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DANIEL PRATT OF PRATTVILLE:
A NORTHERN INDUSTRIALIST AND A SOUTHERN TOWN

VOLUME I

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the life of Daniel Pratt, one of the South's most important industrialists. Daniel Pratt was born in Temple, New Hampshire on July 20, 1799. In 1821, he migrated to Jones County, Georgia, where he worked as a carpenter-architect for ten years. He married Esther Ticknor of Connecticut in 1827. Samuel Griswold hired Pratt in 1831 to superintend his cotton gin factory in Jones County. Two years later, Pratt migrated to Autauga County in central Alabama, where he started his own gin shop.

In 1839, Pratt founded Prattville, located fourteen miles from Alabama's capital, Montgomery. The next year, he formed Daniel Pratt and Company, which manufactured several hundred gins annually. Pratt's gins won favorable attention from prominent southern periodicals like De Bow's Review. By 1860, Pratt's company was the largest cotton gin manufacturer in the world.

Pratt started a cotton mill in 1846. Although several planters invested in Prattville Manufacturing Company (PMC), Pratt dominated the business. PMC became one of the South's most successful and celebrated textile factories. It relied primarily on the labor of poor white families,

but it did employ some slaves. To mold his white employees into an effective work force, Pratt inaugurated a vigorous "uplift" program, which emphasized temperance, education, and church and Sunday school attendance. This program was generally successful.

Prattville, the site of Daniel Pratt's factories, became a significant town with numerous stores and shops, including a sash, door and blind shop and a carriage and wagon shop, as well as churches, schools, and voluntary associations. Included among the latter were a Bible society, a temperance society, a singing society, a fire engine company, a band, and a lyceum.

In addition to having a successful business career, Pratt was involved in Alabama politics from 1847 to his death in 1873. In 1860, he was elected to Alabama's House of Representatives, and ten years later, he became a strong—though ultimately unsuccessful—contender for Alabama's governorship. Pratt vigorously advocated southern industrialization and economic diversification. His pronouncements fell on a mostly receptive audience. When he died, newspapers eulogized him as one of Alabama's greatest men.

INTRODUCTION

In 1870, Daniel Pratt, an Alabama industrialist born in New Hampshire in 1799, was under serious consideration as the Democratic candidate for governor of Alabama. The state's main Republican newspaper, the Montgomery Daily Journal, scoffed at the idea that a man like Daniel Pratt could ever become the nominee of the Alabama Democratic party. Pratt, the paper noted, "is a laborer with his own hands, a mechanic . . . which is, being Democratically interpreted, a 'mudsill,' 'essentially a slave,' something that stinks in the nostrils of the chivalry." Many historians have accepted the view expressed by the Journal that the South was hostile to industry during both the antebellum and Reconstruction periods. These scholars point to the prevalence of plantation and subsistence agriculture and the relative dearth of factories and urban areas in the South as proof that the region harbored mostly antipathy for manufacturers like Daniel Pratt, who called on southerners to get behind industrial development. For these historians, the opinion expressed in 1861 by Texan Louis Wigfall to an English visitor represents the view largely held by the people of the South: "We are a

peculiar people, sir! . . . We are an agricultural people. . . . We have no cities—we don't want them. . . . We want no manufactures: we desire no trading, no mechanical or manufacturing classes." But the business career of Daniel Pratt in Alabama, which lasted from 1833 to 1873, challenges the conventional view that the South did not want cities or manufactures.¹

Daniel Pratt migrated to Alabama after a fourteen-year career in Georgia, first as a carpenter-architect and then as the business partner of pioneer cotton gin manufacturer Samuel Griswold. In 1839, Pratt established a tremendously successful cotton gin factory at Prattville, located in central Alabama. By 1860, he had become the largest gin manufacturer in the world and a very wealthy man. Pratt, however, was a fervent Methodist who wanted to do more in his earthly life than pile up riches. He hoped to provide employment for the poor and build what he called "a village of good morals and good society" that would resemble the

¹Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 7 April 1870; William Howard Russell, My Diary North and South, ed. Fletcher Pratt (New York, 1954), 99. For the view that a hegemonic, prebourgeois planter elite opposed significant industrialization and urbanization in the South, see especially Eugene Genovese's seminal work, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South (New York, 1965); Randall M. Miller's The Cotton Mill Movement in Antebellum Alabama (New York, 1978); Raimondo Luraghi's The Rise and Fall of the Plantation South (New York, 1978); and Jonathan Wiener's Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885 (Baton Rouge and London, 1978).

New Hampshire towns and villages he had known in his youth. In 1846, he spearheaded the incorporation of Prattville Manufacturing Company (PMC), one of the South's most important cotton mills. By 1860, PMC employed over 140 people, mostly women and children from poor white farm families. In addition, Prattville itself became very much "a village of good morals and good society," possessing strong churches, schools, voluntary associations, and even a lyceum. Nor was Prattville a one-man company town. Rather, merchants and mechanics came to the town and opened their own stores and shops. Frenetic economic boosterism characterized antebellum Prattville as citizens sought to attract railroads and more industry to their town.

During the period when Daniel Pratt built this "Yankee" town in the heart of the Deep South, he found himself nearly uniformly praised in Alabama newspapers. In the 1850s, Pratt, a northern-born industrialist, became one of the most admired and celebrated Alabamians. His popularity in Alabama belies the assertion that southerners feared industrialization and urbanization.

Pratt survived the Civil War to become even more influential in the period that followed, Reconstruction. In the wake of the economic havoc wrought by war and emancipation, many Alabamians concluded that Pratt's way would have to become their way as well. At Pratt's death in 1873, his reputation stood higher than it ever had. Even in death,

he continued to exercise influence in his adopted state. His son-in-law, Henry DeBardleben, used his wife's inheritance from her father to fund the industrial development of Birmingham, while New South boosters evoked the name "Prattville" as an example of what one determined manufacturer could accomplish in a southern state.

A study of Daniel Pratt and Prattville, then, provides a view of a different South than we are customarily shown. That the man and the town he built became revered icons of progressiveness in both antebellum and Reconstruction Alabama suggests that at least one southern state was not held in the firm and fatal grip of a premodern-prebourgeois ideology. In truth, Daniel Pratt found that Alabama held fertile fields for his economic endeavors and his industrial gospel.

CHAPTER 1
NEW ENGLAND AND GEORGIA

Daniel Pratt's roots ran deep in the rocky soil of New England. John Pratt migrated from England to Dorchester, Massachusetts in 1643. His great-great grandson Daniel Pratt was born in Reading in 1725.¹

Daniel Pratt of Reading worked as a farmer and joiner. His first wife, Abigail, died in 1771, and in 1773, he married Ruth Burnap. Daniel and Abigail Pratt had eight children, including Daniel and Edward (1765-1829). At Daniel Pratt's death, in 1795, he left the bulk of "what worldly estate it hath pleased God to bless me with in this life" to these two sons. Daniel received his father's farm, and Edward received his father's house and lot in Reading. In addition, the brothers shared Daniel's joiner tools. The father also bequeathed to each son a religious book. To Daniel went a work by Joseph Flavel, and to Edward went Matthew Henry's "Annihilations." Daniel Pratt also gave

¹Eleanor Smith Cooke, The Genealogy of Daniel Pratt (Prattville, 1990); Will of Daniel Pratt of Reading, Folder 45, Pratt Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

Edward extremely minute instructions on the care he expected him to provide his stepmother, Ruth.²

Four years after his father's death, Edward migrated with his wife, Asenath Flint, their three small children, Asenath, Dorcas, and Edward, and his stepmother to the township of Temple, New Hampshire, nestled in the hills above the Souhegan River some fifty miles northwest of Reading. Less than two miles outside the village of Temple, Edward purchased the house and farm of John Burnap, a relation of his stepmother. Over the next ten years, Edward and Asenath had three more children, Daniel, Abigail, and Eliza.³

Asenath's father, Ebenezer Flint, and his family settled in nearby Wilton Township in 1802. A farmer and veteran of the Battle of Concord, Ebenezer "had an iron constitution, was of middle height, compactly built, quick and muscular, a man of much decision and very industrious." In his later years he often expounded on the intrinsic value of work: as a young man, if he could not get more, he

²Will of Daniel Pratt of Reading, Folder 45, Pratt Collection. Joseph Flavel and Matthew Henry, prominent late seventeenth-century writers, were widely popular in New England. See David D. Hall, Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in New England (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 235.

³Henry Ames Blood, History of Temple, N.H. (Boston, 1860), 242-45; Cooke, Daniel Pratt; The Historical Society of Temple, New Hampshire, A History of Temple, New Hampshire, 1768-1976 (Dublin, N.H., 1976), 503.

declared, he would work for one shilling, six pence a day, or for the shilling, or even for the pence. By his first wife, Asenath Holt, Ebenezer had nine children. After Asenath's death, he remarried in 1789 and had three more children, including two sons, Samuel and Abner. Ebenezer provided both these sons with a good education. Samuel graduated from Middlebury College in Vermont, and Abner graduated from Dartmouth College in 1821, later teaching mathematics in Albany, New York. Ebenezer Flint's will of 1819 indicates that he had accumulated a large amount of property by this time. In addition to his farm, he left monetary bequests totalling 1,100 dollars.⁴

Flint probably served as a role model for Edward and Asenath Pratt's fourth child, Daniel, who was born at the Temple farm house on July 20, 1799. Daniel grew up in an environment that resembled that of seventeenth-century New England. The deterioration of Puritan values in the

⁴Abiel Abbot Livermore and Sewall Putnam, History of the Town of Wilton, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire (Lowell, Mass., 1888), 369-70; Will of Ebenezer Flint of Wilton, Hillsborough County Courthouse. Samuel Flint migrated to Milledgeville, Georgia, where he died in 1828. Abner Flint suffered a mental breakdown in 1832, becoming an inmate "for a time at the asylum at Concord" and dying "at the county farm at Goffstown." Livermore and Putnam, Wilton, 370. Asenath Pratt's six children did not fare very well in Ebenezer Flint's will, each child receiving a mere ten dollars. Flint did give Daniel Pratt money in 1819 for his trip to Georgia, however. See below.

eighteenth century seems not to have affected the Pratt household.⁵

Despite Ebenezer Flint's apparent prosperity, Edward and Asenath Pratt have been characterized as "poor but comfortable livers, obliged to use the strictest economy, as their only means of support was the produce of a small farm in a newly settled town." Despite these pinched economic circumstances, they provided Daniel with a religious education and vocational training. The family belonged to the Congregational Church in Temple, Edward and Asenath having purchased, in 1799, for \$33.33, Pew No. 9 in Temple Meeting House. The parents were "strict in their duty as church members." The Sabbath was "not only a day of rest, but a day to be devoted to the service of God." The parents "required their children to attend church and prayer meetings," and they performed "Sabbath-school duties" at home, either "by catechising the children or requiring them to read the Bible or some religious book." On the Sabbath, "all vain and trifling conversation" was prohibited, and on no day was a novel permitted in the house.⁶

⁵Blood, History of Temple, 242.

⁶This account of Daniel Pratt's New Hampshire upbringing is based on the reminiscences of his sister Eliza, the last surviving Pratt sibling. See Shadrack Mims, "History of Prattville," in Susan Frances Harrant, ed., Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond, Va., 1904), 40-49.

Temple served as a proper spiritual setting for this religiously conservative family. Noah Miles, Temple's Congregationalist minister from 1782 to 1831, stood firm against religious deviation during his long tenure. In 1792, he protested against the playing of a bass viol in the church, calling it "ungodly music." Only after a five-year battle did the church finally vote to allow the instrument back into the building. He also opposed the installation of a stove, fearing that warm worshippers would become drowsy during his sermons, but he eventually relented to the pro-stove faction in 1828. Death spared Miles from having to cope with the ultimate anathema, the founding of a Universalist church in Temple in 1832, but he would have been relieved to find that this church remained weak.⁷

Although Daniel was well-versed in religion, he had only a limited secular education. As a boy, he spent eight or ten weeks in both winter and summer in District School No. 4. Owing to his father's ill health, he withdrew from the summer term after he grew "old enough to assist in farming." Daniel's formal education ended in 1815, when he became, for a term of five years, an apprentice to a house

⁷Historical Society of Temple, Temple, 276-306.

carpenter named Aaron Kimball Putnam, who lived in the neighboring town of Wilton.⁸

Shadrack Mims, Pratt's textile factory agent from 1845 to 1860 and a partner in the gin factory company, confirmed that Pratt felt that "defect" of a rudimentary education throughout his life, "as there were many things in connection with his extended operations which he was compelled to employ others to do for him." According to Mims, Pratt's "knowledge of the common, plain rules of arithmetic was very deficient, and as to English grammar, he knew nothing, except what he learned from reading standard works." In letters, Pratt often expressed regret over his lack of education, and his very erratic spelling in his letters indicates that he was not being unduly modest.⁹

Although Daniel Pratt's parents did not provide their son with a very good secular education, they did give him a strong religious upbringing that exercised a strong influence upon him for the rest of his life. Pratt's later conduct suggests that he had absorbed, at home and in Temple Meeting House, the "Protestant Ethic." Like Perry Miller's John Hull, "the greatest Boston merchant of the [the mid-seventeenth century] and the legendary mintmaster," Daniel

⁸Blood, History of Temple, 242; Mims, "History of Prattville," 41-42; Livermore and Putnam, Wilton, 478.

⁹Mims, "History of Prattville," 49. For an admission by Pratt of his poor schooling see Daniel Pratt to Thomas Bugbee, 19 December 1848, Folder 46, Pratt Collection.

Pratt would devote himself "to making profits without succumbing to the temptations of profit."¹⁰

Having given their son the will to succeed, Edward and Asenath added the means. Daniel apparently took after his joiner grandfather, for Edward had discovered in him a "mechanical genius." This revelation meant that Daniel would have to learn a mechanical trade, for good Congregationalists no doubt still believed with their seventeenth-century forbearers that "God called a man to a particular occupation by giving him talents and inclination for it." In apprenticing their son to Putnam—"a fine carpenter and a worthy man"—Edward and Asenath made a wise decision. As his career in Georgia and Alabama revealed, Pratt received a good education in carpentry from his master.¹¹

Just as Pratt's family life conformed to tradition, New Hampshire in the early 1800s adhered to many of the old ways. The state remained overwhelmingly rural in 1820, with fewer than 9,000 persons engaged in manufacturing. Few in New Hampshire, writes historian Lynn Warren Turner, "had any vision of the smoking chimneys and whirling

¹⁰Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), 40-43.

¹¹Mims, "History of Prattville," 41-42; Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Family: Essays on Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England (Boston, 1944), 32. Two of the major parental duties that Morgan identifies are the duty to teach the child a calling and the duty to provide him with a religious education.

spindles that were destined to transform the pleasant river valleys of their acquaintance into hives of industry." New Hampshire did have twenty-eight cotton mills and eighteen wool mills in 1823, but Turner characterizes this information as "misleading" because the mills were quite small. New Hampshire's industry in this period, Turner notes, "was so highly decentralized that it hardly affected the distribution of population or concentration of wealth." Pratt's own town, Temple, remained untouched by industry as late as 1860. Temple's historian, Henry Ames Blood, boasted that year that "there having been no manufactures in town, there has consequently been no Irish, Dutch, or other foreign accretion among us, and that often unhealthy swelling of population has thus been avoided." Temple township never achieved a population of more than five or six hundred. However, several nearby towns in the Souhegan River Valley to the south and east of Temple had mills by the 1820s. In Wilton, where Pratt worked for Putnam from 1815 to 1819, townspeople established a mill in 1814. Another nearby town, Milford, had a mill of 844 spindles by 1822.¹²

¹²Blood, History of Temple, 89; William N. Banks, "Temple, New Hampshire," Antiques 108 (October 1975): 108; Works Progress Administration, New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State (Boston, 1938), 492-96. On the backwardness of New Hampshire in the 1820s, see Lynn Warren Turner, The Ninth State: New Hampshire's Formative Years (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1983), chapter 11.

Pratt left New Hampshire in 1819, the fourth year of his five-year apprenticeship. Putnam had become financially distressed during the Panic of 1819, and he was forced to mortgage his home. At the age of twenty, Pratt set out for Savannah, Georgia, his intention being to make enough money to help Putnam redeem his mortgage. Pratt carried with him twenty-five dollars and a box of tools. Grandfather Flint had given him the money; perhaps the tools were the ones bequeathed in 1795 by grandfather Pratt. Landing in Savannah in November, Pratt apparently quickly found good work, for he returned to New Hampshire in 1820 and redeemed the mortgage. The grateful Putnam, in 1822, named his newborn son Daniel Pratt, the first of several men to do so over the next five decades.¹³

Impressed with the opportunities he had seen in Georgia, Pratt returned to Savannah after a few months. Probably after having worked with a master builder there, he migrated, in July 1821, to Milledgeville, the Georgia capital, situated on the Oconee River in Baldwin County. Over the next ten years, Pratt plied his trade in the vicinity of Milledgeville and nearby Macon. His base became Jones County, which lay situated between the two

¹³Livermore and Putnam, Wilton, 478; Mims, "History of Prattville," 42-43; Savannah Advertiser, 23 November 1819. The Savananah Advertiser listed Pratt as a passenger aboard the brig "Favorite." It is not clear why he chose Savannah as his destination.

towns. The whole area formed part of the rich plantation belt that stretched across middle Georgia.¹⁴

The growth of Milledgeville was hampered by the difficulty of steamboat travel up the Oconee and by outmigration to the newly opened lands in western Georgia and in Alabama in the 1820s, but the town, as the state capital, remained an important place. Observers considered Macon, which had a population of 2,638 in 1830, an "emporium of commerce" with a "high destiny." Clinton, the seat of Jones County, had become a substantial town by 1820, with a number of mercantile and manufacturing establishments, three hotels, two churches, a male and female academy, and several attorneys and physicians. Baldwin and Jones counties, moreover, both had their share of wealthy planters. In short, this part of central Georgia needed the services of a good carpenter. Men of means wanted fancy houses, and planters wanted sturdy boats to carry cotton down the Oconee or the Ocmulgee to market in Darien or Savannah.¹⁵

¹⁴See De Bow's Review 10 (February 1851): 225 and the Montgomery Daily Mail, 14 April 1870 for general statements of Pratt's activities in this area.

¹⁵On the early history of Milledgeville and Baldwin County, see James C. Bonner, Milledgeville: Georgia's Antebellum Capital (Athens, Ga., 1978). On Macon, see James H. Stone, "Economic Conditions in Macon, Georgia in the 1830s," Georgia Historical Quarterly 54 (1970): 209-25. On the early history of Clinton and Jones County, see William Lamar Cawthon, Jr., "Clinton: County Seat on the Georgia Frontier, 1808-1821" (M.A. thesis, University of Georgia, 1984). On Milledgeville's difficulties in the 1820s, see Bonner, Milledgeville, 35. By 1828, Baldwin County had

Pratt kept busy in the 1820s, working primarily as a house carpenter-architect, but also building boats and erecting bridges. In 1827, he wrote his father that he had "got on a difficult branch [of my trade] at this time which is Boat building." He now worked "in Macon building boats to carry cotton down & fetch goods up the [Ocmulgee] River which is disagreeable and heavy work." Until steamboats began successfully navigating the Ocmulgee River to Macon in the 1830s, flatboats served as the town's exclusive form of river transportation. Pratt also may have built Macon's first bridge over the Ocmulgee in the early 1820s. For a time, he owned a modest mercantile establishment as well. Pratt informed his father that he had "a small Store," to which he paid "but little attention." Instead, he "employed a young man to attend to it." His most important work during this period proved to be the construction of homes.¹⁶

nineteen planters who owned more than fifty slaves each. Ibid. Jones County was also doing well in this period, as is evidenced by an 1818 letter written from Clinton by a smitten Yankee. Jones County, he wrote, had "good soil producing cotton and corn in abundance. The planters are generally rich having a large number of negroes." Noting that the man with whom he boarded owned twenty slaves, he waxed: "We live very well indeed and [have] plenty of slaves to wait upon us here." Cawthon, "Clinton," 76-77.

¹⁶De Bow's Review 4 (September 1847): 136; Stone, "Macon," 213-15; Daniel Pratt to Edward Pratt, 19 June 1827, Unnumbered Folder, Pratt Collection. Pratt's letters, particularly those written prior to the 1850s, contain numerous misspelled words and improper uses of grammar, which I have left uncorrected.

Over the course of the 1820s, Pratt distinguished himself as one of the preeminent carpenter-architects of the area. He probably designed and built at least eight houses in Baldwin and Jones counties between 1821 and 1831. These were the Seaton Grantland house, the Charles Howard house, the John Williams house, the Samuel Lowther house, the John Gordon house, the Thomas Maughon house, the Benjamin Jordan house, and the Samuel Boykin house.¹⁷

¹⁷Primary documentation concerning Pratt's career as a carpenter-architect is thin. An 1870 newspaper article on Pratt states that "he erected many of the fine residences of the old families in and around Milledgeville." The article also states that in Macon and the surrounding countryside, Pratt "controlled in a great measure, the business . . . as builder and contractor." Montgomery Daily Mail, 14 April 1870. Samuel Hardeman Griswold (1844-1917), a turn-of-the-century Jones County historian and a grandson of Clinton cotton gin manufacturer Samuel Griswold, in 1908 identified Pratt as the architect and builder of houses for "General Gordon, Col. Maughon, and others;" and his pronouncement carries much weight. His grandfather and his father, Elisha Case Griswold, were Pratt's business partners and friends in the antebellum period; and young Samuel frequently shuttled from Jones County to Prattville with his father. In 1856, in fact, Pratt affectionately mentioned Samuel in a letter to Elisha: "Tell Sammy that Ellen [Pratt's daughter] is a large girl, goes to school. I think she would very much like to see him and all the rest of us would I am certain." See S[amuel] H[ardeman] Griswold, "The Cotton Gin—An Interesting History of the Gin and Its Maker," Gray Jones County News, 2 April 1908; Daniel Pratt to Elisha Case Griswold, 11 March 1856, Folder 48, Pratt Collection. On the Griswold family, see Carolyn White Williams, History of Jones County, Georgia: 1807-1907 (Macon, Ga., 1957), chapter 22. Malcolm Alexander Smith identified Pratt as the builder of the Grantland house. See Malcolm Alexander Smith, "Eulogy," in Tarrant, ed., Daniel Pratt, 121-22; Richard L. Raley, "Daniel Pratt, Architect and Builder in Georgia," Antiques 95 (September 1972): 424, 427. Moreover, Pratt dabbled in architecture in Alabama. He built his own house in Prattville in 1842 (which bore a striking resemblance to the Jordan house),

With the exception of the modest Grantland house, which would seem to have been an apprentice work, these houses were fine examples of Federal architecture.

All had exquisite Federal details, most of them adapted from Asher Benjamin. These included semi-circular or elliptical fanlights, curving stairways and wood and plaster work, much of which was reminiscent of the Adam-Federal period. Frequently, the woodwork was grained, some was marbled, and details might be gilded or touched with gold.

On their exteriors, most of these houses had two-story central porticoes with two columns. As a group, the houses attributed to Pratt and another local carpenter-architect,

and, while serving as a building commissioner for the Alabama capitol in 1850, he submitted plans for a Gothic-style building reminiscent of the state capitol in Milledgeville. He also designed and built a Gothic-style Methodist church in Prattville. See Mims, "History of Prattville," 38-39; Robert Gamble, The Alabama Catalog, Historic American Buildings Survey: A Guide to the Early Architecture of the State (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1987), 194; Donna C. Hole, "Daniel Pratt and Barachias Holt: Architects of the Alabama State Capitol?", Alabama Review 37 (April 1984): 89. On the Prattville Methodist Church, see my discussion in chapters 5 and 7. Pratt clearly had connections with Gordon, Boykin, and Maughon. In 1825, Pratt bought land from his neighbor John Gordon, and in 1830, Pratt, who had formerly lived in Jones County, is listed near Samuel Boykin in Baldwin County in the United States census. Thomas Maughon and Daniel Pratt were on quite good terms, as evidenced by the assistance Maughon extended Pratt's aunt-in-law Clarissa Ormsby and the friendly letter he wrote Pratt in 1838. See my discussion below.

Secondary material on Pratt's architectural activity in Georgia is more substantial. In addition to Raley's work mentioned above, see John Linley, Architecture of Middle Georgia: The Oconee Area (Athens, Ga., 1972); John Linley, The Georgia Catalog, Historic American Buildings Survey: A Guide to Architecture in the State (Athens, Ga., 1982); Frederick Doveton Nichols, The Early Architecture of Georgia (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1957).

John Marlcor, are considered to have national significance. They have been dubbed "Milledgeville Federal."¹⁸

If the chronology for these houses is correct, then, Pratt's architecture reveals "the growth of the man as an artist." Pratt's early work, as seen in the Grantland, Howard, and Williams houses (all built either in or immediately outside Milledgeville), is less inspired than his later work. The Grantland house has little to distinguish it beyond its elliptical fanlight. The Howard house has a fine portico, elliptical fanlights, and a circular staircase," but "the unacademic quality of its design is reflected in its simple plan, which has a single file of front rooms on either side of a central hall and a stair in a curved exedra or niche." Moreover, the rear of the portico is balanced by "a curious little closet," upsetting the house's symmetry. Finally, the Williams house has an impressive portico, beautiful semicircular fanlights, and a curved stair, but the floorplan is a "traditional, solid and unimaginative four-room plan."¹⁹

The later houses represented Pratt's work at its best. All but the Lowther house had very similar exterior

¹⁸Linley, Georgia Catalog, 56-57; Linley, Middle Georgia, 35-36, 42; Nichols, Early Architecture, 124-25, 130, 137-38; Raley, "Daniel Pratt," 427.

¹⁹Nichols, Early Architecture, 124; Linley, Middle Georgia, 140-41; Raley, "Daniel Pratt," 427.

features: two-story central porticoes with fluted columns and doors with grand semicircular fanlights. The Jordan house boasted the most academic exterior of the group, with an entablature and tympanum enriched with triglyphs. The house also had four columns instead of the usual two. A delicate one-story portico with four columns and doors with elliptical fanlights distinguished the Lowther house. There is no documentation of the interior of the Maughon house, which burned in the nineteenth century, but the other houses had virtually identical floor plans: "an entrance hall and enlarged stair behind, a circular free-standing stair, and flanking rooms, the small pair behind separated by an interior chimney." These three houses and the Jordan house were also marked by exceedingly rich interior decoration, skillfully adapted from the architectural design books of Asher Benjamin.²⁰

²⁰Nichols, Early Architecture, 124-25, 130, 137-38; Williams, Jones County, 220-22. The finest example of adaptation is found in the design of the niches on either side of the parlor fireplace in the Gordon house. The ribbed vaulting of the half domes over the niches was apparently inspired by a design for a fanlight from Benjamin's American Builder's Companion. One authority has written that "the scale, arrangement of decorative elements, and quality of both wood carving and plasterwork in these niches seem almost faultless." He argues, in fact, that the rooms of the Gordon house "are among the finest in Georgia, with only a few peers in the nation." Raley, "Daniel Pratt," 431-32. Nichols, a bit more guardedly, has called the parlor of the Gordon house "certainly one of the handsomest Federal rooms in Georgia." Pratt also adapted fanlights, banisters, and cornice details from Benjamin. Nichols, Early Architecture; Raley, "Daniel Pratt," 427-28.

Pratt's skill, it seems, attracted many customers, but he had trouble obtaining proper satisfaction for his work. Money was scarce, and he appears to have received payment for some of his work in land. "I have about 250 acres of land," he informed his father in 1827. "The way I came by the property I now have," he continued, "I took it for work." He told Edward that "[I] would sell it if I could get the value of it but at this time I could not get mutch more than half the value of it."²¹

Apparently inadvertently, Pratt became a fairly significant landholder in Georgia. In 1825, John Gordon sold him 202 1/2 acres, possibly in payment for the house that Pratt had built for him. The next year, B. L. Raney sold Pratt 150 acres. In 1828, James Mason sold Pratt 50 acres. Finally, J. C. B. Mitchell sold Pratt 191 1/4 acres in 1830.²²

Pratt began disposing of his land as early as 1827, when he sold 101 1/4 acres to Robert Brown. The next year, he sold 60 acres to Thomas Maughon. In 1830, he sold 90 acres to J. C. B. Mitchell and 150 acres to Robert Hutchings. Pratt completely divested himself of his acreage as

²¹Daniel Pratt to Edward Pratt, 19 June 1827, Unnumbered Folder, Pratt Collection. Pratt also complained to his father of not having been paid for work done in 1826.

²²Deed Book G, 60; Deed Book N, 135, 230-31, Deed Book P, 166, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Jones County Courthouse.

early as 1832, when he sold 100 acres to Robert Brown and 90 acres to Thomas Maughon.²³

Pratt had his opportunity to become a Georgia planter, but he declined it. Having left farming behind in 1815 when he became Putnam's apprentice, he apparently had no desire to return to it. Yet, while his landholdings peaked in 1826 (when he owned 353 1/2 acres), at no time between 1825 and 1832 did he own less than 192 1/4 acres. He did not want this land, but feeling economically constrained from selling it immediately, he had to find some short-term use for it. By 1827, Pratt owned three slaves, and to them he rented his acreage.²⁴

Unfortunately for Pratt, his entry into the slaveholders' ranks had clearly nettled his stern Congregationalist father. In his letter to Edward, Daniel first attempted to deny the sin. He admitted that he had not intended "that you should have known anything about that, as I supposed that you would think that I was ruined

²³Deed Book N, 334-35, Deed Book O, 225, 322, Deed Book P, 60-61, 139-40, 167-68, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Jones County Courthouse.

²⁴Daniel Pratt to Edward Pratt, 19 June 1827, Unnumbered Folder, Pratt Collection. These slaves were likely Tom, Dave, and Harry, whom Pratt purchased from James Boykin on May 3, 1825 for \$1,612. All three were in their mid-twenties. On August 6, 1826, Pratt also purchased a slave woman named Aggy, aged twenty-six, for \$300 from Alexander McGregor. Aggy does not appear to figure in Pratt's letter to his father. See Slave Bills of Sale, Continental Eagle Corporation Papers, Prattville, (CECP).

eternally." He rationalized that the slaves "which you mentioned are not numerous. I have but three and it is not probable that I shall keep them long." In a striking passage, he added:

Did you know my situation and the situation of the country I live in you would think differently. I will assure you that to live in any country it is necessary to conform to the customs of the country in part. I have brought no man in to bondage and I am in hopes I have rendered no mans situation more disagreeable than it was before but on the contrary I am in hopes I have bettered it.²⁵

This passage is particularly significant because it is the only known surviving private statement by Pratt concerning the South's "peculiar institution." Moreover, it reveals a clear cultural conflict. Pratt's distant father, embodying the Puritan values of Temple, pulled Daniel one way, while Georgia pulled him another. It could be argued, perhaps, that Georgia had already won this battle and that Pratt had already been cast out of Temple into the slaveholder's abyss. But the answer is not so simple.

Pratt's statement constitutes more than a cavalier declaration of "when in Rome." Admittedly, he had written "that to live in any country it is necessary to conform to the customs of the country in part." Certainly, this statement reveals a tendency toward conformity, an instinct to get along for the sake of pursuing a greater goal. If Pratt had really been an abolitionist, he simply would have

²⁵Ibid.

refused to acquire any slaves, whatever the necessity for doing so. But it is important to note his words "in part." This caveat suggests that he had no intention of abjectly bowing to the slaveholders. There were lines that he would not cross.

Nor does Pratt's letter suggest the mindset of a man determined to preserve the South's social order. There is no brash defiance in this letter, only timid rationalization. Pratt's words emphatically are not those of a man who truly believed in the moral rightness of slavery. Guardians of racial and social orders are made of sterner stuff.

There is, in fact, no special affinity for the South revealed in Pratt's letter. For one thing, he refers to the South as another "country," perhaps indicating a certain amount of alienation from the culture. It is significant in this regard that Pratt, unlike some other southern Yankees, turned away from the standard southern path to success, namely the acquisition of land and slaves. He was soon able to sell his land, and he never owned more than four slaves while he lived in Georgia.

Pratt expressed open dissatisfaction to his father about his life in Georgia. Having had difficulty in getting cash for his work, he had apparently sought to get a loan through his brother Edward, but he had been rebuffed. This occasioned a long, plaintive passage from Daniel in

which he gave vent to his frustration with having so little to show for his efforts after spending eight years in Georgia. "You mentioned that I ought not to think hard of Edward for not excepting the order I gave Mr. Taylor," Daniel wrote, "but I do ashure you that he ought not to think hard of me for giving it." Daniel insisted that "I certainlyly work as hard for what little I get as almost annybody in the world." Despite his hard work, however, he owed six thousand dollars. "Times are verry hard and money verry scarce," Daniel complained. In cash-starved Georgia he was "under the necessity of giving from 8 to 16 percent for money," so he badly needed an out-of-state loan. "I wish Brother to except the order," he stressed, adding that "if he can hire it for one year it is probal that I can let him have it to replace by that time without any diffi-culty."²⁶

Pratt found more than the credit situation distress-ful. To this New Hampshirite, Georgia's physical condi-tions were something less than optimal. He glumly informed his father:

I keep Batcheldors hall and I live in a little cabbin which I built on the banks of the river a little below Macon. My family consists of four negro men and my-self. I almost live a hermits life but could enjoy my-self tolerably well was it not for the musketoos. I am now writing by candlelight and if you will believe me they buz about me almost equal to a swarm of bees. I

²⁶Ibid.

am obliged to have my bed covered over with musketoe netting to keep them from me.²⁷

While finding fault with his new state, Pratt sought to maintain his New Hampshire connections. "I saw Uncle Samuel Flint a few days since," he informed Edward, adding that "He was well, and I think looks well." He eagerly requested news from home: "You write to me as if I knew everything that is going on amongst you. Edward mentioned a long time ago that Abby was to be married soon. By Dorcas letter I find she is married and who she married but I know nothing where she lives." He added, somewhat irritably, that "I wrote Edward five or six weeks ago. He must not expect another until I get an answer from that." Daniel also assured his father that the ties of filial devotion had not loosened:

You may depend, I respect you as a father and believe that I think of you as often as you do of me and should you be in want of any of the necessaries of life by letting me know it you shall have the last cent before you shall suffer. I feel under grate obligation to you and feel it my duty to assist you in time of need.²⁸

²⁷Ibid. The "four negro men" with whom Pratt lived were apparently slaves he hired to help him complete his boat-building job.

²⁸Ibid. Abby married Artemas Howard, a farmer from Milford, New Hampshire. Blood, History of Temple, 245; U.S. Census, New Hampshire, 1850, Hillsborough County, 365. Flint died in Milledgeville less than eight months after Pratt wrote this letter. Pratt served as an administrator of Flint's estate. Milledgeville Georgia Journal 4 February 1828, 5 May 1828; Milledgeville Union Recorder, 24 May 1832. After Asenath Flint Pratt's death in 1817, Edward remarried to Hannah Emerson in 1819, the same year Daniel

In the two most important relationships Pratt established in Georgia, he turned to New Englanders. On September 6, 1827—only three months after he had disparaged life in "Batcheldors Hall"—he married Esther Ticknor of Connecticut at Fortville. And in 1831, he went to work for Samuel Griswold, a Connecticut-born cotton gin manufacturer who lived in Clinton.²⁹

Pratt's marriage to Esther Ticknor linked him with a family that matched him in dynamism and determination. As with Pratt, Esther's New England roots ran deep. William Ticknor migrated to Scituate, Plymouth by 1656, where he became a prominent farmer and merchant. His son William married a granddaughter of Nathaniel Tilden, a figure of some importance in Plymouth's religious and political affairs. In 1710, the younger William migrated with his family to Lebanon, Connecticut. William's descendants included such luminaries as George Ticknor, one of Boston's leading Brahmins, and William Ticknor, a co-partner in the great Boston publishing house, Ticknor and Fields. Another of William's descendants was Isaac Ticknor, a first cousin once removed of these two famous Ticknors and the father of

migrated to Savannah. Edward Pratt died at the age of sixty-four on November 17, 1829. Blood, History of Temple, 245; Cooke, Daniel Pratt.

²⁹Macon Telegraph, 24 September 1827; De Bow's Review 10 (February 1851): 225.

David, Orray, and Clarissa, all of whom were to play some role in Daniel Pratt's life.³⁰

David Ticknor and his wife, Edith, obviously drew inspiration from the Bible in naming their five children: Esther (1803-1875), John, Simon, Samuel, and Salome. Esther came to Jones County, Georgia in 1827 to visit her uncle John, her aunt Clarissa, and the family of her deceased uncle, Orray. Orray Ticknor was one of many learned Yankees who came south in the antebellum period. Like Pratt, Ticknor first settled in Savannah; but he preceded Pratt there by four years. In the same year, 1815, he married Harriot Coolidge, who was also a Connecticut native. By 1816, Ticknor and his wife had moved to Jones County. Ticknor had practiced medicine in Columbia, and he did the same in Clinton. He kept office in the store of John Ticknor, who had evidently preceded him to Jones County.³¹

³⁰James Melville Hunnewell, The Ticknor Family in America (Boston, 1919), 1-18, 37-42, 55-56.

³¹Michelle Cutliff Ticknor, ed., The Poems of Francis Orray Ticknor (New York, 1911), 9; Milledgeville Georgia Journal, 11 December 1816, 23 September 1928. In 1817, John Ticknor married Rebecca Wyche, a daughter of a local hotelkeeper; and the couple had several children before Rebecca's death in 1824. Marriage Book A, 67, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Jones County Courthouse; Cawthon, "Clinton," 91; Milledgeville Georgia Journal, 16 November 1824. John Ticknor married Elizabeth Woodall in 1825 and died near Blountsville, Jones County in 1839. Macon Georgia Journal and Messenger, 20 June 1839. On Yankee teachers and physicians in the antebellum South, see Fletcher M. Green, The Role of Yankees in the Old South (Athens, Ga., 1972), chapter 2. Orray Ticknor was one of

In October 1819, Orray Ticknor announced the founding of Clinton Academy, the town's first school. He headed it until January 1821, when, after selling the Academy to J. L. Hyde, he resumed the practice of medicine. During his career at the academy, he presided over the male department, while his wife presided over the female department. He also employed an assistant, Rufus Huntington, a fellow New Englander and a Yale graduate. The school building was probably a fairly substantial structure of two stories. In 1820, it appears that six students, three males and three females, boarded with the Ticknors at the school. After the sale of Clinton Academy, Ticknor did not lose his interest in education, serving in 1823 on the "Board of Visitors" recommending to the public the newly opened academy at Fortville, Jones County.³²

Some of the books that Ticknor surely used in his academy were inventoried after his death, which occurred on September 10, 1823. The administrators of his estate appraised his personal property at slightly under \$400, including books valued at \$25. His library included one

some twenty-five physicians who moved from New England states to Savannah, Georgia from 1804 to 1820. Ibid., 162.

³²Milledgeville Georgia Journal, 26 October 1819, 4 July 1820, 26 December 1820, 15 July 1823; U.S. Census, Georgia, 1820, Jones County. On January 6, 1820, Ticknor bought a lot in Clinton from Zila Fletcher worth the significant sum of \$1,550. Deed Book L, 56, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Jones County Courthouse.

medical book, "Thatcher's dispensatory," and a number of school books: a twelve-volume encyclopedia, a Latin dictionary, a lexicon, an "Echo," a book on philosophy, a Spanish grammar, and "Simpson's Euclid." Pratt's neighbor and patron John Gordon purchased several of Ticknor's books. Two other purchasers were John Ticknor and Ebenezer Ormsby, Clarissa Ticknor's husband.³³

At his death, Orray Ticknor left his wife Harriot and three small children: Lucy Elizabeth, James Henry, and Francis Orray. A great-granddaughter characterized Harriot as "an unusually brilliant woman, possessing a remarkable mind, a liberal education, and sterling qualities, which she devoted to the advancement of her children." What we know of Harriot Ticknor tends to confirm this statement. After Orray's death, she taught in the poor school of Jones County before taking her family to Columbus, Georgia in 1832. Through her hard work she was able to send her sons to a prestigious academy in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.³⁴

All three children of Orray and Harriot attained considerable success. After graduating from Bishop Paddock Divinity School in Massachusetts, James became an Episcopal

³³Annual Returns, Inventories and Appraisements, Sales and Divisions of Estates, Book E, 47-50, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Jones County Courthouse.

³⁴Hunnewell, Ticknor Family, 40; Ticknor, Poems, 10; Williams, Jones County, 293. Harriot Ticknor received \$18.31 for one quarter in 1832. Williams, Jones County, 293.

minister. He held, among others, the post at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Selma, Alabama from 1856 to 1866, where he distinguished himself as something of a "fighting parson" by taking part in the defense of the city against the raiding federals in April 1865. He later edited the Montgomery Church Register, a leading southern Episcopal organ.³⁵

Francis received a degree in medicine from the University of Pennsylvania in 1843. He practiced medicine in Columbus and, at one point, also acted as a local cotton gin agent for Daniel Pratt. Ticknor managed to write poetry in his spare time, and his Civil War poems, particularly "Little Giffen," won him no small measure of fame in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a regional poet. No less a figure than Paul Hamilton Hayne held Ticknor's poetry in high regard.³⁶

Lucy Ticknor married George W. Dillingham in 1832, shortly before the family moved to Columbus. After his death, she married the Reverend Douglas Cairnes. Her

³⁵Hunnewell, Ticknor Family, 86; Mobile Daily Register, 14 May 1868; Montgomery Daily Mail, 1 May 1868; Student Writers Club of Selma, Some Old Churches of the Black Belt (Birmingham, Ala., 1962), 40-41.

³⁶Hunnewell, Ticknor Family, 86; Ticknor, Poems, 13-15, 21-27; American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South 5 (January 1861): appendix. On Ticknor's poetry, see Sarah Cheney, "Francis Orray Ticknor," Georgia Historical Quarterly 22 (June 1938): 138-59. Orray Ticknor dedicated one of his poems, "The Conquest of Labor," to Daniel Pratt. Ticknor, Poems, 62-63.

second husband also predeceased her, and in 1860, Lucy lived with her son by her first marriage, George. George Dillingham, Jr. was an extremely successful Columbus merchant worth nearly \$50,000. Like his uncle Francis, he sold Daniel Pratt's cotton gins.³⁷

While Orray Ticknor and his children remained somewhat on the fringes of Daniel Pratt's world, Esther's Aunt Clarissa and her family entered directly into it. Clarissa married Ebenezer Ormsby, and the couple also settled in Jones County, where they had four children: William Orray, Thomas, Theodore, and Mary. I do not know Ormsby's occupation, but he served as a Justice of the Peace at Fortville in the 1820s and owned a house and lot in Clinton in the 1830s. Three years after his death, in 1835, Thomas Maughon, acting for the widowed Clarissa, conveyed the Clinton house and lot to Daniel Pratt (now living in Autauga County, Alabama) in consideration of "value received," and Daniel Pratt conveyed them to Elbert Hutchings for \$900. Clarissa and her four young children then moved to either Columbus, Georgia or Girard, Alabama, which lay across the river. By 1839, the family had moved to

³⁷Cheney, "Francis Orray Ticknor," 138-39; U.S. Census, Georgia, 1860, Muscogee County. The information that George Dillingham sold Pratt gins is found in a brief filed in 1871 before the U.S. Patent Commission. A typed copy is in the CECP.

Prattville. The Ormsbys would play a significant role in Pratt's life for the next twenty-five years.³⁸

All three of Esther's brothers—John, Simon, and Samuel—became involved in Pratt's business projects in Alabama, especially Simon and Samuel. These latter two served as partners in Pratt's cotton gin factory and shareholders in his textile factory. Esther's mother, Edith, also moved to Alabama, apparently after the death of her second husband, Jonathan Kingsbury.³⁹

After marrying Esther Ticknor, Daniel Pratt continued working as a carpenter-architect. In 1829, he owned a carpenter "workshop" in the Fortville vicinity. In 1830, the couple lived in Baldwin County near Samuel Boykin, for whom Pratt was probably completing a fine plantation house. Pratt remained a slaveholder one year after his father's death in 1829, owning a male and a female slave, both aged twenty-five to thirty-five. But his life soon changed dramatically.⁴⁰

³⁸Hunnewell, Ticknor Family, 17; Macon Telegraph, 24 September 1827; Deed Book P, 522, 526, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Jones County Courthouse; Pauline Jones Gandrud, Alabama Records (Easley, S.C., 1981), Vol. 75, Autauga County, 3; Thomas Maughon to Daniel Pratt, 8 January 1838, CECP.

³⁹Hunnewell, Ticknor Family, 37; Amos Smith, "Reminiscences of Daniel Pratt," in Tarrant, ed., Daniel Pratt, 61.

⁴⁰U.S. Census, Georgia, 1830, Baldwin County, 33; Deed Book O, 222, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Jones County Courthouse.

In 1831, Daniel Pratt went to work for the Clinton cotton gin manufacturer Samuel Griswold. Griswold needed a factory manager, and, impressed with Pratt's accomplishments in house building, he chose Pratt for the job. He chose well, for Pratt's "mechanical genius" was soon as evident in his work with cotton gins as it had been with houses.⁴¹

Samuel Griswold was born in Connecticut on December 27, 1790. He migrated with his wife, Louisa, and their small family to Jones County shortly before 1820. By 1820, he had established a small tin shop in Clinton. The census enumerator for that year declared Griswold's business to be "in tolerable good demand at present." Griswold had invested a mere \$300 in the business, which produced tinware worth \$2,000. His materials cost \$700 annually, and he employed only two male workers, each of whom received \$150 per year.⁴²

From this modest beginning, Griswold developed one of the antebellum South's great cotton gin factories. After witnessing a local planter's gin in operation, he hit upon the idea of mass producing gins. In 1825, he expanded his tin shop and began manufacturing these machines. During

⁴¹De Bow's Review 10 (February 1851): 222; Griswold, "Interesting History," Jones County News, 2 April 1908.

⁴²Williams, Jones County, 401; Griswold, "Interesting History," Jones County News, 2 April 1908; U.S. Census of Manufactures, Georgia, 1820, Jones County.

his first year, he produced fifty of them. Soon afterward, he stopped manufacturing other articles and devoted himself entirely to the gin business. He built a large factory at Clinton and purchased extensive timberland in Jones County to supply lumber for his gin stands. Concord wagons carried Griswold's gins throughout middle and eastern Georgia and the Carolinas, where Griswold had placed numerous agents. By 1830, Griswold could boast of being the most important gin manufacturer in the South.⁴³

Historian Malcolm McMillan has characterized Griswold's factory in Clinton as "a training school for gin mechanics." These men went to work for Griswold and then "moved on once they had learned the trade and could finance the undertaking to establish gin factories throughout the South." Daniel Pratt would become the most distinguished graduate of Griswold's "training school."⁴⁴

⁴³Griswold, "Interesting History," Jones County News, 2 April 1908; Milledgeville Georgia Journal, 14 June 1825, 8 July 1825, 26 June 1826, 3 September 1827, 14 July 1828.

⁴⁴Malcolm McMillan, "The Manufacture of Cotton Gins, a Southern Industry, 1793-1860 (n.d.)," TMs, p. 11, Box 25, McMillan Collection, Auburn University. Other "graduates" of Griswold's "training school" who became prominent gin manufacturers were Joseph Winship of New Salem, Massachusetts, who established a gin factory in Madison, Georgia and later in Atlanta; the brothers Israel and Dwight Brown of Connecticut, who established a factory at Columbus, Georgia; and Orren Webb Massey of Rockingham, North Carolina, who established a factory at Masseyville, near Macon, Georgia. Griswold, "Interesting History," Jones County News, 2 April 1908. Another likely prominent graduate, not identified by McMillan or Griswold, was Turpin G. Atwood of Providence, Rhode Island, the second largest cotton gin

Another important change in Pratt's life was his conversion to Methodism in 1832. Pratt attended services at the Methodist church in Clinton. Constructed in 1821, the church is a plain, white building rather resembling a New England meeting house in its austerity. Methodists predominated in the area, in part because of their dramatic camp meetings, which won many converts. Pratt probably felt at home with evangelical Georgia Methodism, as it no doubt resembled in its strictness the faith he had known in Temple. Esther Pratt, a Presbyterian, also converted, and the couple remained devout Methodists throughout the rest of their lives.⁴⁵

The year 1832 was also the year in which Griswold made Pratt a partner in his business. By 1833, the pair had decided to establish a new branch in the fresh cotton lands to the west. Alabama and Mississippi were experiencing their "flush times," and planters there wanted gins.

manufacturer in antebellum Mississippi. Milledgeville Georgia Journal, 2 February 1832, 31 May 1832; John Hebron Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860 (Baton Rouge and London, 1988), 216-18.

⁴⁵Mims, "History of Prattville," 51-52; Mims, "History of the M.E. Church in Prattville," Box 37, McMillan Collection; Bonner, Milledgeville, 85-91. On the subject of his conversion, Pratt's sister Eliza wrote that his New Hampshire "friends were made happy by the reception of a letter [from Pratt], saying he had been brought to see the sinfulness of his heart, and to trust alone in the atoning blood of the Savior, and had connected himself with the Methodist Church." Mims, "History of Prattville," 44.

Because antebellum gins were constantly breaking down, manufacturers "needed close and constant contact with [them] in order to keep them running." Gins could be "returned to the factory for repair or repaired by the factory's traveling agents," but transportation and communication difficulties meant that "proximity to the planter [was] very advantageous to the manufacturer." For Griswold and Pratt, then, a gin factory on, say, the Alabama River clearly would be a real asset, for it would give them much greater access to the southwestern market.⁴⁶

Despite the prospects their plan held out, Griswold reneged, allegedly because he feared the Creek Indians. The Creeks had ceded their Alabama land in 1832, but they remained a significant presence in the state until their forced removal in 1836. Pratt nevertheless proceeded with the endeavor, and he left for Alabama in 1833. He brought with him Esther, two slaves, and the material for fifty gins. The gin material required six horse teams to carry it.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Mims, "History of Prattville," 20-21; Griswold, "Interesting History," Jones County News, 2 April 1908; McMillan, "Cotton Gins," 9, 12.

⁴⁷Mims, "History of Prattville," 20-21; Griswold, "Interesting History," Jones County News, 2 April 1908; Montgomery Daily Mail, 14 April 1870; Henry Deleon Southerland, Jr. and Jerry Elijah Brown, The Federal Road Through Georgia, the Creek Nation, and Alabama, 1806-1836 (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1989), chapter 7. Less dramatically, Griswold may simply have decided that he was satisfied with his business in Georgia and the Carolinas.

Had Pratt become, by the time he set out for Alabama, a mere minion of the slaveholding elite? Admittedly, one could argue that he had. As a carpenter, he had built fine homes for wealthy planters and flatboats to carry their cotton. As a cotton gin manufacturer, he had built gins and sent them to plantations across Georgia and the Carolinas. Thus, Pratt not only provided slaveholders with luxuries; he also facilitated the production and transportation of their precious staple.

Nevertheless, Pratt, a staunch Yankee, remained his own man. He had not only maintained his northern ties, but had extended them by marrying into the Ticknor family of Connecticut. Moreover, as evidenced by his disposal of the land he had accumulated, he had never accepted the southern agrarian ideal. Rather, he remained concerned with finding suitable outlets for his "mechanical genius." When he came to Alabama in 1833, his goal was not to establish a plantation, but a factory. This errand into the Alabama wilderness was a particularly challenging one, for Pratt had to contend with the physical difficulties attendant to setting up a business enterprise in a frontier region. But he persevered, and by the 1850s, he had created one of the South's great industrial empires.

CHAPTER 2

MANUFACTURING COTTON GINS: 1833 TO 1850

At the time Daniel Pratt cast his gaze toward Alabama, the state was booming. Migrants seeking fresh land had poured into it, primarily from Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Tennessee. Between 1820 and 1830, the state's population more than doubled, increasing from 125,000 to 300,000.¹

These migrants added Alabama to the cotton kingdom. By 1830, slaves constituted 38 percent of the state's population. The slave population was particularly concentrated in the fertile river bottom lands, which had attracted cotton planters. In 1830, five Alabama River counties—Autauga, Baldwin, Dallas, Montgomery, and Wilcox—had populations that totaled over 50 percent slave.²

Autauga County had shared fully in Alabama's boom. The county's population more than tripled during the 1820s, and the percentage of blacks in the population increased from 43 to 51. But beyond the narrow belt of Alabama River

¹On the settlement of Alabama in the 1820s, see Thomas Perkins Abernethy, The Formative Period in Alabama, 1815-1828 (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1965).

²Ibid., chapter 7.

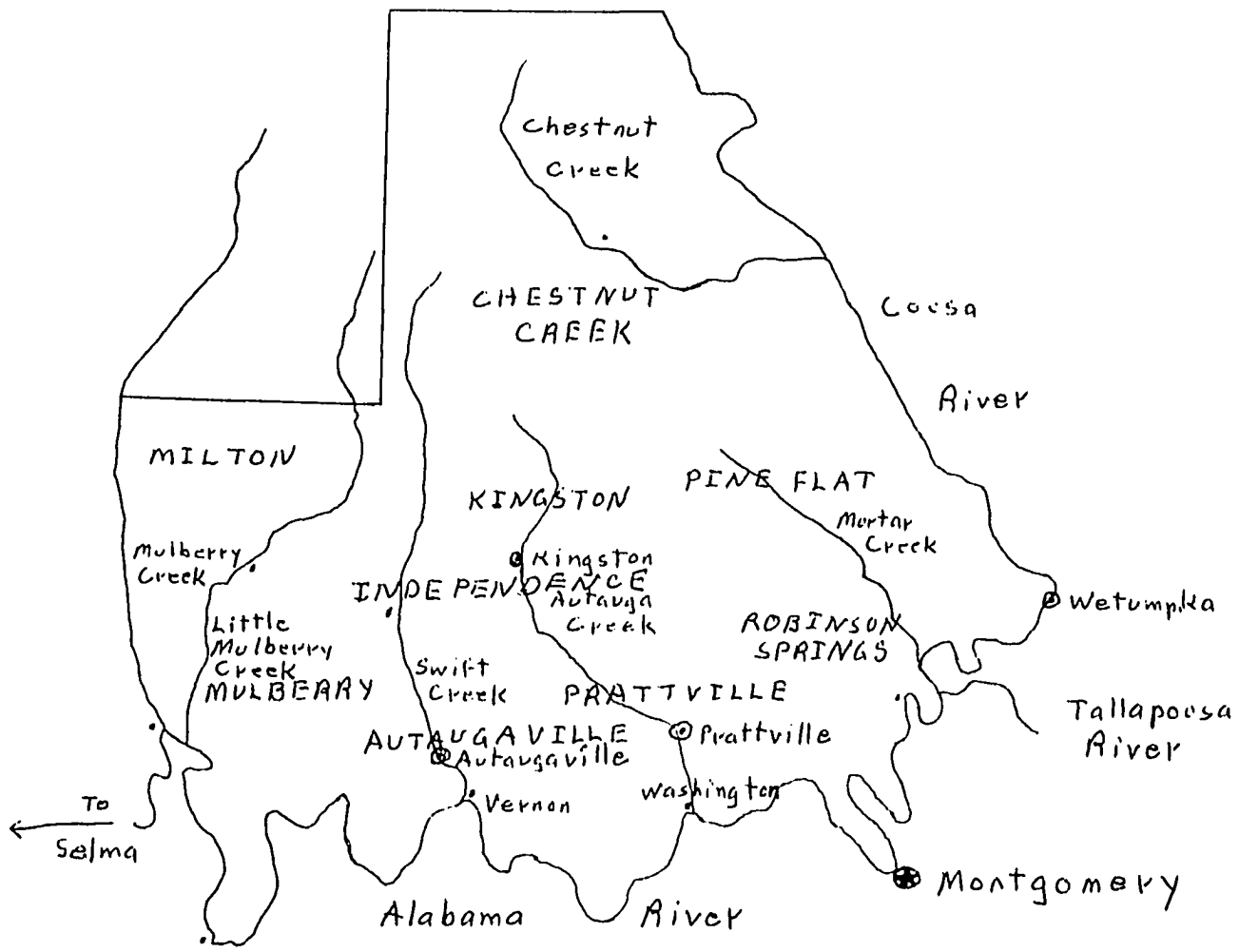
bottomland in the south lay the pine hills, where yeoman farmers had settled. Here, few owned slaves, and a subsistence economy predominated.³

A number of swift creeks ran down from the sparsely settled hills of Autauga County to empty into the Alabama River in the south and the Coosa River in the east. On Autauga Creek, which flowed through the county's center, a sawmill had been erected on the land of Joseph May. Grist mills and a few other sawmills dotted the county, and there were several active gold mines in the north. Beyond these small mills and mines, however, Autauga had little industry.⁴

Autauga's major towns—Coosada, Vernon, Washington, and West Wetumpka—initially were clustered on rivers. Rocky Mount, a small planter community, lay on higher ground several miles west of Coosada. A number of villages—Chestnut Creek, Hamilton, Independence, Kingston,

³For accounts of the antebellum history of Autauga County, see Willis Brewer, Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record and Public Men: From 1540 to 1872 (Montgomery, Ala., 1872), 107-12; John Hardy, "History of Autauga County," Alabama Historical Quarterly 3 (Spring 1941): 96-116, reprinted from the Selma Daily State Sentinel, 10 August 1867; Thomas McAdory Owen, History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography (Chicago, 1921), vol. 1, 77-78. Also useful is the series of articles in the Prattville Autauga Citizen in 1853 and 1859 by, respectively, Shadrack Mims and Thomas Smith.

⁴Hardy, "Autauga County," 97-98. A detailed 1836 map of Autauga County is in the Bolling Hall Papers, Folder 4, Box 4, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery (ADAH).



Map of Antebellum Autauga County, with Towns and Election Precincts

Milton, Mulberry, and Statesville—lay scattered across the county's interior. Washington, the largest of the river towns, served as county seat until 1834, when more centrally located Kingston acquired that status.⁵

Thomas Smith, an early migrant to Autauga, who crossed the Alabama River at Washington in January 1818, recalled that, already by 1820, "more than one hundred and forty white families had settled in the scope of country between [Swift and Mortar Creeks] and within twelve miles of the Alabama River." He noted that "many of the best families of Georgia and South Carolina" had settled in "this delightful region." Autauga also had, of course, its share of rustic folk. The Fielder clan, who settled in the county's interior, were, according to Smith, "an industrious, frugal people, but much given to backwoods life. They had no taste for the restraints and formalities of refined society."⁶

Daniel Pratt settled in Autauga County when he came to Alabama in 1833, and it remained his home until his death forty years later. Pratt and his small group probably traveled over the Federal Road, which ran through

⁵Autauga County map, 1836, Hall Papers; Hardy, "Autauga County," 103-07; Shadrack Mims, "Reminiscences of Autauga County," Prattville Autauga Citizen, 7 July 1853, 4 August 1853, 1 September 1853.

⁶Thomas Smith, "The Early History of Autauga County," Prattville Autauga Citizen, 7 July 1859.

Jones County, Georgia. They likely entered Alabama by crossing the Chattahoochee at Columbus, where a covered wooden bridge had recently been completed. No doubt they stopped to visit with Harriot Ticknor and her family, who had settled in Columbus just a year before. After traveling through miles of territory that only the previous year had been owned by the Creek Indians, they would have reached Montgomery. Merely ten more miles would have brought them to Washington.⁷

In 1829, Benjamin Faneuil Porter and his wife had traveled the same general route on the way from South Carolina to their Alabama River plantation in Monroe County. Many years later, this prominent Whig politician and judge recalled his initial disillusionment with Alabama. The trip over the Federal Road was difficult, what with its drunken "half-naked savages and beastly negroes," but the most shattering disappointment turned out to be the destination:

We had an uncle in Monroe, an early settler, to whose mansion we were hastening. We indulged in golden dreams of his appearance and that of his house. We pictured him a portly, well-looking old man; and his homestead the very abode of comfort. A large white house, piazzas and green blinds floated before our eyes; and amidst the toils and privations of our long journey, we rioted, as we neared his home, upon the vapors of benevolence which rose from his face, and

⁷On the history of the Federal Road, see Henry Deleon Southerland, Jr. and Jerry Elijah Brown, The Federal Road through Georgia, the Creek Nation, and Alabama, 1806-1836 (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1989).

the savory smells from his kitchen. But alas, for our round-bellied uncle, and the white house and green blinds; alas for the fat turkeys and old hams! We found our uncle a small man, with a very lean girdle—his house was a rail pen, full of squabbling mischievous babes, and snapping bull puppies; our supper was a rasher of bacon with boiled greens.⁸

Unlike the learned Porter, Daniel Pratt never took time to pen reminiscences; but from what we know of Pratt, we can fairly conclude that he, like Porter, found the primitive agrarian surroundings in Alabama rather jolting. Pratt clearly could not comprehend planters like Porter's lean-girdled uncle. Twenty years after his arrival in Alabama, Pratt asked pointedly:

For what do we live? Is it silver and gold? Is it to say we have a plantation of one or five hundred negroes, or that we make 100 bales of Cotton? Is it to slave ourselves to accumulate property, and not enjoy it? Have no comfortable house to live in ourselves, or for our negroes, or stables or barns for our stock—to have no roads that we can pass safely over to visit our neighbors?

Conceding that "permanent happiness consists in something more than this world's goods," Pratt nevertheless maintained:

We can take more satisfaction in worshipping God in a good comfortable house, suitable for the worship of such a Being than we can in a log cabin where there is but little to protect us from the cold winds and inclement weather. When we have finished our day's labor we can see more satisfaction in a good, well ventilated house with good furniture, than we can in a little pent-up log cabin with stools, or chairs but

⁸Southerland and Brown, Federal Road, 105-06; Benjamin F. Porter, Reminiscences of Men and Things in Alabama, ed. Sara Walls (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1983), 29-30.

little better, to sit on, and other furniture corresponding.

When Pratt wrote these lines in 1853, he may well have been thinking, in part, of his first years in Autauga County.⁹

Pratt had planned to set up his shop in Montgomery, but the building and lumber for which he had contracted were not ready for him when he arrived. Consequently, he crossed the Alabama River and settled six miles west of Wetumpka, where he leased Elmore's Mill on Mortar Creek. Here, he constructed fifty gins from the material he had brought from Georgia. The gins sold rapidly. The next year (1834), he took a five-year lease on McNeil's Mill on Autauga Creek, one mile north of Washington. On this site, he established his first gin shop. At first, Pratt and his wife "lived in a log cabin, with a dirt chimney bending over and propped up by poles." Soon, however, Pratt was able to erect a two-story frame building to house his shop. The Pratts lived on the second floor, and their operatives boarded with them.¹⁰

Pratt quickly prospered, for his gin shop apparently filled a large void. Eleazer Carver's gin factory in Bridgewater, Massachusetts delivered gins to Alabama via

⁹American Cotton Planter 1 (January 1853): 27.

¹⁰Shadrack Mims, "History of Prattville," in S[usan] F[rances] H[ale] Tarrant, ed., Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond, Va., 1904), 21-22; Montgomery Daily Mail, 14 April 1870.

Mobile, and Carver's Bridgewater rival, Eagle Cotton Gin Company, probably did also.¹¹ Any other gins purchased by Alabama planters were likely to have been made in small machine shops. Since local producers could not have supplied the heavy demand for gins, and the Massachusetts factories would have suffered from severe logistical problems, Pratt had great advantages over his rivals, and he profited accordingly.

In 1835, Pratt, according to his visiting brother Edward, employed "eleven hands to work in the shop besides five or six blacksmiths." Pratt was manufacturing about 200 gins annually and marketing them throughout southern Alabama. In 1835, for example, he sent gins down the Alabama River to Charles Tait's plantation in Wilcox County and James Dellett's plantation in Monroe County. Both men were prominent planters and politicians who certainly could have afforded the best in cotton gins.¹²

Charles Tait's overseer, Joshua Betts Grace, showed high regard for Pratt's gins. In March 1835, Grace

¹¹Abernethy, Formative Period, 81.

¹²Edward Pratt to Dorcas Pratt, 25 September 1835, Autauga County Heritage Center, Prattville; Mims, "History of Prattville," 22; J[oshua] B[etts] Grace to Judge Tait, Charles Tait Papers, ADAH; Daniel Pratt to Enoch Parsons, 10 June 1835, Enoch Parsons Papers, ADAH. Parsons, another prominent planter-politician, apparently acted as a booster of Pratt's gins, for Pratt thanked him for helping him "dispose of my gins." Dellett, Parsons, and Tait all resided in Claiborne in Monroe County. Porter, Reminiscences, 38-41.

informed Tait that Pratt's agent, Mr. Davenport, had come "to see me if we wanted a new gin." The agent, Grace noted, had "already sold several gins in this neighborhood and they done well." He added that he "would like to have a better gin than we have at [the plantation]." Tait assented, and in June, Grace informed Tait that he had "got the new gin from Mr. Prats."¹³

At the same time, Pratt, apparently having tired of leases, put together the land deal that would give "Prattville" its existence. In March 1835, Joseph May agreed, for \$21,000, to sell Pratt 2,000 acres of land on Autauga Creek, four miles north of Washington. The property included a small sawmill known as "Forman's Mill." This substantial purchase was to be completed in four installments: the first, due March 15, 1836, for \$3,691.25, payable in gins; the second, due April 15, 1836, also for \$3,691.25, again payable in gins; the third, due January 1, 1837, for \$6,808.75, payable in cash; and the fourth, due January 1, 1838, also for \$6,808.75, again payable in cash.¹⁴

Pratt surely had no difficulty with the first two payments since they were in gins. But to make the other two,

¹³J[oshua] B[etts] Grace to Charles Tait, 24 March 1835, 19 June 1835, Folder 6, Box 2, Charles Tait Papers.

¹⁴Deed Book D, 381, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse. For general accounts of the purchase, see De Bow's Review 4 (September 1847): 136; Mims, *History of Prattville*, " 22.

which amounted to nearly two-thirds of the purchase price, he needed cash. For this, he found it necessary to turn to outside sources, as he had in Georgia. Here, a bank and a Yankee connection served him in good stead. In 1836, he borrowed \$9,800 from Elijah and Lydia Chandler of Wilton, New Hampshire, putting up much of his newly purchased land as collateral. In 1837, he borrowed \$2,000 from the Montgomery branch of the Bank of Alabama. Four slave mechanics served as collateral for the bank loan.¹⁵

Pratt's neighbors reputedly thought he had made a foolish investment. He had paid over ten dollars per acre

¹⁵Deed Book O, 505, Deed Book DA, 266, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse. Elijah Chandler returned the property to Pratt on September 13, 1838 in consideration of \$8,000. Deed Book DB, 281, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse. On April 1, 1842 and April 18, 1843, Pratt recorded in his Day Book making cash payments of \$500 and \$550 to Elijah Chandler. Day Book (1839-1846), Continental Eagle Corporation Papers, Prattville. (CECP).

Elijah Chandler is identified as a carpenter in the 1838 deed. It seems likely that he was the brother of Joseph Chandler (ca. 1789-1837) of Wilton, who married, in succession, Pratt's sisters Asenath and Dorcas. In the 1850s, Elijah Chandler moved to Pope County, Arkansas. From a letter that Pratt wrote to Chandler in 1854, it appears that he still held the unpaid balance of the eighteen-year loan, \$750. "Your money and the interest on it I will keep just so long as you desire me to do so," Pratt assured Chandler. "Any portion of it will at any time be subject to your order." Pratt added that should he "receive any instructions from you what disposition to make of it in case of your death, they will be complied with if in my power to do so." Daniel Pratt to [Elijah] Chandler, 19 July 1854, Folder 44, Pratt Collection. In 1860, Chandler, age 70, still worked as a carpenter, and he was worth \$6,091. He boarded with an apparently unrelated North Carolina-born farmer and his wife. U.S. Census, Arkansas, 1860, Population Schedule, Pope County.

for land later characterized as being little more than a "dismal swamp." In the 1850s, an article in an Autauga newspaper drew an evocative picture of this wild area. The "old, dreary and dilapidated" mill stood, according to the article, "in the midst of an almost impenetrable jungle." One could approach the building only by means of "a single road, built over the treacherous earth, with slabs and puncheons." The article declared the old mill "a speaking evidence of the rude state of the surrounding country, and of the simple wants of its sparsely settled neighborhood." Except when a local farmer's "cart sought a simple load of roughest plank . . . the solitude of the lonely spot was never broken. Silence and solitude held there, undisputed reign."¹⁶

Despite its primitive quality, May's land had two great virtues in Pratt's eyes: the water power provided by Autauga Creek and the abundance of yellow pine on the hills surrounding the marshy land by the creek. The land thus provided both a power source for a large factory and the raw material for its gin stands. Pratt immediately began the arduous process of draining the marshes. In this endeavor, he used slave labor. By 1839, when his lease with McNeil expired, Pratt had transferred operations to the new

¹⁶Mims, "History of Prattville," 22; Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 6 October 1853, reprinted from The Autaugaville Autaugian.

site. He originally intended to call the hamlet "Pratt's Mills," but a business associate, Amos Smith, suggested another name and Pratt acquiesced. The mileposts to Washington being put up by William Ormsby were accordingly marked "Prattville."¹⁷

Pratt made impressive progress between 1833 and 1839, but he did not act alone. Just as slaves had provided the physical labor necessary to create Prattville, Yankees had provided the financial backing. In 1840, Pratt commenced a partnership in the Prattville gin factory with his brothers-in-law Samuel and Simon Ticknor and a fellow New Hampshire, Amos Smith, a mechanic who met Pratt in 1837 while giving a demonstration of a shingle machine he had made for Ebenezer Coe, a local miller. Pratt secured Smith's help in putting up the machinery for a gristmill in 1838, and, pleased with the work, engaged Smith to take charge of the gin shop. By 1840, Pratt had made Smith a partner. Smith remained a partner in the gin factory until 1857, when he moved to Philadelphia. Throughout the 1840s, the Ticknor brothers remained extensively involved in Pratt's business concerns. The two men were partners in the gin factory from 1840 to 1850. After Simon's death in Prattville in 1850, his administrators appraised his

¹⁷Mims, "History of Prattville," 24-25; Amos Smith, "Reminiscences of Daniel Pratt," in Tarrant, ed., Daniel Pratt, 60-61.

property at \$37,728, most of which represented his investments in Pratt's factories (\$12,000 in the gin factory and \$21,288 in the textile factory). Although the partnership dissolved after Simon's death, both Samuel and Simon's widow, Harriet, remained, after Pratt, the most important stockholders in the textile factory. Samuel, in fact, would embark on a number of business ventures over the next twenty-five years.¹⁸

During the winter of 1839-40, Pratt erected a blacksmith shop, a wood shop, and houses for his workers. Llewellyn Spigner, who had run a wood shop at McNeil's Mill, ran the two Prattville shops. In early 1841, Pratt put his grist mill into operation; it proved an immediate success. Amos Smith had installed "the finest and most improved" machinery that could be had, capable of grinding wheat as well as corn. Farmers brought their wheat to the mill from a distance of up to 150 miles, according to the recollections of a contemporary. As a result of its great popularity, the mill often became so crowded that "eight or ten wagons could be seen at a time, standing waiting for their turn." A native of Galashiels, Scotland named James

¹⁸Smith, "Reminiscences," 60-61; Reports and Wills, Book F, 1850-1853, 97-98, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse. Simon Ticknor attested to the value of the slave mechanics who served as collateral for the bank loan Pratt received in 1837. Deed Book DA, 266, Probate Office Autauga County Courthouse.

Leithhead operated the mill until his untimely death later that year.¹⁹

According to the 1840 census, Pratt's household had thirty-six individuals engaged in manufacturing. Besides Pratt, the household included eleven adult white men (aged 20 to 50), all probably mechanics. It also included four adult white women (aged 20 to 40). In addition, Pratt had thirty-six slaves in the household, twenty-seven males and nine females. Of the men, twenty-four were aged between 10 and 55. By adding the twelve adult white men to these twenty-four male slaves, we reach the figure of thirty-six. In addition, one Pratt mechanic, Western Franks, lived adjacent to Pratt in a separate household. Clearly, then, the census tells us that nearly two-thirds of work force in 1840 consisted of blacks. In all likelihood, Pratt had difficulty finding good white mechanics on the frontier. Over the years, his reliance on slave mechanics would lessen significantly.²⁰

¹⁹Mims, "History of Prattville," 37-38; Smith, "Reminiscences of Daniel Pratt," 60; Pauline Jones Gandrud, Alabama Records (Easley, S.C., 1981), vol. 75. Autauga County, 5. James Leithhead was buried on the hill behind the cotton gin factory in an area which later became the private Pratt cemetery. Gandrud, Alabama Records, 5. Llewellyn Spigner was a member of Autauga's "Dutch Bend" community, a group of settlers of German derivation who migrated from Orangeburg District, South Carolina in the 1820s. Hardy, "Autauga County," 107; Gandrud, Alabama Records, 20.

²⁰U.S. Census, Alabama, 1840, Autauga County.

A Day Book begun by Pratt upon his move to Prattville in 1839 allows us to scrutinize more closely the composition of his work force in the 1840s. Judging by road taxes Pratt paid from 1841 through 1845, he appears to have had roughly a dozen white men in his employment as mechanics during any given year in this period. Among the mechanics whose place of nativity I have been able to determine, Yankees predominate, both in quantity and quality. Amos Smith, of course, superintended the gin factory. Enoch Poor Robinson, born in New Hampshire in 1810, and Ephraim Morgan, born in New Hampshire in 1814, also ranked high in the factory hierarchy, judging by the salaries they earned. Robinson received \$1,002.73 in 1842 and \$1,020.64 in 1843. Morgan received \$661.50 in 1842 and \$863 in 1844; in the latter year, Pratt also paid Morgan's board, valued at \$120. John Tappan Morgan, probably Ephraim's brother, was another northern mechanic, as were John Ticknor, another of Esther's brothers, and, probably, George Luce, a likely brother-in-law of Simon Ticknor, who married Harriet Luce of Connecticut. Luce made less than Robinson and Morgan, earning \$449.92 in 1843 and \$603.84 in 1844. John Ticknor made \$1,000, but this included his wife Harriet's services as well as his own. John would return to Connecticut (though he thought enough of Daniel Pratt to name his son

Daniel Pratt in 1835), but Ephraim Morgan and Eli Robinson would become wealthy Prattville manufacturers.²¹

Native southerners accounted with certainty for only two of Pratt's early mechanics. Western Franks, born in North Carolina around 1800, was Pratt's most highly paid mechanic after Eli Robinson. Franks earned consistently high salaries in the 1840s: \$855.25 in 1842, \$722.11 in 1843, and \$879.40 in 1844. Franks, like Pratt, likely had worked for Samuel Griswold, for he lived in Clinton in 1830. Franks already was a man of some means in that year, owning four slaves. Henry Hunt, born in North Carolina around 1803, did less well than Franks, earning \$562.66 in 1842 and \$617.52 (plus \$102.50 in board) in 1844. Franks remained in Prattville the rest of his life, running a horse mills shop until his death around 1855. Henry Hunt

²¹Day Book, 20-21, 67-68, 98, 100-01, 106, 143, 161, 195, 226; James Melville Hunnewell, The Ticknor Family in America (Boston, 1919), 82; Gandrud, Alabama Records, 12, 15. The Day Book also indicates that Pratt trained Esther's young cousin Thomas Ormsby as a mechanic. See Day Book, 145. His brother William Ormsby, however, became Pratt's private secretary, a bookkeeper, and a co-editor of the Prattville Southern Statesman. The wages Pratt paid Eli Robinson and Ephraim Morgan appear to have corresponded roughly with those Natchez lumber manufacturer Andrew Brown paid two sawyers in the same period. In 1845, for example, Brown paid the one \$1,000 per annum and the other \$800 per annum. John Hebron Moore, Andrew Brown and Cypress Lumbering in the Old Southwest (Baton Rouge, 1967), 128.

abandoned mechanical employment, operating a successful mercantile concern in the 1850s.²²

Pratt probably had other southern mechanics—George Kent, for example, could conceivably have been the father of Thomas Joseph Kent, a native of Georgia who worked in 1860 as an overseer in Pratt's textile factory and later rose to become mill superintendent. These unidentified mechanics, who left Pratt's employment before 1850, often made lower salaries than Pratt's certifiably Yankee mechanics, suggesting they had lower skill levels than the Yankees. Nathan Wadleigh, for example, made only \$475.26 in 1842. Marsh Crow began working for Pratt on June 20, 1843 at \$35 per month (\$420 a year), plus board. George Kent contracted for \$450 in 1843, but, on the other hand, J. N. Sims and J. R. Williams contracted that year for \$600 and \$650, respectively.²³

We can hardly dismiss board as a considerable part of a mechanic's income, of course. By 1845, however, more of Pratt's mechanics seem to have been paying some amount of rent out of their own pockets. In 1845, for example, John Ticknor paid \$200 for his house rental, while Amos Smith paid \$150. Eli Robinson and Western Franks paid only \$75

²²Day Book, 20-21, 67-68, 98, 100-01, 106, 143, 161, 198, 226; U.S. Census, Georgia, 1830, Jones County, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

²³Day Book, 67, 68, 100-01; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

and \$50, respectively, while George Garvie paid a mere \$32.²⁴

Pratt's other source of labor, black slaves, naturally did not pay him rent. In the 1830s and 1840s, Pratt expended considerable sums of money on the purchase and hire of black mechanics. The Day Book provides information on Pratt's slave hires, while surviving bills of sale document his slave purchases.

According to the Day Book, from 1841 through 1845, Pratt regularly hired at least six slaves per year at the cost of at least \$2,500 annually. In January 1841, Pratt hired the slaves George, Dick, Richard, Henry, Robinson, and Benjamin for \$2,600. He hired the same group again in 1842, 1843, 1844, and (except for George) 1845. In February 1843, Pratt turned to Samuel Griswold, hiring from him Jake and Andrew, paying \$400 and \$300, respectively. In April of the same year, he also paid \$300 for the hire of Valentine and \$100 each for the hire of an unnamed number of slaves owned by Martin Burt, a local planter. The lower price for Burt's slaves suggests they may not have been skilled workers. In 1845, George was absent in Pratt's list of hires, but new slaves appeared: Win and a man with

²⁴Day Book, 230-31.

an illegible name, both at \$200, and Branch at \$96.42 (for only 154 1/2 days).²⁵

Purchasing slaves likely proved a better investment for Pratt than hiring them. The best slave artisans cost Pratt almost \$1,200 each in the 1830s and 1840s; so Pratt could buy two such slaves at roughly the cost of hiring six per year. Not surprisingly, then, the prospering Pratt purchased at least twenty-four slaves (eighteen men and six women) from 1834 to 1845 at the cost of \$22,775.²⁶ Daniel Pratt had evidently cast aside any remaining moral scruples he might have had about slavery.

From 1834 to 1839, Pratt purchased only one female slave, Milly, who cost him \$700. Clearly, Pratt wanted artisans. Toward that end, he purchased eleven male slaves. In 1834, he spent \$700 on Dick (age twenty) and \$1,200 on Peter (thirty-three), a blacksmith. In 1837, he bought Joe (thirty), Isaac (twenty-seven), and Dick (sixteen) for \$3,600. In 1839, the year of his move to Prattville, Pratt made his largest purchase yet: Daniel

²⁵Ibid., 8, 95, 100-01, 145, 195.

²⁶The information on Pratt's slave purchases in the 1830s and 1840s comes from the bills of sale preserved in the CECP. In evidently favoring slave purchases over hires Pratt followed in the path of Virginia ironmonger William Weaver, who tried to buy skilled slave forgers whenever he could. See Charles B. Dew, Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge (New York and London, 1994), 99-106. Dew notes that fierce competition among ironmongers for the hired services of skilled slaves made hiring "a risky proposition." Ibid., 99.

(thirty-nine) at \$1,400, Robinson (twenty-three) at \$1,200, Henry (twenty-five) at \$1,600, and, for \$3,300, Dick (seventeen), Joseph (nineteen), and Joshua (twenty-one).

Only starting in 1840, when Pratt and his wife were establishing Prattville as their permanent home, did Pratt begin purchasing more female slaves, who helped ease domestic life. That year Pratt bought, for \$3,100, two slave women, Priskey and Matilda, and two slave men, Ned and Dempsey. In 1841, he spent, respectively, \$200 and \$675 on Mary (fifty-seven) and Susan (sixteen). In 1843, he bought William (fourteen) at \$600, Charlotte (seventeen) at \$800 and Charles (thirteen) at \$700. Finally, in 1845, Pratt purchased Hudson, Harry, and Dillon for \$3,100.

Possibly reflecting a shortage in Alabama of black as well as white skilled workers, Pratt purchased some of his slaves from out-of-state owners, especially in the 1830s. William Daniel of Macon sold Pratt the slave Dick in 1834, while T. W. Brevard, also of Macon, sold Pratt two slaves, Robinson and William. Horatio Bowen, a Clinton planter and physician, owned the slave Daniel, whom Pratt noted on the bill of sale was "carried to Alabama in 1835, for me, by Daniel McCloud of Jones County, Georgia." Robert Huie lived as far away as Rowan County, North Carolina. Along with the blacksmith Peter, he sold Pratt two gray horses

(\$150) and a small two-horse wagon (\$62.50), perhaps suggesting Peter's mode of transportation to Alabama.

In 1843, Pratt purchased from Samuel Griswold a thirteen-year-old "negro molatto boy named Charles," who would become one of Pratt's most able mechanics. After the Civil War, he took the surname "Atwood," suggesting a link to Turpin G. or William K. Atwood, Rhode Island-born brothers who likely worked as gin mechanics for Samuel Griswold in the early 1830s.²⁷

The high prices Pratt paid for his male slaves suggest that most of them, like Charles, had valuable mechanical skills, but only in a few cases is there any proof. Peter is specifically designated on his bill of sale as a blacksmith, as mentioned above. In 1839, Pratt purchased Henry (age twenty-five) for the very large sum of \$1,600 from North Carolina-born Durant Nobles, who in 1850 worked as a carpenter in Montgomery. In 1870, a mulatto freedman named Henry Robinson, born in South Carolina around 1815, worked in the gin factory.²⁸

Another slave mechanic from the 1830s and 1840s worked for Pratt after the Civil War. Richard, born around 1813

²⁷For more on Charles Atwood, see chapter 11. No white Atwood appears to have resided in Autauga County in the antebellum period.

²⁸U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Montgomery County, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

in South Carolina, allegedly came to Alabama with Pratt in 1833. It is more likely, however, that Richard is the twenty-year-old slave named Dick, whom Pratt purchased for \$700 from William Daniel in 1834. In 1881, Richard Pratt still worked in the gin factory.²⁹

Peter and Richard were probably two of the four slave mechanics that Pratt used as collateral for his 1837 bank mortgage. In this document, Simon Ticknor testified that Peter (thirty-five), Josh (twenty-two), Joe (twenty), and Richard (twenty) were worth at least \$4,000. Joe may be the same Joe whom Pratt purchased earlier that year, but the age discrepancy (ten years) between the two Joes is rather large.³⁰

Pratt's purchases of at least eighteen male slaves through 1845 and his annual hire of six or more male slaves from 1841 through 1845 indicate that he continued to rely heavily on black labor in the 1840s. A notation in the Day Book from 1845, however, shows Pratt paying a road tax for only ten "shop negroes."³¹ This fact suggests that Pratt did not work all of his purchased slaves in the gin factory. Nevertheless, it appears from all the available

²⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, Population Schedule, 1870, Autauga County; Montgomery Advertiser and Mail, 12 June 1881.

³⁰Deed Book DA, 266, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse.

³¹Day Book (1839-1846), 228.

information that Pratt's hired and purchased slave mechanics outnumbered his white ones even in the mid-1840s.

With hired and purchased slaves alike, Pratt faced the challenge of extracting labor from unfree workers. Like other southern manufacturers, Pratt used "overwork" as a performance incentive for his slave artisans. Under the overwork system, slaves received cash compensation for doing extra work. In January 1844, for example, Pratt paid Samuel Griswold's slave Andrew \$58.14 for overwork, a very impressive figure. Part of this amount, \$6.37, was for his "overwork since Christmas." Griswold's slave Jake netted \$8.62 in post-Christmas overwork. Five more hired slaves earned overwork payments as well: Robertson (\$14.94), Benjamin (\$6.78), Richard (\$5.73), Dick (\$5.54), and Henry (\$4.47). Pratt also paid overwork to Peter (\$12.53) and two other slaves, Jack (\$15.13) and Yellow Joe (\$19.22). Ironically, sixteen-year-old Thomas Ormsby's name comes at the end of the 1844 overwork list, Ormsby having tallied \$21.25 for the year. Pratt evidently viewed overwork as a fine incentive for slaves and his wife's relatives alike.³²

³²Day Book, 145. On slave overwork, see Charles B. Dew, "Disciplining Slave Ironworkers in the Antebellum South: Coercion, Conciliation, and Accommodation," American Historical Review 79 (April 1974): 405-10; Ronald L. Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1715-1865 (Westport, Conn., 1979); Robert S. Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South (New York, 1970), 99-103. The overwork earned by Griswold's no doubt

Having a work force surely numbering over thirty throughout the 1840s enabled Pratt to become a major cotton gin manufacturer not only in Alabama, but across much of the South. When he moved to Prattville in 1839, Pratt began employing a network of traveling agents to sell his gins to planters in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. In addition to being partners in the gin business, Esther's brothers Simon and Samuel Ticknor acted as gin agents. On June 12, 1840, for instance, Pratt debited the expenses of Samuel on a sales trip to Talladega County, Alabama (\$15.75) and of Simon on a sales trip to Greene County, Alabama (\$16.33). Simon continued up the Tombigbee River into Mississippi, and on June 18, Pratt deducted Simon's expenses to Columbus (\$30.13). The Ticknor brothers only sallied forth on these trips occasionally, but other men acted as fulltime agents. These agents received a fixed monthly salary, plus commissions. In 1843, for example, Pratt hired John Woods and "Mr. Goree" as agents for \$40 a month (\$480 per year). Commissions could add considerably to these salaries. John Gulick, for example, received \$338.31 in commissions for the period from January 11 to September 4, 1840.

extremely capable slave Andrew, \$58.14, compares favorably with that earned by William Weaver's highly skilled slave forgerman Sam Williams. According to Dew, in the late 1840s and early 1850s, Williams regularly made "over \$50 per annum." Dew, Bond of Iron, 179.

A. W. Gray did even better, receiving \$213.04 for the period from September 25 to December 18, 1843.³³

Normally in the spring and summer of a given year, agents would have their planter customers sign contracts ordering gins of a specified number of saws. The agent warranted that the gin would perform well. When Pratt received the contract, he sent the gin to the planter by boat or, if fairly close to Prattville, by wagon. The planter tried the gin during the harvesting season in the fall, and if it did indeed perform well, the contract required the planter to give his note to the agent, which the agent delivered to Prattville. The note would be payable the next spring, after the planter had sold his crop. If the gin did not perform well, Pratt sent the agent or a mechanic (Occasionally, he would go himself.) to make the necessary repairs. If the gin could not be made to work properly, Pratt provided the planter with another one.

A specific instance of this sales process can be found in the contract a Pratt agent, H. F. Matthews, made with planter N. J. Taliaferro of Lowndes County, Mississippi on February 26, 1841. Under the contract's terms, a "fifty saw ten inch cast steel cotton gin" would be delivered by "D. Pratt & Co." at Pickensville in Pickens

³³Day Book, 5, 7, 25, 69-71. 98-99, 132, 137. John Gulick was born in New Jersey in 1805 and died in 1847. He was interred in the private Pratt cemetery. Gandrud, Alabama Records, 4.

County, Alabama "on or before the first of May next." Presumably, Pratt shipped the gin to Pickensville, a Tombigbee River port near Lowndes County, and Taliaferro then had it carried to his plantation. The contract warranted that the gin would "perform well." Taliaferro promised that he would "try this gin in the fall of 1841," and if it performed well, he would give his note to Matthews for \$175, "payable the first of march 1842."³⁴

Pratt demanded annual interest of 10 percent from planters who could not make their payment on time. For example, A. C. Harworth of Rapides Parish, Louisiana promised on February 4, 1842 to pay \$261 by January 1, 1843 "for value received with interest at ten per cent per annum from [March 1, 1842]." Unfortunately, this note was still unpaid on November 16, 1846, when agent John Phillips turned the note over to agent Andrew R. Hynes of Richmond, Louisiana. Hynes promised "to use due diligence in the collection of the [note]."³⁵

At least one planter, Robert Sinclair Gracey, challenged this mode of operation, and Pratt's response to Gracey's complaints is instructive about his general relationship with planters. In the summer of 1839, Gracey contracted with John Gulick to have a fifty-saw gin sent to

³⁴N. J. Taliaferro Contract, CECP.

³⁵Andrew R. Hynes Contract, CECP.

his plantation in Marengo County, Alabama. Gracey wanted to gin his cotton crop and then return the gin if he considered its performance unsatisfactory. Pratt disabused him of this notion:

I cannot be at the expense to waggon a gin so far let a man gin his crop and then take it back. . . . To let a man use a gin through his whole crop and take it back is entirely contrary to my manner of doing business.

Pratt informed Gracey just what he would accept.

Should you not like [the gin] after using of it two weeks well enough to keep it please set it aside and inform me by mail. . . . I eather go or send and have it fixed. If I cannot make it do well I take it back and send [the customer] another.

One can hardly characterize Pratt in this letter as cringing before Gracey, a member of the "planter elite."³⁶

Not all planters ordered Pratt's gins through traveling agents. By 1844, in partnership with H. Kendall Carter, a New Englander he had known in Macon, Pratt had established his own commission house in New Orleans, which

³⁶Daniel Pratt to R[obert] S[inclair] Gracey, 5 August 1839, Box 31, McMillan Collection. Jonathan Weiner declares that "while Pratt was completely dependent on planters for his market, the planters could purchase gins manufactured outside the South." Thus, Pratt and other southern manufacturers "needed the planters much more than the planters needed them." Jonathan Weiner, Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885 (Baton Rouge and London, 1978), 140. On the contrary, in his letter to Gracey, Pratt appeared confident that planters would acquiesce to his terms in order to get a good product. Pratt's innovative marketing techniques made it easier for many planters to order a good gin and keep it in good repair. Whether any given planter would have been willing to participate in some kind of planter boycott against Pratt if he challenged their purported class interests is highly debatable.

took orders directly from large planters in the Mississippi River valley. The firm H. Kendall Carter & Co. lasted until 1858, when Carter sold out to Pratt.³⁷

Pratt also had a warehouse for his cotton gins in New Orleans, from where he distributed a large number of his gins to planters in western Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and eastern Texas. On April 28, 1840, Pratt debited \$108 for the cost of freight and expenses on 22 gins shipped to New Orleans. On May 18, 1841, he shipped 66 gins to New Orleans, recording expenses in more detail. Freight down the Alabama River to Mobile cost \$231. Drayage and wharfage in Mobile cost \$5.75 and \$33, respectively. Freight from Mobile to New Orleans cost another \$231. Finally, drayage on 43 of the gins in New Orleans cost \$18. Pratt accompanied this big shipment, and he debited his "expenses to and from [New] Orleans," \$48.37. At the end of the year, the Day Book has entries for the hauling of 84 gins and 319 gins, respectively, but their destinations are not clear. It appears, then, that in 1841, Pratt shipped at least 469 gins, of which at least 66 (and probably considerably more) went to New Orleans.³⁸

On July 1, 1842, Pratt recorded freight and expenses on 120 gins "up the Bigbee" (\$872.50) and 110 gins to New

³⁷Day Book, 171; De Bow's Review 3 (September 1846): 151.

