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The role of the Virginia slave in iron and tobacco manufacturing

Richard Demone Pulley

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THE ROLE OF THE VIRGINIA SLAVE IN IRON AND TOBACCO MANUFACTURING, 1830-1860

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Richard Demone Pulley
August 1962
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There has been a great deal written about the Negro slave and his use in agriculture during the ante-bellum period in the South. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of the slave to the large plantation system of farming. However, it is a fact that the slaves value was not confined to agriculture. Slavery was put to use quite extensively in other aspects of labor as well. The use of the slave in industry has been somewhat ignored by historians.

It is the purpose of this paper to explore to what extent the Negro slave was used in the iron and tobacco industries in Virginia. These two particular industries were chosen because they were by far the leaders in the employment of slave labor in Virginia. The slave was used in mining but since this is not specifically manufacturing this aspect of slave labor will only be mentioned briefly. Other capacities for slave labor such as blacksmithing and railroad maintenance are also relatively unimportant when compared to the iron and tobacco industries.

The date, 1830, was selected for a starting point because it was approximately this general period when the tobacco factories began to employ large numbers of slaves. The iron industry started somewhat later to discover their use. The year 1860 seemed an appropriate concluding point because with the beginning of the Civil War a whole new era of slave labor in industry began. The use of slaves in industry then was precipitated to some extent by necessity rather than because of the economic value.
Some credit should be given to Miss Kathleen Bruce and Dr. Joseph Claske Robert. Miss Bruce's book on the Virginia iron industry and Dr. Robert's on tobacco each were valuable in pointing out various sources which could be explored.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the time of the Revolution in America and, to some extent before that period, the Negro slave was used in a variety of ways by the white man. Before the Revolutionary War, the Virginia slave was used primarily in agriculture, particularly on tobacco plantations. However, as the plantation system moved farther South toward the Black Belt, the plantation slaves in Virginia were not as much in demand. Virginia had for some time been practicing the one crop system and because of this and a variety of other reasons slaves became less and less economical in agriculture. Thus an excess in slaves resulted. This excess was not wasted but was put to use in areas outside of agriculture. There is frequent mention of the Negro slave working in a great variety of occupations in Virginia records. These primarily cover the period from the Revolutionary war up to the Civil War. It was during this time that the slave was found to be of significant economic value in manufacturing, but after 1830 the tobacco and iron industries found the slave to be almost invaluable.

As early as 1766 a letter from Lt. Governor Fauquier mentioned a large number of slaves being trained as blacksmiths. This occupation obviously required some skill on the part of the Negro as well as requiring physical strength.1 Wertenbaker makes mention of Negro gangs during

1William and Mary Quarterly, (Richmond, Whittet and Shepperson, Second Series, 1921-1943), XXI, 169.
this period being used for digging a canal from Deep Creek, a tributary of the Southern Branch to the Pasquotank River.²

Probably the earliest extensive use of the Negro slave outside of agriculture was in the mines of Virginia. There is frequent evidence of the Negro, both slave and free, being used in the coal, lead and salt mines of Virginia. Whether they were used because of their ability to withstand the heat and difficult manual labor is a matter of speculation.

In a Resolution of the General Assembly dated December 6, 1782, it was stated that "the Executive was authorized to restore the Lead Mines to their owners; and to make contract in regard to the Negro slaves owned by the state, and the lead on hand. Also authorizing payment to be made for use and service of hired slaves."³ In another letter to Archibald Cary Esquire there was mention of the hiring of persons to guard "Negroes sent to ye lead mines . . ."⁴ More correspondence made mention of two slaves who were to be "delivered to Charles Deverex, to be carried to Mr. James Calloway and employed in the lead mine for the use of the public."⁵ Sir Charles Lyell spoke of a Mr. Gifford who was manager of

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⁴McRae, op. cit., VIII, 173.

⁵Ibid., p. 156.
one of the mines in the great Blackheath system engaging 130 free Negroes for work in the mines. Incidental note was made of the apparent compatibility of white and Negro men working side by side. There was no reference to mishap as a result of hostility between the two races. 6

"Railroad companies employed slaves for both construction and maintenance work. As early as 1836 the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad Company advertised for a large number of slave laborers." During the 1850's southern newspapers carried constant advertisements of railroad builders for slaves. 7 One of these came from the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Company. They wanted "400 able bodied Negroes to work on the repairs of said railroad and at the Depot during the ensuing year."8

The tobacco and iron industry dominated all other non-agricultural employment of the Negro slave from approximately 1830 to 1860. The free Negro is mentioned very seldom as having worked in these two industries. There is specific information concerning the slaves being employed in the Westham and Buckingham factories and probably in all the blast furnaces in Virginia. 9 There was also another report of Negroes being included

8 Richmond Daily Dispatch, December 18, 1956.
9 McRae, op. cit., I, 262, 492.
in the work force of an arms factory. They were in this particular instance hired to do drudgery. 10

These are only a few of the notable instances where the slave was used to economic advantage off the plantation. Thus we can see that slaves were used in railroad work, in the mines, and in many other capacities of a non agricultural nature. The point is that the slave could be used profitably off the farm as well as on.

The following chapters will point out the value of the slave to the two thriving Virginia industries of tobacco and iron. The slave system as shown here possessed several distinct and unique differences from that of agriculture.

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10 William and Mary Quarterly, First Series, XXVII, 250.
CHAPTER II

HIRING OF THE SLAVE

Negro slaves in the tobacco and iron industries were acquired by two means. The manufacturer might own his own slaves for an indefinite period or he could hire slaves from a slave agent or from farmers for varying periods of time. Those periods ranged from a few weeks to a year. Kenneth Stampp in his *Peculiar Institution* states that:

Each year around the first of January, at southern crossroads stores, on the steps of country courthouses, and in every village and city, large crowds of participants and spectators gathered for "hiring day." At this time masters with bondsmen to spare and employers in search of labor bargained for the rental of slave property. . . . Hired slaves were most numerous in the Upper South; during the 1850's perhaps as many as fifteen thousand were hired out annually in Virginia alone. But slave-hiring was a common practice everywhere. 11

The number of hands owned and hired was about half and half in the tobacco industry during the two decades preceding the Civil War. 12 Newspapers during these two decades and even somewhat before were filled with advertisements of manufacturers wanting to hire slaves or agents who had slaves for hire. The *Daily Dispatch* of November 14, 1852, advertised for sale "Two likely young men, first rate tobacco twisters." 13 Another

