Lawn during the Charleston Earthquake of 1886, whereby it appears that sleeping quarters, perhaps for sons of the family and for guests, were located in separate small houses on the immediate grounds of the big house. The original dwelling of John Adams and his family likely still stood in the yard. Antebellum farms and plantations were literally small villages of buildings and it was not unusual for the "big house" of a plantation to contain no more than five or six finished rooms when small houses in the yard offered additional accommodation for family and visitors. Sometimes the plantation office would be in such a separate house, as well as a schoolroom for the children. In 1886 Miss Mary Atkins conducted a neighborhood school in such a building at Oak Lawn.

Besides the main house, kitchen and adjacent cottages, the plantation yard at Oak Lawn contained the usual assortment of dependencies including smokehouse, grain house for wheat, well and laundry shed, blacksmith shop, houses for fowl, barns, cotton sheds, corn cribs, wagon and buggy shed, and the Negro quarters. A cotton gin was located on the plantation in 1886 and may have stood there in 1860, as many of the larger antebellum planters of Henry County had their own gins and presses for preparing cotton for market, as well as providing additional income when made available
to neighboring farmers. None of Oak Lawn's plantation dependencies remained by 1967.

On a rise across the road from the Oak Lawn house was the tree-shaded Adams-Atkins family graveyard, which came into use by the early 1830s. Several handsome marble monuments along with others of granite and lesser stone distinguish this old burying ground, which has largely become lost in wild growth reclaiming the surrounding fields.
THE ATKINS FAMILY

The Atkins have been described as one of the aristocratic plantation families of Newberry District, South Carolina. Their history states that they were established in America by Francis Atkins, who was born in London and immigrated to Virginia in the Colonial period. His son Francis, born in Virginia in 1723, moved to Newberry District, South Carolina, where he established a successful and prosperous plantation. He married Jane Yeldell, which union created the first connection of the Atkins to the Adams family who accompanied them to Henry County. This connection was multiplied by the intermarriages of later generations of the Atkins and Adams according to a social and family habit not unusual among Southern families of the 18th and 19th Centuries.

Francis Atkins and Jane Yeldell were the parents of Robert Atkins (1772-1816), who moved to Edgefield District, South Carolina, and subsequently to Abbeville District. His wife was Jane Barnett (1776-1852) who afterwards married as her second husband, John Donald. It is unclear whether she belonged to the same Barnett family who became early settlers in Henry County and married into the Atkins' Adams cousins, but it is likely that the two Barnett groups were collateral lines to one another. These Henry County Barnettts were originally from New Kent County, Virginia, and had settled in Richmond, Wilkes, Clarke and Greene
Counties, Georgia, soon after the Revolutionary War.

The children of Robert and Jane (Barnett) Atkins included their daughter Mahaleath (Atkins) Adams, wife of John Adams, and their son Joseph Atkins, husband of John Adams' sister Margaret (Adams) Atkins. Joseph Atkins was born in Edgefield District, South Carolina, 19 August 1804, and died at Oak Lawn Plantation, 10 November 1866. His wife Margaret Adams was born in Abbeville District, South Carolina, 19 June 1805, and died at Oak Lawn, 28 May 1880. They were married in 1824. The two Adams and Atkins marriages took place in Abbeville District and in 1826, both families came to Henry County where subsequent intermarriages, as well as mutual marriages into other neighborhood families, greatly complicated their connections. It became custom in Henry County to refer to the Adams-Atkins family as a single unit.

Joseph and Margaret (Adams) Atkins had twelve children who were reared at Oak Lawn and most of them were born there. The eldest, Eliza Jane (1824–1894), married Robert M. Walker (1822–1892), son of John and Mary (Chappell) Tyus Walker, successful planters of the neighborhood who had come as early settlers from Greene County, Georgia. The John Walker home, located on or near Indian Creek, stood several miles northeast of Oak Lawn. Robert and Eliza Walker in 1860 occupied a farm some two miles northeast of Bear Creek Station. They are several times mentioned in the Atkins correspondence and three letters from Eliza Walker to her
husband form the bulk of the 1864 family correspondence included in this collection. Their daughter Margaret Walker married in 1861 Richard Henry Minter. She was the child of a first-cousin marriage and he was the grandchild of a first-cousin marriage.

Adaline Matilda Atkins (1826-1901), the second child of Joseph and Margaret (Adams) Atkins, married Gideon G. Minter (1818-1872), older brother of Richard Henry Minter and the "poor Gideon" of the letters. He was a son of Richard and Nancy (Ragland) Minter of Jasper County, Georgia, and grandson of William and Sarah (Ragland) Minter of Chatham County, North Carolina, whereby his parents were first cousins through the Raglands. Members of the Ragland family, from Virginia by way of North Carolina, were early Henry County settlers and reference is made in the letters to Gideon Minter's uncle Lemuel A. Ragland, a planter near McDonough. Matilda and Gideon Minter figure prominently in the Atkins letters, sometimes in connection with Mr. Minter's enigmatic illness, which for some time rendered him largely unable to support his family. Despite expectations of his imminent demise in 1860, he lived another twelve years and died at age fifty-four. The Gideon Minter farm was located near Bear Creek Station.

The next two Atkins children were Robert (born 1828) and John (born 1830), both of whom died in childhood or youth and were among the earliest burials in the Oak Lawn graveyard.

Sarah Atkins, the fifth child, was married in 1855 to Thomas
Colquitt Andrews, son of William and Martha (Guthrie) Andrews who were early settlers in the part of Henry County that was formed into Spalding County in 1851. William Andrews had married late in life and when he died in 1835 he left ten minor children who were placed under the care of guardians, six of them, including Thomas Colquitt and Nehemiah G. Andrews, going to Thomas D. Johnson, a wealthy merchant of McDonough and a long-time member of both houses of the Georgia legislature from Henry County. In 1845 he moved to Griffin, where he continued to prosper. Mrs. Johnson was the former Nancy Key, daughter of Joseph and Judith (Watts) Key, whose family was conspicuous in the early life of Jasper, Henry and Clayton Counties and whose ties included the noted Heard family of Georgia. Thomas D. Johnson, a son of Elisha Johnson, pioneer settler on Cotton Creek in north Henry County, was not related to the Johnsons of Tonalga Creek. — [Some say he was.] (Clarity: Why?)

The Andrews family had come from Prince Edward County, Virginia, to eastern Georgia after the Revolutionary War and settled in the counties of Wilkes, Oglethorpe and Greene before this branch continued to Henry County. Several members of the family appear in the Atkins correspondence. Thomas Andrews' brother Nehemiah G. Andrews married Sarah Atkins' sister Martha. Several letters in the collection were written by Lewis O. Niles of Griffin, who addressed the Atkins as cousins and whose brother George R. Niles was betrothed to and subsequently married Miss
Alice E. Andrews, first cousin to Thomas and Nehemiah Andrews and daughter of Jacob Woodson Andrews of Orchard Hill Plantation several miles southeast of Griffin. Letters of the Niles and Andrews families of Spalding County, from this same period, are preserved in the Niles Collection housed in the library of Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. The Andrews of Henry County were cousins to the family of Judge Garnett Andrews of Washington, Wilkes County, Georgia, whose daughter Eliza Frances Andrews (1840–1931) kept a diary, which titled The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, was first published in 1908.

In 1856 Thomas C. Andrews purchased a tract of 338-3/4 acres of land in the Union District of Spalding County and he and Sarah (Atkins) Andrews were living there in 1860 with their young children Martha (Mattie) and Thomas, Jr., and five slaves. Thomas Andrews enlisted with Thomas Atkins on 28 April 1862 in the Doyal Volunteers, Company A, 53rd Georgia Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia. He was appointed first sergeant of his company and was wounded in the Battle of Gettysburg, 3 July 1863. He was captured at Williamsport, Virginia, and died of his wounds in a Union military hospital in Chester, Pennsylvania, 20 September 1863. Sarah Andrews continued to live with her children on the Spalding County farm. She never remarried. James Lewis Adams noted in his 1886 diary that annual memorial services for T. C. Andrews were held at Thurza Church near the Andrews home in Spalding County.
Colonel James M. Atkins (1833-1890), according to Southern custom, derived his title by virtue of being an attorney, and was the sixth child born to Joseph and Margaret (Adams) Atkins. He was educated at Bethany College in Virginia (now West Virginia) and by 1860 was beginning the practice of law in Griffin, possibly in association with Colonel Samuel W. Mangham, who appears in the letters. Finding Griffin overrun with attorneys, and having been jilted by his fiancée, the evidently-fickle Miss Kirkpatrick, who at the last moment before their marriage, broke the engagement to wed her cousin from Jasper County, James Atkins moved early in 1861 to Morgan, Calhoun County, Georgia, to take a post teaching school probably in the Morgan Academy. He was evidently not satisfied with this situation for on 10 June 1861, two months after the Southern attack on Fort Sumter, he enlisted as first corporal in the Calhoun Rifles, Company D, 12th Georgia Infantry, Army of Northern Virginia, and was subsequently appointed sergeant in the company. His Confederate service record states that he deserted on 2 April 1862, and a letter from Dr. John W. Adams to Thomas Atkins in the spring of that year expresses the hope that "our relation, to wit, your brother and my cousin" James Atkins had gotten safely into the Virginia mountains where he might receive the aid of sympathetic friends in making his way to the North.

It is not known when his family learned of James' safe escape, but Joseph Atkins was aware of it by August 1862, when admitting to
his son Thomas that "We have but little room to be sticklers about men that are trying to evade the war." It is evident that Dr. John Adams and Thomas Atkins both knew of James' intentions before he left the army. Whatever had been his sympathies at the beginning of the war --- his early enlistment in 1861 suggests either that he was anxious to get away from his situation in Calhoun County or that he favored the Southern cause --- by the spring of 1862 he opposed the Southern view and sought refuge among Northern friends no doubt formed during his college days in West Virginia. He landed in Warren, Ohio, where in 1863 he was married to Helen Dunbar King (1827-1886), daughter of the Honorable Leicester King and a descendant of old and influential New England families including the Huntingtons, Dwights, Emersons and Lymans. This alliance with a Northern family suggests the probability that James Atkins was or had become an opponent of slavery and of secession and Southern independence, and no doubt he accurately saw the war as an ultimately self-destructive action on the South's part.

Colonel and Mrs. Atkins moved to Atlanta when the war ended in 1865 and he was appointed Collector of Internal Revenue for the 4th District of Georgia. He held this position until 1872, when he was appointed Collector of the Port of Savannah and moved to that city, where he spent the remainder of his life. He had a small law practice in addition to his port duties, but there is no doubt that his alliance with Northern Reconstruction interests, and his
marriage to a Northern woman at a time when Southern sentiment ran high, combined to make him unpopular among the Confederate families of Georgia. He is perhaps unique among the prominent plantation families of Henry County in having deserted his place in the Confederate army to take the Northern side in the war, but this decision can only have been made on the basis of firm and hard-thought conviction as well as a considerable amount of personal courage. Many in the South disagreed with his actions, but none questioned his integrity. In any case, he apparently did not go so far as to take up arms against his own Southern people, but appears to have remained a civilian in Ohio. As time passed after the war, former friends in Henry County may have softened in their opinions of him, for when he made a brief visit to Oak Lawn in 1886, a number of neighborhood gentlemen who were prominent Confederate veterans called to see him. He and Mrs. Atkins were lifelong and ardent members of the Disciples of Christ Church, and knowledge of this fact may have contributed to his later acceptance by old friends.

Dr. Thomas Washington Atkins was the seventh child of Joseph and Margaret (Adams) Atkins.

The eighth child of Joseph and Margaret Atkins was Elizabeth Margaret Atkins (born 1838), who married as his second wife, in 1857, William Thomas Griffin (1827-1901), son of The Reverend William and Mary Booker (Barnett) Griffin who were early and
prosperous settlers in Henry County from Clarke and Greene Counties, Georgia. The William Griffin plantation was located some two miles northwest of Oak Lawn in the direction of Bear Creek Station. Mr. Griffin was for many years a local minister in the Methodist church, although he is not to be confused with The Reverend Smith H. Griffin, a later Methodist minister who in 1863 bought the former John Jackson plantation joining the Robert M. Walker farm on Towaliga Creek. The Reverend William Griffin and The Reverend Smith H. Griffin belonged to two entirely different Griffin families.