³⁸Day Book, 3, 22, 47.

Orleans from Mobile (\$307.50). At the end of the year, he again noted the hauling of gins in two shipments, one of 59 gins and one of 366 (the latter "to the river"). These records indicate that Pratt shipped 655 gins in 1842, with at least 110 going to New Orleans. It seems likely that many in the shipment of 366 gins went to New Orleans as well. Many of the gins carried up the Tombigbee River surely were destined for the plantation country around Columbus and Aberdeen, Mississippi.³⁹

In 1843 and 1844, Pratt continued to manufacture hundreds of gins annually. In early January 1844, the Day Book records the expenses (likely incurred in 1843) of hauling 90 gins and 240 gins, respectively, "to the river." In December 1844, Pratt noted the costs of hauling 29 gins, 70 gins, 304 gins, 3 improved gins, and 91 improved gins, respectively, "to the river." Thus, in 1843 and 1844, respectively, Pratt shipped at least 330 and 497 gins "to the river," meaning down the Alabama River.⁴⁰

Pratt early on used newspaper advertising to acquaint planters with his product. On March 2, 1840, he paid the Mobile Commercial Register \$38.75 for advertising his cotton gins. On June 3, 1841, he paid \$20 for advertising to the Montgomery Daily Journal. In 1846, Pratt, at the

³⁹Ibid., 79, 95.

⁴⁰Ibid., 145, 195.

request of James De Bow, introduced himself to the readers of the recently launched De Bow's Review in an article that he wrote entitled "Cotton Gins." Pratt boasted that since he had commenced business in Alabama in 1833, he had manufactured "a little exceeding 5000 gin stands." He added that he currently made "about five hundred [gins] annually." His market extended over Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and even Mexico.⁴¹

In constructing his popular gins, Pratt's mechanics used locally grown timber sawn in Pratt's own mill. In December 1845, for example, Pratt recorded \$365 spent on lumber for 86 improved cotton gins. For the gin saws (which pulled the cotton fibers apart from the seed), Pratt, like Samuel Griswold, turned to Naylor's Steel Works of Sheffield, England. On July 20, 1839, for example, Pratt paid Naylor's \$1,462.42 for steel. Unless a customer otherwise specified, Pratt put ten teeth to an inch on each saw and attached the saws to cylinders that stood three-fourths of an inch apart. Screws came from Eagle Screw Company of Providence, Rhode Island. Pratt debited screw purchases of \$113.03 in February 1843 and \$117.19 in September 1843. For the iron used in the gin castings, Pratt relied on a southern company, Shelby Iron Works, located some fifty miles to the north of Prattville in Shelby

⁴¹Ibid., 5, 29; De Bow's Review 3 (September 1846): 151-52.

County. The company's owner, Horace Ware (another Yankee), recalled Pratt as his "best customer." In almost all other cases, however, Pratt, much to his chagrin, found himself forced to rely on northern manufacturers for gin materials and factory machinery, even on the eve of the Civil War. In 1849, for instance, Pratt's bookkeeper, Thomas Avery, informed Pratt that Ball & Rice of Worcester, Massachusetts had sent the new planing machine Pratt needed for his gin factory, at the cost of \$117.50.⁴²

Within only a few years, Prattville began to draw enthusiastic comments from visitors. In 1842, Elisha Case Griswold, the eldest son of Samuel, made a two-day visit to Prattville, in which he spent one of the days touring the gin factory and the village. Pratt's factory, he declared, "is better managed for doing work quickly and cheaply than any I have ever seen." He noted that Pratt "had built more than twenty buildings, most of them occupied by his workmen." Prattville, he concluded, "is a monument to industry and perseverance. When [Pratt] moved here in 1833, he was worth \$10,000, now he has expended \$1,000,000 [?] on

⁴²Day Book, 1, 103, 130, 195; De Bow's Review 3 (September 1846): 151-52; Peter J. Coleman, The Transformation of Rhode Island, 1790-1860 (Providence, R.I., 1963), 146; Ethel Armes, The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama (Birmingham, Ala., 1910), 163; Thomas Avery to Daniel Pratt, 19 March 1849, Folder 44, Pratt Collection.

improvements."⁴³ Coming from Samuel Griswold's son, this was high praise indeed.

James De Bow made certain to stop in "the remarkable town of Prattsville" during an 1847 visit to Alabama. Pratt's "improvements have been extraordinary," he exclaimed, "and one cannot realize they have been made in so short a period, save by the wand of an enchantress." De Bow saw Pratt himself as "a remarkable instance of that success which energy, enterprise, and worth of character will everywhere secure." The gin factory, he reported, manufactured from 10 to 12 gins a week (480 to 576 a year), which generally contained fifty saws, at three to four dollars a saw, depending on the quality of the saw.⁴⁴

By the mid-1840s, Prattville had a gin factory, saw-mill, foundry, grist mill, and store. Revealing what would be a lifelong determination to foster enterprise in Prattville, Pratt began renting buildings to budding local entrepreneurs at least as early as 1843, with the result that more businesses began to sprout in the 1840s. On November 3, 1845, George Tisdale purchased from Pratt (at a cost of \$279.59) equipment for a tin shop: tinsman's tools, machines, pliers, coppers, snip shears, compasses, iron

⁴³Elisha Case Griswold to Sanford Tippet, 19 October 1842, reprinted in Carolyn White Williams, History of Jones County, Georgia: 1807-1907 (Macon, Ga., 1957), 469-70.

⁴⁴De Bow's Review 5 (September 1847): 136-37.

wire, and tin plate. Tisdale, a Connecticut native born around 1817, owned the shop until 1858, when he sold out and moved to Autaugaville, where he started another tin shop.⁴⁵

Pratt for several years owned a general store in Prattville that supplied the needs of his workers. Pratt's miller, James Leithhead, patronized the store, purchasing a gallon of molasses for fifty cents on April 19, 1841 and 24 pounds of coffee for \$3.46 on June 3, 1841. Simon Ticknor bought a rocking chair for \$4.25 and a box of codfish for \$1.75 on February 4, 1843. Henry Hunt spent three dollars on six yards of brown linen on March 17, 1841. In 1843, however, two brothers from Georgia, Benjamin and Haywood Miles, took over the store as the firm B. F. Miles & Co. Pratt charged the pair store rental from October 16, 1843 to January 1, 1845 and from January 1, 1845 to January 1, 1846 of \$241.67 and \$200, respectively, or less than \$17

⁴⁵Day Book, 225; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 109, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration. Although Tisdale managed to stay in business in Prattville for over a dozen years, the Dun credit reporter made a withering assessment of him in 1858. "Irresponsible and business habits not good," he wrote concerning Tisdale, adding "No prospect of accomplishing anything in business here." He added that Tisdale was "trying to sell his property which is under mortgage in order to leave the county." Tisdale crossed swords with Pratt politically in 1854, an action that may have damaged his position in Prattville. See my discussion in chapter 5. In 1860, Tisdale and his family lived in Autaugaville, where Tisdale was a tinner worth \$1,400. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

per month. Pratt kept recording employees' purchases at the store in this period, however, suggesting that Pratt's workers had some sort of credit arrangement through Pratt with B. F. Miles & Co. On December 7, 1844, for example, Amos Smith, likely with his wife's Christmas cooking in mind, purchased a pound of allspice for \$0.20, a half pound of nutmeg for \$0.87, a half pound of cloves for \$0.38, and four pounds of ground ginger for \$0.60. He also bought two pounds of fish and potatoes for \$5.00.⁴⁶

Other men had started businesses in Prattville by 1850, presumably under similar arrangements with Pratt. Western Franks and N. F. McGraw (a Tennessean born around 1821) manufactured horse mills, which millers used to grind corn, and Llewellyn Spigner had a carriage and wagon shop. Like George Tisdale's tin shop, these shops were dwarfed by Pratt's factory, all three together employing only thirteen men. Another Pratt employee, Enoch Poor Robinson, launched a more ambitious project. With another New Hampshireite, Thadeus Mather, he started (probably in 1849) a cotton gin and horse mills factory in Hayneville, the county seat of Lowndes County, Alabama. Lowndes lay on the southern side of the Alabama River, directly opposite Autauga. In 1850, Mather, Robinson & Co. manufactured 150 gins. Unfortunately, the factory burned on October 21, 1855; and

⁴⁶Day Book, 15, 20, 29, 105, 189, 198, 229, 234; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

Robinson returned to Prattville to start his own horse mills shop, McGraw having left Prattville in 1851 and Franks apparently having died. "E. P. Robinson came over this evening with materials and hands to start his shop for making mills," wrote Amos Smith's son George in his journal on December 10, 1855. Robinson made a great success with his Prattville mills shop and became a wealthy man by 1860.⁴⁷

As business in Prattville expanded, Pratt decided to attempt to purchase Washington Landing, located four miles southeast of Prattville on the Alabama River. Washington, the former county seat, had dwindled almost to the vanishing point since the 1830s, the result of transferring the county seat to centrally located Kingston as well as the rise of Prattville as a county business center. Washington now consisted of little more than a dilapidated warehouse and wharf, as well as a ferry. But since Pratt sent his textiles and many of his gins down the Alabama River, the site held great significance for him. The heirs of Wade Cox, who, at his death, owned much of the land in and around Washington Landing, apparently rejected an offer

⁴⁷U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County, Population Schedule, Autauga County, Lowndes County, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Church Register, First Methodist Church of Prattville, 37-38; Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith (Prattville, 1991), 53; Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of George Littlefield Smith (Prattville, 1991), 106, 110, 111.

that Pratt made, however. Thus rebuffed, Pratt sent Shadrack Mims, the textile factory agent, to Kingston, the county seat, to search deeds with the probate judge to determine whether the Cox heirs held proper title to the land. Unfortunately, Mims could find nothing that cast doubt on their title. In a letter to Pratt (who was in New York at that time), Mims suggested that Pratt make another attempt to come to terms with the owners. He indicated that the Cox heirs were primarily interested in maintaining possession of the ferry. As for the warehouse, he supposed that "they would not be reluctant to part with it at a fair compensation in view of all the circumstances." Mims noted that if Pratt established "a warehouse at any point above [Washington Landing] it would finally break up that place and make the property valueless," whereas "should a good warehouse be put up [at Washington Landing] & well conducted, it would divert a good deal of the Travel from the upper routes & thereby enhance the value of the Ferry property."⁴⁸

⁴⁸Shadrack Mims to Daniel Pratt, 15 March 1849, Folder 44, Pratt Collection; Hardy, "Autauga County," 100. Mims, a Georgia native born in 1804, was a southerner who became extensively involved in Pratt's operations. After the dissolution of Samuel Griswold & Co. in 1853, he became a partner in the gin factory, while retaining his position as textile factory agent. He retired from the gin and textile business in 1860, devoting himself to farming and writing local history. Interestingly, Mims was the uncle of Robert Jemison, the prominent Alabama industrialist and politician. For background on the Mims family, see Glover Moore, William Jemison Mims: Soldier and Squire (Birmingham, Ala.,

Perhaps exercising such leverage, Pratt reached an agreement with the heirs by early 1850. Under its terms, the owners received \$10,000 for the land that their father had held. Pratt and Jesse Cox, a prominent Alabama River steamboat captain, shared control over the ferry.⁴⁹

Having secured the landing, Pratt began improving its facilities and constructing a plank road between it and Prattville. On a return visit to Prattville in February 1851, James De Bow wrote:

A plank road of easy grade, upon which it is calculated a team of four mules will have a load of six tons, will soon be built by Mr. Pratt, connecting his place with the [Alabama] river. He is now building a good wharf and warehouse on the river landing which will compare with the best.

Pratt completed the plank road by July, at a cost variously estimated at five to ten thousand dollars. He placed Norman Cameron, a North Carolinian born around 1824, in charge of the warehouse, a position he would hold until the outbreak of the Civil War.⁵⁰

1966), chapter 1. For more on Shadrack Mims, see my chapter 4.

⁴⁹Deed Book DE, 509-13, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse. On Jesse Cox, see the Tuskegee Republican, 19 May 1859.

⁵⁰De Bow's Review 10 (February 1851): 227; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 17; Hardy, "Autauga County," 99; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 12, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. On July 20, 1851, George Smith, the eldest son of Amos Smith, wrote that he and his brother "took a ride down toward Washington on the plank road. It was very pleasant." Nobles, ed., George Smith, 17. Seventy years after the

The 1850 census makes clear why Pratt needed the plank road. In addition to gin and textile factories, Prattville had a saw mill, a grist mill, a foundry, a tin shop, a carriage and wagon shop, and a horse mills shop. The eight establishments employed 185 people and produced products worth \$191,155. The gin factory employed 28 men and produced 500 gins worth of \$50,000. Workers received average monthly wages of \$25. To build the gins, the firm used 25,000 pounds of sheet steel worth \$4,000, 100,000 pounds of lumber worth \$1,000, and "other materials" (gin castings and miscellaneous items) worth \$10,000. The foundry employed 3 men and produced castings worth \$8,000. It used sixty tons of pig iron worth \$1,500 and thirty tons of coal worth \$450. The sawmill employed 3 men and produced 300,000 pounds of lumber worth \$2,700. It consumed 2,700 logs worth \$1,050.⁵¹

From his modest start in Alabama in 1833, Pratt had, by 1850, built one of the country's most important cotton gin factories. But Pratt, at fifty-one, remained a very

event, one man recalled that "the making of a railroad was never talked about more than the building of that plank road." That his family left Autauga before Pratt completed the road counted as "a disappointment of my life," he declared. Washington Bryan Crumpton, A Book of Memories, 1842-1920 (Montgomery, Ala., 1921), 11. On the national plank road fad of the 1840s and 1850s, see George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860 (Armonk, N.Y. and London, 1951), 29-31.

⁵¹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County.

energetic and determined man, and he did not rest on his laurels. Rather, he launched an ambitious course in the 1850s that would make him, by the end of the decade, the largest cotton gin manufacturer in the world and one of the South's most successful and celebrated businessmen.

CHAPTER 3

MANUFACTURING COTTON GINS: 1850 TO 1861

In 1850, James De Bow, that tireless booster of southern industrialization, launched a new series in De Bow's Review, the "Gallery of Industry and Enterprise," in which he chronicled the exploits of the South's great industrialists and entrepreneurs. De Bow commenced the series with Charles James, a Rhode Islander who had done much to encourage southern textile manufacture; his second installment, in February 1851, told the story of Daniel Pratt. De Bow declared Pratt not only a talented businessman, but "an ornament to human nature, and worthy to be held up as an example for the respect and admiration of mankind." Pratt, wrote De Bow, now manufactured about 600 gins a year and had made some 8,000 since 1833. Together, the textile factory (which Pratt started in 1846) and the gin factory employed about 200 people. Noting the strong water power of Autauga Creek, the abundance of fine quality yellow pine in the countryside, and Pratt's improvements in and around Washington Landing, De Bow concluded that "no place in Alabama is so well adapted to manufacturing

purposes as Prattville. The site could easily support a population of 6000 inhabitants."¹

In his article, De Bow mentioned that Daniel Pratt & Co. had undergone a personnel change. The gin factory, he wrote, "is now under the charge of S. Griswold & Co." Why Pratt and Samuel Griswold decided to merge operations in 1850 is nowhere explicitly stated, but there are two probable reasons. First, the two men had remained good friends for some twenty years. Pratt and Griswold, of course, originally had planned to have a business partnership when Pratt set out for Alabama in 1833. Second, since Pratt dreamed of driving his Massachusetts competitors, the Carver and Eagle gin companies, from the field, he no doubt hoped to make use of Griswold's capital. Griswold, too, would benefit from this scheme, though as in 1833, he proved more cautious and hesitant than Pratt.

Carver and Eagle gin companies, both of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, were the North's only major cotton gin factories, but they did a strong business in the Mississippi River Valley. "Both the Eagle and Carver gins were of superior quality and were constantly improved [in the antebellum period]," notes historian Malcolm McMillan. In 1850, Carver employed fifty-seven men and manufactured 372 gins, while Eagle's fifty men made 580 gins. Judging by a

¹De Bow's Review 10 (February 1851): 225-28.

letter Samuel Griswold wrote to Pratt in 1850 concerning the terms of the proposed partnership, Carver (and presumably Eagle as well) posed a significant obstacle to the pair in their quest to dominate the Mississippi Valley gin trade. Pratt apparently contemplated having H. Kendall Carter & Co. take over marketing in Louisiana and western Mississippi, with Texas and Arkansas under the jurisdiction of a man named Renfro. Griswold worried whether Carter could "furnish a full number of agents to do [the area] ample justice." He underlined to Pratt just how important he believed traveling agents were in the battle with Carver: "With a reasonable number of good agents I think a fair number of gins can be sold and but few of our gins can be sold without traveling agents to call on the small planter back in the country for Carver sells most of the large planters gins on the rivers." Griswold reported to Pratt that a visiting member of H. Kendall Carter & Co. had told him that Carver currently sold a popular make of gin at the relatively high price of four to five dollars a saw. "Carver pretends his gins will pick very fast," Griswold noted skeptically. "I believe fast gins are more sought for at the west than formerly." Griswold wondered fretfully whether he and Pratt could "continue to get some of Carver's customers. I suppose they would not think a slow gin worth having." Griswold complained that Pratt already had on hand a "large number" of unsold gins, while he

himself sold all his gins "every year and have none left, at least have done so for the last five or six years."²

For Griswold, expansion appears almost to have held more peril than promise. Why, then, did he finally consent to enter the venture at all? Perhaps most crucially, Griswold's eldest son, Elisha, who, it will be recalled, wrote so favorably about Prattville on his 1842 visit, strongly supported Pratt, and Griswold seems to have had great faith in his son. In fact, in his January letter to Pratt, he authorized Elisha "to enter into any agreement or bargain to purchase or sell any article or property connected with the gin business at Prattville." Griswold declared that Elisha's actions "shall be binding on me as a partner of the firm S. Griswold & Co." In a few years, Griswold would regret that he wrote these words, for Pratt's aggressiveness and his own caution doomed their partnership.³

²Malcolm McMillan, "The Manufacture of Cotton Gins: A Southern Industry, 1793-1860 (n.d.)," TMs, p. 3, Box 25, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; John Hebron Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860 (Baton Rouge and London, 1988), 58-59; Samuel Griswold to Daniel Pratt, 29 January 1850, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery (ADAH). In his letter Griswold added: "If Carter & Co. want more agents, I think a young man by the name of Barfield who I sent out will make a good agent if S. Griswold & Co. don't need him."

³Samuel Griswold to Daniel Pratt, 29 January 1850, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

As events turned out, S. Griswold & Co. became a four-man partnership consisting of Pratt, the two Griswolds, and Amos Smith. In April 1850, Simon Ticknor suddenly died, and Samuel Ticknor withdrew as a partner in the company. Elisha Griswold moved to Prattville that spring, accompanied by his wife and young son, Samuel. Elisha quickly became an integral member of the Prattville community, and the partnership seems to have gone smoothly for about two years. But in the spring of 1852, Pratt made a business decision concerning the newly invented "Parkhurst gin" that brought friction with Samuel Griswold and the ultimate dissolution of the partnership a year later.⁴

The Parkhurst gin, invented by Stephen Parkhurst of New York, created a sensation in the South in 1852. Pratt's involvement in the ensuing Parkhurst gin debacle must have been largely precipitated by his and Griswold's concern over the competition with Carver and Eagle. The Parkhurst gin's proponents touted the machine as being entirely superior to the Whitney gin. The Parkhurst was a roller gin, not a saw gin, and its boosters claimed that it did "not cut or destroy the staple as is the case with the saw gin." As a result, they argued, cotton ginned with a Parkhurst machine would "bring in the market from one or

⁴Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith (Prattville, 1991), 64-65; Mollie Ticknor to Merrill Pratt, June 9, 1853, Folder 30, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

two cents more per pound than that produced by the Whitney gin." One writer declared that "Gen. Wade Hampton and Gov. Hammond, of South Carolina, speak in the highest terms of the new gin. Gen. Hampton has thrown away the Whitney gin, and will use no other than Parkhursts."⁵

Riding on this wave of favorable publicity, Parkhurst formed, in the spring of 1852, a corporation to sell rights to market his gin in Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana. His price was \$40,000 for each state. Two prominent Montgomery businessmen snapped up the Alabama right, but Pratt was able to purchase the Louisiana right. In March, Ferdinand Smith recorded: "The Parkhurst gin seems to be all the talk now. I understand that Mr. Pratt has made arrangements for making them here." The same day, George Smith wrote: "Father says that the gin shop company are going to manufacture the Parkhurst gins for the New Orleans trade." A week later, Ferdinand noted that "Mr. Parkhurst has been over from Montgomery today to make some arrangement about the construction of his gins." In a few days, however, an uncertain note had crept into Ferdinand's journal: "Messrs. Pratt and Griswold have been in the shop most of the time

⁵Mobile Daily Advertiser, 24 August 1852, reprinted from the Savannah Republican; Mobile Daily Advertiser, 7 November 1852, reprinted from the Savannah Courier. Other supposed advantages of the Parkhurst gin were that it was less likely to get out of order, that it required half the horsepower to work it, and that it ginned faster.

today engaged on the new gin, trying to make some improvements in the construction of the machine."⁶

By May 1852, things had definitely taken a bad turn. On the eighth, Ferdinand wrote:

One of the new Parkhurst cylinders came to the shop. George and I then took hold of [the gin] and took out the old [cylinder] and put in the new cylinder and stripper. We then started [the gin], but it did not operate very satisfactorily.

On May 11, Ferdinand complained that the gin "still cuts the seed." On June 4, he wrote: "Mr. Pratt has been in the shop all day at work on those new cylinders, trying them. H. K. Carter got here this morning; he has been in the shop a good part of the time." On the ninth, things were still no better: "At work trying those Parkhurst cylinders in P. Gin. So far as we have gone we find them to be too faulty to put into gins." Finally, on June 11, George Smith recorded ominously that "W. O. Ormsby having prepared a statement in accordance with the facts in reference to the operation of the cylinders, Ferdinand and I went with him to Esquire Reid's office and testified on oath to the truth of the same."⁷

⁶Mobile Daily Advertiser, 24 August 1852; Daniel Pratt to Samuel Griswold, 14 June 1852, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 116, 117; Larry Nobles, ed., The Journals of George Littlefield Smith, (Prattville, 1991), 43.

⁷Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 122, 124, 125; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 51.

Trouble was brewing between Pratt and Samuel Griswold during this period. The latter was horrified when he learned that Pratt, with Elisha's consent, had bought the Louisiana right. "My age and health admonish me that I have more business in Georgia than I can do justice to and it would be unwise [for] me to branch out & incur further liabilities," he insisted in a letter to Pratt in May. Griswold also was "unwilling for Elisha to take an interest in [the Parkhurst gin]." He blamed Elisha "for consenting to a trade of that magnitude without consulting me," but he found Pratt more at fault:

I, however, suppose the reason for [Elisha's] not consulting me was owing to the precipiticy with which the trade was entered into, and not having time to consult me, relied entirely on your judgement and consented for you to do as you pleased.⁸

Pratt had promised to release the Griswolds from the contract and assume the entire liability on his shoulders, but Griswold wanted the promise in writing. It was mostly a formality, Griswold claimed, for Elisha, he argued, could not have bound him to the transaction. He included with his letter a release form that he wanted Pratt to sign.⁹

Pratt apparently wrote Griswold a heated letter in response, for on June 7, Griswold again wrote Pratt, declaring he "was much pained to discover that my letter had

⁸Samuel Griswold to Daniel Pratt, 29 May 1852, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

⁹Ibid.

given you offense by construing its meaning into a threat for the purpose of scaring you into measures." Nevertheless, he insisted that Elisha simply had not possessed the authority to bind him to the Parkhurst deal. In reality, Elisha had not been "authorized to go beyond or do anything in my name not strictly relating to the manufacture of saw gins and the gin business in a similar manner as then conducted." To suggest, as Pratt apparently had, that Elisha had been authorized

to use my name in the purchase of a patent right without consulting me would construe the letter [of January 29, 1850] to give him unlimited control of my name, which I do not think any jury would believe to have been my intention.

Moreover, Griswold argued,

our articles of agreement fixt us limits by saying that no change should be made in the business without consulting me . . . so that no matter how unlimited my letter might have been the articles of agreement superceed that.¹⁰

Griswold suggested that it would be best to dissolve the partnership. Rather than continue in an atmosphere of recrimination, he wrote, "I would at once propose to sell out to you both Elisha's interest and mine in the firm of S. Griswold & Co., for unless we can all be friendly, the firm better be closed if it can be done on fair terms."

¹⁰Samuel Griswold to Daniel Pratt, 7 June 1852, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

Moreover, Griswold did not "see how you can manufacture the new gin while the firm of S. Griswold & Co. goes on."¹¹

Pratt set out his position in a letter he wrote to Griswold on June 14. He apologized for giving offence to Samuel: "I cannot believe the time will ever arrive when I shall not cherish the friendship toward you which has so long existed in my breast." Claiming that at the time he had agreed to release the Griswolds, he had believed that Samuel was "equally bound with the rest of us," he wrote that he had merely wanted from Samuel "the credit of being liberal in this unfortunate affair."¹²

Pratt vehemently opposed dissolving the firm. "If three out of a firm composed of four should think it in the interest of the firm to make some changes or introduce an improvement into their stile of work or contract to build gins of another stile or pattern and these three the persons who superintend and manage the business," he argued, "I do not think they should be deprived of doing so." However, he conceded that "if you or Elisha are dissatisfied and wish to be released from the concern of S. Griswold & Co., I certainly shall not insist on your remaining."¹³

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Daniel Pratt to Samuel Griswold, 14 June 1852, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

¹³Ibid.

Pratt defended himself from Griswold's charge that he had somehow overawed Elisha into consenting to the transaction and that he had been too hasty in entering into the contract. "Mr. Parkhurst sold the right of ala. to a wealthy company in Montgomery," he wrote, "then went immediately to New Orleans and created a great excitement there." Pratt claimed that he was unmoved, but that Elisha worried that "our gin business was about to be ruined." After learning that a company was being formed to purchase the Louisiana right, Pratt took the matter before Elisha and Amos Smith. The two men advised him "to go over and said they would be willing to take an interest and would abide by any contract I thought proper to make." In New Orleans, Pratt "went to see [the Parkhurst gin] perform" and, he felt, "it performed admirably." Pratt believed "that the gin would go into pretty janeral use especialy among the large planters." Under pressure from the rival company, he finally decided to purchase the right. Pratt, representing S. Griswold & Co., took a third; H. Kendall Carter & Co. took a third; and it was hoped that James Gilmer would take a third upon his return to New Orleans. Gilmer, however, declined.¹⁴

Gilmer's refusal to take a third left S. Griswold & Co. and H. Kendall Carter & Co. in a difficult position.

¹⁴Ibid.

If the Griswolds backed out, this position would become even worse. Coupled with the failure of the Parkhurst gin, these occurrences would throw Pratt into great financial distress. Pratt ruefully admitted to Griswold that he had made a bad mistake:

Now I will say the gin they had running in New Orleans was the same they had in Montgomery and the only gin as far as I can learn that ever did perform satisfactory. I supposed all their gins performed as well as the one they had running and from Mr. Parkhurst's tale they were then making superior ones. I had not got acquainted with Mr. Parkhurst and believed what he said was true. . . . It will probably take some four or five years to work through it but should my life be spared I intend dooing so.¹⁵

Despite Pratt's glum assessment of the Parkhurst gin, Ferdinand worked on it in the fall of 1852 and through 1853 in an effort to improve its performance. Moreover, Pratt sold some of the gins, for Frank Smith and his cousin George made trips to Louisiana and Mississippi to "alter" Parkhurst gins. Of course, that Pratt's mechanics had to make such trips belies the claim of Parkhurst's boosters that his gin was unlikely to get out of order. Ferdinand was still working on the faulty cylinder in late 1853, and his last entry concerning the Parkhurst gin (December 9) was not promising: "Mr. Pratt called in today a little out

¹⁵Ibid.

of patience in not seeing the gin going on as fast as he wished."¹⁶

Writing years later, both Samuel Hardeman Griswold and Shadrack Mims acknowledged the Parkhurst gin's failure. Griswold cited his grandfather's refusal to become involved with the gin as an example of his astute business judgment. Mims wrote that Pratt lost \$40,000 on the gin, but he found a silver lining in the sorry episode, claiming that Pratt "could by puffing the gin in the papers [as Parkhurst had done] have sold every dollar of the stock, but he was too honest for that. The loss of \$40,000 was nothing compared to a clear conscience with him."¹⁷

Not only had Pratt lost \$40,000; he lost the Griswolds as business partners. The firm S. Griswold & Co. officially dissolved on January 1, 1852. Shadrack Mims, Pratt's textile factory agent, became a partner in the new firm, Daniel Pratt & Co., which now consisted of Pratt, Mims, and Amos Smith. Pratt did, however, retain the friendship of the Griswolds despite the ripples caused by the unfortunate

¹⁶Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 152, 158, 172; Diary of Benjamin Franklin Smith, TMS, Autauga County Heritage Center, Prattville (ACHC). Even as late as September 1855, George Smith wrote: "Mr. Tuttle, patentee of an improved method of making the Parkhurst gin cylinder, is here." Nobles, ed. George Smith, 105.

¹⁷S[amuel] H[ardeman] Griswold, "The Cotton Gin—An Interesting History of the Gin and its Maker," Gray Jones County News, 2 April 1908; Shadrack Mims, untitled manuscript, 8, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

Parkhurst affair. Indeed, Elisha likely would have remained a partner if his father had allowed him to do so. In the 1850s, he named his third son Daniel Pratt, after the man he so clearly admired. Elisha made a friendly visit to Prattville in 1853, and Pratt wrote him a warm letter in 1856, a year before his untimely death at the age of thirty-eight. Even Samuel Griswold seems to have patched up his relationship with Pratt, for Samuel and his wife visited Prattville in 1855.¹⁸

Although Pratt managed to salvage his friendship with the Griswolds, his business position suffered as a result of their defection. Mims bought Elisha's interest in the company, but Pratt presumably bought out Samuel, thus incurring another large expense as a direct result of the Parkhurst debacle. In addition, Pratt's attempted masterstroke against Carver and Eagle completely backfired, for Parkhurst's machine had proven the "Edsel" of cotton gins.

Despite these problems that beset Pratt in 1852, he launched in 1853 an ambitious expansion campaign that would make him the world's largest cotton gin manufacturer and, by the end of the decade, one of Alabama's wealthiest men. This course would likely have been impossible as long as

¹⁸Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 February 1853; Frank M. Abbott, History of the People of Jones County, Georgia, Vol. I: Genealogies (Macon, Ga., 1977), 101-02; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 63-64; Daniel Pratt to Elisha Griswold, 11 March 1856, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

the rather timorous Samuel Griswold had a voice in the business. In hindsight, then, it appears that the breakup of S. Griswold & Co. actually benefitted Pratt. In addition to his expansion, Pratt found a gin model near the end of the decade that actually proved to match or even surpass Carver and Eagle gins in popularity among the great planters of the Mississippi River delta.

Even during the existence of S. Griswold & Co., Pratt had made a major improvement in the Prattville industrial complex. In 1851, he replaced the grist mill with a three-story brick building, 232 feet long and 29 feet wide. This building housed a machine shop, a carpenters' shop, and a sash, door, and blind shop. While very small by comparison with the gin and textile factories, the sash, door, and blind shop, run by Ephraim Morgan, became a promising establishment in its own right. In 1859, a Prattville paper boasted that the sash, door, and blind shop had "acquired an enviable notoriety on account of the superior make and finish of all its work." The paper predicted that "if its business continues to increase the next two or three years as it has the past two, it will soon become the largest [such factory] in the South."¹⁹

¹⁹Daniel Pratt to [Elijah] Chandler, 19 July 1854, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 14; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 February 1859. The sash, door, and blind factory was operational by May 1851, for in that month, George Smith noted in his journal that "Mr. Lide from Carlowville [a planter community in

From 1853 to 1855, Pratt greatly expanded the production capacity of the gin factory. He put up a new three-story brick building, 220 feet long and 50 feet wide, with a three-story wing 35 feet long and 40 feet wide. According to the 1853 construction contract with T. B. Goldsby, A. J. Mullen, and Hiram Granger (all of neighboring Dallas County, Alabama), Pratt was to pay ten dollars per 1,000 bricks. The contract specified that the building must have 600,000 to 800,000 bricks, so presumably Pratt paid \$60,000 to \$80,000, as a minimum, for this new building. Pratt was to furnish clay and the pine wood needed to burn the bricks, as well as dig the water wheel pit. Goldsby, Mullen, and Granger were responsible for digging the foundation for the building itself. They also furnished their own bricks, lime, and scaffolding.²⁰

Pratt's new brick buildings adjoined each other, forming a line along the western bank of Autauga Creek some 450 feet long. A large water wheel drove the machinery in both buildings. Pratt proudly wrote his old friend Elijah Chandler that he expected "to put in the best of machinery and to have the best cotton gin factory in the world." He

southern Dallas County] was at Prattville this evening. He came for the purpose of procuring some sash and doors." Nobles, ed., George Smith, 14.

²⁰Contract of Daniel Pratt with T. B. Goldsby, A. J. Mullen, and Hiram Granger, 28 September 1853, Continental Eagle Corporation Papers, Prattville (CECP).

noted that he now would be able to "turn out in the shop 1500 gins annually if necessary." Pratt hoped that these great edifices would be something "permanent, something that will induce those who come afterward to keep up the place." He admitted that he was "getting old (55 tomorrow)," and he declared that he "must quit building."²¹

Noah Cloud toured Pratt's new buildings in 1857 and enthusiastically wrote of them in an article in his American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South. Cloud described for his readers what occurred on each floor of the gin factory. On the first floor, workers constructed the various gin parts. On the second floor, workers assembled the parts into gins. Here, also, they tested the finished gins with seed cotton. "Fifty pounds are run through each gin and a note made of the time required to gin it," noted Cloud. "If the speed is not sufficient, or there is any defect found in the performance, it is remedied at once. No gin is allowed to leave the shop until it performs satisfactorily." On the third floor, workers painted and varnished gins before boxing them for shipping. A large elevator moved the gins from floor to floor. A railway connected the brick lumber house, where lumber used to make

²¹Daniel Pratt to [Elijah] Chandler, 19 July 1854, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH. The water wheel was working by late January 1855, and the gin factory's elevator was in service by late February. Pratt completely transferred operations from the old building to the new one by the end of March. Nobles, ed., George Smith, 91-97.

gin stands was seasoned, and the iron foundry, where smiths made the gin castings, to the gin factory. The entire complex so impressed Cloud that he declared "with all [Mr. Pratt's] late improvements and the advantage afforded by his large factory arrangements, he is able to furnish the neatest, most complete and best cotton gin stand in America."²²

Cloud was not alone in singing Prattville's praises. Johnson J. Hooper, the Alabama humorist and editor of the Montgomery Daily Mail, toured Prattville the same year as Cloud and came away equally impressed. Hooper was struck by everything he saw in Prattville, but he took particular notice of the gin factory. "The Gin Manufactory," he exclaimed, "is a mammoth concern, great in extent and massive in structure. Each of its three stories is neatly filled with cotton gins in the process of construction." Through "a great variety of most ingenious mechanical contrivance[s]," Hooper continued, Pratt was able "to secure perfect accuracy and uniformity in the gin saws." Moreover, not only were Pratt's gins mechanically sound, they were aesthetically pleasing. According to Hooper, the gins were "very frequently got up in the most elegant and finished style, resembling, more, furniture for the parlor,

²²American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South 1 (May 1857): 156. Pratt completed the lumber house in October 1855 and the railway in December. Nobles, ed., George Smith, 106, 116.

than a machine for the plantation. We saw many with polished mahogany covers and engraved plates."²³

Pratt continued expanding production in the late 1850s. In 1856, he probably manufactured almost 800 gins. By 1859, he manufactured 1,200; and in 1860, his factory produced at full capacity, 1,500 gins. The 1860 output was valued at nearly \$289,000. Sales, however, did not match production. In 1856, Pratt complained to Elisha Griswold that "the gin business is overdone. I think I have done wrong in building my new shop. I cannot go on to advantage with my new shop to make less than 800 gins annually. I think that is more than I can sell." In 1857 and 1858, Pratt actually sold only 341 and 494 gins, respectively, according to a legal brief Pratt's lawyers filed before the U.S. Patent Commission in 1871. The Panic of 1857 must have had some impact on Pratt's sales. In 1859 and 1860, sales jumped significantly, reflecting the late 1850s cotton boom. In 1859, Pratt sold 780 gins; and in 1860, he sold 858. Prospects appeared quite bright for the gin factory as the country neared war. Since he had arrived in Alabama, Pratt had placed over 14,000 gins into the hands of cotton planters. In 1860, in fact, Pratt manufactured

²³Montgomery Daily Mail, 22 August 1857.

28 percent of the cotton gins produced in the South and one-quarter of all gins produced in America.²⁴

In 1860, Pratt's various businesses employed over 200 people and produced products worth \$491,991. In the gin factory, the 66 men employed produced 1,500 gins valued at \$288,730. They received an average monthly wage of \$38. For raw materials, the factory used 650,000 pounds of lumber worth \$8,125, 180 tons of castings worth \$21,168, 87 tons of iron worth \$6,960, 40 tons of steel worth \$12,800, leather belting worth \$2,360, and "miscellaneous articles" worth \$10,330. The gin factory had a capitalization of \$200,000, almost twice that of the textile factory.²⁵

For raw materials, the foundry consumed 200 tons of pig iron worth \$7,200 and 60 tons of coal worth \$1,000. Interestingly, a sawmill no longer appeared under Pratt's ownership, but several mills operated in the Prattville vicinity. The largest of these employed eighteen men and two women, and it produced 1,000,000 pounds of lumber worth

²⁴Daniel Pratt to Elisha Griswold, 11 March 1856, Folder 48, Pratt Collection, ADAH; American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South 4 (April 1860): 192, 195 (January 1861): appendix; Fred Bateman and Thomas Weiss, A Deplorable Scarcity: The Failure of Industrialization in the Slave Economy (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1981), 211.

²⁵U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County.

\$10,000. Presumably, its leading customer was Daniel Pratt.²⁶

By 1860, Pratt had clearly outdistanced his competition in the cotton gin industry. The U.S. Census that year listed fifty-two gin factories: sixteen in Alabama, twelve in Georgia, eight in South Carolina, five in Louisiana, four each in Arkansas and Texas, three in Mississippi, two each in Tennessee and Massachusetts, and one in New York. Of these, Pratt had four major rivals: Samuel Griswold and Clemson, Brown, and Company in Georgia; and Carver Gin Company and Eagle Cotton Gin Company of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Griswold's factory, which had been moved to Griswoldsville (several miles south of Clinton) around 1850, and Clemson, Brown, and Company of Columbus each

²⁶Ibid. Pratt remained dependent on English and northern manufacturers for a wide range of material right up to the outbreak of the Civil War. Naylor & Co. continued to supply steel, supplemented by Collins & Co. of New York. Eagle Screw Co. remained a supplier of screws and bolts, accompanied by American Bolt Co. of Lowell, Massachusetts. Providence Iron Co. supplied nails and tacks. A number of New York companies provided steel plates, bristles, twine, nails, tacks, screwdrivers, and a variety of paints and varnishes. Robert Ernst from nominally southern Louisville, Kentucky also supplied twine. Iron, however, came from solidly southern suppliers. As Pratt's primary source, Etowah Manufacturing and Mining Co. of Georgia eclipsed Shelby Iron Co. Isaac Spear & Co. of Mobile and Hall & Moses of Columbus, Georgia were also suppliers. On the other hand, the undeveloped state of Alabama's coal industry forced Pratt to rely for coal on Robert Henderson of Philadelphia. Likewise, machinery came from the North. Ball & Williams of Worcester, Massachusetts remained a supplier, along with Putnam Machine Co. of Fitchburg, Massachusetts. See Notes and Bills Payable (1858-1866), CECP.

manufactured about 1,000 gins a year. The two Massachusetts companies, Carver and Eagle, manufactured 410 and 580 gins, respectively. The only other factories that manufactured over 200 gins per year were in Mississippi. Turpin G. Atwood's factory at Bluff Springs in Attala County manufactured 350 gins per year, and Beckett and Tindall of Aberdeen manufactured 250 gins per year.²⁷

Despite Pratt's great success in the 1850s, it appears that he never penetrated the markets in Georgia, except in the Chattahoochee River Valley, or the Carolinas, where Samuel Griswold and Clemson, Brown & Co. predominated. Moreover, he continued to receive stiff competition in the lower Mississippi Valley from the Massachusetts firms, Carver and Eagle.

Pratt improved his situation, however, when he erected his new factory building. In his report on his 1857 visit to Prattville, Johnson J. Hooper noted that Pratt supplied "a large proportion of the gins used by the heavy planters of Mississippi and Louisiana." Pratt shipped many of his largest-sized gins to these wealthy planters, Hooper stated. One surmises that these shipments included the gins that Hooper had noticed that, with their "polished mahogany covers and engraved plates," resembled parlor

²⁷Malcolm McMillan, "The Manufacture of Cotton Gins: A Southern Industry, 1793-1860 (n.d.)," TMs, pp. 18-19, Box 25, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

furniture. Also included, no doubt, were "Eureka gins," which wealthy Mississippi River Valley planters bought for a more substantial reason than appearance. Pratt manufactured Eureka gins under a contract with their inventor and patentee, D. G. Olmsted of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Eureka gins had sixty to eighty saws and cost, because of their special construction, \$6 a saw (or \$360 to \$480 a gin). D. G. Olmsted specially developed his Eureka machines to gin "trashy and swamp cotton" of the Mississippi Delta region, so these gins were "superior for cotton of that peculiar description, to those of any other manufacture."²⁸

Under Pratt's arrangements with Olmsted, the latter had the exclusive right to market the Eureka gins Pratt manufactured. It appears that Pratt received two-thirds of the profits, with one-third going to Olmsted. Pratt and Olmsted certainly had a large volume of sales; in 1864, the pair had \$54,000 in uncollected sales alone, \$36,400 of which belonged to Pratt.²⁹

²⁸Montgomery Daily Mail, 22 August 1857, 1 August 1859; McMillan, "Cotton Gins," 6; Weekly Vicksburg Whig, 11 August 1858. Although I have not located the Pratt-Olmsted contract, clear references to it occur in the following: Daniel Pratt Contract with Samuel Ticknor and Merrill Pratt, 3 September 1859, and Daniel Pratt Contract with Samuel Ticknor, 23 January 1866, (ACHC).

²⁹Summary of Daniel Pratt's Ledger, 1 March 1864, CECP. According to a single document from his New Orleans commission house, dated January 1, 1861, Pratt had received payment for nine Eureka gins. Their value totaled \$3,870. Eureka Gin Sales to Daniel Pratt, 1 January 1861, CECP.

Despite the popularity of the Eureka gin, some lowland planters evidently still preferred Pratt's regular model. Wade Hampton, for example, ordered six regular eighty-saw gins for his great Mississippi plantations in 1860 at \$300 apiece (or \$3.75 per saw). Hampton powered his gin houses with steam engines, and Pratt had adapted his large gins to steam power. In 1861, David Hunt of Rodney, Mississippi (a small town near Natchez), another fabulously wealthy planter, ordered three Pratt gins, one of seventy saws and two of sixty-five.³⁰

The boom experienced by Pratt's gin business in 1859 and 1860 had led to sharply increased sales, but it also made marketing a more complex process. At age sixty, Pratt decided to hand this worry over to others; hence, on September 3, 1859, he concluded a contract with Samuel Ticknor and his own nephew and ward, Merrill Pratt (who had lived in Pratt's household since 1841), under terms that had Ticknor and Merrill take over the marketing of all gins manufactured by Pratt, except the Eureka model, as the firm Pratt & Ticknor. The contract excepted from its operation the area of Texas west of the Trinity River, over which William Saunders had jurisdiction in accordance with a contract he had concluded with Pratt in 1856. Under the 1859

³⁰Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to Col. Wade Hampton, 4 March 1861, Daniel Pratt to David Hunt, 29 May 1861, ACHC; John Hebron Moore, Cotton Kingdom, 69.

contract, Pratt agreed to furnish Merrill and Ticknor with "joint bolt," "swinging front," and "new box" cotton gins at \$2.45, \$1.85, and \$1.75 a saw, respectively. The gins were "to be made in a workmanlike manner and of good material" and "suitably boxed and delivered [to Pratt & Ticknor] in good order." Pratt was to furnish Pratt & Ticknor with all the gins they could "sell in due time." Pratt & Ticknor were to pay for all the gins delivered before January 1 of a given year by March 1 of the following year. Pratt & Ticknor would "use every reasonable exertion to supply the whole cotton growing country with cotton gins," employing "as many agents as are necessary" to do so. Pratt was to pay Pratt & Ticknor 7 percent on all collections "that go through New Orleans" and 5 percent on the rest. Pratt also provided Pratt & Ticknor with gin segments as needed and mule teams to carry gins delivered by wagons. Pratt & Ticknor would pay "ferriages and tolls" and hire "a good and competent bookkeeper," whose job was "to see to the shipping of the gins [and to take] Bills of Lading of the same." The company also would "furnish [Daniel Pratt & Co.] weekly a list of such gins as are wanted for the succeeding week." Pratt & Ticknor were required to use "every necessary means to sell and start the gins" and to attend "strictly to the business generally." Otherwise, Pratt would "take the business back into his own hands." The contract was to commence January 1,

1860 and run to January 1, 1865. Ironically, Pratt, as it turned out, had saddled his kinsmen with the crushing responsibility for collecting notes on gins from planters during the Civil War.³¹

As mentioned above, William Saunders, Jr. had charge of marketing cotton gins west of the Trinity River in Texas. Saunders, an Alabamian born around 1828, had worked as an agent for Mather, Saunders, & Co. After their gin factory burned in 1855, Saunders and Thadeus Mather (a native of New York) contracted with Pratt to manufacture their gins in Prattville in 1856. At some time in 1856, the pair started a commission house in Galveston, Texas. On December 6, 1856, Pratt and Saunders concluded a contract under which Pratt, between January 1, 1858 and January 1, 1863, agreed to furnish Saunders "with all the gins he may sell in Texas at two dollars a saw." Pratt also would provide Saunders with all the gin segments (boxes, bolts, and gudgeons) he needed. On his part, Saunders incurred the risks of shipment and paid the transportation costs. Pratt stipulated that he would not "have any agent for the sale of gins west of the Trinity River in Texas during the [term of the] contract." Saunders agreed to pay Pratt "in New Orleans on the first day of january of each year for all the gins delivered

³¹Daniel Pratt Contract with Samuel Ticknor and Merrill Pratt, 3 September 1859, ACHC.

previous to that time." Saunders would receive his commissions "out of the money he collects from the sale of said gins." Pratt authorized Saunders to warrant the gins according to a form contract that required Saunders "to go or send one of his agents once during the first ginning season after the delivery of each gin to the plantation of the purchaser to see that each gin is properly adjusted and [to] get a note if possible." An addendum to the contract stipulated that Pratt would furnish Saunders with his "improved hung or swinging point cotton box gins at two dollars and twelve and a half cents per saw." Evidently, the arrangement worked well, for in 1860, Pratt and Saunders agreed to extend it through January 1, 1865.³²

In 1860, Pratt employed commission firms in Montgomery, Mobile, Columbus, Mississippi, Natchez, Vicksburg, Memphis, and Galveston. Moreover, he maintained his commission house in New Orleans, having bought out H. Kendall Carter in 1858. Pratt installed Jacob J. Link, a Canadian born around 1812, to run the house.³³

³²Contract Between Daniel Pratt and William Saunders, 5 December 1856, Box 31, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 108; Tuskegee Republican, 19 February 1857.

³³American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South 5 (January 1861): appendix; Tuskegee Republican, 19 February 1857; U.S. Census, Louisiana, 1860, Population Schedule, New Orleans Parish.

As required by its contract with Pratt, Pratt & Ticknor employed a large network of traveling gin agents across Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and eastern Texas. While the great lowland planters tended to order gins directly from Prattville or through the commission houses, interior and often smaller planters relied more heavily on these traveling agents.

A surviving 1861 letterbook yields considerable information on Pratt & Ticknor's marketing practices and agent network. It is evident from the letterbook that Pratt & Ticknor employed at least seventeen agents in the spring of 1861. Each agent covered a certain geographic area, over which he had a monopoly. Three agents had a base of operations in Alabama: Zack Rogers (Tuskegee), A. B. Hill (Claiborne), and William McPherson (Evergreen). Six had a base of operations in Mississippi: H. S. Jacks (Enterprise), William Gaillard (Aberdeen), W. S. Thurston (Woodville), W. Jack Smith (Fulton), Enoch Sanders (Kosciusko), and W. W. Montague (Brandon). Two operated out of Memphis, Tennessee: S. Carroll and H. H. Brooks. One, W. C. Yarborough, operated out of Alexandria, Louisiana; and another, Frank Shelton operated out of Bastrop, Louisiana. Two agents, F. W. Wright and H. R. Cummings, operated in Arkansas. Another agent, A. J. Thompson, probably operated in northern Mississippi's Delta region; and the seventeenth

agent, A. M. Prothro, operated in the Louisiana delta region.³⁴

Personal information on Pratt & Ticknor's agents is sparse. I have located only three of these highly mobile men in the 1860 census, W. G. Yarborough, W. W. Montague, and Zack Rogers. Yarborough, born around 1825 in Georgia, lived in a boarding house in Alexandria, Louisiana. The census enumerator listed his occupation as "ginwright," a reflection of the fact that agents had to be able to repair malfunctioning gins on their note collection rounds. Intriguingly, another agent, W. W. Montague, born in Virginia around 1815, boarded with the family of the mayor of Jackson, Mississippi in 1860. The enumerator listed his occupation as "gin agent" and his wealth as \$5,000, not an inconsiderable sum. Daniel Pratt himself put in a good word for Montague in a letter to planter D. B. Douglas of Bastrop, Louisiana, who had complained about his recently purchased gin. "I notice what you say about the gin," wrote Pratt. "In relation to Mr. Riser [another agent ?]

³⁴Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), ACHC. In May 1861, Shadrack Mims, Jr., the firm's bookkeeper and the son of Shadrack Mims, wrote J. S. Bullard of Shubuta, Mississippi that he could not accept him as an agent because "we have an agent traveling in your section of the country [H. S. Jacks] and we do not think it will be serving him right to establish another agency in his rout." Ibid., S. Mims, Jr. to J. S. Bullard, 7 May 1861, ACHC. Cummings worked from H. Kendall Carter & Co. at the time of the Parkhurst gin affair. Daniel Pratt to Samuel Griswold, 14 June 1852, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

fixing the gin I would prefer Mr. Montague as he understands fixing gins better than Mr. Riser." The third agent whom I have found in the 1860 census, Zack Rogers, did not consider his primary occupation to be that of an agent. He was a farmer in Macon County, Alabama worth \$3,200. Born around 1818 in Georgia, he had a wife and eight children.³⁵

Like W. W. Montague, agent W. Jack Smith received commendation from his employers. Pratt & Ticknor's bookkeeper, Shadrack Mims, Jr., wrote another agent that "we think [Smith] will make a good agent as he seems to have a great deal of energy and 'goaheadativeness'." Agent A. M. Prothro did not win much favor, however. Prothro, an apparent "subagent" of W. G. Yarborough, was dismissed by Yarborough in April 1861. In March, Mims had written Yarborough that "you may use your discretion about discharging A. M. Prothro. If you do not think he is doing a paying business you had better discharge him." As part of the final settlement, Prothro received a \$108 gold watch, the cost of which he passed to Daniel Pratt.³⁶

³⁵U.S. Census, Louisiana, 1860, Population Schedule, Rapides Parish; Mississippi, 1860, Population Schedule, Hinds County; Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Macon County; Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), Daniel Pratt to D. B. Douglas, 9 March 1861, ACHC.

³⁶Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to William Gaillard, 25 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to W. G. Yarborough, 5 March 1861, ACHC; W. G. Yarborough Account with Daniel Pratt, 25 January 1862, CECP.

Pratt & Ticknor's agents earned set salaries, plus commissions (10 percent on gin sales and 5 percent on note collections). Pratt & Ticknor also reimbursed its agents for such incidental expenses as travel. William Gaillard of Aberdeen, Mississippi, a particularly valued agent, received a yearly salary in 1861 of \$1,200. A. M. Prothro, obviously not as valued an agent, received his final settlement in July 1861, \$775 for the period from January 1860 to mid-April 1861 (\$50 per month), plus traveling expenses of \$614.85. In his accounting with Daniel Pratt, W. G. Yarborough charged for a pair of boots and a hat, as well as a subscription to the Prattville Southern Statesman, his board for eleven-and-one-half days at the Merchant's Hotel in New Orleans, and the gold watch he gave Prothro.³⁷

Pratt & Ticknor valued good agents like Gaillard so highly because they vested their agents with a great deal of responsibility. Any negligence or incompetence on the part of an agent could cause the firm great difficulty, given the slowness of transportation and communication. Sometimes, agents failed to send complete shipping information with their gin orders. In March 1861, Shadrack Mims, Jr. reminded H. H. Brooks to be careful on this

³⁷Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to A. B. Hill, 11 March 1861, ACHC; William Gaillard Account with Pratt & Ticknor, 11 March 1861, ACHC; W. G. Yarborough Account with Daniel Pratt, 25 January 1862, CECP; A. M. Prothro Settlement with Daniel Pratt and Pratt & Ticknor, 7 July 1861, CECP.

score. "In giving your orders for gins you did not give the address of the parties we are shipping gins to." In April, Mims instructed H. R. Cummings to "be particular in your letters to give the post offices of the parties you order gins for. Also be very particular about what point the gins are to be shipped to and always what River or Bayou."³⁸

Although Pratt & Ticknor had form sales contracts that it provided to its agents, the agents evidently had authority to draw up their own contracts, a power that could lead to trouble. Mims had occasion again to reprimand H. R. Cummings concerning a contract the latter made with planter Ben Offat of Greenville, Mississippi. Mims complained that the contract was "not drawn up satisfactory, as nothing is mentioned as to the time when due, and according to the way the contract reads we cannot compel [Offat] to pay for the gin at all." Mims demanded: "You must try to get [the contract] in a different shape." Two days later, perhaps after having consulted Samuel Ticknor, Mims wrote a letter to Merrill Pratt—who was himself in Greenville, Mississippi—in which he enclosed the imperfect contract. "We do not exactly like the way the contract reads as nothing is said about the time when due," he told

³⁸Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to H. H. Brooks, 25 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to H. R. Cummings, 10 April 1861, ACHC.

Merrill. "We should be glad if you would call on Mr. Offat and get [the contract] in a different shape and see Mr. Cummings about it." After considerable delay, the concerned parties evidently found their way to a solution, and Pratt & Ticknor shipped a seventy-five saw gin to Offat's plantation in May.³⁹

Even when the agent included the necessary shipping information and drafted a solid contract, he could be undone by penmanship. In May, Shadrack Mims, Jr. informed Zack Rogers of Tuskegee that "we could not tell whether [William Finch's] order was for a 45 or 65 saw gin, as it was written rather indistinctly." He added that with another of Rogers' orders "we could not make out the [customer's] name, as it was signed so badly. . . . Have we got the name right? We are close."⁴⁰

On one occasion in Mims's correspondence, the frightening spectre of agent fraud arose. A. J. Thompson sent an order for a fifty-saw gin for Stephen Thunkild of Mississippi to Prattville, followed by a signed contract. After receiving this gin, Thunkild wrote Pratt & Ticknor, denying that he had agreed to buy any gin. Mims appears to have

³⁹Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims Jr. to H. R. Cummings, 10 April 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to M.E. Pratt, 12 April 1861, S. Mims to Ben A. Offat, 25 May 1861, ACHC.

⁴⁰Ibid., S. Mims, Jr. to Z[ack] Rogers, 24 May 1861, ACHC. On merchant penmanship, see Lewis Atherton, "Mercantile Education in the Ante-Bellum South," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 39 (1953): 636-39.

seriously entertained the possibility of forgery, requesting the planter to "please let us know if your name has been falsely signed to the contract, as we wish to enquire into the matter." Less seriously, William Gaillard apparently made a simple mistake on one occasion, sending in an order for a fifty-saw gin when the planter claimed he had only ordered a horse mill. Mims asked Gaillard to "please look into this matter."⁴¹

A recurring problem in 1861 was the failure of Pratt's agents to desist from taking planter orders for Eureka gins, which D. G. Olmsted had the exclusive right to market. Faced with planter demand and, no doubt, being anxious to secure commissions on this expensive model, Pratt & Ticknor's agents continued to send orders for Eureka gins back to Prattville despite Mims's contrary instructions. On March 12, Mims told agent W. S. Thurston: "You must not sell any more Eurekas as we are not authorized to sell them." On April 19 he sent the same reminder to W. W. Montague and Frank Shelton, apparently to no avail. On May 29, Mims wrote Montague that "We cannot furnish the Eureka gin order for Mr. J. B. Beard as we are not authorized to sell them." The next day, Mims wrote Beard himself, telling him that they could not sell him a

⁴¹Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to Stephen Thunkild, 30 May 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to William Gaillard, 18 March 1861, ACHC.

Eureka gin but "would be glad to furnish you with one of our best gins, which we warrant to perform equal to any other gin now in use."⁴²

Despite the importance of traveling agents, planters sometimes bypassed them, making gin inquiries directly to Pratt & Ticknor. One planter, B. L. Armstrong of Memphis, expressed interest in a Eureka gin, but Mims disappointed him: "We have nothing to do with [the] Eureka Gin. They are manufactured here by Mr. Pratt for the patentee alone and his sales are restricted to the section of the country where he can personally attend to them." H. H. Irwin of Arkansas asked about payment terms and was answered: "Our terms are payable after the 1st crop . . . When an account runs without being paid . . . we expect interest." Mims sent Messrs. Wallis and Wynn of Mississippi blank contracts giving "our terms and conditions and from which we do not vary." He admitted to these possibly thrifty planters that Pratt made "a gin that is fine finished and more durable than our \$3.00 gins, which we sell at \$4 per saw, but do not think it performs any better as to speed and

⁴²Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to W. S. Thurston, 12 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to W. W. Montague, 19 April 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Frank Shelton, 19 April 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to W. W. Montague, 29 May 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to J. B. Beard, 30 May 1861, ACHC.

superiority of samples." No "parlor gins" for Wallis and Wynn!⁴³

Daniel Pratt deemed some of these planter inquiries worth replying to personally. To the extremely wealthy David Hunt of Rodney, Mississippi, Pratt wrote assuringly: "I will send you [gins] of my best make and such as I think you will be pleased with." To Linton Lee of Barnwell District, South Carolina (like Wade Hampton, an absentee landlord in Mississippi), Pratt answered a detailed question as to whether he could furnish Lee with a cotton gin that would "gin 3 bales of 500 lbs each in eight hours, one that will make good cotton and gin the seed clean." Pratt answered Lee that if Lee gave one of Pratt's sixty-saw gins 300 revolutions a minute and had it well-attended, it would produce that quantity in that time. He also promised Lee that he could make a gin brush conforming to a specific plan Lee had provided.⁴⁴

On his own initiative, Pratt wrote Hopkins Rice of Clinton, Alabama concerning a forty-five-saw gin Rice had ordered. "I notice you want to gin 1500 lbs. lint per day, to have the gin run light and pick the saws very clean," he

⁴³Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to B. L. Armstrong, 16 May 1861, S. Mims to H. J. Irwin, 12 June 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Messrs. Wallis & Wynn, 15 April 1861, ACHC.

⁴⁴Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook, Daniel Pratt to David Hunt, 29 May 1861, Daniel Pratt to Linton Lee, 12 June 1861, ACHC.

wrote, adding that "1500 lbs. is more than I calculate for a 45 saw gin to do in a day. . . . That is as much as we calculate for a 50 saw gin with good speed and attention." Pratt advised Rice to purchase a fifty-saw gin, at either \$3 or \$4 a saw. "I warrant both [makes] to be good gins," he declared, adding, however, that "the \$4 is finely finished and a very superior gin"—thus placing a different emphasis on the relative merits of the two makes than did Mims in his letter to Wallis and Wynn. On March 18, Rice ordered a fifty-saw gin, as Pratt had advised, but because it is not apparent whether it was the \$3 or the \$4 make, we do not know if Pratt's sales pitch worked.⁴⁵

Daniel Pratt made sure that Pratt & Ticknor took particular care with the gin sent to Francis Strother Lyon, a very wealthy planter and important Alabama politician. Lyon had ordered an eighty-saw gin for his plantation near Demopolis. Shadrack Mims, Jr. wrote Lyon informing him that the particular model sent him "was sent to the [agricultural] fair last year at Demopolis and Mr. Pratt wished us to let you have it, as it is a superior gin." Mims closed by expressing his hope that the gin "will arrive safely and prove satisfactory."⁴⁶

⁴⁵Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), Daniel Pratt to Hopkins Rice, 11 March 1861, ACHC.

⁴⁶Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims to Francis Strother Lyon, 21 March 1861, ACHC.

Pratt & Ticknor sold to customers who varied widely in wealth, from such great planters as David Hunt, Wade Hampton, and Francis Strother Lyon to men of more modest means. For example, on June 18, 1861, Pratt & Ticknor shipped a sixty-five-saw gin to Lucian Coco and a sixty-saw gin to Jane Woods, both of Avoyelles Parish in the Red River Valley of Louisiana. Coco was worth \$103,500, but Woods was worth only \$37,000. Earlier in the year, Bertin A. Robert, also of Avoyelles, had received a sixty-saw gin from the factory, and he was worth only \$21,200.⁴⁷

Similarly, the wealth of Pratt's customers in southeastern Alabama varied considerably. William J. Bickerstaff of Russell County and R. T. Hudspeth of Henry County, both orderers of sixty-saw gins, were worth \$35,000 and \$35,880, respectively. On the other hand, the probable brothers Joseph W. Guilford and Green H. Guilford (also of Henry County), orderers of forty-five-saw gins, were worth only \$11,150 and \$14,465, respectively. At the farthest end of the spectrum from great planters like Hampton and Hunt was Samuel Shiver of Coffee County, Alabama, a county just entering the commercial cotton market in the 1850s.

⁴⁷Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims to Lucian Coco, 18 June 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Jane Woods, 18 June 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to B[ertin] A. Robert, 23 April 1861, ACHC. Bertin A. Robert was quite possibly a relative of Mary (Robert) Epps, the wife of Avoyelles planter Edwin Epps, made notorious in Solomon Northrup's Twelve Years a Slave.

Shiver, who ordered a gin of only forty saws, was worth a modest \$5,260.⁴⁸

Judging by the 1861 Letterbook, Pratt at the end of the antebellum era sold gins ranging in size from thirty to eighty saws. Gins of forty-five saws and less were generally marketed to smaller planters, while those of fifty to sixty saws went to modestly to very wealthy customers. Gins of over sixty saws (which included the Eureka gin) were confined to the very wealthy.

Of the 195 gins Pratt & Ticknor sold in the spring and summer of 1861, the majority were of fifty and sixty saws, 37.43 percent and 17.43 percent, respectively (or 54.87 percent together). Gins of sixty-five to eighty saws made up 29.23 percent, while gins of thirty to forty-five saws made up 15.89 percent. Eighty-saw gins made up merely 10.76 percent of the total. Admittedly, these results are somewhat skewed against the largest models of gins because the Eureka gin sales are excluded, as well as gins sold in much of Texas and sales through commission houses. Nevertheless, these figures indicate that the great planter did not dominate Pratt's market. Rather, Pratt had a very

⁴⁸Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to W. J. Bickerstaff, 23 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Samuel Shiver, 25 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to B. F. Hudspeth, 25 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to D. W. Guilford, 25 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Green H. Guilford, 25 March 1861, ACHC; U. S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Russell County, Henry County, Coffee County.

broad market, encompassing both the Samuel Shivers and the Wade Hamptons of the cotton kingdom, with many men in the middle.

In the 1850s, Mississippi's railroad network made Pratt & Ticknors' job of delivering gins much easier in that state. Pratt & Ticknor hastened to divert its gin traffic from rivers to rails where possible. In doing so, it relied particularly on the Mobile and Ohio, which by 1861 extended from Mobile to Columbus, Kentucky. Gins that before would have been sent down the Alabama River to Mobile and up the Tombigbee River to Columbus, Mississippi and other towns and landings now went down to Mobile and up the Mobile and Ohio to the various towns that had sprouted on the line—Shuqualak, Macon, Crawford, West Point, Prairie, Egypt, Okolona, Verona, Saltillo, and Baldwin. The Mobile and Ohio also made southern Mississippi more accessible to Pratt & Ticknor, which accordingly shipped gins to railroad towns in this area—Shubuta, Enterprise, and Lauderdale.⁴⁹

The Mobile and Ohio altered Pratt & Ticknor's transportation pattern in Alabama as well. The M&O had a branch line to Gainesville, Alabama that crossed Sumter County,

⁴⁹On the development of Mississippi's railroad network, see Moore, Cotton Kingdom, chapter 7. On the Mobile and Ohio Railroad specifically, see James F. Doster and David C. Weaver, Tenn-Tom Country: The Upper Tombigbee Valley (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1987), 87-91.

and Pratt & Ticknor sent gins to two Sumter planters via this line. In addition, the M&O made possible sales in Alabama's Tennessee River Valley, which had remained physically isolated from southern Alabama since the state's formation. In March, for example, Pratt & Ticknor shipped a fifty-saw gin to a planter in Lauderdale County. The gin was carried by the M&O to Corinth, Mississippi, and then went east on the Memphis and Charleston to Florence, the seat of Lauderdale.⁵⁰

Other Mississippi railroad lines used by Pratt & Ticknor were the Mississippi and Tennessee, the Mississippi Central and the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern in eastern Mississippi, and the Southern in central Mississippi. The only area of Mississippi where Pratt and Ticknor still relied on river transport was the Mississippi lowlands. Here, they continued to send gins by boat from Mobile to New Orleans, from where they moved up the Mississippi River.

In Louisiana, Pratt & Ticknor mostly shipped gins up the Mississippi and Red rivers from New Orleans to various

⁵⁰Doster and Weaver, Tenn-Tom, 90-91; Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to S. F. Pool, 5 April 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Elnathan Tartt, 5 April 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Col. H. D. Smith, 25 March 1861, ACHC. Mississippi-based agent W. Jack Smith evidently operated in the western Tennessee Valley, as well, for when Mims could not reach him at Fulton in northeast Mississippi, he sent a letter to him in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Ibid., S. Mims, Jr. to W. Jack Smith, 21 May 1861, ACHC.

river towns and landings. They did, however, use the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern to ship to such points in the Florida parishes as Tangipahoa and Franklin. Moreover, in some cases, treacherous navigation conditions may have militated against river transport. For example, Mims wrote J. J. Link that he should ship Abram Eddins' gin to Floyd Bayou (in the Mississippi Delta region of Louisiana) "if navigable." If otherwise, he was to ship the gin by rail to Delhi, Louisiana via Jackson and Vicksburg.⁵¹

Despite Pratt's efforts to prod Alabama toward a more vigorous internal improvements policy in the 1850s, Pratt & Ticknor could take little advantage of the state's very underdeveloped railroad system in 1861. They still largely relied on the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers. On March 29, for example, Pratt & Ticknor shipped a forty-five-saw gin for Alexander Weynes of Pickens County and a fifty-saw gin for Hopkins Rice of Greene County—both counties in the western Black Belt—down the Alabama River to the commission house Campbell & Co. of Mobile. Campbell & Co. then sent the gins up the Tombigbee River, one to the river landing "Mouth of the Sipsey," and the other to the river port Pickensville. On April 10, Pratt & Ticknor received the shipping account from Campbell & Co. Five days later,

⁵¹Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to Mrs. Mary Addison, 3 May 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to John Magee, 3 May 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to J. J. Link, 18 June 1861, ACHC.

Mims sent a letter to Campbell & Co. complaining that the charge for freight "up the Bigby is more than double what we have ever paid before." He requested that Campbell & Co. send statements of their "rates for receiving and forwarding—also rates at wharf and dray on gins so that we may know how to examine your [account]." ⁵²

Pratt & Ticknor shipped its gins on the Alabama River steamboat line Cox, Brainard, & Co [CBC], which was co-owned by Jesse Cox of Washington Landing. On June 17, Abner Hill—who had substituted for Mims for a week—replied to a complaint from the company, which had gotten word that Pratt & Ticknor had shipped some gins on another line. The shipment, Hill explained, had been meant for CBC's boat "Beulah," and Washington warehouse keeper Norman Cameron had "hailed her as she passed but for some cause [she] refused to land." Needing the gins to go out as soon as possible, Cameron shipped nine of them on the "Virginia," leaving the balance for a CBC boat. Hill also admitted that some Eureka gins had been shipped on the "Taney" (not a CBC boat) but noted that "we have nothing to do with selling or shipping" Eureka gins. ⁵³

⁵²Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to Alexander Weynes, 29 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Hopkins Rice, 29 March 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Campbell & Co., 15 April 1861, ACHC.

⁵³Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), Abner Hill to Cox, Brainard & Co., 17 June 1861, ACHC. On Cox, see Tuskegee Republican, 19 May 1859.

To the expanding cotton-growing region of southeast Alabama, Pratt & Ticknor sent gins by the Montgomery and West Point railroad from Montgomery to Columbus, Georgia, then down the Chattahoochee River to various ports and landings. On March 23, 1861, for example, Pratt & Ticknor sent six gins to King, Allen & Camack and one gin to Wolfolk, Warner & Co., both Columbus commission houses. The latter gin went to a planter living across the river from Columbus in Russell County, Alabama. The other six gins were shipped to other Alabama landings on the Chattahoochee.⁵⁴

In shipping gins to planters, Pratt & Ticknor itself sometimes made errors. In May 1861, Pratt & Ticknor sent J. J. Hooker of Mississippi a sixty-saw gin, but the notice it sent him separately stated that the gin sent had only fifty saws. Hooker complained to agent A. J. Thompson that he had received the wrong make of gin, and Thompson relayed Hooker's complaint to Prattville. Mims wrote Hooker, explaining and apologizing for the mistake. Hooker fared better than William A. Coppedge of Arkansas, who actually did receive the wrong make of gin. In notifying Coppedge of the mistake, Mims claimed that "the only difference between the two [gins] is price and finish." Coppedge had

⁵⁴Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to King, Allen & Comack, 25 March 1861; S. Mims, Jr. to Wolfolk, Warner & Co., 25 March 1861, ACHC.

ordered a make of gin twenty-five dollars more expensive than the one he had, in fact, received. Mims assured him that the gin sent would "gin equally as fast and give as good a sample as the other [make] and no doubt will please you as well," and he requested Coppedge to let him know whether he would keep the gin or wanted the actual make he had ordered.⁵⁵

In another case, Pratt & Ticknor left the metal plate off a gin sent to Mrs. C. B. Flowers of Alexandria, Louisiana. To rectify the problem, Pratt & Ticknor boxed the plate with a seventy-saw gin it sent to General William Bailey, also of Alexandria. Mims wrote Bailey asking him to please hold onto the plate until local agent W. G. Yarborough could call for it.⁵⁶

Mims blamed some of Pratt & Ticknor's logistical problems on the postal system. "You are mistaken about our not answering your letters," he declared to W. G. Yarborough. "We have replied to every one that required attention." Mims suggested that "the difficulty has been in the mail." In a letter to planter Levi Wray of Copiah County, Mississippi (south of Jackson), Mims claimed his "order was

⁵⁵Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to J. J. Hooker, 13 May 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to William A. Coppedge, 1 April 1861, ACHC.

⁵⁶Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to W. G. Yarborough, 18 April 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Genl. Wm. Bailey, 18 April 1861, ACHC.

nearly 3 weeks reaching us." He put the blame on "some irregularity in the mails."⁵⁷

Once Pratt & Ticknor had successfully distributed the gins to the customers, it faced the challenge of collecting money that the planters owed for those gins. The financially distressed Peyton B. Smith of Cass County, Texas reached an amicable settlement with Pratt & Ticknor. "We note your remark [in your letter] concerning your inability to pay for your gin this year," wrote Mims. "We are willing to abide by your proposition, that is to close the [account] by note with 10% interest from January." Mims enclosed a blank note for him to "sign and return to us by mail." In another case, Mims was much less nonchalant. Replying to a letter from W. Jack Smith, he wrote angrily "If W. T. McDaniel is not honest enough to pay a just balance due on his gin, we shall have to loose it." He pointedly added: "So you can 'let him rip'."⁵⁸

Daniel Pratt's 1850s expansion necessitated not only an increase in the number of agents selling cotton gins, but also an increase in the number of mechanics manufacturing them. In 1850, Pratt employed 28 men in the gin

⁵⁷Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to W. G. Yarborough, 27 April 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to Levi Wary, 24 May 1861, ACHC.

⁵⁸Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), S. Mims, Jr. to Peyton B. Smith, 27 February 1861, S. Mims, Jr. to W. Jack Smith, 8 April 1861, ACHC.

factory itself, plus 3 each in his foundry and sawmill. By 1860, Pratt had more than doubled his gin factory work force from 28 to 66, and 8 men worked in the foundry. Moreover, 12 men worked in the sash, door, and blind shop, which Ephraim Morgan had leased from Pratt since 1851. In 1850, 13 more men worked in three other Prattville shops, and 2 worked in Pratt's grist mill. By 1860, the number working in the other Prattville shops had probably increased slightly, to about 19. Thus, the number of men engaged in mechanical employment in Prattville had more than doubled, from 49 in 1850 to about 105 in 1860.⁵⁹

As the gin factory work force expanded in the 1850s, its racial composition altered. Pratt relied heavily upon black labor in the 1840s. Historian Robert Starobin, in his pioneering work Industrial Slavery in the Old South, claims that Pratt used "scores" of black workers in his gin factory in the 1850s as well, but the evidence does not sustain Starobin's contention.⁶⁰

Certainly, Pratt continued to employ black mechanics in the decade before the Civil War. According to an 1852 state tax assessment, Pratt had seven slaves working in the gin factory. Since only two years earlier, the census

⁵⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County.

⁶⁰Robert S. Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South (New York, 1970), 19.

listed the total number of workers in Pratt's gin factory as twenty-eight, we can surmise that probably about 25 percent of his gin work force in the early 1850s was black. Moreover, Noah Cloud noted in 1857 that of the fifty hands employed in the gin factory and the foundry, "many" were slaves. The journals kept by the Smith cousins also confirm that slaves helped to build Pratt's gins in the 1850s. For example, George Smith recorded on December 20, 1854 that "about half of the colored hands came into [the gin] shop to work." Additionally, the gender imbalance in Pratt's slaveholdings indicates that Pratt continued to employ some of his slaves in factory work. Between 1840 and 1850, the number of slaves owned by Pratt increased only moderately, from thirty-six to forty-seven. Significantly, however, the increase involved only males. The number of male slaves held by Pratt increased from twenty-two to thirty-eight, while the number of females remained constant at nine.⁶¹

Pratt's slaveholdings markedly expanded in the 1850s, but much of this expansion resulted from his purchase of a

⁶¹State Property Tax Assessment, Autauga County, 1852; American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South 1 (May 1857): 156; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 88-89; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1840, Autauga County, 1850, Slave Schedule, Autauga County. I should point out here that Starobin's source, Noah Cloud, does not, in fact, support his contention that "scores" of slaves worked in the gin factory. Cloud wrote only that Pratt employed "many" slaves in the factory, a much less precise term than that selected by Starobin.

plantation in 1858. In 1855, the total number of slaves held by Pratt came to 59, only 12 more than in 1850. In 1858, however, Pratt bought a large tract of land and 32 slaves. Two years later, he owned, according to the census of that year, 107 slaves. In fact, Pratt had become one of only nine Autauga County residents to own 100 or more slaves in 1860. Of Pratt's 107 slaves, 77 were males and 30 were females, a ratio of more than two-and-one-half to one. However, while the number of male slaves had doubled, the number of female slaves had tripled. The percentage of males had actually decreased from 80 to 72.⁶²

Obviously, by 1860, Pratt must have worked many of his slaves on his large landholdings. Even in 1850, he had owned 2,200 acres of land (400 improved) worth \$13,000, as well as livestock worth \$2,226 and farm machinery worth \$800. In 1860, his holdings had increased to 4,050 acres (1,000 improved) worth \$22,500, as well as \$8,500 and \$1,000, respectively, worth of livestock and farm machinery. Moreover, he produced 100 bales of cotton in 1860, making him one of forty-seven Autauga planters to produce that amount or more that year. In addition, Pratt surely employed a large retinue of domestic servants, as he

⁶²U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Slave Schedule, Autauga County; Alabama 1855 State Census, Autauga County; Deed Book DC, 131-33, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse.

owned a large mansion with extensive grounds, including a garden and vineyard, and his household was quite large.⁶³

Finally, I have identified, using the 1860 census, 82 white men as probable workers in the gin factory or the shops, which leaves only 23 of 105 job slots open for slaves. If we assign Pratt, who employed 74 workers in the gin factory and foundry, a proportional share of slave workers, he would have had about 16 black workers, or just 22 percent of his labor force, a slight decrease from 1850. Moreover, we should not lose sight of the fact that Pratt had clearly shifted away from slave labor since the 1840s, when slaves accounted for at least half of his work force.⁶⁴

In 1860, Pratt probably employed as many Yankees as slaves in his gin factory. Clearly, he relied heavily on Yankees at the managerial level throughout the antebellum period. New Hampshire Amos Smith headed the gin factory

⁶³U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Agricultural Schedule, Autauga County; American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South, I (May 1857): 156. The amount of cotton produced on Pratt's plantation in 1850 is obscured by blemishes on its page of the census roll. Surely, though, Pratt could have worked most of his slaves on his extensive landholdings. By way of comparison, Benjamin Fitzpatrick, an Autauga planter who owned 106 slaves in 1850, possessed 5,093 acres (943 improved) as well. Pratt owned somewhat less than half (44 percent) the improved acreage of Fitzpatrick. If Fitzpatrick worked 106 slaves on 943 acres, then Pratt presumably could have worked up to 47 slaves on 400 acres.

⁶⁴U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

from 1839 to 1857, nearly twenty years. Merrill Pratt and Samuel Ticknor marketed Pratt's gins from 1860 on as the firm Pratt & Ticknor. New Hampshire Thomas Avery served as Pratt's bookkeeper from 1845 through the Civil War, and William Ormsby (who, although born in Georgia, had parents from Connecticut) served as Pratt's secretary in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Among the partners in the gin factory over the years, only one, Shadrack Mims, came from a southern state.

As for skilled labor, the 1860 census reveals that Pratt had fifteen northern-born workers: machinists Francis Farnsworth of Connecticut, George Hale of Rhode Island and C. W. Penfield of New Hampshire; master mechanics Ashby Morgan and Ferdinand Smith of New Hampshire; and mechanics Augustus Grayle Morgan, C. P. Morgan, Frank Smith, John Smith, Freeman Holt, and Lewis Holt of New Hampshire; J. H. Wentworth, James Wentworth, and Charles Adams of Maine; and William White of Indiana. One other mechanic, William Beckwith of Georgia, had parents from New York and New Hampshire. Moreover, all but one of the northern-born mechanics were Yankees in the genuine sense, being natives of New England.⁶⁵

⁶⁵U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, 1900, Population Schedule, Autauga County. Two brothers from New Hampshire, Edward and George Fletcher, began working in the gin factory in 1852 but had moved to Montgomery and started their own gin shop by 1856. Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 113; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 117; Prattville Autauga Citizen,

Not surprisingly, given the proximity of their nativity, many of these mechanics were related to each other. Particularly extensive were the kin connections among the Smith family. Amos Smith had three nephews, Ferdinand, Frank, and John, who worked in the gin factory. Daniel Pratt himself had relatives in the factory: Ashby Morgan, the husband of Daniel Pratt's niece and Merrill Pratt's sister, Augusta Dorcas; Augustus Grayle Morgan, Ashby's younger brother; and Freeman and Lewis Holt, nephews of Daniel Holt, the husband of Daniel Pratt's sister Eliza. Another Pratt mechanic, C. P. Morgan, was likely a brother of Ephraim Morgan.⁶⁶

Judging by the 1860 census, several of Pratt's Yankee mechanics earned fairly large incomes. Machinist Francis Farnsworth was worth \$15,000, while mechanics Frank Smith, Ashby Morgan, and John Smith were worth \$8,000, \$7,700, and \$5,000, respectively. Ferdinand Smith did not have a salary listed, but I know from his journal that he was probably the highest-paid mechanic in the gin factory. He started working for Pratt in January 1847, contracting for thirty dollars a month. The next year, 1848, saw his

5 October 1854; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Montgomery County. Former Pratt mechanics Thomas Ormsby and George Smith leased their own machine shop from Pratt in 1860. See chapter 6.

⁶⁶Louis Taylor Nelson, The History of the Smith-Riggs Families (Prattville, 1990); Eleanor Smith Cooke, The Genealogy of Daniel Pratt (Prattville, 1990).

salary increase to forty dollars a month. Because he did not work every day in 1847 and 1848, his actual pay amounted to \$345 and \$362.66, respectively. In 1849, his pay increased to \$451.50. From 1850 to 1853, his salary jumped drastically, to over \$1,000 a year, so that he earned more than twice the average individual wage in 1850. In 1855, Pratt placed Ferdinand in charge of the second floor breasting and finishing department, increasing his pay accordingly. "Mr. Pratt pays me nine cents per saw," Ferdinand noted. Under his arrangement with Pratt, Ferdinand hired Pratt's slave Charles and employed him "at breasting [and] putting on saws and ribs." Ferdinand now may have earned over \$2,000 per year, matching or even surpassing the gross annual incomes of prominent Prattville attorney William H. Northington and physician Samuel Parrish Smith.⁶⁷

Amos Smith and his kin became pillars of the Prattville community. Shadrack Mims, for one, had only praise

⁶⁷U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 1, 2, 30, 58, 83, 115, 175, 199; 1852 State Property Tax Assessment, Autauga County. Ferdinand finished 275 gins in the first six months of 1855. If he finished 550 gins for the whole year and we hypothesize that these were fifty-saw gins, then, at nine cents per saw and subtracting the \$600 he would have paid for the services of Charles for the year, he would have earned \$2,150 in 1855. According to the state property tax assessment for 1852, William H. Northington earned an income that year of \$1,700, while Samuel Parrish Smith earned \$1,600. Less successful professionals like physicians C. A. Edwards and James Townsend earned only \$400 and \$500, respectively.

for them. "This family," he recalled, "were remarkable for their steady, quiet, and orderly lives. Honest, industrious, punctual, and economical, they were all successful in business."⁶⁸

Not all of Prattville's Yankee mechanics were as successful as the Smiths. C. P. Morgan and C. W. Penfield held property respectively valued at \$1,000 and \$700. William Beckwith, the Georgia mechanic with northern parents, was worth only \$2,000, even though he was highly skilled, having installed, in 1855, the elevator and the pump that supplied water to the cistern in Pratt's new gin factory. George Perlette and T. A. Ballard, the foreign-born mechanics, were worth only \$825 and \$100, respectively.⁶⁹

None of the Yankee mechanics boarding with Prattville families had a wealth listing, probably because they were, for the most part, only temporary residents sending their money home. John Smith, brother of Ferdinand and Frank, boarded with William Wallace Fay of Vermont, Shadrack Mims's replacement as cotton mill agent. C. W. Penfield

⁶⁸Shadrack Mims, "History of Autauga County," (ca. 1886), Alabama Historical Quarterly 8 (fall 1946): 265.

⁶⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 94-95, 111. In 1892, Beckwith was elected by the Parisian Academy of Science to its Society of Inventors for his work on cotton gins and water wheels. Prattville Progress, 21 October 1892.

boarded with George Smith. J. H. Wentworth and James Wentworth boarded with Thomas Ormsby, and Charles Adams and the Holt brothers boarded with Frank Smith. Only William White of Indiana boarded with a southerner, probably his uncle, Joshua White of North Carolina. Of these 1860 Yankee boarders, White alone remained in Prattville after 1860. The rest likely left Prattville before the outbreak of the Civil War.⁷⁰

Despite the importance of northern-born mechanics in Prattville's factories and shops, however, most of Pratt's mechanics were actually southerners, a point worth emphasizing in the face of claims by some contemporaries and historians that antebellum southerners were not a mechanical people. Of Prattville's eighty-two white mechanics, sixteen (if Beckwith is included) were Yankees, and only two mechanics came from Europe. All the rest of these men were native southerners.

James Clepper, who owned the carriage and wagon shop, was the wealthiest southerner in Prattville engaged in a mechanical occupation. Indeed, Clepper, of Tennessee, was worth an impressive \$46,000, making him nearly the equal of Enoch Poor Robinson, owner of the horse mills shop. James Wainwright of Alabama, the owner of the tin shop, was worth rather less, \$8,300, but he solidified his position when he

⁷⁰U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

married Daniel Pratt's niece Melissa Holt. Wainwright's wealth compared favorably with that of shop owners Thomas Ormsby and George Smith, who owned property valued, respectively, at \$8,000 and \$4,000.⁷¹

The wealthier southern mechanics who worked in Prattville's shops had roughly the same economic position as George Smith. The six best-off men were Pratt's ward Henry DeBardleben (\$5,000), B. W. Rogers (\$5,000), Joshua White (\$4,800), Benjamin Gaines (\$3,725), Nathan Morris (\$3,300), and Asbury Jones (\$2,900). Ten others were worth between \$1,000 and \$1,700: Harris Ware (\$1,700), John Williamson (\$1,600), J. N. Cook (\$1,500), Samuel Patillo (\$1,500), Robert Ward (\$1,200), James Tunnell (\$1,050), Isaac Ward (\$1,000), G. S. Martin (\$1,000), Washington Lafayette Ellis (\$1,000), and James Glass (\$1,000). Twelve southern mechanics were worth less than \$1,000 but more than \$500, while nine were worth from \$100 to \$500. Two, W. W. Herbert and Seton Durden, were worth only \$60 each. Twenty-five other men had no wealth listing, but some of these cases likely were simply omissions on the part of the census taker. Only one mechanic recorded family members working in the textile factory, and that was John N. Cook, one of the wealthier mechanics. Both his wife Nancy and

⁷¹Ibid.; Cooke, Daniel Pratt.

his fifteen-year-old daughter Adaline were listed as spinners.⁷²

Most Prattville mechanics, whether southern or northern, fared well in terms of wealth compared to Prattville's textile factory operatives. Already in 1850, the mechanics in the gin factory received significantly higher pay than their counterparts in the textile factory; and the disparity only increased over the course of the decade. From 1850 to 1860, the average yearly wage for Pratt's mechanics increased sharply, by about 62 percent, from \$300 to \$486.48. In the same period, the average yearly wage of both male and female textile workers increased far less spectacularly.⁷³

Unlike textile operative households, which usually consisted of a middle-aged parent or parents and a large number of children, gin mechanic households tended to consist of younger, more recently married parents and smaller numbers of children. This disparity in family size makes the disparity in wealth even more significant. Simply put, gin mechanics supported smaller families with larger

⁷²U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

⁷³U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County. Prattville's rising wage disparity in the 1850s between skilled and unskilled workers mirrored national trends. See George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution 1815-1860 (Armonk, N.Y. and London, 1951), 294-95.

salaries. Thirty-five-year-old Samuel Patillo, for example, was worth \$1,500 in 1860 and had a wife and two daughters. John Wesley Glass, only twenty-two, was worth \$1,000 and had a wife and an infant son. Both Patillo and Glass contrast sharply with Thomas Hale, a fifty-six-year-old butcher worth \$400. Hale had a wife and seven children to support. His four oldest daughters worked in the textile factory, and his oldest son had employment as a laborer.⁷⁴

At first glance, the wages of Prattville mechanics appear quite low by national standards, especially in 1850, but to draw such a conclusion would be an error. Highly skilled workers in the North likely earned at least \$7.50 a week, with some earning as much as \$12.00 a week. If we divide the average monthly wage of gin and foundry workers in 1850 by the number of employees (thirty-one), we get only \$6.25 a week. In 1860, Pratt's gin and foundry workers received an average weekly wage of \$10.13, which was closer to the higher northern figures. According to George Rogers Taylor, even few skilled workmen received as much as \$12 a week in 1860. While the Prattville wages seem low, it is important to remember that the census enumerator only gave the total number of employees in Pratt's factory and foundry without distinguishing between slaves

⁷⁴U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

and free men. This omission necessarily depresses the average individual wage figure since the total average monthly wage must be divided by the total number of workers, black and white; and slaves did not receive wages, except for overwork (and even yearly overwork received by a slave would have been much smaller than a white mechanic's salary). If seven slaves are excluded from the 1850 work force, the average individual weekly wage increases to \$8.07. Similarly, if seventeen slaves are excluded from the 1860 work force, the average individual weekly wage increases to \$13.15. It would seem, then, that Pratt's gin workers went from average or low average wages in 1850 to extremely high wages by 1860. Moreover, Pratt's workers also enjoyed low-cost rental housing.⁷⁵

Prattville's wealthier mechanics probably owned their own homes, but most surely rented houses from Pratt, as almost all mill operatives did. Judging from a memo book for the years 1852-1854, Pratt continued to charge many of his workers nominal rents. For example, John Hearn paid Pratt \$75 a year, while James Tunnell paid only \$36, and William Healy paid the very modest sum of \$24. The rents come out to merely \$6.25, \$3.00, and \$2.00 per month, respectively. For men who likely made between \$400 and \$600 a year in the early 1850s, these rents amounted to

⁷⁵Taylor, Transportation, 295-97.

probably anywhere from, at most, 5 to 20 percent of their annual incomes. Less fortunate workers around the nation sometimes paid nearly a third of their income in rent.⁷⁶

The estate settlements of Thomas Ormsby and another mechanic, James R. Glass, provide us a closer glimpse of the economic position of two Prattville mechanics who occupied opposite positions on the economic scale. Ormsby, a Pratt mechanic who became a shop owner in the 1850s, died in a skirmish outside Corinth, Mississippi in 1862, leaving an estate valued at over \$8,400. His estate inventory included his \$2,500 house and lot as well as two house slaves, fifty-year-old Stephen and forty-five-year-old Mourning, valued at \$600 and \$550, respectively. Ormsby also had two shares of stock in the cotton mill worth \$2,000, \$750 in cash, \$1,500 in notes, and eighty acres of land worth \$28.20. In addition, Ormsby owned a \$75 buggy, a \$20 colt pistol, and four bottles of brandy worth \$16. Before his death, he had furnished his house with a sofa, eleven parlor chairs, a rocking chair, a carpet rug, a Mexican blanket, a pair of brass andirons, two looking glasses, four framed pictures, four window curtains, five bedsteads, two bureaus, two wash stands and bowl pitchers,

⁷⁶Pratt Memo Book No. 2, Microfilm Box 1, Reel 18-C, McMillan Collection, University Archives, Auburn University; Taylor, Transportation, 296. Gin painter Ethelred Carrol paid higher rents in 1853 and 1854 (\$120 and \$125), but the house he rented was a very fine structure, later purchased by George Smith. See note 77.

a dining table, a pine table, a desk, a United States map, and a bookcase with ninety books. The inventory did not include the value of Ormsby's interest in the machine shop that he and George Smith leased.⁷⁷

James R. Glass left a far humbler estate after his death in 1856. Glass and his wife, Theodosia Pratt (no relation to Daniel), moved from adjacent Bibb County to Prattville by 1854, where Glass worked for Pratt and rented a house. After his death, his administrator valued his estate at \$409.41. By the time the estate was finally settled in 1858, however, only \$83.51 remained to be turned over to Theodosia.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Reports and Wills, Book RL 12, 1862, 330-32, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse. Like Ormsby, Ferdinand Smith was also a homeowner, having purchased two-story house and lot for \$2,400 in 1854. Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 184. George Smith also purchased a house in 1854, which he called "Mulberry Cottage." This house was a handsome Greek Revival Cottage of one-and-one-half stories, with a central hall and six rooms. Nobles, ed., George Smith, 89; Birmingham News/Age-Herald, 2 June 1935.