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11 Stampp, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
13 Richmond Daily Dispatch, November 14, 1852.
advertisement asked for three or four boys to put up smoking tobacco. 14 The August 22, 1804 issue of the Richmond Enquirer advertised for two Negro fellows to be hired by the year or month "to be employed in the manufacture of Tobacco, for which good wages will be paid."15 The offer of wages to these Negroes seems to indicate that there were some free Negroes employed in the tobacco factories; however, as will later be pointed out, these did not compare in number with the hired and owned slaves. Robert states that the tobacco industry turned to hiring instead of purchasing their own slaves because of the risk involved when a slave might run away or die. He also concluded that the manufacturer could get a better estimate of costs per year if he could hire his slaves. These bonded slaves also enabled a man with no great amount of money to set himself up in the business of tobacco manufacturing. However, many slaves were owned outright by the manufacturer because in this way the rising cost of hiring slaves each year could be overcome.16 This cost for hiring did fluctuate to some extent, as can be noted in ante-bellum newspapers. The cost did not always go up. In the Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner of January 27, 1857, there was a note on the rising cost of hiring tobacco slaves for factories. "Nothing has ever equalled the extravagant demands of the hirers of Negroes for the current year in this city. The ruling rate asked on the street

14 Ibid., December 7, 1853.

15 The Richmond Enquirer, August 22, 1804.

yesterday were for adult male factory hands, $35 to $200. . . ." In contrast to this complaint against exorbitant prices for hired slaves, a farmer spoke out against the low price being offered by the tobacco manufacturers in the South, January 7, 1858 issue.

The present low prices of hands for tobacco factories should induce you to watch narrowly the game on foot, and to set your faces against it, either by hiring out your servants to some other employment or holding them in reserve till next spring when they will assuredly command higher prices. . . ."

This letter continued that slaves who had worked in tobacco manufacturing were unqualified for other jobs and would be of no use to the farmer. It stated that the manufacturer knew this and felt for this reason he could get his slaves at a low price. 18

The great Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond did not advertise for slaves until 1858. For that matter neither did any of the other iron companies to any great extent. In the Daily Dispatch of January 7, 1858 the following wanted advertisement was noted. "Wanted.--To hire for the present year 25 or 30 Negro men at the Tredegar Iron Works." 19 Again in April of 1859 there was a wanted notice for eight or ten able bodied Negro men for the balance of that year. 20 In 1853 there was a rare advertisement for cotton workers that ran; "Cotton Factory Hands.--Wanted to hire for the ensuing year, seventy or eighty hands to work in the Manchester

17 Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner, January 27, 1857.
18 The South (Richmond), January 7, 1858.
19 Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 7, 1858.
20 Ibid., April 8, 1859.
Cotton Factory. Girls and boys, from 12 to 18 years of age, desired chiefly, and for such, liberal prices will be paid. Also--Wanted to employ a large number of White Operatives . . . N. H. Powers, Agent."\(^{21}\)

In the same year was an advertisement for 20 Negro slaves for work in the Rockbridge County Iron Works. It stated that the buyer would "provide clothing, lodging and attention during sickness."\(^{22}\)

To handle the many details of exchange from owner to hirer agents were used. These agents made this their business during the hiring season and the following are examples of agents' notices to the manufacturer and other interested persons.

Negro Hiring.--The subscribers again offer their services to their friends and the public to hire out Negroes for the ensuing year. They will use their best endeavors to get good homes and good prices. Persons having Negroes to hire, would do well to send them in as early as possible.\(^{23}\)

Another notice read, "Negroes for Hire--Will be hired on the 2nd day of January, 1854, at the Court House of Henrico County, at 11 o'clock, A.M., between 30 and 40 valuable Slaves belonging to sundry estates, consisting of farm, factory, and brickyard hands."\(^{24}\) And again on January 3, 1853 there was an advertisement which read,

General agency.--The subscribers offer their services to the citizens of Richmond and the surrounding country as General Agents and collectors. They will attend to the hiring of Negroes, renting out houses, and collecting of claims, either in the city of Richmond or vicinity.\(^{25}\)

\(^{21}\) Ibid., January 3, 1853.  
\(^{22}\) Ibid., December 28, 1853.  
\(^{23}\) Ibid., December 29, 1853.  
\(^{24}\) Ibid.  
\(^{25}\) Ibid., January 3, 1853.
Thus it can be seen how the slaves changed hands. This was a method which was valuable to both slave owner and manufacturer. The slave himself actually had some say in this matter of hiring as will be shown.

During the hiring period which usually lasted from the end of December to the second week of January each year the hired slave had considerable freedom. Some were allowed to go to their homes while others could run loose in the town. In the *Daily Dispatch*, December 31, 1859, Richmond townspeople spoke out against this policy of letting the slaves do as they please during the holiday period.\(^26\) Two other comments in the *Dispatch* are noteworthy here. One states, "Saturday the streets were thronged with Negroes, hirers, owners, and buyers, as is the annual custom. Thousands of dollars changed hands, thousands of Negroes changed homes and masters. During the remainder of this week the streets will be filled with Negroes brought in from the country for hire."\(^27\) This problem of Negroes during the hiring period became so acute that in Richmond laws had to be passed to protect the citizens of the city. Another article in the *Dispatch* which deserves attention stated,

The streets are thronged with servants seeking new homes for the present year, and housekeepers, farmers, tobacconists and others, who need labor are as busy as bees, endeavoring to procure the aid they desire. The first of January on this account, is always the most unpleasant period of the year, not


\(^{27}\) *Ibid.*, January 3, 1853.
only to those who use slave labor but to businessmen generally on Main Street whose doors are obstructed, and trade retarded by the incessant flow of darkies that blockade the sidewalks and render them impassable. This nuisance, however, will exist no longer than the first of next month, unless the city council otherwise declare, as that body passed an ordinance, "concerning Negroes," on the 21st of March last, which embraces the following section:

"Not more than five Negroes shall at any one time stand together on a sidewalk, or at or near the corner of a street. And Negroes shall never stand on a sidewalk to the inconvenience of white persons having to pass by."

In connection with this subject, it may not be amiss to invite attention to another section of the same ordinance, which if properly enforced would make the streets much more passable for ladies than they are at present. Masters, in the meantime, would do well to impress their servants with its existence and inform them that its violation is punishable by stripes. Read it:

"A Negro meeting or overtaking, or being overtaken by a white person on a sidewalk, shall pass on the outside; and if it be necessary to enable such white person to pass, shall get off the sidewalk."