In 1860 William T. and Elizabeth (Atkins) Griffin were living near Albany, Georgia, probably induced to settle there by his sister Almeda Melvina Griffin who was the wife of Perry Cocke of Lee County, Georgia, but by 1863 the Griffins had returned to Henry County near Bear Creek Station. Two letters from William T. and Elizabeth Griffin appear in the Atkins collection.

The ninth and tenth Atkins children were Mary Mahaleath Atkins (1840-1915), who never married, making her permanent home at Oak Lawn, and Martha Atkins (1842-1909), who married in 1860 Nehemiah G. Andrews, the "Nim" of the letters. He was a brother of Thomas Colquitt Andrews who had married Sarah Atkins, as previously noted. Nehemiah Andrews enlisted for Confederate service on 17 March 1862 in the Freeman Volunteers, Company E, 44th Georgia Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia, and on arriving at the front he was thrust
almost immediately into the Seven Days Battles around Richmond. He was mortally wounded in the Battle of Malvern Hill on 1 July 1862. Martha (Atkins) Andrews later married as her second husband, in 1865, her first cousin James Lewis Adams (1843-1887), himself a veteran of the 7th and 53rd Georgia Regiments, serving in the latter with Tom Atkins and Tom Andrews in the Doyal Volunteers.

In 1860, and evidently until 1862, Nim and Martha Andrews lived at the home of his older brother, the Reverend Henry Garnett Andrews, whose wife was the former Malissa Weems, daughter of Samuel Weems, a planter near Oak Lawn. Nim Andrews was engaged in a building-construction project at the Garnett Andrews home, which stood until about 1990 several miles northeast of Hampton (Bear Creek Station) near the Mt. Carmel Church community of Henry County. This Andrews place was a 1-1/2 story vernacular cottage-style house of a type popular during the 1840s and 1850s. When Nim Andrews left for the war in Virginia in the spring of 1862, Martha (Atkins) Andrews returned to Oak Lawn to live.

The eleventh and twelfth children of Joseph and Margaret (Adams) Atkins were Frances Atkins (1845-1921), two of whose letters appear in this collection, and Phoebe Cornelia Atkins (born 1850), who was a student at the Bear Creek Academy during the war years. She was married in 1872 to A. C. Baird and later lived in Oklahoma. Frances Atkins never married and remained at Oak Lawn, as did her sister Mary Mahaleath Atkins. These two ladies were the
Fannie and Mary of James Lewis Adams' 1886 Oak Lawn diary.

The Joseph Atkins household at Oak Lawn, when the census of 1860 was enumerated, consisted of himself, age 55, his wife Margaret, age 54, and their children Mary (age 19), Martha (age 17), Frances (age 14) and Cornelia (age 9). Thus the plantation population at that moment in time totaled to six whites and twenty-eight blacks.
ADAMS' MILLS

THE FIRST ADAMS of whom there is present knowledge in this line was Francis Adams of Abbeville District, South Carolina. It appears possible that he moved in advanced age to Henry County for a Francis Adams, Revolutionary veteran, is found on record there between 1831 and 1837, with land in the vicinity of the Adams and Atkins families. Francis Adams' son David Adams (1759-1833) was married in South Carolina to Phoebe Yeldell (c. 1762-1835), and they accompanied their son and daughter, John Adams and Margaret (Adams) Atkins, to Henry County in 1826. It was through the Yeldells that the Adams and Atkins families were first related, Joseph Atkins' grandmother, Mrs. Francis Atkins, having been the former Jane Yeldell of South Carolina. The Weems family of Henry County also had close Yeldell ties prior to leaving South Carolina.

John Adams, born in Abbeville District, South Carolina, in 1797, and died in Henry County on 21 August 1873, was married about 1816 to Mahaleath Atkins in South Carolina, where she was born in Edgefield District, 10 March 1799. She died in Henry County 8 February 1853, and was buried in the Adams-Atkins graveyard at Oak Lawn, where her husband is also buried, although no monument marks his grave. His parents, David and Phoebe (Yeldell) Adams, are also buried there.
In 1826 John Adams sold to his brother-in-law and cousin Joseph Atkins, Land Lot 230, 3rd District, which he had originally homesteaded with the Atkins. He then settled in Land Lot 240 of the 3rd District in Henry County. With this 202-1/2-acre beginning, John Adams was on an equal land footing with virtually all his neighbors, but he had the advantage of slave ownership which placed him in the fortunate economic minority of Henry County pioneers. The county tax digest for 1831 shows him with a total of 375-3/4 acres of land and fifteen slaves. Thus advantaged, and energetic and ambitious too, John Adams was able over succeeding years to acquire neighboring tracts and expand his agricultural interests to a substantial commercial scale. He added to his holdings throughout the 1830s and subsequent years so that by 1850 he was in possession of 2,800 acres of land, 800 acres of which were cleared for cultivation, and a force of forty slaves, making him one of the largest planters in the county and one of the five largest slaveowners. In 1860 John Adams owned thirty-seven slaves, three fewer than in 1850.

In addition to his planting interests, John Adams had acquired in the 1830s a corn mill built by Bazil Pace on Towaliga Creek, and in 1852 he bought the adjoining mills then known as Keys' Mills on the Towaliga, and earlier called Johnson's Mills for their original builder, Jesse Johnson (1795-1856), himself a wealthy early planter of the county, one of the first sheriffs, a state senator, and best
known today as the great-grandfather of U. S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson. The Johnson and Adams families were connected by the 1842 marriage of Jesse Johnson's daughter, Ava Ann Johnson, to John Adams' son, James Adams, and further by mutual connections to the Barnett, Griffin and allied families of the neighborhood. Jesse Johnson had settled his plantation in 1822, but sold out between 1839 and 1842, when he moved to Randolph County, Alabama. In 1846 he continued west to Caldwell County, Texas. John Adams and his son James acquired most of the Johnson plantation land and John bought the mill interests, consisting initially of a sawmill, to which were added a flour mill, syrup mill and probably a cotton gin, in addition to the nearby corn mill, all powered by the waters of Towaliga Creek and located on the old stagecoach road sometimes called the Macon Road which connected Fayetteville in Fayette County with Jackson in Butts County and continued on to the riverport trade center of Macon. Today it is the Hampton-Locust Grove Road. Owing to the burning of sawdust and other waste timber products, the original sawmill was sometimes called Burnt Mill and gave its name to the old Burnt Mill Road (now Rocky Creek Road) that passed from McDonough to intersect with the stagecoach road at Towaliga Creek. Because of their value to the civilian population as well as to the Confederate army, the mills were destroyed by Union forces in 1864. Some of the granite-stone mill traces and foundation walls still remain.
On the hill overlooking Adams' Mills, as the combined milling operation was known after 1852, was built the two-story dwelling historically known as the John Adams Brick House on Towaliga Creek. Local tradition has asserted that the house was built as payment of a debt owed to John Adams. He bought the brick-house tract in 1836 and a local tradition has been that construction on the house was begun about that time, but for some unknown reason, was halted and not resumed until 1860, soon after which it was halted again because of the outbreak of the War Between the States. The house was not prepared for occupancy until after 1865 when the war was over. In reality, the house was not entirely completed until 1990 when the upstairs rooms were finished and the small, narrow, steep stair built for workmen to carry materials to the second floor was replaced with a conventional staircase. From about 1865 to 1990, the upper floor was used primarily for dry storage.

The style of the Adams house reflects the Greek Revival period, although its hipped roof, perhaps inspired by that at the nearby T. D. Weems plantation, built in 1848, seems a novel feature for the day. The house was built on a standard Classical plan with center hall and four major rooms on each floor. The front doors on both floors opened to a double-tiered portico which was likely planned to be somewhat modest and formal in design. Both doors featured rectangular window lights with slightly-curved wood trim over the doors and windows. The long-ago removal of the original
front portico obscures the builder's intent in terms of its architectural style, although there is no doubt that it was planned in a simple Greek Revival manner. The present portico, with its two large plain columns, was a part of the 1990 renovation of the house by local landowners Mr. and Mrs. Jerry M. Greer.

It appears likely that this house, which can be said to have taken some 157 years to build, was never occupied by the Adams family. John Adams' wife, Mahaleath Atkins, had died during the first hiatus in construction, and by 1860 all but one of the eleven Adams children were established on their own. John Adams' household in that year consisted of himself, age 63, his son Franklin L. Adams, age 20, his bachelor-brother Jesse Adams, age 59, Catherine Johnson, age 70, and her son Wood Johnson, age 28. (The relationship of Mrs. Johnson and her son to John Adams is not established.) In 1850, one son, Thomas A. Adams, a widower with four young children, was living at home with John Adams, but had his own household at other times. Thomas Adams ultimately married three additional wives and had other children, but it is not certain that his family ever lived in the brick house. While John Adams may have intended to occupy the house directly overlooking Adams' Mills, and offering a full view of virtually all milling activities as well as much of the estate's agricultural activities, there was no opportunity for such an intention to be realized, with the mills destroyed in 1864 and the house not habitable until after
1865. Tradition tells that Union soldiers under the command of General Judson Kilpatrick, camping throughout the neighborhood on the night of 16 November 1864, gave a Negro ball in the unfinished rooms of the house.

John Adams probably died before the first-floor rooms of the brick house were finished, which may not have been done until the place was acquired by William Haten Dupree in 1889. This probability is supported by a local recollection. The late Miss Mary Eliza Chappell (1901–1986), a native and lifelong resident of the immediate neighborhood, recalled the traditional John Adams homeplace as a large one-story frame structure with a long front porch, and stated that it was located further along the Hampton-Locust Grove Road at a site which seems to correspond with John Adams' original homestead in Land Lot 240, 3rd District. It was likely in this older house that the Adams family lived throughout their ownership of the large Towaliga Creek plantation. It appears beyond doubt that they were still living in the old house at the time of the Union invasion of 1864. The plantation village, including slave quarters, would therefore have been located at that place rather than at the brick house.

John and Mahaleath (Atkins) Adams reared a family of eleven children who were double first cousins to the Atkins children at Oak Lawn, and cousins again through their mutual Yeldell ancestors. The apparent loss of John Adams' family Bible and other
records and papers, many of which were certainly destroyed during
the Union occupation of Adams' Mills in 1864, combined with the
scattering of younger generations to other parts of the county,
affords nothing more than slight mention of some of these children,
including several who appear in the Atkins letters.

Thomas Atkins Adams, the oldest child, was born in South
Carolina in 1818 and died in Henry County in 1883. He was married
three times, first, in 1837, to Ann Buckley Moseley (1820–1847),
daughter of the Reverend William Moseley (1796–1865) and his wife
Ruth Brooks (1793–1874). Mr. Moseley was one of the noted figures
of antebellum middle Georgia, both as a Baptist preacher and as a
politician who served some years in both houses of the Georgia
legislature. He became one of the original residents of the city
of Griffin in 1841. His wife Ruth (Brooks) Moseley was a daughter
of Revolutionary War veteran Micajah Brooks (1761–1862) and a kins-
woman of several Brooks families who lived in the Cabin and Africa
Districts of Spalding County near Oak Lawn. A son of Thomas Adams
and Ann Moseley was James Lewis Adams of Oak Lawn, whose 1886 diary
forms the second part of this collection.

The second wife of Thomas Adams, whom he married about 1856,
was Mary A. (perhaps sometimes called Betty) Robinson of Fayette
County. His third wife, married by 1870, was Lucinda Caroline
(Griffin) Davis, divorsee of Isaiah Davis and daughter of Smith
Henry Griffin of Oaklea Plantation, and his first wife Martha E.
Shell, who was of Fayette County. (Another Griffin daughter, Marietta E. Griffin, had married Thomas Adams' nephew Thomas J. Adams in 1866.) Children were born to each of these wives.