⁷⁸Reports and Wills, Book RB 10, 1858, 235-37, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse. A few mechanics owned clocks or watches in 1852, including Ashby Morgan (silver watch), George Perlette (gold watch), Harris Ware (clock), and Marcus Cicero Killet (clock). More mechanics, however, gave no such listings. This latter group includes William Counts, William E. Durden, Jacob Ellis, William Healy, John Hearn, Asbury Jones, William Jones, Nathan Morris, Samuel Patillo, and James Tunnell. Shop owners did much better in this regard. Western Franks owned a silver watch, a clock, one slave, and a vehicle, for example, while George Tisdale owned a gold watch, a clock, a bowie knife, and a revolving pistol. State Property Tax Assessment, Autauga County, 1852.

Although not generally as wealthy as the elite of the Yankee mechanics, southern mechanics such as James R. Glass formed the essential backbone of the gin factory in the 1850s. Surviving records show that mechanics had a much higher persistence rate than Pratt's textile factory operatives, with whom rapid turnover was a serious problem. Twenty-one of Pratt's approximately seventy-four white mechanics, or nearly 28 percent, are traceable in Prattville over a ten-year period, back to 1850. Only one of these men, Ferdinand Smith, was a Yankee, while one, George Perlette, was French. Significantly, the other nineteen men were southerners. William Mitchell was a young single boarder in 1850, and five other men, Samuel Patillo, William Count, Marcus Cicero Killet, John Hearn, and Harris Ware, were young, fairly recently married heads of household. The remaining thirteen were sons of parents who had brought their families to Prattville in the late 1840s.⁷⁹

Benjamin Durden was a long-time Autauga resident who moved in the late 1840s to Prattville, where he worked as a carpenter. In 1850, he was worth \$900. It is not certain that Durden actually worked as a Pratt mechanic, but in any case, four of his sons did in 1860. Durden's youngest son was still a minor in 1860, but by 1870, he had employment

⁷⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. Four former Pratt mechanics, George Smith, Thomas Ormsby, Ephraim Morgan, and Merrill Pratt, had started their own businesses by 1860.

in Pratt's cotton mill. Of the three sons who had wealth figures listed in 1860, only William, Benjamin's oldest son, had, at \$750, made his way into the \$500-\$1,000 bracket. However, the sixty-seven-year-old Benjamin, a staunch Democrat, had snagged Prattville's postmastership in 1853 and was worth \$1,100.⁸⁰

Unlike Benjamin Durden, Elisha Ellis was not a carpenter, yet he produced three sons who became Pratt mechanics Washington Lafayette (Fate), Abraham (Abram) Dekalb, and Jacob. The family migrated from South Carolina to Autauga before 1830, where they farmed in the eastern section of the county. By 1850, they had moved to Prattville, where Elisha worked as a "manufacturer" (probably in the picker room of the cotton mill), and Jacob and Fate worked as mill "operatives" (likely as spinners). In 1860, the fifty-seven-year-old Elisha worked as a laborer and listed his wealth as \$100. Both he and his wife, Mary, were illiterate. A fifteen-year-old daughter, Mary, worked as a spinner in the mill. Jacob and Fate now worked as mechanics in the gin factory, however, and were worth \$500 and \$1,000, respectively. By 1870, their younger brother Abram had joined them in the gin factory. Of the three, Fate attained by far the greatest heights. An extremely skilled mechanic, he patented several important improvements in the

⁸⁰Ibid.; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 8 September 1853.

cotton gin in the 1880s. After the Civil War, he became superintendant of the frame and brush department, a member of the town council, Vice-President of the Prattville Cotton Mill and Banking Company, and, last but not least, mayor of Prattville. Without doubt, Shadrack Mims found this native son as worthy of emulation as the various Smiths from New England. Ellis, he recalled in the 1880s, was "a Southern boy raised in the Ginshop" who "made money, and has raised and educated a respectable family besides taking care of an aged father and mother."⁸¹

The third southern family in Prattville in 1850 that had sons "raised in the Ginshop" was that of William Ward. Ward and his family migrated from South Carolina to Georgia in the 1830s and from Georgia to Alabama in the 1840s. By 1850, the family had moved to Prattville. Disaster quickly ensued, both William and his ten-year-old son Milton dying that same year, leaving behind William's widow, Patience, and their remaining six children. In 1850, four sons worked as manufacturers. In 1860, Robert Ward and Isaac Ward were employed, respectively, as a gin painter and an iron moulder. George Ward worked as an overseer in

⁸¹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1830, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; S[usan] F[rancis] H[ale] Tarrant, ed., Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond, Va., 1904), 17, 96; Charles A. Bennett, Saw and Toothed Cotton Ginning Developments (Dallas, n.d.), 42-43; Memorial Record of Alabama (Madison, Wis., 1893), Vol. 1, 350; Prattville Progress, 11 September 1903; Mims, "Autauga County," 266.

the cotton mill. All three sons had done well for themselves, judging by their 1860 wealth listings, which were \$1,200 for Robert and \$1,000 each for George and Isaac.⁸²

Rachel Houston, like Patience Ward, pulled her family out of adversity in Prattville. Mims remembered Houston as a widow "who had seen better days and society, but had been reduced to poverty." Moving to Prattville, she found work for her sons William and Thomas as mechanics in the gin factory and for her daughters Mary and Margaret as weavers in the cotton mill. By their industry, noted Mims, the family made a good living and built a "comfortable house." In 1860, the sixty-year-old Houston was worth \$1,400, much of which must have come from her two mechanic sons, who still lived with her.⁸³

William Jones, a Prattville miller worth \$1,000 in 1850, had three sons who worked for Pratt in that year: Asbury, an iron moulder; William, a machinist; and Joseph, a looms overseer. In 1860, Asbury Jones was a mechanic worth \$2,900. A younger brother named Henry, who lived in

⁸²U.S. Manuscript Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Marilyn Davis Hahn, Alabama Mortality Schedule 1850, Seventh Census of the United States, Original Returns of the Assistant Marshall's Third Series, Persons Who Had Died During the Year Ending June 30, 1850 (Easley, S.C., 1983), 1.

⁸³Mims, "History of Autauga County," 267; James H. Hazen, Manual of the Presbyterian Church (Richmond, Va., 1871), 5; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

Asbury's household, was also a mechanic. Joseph Jones had become the boss of the wool mill. William Jones, Jr. died around 1856, leaving a widow, Isabella, and two small daughters, Ida and Calista. In 1860, thirty-one-year-old Isabella worked in the textile factory (one of the few mothers in Prattville to do so) and was worth \$200.⁸⁴

Eleven of Prattville's 1860 mechanics had appeared in the town as early as 1854, for their names are on a petition published that year in the Prattville Autauga Citizen, wherein they are explicitly identified as Pratt employees. Three of these men were Yankees—Ashby Morgan, Franklin Smith, and C. P. Morgan—while one, William Beckwith, had northern-born parents. The other six men—Nathan Morris, James Glass, W. W. Herbert, James Tunnell, Ebenezer Killough, William W. Smith, and Joshua White—all came from southern states. Another of the 1854 petitioners, Jacob Pullin, was a blacksmith who migrated with his family from neighboring Coosa County to Prattville after 1850, joining his wife's father, John Mills, also a Prattville blacksmith, who had moved to Prattville prior to 1850. Pullin died before 1860, but his two sons worked for Pratt that year and during the Civil War. Two of James Tunnell's sons found mechanical employment by 1860 as well, one as a

⁸⁴U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. The thirteenth individual was Jesse Mathews. I discuss his family in the next chapter.

blacksmith and the other as a machinist. When we add the ten petitioners mentioned above and Pullin's and Tunnell's sons to the twenty-one mechanics who lived in Prattville since at least 1850, we have thirty-six mechanics (34 percent of Prattville's white mechanics in 1860) who persisted in Prattville for at least a six-year period. Significantly, fully twenty-nine of the thirty-five men came from the South. Moreover, we know for certain that at least twenty-four of these men worked for Pratt. This number probably amounted to about 41 percent of Pratt's white mechanics in 1860. It would seem Pratt did not have trouble finding and keeping a white skilled labor force in Alabama, in spite of the problems he had building a stable corps of operatives for his textile mill. Thus, when Pratt expanded his gin factory in 1855, he found himself under no great pressure to bring in more Yankees or buy more slaves.⁸⁵

By the 1850s, Pratt may have largely relegated his slave workers in the gin factory to tasks involving less skill, performed under white supervision. In his comments on Pratt's black work force, Noah Cloud did not specify their type of work, although he did deem their performance

⁸⁵Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5 October 1854; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Coosa County, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

"well-skilled."⁸⁶ More specific information comes from the journals of Ferdinand and George Smith.

The slave Jim appears to have worked primarily as a planer in the gin factory. In March 1851, George Smith reported that "we [got] a negro fellow to go to work for us. He gets along pretty well." Jim labored much of his time under Ferdinand and George, at least through 1855. In September 1853, for example, Ferdinand recorded that he had "started Jim at work on front plank this morning. He took two hundred pieces along to the saw and straightened them." In May 1854, Ferdinand noted that he "had Jim to help me [saw box heads]. He worked two days and [a] half and I three days and we got them all sawed out." In 1852, Jim worked a total of forty days for Ferdinand. Like the slaves whom Cloud noticed in 1857, Jim seems to have been "well-skilled." Only once did Ferdinand or George voice a complaint about Jim, and that dated from his first year. In September 1851, George grumbled that "Jim made bad work hollowing out the rib boards so I concluded to do it myself."⁸⁷

Pratt employed another slave, George, as a gin painter. In February 1856, George Smith noted that Pratt

⁸⁶American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South 1 (May 1857): 156.

⁸⁷Nobles, ed., George Smith, 6, 26; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 115, 166, 183.

had taken George "out of the shop this forenoon to work in his vineyard. There is not enough painting [in the factory] for all [the] hands." In addition, another slave, Joe, worked as a planer.⁸⁸

One slave, Charles, the mulatto boy purchased by Pratt from Samuel Griswold in 1843, definitely did perform skilled work. In 1855, Pratt placed Ferdinand in charge of the second floor breasting and finishing department. Ferdinand hired Charles at \$600 and put him to work at "breasting [and] putting on saws and ribs."⁸⁹

Although Pratt successfully utilized slave labor in his gin factory, it nevertheless presented its own peculiar difficulties. In September 1855, George Smith reported that "Jim ran away this evening." Jim may have resented the treatment accorded him in the factory, as Ferdinand recorded in August 1851 that "Mr. Carrol came into the shop this morning to settle with Jim for some misdemeanor saturday night. He gave him a few sharp stripes, but I fear not enough, for his benefit in the long run." George also wrote of trouble concerning the slave planer Joe. On June 23, 1856, George went to Montgomery to get Joe released from a jail where he was being held. The

⁸⁸Nobles, ed., George Smith, 116-17.

⁸⁹Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 199.

next day, George recorded that he had "got Joe out, in which operation I was bothered considerably."⁹⁰

With slave mechanics liable to attempt flight, one task performed exclusively by white mechanics was gin repair. Although traveling agents fixed gins too, Pratt mechanics made many repair trips themselves, according to the Smith journals. Amos Smith, his son George, and his nephews Ferdinand and Frank all undertook such missions at one time or another. Typically, the Smiths made local trips, either in Autauga or to such neighboring counties as Lowndes and Montgomery. On October 2-3, 1851, for example, George Smith reported that he and his father had traveled "down to the lower part of the county to fix two gins belonging to Messrs. Hall and Chappel." Setting out at 11:00 a.m. down the Indian Hill Road, the pair reached Autaugaville at 2:00 p.m., where they stopped to tour the new textile factory. Taking the Selma Road out of Autaugaville, they arrived at Hall's plantation "about night." Hall put the father and son up and provided them "a good supper." The next morning they "went to work on [Hall's] gin," succeeding by 9:00 a.m. "in making it perform to suit him." The Smiths then set off for Chappel's plantation,

⁹⁰Ibid., 100; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 102, 117. Jim had returned, however, by December 1855. Ibid., 110. Ethelred Carroll, a Virginia-born painter, owned two slaves in 1850. Perhaps, then, Jim belonged to Carroll, not Pratt. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Slave Schedule, Autauga County.

"a mile or two" away. Upon reaching it, they "took dinner," then fixed Chappel's gin. Leaving at 2:00 p.m., they finally made it home at 8:30 p.m., "tired enough." George complained that "the roads were extremely dry and dusty making it very unpleasant traveling."⁹¹

The Smiths, on occasion, went farther afield in Alabama, traveling down the Alabama River and up the Tombigbee River to various Black Belt counties. In 1848, Ferdinand Smith and his uncle Amos also made a two-day overland trip to Talladega County (located northeast of Autauga), of which Ferdinand left a fairly detailed record. He and his uncle set out for Talladega County on October 18. They reached Talladega on October 20 but missed their road and got lost for two hours. Finally, they found the plantation of Oliver Welch, fixed his gin, and spent a pleasant night at his house. Ferdinand found Welch, a large planter and a prominent Baptist minister and educator, a "very intelligent and well informed" host. The Smiths spent the next day repairing the gins of two other customers and finally set out for home on October 22. They "found the roads very rough," obliging them "to travel after dark about four hours before we could find a place of entertainment and that was a miserable log cabin, but we were glad to get that." In the morning, however, the pair "had some

⁹¹Nobles, ed., George Smith, 27-28.

excellent venison for breakfast," which they "devoured with a degree of satisfaction." They reached Wetumpka in the afternoon, where they visited the new state penitentiary and a political forum at Coosa Hall. Spending the night at Wetumpka, they finally reached Prattville on October 24, ending a week-long journey.⁹²

As if such Alabama trips were not arduous enough, the Smiths made several expeditions to southwestern states as well. On June 6, 1853, Ferdinand Smith noted that George Smith had left on a two-month trip to the Shreveport, Louisiana area. George did not actually return until August 20. Ferdinand explained the reason for George's delay as "sickness in Arkansas at two of the places where [he] had gins to fix." In March and April of the same year, Frank Smith made trips to New Orleans and Columbus, Mississippi to work on Parkhurst gins stored at local warehouses. Frank spent three weeks at Pratt's New Orleans warehouse on Notre Dame Street before returning to Mobile by steamboat on April 14. From Mobile, he traveled up the Tombigbee to Columbus, where he "commenced to alter two P. Gins in Langs Warehouse." The next day, April 19, he took the stage to Selma, Alabama, arriving in that city on

⁹²Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 23-24; E. Grace Jemison, Historic Tales of Talladega (Montgomery, Ala., 1959), 269.

April 21. At Selma he boarded the steamboat "Messenger," which reached Washington Landing later in the day.⁹³

Pratt himself occasionally made a repair trip in the 1850s. On September 17, 1853, George Smith wrote that "Father and Mr. Pratt started this morning out on a tour fixing gins. Father is going out on the Bigby and Mr. Pratt down in some of the counties south of the Alabama River." Perhaps by this time both Pratt and Smith (who was two years older than Pratt) were not up to the physical strain of such trips, however. Both men returned home quite sick.⁹⁴

Pratt could well have sometimes been exhausted during the 1850s, for his efforts in that decade had been herculean. By 1861, he stood secure in his position as the largest gin manufacturer in the world, a colossus of the cotton-growing regions. Moreover, Daniel Pratt & Co. served as the economic cornerstone of Prattville. It gave Pratt wealth and prestige, which he, in turn, expended lavishly in a campaign to industrialize the South. Perhaps Pratt's boldest move in this campaign was the launching of a cotton mill in Prattville.

⁹³Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 158, 164; Diary of Benjamin Franklin Smith, ACHC.

⁹⁴Nobles, ed., George Smith, 103-06.

CHAPTER 4

MANUFACTURING TEXTILES: 1846 TO 1861

By the mid-1840s, Daniel Pratt had established himself as an equal in the cotton gin world to such pioneers as Eleazar Carver and Samuel Griswold, Pratt's mentor. But in 1846, he did something that these men never attempted—he established a textile factory. In the fifteen years from the incorporation of Prattville Manufacturing Company (PMC) to the outbreak of the Civil War, Pratt became one of the guiding lights of the textile movement in the antebellum South. Indeed, Pratt has received more attention from historians as a textile manufacturer than as a manufacturer of gins. This fact is somewhat ironic because the gin factory was the industrial heart of Prattville. Yet, Pratt's accomplishments as a textile manufacturer are impressive in their own right. Alabama may not have kept pace as a textile manufacturing state with Pratt's native New Hampshire, but between 1846 and 1861, Pratt helped considerably to alter the state's industrial landscape.

The prolonged agricultural depression that followed the panic of 1837 rekindled interest in the textile industry throughout the South, including Alabama. Prior to the

1840s, Alabama had only two major cotton mills; but by 1850, the number had increased to ten. Prattville claimed the largest mill, and the owners of another mill, Autauga Manufacturing Company, located only fourteen miles west of Prattville at Autaugaville, modeled their operation after Pratt's.¹

Given the economic conditions of the 1840s, Pratt probably found it potentially more lucrative to invest in a textile factory than to undertake a more rapid expansion of his gin business. His motivation for starting PMC, then, may not have been quite so altruistic as his contemporaries claimed. Nevertheless, Pratt's writings make clear that he sincerely viewed the development of the textile industry as necessary for the South's economic salvation.

The Alabama legislature incorporated PMC on January 13, 1846. PMC had three incorporators: Daniel Pratt, James Allen and Jesse Perham. Allen, born in upstate New York around 1798, served, probably in 1847 and 1848, as the mill

¹On the resurgence of southern interest in the textile industry during the 1840s, see Robert Russell, Economic Aspects of Southern Sectionalism, 1840-1861 (Urbana, Ill., 1924), chapter 2; Patrick J. Hearden, Independence and Empire: The New South's Cotton Mill Campaign, 1865-1901 (DeKalb, Ill., 1982), chapter 1. On specific states, see Brent D. Glass, The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History (Raleigh, N.C., 1992), 1-23; Ernest M. Lander, Jr., The Textile Industry in Antebellum South Carolina (Baton Rouge, 1969); Randall M. Miller, The Cotton Mill Movement in Antebellum Alabama (New York, 1978); John Hebron Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860 (Baton Rouge and London, 1988), 220-31.

superintendent, but in this capacity, he proved a failure. After leaving this job, he became a successful Prattville merchant, passing on his business to his two sons when he returned to New York in the 1850s.²

The third incorporator, Jesse Perham, likely made a more important contribution to the textile factory, but he left Prattville soon after PMC began operating. In all probability, Perham served as PMC's first superintendent in 1846. Like Pratt, Perham had a great deal of entrepreneurial zeal. Yet another New Hampshireite, Perham was employed in Prattville in 1845 both as a machinist in the gin factory and the minister of the Methodist church. As a public speaker, he was considered something of a spell-binder. One Prattvillian recalled him as "a true orator," having "as a revivalist . . . no superior." In the 1850s, the silver-tongued Perham entered politics, becoming a popular stump speaker for the Know-Nothing party; sympathetic newspapers carried long excerpts from his speeches on economic issues. John Hardy, a political ally of his from these years, viewed Perham as a very able debater and "a whole-souled, clever fellow."³

²Acts . . . of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama (1846), 22-23. On the Allen family, see the William C. Allen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

³Shadrack Mims, "History of Prattville," in Susan F[rances] H[ale] Tarrant, ed., Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond,

This restless, talented man soon sought other fields to conquer. In 1848, he established, with the help of several wealthy planters in Autauga and Lowndes counties, Autauga Manufacturing Company in nearby Autaugaville. The factory had just gotten off the ground, however, when Perham moved to Selma in 1849 and started the Alabama Manufacturing Company, "the first manufacturing establishment of any consequence in the city." Perham superintended the factory, which did "casting and all kinds of foundry and machine work," for several years. He also acted as an agent for the Alabama and Tennessee Railroad, collecting subscriptions and attending railroad conventions. Despite his successes in Selma, Perham had moved, probably in 1853, to the nearby village of Plantersville and started a sash, door, and blind factory. In 1857, he traveled much farther west, settling in Texas, where he bred mustang horses. Here he remained until his untimely death in his early fifties in 1867.⁴

In contrast to Allen and Perham, Shadrack Mims, whom Pratt hired as the company agent in 1845, proved a durable figure in Prattville. Mims labored at this post for

Va., 1904), 32-33; Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, 60; Selma Alabama State Sentinel, 19 May 1855, 10 July 1855; John Hardy, Selma: Her Institutions and Her Men (Selma, Ala., 1879), 108.

⁴Hardy, Selma, 114; Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, 79-80; De Bow's Review 12 (March 1852): 306-08; Selma

fifteen years, returning for a short stint at the end of the Civil War. In this capacity, Mims had a wide range of essential tasks to perform. Cotton mill agents, explains historian Jonathan Prude, "were responsible for determining production schedules, for maintaining adequate stocks of raw materials and adequate numbers of operatives, for supervising shipments of finished products and for helping to shape and promulgate the 'rules and regulations' of their establishments."⁵

Shadrack Mims stood out from his business associates even more significantly in being a native southerner, having been born in Lincoln County, Georgia in 1804. Orphaned at a young age, Mims moved in 1820 from Georgia to Autauga County to live with his older brother and guardian, Seaborn, who had settled in the Alabama River town of Vernon a year earlier. After operating a mercantile business in Vernon from 1825 to 1835, Mims engaged for the next ten years "in farming, warehousing and ferrying on the Alabama River." In 1845, he sold out his Vernon interests,

Alabama State Sentinel, 24 April 1855; Montgomery Daily State Sentinel, 21 July 1867; Adelaide Smith to Mary Smith, 13 September 1867, Autauga County Heritage Center, Prattville (ACHC). The Alabama Manufacturing Company operated until 1862, doing "a flourishing and a profitable business," when it became the nucleus of the Confederate Naval Foundry of Selma. Hardy, Selma, 114.

⁵Jonathan Prude, The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860 (Cambridge and New York, 1983), 78.

contemplating a move to Texas. After visiting Pratt, however, Mims accepted the post of agent and moved with his family to Prattville. Mims, a devout Methodist, recalled that in making his decision he had been swayed by Pratt's determination "to build a manufacturing village . . . so as to give employment to as many people as he could," with "a special eye to the moral and religious condition of the place."⁶

Pratt, Allen, Perham, and Mims were all shareholders in PMC, which was capitalized at \$110,000 with 110 shares valued at \$1,000 apiece. Pratt owned the largest number of shares, 31, while the Ticknor brothers, Samuel and Simon, each owned 17 shares. Together, Allen, Perham, and Mims owned 14 shares, while three Autauga planters—Organ Tatum, William D. Smith, and Lewis Whetstone—held 15, 10, and 6 shares, respectively. While the number of shares owned by planters, 31, was by no means insignificant, Pratt and his business associates clearly dominated the company. Furthermore, the amount of stock planters owned declined in the 1850s. Unlike other Alabama textile manufacturers, Pratt simply did not heavily depend upon planter investors. In his gin factory, he had his own financial base, and he did not need such a great infusion of planter capital to

⁶Shadrack Mims, "History of the M.E. Church in Prattville," Box 37, McMillan Collection, Special Collections, Auburn University.

to keep his textile factory going that he lost effective control of the business.⁷

Pratt cemented his power with PMC's articles of incorporation, under which PMC had the "power to appoint and prescribe the names and respective duties of its officers," as well as to "adopt such a constitution and bylaws for its own government as its members may deem proper, not inconsistent with or repugnant to the Constitution of the United States, and of the State of Alabama." The articles of incorporation permitted PMC to "hold property to the amount of \$300,000." The legislative authorization for PMC's existence remained in force until 1876.⁸

⁷Alabama Supreme Court Records 208 (1857), 40-44. Tatum, Smith, and Whetstone were all large slaveholders, owning, respectively, seventy, forty, and forty-three slaves in 1850. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Slave Schedule, Autauga County. Randall Miller notes that "no large industrial sector, such as emerged in New England, arose in Alabama to challenge the agrarian social order." Alabama's textile factories, he argues, thus depended on planter capital; and dependence required that the textile manufacturer "bend the knee before the altar of agriculture and slavery, or risk the loss of planter patronage and sanction." Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, 101. Miller's argument does not hold for Pratt, though it is true that some southern textile magnates, such as William Gregg of South Carolina and Henry Merrell of Georgia, occasionally felt stymied by their shareholders. See Broadus Mitchell, William Gregg, Factory Master of the Old South (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1928); Henry Merrell, The Autobiography of Henry Merrell: Industrial Missionary to the South, edited by James L. Skinner, III (Athens, Ga. and London, 1991).

⁸Acts . . . of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama (1846), 22-23.

Taking advantage of the liberal articles of incorporation, the shareholders adopted a constitution that placed great power into the hands of the directorate. Each shareholder received one vote per share. Every year, the shareholders were to gather to elect five "managers" from among themselves. The "board of managers" would, in turn, choose a president and a secretary. The board had extremely broad discretion in the governance of the corporation. Shareholders not on the board had no role to play in corporate business except that of providing "counsel and advice." Such a constitution could easily lead to dissatisfaction among minority shareholders, as it in fact did with planter William D. Smith.⁹

Incorporation on paper did not make Prattville Manufacturing Company a reality; much remained to be done before the factory got off the ground. Pratt appears to have completed the construction of dwellings for mill operatives in May 1846, debiting \$50.40 for "weatherboarding on new houses." Three months later, on August 26, Pratt debited the cost of hauling 2,000 pounds of cotton yarn for sale in Montgomery. He had much bigger plans for his factory, however. In September, he told the readers of De Bow's Review:

[I] am just now putting a Cotton Factory in operation expressly for the purpose of making heavy cotton

⁹Alabama Supreme Court Records, 40-44.

Osnaburg for plantation use—so that I flatter myself that by the first of October next, I will be able to not only furnish the cotton planter with gin stands, but cotton Osnaburg of as good a quality, and as cheap as they can be procured elsewhere.

In October, Pratt traveled to Boston, where he contracted to have the machinery necessary for the manufacture of osnaburg sent to Prattville. According to James De Bow, the textile machinery cost \$40,000. In November, PMC made its first cotton cloth, sending a shipment of osnaburg and yarn to Montgomery on the fourteenth.¹⁰

Despite this successful start, difficulties set in, forcing the mill to remain idle for most of 1847. Shadrack Mims complained that the problem lay with a "want of capacity in the superintendant to manage the establishment." Finally, however, on January 30, 1848, a small shipment of PMC osnaburg arrived in Mobile aboard the steamboat "Montgomery." A Mobile newspaper, the Alabama Planter, approvingly noted the event as "some of the first fruits of our domestic manufactures." The paper added that this shipment was

a small beginning, but ten years hence, with the present progressive disposition of our citizens, it may be of some interest to look back and see how and when the start began in Alabama. The advent of these ten bales [of osnaburg] is, therefore, worth recording.¹¹

¹⁰Day Book (1839-1846), 248, 256, 262, 266, Continental Eagle Corporation Papers (CECP), Prattville; De Bow's Review 3 (September 1846): 137, 153.

¹¹Mims, "History of Prattville," 26; Mobile Alabama Planter, 31 January 1848.

Notwithstanding the optimistic pronouncements of De Bow and the Alabama Planter, Pratt faced more serious difficulties in his textile operation. Under Allen's tenure, production again broke down in the summer of 1848. Perham having involved himself with his own mill project in Autaugaville, Pratt found himself without anyone capable of managing the day-to-day operations of the factory. As production ground to a halt, Pratt headed north to his native New England to find a new mill boss. After stopping in New York to consult his textile factor in the city about his osnaburg sales, Pratt continued to Providence, Rhode Island, where he succeeded in obtaining a well-qualified superintendant, Gardner Hale. Pratt also took on Hale's eighteen-year-old son, Jeremiah, placing him in charge of the mill's carding room.¹²

Pratt seemed confident that Hale would get the mill moving again. Back in New York, he wrote Shadrack Mims, informing him of his "regret that the weaving is getting [on] so badly" but assuring him that the weavers would "have work enough" once Gardner Hale arrived in Prattville

¹²Mims, "History of Prattville," 26; Daniel Pratt to Shadrack Mims, 13 September 1848, 26 September 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery. Gardner Hale and his family moved to Prattville in November 1848. In May 1849, Hale's wife bore a son; his parents named him Daniel Pratt. Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith (Prattville, 1991), 27; Adin Ballou, An Elaborate History and Genealogy of the Ballous in America (Providence, R.I., 1888), 479.

later that year.¹³ Pratt's faith in Gardner Hale was well-placed. Mill performance improved vastly in the 1850s under Hale's guidance, with the result that PMC became one of Alabama's most successful cotton factories. Hale would stay at PMC until after the Civil War, retiring around 1866.

Like Daniel Pratt, Gardner Hale, who was born in Swansea, Massachusetts in 1809, married into a New England family of some prominence. Hale's wife, Ann Susan Ballou, of Cumberland, Rhode Island, was a relative of Adin Ballou, the well-known nineteenth-century Universalist minister, Spiritualist, and founder of the utopian Christian community of Hopedale. Adin Ballou, who knew the Hale family very well, related that Gardner Hale was "a superior man in his sphere of life," possessing "eminent skill, judgment, and moral integrity." Ann he viewed as "the flower of [her father's] offspring" and a "superior woman" possessing "an admirable physical and mental constitution." Ballou judged their son Jeremiah "intelligent" and "enterprising." Other, younger members of the Ballou family, whom the opinionated Adin Ballou did not recall so well, would make

¹³Daniel Pratt to Shadrack Mims, 26 September 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection.

good names for themselves in Prattville in the 1850s and 1860s.¹⁴

Upon arriving in Prattville, Gardner Hale faced the pressing task of instructing the operatives in the fundamentals of cotton manufacture, for these had not taken root under Allen's tenure. Shadrack Mims recalled that the mill hands had been "brought up from the piney woods, many of them with no sort of training to any kind of labor; and in learning many mistakes and blunders were made fatal to success." Hale quickly turned things around, however. By May 1849, Mims was able to write Pratt that operations at the mill were proceeding "smoothly so far as I can learn. Mr. Hale thinks from present prospects that he will consume 100 bales of cotton this month."¹⁵

Although Gardner Hale got mill production going again, he could not help Pratt with another challenge that the factory faced. The textile operation required more funds than the stock subscriptions provided, in part because some of the shareholders had failed to pay in full for their shares. PMC commenced business in 1846 with paid-in capital of \$92,195, from which it purchased machinery and erected buildings. Northern factories supplied the

¹⁴Ballou, Ballous, 478-79, 1019-20. Jeremiah Hale returned to Massachusetts in 1851 after the deaths in Prattville of his young wife and two infant children.

¹⁵Mims, "History of Prattville," 26; Shadrack Mims to Daniel Pratt, 15 May 1849, Folder 44, Pratt Collection.

machinery, which cost \$40,000. To raise the additional money he needed, Pratt found it necessary to borrow. In February 1848, George Cooke, a close friend of Pratt, wrote Pratt from New Orleans: "I think you acted very prudently in not drawing money from Mobile, for if times grow harder it might be inconvenient to raise." Cooke was sure that H. Kendall Carter "will be able to meet all your necessities, for he is doing an excellent business in both [textiles and gins]." Cooke warned Pratt "not to send your Osnaburg here to be forced on the market, as it will give an impression of your wants that may injure your credit." If Pratt had to sell, Cooke advised him to "do it at the north." Fortunately, Carter apparently provided a \$20,000 loan, and Cooke threw in his "mite"—\$1,000. By June, Pratt had evidently escaped from what Cooke called a "tight place."¹⁶

Pratt, however, also had to withstand the onslaught of northern competitors, who consistently undercut the prices charged by PMC and other southern textile factories. Many Alabama merchants believed that the prices charged by PMC and other southern manufacturers should have been lower

¹⁶George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 14 February 1848, 15 May 1848, 19 May 1848, 9 June 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection; Smith v. Prattville Manufacturing Company, 29 Alabama Reports, 503-05; Tuscumbia North Alabamian, 24 March 1848. Court records indicate that profits from PMC were applied to the balances due on stock owned by Organ Tatum, Lewis Whetstone, and Shadrack Mims. These balances were \$1,014.22, \$780.45, and \$100, respectively, but the applicable date is not given. Alabama Supreme Court Records, 28.

than those charged by northern factories since southern manufacturers had, as Pratt admitted, the advantage of "having the raw material at our door." Pratt rejected this reasoning, however, insisting that "experience has proved that we cannot at present manufacture cotton goods as low here as they can in the Eastern States." Southern factories, he noted, had to purchase their machinery in the North, paying freight and expenses, as well as hire badly needed Yankee superintendants and machinists "at high prices" in order to lure them south. Moreover, southern operatives were "generally inexperienced, requiring two of them to do the labor of one experienced hand." He insisted, nevertheless, that southern manufacturers "make better goods because we work better stock," and he urged Alabama merchants to patronize Alabama factories in order to "give new life to our manufacturing business."¹⁷

Between June and October 1849, the price of raw cotton rose sharply from seven cents to eleven cents per pound. In October, an angry Mobile merchant wrote the Mobile Tribune charging Alabama manufacturers with speculating on the price of cotton and warning that, their state

¹⁷Montgomery Tri-Weekly Flag & Advertiser, 12 April 1848, 2 December 1848; Wetumpka Daily State Guard, 29 October 1849, reprinted from the Mobile Herald; George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 14 February 1848, 9 June 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection. On the challenge northern competition offered southern textile factories, see Russell, Southern Sectionalism, 62-63. On the problems of Alabama textile companies, see Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, chapter 5.

loyalty notwithstanding, Alabama merchants would not suffer such unjust treatment. Pratt fired back, insisting in a letter to the Mobile Herald that Alabama manufacturers were, in fact, still selling osnaburg at nine cents per yard—the same price they charged before the rise in cotton. He warned, however, that "should the price of cotton continue as it now is the price of heavy goods must rise," for Alabama manufacturers had to be allowed "to make a living profit."¹⁸

Because New Orleans offered a larger market and better credit facilities, and perhaps because of his difficulties with Alabama buyers, Pratt favored New Orleans over Mobile in marketing his cloth. In New Orleans, he employed the commission firms Green and Hazard and H. Kendall Carter & Co. to sell his textiles. A strong demand existed in New Orleans at the time PMC began its operations. In February 1848, George Cooke wrote Pratt that H. Kendall Carter had complained that Pratt lacked "a supply of his cloth in New Orleans—Green and Hazard he says are in want of it at present and [Carter] could have sold nine bales on Saturday for cash." Pratt soon increased the flow of his textiles to New Orleans, and he noted in 1849 that "I have ten times the interest in New Orleans that I have in Mobile." In

¹⁸Wetumpka Daily State Guard, 29 October 1849, reprinted from the Mobile Herald; Russell, Southern Sectionalism, 60.

1854, PMC listed among its current assets \$24,328.30 and \$20,007 in notes and drafts held for collection by, respectively, H. Kendall Carter & Co. and Green and Hazard. Together, these sums accounted for about 45 percent of PMC's current assets. In July 1854, however, the firm of Green and Hazard failed. It had sold a great quantity of Pratt's cloth on credit and was unable to collect the money due. Green and Hazard failed owing PMC \$20,007, and under a January 1855 settlement agreement engineered by Shadrack Mims, PMC managed to collect only half the amount, \$10,003.87.¹⁹

Pratt also marketed textiles in New York. In November 1848, for example, he sold 100 bales of osnaburg there. His motive was to capitalize on New York's superior credit facilities. In 1849, he noted that "I am often asked the question, why Southern manufacturers ship their goods to New York?" The answer, he declared, was "obvious." The textile manufacturer had to pay cash for "every article he uses," but, at the same time, he found himself "obliged to sell his goods on six months credit." In New York, with its strong financial institutions, a manufacturer could, as soon as a commission firm had sold his goods, "draw for at least three-fourths of their value." Moreover, southern

¹⁹George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 14 February 1848, 19 May 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection; Montgomery Tri-Weekly Flag & Advertiser, 12 April 1849; Alabama Supreme Court Records, 30-35, 45.

merchants could go to New York and "purchase the same goods on twelve months' credit by paying from four to six months's interest." Pratt noted that if Alabama had the same credit arrangements, "we should not be so dependent on New York merchants."²⁰

Despite the challenges offered by northern factories and southern markets, PMC prospered in the 1850s. Already by 1850, it had become the largest textile factory in Alabama, employing 136 workers (63 men and 73 women). The factory consumed 1,000 bales of cotton, valued at \$50,000, worked 2,800 spindles and 100 looms, and produced 540,000 yards of osnaburg (worth \$54,000) and 324,000 yards of sheeting (worth \$30,780).²¹

PMC's workers received good wages by southern standards. The average yearly wage of a PMC worker was \$147.61, a figure thirty dollars higher than the Alabama average that year and forty-eight dollars higher than the average for six southern states (Alabama, Georgia, North

²⁰Montgomery Tri-Weekly Flag & Advertiser, 31 March 1849.

²¹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County; PMC also produced a small amount of thread called "spun truck." Henry Tally Crumpton, a Washington resident, peddled PMC thread in Autauga County. After moving to Wilcox County in 1851, he opened a small store, where he continued to sell thread, possibly that of PMC. In October 1854, PMC had six bales of thread on hand, valued at \$306. Washington Bryan Crumpton, A Book of Memories, 1842-1920 (Montgomery, Ala., 1921), 10, 15; Alabama Supreme Court Records, 45.

Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia). PMC's wages did lag considerably behind the Massachusetts average (\$199) and that of the United States (\$167).²²

In 1851, James De Bow wrote with great enthusiasm about Prattville's textile factory. The building consisted of a large structure of two wooden stories over a brick basement, 150 feet long and 36 feet wide, with smaller wood and brick wings. Pratt had provided the operatives' families with "good houses, neatly painted and of uniform size." De Bow noted approvingly that Pratt had "strictly guarded against" intemperance. In every town deed, he required the insertion of a clause forbidding the sale of "ardent spirits" under the penalty of forfeiture, and the state legislature had prohibited the sale of liquor within two miles of Prattville.²³

Prattville closely resembled the model for southern mill towns that William Gregg presented in 1844 in his influential "Essays on Domestic Industry." In these essays, Gregg had advocated the development of small factory towns as a means of providing useful employment for the South's

²²Gavin Wright, "Cheap Labor and Southern Textiles Before 1880," Journal of Economic History 39 (September 1979): 672, table 2. The wages PMC paid were nearly identical to those paid in 1849 at Graniteville, William Gregg's celebrated South Carolina cotton mill. In 1849, Gregg paid his workers \$3.05 per week, while PMC in 1850 paid its workers \$3.07. Mitchell, William Gregg, 60.

²³De Bow's Review 10 (February 1851): 226-27.

poor whites. Randall Miller argues that "Alabama's demographic, economic, and social climate in the 1840s" made the Gregg-Pratt model of "industrial urbanism" virtually inevitable in Alabama. Planters' fear that the employment of whites in textile mills might result in a powerful urban working class required such "social control techniques" as keeping mill towns small, maintaining factory ownership of town lots, and enforcing temperance. Miller, however, neglects the influence on Pratt of his New England heritage. Small factory towns were, in fact, what Pratt had known in the New Hampshire of the early 1800s. Moreover, given Pratt's conservative Congregationalist upbringing, strict morality was more to him than a handy club he could wield to keep his workers docile. Illustrating this point is a letter Pratt wrote to his sister and brother-in-law Eliza and Daniel Holt in 1847. Given a few more years, Pratt indicated, he would "accomplish what I have been striving for. That is building up a respectable village such as will compare with your Northern towns in point of good morals and good society." He added that Prattville already compared favorably with New England villages of the same size and that his town boasted three churches, a Sabbath school, and preaching "as good as you have in Milford."²⁴

²⁴Laurence Shore, Southern Capitalists: The Ideological Leadership of an Elite, 1832-1885 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986), 32-33; Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, 63-64; Daniel Pratt to Daniel and Eliza Holt, 1 June 1847, Folder 44,

Pratt may have modeled Prattville after Milford, New Hampshire, but in point of fact, Prattville resembled any number of northern textile villages. In contrast to the sprawling manufacturing city of Lowell, Massachusetts, notes an authoritative source, the "typical" New England mill village before the Civil War merely "employed some 100 workers." Indeed, these villages were all part of the "Rhode Island System" pioneered by Samuel Slater in the 1790s. In addition to their smaller work forces, mill villages conforming to the Rhode Island System were characterized by family labor and owner paternalism, manifesting itself in the building of common schools, Sunday schools, and churches. Just like Daniel Pratt and William Gregg, northern textile manufacturers saw their social reform programs as providing a means of uplift to the poor and themselves with reliable work forces. In short, then, Pratt and Gregg, in establishing paternalistic villages, were hardly meekly following commands handed down by an all-powerful planter elite; rather, they were simply copying a successful northern model.²⁵

Pratt Collection. William Gregg's essays are conveniently reprinted in D. A. Tompkins, Cotton Mill, Commercial Features (Charlotte, N.C., 1899), 207-35.

²⁵Gary Kulik, Roger Parks, and Theodore Z. Penn, eds., The New England Mill Village, 1790-1860 (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1982), xxiii-xxxiii. For studies of specific

James De Bow had declared in 1851 that Prattville had great potential as a textile factory town. "The water power of Autauga Creek," he enthusiastically informed his readers, "is sufficient at all times to drive 30,000 spindles and 100[0] looms which with the other business that would naturally follow, would support a population of 6,000 inhabitants." Although PMC never came close to realizing De Bow's great expectations, it remained one of Alabama's most important textile factories throughout the 1850s. In fact, the firm in 1860 very much resembled the firm of 1850. It was still capitalized at \$110,000, and it employed 141 people (62 men and 79 women), only 5 more than in 1850. The number of spindles operated had grown by only 485.²⁶ Yet, the firm did undergo some significant changes during this period.

For one thing, PMC had diversified by commencing to produce coarse woolen goods called linsey. Pratt set out his strategy in a December 1854 article in the Prattville Southern Statesman entitled "Diversity of Pursuits." Alabama, he declared, "had already engaged in the manufacture of cotton goods as extensively as circumstances would

northern mill villages very similar to Prattville, see Prude, Industrial Order and Anthony F. C. Wallace, Rockdale: The Growth of An American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution (New York, 1978).

²⁶De Bow's Review 10 (February 1851): 226-27; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County.

justify, particularly of the coarser fabrics." He warned that "there is great danger of overdoing as well as underdoing." To keep the market from becoming glutted with osnaburg, he proposed starting wool mills. Alabama, he noted, "consumes a large amount of linsey and other coarse woolen goods, for which we are dependent upon other States to supply. We might just as well furnish them ourselves, and save that drain upon our income."²⁷

Being a man of deeds as well as words, Pratt heeded his own advice and started a wool mill. When Noah Cloud visited Prattville in May 1857, he found that Pratt had

fitted up a large two story brick building, in which he has already received and is putting up machinery of the latest improvement for carding and spinning wool . . . in another department of the Cotton Factory.

Several weeks later, even Pratt's political enemy William Howell, editor of the Prattville Autauga Citizen, praised the wool mill: "This factory has just been put in operation. . . . The cloth . . . is of superior quality, and reflects much credit on its manufacturer." Pratt's newest manufacturing concern cost \$11,000 and was located a half mile southeast of the cotton factory near the lower bridge over Autauga Creek. Shadrack Mims recalled that the wool mill "came in very opportunely to assist the cotton mill at a time when it needed assistance. The profit on this mill

²⁷Prattville Southern Statesman, 20 December 1854. Linsey, like osnaburg, was used to make clothes for slaves.

was enormous for the amount of capital invested." In June 1860, the wool mill operated 585 spindles, about 18 percent of the spindles operated by PMC in that year.²⁸

Meanwhile, Pratt did not ignore the cotton factory. In 1859, a neat brick building replaced the rambling old wood and brick mill. It was built on the eastern side of the creek, across from the gin factory, at a cost of \$45,000. Gardner Hale supervised the construction.²⁹

The 1850s also saw changes in the ranks of PMC's shareholders and a lawsuit from one disgruntled investor, William D. Smith. In 1854, PMC had six new shareholders: Harriet Ticknor, who had inherited her husband Simon's shares; Thomas Ormsby; Gardner Hale; Nathaniel Waller, a Selma merchant; John Lapsley, a Selma attorney; and Seth Paddock Storrs, a Wetumpka politician and judge who had migrated to Alabama from Vermont in 1835. Pratt and the Ticknors still dominated the company, owning 62 of the 110 shares, although Pratt held 3 shares less than in 1846. The planters—Smith, Tatum, and Whetstone—now held only 22

²⁸American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South 1 (May 1857): 156; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 21 May 1857; Mims, "History of Prattville," 33-34; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County.

²⁹Mims, "History of Prattville," 33.

shares, the number of Organ Tatum's shares having declined significantly, from 15 to 6.³⁰

In 1854, Pratt served as PMC's president, with Seth Storrs as secretary. Shadrack Mims, Organ Tatum, and Lewis Whetstone completed the board of managers. In the same year, the board refused William D. Smith's request for the declaration of a dividend; and in 1855, Smith brought suit before the Chancery Court at Wetumpka to compel the board to make a declaration. The Chancery judge, James Blair

³⁰Alabama Supreme Court Records, 40, 48-49, 59; Owen, Dictionary, vol. 3, 1,012, vol. 4, 1,630-31, 1,723. Waller, Lapsley, and Storrs were all prominent urban boosters. Lapsley, in particular, became involved in many manufacturing and internal improvement projects in the antebellum period. In 1855, John Lapsley sold his shares to William Page Molett, one of Alabama's wealthiest planters. Molett lived in Dallas County below Cahaba on his Alabama River plantation. U.S. Census, Alabama 1860, Population Schedule, Slave Schedule, Dallas County. Even after this agrarian magnate invested \$5,000 in PMC, however, the planter contingent still owned only 27 out of 110 shares. Alabama Supreme Court Records, 38. Organ Tatum moved to Arkansas after 1855, dying there a few years later. At his death, Tatum again owned 15 shares of PMC stock. Benjamin Miles, a Prattville merchant who had married a daughter of Tatum and moved to Arkansas as well, ended up with a three-fourths interest in 12 shares. It is not clear what happened to the remaining 3 shares. Mims, "History of Autauga County" (c. 1886), Alabama Historical Quarterly 8 (fall 1946); Shadrack Mims, "History of the M. E. Church in Prattville," Box 37, McMillan Collection; U.S. Census, Arkansas, 1860, Population Schedule, Union County; Reports and Wills, Book RB-17, 173, Book RB-20, 238, 253, 309. B. F. Miles died in the 1860s, leaving his shares to his brother Freeman, who owned a store in Prattville. In 1866, appraisers valued the shares at \$1,250 apiece, an increase of 25 percent over their original worth.

Clark, decided against Smith, however, and Smith appealed Clark's decision to the Alabama Supreme Court.³¹

Before the Supreme Court, Smith's lawyers argued that the board was guilty of gross negligence in failing to declare a dividend and in approving Mim's settlement with Green and Hazard. They noted that in 1854, PMC had current assets of \$89,783.43 and current liabilities of only \$29,218.41. The resulting surplus of \$60,565.04, they argued, was more than enough to cover expenses, so PMC should have declared a dividend.³²

In a deposition, Shadrack Mims responded that, in light of the company's anticipated expenses, its financial position was not so secure as Smith contended. Mims estimated that labor, cotton, and "incidental expenses" (oil, freight, hauling, storage, and repairs) would amount to \$42,981.84 over the next six months, greatly eating into the current account surplus of over \$60,000. "If the products of the mill could be sold for cash it would not

³¹Alabama Supreme Court Records, 46; Smith v. Prattville Manufacturing Co., 502-09.

³²Smith v. Prattville Manufacturing Co., 505-06.
Smith's lawyers indignantly asked:

How [\$60,000] can now be necessary to meet the current expenses of the business is not perceived. An outlay might be necessary in starting the business; but after operations have been carried on successfully for nearly ten years, the business ought at least to pay its current expenses by its sales. Where is this accumulation to stop? What is to satisfy the "enlarged discretion" of the managers?

require such an amount of surplus cash capital," he noted, "but the custom of the country has fixed the term of credit at six months without interest." PMC, therefore, needed a large amount of cash on hand. Declaring a dividend could threaten PMC's fiscal health.³³

Even under Mims's calculation, PMC retained \$17,583.20 of its current account surplus after subtracting the \$42,981.84 in anticipated outlays. If this sum had been declared as a dividend, Smith, who owned ten shares, would have received \$1,758.32, a 17.6 percent return on his investment. By comparison, Graniteville began paying dividends in 1849, but it was not until 1855 that its annual dividend rate surpassed 10 percent.³⁴

Unfortunately for Smith, the Alabama Supreme Court showed no interest in such details, and it unanimously upheld the Chancery Court's decision. The court cited the great discretion that PMC's constitution afforded the board of managers and found that the managers had acted in good faith. Chief Justice Samuel Farrow Rice concluded:

The complainant was, at the time he became a stockholder, competent to contract. . . . If the contract

³³Alabama Supreme Court Records, 45-46. Accidents were another "incidental expense" that Mims might have mentioned. In January 1856, George Smith reported that "Mr. Mims is to go down the river to Mobile tonight," as PMC "had some osnaburgs sunk on a boat." Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of George Littlefield Smith (Prattville, 1991), 115.

³⁴Lander, South Carolina, 107.

operates harshly upon him, that of itself is no reason why the court should release him from it. . . . [The court cannot] usurp the discretion of a private corporation at the insistence of a member whose complaint is against acts of the managers done in good faith, clearly authorized by his own contract.³⁵

In this instance, the courts of a southern state had staunchly upheld the legal rights of a manufacturer. Yet, PMC's largest planter-investor clearly chafed under Pratt's leadership. Whereas the single-minded Pratt apparently had determined to sacrifice dividends for the sake of growth, Smith, after waiting nearly a decade, wanted some return on his investment. Finally, he had felt compelled to sue for it.

That Pratt alienated another Autauga planter in 1854 is revealed in a plaintive letter by Albert James Pickett. Pickett, a prominent Alabama intellectual, published, in 1851, the first history of Alabama, which became widely celebrated. He also took a great interest in railroads in the 1850s, investing in several companies. After Daniel Pratt, George Goldthwaite, and Charles Teed Pollard began setting up a company to build a railroad through Autauga County from Montgomery to Selma, Pickett made his interest in the project clear to Pratt and Pollard. Thus, complained Pickett, "it was no wonder that I should have been mortified and surprised by the omission of my name in the charter." Pickett reported bitterly:

³⁶Smith vs. Prattville Manufacturing Co., 509.

I had written to Pratt and Pollard & requested the latter to show my letter to that English Jew—George Goldthwaite. To all these men I complained of injustice, of not being permitted to assemble with them in their meetings, under the charter. As it was expected that I would take considerable stock, all I asked was to be put upon an equal footing with themselves—to have a voice in their deliberations.

Clearly, Pickett's letter reeks of resentment against "outsiders" who, in his view, wanted the money, but not the advice, of planters for their industrial schemes. Both Pickett's letter and Smith's lawsuit suggest that, in practice, Pratt was not quite so obeisant to planters as some have suggested.³⁶

The 1860 census figures confirm Smith's contention that PMC was a successful operation. In 1860, PMC produced 608,302 yards of osnaburg, valued at \$63,871, and 265,800 yards of linsey, valued at \$79,740. Production of osnaburg had increased only slightly since 1850, but by diversifying into wool cloth, Pratt increased the value of PMC's output from about \$85,000 to nearly \$145,000. The factory consumed \$46,392 worth of cotton and \$22,300 worth of wool. It worked 3,285 spindles (2,700 cotton and 585 wool) and 100 looms. The sixty-two male workers and the seventy-eight female workers received an average yearly wage of \$177.10, an increase of nearly 20 percent over

³⁶Albert James Pickett to [Bolling Hall II?], 8 March 1854, Box 37, McMillan Collection. On Pickett, see Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., "Albert J. Pickett: Typical Pioneer State Historian" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alabama, 1955).

1850. Wages continued to remain higher than the southern average (\$146), though the gap had narrowed. One southern state, Virginia, actually slightly surpassed PMC with its average annual wage (\$181).³⁷

Despite the increase in the value of the textiles it produced, PMC had been eclipsed by 1860 by Pratt's own gin factory, which produced gins valued at nearly \$290,000. PMC also had been surpassed by Martin, Weakley & Co. (located near Florence in the Tennessee River Valley), which enjoyed spectacular growth in the 1850s. By 1860, this company operated 8,000 spindles and produced osnaburg and yarn valued at \$256,000. In Alabama, it was Martin, Weakley & Co., not PMC, that compared favorably with William Gregg's Graniteville, which operated 9,245 spindles in 1860. Moreover, several other factories, such as Garland, Goode & Co. (located near Mobile) and Barrett, Micou & Co. (located at Tallassee in Tallapoosa County) had pulled close to PMC. Probably in response to higher cotton prices in the 1850s, Pratt had poured relatively more capital into the gin factory, with the result that PMC did not live up to its early promise. Nevertheless, it clearly remained

³⁷U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County; Gavin Wright, "Cheap Labor," 672. PMC continued to fall behind the national average (\$196) and that of Massachusetts (\$203).

both a major southern textile factory and Alabama's leading producer of linsey.³⁸

Of course, Pratt's textile factory held significance beyond the number of spindles operated in 1860 versus the number operated in 1850. As one Prattvillian, William H. Northington, recalled in a eulogy delivered at Pratt's funeral in 1873, "the manufacture of cotton goods [in the antebellum South] was an experiment." Already enjoying great success with his gin business, Northington noted, Pratt hardly needed "to invest so large a portion of his capital, and devote so much of his valuable time" to this risky endeavor, the outcome of which was very uncertain. Pratt, he argued, was motivated to a great extent by "a desire to benefit the laboring poor, and to develop the resources of the State of his adoption." In Pratt's view, if he could put a successful textile factory into operation in Alabama, others would follow in his footsteps, and a vital new sector of the southern economy would be opened, providing employment for the region's hard-pressed poor whites.³⁹

³⁸U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Lauderdale County, Mobile County, Tallapoosa County; Lander, South Carolina, 80. On the Alabama textile industry in the 1850s, see Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, chapter 5. On the South generally, see Russell, Southern Sectionalism, chapter 8.

³⁹William H. Northington, "Eulogy," in Tarrant, Daniel Pratt, 167-68. Pratt's views on southern economic development are discussed in detail in chapters 6 and 9.

On the whole, Pratt's textile "experiment" should be judged a success. He was able to provide employment and what he viewed as "uplift" to Alabama's rural poor, while they, in turn, proved a capable work force. That Pratt experienced some difficulties with his workers cannot be denied, but by 1860 he could, with ample justification, view Prattville Manufacturing Company as a model for aspiring southern textile manufacturers.⁴⁰

In 1860, Prattville had forty-six households that included persons employed in the cotton or woolen mills. Two of these households were headed by, respectively, J. N. Cook, a mechanic worth \$1,500, and Simeon Glenn, a white-washer worth \$4,200, and thus were not mill households proper. Nevertheless, the remaining forty-four households constituted a significant percentage of Prattville's total households, likely about 25 percent. Poor white farm families, most probably originally from the piney woods region north of Prattville, composed these households. Widows headed approximately 41 percent of the mill families.

⁴⁰My interpretation puts me at odds with historians Randall Miller and Wayne Flynt, who portray PMC much more ambivalently, but I believe the evidence supports my position. For Randall Miller's views, see his Cotton Mill Movement and his articles "Daniel Pratt's Industrial Urbanism: The Cotton Mill Town in Antebellum Alabama," Alabama Historical Quarterly 34 (spring 1972): 5-35 and "The Fabric of Control: Slavery in Antebellum Textile Mills," Business Review 55 (winter 1981): 471-90. Wayne Flynt's position is found in Poor But Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1989), 19-23.

Ninety-six people, forty-four males and fifty-two females, listed manual jobs associated with a mill. Twelve males worked as mill bosses/overseers, eight males (mostly adults) worked as "manufacturers," presumably in the picker room, nine males (mostly boys) worked as spinners, nine males (mostly boys) worked as carders, and two adult males worked as cloth trimmers. Four other males, respectively, held the jobs of dresser, washer, oiler, and lapper, presumably in a mill. Thirty-two females, most aged from seventeen to twenty-five, worked as weavers, while twelve females, most aged from fifteen to eighteen, worked as spinners. Five other females, aged from eighteen to twenty-three, worked as warpers. In addition, one female worked as a cloth trimmer, one as a spreader, and one drew thread.⁴¹

The actual number of whites who worked for PMC in 1860 certainly must have exceeded the figure of ninety-six. In only two instances were adolescents younger than fifteen recorded as working in a mill (Mahalia Johnson, fourteen and John Chatwood, eleven), but it seems inconceivable that almost no children aged twelve to fourteen—or even eight to eleven—worked at PMC. At virtually all American mills at this time, children twelve and older worked as spinners or carders. Often, children eight and older did so as

⁴¹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

well. We know at least one boy eight or nine years old actually did work at PMC in 1858, for the boy died that year in a workplace accident at the cotton mill. When William Howell, the editor of the Prattville Autauga Citizen, reported the horrible fatality in his paper, he expressed no surprise that such a young child worked for PMC.⁴²

Only 21 mill children were listed in the 1860 census as having attended school that year. Another 39 children, age eight to fourteen, were neither listed as attending school nor holding any job. If we add the 22 children age twelve to fourteen ostensibly not attending school or working to the PMC labor force, PMC would have had 118 white workers, 56 men and 62 women. If the children age eight to eleven are added, PMC would have had only 9 job slots, all female, unfilled. Thus, my guess is that PMC actually had from 56 to 62 white male employees and from 62 and 70 white female employees. Whites, in other words, likely made up anywhere from 84 to 94 percent of PMC's work force. Factoring in some of this group of children is important because without them, merely 68 percent of the PMC operatives would have been white. If my calculation is correct, slave labor played only a very minor role at PMC in 1860.⁴³

⁴²Ibid., Prattville Autauga Citizen, 30 September 1858. On this accident, see below.

⁴³U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

Randall Miller has noted ironically that "Pratt, who had spearheaded the earlier mission to employ and uplift local poor white labor through cotton manufactures, switched to a [racially] mixed labor force during the 1850s," but, in my view, the significant fact to keep in mind is that black workers probably accounted for only 6 to 16 percent of PMC's operatives, i.e., about nine to twenty-three people. There is no compelling reason to conclude that the figure was any greater than I have estimated. For one thing, Miller mistakenly assumes that all of Pratt's slaves were kept at Prattville, so he inevitably overstates the significance of slave labor in the town's mills. In actuality, Pratt probably employed most of his slaves on his plantations and in his home. Moreover, Noah Cloud, who toured the cotton mill in 1857, merely noted that "several" of the operatives there were slaves. "Several" certainly does not indicate more than a few. In 1854 and 1855, just two slaves, females named Catherine and Eliza, worked for PMC. If Pratt did make a shift toward slave labor in the late 1850s, it was likely only a very modest one.⁴⁴

Miller suggests that two main reasons account for Pratt's alleged switch to a racially mixed labor force: "the fluidity of local white labor and the desire to

⁴⁴Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, 211; American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South (May 1857): 156; Alabama Supreme Court Records, 45; Alabama 1855 Census, Autauga County.

balance white class interests against slave labor." The latter point is strictly conjectural, for no evidence exists to my knowledge of labor unrest in Prattville. The first point, concerning labor fluidity, does, however, carry some force. What Miller calls "the white workers peculiar habit of moving on after a few months on the job" likely occurred with some frequency in Prattville—though more probably after a few years, not a few months. Pratt himself once grumbled regarding his operatives that "changes [in locale] seem to be necessary to some persons." Certainly, the five and ten-year persistence rates among mill families had room for improvement. Of the thirty-three operative households in Prattville in 1860 not headed by a mill boss, only four can be traced back to 1850: those of Rachel Houston, Martha Coleman, Thomas Hale, and Elisha Ellis. Three more households are traceable back to 1855: those of Elnora Killian, Susan O'Neal, and Diah Spurlock. Thus the five-year operative persistence rate was only 21 percent, less than two-thirds the rate for Prattville mechanics (about 34 percent).⁴⁵

One mill family, the Butlers, clearly illustrates the problem of labor fluidity in Prattville. Nehemiah Butler

⁴⁵Miller, Cotton Movement, 212, 219; Prattville Southern Statesman, 26 May 1855; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Alabama 1855 Census, Autauga County. Four of the twelve mill bosses can be traced back from 1860 to at least 1855.

and his family came to Prattville early in 1852 and went to work in the textile factory. Two years later, however, the promise of higher wages at Garland, Goode & Co. lured them to this factory, located near Mobile. An outraged Shadrack Mims wrote Price Williams, the Garland Goode & Co. agent, accusing his company of unscrupulous behavior. "[These] people we have been at the care & expense of training thus far," Mims complained, "[and] almost the time they are prepared to render us service we find another Factory sending an irresponsible agent amongst our people making false impressions as to wages which I am sure you will not as agent acknowledge." The "irresponsible agent," a man by the name of Owen, had promised Butler that "one of his daughters can get \$16 per month for warping," and Mims insisted that this could not be true "if your Superintendant knows his business." Mims admitted that "Butler's girls are good hands for the practice they have had," but he insisted that they were not yet worth \$16 per month.⁴⁶

Miller has argued that southern mill workers left their jobs so frequently because of their dissatisfaction with mill town life. Proud but landless southerners reduced to factory work suffered great "psychological torment," according to Miller. But rapid labor turnover in

⁴⁶Shadrack Mims to Price Williams, 15 February 1854, reprinted in Miller, "Love of Labor: A Note on Daniel Pratt's Employment Practices," Alabama Historical Quarterly (summer 1975): 148-49.

textile factories was hardly an exclusively southern phenomenon. Mills in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania suffered from the problem as well. Nor does labor turnover necessarily indicate unhappiness with mill life. Some southerners—as did some northerners—bought farms with their saved factory wages, but many others simply would appear to have been using their leverage as a valuable labor source to obtain the best mill jobs possible. Moreover, mill towns held allurements not available in the countryside. As historian Richard Griffin has argued, for poor whites "drawn from the pine hills and sand barrens, the cotton mill and its cash wage meant decent food, clothing, and shelter for the first time in their lives."⁴⁷

Randall Miller and Robert Starobin have asserted that Pratt's white operatives were so disenchanted with mill life that they proved very poor workers. In advancing this assertion, both writers rely on complaints about white operatives made by Shadrack Mims. Mims certainly found fault with white operatives, but his most critical

⁴⁷Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, 217-18; Miller, "Fabric of Control," 478-81; Wallace, Rockdale, 63-65; Prude, Industrial Order, 144-54; Richard Griffin, "Poor White Laborers in Southern Cotton Factories, 1789-1865," South Carolina Historical Magazine 61 (January 1960): 30. For a view similar to Miller's, see Flynt, Poor But Proud, 22-23 and Robert Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South (New York, 1970), 155. For views similar to that of Griffin, see Tom E. Terrell, "Eager Hands: Labor for Southern Textiles, 1850-1860," Journal of Economic History 36 (March 1976): 84-99 and Mitchell, William Gregg, 58-60.

statements invariably concerned new workers. Although Mims recalled that initially, the workers made many mistakes that were "fatal to success," he also wrote:

When [the cotton mill] first started [emphasis added], [the workers] were of the very poorest class with very few exceptions and withal ignorant people from obscure parts of the county—many of them having never enjoyed any religious privileges. They were wild, and many of the fathers were drunken and abandoned men whose children had never been trained to work of any kind.

But Mims believed that training in the factory, temperance, schooling, and religious instruction greatly improved the condition of these people. His testimony certainly fails to support the contention that southern white labor was inherently ineffective.⁴⁸

Indicating his commitment to white labor, Pratt, like William Gregg and many northern counterparts, launched an ambitious program to mold the textile workers into an effective work force. First, he vigorously enforced temperance. Every town deed that Pratt granted from 1846 to 1859 contained a clause prohibiting the sale of ardent spirits "upon penalty of forfeiture." Furthermore, he persuaded the legislature to prohibit the sale of alcohol within two miles of Prattville. The town also had a temperance society, with seventy-two members in 1847. Amos Smith served as the society's president, and James Allen,

⁴⁸Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, 202; Miller, "The Fabric of Control," 478-81; Starobin, Industrial Slavery, 155; Mims, "History of Prattville," 26; Mims, "History of Autauga County," 266-67.

his son Hassan Allen, and William Ormsby served as secretaries.⁴⁹

Pratt's temperance campaign appears to have met with some success. J. Slater Hughes, a temperance advocate, held Prattville up as a beacon of sobriety, declaring no drunkards lived there. Yet, only a year after Hughes's visit to Prattville, Pratt's New Orleans friend George Cooke wrote Pratt that he regretted that "the demon of alcohol has access to your village." And during an 1851 election, George Smith complained of the antics of "a number of partly inebriated young men" in Prattville and indicated that Gardner Hale had fired a hand for "drinking too much liquor." Nevertheless, Pratt himself affirmed in 1860 that his town was "unusually free from the vices of loafing and dissipation." Significantly, Pratt lifted his more coercive temperance measures. In 1859, he dropped the liquor ban from the town deeds he granted; and in the same year, a grocer offered a wide range of liquor, including whiskey, for sale.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Deed Books, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse; Acts . . . of the General Assembly of the State of Alabama (1846), 115-16, (1848), 165; Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, 9 November 1847, reprinted from the Temperance Watchman. Ferdinand and George Smith mentioned hearing temperance lectures and sermons in Prattville's lecture hall and churches. See, for example, Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 114; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 41.

⁵⁰Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, 9 November 1847, reprinted from the Temperance Watchman; George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 15 May 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection;

Pratt also strongly encouraged church and Sunday school attendance so that operatives and their families would receive proper moral instruction. By 1846, Prattville had Baptist, Methodist, and Presybyterian churches, all of which were located near on the western side of Autauga Creek on land donated by Pratt. Pratt and his wife, Esther, became personally involved in both the Methodist Church and the Union Sunday School. "As long as he was physically able," recalled Pratt's sister Eliza, Pratt "superintended the duties of sexton, doing much of it with his own hands." She also noted that when church attendance flagged, Pratt "would go round the village visiting families, and urging the importance of punctual attendance on Sunday-school and church." For her part, Esther Pratt supplied "suitable clothing" for mill children so that they would not be too embarassed to attend Sunday-school classes.⁵¹

While apparently only one mill family, the Houstons, joined the Presbyterian church in the antebellum period, large numbers of mill folk joined the Methodist and Baptist

Nobles, ed., George Smith, 19; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 15 December 1859, 16 August 1860.

⁵¹Karen A. Stone, Prattville Baptist Church: Sharing Our Past With a Vision for the Future, 1838-1988 (Montgomery, Ala., 1988), 13-18; James K. Hazen, Manual of the Presbyterian Church (Richmond, Va., 1871); Samuel Parrish Smith, Church Register: First Methodist Church of Prattville, Alabama, 1849-1866, ACHC; Mims, "History of Prattville," 47, 58.

churches. Between 1848 and 1852, at least 55 of the 224 whites who joined or already belonged to the Methodist Church came from mill families. Although membership rolls for the Baptist church evidently have not survived, it is likely that many of this church's members came from mill households as well. In 1846, the year Pratt started his mill, the church baptized 35 new members, most of whom likely were mill operatives. By 1850, the Baptist church claimed a congregation with 69 white adherents.⁵²

Mill families attending the Methodist church included the Buies, the Butlers, the Carnlines, the Ellises, the Grays, the Grants, the Hugheses, the Holstons, the Joneses, the Methanys, the Searcys, and the Williamses. Nehemiah Butler, his wife, Juliana, and four of their daughters were admitted on probation to the church in October 1852. Juliana Butler "died right" on November 26, 1852, but the other five Butlers became fully connected members of the church on June 26, 1853. Earlier, in March, Nehemiah, all seven of his daughters, and his son, Matthew, had received baptism. For the Butlers, church attendance was, according to Shadrack Mims, a new experience. Mims wrote in his 1854 letter to the agent for Garland, Goode & Co. that "no one [of Nehemiah Butler's] large family of children, some

⁵²Stone, Baptist Church, 13-18; Hazen, Manual; Smith, Church Register.

of them grown, have ever heard preaching." Mims sternly informed the agent that "Mr. Pratt . . . has incurred a heavy expense in order to supply these people with a regular pastoral oversight," and he charged his rival "as a Christian gentleman to take care both souls & bodies of this family."⁵³

Among Prattville mill families, women apparently heard more preaching than men. In the period from 1848 to 1852, 71 percent of the members of the Methodist church from mill families were female. Mary Ellis and Catherine Hale belonged to the church, for example, but their husbands did not. Similarly, widow Hannah Holston and her eldest daughter were church members, but her eldest son was not. However, in most cases, husbands and wives, as well as sons and daughters, were church members. Hatter Abram Carnline belonged to the church, for example, as did his wife, Barbara, his operative sons John and George, and his daughter Visa. Probably, the gender imbalance in church membership to some extent reflects the greater number of females in mill families in the first place.⁵⁴

⁵³U.S. Census, 1850, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Smith, Church Register; Shadrack Mims to Price Williams, 15 February 1854, reprinted in Randall Miller, "Love of Labor," 148-49.

⁵⁴Smith, Church Register.

Both males and females occasionally got into trouble with the church. At least half of the fourteen people expelled from church membership from 1849 to 1852 came from mill families. Fate Ellis, his cousin John Ellis, Tilman Jones, and Rebecca Searcy were expelled for neglect of religious duties, while Eliza Gray, Susan Gray, and Sarah Methany were expelled for dancing. All seven individuals were young people, either in their teens or early twenties.⁵⁵

Prattville's interdenominational Union Sunday School (an affiliate of the American Sunday School Union) had as its goal the inculcation of virtue in the town's youth. In 1847, Prattville's Sabbath School had 20 teachers, 120 students, and a library of 1,000 volumes. Shadrack Mims proudly declared of the institution: "We have one of the best Sabbath schools in the State." Judging from an incomplete 1854 library record, mill children did attend this school, which was divided into male and female departments. The names of children of John Searcy, Edmund Baxley, Patience Ward, Hannah Holston, Rachel Houston, Martha Mathews, Sarah Hoyle, Elizabeth Ross, Elisha Ellis, Sara Chatwood, Matilda Elliot, and Elizabeth Royals all were recorded in the membership record. Probably at least fourteen of eighty boys (17.5 percent) in the school in 1854

⁵⁵Ibid.

came from mill families, while twenty-one (52.5 percent) of the forty girls (a partial listing) in the school in that year belonged to mill families. In part, this gender disparity probably reflected the general gender disparity in mill families. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Shadrack Mims recalled that mill girls were less resistant to Sunday School than mill boys. Mims asserted that initially, mill children "seemed to have an aversion to Sunday School." Fortunately, however, through the efforts of Mrs. Pratt and other ladies who visited the families and furnished them with proper clothes, "many of the girls, and some few of the boys of the better class were induced to enter the school." Those "boys who did not enter Sunday School," grumbled Mims, "were roaming about over the country robbing orchards and melon patches, and they would do this at night as well as on Sundays."⁵⁶

Pratt sought to provide the children in mill families with a secular education as well as a religious one, for he insisted that "it is just as necessary for successful operatives to have a plain, practical education, as it is for them to operate with the hands; the intellect ought to be educated as well as the hands." As early as 1845, Pratt had started a school for village children. The frame

⁵⁶Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, 9 November 1847, reprinted from the Temperance Watchman; The Prattville Sunday-School Library Record, ACHC; Mims, "History of Autauga County," 266.

schoolhouse cost about \$1,000 and "was situated in a cool sequestered place completely surrounded by a forest growth of young oaks and a cool spring." Pratt employed New Hampshire-born Thomas Avery as the school's first teacher. Mims remembered Avery, who later became Pratt's bookkeeper, as "an accomplished scholar and gentleman." By 1847, Prattville had two schools, one of which was a "Ladies School" for children.⁵⁷

Throughout the 1850s, several schools operated in Prattville. In 1860, Pratt put up a fine Italianate-style brick building that housed the Prattville Male and Female Academy. Pratt also served as the President of the Academy's Board of Trustees. With its tuition ranging from \$32 to \$132 per nine-month term, this school would have been prohibitively expensive for the children of textile families. These children attended a free school, which opened in 1857. It was established expressly for the "education and moral training of the children of factory operatives." Pratt's niece Augusta (Pratt) Morgan taught the school, with assistance from Eliza Abbot, a young New Hampshire woman likely related to Pratt also. Moreover, Hassan Allen had "taken a deep interest in the school" and gave music lessons to the students. The editors of the Prattville

⁵⁷Prattville Southern Statesman, 20 December 1854; Mims, "History of Autauga County," 266; Daniel Pratt to Daniel and Eliza Holt, 1 June 1847.

Autauga Citizen gave Augusta Morgan and her school qualified praise: "Considering the raw and unlettered material which she has had to operate upon, we think she deserves the greatest credit for the progress she has made in the moral and mental culture of the children under her supervision." From forty to fifty children attended the school, exceeding expectations of twenty to thirty. In fact, attendance was so great that the schoolhouse became overcrowded, and many children had to bring their own seats. In addition, Augusta Morgan received only a "pittance" for her "onerous duties." The editor of the Citizen implored "the wealthier class of our citizens to remedy these problems."⁵⁸

The "wealthier class" of Prattville's citizens may not have been as forthcoming as hoped, for only twenty-one children from textile families were listed as attending school in the 1860 census. A household like that of Toliver Golden, where no less than four children—Nancy (fourteen), Thomas (twelve), Martha (nine), and Toliver (nine)—went to school, was a rarity. Nevertheless, this number was still 35 percent of the school-age children (five to fourteen) in the textile families who were not listed as employed. Augusta Morgan and Eliza Abbot

⁵⁸Prattville Autauga Citizen, 18 June 1854, 4 March 1857, 16 August 1860, 20 September 1860. A photograph of the Academy building appeared in the Prattville Progress, 11 November 1898.

apparently no longer taught at the school, but Mary Sheldon, Augusta Morgan's and Merrill Pratt's stepsister, and Mary Walker, a young New York woman who boarded with a textile family, were listed as teachers in the 1860 census. It appears, then, that although the free school, like the Sunday school and the church, reached only a portion of the operative community, it nevertheless remained a viable institution.⁵⁹

While the evidence at hand does not permit extravagant declarations concerning the success of Pratt's efforts concerning his factory workers, neither does it allow the conclusion that they ended in failure. Many operatives attended Prattville's churches and sent their children to the Union Sunday School and the common school. That others failed to do the same does not negate Pratt's accomplishment in molding a capable mill labor force.⁶⁰

⁵⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Eleanor Smith Cooke, The Genealogy of Daniel Pratt (Prattville, 1990).

⁶⁰Although in his early work Randall Miller conceded that Pratt's efforts met with some success, his assessment in a more recent article is completely negative. In regard to the impact of the "reform measures" of southern textile mill owners in the antebellum South, Miller contends:

All the expenses for Sabbath schools, religious tracts, and stationed preachers as well as the strictures on strong drink, strong language, and strong play did not make southern whites work to the clock-time rhythms of the factories or internalize "Yankee" values.

Indeed, Miller sweepingly declares that "everywhere in the [antebellum] South, white factory workers arrived late,

Poor whites hardly shunned Prattville. Indeed, some appear to have traveled long distances to get there, surely a major commitment of scarce resources. Two families offer excellent examples of this phenomenon. In 1850, Toliver Golden and his large family lived in Walker County, located in hilly northern Alabama. At the opposite extreme, Nehemiah Butler and his family resided in Coffee County, part of the "wire grass" region of southern Alabama. Both Walker and Coffee counties were as insulated from the market economy as any counties in Alabama, yet the Golden and Butlers both moved to Prattville in the 1850s.⁶¹

Other families offer less dramatic examples of migration to Prattville. Probably after the death of her husband, Charles, Sarah Chatwood brought her family to Prattville from Tallapoosa County, located one county to the east of Autauga. Also probably after her husband's death, Elizabeth Royals moved with her family to

left early, or failed to show up at all. They drank, they stole, and they drifted away." He concludes that southern whites "were, on the whole, an unreliable work force who clung to the preindustrial work habits and values of rural and village culture." See Miller, "The Fabric of Control."

⁶¹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Free Schedule, Coffee County, Walker County, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. Toliver Golden's aged father, G. W., accompanied the family, dying in Prattville in 1859 at the age of ninety-seven. Marilyn Davis Barefield, Alabama Mortality Schedule, 1860, Eighth Census of the United States, Original Returns of the Assistant Marshall's Third Series, Persons Who Died During the Year Ending June 30, 1860 (Easley, S.C., 1987).

Prattville from Pike County, located to the southeast of Autauga. Two other families, the Griffins and the Glens, came to Prattville from adjacent Coosa County.⁶²

More commonly, however, the hilly Autauga districts to the north of Prattville, particularly Milton and Pine Flat, served as Pratt's source of operatives. The families of Susan O'Neal, Elnora Killian, and Diah Spurlock all traveled to Prattville from Pine Flat in the 1850s, while Elizabeth Ross's and Seaborn Carter's families came from Milton. Some of these families may not have been unfamiliar with mechanical work, for the O'Neal, Killian, and Spurlock families (as well as carpenters Ebenezer Killough and James Tunnell) all lived in 1850 in close proximity to Norfleet Ivy, who owned a Pine Flat sash, door, and blind shop, smithy, and grist mill. Ivy retired to Prattville after 1850 (possibly a casualty of competition with Pratt) and started a boarding house, no doubt throwing local families out of work. Both Killough and Tunnell must have transferred from jobs with Ivy to jobs with Pratt, and members of the other families may have as well.⁶³

The financial condition of these families does seem to have improved, at least moderately, in Prattville. In

⁶²U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Coosa County, Pike County, Tallapoosa County.

⁶³U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County.

1860, the vast majority of families had wealth ranging from \$100 to \$800. Half owned property valued at from \$100 to \$400, while 27 percent owned property worth from \$500 to \$800. Nine percent of mill families owned \$1,000 or more, while 7 percent owned less than \$100, and 7 percent had no wealth listed. Median wealth among the mill families with wealth listings was a little over \$400.⁶⁴

Many families went from having no wealth listing before they came to Prattville to one amounting in 1860 to \$400 or \$500. The Spurlock family offers a good example of this occurrence. Diah Spurlock continued to find employment as a laborer in Prattville; Ferdinand Smith noted in his diary in 1855 that he had had over "Mr. Spurlock to hoe my potatoes." Spurlock's teenaged daughters, Frances and Missouri, worked in the mill as a warper and a weaver, respectively, while his fourteen-year-old son, Wilmont, worked as a spinner. Through their joint efforts, the family increased the wealth of the household from no listing in 1850 to \$400 in 1860.⁶⁵

William Griffin brought a sprawling family consisting of a wife, Rosanna, and thirteen children from Coosa County to Prattville between 1855 and 1859. His death from cancer in 1859 could well have spelled disaster for the family,

⁶⁴U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

⁶⁵Ibid.; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 212.

but in 1860, two of Rosanna's children worked in the mill, one as a spreader and the other as a carder, and Rosanna listed her household's wealth as \$500.⁶⁶

Rosanna Griffin's case reveals that factory work, while far from offering an easy life, could mean economic survival for widows and orphans. Widows Susan O'Neal, Elnora Killian, and Elizabeth Ross buttress this point. O'Neal, Killian, and Ross went from having no wealth listings to those of \$600, \$250, and \$500, respectively. All these women had daughters working variously as spinners, weavers, or warpers. Killian, age forty-nine, worked in the mill as well.⁶⁷

Darker threads in this generally successful pattern can be seen in the cases of Elizabeth Royals and Sarah Chatwood. Royals' husband had been worth \$800 in 1850, but in Prattville in 1860, Elizabeth, with teenage daughter Sara working as a weaver and teenage son Harrison working as a spinner, was worth only \$300. Similarly, Charles Chatwood had been worth \$200 in 1850, but in 1860, the family had no wealth listing at all, despite the fact that four of Frances' children had employment: twenty-one-year-old Frances (drawing thread), eighteen-year-old Charles

⁶⁶U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Barefield, Alabama Mortality Schedule.

⁶⁷U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

(brick mason), fifteen-year-old Eli (spinner), and eleven-year-old John (spinner). However, one can speculate that these families might well have fared worse but for available work in the mill. Moreover, it is possible that Chatwood's wealth listing simply was inadvertently omitted in the 1860 census.⁶⁸

Prattville also had a few clear cases of impressive upward mobility. Both the Ellis and Houston families, whom I discussed in chapter 3, had children who worked in the cotton mill. Another textile family, the Matthews, also fared well from its move to Prattville.

Martha Coleman was, as Shadrack Mims wrote of Rachel Houston, a widow who had seen better days when she came to Prattville. Her uncle Martin Burt was a successful Autauga planter; her uncle-in-law Henry Hunt worked for a while as a carpenter for Daniel Pratt; and her father, John Coleman, was, she recalled, an enterprising "Jack-of-all-Trades" who provided scarce services in the newly settled county:

If a neighbour wanted a pair of shoes, Mr. Coleman was the man to make them. If a set of chairs were needed Mr. Coleman was the man applied to. . . . In addition

⁶⁸U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Coosa County, Pike County. Seaborn Carter also appears to have fared less well than most operative families by moving to Prattville. Between 1850 and 1860, his wealth listing increased from nothing to only thirty dollars, although in 1860, both he and his son worked in the mill's carding room. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

he made all the spinning wheels and clack reels for the neighbour women. He had also a blacksmith shop and did all the work for his neighbours in that line. If any of the belles of the neighborhood had a piece of tauter-shell (tortoise shell), he would manufacture it into a fancy breast pin. If a neighbour wanted a steel trap, Mr. Coleman was the man to make it for them. Mr. Coleman was a great gunsmith, and had a large business in repairing guns. . . . In addition, to all this skill in mechanism, Mr. Coleman was a house carpenter and assisted building a great many houses in the neighborhood of old Washington.⁶⁹

In 1826, Coleman was making arrangements to start a gin shop near McNiel's Mill (the future location of Prattville), but his health rapidly declined, and he died in April. Coleman's daughter Martha married Henry Matthews in 1831. Matthews, a plantation overseer, died in 1843, leaving a widow and four young children. Martha Matthews, left alone with four children and nothing to depend on for support but her own exertions, moved to Prattville. When the cotton mill started operations in 1846, "she found ready employment for all her children," allowing her "to make a good living" and "give her children very good advantages in the way of education." Her son Jesse became a bookkeeper and, after the Civil War, a prominent Prattville merchant. In 1872, he married Lily Horn, a stepdaughter of New Hampshire-born gin mechanic C. P. Morgan. James Matthews moved to Monroe, Georgia, where he worked as a jeweler. Daughter Mary married, in 1869, Hugh Narramore, a

⁶⁹Samuel Parrish Smith, "Burts and Colemans" [1885], Autauga Ancestry 5 (May 1995): 21-22, 27.

Prattville shop owner. Daughter Caroline never married, remaining in her mother's Prattville home.⁷⁰

In addition to providing her children with good educations, Mary Matthews, an active member of the Prattville Baptist Church, also made certain they attended church and Sunday school. All four children became, like their mother, members of the Baptist church. Jesse served as class leader in the Union Sunday School as well.⁷¹

No doubt the family of Martha Matthews, like that of Rachel Houston, was an atypical textile family. While Martha Matthews's husband did not own a farm, he was a well-respected plantation overseer. Moreover, some of her kin, such as her uncle Martin Burt, were undeniably wealthy. In addition, her own father, John Coleman, rather resembled Daniel Pratt in his undoubted mechanical skills.⁷²

In short, Martha Matthews and Rachel Houston headed formerly middle class families that regained and even advanced their social and economic status in Prattville. They were not, like the Ellis family, people who had always been poor; and their success stories, therefore, are not so

⁷⁰Ibid., 23-25.

⁷¹Ibid., 24; Prattville Sunday School Record.

⁷²John Coleman's brother Thomas had talents similar to those of John. Thomas Coleman owned a wagon shop in the 1820s and also made gins on special order. Smith, "Burts and Colemans," 25.

dramatic. Nevertheless, it is clear that Prattville's cotton mill did offer a ladder for these determined widows to climb.

As a group, Pratt's mill bosses did not do as well financially as Houston or Matthews. Twelve men, all southern-born, worked as mill bosses in 1860: Alison Scroggins, Thomas Kent, George Ward, William Glenn, Giles Lester, J. D. Jones, John Wood, John Hoyle, Josiah Durden, Albert Chapman, E. W. Parker, and W. R. Carter. Of the men named, Ward, at \$1,000, was easily worth the most, while Jones, Scroggins, Kent, Chapman, and Wood did fairly well, being worth \$650, \$500, \$500, \$400, and \$300, respectively. Faring worse were Glenn (\$125) and Lester (\$50). The four other men had no wealth listing. However, it is worth noting that all these men were much younger than the typical operative household head, ranging in age from twenty-four to thirty-two. Moreover, the bosses had married much more recently and had smaller families.⁷³

Gardner Hale stood at the top of the factory echelon in 1860, followed by the two mill agents, William Wallace Fay and Andrew Jackson Thompson. Fay, a thirty-three-year-old native of Vermont, succeeded Shadrack Mims in 1860 as the cotton mill agent. Fay was a nephew of Edwin Fay, a long-time Autauga resident who had migrated to Alabama as a

⁷³U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

schoolteacher and eventually became a successful planter. The twenty-eight-year-old Thompson, a native of Alabama, probably served as the agent for the wool mill. His background is not clear, although it appears he had a brother, Clinton, who owned a Prattville restaurant. Andrew Thompson had wealth valued at \$1,000, much less than Fay, who was worth \$10,000.⁷⁴

Whatever their financial condition, Prattville's mill workers surely found appealing the quality low-rental housing with which Pratt provided them. De Bow declared that Pratt's operatives had, for a small rent, "good houses, neatly painted and of uniform size." Furthermore, census evidence suggests that some of the operatives' households in Prattville, like those in Rockdale, supplemented their income by taking in boarders, typically young adult males or females who worked in the gin or textile factories. Widows Cynthia Mason and Mary Davis appear to have done particularly well as landladies. Mason, worth \$700, boarded four young male adults: George Hurst, a dresser; John Story, a mechanic; John Royals, a blacksmith; and John Hoyle, an overseer. Mason's daughters—twenty-four-year-old Sarah, twenty-two-year-old Nancy, and eighteen-year-old Martha—all worked as weavers in the

⁷⁴Ibid. On the Fay family, see Bell Irwin Wiley, ed., "This Infernal War"; The Confederate Letters of Edwin H. Fay (Austin, Tex., 1958).

mill, while her fourteen-year-old son William attended school. Davis, worth \$800, boarded Frances Tower, a thirty-year-old weaver and her two sons; William Baxley, a thirty-year-old washer; and Mary Graves, a nineteen-year-old warper. None of her children aged fourteen and under had occupations listed in the census, but her sixteen-year-old daughter Narcus, who died from typhoid fever in 1859, had worked as a weaver. A. J. Weatherly, a fifty-seven-year-old cloth trimmer worth \$250, had almost as many boarders as Mason and Davis. Dwelling in Weatherly's household, in addition to his wife and eight children, were Richard Grant, a twenty-four-year-old lapper, Benjamin Durden, a twenty-year-old mechanic; and William McMillan, an eighteen-year-old mechanic.⁷⁵

Mill families had a wide choice of Prattville stores in which to spend their hard-earned cash. Since Prattville was not a company town, it had no company store. In any given year in the 1850s, some half-dozen mercantile concerns operated in Prattville. Perhaps the most popular was W. C. Allen & Co., a firm owned by New York natives W. C. Allen and his brother Hassan, sons of James Allen. In 1854, the Allen brothers advertised such diverse items as clothing, hardware, utensils, foodstuffs, toiletries,

⁷⁵De Bow's Review (February 1851): 226; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Barefield, Alabama Mortality Schedule.

jewelry, toys, books, and tobacco—all "at the lowest prices." Operatives and their families did their shopping during their noon dinner breaks and in the evenings from six to nine on weekdays and from five to nine on Saturdays.⁷⁶

While housing and access to stores, churches, and schools likely offered strong incentives to some families to come to work in Prattville's mills, poor working conditions and long hours may have discouraged others. Concerning operatives' work hours, an 1859 letter to the Prattville Southern Statesman claimed that operatives labored until 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. on Mondays through Fridays and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays. In addition, the writer asserted that operatives had forty-five minutes to an hour to eat their dinner at home after the ringing of the noon bell. Assuming the day began about 6:00 a.m., it would seem likely that mill operatives faced about eleven hours of work a day, six days a week.⁷⁷

Due to a paucity of evidence, little can be stated about working conditions in the textile factory. Beyond doubt, however, is that an exceptionally horrible accident in the mill claimed the life of a young boy operative in 1858. The boy in question was likely Probadus Griffin, a

⁷⁶Prattville Autauga Citizen, 15 December 1859.