The problem of Negroes in the city was a year round one. A unique difference in the industrial slave and the agricultural slave was that the former had considerably more freedom than the latter. The life of the factory hired slave was not as bad as one might think. He had certain privileges which the slave on the farm did not have. The newspapers of the period again provide the best source of information for this interesting phenomenon. There one can find protests and comments against this measure of freedom allowed the slaves by the manufacturers.

The system of giving board money to the slaves was most frequently spoken out against. This was the system by which the manufacturers would

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28 Ibid., December 7, 1857.
give the slave sufficient funds to secure his own lodging and food at a
place of his own choosing. In the Dispatch of December 7, 1857 an article
appeared which protested to this "ruinous" practice.

At the convention of the Tobacconists on Thursday night last, Mr. B. A. Mayo called attention to the present loose system of
managing servants in factories, and gave it as his opinion that
the practice prevailing in factories of giving light tasks,
paying for overwork, and furnishing board money was ruinous to
the servant in every respect, unjust to the manufacturers and
injurious to owners. He desired to see a reformation affected
as one of the surest means of preventing insubordination. We
have frequently invited public attention to this subject, and
have often been surprised that the community did not demand a
reformation. The board money given, if properly expended would
feed the recipients well, but it is a notorious fact that, in
nine cases out of ten more than two-thirds of the money given
are spent in dissipation, and that private families and hotel
keepers have to feed the servants from their kitchens from one
weekend to another. . . . 29

The article continued that a unified effort was needed to discontinue the
practice. It stated that no one manufacturer could refuse to give board
money and still expect to hire a sufficient labor supply to carry on his
business. 30

This same practice was vigorously protested against in the Daily
Republican. In this article an ordinance is mentioned which would pro-
hibit the giving of board money to slaves. The tobacco manufacturers were
fighting against this ordinance whereas the editorial spoke up for it.
It stated that the manufacturers logic was not strong enough to overrule
the arguments against board money. It stated that every housekeeper would

29 Ibid., December 7, 1857.
30 Ibid.
have to stand at his door at night to keep away hoards of Negroes seeking food and shelter. "The framers of the ordinance never contemplated compelling hirers to coop their Negroes at night, in their factories and yards, and to feed them as pigs or chickens. Their object was solely to protect families from the nocturnal visits of strolling Negroes, and have plainly said so . . ."31

The system of giving money for overwork was another unusual practice in both tobacco and iron factories. The system worked much like the present day system of bonus. After the slave had completed his allotted days work then he could work extra for money. This he was allowed to use as he pleased. There are repeated examples of slaves being paid for overwork in the Tredegar Iron Works.32 In answer to a northern abolitionist cry of the "Poor Down Trodden Slave," another article was written in the Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner. The subject of this article was the overwork permitted the Negro slaves. The title read the "Poor Down Trodden Slave." It made mention of the fact that "many of the Negroes in the tobacco factories make from $8 to $12 per week overwork, without any extraordinary labor." This article suggests the fact that the slave was not in a bad way at all and that if he so desired, he could better himself.33

31 Richmond Daily Republican, October 21, 1852.
33 Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner, January 27, 1857.
Still people objected to this liberal treatment of the industrial slaves and some sought a solution. The system of hiring out by auction was advocated by some.

For some years past our tobacco manufacturers have been compelled in order to secure labor, first to purchase consent of the Negroes to live with them and then to hire them of their owners and, in order to be given the extent of daily labor to be performed and the price to be paid for such overwork as they may feel disposed to do. Such a policy has already proved most injurious to the slaves, and will eventuate in their becoming entirely worthless if persisted in. By adopting the system of hiring out by auction the owner can state the kind of work at which his servant is to be employed and so arrange the bond as to make obligatory on the hirer to keep him at certain labor.34

Other reasons for advocating this system of hiring out by auction were stated in a later article of that same hiring season.

By the change the present abominable system of giving board money could be obviated, overwork might be done away with by the tobacconists and others and good hands would bring the highest prices at all times. . . . And another and most important argument in favor of the change is, that by doing away with board money, the slaves would be prevented from intemperate indulgences, which now corrupt their morals, destroy their constitutions and eventually make them worthless.35

The slaves used in the tobacco and iron industries, therefore, enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom. There is no evidence in newspapers during that period which indicates that this freedom was ever taken away. Why did they get this liberal treatment? This can only be speculated. It is possible that this easy treatment persuaded the Negroes to work harder. Runaways were possibly reduced. The slave could not be very

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34 Richmond Daily Dispatch, December 18, 1856.
displeased with his position for where could he get better treatment. In any case he was in a very unique position and one with which the agricultural slave could be envious.
Robert lists the jobs performed by Negroes in Tobacco Kingdom. The main positions occupied by Negroes were: stemming or stripping, dipping, twisting, lump making, prizing, and the operation of screw presses. Negroes were also used in the firing or curing of tobacco. In this process a fire was built under tobacco leaves which were elevated off the floor by horizontal poles. The Negro tended the tobacco and kept it at approximately the same temperature. In an article in the 1841 issue of Southern Planter the health of these Negroes was a cause for some concern. Morris, the author of this article, said that firing the tobacco day and night caused the slave to become wet with perspiration. This often led to serious health problems in the factories.

Stemming was the process of removing the midrib from the tobacco leaf. Morris said that when stripping or stemming commenced, "the Negroes who have had the most experience, and who are considered best judges, sort the tobacco." These Negroes tied the first and second qualities

36 Robert, op. cit., p. 197.
37 Southern Planter, (Richmond, 1842), 1, 140.
38 Ibid., December, 1842, pp. 230-31.
in bundles of 5 or 6 leaves, with the half of a fine small leaf, neatly wrapped around the heads, and about an inch down the bundle; carefully observing that the leaves in a bundle be as near as possible of the same length.\textsuperscript{39}

The lugs or third quality leaves were tied in bundles of a dozen or more leaves, with little care.

Morriss continues,

When sufficient quantities of 1st and 2nd qualities are stripped to form a bulk of each quality, bids are prepared . . . two bundles of tobacco are taken up, the heads even, and the bundles are straightened, pressed and drawn through the hands of one person, then given to another who likewise presses the bundles and draws them through his hands, and passes them to the bulker, who packs them down; two more bundles are treated in the same manner, and placed as close as possible to the first two; and so on the whole length of the bed; the bulker then passes to the other side, and places the bundles in the same manner, lapping the tails about one-third of the length of the bundles, and continues first one side of the bulk and then the other, until the bulk is finished.\textsuperscript{40}

It seems then that the Negro had to be somewhat skilled to perform this operation. This was the initial stage of tobacco manufacturing and as important as it was, the Negro was entrusted with the job.