Sarah (Sally) Adams (1819-1899) married in Henry County in 1834, Thomas Griffin Barnett (1813-1884), son of Nathan and Ava Garnett (Griffin) Barnett of Greene County, Georgia. Ava (Griffin) Barnett moved to Henry County as a widow in 1824 with her children. She was a sister of The Reverend William Griffin who married Mary Booker Barnett, parents of William T. Griffin who married Elizabeth Margaret Atkins of Oak Lawn. Ava (Griffin) Barnett was also a sister of John Griffin who married Mary Booker Barnett's sister Sarah Caroline Barnett. The mother of Ava, William and John Griffin, Mrs. John Griffin, Sr., was the former Mary Andrews, whereby Mrs. Barnett and her Griffin brothers were related to Thomas Colquitt Andrews and his brother Nehemiah G. Andrews, who married respectively Sarah and Martha Atkins of Oak Lawn.

Thomas Griffin Barnett was a prosperous farmer or small planter and became an early merchant in Bear Creek Station. He represented Henry County in the lower house of the Georgia legislature in 1851-52, and served as mayor of Bear Creek and Hampton from its incorporation in 1872 until his death. He is the "Squire Barnett" of the Atkins letters and his son John A. Barnett, cousin to both the Adams and Atkins children, is a participant in the family correspondence. The surviving T. G. Barnett house, a
one-story brick dwelling built soon after the Confederate War, still stands adjacent to old Berea Church in Hampton. The Barnettts had a number of children, John being the oldest son and the only one of age for service in the Confederate army.

The next child of John and Mahaleath Adams was James Adams, who in 1842 married Ava Ann Johnson, daughter of Jesse and Lucy Webb (Barnett) Johnson as previously noted. Lucy (Barnett) Johnson belonged to the complicated connections of the Barnett, Andrews, Griffin and related families of old eastern Georgia and Henry County. James and Ava (Johnson) Adams lived immediately north of the large John Adams plantation and James himself was a large landowner, the 1850 Agricultural Census showing him with a total of 2,300 acres of land, with 200 acres in cultivation.

Jonathan Adams, the next child, was known as Dr. John W. Adams. He was born c. 1828 and died in Confederate service either late in 1862 or early in 1863. The last word of him was a letter written from Camp McIntosh at Goldsboro, North Carolina, dated 26 April 1862, when he was evidently in the process of organizing a new company for Confederate service. His military record has not been located. His first wife was Nancy, her maiden name at present unknown, and they had a daughter Rowella and an infant son. By late-1862 Nancy and Rowella were dead and Dr. Adams was preparing to marry Marcella Holmes of Griffin. His death occurred several months after this marriage.
Robert A. Adams (c.1828–1886), the next child, served as captain of Company B, 2nd Georgia Reserves, and was on guard duty at Andersonville Prison, although ill health caused him to be at home in Henry County during much of that year, with his company at Andersonville under the command of his cousin-in-law Lt. Robert M. Walker. Eliza Walker's emotional opinion that Captain Robert Adams was evading his duty at Andersonville and thereby placing undue burden on her husband seems unfounded in view of the fact that Robert Adams is known to have been sick and bedridden at home in Henry County in July, 1864. He was evidently married, but his wife is not identified and there were no children.

Jane Adams, the second daughter of John and Mahaleath Adams, was married in 1842 to William Warren Jackson, son of John and Mary (Harwell) Jackson who were early settlers in Henry County from Hancock and Jasper Counties, Georgia. John Jackson appears in the Atkins correspondence. He had come originally with various relatives from Brunswick County, Virginia, and was a successful planter on Tawaliga Creek above Adams' Mills. At the time of the Atkins letters he was living in retirement with his son William Warren Jackson, to whom had been given the bulk of the 950-acre John Jackson plantation. This estate in late-1863 became the property of Smith H. Griffin and was later known as Oaklea Plantation. John Jackson died in 1863 while on a visit at the plantation of his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Lemuel A. Ragland, southwest
of McDonough. The Atkins letters reveal that in 1863, William Warren Jackson moved to Griffin, where he had bought a commercial warehouse, but in 1864 he took his family to Athens, Alabama, to escape the approach of the invading Union army in Georgia. They later lived at Pine Apple, Wilcox County, Alabama. Edmund W. Jackson, another son of John Jackson, also lived on the Towaliga on a farm of 250 acres, and was the “Mr. Jackson” mentioned in the 1864 correspondence of Eliza Walker as preparing to drive livestock to Jasper County to prevent its seizeure by the Union army.

Dr. David Adams (1830-1908), the next son, moved with his wife Martha Elizabeth Blankenship to Wilcox County, Alabama, where they lived near the town of Pine Apple by the time of the war. He was both a physician and a minister in the Disciples of Christ Church.

Joseph Warren Adams (c.1832-1864), the next child, married in 1853 Nancy Ann (Bernhard) Rawls, widow of Joseph Rawls and daughter of Jacob and Esther (Lites) Bernhard, whose plantation neighbored the Atkins' Oak Lawn on the west. Joseph Warren Adams was the "Capt. Adams" and subsequently the "Major Adams" of the Atkins letters. He entered Confederate service as captain of the Freeman Volunteers, Company E, 44th Georgia Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia. He was promoted to major 28 June 1862, and died of smallpox in Virginia, 4 March 1863. The Rawls (Rahls/Ralls/Rawls) and Lites were German Lutherans who had come to Piedmont South Carolina in the mid-1700s and their colony was joined there by the
Bernhards. These families were closely connected with Mt. Pilgrim Lutheran Church at Haralson in Coweta County, the first Lutheran church organized north of Macon in Georgia.

A daughter, Margaret Adams, was the next child of John and Mahaleath Adams. She evidently died in childhood as no mention is made of her in family records other than the fact of her birth.

Franklin L. Adams (c.1839-1862), the next son, was the "Frank" of the letters. He served in the Doyal Volunteers, Company A, 53rd Georgia Regiment, under Captain Thomas Atkins, and died of disease in camps near Richmond, Virginia, 26 August 1862. Thomas G. Barnett, his brother-in-law and partner in the Bear Creek business house of Barnett & Adams, went to Virginia and brought his body home for burial. This was the first interment in Berea Church Cemetery at Bear Creek Station. Franklin L. Adams married Edna J. Fears (1844-1923), daughter of the Reverend William Sadler Fears, a wealthy farmer of the neighborhood, and they had one child, the "Professor Frank L. Adams" of James Lewis Adams' 1886 diary, who was born after his father's death in Virginia. "Professor Adams," known in the family as "Sonny Adams," was a school teacher and a minister in the Disciples of Christ Church. He died many years later in Fulton County, Georgia. Edna (Fears) Adams married as her second husband James M. King, a veteran of Company I, 3rd Georgia Reserves, and their home was immediately southeast of Hampton and is still owned by their descendants.
William J. Adams (c.1843-1864), the last child of John and Mahaleath (Atkins) Adams, served as 4th sergeant and as quartermaster sergeant in the Weems Guards, Company A, 44th Georgia Regiment, and died in Jackson Hospital, Richmond, Virginia, 4 June 1864, after being wounded in the knee. He was not married.
PLANTATIONS AND CROPS

The key to the development of any region dominated by an agrarian economy is the nature of the climate and the fertility of the soil. Henry County's climate was and is fairly typical of that throughout the Deep-South Piedmont. The growing season is usually fairly long with the last spring frost seldom occurring after mid-April and the first frost of autumn coming usually in late October or perhaps even in November. Less kind is the rainfall. Periods of drought are commonplace during the summer months and at times these droughts can be long and damaging. By contrast, extended rainy seasons also occur from time to time during the growing period for crops, and continuous rains can be as harmful as extended droughts. The region experiences winter cold and its summer heat can be intense and made unpleasant by extreme humidity which often creates an oppressive atmosphere ill suited to many persons of British stock. It is a climate in which ruinous insects thrive, although those of imported varieties were less prevalent in antebellum times than now.

As for the soil, Henry County is again typical of the Piedmont Deep South. In most places it is neither highly productive nor abysmally poor, but is what antebellum Southerners defined as oak and hickory land, moderate in fertility and much of it rated in tax
digests as second and third quality land, which was neither as good as first quality nor as poor as pineland. The Reverend George White in his 1849 Statistics of the State of Georgia wrote of Henry County:

The face of the country is uneven. The bottom lands are fertile, commanding $15 per acre, and are well adapted to cotton and corn. The mulatto or hickory lands are productive, and sell for $10 per acre. Common gray lands are worth from $5 to $6 per acre. Ridge lands from $1 to $2 per acre. Average Product per acre: Cotton averages 500 pounds per acre, Corn averages 4 barrels per acre, Wheat averages 12 barrels per acre.

The yields quoted by White reflect the period just before commercial fertilizers were introduced into Henry County. Their advent, along with crop rotation, contour plowing and the terracing of hillside fields, came quickly to some and slowly to others, but where applied they improved productivity. The Henry County Agricultural Society was formed by 1849 to promote agriculture and industry and in the fall of that year the organization sponsored an agricultural fair which drew as much interest among the ladies for domestic arts and crafts as among the gentlemen for livestock and crop raising. One planter produced 96 bushels of corn on a single acre of ground. The Agricultural Society encouraged improved and scientific methods of farming.
In Henry County, red-clay hills normally border the water-courses except where swamps and extensive bottomlands prevail, while away from the streams the land is gently rolling and ranges from red to gray soils. Almost any farm in the county was capable of providing a decent livelihood and in all quarters of the county there were at least a few plantations of relatively large scale that provided wealth to their owners; but a distinct plantation district in Henry County lay in a belt roughly extending from Lovejoy's Station (now the town of Lovejoy) on the Clayton County line southward to Bear Creek Station (now Hampton), and from there southeasterly along Towaliga Creek through Lowe's District to the present town of Locust Grove.

In this belt in 1860 were located at least seventeen of Henry County's fifty-six plantations meeting the historian's strict definition whereby to be called a plantation (as opposed to a farm) a property must have contained at least 500 acres of land with at least 250 acres under cultivation, and a total of at least twenty slaves of all ages. Among these planters were Parker Eason, Andrew M. Brown, Thomas S. Crawford, Thomas J. Edwards, Samuel P. Campbell, John Adams, Jacob Bernhard, Joseph Atkins, Samuel R. Weems, Thomas D. Weems, Timothy T. Barham, John H. Lowe, E. L. Gresham and Andrew W. Walker. Others lay in the same immediate locale, but were across the line in Spalding County. A few antebellum planters, such as John Walker of Indian Creek, Jonathan
McKay and Samuel Weems (the elder), were deceased before 1860. John Dorsey on Shoal Creek near Lovejoy's Station had large landholdings, but had reduced his slave force by 1860. Some of his slaves were evidently assigned to his sons as he advanced in age.

The two largest individual slaveholders in Henry County in 1860 were Thomas Dickson Weems with sixty, and John Harvey Lowe with sixty-five. The Weems and Lowe plantations lay in Lowe's District near Oak Lawn. T. D. Weems had 800 acres of land in cultivation and 3,000 acres unimproved, making a total of 3,800 acres of land. John H. Lowe had 700 acres in cultivation and 600 acres unimproved, for a total of 1,300 acres. Parker Eason, a large planter on the Towaliga, had forty-eight slaves of his own and held an additional thirty-seven slaves as guardian for minor children, making a total of eighty-five slaves on his plantation in 1860.

A considerable number of lesser properties which may be classed as small plantations or large farms, all usually worked by slave labor, were centered in the Oak Lawn locale. In 1860 Henry County numbered 224 individuals who owned between five and nineteen slaves, including persons who lived in McDonough, the county's only town. Based on the number of owners in this category, country properties containing perhaps on the average between 250 and 500 acres of land, with perhaps 150 to 250 acres in cultivation, constituted the average Henry County plantation. This generality
varied, however, in all directions and categories. The Reverend William Saddler Fears' land joined Adams' Mills. He had twelve slaves of all ages in 1860, 400 acres of land in cultivation and 257 acres unimproved, making a total of 657 acres. His slave force would appear to have been small for this comparatively large scale of farming, but it was nearly duplicated by his neighbor James Adams, son of John Adams of Adams' Mills, who had 455 acres in cultivation, 505 acres unimproved, making a total of 960 acres, and fourteen slaves. Far more typical of men in this small-planter or prosperous-farmer category was John Adams' son Thomas A. Adams, who in 1860 had 150 acres under cultivation, 200 acres unimproved, making a total of 350 acres, and a force of eleven slaves.