⁷⁷Prattville Southern Statesman, 16 June 1859.

son of William and Rosanna Griffin. At the time of his fatal accident, Probadus was probably about eight or nine years old. In September 1858, a machine belt in the mill caught the boy, pulling him "under the machine between the belt and a pulley." From this point, "he was hurled up to the roofing above, and partially drawn through a hole," where, a local newspaper gruesomely detailed, "his head was severed from his body, letting the lifeless trunk fall to the floor while the head remained above." When Rosanna Griffin appeared at the factory shortly after the tragedy took place, her shock proved so great "that she swooned" and her "reason forsook her." Terrible as this occurrence certainly was, however, no other operative injuries, not to mention fatalities, are noted in Prattville diaries or newspapers in the antebellum period.⁷⁸

⁷⁸Prattville Autauga Citizen, 30 September 1858. In arguing that "there was abundant cause for whites to find factory labor distasteful, even at the enlightened Prattville mills," Miller relies on thin evidence concerning working conditions in the textile factory. Shadrack Mims complained that his overwork at Prattville "completely wrecked" his health, and Miller attributes this breakdown, in part, to "cotton dust and an unhealthy environment." But a company agent presumably would have spent little time in factory working areas; so Miller's conclusion appears faulty. Miller also relies on George Cooke's statement in a letter to Pratt concerning his regret over "the death of young Brock and the sickness of your village." Journal entries made by Ferdinand Smith in the summer of 1848 suggest that extensive sickness prevailed in Prattville in this period. Smith noted that several people, including himself, were suffering from fever and that Samuel Brock (William Ormsby's brother-in-law, not a mill hand, as Miller claims) had died. To escape these dismal conditions, Ferdinand and George went on a week-long trip to

By 1861, Pratt's textiles "experiment" had clearly proven itself successful. Labor turnover undoubtedly caused Pratt some difficulty, and, as cotton prices rose in the 1850s, he apparently found it more profitable to divert capital into the gin factory and a plantation, just as potential planter investors would have found it more profitable to invest in land and slaves. As a consequence, the textile mill never achieved the significance it might have. Nevertheless, Pratt had successfully established one of the South's major textile factories. Moreover, the textile factory, in conjunction with the gin factory, became the nucleus around which the town of Prattville developed.

Shelby Springs and Talladega Springs in northern Alabama, where they took sulphur water cures. Mill hands obviously had no such recourse. However, this evidence does not reflect directly on conditions in the factory. Miller, Cotton Mill Movement, 215-217; Mims, "History of Autauga County," 251; George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 19 October 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 16-20. Wayne Flynt, relying on Miller, makes the same error about Mims. Flynt, Poor But Proud, 23. News of only one other mill accident appeared in the papers during Pratt's lifetime. In June 1868, Andrew Simmons, a twenty-two-year-old carder, "got his right arm shockingly mangled by getting it caught in a carding machine." As a result, Simmons had to have his arm amputated. Two years later, in 1870, Simmons worked as a night watchman in the mill. Montgomery Daily Mail, 20 June 1868.

CHAPTER 5

THE MAN AT THE CENTER

Although a place called Prattville first came into existence in 1839, it remained for years a tiny offshoot of Daniel Pratt's cotton gin factory. Only with the advent of the textile factory in 1846 did Prattville begin to blossom. By 1850, the village had about 73 households and a free population of 448; by 1860, the free population had more than doubled, to 157 households with 868 people.¹ On the eve of the Civil War, Prattville had become Alabama's premier factory town and the business center of a wealthy Black Belt county. Not content with these distinctions, Prattville's ambitious and enterprising citizenry spoke confidently of making the town the "Lowell of the South." Even as Prattville grew and diversified, however, Daniel Pratt remained at the center of its affairs, so much so that the local Democratic paper took to referring to him as "the Great I Am." To a large extent, Prattville mirrored the man after whom it had been named.

In 1847, soon after he had gotten his textile factory off the ground, Pratt wrote to his New Hampshire relatives

¹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

about what had become his ruling passion: "Should my life be spared a few years longer I think I shall accomplish what I have been striving for. That is build up a respectable vilage such as will compare with your Northern towns in point of good morals and good society." Pratt boasted that he was, in fact, "not afraid now of a comparison with any vilage in New England of the same population." Pratt listed two things that he felt made life in Prattville especially good, its churches and its schools:

We have regular preaching every Sabath and januraly every wednesday night and I think as good as you have in Milford. We have a Methodist Church numbering 100 or more members, a respectable Baptist Church and Presbeterian. We also have an excelent school the year round besides a ladies school for small children. We have a Sabath school numbering 120 scholars. We also have a Bible class.²

For Pratt, then, Prattville was to be a reflection of the value system inculcated in his New England boyhood, a place of hard work and religious devotion, of, as he put it, "good morals and good society." Until the end of his life, Pratt himself remained almost obsessively concerned with the pursuit of his calling, never resting with the attainment of a goal, but immediately dashing off in pursuit of another one. Despite his preoccupation with business, however, Pratt did not neglect what he conceived as his familial and religious duties. Pursuit of profit for its

²Daniel Pratt to Daniel and Eliza Holt, 1 June 1847, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery (ADAH).

own sake, he believed, would have been a sin. Despite a formal, even stiff demeanor, Pratt displayed affection for kin and friends such as Shadrack Mims and the artist George Cooke, nor did Pratt confine benevolence to a small circle of friends and family. By engaging in a variety of charitable religious projects, he sought to fulfill what he saw as his Christian obligations to mankind in general.

Anson West, a minister who had known Pratt, recalled him as a tall, straight-backed man with "large hands and feet, a Roman nose, and eyes the color of the sky." He declared that "not only did [Pratt's] countenance beam with benevolence, but his entire person indicated benevolence." Indeed, he found Pratt the very "embodiment of energy, integrity, and philanthropy."³ Nevertheless, Pratt's expression also had a serious, even stern quality, suggesting that his philanthropy would be tempered by a clearheaded estimation of the would-be recipient's worth.

Pratt's family and friends viewed him as a kind but very reserved man. During the Civil War, when Julia (Smith) Pratt wrote her husband, Merrill (Pratt's nephew and ward), of her experiences in joining Prattville's Methodist church, she noted that Daniel Pratt and his wife, Esther, had different reactions to her act: "When I was coming out of church today, M[rs.] P[ratt] met me and said

³Anson West, A History of Methodism in Alabama (Nashville, 1893), 617.

she was so glad to see me take the steps that I had taken today. Mr. P[ratt] also seemed to be very glad although he did not say anything." Two months later, Merrill mentioned in a letter to Julia that "Uncle Pratt" had written him "that Julia Pratt was well and as pretty as ever." Of this comment Merrill joked: "I think something must be about to happen for I think this about the first time he ever said anyone was pretty." Possibly alluding to the incident Julia had described, he added: "Tho I recon he thought his wife was [even] if he didn't say so, don't you?"⁴

Shadrack Mims, who wrote at great length in the 1870s and 1880s about Pratt's character, agreed that Pratt could be formal and distant. Mims recalled that in conversing, Pratt, "modest at all times," preferred listening to talking. Although enjoying "a pleasant witticism or repartee that gave no offense," Pratt did not condescend to "foolish jesting." Never stooping to "undue familiarity" with men, Pratt "reserved to himself the right to repel it in others toward himself." Not surprisingly, perhaps, "he had few confidants."⁵

⁴Julia Pratt to Merrill Pratt, 23 November 1862, Box 21, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; Merrill Pratt to Julia Pratt, 19 January 1863, Folder 34, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

⁵Shadrack Mims, "History of Prattville," in S[usan] F[rances] H[ale] Tarrant, ed., Hon. Daniel Pratt: A

Mims also implied that Pratt could have flashes of temper. "When things did not go on [in his business] to suit him, he was impatient and fretful, and sometimes abrupt," Mims admitted, adding, however, that considering how few men measured up to his standards as a businessman, Pratt actually "exercised great forbearance towards the shortcomings of others." In his journal, Ferdinand Smith provides a specific instance of Pratt fretting over a business matter: "Mr. Pratt called in today a little out of patience in not seeing the [Parkhurst] gin going on as fast as he wished."⁶

Mims repeatedly emphasized Pratt's unflagging devotion to business. So much of Pratt's time was "taken up with business during the week," recalled Mims, "that he found little time for society." Pratt's friends and even his doctor warned him that he endangered his health by overworking, but to no avail. "No persuasion . . . could prevail with him to favor himself, even at the near approach of his last illness. Work was his element, and work he would, when he should have been in bed under treatment." Mims related that Pratt had even declared "that if he knew

Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond, Va., 1904), 55.

⁶Mims, "History of Prattville," 45-46; Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith (Prattville, 1991), 172.

that tomorrow would be his last day on earth, he would continue his regular routine of work."⁷

Pratt's assertion to Mims, while dramatic, is basically borne out by Pratt's actions. He continued to drive himself in the 1860s and 1870s, even as his health steadily worsened. In 1872, less than a year before his death, he complained to Mims that he had "been laid up about two weeks not able to attend to business. My hand is so lame now I am hardly able to hold a pen." Pratt declared that he desired to go to Talladega Springs for a water cure, as friends had urged him, but that he had too much to do.⁸

Detailing only Pratt's absorption with his work, however, gives an incomplete portrait of the man. Pratt balanced his devotion to business with a commitment to family, friends, and the community at large. Pratt's strong ties to his own family can be traced from his 1827 letter to his father through the rest of his life. In 1827, he told his parent: "You may depend, I respect you as a father and [I] believe that I think of you as often as you do of me." He assured Edward that he felt "under grate obligation to you and feel it my duty to assist you in time of need" and promised "should you be in want of any of the necessaries of life by letting me know it you shall have

⁷Mims, "History of Prattville," 46.

⁸Daniel Pratt to Shadrack Mims, 3 June 1872, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

the last cent before you shall suffer." Pratt's father died in 1829, but as Pratt's own fortunes rose in the 1830s and 1840s and those of his siblings declined, he repeatedly expressed his concern and offered help.⁹

By the time Pratt moved to Alabama in 1833, all his siblings had wed. His oldest sister, Asenath, married Joseph Chandler, likely a relation of Pratt's good friend Elijah Chandler. After Asenath died in 1836, leaving three children, Joseph married Pratt's forty-one-year-old sister Dorcas. He himself died the next year, however, leaving the widowed Dorcas fifty dollars and a clock. Daniel's two younger sisters, Abigail and Eliza, wed local farmers of modest means, Artemas Howard and Daniel Holt, respectively. Daniel's only brother, Edward, married Dorcas Pevey, a daughter of Peter Pevey, a well-respected farmer who lived in the nearby township of Greenfield. Edward appears, like Daniel, to have worked as a carpenter.¹⁰

Edward Pratt had consumption (from which he would die in 1838), and in 1835 he accepted Daniel's invitation to

⁹Daniel Pratt to Edward Pratt, 19 June 1827, Unnumbered Folder, Pratt Collection, ADAH; Eleanor Smith Cooke, The Genealogy of Daniel Pratt (Prattville, 1990).

¹⁰Ibid.; Abiel Abbot Livermore and Sewall Putnam, History of the Town of Wilton, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, (Lowell, Mass., 1888), 467; Henry Ames Blood, History of Temple, New Hampshire (Boston, 1860); Will of Joseph Chandler of Wilton, Hillsborough County Courthouse, Nashua. I verified much of the information contained in the above sources from a visit to Wilton cemetery.

come to Alabama to improve his health. While noting in a letter to his wife that "my Brother works like a slave," Edward reported that Daniel and Esther "are very kind to me. They do everything in their power to make me comfortable." In the gin shop he had his "choice out of all the work," and he could work when he pleased. Dorcas replied that it "brought great joy to my heart that you was placed in a situation where you have everything to make you comfortable." She expressed "much gratitude to Brother and Sister for their kindness."¹¹

Despite his good treatment, Edward fretted about his separation from his family. A particular worry of his concerned the education of his two children, ten-year-old Augusta and seven-year-old Merrill. "I feel very badly that the children were deprived of going to the village school [during summer]," he informed Dorcas. "If you can persuade them to go to Greenfield or anywhere else [during winter] by paying their board and tuition I should be very glad." Dorcas assured Edward that she would "try to have the children" attend the Temple school when it opened for winter term. She added that when the term ended, she planned to travel to Greenfield "with the children and stay a week. I should leave them there if the schools are keeping but it seems impossible to persuade them to leave me

¹¹Edward Pratt to Dorcas Pratt, 25 September 1835, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

much more so than it was before you left home." In his 1838 will Edward reiterated his desire that his children attend school, specifically directing that Dorcas provide Augusta and Merrill with "a good common school education."¹²

Although the separation must have sorely tried Dorcas, she did her best to fulfill her dead husband's wish by sending thirteen-year-old Merrill to live with his Uncle Daniel in Prattville in 1841. Merrill would, in some respects, become the son Daniel never had, serving him as his right-hand man in the gin business and eventually taking over the reins after his uncle's death. In 1842, Daniel wrote his sister Dorcas of his pleasure with Merrill, evidently a virtuous and dutiful teenager: "Merrill appears to enjoy himself very well. He is a very good boy. [He] is always willing to do all that I want him to." Probably recalling his brother's wish, he added that Merrill "has ben at school since he was with me."¹³

Pratt also helped his sister Dorcas, a childless widow with no means of her own. When in New York City on a business trip, Pratt sent Dorcas a fifty-dollar check,

¹²Dorcas Pratt to Edward Pratt, 28 October 1835, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; Will of Edward Pratt of Milton, Hillsborough County Courthouse.

¹³Tarrant, ed., Daniel Pratt, 174; Daniel Pratt to Dorcas Chandler, 12 October 1842, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

apologizing for sending her "so small a trifle." He explained that he "would have sent more but could not well spare it at this time" because of his difficulty in obtaining "northern funds." Nevertheless, he implored her not to think him unable or unwilling "to do more." He insisted it would "be a great pleasure to me to furnish you with all you need." Pratt's obvious guilt at not doing more at the time to help Dorcas poured out at the end of the letter when he prayed that "the Lord support you under all of your afflictions" and signed as "unworthy Brother Daniel."¹⁴

By 1847, Dorcas had moved in with her sister Eliza and her husband, Daniel Holt. Visiting the Holts that year, Pratt found Daniel in poor health. Distressed by this discovery, he wrote the Holts from Prattville, in June, informing them of his concern. After describing his village in glowing terms, he invited the Holts and Dorcas to move to Prattville:

Now if you would like to live in such a vilage [as Prattville], I will build a house for you and will give you employment in the mills, say to attend to my flouring and grist mill. Your children can go to school as long as necessary and can work in the Factory if you wish them to do so. I would build large enough for Sister Dorcas to live with you.

Admitting that the Holts nevertheless "might not be sattisfyed here," he insisted they must be their "own judges."

¹⁴Daniel Pratt to Dorcas Chandler, 12 October 1842, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

He assured them that if they did "not feel disposed to come," he would "try and assist" them as soon as he possibly could. Again he pled the difficulty he had in obtaining ready cash: "Although I have a large property in this place I have allways had as much as I could do to get along and meet my payments and it is yet so."¹⁵

Pratt's proposal apparently met with some reluctance, but Dorcas, the Holts, and their six children finally did move to Prattville in 1850, accompanied by Merrill's sister Augusta and her husband, Ashby Morgan. Instead of going to work in one of Pratt's factories or shops, Daniel Holt took over the operation of a farm Pratt owned. "Mr. Pratt thought he would build him a house about a mile out of the village and get someone to go on it and raise hogs and fowls and take his cows to make his butter," Daniel Holt wrote to some relatives back home, "but he could not get anyone to go on to his farm that he could trust. . . . Eliza said she guessed he had better send us. . . . I told him I was willing to go there or to the mill whichever would be best for him. He concluded that it was best for us to go on his farm." Both Daniel and his wife declared themselves very pleased with their new situation. Daniel

¹⁵Daniel Pratt to Daniel and Eliza Holt, 1 June 1847, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH. To Dorcas, Pratt included a separate note, urging her "to exercise your own judgment and decide the way you think would be most conducive to your future happiness."

wrote that Pratt "has built us a very good house. It is on a hill so that we can see into the village of Prattville and see the city of Montgomery, and we have the best of water." In addition, Holt had "1 1/2 acres to plant with corn," and Pratt had promised to build him "a Yankee barn."¹⁶

Eliza reported that "as yet we feel perfectly contented." The house (called Daniel Pratt's farm house) she found "very neatly finished and convenient." It had one story with six rooms and a "piazza" extending around three sides. Moreover Eliza had charge of the "nicest dairy room" she had ever seen. Eliza also asserted that she went calling "much more [in Prattville] than at the North," describing in particular a fine Thanksgiving celebrated at Daniel Pratt's mansion. A great many relatives, including Merrill's visiting mother, had attended, making the event "quite a party."¹⁷

Pratt's remaining sister, Abigail, and her family never moved to Prattville. Pratt did not forget these relatives, however, lending each of Abigail's three children, Artemas, Eliza, and Esther, \$500 in 1860. Pratt's bookkeeper listed the amount as payable "1 day." Records

¹⁶Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 80; Daniel Holt to Abiel and Betsy Holt, 10 February 1852, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

¹⁷Eliza Holt to Abiel and Betsy Holt, 10 February 1852, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

indicate that Pratt lent large sums to other in-laws as well. Both Daniel Holt and Dorcas (Pevey) Pratt (who is listed as Dorcas Sheldon, having married William Sheldon in 1847) received large amounts from Pratt, Holt \$3,000 in 1858 and Sheldon \$1,000 in 1860. Again, both amounts were entered as payable "1 day."¹⁸

Although Pratt had promised the Holts a house large enough for his sister Dorcas, it appears that Dorcas actually lived in the Pratt mansion, along with Merrill, Esther's mother, Edith Kingsbury, Julia Bill, a young first cousin, once-removed, of Esther, and the widowed Mary DeBardleben and her three children, whom Pratt seems more or less to have adopted as wards. Pratt had room for all these people in part because his own immediate family was comprised only of himself, Esther, and their daughter Ellen, born in 1844.¹⁹

Daniel and Esther evidently did not attempt to start a family until the early 1840s. In all likelihood, the prudent Yankee couple had waited to do so until their successful move to Prattville had put them on a stable financial footing. Amazingly in this time of early marriage and

¹⁸Esther Howard to Merrill Pratt, 11 November 1863, Folder 34, Pratt Collection, ADAH; Bills Payable, 1 March 1863, Continental Eagle Corporation Papers, Prattville (CECP).

¹⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; James Melville Hunnewell, The Ticknor Family in America (Boston, 1919), 37, 43.

parenthood, Esther, who married Pratt at the age of twenty-four, did not give birth to her first child until 1843, when she was forty years old. The child, Mary, died that same year. In addition to Ellen, the Pratts had another daughter, Maria, who was born in 1847 and died in 1849.²⁰

At the same time Daniel and Esther were attempting to start a family, Daniel was building a home, the first real one the couple would have. Designed by Pratt and completed early in 1843, the house stood on the western bank of Autauga Creek some 200 feet northwest of the gin factory. The academic classical exterior of the house strongly resembled Pratt's earlier Jordan house. Pratt's home had a far less ornate interior than any of those he had built in Georgia, however. An architectural expert who toured the house in 1935 found the decorative moldings "severe" and the mahogany stairway "conservative," yet he admired the great house's "lack of strain toward pretentiousness" and its "utilitarian aspect." According to Pratt, he and Esther did not so much want a lavish house as to "have every thing very convenient about us and room a plenty." Outbuildings included a sunken brick wine cellar, brick stables, and a large two-story brick building housing servants' quarters,

²⁰Mims, "History of Prattville," 20-21; Pauline Jones Gandrud, Alabama Records (Easley, S.C., 1981), vol. 75, Autauga County, 3. It is possible that the Pratts may have had medical difficulty conceiving a child and that these late births were not intentional on their part.

a laundry, a bathroom, and serving rooms. Later in the decade, Pratt added an orchard, a vineyard, and an art gallery. James De Bow described the house in 1847 as "a splendid structure, with beautiful neighboring grounds."²¹

Pratt believed that a man and his family should enjoy the fruits of his labor. In 1852, he scoffed at miserly planters living in miserable abodes: "For what do we live? Is it silver and gold? Is it to say we have a plantation of one or five hundred negroes, or that we make 1000 bales of cotton? Is it to slave ourselves to accumulate property, and not enjoy it?" No, he insisted: "When we have finished our day's labor we can see more satisfaction in a good, well ventilated house with good furniture, than we can in a little pent-up log cabin with stools . . . to sit on, and other furniture corresponding." Pratt, for one, clearly did not stock his home with stools. In an 1852 state property tax assessment, he listed the value of his jewelry, plate, and furniture at \$2,000, ranking second in his county only to planter John Steele. Distantly following Pratt were planters Absalom Jackson (\$1,000) and

²¹Robert Gamble, The Alabama Catalog, Historic American Buildings Survey: A Guide to the Early Architecture of the State (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1987), 194; Birmingham News Age-Herald, 28 April 1935; Daniel Pratt to Dorcas Chandler, 12 October 1842, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; De Bow's Review 4 (September 1848): 137. Continental Eagle Corporation razed Pratt's house in 1962. Gamble, Alabama Catalog, 194.

Benjamin Fitzpatrick (\$950).²² According to the 1852 assessment, then, Pratt clearly presided over one of the most splendid estates in Autauga County.

Pratt's home and its grounds reveal him as a man of culture, rich not merely in material things, but in a variety of interests, such as art, music, viticulture, and pomology. Susan Frances Hale Tarrant, Gardner Hale's oldest daughter and a music teacher, testified to Pratt's love of music, which dated from his days at Temple Meeting House. In one parlor he had a grand piano, in the other a large music box, and in the library an organ. Still not content, Pratt kept installed in his art gallery "a sweet-toned hand-organ" (made to order) that "contained cylinders for seventy tunes, all sacred music." Tarrant remembered that Pratt had particular fondness for this specially constructed item:

It was Mr. Pratt's pleasure on Sunday afternoons to sit down before this instrument, and soon the grand old tunes of "Dundee," "Mear," "Old Hundred," and others, would be heard, pealing out their hallowed strains, delighting him and other listeners.²³

As Pratt purchased musical instruments to place in his mansion, he began planting a vineyard on the hillside behind it, evidently distinguishing wine-drinking from the

²²Alabama State Property Tax Assessment, Autauga County, 1852, Autauga County Heritage Center, Prattville. American Cotton Planter I (January 1853): 23. The figure of \$2,000 was very likely a drastic underestimate.

²³Tarrant, Daniel Pratt, 85.

consumption of whiskey and other hard liquors, of which he strongly disapproved. In the spring of 1849, Pratt, while in New Orleans on a business trip, wrote Englishman James Noyes, who owned the celebrated Hollywood Vineyards outside Natchez, Mississippi, requesting the latter man's help in starting a vineyard in Prattville. Aware that Noyes would be visiting Mobile in the summer, Pratt invited him to come up to Prattville during his trip. Noyes doubted he would have time to make such a journey upriver, but he hoped to meet Pratt in Mobile so that the novice wine maker might "taste a thimbleful of Hollywood Tokay and a little talk about the wine cause in the south." Pratt decided to order 320 Roanoke grapevines, and in the fall he again wrote Noyes, asking for detailed instructions on planting. Pratt informed Noyes that he hoped to travel to Natchez from New Orleans and visit Noyes' vineyards in the winter, causing Noyes to respond enthusiastically: "I should feel heartily pleased to receive a visit at any time from a citizen of your state but a visit from Mr. Pratt, the Father of the manufacturing interest of Alabama, will make me more than proud."²⁴

The next year Pratt requested advice from Noyes on the hiring of a gardener. Noyes recommended against hiring a white man for the post: "There is very little chance of

²⁴James Noyes to Daniel Pratt, 26 March, 19 April, 15 November 1849, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

procuring such as I could recommend for all that pretend to know anything will not engage but for very high wages and do nothing but look on while others do the work." Instead, Noyes advised Pratt "to select from among your servants a likely negro and send him to me for about 18 months." Noyes himself would teach "him all that is necessary for the vineyard and kitchen garden." He assured Pratt that he had "2 such hands either of which I would not give for the services of the best white gardener." Although he feared Pratt might "think such a plan an expensive one," Noyes insisted that "in the end it is the cheapest and most satisfactory one you can adopt." Despite Noyes' admonition against hiring a white man, Pratt apparently did just that, for living in the Pratt household in 1850 was John Welch, a thirty-eight-year-old gardener from Scotland.²⁵

In the mid-1850s, Pratt began patronizing Charles Axt, a German viticulturalist living in Washington, Georgia whose list of customers included prominent Autauga planters and Montgomery businessmen. In both 1855 and 1856, Pratt paid Axt \$200 for "planting grape vines" and "attention to vineyard." R. G. Dun & Co. estimated that Pratt had spent five thousand dollars on the vineyard. In 1860, he produced 500 gallons of wine, almost half (46 percent) the

²⁵James Noyes to Daniel Pratt, 31 August 1850, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

wine produced in Autauga County that year. Pratt's wine-making efforts won notice in the pages of the Montgomery Daily Mail and Noah Cloud's American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South. Cloud, one of the South's most accomplished agricultural reformers, gave the most detailed description of Pratt's vineyard. According to Cloud, the vineyard was composed of "three to five acres of scuppernongs and catawbas, terraced in the most picturesque style to the summit level of a high and very steep hill, perhaps one hundred feet or more perpendicular." Pratt kept the vines in place with "cast iron posts set along on the terraced embankments and wire railings from post to post." The vineyard, Cloud noted, actually contained "in all twenty-five acres of land" and was "enclosed by a substantial brick and pickette fence." After his tour of the vineyard, Cloud enjoyed "several specimens of fine Autauga wine" with Esther Pratt's "elegant dinner." Cloud also praised Pratt's "beautiful orchard," declaring that it had "fine, large fruit trees, embracing various varieties of the apple, peach, pear, plum, and fig, all healthful and thrifty."²⁶

²⁶American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South, I (May 1857): 156-57; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 12, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Agricultural Schedule, Autauga County. See also Montgomery Daily Mail, 17 July, 22 August 1857. Scattered references to Charles Axt are found in folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH and in the Continental Eagle Corporation

Perhaps Pratt's most revealing outside interest was art. Pratt, insisted Susan Tarrant, "was an artist as well as an artisan." He continued to dabble in architecture in the 1840s and 1850s, but his known structures—his house, the Prattville Methodist Church, and the rejected plans for the Alabama Capitol—show little of the flair of his work in Georgia. Pratt's real contribution to southern art during this period occurred when he became, in 1844, the patron of the painter George Cooke.

Born in Maryland in 1793, the son of a lawyer, George Cooke in his twenties embarked on a career as a painter after having worked in "the mercantile trade as a partner in a china and grocery business." Spending several years in Europe with his wife, Maria, where he pursued his artistic education, Cooke returned to America fired with the ambition to become a "history and landscape artist in the grand manner" but instead found himself wandering across the South "in pursuit of portrait commissions."²⁷ In 1844, however, Cooke met Pratt in New Orleans; and the Alabama industrialist became both his close friend and his major patron.

papers. The second largest wine producer in Autauga County in 1860 was Daniel Holt, who made 364 gallons. Together, Pratt and his brother-in-law accounted for 80 percent of Autauga's wine production.

²⁷Donald D. Keyes, George Cooke 1793-1849 (Athens, Ga., 1991), 7-15, 23, 27.

George Cooke and Daniel Pratt seem to have hit it off almost immediately. For one thing, as one writer has noted, the pair "seemed to agree about everything: they were both political conservatives who deplored Jacksonian populism; they were devout Methodists; and they were aesthetic traditionalists." But even more important, the two friends were intelligent, sensitive, and driven men who shared an occasional sense of impatience with a South that did not always live up to their highest hopes and fondest dreams. Indeed, one could argue that Cooke and Pratt had their own "sacred circle" of sorts, not altogether unlike that of William Gilmore Simms, James Henry Hammond, Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, Edmund Ruffin, and George Holmes.²⁸

Soon after meeting Cooke in 1844, Pratt agreed to rent him for use as an art gallery the top two floors of his four-story warehouse on St. Charles Street in New Orleans. In December 1844, Cooke opened his National Gallery of Paintings, which became "a fixture in the cultural life of New Orleans." Upon the National Gallery's opening, one New Orleans paper declared its "admiration and surprise that so large a number of most excellent paintings should be now in existence among us." In addition to his own work, Cooke displayed paintings by such prominent artists as Thomas

²⁸Ibid., 41-42; Drew Gilpin Faust, A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860 (Baltimore, 1977).

Cole, Thomas Doughty, John Gadsby Chapman, and Thomas Sully. Sully's copy of Gilbert Stuart's famous full-length portrait of Washington sold for \$600.²⁹

For the next four years, Cooke would open the gallery every winter, leaving New Orleans in the summer, but his bold project did not live up to its early promise, despite the favorable attention it had won in the press. In 1846, Cooke bemoaned: "There is no prospect of selling paintings here. . . . I despair of success with my Gallery. This winter it has only averaged 60 \$ per week, just covering expenses." Although wealthy New Orleans financier James Robb attempted to bolster the tottering art gallery, Cooke's most steadfast supporter proved to be Daniel Pratt. In November 1845, Pratt gave Cooke a challenging commission to make an enlargement of his painting "Interior of St. Peter's, Rome" for an art gallery Pratt had decided to build on the grounds of his Prattville estate. Pratt intended that Cooke's huge painting would serve as the centerpiece of the gallery, Cooke explained:

Mr. Pratt is building a gallery adjoining his house in Alabama to be lighted from above and I am to paint St. Peter's Church to fill one end of it, fifteen by twenty-three feet, so that when you enter the door the whole church with its arches and colonnades in perspective will appear as in nature.

Cooke and his wife spent two summers at Pratt's home, completing his masterwork in 1847. The same year, he also

²⁹Keyes, George Cooke, 18-19, 42.

painted a group portrait of Esther Pratt, little Ellen, and her mulatto nursemaid. Cooke and his wife spent some of early 1848 in Prattville as well, during which time Cooke traveled to Selma and executed a painting of John Lapsley, the prominent Selma businessman and a soon-to-be shareholder in Prattville Manufacturing Company, as well as a posthumous one of Lapsley's deceased son.³⁰

Although in the summer of 1848 the ailing Cooke traveled north to take water cures, he carried with him another Pratt commission, to paint full-length portraits of John C. Calhoun and Daniel Webster. Pratt already owned a copy of Cooke's full-length portrait of Henry Clay, and he hoped to have the complete "great triumvirate" for his gallery. In the end, Cooke only managed to execute the Calhoun portrait. Cooke reported that Calhoun, though preoccupied by political issues, "appeared much flattered by the invitation to sit for his portrait," but that Webster, pleading fatigue, repeatedly prevaricated. Sympathetically noting the recent deaths of two of Webster's children, Cooke wrote that the statesman "appeared very depressed and somewhat worn with care. Yet his fine black eye has not lost its lustre."³¹

³⁰Ibid., 19-20, 42-43, 76-79.

³¹Ibid., 20, 43; George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 9 June 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

In July, Cooke reported to Pratt that he had "had only three sittings from Mr. Calhoun," as the statesman "had been unusually occupied with questions of great interest to the South." Cooke compared Calhoun to "the fabled 'Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders'," for he sustained "the whole weight of the South on the slavery question in the acquired territories." Cooke complained that Calhoun illustrated "a certain character in the Bible, who when told to do something, said "Sir, I go—but went not," but he hoped that Webster would "be like the other who refused, but afterward went and did it." In August, having finished the head of Calhoun and sketched his figure, he and Maria went to take the waters at Saratoga and Sharon Springs. From there he wrote Webster, offering to paint him in Boston, but Webster wrote him back refusing, again pleading ill health.³²

The Cookes returned to New Orleans in the fall, determined to close his failing National Gallery and move to Athens, Georgia, where they had lived previously and preferred both the climate and the people. In the spring, Cooke had tried renting the gallery out as a lecture hall. One "Dr. Colton" had drawn crowds of 150 to 200 persons nightly to his lectures, but, Cooke complained, "in this warm weather, there is not sufficient ventilation, nor is

³²George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 21 July, 6 September, 19 October 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

the room large enough." In March 1849, however, before the couple could complete the move, Cooke contracted Asiatic cholera and died. Daniel Pratt (along with James Robb) served as one of Cooke's executors. Also indicative of the trust Cooke placed in Pratt is the fourth item of his will: "Any amount due me by Daniel Pratt, Esq., after deducting the rent for rooms in his building, and also for any other painting he may wish to purchase, may remain in the hands of said Pratt at legal interest until he may prefer paying it over to my wife."³³

Pratt purchased over a dozen Cooke paintings, transferring them to his Prattville gallery. His collection included, in addition to the Clay and Calhoun portraits, Cooke's copy of Sully's portrait of George Washington, his portrait of his wife, his own self-portrait, and an 1847 portrait of Bishop Joshua Soule of the Methodist Church. In addition, Pratt also bought for his collection American and European landscapes (such as Natural Bridge, Virginia, Niagara Falls, Rome, and Naples) and Cooke's copies of works by European masters, including Baroccio's "Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene in the Garden," Lanterwoort's "Christ Known by the Breaking of Bread at Emmaus," and, the most famous of all, Leonardo Da Vinci's "The Last Supper."

³³George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 14 February 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH; Marilou A. Rudolph, "George Cooke and His Paintings," Georgia Historical Quarterly 44 (June 1960): 148-49.

Art historian Jessie Poesch ranks Pratt's art collection as among the finest "private collections to be in the South" in the antebellum period.³⁴

A dramatic setting lent impressiveness to Pratt's art collection. Susan Tarrant gives the fullest description of the building housing Cooke's paintings:

The picture gallery had two entrances, one from the flower yard, with its beautiful hedges of cape jessamine, in the centre of which played a fountain. The other entrance was from the large back piazza of the residence, shaded by the beautiful live oak trees. Skylights were so arranged that the paintings could be seen to best advantage. One end of the gallery was entirely covered with a canvas on which was represented the interior of St. Peter's Church, the procession of priests and cardinals appearing life-size when viewed from a distance. Just above the door of the entrance (occupying the entire width of the room) was the painting of "The Last Supper," Christ and twelve apostles represented life size.³⁵

Visitors to Prattville came away very impressed with the gallery. One guest of Pratt was particularly enraptured by "Interior of St. Peter's, Rome," calling it "the finest painting in Alabama." The painting, he wrote, had "received the highest commendations" from professional artists. He added:

The coloring is exceedingly fine and the perspective is most admirable. Every object appears to stand in

³⁴Rudolph, "George Cooke," 149; Descriptive Catalogue of Paintings in the Gallery of Daniel Pratt, Together with a Memoir of George Cooke, Artist (Prattville, 1853); Jessie Poesch, The Art of the Old South: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and the Products of Craftsmen, 1560-1860 (New York, 1983), 301.

³⁵Tarrant, Daniel Pratt, 84-85.

bold relief from the canvass, and as you look upon it you can easily imagine yourself standing in the entrance of the grand old cathedral, gazing upon the beauties of the magnificent altar.³⁶

Cooke's widow, Maria, decided that his body should lie in the town where his work was really honored, so she had it moved from St. Louis Cemetery in New Orleans to Pratt's private cemetery in Prattville, where an impressive obelisk was erected over his grave. Pratt's reverent treatment of Cooke after his death indicates the closeness of his relationship with the Cookes, as does his and Esther's naming of one of their daughters after Maria Cooke.³⁷ Cooke's seven surviving letters to Pratt, dating from February to October 1848, are further compelling evidence of this closeness.

In his letters to Pratt, Cooke does not treat him as a provincial intellectual inferior he must humor, but as an equal in all ways. Cooke clearly felt on very familiar terms with Pratt and his family:

Mrs. Cooke and myself were very much gratified to hear of your pleasant trip on your name-sake [the Alabama River steamboat "Daniel Pratt"], and of the good health of your little family—in whom we take an increasing interest as the dear children grow up to remember and love, and however flattered by the name of your little Maria, I think it will be difficult for her to rival Ellen in our affections.³⁸

³⁶Montgomery Daily Mail, 8 September 1855.

³⁷Keyes, George Cooke, 42, 44.

³⁸George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 14 February 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

Cooke greatly looked forward to visiting Prattville in the fall. He wanted to see all of Pratt's "improvements" in the town, as well as "make a group [portrait] of little Ellen and Maria and once again enjoy the hospitality of yourself and family." He also expressed his wish to "once more 'sit together in heavenly places'" with Pratt, Jesse Perham, and Shadrack Mims.³⁹

In addition to discussing at length with Pratt matters of national politics ("With you I am utterly disgusted with [the] Democracy and fear we shall have to endure its abuses to the last."), world affairs ("All that I predicted of the French is coming to pass, and the worst is yet to come."), and religion ("I can but think there is more real religion at the South than at the North. I would not do these people an injustice, but I fear there is more formality than spiritual worship, and hence every kind of -ism prevails from Universalism to Millerism."), Cooke, the former merchant, discoursed on financial issues and the intricacies of Pratt's newly launched business:

I am greatly gratified at the success of your enterprise and hope the stockholders will be able to pay up the amount due, but have fears under the existing pressure of money matters they cannot. . . . I do not pretend to have your foresight in business, but I certainly did foresee the scarcity of money and reduced price of cotton when I advised you not to lay in your stock of cotton at the prices then given and although the prospect of peace [in Europe] and advanced state of

³⁹George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 21 July 1848, Folder 48, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

the season may relieve the money market a little, you may rely upon money will be scarce for a long time whether Cass or Taylor be the next president.

Cooke also gave Pratt the benefit of his discussions with John Lapsley, who had sat for a portrait within the last few weeks and whom Pratt hoped would, along with his friends, buy stock in Prattville Manufacturing Company. "I have not heard from Mr. Lapsley since we left Selma," Cooke confided, "but I have no doubt of his intention to engage his friends in the manufacturing interest. It requires, however, time and opportunity for them to make up their minds."⁴⁰

Writing from Sharon Springs, located in the hills bordering the Mohawk Valley, Cooke even felt free to question free labor's superiority to slave labor:

From my window I can count 20 farm houses, all painted red, and their fields looking like garden squares. I am satisfied, however, that the appearance of the country is attributable to the climate and soil, more than to free labor. They are not subject to a parching sun and drought as we are in the South, and they actually live on less than our Negroes, yet they do accomplish a great deal with little means.⁴¹

Cooke's treatment of Pratt as a full intellectual equal is especially striking in light of his strong declaration to his brother that he could not be true friends

⁴⁰George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 14 February, 15 May, 9 June, 21 July, 6 September 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

⁴¹George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 6 September 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

with a mental inferior, no matter how much he might respect him. "I am not an aristocrat," he insisted, "and think myself no better than the man who knows how to plough and live virtuously; but my mind would never be elevated by such associations." He concluded: "I should not seek such [a man] for a bosom friend."⁴²

With the death of Cooke, Pratt lost a true "bosom friend," one of the few he appears ever to have had. Even Pratt's great admirer Shadrack Mims wrote regretfully of his own "misfortune of having known so little of [Pratt] personally."⁴³ Indeed, the only other person who can with certainty be viewed as a bosom friend of Pratt is Esther Pratt, his wife of nearly forty-six years. Although, sadly, no letters between the two survive, it is discernible from the available evidence that the couple had an uncommonly strong marriage.

All descriptions of Esther Pratt by her contemporaries portray her as Daniel Pratt's virtuous helpmate through all his ups and downs. According to Mims, Pratt placed great faith in the judgment of Esther, "her husband's equal." The pair "were happily made one" and "never pulled at different ends of the rope." In 1833, Pratt actually offered to "return North and settle . . . among

⁴²Rudolph, "George Cooke," 117.

⁴³Mims, "History of Prattville," 32.

their relations if she desired." Fortunately for Prattville, Esther "very wisely decided to remain in the South." Mims found an important moral about the Pratts' marriage in this anecdote, declaring: "Some men are so mannish that they will think it a weak point to consult their wives, when perhaps their greatest weakness lies in their not consulting them." Noah Cloud would have concurred with Mims that Esther's opinions were worthy of attention, for he found her "a lady of unusual intelligence and social vivacity" who discoursed interestingly on the Pratt estate's "tastefully arranged shrubery, fine fruit and vegetable gardens, and terraced vineyards."⁴⁴

Esther Pratt, originally a Presbyterian, converted to Methodism along with her husband in 1831. Like Daniel, Esther became involved in Prattville benevolence projects. Her particular area of involvement was evidently sewing for the needy. Throughout the antebellum period, Esther provided Sunday School clothing for Pratt's factory operatives; and during the Civil War, she served as president of the Prattville Ladies Aid Society. The Society, which made clothing for Alabama soldiers, was, according to historian

⁴⁴Mims, "History of Prattville," 24; Shadrack Mims, "History of the M. E. Church in Prattville," Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South I (May 1857): 156.

Malcolm McMillan, one of "the more active of the small town societies" in Alabama.⁴⁵

A portrait of Esther by George Cooke (likely dating from 1847) depicts her as a beaming, round-cheeked matron holding her young child Ellen on her lap while Ellen's mulatto nursemaid stands by in the background.⁴⁶ Esther was likely pregnant with Maria at the time of the sitting. Judging from this blissfully domestic portrait, it appears that Esther had a cheerful, serene nature that no doubt helped clear Pratt's more tempestuous moods.

Both Daniel and Esther Pratt doted on Ellen, their only child to survive infancy. Of Ellen, Pratt wrote his relatives in 1847 that "she grows fast is a sweet little girl. We think a good deal of her but not enough to spoil her." Pratt's judgment that he and Esther did not spoil Ellen may have been in error, however. In February 1863, the eighteen-year-old Ellen eloped with Henry DeBardleben, another of Pratt's wards, provoking a major scandal in the town. Receiving news of the event from his wife at Port Hudson, Louisiana, Merrill Pratt reacted angrily, branding Ellen a willful young girl who had "had her own way too long." Merrill had worried in Prattville that Henry and

⁴⁵Mims, "History of Prattville," 58; Mims, "History of the M. E. Church"; Malcolm McMillan, Alabama Confederate Reader (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1962), 350.

⁴⁶Keyes, George Cooke, 42, 43.

Ellen might be up to something, and he had "talked with Aunt Esther about it, but she had so much confidence in Ellen that she did not think she would marry" without her parents' consent. Merrill feared the scandal would "ruin" his uncle, who was "getting old and feeble." He suspected that Henry DeBardleben, who was "not calculated for any good girl," had actually "seduced" Ellen prior to the elopement.⁴⁷

According to Merrill, some of the blame rested with one Eliza, who was clearly black and in fact may have been the mulatto nursemaid in Cooke's portrait. In Merrill's view, Eliza was a "bad woman" who exercised a negative influence on Ellen. He had told his uncle and aunt of his worries, even going "so far as to tell Aunt to keep Ellen away from her," but to no avail.⁴⁸

Daniel Pratt's relatives in Prattville fully shared Merrill's outrage over the behavior of Ellen and Henry. Indeed, many of them refused even to speak to the couple when they returned to Prattville in March. The reaction to the affair by Merrill and the rest of Ellen's kin would appear to stand in marked contrast to that of Ellen's parents, who seem to have been extremely forgiving of their

⁴⁷Daniel Pratt to Daniel and Eliza Holt, 1 June 1847, Folder 44, Pratt Collection; Merrill Pratt to Julia Pratt, 18 February 1863, Box 34, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

⁴⁸Merrill Pratt to Julia Pratt, 18 February 1863, Box 34, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

daughter's rash action, given the remarkable discipline and self-control they had exercised in their own lives. Certainly, Pratt's treatment of Ellen in this instance was not that of a stern, cold man.⁴⁹

Pratt's life, in fact, is characterized in part by charitable acts, not just toward family, but to friends and even strangers. As early as 1820, the young Daniel Pratt used the money he had earned in Savannah to redeem the mortgage on Aaron Kimball Putnam's home. As late as 1863, Pratt wrote a \$1,000 check to Shadrack Mims, who suffered from poor health and financial troubles. "As you have four sons in the army and as I have not the pleasure to have any I think it nothing but right for me to contribute this much towards their expenses," he wrote in the accompanying letter. Mindful of Mims's feelings, he added: "I do not contribute this because I think you are not able and willing to do all that is necessary for your sons, but because I think you deserve it and that it is a pleasure to me to do so."⁵⁰

Shadrack Mims records several instances of Pratt's benevolence to down-at-their-heels strangers. Pratt's charity, wrote Mims, was not "spasmodic"; rather, a

⁴⁹Merrill Pratt to Julia Pratt, 30 March 1863, Box 34, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

⁵⁰Mims, "History of Prattville," 42-43; Daniel Pratt to Shadrack Mims, 5 September 1863, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

"constant stream" ran "from his heart and purse." To a Prattville man whose home had burned, Pratt gave five hundred dollars to assist him in rebuilding. In Hot Springs, Arkansas, Pratt gave fifty dollars to a "poor, afflicted and penniless" man who "was being improved by the water but had no means either to stay or get away." Years later, upon meeting a Prattvillian traveling in Arkansas, the man informed him of Pratt's kind act, declaring that "Mr. Pratt is one of the best men I ever met."⁵¹

Sometimes, strangers had to content themselves with advice, which Pratt, a successful, self-made man, never hesitated to dispense to others. A young widow wrote Pratt asking if she could procure jobs for her children in Pratt's cotton factory. Discovering from her letter that the woman "was an educated lady," Pratt wrote her back "advising her and encouraging her to take a school." Several years later, Pratt "received a letter from this lady thanking him for his advice" and informing him "that she had succeeded so well in her calling as [a] teacher" that she had been able to purchase a home that served as "a

⁵¹Shadrack Mims, Untitled Manuscript (1873), Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University. According to Mims, Daniel Pratt's bookkeeper once remarked to him "that he could not keep up with Mr. Pratt's expenditures" on charity.

fine building for an academy" and to save "a surplus of money besides."⁵²

Pratt penned some heartfelt "good advice" to an old friend he had not seen in years, Elijah Chandler, the New Hampshire carpenter who had lent him much of the money he had used to purchase May's mill in the 1830s. By 1854, Chandler, now in his sixties, had migrated to Pope County, Arkansas in search of new economic opportunities. Noting Chandler's "feeble" health and likely recalling his own hard struggle in frontier Alabama, Pratt intimated that Chandler's move perhaps had been imprudent. Asserting that Chandler had "enough of this world's goods to permit all the comforts of this life," Pratt urged him: "Live the balance of your days on what you have labored hard for." Pratt declared that "there are none of us that can be perfectly happy in this life, [so] let us make ourselves as happy as circumstances will admit and live in a constant preparation for perfect happiness hereafter." Pratt suggested to his friend that when he tired of living alone, he should move to Prattville, where Pratt and his wife would do "the best we can to make you comfortable." Despite his advice, however, Pratt wrote that he was eager to read "a history of that far-off country [and] a description of your place and improvements." Should he pass through Arkansas

⁵²Ibid.

himself, Pratt added, he would "stop and spend a night" at Chandler's abode.⁵³

Pratt expended exceedingly large sums of money on Prattville churches and schools, which he expected to benefit the townspeople. According to an R. G. Dun and Company agent, Pratt had, by 1853, already given "away to charity purposes as much as \$100,000." In probably his most expensive projects, he spent \$20,000 on the Prattville Methodist Church Building (completed in 1853) and nearly \$9,500 on the Prattville Male and Female Academy (completed in 1861). In addition to the church, the Methodist Church building housed the town's interdenominational Sunday School room and library. The academy served for years as Autauga County's finest school. Pratt also "contributed largely" to the building of the Autauga County Courthouse (completed in 1870). When he did not give money, he often gave land, providing lots for Prattville's Baptist and Presbyterian churches and the town cemetery.⁵⁴

Pratt even conceived of his art gallery as a public benefit, for he opened the building to visitors. Middle class citizens of Prattville, at least, fondly remembered their visits there. Susan Tarrant recalled spending hours

⁵³Daniel Pratt to Elijah Chandler, 19 July 1854, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

⁵⁴Alabama Vol. 2, p. 12, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; Mims, Untitled Manuscript; Prattville Academy Expenses, Folder 54, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

in the gallery, "inspired by the revelations on canvas and always grateful that there was one man—I've never seen his like—who was willing to spend money for the fine arts, and make the same accessible to those who otherwise had no opportunity to gratify their love for the beautiful." When, after the Civil War, the art gallery building became infected with dry rot and had to be torn down, Pratt donated the two largest paintings, "Interior, St. Peter's" and "The Last Supper," to the University of Georgia, whose president, Andrew Adgate Lipscomb, had been a friend of Pratt's since his days in the 1850s as president of Tuskegee Female College, a Methodist school that Ellen Pratt possibly attended. "Interior, St. Peter's" was placed at one end of the Greek Revival University Chapel, where it still stands. An Athens newspaper contrasted "the taste and liberality of the generous donor" with the "niggardliness" of the state legislature. Pratt, it noted, had endowed the university "with a magnificent work of art" worth some fifteen to eighteen thousand dollars, while the "solons" in the legislature had provided the university with an annual stipend of only eight thousand dollars.⁵⁵

⁵⁵Tarrant, Daniel Pratt, 85; Andrew Adgate Lipscomb to Daniel Pratt, 17 August, 1 September 1868, Folder 46, Pratt Collection, ADAH. Lipscomb enclosed the newspaper article from which I quote in one of his letters. Pratt donated the Washington and Clay portraits to the University of Alabama. Keyes, George Cooke, 36. One one occasion, the art gallery served as the location of a triple wedding. Thomas Ormsby married Gardner Hale's daughter Hannah, George Smith

Pratt did not confine his benevolence to Prattville's white population, for he extended aid to blacks before and after the Civil War. Shadrack Mims declared that Pratt as a master "was free and generous" with his slaves, "providing fully for all their physical wants and comforts." Pratt, Mims insisted, bought "the best quality food and clothing" for his bondsmen and built them "comfortable and commodious houses." After the Civil War, Pratt donated a two-story building and lot worth \$1,500 to the freedmen to serve as a church and day school. In his 1873 eulogy to Pratt, Charles Doster, a white Prattville Republican, declared that the town's black inhabitants "should honor and revere his memory, because he was their friend, and did for them many acts of charity." Mims fully concurred, asserting that Pratt "never failed to assist [his former slaves] to the last when called on" for help.⁵⁶ Testimonials of whites notwithstanding, however, Pratt became a loyal Democrat after the war and staunchly opposed black social equality.

married Mary Ormsby, and Ferdinand Smith wed Martha Riggs. After the weddings, Pratt served the party "a most sumptuous dinner." Ferdinand Smith wrote appreciatively that Pratt's "kind proposal indicated his true feelings towards the young men of Prattville." Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 170, 175.

⁵⁶Mims, Untitled Manuscript; Charles Doster, "Eulogy," in Tarrant, ed., Daniel Pratt, 138.

One intriguing instance of Pratt's generosity to a slave can be gleaned from his surviving business records. According to his bookkeeper, Pratt lent the sum of \$700 (payable "1 day") to one Eliza on October 26, 1861. Eliza, whom the bookkeeper listed as a servant, is likely the "bad woman" Merrill Pratt referred to in his letter concerning Ellen Pratt's elopement. Furthermore, it seems quite possible that Eliza was the mulatto nursemaid of Ellen in George Cooke's 1847 painting. What became of Eliza after the war, however, is not known.⁵⁷

In addition to performing benevolent acts in Prattville, Pratt became involved in statewide projects of the Methodist Church. Passionately devoted to the cause of education, he served as a trustee for two important Methodist schools in south Alabama, Centenary Institute in Dallas County and East Alabama Male College in Auburn. Nor did Pratt's service end here. Not surprisingly, given his business success, the Methodist Alabama Conference included him among the nine lay members it appointed in 1850 to its newly created Joint Board of Finance.⁵⁸

Pratt extended a philanthropic hand to other institutions besides those of the Methodist Church. The University of Alabama, the East Alabama Masonic Institute of Oak

⁵⁷Daniel Pratt's Bills Payable, 1 March 1863; Daniel Pratt's Bills Payable, 1 January 1864, CECP.

⁵⁸West, Methodism, 611, 681, 736.

Bowery, and Howard College of Marion all received donations from Pratt, who soon found himself an honorary member of such scholastic clubs as the University of Alabama's Philomathic Society, Howard's Adelpthic Society, and the East Alabama Masonic Institute's Irving Literary Society. To the unlettered Pratt, it is clear that these honorary memberships held great significance. Each institution received an appreciative, humble letter of acceptance from him. To the corresponding secretary of the Philomathic Society Pratt wrote movingly of his belief in education:

Although I have never received the benefit of an Education no man holds it in a higher estimation than myself. Probaly the want of an Education causes me to appreciate [Pratt corrected the spelling of this word] it quite as highly as the possession of it would do. I presume most young persons do not fully consider the importance of a good Education and a mind well stored with usfull knowledge. It will be a great source of hapiness to look back on a life spent in improoving and benefiting Society. . . . I consider my self highly honored by being a member of your Society and will with much pleasure axcept the same.

Pratt echoed these sentiments in his acceptance letter to the secretary of the Adelpthic Society:

Unfortunatly I never had the advantage of an Education. I am probaly more thouraly convinced of its importance than I should have ben had I received it as every days experiance shows me the necessity of it. I am a friend to all literary and moral insitutions or societies. . . . It must certainly be very great consolation to a man in his old age to look back and see that his life has ben spent in binefiting the condition of others and the

improvement of Society. It we can do this we shall feel that we have not lived in vane.⁵⁹

Pratt's greatest honor probably occurred in 1846, when the trustees of the University of Alabama conferred upon him "the honorary degree of master in the mechanic and useful arts." The highly complimentary letter written by his admirer Basil Manly, president of the University, informing Pratt of the degree bestowed on him, gives an idea of the esteem in which Pratt was held in Alabama as early as 1847:

Without having devoted your life to literary pursuits, you have attained, in an eminent degree, that which is the end of all letters and all study, the art of making men, around you, wiser, better, and happier. You have shown, in a substantial manner, that you value, and know how to promote, the industrial and economic virtues among men, rendering your own intelligence and honestly acquired wealth a blessing to all that come within the sphere of your influence: You have shown yourself the friend & supporter of schools for the son of the laboring man, as well as of the rich; that all the rising generation may be fitted to that ambition of republican freedom which it is the peculiar privilege of American citizens to enjoy: above all, you have shown that you discern what is the great source of all virtue and happiness, of all knowledge and success, by your efficient maintenance of the Institutions of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, among your people.⁶⁰

Shadrack Mims, who entered Pratt's office shortly after Pratt received Manly's missive, attested to the deep effect it had on Pratt. "As he handed me the letter,"

⁵⁹Daniel Pratt to Thomas Bugbee, 19 December 1848 and Daniel Pratt to W. D. Lee, 21 December 1850, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

⁶⁰Basil Manly to Daniel Pratt, 4 January 1847, Folder 46, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

recalled Mims, "the tear-drop stood in his eye." Pratt quickly penned Manly a heartfelt response, in which he confessed himself "at a loss to know how to answer" Manly's letter, for it had filled him with "supprise and astonishment." Pratt insisted that he felt "unworthy of the honour and unworthy to receive such a letter as you was pleased to address to me." If he had "done anything to benefit others, or to benefit society," Pratt humbly added, credit lay with God: "Had not the means and disposition ben derived from a purer source than poor, erring, and degenerate man, I should never have deserved any applause for any good deed." Pratt hoped that the honor bestowed upon him by the University would "be the means of awakening me to a higher sense of duty, that I may be more 'diligent in business, fervant in spirit, serving the Lord.'"⁶¹

As Pratt's letter to Basil Manly indicates, his philanthropy stemmed from his deeply held religious convictions, not some cynical, calculating effort to exert social control over a potentially restive work force. I have already discussed Pratt's strong religious upbringing in New Hampshire, as described in a memoir by his sister Eliza. Other records confirm that religion permeated the Pratt household. Both Pratt's brother Edward and his sister Dorcas had a very powerful faith. Dorcas Chandler,

⁶¹Mims, "History of Prattville," 30; Daniel Pratt to Basil Manly, 21 January 1847, Folder 46, Pratt Collection.

though a Congregationalist, joined the Methodist Church when she moved to Prattville. According to Mims, she possessed a "marked Christian character." Indeed, Mims doubted whether he had "ever met anyone more completely representing all the Christian virtues than Mrs. Chandler."⁶²

Firsthand evidence of Edward's strong religious convictions are found in the letters he exchanged with his wife, also named Dorcas. In their letters, husband and wife devoted much space to discussing religious revivals in the towns of Greenfield and Wilton. In Greenfield, Dorcas reported, "there was about 50 inquirers," including her "aged father," Peter Pevey. Edward wrote that Dorcas's revelation about Peter Pevey "was very pleasing news to me and I think it must be much more so to your aged mother. I think she must feel to rejoice that her husband is fetched in even at the eleventh hour." Edward prayed "that the Lord will pour out his Spirit and that you will have a revival of religion in Temple." Edward, whose health had been failing, also found consolation in his faith. "I hope if we are not permitted to meet again in this world," he told his wife, "we shall be so happy as to meet in heaven where we shall never more be parted." Dorcas responded in kind to Edward's sentiment, writing of her hope that she

⁶²Mims, "History of the M. E. Church."

and Edward "may be permitted to meet again and once more enjoy each others society here in this world," but adding that "if God in his wise providence has ordered otherwise may we be submissive to his will and be so happy as to meet in heaven where separations are no more."⁶³

Religious feeling also infuses Daniel Pratt's letters. In addition, Pratt showed his faith not just through words and charitable donations, but through day-to-day actions as well. He, along with Shadrack Mims, served as a class leader in the Methodist Church. In addition, according to Mims, Pratt, as long as he was physically capable of doing so, "superintended the duties of sexton, doing much of it with his own hands." Moreover, when church attendance flagged, Pratt "would go round the village visiting families and urging the necessity and importance of punctual attendance on Sunday-school and church."⁶⁴ Having Pratt on the doorstep must have been inducement indeed for a mill family depending on him for a livelihood.

Daniel Pratt clearly felt obligated by his religious faith to do more than simply pile up money. To that end he used his wealth to improve, as he saw it, the lives of his

⁶³Dorcas Pratt to Edward Pratt, 16 August 1835, Edward Pratt to Dorcas Pratt, 28 September 1835, Dorcas Pratt to Edward Pratt, 28 October 1835, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

⁶⁴Samuel Parrish Smith, Church Register, First Methodist Church of Prattville, Alabama, 1849-1866, ACHC.

family, friends, and fellow men and women. In particular, Pratt hoped to make Prattville a model town—a "shining city" on the bank of Autauga Creek—that incorporated the virtues he held dear. In this endeavor, he once again enjoyed great success.

CHAPTER 6

BUILDING A TOWN: PRATTVILLE, 1846 TO 1861

In accordance with Daniel Pratt's wishes, Prattville blossomed in the fifteen years before the Civil War from a company town into a diversified marketing and manufacturing center. Like the citizens of other towns across the United States, Prattvillians in the 1850s enthusiastically adopted the booster ethic, trumpeting the economic and social advances that their town had made during the decade and urging the necessity of doing even more. Toward the end of improving their town economically, the people of Prattville launched vigorous campaigns to capture the county courthouse and to get railroads routed their way. At the same time Prattvillians pursued economic advancement, they also sought social improvement through the establishment of churches, schools, lyceums, and voluntary associations promoting in Prattville's populace such virtues as temperance and reading. Despite their efforts, however, Prattville did suffer lapses from virtue—drinking and brawling, for example, occasionally broke out in the town's normally quiet streets. Moreover, the desired courthouse and railroads did not materialize until after the Civil War, in

part because of political squabbles that broke out between Pratt and his supporters on the one side and Autauga's Democrats on the other. Nevertheless, Daniel Pratt and the People of Prattville by 1860 had largely succeeded in making, as Pratt put it, a town of "good morals and good society." Indeed, in the adherence of its citizens to a Victorian middle-class value system, Prattville is not readily distinguishable from northern towns of the same period. Antebellum Prattville stands as a corrective to those historians who argue that a hegemonic premodern-pre-bourgeoisie planter class stunted the economic and cultural vitality of the southern town. Much of what was supposedly new about the "New South" of the postbellum years already existed in Prattville in the 1850s.¹

¹The acceptance by most historians that the market revolution of the Jacksonian period largely bypassed the antebellum South, historian Darrett Rutman has noted, has "truncated the social history of the antebellum nation." He explains:

For the North we have countless studies of the great transition, of the onset of manufacturing and the development of the marketplace, of revolutions in transportation and finance and law, of mill towns and the appearance of urban conglomerations, of the coming of class and the appurtenances of class as new determinants of social relations. For the South we have a steady stream of studies informing us of slaves and planters and yeomen and the unique world they made for themselves. But the two literatures never mingle.

Darrett B. Rutman, "Myths, Moralities, and Megathemes: The Case of the Antebellum American South," in Darrett B. Rutman, with Anita K. Rutman, Small Worlds, Large Questions: Explorations in Early American Social History, 1600-1850 (Charlottesville, Va. and London, 1994), 278. Historians

Prattville grew markedly in the fifteen years before the Civil War. Using the census, I have concluded that the town had a free population of 448 in 1850. By the end of the decade, Prattville's population had more than doubled,

who do take notice of antebellum southern towns tend to be dismissive. David Goldfield, for example, grants that there "were, of course, towns and cities in the Old South," but he then proceeds to describe them in terms that would have appalled the bustling people of Prattville:

"Mere trading posts," W. J. Cash called the best of them, and that is precisely and only what they were. . . . White-painted towns dozing in the summer sun, strewn about with hogs, dogs, and a few people; a languid populace briefly awakening with the arrival of a steamboat—that smoking, belching monster that likely provided the only excitement for a day or a week, unless a revival was in town—and then quickly resuming its "at ease" posture waiting for nothing more than supper.

David R. Goldfield, Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607-1980 (Baton Rouge and London, 1982), 32. Goldfield's statement, while extreme, is, unfortunately, representative. There are exceptions to this general view, however, including (surprisingly, given his complete about-face) the earlier work of Goldfield. See, besides Rutman, Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield (eds.), The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South (Port Washington, N.Y. and London, 1977); David R. Goldfield, Urban Growth in an Age of Sectionalism: Virginia, 1847-1861 (Baton Rouge, and London, 1977); James Michael Russell, Atlanta, 1847-1890: City Building in the Old South and the New (Baton Rouge and London, 1988); Kenneth A. Wheeler, To Wear a City's Crown: The Beginnings of Urban Growth in Texas, 1836-1865 (Cambridge, Mass., 1968). Also important are political histories that stress the societal tensions allegedly provoked by the embrace of the market revolution by many southerners in the 1850s. See Lacy K. Ford, Jr., Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York, 1988); Marc W. Kruman, Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865 (Baton Rouge, and London, 1983); J. Mills Thornton, III, Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge, and London, 1978).

to 943. Moreover, some households, like those of William Beckwith, Ephraim Morgan, and the Allen brothers, William and Hassan, are listed in other precincts than Prattville, surely a mistake. If these households are included in Prattville's population count, the number of citizens would stand at about 1,000. Whatever the exact count, however, one thing is clear: Prattville experienced significant growth in the 1850s.²

Prattville's population expanded significantly in the 1850s, in large part because of Pratt's efforts to make his creation something more than a company town. First of all, in constructing, in 1851, his four-mile plank road from Prattville to Washington Landing on the Alabama River, Pratt had made Prattville Autauga County's main portal to the outside world. The only real competition that the Prattville/Washington Landing trade artery had come from that of the Autaugaville/Vernon Landing to the west, but, significantly, a plank road did not connect Autaugaville to Vernon Landing. Moreover, while no one upgraded Vernon Landing, Pratt had considerably improved the facilities of Washington Landing, and Vernon simply languished in the

²U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. It must be admitted as well that some of the planter households listed in Prattville, such as that of Martin Burt, stood on the outskirts of the town and should not really be considered part of Prattville proper at all. Even with this caveat, however, it is still extremely likely that Prattville's free population in 1860 stood at over 900.

1850s. In 1858, an R. G. Dun & Co. agent reported dispiritedly that Vernon had "but 2 business houses of any kind," neither one amounting to much.³

Prattville's increasing importance as Autauga's marketing center in the 1850s is made clear by comparing the number of merchants in the town in 1850 and in 1860. In 1850, Prattville had seven merchants: James Allen and his son William; George Coe; A. K. McWilliams and his partner, James M. Smith; and B. F. Miles and his brother Haywood. In addition to the merchants (who accounted together for four different firms), Prattville also had a hatter, Abraham Carnline, and a German tailor, F. R. Pennmeyer. Both these latter businesses were surely tiny concerns—Carnline even had two sons who appear to have worked as operatives in Pratt's mill.⁴

The difference between 1850 and 1860 is striking. In 1860, Prattville boasted fourteen merchants, twice the number it had ten years earlier. In addition to its general merchants, Prattville had two druggists, Joseph Hurd of New Jersey and William Spong of England. The latter affiliated with chemist William Root of Massachusetts in the firm of

³Alabama Vol.2, p. 22, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration.

⁴U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. The information in the next two paragraphs is drawn from these two census schedules as well.

Spong and Root. J. P. Cassady of England, formerly of Cassady and Oberling, made shoes and boots. A dentist, William Bush of Massachusetts, resided in Prattville as well.

Other professions also provided opportunities in Prattville. In 1860, the citizens of the town did not suffer from a shortage of men of medicine, for no less than six physicians (southerners all) practiced there: Charles Edwards, Isaac Vincent, Alexander McKeithan, Edward Doster, Samuel Parrish Smith, and J. B. Johnson. In addition, Prattville had two attorneys, William Northington and Charles Doster, as well as a law student, James Alexander, who was reading under his kinsman Doster. In 1850, Prattville had claimed two attorneys, but only three physicians.

Prattville possessed no hotel in 1850, but a year or two later, Tennessean William Morgan opened the Tennessee Hotel and Stables. Although the Tennessee Hotel no longer existed in 1860, Prattville did have two boarding houses, one run by a retired shop owner, Norfleet Ivy of Virginia, and the other by Caroline Franks of South Carolina, the widow of shop owner Western Franks. Besides boarding houses, Prattville also had an "oyster saloon" owned by merchants George Sears and Clinton Thompson. Quite a time evidently could be had at the oyster saloon, for Sears and Thompson also stocked cigars, tobacco, whiskey, brandy

cordials, ale, porter, champagne, cider, wines, bitters, and "Snuff of all kinds."⁵

Merchants, clerks, and bookkeepers composed another occupational group. Two of the bookkeepers, Thomas Avery of New Hampshire (who worked for Pratt) and Patrick Kennedy of Ireland, were older men, but the other two bookkeepers and the seven clerks were all young men in their twenties. With the exception of bookkeeper Jay DeWitt Wheat of New York, all were southerners.⁶

With the expansion that occurred in Prattville in the 1850s, it is not surprising that the population of the town included eight men engaged in the building trades: four housepainters, two brickmasons, and two plasterers. Both brickmason S. R. McCord, who had constructed Pratt's new cotton mill in 1859, and plasterer J. A. Reynolds were from New York, but the other men all came from the South.⁷

⁵Ibid.; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 February 1853, 15 December 1859.

⁶U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. Patrick Kennedy may have worked for Pratt as well. In 1854, along with many Pratt employees, he signed a petition of support for Pratt during Prattville's incorporation struggle. See below. Jay DeWitt Wheat for a time in the 1850s edited Prattville's Know-Nothing newspaper, the Southern Statesman. He married a daughter of Gardner Hale in 1859. See below.

⁷U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 15 October 1857.

In 1860, only 52 of Prattville's 173 households can be linked to Pratt's gin factory or to a shop, while 47 households can be linked with the mill. Thus, 74 of Prattville's households, or 43 percent, were headed by someone not employed in manufacturing. Of these nonmanufacturing households, 26 were headed by farmers and planters, but the remaining 48 were almost all headed by men employed in the various trades and professions described above. Clearly, this segment of Prattville's population, which did not depend directly on Pratt for livelihoods, had significance, for it accounted for slightly more than the number of operative households and slightly less than the number of mechanic households.

Another central reason behind the rise of merchants in Prattville in the 1850s is Pratt's refusal to start a company store, which could have crushed potential competitors by exercising a monopoly over his textile workers' business. Prattville's three most important mercantile firms in the 1850s were W. C. Allen & Co., McWilliams & Smith, and B. F. Miles & Co. The latter firm, it will be recalled, had its origin in 1843, when Pratt began renting store space to B. F. Miles and his brother Haywood. B. F. Miles left the firm in 1858, when he moved to Arkansas, but Haywood remained in the business, joined by another

brother, Freeman. In 1860, the two brothers had wealth valued at \$26,000.⁸

W. C. Allen & Co. and McWilliams & Smith, however, were the rising stars in antebellum Prattville's mercantile firmament. A native of South Carolina, McWilliams was worth \$67,000 in 1860; and his partner, James M. Smith, also of South Carolina, was worth \$25,600. The firm employed a brother of Smith as a clerk, as well as a bookkeeper from Georgia. Evaluating the firm in 1855, a Dun agent reported favorably: "a fine run of customers and does an excellent business." In 1860, he avowed that McWilliams & Smith did "as well . . . as any firm in the county."⁹

W. C. Allen entered the mercantile trade in the late 1840s with his father, James Allen, a New York native who had briefly superintended Pratt's cotton mill. James Allen soon moved back to New York, but his son remained in Prattville, running the firm W. C. Allen & Co. with Samuel Ticknor, Pratt's brother-in-law. Ticknor withdrew from the firm by 1853, and Allen's younger brother Hassan, formerly a clerk, took Ticknor's place as a partner. In 1860, W. C. Allen had wealth valued at \$55,000, while Hassan was

⁸Alabama Vol. 2, pp. 22, 109, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U. S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

⁹Alabama Vol. 2, p.5, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

worth \$9,200. The Dun agent dubbed W. C. Allen "the best merchant in the county."¹⁰

An 1856 Dun report indicated part of the reason for Allen's success when it noted that the Yankee merchant was "formerly a clerk for Daniel Pratt, who is assisting him when needed." Obviously, the backing of his wealthy friend helped Allen obtain northern credit, yet Pratt's support of Allen did not stifle competition in the town. In 1859, another important firm entered the fray, Livingston, Faber, and Kemp. Their "New York Store" carried a wide variety of dry goods, clothing, and shoes. Kemp withdrew from the firm in 1860, but Julius Livingston and Henry Faber remained. Faber, from Germany, and Livingston, from New York, together had wealth of only \$14,500 that year, but their firm was, according to a Dun agent, merely "a branch of an establishment in Montgomery." The two young men in charge did "well" and were "responsible." Henry Faber became an especially prominent figure after the Civil War. During Reconstruction, he would, with his brother Jacob and W. C. Allen, incorporate the Indian Hill Textile Factory near Prattville and become a Republican mayor of Montgomery.¹¹

¹⁰Alabama Vol. 2, p. 8, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

¹¹Alabama Vol. 2, pp. 8, 22, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule,

Druggist Joseph Hurd of New Jersey also made a name for himself in Prattville. In 1860, he was worth \$14,500. Judging by his newspaper advertising in the 1850s, Hurd carried an impressive range of products, including Eau Lustrale Hair Renovator ("a charming article for the Toilet . . . which . . . renders [hair] beautifully soft and glossy"), Lemon Rouge De Sorgho ("a permanent and beautiful carnation for the cheeks and lips"), Lorillard's Maccaboy Snuff, Cotton King Cigars, Moffat's Life Pills, and Phoenix Bitters. Not to be outdone, Hurd's competitor, Spong and Root, boasted of its supplies of Frangipanni ("an everlasting perfume for the handkerchief and sachets for the Ladies Wardrobe"), butter and soda crackers ("fresh from the bakery"), Valentines ("Cheap as Dirt"), and the "Cool Soda Water" from their "Soda Joint," which they "served up with the most delicious syrups."¹²

Clearly, an important reason these men flourished in Prattville was that they had access to the market offered by Pratt's operatives, though admittedly mill workers were not likely purchasers of Frangipanni or Lemon Rouge

Autauga County; S[usan] F[rances] H[ale] Tarrant, ed., Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond, Va., 1904), 18; Prattville Southern Statesman, 10 November 1859.

¹²U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Prattville Southern Statesman, 15 October 1857, 4 March, 8 April 1858, 10 February, 28 July, 10 November 1859, 29 March 1860.

De Sorgho. Only after Pratt's death did the Board of Managers of Prattville Manufacturing Company launch a company store in direct competition with Prattville merchants, a "departure," Shadrack Mims noted in an angry petition he drew up, which did "not reflect credit upon the illustrious founder of this place."¹³ Pratt had shielded the town's merchants from such competition as long as he lived.

Signifying Prattville's increasing importance was the newspaper, the Autauga Citizen, started by William Howell and T. S. Lockett (with financial assistance from Daniel Pratt) in the town in 1853. Not surprisingly, the Citizen became a platform for the views of Pratt and like-minded Prattvillians on the town's economic prospects. The editors themselves declared Prattville's present position rosy and its future quite bright. "As a place of business and

¹³Shadrack Mims, "Petition of Objections to Prattville Mfg. Board" [June 1873 ?], TMs, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University. This petition refers to the "undersigned merchants," but it is not clear whether it was so signed and actually presented. Also in Mims's papers is a plaintive, undated letter from Mims to Pratt's widow in which Mims expresses his conviction "that it was not right for the cotton factory to come in competition with the merchants." He complained: "As matters are now going [the mill store] is taking nearly all the cash trade—they take no risks, therefore can sell a little cheaper than the merchants." Mims concluded bitterly that Pratt's "immediate representatives [Henry DeBardleben, Merrill Pratt, and Samuel Parrish Smith] have thought best to pursue a different policy than the one he pursued, that of 'live and let live'." Despite his unhappiness, however, Mims absolved Esther of blame, as she no longer had control of the business. Shadrack Mims to Esther Pratt [June 1873 ?], Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

industry," they declared, Prattville was not surpassed "by any other county town of its size in the state." Indeed, they boasted, Prattville's "large and commodious" brick commercial structures presented "an appearance that would do credit to older and larger towns—even cities."¹⁴

In the view of the Citizen, Prattville served as an economic beacon for the rest of the South to follow. In "Southern Industry," Howell and Lockett editorialized that if the South, with all its advantages in natural resources, would only follow Prattville's example and turn its energies to "diversified pursuits," it would soon "occupy a position to be envied by the first nations of the earth, in point of commercial greatness." Without the South's abundant natural riches, the editors pointed out, both England and New England had become major industrial centers. In a frontal assault on the South's leisure ethic, the editors asserted that manufacturing would benefit the South socially as well as economically by giving employment to "thousands" of the region's young men, "who might otherwise drag out a miserable existence in idleness and profligacy." If only "the true sentiments" concerning "the respectability of labor" were instilled in the minds of these idle young men, they could be "profitably employed" as shop

¹⁴Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 February 1853.

mechanics and factory superintendants and overseers, just as in Prattville.¹⁵

Occasionally, a dissenting voice appeared in the pages of the Citizen. "A Friend of Agriculture" wrote Prattville's paper complaining of an article by one "Cid Hamet" in the nearby Autauga Mercury. "Cid Hamet," the writer noted, had evinced "a very commendable zeal for manufacturing in our State," but he had erred in asserting that "manufacturing is more profitable than planting." For the South to become a successful manufacturing region, noted the writer, it first needed two things, population and capital. In order to obtain greater population and capital, the South would have to embark on a more liberal policy towards railroads and banks. "Why talk about encouraging manufacturing when the few concerns now operating are thrown upon the mercy of brokers operating on Georgia and Carolina funds," he demanded. "It is perfectly preposterous to even dream of success under such disadvantages." It was idle for "Cid Hamet" to boast of the South's advantages over New England in water power and proximity to raw material when New England had much superior "monied facilities." While the writer was "no enemy to our State and her citizens encouraging the various branches of manufacturing," he insisted that ultimately, "the prosperity of any

¹⁵Ibid., 17 March 1853.

country depends mainly upon her farming and planting interest for stability."¹⁶ Clearly, "Cid Hamet" had nettled an Autauga planter by directly challenging the primacy of agriculture over industry, something Daniel Pratt and Prattville boosters scrupulously avoided.

Making "her" point more playfully than "a Friend of Agriculture," one "Dorothy Dump" wrote a letter to the Citizen in 1853 satirizing the newspaper's pretensions about Prattville and Autauga County:

Autauga certainly deserves one paper—for it is the next greatest place next to anywhere! No matter where that is. . . . Then there are the factories, foundries, etc. Bless me! . . . Show me another county in the State that has two such noble cotton mills!—pray, where do you find so much industry, enterprise, competition and excitement, as at Prattville and Autauga-ville?—so much hammering and building, sawing and grinding, driving and riding, walking and talking, flirting and trading, buying and selling, cheat—oh, I forgot—I didn't mean to say that! The railroad too! We must not forget to take a trip on that. . . . If I had been Albert Pickett, and author of the history of Alabama, I should have left De Soto and his army, to wander up and down the Mississippi and river beds as they liked and dedicated the volume to the history of Autauga.¹⁷

"Dorothy Dump" had a point in poking fun at Prattville's pretensions, for despite the exertions of the town's citizens in the 1850s, Prattville during this decade neither got its railroad nor did it become Autauga's political seat. With justification, "Dorothy Dump" called the

¹⁶Ibid., 17 November 1853.

¹⁷Ibid., 2 June 1853.

county courthouse, located at the interior village of Kingston, "that long coveted prize—that Eldorado of all you Prattvillians!" The Citizen clearly felt frustrated that Kingston had managed to hold on to this ornament, even though Prattville had far outstripped the piney woods village in population. Describing Kingston in the same 1853 article on Autauga County in which they had sung Prattville's praises, the editors of the paper could not refrain from contemptuous sarcasm:

Kingston, the county site, is situated in a healthy region, and would be a very pretty place, if there was not quite so much sand. But Kingston may yet start to grow—who knows? They have commenced the building of the new brick Jail, which, when finished, is bound to improve the place a little, or at least increase the population.¹⁸

Prattville succeeded in bringing the site of the county seat to a vote in 1852, but Kingston narrowly bested its larger rival. George Smith noted in his diary on August 2 that an election had been held that day "to decide the location of the Court House. The Prattville folks were very desirous to have it come [here] and voted accordingly." Ferdinand Smith recorded that of 234 votes cast in Prattville precinct, 233 went for Prattville. Unfortunately for the "Prattville folks," Kingston edged Prattville by 55 votes. "The people here feel somewhat depressed," noted Ferdinand as he reported the disappointing

¹⁸Ibid., 10 February 1853.

result in his diary.¹⁹ Prattville was not able to wrest the seat from Kingston until 1870.

Prattville's railroad campaign proved considerably more intricate than its courthouse fight, and, in the end, no more successful. The first big push began in April 1853, when Daniel Pratt published a two-part editorial in the Citizen, "Our Improvement and Prosperity as a Nation." From this editorial, it is clear that Pratt had become swept up in the Whig vision of progress. "This is an age of improvement," he ringingly declared:

There are no people on the face of the earth who possess the same spirit of enterprise as the citizens of the United States. . . . Should peace and prosperity be continued to us twenty-five years longer, we shall far outstrip every other nation.²⁰

Pratt insisted that the most important improvement for the country to make was to build more railroads: "That State which expects prosperity will assuredly be disappointed if it fails to connect different parts of its territory and the adjoining States by railroads." Alabama, of all the states, particularly stood to gain from railroads, according to Pratt, for he knew no other state with "natural advantages superior" to his adopted one. Myriad

¹⁹Larry W. Nobles, ed., "The Journals of George Littlefield Smith", (Prattville, 1991) 68; Larry W. Nobles, ed., "The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith", (Prattville, 1991), 131.

²⁰Prattville Autauga Citizen, 7 April 1853.

industries would prosper, benefitting, in turn, all Alabamians if the people only heeded Pratt's advice:

The manufacturing of iron can be made equally as profitable as in other States, when we have railroads to carry it to market. If we want fine marble houses, we can have them equal in quality, and build them as cheap as any other State. Our cities can be supplied with coal as cheap as any other State. Lumber of the best quality we have in abundance. Above our home wants we could supply Texas and also the northeastern States, for ship building. We now send to Maine and Philadelphia for thousands of casks of lime, which would be furnished on better terms at home.²¹

Pratt added that "the time is not far distant when we shall grow and manufacture our home supply of wool" and also that he still had hopes for the "cotton manufacturing business, although we have much to contend with." With railroads stimulating all these industries, Alabama would become "the most independent State in the union." Toward this end, Pratt urged "every citizen of our State, who can spare \$100, \$1,000, or \$10,000 to invest at once in railroad stock." Even if they did not for several years receive a dividend, "they would not be losers" since their real estate would appreciate. Besides, Pratt reminded his readers, "Alabamians ought to consider that it is our duty to pursue that course which will most benefit the rising generation."²²

²¹Ibid., 14 April 1853.

²²Ibid.

Prattvillians were interested in two proposed lines. The first would run from Montgomery to Selma through southern Autauga County, connecting Autauga's planters to major railroads in these two hubs. The second would run from Montgomery north through Autauga to some point on the Tennessee River, opening for exploitation the virtually untapped rich mineral belt of northern Alabama. In July 1853, Pratt traveled on the Selma and Tennessee Railroad from Selma to Montevallo, in Shelby County, where he discussed Autauga's project with local railroad boosters. He also corresponded with Montgomery's Charles Teed Pollard, Alabama's great railroad promoter. On August 13, Pratt brought together a large delegation of Alabama railroad supporters for a conference in Prattville in order to get his plans off the ground.²³

The delegation to Prattville's railroad conference included important figures from the Black Belt counties of Autauga, Montgomery, Dallas, Perry, Marengo, and Sumter, as well as the hill counties of Shelby and Jefferson. Having been elected its president, Pratt opened the conference with a short speech. The resolutions committee, on which Pratt sat, produced two resolutions: first, that a railroad running through Autauga from Montgomery to Selma and then on to Jackson, Mississippi would form "an indispensable

²³Ibid., 21 July, 18, 25 August 1853.

link in the chain of railroads, which are soon to connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans," and second, that a railroad line running from Montgomery through Autauga and Shelby to a point on the Tennessee River would be "of the utmost importance in affecting a development of the mineral resources of the State of Alabama." Pratt chose the men to serve on committees charged with securing charters for and promoting the two proposed railroads. He also chose a delegation to attend a railroad convention at Elyton in Jefferson County later that month. Unsurprisingly, Pratt ended up a member of all three groups. The Citizen had nothing but praise for Pratt's convention: "Judging from the number who attended . . . and the harmony and unanimity which prevailed throughout the proceedings, we set down the establishment and early completion of the two roads as a fixed fact."²⁴

Despite the newspaper's confidence, Prattville never obtained a railroad in the antebellum period. The "harmony and unanimity" of the August railroad convention collapsed under the pressure of personal pique and partisan politics

²⁴Ibid., 18 August 1853. Among the notable Alabamians attending the convention were Charles Teed Pollard, Francis Strother Lyon, Thomas Hill Watts, George Goldthwaite, John Lapsley, and William Mudd. Autaugians at the convention included planters Bolling Hall, Absalom Jackson, Crawford Motley Jackson, Charles Malone Howard, William Montgomery, Neil Smith Graham, and Caleb Moncrief, as well as Prattville attorney William H. Northington and Autaugaville minister and textile manufacturer David Smedley.

as the decade of the 1850s progressed. Only as the secession crisis brought Autauga's bickering factions together did Pratt's railroad project get back on track.

Soon after the railroad convention ended, the Autaugaville Mercury launched an attack on Pratt, claiming that he had insulted Autaugaville's citizens by not placing someone from the town on the committee charged with promoting the Montgomery-Selma Road, which, were it routed through Autauga County, would surely pass through Autaugaville. Pratt defended himself by claiming that he had "made the best selection" he could have "in the hurry of the moment." Charles Malone Howard, a planter living near Autaugaville, had seemed to Pratt a good choice "to attend to the interests of Autaugaville." The Mercury had named Albert Pickett, a highly respected historian and the owner of a large plantation near Autaugaville, as the man Pratt should have chosen, but Pratt pointed out that Pickett actually lived in Montgomery. In any event, declared Pratt, Autaugaville's own representatives at the convention had not even recommended Pickett themselves. Pratt assured the Mercury that he had nothing but the best wishes for Autaugaville. He, for one, was not "of that class of people in our State" who did not desire a railroad unless it ran "by their door." Rather, Pratt avowed that he would take great pleasure in having a line run "through any part of our county," including, of course, Autaugaville. Despite Pratt's

conciliatory tone, however, he could not resist chiding the Mercury's editors for complaining about the convention's result when they had not even attended it. "If the editors feel so great an interest in their flourishing village," he queried, "would it not seem more likely that they were in earnest, if they had attended the convention . . . and given their views on the subject of railroads?"²⁵

Pratt's remarks succeeded only in provoking another editorial assault from the Mercury. Pratt then signaled his desire to let the issue lie, but those who had felt slighted continued to air their grievances. Albert Pickett complained in a letter that Pratt, Pollard, and George Goldthwaite ("that English Jew") had completely ignored his opinions on the Montgomery-Selma Road. Pratt, he insisted, had been "fully aware" of his deep interest in the subject, for the pair had made a "tour of observation" together along the railroad's projected route in the fall of 1853. When a railroad company was incorporated early in 1854 under the name Western Railroad Company, Pickett's distress turned to anger on account of the omission of his name from the company's charter. This development both "mortified & surprised" him, and Pollard bitterly complained of the "injustice" they had done him. "As it was expected that I would take considerable stock," he told a

²⁵Ibid., 1 September 1853.

friend, "all I asked was to be put upon an equal footing with themselves—to have a voice in their deliberations." The Western Railroad Company's Board of Commissioners did choose Pickett, along with David Smedley, to oversee the collection in Autaugaville of capital stock subscriptions, but both men summarily declined these posts. According to Pickett, Smedley gave Charles Pollard, secretary of Western Railroad Company, two reasons for his action: "1st business. 2nd last summer at Prattville no man about Autaugaville appointed as a Delegate, no man about Autaugaville named to cooperate in a survey & none put in the recent charter."²⁶

Carping from Autaugaville boosters aside, Pratt's project had much support, judging by the Autauga Citizen. "Progress" wrote a detailed letter in which he proposed a route for the Montgomery-Selma Road, while "Alabama" sent a long missive asserting the importance of state aid to railroads. Nor did the editors of the Citizen stint in support: "It is evident to every reflecting mind that it is impossible for this county to do without a railroad any longer. . . . Let every man put aside interests of minor importance—let all forget the petty prejudices which may

²⁶Ibid., 15 September 1853; Albert Pickett to Major [?], 8 March 1854, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University Library.

have heretofore existed—let all act in perfect unison with each other."²⁷

Ironically, given this stirring plea for unity for the sake of Prattville's economic advancement, the Citizen would tear Prattville apart in the summer of 1854 by launching a violent assault on the town's founder, thereby setting back railroad development efforts in Autauga for several years. William Howell and his partner, T. S. Lockett, had started the Citizen in 1853, Pratt having extended them significant financial aid. Howell and Lockett professed political neutrality, but like Pratt, they showed a decided sympathy for Whiggish economic policies. Pratt, however, believed that support for banks and railroads was not a matter of politics, but of economic rationality and responsibility. Pratt simply could not believe that Democratic politicians sincerely opposed these entities on ideological grounds. Rather, he was convinced that these designing men cynically fostered the class resentments of common people in order to advance themselves politically. Above all, in Pratt's view, the Democrats wanted a political hobby horse to ride against the Whigs, no matter the adverse economic consequences. "It is my oppinion [that] had the Whigs as a party ben opposed to Chartered Institutions and Banking then the Democrats as a party would have

²⁷Ibid., 1, 8 September 1853, 2 March 1854.

ben in favor of them," Pratt observed trenchantly in 1847. He had hoped that the Autauga Citizen would provide a forum for his enlightened economic views, but his plan completely backfired, for William Howell turned against him in less than two years.²⁸

Luckett left the Citizen after several months, leaving the paper exclusively to the hands of Howell. True to the newspaper's nonpartisan stance, Howell remained neutral during a political storm that shook Prattville in the late summer and early fall of 1853. The highly partisan dispute concerned the disposition of Prattville's postmastership. In 1846, Pratt had outfitted a post office in one of his brick buildings on the western side of Autauga Creek, allegedly "at the cost of hundreds of dollars." After a succession of postmasters, Shadrack Mims, professedly a Democrat, sympathized with the Whig party because of its economic positions. After the Democratic party reoccupied the White House in 1853, local Democrats began agitating

²⁸Daniel Pratt to Dixon Hall Lewis, 21 September 1847, Lewis Papers, University of Texas Library. In his letter to Lewis, Pratt went on to urge that "the two parties unite for the intrest of our State. Not ask as is now the custom what will be for the intrest of our party but ask what will be for the present and future intrest of our State." Ibid. It is not clear just how much money Pratt actually gave to Howell and Luckett. John Hardy, editor of the Selma Alabama Sentinel, asserted that the Citizen's editors received \$700 from Pratt, but Howell claimed that Pratt provided only \$170, "not a fourth of the cost of the materials." Other Prattvillians, both Democrats and Whigs, paid the balance, he insisted. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5 July 1855.

for the removal of the post office across the creek into Prattville proper and for the appointment of a fully loyal party man as postmaster.²⁹

In August 1853, shortly after Prattville's railroad convention, William Ormsby (who was, it will be recalled, Esther Ticknor's cousin and the bookkeeper for Ephraim Morgan's sash, door, and blind shop) precipitated an out-and-out political firefight over the postmastership by savagely attacking the Democratic agitators in a provocative piece in the Citizen entitled "A Reverie." In this piece, Ormsby lauded Pratt's accomplishments: building a gin factory and a cotton mill (the latter of which gave employment to "poor and destitute families" and guaranteed them "at least an easy subsistence and comfortable homes"), building the Methodist Church and Union Sunday School and contributing to Prattville's other churches and schools, and giving "impetus to other branches of industry" besides his own, thus developing a "lovely village" with "merchants, doctors, and lawyers." Having built up Pratt as a sort of moral colossus, Ormsby then tore down the moral pygmies who would challenge this great and good man. Addressing them directly, he angrily lectured:

You are daily reaping the results of his energy, but you are not satisfied. Judging from your actions, you

²⁹Information on the Prattville postmaster fight is found in the following issues of the Autauga Citizen: 11, 18 August, 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 September, 6, 13 October 1853.

would, cormorant-like, pluck him from his high position and devour his substance. . . . He has endeavored to merit your good will—but you are ready to spit upon him. He has been the instrument, in God's hands, of adding to your substance—but you would have all that he possesses. He has been a public benefactor in your midst, while you have heaped calumny and abuse upon him. Would that himself and his effects could be transplanted to another locality: you then would wish for his return.³⁰

Ormsby sought to shame these Democrats for conspiring to seize the postmastership, but in so extravagantly praising Pratt and excoriating his opponents, he wildly overplayed his hand. Democrats angrily objected to what they viewed as the antirepublican tone of Ormsby's "Reverie." Ormsby assumed "that whatever does not have its conception, its birth and its maturity in the particular junto composed of himself, his master and company must necessarily be wrong," huffed a Democrat in a letter to the Citizen. "What presumption! Proper subordination is commendable, but a cringing parasite is detestable." Surely such "fulsome praise" from "a loaf and fish sycophant" must have nauseated Pratt himself, "a man of known modesty and sensibility." Pratt, argued the writer, deserved "the highest encomiums for his eminent services to his community—his Christian benevolence—his indiscriminate charity and boundless liberality." Nevertheless, the Democrats had complete justification in seeking to have the postmastership transferred to Benjamin Durden, a sixty-year-old

³⁰Prattville Autauga Citizen, 11 August 1853.

carpenter and staunch Democrat. This "aged and infirm old citizen, honest, faithful and capable," desired the post not merely out of partisanship, but also out of the hope that it would help him better support his "large and dependent family."³¹

Pratt remained aloof from this fracas, but Shadrack Mims soon lent Ormsby some support. Democratic activists in Autauga County had put up Durden to seek the postmastership solely "on party grounds," according to Mims, who complained that Durden simply did not have the necessary qualifications to serve as postmaster. Members of both parties, Mims asserted, had requested him not to relinquish the job.³²

Unfortunately for Mims, he, like Ormsby, had left himself open to charges of elitism, and in a letter to the Citizen, Benjamin Durden promptly leveled such charges in a letter that Prattville attorney and leading Autauga Democrat William H. Northington actually scripted. "Notwithstanding I am not very expert at writing Reminiscences," the humble Durden jabbed at Mims, whose "Old Citizen" column appeared regularly in the Prattville newspaper, "I am not so vain, presumptuous and arrogant as to think I am the only man about Prattville who can give permanency to

³¹Ibid., 18 August 1853.