The chief operation in manufacturing plugs was done mostly by hand. It consisted of cutting stems out of the leaves, dipping the leaves in whatever flavoring compound the manufacturer might decide to use, such as sugar or licorice, "and forcing it, by means of a screw press, into molds that turned it into small hard cakes."\textsuperscript{41} This process involved the dipper,

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{40}Ibid., \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{41}About Tobacco (Richmond: Lehman Brothers, 1955).
the stemmer, and screwpress operator, many or possibly all of whom were Negro slaves. Other positions occupied by slaves were cooking and servant capacities. Draymen and hogshead men were also mentioned by Robert. 42

After the Civil War Negro women were being hired in increasing numbers as stemmers. 43 It is safe to assume that in some areas these women were used in pre-Civil War years. In the 1860 Census of Petersburg industries approximately one-third of the labor force in the tobacco factories was women. If this assumption is correct, then this would explain the increase of women in the factories. 44

42 Robert, op. cit., p. 197.


CHAPTER IV

PRIMARY TOBACCO CENTERS

According to the Industrial Census of 1850 and 1860 there were three areas in Virginia which dominated the tobacco industry: Richmond, Petersburg, and Lynchburg, as well as the counties in which they were located, employed well over half of the tobacco hands in Virginia. The following charts were formed from information taken directly from the Industrial Census of Virginia of 1850 and 1860. These censuses included a listing of all of the manufacturing interests by county and city, and described their products, machinery used, investment, and number of hands employed.

Several interesting conclusions are drawn from a close examination of these charts. Some are facts while others can only be educated guesses.

Robert states that in 1840 there were 3,824 tobacco factory hands, 5,900 in 1850, and 12,843 in 1860. These were figures for both Virginia and North Carolina. Over half of these hands worked in the three tobacco centers mentioned above. The assumption is that the great majority of hands in the tobacco factories were Negro slaves. If the figures from these charts are compared with the Personal Property Books for the same years, this assumption can be proven with some accuracy.

45 Robert, op. cit., p. 197.
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<th>Petersburg and Dinwiddie County</th>
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*Virginia Industrial Census of 1850.

NOTE: Each horizontal column above represents one factory.
## TABLE II

**Men and Women Hands Employed According to The Industrial Census of 1860**

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<td></td>
<td>Lynchburg and Campbell County</td>
<td>Richmond and Henrico County</td>
<td>Petersburg and Dinwiddie County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \text{Total: } 1,303 \quad 235 \quad 3,516 \quad 44 \quad 1,600 \quad 840 \]

*Virginia Industrial Census of 1860.*

**NOTE:** Each horizontal column above represents one factory.
The preceding charts show that there was a marked growth in tobacco factories in all three cities from 1850 to 1860. Using Richmond and Lynchburg for comparison, there were sixty-six factories in 1850, whereas in 1860 this number had grown to ninety-nine. In 1850 these two cities were shown as having 2,796 hands, both men and women. By 1860 there were 5,098 hands. If Petersburg figures are added to this, the number swelled to 7,538. This growth indicates that there were increased demands for Negro slave labor up to the Civil War. 46

One interesting fact is the increase of women in tobacco factories in the 1860 Census. There were but 153 women laborers in Richmond and Lynchburg factories in 1850. In 1860 this figure was 279. This growth is not surprising until Petersburg figures are added. Petersburg in 1860 had 840 women working in its tobacco establishments. 47 Richmond showed less employment of women whereas in Petersburg one-third of the work force was made up of women laborers. This can be accounted for by the fact that Negro women were beginning to be used as steemers in the factories. These women were probably Negro women for the most part, for tobacco factories’ distasteful and unhealthy working conditions did not provide desirable work for a white woman of that period.

There is no way of establishing the exact number of these hands which were Negroes, but by comparing the data in the charts with figures taken from the Personal Property books, an estimate can be made. In

47 Ibid.
1860 there were eight factories in Richmond having over one hundred hands.

A comparison of the number of hands employed and number of slaves accountable for in the property books follows: 48

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OWNER</th>
<th>Number of Hands</th>
<th>Number of Slaves Owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas &amp; Samuel Hardgrove</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosley and Anderson</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Thomas, Jr.</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William H. Grant</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royster Co.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turpin &amp; Yarbrough</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Barrett</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian &amp; Lea</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Petersburg factories having over 100 employees in the 1860 Census were as follows: 49

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OWNER</th>
<th>Number of Hands</th>
<th>Number of Slaves Owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David B. Tennant</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron &amp; Crawford</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair &amp; Dyson</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McEnery &amp; McCullough</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon &amp; Brodnax</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks Williams</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Chieves</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Dunlop</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Venable</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lynchburg factories having over 50 employees in the 1860 Census were as follows: 50

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48 Industrial Census of 1860 compared with Personal Property Tax Book of same year (MSS, Virginia State Library).

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.
The comparative figures show that the majority of hands working in these factories were Negro slaves. If the property books included only slaves owned and not hired slaves, then the figures would be even more conclusive. This is more than likely the case. The presence of any large number of free Negroes seems hardly likely also. Slaves were cheaper and easier to control than free labor.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF TOBACCO

The effectiveness of the slave in the tobacco industry is hardly questionable. The fact that the system grew and slave labor increased is evidence enough of this fact. It has been established that the work was favorable for the times and especially for slavery. Slaves were certainly unaccustomed to earning money for their work but in the tobacco industry they were not only clothed and cared for in sickness, but they were also given the choice of earning money if they had the initiative. The freedom given the slaves in the tobacco factories helped to keep a stable working force. The system was then profitable to both the slaves and the manufacturer for the latter could obviously operate his factory on a smaller budget. It seems that only the citizens outside of the industry did not profit. The tobacco industry discovered then what the iron industry was to find out approximately a decade later. That Negro slaves could be put to work in factories, that they could work effectively and at a considerable savings to the manufacturer.
CHAPTER VI