These large farms or small plantations, according to the Agricultural Censuses of 1850 and 1860, produced much the same crops and contained the same livestock, though usually in lesser quantity and numbers, as the larger plantations, and such properties produced marketable cotton sufficient to rank them as small commercial enterprises, placing them above the level of mere subsistence farming. They were plantations on a small scale and their owners called them plantations, as did, for example, Thomas Colquitt Andrews in referring to his Spalding County farm of 338 acres, on which he had five slaves and for which he employed an overseer in 1860 and 1861.

Approximately one-half of Henry County's farmers (557
individuals including the large planters) owned at least one slave, which is also to say that approximately one-half of the farmers owned no slaves at all. Taking all occupations into account, the majority of white Henry Countians owned no slaves. In the South as a whole only about one-fourth of the white population owned one or more slaves in 1860, but this figure included the mountain and wiregrass regions in which few if any slaves were found and where farming operations were usually conducted on a meagre scale.

Occasionally supplanting slave labor on some farms and augmenting it on plantations of all sizes were those white males who identified themselves in the censuses as farm laborers, a term used to designate persons working on other than their own lands. A number of such men were found in Henry County, although as a group they did not form a significant percentage of the agrarian population and some of them were sons or nephews of the men on whose farms and plantations they labored. It would appear that tenant farming existed to some small degree in the antebellum South, although historians have given it little attention until the post-war era when conditions made it the prevalent system, along with sharecropping.

The produce and livestock found at Oak Lawn and Adams' Mills in 1860 were fairly typical of the larger plantations of Henry County at that time. The Agricultural Census of 1860 was enumerated at Oak Lawn on 2–3 July of that year. It has previously
been noted that in 1860 the plantation consisted of 440 acres of improved land and 640 acres of unimproved land, making a total of 1,080 acres, and that the estate contained a total of twenty-eight slaves of all ages. The real estate was valued at $8,694, or $8.05 per acre, which was likely a conservative figure compared with George White’s average per-acre Henry County valuations in 1849. Farming implements on the premises were valued at $275. This might seem a small figure, but most field work was performed with the use of hoes, human hands and scythes, and hence more of it was done by hand than with the use of mules or oxen drawing heavy implements.

Livestock enumerated at Oak Lawn in 1860 consisted of 2 horses (one or two others belonging to the plantation were in the possession of absent sons), 7 mules, 11 milch cows, 2 work oxen, 19 other cattle, 15 sheep, and 115 swine, for a total value of $1,850. On hand were 160 bushels of wheat, 2 bushels of rye, 200 bushels of Indian corn, 800 bushels of oats, 50 bales of ginned cotton at 400 pounds per bale, 30 pounds of wool, 50 bushels of peas and beans, 200 bushels of sweet potatoes, and 400 pounds of butter. Home manufactures were valued at $50 and there was $400 worth of animals slaughtered (in the smokehouse or otherwise stored). No orchard products were listed at Oak Lawn in 1860, but Joseph Atkins’ wartime letters reveal that apples and peaches were grown on the plantation, and James Lewis Adams’ diary refers to pears in 1886.

These 1860 Agricultural Census figures referred only to
products of the plantation and did not include other provisions acquired by purchase. The stated quantities of grains and other produce on hand reflected only those items in storage, not the total of a year's yield. The 160 bushels of wheat, for example, were what remained of the winter crop for 1859-60. Likewise the 50 bales of ginned cotton were what remained of the 1859 crop, the 1860 crop being yet in the field. Planters kept bales of ginned cotton on hand in a time when cotton in storage was the same as money in the bank. It could be sold as money was needed and otherwise could be held on speculation for higher market prices. The census enumeration did not include unginned cotton or seed cotton.

Domestic fowl, dogs and cats were not enumerated in the census. The 1864 tax digest for Henry County numbered dogs kept for herding sheep. Hunting dogs, usually common hounds, lounged about almost every yard. Large numbers of chickens were virtually always found in the fowl yards of farms and plantations as well as in town and village. Estate-sale inventories of the period reveal that turkeys and geese were often kept. All such fowl provided eggs and flesh for the table as well as down for the stuffing of feather beds. Peafowl were sometimes kept for use as "watchdogs" as well as for the beauty and ornament of their plumage.

Adams' Mills, with 800 acres of improved land and 2,000 acres unimproved, and an 1860 labor force of thirty-seven slaves, was a
larger agrarian operation than Oak Lawn. There was more livestock at Adams' Mills than at Oak Lawn. (No information in the Census reflects the operations of the mills themselves.) The Agricultural Census enumerated at Adams' Mills on 11 and 12 July 1860 gave the real estate value at $16,000, or $5.71 per acre, and farming implements valued at $250. The following livestock were listed: 12 horses, 6 mules, 11 milch cows, 6 working oxen, 40 other cattle, 3 sheep (which may be an erroneous figure since 30 were counted in 1850), and 140 swine, for a total value of $2,500. There were on hand 137 bushels of wheat, 5,000 bushels of Indian corn, 37 bushels of oats, 65 bales of ginned cotton at 400 pounds per bale, 100 bushels of peas and beans, 40 bushels of Irish potatoes, 400 bushels of sweet potatoes, $50 worth of orchard products, 500 pounds of butter, 2 pounds of beeswax, 18 pounds of honey, $300 worth of home manufactures and $732 worth of animals slaughtered (in the smokehouse or otherwise stored). As at Oak Lawn, the amounts of these products on hand do not reveal the total raised on the plantation in a given year. The 1860 cotton crop would not begin harvest before August and would continue perhaps into October or November, depending on the year's weather, and the same would be true for other products not yet harvested in the 1860 crop year.

Orchard products in Henry County, of which John Adams had $50 worth in July of 1860, and these undoubtedly peaches of the current harvest, usually consisted of peach, apple and pear trees and
perhaps one or two improved varieties of grapes, although the wild scuppernong and muscadine were habitually gathered in season and were often cultivated in kitchen gardens and orchards. Peaches were ordinarily dried for future use, apples were dried or stored, and some of each respectively were converted into brandy and cider, just as improved grapes and native scuppernongs, muscadines and elderberries were used in making wines.

Other crops were grown on a scale too small for census enumeration. Sugar and sorghum cane for syrup were grown in Henry County bottomlands and some farmers and planters raised small amounts of tobacco. Watermelons were commonly grown for home consumption. Whether upland rice was ever attempted is not known, but it seems unlikely since the plant was not suited to the area and Henry Countians evidently preferred sweet potatoes and Irish potatoes to rice. The census made no mention of kitchen-garden produce, but this was grown in ample variety for home use. Turnips, cabbages, lettuces, various peas and beans, radishes, carrots, okra, tomatoes --- virtually all the usual vegetables grown in Piedmont kitchen gardens today, along with a variety of herbs, were common in 1860. On larger farms and plantations the slaves usually cultivated their own separate gardens, but on the smaller establishments a single large garden was usual where whites and blacks shared essentially the same table fare.
TOWNS, VILLAGES AND SETTLEMENTS

Griffin, some eight miles southwest of Oak Lawn, was founded in 1840 by General Lewis Lawrence Griffin, an early promoter of Georgia railroads, and named for him. The city received its corporate charter in 1843. With an 1860 population of 2,855 persons, Griffin was considered one of the manufacturing towns of Georgia. The city was laid out on the original Monroe Railroad, later renamed the Macon & Western, later still the Central of Georgia and now the Southern Railway, and linked the new city of Atlanta and points north with Macon and Savannah to the south. Much of antebellum Georgia's rich cotton trade passed along this rail line on which Griffin was an important trade center from the day of its founding.

Griffin absorbed an older country place called Pleasant Grove, which had been made a post office in 1826. One of the early postmasters of Pleasant Grove, and earlier a successful merchant in McDonough before his removal to Pleasant Grove and Griffin, was Samuel Johnson, brother of Jesse Johnson of Johnson's Mills, later Adams' Mills, in Henry County. Another early Griffin citizen was Thomas D. Johnson, guardian of the brothers Thomas and Nehemiah Andrews and no relation to Samuel Johnson. T. D. Johnson, too, was a leading McDonough merchant who moved to Griffin in 1845. A
number of Henry County families were conspicuous in the early
development of Griffin and the city's immediate growth and
prosperity, resulting from its railroad status, caused McDonough,
seat of Henry County, and other older towns of the region to
decline as they lost both valuable citizens and lucrative trade to
the newer place. Griffin became the seat of Spalding County in
1851 when the county was created out of Henry, Pike and Fayette
Counties.

By 1860 the city boasted four small colleges; the Griffin
Female College (Methodist), the Synodical Female College
(Presbyterian), Marshall College (Baptist male) and the Griffin
Medical College founded by Dr. Edward F. Knott, formerly of
McDonough. The first three institutions in 1860 had enrollments of
100 to 130 students each and their trustees included several large
planters of Henry County, revealing the degree to which Griffin
institutions were supported by men who lived in the neighborhood
surrounding Oak Lawn. William Markham of McDonough, later a
leading business and financial figure in Atlanta, was an original
trustee of the Synodical College. Original trustees of Marshall
College included Parker Eason, Andrew W. Walker and Hendley Varner,
all leading Henry County planters. Parker Eason was also a trustee
of the Female College and trustees of the Medical College included
former McDonough citizens Colonel Leonard T. Doyal and Colonel
Erasmus W. Beck. Dr. John Lamar Moore, an incorporator of the
Medical College along with Dr. Knott and others, was a son of Colonel Andrew R. Moore, an early attorney in McDonough, where he had married in 1832 Miss Emily L. Lamar, and in the 1840s moved to Griffin. Dr. Knott of the Medical College appears in the Atkins letters, and Professor A. B. Niles of the Female College was the father of Lewis O. Niles who was among the Atkins' correspondents, and of George R. Niles, who married Miss Alice E. Andrews, cousin of Tom and Nim Andrews who married the Atkins sisters, Sarah and Martha.

Griffin contained five churches in 1860; Methodist, Missionary Baptist, Presbyterian, Christian (Disciples of Christ) and Primitive Baptist. There was an Episcopal congregation in the city, but it had no sanctuary until after the War Between the States. The Christian Church was organized in 1849 largely under the direction of The Reverend Augustus Browder Fears, half-brother of The Reverend William Sadler Fears of Henry County. Mrs. A. B. Fears was the former Mary A. Griffin, daughter of The Reverend William and Mary Booker (Barnett) Griffin who were Oak Lawn neighbors and whose son William T. Griffin married Elizabeth Atkins of Oak Lawn. The Primitive Baptist Church, dating from the early 1840s, was largely the work of the Reverend William Moseley, formerly minister of Padanaram Baptist Church which became Lebanon Primitive Baptist Church at Bear Creek Station. Mr. Moseley was the father of Ann Buckley Moseley who married Thomas Adams, son of
John and Mahaleath (Atkins) Adams of Adams' Mills. He had settled in Griffin in 1841 and was among the first residents of the new city. He represented Spalding County at different times in both houses of the Georgia legislature from 1853 to 1863, and had previously been a representative from Henry County. His son Dr. William R. Moseley and son-in-law Dr. Daniel Puckett Davis were early Griffin physicians. The Atkins and Adams families therefore had close ties with Griffin's religious and political life as well as with its medical, legal and business professions.

Griffin in the 1850s published two newspapers, The American Union, later called The Independent South under the ownership of Augustus Peter Burr of Macon, where he also owned and edited The Macon Telegraph, and The Georgia Jeffersonian. Mr. Burr, whose family came to Georgia from Hartford, Connecticut, was a near kinsman of Aaron Burr, United States vice president under Thomas Jefferson.