³²Ibid., 1 September 1853.

the Post Office." Durden did not think such a claim would "find much favor among the plain republicans of old Autauga."³³

Durden belittled Mims for his professed political independence as well as his elitism. Trimmers like Mims Durden viewed as "objects of distrust and suspicion." Who could tell where he stood with such a creature? Durden asserted his right to the office both as a loyal party man and as a "poor" carpenter with "a large and dependent family," many of whom, he noted, worked as "honest and faithful laborers" in Pratt's gin factory.³⁴

Despite protests from Ormsby, Mims, and their supporters, some thirty to forty Prattville Democrats petitioned for a transfer of the postmastership to Durden. While waiting word from Washington, D.C., both sides escalated their rhetorical attacks on each other. Mims found himself compared to such despots as Tsar Nicholas, Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Julius Caesar. Writing in his own name, William H. Northington proved particularly scathing. Mims, he cried, had stepped forward "as the peculiar champion of wealth and the one man power" regarding "all who do not sacrilegiously bend the knee of reverence at the shrine of his monied God, as unworthy of a

³³Ibid., 8 September 1853.

³⁴Ibid.

participation in the management of or control in our government." With such bombast, Northington effectively silenced his enemies, and in January 1854, Durden ascended to the postmastership, a position he would hold for nearly seven years.³⁵

The heated political contest for the Prattville postmastership fractured the town at a time when, as William Howell had noted, a unified effort was needed to bring railroads to Autauga County. Judging from the names signed to a petition of support for Durden, Pratt's most vocal opposition came from a group of Democratic planters and attorneys living in Prattville and its vicinity. Of the twenty-five names on the petition, only six belonged to men currently or formerly employed in trades in Prattville: Llewellyn Spigner (previously the owner of Prattville's carriage shop but now engaged in farming), A. K. McWilliams (a merchant), George Tisdale (an owner of a tin shop), Casimir Krout (a confectioner), William Morgan (the proprietor of the Tennessee Hotel), and Daniel Suter (a blacksmith). By no means did all local planters belong to this group. Absalom Doster and his sons Charles and Edward (respectively a Prattville attorney and a physician), for example, did not sign the petition. Nor did Thomas Smith, the father of Samuel Parrish Smith, Pratt's friend and

³⁵Ibid., 15 September, 13 October 1853.

physician. Nevertheless, Autauga had a very strong Democratic organization, basically a cog in Benjamin Fitzpatrick's political machine, the "Montgomery Regency." Fitzpatrick, one of Alabama's United States senators, claimed as his domicile his Autauga plantation, Oak Grove. Two of his most important lieutenants, Bolling Hall and Crawford Motley Jackson, also resided in Autauga. To challenge Autauga's powerful Democracy over the postmastership, as Mims and Ormsby had done, risked alienating these powerful planters from Pratt's railroad projects. No doubt keenly aware of this, Pratt had kept his own counsel during the brouhaha.³⁶

Unfortunately for Pratt, the Democrats, not content to leave bad enough alone, began agitation over a new issue in 1854—the incorporation of Prattville—and this time they had the vocal support of the Autauga Citizen, William Howell having defected to their side. Unlike during the struggle of 1853, Pratt found himself under venomous personal attack from this serpent in his "lovely village."

The circumstances around the canceling of the incorporation election are somewhat unclear. On August 24, the Citizen announced that an election was to be held on that Saturday, but on August 31, the paper tersely noted that

³⁶Ibid., 13 October 1853. On Benjamin Fitzpatrick's Montgomery Regency, see Thornton Politics and Power, 365-98.

the "election for the incorporation of Prattville did not take place, as it was considered unnecessary to hold said election." In their journals, the Smith cousins, Ferdinand and George, are rather more explicit. George noted that an election was to be held in Prattville concerning incorporation, but that "the managers would not hold it." George and some of his friends "considered that the same as a defeat and fired 35 guns and were going to fire 15 more but backed out." Ferdinand makes clear why they "backed out" of firing more guns: "In the afternoon the boys fired the cannon and came near to getting into a fight."³⁷

Pratt likely feared two things about incorporation: property taxes and loss of personal power. Opponents of incorporation claimed that it could result in an additional tax of one percent on real estate, as well as a two-dollar poll tax. As for the issue of power, Prattville's Board of Managers appears to have been unelected. Pratt probably feared that free elections simply would give the Democrats more opportunity for "trouble-making" in his own back yard. Whatever Pratt's justifications, however, to refuse even to hold an election concerning the matter certainly made him vulnerable to charges of despotism.³⁸

³⁷Prattville Autauga Citizen, 24, 31 August 1854; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 79; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 189.

³⁸Prattville Autauga Citizen, 24 August 1854.

William Howell, who had decided to throw his lot with Autauga's Democracy, now hurled such charges. He claimed that Pratt had precipitated the break by attempting to have his paper proscribed in Prattville. Howell declared that the scales had dropped from his eyes. "Here, right here, in the heart of the Sunny South," he exclaimed in horror, "has sprung up one of those little one horse despotisms so peculiar to the manufacturing towns of the North." Pratt, whom Howell now cleverly dubbed "the Great I Am" (an allusion to Yahweh in the Old Testament), had even gone so far as to threaten one of his workers, "a respectable citizen," with expulsion from Prattville if he voted for the Democratic ticket. "Truly, the man who can utter such sentiments, in a republican government," declared the outraged Howell, "is fit to wear the diadem of a Czar." Howell suggested that Pratt organize a band of adventurers, conquer Cuba, and proclaim himself a monarch.³⁹

Despite Howell's insistence that the proscription of his newspaper was the work of a tiny clique of wealthy Prattvillians, it appears that the move met with wide approbation in Prattville. Howell's boast of having picked up at least 200 new subscriptions from such Democratic precincts as Pine Flat, Chesnut Creek, and Milton suggests that he had lost a large number of subscriptions from

³⁹Ibid., 5 October 1854.

heavily Whig Prattville. George Smith spent a day gathering sixty signatures to a document defending Pratt from Howell's charges, which he requested Howell to publish in the Citizen. Howell consented to do so, but he sneered at the signers for having lost their manly independence by having "voted and acted with Mr. Pratt on every occasion, ever since they have been in his employ." Admittedly, Pratt employees filled the ranks of the signers. A few, such as James Allen, Henry Thigpen, Ephraim Morgan, James Wainwright, and Western Franks, had their own business concerns. Yet of the forty-four men who listed their party affiliation, sixteen (or 36 percent), including Shadrack Mims, Amos Smith, and such humble mechanics as Washington Lafayette Ellis and Marcus Cicero Killet, listed their party affiliation as Democratic, suggesting that Pratt, contrary to Howell's insistence, had left his workers some measure of autonomy.⁴⁰

Suddenly facing a vigorously partisan Democratic paper in their midst, Prattville's Whigs threw their support in December 1854 behind a new Prattville newspaper, the Southern Statesman, edited by no less than T. S. Luckett, Howell's former partner, and William Ormsby, the man who had done so much to aggravate Prattville's political schism. The description of the Statesman on the title page

⁴⁰Ibid., 20 September, 5 October 1854.

indicated that it would be quite in line with Pratt's way of thinking: "An Independent Family Journal, Devoted to Southern Industry, Agriculture, Manufactures, Mechanics, Internal Improvements, Current News, etc." A picture by the title illustrated a man (rather resembling Pratt) standing beside cotton bales and a cotton gin with Prattville's great factories looming in the background. During the next two years, as the American, or Know-Nothing, party rose and fell in Alabama, the Statesman and the Citizen constantly traded blows with each other.⁴¹

The cause of railroads suffered an even more serious setback in Prattville in 1855, when state Democrats, following the lead of Governor Winston (who was running for reelection), came out vigorously against state aid for internal improvements. Pratt ran as the American party candidate for the state senate from Autauga and Montgomery counties that year, and he found himself pilloried by Howell for his strong support of state aid. Howell, who in 1853 had himself shown sympathy to proponents of state aid, now denounced it as a "wild and reckless system of taxation for the construction of railroads." The editor of the Citizen brutally ridiculed Pratt's performance in the debates with his Democratic opponent, Judge Adam Felder of

⁴¹Prattville Southern Statesman, 20 December 1854. This issue is the only known surviving number from 1854 to 1859. The Statesman ran until the outbreak of the Civil War.

Montgomery, which took place in Autauga County during the summer. Howell concluded that Pratt was "a man unfit" to serve in the state senate.⁴²

In the end, Howell's tough tactics seem to have worked. The movement of Autauga's upcountry yeoman Democrats into the American party came to an abrupt halt by mid-July. By the August election, traditional party alignment had reasserted itself as Autauga's upcountry yeoman election districts voted heavily Democratic and its lowcountry planter districts voted American. While Pratt won Montgomery County by 110 votes, he lost his home county by 140 votes, resulting in a narrow loss to Felder.⁴³

The bitter election campaign only worsened feelings between Pratt and Prattville's Democrats. Already in March 1855, an R. G. Dun and Company agent had noted that Pratt was "not popular, will have his own way & monopolize everything." During the summer, Howell brandished a new epithet for Pratt, "the Grand Sachem." He again accused Pratt of despotism, claiming that he used "all manner of low chicanery to induce" subscribers to cancel their subscriptions to the Citizen.⁴⁴

⁴²Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5, 12, 19 July 1855.

⁴³Ibid., 19 July, 2, 9 August 1855. For more detail on Pratt's 1855 state senate race, see below.

⁴⁴Alabama Vol. 2, p. 12, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Prattville Autauga Citizen, 19 July 1855.

Events in 1856 did nothing to improve the situation. In this year, Autauga's twenty-four-year Democratic incumbent probate judge, Henly Brown, faced opposition from the nominally independent but, in fact, Know-Nothing-supported James Clepper, a Prattville carriage maker. Once again Democrats feared they might lose a political race due to defections from disaffected upcountry yeomen. "The fact is," wrote a panicked William Howell to Bolling Hall only four days before the election, "Major Brown is beat, to a certainty, unless we do something soon." Howell noted fretfully that "at least 30 Brown men have gone to Clepper in Chesnut [Creek precinct]. Howell urged Hall to get "to Chesnut Creek as soon as possible" to get the precinct's wayward Democrats back into line. "Unless we do something soon we are beaten—There is no denying the fact," he reiterated. The last-minute Democratic efforts proved successful, for Brown, "the old war horse," defeated Clepper by 142 votes, almost the same margin Felder had achieved over Pratt.⁴⁵

Seeing the Democrats pull out victory at the very last minute proved galling to Prattville's "Independents," some of whom apparently sought to extract vengeance in a rather highhanded and petty fashion. In June 1856, several

⁴⁵William Howell to Bolling Hall, 1 May 1856, Box 4, Folder 4, Bolling Hall Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 24 April, 8 May 1856.

Know-Nothing Methodists brought charges of falsehood against Edward Doster, a physician and a son of a prominent local planter, Absalom Doster, claiming that he had stated, during the recent campaign, that he would vote for Clepper but then, in fact, voted for Brown. Furthermore, according to the Citizen, these men attempted to have the physician's practice boycotted. With much pathos, Howell begged Autaugians not to allow these cruel conspirators to reduce "Dr. Doster, his wife and little ones to houseless, homeless wanderers" and to "show to the world that a man cannot be crushed in old Autauga" merely for staking out his own political course. Among the men who testified against Doster stood Thomas Ormsby, the brother of William, and Samuel Parrish Smith, a former Whig and Pratt's friend and physician. Of Ormsby, Doster angrily declared that he had "not had a conversation with him in five years of more than one minute's duration." The Methodist Quarterly Conference found for Doster, leaving his opponents discredited and both sides even farther apart than previously.⁴⁶

Finally, in May 1857, Pratt, who had long ago pulled his advertising from the pages of the Citizen, made Howell a sort of peace offering. Pratt's mill boss, Gardner Hale, sent his son George over to Howell's office with a bundle containing "a pattern of three and a half yards of cloth

⁴⁶Prattville Autauga Citizen, 19 June, 7 August 1856.

for a pair of pants," made at Pratt's recently launched wool mill. Howell facetiously wrote that on seeing the young man ("a descendant of a 'bloody Know Nothing'") entering his "sanctum" with a "very mysterious looking bundle under his arm," he at first feared that the Know Nothings had devised "some infernal machine . . . for the purpose of blowing us 'sky high'." On seeing the cloth, however, he deemed it of a "superior quality" that reflected "much credit on its manufacturer." Howell even went so far as to tender his "sincere thanks for this very handsome and substantial present."⁴⁷

In early 1859, Howell published highly complimentary pieces on businessmen James Wainwright, James Clepper, and Ephraim Morgan (all allies of Pratt), marking his return to his 1853-54 role as a Prattville business booster. He enthusiastically predicted that it would not be long "before our thriving village will become the Lowell of the South."⁴⁸

Howell's reactivated magnanimity toward Pratt and his friends was not simply the result of a young man bearing a gift of woolen cloth. With the collapse of organized opposition to the Democratic party in Alabama in the late 1850s and the rising sectional tension in the country, the

⁴⁷Ibid., 21 May 1857.

⁴⁸Ibid., 10 February, 10 March 1859.

conservative Montgomery Regency for which the Citizen spoke began to worry much more about the insurgency of William Lowndes Yancey and the Fire-Eaters within the Democratic party than about the machinations of former Whigs and Know-Nothings.⁴⁹

As the Civil War loomed closer, Howell and other Prattville Democrats helped Pratt get one of his railroad projects back on track. In February 1860, the Citizen informed its readers that Lowndes County, located across the Alabama River from Autauga, was "making great exertions" to have the Montgomery and Selma Railroad routed through its area. Howell emphasized to his readers the great importance of Autauga getting the line instead of Lowndes. With a railroad rumbling through its midst, Howell speculated that Prattville's population would explode to "seven or eight thousand." The Citizen's editor approvingly noted that "Mr. Pratt, our enterprising townsman . . . has made most liberal offers to the managers of the road, to induce them to locate the route through Prattville."⁵⁰

In April, railroad boosters held a convention in Kingston, Autauga County's seat, in order to raise subscriptions for the Montgomery and Selma Railroad. Informing readers of the upcoming convention, Howell again

⁴⁹Thornton, Politics and Power, 365-98.

⁵⁰Prattville Autauga Citizen, 16 February 1860.

emphasized that "the people of Lowndes are making desperate efforts to get the road" and pleaded with "the people of Autauga" to "arouse themselves to their true interests" and buy one hundred thousand dollars worth of stock. If they would only do so, the road would "be certain to pass through Autauga," Howell avowed.⁵¹

The Kingston railroad convention, held on April 2, gathered a remarkable collection of old political enemies, united by their desire for a railroad in Autauga. Charles Doster, a Prattville attorney and the brother of Edward, served as convention secretary, while Daniel Pratt, Bolling Hall, and William H. Northington all served on the resolutions committee, Pratt as its chair. Pratt, who brought with him books of subscription, made the opening speech, followed by declamations from Hall and Northington. The Statesman complimented Pratt's "peculiar, plain common sense, practical style" of speaking, while the Citizen, which had ridiculed his 1855 campaign stump performance, found Pratt's speech "able and forcible" and "earnest and practical." The convention appointed Pratt to its county subscriptions committee. Howell reported that the convention concluded that Autauga actually needed a total of \$150,000 in stock subscriptions, but only \$60,000 had been raised; and he fretted that if Autaugians did not raise

⁵¹Ibid., 29 March 1860.

this extra amount, the county would lose the road, leaving the people "to jog along in the same old foggy manner" of "the last forty years." The Statesman, however, took assurance from Autauga's dependable Daniel Pratt: "We have a man among us who always foots the bill in raising what may be necessary to carry forward worthy public enterprises."⁵²

On April 7, another railroad convention took place, this time at Prattville. Shadrack Mims, on motion of William H. Northington, took the chair. Daniel Pratt, along with such wealthy planters as Bolling Hall, John Steele, Absalom Jackson, and John Wood, made large subscriptions.⁵³

Despite such efforts, however, Lowndes County won the contest over the Western Railroad. Prattville now had to pin its hopes on the North and South Railroad Company, which had incorporated in November 1858 and had raised \$75,350 in stock subscriptions at a Montgomery convention held the same month. Unfortunately, the Civil War disrupted progress on the line, and Prattville had to wait until Reconstruction to renew its efforts.⁵⁴

By the late 1850s, progress had again become the gospel throughout Prattville, but precious time had been frittered away in fruitless political squabbles. The Civil War

⁵²Ibid., 5 April 1860; Prattville Southern Statesman, 7, 14 April 1860.

⁵³Prattville Autauga Citizen, 12 April 1860.

⁵⁴Ibid., 4 November 1858.

would bring all development schemes to an abrupt halt. Thus, despite a strong start, Prattville did not live up to the grandiose economic expectations of the early 1850s. But if the town, by decade's end, had not improved to the extent that boosters had desired, what can we say about the people? Just as they tried to improve their town, Prattvillians attempted to improve themselves.

CHAPTER 7

BUILDING A SOCIETY: CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS IN PRATTVILLE, 1840 TO 1861

Making Prattville a model middle class town had long been a central purpose of Daniel Pratt. In his 1847 letter to the Holts, he declared that "building up a respectable village such as as will compare with your Northern towns in point of good morals and good society" was the goal toward which he had been "striving" in Alabama. Pratt could not accomplish this task alone, of course; strive as he might, he needed the help of a virtuous people. To a large extent, he got such help, with the result that in 1860, Pratt could proudly announce that Prattville was "unusually free [of] the vice of loafing and dissipation" and had a citizenry that was "industrious, intelligent, and refined." Quoting the prophet Daniel, Pratt contentedly declared: "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."¹

Like their counterparts in northern towns and villages, middle-class Prattvillians knew that a railroad

¹Daniel Pratt to Daniel and Eliza Holt, 1 June 1847, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery (ADAH); Prattville Autauga Citizen, 16 August 1860.

alone would not suddenly usher in the blessings of material prosperity. To participate fully in the market revolution sweeping the country, they needed to improve themselves as well as their town. Only an "industrious, intelligent, and refined" populace (to borrow from Pratt) would be able to take full advantage of the expanding economic opportunities offered them by the dynamic age in which they lived. Mindful of the imperative of self-improvement, Prattvillians sought in the 1850s to inculcate virtue in themselves through churches, voluntary societies, and schools.²

One may, of course, question whether Prattville was really a southern town at all or instead an artificial northern transplant. While it is certainly true that Yankees made up a very important part of the town's population, numerically Prattville's Yankee element was not dominant. Of the town's approximately 173 households in 1860, only thirteen (7.5 percent) were headed by northerners. Foreign-born residents headed another three (1.7

²While the literature on the development of the northern middle class in the nineteenth century is voluminous, historians have paid scant attention to the southern middle class in the same period, though it most certainly existed. In the last few years, however, some historians have taken notice of this heretofore mostly ignored group. Most promising is John W. Quist's "Social and Moral Reform in the Old North and the Old South: Washington County, Michigan, and Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, 1820-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1992) and his "Slaveholding Operatives of the Benevolent Empire: Bible, Tract, and Sunday School Societies in Antebellum Tuscaloosa County, Alabama," Journal of Southern History 62 (August 1996): 481-526.

percent) of the households. Out of Prattville's free population of about 943, 65 (6.9 percent) came from the North, while merely 5 (0.5 percent) came from foreign countries.³ Thus, non-southerners accounted for only about 9.2 percent of Prattville's heads of households and 7.4 percent of its free population. Put another way, southerners (mostly Alabamians, Georgians, and South Carolinians) accounted for over 90 percent of Prattville's heads of households and free population. As far as nativity is concerned, then, Prattville can hardly be viewed as some Rockdale mill village picked up and put down in Alabama.

It is indisputable, however, that Prattville's Yankees constituted an extremely important segment of the town's population. One-quarter of Prattville's mechanics in 1860 hailed from the North. Although Amos Smith moved with most of his family to Philadelphia in 1857, Gardner Hale remained Pratt's mill superintendant. William Wallace Fay of Vermont replaced Georgian Shadrack Mims as the cotton mill agent in 1860. Amos Smith's son George and his nephews Ferdinand and Frank stood at the top of the gin factory hierarchy. Merrill Pratt and Samuel Ticknor marketed Pratt's gins. Thomas Avery kept Pratt's books. The machine shop of Thomas Ormsby and George Smith serviced

³The information in this paragraph and the next several that follow it comes from the U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

Pratt's factories. Enoch Robinson and Ephraim Morgan made, respectively, horse mills and sashes, doors, and blinds in shops that stood next to Pratt's own factories in size and importance to Prattville's economy. If Prattville's Yankees had suddenly vanished in 1860 (as some of the mechanics, in fact, did, moving back to the North as conditions between North and South deteriorated), much of the town's industry would have ground to a halt.

Nor did Pratt's industrious Yankees confine their efforts to the town's factories and shops. Northerners held jobs in "white-collar" professions as well. Joseph Hurd of New Jersey and William Root of Massachusetts were druggists, while William Bush of Massachusetts served the village as a dentist. Jay DeWitt Wheat of New York had employment as a bookkeeper in 1860, while in the late 1850s, he edited the Southern Statesman. William Allen and his brother Hassan maintained their positions as Prattville's leading merchants. Henry Butler of Massachusetts headed Prattville Academy, while four northern-born women taught school.⁴

⁴Henry Butler taught a music school in Prattville from 1857 through 1859 prior to taking over Prattville Academy from Jere S. Williams in 1860. Before moving to Prattville, he had taught in Montgomery for two years. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 15 October 1857, 5 January 1860. William Root was born in Southwick, Massachusetts in 1833. He migrated to Montgomery in 1854, where he entered into a partnership with another druggist until 1858, when he moved to Prattville. Prattville Southern Signal, 22 May 1885.

Some prominent southern residents of Prattville married into Yankee families, most notably Samuel Parrish Smith of Georgia, Hugh Hillhouse of Virginia, William Miles (probably of Georgia), Stephen Pearce of Alabama, and James Wainwright of Alabama. Samuel Parrish Smith married Adelaide Allen of Connecticut. Adelaide's parents, Richard Allen and Julia Phelps of Connecticut, settled in Autauga County in 1824, where Allen operated a tannery. In 1830, the Allens moved back to Connecticut to educate their teenage daughter Adelaide, but they returned to Autauga in 1836, locating at Washington. Allen opened a general store there, but he died in 1841, a year after his daughter's marriage to Samuel Parrish Smith, a recent graduate of Philadelphia's Jefferson Medical School. Smith, his wife, and her widowed mother moved to Prattville in 1845. The young doctor soon established himself as one of the new village's most respected citizens. His eldest daughter, Julia Adelaide, married Merrill Pratt in 1862, while his son Eugene became Prattville's most renowned intellectual, graduating from Heidelberg University after the Civil War, marrying a daughter of University of Alabama president Landon Garland, teaching geology at the University of Alabama, and serving as state geologist for over fifty years.⁵

⁵Prattville Southern Signal, 3 September 1886; Prattville Progress, 3 April, 17 June 1891; Oliver Seymour Phelps, The Phelps Family of America (Pittsfield, Mass., 1899), 289; Thomas McAdory Owen, History of Alabama and

Although Hugh Hillhouse was born in Virginia, one could well classify him as a Yankee, as he moved with his family to Ohio as a child. Like Samuel Parrish Smith, Hillhouse graduated from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. In January 1848, soon after settling in Prattville, he married Harriet Allen, the daughter of James Allen and the sister of William and Hassan Allen. Death ended Hillhouse's career in 1855, however, and Harriet Allen returned with her children and her father to upstate New York that same year.⁶

William Miles, the head of Prattville Academy from 1856 through 1858 and almost certainly a relation of Georgia-born merchants B. F., Freeman, and Haywood Miles, also married a Yankee. In 1852, William Miles, who lived in Lowndes County, married Julia Robinson of New Hampshire, who lived with her apparent uncle, Enoch Robinson, in Hayneville, the seat of Lowndes. In 1855, the couple moved to Prattville, where Enoch Robinson had started a horse mills shop, his Hayneville shop having burned earlier that year. Miles took over Prattville Academy in 1856, Julia

Dictionary of Alabama Biography, vol. 4 (Chicago, 1921), 1579-80, 1595; Stewart J. Lloyd, Eugene Allen Smith: Alabama's Great Geologist (New York, 1954); Marriage Book 4, p. 153, Probate Office, Augusta County Courthouse, Prattville.

⁶Prattville Autauga Citizen, 31 May 1855; Marriage Book 4, p. 153, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse, Prattville.

serving as his assistant. The pair ran the Academy for three years before migrating to Texas.⁷

When he wedded Harriet Fay of New York in 1859, Stephen Pearce of Alabama became yet another Prattville southerner to marry a Yankee. Stephen Pearce was a wealthy planter and merchant (He would be worth \$61,210 in 1860) about fourteen years older than Harriet Fay, the niece of Edwin Fay of Vermont, a planter who lived in the nearby community of Rocky Mount. Soon after graduating from Harvard in 1817, Edwin Fay migrated to Autauga County, where he ran a school and practiced law. By 1850, he had become a planter and lived in Rocky Mount. As a planter he met with considerable success; by 1860, his wealth was valued at \$35,000. At some point in the 1840s, Edwin Fay took in the children of his brother Frank, a teacher and physician who had died in Georgia. Edwin Fay was a friend of Daniel Pratt, and his entire extended family was closely connected

⁷Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of George Littlefield Smith (Prattville, 1991), 64, 107. Adelaide Smith to Julia Smith, 4 April, 1 July, 21 November 1858, Box 96, McMillan Collection, Auburn University. My estimation, based on census data, is that William, B. F., Freeman, and Haywood Miles were all sons of planter Abram Miles of Russell County, Alabama, and nephews of planter Aquilla Miles of Lowndes County. It is clear from the Smith journals that William Miles lived in Lowndes County in 1850, but I have not been able to locate him in the census. Freeman Miles resided in Lowndes County in the household of Aquilla Miles in 1850, about eight years before he moved to Prattville to become Haywood Miles's business partner. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Lowndes County, Russell County.

to Prattville society. Being merely a niece of a moderately wealthy man, Harriet Fay evidently was considered by the village to have made an excellent match in Stephen Pearce. "[R]eport says [Miss Hattie] is to marry Stephen Pearce soon, & Mrs. Hadnot is very much pleased and so are the Fays, I expect & so is every body but Mrs. Carpenter," reported Adelaide Smith to her daughter Julia, away at school in Connecticut. "Hattie will be doing too well to suit her, as she disliked her so much."⁸

If Stephen Pearce married a bit down when he wed a Yankee, James Wainwright married quite a bit up when he married Melissa Holt, a niece of Daniel Pratt, in 1854.

⁸Marriage Book 4, p. 372, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule Autauga County; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 12 May 1859; Adelaide Smith to Julia Smith, 26 June 1857, Box 96, McMillan Collection. On the Fays of Autauga County, see William Monroe Newton, History of Barnard, Vermont with Family Genealogies 1761-1927, Vol. 2, Genealogies (Montpelier, Vt.), 197; Mary Smith Fay, Edwin Fay of Vermont and Alabama, 1794-1876 (Houston, 1988); Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., "This Infernal War": The Confederate Letters of Sgt. Edwin H. Fay (Austin, 1958). Harriet Fay also had a sister, Ellen, who married Massachusetts-born dentist William Bush the same day Harriet wed Stephen Pearce. Marriage Book 4, p. 371, Autauga County Courthouse. Adelaide Smith's sources were dead-on here as well: "Some think Miss Ellen Fay will marry Doctor Bush." Adelaide Smith to Julia Smith, 26 June 1857, Box 96, McMillan Collection. Edwin Fay and his wife had five children themselves: Edwin Hedge, William Henry, Joseph Dunham, Sarah and Eleutheria ("Theria"). In the 1850s, Theria died, Sarah moved to Selma, and Edwin Hedge moved to Louisiana. William Henry was killed in the Civil War. Wiley, ed., Infernal War, 451. William Henry and Theria are buried in the private Pratt Cemetery. Pauline Jones Gandrud, Alabama Records, Vol. 75, Autauga County (Easley, S.C.), 4.

Wainwright, a native Alabamian, probably moved to Prattville in late 1850. He and Thomas Ormsby, one of Esther Pratt's cousins and a Pratt mechanic, opened a tin shop in competition with George Tisdale, who had started his shop in 1845. In an 1853 advertisement, Wainwright and Ormsby boasted that all experts acknowledged their "Empire State Cooking Stoves" as "the BEST in use." Not surprisingly, Wainwright's union with the Holts proved economically advantageous for this up-and-coming mechanic. While recognizing him as a "steady honest young man of industrious habits," an R. G. Dun & Co. agent stressed that Wainwright had "married a niece of 'Daniel Pratt' who would probably back him for any reasonable amount." After Ormsby had left the partnership in 1854 (he later started a machine shop with George Smith), Wainwright continued to prosper on his own. In 1855, his wealth was estimated at only \$500, and he owned no real estate or slaves. By 1857, he had bought a "little farm" and "built . . . a small residence." The agent now assessed his wealth at \$1,000 to \$1,500. He also reported that Wainwright had "hired hands in connexion with his 'Father-in-law'." (This may refer to mechanics, possibly black, from the gin factory of Daniel Pratt. The agent may have confused Daniel Pratt with Daniel Holt. On the other hand, the agent may have meant that Wainwright had hired from Holt black laborers for his "little farm.") Although adversely affected by the Panic of 1857,

Wainwright had, by 1860, wealth valued at \$8,300. He had \$2,500 invested in his business and employed two men, whom he paid \$30 per month.⁹ Although Wainwright was far from being a rich man on the eve of the Civil War, he nevertheless was firmly ensconced in Prattville's middle class.

Just as some southern men married Yankee women in Prattville, some Yankee men wed southern women, namely William Wallace Fay, Ferdinand Ellis Smith, and William Ormsby. William Wallace Fay, the brother of Harriet Fay, taught school in Prattville in the late 1840s. In 1851, he married Eliza Graham Morris, the widowed daughter of a wealthy planter and politician, William Graham of North Carolina. Both the Graham family and Fay belonged to the Prattville Presbyterian Church. In 1860, Fay became the agent for Prattville Manufacturing Company.¹⁰

⁹Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith (Prattville, 1991), 74; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 February 1853, 2 February 1854; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 9, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Manufactures Schedule, Autauga County.

¹⁰Prattville Progress, 25 August 1927; Wiley, ed., Infernal War, 451; Marriage Book 3, p. 63, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse. William Graham's obituary in the Citizen makes clear that the county held him in great esteem. Among his other accomplishments, he served as mayor of Montgomery and State Treasurer from 1848 to 1860. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 16 August 1860. In stark contrast to his wealthy planter father-in-law, Fay owned only one slave in 1860. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Slave Schedule, Autauga County.

Like Fay, mechanic Ferdinand Ellis Smith and agent William Ormsby married relations of co-religionist planters. Martha Riggs, whom Smith wed in 1854, was the ward of George Noble of Virginia, a Montgomery planter who seems to have moved to Prattville for several years in the early 1850s because, like Pratt, he held in high estimation the village's churches and schools. Noble was a devout Methodist who, after moving to Montgomery in the mid-1850s, became the manager of the Alabama Bible Society's Bible Repository. Ferdinand Smith frequently attended the Methodist church in the 1850s and finally became a full member after his marriage. William Ormsby married Isabella Brock of South Carolina in 1846. Isabella was the daughter of Mary Brock, who probably moved to Prattville after the death of her planter husband, Richard. Both William Ormsby and the Brocks belonged to the Methodist church.¹¹

¹¹Marriage Books 1, p. 349 and 3, p. 189, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse; Owen, Dictionary, vol. 3, 1283; Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith (Prattville, 1991), 175; Samuel Parrish Smith, Church Register, First Methodist Church of Prattville, Alabama, 1849-1866, Autauga County Heritage Center, Prattville (ACHC); Columbia Southern Christian Advocate, 6 December 1855. Martha Riggs and her sister Sarah (both originally from South Carolina) were cousins of George Noble's wife. Their mother had died when they were infants, and their father had consigned them to the care of her relatives before moving west. On the Riggs family, see Louise Taylor Nelson Boal, History of the Smith-Riggs Families (Prattville, 1991). Both George Noble and Mary Brock appear to have been only moderately wealthy. In 1860, Noble was worth \$31,700, while in 1850, Mary Brock and her son-in-law William Ormsby together owned thirty-five slaves. U.S.

Despite these important examples of marital alliances between northern and southern families in Prattville, most southern-born citizens of Prattville had no discernible Yankee connections. This group includes most of Prattville's merchants, physicians Charles Edwards and Isaac Vincent, attorneys William Northington and Charles Doster, wagon and buggy maker James Clepper, retired shop owner, farmer, and town marshall Llewellyn Spigner, blacksmith David Suther, such highly skilled mechanics as Nathan Morris, Harris Ware, Joshua White, and B. W. Rogers, and, of course, mill agent Shadrack Mims. Prattville's middle class simply cannot be viewed as exclusively Yankee. The creation of a middle class culture in the village involved the efforts of southerners and northerners together.

Churches and schools were key institutions fostering middle-class values in Prattville. New churches began appearing in Prattville during the 1840s, the first decade of the village's existence. Missionary Baptists organized a church soon after Pratt's arrival at Mc Niel's Mill in 1840. Pratt built a small frame church on a lot on the west side of Autauga Creek, and he deeded the church and lot to a Board of Trustees composed of himself and several local planters. Like the building itself, the congregation in the beginning was tiny, numbering only fourteen members.

Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Montgomery County, 1850, Slave Schedule, Autauga County.

By 1842, membership stood at only thirty-seven persons, twenty whites and seventeen blacks. In 1846, however, the church baptized thirty-five new members. By 1850, the congregation claimed eighty-two adherents, most of whom (sixty-nine) were white. Almost certainly, this influx of white members in 1846 resulted from the arrival in Prattville that year of white families Pratt had hired to work in his newly opened cotton mill. Membership records have not survived, but it appears likely that the Baptist church's congregation had a heavy concentration of mill families, such as the Mathews family (discussed in chapter 4). Joseph Muse, a South Carolina farmer living in Prattville in 1850, served as Baptist church clerk for six years in the 1840s. His eldest son, Daniel, listed his occupation as manufacturer, likely meaning he worked in the mill. I have only verified two Yankees as members, these being mechanic Frank Smith, a brother of Ferdinand Smith, and Daniel Holt. Both men, however, were staunch Baptists. Holt served as church clerk from 1851 to 1853, while Smith served as church clerk for seventeen years between 1854 and his death in 1873.¹²

Unlike the journals of his brother Ferdinand and his cousin George, Frank Smith's journal is mostly devoid of

¹²Karen A. Stone, Prattville First Baptist Church: Sharing Our Past with a Vision for the Future (Montgomery, Ala., 1988), 13-18.

any substantive activity besides working at the gin shop and attending the Baptist church. A typical Sunday entry is found on June 27, 1852:

Sunday . . . I went to Sabbath school in the morning and after that I went to Church and heard a sermon from Mr. Foster Heb. 9, 13, 14 For if the blood of the bull, and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God. . . . F[erdinand] and I went up to uncles after dinner and stayed to supper had a watter mellon.¹³

As we shall see, not all of Prattville's Yankees proved quite so religiously orthodox as Frank Smith.

The Prattville Presbyterian church, like the Baptist church, had a humble beginning. In 1846, thirteen individuals from three local planter families—the Fays, Grahams, and Smiths—organized the church. By 1858, thirty-eight white persons had joined the congregation, increasing its size to about fifty. In 1860, a dynamic new minister, James King Hazen of Massachusetts, began servicing the church. His tenure as pastor would last nearly seventeen years. Hazen, who married Samuel Ticknor's only child, Mary, in 1858, would become after the Civil War a director of the Prattville Manufacturing Company and the guiding spirit behind the Presbyterian Orphan's home at Tuskegee, Alabama. During the energetic Hazen's first month in

¹³"Diary of Benjamin Franklin Smith," TMs, ACHC.

office in 1860, no less than twenty individuals joined the congregation.¹⁴

Even in 1860, however, members of the Smith, Graham, and Fay families made up a large segment of the Presbyterian church's membership. The church also served over the years as the spiritual home for a significant part of Prattville's Yankee population. In addition to the Hazens, the northern-born Presbyterians included Esther Porter Ticknor (the wife of Samuel Ticknor); Harriet Ticknor (the wife of Simon Ticknor); John Gulick (a gin agent from New Jersey); Augusta Pratt Morgan and her husband, Ashby; Eliza Abbot (probably a Pratt cousin); Ellen Fay Bush and her husband, William; Emily Hale Wheat and her husband, Jay DeWitt; William Root; George Hale; Joseph Hurd and his wife, Mary; and Harriet Porter Fay and her husband, Edwin, their son William Henry, their daughter Sarah, their nephew William Wallace, and their niece Harriet. Other southerners besides various Smiths and Grahams joined the church as well. These southern Presbyterians included painter Ethelred Carroll and his wife; Rachel Houston and her daughters Mary and Frances (both mill operatives), as well as the wife of her son William (a mechanic); Catherine Lockett (the wife of Thomas Lockett, editor of the

¹⁴James M. Graham, A Brief History of the First Presbyterian Church of Prattville, Alabama (Prattville, ca. 1932), 4-8, 17; James H. Hazen, Manual of the Presbyterian Church, Prattville, Alabama (Richmond, Va., 1871), 4-6.

pro-Pratt Southern Statesman); Margaret Killough (the first wife of mechanic Ebenezer Killough); Alabama Tatum Root (the wife of William Root); merchant A. K. McWilliams; and H. S. Yates (a tinner who worked for James Wainwright).¹⁵

Planters Malcolm Smith and Edwin Fay served as ruling elders of the church from 1846 to 1857, when they were succeeded by William Wallace Fay and A. K. McWilliams. In 1859, the church installed two deacons, James Hazen and Ashby Morgan. After Hazen was officially elected pastor in early 1861, William Bush replaced him as a deacon.¹⁶ Of the seven elders and deacons in this period, then, five were northerners.

Overall, the Prattville Presbyterian church should be viewed as a middle and upper class institution. Yankees made up a disproportionately large number of its members, but southerners formed a strong element as well. The two groups seem to have gotten along quite well, judging by an 1852 letter from Ashby Morgan to his wife's stepfather, William Sheldon, in which Morgan requested Sheldon to obtain for him and Augusta letters of recommendation from their Wilton church. "We have become acquainted with nearly all the members [of the Prattville Presbyterian church] and find them very friendly and I think consistent

¹⁵Hazen, Manual, 5-6.

¹⁶Graham, Brief History, 10-11; Hazen, Manual, 4.

and devoted Christians," reported Morgan. After the Civil War, these "consistent and devoted Christians" would prove some of Prattville's most energetic promoters of benevolence projects, forming a ladies' aid society and providing the leading role in establishing the Presbyterian Orphans' Home in Tuskegee.¹⁷

While the Baptist church enjoyed, as Pratt had written, a "respectable" membership, and the Presbyterian church experienced substantial growth on the eve of the Civil War, the most important church in the antebellum period was that of Pratt's own faith, Methodism. Pratt found that Autauga held fertile ground on which to plant a vigorous Methodist church, a major Methodist revival having swept the county in the 1820s. In 1822, Graves' Ferry (located near Washington, then Autauga's seat) became the site of a great Methodist camp meeting, "largely attended from far and near." Among those who converted to Methodism at this time was Thomas Smith, the father of Samuel Parrish Smith. The elder Smith was, according to Shadrack Mims, "a man in whom everyone had confidence" and who "did much good in influencing others to do right. Every member of his family became religious." Mims himself first professed religion in 1821, as a result of a revival in Vernon, the village founded by his elder brother, Seaborn.

¹⁷Ashby Morgan to William Sheldon, 19 July 1852, Box 21, McMillan Collection; Graham, Brief History, 15-19.

During a visit from a Methodist circuit rider, Seaborn Mims's wife was suddenly overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit. "Her ecstasy was so intense that she could not restrain herself," reported a church historian, "and soon she made the entire premises resound with her shouts." A revival resulted, winning over "nearly the entire population" of Vernon, including Seaborn and Shadrack, to Methodism.¹⁸

With devoted Methodists like Shadrack Mims and Samuel Parrish Smith at Pratt's side, it is not surprising that Prattville had a strong Methodist church. Elvira Ramsey Spigner, the wife of Llewellyn Spigner, also played a part in putting Prattville Methodism on a sure footing. Elvira Spigner was the daughter of James Ramsey, a "Georgia Methodist of the old stamp." As a result of the persuasion of this "most estimable lady whose seat in the church and S[unday] School was never vacant when she could attend,"

¹⁸Anson West, A History of Methodism in Alabama (Nashville, 1893), 174-79; Shadrack Mims, "History of Autauga County" (1886), Alabama Historical Quarterly 8 (fall 1946): 249. When Mims moved to Alabama in 1820, he "had never heard nor seen but few Methodist preachers." But a few months after having arrived in Vernon, he found "there was no getting rid of them. On their rest day they would go fishing or boating with the young men in order to get acquainted with them." Mims noted: "Whilst I was really fishing for fish they were fishing for me. In almost two years they dragged me to them in their nets." Shadrack Mims to T. O. Semmes, October 1873, Box 37, McMillan Collection.

both her husband and their two daughters joined the church.¹⁹

In 1844, Pratt outfitted the upper room of B. F. Miles's store to serve Prattville Methodists as a place of worship. B. F. Miles himself "soon afterwards embraced religion, joined the church, and became a useful and exemplary working member." In 1846, Pratt "made a private arrangement with the [Methodist Quarterly] Conference" to have Jesse Perham of New Hampshire serve as both pastor of the church and a machinist in Pratt's newly started cotton mill. Perham, who "was by trade an engineer and a machinist," joined the Methodist Church at Livingston, Alabama in 1839 and was licensed to preach the next year. Mims deemed Perham, who served through 1847, a fine minister and a "true orator by nature." He noted that "as a revivalist [Perham] had no superior." Church historian Anson West concurred in Mims's assessment of Perham's eloquence, finding his speaking "gushing and enthusiastic." Under Perham's leadership, "a large church was formed of young people, mostly engaged in the manufacturing departments." Jacob Slater Hughes, a Methodist minister and temperance advocate, visited Prattville twice in 1847 and found its people well-churched and virtuous, with the exception of "a

¹⁹Shadrack Mims, "History of the M.E. Church in Prattville," TMs, 1885 (?), Box 37, McMillan Collection.

few youngsters [one suspects mill children] who have not learned to be decent in the house of God."²⁰

The Prattville Methodist church continued to enjoy growth in the next several years after Hughes's visits. By 1852, the church claimed 251 members (137 white and 114 black), making it about three times as large as the Baptist church and eight times as large as the Presbyterian church. By this time, the room above Miles's store surely had become rather cramped. In 1853, Pratt completed construction of a new church from his own design. The imposing two-story brick battlemented Gothic building cost him about \$20,000. Pratt felt great pride for the church he had raised, believing it no less than "probably the best brick building in Alabama." The upper story encompassed the church itself (seventy-five feet by sixty feet) and the Sunday School room (seventy-five feet by forty feet), while the lower story housed stores and offices, the rentals of which went to pay church expenses. Pratt hired a prominent New Orleans fresco painter, Charles Potthoff, to embellish the walls and ceiling of the church with trompe l'oeil decoration. Several "young ladies" of Prattville made an

²⁰West, Methodism, 545, 547; Mims, "M.E. Church"; Mims, "History of Prattville in S[usan] F[rancis] H[ale] Tarrant, ed., Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond, Va., 1904); Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, 9 November 1847, reprinted from the Temperance Watchman. Ferdinand Smith records hearing Jesse Perham's "valedictory sermon" on January 23, 1848. Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 2.

"elegant carpet" for the church as well as a table cover and a pulpit rug. Spittoons were thoughtfully supplied for those "gentlemen" who could not "refrain (?) from using tobacco in churches." Pratt invited a correspondent from the Methodist newspaper the Southern Christian Advocate to the church dedication. Pratt's impressed guest reported to the Advocate that the building stood as a "monument" to "the liberality of one noble heart—Daniel Pratt, Esq. has done it all." This was, he noted, "just one of [Pratt's] many liberal acts," but out of respect for his host's "humility and delicacy of feeling," he refrained from adding more detail.²¹

Pratt and his family were, of course, the leading members of the Methodist church, but the surviving register kept by recording steward Samuel Parrish Smith shows that a wide spectrum of townspeople belonged to the congregation

²¹Smith, Church Register; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 14 July 1853; Montgomery Weekly Alabama Journal, 20 August 1853; Daniel Pratt to [Elijah] Chandler, 19 July 1854, Folder 44, Pratt Collection; Mims, "M.E. Church." A photograph of the later razed Methodist church building appeared in the Prattville Progress, 11 November 1898. Mims complained in 1885 that the building had been abandoned and had fallen into disrepair. He urged "the church and citizens" to "take some steps to raise the small amount of money it would require to repair the roof of this building, that it may be perpetuated as a last monument to the founder thereof." Mims, "M.E. Church." On the fresco painter Charles Potthoff, see John A. Mahé II and Rosanne McCaffrey, eds., Encyclopedia of New Orleans Artists: 1718-1918 (New Orleans, 1987), 313. In the 1850s, Potthoff also frescoed the ceilings of the First Presbyterian Church and Trinity Episcopal Church in New Orleans.

in the 1850s. When Smith began the record in 1849, Pratt, his wife, Esther, and her mother, Edith Kingsbury, had already joined the church. Pratt's sister Dorcas joined in 1851, soon after arriving in Alabama. Ellen Pratt, whom her parents baptized as a Methodist in 1844, joined the church in 1860, as did Merrill Pratt. Even Pratt's Scottish gardener, John Welch, belonged to the Methodist church.²²

Although the Holt family joined the Prattville Baptist church, Esther Pratt's Ormsby relations proved partial to the Methodists. Thomas Ormsby and Isabella Brock Ormsby belonged to the church in 1849, and William Ormsby, Isabella's husband, joined the next year. Hannah Hale, a daughter of Gardner Hale who married Thomas Ormsby in 1854, joined in 1856. Elizabeth Smith, a daughter of Amos Smith, who became William Ormsby's second wife in 1858 (Isabella having died in 1855), joined the church the year of her marriage. Both Hannah Hale Ormsby and Elizabeth Smith Ormsby received baptism.

Like Pratt and his wife, Shadrack Mims and his wife, Elizabeth, belonged to the church in 1849. The baptismal record shows all their children received prompt baptism. During the antebellum period, their four eldest children

²²The information in this paragraph and the next several following is drawn from the Church Register and the U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

joined the church. Interestingly, although Samuel Parrish Smith, of course, recorded himself as a member of the church, he did not so record his wife, Adelaide. Their adult children did join the church in the 1860s, however.

Other middle class families belonging to the Methodist church included those of David Carmichael, a North Carolinian mason owning eleven slaves in 1850; John Buie, a North Carolinian "manufacturer" who was worth \$1,000 and owned one slave in 1850; John Mills, a blacksmith from Georgia; N. F. McGraw of Tennessee, a partner with Western Franks in the horse mills shop; Hugh Hillhouse; Elisha Griswold; B. F. Miles; Llewellyn Spigner; W. C. Jones, a miller from Georgia; Charles Doster; Edward Doster; Charles Edwards; attorney Gustavus Northington of Virginia (a brother of William H. Northington); attorney Thomas Saddler of Alabama (who married a daughter of Shadrack Mims); and James L. Wainwright. In addition, although Gardner Hale did not join the Methodist church (Hale, according to Shadrack Mims, "was not a Christian," although he did believe "in the overruling of providence in earthly matters), several of his children did.²³

The Church Register also shows that the congregation had indeed made, as Mims had claimed, gains among households headed by mechanics and operatives. Mill worker

²³Mims, "History of Autauga County," 264.

membership in the Methodist Church has already been discussed in chapter 4. Mechanics joining the church in this period included Samuel Patillo of Alabama, John McKibbon of Ireland and his nephew John McKibbon of New York, Tilman Jones of Georgia, Marcus Cicero Killet of South Carolina, James M. Killet of South Carolina, John Hearn of Georgia, Solomon Rogers of Alabama, William W. Jones of Georgia, John T. Davenport of Alabama, James Ward of Georgia, John Falsinger of Germany, H. T. Davis of Georgia, Harris Ware of North Carolina, James P. Glass of Alabama, John Wesley Glass of Alabama, James Tunnell of Kentucky, and Joshua White of North Carolina. Norman Cameron, a young North Carolinian whom Pratt placed in charge of the warehouse at Washington Landing, also joined the church.

Sometimes, mechanic husbands did not join, while some of their family members did. Sarah Carmichael, whose own family was strongly Methodist, remained in the church when she married Ephraim Morgan, but he never joined. A Dun agent appraising the creditworthiness of Morgan's sash, door, and blind shop reported in 1856 that while Morgan was "quite responsible in his pecuniary affairs," he nevertheless was also "a man of bad morals." Somewhat similarly, George Duckworth did not finally join the Methodist Church until 1865, seven years after his wife and daughter

Elizabeth, four years after his daughter Nancy, and one year after his daughter Rosanna.²⁴

While people from many different ranks in life joined the Methodist congregation, the leadership was confined to members of the middle class. Besides Daniel Pratt, Shadrack Mims, and Samuel Parrish Smith—the usual trinity—those who served as church stewards included Hugh Hillhouse, Thomas Saddler, B. F. Miles, William Ormsby, Norman Cameron, Thomas Ormsby, James Wainwright, and James Tunnell. The humblest member of this group was mechanic James Tunnell, but even he was worth \$1,050 in 1860.²⁵

Both the Methodist church congregation and its leadership had strong contingents of southerners. In fact, a striking point about the church is the absence from it of many of Prattville's most prominent notherners, including Gardner Hale, Enoch Robinson, Ephraim Morgan, Charles Morgan, James Allen, William Allen, Hassan Allen, Amos Smith, George Smith, and Ferdinand Smith. Two of these men, Gardner Hale and Ephraim Morgan, appear to have qualified as religious skeptics, at the least. Mims, it will be

²⁴Alabama Vol. 2, 9, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection. On the Carmichael family's Methodism, see the obituary of Mrs. Mary Carmichael in the Columbia Southern Christian Advocate, 11 August 1854.

²⁵U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

recalled, claimed that Hale "was not a Christian," while a Dun agent labeled Morgan "a man of bad morals."

One might have thought that Amos Smith and his family, as well as his nephew Ferdinand, might have fared poorly in the estimation of some Prattvillians, including Daniel Pratt himself, for they were partial to Universalism, a faith that has as its central tenet the belief in universal salvation, and they even dabbled in Spiritualism for a short time. Universalism and Spiritualism, historians tell us, were universally condemned by southerners, whose strong religious and social conservatism alienated them from these radical northern "isms," along with abolitionism, feminism, and socialism. However, there is no evidence that the Smiths suffered any social ostracism for their unorthodox beliefs. Indeed, Mims gave the family unqualified praise:

The family of Smiths was from [the] New England states and were remarkable for their steady, quiet, and orderly lives. Honest, industrious, punctual, and economical, they were all successful in business. They were law-abiding and faithful to all their church duties. . . . They were model men and have model families. If the world was fitted up with just such people, we should have a comparatively happy world.²⁶

Mims saved his sectarian scorn for the Hardshell Baptists.

In the late 1840s and 1850s, Amos Smith regularly received itinerant Universalist ministers at his Prattville abode, Mount Airy. During their stays, these visiting preachers delivered sermons either at one of the Prattville

²⁶Mims, "History of Autauga County," 265-66.

churches or, more commonly, at the village lyceum, Alida Hall. Amos Smith's Universalist guests included John C. Burruss, editor of the Universalist Herald (published in Notasulga, Alabama), C. F. R. Shehane, S. J. McMorris, E. H. Lake, and Almon Gage. After stopping at Prattville during one of his Alabama circuits, E. H. Lake reported to the Herald that he had been there "cordially received by that devoted friend of our cause, Br. Amos Smith. He and his family are with us heart and soul. God bless that mansion of peace and love."²⁷

The Smiths held in especially high esteem Almon Gage, who like themselves was a Yankee (He was born in New York). Ferdinand and, especially, George recorded his visits to Prattville in some detail in the journals. On February 4, 1851, George noted:

Just before night Mr. Gage, a Universalist preacher arrived at the [gin] shop. He had an appointment at Prattville this evening. We all quit and went home took supper and returned to town. He preached in Morgan's Hall and gave us a most excellent discourse, showing him to be a man of no ordinary ability. He returned home with us to Mt. Airy.

²⁷Notasulga Universalist Herald, 2 May 1856. Almon Gage delivered three sermons in the Methodist church in 1848, and a "Mr. Clayton" gave a sermon the same year in the Baptist church. C. F. R. Shehane delivered a sermon in the Baptist church the following year. It was not until 1852, however, that a Universalist spoke again in a Prattville house of worship. That year, Gage delivered a temperance lecture and a funeral oration in the Methodist church. Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 3, 67, 11, 54, 122, 125.

On this occasion, Gage stayed three days and two nights at Mount Airy. The second evening, he toured Pratt's art gallery, but it does not appear that he met Pratt himself.²⁸

Gage's visit did provoke some sectarian unpleasantness the following Sunday, however. H. G. Ferguson, the presiding Methodist elder, delivered a "rather dull" sermon, noted George, entitled "Man of Straw." George complained: "I think he intended this 'man of straw' for a Universalist, but he knew not what he was doing." Undeterred by the disdain of the Methodist elder, Gage returned to Prattville in July, September, October, November, and December of that year, each time lecturing at Alida Hall and staying over with the Smiths. Amos Smith paid Gage thirtyone dollars for his services in 1851. "I think him one of our best men," concluded George in December. "I wish we could sustain such a man at Prattville," he added a few days later, "but there is little hope of it at present."²⁹

January 11, 1852 saw another bolt from the pulpit aimed at the Universalists, this time by G. R. Foster, the Presbyterian minister. "He couldn't forbear making a stab

²⁸Nobles, ed., George Smith, 4. The Smiths often refer to Prattville's lyceum as Morgan's Hall, while the Autauga Citizen designates the building as Alida Hall. I have followed the newspaper's usage.

²⁹Nobles, ed., George Smith, 4, 18, 26, 29, 33, 35, 36, 44.

at the Universalists," complained George, "classing them with Mohammedans, Mormons and Infidels, this showing rather an unChristian spirit to say the least of it." Ferdinand Smith concurred, calling Foster's remarks "very unkind." To these "quiet," "orderly," "industrious," "punctual," "economical," "law-abiding," and "faithful" young men, classification with such religious and cultural pariahs was hurtful indeed. Undaunted, Foster heaped "more abuse on Universalists" on August 8, 1852.³⁰

That the clerical criticism of Universalism reflected a broader consensus in Prattville is not apparent; certainly the Smith cousins never complained of any widespread animosity against them for their unorthodox religious views. Indeed, when Gage returned to Prattville in March, this time with editor John Burruss, George reported that the pair "preached in the Hall to a pretty good audience." Likewise, on June 6, George wrote that Gage's sermon at the Hall enjoyed a "[p]retty good audience." Moreover, a year earlier, on July 29, Ferdinand noted that Gage's "excellent discourse had a very fair congregation," including the Methodist minister, John A. Spence.³¹

³⁰Nobles, ed., George Smith, 38; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 111, 132.

³¹Nobles, ed., George Smith, 44, 51; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 98. On May 11, 1852, however, George reported that there were "not very many out" at Gage's

Gage made a total of five visits in 1852. On November 21, John A. Spence, evidently not having liked what he had heard the previous year, launched his attack on Universalism, a sermon based on the text "and these shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal." After the tragic death of his beloved sister Mary, George stopped writing in his journal during much of the second half of 1852, but Ferdinand did record his contempt for Spence's sermon, which the minister "pretended to be an Exposition of Universalism and its founders." Ferdinand derided the putative Exposition as "a very lame and vague affair about an hour and [a] half long." On December 5, Gage returned to deliver "Cousin Mary's funeral sermon," which, on account of illness, he had been unable to deliver after Mary's death in July. "His subject was the resurrection, Corinthians XV. 35," noted Ferdinand. He was clearly moved by Gage's sermon, calling it "one of the best I ever heard on that subject." Ferdinand later bought two books from S. J. McMorris, another Universalist minister, who had accompanied Gage to Prattville. The next day, George and Ferdinand "went over the creek with Bro. Gage and Mr. McMorris, and took a look about the new [gin

temperance lecture, which he delivered at the Methodist church. Similarly, on September 21, 1851, Ferdinand noted that Gage's "audience was rather small on account of a funeral in town."

factory] building and the sash shop, also went up to Mr. Pratt's picture gallery."³²

Gage left Alabama for a station in South Carolina in 1853, but Amos Smith continued to receive Universalist itinerants up to the time he left Alabama in 1857. Nor were the Smiths the only Universalists in Autauga County. Caleb Moncrief, a prominent Whig planter, counted among their ranks, and George Tisdale purchased at least one Universalist book. When S. J. McMorris preached at Morgan's Hall, however, the congregation was small enough that George was able to list it with greater specificity than previously: "our family, Mr. Harris and wife, Mr. Strickland, and Mr. Moon." Clearly, Universalism accounted for only a fragment of the faithful in Prattville. Even the Smith boys drifted away from Universalism, George becoming an Episcopalian in 1857 (an especially interesting choice in light of the fact that Prattville had no Episcopal church until after the Civil War) and Ferdinand joining the Methodists in 1858.³³

The interest of the Smiths in Spiritualism proved more ephemeral than their interest in Universalism, but for a

³²Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 134-35, 141-42.

³³Notasulga Universalist Herald, 4 January 1856; Adelaide Smith to Julia Smith, 26 June 1857, Box 96, McMillan Collection; Smith, Church Register; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 29, 60.

time in the 1850s, the Smiths, as well as at least a few other Prattvillians, enthusiastically tipped tables. Between May 24 and August 29, 1853, Ferdinand Smith recorded eleven instances of family seances at Mount Airy (George Smith was absent most of this time on a gin-repairing trip in the Southwest). Probably the most extraordinary spiritual occurrence that Ferdinand recorded in his journal took place on August 3:

At night went home with Uncle, took supper and stayed until ten-o'clock [Ferdinand was boarding separately in Prattville at this time]. We had the table tipping, the spirit of Edward Pratt [presumably Merrill Pratt's father and Daniel Pratt's brother] was present and brought the spirit of Father [Amos Smith's brother, Daniel], he said he was happy and told me to go on in the good work in which I was engaged. . . . [T]he spirits reported that George [Smith] was between New Orleans and Mobile.³⁴

The Smith's seances seem to have been a family affair engaged in by Ferdinand, George (when he was present), Amos Smith and his wife, George's sisters Elizabeth and Sarah, his brother Daniel, and Ferdinand's fiancée, Martha Riggs. It is possible that the sudden death of George's sister Mary on July 28, 1852, which shattered the family, may have triggered their interest in spiritual communication with the dead. Interest in Spiritualism in Prattville, however, apparently extended beyond the confines of Mount Airy. On February 9, 1854, George Smith, who had married Mary Ormsby the previous month and moved into his own abode, entered in

³⁴Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 157-58, 160-63, 165.

his journal: "At noon Brother Tom [Ormsby] rode up to our house with us to dinner, his wife [Hannah Hale] being here as also Mrs. Beckwith. We had some table tippings before dinner." All these table tippers of whom George wrote, including Susan Beckwith of New York, the wife of a Prattville machinist, were Yankees.³⁵

One might be tempted to dismiss these examples of Prattville spiritualism as the not unusual behavior of typical (for the most part) New England Yankees. The only southerner in the lot was South Carolinian Martha Riggs. This point, I think, carries some weight, yet it does not ultimately strike completely home. For one thing, one Yankee in Prattville, Adelaide Smith, found spiritualism shocking and offensive. It is almost certain that Daniel Pratt would have shared her view. Adelaide Smith, for one, wrote her daughter Julia disdainfully of the antics of a Mrs. Leland, who "pretends that the spirits of the dead enter her & . . . acts as she thinks they did while living." The visiting spiritualist held her meetings at the home of Mr. Reynolds, a plasterer from New York with an English wife. Adelaide declared her behavior at that house simply had become a scandal:

The other night she said Mr. Abner Hill's spirit got into her & called for a drink of whiskey & cursed & went on at a terrible rate. A night or two after that Mr. Franks' spirit got into her & she started off down

³⁵Nobles, ed., George Smith, 69.

the hill full speed to see the old woman. They went after her & carried her back. Your Pa says he wishes they had let her go to see the old woman. He thinks she would not go again.

Adelaide insisted she and her husband were not alone in their outrage over the medium's actions: "People are getting very much mad with her & if she don't [?] she will have to leave." Virtuously, she added: "I have never seen her and don't want to."³⁶

Given her feelings about Mrs. Leland, Adelaide would probably not have been pleased to find that her eighteen-year-old daughter Mary dabbled in spiritualism at a girls' academy in Tuscaloosa in 1864. In a letter to her brother-in-law Merrill Pratt, Mary Smith casually informed Merrill that she and her classmates had been "so busy calling up spirits last night" that she had not completed her letter to him. Mary explained that her teachers had gone to a party the night before, leaving "the girls" with the house to themselves. "You can imagine what a time we had," she declared. Left to their own devices by their absent teachers, Mary and her friends called up spirits, including "the Old Bad Man," and "had the table dancing all over the

³⁶Adelaide Smith to Julia Smith, 17 January 1858, Box 96, McMillan Collection. Abner Hill was a local planter whose deathbed conversion to Methodism greatly relieved Samuel Parrish Smith. See Smith, Church Register. Mr. Franks's "old woman" was likely Caroline Franks, the widow of shopowner Western Franks, who died around 1855. Mrs. Franks kept a boarding house in Prattville.

room."³⁷ Mary Smith's mother, of course, came from Connecticut, but her father was a Georgian by birth, and she herself had been born and reared in Prattville in the 1840s and 1850s.

Although admittedly many Prattvillians probably would have looked askance at Mary Smith's dalliance with the "Old Bad Man," just as they did at Mrs. Leland's profane demands for whiskey, it appears that, with the exception of several local ministers, they found Universalism far less objectionable. What probably united most Prattvillians of the various Christian denominations was a commitment to social reform. Methodist Shadrack Mims, whose body of writings attest to his strong religious devotion, greatly admired Amos Smith and his family but showered scorn on Autauga's Hardshell Baptists for their stubborn opposition to institutional development and reform. Mims recalled one

³⁷Mary Smith to Merrill Pratt, 15 November 1864, Folder 35, Pratt Collection, ADAH. The Citizen reported in 1853, shortly before the Smiths began their spiritualism experiments, that "some intelligent gentleman in the Alabama capital . . . not of the class to be easily humbugged" had taken up "table-rapping." Prattville Autauga Citizen, 14 April 1853. Thus the fad may easily have spread to nearby Prattville by May. Further research will likely reveal that Spiritualism, at least in towns and villages, was not a northern, but rather a national phenomenon. For example, Yankee textile manufacturer Henry Merrell, who lived in Greensboro, Georgia from 1845 to 1856, wrote in his Autobiography that during his residence in Greensboro, "the sport of spirit-rapping and table-turning was in full blast. We tried some experiments at my house, but in a skeptical way." Henry Merrell, The Autobiography of Henry Merrell: Industrial Missionary to the South, edited by James L. Skinner III (Athens, Ga., 1991), 213.

minister, L. C. Davis (nicknamed "Clubaxe"), who "was a Baptist and nothing but a Baptist." Mims complained of Davis's opposition "to Sunday Schools and all other institutions." While Mims admitted that Davis "in point [of] zeal and hard common sense was above the average Hard Shell preacher," he nevertheless asserted that Davis "was very eccentric and . . . very rough in his language." To illustrate Davis' shortcomings, Mims related an incident that took place at one of Davis' churches, located in Vernon:

In commentary upon the verse which speaks of Peter's letting down his hook and drawing up a fish with a piece of silver in his gills, the old man said Peter had better luck than he had . . . all the fish he caught must be tadpoles that had no gills, for he had never received a penny from any of them. This was a hard thrust, but no doubt true.

Mims added witheringly that he had told this anecdote "to show what sort of material the state had as to its religious instruction from a Baptist standpoint."³⁸

Like Mims, Ferdinand and George Smith could be very hard on ministers. What the Smiths seem to have valued most in sermons was not doctrine, but useful advice on how to live morally upright and materially productive lives. The highest praise a Smith could give a sermon was to designate it "practical," while the lowest insult was to deem it "doctrinal." Their favorite minister, Almon Gage, scored very well in this regard. Ferdinand Smith wrote in

³⁸Mims, "History of Autauga County," 254-59.

1851, for example, that Gage had "preached an excellent discourse on the Test of Discipleship, a practical sermon." But Gage was not the only "practical" minister in Prattville by any means. Indeed, in their journals, the Smith cousins evinced a generally high regard for Prattville ministers. Ferdinand repeatedly praised Georgian James Heard, who served as pastor of the Methodist church in 1849-50: "a good practical sermon"; "a very good practical sermon . . . Subject: Self Examination"; "a very good and practical sermon."³⁹

The Smiths quickly revealed displeasure with John Spence, who replaced Heard in 1851. Ferdinand dubbed Spence's discourses "very melancholy" and "dry and uninteresting," while George displayed open contempt for the new pastor. "Mr. Spence preached, subject: "Capital Punishment—very poorly treated," judged George in 1852. George's entry of August 10, 1851 flayed Spence for his parochial naiveté concerning a sermon he delivered upon the evils of the fictitious "Somersetski Dance." Of the discourse George complained: "He gave us one of the flattest messes to be called a sermon that I have heard for a long time." Spence, it seems, had gone "off in to a dissertation on dancing," which George decried as "ridiculous." George explained that Spence had seen a newspaper story,

³⁹Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 75-76, 82, 103.

which he did not realize had been "written for a burlesque," that described a new dance supposedly sweeping fashionable coastal resorts, called the "Somersetski," "in which all those taking part, ladies and all, were continually turning somersault[s], heels over head, the ladies wearing flesh colored silk tights so as not to be too much exposed when heels upward." Spence, George claimed, took the whole satire "in sober earnest and proclaimed a long time on the downward debasing tendency of this amusement." George chuckled: "I should like much to have a copy of the sermon for future reference."⁴⁰

While at first glance these comments might appear to indicate a deep cultural divide between southerners and northerners, this view is misleading, for Spence proved unappealing to southerners as well. George Smith noted with relish a humiliation Spence suffered in March 1852. John Shelman, an agent of the Alabama Bible Society, had preached "a most excellent discourse on the comforts and consolations in the Bible," reported George. After Shelman's sermon, church officials began taking up a collection for the Society. The Presbyterian minister, G. R. Foster, proposed that he become "one of six to make Mr. Spence a life member of the American Bible Society by

⁴⁰Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 88, 116; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 20, 50. Spence had also, it will be recalled, attacked Universalism in a sermon.

paying thirty dollars." George Noble offered to be the second individual, but then came "a long pause." "Finally," announced George triumphantly, "Mr. Noble proposed that as the brethren were so backward about coming forward, that Mr. Foster and himself" would pay the full amount between themselves. "This little affair shows in what estimation Mr. Spence is held by his church," concluded George with satisfaction.⁴¹

Anson West, the historian of the Methodist Church in Alabama, more guardedly criticized Spence. While Spence "proved to be a man of good ability and of more than ordinary attainments," wrote West, he was also "a man of sour temper, always dissatisfied, always complaining, always engaged in adverse criticism." Spence eventually became a Methodist Protestant in 1874.⁴²

Spence served Prattville only in 1851 and 1852. A much more popular minister was John Dalton Fisher, who was born in New Bern, North Carolina in 1802. He served three terms in Prattville, 1855-56, 1859-60, and 1863-64, longer

⁴¹Nobles, ed., George Smith, 44. Given George's occasionally rather venomous jottings concerning Spence, it is with surprise that one sees him credit Spence on December 21, 1851 with "a very good sermon from these words: 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, etc.'." Ibid., 35. Spence's unpopularity may reflect something of a conservative/rural-liberal/"urban" religious divide. On June 29, 1851, George wrote: "Mr. Spence's brother preached a regular Piny Woods sermon." Ibid., 16.

⁴²West, Methodism, 43.

than any other Methodist pastor prior to Reconstruction. Shadrack Mims, who had nothing to say about Spence in his reminiscences, wrote highly of Fisher:

Rev. J. D. Fisher served the church at Prattville six years at different times and was highly acceptable as a faithful pastor and preacher during the whole time. . . . He was a man of fine common sense and a close observer of men and passing events. He was uniformly entertaining in the pulpit, and was highly respected and loved by all who knew him.

Ferdinand Smith several times praised Fisher's sermons as "good" or "very good," while George was even more emphatic, declaring them at various times "excellent," "powerful," and, of course, "practical."⁴³

Just as Prattville's Methodists appear to have reached a consensus concerning Reverend Fisher, so all denominations in the village joined together on Sunday in the Union Sunday School, which was affiliated with the American Sunday School Union, a national organization formed in Philadelphia in 1824 in order to promote Sunday schools in the United States. In 1847, Jacob Slater Hughes wrote that the Sabbath School had 20 teachers, 120 students, and a library of "one thousand volumes of good books." The same year Pratt informed his relatives: "We have a Sabath school numbering 120 scholars." Presumably after the completion in

⁴³Ibid., 1139; Mims, "M. E. Church"; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 201-02, 205, 217; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 48, 104, 106, 115. Fisher stumbled in George's estimation on June 15, 1856, however: "[H]eard a prosy discourse from Mr. Fisher, at least it seemed so to me." Nobles, ed., George Smith, 117.

1853 of the large Methodist church building, which also housed the Union Sunday School and its library, the school's leaders divided it into male and female departments. A surviving Library Record for the male department of the school reveals that in 1854, its male department claimed about 80 students in any given month, as well as 16 teachers. The Record notes that William Ormsby and Abner Echols, librarians of the female and male departments, respectively, "sorted and numbered all the Books that are bound, belonging to this school, and placed them in the new room in the New S. S. Room, furnished so comfortably and tastefully by Mr. Daniel Pratt." The number of books processed by Ormsby and Echols came to 1,036. In the Record, Echols offered a prayer that Prattville's children would "never fail to be blest with the influence of American Sunday Schools, and that Holy Religion that first dictated their Institution." Shadrack Mims, for one, found the new school a blessing indeed, declaring: "We have one of the best Sabbath Schools in the State."⁴⁴

⁴⁴Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, 9 November 1847; Daniel Pratt to Daniel and Eliza Holt, 1 June 1847, Folder 44, Pratt Collection; The Prattville Sunday School Library Record, ACHC; Shadrack Mims to Price Williams, 15 February 1854, reprinted in Randall Miller, "Love of Labor: A Note on Daniel Pratt's Employment Practices," Alabama Historical Quarterly (summer 1975): 148-49. At one time, probably in the 1840s, Pratt and Mims taught Sunday School classes as well. Malcolm Alexander Smith, a local planter's son born in 1840, wrote that his "earliest recollection of Mr. Pratt dates back to the time when I first, as a small child, attended the Union Sabbath-School in Prattville." Pratt

At the forefront of Prattville's effort to extend the influence of American Sunday Schools were the sixteen teachers of the male department: merchants Henry Thigpen and James Allen, planters Washington Pollard, John Shelman, and Daniel Holt, teacher (and later agent) William Wallace Fay, mill overseer George Ward, and mechanics George Smith, Ferdinand Smith, Frank Smith, James Wainwright, Ashby Morgan, Jesse Mathews, James Tunnell, and Nathan Morris. Half of these men were northerners, while the other half were southerners. Most of them were of fairly modest means, having wealth ranging in 1860 from \$1,000 to \$10,000. The three wealthiest, planter Washington Pollard (\$24,100), planter John Shelman (\$16,700), and merchant Henry Thigpen (\$13,070) had no connection to Pratt. Pollard owned a plantation near Washington Landing, while Shelman owned one in northern Montgomery County. Like George Noble, they lived in Prattville for several years in the 1850s, apparently preferring the amenities of village life.

was Smith's teacher, and Smith recalled "being drilled by him in questions touching the historical portions of the Scriptures." Smith praised Pratt's "care, kindness, solicitude" as a teacher. Malcolm Alexander Smith, "Eulogy," in Tarrant, ed., Daniel Pratt, 120. On the American Sunday School, see Anne M. Boylan, Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880 (New Haven, Conn. and London, 1988). Prattville's school probably purchased its library from the American Union, which sold "Sunday School Libraries" in the 1850s of varying size and price. Boylan, Sunday School, 49, 51, 56. The Library Record has "American Sunday School Union" and its Philadelphia address stamped on front.

Shelman also resembled Noble in his connection to the Alabama Bible Society, for which he worked as an agent.⁴⁵

Shelman, Tunnell, Thigpen, Wainwright, and Ormsby belonged to the Methodist Church in 1854, while Mathews, Holt, and B. F. Smith were Baptists and Fay and Morgan were Presbyterians. Ferdinand Smith and George Smith inclined toward Universalism, although later in the decade the former man would become a Methodist and the latter an Episcopalian. The religious affiliations of Allen, Pollard, Ward, and Morris are unknown, though it seems likely that the latter two men, who came from more humble backgrounds, belonged to the Baptist Church.

The teachers of the male department of the Prattville Union Sunday School, then, represented a variety of religious, regional, and economic backgrounds. Again, northerners were disproportionately involved, but southerners held their own. Most of the men had some connection to Prattville industrial occupations, but a few did not. At least three of the male Sunday School teachers, Ormsby and the Smith cousins Ferdinand and George, even dabbled in Spiritualism.

Most of the teachers were relatively young married men with small families, though Allen, Holt, and Tunnell were older men with larger families. Thomas Ormsby, Ferdinand

⁴⁵Library Record; U. S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County, Montgomery County.

Smith, and George Smith took wives in a triple wedding at Daniel Pratt's art gallery on January 5, 1854; about two weeks later, George recorded in his journal: "Went with Mary [Ormsby, his new bride] to the Sabbath School this morning. Found that there was a class which the Superintendent [Abner Echols] wishes me to take, and thus become a teacher. I think I shall take it."⁴⁶

Like the teachers, the students of the Sabbath School came fairly evenly from families across Prattville's social spectrum. Out of the boys' and girls' divisions of the school I have identified a total of sixty-four children from thirty-four households. Ten of these households (to which sixteen children belonged) were headed by merchants, planters, or professionals. The other twenty-four households (with forty-eight children) belonged to the operative and artisan communities. Some of these "artisan" households stood at the apex of Prattville society, however, being those of shopowners or high-ranking factory officers. From these households we find Ellen Pratt, two of Gardner Hale's sons, no less than five of Shadrack Mims's children, three of Western Frank's children, and George Tisdale's daughter, Emma. Yet we also find the children of mechanics James Tunnell, John Buie, William Counts, J. N. Cook, and Ebenezer Killough, painter Ethelred Carrol, and millers

⁴⁶Nobles, ed., George Smith, 66-67.

Joshua Harris and William C. Jones. Three sons of carpenter Benjamin Durden, the Democrats' standardbearer in the post office battle, also attended. In addition, we find children from operative households headed by John Searcy, Patience Ward (mother of teacher George Ward), Hannah Holstine, Rachel Houston, Martha Mathews, Sarah Hoyle, Elizabeth Ross, Elisha Ellis, Sara Chatwood, Matilda Elliot, and Elizabeth Royals. The number of women among these mill household heads is pronounced, again underscoring that women were particularly prone among this group to involve themselves and their children in church. In the Sabbath School, at least, such children of the wealthy as Ellen Pratt and Irene and Zachariah Pope Gordon (children of local planter James Gordon and his heiress wife, Amanda Pope) rubbed shoulders and sang songs with both middle-class children like Laura Franks and Julia Buie and children from poorer families such as Elizabeth and Sarah Royals and Sarah Chatwood.⁴⁷

Though rich and poor children attended the same Sunday schools, they went to different common schools on weekdays. In the 1850s, mill children attended a free school

⁴⁷Library Record, U. S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. A list in the Library Record includes the names of thirty-nine female students in the Sunday School, but it does not give any teachers. It seems likely that this is only a partial listing of students, for there is no reason to think that only half as many girls attended as boys.

(discussed in chapter 3), while other youths enrolled at Prattville Male and Female Academy, a private institution conducted by a succession of men, including southerner William Miles and northerner Henry Butler. Prattvillians wanted a better school, however; so, not surprisingly, Daniel Pratt began erecting a new academy building in 1859. The substantial brick Italianate structure, fully completed in 1861, cost Pratt almost \$8,000. As president of the board of trustees, Pratt secured as principal a native southerner, the Reverend E. D. Pitts of Auburn Female College. Pratt proudly declared that Prattville now had "the most elegantly furnished school building, of the size, in the State." A visiting newspaper correspondent reported that "in putting up this fine school," Prattvillians had "added another to the many evidences of their public spirit, and of their attention to the necessities of the rising generation." For his part, Pratt believed that the new Male and Female Academy would considerably advance "the mental and moral culture of [Prattville's] youth."⁴⁸

⁴⁸Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 March, 12 May 1859, 16 August 1860; Tuskegee Republican, 19 May 1859; "Prattville Academy Expenses from May 1859 to June 1861," Folder 54, Pratt Collection, ADAH. The new school at least was more expensive than other Prattville schools, costing \$32 to \$132 per year. By contrast, Butler's school in 1860 cost only from \$18 to \$26 dollars per year. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5 January, 20 September 1860. Pratt paid over \$1,000 for furnishings and almost \$400 for a school bell.

In the creation of strong schools and churches, Daniel Pratt and his supporters believed they had taken a major step toward placing Prattville on a strong moral foundation. Not everyone in the 1840s and 1850s, however, lived up to Pratt's ideal standard of middle class virtue. Some village youths drank, gambled, fought, or engaged in noisy street spectacles (charivari). Along with his allies, Pratt hoped that schools and voluntary associations, such as the Sons of Temperance and the Fire Engine Company, would give his vision of the "good society" even greater substance.

DANIEL PRATT OF PRATTVILLE:
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CHAPTER EIGHT

BUILDING A SOCIETY: VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS IN PRATTVILLE, 1846 TO 1861

On February 26, 1852, Nathan Morris, one of Daniel Pratt's best southern gin mechanics, married Eliza Franks, a daughter of Western Franks, an original Pratt mechanic who had become, by 1850, a shop owner in his own right. That evening, "a good number" of Prattville's citizens attended the weekly Singing Society meeting. Both Ferdinand Smith and George Smith went to the meeting, Ferdinand in the company of his sweetheart, Martha Riggs. Later that evening, Ferdinand recorded in his diary that the Society had "had a good sing," but he complained that "the goings on of ragamuffins out celebrating Miss Eliza Franks' wedding supper" had "somewhat disturbed" the singers. In a similar vein, George Smith declared in his diary: "The Cowbellians were out in full force and made [the] night hideous with their horrid noises." He added irritably that on his way back to his father's house, Mount Airy, after the meeting, the noisy mob "frightened my horse considerably."¹

¹Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith (Prattville, 1991), 115; Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of George Littlefield Smith (Prattville, 1991), 42.

The men and women attending the Singing Society meeting that February night were partaking of one of the dignified, community-improving entertainments available in antebellum Prattville. Not for them the raucous antics of the Cowbellians' charivari. Rather, middle-class Prattvillians joined voluntary associations, attended lectures at the Lyceum, and visited the Reading Room and Daniel Pratt's art gallery. Prattville's voluntary associations and other cultural institutions were designed to help build the "industrious, intelligent, and refined" people with whom Pratt desired to populate his town. On the other hand, the charivari loudly offered itself as an example of the "dissipation" Pratt wanted to eliminate from his "lovely village." By 1860, Pratt had largely succeeded in building his "good society." The strident chords of the charivari were no more, while the sweet strains of Singing Society practices filled the air every Thursday evening.²

²The literature on southern associational activity is sparse, but see Guion Griffis Johnson, Antebellum North Carolina: A Social History (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1937), 162-80, 416-26, 453-58, 701-03; Suzanne Lebsack, The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York, 1984), 195-236; John W. Quist, "Slaveholding Operatives of the Benevolent Empire: Bible, Tract, and Sunday School Societies in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama," Journal of Southern History 62 (August 1996): 481-526. On the charivari in the nineteenth-century South, see William F. Holmes, "Charivari: Race, Honor, and Post Office Politics in Sharon, Georgia, 1890," Georgia Historical Quarterly 80 (winter 1996): 759-84; Bertram Wyatt Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York, 1982), 435-61.

Judging from surviving diaries and letters, "dissipation" and disorder were never in great evidence in antebellum Prattville. The charivari occasioned by the Franks-Morris wedding is the last of these incidents recorded in the Smith journals, which together cover the period from 1848 to 1855. Moreover, the only other charivari mentioned by the Smiths occurred just a month earlier. And significantly, George Smith, at least, seems to have sympathized with the Carmichael-Morgan charivari.

On January 20, 1852, Yankee shopowner Epraim Morgan married Sarah Carmichael, the sister of a prominent local builder, Daniel Carmichael, originally from South Carolina. In an apparent attempt to avoid any unseemly street celebrations, the marriage was quietly performed at Carmichael's house, with only the bride's family as witnesses. The newlyweds "passed the night" at Morgan's house, "which had no other furniture than an old cot bedstead," and at five o'clock in the morning, the bride returned to her brother's house. Morgan's "object in all this," noted a bemused George Smith in his journal, "was to keep anybody from knowing of his marriage." Inevitably, word got around to the townspeople, and the next evening the Cowbellians struck, making the "night hideous by all kinds of unearthly

noises," including gunfire. "Just now a big gun went off," noted Ferdinand Smith in his journal.³

George Smith put the blame for this charivari on its victim, Ephraim Morgan. While he disapproved of the Cowbellians' behavior, he nevertheless admitted that Morgan had overreacted, treating his bride very shabbily. Claiming that on the night of the charivari "Ephraim did not sleep with her but staid alone at his house," George concluded scornfully that Morgan's marriage "on the whole . . . was the most ridiculous affair I ever heard of." In short, Morgan's conduct merited public humiliation. Other respectable Prattvillians seem to have been of the same mind as George, for, after talking to people around town about Morgan's character, a visiting Dun agent reported in 1856 that Morgan was "a man of bad morals."⁴

While charivaris appear to have occurred only infrequently in Prattville, other examples of disorder in the town in the period can be found. In an 1848 letter to Daniel Pratt, George Cooke wrote of his "regret to hear that the demon of alcohol has access to your village." If Cooke had lived into the 1850s, he would have found that Pratt had failed to exorcise this "demon" from Prattville.

³Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 112; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 39.

⁴Nobles, ed., George Smith, 39; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 91, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration.

Drinking in all likelihood had accompanied Prattville's charivaris, and it certainly played a role in an earlier political demonstration in August 1851. That month saw the culmination of a hard-fought, heated campaign at the state and local levels between Southern Rights and Unionist candidates for office. On election day, August 4, George reported that "two fights were begun, but were promptly put a stop to, one between T. [J.] Tarleton and Bolling Hall, the other between J[ohn T.] Hamilton and Mr. Methany." Ferdinand noted that "there was considerable excitement in town and a little attempt at fighting, but the disturbance soon ended." He added that he "was sorry to see some drunkenness."⁵

The atmosphere in the town remained volatile for three days, as anxious partisans awaited the election results. On August 5, Ferdinand wrote: "There has been a little excitement among the Fire Eaters, growing out of the election." He added the next day that "considerable excitement" occurred in the town, "mostly occasioned by a few drunken fellows." George Smith gave more explicit detail in his entries: "Some of the Southern Rights crowd are

⁵George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 15 May 1848, Folder 44, Pratt Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 98; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 19. For background on the bitter 1851 Alabama election, see J. Mills Thornton, III, Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge and London, 1978), 164-204.

mad because Mr. Hale turned a [mill] hand off who voted that ticket." He added his opinion that at bottom, "the great trouble with this is getting and drinking too much liquor."⁶

When news came in on August 7 of a Southern Rights victory in Autauga (both William Mudd, the Union candidate for the United States House of Representatives, and Jesse R. Jones, the Union candidate for the Alabama House of Representatives, had been defeated), Prattville's Southern Rights men staged "in the streets of Prattville" what an outraged George Smith called "a very ridiculous affair." He described the unseemly street celebration at length:

A number of partly inebriated young men procured a skeleton and placing it on a table in the middle of the street, named it Jesse R. Jones, the Union Candidate for representative, and then performed the funeral ceremonies over it. . . . Old man Killet presided and Mr. William Cox delivered the funeral address.⁷

Middle-class Prattvillians could dismiss such occurrences as the unfortunate but none-too-surprising shenanigans of Democratic "ragamuffins" and rascals like old man Killet, but what could they say when respectable men fell

⁶Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 98; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 19.

⁷Nobles, ed., George Smith, 19-20. "Old man Killet" was probably John Killet, a farmer born around 1785 in South Carolina who lived in Prattville in the household of his son Marcus Cicero Killet, a gin mechanic. U.S. Census, 1850, Alabama, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

from grace? Several such troubling instances occurred in the 1840s and 1850s.

A nasty fight took place on Christmas Day, 1850, between Thomas Ormsby and Frank DeBardleben, a half-brother of Henry DeBardleben. Ferdinand Smith labeled the affray "a very disgraceful affair." Ormsby, he noted, "cut the latter [man] badly with a knife."⁸ That Thomas Ormsby, the brother of William Ormsby and a cousin of Pratt's wife (as well as the future brother-in-law of George Smith and son-in-law of Gardner Hale) would descend to such behavior must have indeed shocked the middle class community. Whether drink was involved is not clear, though the occurrence of the incident on Christmas day is suggestive.

Some Prattvillians certainly imbibed excessively. In November 1849, Ferdinand Smith circumspectly reported that "the subject of conversation [for the gin shop] this morning was the oyster treat that some of the young men helped themselves to on Saturday and its consequences." In April 1848, Ferdinand was "pained to hear that Doct[or] Townshend has returned to his intoxicating ways." In July 1855, Ferdinand dryly noted that "Mr. Killet has not got over his

⁸Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 82. A "shooting scrape" occurred between two planters' sons on the bridge over Autauga Creek in Prattville in 1859. After getting into a fist fight with Arch Wilson, Bill Rice pulled out a gun and shot Wilson, but Wilson's wound was "not considered dangerous." Adelaide Smith to Julia Smith, 17 April 1859, Box 96, McMillan Collection, Special Collections, Auburn University.

Fourth of July yet."⁹ Since Ferdinand wrote this entry on July 16, one wonders just how Killet celebrated his holiday!

Probably the most embarrassing example of drunkenness was reported by Adelaide Smith in a letter to her daughter Julia in 1858. "Mr. Miles has been seen tipsy once or twice lately," she declared. "I was sorry to hear it. I do not think he would get many scholars next session . . . if the patrons should know he drank."¹⁰ Interestingly, William Miles, the head of Prattville Academy from 1856 to 1858, moved to Texas soon after Adelaide Smith penned her letter, leaving the academy in the hands of Jere S. Williams.

What really distinguishes these examples of middle-class drunkenness in Prattville is their rarity. While it appears that many middle-class Prattvillians drank, they did not do so to excess. In this respect, these people followed the example of their town's leading citizen, Daniel Pratt. Pratt, it will be recalled, produced wine from the Catawba grapes he cultivated in his vineyard. Pratt's fondness for wine dates back at least to 1836, when he purchased three gallons of Malaga wine at Richard

⁹Ibid., 8, 54, 211. The "Mr. Killet" to whom Ferdinand referred was probably gin mechanic Marcus Cicero Killet.

¹⁰Adelaide Smith to Julia Smith, 4 April 1858, Box 96, McMillan Collection.

Allen's store at Washington. Even the abstemious Smith cousins tipped a glass on occasion. One Saturday in 1854, for example, George Smith and his wife Mary (Ormsby) attended an "oyster party" at the home of William and Isabella Ormsby. The guests included Samuel Parrish Smith, "Miss Phelps and Miss Moore" (Connecticut relations of Smith's wife, Adelaide), Ashby and Augusta Morgan, and Ormsby's boarders. Ormsby served his guests claret with their oysters. George and Mary had a "delightful" time, not getting home until 11:00.¹¹

Such restrained social drinking evidently did not violate the moral standards of Prattville's middle class. Even the "oyster party" described by George Smith was relatively rare. Most often the Smiths confined their drinking to such beverages as tea and, apparently non-alcoholic, eggnog. Some Prattvillians, such as Shadrack Mims, seem to have eschewed alcohol altogether. Mims spent over thirty years denouncing drinking in articles in Prattville newspapers. In one 1853 article, for example, he linked alcohol to stunted economic growth, challenging his readers to name any neighborhood "where a grog shop is kept up" that

¹¹Richard Allen Account Book, 1836-1841, Autauga County Heritage Center, Prattville; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 68. In contrast to Pratt, Western Franks regularly purchased whiskey at Allen's store in the 1830s. Whether he took the pledge in the 1840s or 1850s after he became a successful shop owner is unknown.

had not suffered "inconstancy and instability of population."¹²

Daniel Pratt evidently shared Mims's belief that "grog shops" inhibited economic development, for every town deed he granted from 1846 through 1858 contained a clause prohibiting the sale of ardent spirits "upon penalty of forfeiture." Furthermore, Pratt persuaded the legislature to prohibit the sale of alcohol within two miles of Prattville. Yet in 1859, the liquor clause disappeared from the deeds, and an "oyster saloon" opened its doors in the town, offering for sale a variety of liquors both hard and soft—no doubt giving Spong and Roots's soda fountain a run for its money.¹³

Pratt's motivation for allowing a "grog shop" in his midst is not clear. Was he responding to popular pressure, or did he believe the people were virtuous enough to resist overindulgence in such a temptation? Perhaps a combination of these two proffered reasons was at work in his mind. In any event, despite the presence of an oyster saloon in Prattville, Pratt was still able to claim in 1860 that his town was largely free from "dissipation."