THE NEGROES VALUE TO THE IRON INDUSTRY

Iron in Virginia did not really become a flourishing business until the turn of the eighteenth century, but there was mention in an earlier period of slaves being used in the then limited industry. In the Writings of Colonel William Byrd a Mr. Chivers is giving Byrd instructions on how to begin an iron business. Mr. Byrd learned that "120 slaves including women were necessary to carry on all the Business of an Iron Works." 51 This was as early as the year 1732. Mr. Chivers obviously had in mind that the slaves were needed to carry on the process of mining coal or ore for the factory for in a later paragraph he stated that he had faith that "through proper instruction Negroes could be taught to do mine work tolerably well." 52

Approximately three decades later there is mention of a pig iron works in the County of Spottsylvania owned by Alexander Spottswood. In these works Spottswood employed nearly all of his slaves. 53

52 Ibid., p. 360.
During the 1830's there is a description of two furnaces in Botetourt County. The author said that at Rebecca and Jane furnaces in Botetourt County "are employed 150 operatives, 87 of which are blacks." The James River Forge was also mentioned. It had from 60 to 100 operatives and these were principally black. 54

Virginia was a state which could produce iron and produce it profitably. In an article in the Richmond Daily Times there was a report on the population increase in Botetourt County. In this report it was stated that the slave population increased 27 percent from 1840 to 1850. The article credited the increase in population of slaves to their adaptability to the iron industry. 55

In an effort to sell the Catawba Iron Works the owner offered various reasons why the iron industry in Virginia had certain advantages.

A few days since, we had occasion to state some very important facts, showing that the manufacture of iron in this state was attended with peculiar advantages. As such information cannot be familiar to the public, we repeat, that by reason of the cheapness of slave labor the best charcoal iron can be turned out at as low a price as the Pennsylvania anthracite iron, and is worth from three to five dollars per ton more. 56

These two instances credit the Negro with being the key factor in the profitable production of iron in Virginia. Joseph R. Anderson, "master," of the Tredegar Iron Works felt that without the use of the Negro slave,

55 Richmond Daily Times, January 15, 1851.
56 Richmond Times and Compiler, September 25, 1846.
the iron industry in Virginia could not hope to survive. He stated this in a letter to the President of the Tredegar Board of Directors:

In reply to the resolution of your Board at its last meeting requesting me to suggest "any and every curtailment that in my opinion might be made in the current expenditures of the compy. without injury to its interest." I will suggest such as present themselves to my mind at this time reserving for a future occasion any suggestions with regard to such details as I have not had time to consider.

Ascertaining that it would not do for us to continue the manufacture of Iron unless its cost could be diminished, we have endeavoured to fall upon a feasible plan to attain this object. As preliminary thereto the hands were all discharged last Monday and all paid except such as will remain if the new organization be approved by the Board and established.

It has always been considered an object of primary importance in our country to introduce slave labour generally in the several branches of Iron manufacture. The difficulty has been here that certain operations, as Puddling, Heating, Rolling, etc., are known only to foreigners and a few Americans who have been from interest opposed to imparting this knowledge to Negroes. The present depressed state of business has modified their notions somewhat so that seeing themselves cut off from employment here and but little prospect of being taken in at other establishments, some of these men, enough for our purposes, have been induced through the medium of the exertion of your indefatigable manager, Mr. Atlee, to enlist as it were in the service of your company and be subject to the orders of your officers so far as the manufacture of Iron is concerned, and instruct such persons, hiredmen, apprentices, or servants as may at any time be placed in the establishment. Anderson stated further in effect that these skilled white operatives were to be paid a fixed sum for five years. This was to assure the men that their job would not be taken over by the Negroes that they would teach.

The letter continued,

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It is hardly necessary for me to add that in arranging all the details of this organization I am indebted to the labor of practicable information of Messrs. Tanner and Atlee, long familiar with all the details of your establishment in all its branches of manufacture, and the Board must judge whether they ought to adopt the new organization, and will be aided in making up their opinion by reference to statement B. carefully drawn from our experience as far as it goes. From this statement it appears that when the establishment shall be in something like full operation working Six Puddling Furnaces under this organization there will, if the company were to hire the Twenty-Two Negroes to be employed in the professional point of the business, be incurred over an annual expenditure less by $11,181 than under the present organization. If, however, the company own the Twenty-Two Negroes (as it may some day) the saving would be $12,281 per annum. I would suggest that one or two be purchased from time to time as may be practicable.58

The letter goes on to state that the business in its present state did not seem worthy of further operation. Anderson offered that he also recommended that reform be made in the foundry also. He had already fired five white men and replaced them by Negroes. This one step would save the company at least $940 dollars per year providing the Negroes did as much work as the white men. Anderson ended the letter by stating that, "The foregoing items Eleven or Twelve Thousand Dollars will be realized fully only when the slaves have been tutored and we shall work six furnaces and progressively till that period."59

This letter is of special significance for it marked the beginning of a new era for the Tredegar Iron Company. This company in 1850 was the largest producer of iron in Virginia and by 1860 it more than doubled the output of every other iron factory.60 The letter indicated that the

58Ibid.
59Ibid.
60Industrial Census of Virginia, 1850 and 1860 (MSS in Virginia State Library).
company was on the verge of collapse under the system it was then following. Therefore, it seems that the introduction of slaves into the works was a sort of economic salvation. Following the letter by Anderson there was a written comparison of the old and new systems and a detailed account of the savings by the new system. In this account was a rundown of the capacities in which the slaves were to serve. Most of the slaves were to be employed as puddlers. A formal contract followed with an experienced white puddler, stating that he was to be employed to instruct Negroes in his capacity inasmuch as the Tredegar wished to introduce slave labor into their forges and rolling mills. 61 A letter from Anderson to Mr. Harrison Row provided some very interesting statements.

A Mr. Names no doubt informed you I am employing in this establishment as well as at the Armory Works adjoining of which I am President, almost exclusively slave labor except as to the Boss men. This enables me of course to compete with other manufacturing and at the same time to put it in the power of my men to do better for themselves, with this view I am now giving my men who are steady and respectable as are to be found, each two furnaces at puddling and furnish them three of my own hands who are blacks—one of them capable of acting as Foreman of one of the furnaces. . . 62

In this letter of 1848 Anderson made reference to the strike which occurred in his works the year before. He pointed out that he stood fast on the subject of slave employment and stated that every effort was made to oppose

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61 Letter from J. R. Anderson to President of Directors of Tredegar Iron Company. Tredegar Papers (MSS in Virginia State Library).

him on his stand but that he was resolved to maintain his own rights
"knowing too that certainly all iron establishments in a slave state
must come to the employment of slaves."63

In this letter Anderson was interested in hiring Row who was an
experienced puddler. However, he wanted to be sure that Row was well
aware of the fact that he would have to work with Negroes wishing not
for another strike as occurred the year previous,

Another letter to John Y. Mason in Washington expressed still
further Anderson's feelings on the subject of slaves in iron factories.