Shops and stores of virtually all kinds were available in the city. Cotton factors such as Captain James H. Low of Savannah, with business offices in Savannah and New Orleans, had located in Griffin, and large quantities of cotton were shipped from the city's railroad warehouses. A wealthy and cultivated class of merchants and professional men had located in the city from its founding and Griffin had quickly become a social as well as a business, manufacturing, shipping and educational center for much
of middle Georgia, including all of Spalding County and large portions of the surrounding counties of Henry, Clayton, Fayette, Coweta, Meriwether, Pike, Lamar and Butts. Spalding County itself, while boasting a healthy climate and good water and while lying in the Piedmont Georgia plantation belt, was not considered a particularly rich agricultural county because of the indifferent quality of much of its soil, but Griffin profitted from wealthy plantation districts which lay in several sections of Spalding County and in the Towaliga River Basin of the Atkins' Henry County neighborhood. Joseph Atkins of Oak Lawn conducted business with the Savings Bank of Griffin, founded in 1857, and with various merchants, and his son James M. Atkins had begun the practice of law there in 1859.

Bear Creek Station (Hampton), named for the stream Bear Creek which flowed through the original settlement, figures conspicuously in the Atkins' correspondence and lay some six miles northwest of Oak Lawn. The place began as a scattered farm settlement around the country store of Middleton Nall. It was made a polling place for Henry County in 1830 and gained a post office in 1836. This office was discontinued from 1842 to 1852, but was then reinstated. The Reverend William Moseley, having bought Mr. Nall's farm and store house, was Postmaster from 1837 through 1841.

When regular rail service was opened on the Macon & Western Railroad in 1846, the original Bear Creek settlement shifted east
to the railroad and began to develop as a village and town at Hampton's present location. In 1860 it contained a post office, a small railway station, no doubt with wood shed and water tank as well as a telegraph office and perhaps a cotton warehouse; a small carriage factory including a blacksmith, mechanic and carpentry shop, all owned by Richard A. Henderson; and an assortment of private dwellings. Several prosperous business houses flourished there, among them that of Joseph Atkins' nephew-by-marriage Thomas Griffin Barnett, Esq., who with several of his children appear in the Atkins letters. By 1859 Squire Barnett was operating with his young brother-in-law Franklin L. Adams under the firm name of Barnett & Adams.

Caswell M. Black was one of the first merchants in the village and in 1852 was licensed with J. R. Black to sell spiritous liquors. In 1853 C. M. Black was in partnership with John G. Derrick and in 1854 formed a partnership with Simeon C. Hightower in the firm of Hightower & Black, which was one of the leading business houses, occupying a two-story building on the railroad. Other merchants in the 1850s were Dr. James Madison Couch, in partnership with his brother Berry Couch, both of whom moved to Griffin to expand their interests, Asa Lowery and Benjamin L. Roan. Several of these merchants had licenses to sell spiritous liquors in that time in which spirits were a usual adjunct to grocery or general merchandise stores.
Early institutions of Bear Creek Station included the Pine Grove Masonic Lodge, organized in 1853, whose meeting hall was on the second floor of the store house of Hightower & Black; the Bear Creek Academy, organized in 1854 as Oak Grove Academy; and Berea Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), organized in 1854 by The Reverend Augustus Browder Fears of Griffin and his half-brother The Reverend William Sadler Fears, along with the Atkins, Adams, Barnett, Johnson and several allied families of the locality. Lebanon Primitive Baptist Church, constituted in 1824 as Padanaram (Missionary) Baptist Church and reorganized by the Reverend William Moseley into the Tawaliga Primitive Baptist Association in 1836, also stood in the village, although it was located there long before a village existed. Mt. Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church and Academy stood west of Bear Creek Station and its cemetery served the village until a new cemetery was begun at Berea Church during the Confederate War. Several other Methodist Episcopal and Missionary Baptist churches were scattered in the outlying countryside. There were no Presbyterian or Episcopal congregations in the community, nor are there known to have been any individual local families of those denominations, but if there were, Griffin contained the nearest Presbyterian Church and an Episcopal congregation whose church building was not completed until 1871. A few Lutheran families, primarily the Bernhards and Rawls, briefly formed a small church, St. John's, southeast of Bear Creek Station,
but their primary affiliation was with the Mt. Pilgrim Lutheran Church at Haralson in Coweta County. The Bear Creek community was therefore dominated by the Methodist Episcopal, Missionary Baptist, Primitive Baptist and Christian (Disciples of Christ) churches.

Three physicians practiced medicine at Bear Creek Station in 1860; Dr. Andrew G. Couch, his partner in practice Dr. William H. Peebles, and Dr. James C. Turnipseed. They were part of a distinct coterie of ten medical doctors associated with lower Henry County and Griffin and involving the Atkins, Adams and related families. The first of these physicians was Dr. Nathan Barnett Johnson, son of Jesse and Lucy (Barnett) Johnson of later Adams' Mills on Towaliga Creek. Dr. Johnson graduated in 1843 from the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta and located in Griffin. Dr. James Madison Couch of Coweta County settled at Bear Creek Station by 1849 and practiced medicine there until 1855, when he too moved to Griffin and evidently gave lectures in Dr. Edward P. Knott's Griffin Medical College. His younger brother, Dr. Andrew George Couch, began a medical practice in Bear Creek Station by 1853. A third brother was Dr. William Bartley Couch who settled in 1858 in the Mt. Zion District of Spalding County. In 1862 their sister Martha G. Couch married the young widower John W. Adams, son of Thomas and Ann (Moseley) Adams and grandson of John and Mahaleath (Atkins) Adams of Adams' Mills and of the Reverend William and Ruth (Brooks) Moseley.

[Signature]

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Dr. William Hubbard Peebles formed a joint practice with Dr. A. G. Couch in Bear Creek Station in 1860. He was a grandson of the Reverend William Moseley and was thus a nephew of Ann Moseley who had married Thomas A. Adams, and also a nephew of Dr. William R. Moseley and of Dr. Daniel Puckett Davis, both of Griffin. Dr. John W. Adams of Double Cabins was, of course, a brother of Thomas A. Adams and cousin of Dr. Thomas Washington Atkins of Oak Lawn. Dr. James C. Turnipseed began his practice near Bear Creek Station by 1860 and later located in the town. Dr. A. G. Couch was killed in Confederate service in 1864 and Dr. Turnipseed married his widow, the former Catherine E. Little, daughter of Zabud and Dorothy (Wellborn) Little, whose plantation lay southwest of Bear Creek Station on lower Bear Creek and the Spalding County line.

Intricate ties of blood, marriage and close association (most or all were graduates of the Medical College of Georgia and several took advanced studies in Philadelphia) therefore existed among these ten physicians of antebellum Bear Creek Station, Double Cabins and Griffin.

Double Cabins, where Dr. Thomas Washington Atkins studied under his cousin Dr. John W. Adams, with whom he had a joint medical practice, was located in Spalding County some three miles south of Oak Lawn. It was more a country place than a village. Adiel Sherwood, in his 1860 Gazetteer of Georgia, gave this description: "Double Cabins 6 miles E. [of Griffin], contains 3 or
4 houses. York is a post office N.W. Less cotton comes to this place since railroads are become convenient to regions that used to send here; 30,000 bags of last crop sold here."

That Double Cabins had formerly enjoyed more prominence is suggested by Sherwood's statement. The place pre-dated the city of Griffin. No doubt the most conspicuous building at Double Cabins in 1860, as now, was the imposing square-columned plantation home of Shateen Coker Mitchell, whose cotton gins stood nearby. Across the road from the Mitchell-Walker-Hollberg house, as it is now known, stood the Double Cabins Tavern, which is said to have given its name to the place and ultimately to the Cabin Militia District of Spalding County. A post office was created there in 1837, but by 1860 had given way to nearby York Post Office as noted by Sherwood. Several prosperous farms and plantations surrounded Double Cabins, among them those of Joseph P. Manley, whose family figures into the Atkins correspondence. Other neighborhood farmers and planters included John Lewis Moore, Solomon Strickland, Jr., Leroy Strickland, Garry Grice, Thomas Brooks, Richard James Manley, Andrew W. Walker and Parker Eason.

McDonough, some ten miles northeast of Oak Lawn, was laid out and incorporated as the seat of Henry County in 1823. It was briefly called Henry Court House and then Henrysville, but was soon renamed to honor Commodore Thomas McDonough, American hero of the Battle of Lake Champlain in the War of 1812. The town early drew a
group of cultivated merchant families from older parts of Georgia and several substantial Classic-Revival houses were built in McDonough in the 1820s and 1830s. Among them was the home of Colonel William Harden, first Clerk of the Henry County Superior Court in 1822, who had befriended the Cherokee Indians of north Georgia during the War of 1812 and in subsequent years frequently treated with the Cherokees in various federal government matters. Two sons of Cherokee Chief John Rodgers (ancestor of American humorist Will Rodgers) stayed at the Harden home in McDonough in order to attend the Henry County Academy. In 1831 Colonel Harden was appointed Enrolling Agent for the United States Government under President Andrew Jackson, and in order to meet his duties he moved to the Cherokee capital of New Echota in present Murray County, Georgia.

Two years after the Adams and Atkins families arrived in Henry County, The Reverend Adiel Sherwood wrote in his 1828 Gazetteer of Georgia that McDonough had, in February of that year, "46 houses, 8 stores, 7 mechanic shops, 4 doctor shops, 3 law offices, Academy, houses for worship for the Baptists and Methodists, C.H. [court house], and Jail. The C.H. cost $8,500.00. The Academy is a two-story brick building and cost $2,000, and is in a flourishing condition." During this time McDonough was on one of the relay routes of the New York to New Orleans stagecoach line which passed from Augusta to Alabama by way of Greensboro, Madison and Covington
to McDonough, and on to Pleasant Grove (Griffin) and to Greenville in Meriwether County. This route ran a short distance east of Oak Lawn. Other stage lines connected McDonough with Fayetteville, Decatur and Macon, and at least two lines, that from Fayetteville to Decatur and from Fayetteville to Jackson and Macon, passed through the rural county, the latter running through the original Bear Creek settlement and by Adams' Mills, passing north of Oak Lawn where it intersected the New Orleans line at the John H. Lowe plantation, the present intersection of State Highway 155 and Hampton-Locust Grove Road just north of the village of Luella.

In the 1829 and 1837 editions of his Gazetteer, Mr. Sherwood wrote: "McDonough is a healthy spot, and several respectable and wealthy inhabitants from the lower sections of the state make it a summer, and others a permanent residence. The society, though not so refined as in some older places, is quite a desirable one on account of its religious cast, and disuse of that [alcoholic spirits] which would render even paradise a place of discontent and wretchedness. McDonough is somewhat enlarged [in 1837], the Presbyterians have erected a house of worship, and the inhabitants a female Academy, with rooms for a family. For some years a small paper, the Jacksonian, by Mr. [Samuel] Minor, was issued at this place. He avers that his paper first nominated Gen. Andrew Jackson for President." Mr. Minor moved his newspaper to Fayetteville, keeping the same name and the same claim to distinction, and he
also turned up in other Piedmont Georgia towns as the first newspaperman. Between the 1830s and 1871, Henry County had no local newspaper, but county residents depended first on the newspapers of Milledgeville, the capital city of Georgia, and after its founding, those of Griffin.

The Reverend George White, in his *Statistics of the State of Georgia*, noted of McDonough in 1849: "The public buildings are a brick court house, jail, three churches, and one academy. The town declined in business when Griffin was first settled, although it now begins to revive. The amount of goods sold in a year is over $50,000. Population 500. Great efforts are making to put a stop to the sale of ardent spirits in McDonough." The McDonough High School was evidently opened after Mr. White's account was written, and in 1854 this school was enlarged into the McDonough Collegiate Seminary. The Henry County Academy ceased to function by that time.

Among the prominent McDonough merchants and professional men who moved to Griffin, aside from Samuel Johnson and Thomas D. Johnson already noted, were McDonough attorney Colonel Andrew R. Moore, Aaron Cloud, John M. Cox, James S. Jones, Alexander D. Murray, Colonel Leonard T. Doyal, Dr. Edward F. Knott, George W. Clarke, Seth W. Parham, Colonel Erasmus W. Beck and R. L. Tomlinson, all of whom quickly attained prominence in the new city.