One of Prattville's first voluntary associations, the local Sons of Temperance chapter, directly engaged the

¹²Prattville Autauga Citizen, 28 July 1853.

¹³On Pratt's prohibition of liquor, see chapter 4. On the oyster saloon, see chapter 6.

drinking issue. A visiting Methodist minister, Jacob Slater Hughes, reported in a letter to the Temperance Watchman in 1847 that Prattville claimed a flourishing chapter of the Sons of Temperance with seventy-two members. Amos Smith served as the president of the Sons, while John Mills, a forty-five-year-old blacksmith from Georgia, served as vice president, and Hassan Allen served as secretary. James Allen, William Ormsby, and B. F. Miles made up the business committee.¹⁴

In 1848, the Sons of Temperance showed signs of considerable strength in Prattville. In February of that year, they organized a march that included a musical band and a banner painted by William Ormsby. The Prattville Sons also held monthly meetings, at which members discussed the "demon of alcohol" and their own struggles against him. At one such meeting, "Doctor Townshend" delivered a "very fine address," but by April the doctor had, according to a disappointed Ferdinand, "returned to his intoxicating cup." In November 1848, the Sons held another "celebration," at which they enjoyed "a very respectable procession." In 1849, the organization seems to have entered a dormant period, but in October 1850, Ferdinand noted that the Sons "had a meeting today and a number of

¹⁴Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, 9 November 1847, reprinted from Temperance Watchman. Hughes also claimed that twenty-three people in Prattville subscribed to the Temperance Watchman.

accessions."¹⁵ After this entry, however, the Sons disappear from the Smith journals. Either the group disbanded or the Smiths ceased recording any references to it, which seems unlikely.

Despite the possible demise in Prattville of the Sons of Temperance, temperance itself remained a pressing moral concern in the town, as evidenced by its popularity in the 1850s as a sermon and lecture topic. For example, Mr. Hewlett, according to Ferdinand "the grand lecturer for the Sons through the State," spoke in Prattville twice in 1852. Attending the first lecture with his cousin Sarah and his sweetheart, Martha Riggs, Ferdinand deemed it "interesting." George, however, came away from the second lecture with a far less favorable impression. He dubbed Hewlett's talk "quite amusing"—surely not the reaction for which Hewlett had aimed. George much preferred Brother Gage's temperance lecture of the next month, which he declared "very good."¹⁶

Temperance no doubt was an indirect concern of Prattville's Bible Society, which had organized by 1846. An auxiliary of the American Bible Society, the Alabama Bible Society was formed in 1824. It was, notes historian John Quist, "Alabama's first statewide benevolent

¹⁵Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 5, 6, 8, 26, 78.

¹⁶Ibid., 114, 120; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 41, 47, 49.

organization." The Society had as its goal the distribution of Bibles to indigent households. In 1846, Prattville's local branch included among its members Jesse Perham, George Garvey, William Ormsby, J. M. Sims, Samuel Ticknor, and John Walker. Jacob Slater Hughes claimed in 1847 that the Bible Society was "flourishing," but he did not give an exact membership count. Agents from both the Alabama Bible Society and a related organization, the American Tract Society, spoke in Prattville churches. In 1848, Ferdinand Smith reported attending the Methodist Church and hearing "a good sermon from the words 'The poor have the gospel preached to them' by Mr. King," an American Tract Society agent. King preached a second time in the evening, collecting twenty-seven dollars in contributions from local citizens. John Shelman and George Noble, planters and devoted Methodists who both lived several years in Prattville in the 1850s, were both affiliated with the Alabama Bible Society. Shelman served as a Society agent, and Noble, after moving to Montgomery in the mid-1850s, became the manager of the Society's Bible House.¹⁷

¹⁷"Slaveholding Operatives," 487; Day Book (1839-1846), 227, Continental Eagle Corporation Papers, Prattville; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 4; Thomas McAdory Owen, History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography (Chicago, 1921), vol. 3, 1283; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 44.

Other voluntary associations may not have had moral goals such as temperance or the distribution of Bibles, but they did serve the laudable goal of improving members in some way. Prattville's Fire Engine Company obviously had a broader public purpose, but it also strove to instill character and responsibility in those men who belonged to it. As members of the Engine Company, young men were given control over an organization charged with protecting the lives and property of their fellow citizens. Their task had particular importance in a factory town like Prattville, for a fire in a factory building could destroy thousands of dollars worth of property, take dozens of lives, and throw many other people out of work. Surviving evidence suggests the men of the Prattville Fire Engine Company took their job very seriously.¹⁸

Forty-six men organized the Engine Company on December 29, 1846, the year Pratt started his cotton mill. The Alabama legislature officially incorporated the Engine

¹⁸In my view, the Prattville Fire Engine Company stands in stark contrast to the Philadelphia engine companies described by historian Bruce Laurie as "vital social organizations deeply embedded in traditionalist communities that fulfilled the cultural needs of their members." According to Laurie, Philadelphia businessmen loathed the city's volunteer engine companies for their "rowdiness" and "blasé attitudes toward work" and desired to replace them with professionals. See Bruce Laurie, Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1853 (Philadelphia, 1980), 58-61. In Prattville, the volunteer company served as an engine of modernization, not a roadblock in its path, because it helped to prepare young men for responsible roles in the market economy.

Company on March 2, 1848. Engine Company members, however, looked upon their charter with displeasure, in part because it limited the size of the membership to forty persons, and it did not exempt members from military and road duty. After hearing the charter read to them at their meeting of April 8, Ferdinand noted that the "company seemed to express general dissatisfaction." Members called on Thomas Avery (Pratt's bookkeeper) "for a speech," whereupon he "arose and spoke in a very spirited manner upon [the] charter." A committee was formed to prepare a "report" giving "the true sense of the Company in regard to the charter." On April 29, the Engine Company heard the report prepared by the committee. Liking what they heard, members voted to have the report "printed in the Montgomery papers." In time, the Engine Company's agitation paid off, for on January 9, 1850, the legislature granted the members a new charter, one that met their demands by exempting members from military and road duty and leaving it for the Company to determine the size of its membership.¹⁹

The Engine Company held monthly meetings and an annual supper in December. Each year, at their January meetings, members elected officers, who mostly appear to have been young middle-class mechanics, mill bosses, merchants, and clerks. From the Smith diaries I have gleaned

¹⁹Prattville Southern Signal, 21 December, 1877; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 9, 10.

the following twelve Engine Company officers for the period from 1845 to 1855: Merrill Pratt (assistant hoseman, 1848; captain, 1849; lieutenant, 1851), Elisha Griswold (treasurer, 1851), Jeremiah Hale (secretary, 1851), Ephraim Morgan (hoseman, 1848, 1849), George Coe (assistant hoseman, 1851), Thomas Ormsby (captain, 1853), George Smith (assistant hoseman, 1848; clerk, 1854), William Wallace Fay (clerk, 1855), James M. Smith (treasurer, 1853), George Ward (hoseman, 1853), and Ferdinand Smith (assistant hoseman, 1848; captain, 1852; treasurer, 1854). Coe and James M. Smith were Prattville merchants, while Spigner, Morgan, and Ormsby owned their own shops. Griswold served as an officer in Prattville Manufacturing Company. Hale and Ward worked as mill bosses. Fay was a former teacher turned bookkeeper. Later in the decade, Pratt's nephew Merrill Pratt became a co-partner in Pratt & Ticknor, the company that marketed Pratt's cotton gins. The Smith cousins, of course, were gin mechanics. Three other men—James Wainwright, Theodore Ormsby, and Thomas Avery—belonged to the Company, but it is not apparent that they ever served as officers. Avery was Pratt's bookkeeper, while Wainwright owned a tin shop. Of the eighteen men whom I have identified as members of the Engine Company, only four were native southerners: James M. Smith, Spigner, Wainwright, and

Ward. The nativity of three men—Mr. Strickland, Col. Spencer, and E. Sherwood—I could not determine.²⁰

As with Philadelphia's engine companies, the Prattville Fire Engine Company had a purely social dimension. The annual company dinners were eagerly anticipated events, judging from the Smith journals. Upon his appointment to the supper committee on November 1, 1851, George Smith threw himself into preparations. On November 8, he met at Alida Hall with his fellow committee members, who

²⁰Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 1, 29, 31, 83, 111, 145, 175, 199; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 1, 67, 91; U.S. Census, 1850, Population Schedule, Autauga County. Competition for office could be very intense. In 1853, for example, Thomas Ormsby "was elected captain on the tenth ballot." Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 145. Election to any position was evidently quite a prize. In his first journal entry (dated January 1, 1848), Ferdinand noted proudly that at the annual meeting of the Engine Company, he "had the honor of being elected Hoseman." Ibid., 1.

The worst election fracas, however, involved not the election of officers, but of new members. Ferdinand wrote a long entry concerning the unhappy event, which occurred in 1853:

The engine company met this evening and elected three new members. The election was somewhat protested in consequence of [a] misunderstanding [as] to the importance of all, or a majority of the company, voting to secure an election, it being decided by the captain that it required two thirds of all present to elect a member or candidate. Also there was [a] little trouble occasioned by the manner of voting and the reading of the votes. . . . The capt. [Thomas Ormsby] took it as reflecting severely on him and the whole affair produced a good deal of unpleasant feelings.

Ibid., 148. George Smith concurred: We had some warm debating during the meeting, in which Messrs. Strickland, T. J. Ormsby, J. L. Wainwright and myself took part." Nobles, ed., George Smith, 163.

concluded to have the supper there and to ascertain as soon as possible who to get to do the cooking, set the table, etc." On November 20, George traveled to Washington Landing to see the warehouse keeper about getting "oysters and fruit" supplied for the supper. That evening, he again met with the committee. On the big day, December 6 (a Saturday), George excused himself from that afternoon's Engine Company meeting and went to Alida Hall to help with the final preparations. A bell rang at 7:45 announcing the great event. George believed the outcome well worth the effort: "We had a good supper, plenty of oysters, and we remained there until eleven o'clock, laughing, talking, and singing." Ferdinand Smith concurred, reporting that all present "had a jovial time."²¹

At the 1852 supper, however, some merrymakers indulged in more than "laughing, talking and singing." The Engine Company met at William Morgan's Tennessee House at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, December 4. "Experienced servants

²¹Nobles, ed., George Smith, 30-33; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 108. Prattville's Engine Company seems rather to resemble the "perfectly reputable" volunteer fire department of colonial Philadelphia, as described by Bruce Laurie in his Working People, 58:

Founded by the energetic Dr. Franklin, it recruited public-spirited citizens of all classes, but relied chiefly on the concerned elite and mechanics who looked upon public service as an obligation of republican citizenship. As befits this social composition, companies closely resembled respectable dinner clubs.

put on the meal" and "the company was well satisfied," noted Ferdinand, but he added with displeasure that "after supper a part of the company tarried awhile and went into some pretty rough performances. There were one or two pretty hurt brushes and several put to bed." Evidently, this embarrassing incident propelled the members, at their meeting of November 5, 1853, into formally suspending "the by-law referring to the annual supper." This vote did not end the matter, however, for on December 3, Ferdinand noted that "at night a little past seven," the Engine Company had its "annual supper, which was well got up and passed off finely."²² Apparently, the members had relented from their draconian anti-supper position of November, but only after they made sure that the supper would not again degenerate into a fracas.

Engine Company members had no tolerance for absenteeism either. Ferdinand Smith reported that there occurred "considerable debate on the bylaws concerning excuses" at the November 4, 1848 meeting. The meeting of July 3, 1852 had "some pretty warm discussion," after which two members, Col. Spencer and E. Sherwood, "withdrew from the company." George Smith explained that this "warm

²²Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 142, 169, 172.

discussion" had concerned expulsion of "members absent from a called meeting."²³

The Engine Company seems to have performed well, not just at arranging dinners, but at fighting fires. On the morning of May 26, 1848, Ferdinand Smith was at work at the shop when "all were alarmed by the cry of fire, fire." Ferdinand immediately repaired to the engine house, where he joined his fellow firemen in taking the engine and hose to the site of the calamity, the "gin plank kiln filled with Mr. Cox's lumber," where they "rendered efficient service," saving the lumber. Ferdinand modestly admitted the fire had made "but little headway" when the Company arrived.²⁴

The Engine Company again came to the rescue on the evening of July 8, 1851, when the kitchen attached to John Shelman's house caught fire. The "company succeeded in saving the house," although Ferdinand badly blistered his toes in the effort. In June 1854, the Engine Company made the pages of the Autauga Citizen after members put out a fire in the picker room, located in the basement of the cotton mill. Several bales of cotton ignited on June 28, a day the thermometer reached ninety-seven degrees. Fortunately, the Engine Company "was out in short order," noted

²³Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 25, 127; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 54.

²⁴Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 12.

Ferdinand, "with a stream of water going on the fire." George Smith gave credit as well to citizens who poured buckets of water on the blaze before the Engine Company arrived. William Howell, in turn, showered praise on those involved in battling the conflagration: "Our excellent engine co[mpany] was on the spot in double quick time, and, through its exertions and the assistance rendered by the large crowd assembled, the fire was soon extinguished with but little difficulty."²⁵

Later that year, however, the Engine Company finally met with a failure. Around 11:00 p.m. on November 30, a firebell woke George Smith and his wife. He "immediately arose, dressed and went in the direction of the light." The building aflame "proved to be the barn belonging to T. W. Hutchinson." Because flames had "nearly consumed" the barn by the time the Engine Company assembled, the men could do nothing. Hutchinson lost the barn, 200 bushels of corn, and a buggy—losses totaling about \$400.²⁶

Although it rendered far less dramatic service, the Prattville Band proved just as enduring an institution. Band members adopted a constitution and bylaws on

²⁵Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 96, 186; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 74; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 29 June 1854.

²⁶Nobles, ed., George Smith, 86; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 7 December 1854. The Citizen stated that the fire started around 9:00 p.m., two hours earlier than George claimed in his journal.

February 8, 1848. "After signing the Constitution and playing a few tunes, we dispersed," reported Ferdinand Smith, who, not surprisingly, was a charter member of the band. Other members included George Smith, George Tisdale, Merrill Pratt, Norman Cameron, and Thomas Ormsby.²⁷

Band members tried to uphold strict standards of personal behavior, but it is apparent that, as with the Engine Company, the Band had its lapses. On June 5, 1848, the Band passed a resolution that Thomas Ormsby—who would participate in a knife fight in 1850—"had forfeited his membership in consequence of bad conduct." On November 8, 1852, however, a disappointed Ferdinand reported that a "scuffle came off" at that day's Band meeting "and with it some profanity." He concluded that the unpleasantness was "a fair specimen of what accompanies gambling."²⁸

Ferdinand, for one, did not join the Band in order to indulge in such undignified behavior. He wanted the Prattville Band to become a polished organization capable of giving professional performances at public events, just like the Montgomery Band. For several years, the Band confined itself to serenading local households, such as those of Daniel Pratt, Shadrack Mims, and Enoch Robinson. Yet, as early as 1848, Ferdinand had bigger plans for the

²⁷Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 4, 6, 11, 13. With the exception of Cameron, all these men were northerners.

²⁸Ibid., 13, 139-40.

Band. In March, he visited Merrill Pratt's office in the gin shop to get some help in determining "the constitution upon which we can have a better band." In June, the Band went out one afternoon "into the old field by Mr. Tisdale's [house] to practice playing and marching." Ferdinand was "convinced that practice is what we most need."²⁹

A big moment for the band arrived in January 1853, when members received the news that the Montgomery True Blues and the Montgomery Riflemen were going to visit Prattville in just a few days and that the Prattville band was wanted "to play for their reception." The Band practiced four nights in a row. On the big day, the Autauga Guards, accompanied by the Band, marched to Washington Landing to receive the Montgomery companies and escort them to Prattville. In the evening, everyone attended a ball at Alida Hall. Late that evening, the Montgomery men repaid their thanks to Prattville by serenading Daniel Pratt's house. The Band and the Autauga Guards went down to the river with the Montgomery companies to see them off on the steamboat "Magnolia." "We have enjoyed this visit very well," Ferdinand declared, "and I think they are very well satisfied with the reception that they received taking into

²⁹Ibid., 6, 13.

account the premature situation we were in for such a thing."³⁰

Perhaps spurred by this successful debut, the band decided to order new instruments. Having received estimates from Boston and New York manufacturers (\$7.30 and \$2.54, respectively), the members decided to purchase them from the New York company, Sax Horns. In February, the band met in Merrill Pratt's "room" and "tried a new piece." Ferdinand wrote optimistically that they had "made some progress."³¹

Despite this flurry of activity, the band apparently became dormant until June 20, 1854, when "the people of Prattville . . . offered the band \$100 to play for them" at their upcoming Fourth of July celebration. "We are going to meet at five o'clock every evening until the fourth," Ferdinand determinedly declared. On the big day, the Band "went over the bridge in front of the factory and formed the procession and started . . . down the plank road." At the "barbecue ground," located about three-fourths of a mile down the road, a "strong stand" had been raised for the Band and the speakers. Ferdinand reported that the "exercises were very satisfactory" and that the "dinner was good." His somewhat muted tone after this triumphant day

³⁰Ibid., 145; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 60.

³¹Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 146, 148.

is probably a reflection of the fact that he had gotten "a severe headache" during the march to the ground and had returned "feeling about used up." Nevertheless, the Citizen, as per custom, was effusive with praise for all the event's participants. In particular, the paper concluded that the "brass band" gave an "excellent performance." The Citizen estimated the crowd at the ground at from one to two thousand. After Charles Doster read the Declaration of Independence, and William K. Northington, William Howell, Edward Doster, Abner Echols, and others made speeches, the Fletcher brothers, Edward and George, entertained the audience "with several well-executed arias." After the dinner, the brass band closed out the celebration with a rendition of "Hail, Columbia."³²

Again buoyed by a successful performance, "the members of the band concluded to send to the North for some music through [Hassan] Allen." As the local agent for Dolce Campana Attachment Piano Fortes (made by Boardman & Gray of Albany, New York), Allen had already sold instruments to Shadrack Mims, Samuel Parrish Smith, William Ormsby, William Fay, William Howell, Samuel Pearce, minister George Foster, and planters William Graham and Berry Tatum. On August 11, George Smith reported that the "instruments had arrived from New York this evening in good

³²Ibid., 185-86; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 13 July 1854.

order." George had received a "Baryton," and the next day he put his carpentry skills to work by making a case for the instrument.³³

Unlike the Band or the Engine Company, the Prattville Singing Society was open to both men and women. The Singing Society formed some time before 1851. From January 1852 through January 1853, the group met on Thursday evenings at Alida Hall, which it had rented for the year. In January 1853, members began holding their "sings" in "the room in the [gin factory] formerly occupied as a Reading Room." During this time, Samuel Parrish Smith served as chorister, succeeded in November 1854, however, by Ashby Morgan. Although not himself the leader of the Singing Society, George Smith was one of its most passionate devotees, attending almost all its meetings and making comments about them in his journal. Ferdinand Smith also attended sings, although not with the same frequency as George. The Smith cousins often escorted young ladies to the Thursday meetings, most typically George's sisters Mary, Elizabeth, and Sarah or their respective sweethearts, Martha Riggs and Mary Ormsby. Other Prattville ladies who attended Prattville sings were "Mr. Holt's girls," "three young ladies from Mr. Pratt's" (probably Ellen Pratt, Mary Ticknor, and Julia Bill), Enoch Robinson's nieces Julia and Carrie,

³³Nobles, ed., George Smith, 76, 78.

Edwin Fay's niece Harriet, "Miss Hardeman" (likely a sister-in-law of Elisha Griswold), Etta Rockwell (the daughter of a Baptist minister from Vermont who taught school in Carlowville and was a good friend of the Amos Smith family), Mrs. Temple (the wife of dancing master J. R. Temple and an accomplished violist), Mrs. Ticknor, and Miss Cowan, from Kennebec County, Maine.³⁴

Just as Ferdinand Smith hoped to make the Band a more professional organization, George desired to improve the quality of the Singing Society. He clearly had hopes of becoming chorister himself. On one occasion he officiated in Dr. Smith's absence. After another meeting he grumbled that "the singing was miserable tonight for some reason or another, probably the lack of a competent leader is one cause." In 1854, George decided to conduct a singing school in his spare time. After buying a blackboard and borrowing a copy of Mason's Large Musical Exercises from a friend of his, professor P. A. Towne of Montgomery, George "prepared and circulated subscription papers containing proposals to teach a singing school in the Baptist Church." He taught eight sessions of his school in November and December. At the same time, George helped Doctor Smith

³⁴Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 83, 88, 105, 115, 136-38, 147, 152-53; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 2, 24-25, 28-29, 38, 41-42, 47, 61, 85; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 23 July 1 1853, 6 October 1853. The Reverend O. Rockwell also served as President of Selma's Masonic Institute. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 March 1853.

prepare the Sabbath School teachers and students for a Christmas celebration.³⁵

Prattville also claimed a debating society in the 1850s, but this was one organization in which mechanics seem to have played little part, judging by its known members: physician J. D. O'Bannon, planter H. J. Livingston, bookkeeper William Fay, physician Alsey Pollard, attorney C. S. G. Doster, and planter T. J. Hamilton. The debating society appears to have devoted itself to pressing political questions of the day. In one April 1855 meeting at Alida Hall, for example, the debate topic concerned the acquisition of Cuba. Southerner C. S. G. Doster took the affirmative, while northerner William Fay took the negative.³⁶

Although few Prattville mechanics seem to have directly involved themselves in political debates, some, at least, attended lectures at Prattville's lyceum, Alida Hall, and read books and journals. In his history of the American lyceum, Carl Bode concludes that "after 1845 few reflections of the lyceum movement were still to be

³⁵Nobles, ed., George Smith, 2, 4, 85-88.

³⁶Prattville Autauga Citizen, 29 March, 12 April 1855. Given the limited interest shown by the Smith cousins in national politics, it is not surprising that they did not belong to the debating society or even mention it in their journals. Ferdinand does, however, record serving as a judge at a debate held at the Prattville Academy in 1848 over whether corporal punishment should be abolished. He voted yes. Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 7.

detected in Alabama." While grudgingly conceding that "Montgomery and Mobile sometimes saw a visiting lecturer," he concludes that the movement basically fizzled in antebellum Alabama.³⁷ Evidence from Prattville suggests that Bode's view is far too bleak.

As befitted a manufacturing town, lectures at Prattville's lyceum often centered on science and technology. On December 4, 1848, for example, Ferdinand Smith attended a "very interesting" lecture on electricity, which included an "apparatus to make experiments." George Smith, his sisters Mary and Sarah, his brother Daniel, and William Ormsby also attended. George pronounced the lecture "quite interesting." On November 17, 1853, Ferdinand Smith and his uncle Amos attended a lecture on education by a

³⁷Carl Bode, The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill., 1956), 160-61. Bode's book is badly dated, completely overlooking the important economic and social changes in the South in the 1850s. His portrayal of the southern planter borders on caricature:

"The men who might in Boston have read books at the Athenaeum, in the South rode and hunted. Still interested, to all appearances, in physical activities rather than thoughts, they felt for the lyceum an indifference amounting almost to contempt.

As for the middle class, Bode concludes it was "dwindling" since artisans could not compete in a slave economy and "either gave up the struggle or else moved north where the opportunities for skilled workers were far richer," while the young, middle-class professional "frequently practiced his profession only long enough to acquire" capital to purchase a plantation. Bode, Lyceum, 153-57.

phrenologist, Dr. Cone. After the doctor's talk, Ferdinand reported, he "examined some heads." Not all lectures revolved around science, however. In 1854, for example, A. P. Dietz, head of Prattville Academy, declaimed on "A Vindication of the American Revolution." In September and October of 1853, Professor Morris gave a series of lectures on grammar at Alida Hall. The Smiths appear to have attended thirteen of his fourteen lectures, missing the one on account of rain.³⁸

Other presentations were rather less rigorous, falling more into the category of spectacle. Nevertheless, their apparent popularity reveals that the people of Prattville had great fascination with the advances of the modern world. In May 1852, Ferdinand, George, George's sister Sarah, and Martha Riggs went to view a panorama, "New Orleans and the Bank of the Mississippi," and a diorama, "The Crystal Palace by Gaslight." Ferdinand declared the exhibit "a splendid entertainment," while George noted that the "very fine" presentation "elicited a good deal of admiration from the audience." Similarly, Mr. Wills's "Exhibition of Mysterious Things" ("legerdemain and sleight

³⁸Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 27, 94, 167-70; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 14; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 26 October 1854. A. P. Dietz had recently moved from Montgomery to Prattville. A New Orleans native, Dietz was the nephew of Professor Alexander Dietz of that city. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 28 September 1854. On the "science" of phrenology, see Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860 (New York, 1997), 158-65.

of hand") in February 1853 drew "a very crowded audience." Not all attempts evoked admiration, however. Of Mr. Hall's lecture on physiology, Ferdinand could only conclude that it had been "a complete failure."³⁹

Both Ferdinand Smith and the Prattville Autauga Citizen ridiculed the presentation of buggy and wagon maker Benjamin A. Rogers, who delivered a talk at Alida Hall entitled "Southern Improvements" in May 1853. The snobbish contempt displayed for Rogers by both Smith and the Citizen's editors should not obscure the importance of Rogers's speech, for in it, Rogers, a poorly educated but skilled southern mechanic, wholeheartedly endorsed the Whig vision of industrial and social development that was forcefully advanced in the North at this time. Rogers's speech gives us a rare glimpse of the ideology of an antebellum southern artisan.⁴⁰

³⁹Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 75, 123; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 49, 64. Ferdinand was only lukewarm in his assessment of "The Exhibition of Mysterious Things": "The Show was for nothing very alarming." Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 149.

⁴⁰While I have concluded that Prattville's skilled artisans most certainly were included in the town's middle class, the contempt displayed by Ferdinand Smith for his fellow mechanic does suggest the existence of social divisions based on education and manners. On the division between a white-collar middle class and a blue-collar working class in nineteenth-century America, see Stuart M. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge and New York, 1989).

The Citizen printed Rogers's speech verbatim, but only as a joke at his expense. "We are not sufficiently learned in hieroglyphics and other dead languages to comprehend the technicalities in mechanics, as used by the erudite lecturer," Howell and Lockett sarcastically informed their readers, "and will, therefore, in putting his lecture in type, follow copy." Ferdinand Smith reported that the lyceum "had pretty well filled with boys and young men," as well as "a few ladies." While allowing that Rogers had "labored hard," Ferdinand concluded: "a more laughable and ridiculous affair, I have never seen. There was not the least particle of sense in any of it." Rogers, however, labored through his speech undaunted: "His brass bore him through."⁴¹

Such snickering aside, Rogers's speech is a striking testament to the middle-class view of society espoused by the very people who snickered. In "Southern Improvements," Rogers pointedly asked: "Why are [there] not as enterprising men in the south as in [the] north?" One explanation, he asserted, was the comparative lack of voluntary associations in the South. "I say in a place like this we need a gentlemen's and ladies' society." Associations, Rogers declared, "are matters of importance with us in the south If we gain nothing [else] by these

⁴¹Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 156; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 12, 19 May 1853.

associations we have some consolation of its doing those some good that may come after us." Later in his rambling discourse, Rogers returned to this theme: "We need societies as well as churches by which associating with each other, we will gain information."⁴²

Rogers fervently believed that he lived in an age of expanding opportunity. Drawing inspiration from the life of Prattville's founder, he declared: "I am a poor man, but I do not rest content with the thought of remaining so as long as I live." Daniel Pratt, Rogers noted, "was once a poor man himself," but he had made a fortune through his hard work. Moreover, Pratt used his great wealth to benefit others, not just himself. Indeed, asserted Rogers, Pratt had "done more for Autauga County and the [residents] . . . than any man in [the county]." Nor did Pratt do such things as starting a cotton mill "because he had capital for no other use." Rather, Pratt did so "because he felt the importance of this enterprise to the South." Rogers declared that Pratt richly deserved "the honor and praise as well as popularity of [all Alabama's citizens]."⁴³

Rogers asserted that the great fault of most Alabamians was that "we sleep too much." He concluded that if people would only emulate the admirable Pratt and apply

⁴²Prattville Autauga Citizen, 19 May 1853.

⁴³Ibid.

themselves "from dark until respectable bedtime" in productive endeavors, there was no telling what they might accomplish. "Where was our fathers [forty] years ago?" Rogers rhetorically asked:

What conveyances had they to travel? Horses and carts. How did they send news from one place to another? On horseback. [I]f [any] one had said have a telegraph they would of confined him for a crazy man. But now they are not startled at men starting perpetual motion.

In the 1850s, he added, some visionaries dared to conceive of such things as "a flying Boat to carry [two] hundred persons to Caliafornia and back a week." Rogers himself hoped to "invent a wagon to run plank roads by steam."⁴⁴

Surviving evidence indicates that Prattvillians, as Rogers so fervently urged them, did indeed spend their evenings in improving activites. Besides joining voluntary associations, many citizens of Prattville read books, journals, and newspapers. Books were available to readers both in Prattville itself and in Montgomery. In 1857, W. C. Allen & Co., for example, "received the sole agency of Autauga Co., for the subscription works published by D. Appleton & Co.," the big New York City publishing firm. One of the attractions nearby Montgomery held for the Smith cousins was the book and music store of Armand Pfister, a transplanted Barbadian who was also Alabama's Grandmason. In a trip to the store in August 1854, George Smith

⁴⁴Ibid.

purchased Russia, by the Marques De Custine, The Iron Cousin, and Twenty Years in the Philippines. A few days later, Smith sent Pfister an order for Hood's Own, The Nile Boat, and Parker's Abyssinia. He also returned The Iron Cousin. George clearly had a special fondness for works of history, geography, and British literature. About two weeks after receiving his salary for his 1852 work, George set off by stage for Montgomery in order to select a marble tablet for his deceased sister Mary's grave and also to buy some more books. A few weeks earlier, Ferdinand had bought George "a fine copy of Shakespeare" in Montgomery. Now George bought Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Guizot's History of Civilization, Mills's Literature of England, and Allison's History of Europe. George spent the day and evening in Montgomery, getting dinner and supper at the Exchange Hotel. He started home by stage at 11:00 p.m.⁴⁵

The Smiths also had a healthy appetite for journals, devouring issues of Harper's, De Bow's Review, the London Illustrated News, and the New York Journal of Commerce. George reported happily in 1855 that a local doctor, Alsey Pollard, sent him "some papers and pamphlets to take charge of." George kept at his house the magazines of general interest, which included Graham's, Harper's, Blackwood's, Godey's Lady's Book, Southern Eclectic, Westminster

⁴⁵Nobles, ed., George Smith, 61, 63, 79; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 24 September 1857.

Review, North British Review, and Edinburgh Review, and he carried over to the gin shop the rest of Pollard's magazines, which he apparently deemed as having a more technical nature.⁴⁶

Like the Smith cousins, the Ormsby brothers, William and Thomas, avidly read books and magazines. William Ormsby, of course, coedited the Southern Statesman in 1854 until poor health forced his retirement. He revealed his literary ambitions in his ornate newspaper article "A Reverie," the piece that had stirred the great brouhaha over the Prattville postmastership in 1853. He probably wrote, as well, the favorable review in the Statesman of Nehemiah Adams's apologia, A South Side View of Slavery. In the obituary Shadrack Mims wrote for William Ormsby in the Southern Christian Advocate, Mims noted that Ormsby had "possessed a decided taste for the arts, and devoted his leisure hours to reading, of which he was very fond." Mims added that "at an early age," Ormsby began writing "for different literary periodicals of high standing" and that "the productions of his pen were highly appreciated." Ormsby "possessed a fine fancy, and his descriptive powers were rarely excelled." Certainly, Ormsby's "Reverie,"

⁴⁶Nobles, ed., George Smith, 101, 121.

with its "cormorant-like" Democrats "devouring [Pratt's] substance" is nothing if not vivid.⁴⁷

Mims also mentioned that Ormsby "had collected together a very handsome library of select books." In 1859, Ormsby's library was partially inventoried, giving us a glimpse of his preferred reading material. Among Ormsby's inventoried books, we find a two-volume biography of John Randolph, Aunt Phillis's Cabin, Cotton is King, Stephens's Travels and Holy Land, the collected works of Byron, De Bow's Industrial Resources, a fourteen-volume Farm Library, twelve volumes of school books, two volumes of Fanny Ferris, and two Masonic works. In addition, Ormsby also owned a great many magazines, including Southern Eclectic, De Bow's Review, Knickerbocker's Magazine, Penny Magazine, Scientific American, and Illustrated London News.⁴⁸

William Ormsby's mechanic brother, Thomas, also owned a respectable library, judging by the 1862 inventory of his estate. Thomas Ormsby's library contained some ninety books, including a fifteen-volume Evangelical Library, the collected works of Washington Irving (in fifteen volumes), Hardee's Tactics, Livingstone's Travels in Africa, six

⁴⁷Prattville Southern Statesman, December 20, 1854; Columbia Southern Christian Advocate, 3 March 1859.

⁴⁸Reports and Wills, Book J10, 1858, pp. 378-79. Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse.

volumes of Scientific American, and five volumes of Patent Office Reports.⁴⁹

Purchasers of the Ormsbys' books at estate sales in 1859 and 1862 reflect a wide spectrum of Prattville society. Among them we find Daniel Pratt, Enoch Robinson, Samuel Parrish Smith, George L. Smith, Gardener Hale, Henry Hale, James Clepper, James Wainwright, William Root, William Spong, Charles Riggs (the brother of Martha Riggs, the wife of Ferdinand Smith), teacher C. Whitfield Smith, physician J. D. O'Bannon, merchant Samuel Booth, attorneys C. S. G. Doster, W. H. Northington, and J. L. Alexander, and mechanics Jacob Ellis and Harris Ware.⁵⁰

Prattville had enough readers to support a Reading Room, at least for a time. In April 1852, Ferdinand Smith and his brother Frank constructed a table for the newly opened Reading Room. Despite this action, however, Ferdinand does not seem to have used the Reading Room much. In August, Ferdinand noted in his journal: "After supper went into the reading room, Mr. Hatcher's room, and also to the singing society." However, this is the only time Ferdinand mentioned going to the Reading Room. George does not mention the facility at all. Perhaps the two young men felt content with their own book and magazine collections. It

⁴⁹Reports and Wills, Book RL12, pp. 330-32, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse.

⁵⁰Ibid.

is also possible that the Reading Room closed in 1853. An advertisement for the Prattville Singing Society in October 1853 announced that the Society would begin meeting "in the room in the brick building formerly occupied as a Reading Room." However, earlier that year (in March), Ferdinand Smith noted that the Band held a meeting in the "old reading room," implying that a new one existed. When, in 1855, George Smith carried Pollard's technical magazines over to the gin factory, he may have been delivering them to the Reading Room. Whether other mechanics than the Smiths and Thomas Ormsby read much is not known. Two of the more skilled southern mechanics, Nathan Morris and Washington LaFayette Ellis, subscribed to Harper's.⁵¹

If they read nothing else, Prattville mechanics likely at least perused the pages of the Citizen and the Statesman. The editors of the Citizen (and probably the editors editors of the Statesman as well) occasionally ran stories clearly aimed at mechanics. Literary pieces like "The Two Carpenters: A Sketch for Mechanics" instructed artisan readers that material prosperity followed virtuous living as naturally as day followed night. In "The Two Carpenters," Charles Brackett and Ludlow Watson are carpenter's

⁵¹Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 120, 133, 151; George Smith, 121; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 6 October 1853. Ellis's subscription to Harper's is especially significant in that, according to the 1850 and 1860 censuses, his parents were illiterate.

apprentices with very different attitudes toward work. While Ludlow spends his free time enjoying a variety of frivolous pastimes, the sober Charles reads The History of Architecture ("dry stuff," snorts Ludlow) or takes special lessons in "mensuration" from a professor at the local academy ("O, bother mensuration," Ludlow cries). Instead of joining Ludlow and his girlfriend in a boating party on the pond, Charles and his equally sober girlfriend, Mary Waters, spend their Sabbath visiting her ailing aunt. Ludlow marries his sweetheart at the age of twenty-one, and the newlyweds board with the bride's mother. Charles and Mary, however, prudently postpone their nuptials until Charles "can get a house to put a wife into." The story ends with Charles triumphantly winning the competition for the design of the state capitol. Charles becomes a great architect, "known throughout the Union," and he and his wife, Mary, soon "own one of the prettiest houses in his native town." The chastened Ludlow declares to Charles that he had never "thought that a carpenter could be such a man," to which Charles responds: "and why not a carpenter as well as any one? It only requires study and application." Ludlow protests that "all men are not like you," but Charles cuts him to the quick: "Because all men don't try."⁵²

⁵²prattville Autauga Citizen, 1 September 853.

Another story, headlined "Wouldn't Marry a Mechanic," draws a similar moral. In this tale, a frivolous young lady thoughtlessly rejects a mechanic because he has to work for a living and she dislikes "the name of a mechanic." Instead, she marries a man of leisure, who, to her dismay, soon becomes "a regular vagrant about grog shops." To support herself and her children, she is reduced to taking in washing. Meanwhile, the hard-working mechanic she so casually rejected becomes "a worthy man" with "one of the best of women for a wife."⁵³

Prattville ladies did not have their own formal associations in the antebellum period. Nevertheless, the free women of Prattville did not live out their lives isolated in their individual households. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese asserts that the "predominantly rural character of southern society" (she includes "small towns and villages" in her definition of "rural") "excluded southern women from many of the opportunities that were opening up for their northern sisters," such as developing "sustained female networks beyond the household" and forming "voluntary associations of various kinds." While formal female

⁵³Ibid., 10 November 1853. Such newspaper stories, I should add, are at odds with Stuart Blumin's assertion that magazines at this time told the mechanic "to know, be content with, and keep, his rather humble place." On the contrary, the stories I have examined urged mechanics to scale the heights of success. For Blumin's discussion of this issue, see Blumin, Middle Class, 121-33.

associations in Prattville were a legacy of the Civil War, townswomen did come together in the Female Department of the Union Sunday School, as well as in quilting and sewing circles. One such group of ladies made a carpet, a table cover, and a pulpit rug for the new Methodist Church in 1853.⁵⁴

In 1859, Adelaide Smith described one of the meetings of her quilting circle in a letter to her daughter Julia. The circle included Esther Ticknor Pratt, Mary Ticknor Hazen, Mrs. Enoch Robinson, Mrs. Hutchinson (wife of a merchant), Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. Merritt (wives of local planters), and Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Chapman (both unidentified). On Monday and Tuesday, the women "put [the quilt] in the frames." On Wednesday, they had dinner at Mrs. Gordon's house. On Thursday, Adelaide played hostess. Poor weather prevented Mrs. Merritt from attending the quilting and dining, but the other seven ladies all made it. Adelaide provided her guests with a sumptuous repast: ham and greens, a large turkey, baked pork and beans, boiled rice, Irish potatoes (mashed and baked), sweet potatoes (baked and stewed in sugar), pickled eggs, asparagus, wheat bread and cornbread, lettuce dressed with eggs and mustard, pickles, stewed peach sauce, tomato sauce,

⁵⁴Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London, 1988), 70; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 23 July 1853.

grape jelly, peach pie, blackberry pie, two cakes, and boiled custard. "I wish you had been here to eat & quilt too," Adelaide joked with Julia, "but I expect you would have enjoyed the eating part best." She added that Mrs. Robinson would hold the next "dining."⁵⁵

One Yankee woman certainly did not feel more isolated in the South. Daniel Pratt's sister Eliza Holt wrote relatives back home in New Hampshire that she did not find life at her brother's farm, located near Prattville, at all lonely. "I have been out here much more than at the North," she declared. "I get along very well with the folks without, but instead of tea, we often go to dinner." Eliza concluded: "The society here is very pleasant." If she and her family became "dissatisfied" with farm life, she added, they could always move "back to the village."⁵⁶ Eliza Holt apparently felt that her brother had indeed made great strides toward building a "respectable" northern village in the South.

It is misleading to suggest that middle-class Prattvillians spent all their leisure time engaged in character-building endeavors. Much of their recreation consisted of purely frivolous activities, such as playing whist, pulling

⁵⁵Adelaide Smith to Julia Smith, 4 April 1858, Box 96, McMillan Collection.

⁵⁶Eliza Holt to Abiel and Betsy Holt, 10 February 1852, Box 37, McMillan Collection.

candy and attending circuses and dances. Even Ferdinand Smith, who at first found the circus morally suspect, came to enjoy it. Traveling circus companies visited Prattville at least seven times between 1849 and 1854. Ferdinand noted the advent of Stone & McCallan's Circus in 1849. The agent for Stone & McCallan's "came into town today and posted up their bills. George and I have just been discussing the merits of the circus as an honorable occupation. He goes for and I against it." In spite of his suspicions, Ferdinand recorded a favorable impression of the circus in his journal: "The band was drawn in by twenty splendid horses. They made a very impressive appearance. The music was very nice."⁵⁷

Dances most typically occurred in conjunction with Fourth of July celebrations and, naturally, at commencements of the Dancing Academy. On July 4, 1851, for example, a cotillion took place at Alida Hall. The arrangers hired three musicians to make music, and a local restaurateur, Casimir Krout, to provide supper. Ferdinand and George Smith attended, accompanied by George's sisters Elizabeth and Sarah. While Ferdinand deemed the cotillion "a rather ordinary affair," George declared enthusiastically that he "had a fine time" and "had danced as much as I wished and had good partners." Festivities did

⁵⁷Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 36.

not end until 2:30 in the morning. The next day, George "remained in bed until nine." He then got himself over to the shop to do some work, but he complained that he "did not feel very smart."⁵⁸

Prattvillians also attended celebrations held in the county by various planters. In March 1853, for example, George noted that "a large party went from Prattville to attend a soiree at Mr. John DeJarnette's tonight." Similarly, Prattville citizens, including Ferdinand and George's sister Mary, attended the big wedding party at planter Martin Burt's place in 1850. Although Burt's two-story dogtrot house was not large enough to accommodate everyone, the planter did provide his guests with a "rich and bountiful supper." Ferdinand noticed distinct differences between the town and country guests. "In one corner [of the room], he noted, "sat a group of old women, with one or two of the more plain sort of girls who did not have the advantage of a boardingschool education, with their pipes smoking and eagerly watching the manuevering of the rest of the company." Ferdinand contrasted these rustic pipe-smoking women with the "more polished and fashionable ladies" in another corner, who entertained "themselves with the novelty of the scene, perhaps at the

⁵⁸Ibid.; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 16.

expense of some of the peculiarities of some of the more plain and simple sort of folks."⁵⁹

As this anecdote of Ferdinand Smith indicates, Prattvillians of the 1850s saw a vast cultural difference not between North and South, but between their "sophisticated" town and the "primitive" Autauga countryside. As Pratt had hoped so fervently, Prattville had become much like those "respectable" New Hampshire towns of Milford and Wilton that he recalled from his youth. In one area alone did Pratt's town differ drastically from northern towns. What made Prattville peculiar was the institution of slavery. When Pratt entered the political arena in order to spread more effectively his economic and social gospel, he found that he had to learn the language of the politics of slavery if he hoped to make himself a political force. His political career in antebellum Alabama reveals both the opportunities and obstacles an industrial missionary faced in the old South.

⁵⁹Nobles, ed., George Smith, 65; Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 63.

CHAPTER 9

THE POLITICS OF DANIEL PRATT, 1847 TO 1856

By 1847, Daniel Pratt had established himself as one of the South's most important manufacturers. After fifteen years in Alabama, the New Hampshire farmboy had become a wealthy and influential man. Planters from Georgia to Texas used his gins, and Pratt expected to duplicate this success with his recently launched cotton mill. He evidently decided that the time had come for him to start expressing publicly his opinions on pressing political issues in Alabama. From 1847 until his death over a quarter century later in 1873, Pratt played a very active role in Alabama politics. In the period before the Civil War, he forcefully advocated southern economic diversification, urging southerners to get behind banking, internal improvements, and manufacturing. Pratt also opposed the efforts made by southern fire-eaters to sunder the Union, all the while making clear his support for the South's "peculiar institution." Slavery, Pratt insisted, could be maintained within the Union. Nor did Pratt confine his political opinions to the pages of newspapers. In the 1850s, he became actively involved in the Whig and American

parties. Pratt's political activism culminated in a campaign for a seat in the Alabama senate in 1855.

The important role played by Daniel Pratt in antebellum Alabama politics belies the contention historians have made for over thirty years that Pratt and other southern manufacturers were muzzled by a hegemonic, premodern-pre-bourgeois planter class. Eugene Genovese presents this argument in its most uncompromising form in his influential 1965 essay, "The Industrialists Under the Slave Regime." Insisting that "the cause of Southern industrialism demanded, above all, the destruction of the slave regime," Genovese derides Daniel Pratt and other southern industrialists for their alleged impotence in the face of determined planter opposition to large-scale industrialization. In order to be "permitted" by these united, implacable planters "to operate in the South," many manufacturers "had to accept the prevailing social system despite the restrictions it imposed on the expansion of their wealth as a class," Genovese declares. Dependent on a planter market for cotton gins and textiles, Pratt did not dare challenge the economic primacy of plantation agriculture. Although Pratt was, along with William Gregg, the famous South Carolina textile manufacturer, "the most thoroughly bourgeois of the industrial spokesmen of the Lower South," he, like Gregg, "bowed to the slaveholders and accepted their

terms." Increased manufacturing would not be allowed to lead to "a general industrialization."¹

Later historians have followed in Genovese's footsteps. Historian Randall Miller, like Genovese, concludes that Pratt capitulated to the South's planter class. Miller, however, argues that Pratt did what he did not because of a failure of class will, but because he sincerely adopted planter ideology. In Miller's view, Pratt was far from being "thoroughly bourgeois." Rather, Pratt evinced "an attachment to Southern principles that went beyond mere expediency." Pratt, argues Miller, advocated "modest industrialization" and "positive state action to support internal improvements, education, and banking" in order "to protect the racial and social order in the South, not destroy it." Although Miller rescues Pratt from Genovese's charge of class cowardice, his basic conclusion is much the same: Pratt failed to offer any significant challenge to the South's agrarian social order.²

Miller asserts that hostile Alabamians effectively silenced Pratt's political voice in 1850. Other scholars

¹Eugene D. Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South (New York, 1965), 181, 183-84.

²Randall Miller, "Daniel Pratt's Industrial Urbanism: The Cotton Mill Town in Antebellum Alabama," Alabama Historical Quarterly 34 (Spring 1972): 16-17, 31-32, 34. Similar material on Pratt is also found in Miller's The Cotton Mill Movement in Antebellum Alabama (New York, 1978).

have relied on Miller's assertion in arguing that southern political culture proved unfriendly to vocal advocates of industrialization.³ In reality, however, Pratt did not fall silent after 1850. On the contrary, he became more actively involved in Alabama politics during the decade of the 1850s. Moreover, while Pratt remained the subject of sniping by Democrats and fire-eaters in the 1850s, he always received strong support from Whigs and Know-Nothings, who found appealing his economic and social views. In short, antebellum Alabama provided a mostly receptive environment for Pratt and his ideas. There is no evidence that Pratt felt compelled to temper any of his convictions.

In June 1847, Pratt made his first known attempt to shape Alabama public opinion. That month the Montgomery Tri-Weekly Flag and Advertiser published a letter from Pratt ambitiously addressed "TO THE PEOPLE OF ALABAMA." Here, Pratt urged planters to start investing their surplus capital in industry. In making his case, he enthusiastically detailed Alabama's potential as a manufacturing state. "Alabama does not know her means of wealth," Pratt declared. "She does not know the advantages she possesses

³Fred Bateman and Thomas Weiss, A Deplorable Scarcity: The Failure of Industrialization in the Slave Economy (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1981), 162; John Ashworth, Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic, vol. 1, Commerce and Compromise, 1820-1850; (Cambridge, 1995), 100; Jonathan M. Wiener, Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885 (Baton Rouge and London, 1978), 144-45.

over other states." Pratt predicted that the textile and iron industries would both flourish in Alabama. "No estimate can be made of what our Iron manufacturing will amount to," he insisted. As for textiles, Pratt could "see no good reason why Alabama 20 years hence, should not manufacture all the cotton grown in the State." Alabama, he noted, had "more good water power" than Massachusetts, home of the celebrated Lowell. Admittedly, Alabama could not boast of a wonderful railroad network like Massachusetts, yet Alabama did "have fine navigable rivers in the vicinity of a great portion of our water power, from the banks of which we can, at small expense, ship to Mobile and New Orleans, and thence to any part of the world."

Pratt urged planters to help Alabama fully exploit her industrial capacity by investing in manufacturing. Too many planters put all their money into land and slaves, which, in most cases, did nothing to permanently benefit the state. A planter, Pratt noted,

will continue his planting business probably for some number of years, until he exhausts the soil. He will then either sell his worn out plantation, or abandon it, and go in pursuit of fresh land, which, in nine cases out of ten, he will go out of the State to find. He will then take his negroes and what other property he may have accumulated and leave the State. The worn out plantation is all that Alabama has for her share. Thus we see that instead of his enriching our State, she has been impoverished as much as the plantation thus abandoned has been sunk in value.

In contrast, he maintained, investment in manufacturing permanently enriched Alabama. The greater portion of the

investment went into buildings and heavy machinery that would never be removed from the state. If the original owners failed, others would step into their place. Pratt speculated that \$50,000 invested in a factory would, within ten or twelve years, "increase to \$100,000, which will give employment to some 500 persons, in branches of business which this \$100,000 will be instrumental in establishing."

In Pratt's view, the key to Alabama's economic future clearly lay with industrial villages like Prattville. Pratt noted that a million dollars "invested in a village manufacturing cotton" would provide employment for 1,600 operatives. The operatives, along with members of their families who did not labor in the factory (about 400 persons) would, in turn "bring in 1500 more in other small branches, such as merchants, machinists, boot and shoemakers, tanners, saddlers and harness makers, silver smiths, tanners, paper makers etc." Such a village, now numbering some 3,500 individuals, "would create a market for all the provisions made to spare from 10 to 20 miles around, encouraging and enriching all our small, industrious farmers."

Pratt's enthusiasm for manufacturers and small farmers and his relative indifference to plantation agriculture could not be clearer. It is true that Pratt avowed that he most certainly did not oppose "the planting interest." Indeed, Pratt thought "agriculturists the bone and sinew of

our country." Nevertheless, he immediately sank this disclaimer in the body of the letter. Moreover, in referring to "agriculturists" as the "bone and sinew of our country," he may well have had more in mind those "small, industrious farmers" producing "provisions made to spare" for local manufacturing villages. Pratt's disclaimer, in short, can hardly be viewed as much of a sop to obdurate cotton planters. His plans, if implemented, promised to significantly diversify the southern economy.

Nor did Pratt rest content with urging planters to invest their surplus capital in industry. He placed heavy emphasis on the need for "wise legislation." Alabama needed laws "that would keep our capital at home, and induce capitalists to come in from other states." Again looking at Massachusetts as an example of success, he pointed out that "her liberal course of legislation—the inducements that she held out to capitalists, that were not offered by other states," had made Massachusetts "immensely wealthy, having about one eighth of her population employed in the different branches of manufacturing." Pratt noted that "Massachusetts has always granted liberal charters to manufacturing companies." Other states were following Massachusetts' example and were thereby "rapidly increasing in wealth and population." Unfortunately, complained Pratt, Alabama "instead of encouraging capitalists to invest in manufacturing has rather thrown obstructions in

their way." Pratt declined to say anything further on the subject, but his next letter makes clear that by "obstructions," he was referring to Alabama's tax on capital invested in manufacturing. Pratt viewed such "obstructions" as wholly misguided. "It is thought by most persons in our Southern States, that manufacturing benefits the capitalists, but is of no advantage to persons in moderate circumstances," Pratt asserted, but he insisted that this belief was mistaken. When capitalists lent money "to merchants, or to Government, or to some persons living out of State, or to planters, who invest it in negroes and land," no "advantage" accrued "to the community generally." But when capital was invested in Alabama businesses, the "whole community" benefitted.⁴

Pratt's letter to the Flag and Advertiser contained bold and forceful arguments that reached audiences presumably not only in Montgomery but in much of the state. Nineteen days later, Pratt sent a second letter to the Flag and Advertiser, in which he leapt into the great debate over banking in Alabama. Since the liquidation of the Bank of Alabama in 1842, the state had had to manage without

⁴Montgomery Tri-Weekly Flag and Advertiser, 5 June 1847. At the time Pratt composed this letter, Michael Tuomey, Professor of Geology at the University of Alabama, was about to begin "the first systematic geological survey of [Alabama]." Pratt, no doubt, was closely following Tuomey's activities. Lewis S. Dean, "Michael Tuomey and the Pursuit of a Geological Survey of Alabama, 1847-1857," Alabama Review 44 (January 1991): 102.

banks entirely. Arguing that this absence of banks imposed great difficulties on Alabama capitalists, Pratt urged the legislature to charter a bank with \$250,000 capital in Montgomery. Several days earlier, correspondents from Dallas County had sent a clipping to the Flag and Advertiser containing the 1837 testimony before the Pennsylvania state legislature of one Charles Hagner, a textile manufacturer at Manayunk who had called for the abolition of all banks in the United States. Of Hagner's testimony Pratt wrote witheringly: "I presume there is no intelligent, thinking man in our State, who would say he expected to live to see the day when banks will be done away with throughout the United States." In any event, it was obvious, Pratt declared, that banks were a positive good. "Notwithstanding there was such clear proof given by Mr. Hagner ten years ago" that banks were ruining Philadelphia, Pratt noted sarcastically, "they still continue them—their State is also improving."⁵

Until Pratt called for a restoration of state banks in Alabama, the Flag and Advertiser, a Democratic paper, had shown considerable sympathy for his views. The paper agreed with him that Alabama was "well adapted to manufacturing of all sorts" and looked to such men as Pratt to take the lead in developing "productive industry" in the

⁵Ibid., 14, 24 June 1847.

state. Nevertheless, the paper rejected Pratt's argument that banks were essential to the development of "productive industry" in Alabama. "We dissent toto caelo from Mr. P's notion as to the necessity of banks of issue for the successful prosecution of manufacturing," declared the editors.⁶

In his second letter, Pratt also explicitly attacked Alabama's tax on capital invested in manufacturing. He reminded readers of the Flag and Advertiser that textile manufacturers labored "under many disadvantages. We have to get all our machinery from the North, with a very heavy expense for its transportation. When we get our machinery set up, we have to run it with inexperienced hands." Given the problems faced by textile manufacturers in Alabama, Pratt asked whether it would not be wise for the state "at least to tax manufacturing capital no higher than property otherwise invested?" Under the current system, Pratt asserted, "the tax on capital invested in manufacturing is about one fifth higher than on most other property." Pratt warned that if Alabama did not change its policy, it would "drive the most of our capital out of the State." On this issue, the Flag and Advertiser agreed with Pratt. Indeed, the editors even suggested that the "public interest" might "be promoted by entirely excepting capital thus invested

⁶Ibid., 24 June 1847.

from taxation for a limited time." The editors declared that their own "notions of political economy" led them "to oppose all taxation by which productive labor is hampered." Moreover, noted the editors, taxation increased production costs, thereby increasing consumption costs. In short, they concluded, "taxation retards the development of the industrial pursuit to which it is applied."⁷

Pratt had made some headway with his letters, judging by the editorial responses in the Flag and Advertiser, yet he nevertheless felt very pessimistic over the prospects for state banking. In September 1847, Pratt wrote a despondent letter to a friend of his, U.S. Senator Dixon Hall Lewis of nearby Lowndes County. At this time, Lewis was one of the most important politicians in Alabama. Pratt enclosed with his letter to Lewis several newspaper clippings from the Flag and Advertiser, including his own letters, and he requested Lewis to share with him Lewis's views of the subjects he had addressed. "I must confess that I am dishartned and frequently regret that I have expended so much in trying to do what there is so little prospect or probability at this time of dooing," Pratt darkly declared. He found it "verry disscouraging and dishartning to any man or set of men to make improvements in this State as it is now situated and as it seems our

⁷Ibid.

leading men are determined it shall be." In Pratt's view, demagogic politicians riding the anti-bank hobby horse were driving Alabama into the ditch. Pratt complained that the Democratic Party in Alabama did not "consider the interest of the State." Pratt insisted "that it must be evident to every reflecting unprejudiced man that we can never compete successfully with other states in the manufacturing business unless we have the same facilities." But instead of working with the Whigs to restore Alabama's financial health by rechartering state banks, the Democrats, playing on Jacksonian fears of power and privilege, continued to attempt to make political capital out of attacking banks. Pratt denounced Democratic opposition to banks as wholly insincere: "It is my opinion had the Whigs as a party been opposed to Chartered Institutions and Banking that the Democrats as a party would have been in favor of them." Pratt insisted to Democrat Lewis that it was "perfect right we should have two political parties," but he also pleaded that "the two parties unite for the interest of our State" by bringing back banks.⁸

Pratt's pessimism proved unjustified, for many Democratic members of the state legislature soon came around to his way of thinking. Between 1847 and 1849, the pro-bank forces won the battle for popular opinion, and Democrats

⁸Daniel Pratt to Dixon Hall Lewis, 21 September 1847, Lewis Papers, University of Texas Library.

came to believe that they could no longer make political hay out of opposition to banks. By 1849, according to J. Mills Thornton, "it had become apparent to most Alabamians that the time had arrived when the state could no longer afford to dwell in a banking vacuum." In that year, Democrats dropped their "intransigent anti-bank governor, Reuben Chapman," and nominated instead the pro-bank Supreme Court Justice Henry Collier, a man who had such pronounced Whiggish sympathies that he almost could be viewed as a Democrat in name only. With Collier as their nominee, the Democrats won a close gubernatorial race, but they lost the Senate to the Whigs. In 1850, the new state legislature passed bills incorporating a new bank in Mobile and, more importantly, permitting free banking in Alabama. Both measures passed with substantial Democratic support. The legislature also defeated a measure to make bank stockholders individually liable for the total debts of a bank. Again, significant numbers of Democrats sided with the Whigs on this issue. On the other hand, the legislature simultaneously enacted a tax on the income of officers of corporations (as well as that of public officials) and tabled a bill to prohibit the taxation of "labor or industry."⁹

⁹J. Mills Thornton, III, Power and Politics in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge and London, 1978), 281-85, 287, 464-65.

Despite defeats on the issue of taxes, Pratt could take great satisfaction in the restoration of banking in Alabama. In March 1849, he had revived his letter-writing campaign in the hope of converting Alabamians to his pro-bank position. This time he wrote a letter entitled "Present Position of Alabama" to the Mobile Tribune. His decision not to send this epistle to the Democratic flagship newspaper in Montgomery is not surprising, given the letter's aggressive, assertive tone. Pratt asked his readers how Georgia, a state "greatly inferior to [Alabama] in natural resources," had gone so far ahead of Alabama in building railroads and factories. "The reason is obvious," he snapped. Georgia had granted liberal charters and banking privileges, "without which railroads and manufactures cannot prosper." If Alabama refused soon to follow suit, Pratt predicted, she would become a wasted region of "worn out lands" and "dilapidated villages and towns."

Pratt placed responsibility for this dire state of affairs directly on the shoulders of Alabama's elected representatives and their "narrow, contracted and short sighted policy." He complained that their goal appeared to be "to cramp our State in every possible way." So long as the state legislature continued such foolish behavior, Pratt warned, "we shall continue to sink, until finally our enterprising citizens will seek other places to make

investments and engage in manufacturing of the different branches."¹⁰

Pratt's Mobile Tribune letter caught the attention of the editors of the Tri-Weekly Flag and Advertiser, who reprinted it in their own paper, along with unfavorable editorial comment. Admitting that Pratt was "an honest and sincere friend of the best interest of the State," the editors rejected his contention that banks were vital to Alabama's economic prosperity. Banks, they asserted, had had nothing to do with the success of Prattville itself. Rather, "labor did it all, aided by the energy and industry of Mr. Pratt himself." The editors expanded upon this theme, clearly derived from the labor theory of value:

The labor of the men and women of Prattville made the town what it is; and labor will do the same for any locality. Mr. Pratt settled there comparatively a poor man: he surrounded himself with a working population, and the profits made from THEIR LABOR is shown in the buildings, the machinery, and the other evidences of wealth which Prattville possesses.¹¹

Daniel Pratt found such rhetoric intolerable, and he quickly fired off a response. "It is true, as you say, that I settled in Prattville comparatively a poor man," Pratt admitted. "But I will state that I had more cash means than I have now, or have had since." Access to

¹⁰Montgomery Tri-Weekly Flag and Advertiser, 31 March 1849, reprinted from Mobile Tribune.

¹¹Montgomery Tri-Weekly Flag and Advertiser, 31 March 1849.

"banking facilities" had proven vital to Pratt in building his factories. In 1837, he had borrowed \$2,000 from the Montgomery branch of the State Bank to help him pay for the land he had purchased from Joseph May. After the state liquidated the Bank in 1842, Pratt "got money from Georgia." Upon opening his commission house in New Orleans in 1846, Pratt turned to that city for credit. In fact, Pratt observed pointedly, "Louisiana has done as much toward building up Prattville as Alabama." Clearly, Pratt implied, to suggest that labor, not capital, had built Prattville was preposterous. Labor could, of course, work the machinery, but it could not provide the credit necessary to buy the machinery in the first place.¹²

The editors of the Flag and Advertiser were clearly taken aback by Pratt's forceful response to their criticism. The editors explained that they had not had "the remotest idea of trenching in any way upon his personal or private affairs." Indeed, they declared, they had "very great respect" for Pratt, recognizing that he had "made his own fortune" in Alabama and that he was a sterling example of what energy and industry could accomplish.¹³

Randall Miller relies on the exchange between Pratt and the Flag and Advertiser to conclude that "positive

¹²Ibid., 12 April 1849.

¹³Ibid.

state notions were not . . . well received in Alabama," but this interpretation is misleading.¹⁴ Although the Flag and Advertiser editors opposed banking, they nevertheless sympathized with other views Pratt held, such as his opposition to taxes, and they consistently strove to make clear their great esteem for Pratt and his accomplishments as a manufacturer. And, in any event, it is erroneous to extrapolate from one newspaper that Alabama rejected Pratt's "positive state notions." In reaching this conclusion Miller loses sight of the rather important fact that in 1850, the Alabama state legislature adopted Pratt's pro-bank position when it enacted a free banking law. In all likelihood, the resolution of the banking battle lifted Pratt from the depths of his depression and encouraged him to continue publicly to air his opinions in the newspapers. In this episode, Pratt displayed no timidity, nor did he face planter opposition to "positive state notions."

Flushed with success over the banking issue, Pratt evidently felt emboldened to take a public stance on the extremely controversial Compromise of 1850, the attempt by the United States Congress to settle the question of whether to allow slavery in the territories won by the United States in the Mexican War. The admission of California as a free state proved a bitter pill for many

¹⁴Miller, "Industrial Urbanism," 15.

southerners. In a letter sent to the Montgomery Alabama Journal in October 1850, Pratt urged Alabamians to swallow. He asserted that "this great agitation has arisen solely from the Northern people interfering with our institution of slavery." Nevertheless, he did not believe that "secession or a division of our glorious Union" was the proper remedy for the South. Secession would only exacerbate North-South tensions by increasing the incidence of runaway slaves. Nor was the South economically prepared for secession. "Instead of spending our time and resources in calling conventions," Pratt declared, "let us spend them in encouraging and protecting our own State. Let us show a disposition to encourage home industry and home trade." Only after southerners had built a stronger manufacturing sector would secession be a prudent course. Pratt argued that to foster southern industrial development, southerners should patronize southern manufacturers. "Instead of going to New York and Boston for almost everything we consume," Pratt wrote, "let us encourage our own Tailors, Shoemakers, Farmers, Saddlers, Cabinet makers, Carriage makers, Rail makers, Broom makers, Cotton Gin makers, Cotton and Woolen factories, and many other branches of business."

In his 1850 letter, Pratt also made his first known public utterance on slavery. Long ago he had written rather ambivalently to his father concerning slavery "that to live in any country it is necessary to conform to the

customs of the country in part." Now Pratt expressed no hesitation about slavery's absolute moral rightness, writing of "the blessings resulting from our slave institutions." American slavery, he explained, "was designed by Providence to christianize that degraded people [Africans]." Even with his public endorsement of slavery, Pratt soon found himself the subject of a blazing attack from William Lowndes Yancey's radical paper, the Montgomery Atlas. Because the implications of this incident often have been misinterpreted by scholars, I shall examine the affair in some detail.¹⁵

The affair began on November 6, 1850 (about two weeks after the Alabama Journal published Pratt's letter), when a letter signed "Charles Pym" appeared in the Montgomery Advertiser, along with approving comments from the editors. The letter so outraged Pratt that he sent a letter concerning "Pym" to the Alabama Journal. According to Pratt, "Pym" and the editors of the Advertiser had challenged the character and patriotism of northern-born residents of Alabama, many of whom had supported the Compromise of 1850. Pratt was especially incensed by the editors' waspish claim that the typical Alabama Yankee was uncouth and ignorant, having "enjoyed, in the way of education, the benefit of a

¹⁵Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 24 October 1850; Miller, "Industrial Urbanism," 31; Bateman and Weiss, Deploable Scarcity, 162; Ashworth, Commerce and Compromise, 100; Wiener, Social Origins, 144-45.

few quarters in a free school, made some proficiency in church music, and served an apprenticeship to the manufacture of gimblets and fishing-tackle."

Pratt made clear that he would not allow such partisan bombast to silence him. Despite his having been "born in one of the New England states," Pratt wrote, he had just as much right to air his opinions as a native of South Carolina: "I claim to be a citizen of Alabama, and to be much attached to the State, and to feel as deep an interest in its welfare and future prosperity, as either the Editors of the Advertiser, or any contributor to that paper who so freely denounces all Northern born citizens."

According to "Pym," declared Pratt, a man "born North" had "no right to express his opinion." If he dared do so, "Pym" demanded that the man "be marked." If Pym's view gained general approval in Alabama, concluded Pratt, it would be "best for all persons born in a State or county where slavery does not exist to pull up stakes and start over—for a government where the majority will not tolerate a proper freedom of the press is not worth sustaining." Happily, Pratt did not think such a state of affairs existed in his adopted state. Indeed, Pratt declared that he was "proud of being a citizen of Alabama, where a large

majority of the citizens" appreciated the qualities of "honesty, enterprise and industry," even in Yankees.¹⁶

Pratt's defense of Alabama Yankees provoked "Pym" to write another letter, this time aimed specifically at Pratt. Pym's second letter appeared in the Montgomery Atlas, the radical newspaper co-owned by William Lowndes Yancey, one of the South's preeminent fire-eaters. Pym's words were breathtakingly backward:

You [Pratt] have some reputation as a manufacturer of cotton goods, but your skill in that department is no evidence of your ability to mark out a path for the Southern people. . . . Yet you have put yourself forward as an adviser of the people respecting matters which are cautiously and tenderly touched on by the jurists and the statesmen of our land, and by those who have been born and bred upon the land!! The wealth you have acquired has made you step above your station.

Pym ordered Pratt to confine himself "to the manufacturing of cotton goods." If he dared put himself "amid the heat and dust of the present stern struggle among southern men," he would "be marked and treated as a Gentile in Israel—the Barbarian among the Romans." It was for "statesmen to blaze out the path for the people of Alabama."¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid., 13 November 1850

¹⁷Ibid., 22 November 1850. Jonathan Wiener muddles this event considerably in his account of it in Social Origins, attributing the attack on Pratt to the "class-conscious" Journal. In reality, the Whig Journal steadfastly defended Pratt against his critics. See Wiener, Social Origins, 144-45.

Significantly, Pym's vicious personal attack on Pratt appeared in a radical Montgomery newspaper co-owned by William Lowndes Yancey. Yancey and his cohorts can hardly be seen properly as representing mainstream Alabamians, for, as William Cooper has noted, the "efforts to precipitate secession over the Compromise of 1850 failed miserably."¹⁸ That the Advertiser, the Democratic state organ, printed the original Pym letter and also indulged in potshots against Yankees is more significant. Nevertheless, the editors of the Advertiser evidently did not adopt quite the aristocratic tone of Pym, nor did they attack Pratt personally. For them to have done so would not have squared with their own praise of Pratt the previous year during the bank fight. Yankee-baiting was, however, a time-honored tactic in southern politics, and by associating himself with the Whig Party on the banking issue in 1849 and on the Compromise in 1850, Pratt had, in some Democrats' eyes, made himself fair political game.

When radicals and Democrats criticized Pratt, Whigs rushed to his defense. Both the Alabama Journal and the New Orleans Bulletin wrote editorials lauding Pratt and denouncing his critics. Pym's outrageous condescension gave Whigs a beautiful opportunity to reverse places with the Democrats and pose as defenders of the common man.

¹⁸William J. Cooper, The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856, (Baton Rouge and London, 1978), 317.

Pym's "doctrine," declared the editors of the Journal, was "dangerous, monarchical and abominable, and repulsive to every feeling and principle of republicanism." How dare Pym presume "to establish and designate stations in our republican institutions, as if there was any station or position that Mr. Pratt, or any worthy citizen, has not the right to aspire to if they wish." For Pratt, the Journal had nothing but praise:

We would give more for the strong, clear, practical sense of Mr. Pratt in reference to the true interests of Alabama, than that of all the statesmen who could be mentioned.—In fact he has done more to develop the resources of the State and point out its way to wealth and power, than all the demagogues and scheming politicians with which it has been cursed from its its foundation.¹⁹

Pym's letter was so offensive to commercially minded southerners that the editors of the New Orleans Bulletin felt compelled to write an editorial defending Pratt and attacking Pym. The Bulletin diagnosed Pym's statements as evidence of "madness." Yankees such as Pratt, declared the editors, should be cherished as the South's "very best citizens." The editors even went so far as to invite any Yankees who felt unwelcome in Alabama to come to Louisiana, where they would "find a hearty welcome."²⁰

¹⁹Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 22 November 1850.

²⁰Mobile Daily Advertiser, 4 December 1850, reprinted from New Orleans Bulletin.

In December 1850, the Advertiser accused Pratt of turning a cold shoulder to a group of Autauga Southern Rights men who wanted to use some of Pratt's land for a rally and barbecue for Congressman Sampson Harris, a Southern Rights Democrat. The editors of the Advertiser backed off from their accusation, however, when it turned out that the group had not even requested Pratt's permission to use his land in the first place. Moreover, Pratt himself had attended the event and suspended operations at his factories so that his workers could attend as well. Once again, a political salvo aimed at Pratt had been neatly deflected.²¹

Pratt became more politically active than ever before during the 1850s. This tough and determined New England Yankee was hardly such a sensitive plant that he could not withstand the blasts of the fire-eaters. Pratt no doubt found sustenance in the extravagant praise he received from his Whig friends. In April 1851, for example, the Journal published a long piece praising Pratt and flaying fire-eaters. The Journal reminded readers of Pym's "articles of studied mockery and contempt" that had "sneered" at Pratt because "he was a practical man, whose hands were soiled by contact with this vulgar manufacturing." In contrast to the sneering Pym, the Journal celebrated Pratt, declaring

²¹Montgomery Weekly Alabama Journal, 14 December 1850.

that he had shown Alabamians "the true road to power and prosperity." In the view of the Journal this "true road" was "the policy of diversifying capital and directing it in all the channels where it can be used with profit in developing the mineral wealth with which our lands are teeming." While the Journal recognized that "some portion of all the Gulf States are wholly agricultural," it pointed out that "other important portions of all these States" claimed abundant "mineral wealth and manufacturing resources." Just because "some important sections grow cotton and rice," it did not follow that other sections without identical "natural capacities" must "do the same or remain idle, unproductive and unsettled." The Journal insisted that all sectional interests within Alabama "should be fostered and urged on harmoniously together." Alabama had inside her borders "all the necessary elements of an independent empire." It was folly for her not to develop her resources.²²

In the 1850s, Pratt became one of Alabama's—indeed the South's—most vocal preachers of the industrial gospel. He realized that he could not singlehandedly pave Alabama's

²²Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 12 April 1851. Randall Miller has characterized "Pym" as representing Alabama's "planting interest" and has asserted that a humiliated Pratt withdrew from politics for nearly a decade as a result of "Pym's" verbal assault on him. Miller, "Industrial Urbanism," 31. Though Miller's interpretation of this event has influenced other scholars, his conclusions are, in my view, erroneous.

"true road to power and prosperity," and he determined to persuade others to join in the effort. Nor did he refrain from involving himself in overtly political matters. In May 1851, Pratt, along with Elisha Griswold and planter Lewis Whetstone, a shareholder in his cotton mill, attended a fusion convention of Constitutional Union men and moderate Southern Rights men held in Autauga's county seat, Kingston, in order to choose delegates for a convention to nominate a congressional candidate for the upcoming election. The convention appointed both Pratt and Griswold to the ten-man Resolutions Committee. The Preamble produced by the committee denounced South Carolina for "wild and fearful schemes of secession and revolution" that threatened to "break up this grand and glorious Republic." In order to help "preserve the Constitution and Union of our beloved Country," the committee proposed seven resolutions, all of which convention members unanimously adopted. In the resolutions, the members declared that the measures included in the Compromise of 1850 did not "afford sufficient cause" for any southern state to secede from the Union and "revolutionise" the government. While the members did "not approve of the whole of the said Compromise measures," they nevertheless recognized them "as the law of the land." As "order-loving, law-abiding citizens," the members intended to abide by those measures.

Although the adopted resolutions clearly embraced the Compromise of 1850, they also bluntly informed the North "that further aggressions upon [southern] rights are to cease." Such "aggressions" included abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, materially modifying the fugitive slave law, and prohibiting slavery from any U.S. territory. If the North kept up its "aggressions," the South would be justified "in resorting to such ulterior measures of resistance and redress as she might think proper to adopt."

Pratt's hand in the committee's work is most evident in the seventh resolution, which declared it the "imperative duty" of "every citizen" of Alabama "to foster and cherish our own commerce, our own manufactures, our own mechanic arts of every kind and description," with the goal of enabling the South "to rely on herself alone for the protection of her rights and honor." Taken together, the adopted resolutions at the Southern Rights Constitutional Union Convention at Kingston embodied Pratt's public political positions: southern rights maintained within the Union and secession as a last resort, to be turned to only after the South had greatly strengthened the industrial sector of its economy.²³

At their nominating convention, the Union men chose as their congressional candidate William Mudd of Jefferson

²³Ibid., 26 May 1851.

County, a former legislator and, like Pratt, an active promoter of manufacturing and internal improvements. The opponent Mudd faced was incumbent Sampson Harris, a Southern Rights Democrat. As this election approached, tensions increased between the Unionists and the more radical Southern Rights men. On June 21, a group of fire-eaters held a meeting in Kingston. Two days later, a "bad affray" broke out in the gin factory between two mechanics, Unionist William Healy of New Hampshire and a fire-eater named Jones. Three days after this event, "Jones had Healy arrested," but Elisha Griswold intervened and worked out "an amicable settlement" between his two mechanics. Griswold's mediation did not remove fire-eater enmity toward Healy, however. On election day, August 4, "a report got abroad that [Healy] had [been] making incendiary speeches to the Negroes." A group of local hotheads "determined to tar and feather him or ride him on a rail, but they concluded to defer it until further evidence could be procured." Taking no chances, Healy "armed himself with a revolver." Finally, however, Healy's enemies "concluded to drop it," finding "no foundation in fact for the reports."²⁴

²⁴Thornton, Politics and Power, 194; Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of Ferdinand Ellis Smith (Prattville, 1991), 95, 98; Larry W. Nobles, ed., The Journals of George Littlefield Smith (Prattville, 1991), 19-20.

Although the Healy affair ended without any tar being applied, two fights broke out on election day, one between T. J. Tarleton, a Unionist planter from New Hampshire who had chaired the Southern Rights Constitutional Union Convention, and Bolling Hall, one of Autauga's most important Democrats; the other between Unionist O. W. G. Methany, a mill operative from Virginia, and J. T. Hamilton, a prominent Democratic planter. The next day saw more "excitement . . . among the Fire Eaters" over a rumor that Gardner Hale had fired an operative who had voted for the Southern Rights ticket. George Smith noted: "Some of the Southern Rights crowd are very mad." Considerable drinking among the Southern Rights men led to fear that violence might occur, but nothing happened. No doubt Harris's narrow victory helped to calm the extreme Southern Rights contingent in Prattville. To celebrate their victory, some "partly inebriated" southern rights men "procured a skeleton" and, naming it J. K. Jones (after the Union candidate for Autauga's seat in the state House of Representatives, who had also lost), held a funeral ceremony for it. "Old man Killet," likely the father of Marcus Cicero Killet, one of Pratt's gin mechanics, presided over what an outraged George Smith labeled "a very ridiculous affair."²⁵

²⁵Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 98; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 19.

Autauga politics had quite clearly become very divisive and bitter by 1851. During this heated political struggle, Pratt had come down forcefully on the side of the Union party. As Alabama's most celebrated industrialist and a very wealthy and articulate man, he instantly became an important political figure in Autauga. Even before 1851, however, his political sympathies had been readily apparent, despite his claims of nonpartisanship. In 1848, for example, Pratt furnished a mule team and wagon, with a banner bearing the words "Rough and Ready" flying overhead, to carry Prattville voters to the polls. Pratt's Whig wagon "made two trips crowded with passengers."²⁶ In 1852, Pratt committed more than a wagon and some mules to the Whig cause. That year he attended the Whig state convention at Montgomery as a delegate from Autauga County. The nomination by the national Whig Party of Winfield Scott, whom many southern Whigs viewed as soft on slavery and the Compromise of 1850, caused Whig spirits to plummet in

²⁶Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 25. Pratt's efforts were not in vain. Prattville Beat went for Taylor over Cass by fifty-two votes. Taylor won the county by seventy-five votes. One of Taylor's votes came from Ferdinand Smith, who, in a rare burst of political enthusiasm, wrote in his diary: "Hurrah for Z. Taylor." Ibid., 25. Pratt quite openly discussed his partiality toward the Whigs with his friend George Cooke in 1848. In one of his letters, Cooke assured Pratt: "With you I am utterly disgusted with [the] Democracy and fear we shall have to endure its abuses to the last." George Cooke to Daniel Pratt, 21 July 1848, Folder 48, Pratt Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery (ADAH).

Alabama and across the South. Those few men who attended the Montgomery convention must surely have been Alabama's most committed and loyal Whigs. Pratt played an important role at this convention, serving as one of the five convention vice-presidents and as a member of the Committee of Thirteen, which drafted the convention's resolutions.²⁷

The Committee of Thirteen put on a brave face, drafting a resolution commending Winfield Scott for his many virtues, including his own southern birth and his "ties of blood and marriage with Southern citizens," and asserting that he would maintain the Compromise of 1850 and protect "the Constitutional rights attaching to our peculiar institution." At the same time, however, the Committee drafted a long tribute to Millard Fillmore, the sitting president, whom most southerners had hoped would receive the nomination instead of Scott.²⁸

Like his southern Whig brethren, Pratt no doubt preferred Fillmore to Scott as the candidate who could better reassure wavering southern voters that he would protect the South's "peculiar institution." Pratt had taken his own step in August 1851 to make even clearer his strong commitment to slavery when he sent a long proslavery letter to

²⁷Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 4 September 1852. On Scott's disastrous campaign in the South, see Cooper, Politics of Slavery and Thornton, Politics and Power.

²⁸Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 4 September 1852.

the Farmer's Cabinet, a journal "with free soil tendencies" published in Amherst, New Hampshire. Pratt informed the editors of the Cabinet that he had been distressed to discover of late that the editors had criticized slavery. Pratt proceeded to defend slavery on both moral and economic grounds. First, he dramatically declared "that African slavery in North America has been a greater blessing to the human family than any other institution except the Christian religion." By taking Africans from their homelands and carrying them to America, Pratt argued, whites had done a great thing:

Every person who is familiar with the condition of the African race in their own country know that they are perhaps the most degraded beings on the face of the earth. Ignorant, indolent and savage, they are but little above the brute creation, and so situated as to have but little chance of their condition being materially improved at present.

Given this "fact," Pratt continued, surely Africans were better off in America, even as slaves. "Here," Pratt asserted, "they are well fed and clothed, taught industry and economy, agriculture and mechanic arts, and the Christian religion. They are taken care of when sick, and well provided for."

Because his readers might well have been tempted to ask at this point, would blacks not be still better off if they were free, Pratt hurried to a consideration of slavery's beneficial economic aspects. Slavery, he declared, had built the great textile industries of "Old and New

England." Without the cotton produced by slaves—here Pratt claimed that the "negro is peculiarly fitted for [southern] lands and climate"—less than a fourth of the mills currently in operation would exist. Moreover, since "cotton mills and other manufactories . . . have been the primary cause of most of our internal improvements," the elimination of slavery would have a negative impact on northern canal and railroad projects as well. Clearly, then, slavery was vital economically to the North as well as the South.

Given these "facts," Pratt concluded, "would it not be folly and madness to break up our happy government on the account of African slavery?" He warned the editors "that the slaveholding States are now on a pivot—a very small weight will turn the scale on whichever side it is thrown." If the North continued to agitate the slavery question, Pratt predicted, the South would secede—"no mistake about it." On the other hand, if the North would only "sustain the Constitution of the United States, and let our domestic institutions alone," both sections would find that they could "unite and live peaceably and friendly in the great family of States." The United States stood poised to become "the most powerful nation on earth," but a fratricidal war would leave both sections of the country weaker.²⁹

²⁹Ibid., 13 September 1851, reprinted from the Farmer's Cabinet. Shadrack Mims claimed this letter was

Pratt's proslavery missive met with very favorable comment from his friends at the Alabama Journal. Pratt, declared the Journal, was "eminently a practical man, with a deserved reputation for his large experience and sound observation" and thus his "opinion of the value of the institution of African slavery, not only to the negro race, but to the world" was "unanswerable." The Journal expected the letter to have a salutary effect on northerners "of limited information who are grossly deceived on this subject and who know no more of the institution of slavery than they have learned from the miserably false caricatures in the windows of the Abolitionist print shops."³⁰ Once again Pratt had scored another political goal, at least as far as Alabama's Whig press was concerned.

Until a newspaper started in Prattville in 1853, the Journal served as Pratt's public forum. Not only did the editors shower praise upon the industrialist, they also published his letters. On October 17, 1851, Pratt read a letter authored by "Laborer," which so impressed him that he wrote his own response that very day and sent it to the

part of a series that Pratt sent to the Cabinet. Pratt's agent declared proudly "that the publication of the letters in a New Hampshire paper was like throwing firebrands against a den of rattle snakes." Pratt's letters, it seems, "were assailed with the most virulent abusive language" in the North. Nevertheless, Mims believed, Pratt died holding the same beliefs about slavery. Prattville Southern Signal, 11 January 1878.

³⁰Montgomery Alabama Daily Journal, 13 September 1851.

Journal. It is not hard to see why Pratt found "Laborer's" letter so appealing. In his epistle, "Laborer" complained that too many southern boys were brought up as dandies with no respect for honest labor. The southern dandy did have some skills, admitted "Laborer" sarcastically:

[H]e can toot a horn equal to a trooper, and glories in the voice of a hound—can set a gaff on the heel of a sock with great precision—is an expert dancer—loves to be seen puffing "the best Havana"—rides admirably, with his ivory whip-staff—chats most charmingly on all the nonsensical subjects of general gossip—takes a social glass, and now and then is seen gentlemanly tight—perhaps knows something of cards, and delights in poker.

Such a man "is the very beau ideal of the ladies," conceded "Laborer", but "what honorable position in society" could he fill? "Laborer" declared that ways had to be found to impress upon these young men the importance of learning some sort of useful calling. First, he suggested that "industrial publications and scientific works . . . be widely circulated among the people." These worthy items, "Laborer" hoped, would replace "trashy novels" as the reading material of young men. In addition, "Laborer" urged that "agricultural and mechanical societies . . . be established in every county." Here Alabama's government "should lend a helping hand, and give suitable encouragement." Finally, the "Legislature should establish agricultural and mechanical schools." When the day came when "all young men were properly educated in some useful branch of industry, be it agricultural, mechanical or science,"

"Laborer" eagerly concluded, honest workers "would be more respected and hold a higher rank in the social circle, and many would be both useful and happy who are in a fair way to become vagabonds and outcasts."³¹

Pratt was so happy with "Laborer's" letter that he penned an immediate response, which the Journal also published. Pratt admitted that he had read "Laborer's" remarks "with much pleasure." He hoped "an interest may be awakened on the subject of the future destiny of our young men." Like "Laborer," Pratt found it "alarming to see what little interest the young men and their parents seemingly had for their future usefulness and happiness." To these shortsighted people Pratt declared bluntly: "No man is happy who has no useful employment." Pratt admitted he was aware that many people thought it "degrading . . . to be seen following the plow, or with a jack-plane, saw, trowel, hammer, or any other machine tool in their hands." Nevertheless, Pratt stamped such views as mistaken. Labor brought material rewards that would command respect and admiration from others:

I ask, is any man thought less of for having a neat, substantial dwelling, the front yard adorned with shrubbery and flowers, a good vegetable garden, a pleasant wife and cheerful children to welcome a visitor? All these, and many other comforts of life, a man can have if he is blessed with health and habits of industry. . . . No man whose society I would wish to cultivate would think less of me for having some

³¹Ibid., 17 October 1851.

occupation, and sticking closely to it; no matter whether I am a tailor, shoemaker, hatter, blacksmith, carpenter, machinist, carriage or harness-maker, saddler, silversmith, or painter, or whether I dig potatoes, pick cotton, or follow the plow-handles, provided I attended strictly to my occupation, and was punctual and honest.

Pratt made clear that his advice applied equally to all social classes in Alabama, including the most privileged. "Many persons think it outrageous for a man to labor, if he is what they call rich and able to live without it," but, Pratt declared, such people were woefully misguided. He claimed that "if a man is wealthy and has sons, it is much more important that he should raise them to business than if he was poor." Pratt pronounced that "riches prove a curse instead of a blessing to a man who is raised to no business." This maxim was true, according to Pratt, because such an ill-trained man would have no idea how to "make riches not only a blessing to himself but to those around him." Instead, the accursed man would foolishly fritter away his wealth, doing no one, not even himself, any good.

Pratt agreed with "Laborer" that to instill "habits of industry" in young men, a Mechanic's Institute was essential. He hoped to finance the school through both private donations and public assistance. "Are there not thirty persons that would give \$1000, sixty \$500, sixty \$250, sixty \$125, sixty \$100, sixty \$50, and sixty \$25?", he asked. "I will be a subscriber to each amount, provided

the state will make it up to \$100,000 and give an annuity of \$1000." In addition to providing \$2,050 from his own pockets, Pratt generously offered to donate the site for the school. He also suggested that the Institute provide free tuition and board "for such as are not able to pay," so that no dutiful young man would have the door to opportunity shut in his face.³²

Once again Pratt's views found a receptive audience in the Journal editors, who found it "cheering . . . that the importance of the subject of developing the industrial resources of the State is engaging the attention of practical men and able writers." Pratt's specific proposal of starting an industrial school did not capture broad public interest, however. The only response to his letter published in the Journal came from an avid phrenologist named Whitfield, who endorsed Pratt's Institute as long as it was "conducted on Phrenological principles." Whitfield demanded "that no young man be admitted into the School whose mental developments are not of a high order, considered Phrenologically."³³ In this case, Pratt must have found the popular response to his ambitious ideas rather deflating.

³²Ibid., 22 October 1851.

³³Ibid., 22 December 1851.

Pratt's major concern for the next four or five years became internal improvements, specifically railroads; and in this instance, at least, many other Alabamians did share his interest. In February 1853, Pratt helped start a Prattville newspaper, the Autauga Citizen, which promptly became the forum for Pratt and other local railroad advocates. Because Pratt's enthusiastic opinion of railroads and his involvement in Autauga railroad projects have been discussed in an earlier chapter, I shall consider here upon his role in Alabama's great "state aid" campaign of 1855.

Internal improvements advocates had attempted in the 1851 session of the state legislature to push through a general program of state aid for internal improvements, but their efforts met with defeat. A renewed attempt during the 1853 session was blocked by the new governor, John Anthony Winston, a Jacksonian Democrat who was extremely skeptical of state aid to private railroad companies. When Winston ran for reelection in 1855, state aid accordingly became the great issue in the gubernatorial race.³⁴

Pratt must surely have found dismaying the advent of John Anthony Winston. Pratt believed passionately that rapid railroad development would do more to diversify Alabama's economy than any other measure, now that the legislature had restored banking. "That State which expects

³⁴Thornton, Politics and Power, 321-27.

prosperity will assuredly be disappointed," he asserted in 1853 in the Autauga Citizen, "if it fails to connect the differing parts of its territory and the adjoining states by railroads." Pratt laid special emphasis on the point that railroads would unlock the remote mineral resources in northern Alabama. In another 1853 letter to the Citizen, he expressed the hope that Alabama would elect a governor and legislators "friendly to railroads."³⁵ After the disappointing session of 1853, Pratt decided to lay down his pen and run for the legislature himself.

Pratt had already cast aside the mask of nonpartisanship when he played a prominent role at the 1852 Whig state convention. Pratt reaffirmed his devotion to the Whigs by not abandoning them when, in the wake of the tempest over Winfield Scott's nomination, their party began rapidly taking on water. In fact, as the party started sinking into oblivion in 1853, Pratt stood prominently at its helm, having been elected to the Whig state central committee that year. When Know-Nothing lodges began forming in Alabama in 1854, Pratt, along with most of his fellow Whigs, drifted into the new organization, hoping it would serve as an effective foil to the ascendant Democracy.³⁶ It would be

³⁵Prattville Autauga Citizen, 7 April, 1 July.

³⁶Ibid., 9 June 1853. On the collapse of the Whigs and the rise of the American Party in Alabama, see Thornton, Politics and Power, 352-55.

as a Know-Nothing that Pratt would take his deepest plunge yet into Alabama politics.