From the difficulty of controlling in a slave state, the white
labor employed at high wages in the manufacture of iron I have
come to the determination to introduce slave labor, to a great
extent, having satisfied myself by experiment of the practica-
ibility of the scheme.64

Anderson in the remainder of the letter discusses the possibility of having
Mason's slaves.

To purchase the number of Negroes would require more means than
convenient for me to apply to that purpose, and having heard,
perhaps from yourself, that your slaves have not been productive
of late at agriculture, I will make you a proposition which if
accepted may be mutually advantageous, indeed would I think
certainly be---I would then propose to hire from you for four
years from twenty to thirty young men and boys, say from 15 to
30 years of age to learn the puddling and other operations con-
ected with the manufacture of iron; the Negroes to be sober and
sprightly and any of them who are found unfit to learn the
business after reasonable trial to be returned to you. On my

63 Ibid.
64 Letter from J. R. Anderson to John Y. Mason, December 19, 1844,
part I would contract to teach each one a useful occupation who may be found capable of being taught... 65

The prices were discussed for the proposition and Anderson gave his promise to feed and clothe well. He further said that there was "no employment more healthy and invigorating to white or black." This last statement seems to be overdoing things a bit just from knowledge of the iron business itself. He told Moran that after learning the iron business his slaves would more than double in value. Another very significant statement made by Anderson concerned that of foreign pauper labor. He gave as part of his reason for hiring these slaves the purpose of trying to keep out foreign pauper labor. He also appealed to the philanthropic side of the slave owner saying that it was his "bounden duty" to seek the employment for their slaves which would be best and most profitable for them. He urged Mr. Mason to answer him as soon as possible for he had to hire slaves for the "ensuing year." 66

It can thus be reasoned that slave labor was considered even before the Civil War to be a necessity to the iron industry. Anderson's correspondence can be taken to be a good example of all the iron producers since his name in ante-bellum Virginia was synonymous with that of the iron industry. This fact will later be pointed out still further.

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
CHAPTER VII

IMPORTANT IRON REGIONS AND THE IRON SLAVE POPULATION

The area of Virginia with the most numerous Iron furnaces was the Great Valley. This valley ran along the Appalachian Mountain chain from the extreme northern tip down to the southwestern extremity of Virginia. In this valley several counties stood out in the production of iron. Wythe County in the southwestern part of the valley alone had thirteen iron furnaces of varying sizes. Botetourt County boasted of nine such iron furnaces. Rockbridge also had nine, Shenandoah seven, and Augusta also had seven. These counties mentioned produced the raw iron, not manufactured iron products. Richmond and the surrounding area was the only major producer of manufactured iron goods during the period. It became such because of the great coal fields located in nearby Chesterfield County. Henrico County in which the City of Richmond was located, therefore is listed as having only two furnaces. It was the location, however, of the Tredegar Iron Works, the Armory, Iron Works, the Shockoe Foundry, Eagle Machine Foundry, and a foundry owned by a Mrs. Talbot. These all turned out finished iron products and were in a position to hire Negro slave labor. Richmond was, therefore, the chief iron producer in Virginia before and during the Civil War. Following is a quantitative


68 ibid.

69 Industrial Census of Virginia, 1850 and 1860 (MSS in Virginia State Library).
account of some of the larger iron producers and the number of slaves which they employed. The figures arrived at were taken by comparison of figures in the Industrial Census of Virginia for 1850 and 1860 and the Personal Property Tax Books of the same years.

### TABLE III

**SLAVE EMPLOYMENT IN THE IRON INDUSTRY ACCORDING TO THE INDUSTRIAL CENSUS* AND PERSONAL PROPERTY BOOK OF 1850**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishment Owner</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Hands Employed</th>
<th>Slaves Owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. T. Jordan and Company</td>
<td>Alleghany County</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ira F. Jordan and Company</td>
<td>Alleghany County</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson and Plunkett</td>
<td>Appomattox County</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheran and Albright</td>
<td>Botetourt County</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel C. Robinson</td>
<td>Botetourt County</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph R. Anderson</td>
<td>Henrico County</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armory Iron Works</td>
<td>Henrico County</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE II (CONT'D)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shanks and Anderson</th>
<th>Rockbridge County</th>
<th>65</th>
<th>67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Doyle</td>
<td>Rockbridge County</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George F. Hupp</td>
<td>Shenandoah County</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Industrial Census of Virginia for 1850.

**Personal Property Tax Book for 1850.

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### TABLE IV

SLAVE EMPLOYMENT IN THE IRON INDUSTRY ACCORDING TO THE INDUSTRIAL CENSUS OF 1860* AND PERSONAL PROPERTY BOOK OF 1860**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishment Owner</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Hands Employed</th>
<th>Slaves Owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis F. Anderson</td>
<td>Rockbridge County</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. F. Jordan</td>
<td>Rockbridge County</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James T. Scott</td>
<td>Spottsylvania</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Graham</td>
<td>Wythe County</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the preceding charts a representative sample was taken from the leading iron manufacturers in the state. Certain conclusions may be drawn from this information. The most significant fact which can easily be seen is that all of the companies cited owned a high percentage of slaves as compared to their total work force. The figure in many cases is half or more than half of the total number of hands. This number cannot be taken for all the iron producers, however, for not all of the companies were of sufficient size to merit listing. This large number of Negro hands suggests what has already been stated, That Negroes were important to iron manufacturing. This is not to conclude that the Negroes were in all cases indispensable but rather they enabled the manufacturers to operate on a much cheaper basis. It is possible that J. R. Anderson's company was instrumental in beginning this movement toward slave labor in iron manufacturing. The Tredegar in any case was the most prosperous of the industry, having 800 hands by 1860. The Tredegar system used a
very significant number of slaves in the later period during the war. J. R. Anderson stated in 1863 that in the entire Tredegar system there were 750 Negroes. After the Civil War the ratio of Negroes to white in the Tredegar was almost constantly half and half.