Atlanta, incorporated as Marthasville in 1843 and as Atlanta
in 1845, also drew several of its most noted early builders and financiers from McDonough. Among them were Joseph A. Thrasher, William Markham, Madison Berry, Robert J. Lowry, Thomas G. Healey, Dr. John M. Dorsey and Seymore B. Love. Among those moving to the railroad town of Jonesboro were members of the Tomlinson family, the Reverend Joshua S. Callaway and his son-in-law the Reverend Aaron E. Cloud, businessman and later newspaper editor. The removal of these and other leading men of McDonough sent the town into a decline from which it was slow in recovering. The void was somewhat filled as young men gradually moved into town from the surrounding countryside, but full recovery did not occur until 1882 when McDonough got a railroad of its own, and by that time the region was coming into competition with the burgeoning growth of Atlanta, which by offering a great chance for business and professional success and wealth, continued to draw away much of Henry County's best native talent and ability, a loss felt in literally every aspect of local life and culture.

After the 1840s, families such as the Atkins, Adams and their neighbors seldom went to McDonough except for necessary court-house transactions. Their trade was directed instead to Griffin and Bear Creek Station.
SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The letters of the Atkins family and their friends reveal much about Southern agrarian society in mid-19th Century America. The part of Georgia in which they lived having been occupied by the Indians as recently as 1821, only forty years had elapsed between the arrival of the first settlers and the beginning of the War Between the States. Thus Henry County lay in a new region which had only forty years to develop its antebellum economic and social structure before both were destroyed by brutal military, political and ultimately social defeat. For the most part, however, the pattern of life brought into the county from the beginning was merely an extension of that found in older parts of the South and it was well established in the minds and habits of the people. The rural culture of the area was what some today might consider a perplexing mix of the rustic and the urbane, but if Georgians of that day were suddenly set down in our own time, their response to our world would be precisely the same.

The Reverend George White wrote of Henry Countians in 1849: "The citizens of this county are plain and unassuming in their manners, industrious, benevolent and enterprising." Because Henry County's soils were mostly of moderate quality, the county drew as settlers a preponderance of middle-class farmers and planters from
older regions of Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia, rather than large-scale planter capitalists. Men already in possession of great fortunes had no interest in regions of ordinary productivity, but sought instead the richest lands where the greatest profits could be made in the shortest time. Nevertheless, several county families traced their ancestry to noted Colonial Tidewater Virginia planters and many were products of the Old Dominion's lesser gentry. Names such as Farrar, Dabney and Woodson appeared early in the county and families bearing other names traced descent from the Pages of Rosewell, the Perrins and others of note in the Virginia Tidewater. Several families had close connections to luminaries of the Revolutionary War period such as Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry of Virginia, and General Andrew Pickens and Robert Sevier of South Carolina. Others were allied with families early influential in old eastern Georgia such as the Glascocks, Heards, Callaways, Lumpkins, Bibbs, Toombs and Lamars, and with the Napiers, Munroes and Nesbits of Macon, and ties including Kells, McIntoshes and Spaldings of the Georgia coast, a member of the last named, Thomas Spalding of Sapelo Island, being honored in the naming of Spalding County.

Although none were great estates, the antebellum plantations of Henry County were undeniably business enterprises while at the same time being family farms on which the owners and laborers alike expected to live, die and be buried, and the owners no doubt
expected their landed properties to continue in the founding families for generations to come, although the division of estates by death and inheritance sometimes worked against it. Suggestive of the intention is the fact that almost every permanent homestead contained its own private family burying ground. While some early churches had graveyards, many did not, and public cemeteries came late to the area except in the principal towns. Granted, the climate often necessitated hasty interments, but deceased persons were sometimes transported a sufficient distance for home burial to indicate that church or public cemeteries could have been used had they been desired. In death as in life, independence and a sense of private family domain characterized Southern farm and plantation values.

The legendary plantation life associated with Chesapeake Bay and the Virginia Tidewater, the South Carolina and Georgia Low Country and the Mississippi River Delta, did not exist in antebellum Henry County, nor, for that matter, in many places other than those named, and even there it was by no means the common lifestyle. Henry County did not contain an organized, cohesive aristocracy, but among relatively genteel families of the upper and upper-middle classes, based on the long ownership of landed properties and involved ties of blood and marriage, there existed a quiet and unpretentious aristocratic or gentrified element that came to distinguish the best of the mid-19th Century South. Joseph
Atkins' references in letters to his son Thomas to "sense and propriety," "gentlemanly deportment" and "your usual good breeding," reveal that the Atkins and their friends belonged to this segment of society. As elsewhere, such elements were found more often in town than in the country. The level of cultivation in a farm or plantation family often depended on travel and exposure to town society. A few leading McDonough merchants made occasional business trips to Savannah and Charleston, and even at rare times to New York and Philadelphia. The city of Griffin contained an urbane, educated and well-traveled element of citizens. Prosperous local families sometimes recruited in health and social pleasure at the popular spring resorts in upper Georgia and thereby mingled with the state's leading society, albeit in accommodations that tended to the rustic. Indian Springs, described as the most fashionable watering place in the state in 1860, lay in and scarcely more than twenty miles from McDonough, adjacent Butts County. By the 1850s local families such as the Atkins were beginning to send fortunate sons to colleges in Virginia and the North, and at least one youth of the Bear Creek area, George Gilmore Crawford, son of planter Thomas Shanklin Crawford, was sent to Germany for his advanced education in medicine. Such exposures elevated the tone of society at home as Henry County emerged from its pioneer stage in the last two decades before the War Between the States.

Late-antebellum cotton prosperity, travel and widened horizons
manifested in other ways in Henry County as local culture advanced. The plantation district in which Bear Creek Station and Oak Lawn lay began from the late 1840s to acquire several fine country houses which surpassed in size and elegance any to be found in other parts of the county. The first of these houses to be completed was built in 1848 by South Carolina native Thomas Dickson Weems northwest of Oak Lawn on the present Hampton-Locust Grove Road. Of two-story frame construction with a hipped roof that originally contained a belfry, the Weems house follows the Classical four-room, central-hall plan. The entrance hall originally featured hand-painted murals with landscape scenes and blue sky and clouds overhead. A curved arch partially separates this from the back hall in which a handsome and spacious stair ascends to the second floor. Gold-leaf curtain cornices were ordered for the parlor from London and mahogany furniture in what is now called the American Empire and early Victorian styles was ordered from New York City to make the Weems house probably the finest country residence in antebellum Henry County. An unpretentious original double-tiered entrance portico in the plain Greek Revival style was replaced about 1923 with the present long porch with its large fluted Ionic columns. Alone of the imposing antebellum country houses of the area, the Weems house remains in the Weems family.

In 1849 or 1850, Thomas J. Edwards, a native of Oglethorpe
County, Georgia, built the second of these notable local houses at his plantation northwest of Bear Creek Station. This one-story frame dwelling, which burned in the 1960s, was distinguished by a recessed front porch whose roof was integral with the whole structure and was supported by six stuccoed-brick Roman Doric columns which rose from the ground instead of the porch floor, thereby giving the U-shaped porch a balconied effect. Double entrance doors surrounded by rectangular window lights made the center hall an extension of the front walk, the walk itself passing through the "U" of the recessed front porch and continuing down the hall and out to a courtyard behind the house. The courtyard was bounded by a masonry dairy house, well shed, kitchen and smoke-house. The overall design and details of the Edwards house reflected an imaginative and somewhat sophisticated version of the Classic Revival style. Although its columns and projecting roof gables were heavier, it was similar in plan to the original antebellum house at Pebble Hill Plantation near Thomasville in distant southwest Georgia.

The Thomas Shanklin Crawford plantation house northwest of Bear Creek Station and near Lovejoy's Station on the Clayton County line, began in 1835 as a plain two-story house, but about 1850 or soon thereafter it was enlarged with the addition of a wing whose size exceeded the original structure. This wing is thought to have been an entirely separate house from a neighboring plantation,
rolled to the site and simply attached to the older Crawford home. When this was done, a long divided porch was built across the enlarged front of the house and six fluted two-story Doric columns were installed. A long hanging balcony serves the second floor beneath the old part of the columned porch. Interiors in the addition reflect late-Greek Revival details while those in the original part of the house are of a plain earlier style. The Crawford house can best be described as a type of vernacular Classical, certainly not academic, architecture. Mr. Crawford was a native of Abbeville District, South Carolina, and may have been familiar with the side portico at Fort Hill, the John C. Calhoun estate near Clemson, as well as with the garden portico of The Cedars, the Governor George R. Gilmer house in Lexington, Georgia, both of whose porticos bear some resemblance to that at the Crawford plantation. The Crawford house still stands and is now known as Lovejoy Plantation, the home of Betty Shingler-Talmadge.

The John Adams house at Adams' Mills on Towaliga Creek, believed to have been begun about 1836, but evidently not completed until about 1889, is described in detail in the chapter on Adams' Mills. The imposing Smith Griffin house at Oaklea Plantation northeast of Hampton was long said to be an antebellum structure, but recent research dates the house to about 1870, so that it is not to be included with the antebellum houses of Henry County.

After 1840 a number of Classic Revival cottages, many with
plastered walls, wainscoting and standard trim of the style, were built on Henry County farms and plantations, and no doubt several other large manor houses long ago destroyed distinguished this area of the county, but the houses above described, two of them still standing, proclaimed the emergence of Henry County's Towaliga River Basin from log-cabin culture to a more affluent, well rounded and developed society. By no means, however, did the size and elegance (or lack thereof) of a Henry County planter's house necessarily reflect his wealth or position in the community. The Oak Lawn house of the Atkins family serves as an illustration of this fact. So conservative was local society that there was clearly no competition among planters and merchants in the business of house-building, no effort on the part of prosperous local men to outdo one another by efforts at show and pretention. In houses as in other matters, individuality prevailed.

In the antebellum South, as before and since, social station was not always solely a matter of economic wealth and public display, the latter, in fact, usually being eschewed by genteel families. There were rich planters who had recently risen from humble status and middling or small farmers who had once enjoyed more prosperous times, perhaps in previous generations in other places. The former might never attain complete acceptance while the latter might repose within the sanctum sanctorum of the local order. There were also those families who had never had signi-
icant wealth, but who were known for their social, moral and ethical respectability, and sometimes by a marked cultivation in intellectual matters, and for these virtues they occupied a social position in the front rank of their communities.

It became habit in the 18th Century South that the term "planter" signified a gentleman, and the same custom continued to Henry County in the 19th Century. Its use was determined more by the social standing of the individual or his family than by his ownership of land and slaves. Thus is explained the fact that in 1862, a Confederate soldier of Henry County, on being discharged from the army for medical reasons, and being in possession of fifty acres of land and two slaves, was recorded as a "planter" by occupation instead of farmer. He was a young man starting out in life and his father, father-in-law and grandfather were prosperous and respectable citizens of the community, thereby conveying to him a status not yet attained by his own estate.

Southern family histories, examined individually and in group patterns, often reveal that social position in the South, while somewhat fluid, was in a degree viewed as hereditary and based on the stratum in which a person or family had long moved and was accepted. By simple observation of neighbors, friends and relatives over two or more generations, certain traits came to be viewed as characteristic and expected of families. Breeding, good or bad, was seen in humans much as it was seen in horses and other
animal life, hence, multiple marriages among "good" families, including the intermarriages of cousins such as often occurred among the Atkins, Adams and their friends, were perceived more as an asset than as a liability, provided the basic gene stock was sound. Such marriages often had the advantage of keeping lands and slaves, which is to say wealth, intact, or at least within the same circle of family and established connections. Thus in a place such as Henry County where groups of families long related or otherwise allied migrated into a neighborhood together, the social structure from the beginning was intricately involved with and formed by connections of blood and marriage which often extended back a century or more. These connections were part of a complicated social pattern that had followed the path of migration from Virginia and the Carolinas and continued westward through Alabama, Mississippi and on to eastern Texas. It could be said with almost literal truth that among the old families of the South, to be kin to one was to be kin to all. This was as true of the middle as of the upper Southern gentry.

Advanced education did not necessarily accompany wealth or social status in the South. From the founding of the first English settlement at Jamestown in 1607 to the War Between the States in 1861, Southern history was much a matter of frontier expansion. A large number of Henry County's first settlers were pioneering for the second or third time in as many generations, and each
pioneering experience tended to increase a frontier outlook as families became farther removed in geography and time from the older-settled parts of the country. Hard work and pragmatism were the elements of pioneer life. Many of the niceties had to wait until a new country and its society became settled and firmly established.