In 1853, the Alabama Journal had floated Pratt's name as a candidate for the state senate seat of Autauga and Montgomery counties. In 1855, a Pratt candidacy finally materialized when the Know Nothings chose him as their man to run for the seat against Democrat Adam Felder, a Montgomery attorney and former judge.³⁷ Pratt's 1855 race for the state senate reveals the error in contentions that Pratt had no political courage, for in his exceedingly close race, Pratt suffered blow after blow from tough, battle-hardened Democrats. A timorous man surely never even would have ventured into battle.

Throughout the campaign, which lasted from June until August, the Autauga Citizen, which the Democrats had bought out the year before, waged an especially nasty vendetta against Pratt, upon whom its editor, William Howell, had once heaped praise. Howell in 1855 received marching orders from Bolling Hall and Autauga's other Democratic leaders. Hall, along with most planter Democrats in Autauga, had supported Pratt's railroad development plans in 1853 and 1854. Fearing, however, that disillusioned Democrats might turn to the Know-Nothings in the 1855 election,

³⁷Prattville Autauga Citizen, 24 March 1853, 28 June 1855.

Autauga's Democracy unleashed Howell to bludgeon Pratt with any handy implement, including the state aid issue.³⁸

Howell had, only a short time earlier, enthusiastically supported Pratt's ideas on railroad development, but now he stridently denounced the man and his ideas. Even before Pratt's nomination, Howell made clear that he had completely reversed his own position on state aid. Now he urgently warned his readers that state aid was a "wild and reckless system of taxation for the construction of railroads" and an "abominable doctrine" that "would bankrupt the most prosperous state in the Union." In June, with Pratt's nomination looming, Howell also played what might be called the "Yankee card," pointing out that the Democratic candidate, at least, would "be one of Alabama's native sons, who has been raised in our midst, and who

³⁸Pratt's campaign can be followed in the Autauga Citizen's June, July, and August issues. The Southern Statesman, Prattville's Know-Nothing organ, has no surviving issues from this period, but the Know-Nothing side of the campaign can be followed closely in the pages of the Selma Daily Alabama Sentinel. John Hardy, the editor of the Sentinel, took a strong interest in Pratt's race because his paper had a circulation in Autauga. Moreover, Hardy himself passionately supported state aid and personally despised William Howell, the editor of the Citizen. At one point during the heated campaign, Hardy referred to Howell as "this little stinking toad" and "the little lump of feotid matter." Selma Daily Alabama Sentinel, 5 June 1855. On the close political relationship between William Howell and Bolling Hall, see William Howell to Bolling Hall, 1 May 1856, Box 4, Folder 4, Bolling Hall Papers, (ADAH).

would be true to the South were he even a resident of the land of wooden nutmegs."³⁹

In the campaign, attacks on Pratt's economic agenda likely damaged him more than unsubtle reminders of his Yankee origins. Certainly, Howell directed most of his rhetorical bombast at state aid. Pratt surely was as closely associated with state aid as any Alabamian, while his residence in the South for over thirty-five years and his staunch public defense of slavery rendered xenophobic attacks upon him largely ineffective. In short, Pratt's 1855 race for the Alabama state senate turned into a referendum on state aid. Pratt—along with his issue—lost, but only by a very slim margin. Although Pratt won Montgomery County and Autauga's wealthy planter-dominated southern precincts and enjoyed vocal support from Selma, he lost Autauga's yeoman-dominated northern precincts by large margins, giving his opponent a very narrow victory. Autauga's planters proved quite receptive to Pratt's economic agenda. Opposition came mostly from small farmers insulated from the wider commercial market.

Having previously aired his political views only in print, Pratt found the necessary transition from essay writer to stump speaker in his 1855 campaign rather difficult. Even such strong admirers of Pratt as the editors

³⁹Prattville Autauga Citizen, 26 April 1855; Selma Alabama State Sentinel, 26 June 1855.

of the Alabama Journal conceded that Pratt was "perhaps a better writer than speaker." His most vocal enemy, William Howell, mocked him for his apparent oratorical shortcomings. At a public debate held at Autaugaville between Pratt and his opponent, for example, Howell sneered that Pratt had made only "a few incoherent and disconnected remarks." Pratt fared no better on his home turf, according to Howell. At a Prattville debate, declared the Citizen's editor, Felder had "acquitted himself with honor," while Pratt "did not even make a point." Howell concluded cruelly that Pratt's debate performance revealed him as "unfit" to serve in the Alabama state senate.⁴⁰

The editors of the Journal countered Howell's taunts by pointing out that rhetorical skill did not measure legislative ability: "It is not the fluent talking man, as much as the common sense man of the committees . . . who directs and controls legislation." As a man "eloquent in deeds, not words," Pratt possessed better qualifications than Felder "for the duties of faithful, intelligent, [and] practical legislation." Indeed, when Pratt did win a seat in the Alabama legislature in 1861, he confirmed the Journal's maxim, proving himself an effective and important

⁴⁰Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5, 12 July, 4 August, 1855. One of Pratt's employees, Ferdinand Smith, attended the Prattville debate. He found the debate between Pratt and Felder "very good on both sides." Nobles, ed., Ferdinand Smith, 211.

legislator. Felder, on the other hand, seems to have mainly won distinction as a political opportunist of the first order.⁴¹

Pratt evidently soon recognized that Felder was getting the better of him in public debates. After an encounter at Pine Flat, a hamlet in upcountry Autauga, Pratt retired from the field. Howell quickly found another needle with which to prick Pratt, however. He accused Pratt, who he now dubbed "the Grand Sachem," of resorting to "all manners of low chicanery to induce" Citizen subscribers to cancel their subscriptions. By "low

⁴¹Montgomery Alabama Journal, 4 August 1855. On Pratt's service in the Alabama state legislature, see my discussion in the next chapter. On Felder's defection to the Republican party during Reconstruction, see Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, The Scalawag in Alabama Politics, 1865-1881 (University, Alabama, 1977), 20, 106, 136-37, 153. The sentiments expressed by the Journal concerning the proper qualifications for a legislator are strikingly similar to those expressed in 1860 by Frederick Law Olmsted:

The valuable men at Washington are not speakers of Greek or aught else, but the diggers and builders of the committees, and the clerks of the departments, and the best of these men are trained in habits of business by the necessities of what is called private business and who have been drawn directly from private business.

See Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey in the Back Country (New York, 1860), 436.

Historian Kenneth Greenberg posits that the antebellum North moved away from an oratorical political culture while the South remained in oratory's sway. See Kenneth S. Greenberg, Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery (Baltimore and London, 1985), 12-15. It would appear, however, that many Alabamians, at least, shared Olmsted's disdain for a "'bunkum' oratory" and his admiration for dependable "diggers and builders."

chicanery," Howell presumably meant threats of economic boycotts against Prattville tradesmen and professionals who did not do as Pratt willed. Rather ironically, given his own tactics, Howell took solace in the belief that "the abuse of petty demagogues almost invariably effects more good than harm."⁴²

Despite Howell's own abuse of Pratt, the Know-Nothings seemed to make some headway in Autauga during the early summer, winning converts in upcountry precincts, including Chesnut Creek, an area so staunchly Democratic that people had dubbed it "the Gibraltar of Autauga Democracy." As the season passed, however, Howell's mud began to stick to his target. By mid-July, the editor gleefully reported a series of defections from American ranks, as wayward upcountry yeomen began returning home to the Democracy.⁴³

The August election returns revealed that Pratt had lost the race to Felder by a mere 30 votes. While Pratt had won Montgomery County by 110 votes, Felder had bested Pratt by 140 votes in Autauga. Traditional Autauga voting patterns had, in the end, held firm, with the more commercially oriented southern precincts generally favoring Pratt

⁴²Prattville Autauga Citizen, 19 July 1855. I have found no independent verification of Howell's charge against Pratt.

⁴³Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5, 19 July, 2, 23 August 1855.

and the more isolated northern precincts heavily supporting Felder. Pratt won three of Autauga's four low country precincts. He captured an impressive 71 percent of the vote in Robinson Springs, a veritable planter redoubt, 62 percent in Prattville, and 52 percent in Autaugaville. Pratt did lose Mulberry precinct, yet he did so by the thinnest possible margin—one vote. In Autauga's central precincts, Pratt suffered fairly narrow defeats. At Independence, Pratt took 47 percent of the vote, while in both Milton and Wetumpka his share dropped somewhat, to 44 percent. In the very hilly, yeoman-dominated northern precincts of Autauga, Felder simply plowed under his businessman opponent. Pine Flat returned 32 percent of its vote for Pratt, Kingston delivered 31 percent, and Chestnut Creek, "the Gibraltar of Autauga Democracy," conceded only a paltry 24 percent.⁴⁴ Planters in Autauga, it seems, had proved rather receptive to Pratt and his state aid notions. Pratt's candidacy had been fatally undermined not by planters, but by yeoman farmers from the piney woods.

Undaunted by his political setbacks, Pratt continued to play an active role in Alabama's public affairs. He no doubt found considerable solace in the strong support he had received during his campaign from both Autauga planters

⁴⁴Autauga County Citizen, 9 August 1855; John Hardy, "History of Autauga County," Alabama Historical Quarterly 3 (spring 1941): 96-116, reprinted from Montgomery Daily State Sentinel, 10 August 1867.

and the editors of the Montgomery Mail, the Montgomery Journal, and the Selma Sentinel. John Hardy proved himself an especially fervent acolyte, contrasting the forward-looking Pratt with backward-looking "political demagogues" like Alabama's sitting governor, John Anthony Winston. Pratt and his "thriving" town had shown Alabamians who would but open their eyes what "a liberal progressive spirit" could accomplish for the state. What Alabama needed, concluded Hardy, was more men like Pratt and less like Winston. Then she would become "the most prosperous and thriving state in the Union."⁴⁵

Three weeks after Pratt's defeat, Autauga's defiant Know-Nothings held a barbecue and political rally in the Sunday School room of Prattville's imposing Methodist church, which Pratt had designed and built in 1853. The Montgomery Mail, Alabama's Know-Nothing organ, reported that approximately 1,000 people attended the big event. Because the Sunday School room had a seating capacity of only about 500 people, many of the attendees had to stand in the vestibule and doorways. Evidently, Pratt had learned something about the "graces of oratory" during the course of the campaign. Noting that at the recent Democratic barbecue at Autaugaville, the crowd had given three cheers for Chestnut Creek as the Gibraltar of Autauga

⁴⁵Selma Alabama State Sentinel, 24 May 1855.

Democracy, Pratt proposed that his fellow Know-Nothings give "three cheers for the ladies, the Gibraltar of the American Party in Alabama." The Mail reported that Pratt's "proposition was responded to with three most hearty cheers, and the applause was loud and long." After the barbecue, Pratt, ever the gracious host, invited a number of people to his art gallery, where they viewed his collection of George Cooke paintings. "Everything passed off finely," declared townsman George Smith in his diary that night.⁴⁶

Pratt attended another American Party barbecue in Autauga a couple of weeks later. He remained active in the American Party into 1856, when he served as a delegate to the party's state convention in Montgomery.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Pratt's 1855 political race represented the high watermark of his involvement in the politics of antebellum Alabama. After 1856, slavery—always the central issue in southern politics—completely swept economic issues such as state aid off the political stage. Pratt, who thought threats of secession precipitous and foolhardy, had little else to contribute to the increasingly acrimonious debates over the extension of slavery in the western territories and the reopening of the slave trade. Moreover, by the

⁴⁶Montgomery Daily Mail, 5, 8 September 1855; Nobles, ed., George Smith, 102.

⁴⁷Nobles, ed., George Smith, 103, 115.

late 1850s, he found his time largely occupied with his greatly expanded cotton gin business. Nevertheless, Pratt could look back with some satisfaction on the role he had played in antebellum Alabama politics. Through the example of Prattville, his own cogent newspaper articles, and his 1855 political campaign, Pratt had forcefully advocated proposals for the economic development and diversification of Alabama. The declarations of this Yankee manufacturer fell upon an appreciative and attentive audience, though admittedly hecklers like Howell and Yancey were present as well. Nor, as events turned out, was Pratt's role in Alabama politics over by any means. Indeed, the years of Civil War and Reconstruction would see Pratt reach the apex of his influence in Alabama.

CHAPTER 10

SECESSION AND CIVIL WAR: 1857 TO 1865

As the 1850s progressed, the rift between the South and the North over the issue of slavery grew ever wider. As Alabama neared secession in late 1860, Daniel Pratt, who opposed this drastic step, ironically found himself drafted to run for Autauga's seat in the Alabama House of Representatives; and this time, he won easily. Once in the legislature, Pratt verified the Alabama Journal's prediction that he would be "a common sense man of the committees." In addition to authoring several significant bills, he also chaired the important manufactures committee, which oversaw bills concerning the chartering of corporations. While Pratt's political career blossomed in wartime, however, his businesses withered. The conflict engulfed his western sales area, decimating gin sales. Although Pratt's textile mills initially boomed, the financial collapse of the Confederacy eventually turned this boom into a bust. Ultimately, therefore, the Civil War proved a disaster, not only for the South, but for Pratt himself. Pratt attempted simultaneously to advance his own personal interests and those of the Confederacy during the war, but, in the end,

they conflicted. Nevertheless, Pratt survived the war to recoup his business fortunes during Reconstruction, and his political stock remained high until his death.

In the late 1850s, especially after John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry in October 1859, the same anti-Yankee hysteria that gripped the rest of the South took hold of many people in Prattville, a town that certainly had its share of northerners. In both 1858 and 1859, Prattville citizens held public meetings to discuss the danger posed by alleged abolitionist agitators within their midst and to pursue appropriate remedies. At the first of these meetings, which took place in May 1858, the conduct and beliefs of three "New England Yankees"—M. W. Leland, Joseph H. Wentworth, and Edward Slocum—went under scrutiny. Prattvillians at the meeting accused Leland of "tampering with slaves," Wentworth of harboring "abolition sentiments," and Slocum of "entertaining and promulgating abolition sentiments." Shadrack Mims chaired the meeting, while Daniel Pratt and Samuel Parrish Smith, among others, served on the resolutions committee. After a "short consultation," the resolutions committee concluded that the concerns about Leland, Wentworth, and Slocum had validity. Having reached this conclusion, the committee resolved that another committee be formed, this one charged with the duty of calling on Leland and Slocum and requesting them to leave Alabama. Slocum was to be allowed only forty-eight hours to vacate

the state. Wentworth, perhaps because he stood accused merely of harboring "abolition sentiments," got off more easily. The committee was merely to recommend that he leave Prattville. Members of this unwelcoming committee included Shadrack Mims, attorney Charles Doster, physician Charles Edwards, schoolteacher William Miles, and mechanics Nathan Morris, Ferdinand Smith, and George Smith.¹

The presence of three young gin mechanics on this committee suggests that the Yankee outcasts were themselves mechanics. Certainly, Wentworth claimed this occupation. The 1860 census records him as a twenty-three-year-old mechanic from Maine boarding in the house of Thomas Ormsby. James Wentworth, a twenty-one-year-old mechanic from Maine, resided in the same house.² Presumably, J. H. Wentworth managed to convince his visiting committee, which included two fellow Yankee mechanics, that he did not hold "abolition sentiments," or else he surely would not have been residing in Prattville two years later.

Although Wentworth managed to elude the clutches of Prattvillians, other Yankees did not share his good fortune. Daniel Pratt, who admittedly played a role in the ousting of Leland and Slocum, seems to have stood on the

¹William L. Barney, The Secessionist Impulse: Alabama and Mississippi in 1860 (Princeton, N.J., 1974), 163-70; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 8 April 1858.

²U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

sidelines during these other episodes. In November 1859, an itinerant Yankee bookseller became "strongly suspected of unsoundness, and was closely watched." After discovering he received letters at the Prattville post office that "had been mailed at suspicious places north of Mason & Dixon's line," some citizens concluded that he was probably a secret abolitionist agent sent to foment trouble among the slaves. Thereupon, a delegation "requested him to leave, 'immediately, if not sooner'," which he did. The Citizen wrote approvingly of the incident and urged Autaugians "to arrest all suspicious individuals that may be found lurking about our villages and plantations, and compel them to give account of themselves."³

Vigilant Prattvillians soon snared another suspicious Yankee, Luther Cleaveland of Maine, a millwright in his early sixties. Cleaveland had already run into trouble two years earlier at Deatsville, a village in Pine Flat precinct. In September 1857, a Deatsville citizens' committee had given Cleaveland thirty days to vacate their village. The committee's final letter declared that "from observation and rumor," citizens had come to believe that Cleaveland "opposed . . . Southern interest[s] and institutions," and it advised him "to return to the North," where he could

³Prattville Autauga Citizen, 1 December 1859.

"enjoy the company of abolitionists and negroes to [his] heart's content."⁴

After Cleaveland's expulsion from Deatsville, the hapless mechanic moved back to Prattville, where he had previously resided. Some Prattvillians, at least, believed Cleaveland a worthy man. The editor of the Citizen, William Howell, complained that, before moving to Deatsville, Cleaveland had obtained "some four or five certificates of character from certain [Prattvillians]," despite the fact that Autauga's "best southern citizens" had regarded Cleaveland right from the start "as a suspicious individual." The citizens of Deatsville, Howell declared, had "very properly disregarded" the imprudently granted certificates. Cleaveland seems to have avoided trouble in Prattville for nearly two years, but in December 1859, the recently formed Prattville Vigilance Committee reported at a public meeting that Cleaveland was "an unsafe member of a Southern community." Thus informed, the meeting's resolutions committee resolved that another committee be formed "to notify said Cleaveland to leave this county within ten hours." If Cleaveland failed to do so, he would "be forced to leave." The committee resolved further "to sustain the [vigilance] committee in any course [emphasis added] they

⁴Ibid., 24 September 1857.

may think proper to pursue in expelling him from our community."⁵

There is no indication that Pratt even attended this meeting, let alone played any role at it. It is clear too that some Prattvillians, probably Yankees themselves, had testified to Cleaveland's good character two years earlier. The prime anti-Yankee agitators in Prattville seem to have been William H. Northington and Charles Doster, southern-born Prattville attorneys and Democrats, and William Howell, the inflammatory editor of Prattville's Democratic newspaper. Northington and Doster had prominent parts at both the December public meeting and at the formation in November of the Prattville Vigilance Committee, which was charged with protecting "lives and property from the incendiary attacks of such men as old John Brown, and nigger stealers generally." For his part, Howell turned the rhetorical firepower he had used to cut down Pratt in the 1855 state senate race against the alleged abolitionist conspirators he saw lurking in village streets and country lanes. He described Cleaveland as a beast incarnate: "Cleaveland is a native of the State of Maine, is a short, thick-set old chap, about 60 years old, is bald headed, has ugly features and a hooked nose, complexion dark, is slightly grey, and has, "like all abolitionists, a real

⁵Ibid., 15 December 1859.

Judas countenance. Pass him round!" In 1858, Howell warned "that there are one or two others [besides Leland, Wentworth, and Slocum] in this vicinity who would find a cold climate much better adapted to their views . . . than the one they now reside in," and he urged "that they be watched." Howell complained that Prattville "will soon get its name up for fostering abolitionists."⁶

Despite all the fulminations against Yankees from Democratic quarters, many northerners (most of whom were New Englanders) continued to reside in Prattville in 1860. Yankees still played a vital role in the town's economy and culture. Daniel Pratt does not appear, for the most part, to have lent his sanction to anti-abolitionist agitation, yet neither did he put a stop to it. Indeed, he reaffirmed his support for slavery in the late 1850s and warned northerners to leave the South alone.

In late 1858, Pratt's home town, Temple, New Hampshire, celebrated its centennial. The people of Temple invited their most famous son, Daniel Pratt, to attend, but

⁶Ibid., 1 December 1859, 24 September 1857, 8 April 1858. In one case, Howell allowed that some Prattvillians had wrongly suspected Lorenzo Wilder, a recent resident who hailed from Massachusetts, of being an abolitionist. Several letters from reliable northerners to William H. Northington revealed, Howell explained, that back in Massachusetts, Wilder had been "no abolitionist, but a Democrat," which, of course, was permissible. Ibid., 5 January 1860. On the formation of vigilance committees in the South in the 1850s and their role in fomenting secession sentiment, see Barney, Secessionist Impulse, 171-80, 211-12.

he declined, pleading that distance prevented him from conveniently doing so. Pratt did, however, send Temple a fifty-dollar check, as well as some advice. Americans, Pratt declared, were "a happy, thriving, and prosperous people." Indeed, he opined, a "happier people does not exist on earth." But one thing was "necessary to secure the perpetuity of these blessings: that is for each division of the country to attend to its own individual interests."⁷ Pratt put his message delicately, but his meaning was clear: Northerners agitating against the South's "peculiar institution" threatened to destroy a happy, prosperous republic.

In early 1859, Pratt sent a missive that he entitled "Alabama Improvements and the True Interests of Her People" to Noah Cloud's famous agricultural journal, American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South, in which he again defended slavery. "I have no patience to listen to a class of persons, who speak of fencing in or penning up slavery," Pratt declared peremptorily. "It is all talk. Slavery will eventually go where it can be made profitable, and no where else is it wanted." Pratt, in short, wanted to remove the issue from politics and allow the free market to decide.

⁷Daniel Pratt to Nahum A. Child, 8 September 1858, reprinted in S[usan] F[rances] H[ale] Tarrant, Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond, Va., 1904), 80-81.

After this defense of slavery in the territories, Pratt went on to assert strongly the morality of slavery, as he had earlier in the decade. "I am well aware," he declared, "that a large portion of the present generation in the Eastern States has been educated to believe that African slavery is a curse and a sin against High Heaven." Where these people went wrong, however, was in failing to consider "the degraded state of cannibalism, ignorance and poverty the negro is in [in] his native country." American slavery, Pratt insisted, was "the only way" of improving the African "physically, morally and religiously."⁸

As a sincere Christian, Pratt had real reason to ponder the compatibility of slavery with Biblical teaching, for during the 1850s, his slaveholdings significantly expanded. Between 1850 and 1860, the number of slaves owned by Pratt increased from 47 to 107. Historian Randall Miller attributes Pratt's expansion of his slaveholdings at this time to criticism received from the Montgomery Atlas in 1850. Miller argues that Pratt attempted, in effect, to buy his way into the planter class in the hope that this

⁸Montgomery Daily Mail, 25 February 1859, reprinted from American Cotton Planter and Soil of the South. The portions of this letter that concern slavery have been deleted in Tarrant's book. See Tarrant, Hon. Daniel Pratt, 77.

action would insulate him from further criticism.⁹ There are several problems with Miller's analysis here, however. First, during his long career in Alabama, Pratt seems to have been remarkably tenacious in pursuing his own course and doing things his own way, regardless of what others thought about him. Second, Pratt already owned a large number of slaves in 1850. Third, as I argued in the last chapter, criticism from the extremist Montgomery Atlas was hardly the traumatizing event Miller makes it out to be. Moreover, the Atlas was cut down by a barrage of sharp counter-editorials from Pratt's supporters. Finally, by only looking at the 1850 and 1860 censuses, Miller's chronology is necessarily vague. Pratt's largest slave purchase actually took place in 1857, seven years after the Atlas attacked him.

State records reveal that Pratt owned only 40 slaves in 1852. Between 1850 and 1852, then, the number of slaves that he owned actually dropped. By 1855, Pratt's slaveholdings had increased by 19, to 59. More detailed census data thus reveal that the biggest increase in Pratt's slaveholdings occurred between 1855, when he owned 59 slaves, and 1860, when he owned 107, a difference of 48. On January 4, 1858, Pratt purchased a plantation and 32

⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, Slave Schedule, Autauga County; Randall Miller, The Cotton Mill Movement in Alabama (New York, 1978), 219-20.

slaves located below Prattville near Washington Landing.¹⁰ The remaining 16 reasonably can be attributed to natural increase. Was Pratt attempting further to solidify his position as a land and slaveowner with this purchase in 1857, however? In my view, the answer is much simpler. Pratt, first and foremost a businessman, probably saw a seemingly good investment opportunity and grabbed it.

Pratt was extremely troubled by his low gin sales in 1857. In 1855, he had completed the massive expansion of his gin factory, so that it was now unprofitable for him to manufacture less than 800 gins annually. In 1857, the year of the Panic, he sold only 341 gins, less than half the number his factory had produced. The year before, Pratt wrote glumly to his friend Elisha Griswold: "The gin business is overdone. I think I have done rong in building my new shop. . . . I think that [800] gins is more than I can sell." Moreover, Pratt viewed the osnaburg market as glutted, so he did not want to expand his cotton mill either—though he did build a small woolen mill in 1857. Under these circumstances, it is wrong to conclude, as Miller does, that "investments in slaves represented dead capital

¹⁰Alabama State Property Tax Assessment, Autauga County, 1852, Autauga County Heritage Center (ACHC); Alabama 1855 State Census, Autauga County; Deed Book DC, 131-33, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Autauga County Courthouse, Prattville. Pratt's purchase included the McCowly tract and adjoining land. The land and slaves together cost him \$25,425.

for manufactures." If Pratt bought his plantation for a low price and then sold it a few years later for a higher one, he could have profitably expanded his manufacturing operations at a more propitious time.¹¹

Rather than attempt to become some sort of agrarian aristocrat, Pratt continued to do what he could for southern manufacturing. Understanding the political trends of the 1850s, Pratt attempted to link the cause of southern industry to southern nationalism. If you really want to secede, so be it, Pratt lectured his readers. Just make sure you are prepared first.

Even as early as his 1855 state senate campaign, Pratt warned southerners that the increasingly strident sectional conflict made it imperative that the South develop the requisite industrial capacity to defend itself in war. Pratt struck this note more loudly in his 1859 letter to

¹¹Miller, Movement, 219. On Pratt's business troubles, see my discussion on pages 93 and 166-67. In 1856, Pratt offered to pay part of a debt to Elisha Griswold by getting him an Autauga plantation near Washington at a bargain price. He did not use as one of his selling points that the plantation would confer status on Elisha. He seems simply to have viewed it as a good buy. See Daniel Pratt to Elisha Griwold, 11 March 1856, Folder 48, Pratt Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery (ADAH). What I view as one of Miller's mistakes about Pratt has unfortunately resurfaced in the new major history of Alabama: "But by the 1850s, with white labor proving unsatisfactory and the secessionists attacking his northern birth and loyalty to the South, Pratt invested heavily in slaves and began to use them in his factories." William Warren Rogers, Robert David Ward, Leah Rawls Atkins, and Wayne Flynt, Alabama: The History of a Deep South State (Tuscaloosa, Ala. and London, 1994), 125.

the Cotton Planter. "I profess to be a Southern rights man, and strongly contend that the South ought to maintain her rights at all hazards," Pratt began belligerently. Nevertheless, he elaborated, "I would . . . pursue a somewhat different course from that of our politicians." Pratt's course was for southerners to stop making "flaming fiery speeches and threats" and, instead, "to go quietly and peaceably to work, and make ourselves less dependent on those who abuse and would gladly ruin us." Southerners should produce their own iron, coal, lime, marble, axes, hoes, spades, firearms, powder, wagons, carriages, saddles, bridles, harnesses, clothing, plows, doors, sashes, blinds, shoes, boots, "and last, but not least," cotton gins. "Give us proper encouragement," Pratt challenged his readers, "and you will be furnished with mechanics and manufacturers." Prattville showed what determined men could accomplish in the South if southerners would but heed the example. "Hitherto we at the South [have] pursued a wrong course," Pratt chastised. If only southerners would "attend strictly to . . . business," however, they would be able to make the North yield to southern demands.¹²

When the newly formed Wetumpka Dragoons wrote Pratt in February 1860 querying whether his cotton mill could

¹²Selma Alabama State Sentinel, 24 May 1855, quoting Prattville Southern Statesman; Montgomery Daily Mail, 25 February 1859, reprinted from American Cotton Planter and the Soil of the South.

manufacture cloth for their uniforms, Pratt took advantage of the opportunity to reiterate his view on southern preparedness. "Nothing will do more to prevent war than a preparation for it," Pratt announced, "and if it does not prevent it, a preparation is absolutely necessary to carry it on." Pratt commended the Wetumpka Dragoons for making a point of seeking to purchase their cloth from a southern concern: "This is the spirit for which I have been an advocate for the past twenty years." Pratt warned that "we of the South, are much more dependent than we suppose." Instead of constantly orating, southerners needed to "go relentlessly but earnestly to work" building business enterprises. Pratt also urged state legislators to "encourage internal improvements, such as rail roads and manufactures, by diminishing or removing the tax on capital invested in [such businesses]." Such beneficent legislation would attract foreign investment and encourage the migration of manufacturers and mechanics. With war looming on the horizon, Pratt insisted that if southerners would only "set about it in the right way," they would be industrially self-sufficient in ten years, "in spite of all the Black Republican forces that can be paraded."¹³ The only

¹³Prattville Autauga Citizen, 23 February 1860, reprinted from Wetumpka Enquirer. Admitting to his inquirers that he could not provide cloth "of a suitable color for your purpose," Pratt recommended James Roswell King's factory at Roswell, Georgia. Ibid.

problem with Pratt's hopeful scenario is that many southerners were unwilling to abide a decade of Republican parading, as events that winter would prove.

As the Civil War neared, Pratt continued to enjoy the same good press he had generally received since the 1840s. In 1857, a Montgomery Daily Mail correspondent found Pratt a "plain, affable and kind old gentleman, who . . . by dint of his individual exertions alone . . . made Prattville what it is—a flourishing and healthy village, with all the facilities for manufacturing." Similarly, a correspondent for the Tuskegee Republican wrote that "Mr. Pratt has many of the traits of a great man. Here upon the arid sands of a pine barren he has built up a seat of industry, wealth and contentment that ought to send his name down to future generations with éclat."¹⁴ Even William Howell, who had mauled Pratt during his 1855 political campaign and who now growled about the Yankee menace, wrote admiringly of Pratt in the late 1850s.

Pratt's popularity only increased during the secession crisis, despite his opposition to sundering the Republic. Pratt remained uncharacteristically mute in the newspapers during much of 1860, but he finally spoke up when the Montgomery Daily Mail claimed that he supported for President John C. Breckinridge, the candidate of southern

¹⁴Montgomery Daily Mail, 17 July 1857; Tuskegee Republican, 19 May 1859.

Democrats. "I must say," Pratt wrote the Mail, "that my preference has been all the time for Bell and Everett." Pratt's support for the ticket of the Constitutional Union Party shows that, like many old southern Whigs, he still believed that the Union was worth preserving and that southern rights could be maintained within it. In October, Pratt attended, by invitation, a meeting of Prattville's Breckinridge and Lane Club at Alida Hall. He "was loudly called for" by "the large crowd in attendance," and he promptly rose to speak, despite laboring "under physical pain and suffering" from a neuralgia attack. He again declared himself for Bell, yet he added that he believed Breckinridge "a sound and true man." Judging from the report in the Statesman, however, Pratt showed greater concern in his Alida Hall speech with industrialization than with secession. He urged the South to "encourage the manufacture of arms, and gunpowder, and everything that the South needed to make her independent, and prosperous . . . and show" the North that she was capable of maintaining southern "independence and rights." Such a course, Pratt predicted, would bring northern "fanatics" to heel. If, however, "the worst should . . . come to the worst" and the

South was "forced in self defense to withdraw from the Union, she would then be prepared for the emergency."¹⁵

Daniel Pratt and other supporters of the Constitutional Union Party were not alone in opposing Breckinridge. In June, when the Democratic convention at Baltimore split between Douglas and Breckinridge, the local party in Autauga similarly fractured. Many of Autauga's most prominent conservative Democrats, including Bolling Hall and Charles Doster, had already pledged their support to Douglas in May of that year at a party convention at Kingston. Reflecting sentiments similar to Pratt's, Hall vigorously denounced "the enemies of the Union both North and South." The Democratic Party's Autauga organ, the Citizen, thereupon fell into line and declared for Douglas. In September, Howell predicted that Stephen Douglas would "carry Autauga by a small plurality majority." The Citizen's editor insisted "that all the leading Democrats in this county, with a few exceptions, are strong for Douglas" and "that the old line Democracy all over the county are rallying to his support." Howell also predicted that Bell would place a strong second, as "many old line Whigs and conservative Know-Nothings are leaving Breckinridge and going over to Bell." Breckinridge, it

¹⁵Prattville Autauga Citizen, 9 August 1860, reprinted in the Montgomery Mail; Prattville Southern Statesman, 6 October 1860.

seemed, would run a poor third, according to Howell's hopeful scenario.¹⁶

Howell's prognostications proved woefully inaccurate in November. With 49 percent of the vote, Breckinridge nearly won an outright majority in Autauga. Douglas finished second with 31 percent of the vote, and Bell finished a poor third with only 20 percent. Breckinridge won pluralities in six precincts, while Douglas won pluralities in four, all of them located in the upcountry. Bell's best performance (33 percent) was in the planter precinct of Robinson Springs, but even there Breckinridge bested him, winning 47 percent of the vote. Southern Democrats even managed to storm Autauga's Whig citadel, Prattville. In the precinct that included the "Lowell of the South," Breckinridge won a staggering 65 percent of the vote, while Bell took only 20 percent.¹⁷

Clearly, contrary to Howell's assertions, many old-line Whigs voted for Breckinridge.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Bell

¹⁶Prattville Autauga Citizen, 24 May, 28 June, 20 September 1860. Bolling Hall resigned as a Douglas elector in late July, but he did not say whom he would support in the November election. Ibid., 2 August 1860.

¹⁷Ibid., 15 November 1860.

¹⁸Thomas Alexander and Peggy Duckworth have argued, in attempting to explain why the Bell vote was so low in Autauga, that much of the old Whig vote went to Douglas. This, I believe, is an error. The Douglas vote was strong in Autauga because of the strong Unionism of Autauga's upcountry Democrats and because many party leaders held for Douglas. On the other hand, the Breckinridge vote was so

and Douglas voters together still made up a bare majority of the Autauga vote. If the two groups worked together, they might be able to prevent the Breckinridge supporters from sending a delegate supporting immediate secession to the secession convention called by the governor of Alabama upon Abraham Lincoln's election in November. Soon Pratt found himself working with Bolling Hall and other conservative Democrats to forestall immediate secession. Just as the two men had worked together to try to bring railroads into Autauga County, they would now join together in an attempt to prevent secessionists from recklessly derailing the Union, at least until Alabama could consult with her sister southern states.

As soon as it became clear that Lincoln had won the election, Autaugians scheduled a public meeting at Kingston on November 28 to choose that county's delegate to the secession convention. William Howell announced before the convention that he supported the cooperationist position: that Alabama should only leave the Union in the company of a "number of States sufficiently strong to form a Southern

high in Autauga precisely because Whiggish precincts like Prattville, Autaugaville, and Robinson Springs inclined heavily toward the southern Democrat. Alexander and Duckworth are also incorrect in asserting that Benjamin Fitzpatrick supported Douglas. On the contrary, Fitzpatrick declared for Breckinridge in August. Thomas B. Alexander and Peggy J. Duckworth, "Alabama Black Belt Whigs During Secession: A New Viewpoint," Alabama Review (July 1964): 186-88; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 2 August 1860.

Confederacy that would give [Alabama] all needed protection." Among the men the cooperationist Howell believed should receive consideration as Autauga's delegate to the secession convention were Bolling Hall, Charles Doster, Shadrack Mims, and Daniel Pratt.¹⁹

Unfortunately for the cooperationists, their opponents, known as immediatists because they wanted Alabama to secede from the Union at once, no matter what other southern states did, got control of the Kingston meeting. Howell was outraged by the behavior of the immediatists or, as he now bitterly dubbed them, "the Separate State Action Yancey men." He complained that "the Douglas men, and the Bell men, and the cooperation Breckinridge men" had done everything they could "to harmonize the meeting, but all efforts to accomplish this most desirable end proved utterly futile" because "the Yanceyites were determined to rule or ruin." According to Howell, the militant Yanceyites turned deaf ears to the pleas made by Pratt, Hall, Doster, and even Benjamin Fitzpatrick, the respected former governor and senator, "to keep down the old partisan spirit."

The Kingston meeting quickly degenerated into a noisy, quarrelsome affair. Chairman W. C. Penick proceeded to stack the ten-man resolutions committee with seven

¹⁹Prattville Autauga Citizen, 22 November 1860.

Yanceyites, in the process completely passing over, as Howell angrily emphasized, such men as Fitzpatrick, Hall, and Pratt. Instead of eminences, Howell reported bitterly, Penick chose "young and inexperienced men, who happened to have voted with the Yancey party before." The bitterly divided committee produced two reports, a majority report that "embodied Yancey's rash and precipitate doctrine, Independent Separate State Action," and a minority report that endorsed cooperation. When an attempt was made to vote on whether to adopt the majority report, chaos ensued in the packed courtroom, where between 500 and 600 men had gathered. To restore order, the crowd "retired to the street and formed two lines." At this point, "the conservative cooperation men" decided to keep walking. This group marched into an adjacent building and held their own meeting, at which they adopted the cooperationist minority report and nominated their own man, Bolling Hall. Howell reported that Hall "delivered one of the most able, logical, impressive and eloquent speeches we have ever listened to in favor of cooperation and in opposition to the Yancey doctrine of Independent Separate State Action." Doster, Fitzpatrick, and Pratt also made speeches "strongly urging cooperation" and "readying themselves to use all fair

means to secure the election of Major Hall as the Delegate to the Convention" from Autauga County.²⁰

At this juncture, Autauga's representative in the lower house of the state legislature abruptly died. On December 11, two to three hundred cooperationists came together to nominate a candidate for the suddenly vacant seat. This time, the cooperationists nominated a former Whig, Daniel Pratt. "Mr. Pratt is a gentleman of large experience, is a clear thinker, and is considered one of the best financiers in the State," William Howell wrote effusively, adding that "He is just such a man as the people of Autauga desire to represent them in these troublesome times." To oppose Pratt, the Immediatists chose a Dr. Robinson of Chestnut Creek. Pratt, perhaps recalling his difficult 1855 race, proved reluctant to accept the proffered nomination, but he finally relented at the urging of a delegation of "old and respectable citizens." Pratt insisted, however, that under no circumstances would he "canvass the county" or leave his business affairs to "electioneer with any man for the purpose of getting his vote." William Howell, the man who had ridiculed Pratt's oratorical performance in 1855, declared confidently that the precincts of Autauga, especially "that glorious old

²⁰Ibid., 29 November 1860. William Barney provides a good concise summary of the battle between cooperationists and immediatists in Autauga County. See Barney, Secessionist Impulse, 251-52.

box, Chestnut Creek . . . will roll up such tremendous majorities for Hall and Pratt as will astonish the immediate secession Rives and Robinson party."²¹ Howell proved correct in only one man's case.

For Hall and Pratt to best their rivals they had to hold together a coalition of Douglas Democrats and Bell Whigs. To be on the safe side, they also needed to detach some Breckinridge Whigs from Prattville and Breckinridge Democrats from Chestnut Creek. The Hall and Pratt pairing seemed uniquely suited to accomplish this goal, for Pratt, of course, was popular in Prattville, while Hall, a Robinson Springs planter, had cleverly built strong personal ties with the men of Chestnut Creek and enjoyed great influence in the populous piney woods precinct. In the end, however, the plan only worked halfway. Pratt won and Hall lost. Pratt, in fact, pulverized his opponent, 57 percent to 43 percent, while Hall failed by a razor-thin margin, 49 percent to 51 percent. The official precinct vote tally makes clear why the two results turned out differently. Chestnut Creek Democrats followed Hall's lead and voted for Pratt as well. Prattville Whigs did not extend the same courtesy to Hall. Hall and Pratt won 88 percent and 85 percent, respectively, of the vote in Chestnut Creek. Yet, while Pratt was able to win nearly half (49.6 percent) of

²¹Prattville Autauga Citizen, 6, 13, 20, December 1860.

the vote in Prattville (where Bell and Douglas together had taken only 35 percent of the vote), Hall could muster less than a quarter (24 percent) of the votes cast in Pratt's home precinct.²²

The magnitude of Pratt's victory was truly impressive. Besides Prattville, he lost only two other precincts, Robinson Springs (where he gained 47.7 percent of the vote) and Autaugaville (where, rather strangely, he garnered only 23 percent of the vote). In no other precinct did his share of the vote drop below 55 percent. As at Chestnut Creek, his victory tallies were astounding, given his 1855 track record: Mulberry, 82 percent; Milton, 79 percent; Kingston, 63 percent; Wetumpka, 59 percent; Independence, 58 percent; and Pine Flat, 55 percent. Nor should Pratt's sudden popularity in the piney woods be viewed as entirely the result of his sharing the political spotlight with a popular Democrat like Bolling Hall. After all, Pratt's opponent actually hailed from Chestnut Creek. By 1860, Pratt had a long reputation as a man of prudence and moderation in sectional matters who had always shown a marked disdain for the "flaming fiery speeches" and antics of the disunionist Yancey crowd. There is evidence that

²²Ibid., 3 January 1861. Thomas Alexander's assertion that Bolling Hall was a resident of Chestnut Creek is incorrect. See Alexander, "Whigs," 188. For evidence of his personal popularity there, however, see Leonidas Howard to Bolling Hall, 17 July 1855, Box 4, File 4, Bolling Hall Papers, ADAH.

these qualities would have made Pratt much more palatable to upcountry voters in 1860 than in 1855, when the canvass had mainly concerned the issue of state aid. Even as late as May 1861, Shadrack Mims, Jr. mentioned in a letter: "Nearly 400 volunteers have left our county and nearly all of them from the lower part A great many of the people from Chestnut Creek say they will fight for Lincoln before they will fight for the South."²³

However many Autaugians may have felt about the matter, the secession convention voted, on January 11, 1861, to take Alabama out of the union. Daniel Pratt took his seat in the legislature on January 16. Thus Pratt ironically reached the summit of his personal political achievement at a time when Alabama had taken a course of action that he believed precipitous and fraught with peril.

The evidence makes clear that in 1861, Pratt personally opposed secession, both because of a sincere attachment to the Union and a cold calculation that secession might well prove tantamount to southern suicide. Certainly, after Pratt's death, his friends uniformly insisted

²³Prattville Autauga Citizen, 3 January 1861; Shadrack Mims, Jr. to W. F. Smith, 3 May 1861, Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook, Box 42, McMillan Collection, Auburn University. J. Mills Thornton characterizes as "unconvincing" evidence supporting the contention that Alabama's hill region "remained bitterly opposed to" secession. J. Mills Thornton, III, Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge and London, 1978), 437. Mims's statement about Chestnut Creek, however, seems straightforward and compelling.

that he had regarded secession as folly. Writing in 1878, Shadrack Mims declared: "It is generally known that [Mr. Pratt] was opposed to secession, fearing ability to sustain the same." H. J. Livingston recalled, in his eulogy at Pratt's funeral, that Pratt had, in both conversation and speeches, "advised moderation" during the 1860 presidential campaign, "asserting that the election of Abraham Lincoln would not be a justifiable cause for secession" and "predicting that in such a course the country would be involved in a gigantic internecine war." In a similar vein, another eulogist, Jesse H. Booth, observed trenchantly that Pratt "did not believe, as some did, that Southern chivalry was superior to any other and [that] the South was going to meet a timid foe." Booth also recalled that Pratt had, "from the early days of Troup and Quitman, . . . called upon all to remember and follow the warning advice of Washington, and the deep and loyal pleadings of Clay and Webster." Booth, a Republican, declared of Pratt that the bloody havoc of the Civil War would "stain not his record in heaven!"²⁴

²⁴Tarrant, Daniel Pratt, 57, 111, 156. In his autobiography, Henry Merrell (who, like Pratt was a northerner manufacturing textiles in the South) recalled that he too believed secession a fatal error. Likewise, he too voted for the Bell/Everett ticket. Henry Merrell, The Autobiography of Henry Merrell: Industrial Missionary to the South, ed. James L. Skinner, III (Athens, Ga. and London, 1991), 292.

One nearly contemporaneous statement by Pratt indicates that he did indeed hold grave doubts about secession. In an 1863 letter to the Montgomery Mail concerning the problem of wartime profiteering, Pratt remarked that "we might have pursued a wiser course from the commencement. But as Job says, 'what I greatly feared is upon us'," and now Alabamians had only one rational course to pursue: "to think less of making money out of this war, and more of defending our country and our just rights."²⁵

As his above statement indicates, Pratt strongly supported the Confederate war effort once Alabamians had cast their die. That Pratt enthusiastically joined the Confederacy has led Eugene Genovese to scorn him for lack of fealty to his "class interests." Since, in Genovese's view, "the cause of Southern industrialism demanded, above all, the destruction of the slave regime," Pratt and other southern manufacturers who supported the Confederacy necessarily "repudiated their class interests . . . when they joined . . . in a crusade on behalf of a social system they had every reason to abhor." My view, however, is that Pratt, given the personal success he achieved and the popular esteem he won in Alabama, did not feel he "had every reason to abhor" the southern social system. Pratt did not believe that southern "bourgeois" industrialists and

²⁵Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 September 1863, reprinted from the Montgomery Mail.

"feudal" planters necessarily had to engage in some sort of dialectical death struggle. If Pratt had, however, sat out the war completely, the wrath of many Autaugians, as well as the Alabama government, most likely would have fallen upon him. Nor is it surprising that Pratt would have some personal empathy for the state in which he had lived for nearly thirty years. Pratt had no admiration for southern fire-eaters, but he also held northern abolitionists in disdain. And while he thought secession unwise and even unwarranted, he did not believe it illegal. Hence he denounced the attempt by the Union to put down secession by force of arms. To Pratt, the South, in defending itself against northern invasion, was defending its "just rights." Finally, it is important to note that by 1863, at least, Pratt did not view the prospect of a Yankee victory at all sanguinely. In Pratt's view, northern ascendancy would mean southerners would lose not just their slaves, but their other property as well. "Are you willing to live under a government you can have no control over, and be taxed to the last dollar to pay for the loss of all that was near and dear to you," he asked Alabamians fretfully in his 1863 letter.²⁶ Pratt, then, saw the survival of the

²⁶Ibid.; Eugene D. Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave State (New York, 1965), 181, 208. An example of the heightened emotions—indeed, one could say hysteria—following Lincoln's election can be seen in the violent suppression of alleged "negro conspiracies" in Autaugaville

Confederacy and the advancement of southern industry as far from mutually exclusive. As a legislator he sought the passage of laws that would foster industrial development, while as a manufacturer he tried to do what he could for the Confederate war effort.

Only three weeks after his decisive election, Daniel Pratt took his seat in the Alabama House of Representatives. Although his accomplishments in the political arena have escaped the notice of scholars, Pratt proved an effective, independent-minded legislator. Within two days of his enrollment, he introduced two bills, the first "to Encourage and Promote the Manufacturing Interest in Alabama," and the second "to Prevent Free Negroes from Being Settled in Suburbs of Cities, etc." The latter bill

and Prattville precincts over the Christmas holidays. These two precincts were the epicenter of secession in Autauga, giving Breckinridge 58 percent and 65 percent of the vote, respectively, and the Immediatist candidates for the secession convention an astonishing 89 percent and 76 percent, respectively. At Prattville, according to the Autauga Citizen, some slaves agreed with each other "to join Lincoln's army when it should be marched South." As punishment, "many of them were severely whipped." At Autaugaville, the local Vigilance Committee claimed to have foiled an actual insurrection plot. A white man by the name of Williamson—the alleged ringleader ("he had [the negroes] completely under his control")—was hanged, along with three blacks. Other slaves "were whipped, cropped, and branded." William Howell wrote approvingly of the affair, calling it "a wholesale lesson to the negroes" and "a warning to those white scoundrels who take a delight in tampering with slaves." Prattville Autauga Citizen, 3 January 1861. In such a feverish atmosphere, it seems likely to me, at any rate, that sitting out the war would have done irreparable damage to Pratt's businesses, if not himself.

was referred to the Accounts and Claims Committee. After the committee chairman, Percy Walker of Mobile, reported adversely on the bill, it was tabled. The fate of Pratt's first proposal is not as clear. After being referred to the Ways and Means Committee, the bill was replaced by a substitute offered by the committee chairman, Francis Strother Lyon of Demopolis. How significantly the substitute bill differed from Pratt's, I do not know. In any event, the House narrowly passed the substitute, thirty-two to twenty-seven, Pratt voting in the majority. Opposition to the bill stemmed mostly from hilly northern Alabama and the Wiregrass region of southern Alabama, areas populated by Jacksonian Democrat yeoman farmers traditionally skeptical of government aid for internal improvements and manufacturing. Despite passage by the House of Representatives, the bill did not ultimately become law.²⁷

²⁷Journal of the Called Session of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama Commencing January 14, 1861 (Montgomery, 1861), 24, 27, 30, 136, 146-47. Despite the failure of the manufactures bill, the legislature, spurred by the exigencies of war, passed several measures during the next session to promote the establishment of war-related industries. These measures included acts "to Encourage the Manufacture of Salt," "to Encourage the Manufacture of Cotton and Wool Cards" and "to Encourage the Manufacture of Firearms and Munitions of War." Acts of the Second Called Section 1861 and of the First Regular Annual Session of the General Assembly of Alabama (Montgomery, 1862), 25-26, 70-71, 75. These measures may well have embodied some of Pratt's original ideas. Significantly, he introduced the bill that became the Salt Act. Genovese has commented on Pratt's wartime service in the Alabama legislature that if he "did anything unusual, it has escaped notice." Genovese, Political Economy, 205.

Pratt's first session in the Alabama legislature, then, cannot be viewed as especially fruitful for him. In addition to having his bills fail to become law, Pratt received appointment to only one committee, Patents and Copyrights. However, Pratt's two proposals do show that he was attempting to advance Alabama's "manufacturing interest." The first bill obviously sought to provide state aid for war-related industry. The second no doubt was intended to shield Alabama's urban white mechanics from free black competition, thus encouraging more white men to enter mechanical professions. White workingmen's organizations across the South had loudly urged such a course of action in the 1850s.²⁸

Pratt also supported Alabama's railroad companies. He opposed tabling an amendment to a railroad bill that would

²⁸Journal of the Called Session, 25; Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Working Men in the Antebellum American South," American Historical Review 88 (1983), 195-96; Randall M. Miller, "The Enemy Within: Some Effects of Foreign Immigrants on Antebellum Southern Cities," Southern Studies 24 (1985), 40; Fred Siegal, "Artisans and Immigrants in the Politics of Late Antebellum Georgia," Civil War History 18 (1981), 223-24, 228. Pratt's proposed legislation concerning free blacks represented a compromise between the interests of white mechanics and those of slaveowners. As Berlin and Gutman have pointed out, "slaveholders generally found it easy to deflect [attacks on slave artisans] and direct them to the most vulnerable element of the black population, the black freeman. Attempts to proscribe free negroes consistently met with greater success than did attempts to limit the use of slave workers." Berlin and Gutman, "Workingmen," 1195-96. Once again, Pratt had tried to advance the manufacturers' interest, as he saw it, without overturning those of slaveholders.

have required the government to subscribe to \$100,000 worth of stock in the Mobile and Great Northern Railroad Company. Nevertheless, the motion to table prevailed by a vote of thirty-eight to twenty-nine. Despite the fact that the Mobile and Great Northern, which was projected to run from a point on the Tensas River twenty-two miles north of Mobile to connect with the Alabama and Florida at the town of Pollard, was vitally important in linking Montgomery and Mobile, the project was only half finished by the fall. At that point, the Confederate government finally lent the company \$15,000, which allowed the road to be completed by November. In a similar vein, Pratt voted to table a "Bill to Regulate and Define the Duties and Liabilities of Railroad Companies, etc." Once again, Pratt found himself on the losing side, the motion to table failing by a vote of twenty-five to fifty-five. Judging from the title of the bill, I would conclude that Pratt probably found it overly onerous to railroad companies. Most certainly, Pratt supported the Confederate war effort—he provided a crucial vote for the Bill to Legalize the Suspension of Specie Payments, for example—but he did not want the manufacturing interest to be harmed as a result of war measures.²⁹

²⁹Journal of the Called Session, 51-52, 123, 144-45; Wayne Cline, Alabama Railroads (Tuscaloosa, Ala. and London, 1997), 51; Robert C. Black, III, The Railroads of the Confederacy (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1952), 75-76.

Pratt enjoyed greater success and prominence in the fall session of the legislature, which opened on October 28. He won seats on the important Ways and Means and Banks and Banking Committees and became chairman of the Manufactures Committee. As a legislator, he introduced the "Bill to Encourage the Manufacture of Salt in the State of Alabama." As the chairman of the Manufactures Committee, he favorably reported the "Bill to Encourage the Manufacture of Cotton and Wool Cards in the State of Alabama," as well as a bill to incorporate the Wills Valley Coal and Leather Company. All three pieces of legislation became law by December.³⁰

Both the salt and card bills held significance for Alabamians. Because of the necessity of salt for the preservation of meat and other products, the mineral became, as one historian has observed, "a prime necessity" for the survival of the Confederacy. The northern blockade of the South had cut off the importation of salt from Europe, so southerners found it imperative that they produce their own supply. Pratt's Salt Act authorized the governor to lease "any or all of the Salt Springs or Wells in [Alabama]" for up to ten years. A lessee, who had to post a security bond of \$5,000, was required by the terms of his lease to

³⁰Journal of the Second Called Session 1861 and the First Regular Annual Session of the House of Representatives of the State of Alabama 1861, 37-38, 51, 84, 111, 137.

commence manufacturing salt within three months and to continue until the expiration of the lease or the end of the war, at a price fixed at seventy-five cents per bushel, plus transportation costs. Cotton and woolen cards were as much prime necessities as salt, for they were essential to the household manufacture of cloth. The Cotton and Wool Cards Act offered Alabama manufacturers state bounties of up to six to ten cents per pair of cards, depending on the make.³¹

During Pratt's tenure as Chairman of the Manufactures Committee, an impressive number of companies were incorporated by act of legislature. In 1861, the legislature incorporated twenty-one companies, including the Wills Valley Coal and Leather Company, the Chemical Manufactory, and the Southern Salt Manufactory. There were fourteen more companies incorporated in 1862, including Pratt's own Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company, the Selma Iron Foundry Company, the Bibb County Iron Company, Hale and Murdock's Iron Company of Fayette County, the Chewackla Lime Company, and the Mobile and South Western Railroad Company. The

³¹Ella Lonn, Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy (New York, 1933), 13-18; Malcolm C. McMillan, The Disintegration of a Confederate State: Three Governors and Alabama's War-time Home Front, 1861-1865 (Macon, Ga., 1986), 48; Acts of the Second Called Session, 25-26, 70-71.

legislature also favorably amended corporate charters, such as that of the Shelby County Iron Manufactory.³²

In Pratt's last legislative session, which started in October 1862, he held the same important committee posts as before, including the chairmanship of the Manufactures Committee. Not surprisingly, Pratt unfavorably reported a "Bill to Regulate the Price of Factory Thread, etc."³³ Although Pratt probably felt that the Alabama government had a right to set a ceiling on the price of salt produced on land it had leased to private individuals, he undoubtedly did not believe that price controls should be extended to other commodities. A widespread system of price controls, Pratt probably thought, would undermine entrepreneurial efforts by interfering with the operation of the profit motive.

Pratt seems to have had a similar distaste for the "Bill to Aid the Confederate Government in Providing Shoes for Alabama Soldiers and to Impress Material for Shoes." His objection lay with the impressment provision of the bill, which gave the governor the power to seize

³²Acts of the Second Called Session, 160-64; Acts of the Called Session 1862 and for the Second Regular Annual Session of the General Assembly, 118-23, 127-28, 133-44; Walter L. Fleming, Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama (New York, 1905), 161.

³³Journal of the Called Session 1862 and the Second Regular Annual Session of the House of Representatives of Alabama (Montgomery, 1863), 20-21, 255.

shoemaking material from shoe manufacturers for "just compensation." In determining what compensation was just, the governor was to consider the "wants and necessities" of the locale where the impressment was made, the extent the manufacturer contributed to supplying the wants of the community and the government, and the prices he had charged. Pratt probably saw such a provision as a bullet aimed directly at the heart of the private shoe industry. Under its terms, the governor could almost at whim destroy Alabama shoemakers. Opposed to the impressment provision, Pratt supported an effort to strike it out of the bill. When that attempt failed, Pratt voted to table the bill. This effort failed by the narrowest possible margin, thirty-four to thirty-three. In the end, however, Pratt finally voted for the shoe bill. Only six legislators held out against it.³⁴

In addition to continuing to do what he could to promote manufacturing, Pratt showed a most un-Jacksonian interest in raising the pay of government officials, as well as in levying taxes. When the 1862 session began, a resolution was offered that clergymen be invited to open every day's session with prayer. Pratt offered an amendment to the resolution that the clergymen be paid in proportion to members of the House. The amendment lost, while the

³⁶Journal of the Called Session 1862, 46-47, 75, 98-99; Acts of the Called Session 1862, 47-48.

resolution passed. The majority evidently did not feel inclined to pay for prayers. In November, Pratt introduced a "Bill to Increase the Fees of the Probate Judge, Clerk, etc. of Autauga County." It is not clear exactly what happened to this bill after referral to the Judiciary Committee, but it did not become an act. Pratt also introduced a "Bill to Authorize the Commissioner's Court of Autauga County to Levy a Special Tax for the Support of Families of Soldiers in the Army." That this bill became an act no doubt reflected the greater popularity of giving aid to soldiers' families than to government officials.³⁵

After one-and-a-half terms in the Alabama legislature, Pratt decided to retire, even though he enjoyed great popularity in Autauga. When he ran for reelection in 1861, he trounced his opponent, Daniel Wadsworth of Autaugaville, winning 68 percent of the vote to Wadsworth's 32 percent. Wadsworth was evidently a classic Jacksonian Democrat planter. When he again declared himself a candidate in the 1863 race for Autauga's seat in the House of Representatives, he announced that he favored "short sessions of the Legislature" and lower State and county taxes. "The people are already heavily taxed," he complained, "and the taxes will become more burdensome if the war continues much longer." In addition, Wadsworth's friends pointed out that

³⁵Journal of the Called Session 1862, 22, 26, 150; Acts of the Called Session 1862, 47-48.

their man was a "plain and good old farmer." One of his supporters, "Chestnut Creek," declared belligerently "that the people in this section . . . say that the fancy men have had their share of the public offices. We now say, as time changes, let us change our law makers, and give the yeomanry of the county a showing."³⁶

With Daniel Pratt, a de facto Autauga Whig had finally captured a seat in the legislature. Without Pratt, Autauga's old Whigs could not hold the seat. The 1863 election pitted planter-physician T. A. Davis against Leonidas Howard, one of the county's most prominent Democrats, and that "plain and good old farmer," Daniel Wadsworth. Davis took only 39 percent of the vote to Howard's 53 percent and Wadsworth's 8 percent.³⁷

³⁶Prattville Autauga Citizen, 30 April, 8 August 1861, 16 July 1863. Wadsworth came from humble origins, migrating to Alabama from North Carolina as an overseer, but by the Civil War he was certainly not a poor man. In 1860, his wealth was valued at \$82,000. Ibid., 21 December 1876; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

³⁷Prattville Autauga Citizen, 13 August 1863. After Pratt declined to run, a movement to draft Bolling Hall as a consensus candidate started. Howard offered to drop out if his fellow Democrat agreed to enter the fray, but Davis refused to do the same. Like Pratt, Hall ultimately decided to sit out the race. Ibid., 7, 14, 28 May, 11 June, 2, 16, 23, 30 July. The Democrats won easily anyway, piling up huge majorities in such traditional Democratic precincts as Chestnut Creek (87 percent to Davis's 7 percent) and Pine Flat (75 percent to Davis's 6 percent). Davis won only Prattville (57 percent to 29 percent), Autaugaville (81 percent to 14 percent), and (surprisingly) Independence, (61 percent to 39 percent), and he ran fairly close in Robinson Springs (44 percent to 52 percent).

Pratt had become so popular by 1861 that many Autaugians and Montgomerians urged him to run for the Autauga/Montgomery seat in the state Senate. John Steele, a prominent Autauga planter from Mulberry precinct, decided to withdraw from the race after learning, he reported, that the "Prattville Dragoons . . . and other soldiers who have patriotically gone forth to fight the battles of the great cause of the South" declared that Daniel Pratt ("one of our most worthy, industrious and patriotic citizens") should carry the mantle. Steele "cheerfully and cordially" withdrew his name, hoping "to encourage a spirit of good will among our absent soldiers" and to show his "appreciation of the merit of the honorable gentleman for whom they have expressed a unanimous preference." William Howell, who printed Steele's letter in his paper, agreed that Pratt "would make an excellent Senator," giving "entire satisfaction to the voters of [both Autauga and Montgomery] counties."³⁸

A letter to the Citizen, signed by one "Montgomery," made clear that one of Pratt's most appealing qualities was his reputation for objectivity and nonpartisanship, attributes that were particularly valued during the war crisis. "At a time like this, the present partyism should be laid aside," declared "Montgomery," "and the voice of

³⁸Ibid., 6 June 1861.

demagogueism should be hushed." For this reason, "Montgomery" asserted, the Senate needed a man like Pratt. "Montgomery" realized that Pratt did not want the office, but he urged him, "Cincinnatus like, to lay aside his business and obey the voice of the people." If he did run, he would most assuredly win. "Wherever I go I hear men saying he is the man," avowed "Montgomery" enthusiastically.³⁹

Despite such puffing, Pratt's candidacy for the state Senate never took sail. Moreover, Pratt declined to run for any office whatsoever in 1863. Certainly, he may have felt that his new political "career" caused him to neglect his business; but, in addition, health considerations likely played a major role in his decision. Pratt had by this time reached his middle sixties. He was long past "the meridian of life." During the late 1850s, his health began a long decline, culminating in his death in 1873. Shadrack Mims recalled that for over "fifteen years before [Pratt's] death he suffered more than [man?] can tell." Mims was probably referring to chronic attacks of neuralgia, one of which Pratt had been seen suffering from the evening of his Alida Hall speech in December 1860. In March 1862, Pratt's bookkeeper, Thomas Avery, wrote Pratt's nephew Merrill: "Your Uncle has been confined to the house most of the time since last Saturday with his old complaint

³⁹Ibid.

Neuralurgy and rheumatism, and is quite lame." Avery hoped that with the warmer weather, Pratt would be able to get "out again soon." By early 1863, Merrill (encamped at Port Hudson, Louisiana) described his uncle as "old and feeble" in a letter to his wife, Julia. During winter that year, Pratt confirmed his nephew's fears when he became gravely ill. In November, Julia Pratt informed her husband that "Uncle Pratt has been quite sick . . . he is suffering with his old complaint." Only after a week had passed did Pratt become well enough to get out of bed. By January, Julia could report that Pratt had "got nearly well again." Unfortunately, only a week later Pratt had a relapse. After nearly two weeks, Julia informed Merrill that her father, Samuel Parrish Smith (Pratt's good friend and the family physician), believed Pratt was "out of danger." Nevertheless, Pratt's illness had been extremely serious. At the worst, Smith had been "very much afraid that [Uncle Pratt] would die." Even now, he was still confined to bed. Julia had visited him and found him looking "badly but much better than he did a week ago." She explained to Merrill that she had not told him earlier "how sick he was," fearing that if she had done so, Merrill would have felt "anxious about him . . . and it takes my letters so long to go through." Esther Pratt, Julia also admitted, was "not

looking very well" either, probably because she had "been up so much with Uncle."⁴⁰

As Julia had expected, Merrill fretted about the state of his uncle's health, writing her, for example, in March: "I am feeling great anxiety in regard to Uncle and wish to hear [about him] as often as possible. I do hope he will be more careful. How I wish I could be with him." Fortunately, Julia was able to convey encouraging news: "Uncle Pratt still continues to improve. He was able to attend the meeting of the stock holders of the [cotton] factory Tuesday, yesterday and this morning. He was feeling very tired this evening Aunt Esther said." A few days later, however, Julia noted that while Pratt "was getting along very well," he had lately suffered from "the rheumatism in his hands." Even as late as June 8, Julia reported that while Pratt was improving "all of the time," he still did not walk "a great deal."⁴¹ Indeed, it appears that Pratt never fully recovered his health after the winter of 1863. For the next decade, Pratt would suffer recurrent bouts with "his old complaint." With some frequency, he was

⁴⁰Shadrack Mims, Untitled Manuscript, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; T. B. Avery to Merrill Pratt, 28 March 1862; Merrill Pratt to Julia Pratt, 18 February 1862, Julia Pratt to Merrill Pratt, 30 November 1862, Julia Pratt to Merrill Pratt, 8, 13, 25 January 1864, Folders 32, 34, and 35, Pratt Collection, ADAH, Montgomery.

⁴¹Merrill Pratt to Julia Pratt, 2 March 1864, Julia Pratt to Merrill Pratt, 3, 18 March, 8 June 1864, Folders 35 and 36, Pratt Collection, ADAH.

either laid up in bed or taking waters cures in upstate Alabama, Arkansas, or Virginia.

Despite his afflictions, Pratt struggled mightily to do all he could for the southern war effort, both as a legislator and a private citizen. Even as his eulogists lauded him for opposing secession, they praised him for supporting the Confederacy. H. J. Livingston asserted that Daniel Pratt never shut his purse to the cause. Indeed, Pratt "contributed seventeen thousand dollars toward mounting and equipping the regiment" Livingston commanded during the war. In March 1861, Pratt gave \$500 for the support of families of volunteers for the Autauga Rifles and the Prattville Dragoons, promising "to put down ten times as much more if it" proved necessary. In May, Pratt provided dress uniforms for the Prattville Dragoons, a local outfit that was headed for the Confederate encampment at Pensacola. Susan Tarrant recalled the dress uniforms as "made of black broadcloth, trimmed with gold braid. No other company in the state had a uniform so handsome." William Howell lavishly praised Pratt for such largesse, calling him "a noble-hearted, patriotic citizen, whose example deserves to be emulated by others."⁴²

Pratt also made a point of performing personal kindnesses for soldiers. A. C. Oxford recalled that he had

⁴²Tarrant, Daniel Pratt, 83, 112; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 21 March, 2 May 1861.

been traveling from Selma to Montgomery on horseback to join his company when, as he was passing through Prattville, a sudden downpour forced him to take shelter under the eaves of a building. "Mr. Pratt saw me," he reported, "invited me into his hospitable mansion, gave me dinner, fed my horse, then told his good wife to put some garments into my haversack." Oxford claimed that he had "thought of that incident a hundred times" and that he revered "the memory of that noble benefactor of his race."⁴³

Pratt demonstrated his support for the Confederacy not merely through outfitting and equipping military units, but also through buying war bonds. In June 1861, Pratt responded to a national bond drive by purchasing \$14,000 worth of Confederate bonds, \$10,000 in his own name and \$2,000 each in the names of Esther and Ellen Pratt, his wife and daughter. At the same time, Pratt also received an appointment from the Confederate government as a county bond agent.⁴⁴

Pratt's devotion to the Confederacy had its limits, however. While as a private businessman he cooperated with government authorities by selling at "fair" prices most of his cloth to the Confederacy, he complained at war's end that those same authorities had repeatedly exploited him.

⁴³Tarrant, Daniel Pratt, 83.

⁴⁴prattville Autauga Citizen, 20 June 1861.

Pratt certainly did not possess so fervent a devotion to the Confederacy that he would complacently stand by and watch everything for which he had labored for over thirty years get swept away in the name of southern independence.

In his well-known work The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865, Emory Thomas has asserted that because of its "pre-industrial economy," the South necessarily had to rely on "preindustrial men" in order "to create instant war industry." These "men who managed the South's short-lived economic transformation," he declares, "were hardly entrepreneurs whose acquisitive instincts fit the Yankee stereotype." Rather, they were "traditional intellectuals," such as "schoolteachers, natural philosophers, and military scientists." To such men, Thomas concludes, "The profit motive was less a factor." In her book, Patriotism for Profit, Mary A. DeCredico has effectively rebutted Thomas by pointing to the important contribution made by profit-minded antebellum entrepreneurs in Georgia to the Confederate war effort.⁴⁵ Like the Georgia businessmen DeCredico has studied, Pratt sought during the war to advance

⁴⁵Emory Thomas, The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865 (New York, 1979), 211-13; Mary A. DeCredico, Patriotism for Profit: Georgia's Urban Entrepreneurs and the Confederate War Effort (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London, 1990). See also DeCredico's "War is Good Business: Georgia's Urban Entrepreneurs and the Confederate War Effort," Georgia Historical Quarterly 73 (summer 1989): 230-49.

simultaneously his own interests and those of his state and his new country. And, for a few years, he succeeded.

Whatever his other accomplishments, Pratt certainly was not a "traditional intellectual." On the contrary, he was in many ways indeed a "Yankee stereotype." Fortunately for this northern-born businessman for whom profit had always served as a guide, he found for the first three years of the Civil War, at least, that patriotism and profits could be reconciled with each other.

Such historians as Thomas, Raimondo Luraghi, and Charles Ramsdell have, in my view, exaggerated the negative impact of government regulation on the textile industry during the Civil War. It is true that the Confederate government attempted in 1862 to coerce textile producers to sell two-thirds of their product to the government at fixed prices that allowed for a 75 percent profit, later 33 1/3 percent. Luraghi characterizes this action as amounting to a deliberate "quasi-nationalization" by an anti-industry planter elite that wanted to prevent war industry from becoming a Frankenstein's monster that would destroy their agrarian society. However, as Elizabeth Yates Webb pointed out sixty-five years ago in an article on the North Carolina textile industry during the Civil War, the conflict initially proved a godsend for southern cloth manufacturers:

For the first time there was a demand for every ounce of yarn and yard of cloth which could be turned out, and in spite of disabilities fastened on the industry by what owners considered unfair state restrictions, prices were high and profits at least better than before the war. But for the inescapable wear and tear on equipment and the collapse of Confederate finances, 1861-1865 would have marked a period of phenomenal prosperity in the North Carolina textile industry.⁴⁶

War had abruptly erected, in effect, a trade wall around the South, protecting southern textile manufacturers from predatory northern and European competition. Moreover, at the same time war decreased suppliers of cloth, it increased the demand for it since soldiers needed a constant supply of clothing. What destroyed this favorable state of affairs was not the Confederate government, but the economic and political collapse of the Confederate government.

⁴⁶Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Control of Manufacturing by the Confederate Government," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 8 (December 1921): 235-37; Raimondo Luraghi, "The Civil War and the Modernization of American Society: Social Structure and Industrial Revolution in the Old South before and during the War," Civil War History 18 (September 1972): 245; Elizabeth Yates Webb, "Cotton Manufacturing and State Regulation in North Carolina, 1861-65," North Carolina Historical Review (April 1932): 117. Other evidence of southern manufacturers' profits during the Civil War is found in Merrell, Industrial Missionary, 294-307; W. E. Merton Coulter, The Confederate States of America, 1861-65 (Baton Rouge, 1950), 229-31; John Christopher Scwab, The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865: A Financial and Industrial History of the South During the Civil War (New York and London, 1901), 272; and an incisive and overlooked essay by Lester J. Cappon, "Government and Private Industry in the Southern Confederacy," Humanistic Studies in Honor of John Calvin Metcalf (Charlottesville, Va., 1941): 184-88. A good case study of one company is Frank E. Vandiver's "The Shelby Iron Company in the Civil War: A Study of Confederate Industry," Alabama Review 1 (1948): 12-26, 111-27, 203-17.

From the commencement of the Civil War, Pratt sold much of his cloth to the state of Alabama. Governor John Gill Shorter expressed great satisfaction with Pratt's prices. In 1862, Shorter requested that General Braxton Bragg transfer some of Pratt's workers from the army to Prattville, noting that Pratt rendered "good service to the Confederacy and the State" and that he charged "extremely low" prices for his osnaburgs. In another 1862 letter, this one to Secretary of War G. W. Randolph, Shorter spoke even more highly of Pratt, calling him "a gentleman whose conscientiousness, public-spirit, and liberality are beyond all praise." Of Prattville Manufacturing Company (PMC), Shorter declared enthusiastically: "I hazard nothing in the assertion, that even in a war-aspect it is worth a regiment of men to the Confederacy." The governor added that Alabama had "large contracts with the company for the supply of cloth at modest prices."⁴⁷

Pratt needed to maintain a good relationship with Confederate and Alabama authorities in order to hold together the labor force necessary to operate his manufacturing establishments. In addition to operating the cotton and woolen mills, he opened two shops during the Civil War, one manufacturing bobbins, quills, and spools, and the

⁴⁷John Gill Shorter to General Braxton Bragg, ? May 1862; John Gill Shorter to G. W. Randolph, 30 July 1862, Governor Shorter Papers, ADAH, Montgomery.

other manufacturing pikes. The bobbin shop, as workers called it, produced items necessary in the spinning of cotton fibers into cloth. Previously, Pratt had relied on northern manufacturers for all his machinery components. Machinist William G. Beckwith ran the bobbin shop, which was located in the gin factory building. Mechanic George Smith ran the pike shop, which was also located in the gin building. Because the war soon engulfed Pratt's western sales area, he no longer needed many mechanics to build cotton gins. The pike shop seems to have lasted only about a month. In May, George Smith started a rifle shop, which was affiliated with the Confederate arsenal at Montgomery. The shop performed poorly, however, producing only about one rifle a week, while the arsenal produced five or six rifles a day.⁴⁸

By 1862, labor leaks threatened to sink Pratt's operations. Even as early as May 1861, Shadrack Mims, Jr. had written a customer: "Prattville is near deserted as any place you ever saw." Nearly a year later, Franklin Smith reported to his cousin Ferdinand that "Boss Hale has no one with him now but Mr. Holmes and Kent." In the spring of 1861, twelve likely Pratt workers joined the Prattville

⁴⁸Franklin Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 13 April 1862, Sallie Riggs to Ferdinand Smith, 8 May 1862, Martha Riggs Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 8, 23 May, 1 June 1862, ACHC; Abigail Holt Smith Diary, ACHC. Pratt's 1864 ledger shows a credit of \$18,000 designated "bobbin & spools a/c." Trial Balance Ledger, 1 March 1864, ACHC.

Dragoons, an outfit with a total of 100 men. Of the twelve probable Pratt employees, eight men were mechanics and machinists, including Henry DeBardleben and two of Gardner Hale's sons, three were mill bosses and one a mill spinner. Moreover, in September 1861, three mechanics, George Duckworth, W. E. Durden, and Jacob Ellis, joined a new unit, the Autauga Guards. The year 1862 saw further leakage when Pratt's nephew Merrill formed Company K, composed of fifty-two men, fifteen of whom (29 percent) probably came from Pratt's employ. Among this group were mostly mechanics, but the unit also included a mill spinner, a mill boss, and wool mill agent A. J. Thompson. In addition, another Pratt mechanic, Ferdinand Smith, volunteered to help in the construction of Mobile Bay defenses.⁴⁹

Even more ominously for Pratt's businesses, the passage of the first conscription act in April 1862 made all

⁴⁹Shadrack Mims, Jr. to W. F. Smith, 3 May 1861; Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook (1861), McMillan Collection, Box 42, Special Collections, Auburn University; Franklin Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 13 April 1862; Wilbur F. Mims, War History of the Prattville Dragoons (Montgomery, Ala., n.d.), 3-4; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 23 May, 26 September 1861; Daniel P. Smith, Company K, First Alabama Regiment or Three Years in the Confederate Service (Prattville, 1885), 15-19, 46-47, appendix; Martha Riggs Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 6 April 1862, ACHC. Three more mechanics, G. W. Durden, G. F. Martin, and A. J. White, joined Company K in January 1863, while mechanic Abram Ellis joined in 1864. Smith, Company K, 47-47, appendix. Thomas Ormsby, James Wainwright, and Shadrack Mims, Jr. enlisted in the Prattville Dragoons. All these men had business relationships with Pratt, and Ormsby and Wainwright were related to him (the latter through marriage). Mims, War History, 3-4.

white males between eighteen and thirty-five subject to military service. The first exemption act, passed a few days later, explicitly gave the secretary of war the authority to exempt superintendants and operatives in cotton and wool factories; and over the summer and fall, Secretary Randolph used his discretionary power to exempt other classifications of industrial workers as well. Given these circumstances, Pratt took steps in the summer of 1862 to secure exemptions for his workers, both those who had remained in Prattville and a few who had already enlisted. Fear of losing his employees had already motivated Pratt to write then Governor Andrew Moore the previous summer. Pratt informed Moore that "nearly every man" left in Prattville had joined the Prattville Grays, a reserve unit. If the government called the Grays to active duty, Pratt worriedly informed Moore, "not a work shop . . . would have an overseer or many hands." While Pratt assured the governor that the people of Prattville were "willing to go and battle for our countries rights" and that he himself was "not only willing to go but to give the last dollar I have if necessary for the success of the Confederate States," he nevertheless urged that "should it be necessary to call for more troops would it not be well to leave our company [the Grays] until their actual services are necessary?"⁵⁰

⁵⁰Albert Burton Moore, Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy (New York, 1924), 13-14, 52-53, 62-63;

At Pratt's prompting, mill agent William Wallace Fay wrote Governor Shorter in 1862, requesting him to seek exemptions and transfers for over twenty workers, including Henry DeBardleben; Gardner Hale's sons George and Henry; William Beckwith; J. L. Wainwright (a tin shop owner and the husband of one of Daniel Pratt's nieces); mechanic G. W. Durden; blacksmiths Samuel and William Pullen; mill bosses J. D. Jones, Thomas Kent, and G. W. Ward, teenaged card stripper George Golden; and, somewhat implausibly, Jay DeWitt Wheat, a northern-born bookkeeper and former newspaper editor who had married one of Gardner Hale's daughters. Shorter promptly wrote Secretary Randolph and General Bragg, urging them to make the desired exemptions and transfers. The Alabama governor evidently secured these exemptions, for Pratt kept his mills and the bobbin shop going throughout the war. Getting exemptions seems not to have been particularly difficult in 1862. In April,

Daniel Pratt to Andrew Barry Moore, 10 July 1863, Governor Moore Papers, ADAH. Officers in the Prattville Grays included Pratt affiliates and employees Merrill Pratt (fourth lieutenant), Thomas Kent (second sergeant), Shadrack Mims, Jr. (third sergeant), Nathan Morris (fourth sergeant), and George Smith (armorer), as well as Llewellyn Spigner (captain), William H. Northington (first lieutenant), Charles Doster (third lieutenant), William Howell (quartermaster), Norfleet Ivey (orderly sergeant), E. D. Pitts (clerk), and A. K. McWilliams (treasurer), Prattville Autauga Citizen, 23 May 1861. Merrill Pratt and Shadrack Mims, Jr. later joined active units. The second exemption act of October 1861 explicitly exempted a much broader class of men engaged in manufacturing pursuits. Moore, Conscription and Conflict, 67-68.

Franklin Smith assured his brother Ferdinand in Mobile that "if you were at home you could get hold of some work that would excuse you from going [to fight]." Unfortunately for mechanic Thomas Ormsby, a cousin of Esther Pratt and a son-in-law of Gardner Hale, Shorter's transfer request came too late. He was killed in a skirmish outside Corinth, Mississippi a few days before the request arrived. George Hale returned to Prattville with Ormsby's body.⁵¹

Having stopped his labor losses, Pratt continued to successfully manufacture cloth, most of which he sold to the Confederate and Alabama governments. According to his agent, William W. Fay, Pratt kept "a small reserve" of

⁵¹John Gill Shorter to G. W. Randolph, 30 July, 1 August 1862, to General Braxton Bragg, ? May 1862, to Captain Prattville Dragoons, 19 May, 30 June 1862, Governor Shorter Papers, ADAH; Franklin Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 13 April 1862, Martha Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 8, 12 May 1862, Sallie Riggs to Ferdinand Smith, 8 May 1862, ACHC. In January 1864, Henry DeBardleben and J. A. Reynolds got a contract with the government to make barrels for the army. To help them, the two men employed mechanics Lafayette Ellis and James Williamson. In addition, some Prattville mechanics found work with William Penny & Company, a machine shop that relocated from Milton, Florida after the area was evacuated by Confederate forces in the spring of 1862. William Penny & Company operated as a branch of the Confederate States Naval Iron Works of Columbus, Georgia, a manufacturer of marine steam machinery. Prattville mechanics working for William Penny & Co. in July 1863 included William Beckwith, Benjamin Durden, Samuel V. Pattillo, Henry DeBardleben, George Perlette, G. B. Martin, Franklin Smith, and Ferdinand Smith. Julia Smith Pratt to Merrill Pratt, 13, 19 January 1864, Folder 35, Pratt Collection, ADAH; Payrolls of Civil Personnel in Shore Establishments of the Confederate Navy, Record Group 45, National Archives, Entry 422; Communication from Robert Holcombe, Director of the Confederate Naval Museum, Columbus, Georgia.

osnaburgs to use as barter for supplies such as iron. Evidence indicates that intrepid civilians could get something for themselves as well. In August 1863, Abigail Holt Smith, one of Pratt's nieces and the wife of George Smith, reported in her diary:

Just after dinner a carriage drove up and two ladies alighted. One of them introduced herself as Mrs. Roundtree whereupon I remembered meeting a person of that name six years ago at the examination in Summerfield [a town in Dallas County and home to a Methodist academy]. They wanted me to go the Factory with them to get thread, cloth, etc.

"Not daring to go" herself, Abigail persuaded her apparently more stouthearted sister Asenath Holt Smith (the wife of George's cousin Franklin) to accompany her visitors to the mill. They returned emptyhanded, however, and the ladies stayed the night at Abigail's house. The next day, her husband, George, "escorted the ladies to the factory . . . and got some cloth and thread for them."⁵²

The incident detailed by Abigail Smith indicates that Pratt not only kept some of his product aside for barter, but also for sale to civilians. One South Carolina woman recalled the "blessing" of having a cotton factory in the neighborhood to supply "our country and town in thread for

⁵²William W. Fay to A. T. Jones, 27 June 1863, Folder 2, Shelby Iron Works Papers, Hoole Library, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa; Abigail Holt Diary, Box 97, McMillan Collection, Special Collections Library, Auburn University. Jones, the president of Shelby Iron, badly needed clothing for his slave workers and attempted to barter iron for Prattville osnaburgs. Fay turned Jones down, however, asserting that his mill had an ample supply of iron.

our use. A neighbor woman would get ready to make a trip to the factory in a buggy, sending word around to her neighbors that she would carry anything she could for them." On the other hand, Henry Merrell recalled that his lone textile mill in western Arkansas came nowhere close to meeting the demands of a desperate populace, some of whom came from 50 to 100 miles away in search of cloth and thread. "It well nigh made me down sick," wrote Merrell. "Of course I could relieve many . . . but [I had] not enough to meet the wants of one in ten that came or sent to me. The woods around our village was an encampment of people anxiously waiting their turn."⁵³ There is no indication from surviving records that such a scene as this one ever took place in Prattville, which suggests that Pratt's mills, in combination with the Autaugaville mill, were better able to supply the local population with textiles, despite the demands imposed on them by the government.

Pratt, no doubt, would have been glad to have sold more goods to civilians, for he could have commanded a higher price from them, if he so chose. In October 1862,

⁵³Marilyn Mayer Culpepper, Trials and Triumphs: Women of the American Civil War (East Lansing, Mich., 1991), 228; Merrell, Industrial Missionary, 297. On the severe cloth shortage suffered by southern civilians in the Civil War, see the sources cited above as well as George C. Rable, Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism (Urbana, Ill. and Chicago, 1989), 92-95; Mary Elizabeth Massey, Ersatz in the Confederacy (Columbia, S.C., 1952), 85-91.

the Confederate government made exemptions for mill workers contingent upon the manufacturer's acceptance of a profit ceiling of 75 percent over the costs of production. In 1864, the Quartermaster General lowered the profit ceiling to 33.3 percent. Typically, the government purchased two-thirds of a factory's product.⁵⁴

Pratt may have commanded much higher prices from the government during the Civil War than he had on the open market in 1860, but much of this increase must have reflected the rampant inflation in the Confederacy rather than any spectacular profit-making. In 1860, Pratt had sold osnaburgs at 10¢ a yard, but by 1863 and 1864, he sold them to the Confederate government at 72¢ a yard and \$1.70 a yard, respectively—ten and seventeen times the 1860 figure. If cotton prices are any accurate gauge, Pratt was making about the same profit in 1863 and 1864 as he had in 1860. Between February 1861 and November 1863, cotton prices increased 6.3 times, while between February 1861 and December 1864, cotton prices increased 17 times. These

⁵⁴Ramsdell, "Control of Manufacturing," 235-37. Henry Merrell declared emphatically in his autobiography: "It was not for my interest to work for Government at all. Government fixed its own prices. The people by this time had given up the question of price, & would cheerfully have paid me twice what the Government paid. I might have been \$50,000, at least, better off had Government let me alone." Merrell, Industrial Missionary, 307. Similarly, William Gregg complained bitterly of government profit ceilings in a speech in 1864. Broadus Mitchell, William Gregg: Factory Master of the Old South (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1928), 224-30.

increases nearly mirror those of Pratt's osnaburgs. Of course, it is likely that Pratt did make greater profits in 1861 and 1862, before rigid government controls appeared and machinery began to deteriorate. The stockholders of William Gregg's Graniteville factory, for example, realized large profits in 1861 and 1862, but only 7 percent in 1863.⁵⁵

Pratt surely hoped to mix both patriotism and profits. He wanted the Confederacy and his business to flourish together. In September 1863, he patriotically urged Alabamians "to think less of making money out of this war and more of defending our country and our just rights." The sentiments expressed in late 1862 by John Lapsley, a former PMC stockholder who became one of the key men in the Shelby Iron Works during the Civil War, probably resembled Pratt's own convictions: "I for one am anxious to avoid the impeachment of wishing to extort on the necessities of government. We can make enough at reasonably liberal prices, and I would prefer to make less, and do it agreeably."

⁵⁵Coulter, Confederate States, 219-38; Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens and/or Business Firms (CPRCBF), National Archives, roll 818; Schwab, Confederate States, 163-85, appendix 1; Broadus Mitchell, William Gregg, 216-19, 225-26. In December 1863, a Columbus, Georgia company offered to sell osnaburgs to Shelby Iron Works for \$1.50 per yard. By March 1864, their price had increased markedly to \$2-\$3.50 a yard. Vandiver, "Shelby Iron," 126-27. These figures indicate that Pratt made, with his government contracts, considerably less than what he would have made on the open market.

Nevertheless, after 1862 it became progressively more difficult for manufacturers to make profits by "agreeably" contracting with the government. The real problem was not government price ceilings, but the collapse of Confederate finances, which made it impossible for the Confederacy adequately to reimburse its suppliers for their goods. Pratt found himself having to accept Confederate and Alabama bonds in payment. By March 1864, his "assets" included \$113,800 in Confederate bonds (presumably only \$14,000 of which he had purchased of his own accord) and \$56,500 in Alabama bonds. Apparently, this problem became more acute during the rest of the war. In September 1865, Pratt complained to Alabama Governor Lewis Parsons that he had delivered "a large amount of [cotton and woolen] goods to the [late Confederate] Government, for which" he had been "compelled to take over [\$260,000] in their Bonds & Treasury Notes, which are now on hand and entirely worthless." Sometimes Pratt did not even do so well as to receive bonds. In 1864, for example, the Quartermaster General reported that he could not pay for a consignment of Prattville Manufacturing Company goods worth nearly \$138,000. According to Shadrack Mims, Pratt "lost more than half a million of dollars" as a result of the war. The above figures certainly show that he suffered tremendous

financial losses from his business dealings with the government.⁵⁶

No wonder Pratt wrote bitterly to Governor Parsons in September 1865 that supplying the Confederacy "with goods has resulted in heavy loss to me."⁵⁷ In 1865, Pratt sounded far different from the man who had grandiosely asserted in 1861 that he would gladly give his last dollar "for the success of the Confederate State." His early rhetoric was most likely hyperbole calculated to cajole then Governor Moore into leaving the Prattville Grays alone. Throughout the war, Pratt's greatest passion remained protecting what he had built in Prattville.

Daniel Pratt tried to safeguard the interests of textile manufacturers as vice president of the Manufacturers and Direct Trade Association of the Confederate States; William Gregg served as President. Mary DeCredico has pointed out that the association, which met annually in

⁵⁶Cappon, "Private Industry," 178-80; Summary of Daniel Pratt's Ledger, 1 March 1864, Pratt Collection, Alabama, ACHC; Daniel Pratt to Lewis Parsons, 8 September 1865, Governor Parsons Papers, ADAH; CPRCBF, National Archives, roll 818; Shadrack Mims, Untitled Manuscript, McMillan Papers, Box 37, Special Collections, Auburn University. Pratt was not alone in balking at bonds. John Lapsley warned Shelby Iron Works against accepting one-third of a government subsidy in eight percent bonds. The contract the company eventually signed included a guarantee against depreciation of Confederate currency. Cappon, "Private Industry," 180.

⁶⁰Daniel Pratt to Lewis Parsons, 8 September 1865, Governor Parsons Papers, ADAH.

Georgia, strongly denounced government actions that negatively impacted manufacturers: "Southern industrialists used their organization to unleash salvos against government price policies and output controls and to counter allegations that they were profiting unduly at civilian and government expense." Judging from evidence offered by Cappon, DeCredico, Vandiver, and Webb, Pratt seems in actual practice to have cooperated more closely with the government than many southern industrialists. Of the men running Shelby Iron Works, for example, a Confederate official angrily complained in July 1864: "Their leading idea seems to be, to build up their establishment during the War & have it in good running order after peace is declared. They . . . go upon a cold, hard selfish policy in which self interest predominates." Pratt seems never to have drawn such fire, but his goals for Prattville Manufacturing Company can hardly have differed from those of the men of Shelby Iron Works.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Coulter, Confederate States, 212, 229; DeCredico, Patriotism for Profit, 65; Cappon, "Southern Industry," 182-83. Whether Pratt sold textiles to the Confederacy after 1864 is open to question. Surviving vouchers show that PMC sold to the Confederacy 155,000 yards of cloth (osnaburgs and coats and pants) for \$190,157 in 1863 and 191,696 yards of cloth (osnaburgs, coats and pants and drilling) for \$398,126 in 1864. I have found no records of any sales whatsoever in 1865, but the pertinent records may not have survived the war. Some of the 1863 and 1864 vouchers are likely missing as well, for the amounts of textiles recorded in these vouchers total to only about one-fifth of the amount (874,102 yards) produced by PMC in 1860 (17.8 percent in 1863 and 21.9 percent in 1864).