70 Bruce, op. cit., p. 248.
71 Ibid., p. 237.
CHAPTER VIII

STRIKE AT TREDEGAR

The use of Negro slave labor in the iron industry caused little trouble with white labor, but there was one serious incident in 1847 at the Tredegar Iron Works and Armozy Works which could have caused a great deal of trouble had it not been handled firmly and quickly by the owners. The white laborers of the two iron works mentioned went on strike as of May 22 and 23, 1847. These workers said that they would not go back to work unless the Negro workers were removed from the jobs of puddling, rolling, and heating, in effect from the entire factory process. They also at this time made certain minimum wage demands but these were said to be of secondary importance. Such a statement was made because of the fact that the workers stated the sole reason for their strike in a resolution at the initiation of the strike. In the resolution the workers pointed out that they had no other object in view at the time that they resolved to strike "but that of trying to prohibit the employment of colored people on the said works." 72

J. R. Anderson addressed a letter to the strikers that began: "To my late workmen at the Tredegar Iron Works." He said that he regretted that the men had "given up constant employment at good wages, always promptly paid in cash," but that he fully recognized the right of

72 The Richmond Enquirer, May 29, 1847.
any individual to leave his employment at any time. At the same time he added, "I had no idea of relinquishing my right to discharge or employ anyone at my pleasure."73

If I were to yield to your demands I would be giving up the rights guaranteed to me by the Constitution and laws of the State in which we live. This I hope, you will never expect me to do; and having heard nothing further from you since my reply was conveyed to you on the 22nd inst., I must infer that you do not intend to work for me any longer.74

Anderson's abrupt and firm handling of the strike drew support from the newspapers and fortunately so. Had the strikers been supported it may have begun a chain reaction which would have set the iron industry back considerably. The editor of The Enquirer urged the public to stand behind the manufacturers. He said, "if it be sanctioned, it will render slave property utterly valueless, and place employers in the power of those employed, the latter dictating to the former what species of labor they shall employ in their service.75 The Richmond Whig said that, "the right of employers to select such kinds of labor as they may prefer, is one of which the law itself cannot deprive them . . . In this community, no combination, formed for the purpose avowed by the authors of the recent strike, can receive the slightest attention."76 The Richmond Times and Compiler said that the principle of the strike struck at all rights and

73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
privileges of the master, and that if allowed to gain a foothold would destroy the value of slave property." It is a question about which there ought not to be two opinions. 77

Northern newspapers used the strike as an effective propaganda weapon. They exclaimed that the strike pointed out the complete loathing which the white man had for the Negro race. The Times and Compiler hit at the real reason for the strike, however, in combatting this northern protest.

The objection to working with Negroes did not govern their (the strikers) actions: it was the mere fear that the Negroes were intended hereafter to take their places.

We take occasion to say, that whilst the combined efforts of the workmen to dictate to their employers the kind of labor they should use, cannot be justified, we are persuaded that they have been acting under a very mistaken understanding of their employers intentions toward them. We are satisfied that there has been no design to get white workmen to instruct Negroes who should thereafter displace them. 79

This last statement cannot be depended on too heavily, however, for Anderson years earlier had stated that his intentions were to replace the white workers with skilled Negroes in order to cut costs of business. It was this fear which precipitated the strike.

77 Ibid.
78 The Richmond Times and Compiler, May 28, 1847.
79 The Richmond Times and Compiler, June 9, 1847.
The strike was the only one of major proportion recorded during the ante-bellum period. The very fact that it did occur points out that the Negro if properly trained was capable of doing the work of a white skilled worker, and at less cost. They were to prove this conclusively when the Civil War came and their use was a necessity since white laborers were scarce because of their service in the army.
CHAPTER IX

EMPLOYER-SLAVE RELATIONS IN THE
TREDEGAR IRON WORKS

The conditions under which a colored laborer worked and lived in the industry are not as bad as one might expect. Their freedoms were not as extensive as that of the tobacco workers but they were still treated with care. There are only scattered instances of a slave in the iron industry being given board money. There is one instance of a slave named Moses being given money for board. He was given five dollars for the month. This, however, according to the records was not a common practice.

The slaves were given pay for overwork as were the slaves in the tobacco industry. This overwork consisted of all work over what was constituted as a normal days work. In the Tredegar there is evidence of what the normal working day was. In a notice from J. R. Anderson to the Revenue Cutter Yard the following was announced:

From and after Monday next 15 Inst. the Bell for commencing Work at this yard will ring at half past six o'clock in the morning and at 12 o'clock for Dinner, allowing three quarters of an hour recess, and as ten hours are regarded as a days work, in future time will be kept by the hour. The Bell for quitting in the evening will be rung as soon as it is too dark to see. 81


If one can take this as an example for all yards then we can assume that the normal working day for all hands was from six o'clock until dark with ample breaks for dinner and supper. This did not constitute an excessively hard day during this period.

Should a slave prefer to do so he could work longer than his allotted time for pay. This pay did not amount to a great deal but it did mean that a slave could earn something which for a slave was indeed unusual. In the Tredegar Pay Roll for August, September and October of 1852 the following names were listed for overwork. There was no distinction whether the worker was white or black but the names alone indicate almost without doubt that they were Negroes. There may have been more slaves but only the most obvious names were selected.

**EXAMPLES OF OVERWORK PAY**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Little Matt</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Little Frederick</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Geo. Washington</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>4. Jeff</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.97</td>
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<td>5. America</td>
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<td>6. Matt</td>
<td>.50</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Ezekiel</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Africa</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Jepe</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Moses</td>
<td>12.02</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Peter Baker</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Nat</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Reuben</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Jesse</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.87 82</td>
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82 Tredegar Rolling Mill Pay Roll for 1852.
An examination of the pay roll shows that not all slaves worked every month. They had their own choice. They could also work their own hours, as many or as little as they wished.

"The life of these ante-bellum colored iron workers presents a sunny rather than a dreary picture." Every man was expected to do his task and there was no "going through the motions without performing the work." J. R. Anderson substantiates the statement when he advised Mrs. Betsey Mason on the selling of her slaves to a manufacturer of iron.

I think it is my duty to add that I would not advise you to send your servants if they have been accustomed to an idle life--for whilst they are abundantly fed and clothed with us they are required to do their duty. . . .

The slaves had to work therefore. There was no toleration of loafing. At the same time there was frequent mention of kind treatment. In writing to a slave owner of the progress of her slave Issac, Mr. Tanner, an assistant to Anderson stated,

The Business is a very healthy one subject to a few casualties as any other and Negroes become uncommonly fond of it as they have a good deal of spare time and an opportunity to make a trifle for themselves.