Old accounts repeatedly state that up to about 1840, the area in which Henry County lies was a rather crude frontier in which the majority of families lived in log houses, frequently worshipped under brush arbors, and got such meagre schooling as struggling little academies might offer. Even as late as 1860, country school teachers were most apt to be the products of neighborhood academies and "field schools" rather than colleges or universities, but the Reverend George White observed in 1849 that in Henry County, "Proper attention is paid to education." He was no doubt referring primarily to the coeducational Henry County Academy chartered in 1824 in McDonough. By 1831 the Henry County Female Academy had been founded, also in McDonough, and in 1854 the High School of McDonough became the McDonough Collegiate Seminary, which functioned until it was burned by black incendiaries after the War Between the States. The Henry County Academy evidently continued through part of that time, whereby McDonough had at least two schools in operation during the early 1850s. Documents relating to these institutions suggest that Northern teachers were prized and
the faculties of these town schools no doubt possessed college or university degrees.

Several early rural schools were established in the Oak Lawn vicinity. The backers of most of these institutions included persons closely connected with the Atkins and Adams families. Pleasant Grove Academy was incorporated in 1827 near the place where the city of Griffin was later founded and at least three of its trustees, John W. Poyner, Woodson Hubbard and Grice, were near neighbors to Oak Lawn, suggesting that neighborhood youths were schooled at Pleasant Grove. In 1831 the Harmony Grove Academy was chartered west of Oak Lawn and its trustees, William Griffin, John Williams, Parker Eason, William Moseley, John Whitsel, Zadock Sawyer and Samuel Weems, were neighborhood residents and close associates of the Atkins. (William Griffin was the father of William T. Griffin who married Elizabeth Atkins. William Moseley was the Baptist reverend of Bear Creek Station and Griffin, whose daughter Ann married Thomas A. Adams.) Mount Prospect Institute was founded near Oak Lawn in 1837 and most of its trustees, Joseph P. Manley, Solomon Strickland, William Andrews, Ephraim Strickland and Christopher Wiggers, lived in the Cabin District of what became Spalding County. (William Andrews was the father of Thomas C. and Nehemiah G. Andrews who married the Atkins sisters Sarah and Martha.) The Oak Grove Academy was founded in Bear Creek Station in 1854. Its trustees
were Beverly B. Ransome, Samuel P. Campbell, John Smith, and Thomas G. Barnett. (Beverly Ransome, a young attorney from Walton County, Georgia, had married Martha Griffin, sister of William T. Griffin who married Elizabeth Atkins. The Ransomes moved to Griffin soon after 1854. Thomas G. Barnett was the Squire Barnett who had married John Adams' daughter Sarah.) In 1860 the Oak Grove Academy was renamed and chartered as the Bear Creek Academy with William Sadler Fears, Samuel P. Campbell, William Warren Jackson, Mark Wade Westmoreland, Thomas J. Edwards, Richard A. Henderson and Thomas G. Barnett, trustees. (William W. Jackson had married John Adams' daughter Jane.)

Not all these academies functioned simultaneously. Difficulties in financial backing and uncertain attendance of students along with problems in securing adequate teachers made some of these institutions short lived even though the founding trustees went to the trouble and expense of acquiring land on which to erect buildings, and having the schools chartered by the state legislature. Similar academies were established at different times in all sections of Henry County.

The Atkins letters reveal a wide range of education, extending from the barely-literate to the polished, and those displaying the most literary accomplishment were written by individuals such as Thomas Andrews and Lewis Niles, who had had the benefit of superior schools in Griffin or other cities. Joseph Atkins, educated in
country schools of Piedmont South Carolina before 1820, was not an accomplished speller, but his thinking, as revealed by his letters, indicates some exposure to significant schooling, some of the benefits of which may have faded after years of plantation management.

The older Atkins children were educated in Henry County's early rural schools. It is probable that several years in these institutions may have turned out reasonably adept young scholars, considering the place and the time, but most children attended for rather brief periods and got no further in their schooling that the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, the first two of which often fared ill on the scale of Southern values.

As for the Atkins children, there is a great difference between the letters of the oldest daughter Eliza, born in 1824, and the younger daughter Frances, born in 1845. Eliza's education in the 1830s was rudimentary and probably quite brief, while Mary, Frances and others of the younger children, educated twenty years later in the 1850s, had evidently received better schooling, or at least more of it, and may have attended one of the girls' schools which were then cropping up across the state. The Griffin Female College and the Griffin Synodical College were two such institutions near Oak Lawn, and friends of the Atkins were connected with both schools. As for the eldest Atkins daughter, Eliza may simply have had no interest in the classroom, or may have suffered
delicate health in early youth which prevented her staying long enough in school to gain much benefit from it. It deserves noting, too, that learning disabilities were not recognized in that day, and youths suffering from them were quickly dismissed as being "unlearnable." A variety of situations, including early marriage and settling into the routine of rural farm life, often worked against the influences of education.

Educational accomplishment naturally depended on the proclivities of the individual and the milieu in which he or she habitually moved. Typical of most Southern planters, Joseph Atkins, as the manager of his own agrarian operations, associated daily with his Negroes and with the plain farmers of the neighborhood. Such elemental rural society was conducive to laxness in habits of speech and expression and it is doubtful that written social correspondence, before his sons went to distant colleges and into the Confederate army, was much a part of Joseph Atkins' daily experience.

A comparison of grammar might be made between the Atkins letters and letters written in the first decade of the 19th Century by members of the aristocratic Lewis family of Virginia who were close cousins several times over to Thomas Jefferson and the Randolphins, revealing that men who were born and reared on plantations, and who intended to spend their lives on plantations, did not always pursue formal education beyond the basic level.
Standardized spelling, although an ideal, was not in common use in the early and sometimes even mid-19th Century South. Both the Lewis and Atkins letters reveal inconsistencies in spelling and punctuation, and a frequent use of phoenetic forms. Written phoenetic English provides important clues to the common word pronunciations of a given time and place and therefore has a value all its own in a world where spoken language is constantly evolving in new directions.
Local political structures quickly emerged in Henry County and were somewhat established by the time the Atkins and Adams families arrived in 1826, just four years after original settlement. Bear Creek, Lowe's and Locust Grove Militia Districts, the seat of Henry County's distinctive plantation belt, contributed a share of political and magisterial leadership in the county's early life. Colonel Solomon Strickland of Towaliga Creek served as the county's first representative in the lower house of the state legislature in 1822. In 1825 he and his neighbor John Griffin were both in the lower house. In 1826 another Lowe's District neighbor, Gary Grice, was in the legislature. He had immediately previous been County Surveyor. In 1842 William Lumpkin Kimbell of Lowe's District held the office of representative. His brother John Kimbell was a county magistrate.

Local political leaders tended to come as much from the middle classes (prosperous farmers and small planters) as from the upper classes (middling-to-large planters), and the large planters did not visibly control the county, although they undoubtedly held considerable influence. The larger planters themselves tended more often to serve as county magistrates than as legislative representatives, although they occasionally appeared in all levels
of public office. The demands of operating a plantation usually left little time or inclination for self-sacrificing public service in counties such as Henry, where plantation overseers were seldom employed and in a day (unlike our own) when political office was not a pathway to wealth. Indeed, wealth was by no means a sole basis for the county's political structure. As in virtually all other aspects of county life, family connections, often acquired or enhanced by judicious marriages, played a key part.

Several family groups were conspicuous in somewhat dominating the political and public affairs of lower Henry County in antebellum days. The Johnson-Griffin-Barnett, Brooks-Moseley and Hand-Henderson family and political alliances are of interest.

Planter and mill-owner Jesse Johnson, perhaps setting a precedent in politics for his great-grandson who would become president of the United States, was sheriff of Henry County in 1824 and again in 1828. He was often a Justice of the Inferior Court and in 1830 and 1831 he served two terms as a state senator. Samuel Johnson, Jesse's brother, a planter and early merchant first in McDonough and later in the community of Pleasant Grove, which was absorbed by the city of Griffin, was a magistrate of Henry County in 1823 and Clerk of the Court of Ordinary in 1825 and 1827, at which time he lived in McDonough before moving to his Pleasant Grove plantation. The political influence of the Johnson family was greatly enhanced by Samuel Johnson's son-in-law, Dr. James
Harper Starr, a native of Connecticut who came to Georgia in 1832 and settled at Pleasant Grove. Dr. Starr moved to Texas in 1836, rose to the office of Treasurer of the Republic of Texas, and was much later a Fiscal Agent of the Confederate Government and became manager of the Confederate Post Office Department for the district west of the Mississippi River. As a nephew by marriage, he likely influenced Jesse Johnson's decision to move to Texas in 1846.

The Griffin and Barnett families, as close and intricate relatives of the Johnsons, were a part of the potent Johnson faction in local politics. John Griffin was in the lower house of the state legislature in 1825. A brother of The Reverend William Griffin who had married Mary Booker Barnett, John Griffin had married her sister Sarah Caroline Barnett. John G. Barnett, brother of Squire Thomas G. Barnett and cousin of legislative representative John Griffin and William Griffin, was a magistrate in 1826 and county Tax Collector in 1838-40. Thomas Griffin Barnett, small planter and prosperous Bear Creek merchant, was commissioned a magistrate in 1838, and while all magistrates were given the courtesy title "Esquire," Thomas Barnett became the proverbial Squire by his long tenure which extended consistently up through 1861. He served in the lower house of the state legislature in 1851-52, and may have been outspoken in favor of Georgia's secession from the Union in 1861. (Joseph Atkins wrote from McDonough in April of 1863: "Squire Barnett informed me today
that John [Barnett] had arrived clear of the army. ...The Devils that brought the war on is the very ones that are backing out." It is not clear, however, that Joseph Atkins was referring directly to Thomas Barnett in the last statement.) Squire Barnett concluded his public life by serving as mayor of Bear Creek when it was incorporated as a town in 1872 (the name changed to Hampton in 1873), holding the office of mayor until his death in 1885.

The Brooks-Moseley contingent was a significant political element in early Henry County. Micajah Brooks, an old soldier of the Revolution, was the head of this family and settled at present Pomona in original Henry, now Spalding County. His son John Brooks was a member of Henry County's first Superior Court Grand Jury in 1822 and was said to have built the first grist mill in Henry County, in the section that became Spalding County. Another son, Aaron Brooks, was sheriff of the county in 1827 between Jesse Johnson's terms. Micajah Brooks' son-in-law Woodson Hubbard was a magistrate of the county in 1825 and 1829, and also an Oak Lawn neighbor. Mr. Hubbard moved from Henry to Paulding and Polk Counties and represented Paulding County in the state legislature in 1833, and Polk County in 1853 and 1854. Micajah Brooks' daughter Ruth was the wife of the Reverend and the Honorable William Moseley. Most of the Brooks family moved from Henry County by 1837, but several family connections, including the Moseleys, remained.
William Moseley, regarded by some contemporaries as the most noted antebellum political figure from Henry County, and well known throughout middle Georgia as an orator and political stump-speaker, entered politics in 1840 when he campaigned actively for the Whig Party's presidential candidate William Henry Harrison. Mr. Moseley at that time lived southeast of Bear Creek Station near the Adams and Atkins families. He was elected to the state senate in 1843, was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress in 1846, by which time he had moved to Griffin, and served in the lower house of the legislature, representing Henry County, in 1847. He was in the state senate in 1851 and in 1853 from Spalding County and again during the war years of 1861 through 1863. He had a long-running political disagreement with the Atkins' neighbor Gary Grice, a Democrat who opposed all Whig policies and who obviously continued to hold local political influence long after his one term in the lower house in 1826.

As the Whig Party faded from Georgia politics in the early 1850s, Mr. Moseley joined with the Democrats and became a strong State Rights advocate. He was present, and read a toast, at the noted Iverson Dinner held in Griffin on 14 July 1859. This dinner, held to honor United States Senator Alfred Iverson, who was seeking reelection, drew leading political figures from throughout the state and was an event which is credited (or blamed) for shifting much Georgia support away from the Union and toward secession,
which was to follow in 1861.