Issac has given perfect satisfaction at the furnace the past year--Mr. Anderson saw him during the summer. He was much pleased with his situation.

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83 Bruce, op. cit., p. 249.
More letters in the Tredegar file show that the Negroes were always treated with kindness unless they deserved otherwise. There was one situation in 1847 when Anderson brought in a slave's wife and five children. He agreed to do this to gratify Henry, his laborer. He stated that he would feed and clothe the family but could not should not be expected to care for the expenses of childbirth and sickness. These expenses were to be taken care of by the owner. He accepted this man's family while admitting at the same time that it would be a burden on him.

Another letter deserves quoting in full in as much as it conveys Joseph R. Anderson's sympathies toward handling of all his slaves. There are no records to the contrary that the slaves were treated differently in other iron concerns. The letter is to Mrs. Sally Wood.

Thinking you would desire to see your servants, Booker, George, and Aleck, I have sent them to you and have given them money to pay their passage in the Packett Boat and expenses. I have endeavored to extend to your boys kind and humane treatment and I believe have amply supplied all their wants. I have not asked them whether they are satisfied with me but I hope they are as I cannot do more for any servants and must always require my hands to obey and do their duty, but at the same time pledge myself that they shall in no case be badly treated by my manager or agents. If you have confidence in my justice you will no doubt wish to send them back. If you have not I do not wish you to do so. Since I have introduced slave labor during the last years in my operations, I have given your servants every chance to learn as if they were my own and I don't hesitate to say that Booker especially has cost me in the waste of iron and coal more than his hire. . . .


In another case Anderson actually bought a slave from an owner so that the slave could purchase his own freedom as well as that of his family by work in the Tredegar Iron Works. 88

Thus it can be seen that the slaves in the Tredegar Company received the best of treatment. This does not necessarily mean that all Negro iron workers were treated in this manner, but the fact that the slaves were expensive alone points out that they could not be maltreated. A life which could be made appealing to the slaves would tend to preserve good relations, thus cutting down on runaways and a loss of investment. The kind and liberal treatment given the slaves was a necessity as well as humane.

CHAPTER X

SUMMARY OF IRON

The use of slave labor in the iron industry was as much a matter of necessity as it was convenience. In order to compete with northern iron industries the Virginia manufacturers turned to slavery. The furnaces in the Great Valley of Virginia used this type of labor extensively. The Tredegar Iron Works under the ownership of Joseph R. Anderson turned to slavery in skilled positions to cut cost of production. White skilled labor was used to instruct these Negro slaves in such positions as puddling, rolling and heating. Partly for this reason the Tredegar Works was able to move from a state of virtual collapse in 1842 to that of the largest in Virginia by the time of the Civil War. In a comparison of the total labor force in several leading iron concerns it was found that many had as many as fifty percent Negro labor. Ample evidence as to the value of Negro slave labor in iron manufacturing in Virginia. There was only one major incident of hostility between white and Negro laborers in iron between 1830 and 1860. This being the strike at the Tredegar and Armory Iron Works in Richmond. The strike was put down swiftly by the owners and there was no re-occurrence. At the famed Tredegar Iron Works under J. R. Anderson the slaves were treated in a liberal manner. They were given free time, fed, clothed, and allowed to earn some money. This was certainly a unique phenomenon in the institution of slavery.
An inspection of the Tredegar books during the Civil War shows that slave labor in the iron factories greatly increased. At five loading furnaces in the Tredegar chain (Catawba, Grace, Cloverdale, Glenwood, and Rebecca), there were 507 hands employed. Of these 507 there were 339 Negroes. Letters mention hiring during this same year groups of 100 Negroes and more.

Thus the need increased for Negro slave labor rather than decreased. The absence of so many white laborers who were in the army probably had much to do with this. Still the iron industry continued to function as it never had before.

89 Negroes and Rations at Catawba 1865. Tredegar Papers (MSS in Virginia State Library).

90 Ibid.
CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSIONS

"When the channels of agriculture are choked," predicted an industrial promoter, "the manufacturer of our own productions will open new channels of profitable employment for our slaves." Some others felt that through slave labor in the factories the South could free itself from dependence on Northern manufacturing. These Southern industrial leaders in other words felt that slavery and manufacturing were compatible.

Some feel that slaves were worthless to industry because of their very nature. They felt that the fact that they were slaves made them lazy and thus useless in the occupation of manufacturing. Negroes could only be useful in gang labor, particularly on plantations. Others felt that if possible, however, Negro mechanics would be good for the system for white workers would be so hostile to Negroes taking their jobs that they would become "not abolitionists."\footnote{1}

The slaves used in the tobacco and iron industries in Virginia had a distinct advantage over the agricultural slave, however. In the first place the system of hiring allowed him more freedom in both industries. In the tobacco industry the owners often allowed their

\footnote{1}Stamp, \textit{ibid.}, p. 64.

slaves to live and board where they wished, giving them ample money for such. Overwork pay was again a unique practice which again was almost unprecedented in the institution of slavery. In many cases the hired slave was allowed a two week holiday period during hiring season from the end of December to the second week of January. Thus it seems that the Negro was in many ways more of an apprentice rather than a slave. It is no wonder that very few were lost due to runaways. The slave in the tobacco and iron industry had a much easier life than he might have gotten anywhere else. This freedom combined with relatively kind treatment from the hirer was enough to make a slave rather content with his position.

The value of the slave to the two industries cannot be questioned. The very fact that the number of slaves in their factories increased each decade is evidence of this fact. J. R. Anderson introduced slave labor into his business both on a skilled and unskilled basis so that the Tredegar could remain in business and operate on a profitable level. This innovation allowed the Virginia manufacturers to compete with northern industrialists. By the time of the Civil War both the tobacco and iron industries were employing Negro slaves in capacities which required skill as well as in those which utilized the slaves' physical attributes. By 1860 both the industries were on a comparable basis with the largest in the United States, the tobacco industry in Virginia leading all others in the country. Slave labor must be given at least part credit for this.
Though slavery was not as profitable in Virginia agriculture as it once had been, and was becoming increasingly more unprofitable, it did not mean that slavery in Virginia was on the way out. Had it not been for the Civil War it is entirely possible that through use of slave labor in industry slavery would have continued for some time in Virginia. The Negro could adapt himself to factory labor with training and he was in this capacity as effective as he was on the farm.
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