Mr. Moseley, as already noted, was a Baptist and Primitive Baptist preacher and in his youth had served under General Andrew Jackson in the Creek Indian Campaign of 1817. He supplemented his income and supported his family by fairly modest farming, but the Baptist ministry was his primary vocation. His contemporary biographers observed that he owned only one slave, and that a woman who assisted Mrs. Moseley with house and kitchen tasks. Mr. Moseley promoted himself as a man of the people, as indeed he was, although the Moseleys were a Colonial Virginia family with gentry connections, and his first cousins, Benjamin and Silas Moseley and Mrs. Wade Hampton Turner, were wealthy Henry County planters and slaveowners. His daughter Ann, by her marriage to Thomas Atkins Adams, was allied with one of the county's five largest slaveowning planters in the person of her father-in-law John Adams of Adams' Mills.

Other Moseley connections were prosperous farmers of the county and Mr. Moseley no doubt gained some political advantage through connections of his wife's family, the Brooks, although his own father, The Reverend Elijah Moseley (1767-1822), had been well known to many middle Georgians back in Putnam County for his prominence as a Baptist minister and his close friendships with the noted Baptist Reverends Silas and Jesse Mercer, along with other influential Georgians of the day. The Moseleys' son-in-law

*Note: The Moseleys & Mercers allied with the Old Group Party in state politics, out of which emerged the Whig Party.*
Abram Peebles, a prosperous farmer (albeit for many years a large landowner with properties in several Georgia counties), was County Surveyor from 1850 to his death in 1864. The family's public service was continued when Mr. Moseley's grandson, Dr. William H. Peebles, represented Henry County in the lower house of the legislature in 1866 and 1867, and served on the County Commission of Roads and Revenues in 1870. He was an original Town Commissioner when Bear Creek Station was incorporated in 1872.

The Atkins and Adams families, while friendly with other elements, fell into the Johnson-Barnett-Griffin camp on their arrival in the county in 1826, and soon were allied by marriages with all three of these influential families, as well as with the Brooks-Moseley contingent. John Adams himself became a magistrate of the county in 1827, only one year after his arrival, which suggests his immediate placement in the local structure. His sons Thomas and James Adams were commissioned magistrates in 1845 and 1852 respectively.

Farmer John C. Hand, son of Revolutionary War veteran Joseph Hand, who had come originally from South Carolina and settled on Towaliga Creek above Johnsons' and Adams' Mills, served in the lower house of the legislature in 1839. He had been a county magistrate as early as 1822 and again in 1828. His brother Isiah (or Isaiah) Hand, also a farmer, was a magistrate in 1833 and 1841, several years after which the Hands moved with other Henry
Countians to Tallapoosa County, Alabama. Their brother-in-law Andrew Henderson, a farmer northwest of Bear Creek Station, was a magistrate in 1839 and served in the lower house of the state legislature in 1859-60. Thus the Hand-Henderson coterie, farmers rather than planters, held political influence in Bear Creek District throughout the antebellum period. (Andrew Henderson's father, pioneer settler Richard Henderson, whose first homestead was near original Johnsons' Mills and became a part of the John Adams plantation, was a prosperous small planter near Mt. Pleasant Church, but his son Andrew Henderson farmed on a more modest scale and without slaves. The Bear Creek carriage-maker Richard A. Henderson, himself a county magistrate in 1862 and ten years later an original Town Commissioner of Bear Creek, was a son of Andrew Henderson.)

Other political elements were conspicuous in antebellum Henry County. Thomas D. Johnson (no relation to Jesse and Samuel Johnson) was indirectly connected with the Atkins family by his guardianship of Joseph Atkins' sons-in-law Thomas and Nehemiah Andrews during their minority. He created a notable record in the lower house of the state legislature by representing Henry County for six terms, 1828-1832 and 1837, and by serving two terms, 1839 and 1841, in the state senate. Serving in the lower house for four terms, three with Thomas Johnson, was Hendley Varner, 1832-1834 and 1841, and in the state senate in 1837. James Sellers was
especially conspicuous in the state senate by serving ten terms, 1823–1828, 1831–1832 and 1834–1835.

Thomas D. Johnson has been noted already as a wealthy merchant of McDonough and Griffin. Mrs. Johnson, the former Nancy Key, belonged to an influential family in early Henry County. Her brothers included Tandy Watts Key, owner of Key's Ferry on Ocmulgee River and an original McDonough merchant, County Treasurer and trustee of the County Academy, and Dr. James Barton Key of Jonesboro, who represented Clayton County in the lower house of the state legislature in 1861–63 and held other positions of public trust. Tandy W. and Dr. J. B. Key were owners of Adams' Mills prior to John Adams' purchase, when the business was known as Keys' Mills.

Hendley Varner was a McDonough merchant, a shareholder in the original Monroe Railroad, and although a resident of McDonough, he owned a successful 800-acre plantation, with thirty-seven slaves in 1860, in Locust Grove District. He had other property, including a country house, at present Sunnyside in original Henry County, now Spalding County, near the Thomas Colquitt Andrews home and not far distant from Adams' Mills and Oak Lawn. Mrs. Varner was the former Martha Caroline Napier of Macon and an aunt of Judy Blanche Napier, wife of Captain John McIntosh Kell of Darien, Georgia, who in 1865 established a home next to the Warners at Sunnyside. Captain Kell was noted in Confederate history as an officer of the C.S.S.
Alabama. Through the Napier, Kell, Munroe, Nesbit and allied families, Hendley Varner claimed a number of prominent and influential ties in antebellum Georgia.

By no means were Thomas D. Johnson, Hendley Varner and James Sellers professional politicians, however. In their day, public office was still largely regarded as a civic duty of the upper and upper-middle classes. The office of county magistrate often went hand-in-hand with large planting interests and to some extent it was considered a planter's duty to occupy the position for at least one term. Magistrates were elected by public vote and commissioned by the governor of the state. Aside from performing marriage ceremonies, the magistrates (officially called Justices of the Peace) exercised judicial powers in small legal disputes and they, or Justices of the Inferior Court, were required to notarize deeds and other legal documents. Most of those holding the office in the Bear Creek and Lowe's Districts throughout the antebellum period were large, middling or small planters, but a few were smaller farmers. Magistrates from Lowe's and Bear Creek Districts, aside from those already mentioned, included Samuel Weems and his sons Samuel R. and Thomas D. Weems, John Walker and his son Robert M. Walker, Zadock Sawyer, William B. Stanfield, Major John M. Ponder, John T. Ransome, Shateen C. Mitchell, Parker Eason, John Jackson and his son Edmund W. Jackson, Thomas S. Crawford, Andrew W. Walker, Leroy M. Cobb, Leonard Roan and Thomas J. Edwards. The
Weems, Walkers (both families), Mitchells, Easons, Jacksons, Crawfords and Edwards ranked among the wealthy citizens of the county in their day.

Local planters held other county offices, such as, for example, Colonel John Harvey Lowe, for whom Lowe's District was named and one of the county's largest antebellum slaveowners, who was Clerk of the Court of Ordinary from 1845 to 1854. Various planters and farmers served as Justices of the Inferior Court (those from the Atkins' and Adams' neighborhood including William Griffin, Gary Grice, Jesse Johnson and Parker Eason), as members of the County Grand Juries, road commissioners, and during the early years of the county when it was an active institution, as officers in the county militia. (Thomas Griffin, son of pioneer John Griffin, rose to the rank of general in the state militia, although by that time he had left Henry County and was living near the city of Macon.) Among all these local and county positions of public trust, the name of Joseph Atkins is conspicuously absent. It can only be surmised that he, along with some other prominent and well respected men of the county, had no interest in holding public office.

The political affairs of antebellum Henry County appear to have been conducted on a democratic and fairly representative basis so far as the white middle and upper classes were concerned. No study has been made of the county's economic lower classes, but
they appear to have been relatively few in number. Many landless men who gave their occupation in 1860 as farm laborers were sons, brothers or other near relations of landowners, and hence their interests were allied with those of the middle classes.

Slaves had no legal political representation. Their interests were determined by their individual owners and by a general consensus of public opinion influenced by the Christian religion which held sway in the region. In Henry County, where most slaveowners were small holders and most planters lived on their own farms, and overseers were rare, the slaves lived and worked in close association with the whites and were generally treated in a humane manner. They had protection under the law so far as safety of life and limb were concerned.

As to political parties, Thomas C. Nolan of McDonough reminisced in 1881 that the county in antebellum days had been about equally divided between Whigs and Democrats. "So inveterate was the antipathy existing between the parties then that they made it a matter of business to cherish a dislike for each other, which at times was so strong that they would often refuse to give consent for their children to intermarry with each other." While some old and personal political animosities lasted many years after, the Whigs were generally assimilated into the Democratic Party during the 1850s as events moved toward the secession of the Southern States.
Joseph Atkins wrote to his son late in 1860, soon after Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency, that "our county is a strong union county," and added that Lincoln's election, by itself, was not sufficient cause for the Southern States to secede. The city of Griffin, however, along with most urban centers in Georgia, was pushing for secession. At least a large minority, if not an actual majority, of rural Georgians of all economic and social classes favored an approach of cooperation with the new administration in the hope that secession and possible war might be averted. The cooperationist viewpoint called for a "wait and see" approach before taking any drastic, irreversible and possibly devastating action. Thomas Colquitt Andrews expressed the view of many Georgians when he wrote three days after the secession of South Carolina in December 1860: "I say if fight we must let us begin in the Union and then after exhausting all honorable means to secure our rights, and failing to procure them, we can then withdraw with honor to ourselves." Five days before Georgia's secession from the union in January 1861, Tom Andrews again wrote: "...My honest opinion is that secession is no remedy either for existing wrongs or those in anticipation, for really all the wrongs politicians complain of are anticipated."

Georgia's Secession Convention, which convened at the State Capitol in Milledgeville on 16 January 1861, has been described by historians as the most elite assembly of public leadership ever
gathered in the state's history. County delegates were elected throughout the state on 2 January 1861 on the basis of whether they opposed or favored immediate secession from the Union. Political observers noted that heavy rains throughout much of Georgia on that day may have kept numbers of rural voters away from the polls, but the ultimate conclusion is drawn that the convention's vote to secede undoubtedly reflected the desire of a majority of the state's voters, even though it may have been but a small majority.

Henry County's delegates to the convention, elected on 2 January 1861 on a county-wide basis according to their stand for or against immediate secession, were Dr. Francis Eppes Manson of McDonough, and Elijah B. Arnold and Colonel John Harvey Lowe of the rural county. All three men were planters. Dr. Manson, a native Virginian who is thought to have had family ties with the noted Eppes and Jefferson families of that state, was the owner of twenty-three slaves in 1860 and lived at his plantation on the west edge of McDonough. He combined planting with the practice of medicine and was also a minister in the Methodist Episcopal church. He would serve in the lower house of the state legislature in 1864–65 and in the state senate in 1865–66. Elijah B. Arnold was in possession of thirty-two slaves in 1860 and was one of the few planters seated in northern Henry County's Shakerag Militia District, a section of the county characterized more by farms than by plantations. He had served in the state's lower house in 1845,
1849–50 and 1853–54, and in the state senate in 1857–58. Colonel John H. Lowe of Lowe's District, with sixty-five slaves in 1860, was the largest individual slaveowner in the county at that time (allowing for Parker Eason who had forty-eight of his own and thirty-seven as guardian for minor children) and as already noted, Colonel Lowe was Clerk of the Court of Ordinary in 1845–54.

All three Henry County delegates were ostensibly elected as Union men, but when the final convention vote was taken on 19 January 1861, Colonel Lowe, perhaps swayed and convinced by other delegates, voted in favor of secession. The ordinance passed by a vote of 208 to 89, whereupon, according to terms authorized at their election, all three Henry County delegates stood with the majority and signed for secession. Spalding County's delegates, Colonel William G. Dewberry and Major Henry Moor, both successful Griffin attorneys, were elected as secession men and voted as such.

Once Georgia had seceded, most former cooperationists gave their loyalty to the state and the new Southern Confederacy. As Nim Andrews wryly observed a month later, "I am a secession man, but it is against my will." Thus was the dye cast in Georgia as the state declared its independence from the Federal Union and began to prepare for the war which followed.