Daniel Pratt held out great hope for another manufacturing concern besides Prattville Manufacturing Company, one he had helped create in 1862: The Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company, also known as Oxmoor Furnaces. In 1864, Pratt held \$25,000 worth of stock in this company. He had long dreamed of tapping the rich mineral region of northern Alabama. Now, with war and the Confederacy's desperate need for coal and iron, he had the impetus he needed. An early historian of Alabama's coal and iron industry characterized "the initial iron making enterprise in Jefferson County" as "practically a war measure."⁵⁹

Pratt did not dominate Red Mountain like he did PMC. He was only one among about twenty-five shareholders, including his nephew Merrill and Frank Gilmer and John T. Milner, two tireless Alabama promoters of railroads and the iron and coal industry.⁶⁰ Certainly, the aging Pratt could not do for Alabama's mineral region what he had done for Prattville. But he could—and did—invest his money in important development projects.

Red Mountain quickly became a leading southern supplier of coal and pig iron. "Thousands of tons of Red Mountain pig iron were shot away in shot and shell at

⁵⁹Summary of Daniel Pratt's Ledger, 1 March 1864, Pratt Papers, ACHC; Ethel Armes, The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama (Birmingham, Ala., 1910), 161-64.

⁶⁰Armes, Coal and Iron, 162. Pratt allegedly achieved majority control of Oxmoor Furnaces in 1872.

Charleston and Mobile," Milner recalled. Red Mountain would prove one of Pratt's most enduring legacies, serving not only the ephemeral Confederacy, but also helping to build a "new Alabama" after the war. Unfortunately for Pratt in the short-term, Federal invaders destroyed the Red Mountain furnaces at Oxmoor in April 1865. They would not finally be refired until Pratt was on his deathbed eight years later.⁶¹

Prattville luckily never received a visit from Federal raiders, but Pratt's cotton factory did not escape the ravages of time. Simply put, the mill machinery fell apart as the conflict raged. As early as September 1863, Pratt complained that "it is next to impossible to build good machinery, and consequently we cannot do good work." Considering "the inferior work generally turned out" by poor machinery, Pratt concluded pessimistically that "it would be better for the government to make arrangements to import" what it needed through smuggling operations than to contract with domestic manufacturers. The next year, Pratt apparently sent his mill agent, William Wallace Fay, to Nassau, Bahamas to attempt to get mill machinery from England through Union blockade. Fay died from yellow fever in

⁶¹Ibid., 164, 201-02; Shadrack Mims, Untitled Manuscript, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Special Collections, Auburn University.

Nassau in the fall of 1864, his mission unfulfilled.⁶²

Pratt would not finally obtain new machinery until 1866.

Piling mishap upon mishap, a tornado passed directly through Prattville on November 9, 1864, causing property damage the Citizen estimated as "at least fifty thousand dollars." The house of merchant James M. Smith "was literally torn to pieces," Mr. Gardner's house across the street

⁶²Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 September 1863, reprinted from the Montgomery Mail; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 November 1864. If Wilson's Raiders in April 1865 had moved from Selma to Montgomery through Autauga (on the north side of the Alabama River) instead of through Lowndes (on the south side of the Alabama River), they very likely would have destroyed Pratt's factories. Only the Autauga County Reserves, commanded by Charles Doster, stood in their way. Even William Howell, Doster's adjutant, made jokes at the expense of the Reserves: "Everybody was in a state of anarchy and confusion, so confident were all that Wilson would proceed to Montgomery on this side of the river." However, he added sarcastically: "[Wilson] knew that Col. Doster's terrible Autauga melish were roaming up and down and about the country seeking Yankees to devour, and deeming prudence the better part of valor, he 'tuck up' the other side of the river, where he knew he would meet with but little opposition from the badly frightened rebs that inhabit that region." Howell added, tongue in cheek, that he was "perfectly satisfied that the freedom of Autauga from the ravages of Wilson's raiders was solely due to the valorous deeds and tremendous exertions of Col. Doster's melish." Prattville Autauga Citizen, 9 May 1867.

Pratt did his part for Autauga defense, leading, along with his mill superintendant, Gardner Hale, an expedition of slaves to construct river defenses on the Alabama River in May and June 1862. Many Alabama planters resisted lending their valuable slaves to such operations, but Pratt seems to have put his shoulder to the wheel (or least directed others to do so) with his characteristic vigor. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 1 May 1862; McMillan, Confederate State, 52-55; Martha Riggs Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 1, 8 June, 23 May 1862, ACHC. George Hale became "boss of the Factory" in his father's absence. Martha Riggs Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 23 May 1862, ACHC.

was left "a complete wreck," and Prattville Academy was "also badly damaged." In addition, "other houses in various portions of the town were blown down or completely damaged."⁶³

Rather like a tornado, war battered Pratt's "lovely village." The long conflict exacted its toll in Autauga, just as it did the rest of the South. Prattvillians who died as a result of the Civil War included William W. Fay, Thomas Ormsby, Norman Cameron (the superintendant of Pratt's warehouse at Washington Landing), wool mill agent A. J. Thompson, mill overseer J. G. Holston, and mechanics A. J. White and John R. Cook. Ormsby was married (to Gardner Hale's daughter Hannah), as were Fay, Thompson, and Cook. The latter three men had children as well. Cook, for example, who was listed in the 1860 census as a thirty-six-year-old mechanic worth \$1,500, left a wife and six children when he died. Both his wife, Nancy, and his eldest daughter, Adaline, worked as mill spinners. In 1878, the Autauga Citizen recalled that Cook had volunteered for service despite having "feeble health" and a large family. As a member of Company K, he was present at the surrender of Island Number Ten in Kentucky in April. He was interred

⁶³prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 November 1864.

at Camp Butler, near Springfield, Illinois, where he died in July.⁶⁴

Most Prattvillians in Company K and the Prattville Dragoons survived the war, despite seeing a great deal of action. Merrill Pratt, G. W. Durden, J. H. Durden, LaFayette Ellis, J. C. Hearn, Joseph Hurd, John Killough, Junius Robinson, John Tunnell, Josiah Tunnell, Isaac Ward, and John Williamson got through the Battle and Siege of Port Hudson and eventually returned to Prattville. Merrill Pratt, the First Lieutenant of Company K, spent about fourteen months at Johnson's Island in Sandusky Bay, Ohio, a Federal prison for Confederate officers. Once Merrill obtained release in September 1864, his uncle prevailed upon Francis Strother Lyon, a member of Alabama's delegation to the Confederate House of Representatives, to lobby the War Department to get Merrill detailed to help Pratt manage his business. Lyon apparently succeeded, for Merrill remained in Prattville for the remainder of the war.⁶⁵

Prattville suffered other forms of disruption in addition to the loss of its menfolk. As historian George Rable has noted, "War considerably abbreviated the normal

⁶⁴Smith, Company K, 19, 31, appendix; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 23 May 1878; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

⁶⁵Smith, Company K, appendix; C. E. Tuttle to Merrill Pratt, 7 November 1864; Francis Strother Lyon to Daniel Pratt, 29 November 1864, Folder 36, Pratt Collection.

courtship period and lessened parental influence." In Prattville, as in the rest of the South during the war, impetuous youths married hastily and even eloped, flouting the authority of their elders. Sixteen-year-old Ellen Pratt's elopement with Henry DeBardleben in 1863 was only one among several shocking incidents. Julia Smith related one such event in an August 1863 letter to her husband Merrill: "Henry Hale married one of the factory girls last week The [Hale] family are very much chagrined." Henry Hale's "factory girl" bride was eighteen-year-old Mary Medlin. In 1860, Mary Medlin lived with her mother and brother in the household of Elisha and Mary Ellis, the parents of LaFayette Ellis, and she worked as a spinner in one of the mills.⁶⁶ Middle-class Prattvillians probably found especially shocking the idea that the son of the mill superintendant would run off with a young woman of such humble station in the town. No doubt it was one thing for a mill boy to work his way up to the top as LaFayette Ellis

⁶⁶Rable, Civil Wars, 51; Julia Pratt to Merrill Pratt, 4 August 1863, Folder 34, Pratt Collection, ADAH; Adin Ballou, History and Genealogy of the Ballous (Providence, R. I., 1888), 478.; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. On Ellen Pratt's elopement, see chapter 5. Drew Gilpin Faust has similarly concluded in her recent work that "prescriptions for appropriate mates and regulations about courtship behavior relaxed under wartime pressure." Drew Gilpin Faust, Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London, 1996), 148.

did and quite another for a mill girl to get there through marriage.

An even greater scandal—because it involved the crime of bigamy—occurred when Gardner Hale's daughter Susan Frances married a Dr. Custer from Tennessee. "I have some news to tell you that I know will shock you," Julia breathlessly informed her husband in a November 1862 letter, "Sue Hale's husband has a wife and four children living. Mr. Hale received a letter last week from someone in Shelbyville, Tenn. telling him all about it." Julia branded Custer "a villain indeed . . . he thought . . . that the Yankees had Tenn. and would probably hold it and there would be no danger of Sue's ever hearing of his wife." Julia concluded her narration of the dark episode with a pious maxim: "Marry in haste, and repent at leisure."⁶⁷

Most Prattville women seem, however, to have avoided getting themselves entangled in such wartime predicaments as Susan Frances Hale or Ellen Pratt. Even so, Prattville ladies broke new ground for their sex by becoming members of the town's Ladies Aid Society. This group, historian Malcolm McMillan has noted, was one of "the more active small town societies" in Alabama. Not surprisingly, Daniel Pratt's wife, Esther, served as the Society's president.

⁶⁷Julia Pratt to Merrill Pratt, 23 November 1862, Folder 32, Pratt Collection, ADAH. Susan Frances Hale married educator John Frederick Tarrant in 1864 and authored Hon. Daniel Pratt in 1904.

Under her energetic leadership, the Prattville Ladies Aid Society began producing clothing and other articles for the Confederate army. In May 1861, Martha Riggs Smith informed her husband, Ferdinand: "The Society is working again for the Dragoons and some for the Government." The Prattville ladies had 500 pairs of pants slated to go that month to the Prattville Dragoons, who were stationed at Pensacola. In October 1861, the Society agent, Samuel Parrish Smith, reported that the members had "furnished material and made up for the army" an impressive array of items: 1,008 sand bags, 308 pairs of pants, 122 shirts, 110 Zouave caps, 108 haverlucks, 19 haversacks, 9 tents, 98 coats, and 78 pairs of socks. In addition to their Society work, Prattville ladies made individual contributions to the army. Augusta Pratt Morgan (who was married but had no children) seems to have had especially nimble hands. She made 2 blankets, 1 pair of socks, 1 comforter, 4 shirts, and 4 pairs of drawers. Most all Prattville women, from Mrs. Pratt herself (4 blankets and 1 pair of socks) to more humble mill widows and mechanics' wives like Rachel Houston (2 blankets) and Mrs. Samuel Patillo (2 pairs of socks), made contributions, however. Even Rachel, "servant of Rev. J. A. Spence" contributed a blanket in her own name.⁶⁸

⁶⁸Malcolm C. McMillan, The Alabama Confederate Reader (University, Ala., 1963), 350-52; Martha Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 28 May 1861, ACHC; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 2 May, 9 October 1861. On Alabama's wartime ladies aid

George Rable has noted that many southern ladies aid societies fell apart after 1862 as a result of declining morale, supply shortages, financial difficulties, and corruption allegations, but Prattville's society remained active at least through 1863. In November of that year, the Reverend T. R. Lynch, a former Methodist minister in Prattville who had transferred to Rockford, the seat of neighboring Coosa County, encountered an officer from the Army of Tennessee who was on detail in Alabama looking for socks for his brigade. Lynch promptly wrote Esther Pratt, informing her that he had recommended that the officer write her in her capacity as president of the Prattville Society. Lynch knew that Esther Pratt and her society would come through with some socks, as he had been "a witness to many of the kindnesses which have characterized the actions of the ladies of your devoted City and especially you yourself." Lynch assured Mrs. Pratt that he took the officer for "a gentleman" and that his brigade deserved "encouragement." The same day, the officer himself wrote Mrs. Pratt, grandly addressing her as "Mistress President of the Soldiers Aid Society of Prattville", assuring her that he had "heard much of the Patriotic Zeal

societies, see H. E. Sterkx, Partners in Rebellion: Alabama Women in the Civil War (Rutherford, N.J., 1970), chapter 5. On these groups in the South, see Faust, Mothers, 23-25; Rable, Civil Wars, 138-44; Culpepper, Trials and Triumphs, 246-48.

with which your Society have labored for the comfort of our Soldiers in the Field." As late as January and March, 1864, Julia Smith Pratt received two letters from soldiers thanking her for shirts she had sewn for a shipment of clothes the Society sent Joseph E. Johnston's army in Dalton, Georgia.⁶⁹

Abigail Holt Smith's diary, which runs over a fifteen-month period in 1862 and 1863, reveals that she spent much of her time sewing for relatives and for the Society. Abigail owned her own sewing machine, which she carried over to the Society's rooms, sometimes in the company of her sister Asenath Holt Smith. Even with a sewing machine to help her, she still found the work exhausting. In February 1862, she spent three days in a row working at the sewing rooms, helping to get the clothes for Merrill Pratt's Company K finished. In the evening of the second day, she admitted that she felt "the effects of [sewing all day]." Nevertheless, she reported that the Society was "getting on well with the sewing."⁷⁰

⁶⁹Rable, Civil Wars, 142, 366, note 24; T. R. Lynch to Mrs. Daniel Pratt, 30 November 1863, Thomas Wentworth Davis to Mrs. Daniel Pratt, 30 November 1863, Folder 32, Pratt Collection, ADAH; McMillan, Reader, 350-52. Rable also concludes that "relief work provided a slender precedent for postwar reform," but I believe that his conclusion does not hold for Prattville. On this point, see chapter 11. Rable, Civil Wars, 144.

⁷⁰Abigail Holt Smith Diary, ACHC.

While female organizational activity may have flourished in Prattville during the Civil War, Pratt's factories did not. Indeed, by 1865, these concerns stood close to collapse. And if Pratt's business empire crumbled with the Confederacy, what would become of the town he had founded? Pratt's immediate goal in the aftermath of the Civil War became reviving his nearly comatose businesses. But the indomitable industrialist soon found that Reconstruction impacted everything around him. Once again, he would have to grapple with the rough-and-tumble world of Alabama politics. Although he grew physically weaker every year, the old Yankee proved he was still a good wrestler.

CHAPTER 11

REBUILDING PRATTVILLE: 1865 TO 1873

At the age of sixty-six, suffering from recurrent bouts of neuralgia and rheumatism, Daniel Pratt set out to restore the economic health of his ailing businesses and his "lovely village." Within a few years, both his gin and textile factories had recovered the ground lost during the war, and Prattville had started to hum again with the sound of busy people engaged in profitable economic activities and virtuous benevolent endeavors. It would be going too far, however, to claim that Pratt totally succeeded in achieving his economic and social objectives. Most seriously to Pratt, he failed to realize his long-standing dream of securing a railroad that passed through Prattville. Nevertheless, Pratt continued to inject remarkable energy into his multi-faceted drive to improve his community, and he accomplished much of what he attempted.

Daniel Pratt washed his hands of the shattered Confederacy and applied for a presidential pardon in August 1865. On August 2, he formally took the oath of allegiance to the United States. By early September, Pratt had still not

received his pardon, so he persuaded former U.S. senator and Autauga resident Benjamin Fitzpatrick to write a letter to Lewis Parsons, the man President Andrew Johnson had appointed governor of Alabama in June 1865, supporting Pratt's application. "I know Mr. Pratt & his political course well," Fitzpatrick assured Parsons. "You could not recommend a more worthy man [for a pardon] nor one who was more decided in his opposition to secession." Pratt, avowed Fitzpatrick, "is now and ever has been one of the most conservative men in this C[ounty]." Whether the esteemed former senator's words oiled the gears of government is not clear, but Pratt received his pardon on September 29. On October 5, 1865, the Autauga Citizen happily reported that Pratt had "just returned from Washington city, thither he went to get his pardon, and [he] procured it without much difficulty." The Citizen also added hopefully that the trip appeared to have "improved [Pratt's] health, judging from his general appearance."¹

Restoring Pratt's citizenship proved a much quicker process than reviving his businesses. Gin sales collapsed during the Civil War, and Pratt & Ticknor could not collect payments from ruined planters who had bought gins before the conflict had started. In 1871, Pratt's lawyers

¹Daniel Pratt Application for Pardon, Amnesty Papers of the Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1785-1917, Record Group 94, National Archives; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5 October 1865.

asserted that war-related losses to his gin business amounted to \$404,920. During the conflict, the lawyers declared, Daniel Pratt & Co. "necessarily remained in a state of absolute inactivity."²

Pratt could do nothing about lost sales opportunities, but Pratt & Ticknor, the marketing firm headed by his brother-in-law Samuel Ticknor and his nephew Merrill Pratt, could, and did, attempt to compel planters to pay for gins they had purchased. In February 1863, planter debts to Pratt & Ticknor stood at \$156,427.36—a crushing amount. That month, Pratt agreed not to "sue, molest or trouble" Samuel Ticknor and Merrill, provided that the two men used "their best endeavors to collect all claims, debts, and sums of money" owed the company. Nearly three years later, in January 1866, Pratt sold the Pratt & Ticknor debt, valued now at \$160,000, to Samuel Ticknor outright. Ticknor also purchased the planter debt of \$150,000 owed to him individually as a partner in Pratt & Ticknor and the Eureka Gin debt of another \$51,000. Ticknor was to assume responsibility for any claims the heirs of the now-deceased D. G. Olmsted might make against Pratt over the the disposal of the Eureka Gin debt. The amount of the

²Brief filed before the Commissioner of Patents in the Application of Daniel Pratt for Extension of Letters of Patent No. 17806 granted him July 14th 1857 for Improvement in Cotton Gin [1871], 6, Pratt Papers, Autauga County Heritage Center (ACHC).

debts purchased by Ticknor from Pratt totaled a staggering \$361,000. For this doubtful asset, Ticknor turned over to Pratt seventy-four bales of cotton valued at \$15,028.86 and promised "to pay over . . . as collected" \$34,971.20.

Ticknor was "to make use of all diligence and perseverance in collecting that may be in his power."³ Essentially, Pratt had let his wife's brother off the financial hook in return for seventy-four bales of cotton. Only when Ticknor actually collected over \$50,000 in debts would he see any personal profit out of the deal, but no doubt he was very happy to be relieved of a debt of over a third of a million dollars.

As per agreement, Samuel Ticknor went about collecting payments from delinquent planters with diligence and perseverance. In the summer, for example, he hired attorney Robert H. Bradford of Milliken's Bend, Madison Parish, Louisiana to present formal "demands of payment" against four estates of planters who had purchased Pratt gins in 1860. Bradford wrote Ticknor in October that he believed two of the estates were solvent, one insolvent, and one uncertain. The amount due Pratt from these four estates, exclusive of interest, was \$1,571.90.⁴

³Contract between Daniel Pratt and Pratt & Ticknor, 26 February 1863; contract between Daniel Pratt and Samuel Ticknor, 23 January 1866, Pratt Collection, ACHC.

⁴Robert H. Bradford to Samuel Ticknor, 10 October 1866, Pratt Collection, ACHC.

Whether Ticknor collected on these estates is unknown, but he did manage to conclude settlements with at least a few planters. In March 1866, for example, J. A. Maxwell of Early County, Georgia promised to pay "at Col. Hafford's office in Blakely" \$200 with interest running from January 1, 1862. In two cases, at least, Ticknor actually got his hands on some money. In March 1862, Alexander Prudhomme promised to pay Pratt \$245.70, "with interest from date until paid." Six years later, someone (presumably Ticknor) wrote on the note itself: "Received on the written note ninety dollars & eighty one cents the proceeds of one bale of cotton March 13th 1868. \$90.81." Over two years later, in May 1870, Ticknor settled with Lewis Endt for \$164.70. Endt, a Louisiana planter, had purchased a fifty-saw gin fully nine years earlier.⁵

As late as January and February 1874, months after Pratt's death, Ticknor was still making forays against his debtors. In answer to a "pointed note" from Ticknor, planter S. B. Robertson of Marksville, Avoyelles Parish,

⁵J. A. Maxwell Note, 4 March 1866, Receipt for \$164.70 from S. F. Ticknor, 5 May 1870, Alexander Prudhomme Note, 13 March 1868, Pratt Collection, ACHC; Shadrack Mims, Jr. to Lewis Endt, 3 May 1861, Pratt & Ticknor Letterbook, Box 42, McMillan Collection, Special Collections, Auburn University. In November 1862, Samuel Ticknor apparently traveled to Louisiana and Mississippi in an attempt to make collections. Julia Pratt wrote her husband, Merrill, that the town had "not heard from Mr. Ticknor since he crossed the Mississippi River." Julia Pratt to Merrill Pratt, 23 November 1862, Box 96, McMillan Collection.

Louisiana insisted that he could not pay for his gin. "While we are thankful that we are not actually starving," Robertson wrote plaintively, "we have absolutely no money." Robertson enclosed a draft he held on J. J. Irby and Company for thirteen dollars to pay the interest on his note, insisting that this was "the best I can do." If Ticknor could not "indulge" Robertson, which he was "almost ashamed to ask" Ticknor to do, the planter would "have to try to sell the gin . . . though it suits me well & I cannot think of replacing it." Robertson's closing comments could hardly have encouraged Ticknor: "I have plenty of hands this year and still hope to make a crop. As to collecting anything I've just quit trying."⁶

At this late date, Ticknor's problems were, no doubt, enhanced by the devastating Panic of 1873. As one of Ticknor's collection agents, Benjamin Thigpen, succinctly put it: "people poorer & poorer & meaner & meaner." Thigpen was based in Paulding, the seat of Jasper County in southeastern Mississippi. He complained that there was "no money scarcely in this county." One of Ticknor's planter debtors, one Jones, had gone bankrupt and was not very agreeable, Thigpen reported: "He is a hard case. He refused to give a new note until I told him I should sue him on the old one and try to get your testimony that he

⁶S. B. Robertson to Samuel Ticknor, 15 January 1874, Pratt Collection, ACHC.

had promised to pay more than \$50.00 then I could get a Judgement for whatever I could prove." Jones bowed to this threat, agreeing to give Ticknor's agent a \$50 note bearing 10 percent interest from January 1, 1873 and payable on April 1, 1874. Thigpen agreed not to charge Jones interest if he paid the note by the middle of January. Of another debtor, Thigpen was even less comforting: "I have not seen Conner yet. [I] hope I may make an impression on him yet, tho it looks like a bad chance. I can make the money out of Jones at Law but don't think a Judgement on Conner collectible by law. [I] will do the best I can and report at an Early day."⁷

As Samuel Ticknor pursued old debtors, Daniel Pratt beckoned new customers. In 1866, Pratt placed a new advertisement for his gins in De Bow's Review, proclaiming that his factory was back in operation. Pratt boasted that he "had nearly 40 years' experience in the business; has lived all the time amongst cotton planters; has visited Gin Houses, put Gins in operation, and thinks he knows as near as most any other man, what constitutes a good Gin." Pratt also announced a new, expanded network of sixteen fixed agents: five firms in Georgia (Augusta, Macon, Atlanta, Eatonton, and Hawkinsville), four in Alabama (Montgomery, Selma, Mobile, and Eufaula); four in Mississippi (Meridian,

⁷Benjamin Thigpen to Samuel Ticknor, 7 February 1874, Pratt Collection, ACHC.

Columbus, Natchez, and Yazoo City), and one each in Louisiana (New Orleans), Tennessee (Memphis), and Texas (Galveston). This list of agents reveals that Pratt had expanded his market into Georgia. The ruination during the war of Pratt's old friend and business associate Samuel Griswold left Georgia open for Pratt's own invasion; and by 1866, he had agents in Atlanta and across the state's plantation belt.⁸

⁸De Bow's Review, 2nd Ser., II (1867): appendix; S. H. Griswold, "The Cotton Gin," Gray Jones County News, 2 April 1908, reprinted in Carolyn White Williams, History of Jones County, Georgia, 1807-1907 (Macon, Ga., 1957, 401-02, 510-11. Federal troops razed Griswoldsville in 1864. Like Pratt, Griswold had manufactured revolvers in his gin factory. Griswold died in September 1867, at the age of seventy-six. Griswold, "The Cotton Gin," reprinted in Williams, Jones County, 401-02, 510-11.

Pratt's major competitor after the war, Clemons, Brown & Co. of Columbus, Georgia, had twenty-six fixed agencies across the South, but the company seems to have made many of its sales in Virginia (two agencies), North Carolina (four agencies), and South Carolina (five agencies), states where Pratt did no business. The Columbus company did, however, have three agencies in Georgia (two in Savannah and one in Macon), four in Alabama (two in Mobile, one in Montgomery, and one in Greenville), two in Louisiana (New Orleans and Trenton), two in Texas (Galveston and Austin), two in Tennessee (both in Memphis), one in Mississippi (Vicksburg), and one in Florida (Tallahassee). De Bow's Review, 2nd Ser., II (January 1867), appendix. In 1868, Pratt still had sixteen fixed agencies: six in Alabama (three in Montgomery, one in Mobile, one in Selma, and one in Eufaula), four in Georgia (two in Macon, one in Columbus, and one in Dawson), two in Texas (Houston and Galveston), two in Tennessee (Memphis and Nashville), one in Louisiana (New Orleans), and one in Mississippi (Columbus). He no longer employed traveling agents. Montgomery Daily Mail, 4 August 1868.

Although the factory was back in operation a year after the end of the Civil War, gin sales did not surpass their 1860 level until 1870. In 1866, Pratt sold about 700 gins. Four years later, he sold 897 gins, nearly 40 more than in 1860. Nevertheless, Pratt had only produced 700 gins. The rest of his sales came from inventory that had piled up in the factory in previous years. With business only just reviving, Pratt employed merely fifty workers (forty-eight men and two boys under seventeen years of age), twenty-four less than in 1860. Though the size of Pratt's labor force declined in the 1860s, his workers' wages increased. Between 1860 and 1870, the wages of his factory workers increased from an average of \$40.50 a month to \$64.38 a month (or \$486.48 a year to \$772.60 a year), a gain of about 59 percent. The rate of percentage increase in the 1860s nearly mirrored that of the 1850s (from \$25.00 to \$40.50).⁹

The men who still worked for Pratt in 1870 thus continued to earn good salaries. Surprisingly, however, a majority of the gin factory employees in 1870 were African-Americans. According to my calculations, freedmen must have made up a majority of Pratt's fifty gin workers. About two-thirds of Prattville's white mechanics had simply

⁹Brief Filed before the Commissioner of Patents, 8, 10; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 12, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration.

disappeared between 1860 and 1870. Most of Prattville's Yankee mechanics, for example, left the town during the secession crisis and never returned. Of the Yankees remaining in 1870, moreover, few remained in Pratt's employ. In 1866, Ferdinand Smith, his brother Franklin, and his cousin George took over the sash, door, and blind factory under the name F. E. Smith & Co. Ephraim Morgan, the previous owner and a fellow New Hampshire, retired from the business and purchased a plantation. Enoch Poor Robinson, who also hailed from New Hampshire, resumed his horse mills business but was beset by financial troubles and went bankrupt in 1869. The next year, he and his family migrated to Texas. C. P. Morgan, likely a brother of Ephraim Morgan, remained in Prattville but now found employment as a house carpenter. William White of Indiana devoted his time to farming in 1870. One other Yankee mechanic, Ashby Morgan, the husband of Merrill Pratt's sister, Augusta, remained in Prattville after the Civil War started, but he died suddenly in 1862.¹⁰

Only two Yankees appear to have worked in the gin factory in 1870: superintendent Merrill Pratt and a foundry worker from New York. In addition, one foreign-born worker, Patrick Ahern of Ireland, worked in the machine

¹⁰U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Alabama Vol. 2, pp. 9, 18, 22, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; Abigail Holt Diary, ACHC.

shop. The rest of the likely white workers came from Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee.¹¹

Not only was Pratt's white work force mostly southern, it was also basically new. Only nine of these men had lived in Prattville in 1860. One, John Averhart, had been a farmer in 1860. Three—John Counts, Abram Ellis, and Abram Killian—were too young in 1860 to have had employment, but they all came from factory families. Abram Ellis was the son of Elisha and Mary Ellis and the brother of Lafayette Ellis. Abram Killian was the son of Elnora Killian, who, along with two of her daughters, had worked in the mill in 1860. John Counts was the son of William Counts, a mechanic. The remaining five men all had worked as artisans of some sort in 1860. Robert Ward and Floyd Weatherly were gin painters, Lafayette Ellis and John Williamson were mechanics, and Isaac Ward was an iron moulder.¹²

Fourteen other 1860 mechanics persisted in Prattville in 1870. Ten of them had employment, not as factory mechanics, but as house carpenters. These men were William Counts, George Duckworth, W. E. Durden, John Hearn,

¹¹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

¹²U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Autauga County. One of Pratt's new gin employees was twenty-four-year-old William Griswold, a grandson of Samuel Williams, Jones County, 402.

John Johnson, Henry Jones, John Killough, C. P. Morgan, James Smith, and Joshua White. The other four remained mechanics, but they did not work for Pratt. Nathan Morris purchased Prattville's carriage and wagon shop in 1869. Marcus Cicero Killet, another 1860 mechanic, worked in Morris's shop in 1870, while John Tunnel, a foundry worker in 1860, now labored in the sash, door, and blind shop. John Royals, a blacksmith from a mill family, had his own blacksmith shop in 1870. Yet another former mechanic, Samuel Patillo, moved to Montgomery and joined the city police force.¹³

Why so many Prattville mechanics either left town or Pratt's employ is not clear. Of course, business conditions had remained quite poor for several years following the Civil War, and Pratt did not need nearly as many mechanics. In July 1868, in fact, a Dun agent reported that Pratt had ceased production because \$70,000 worth of unsold gins (probably some 250 machines) had accumulated in warehouses. Moreover, with the industrial expansion that began after the war and the presumably greater scarcity of skilled labor as a result of war deaths and displacements, white mechanics may have been able to find as good or

¹³Ibid.; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Industrial Schedule, Autauga County, Montgomery County; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 27, R. G. Cun & Co. Collection. In 1868, the Montgomery police force paid a salary of \$75 a month, or \$900 a year. Montgomery Daily Mail, 16 December 1868.

better jobs than those that Pratt offered. Nevertheless, it is surprising to find so many house carpenters in Prattville. Perhaps the influx of freemen after the end of the war and the founding, in 1866, of Allenville, a mill village only a mile from Prattville, caused a housing boom that lasted into 1870.¹⁴

Whatever the reason, it appears undeniable that Pratt in 1870 relied more heavily on black labor in his gin factory than at any time since the 1840s. No doubt in many cases, Pratt's 1870 black gin workers had worked for him as slaves in 1860. Charles Atwood, a very light-skinned, straight-haired mulatto, was purchased as a boy by Daniel Pratt from Samuel Griswold in 1843. It seems a reasonable surmise, given his connection to Griswold and his taking of the surname Atwood after the Civil War, that Charles was the offspring of a mulatto slave woman and either Turpin G. or William H. Atwood, Rhode Island mechanics who worked for Griswold in the early 1830s, the time when Charles Atwood was born. Atwood was obviously a highly skilled and successful mechanic. In 1870, he listed his occupation as "gin maker"—a term connoting a feeling of artisanal confidence and pride—and his wealth as \$1,000, placing him among the five wealthiest of Pratt's fifty gin workers. Earlier that year, Atwood paid Henry and Ellen DeBardleben

¹⁴Alabama Vol. 2, p. 12, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection. On Allenville, see below.

\$700 for a house and lot located in the "white section" of Prattville, adjacent to the house and lot of his fellow "gin maker" Lafayette Ellis. In 1872, Atwood also subscribed to \$100 worth of stock in the proposed Prattville railroad—the only African-American in Prattville to do so. The previous year, he had named his fourth son "Pratt."¹⁵

Two black gin mechanics in 1870 had been with Pratt longer than Atwood. Richard Pratt, a fifty-seven-year-old slave from North Carolina, was probably the slave "Dick," whom Pratt purchased in 1834, a year after he arrived in Alabama. Richard's twenty-one-year-old son, Richard, Jr., also made gins in 1870. Richard Pratt, Sr. continued to labor in the gin factory as late as 1881, nearly fifty years after Daniel Pratt had purchased him. That year, a newspaper correspondent from Montgomery noted that Richard

¹⁵Slave Bill of Sale, Continental Eagle Corporation Papers, Prattville (CECP); U.S. Census, 1850, 1860, Mississippi, Population Schedule, Attalla County, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Deed Book 18, 139, Autauga County Courthouse, Prattville; Map of Prattville, Ala., 1891, Prattville Public Library; Subscription to the Prattville Railroad, CECP. When he died in 1825, David C. Atwood of Providence, Rhode Island belonged to the Masonic lodge at Clinton, the county seat of Jones County and the location of Griswold's factory. Turpin G. Atwood owned a house and lot in Clinton in 1827. In 1832, Turpin G. Atwood, William H. Atwood, and Daniel Pratt were parties to a legal action in Jones County. Charles Atwood was probably born between 1830 and 1832. Turpin G. Atwood married in late 1831. Macon Telegraph, 5 November 1831; Milledgeville Georgia Journal, 11 October 1825, 29 October 1827, 25 February 1828, 2 February, 31 May 1832. I have seen the photograph of Charles Atwood that is in possession of his grandchild, Mrs. Lilian Atwood Strong of Prattville.

Pratt had "been at work in the factory since it started. He is good for a situation as long as he is able to work, and a pension afterwards." The third likely former Pratt slave was a fifty-five-year-old mulatto originally from South Carolina named Henry Robinson. In 1839, Pratt purchased a twenty-five-year-old slave named Henry for the sizable sum of \$1,600 from Durant Nobles, a carpenter originally from North Carolina. The slave Henry likely became Henry Robinson after the war.¹⁶

At least four other black mechanics in addition to Charles Atwood became prominent figures in the Prattville community: Frank Dozier, Dudley Green, William Squires, and Anthony Thomas. According to the 1870 census, Frank Dozier was the son of Pompey Dozier, a sixty-four-year-old farm laborer from North Carolina worth \$100. Frank Dozier, eighteen, worked in the gin shop, as did his brother George, sixteen. Dudley Green, twenty-four, was probably the son of Valentine Green, a forty-eight-year-old brick-mason from South Carolina worth \$400. William Squires, thirty-seven, was a mulatto worth \$50 who originally came from North Carolina. Two of his sons, Richard (sixteen) and Edmund (eighteen), also worked in the gin shop. In 1887, a Prattville newspaper named Dozier and Squires, as well as

¹⁶U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1880, Population Schedule, Montgomery County, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Montgomery Advertiser and Mail, 12 June 1881.

Charles Atwood, as important and conservative black leaders. The paper also noted much more grudgingly in 1893 that Dudley Green, who had just died, was "a prominent character among the colored population." Green's funeral procession, the paper reported, was one of the largest such events ever seen in Prattville. Foundry worker Anthony Thomas, a forty-three-year-old South Carolinian worth \$500 in 1870, proved especially popular with the white press, as he was a Democrat. In 1878, he hosted a political barbecue, at which important white and black Democrats spoke. Prattville's Democratic newspaper commented favorably on Thomas's "well laden tables" and neat dwelling and grounds and found Thomas himself "an honest, industrious, colored man." When Thomas died in 1882 "under very suspicious circumstances," the same paper asserted he had been poisoned.¹⁷

Although some of Pratt's black mechanics became men of note in their community, few had achieved any substantial wealth in 1870. Probably only Charles Atwood, the sole black mechanic worth \$1,000 or more, owned his own home. Three other Pratt mechanics were worth \$100 or more: Anthony Thomas (\$500), Richard Pratt (\$200), and Henry Robinson (\$100). Nine other men ranged in wealth from \$10

¹⁷U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Prattville Progress, 6 May 1887, 10 March 1893; Prattville Southern Signal, 9 August 1878, 16 June 1882.

to \$50, and the remaining fourteen did not provide a listing.¹⁸

Pratt's black workers were, however, only marginally worse off than his white workers. Of his twenty-one likely white gin workers, only three gave wealth listings of over \$1,000: John Williamson (\$1,350), Lafayette Ellis (\$1,200), and Isaac Ward (\$1,100). Three other men had wealth valued at from \$100 to \$500: John Averheart (\$500), Robert Ward (\$400), and Ebenezer Carter (\$150). Finally, two men had wealth listings of less than \$100—Floyd Weatherly (\$75) and John Counts (\$30)—while twelve men did not have any wealth listings at all. Of the five men who had wealth listings in both 1860 and 1870, three had done better by 1870 and two had done worse. As a farmer in 1860, John Averhart was worth only \$200, but as a mechanic, he was worth \$500. Issac Ward's wealth increased slightly, from \$1,000 to \$1,100, and Lafayette Ellis's increased from \$1,000 to \$1,200. Conversely, John Williamson's wealth dropped from \$1,600 to \$1,350, and Robert Ward's plummeted from \$1,200 to \$400. Interestingly, this group did better over time than Prattville's house carpenters. Of the six house carpenters that listed wealth figures in 1860 and 1870, five were less wealthy: Joshua White (\$4,800 to \$1,500), C. P. Morgan (\$1,000 to \$100), John Hearn (\$750 to

¹⁸U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

\$500), George Duckworth (\$350 to \$300), and William Counts (\$750 to \$100). Fortune smiled only on W. E. Durden, whose wealth increased from \$750 to \$1,000.¹⁹

Even without the services of such comparatively wealthy 1860 mechanics as Joshua White and C. P. Morgan, Pratt still had a highly skilled core of mechanics in 1870, namely Charles Atwood, Lafayette Ellis, John Williamson, and Isaac Ward. Ellis, in fact, would go on to invent the important huller cotton gin.²⁰ These four southern men, three of whom were white and one a mulatto, had stepped into the place once held by such Yankees as the Smiths, Ashby Morgan, and Francis Farnsworth.

Despite some instability in markets and his labor supply, Daniel Pratt's gin factory was well on its way to recovery by 1870. Indeed, in March 1871, a visiting Dun agent effusively declared of both the gin factory and Prattville Manufacturing Company (PMC) that "both firms are

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Charles A. Bennett, Saw and Toothed Cotton Ginning Developments (Dallas, Tex., n.d.), 32. In 1881, Ellis invented the "split-rib huller cotton gin." In 1889, he invented an "improved double-rib huller gin" which "became a general standard in the United States." Ibid., 32-33. Ellis worked on his 1881 gin for three years, having it ready for show at the great International Cotton Exposition at Atlanta. The gin, which separated "cotton from the hull, depositing the seed in one place and the hull in another," was "the wonder and admiration of all the big planters in the South," according to William Howell. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 15 December 1881. See also Prattville Southern Signal, 30 September 1881.

as good as gold dust . . . as good as ever." Indeed, by 1870, Daniel Pratt had considerably expanded PMC, installing new machinery and more spindles, employing more people, and producing higher quality products. Between 1860 and 1870, the number of spindles in the cotton and wool mills increased from 3,285 (2,700 cotton, 585 wool) to 5,088 (4,608 cotton and 480 wool), an increase of 54.8 percent. In 1860, the two mills had employed 141 people, while in 1870, they gave work to 167 (159 in the cotton mill and 8 in the woolen mill), an increase of 18.4 percent. With more equipment and workers, production expanded from 874,102 yards in 1860 to 1,324,992 yards in 1870, an increase of over 450,000 yards, or 51.5 percent. Not only did Pratt's cotton mill produce more, though woolen production had decreased, but it had also diversified its output. Now PMC produced not only osnaburgs (698,369 yards), but also higher-quality sheeting (361,540 yards) and shirting (159,283 yards). Together, sheeting and shirting accounted for 42.7 percent of the cotton mill's production. Pratt's osnaburgs were now priced at only 6 cents a yard, but his sheeting was worth 6.4 cents and his shirting 8.3 cents.²¹

At the end of the war, Gardner Hale traveled "to England to contract for and superintend the building and

²¹Alabama Vol. 2, p. 12, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Industrial Schedule, Autauga County.

shipping of a large outfit of machinery," presumably for both of Pratt's factories and the newly started mill at Allenville. The machinery began arriving in July 1866. Two years later, a Dun agent reported that PMC was "doing very well at present" and was "now making money." The company, he noted, was "well-managed at present by Daniel Pratt, a good financier." The next year, the reports became even better: "This company is doing well, succeeding better than at any time since the war." A few months later, in August 1869, the Dun assessment was again very encouraging: "Doing well and prosperous."²²

Daniel Pratt apparently deserves much personal credit for the revival of PMC. In May 1868, the Montgomery Daily Mail reported that earlier that year, "hundreds upon hundreds of bales of cotton goods were accumulating at his factory, and that the cry was 'no sale'." Taking matters into his own hands, Pratt traveled "to the Northern cities, introduced samples of his fabrics, spoke of the advantages his factory offered, and selected intelligent commission merchants, with whom he deposited his goods." Within a matter of weeks, the public became aware of "the quality and cheapness of [Pratt's] wares" and bought "his entire accumulated stock." Since then, orders had "come in so

²²Adin Ballou, History and Genealogy of the Ballous in America (Providence, R.I., 1888), 479; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 15, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection. On Allenville, see below.

fast as to compel" Pratt to increase the number of his spindles. To assure a large enough volume of water to power his additional spindles, Pratt elevated his dam on Autauga Creek by ten feet.²³

The Mail noted approvingly that Pratt's factory expansion would "give employment to an additional force of mechanics, men, women, and children." This outcome likely had been one of Pratt's goals in the first place. Shadrack Mims claimed that Pratt always kept the welfare of his operatives uppermost in his mind. Mims twice cited one postwar incident as powerful proof of his claim. Having returned as mill agent in January 1865 after the death of William W. Fay, Mims reported at a meeting of PMC's board of managers in April or May that the mill had seven hundred bales of cotton on hand, but that the machinery had "completely run down." Consequently, the mill could only be run at "a heavy loss to the stockholders." Mims presented the meeting with two alternatives: "either close up or fill up the mill with new and the latest improved machinery." For "the high-toned Christian gentlemen" who composed the board—Daniel Pratt, president; John Whiting; Lewis Whetstone; Samuel Ticknor; and James Hazen, secretary—however, "the interest of the operatives turned the scale." PMC

²³Montgomery Daily Mail, 7 May 1868.

continued to run at a heavy loss until the new machinery arrived and was installed.²⁴

Though Pratt kept his operatives employed, he did not pay them very much, especially in relation to his gin workers. The wages of textile workers increased almost 28 percent between 1860 and 1870, from \$14.75 a month to \$18.86 a month (or \$177.10 a year to \$226.41 a year), a much smaller percentage increase than that enjoyed by gin workers. In 1850, mill workers had made almost half the salary of gin workers. By 1860, this figure had dropped to 36 percent, while in 1870, it had diminished even further, to 29 percent. Mill workers did enjoy a greater percentage increase in their wages between 1860 and 1870 than between 1850 and 1860, when the increase was only about 20 percent, but the

²⁴Prattville Southern Signal, 23 May 1878; Shadrack Mims, "History of Autauga County" (1886), reprinted in Alabama Historical Quarterly 8 (fall 1948): 263. In his 1886 version of the story, Mims builds Pratt up at the expense of the other managers (those "high-toned Christian gentlemen"), writing that they "yielded to [Pratt's] wishes concerning the operatives. Mr. Pratt's private opinion was to stop the mill and sell the cotton. But the operatives lay on his heart, 'what would become of them was the great question with him'." Which recollection is correct, I cannot say. It is possible that Mims felt reluctant to state publicly, only thirteen years after the event, that PMC's managers had contemplated throwing mill operatives out of work. On the other hand, as years passed, Mims may have been unable to resist the urge to deify his subject at the expense of those around him. Yet either way one looks at this event, Pratt comes out well.

small difference of 8 percent was probably nullified by the higher price inflation of the 1860s.²⁵

The sad fact is that Pratt's mill operatives were probably thankful simply to have jobs after the Civil War. Governor Robert Patton pointed out in a De Bow's Review article in January 1867 that the Civil War had devastated Alabama families:

Of young and middle-aged men killed in the war, Alabama lost fully 40,000. About 20,000 were disabled for life, many of whom since died from this cause. At least 20,000 widows and 60,000 orphans are left in the state. Three-fourths of these are today dependent upon government rations for subsistence. . . . From this unemployed and impoverished class of women, boys, and girls, there might be employed 20,000 or 25,000 efficient factory operatives.²⁶

In short, whereas skilled labor had become scarcer in the South after the Civil War, unskilled labor had become more plentiful. Under such circumstances, the gap between the two groups grew ever greater.

Despite poorer wage increases, about one-third of the 1860 mill families persisted in Prattville between 1860 and 1870. Except for Joseph Kent and Simon Welden, all the families who listed wealth figures in 1860 and 1870 listed smaller figures in 1870 than in 1860. Joseph Kent of Georgia, who probably went from being a mill boss to the

²⁵U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1860, 1870, Industrial Schedule, Autauga County; Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, A Monetary History of the United States (Princeton, N.J., 1963), 29-33, 135.

²⁶De Bow's Review, 2nd Ser., IV (1867): 65.

effective mill superintendent when Gardner Hale retired in the late 1860s, went from \$500 to \$1,400, a very impressive increase for the 1860s. Simon Welden's household increased its wealth in the same period from \$75 to \$300. In 1860, Simon Welden had been absent from the household, leaving his wife, Sarah, as the putative head. Sarah's twenty-year-old daughter, Rebecca, and her sixteen-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, respectively, worked as a weaver and a spreader. By 1870, Rebecca and Elizabeth had left the Welden household, but the four youngest children, William (twenty-two), Samantha (nineteen), Nancy (seventeen), and Luvinia (fourteen), all worked in the cotton mill. With four children now at work in the mill, the Welden's wealth quadrupled in the 1860s. Simon Welden himself was sixty-two years old and without an occupation.²⁷

The economic position of most mill families deteriorated in this period, however. Susan O'Neal, a widow born around 1797, and her daughter Emily, a weaver born around 1838, declined in wealth from \$600 to \$100. Elnora Killian's household declined in wealth from \$250 to \$100. In 1860, she had had two daughters working as weavers. In

²⁷U.S. Census, Alabama, 1850, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County. Henry DeBardleben, now Pratt's son-in-law, carried the title of Mill Superintendant, but he was likely more a manager than a day-to-day supervisor. In 1879, Kent was described as PMC's "skilled and experienced chief superintendant." Prattville Southern Signal, 6 June 1879.

1870, one of the daughters, Jane, still worked in the cotton mill, while her son, Abram, worked in the gin factory, but the household was still worth less than in 1860. Daughter Sarah had, however, made an advantageous marriage to Thomas Fallon, an Irish engine builder worth \$750 in 1870. In 1864, Sarah Fallon purchased a \$200 town lot from Daniel Pratt.²⁸

One family that seems to have done well, not so much economically as politically, was that of A. J. Weatherly. In 1860, the fifty-eight-year-old Weatherly was a cloth trimmer worth \$250. Two of his daughters worked as weavers, and his sons Floyd and William worked as a gin painter and as an apprentice tinner, respectively. Weatherly's eldest daughter, Ann, had married Alison Scroggins, a boss in the mill. By 1870, Weatherly had died, leaving his wife, Mary, the head of a household worth only \$100. Three of her daughters, Frances (age thirty), Mary (twenty-two), and Nancy Tallapoosa (fifteen), worked in the mill. Floyd, who still worked in the gin shop, had his own household. Another son had married Sallie Patillo, a daughter of gin mechanic Samuel Patillo, and moved to Montgomery, where he worked as a harnessmaker.²⁹

²⁸Ibid.; Larry W. Nobles, Autauga County Cemetery Register (Prattville, 1988); Deed Book 15, 607, Autauga County Courthouse.

²⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County, 1870, Montgomery County.

Before his death in 1868, Weatherly enjoyed a brief local political career. After Prattvillians voted to incorporate the town, in September 1865, Weatherly won one of five spots on the town council. Moreover, his son-in-law, Alison Scroggins, was elected town marshall. A prominent local Democrat in the 1870s, Scroggins eventually became county coroner. Both Scroggins and his mother-in-law received full obituaries from the local paper at their deaths later in the century. Of Scroggins, the newspaper declared that while he had not "possessed much of this world's goods, he was nevertheless rich in kindness of heart and other noble qualilties" that made "mere sordid wealth . . . a mere mockery and a sham." All men who had known Scroggins during his "long residence" in Prattville knew him as "a clever, kind, accommodating and gentlemanly man."³⁰

After the Civil War, the mills became almost completely the preserve of white families like the Weatherlys, Of the 211 of 235 workers in the Prattville and Allenville

³⁰Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5 October 1865, 20 May 1880; James Hazen, Manual of the Presbyterian Church, Prattville, Ala. (Richmond Va., 1871), 6; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1880, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Prattville Southern Signal, 28 October 1881, 12 March 1886. Scroggins probably got the nomination in part out of sympathy for him generated when he received a serious injury in Pratt's mill in 1876. Scroggins, the night watchman, was starting up the machinery for the day when he "was suddenly seized by the belting and seriously crushed." By 1880, Scroggins's only son, twenty-one-year-old Obadiah, had become the new night watchman at the mill. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 23 November 1876; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1880, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

mills that I have identified, only 20 (9.4 percent) were black. This probably represents a reduction from the already small figure in 1860. Because of the cultural taboo about whites, especially women and girls, working in the company of freed blacks, Pratt, like other southern mill operators, no doubt kept his black workers confined to the worst, most isolated job in his factories: unpacking cotton bales in the picker room. Almost all his black mill workers were males aged from twelve to twenty-five. One, Columbus ("Lum") Jones, was the son of Louisa Jones, a free black woman who lived in Prattville before the war. By 1900, Lum Jones ran the picker room.³¹

Both the Prattville and Allenville mills attracted enough new white labor in the 1860s to allow them to avoid turning to African-Americans. Not only did about a third of mill families persist between 1860 and 1870, but many new families, frequently headed by widows, appeared. While in 1860 women had headed just over 35 percent of mill households, in 1870 women headed thirty-five of the sixty-eight mill households in Prattville and Allenville, over 51 percent. Likely many of these families consisted of the

³¹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, 1870, 1900, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

indigent Civil War widows and orphans Governor Patton had written about in his De Bow's article.³²

The Mary Sager and Caroline Hall households certainly seem to fit this pattern. In 1860, the two women lived in Autauga County, Sager in Kingston precinct and Hall in Autaugaville. By 1870, their husbands had died, and they had moved to Prattville, where they put their children to work in the mills. Mary Sager was the wife of J. J. Sager of South Carolina, a farmer worth \$500 in 1860. J. J. Sager died around 1865, leaving his wife with about eight children. Within a few years, the Sagers moved to Prattville. Mary's eldest son, William, was without occupation. Since he would have been around seventeen when the war ended, perhaps he suffered a serious wound in the army. The family income was brought in by the three younger children, Eliza (about eighteen), Mary (about twelve), and Patrick (about ten), who all worked in a cotton mill. Despite having three wage earners, the family listed no wealth in 1870.³³

D. W. Hall worked as a carpenter in Autaugaville. In 1860, the forty-five year-old Georgian was worth \$200.

³²Ibid. On the increase of indigence in Autauga County as a result of the war, see Commissioners Court Minutes, Book of 1854-1866, 218, Autauga County Courthouse; Montgomery Daily Mail, 25 March 1870.

³³U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

When he died, probably in the early 1860s, he left his wife, Caroline, with six children. In 1870, Caroline's daughters Ellen and Louisa worked in a cotton mill, while her sons David and Thomas attended school. Her eldest son, Henry, who had married and formed his own household, worked in the woolen mill. Like the Sagers, the Halls had no wealth figure listed.³⁴

Not all families that came to Prattville in the 1860s, of course, were headed by widows. Like Mary Sager and Caroline Hall, Bolling Anthony, James Buckner, James Snell, and Sterling Skaggs brought their families to Prattville in the 1860s. In 1860, Bolling Anthony, a farm laborer from Georgia worth twenty-five dollars, lived in hilly Mount Olive precinct in northeastern Coosa County, with his wife and eight children. With six daughters and only two sons, Anthony probably felt he had little to lose by moving from the country to Prattville. Moreover, Anthony may have suffered injury in the war, for he is listed in 1870 as "without occupation." Three of his daughters, Nancy (twenty-six), Sarah (twenty-one), and Keziah (eighteen), worked in a cotton mill, as did his son Reuben (fourteen). In addition, his daughter Martha had married mill worker Thaddeus

³⁴Ibid.

Hoyle, and the couple lived in Anthony's household. The family's wealth was listed as only \$10, however.³⁵

James Snell also had a farming background. In 1860, Snell worked as an overseer on the John Frank plantation near Prattville and was worth \$250. In Prattville in 1870, Snell drove a dray, while his son Thomas (twenty-six) and his daughters Adelaide (fifteen) and Eldora (ten) worked in a mill. The family was now worth \$100.³⁶

James Buckner and Sterling Skaggs both migrated from Georgia to eastern Alabama between 1850 and 1860 and thence to Prattville by 1870. James Buckner became a respected, albeit poor, member of the community. He was born near the town of Sparta in Hancock County, Georgia in 1796. As a youth, he served in the War of 1812. Probably due to his military experience, as well as the "remarkable vigor" he had enjoyed "up to a short time before his death" in 1877, Buckner became known around town as "the General." In 1850, he still lived in Hancock County, along with his much younger wife, Frances Barnes, and his six children. Buckner listed his occupation as house carpenter. By 1860, he had moved near the town of Opelika, located in Russell County in southeast Alabama, where he gave his occupation

³⁵U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, Population Schedule, Coosa County, 1870, Population Schedule, Coosa County.

³⁶U.S. Census, Alabama, 1860, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

as machinist. By 1869, he had moved his expanded family—his wife had delivered him eleven children, the first when he was forty-two and the last when he was sixty-six—to Prattville. In 1870, the old "General" was without occupation, but three of his children, Joel (twenty), Susan (sixteen), and Sarah (twelve), worked in the mill. His daughter Adaline had married mill worker Henry Hall, while his daughter America had married mechanic Abram Ellis. Evidently, the "General," at least, enjoyed his years in Prattville, for William Howell recalled that Buckner "was noted as having a superabundance of wit and good humor," as well as a "pleasant smile" that he wore "through all his worldly journeyings."³⁷

Sterling Skaggs also made extensive "worldly journeyings." In 1850, Skaggs lived in Henry County, Georgia. The twenty-seven-year-old farmer had compiled an estate valued at only \$100. By 1860, he had moved to Tallapoosa County, Alabama, with his expanding family, where he worked as a house carpenter. Just two years later, Skaggs and his family were living in Prattville. In 1862, Skaggs again derived his livelihood from farming. He owned two acres of his own land and also did farm work for other Prattvillians. When Ferdinand Smith left for Mobile, he hired Skaggs

³⁷Prattville Autauga Citizen, 18 January 1877; U.S. Census, Georgia, 1850, Population Schedule, Hancock County, 1860, Population Schedule, Russell County, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

to care for his small plot of farmland. Ferdinand's wife, Martha, reported to her absent husband in March that Skaggs "appears to be doing his best. He has got all the ground planted that he had broken up when you left and he has considerable more broken up." In May, Martha informed Ferdinand that Skaggs "is expecting you home soon so he is flying around considerable and is doing very well." Skaggs hoped to borrow the Smith's horse for use on his own land, but Martha was skeptical: "He took [the horse] one day to plow his potatoes and kept him all day and did not give him anything to eat and he plowed for some one [else]." Ferdinand's brother Frank believed "it would be best not to let [Skaggs] have him but a half day at a time." A year later, Martha complained that Skaggs did not give the Smith farm sufficient attention, only coming over "late in the evening" after he had worked on his own acreage.³⁸

Skaggs seems to have worked hard—on his land, at least—but in 1870 he had not gained any economic ground. That year he was worth the same as in 1850, \$100, despite having four of his children, Nancy (twenty-two), Mary (twenty), Jerusha (seventeen), and George (nine) at work in a cotton mill and one son, William (fourteen) laboring on a farm. His eldest son, James, who was married and had a

³⁸U.S. Census, Georgia, 1850, Population Schedule, Henry County, Alabama, 1850, Population Schedule, Tallapoosa County; Martha Smith to Ferdinand Smith, 30 March, 19 April, 8 May 1862, 1 June 1863, ACHC.

separate household outside town, worked as a laborer on the farm of Henry J. Livingston, a wealthy Prattville attorney worth \$18,000. Sterling Skaggs himself gave his occupation as farmer.³⁹

Like Buckner, Skaggs seems to have become a respected figure in the town. By 1876, he had been elected town marshal. Over Christmas of that year, Skaggs, "while discharging his duty as marshal of Prattville," was shot and beaten by several black men, including Jim Davis and Jake Saddler. Skaggs lingered for nearly three months. In March, two Prattville doctors amputated his leg "in order to save his life," but he died about two weeks later. William Howell eulogized Skaggs as "a good, industrious and peaceable citizen" whose death would "be deplored by all who knew him."⁴⁰

William Howell never found cause to eulogize Prattville as he had Skaggs. As factories and shops began

³⁹U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

⁴⁰Prattville Autauga Citizen, 11, 15, 22 March 1877. Jim Davis and Jake Saddler received life sentences for Skagg's murder, while Jerry Lewis and Cato Taylor received sentences of five years for manslaughter. Ibid., 13 May 1877. Cato Taylor was the son of Robert Taylor. In 1870, Robert Taylor worked in the carriage shop, and Cato, thirteen, worked in a cotton mill. Jim Davis was probably the same man as James Davis, a gin shop worker worth \$25 in 1870. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County. After Cato Taylor's release in 1883, he apparently robbed the store of a Prattville merchant but was captured and arrested. Prattville Southern Signal, 14 December 1883.

postwar recoveries and new businesses opened their doors, the editor of the Autauga Citizen resumed his enthusiastic boosterism of the 1850s. When the new machinery for the mills at Prattville and Allenville arrived, Howell declared Prattville "now on the high road to prosperity" after the awful detour of the Civil War. "With the addition of a few more factories, and the carrying out of other enterprises that are now spoken of," Howell predicted that Prattville would "become the leading manufacturing town of the South."⁴¹

Howell heralded the opening of every new concern with grand rhetorical flourishes. The most ambitious new undertaking, the Indian Hill Factory, received much attention from Howell. One can view Indian Hill Factory, like the cotton mill at Autaugaville, as a Prattville spinoff. The key men in the factory were Prattville merchants William Allen and Jacob Faber and Montgomery merchants Henry Faber and Marcus Munter. The firm of Munter & Faber was one of the leading mercantile houses in postwar Montgomery. Henry Faber, who was born in Bavaria in 1837, settled in Montgomery in 1858. By 1860, he has established successful stores in both Montgomery and Prattville, the latter managed in 1870 by Henry's younger brother Jacob.⁴²

⁴¹Prattville Autauga Citizen, 19 July 1866.

⁴²Alabama Vol. 2, p. 26, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; Montgomery Daily State Journal, 17 September, 4, 5 October

On August 1, 1866, William Allen conveyed land he owned on Autauga Creek one mile northwest of Prattville, at Indian Hill, to the Indian Hill Manufacturing Company in exchange for \$20,000 worth of stock in the company. At a meeting of the stockholders, Henry Faber was elected president, and William Allen became agent. The factory had already been completed, and the machinery was expected to be put in operation some time in October. Unfortunately for the shareholders, a freshet struck "Allenville" in October, flooding the factory and damaging the machinery, valued at \$30,000. "The machinery was brought direct from England, and perhaps much of it may never be recovered," Howell bewailed. This setback apparently so strained the financial resources of the company that it had to be sold under a mortgage. Munter and the Faber brothers survived, but William Allen went into bankruptcy in 1868 and fled to his home state, New York, never to return to Alabama, the state where he had lived more than twenty years.⁴³

1871. Running as a Republican, Henry Faber won election to the office of Mayor of Montgomery in 1870. Montgomery Daily State Sentinel, 30 September 1870. His brother remained in charge of the store in Prattville, assisted that year by two clerks, Louis Goldman and Mark Herscher. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

⁴³Deed Book 16, 128-29, Autauga County Courthouse, Prattville; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 9 August, 13, 29 September 1866; Alabama Vol. 2, pp. 8, 26, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection. In 1882, the Faber brothers gained control of PMC itself, but they held onto the company only until 1886, when a freshet wrecked the building and machinery.

Indian Hill Factory fell into the hands of Simpson, Moore & Co. and Lehman, Durr and Co. The former concern manufactured textiles in neighboring Coosa County, while the latter was an important Montgomery firm of cotton brokers that began investing heavily in Alabama industry after the war. With these two successful firms at the helm, Indian Hill Factory righted itself. "Prospects good, doing well, regard quite safe and responsible," a Dun agent wrote of the concern in 1869. By 1870, the company was capitalized at \$60,000, operated 3,244 spindles, employed sixty-eight persons, and produced 522,032 yards of shirting and sheeting, as well as yarn and thread.⁴⁴

Although Indian Hill Factory was the most important concern to become established in Prattville during the Reconstruction era, it was by no means the only one. In the hard years following the Civil War, old firms fell, yet new ones arose to take their place. In 1870, the most important manufacturing enterprises after the cotton mills and the gin factory were the sash, door, and blind shop, F. E. Smith & Co.; the carriage, buggy, and wagon shop, N. H.

Apparently, the Fabers simply were not meant for Prattville! Prattville Progress, 11 November 1898.

⁴⁴A Centennial: Lehman Brothers 1850-1950 (New York, 1950), 20-22; Alabama Vol. 2, p. 26, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Industrial Schedule, Autauga County. Indian Hill Factory continued to profitably manufacture goods until a fire utterly destroyed the building and machinery in February 1880. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 12 February 1880.

Morris & Co.; a boot, shoe, and harness shop, S. S. Booth & Co.; and a saw mill owned by Merrill Pratt.

In 1866, the members of the New Hampshire Smith family who remained in Prattville, Ferdinand, Franklin, and George, purchased Ephraim Morgan's sash, door, and blind shop and started their own firm, F. E. Smith & Co. William Howell visited the shop in November 1866 and, unsurprisingly, came away very impressed: "This factory . . . has been supplied in every department, and at great expense, with new and improved labor saving machinery, which will enable this firm to turn out better work, and more of it, than any similar establishment in the Southern country, and at prices that must defy competition." Of the Smiths, Howell enthusiastically added: "Such men as compose this firm are the bone and muscle of our section, and it is only by the industry and enterprise of such men [that] our immense resources [will] be developed."⁴⁵

Throughout the 1860s, Dun agents, who never hesitated to speak freely of the perceived character defects of their subjects, stamped the Smiths with seals of approval. "They are worth several thousand dollars and are good men and energetic and economical and are perfectly responsible," one agent reported. By 1870, the trio was, according to Dun, "prospering and doing very well." That year, F. E.

⁴⁵Prattville Autauga Citizen, 25 January, 8 November 1866.

Smith & Co. was capitalized at \$6,000 and employed sixteen men. The business produced 780 doors, 1,800 sashes, 1,500 blinds and moulding worth a total of \$12,000. Ferdinand and George each owned property valued at \$4,000, while Franklin was worth \$3,500. In 1873, Franklin died, and his brother Ferdinand sold out and returned to the gin factory. George Smith remained, now in partnership with his brother, Daniel Pratt Smith of Philadelphia. In their hands the company became, by 1881, "the largest and most widely patronized sash, door and blind factory in the State, employing twenty-five men."⁴⁶

Prattville's carriage, buggy, and wagon shop traveled a rougher road in the years following the Civil War. The 1861 owner, James Clepper, became a business casualty of the conflict. Like Pratt, he sold his goods (wagons) to the army, receiving bonds in exchange. Unlike Pratt, Clepper could not absorb such losses. He sold out and moved to Butler County, Alabama. Merrill Pratt and Llewellyn Spigner, the man who had owned the shop before Clepper, took over the business. Less than a year later, Spigner had bought out Merrill. Asserting that Spigner's vehicles could not be surpassed by any other establishment in the Southern states," Howell urged Autaugians to give his shop

⁴⁶Alabama Vol. 2, pp. 18-19, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; Montgomery Advertiser and Mail, 12 June 1881.

their business. He noted that Spigner had "lost heavily in the war."⁴⁷

Whether due to Howell's encouragement or not, Spigner's concern had become "prosperous" by 1868, according to a Dun agent. Nevertheless, Spigner sold out the next year to mechanic Nathan Morris and merchant James M. Smith. The two southerners had what it took to make it in business, according to the Dun agents: "Both are married men of good standing, considered as a firm both reliable and trustworthy." By 1870, their business was "doing well," and its "prospects" were "good." That year, the shop was capitalized at \$4,000, and its six hands turned out ten carriages, twenty buggies, and fifty wagons. The total product value, including repairs, came to \$13,800. N. H. Morris & Co. also owned a blacksmith shop, which employed six men and was capitalized at \$1,200. The shop made 100 wagon axles, 500 plows, and 1,800 horseshoes. Including repairs, the total product value came to \$2,980.⁴⁸

S. S. Booth & Co. made boots, shoes, and harnesses. Before the war, Samuel Booth, the son of a successful planter, had been a merchant and a partner of J. L.

⁴⁷Larry W. Nobles, Compendium of Old Autauga County History (Prattville, 1997), 179; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 13 June 1867; Alabama Vol.2, p. 27, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection.

⁴⁸Alabama Vol. 2, p. 27, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Industrial Schedule, Autauga County.

Wainright in a tin shop. After the war, he remained a merchant and started a new concern as well, S. S. Booth & Co. In 1866, William Howell took "a stroll" through Booth's shop, seeing signs of imminent greatness everywhere. Booth employed J. P. Cassady, an Englishman who lived in Prattville before the war, to head the boots and shoes department, while Hugh Narramore ran the harness department. Cassady's shoes, Howell reported, were "much cheaper and more durable than the worthless Yankee boots and shoes annually thrown upon our market." Howell declared he would not trade one of Narramore's cheap, durable, and beautiful harnesses "for half a dozen bought from Yankee land." Booth told Howell that he expected to greatly expand both branches of his business, so as "to meet the wants of his rapidly increasing customers." Howell lauded Booth for "the indomitable energy and perseverance he has shown in his efforts to establish manufactories in our midst" and urged Autaugians to sustain him.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, Booth appears to have overextended himself financially. The same year Howell made his tour, Dun reported that while Booth was "a man of much energy and good habits [and] some capital," he nevertheless owed "a considerable amount of money." In 1868, Booth went into

⁴⁹Alabama Vol. 2, p. 27, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Industrial Schedule, Autauga County.

bankruptcy, but he was able to make a recovery with the help of Charles Doster, an attorney and planter worth an impressive \$40,000 in 1870. With Doster behind him, Booth was now a safe bet, the Dun agents decided. In 1870, however, S. S. Booth & Co. had not undergone the kind of ambitious expansion Booth had envisioned. The company was capitalized at \$3,000 and employed only four men, who produced 200 pairs of boots, 1,000 pairs of shoes, and 50 pairs of harnesses, worth a total of \$4,400. Hugh Narramore, Booth's former employee, had started a tiny business himself, but it lost money in 1870.⁵⁰

All these shops operated in the shadows of the big textile mills and the gin factory, of course. PMC employed 167 people, Indian Hill Factory employed 68, and the gin factory gave work to 50, for a total 285 men, women, and children. Prattville's shops, including Merrill Pratt's saw mill, employed only 47 persons. Still, the total number of people employed had increased from about 241 in 1860 to about 332, not an insignificant gain. Prattville remained a place that attracted hard-working, ambitious mechanics. Some men, such as James Clepper and Enoch Poor

⁵⁰U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Industrial Schedule, Autauga County.

Robinson, dropped out of the race after the war, but other men took their places.⁵¹

Prattville also drew new merchants to the town in the late 1860s. Certainly, William C. Allen's financial collapse, as well as the retirement of Freeman Miles, left openings for new men. By 1870, Prattville claimed a dozen merchants, two less than in 1860. A. K. McWilliams, worth \$35,000, probably did the most business after the war. After McWilliams, the most prominent merchants in 1870 were James M. Smith (\$11,500) and Jacob Faber (\$10,000), both of whom had operated in Prattville in 1860. Two Yankees who had lived in Prattville in 1860, Joseph Hurd and William Root, came together to form Hurd & Root, a drug store. S. S. Booth also had a Prattville store in 1860. The other six men appear to have been new to the Prattville business scene. Among their number we find William Mims, a son of Shadrack Mims; E. M. Davis, a son-in-law of Shadrack Mims;

⁵¹Another mechanic who failed at this time was James Wainwright, the husband of one of Pratt's nieces. When Wainwright attempted to reanimate his tin shop in 1866, Dun thought his prospects were promising: "W. owes a large amount of money but is industrious and I think that with indulgence and ordinary success [he] will eventually pay all his debts and succeed in life." Dun noted that Wainwright was "carrying on a good tin business and selling a good many goods on commission." Despite these favorable omens, Wainwright had gone into bankruptcy by 1868. Alabama Vol. 2, p. 9, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection. Leaving their twelve-year-old-daughter Mary behind with relatives (their other three children had died during the Civil War), Wainwright and his wife, Melissa, moved to Mobile, where Melissa died in 1869. Pauline Jones Gandrud, Alabama Records, Vol 75, Autauga County (Easley, S.C., 1981).

Daniel Graham, son of a big planter; and Jones Rush, a black grocer.⁵²

While the number of merchants in Prattville had slightly decreased, the number of clerks increased a bit, from seven to eight. Most of these men came from the South. Among the southern group we find J. H. Edwards (the son of physician C. A. Edwards, he clerked for Hurd & Root), James Matthews (a former mill boy), Jesse Franks (the son of deceased shop owner Western Franks), and George Ward (a former mill boss who switched careers in his thirties). The northerner was Lorenzo Wilder of Massachusetts, the man briefly accused of being an abolitionist before the war. Lewis Goldman, a clerk for Jacob Faber, came from England. Moreover, both bookkeepers came from the South. Edward Wingate of North Carolina was Pratt's bookkeeper. He married Julia Bill, a relation of Esther Pratt who lived in the Pratt household. The other bookkeeper, Eustace Robinson, was a son of Enoch Robinson.⁵³

Prattville also had a hotel and livery stables in 1870. Maria McLemore, the wife of hardware merchant Simon McLemore of Alabama and the daughter of planter William Graham of North Carolina, owned the hotel, and Mark Rogers

⁵²U.S. Census, 1860, 1870, Alabama, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Nobles, Compendium, 214.

⁵³U.S. Census, 1860, 1870, Alabama, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

of Connecticut kept the stables. In addition, many women continued to take in boarders. Martha Jones, for example, had in her household, in addition to her two children, boarders Andrew Simmons (the mill night watchman) and his wife and five adult mill workers, male and female.⁵⁴

The ranks of Prattville physicians and attorneys remained strong in 1870. That year, Prattville had six physicians (one less than in 1860) and seven attorneys (five more than in 1860). All these men were southerners. Among the physicians we find long-time practitioners Charles Edwards, Samuel Parrish Smith, and A. S. McKeithen, as well as Alexander Mims, another son of Shadrack Mims. Prattville attorneys included William H. Northington and his brother Gustavus, Charles Doster, Jesse H. Booth (a brother of Samuel), and Mac A. Smith, a son of planter Malcolm Smith. William Bush continued to reside in Prattville in 1870, meaning that Prattville also claimed a dentist.⁵⁵

Prattville was incorporated in August 1865. Three years later, after the legislature put northern Autauga (encompassing most of Chestnut Creek) into a new county, Baker (today Chilton), and eastern Autauga (including Wetumpka, most of Robinson Springs, and part of Pine Flat) into the new county of Elmore, Prattvillians succeeded in

⁵⁴Ibid.; Nobles, Compendium, 213.

⁵⁵U.S. Census, 1860, 1870, Alabama, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

finally wresting the prize of county seat from Kingston. As a consequence, several of Prattville's 1870 heads of household held political offices, including probate judge W. G. M. Golson and state and county tax assessor William Boon. State senator James Farden of Ohio (Autauga's carpetbagger) and state supreme court clerk Daniel Booth (another Booth brother) resided on farms in the Prattville vicinity.⁵⁶

As indicated above, Prattville had a plethora of house carpenters, but not all of them were white men. Two Prattville house carpenters—including Dick Gardner, who was worth \$700—were African-Americans. Other artisans found in the town in 1870 were four teamsters (James Snell and three black men), two black house painters, one white brickmason, one white plasterer, and one white butcher.⁵⁷

According to the official 1870 census count, Prattville had an 1870 population of 1,346. My count of the 280

⁵⁶Larry W. Nobles, "Prattville's Petition for Incorporation," Autauga Ancestry (May 1991): 2-6; U.S. Census, 1870, Alabama, Population Schedule, Autauga County. There are questions about the August incorporation election. The Citizen of October 5, 1865 says that the election was "held some three weeks since" and that the vote was unanimous for incorporation. Court records show, however, that the election took place on August 8 and that the vote was seventy-two to two in favor of incorporation. Intriguingly, the poll list of votes does not include the names of Daniel Pratt, Merrill Pratt, or Henry DeBardleben, though it does include many important townspeople, including Samuel Ticknor.

⁵⁷U.S. Census, 1870, Alabama, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

households in the Prattville-Allenville area yields only 1,240 inhabitants, but there are other households listed in the Prattville vicinity (mostly white) that should probably be counted as part of Prattville. If they were, Prattville would have a population that would closely approximate the official figure. In either case, Prattville's population likely increased somewhat between 1860 and 1870. By my estimate, Prattville had a free population of about 900 in 1860. In 1870, its white population stayed about the same as in 1860, but the black population probably increased. Despite the influx of freedmen, however, Prattville had an 1870 population that was at least 68 percent white. Nevertheless, freedmen made up a large majority of the population in the countryside.⁵⁸

Prattville, it seems, had made a real recovery from its wartime economic disruption. Soon after the war ended, in fact, newspapers in Montgomery and other Alabama cities began again to point to Prattville as an example for the rest of the South to emulate if it hoped to recover the economic prosperity of the antebellum years. In 1868, the Montgomery Daily Mail, a Democratic paper, ran a long article entitled "Prattville," which asserted: "No one who has visited the little town which [Mr. Pratt] selected as the scene of his labors, and which owes its existence to his

⁵⁸Ibid.

enterprise, can fail to be impressed with its importance as a manufacturing point." The Republican Huntsville Advocate, at the conclusion of a piece on Prattville's factories from 1870, enviously declared: "Would that we had such establishments in or near Huntsville, and such Yankees as Daniel Pratt." Another Republican paper, the Montgomery Daily Journal, concluded that Prattville proved there was "life in the old land yet." The Mobile Weekly Register also paid encomiums to Pratt and his "lovely village" in an especially detailed piece, also from 1870. The Register's correspondent, noting that to visit Prattville without seeing its founder was "like seeing the play of Hamlet, with Hamlet left out," hastened to call on Daniel Pratt, whom he found tall, slim, and "somewhat bent with weight of care and years" and "recent illness," but all the same "attending in person to his vast business with a vitality and energy" that had always characterized him. Pratt's admirer wrote rhapsodically of "beautiful cottages, with their tasteful grounds, the busy hum of [the] machinery," and "the energetic people" who filled the town. Finally, the correspondent could no longer contain himself and cried: "Would to God, Alabama had many more Daniel Pratts!"⁵⁹

⁵⁹Montgomery Daily Mail, 7 May 1868, 28 May 1870, reprinted from Huntsville Advocate; Montgomery Daily Journal, 31 October 1871; Mobile Weekly Register, 28 May 1870.

While rather less gushing than the Register's correspondent, Governor Patton also lauded Pratt in his 1867 De Bow's Review article. Patton saw fit to mention Pratt, whom he called "my friend," twice in his article. The governor commended Pratt for pursuing manufacturing "with zeal and activity for more than a quarter of a century." He also cited "the beautiful village of Prattville" as what a factory could do for Alabama's benighted war orphans. In Prattville one found good churches and schools that afforded "moral improvement of a certain class of youth which might otherwise grow up in ignorance."⁶⁰

Pratt also won notice from his counterparts in the North. In 1868, he received appointment as temporary chairman of the first meeting, held in New York City, of the Cotton Planters and Manufacturers' Association—his rival in fame, South Carolina textile manufacturer William Gregg having died the previous year. Pratt was also made one of the permanent vice presidents of the Association. At the convention, Pratt attempted to get northern capitalists interested in investing in Alabama mills. Some attendees requested him to get them the names and locations of all the cotton factories in Alabama, as well as the number of looms and spindles, capital invested, quantity of cotton consumed per annum, the number of yarns spun, and

⁶⁰De Bow's Review, 2nd Ser., IV (1867): 63, 66.

the names and post offices of company presidents. When he returned to Alabama, Pratt diligently set to work. Finding he needed help on northern Alabama, he wrote his friend Governor Patton, a fellow mill man from the Tennessee Valley, asking him for information. "Please excuse me for troubling you," Pratt wrote the busy governor, "I feel a good deal interested in this matter."⁶¹

Pratt no doubt took great pleasure in the establishment of the Indian Hill Factory at Allenville. He tried in his last years to persuade Montgomery investors to get another mill started, but in this effort he failed. In November 1871, "several of [Montgomery's] most enterprising and thoroughgoing business men" met at the rooms of the Board of Trade to discuss the need for a cotton factory in Montgomery. The group chose a subscription committee, which had as one of its duties the selection of a location for the mill. "It is probable that one or more of our citizens may own land which the committee may set upon," declared the Republican Daily State Journal. "If so, we trust that such citizen will donate a spot sufficient for all the purposes of a factory or make the payment contingent upon future success." Daniel Pratt did not need to be told twice. Three weeks later, the industrialist made the

⁶¹Montgomery Daily Mail, 7 May 1868; Daniel Pratt to Robert Patton, 11 May 1868, Governor Patton Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH).

following offer "to the citizens of Montgomery": "I have one of the best water privileges, I think, in the State, on Au-tauga Creek, below Prattville, with power to turn 20,000 spindles, and all the machinery necessary to make it into cloth, a beautiful and healthy location, which I will give to a Montgomery company if they will improve it."⁶²

This was a generous offer indeed. It also reveals the vast scale of Pratt's industrial vision. At this time, Alabama had, according to the 1870 census, only two mills that even generated more than 5,000 spindles, Baugh, Kennedy & Co. of Tuscaloosa (5,660) and Tallassee Manufacturing Co. in Elmore County (6,300). Tallassee, the queen of Alabama cotton mills, employed 325 people. Presumably, a 20,000 spindle factory would have given work to nearly 1,000 people, quite a "proletariat."⁶³

Unfortunately, Pratt's grand proposal never was acted on, leaving the exasperated Journal asking, in April 1872: "What has become of the factory, a location for which was tendered to our citizens by Daniel Pratt?" The Journal complained that while Georgia cities like Augusta and Columbus had forged ahead into a brave new South, Mont-gomerians were "most woefully behindhand as regards manufactures." A year later, shortly before Pratt's death,

⁶²Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 15 November, 8 December 1871.

⁶³U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Industrial Schedule.

the Journal was still complaining that Montgomery had no mills. "Let us cease to be practical hewers of wood and drawers of water for other sections," urged the Republican Journal. "Let us make our own bread, and manufacture our own cotton, and grow rich. Let Montgomery have at least one cotton factory."⁶⁴

Montgomery did exert itself to help get the South and North Railroad completed, but ironically, this accomplishment did nothing to help Prattville, for the simple reason that the road bypassed Pratt's "lovely village." The failure to attain the South and North—or even a branch line—likely proved the most galling failure of Pratt's long career. It was also a costly failure, for Prattville did not finally get a road until the 1890s, over twenty years after Pratt's death. The result was two decades of slowed growth.⁶⁵

The South and North Railroad was to run from Montgomery to Decatur, crossing the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad at Elyton (the future site of Birmingham). Pratt greatly wanted this road built—both because he believed it

⁶⁴Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 6 April 1872, 1, 2 May 1873.

⁶⁵Prattville's population declined to 977 in 1880 and 724 in 1890, but after the railroad came through in the 1890s, the population of the town increased to 1,929 by 1900. W. Craig Remington and Thomas J. Kallsen, eds., Historical Atlas of Alabama, Vol. 1, Historical Locations by County (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1997), 5.

would unlock northern Alabama's mineral resources and because he hoped to get it routed through Prattville—and he invested both his time and his money in the project. Pratt held a large block of shares in the railroad company from its inception, and by 1868, at least, he sat on the board of directors, along with railroad men Francis Gilmer and Charles Pollard, banker Josiah Morris, and cotton broker Mayer Lehman of Lehman, Durr & Co.⁶⁶

Montgomery wanted this railroad as badly as Pratt did. Jonathan Wiener, in his provocative but, in my view, erroneous interpretation of Alabama politics and society in the postwar period, concludes that Montgomery planters, fearing the rise of a great industrial city like Birmingham and indifferent even to developing the mineral region, plotted to reroute the road so that it would become a mere feeder line of the Alabama and Chattanooga. The planters' plan, according to Wiener, was to transport the iron ore mined at Birmingham for manufacture outside the state. Planters, in short, conspired to strangle an infant Birmingham in its mountain crib.⁶⁷ Wiener's argument, however, simply does not withstand close scrutiny.

All the Montgomery newspapers at this time, Democratic and Republican, sang the same tune in regard to

⁶⁶Montgomery Alabama State Journal, 12 February 1889.

⁶⁷Jonathan Wiener, Social Origins of the New South: Alabama 1860-1885 (Baton Rouge, and London, 1978), 162-68.

industrial development. They wanted more railroads and more cotton mills, and they were dazzled by northern Alabama's mineral wealth. In my survey of Montgomery newspapers from this period, I have found only enthusiasm for the kind of projects Pratt had always supported.⁶⁸ Nor have I found evidence of a planter conspiracy to reroute the South and North Railroad.

Wiener's support for his conspiracy theory comes from one source only: journalist Ethel Armes's The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama, a book published in 1910 under the auspices of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. Throughout her book, Armes ceaselessly celebrates her captains of industry and castigates the short-sighted men who allegedly opposed them. It is a book shaded in black and white, with industrialist heroes on one side and planter villains on

⁶⁸The examples are too numerous to cite, but especially striking is a Mail article from December 13, 1870, which demanded that the Alabama legislature appropriate the money for a new geological survey of northern Alabama. The Mail eagerly wanted answers to the following questions: "What is the quality of our iron? Whether we can work it cheaply or to advantage? And whether we can successfully compete with other parts of the country in the quality and cheapness of its manufacture?" The Mail also wanted the "ores of lead, copper, plumbago, zinc, cobalt, manganese, baryta, etc., scattered over that whole northern region . . . to be examined and reported on so as to lead to development." The Mail thought that a "reliable record of these matters should be speedily made, and lodged at the capital for reference, so that capitalists may have data on which they can act, and so that the knowledge may induce capital to flow into the state."

the other. It therefore behooves a historian to take the accounts in Armes's book with caution.⁶⁹

Relying on the South and North's former engineer John Milner, Armes tells us that the president of the South and North, John Whiting, supported the plot of John C. Stanton, the president of the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad, to make the South and North a mere feeder line to Stanton's road. Stanton, it seems, hoped to ship Alabama iron ore for processing in Chattanooga, where he had extensive business interests. According to Armes, Whiting, a cotton factor, cared nothing about developing northern Alabama's resources. "Whiting . . . wanted what was good for cotton." Only his sudden death saved the South and North. Frank Gilmer collected enough proxy votes to win election as president, allowing him to rescue the line from the machinations of Stanton and the cotton men. Although the planters lost this fight, Wiener concludes they had made clear that "in taking over a key railroad, they were not

⁶⁹Historian W. David Lewis, noting that "most scholars" have followed Ethel Armes on the subject of the South and North Railroad and Birmingham, has concluded: "Few topics in Alabama history merit closer reexamination." W. David Lewis, Sloss Furnaces and the Rise of the Birmingham District: An Industrial Epic (Tuscaloosa, Ala. and London, 1994), 52. Lewis himself relies largely on Armes, however, as does Wayne Cline, Alabama Railroads (Tuscaloosa, Ala. and London, 1997), 97-99.

entering the service of the new industrial order, but rather fighting in an effective way against it."⁷⁰

The problem with Wiener's conclusion is that Armes's reconstruction of this episode is extremely suspect. For one thing, her facts are wrong. Whiting died in February 1869. Soon after his death, the directors of the South and North—among them Daniel Pratt—unanimously elected as the new president former state governor Robert Patton, who was hardly a puppet of the planters. Dissatisfied with Patton's performance, the directors replaced him with Frank Gilmer in November. Armes, however, mistakenly states that Gilmer was elected a week after Whiting's death. Nor does she give a hint that Patton served as president of the line for ten months.⁷¹

Furthermore, Armes's characterization—derived from Milner's recollections—of Whiting as a cotton man unconcerned with economic diversification is contradicted by contemporary evidence from newspapers. First, Whiting belonged not only to the board of directors of the South and North, but also to the board of managers of Pratt's own cotton mill. Was he merely a planter "plant" in PMC, or was he someone genuinely interested in Alabama's industrial

⁷⁰Ethel Armes, The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama (Birmingham, Ala., 1910), 216-17; Wiener, Social Origins, 166-67.

⁷¹Montgomery Daily Mail, 16 February, 28 November 1869; Armes, Coal and Iron, 217.

development? The latter seems a more reasonable conclusion to me. Wiener assumes that because Whiting was a cotton broker, he must have been "a member of the planter establishment," but this assumption is faulty. After all, cotton brokers were businessmen. The Lehman brothers were Montgomery cotton brokers like Whiting, but that occupation did not prevent them from investing heavily in Alabama industry after the war.⁷²

If there were a planter conspiracy to halt the South and North at Elyton, the Montgomery newspapers seem to have missed it. When Patton replaced Whiting as South and North president, the Montgomery Daily Mail declared that there was not a man "better qualified in every way as the successor of the lamented Whiting, than Gov. Patton" and concluded: "We should have a rail connection with Decatur [emphasis added] in eighteen months." In December, the Mail asserted that Whiting had warded off Stanton's advances against the South and North:

Mr. Whiting . . . secured the last needed legislation by which the whole line from Decatur to Montgomery became a unit, rejected a proposition made by Mr. Stanton and others to build the road (under which Messrs. Stanton & Co. would have built the road out of the money of the company and then owned it) and was about placing the road under contract when his untimely death threw the company into the hands of ex-Gov. Patton.

⁷²Prattville Southern Signal, 23 May 1878; Wiener, Social Origins, 166.

At the same time the Mail praised Whiting, the paper also lauded John Milner, the man who later villified Whiting, according to Armes. Milner, the chief engineer and superintendent of the line, was, in the view of the Mail, "an energetic officer" who had "devoted his life to the study of internal improvements" and "to Alabama and her interests."⁷³

With Montgomerians aspiring to complete the South and North Railroad, not conspiring to undermine it, the line began to make real progress. Builders finally completed the road in September 1872. In the process, however, the line bypassed Prattville, running about seven miles east of the town. Pratt was pleased to see the railroad forging ahead, of course, but he found quite nettlesome the company's casting aside Prattville's interests. He complained in 1869 in a letter to the Mail that "Montgomery universally opposed my views" on the routing of the South and North line. He nevertheless reiterated them, insisting "I yet think I am right" and hoping "that there may yet be

⁷³Montgomery Daily Mail, 16 February, 28 April, 30 December 1869. For its part, the Republican Journal declared that in losing Whiting, "Montgomery has indeed lost a jewel." Montgomery Dailiy Alabama Journal, 10 February 1869. Since Wiener cites the "Radical" Journal for pointing out, "in a brilliantly concise paragraph," that "the prebourgeois planter class was the obstacle to [Alabama's] industrial development," it is surprising that he did not also notice the paper's commendation of the man he claims was "a member of the planter establishment" the Journal excoriated. Wiener, Social Origins, 161.

some remedy." Pratt's plan had been "to take the road from Montgomery down the river and cross at Washington," then "to go up Autauga Creek to Kingston," not coincidentally passing through Prattville. From Kingston the line would have gone north to Elyton. Pratt pointed out that with a railroad running along Autauga Creek, more cotton mills would come into existence, producing textiles for export in Montgomery. The overall distance of his proposed route, Pratt insisted, would not have exceeded that of the chosen route by three miles. "The only remedy," Pratt concluded, "is to have a branch from the [South and North] Road to Prattville, or its vicinity."⁷⁴

Pratt spent the few remaining years of his life trying to make his proposed branch line a reality. The effort to get Prattville a branch railroad finally began to take force in late 1871. That same year, Prattvillians had completed building a two-story, brick Italianate courthouse that cost at least \$15,000. In December, the town's most prominent citizens, Democrats and Republicans alike, met at the new courthouse to discuss the railroad question. Among the attendees were Democratic attorneys William H. Northington and Henry J. Livingston, Republican planter and former attorney John L. Alexander, Republican merchant Samuel Booth, Democratic merchant James M. Smith, Autauga's

⁷⁴Cline, Alabama Railroads, 105; Montgomery Daily Mail, 20 August 1869.

carpetbagger state senator James Farden, and Democrats Daniel Pratt and Edward Wingate. James Smith chaired the meeting, while Wingate, Pratt's bookkeeper, acted as secretary. Both Daniel Pratt and Senator Farden made speeches. According, to the minutes of the meeting taken by Wingate, Pratt discussed "in his usual clear, forcible and practical manner" the various routes proposed for the railroad. Pratt argued ("with great force and plausibility") that the line should run from the South and North railroad through Prattville to some point on the Selma, Marion, and Memphis, a road being built from Selma to Memphis under the leadership of the company's president, Nathan Bedford Forrest. Pratt "demonstrated clearly that when this line was completed it would be the cheapest and most direct route from Memphis to Brunswick [Georgia]." The assembly then chose a five-man correspondence committee "to communicate with the president and directors of the South and North railroad, and write Gen. Forrest, the citizens of Montgomery, and others" about building the Prattville Railroad. Pratt, Farden, Northington, Livingston, and Alexander made up the committee.⁷⁵

The committee reported to a large crowd assembled at the courthouse on December 30. Samuel Parrish Smith chaired the meeting, with William Howell acting as

⁷⁵Prattville Autauga Citizen, 9 March 1871; Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 12 December 1871.

secretary. After preliminary remarks from Daniel Pratt and others, William Northington offered a resolution "that the amount of stock necessary to secure a branch road from the South and North should be taken up by the town of Prattville, and that the amount necessary to purchase said stock be raised by a direct tax, imposed for that purpose."

Daniel Pratt, Charles Doster, William Northington, James Hazen, Samuel Booth, George Smith, and James Farden, among others, made speeches in favor of the resolution, which the assembly unanimously adopted. Two committees were then appointed: one to petition the legislature to authorize the Prattville town council to levy a special railroad tax and to raise the necessary amount of money to build the branch railroad, and the other to solicit Montgomery's Board of Trade for aid in building the road.⁷⁶ Northington, Doster, and George Smith sat on the first committee, while Booth, Farden, and Merrill Pratt sat on the other.

The Alabama Journal applauded the efforts of its "Autauga friends" and asserted that "Montgomery is deeply interested in the proposed railroad to Prattville." The paper declared that the people of Prattville, who were "progressive, liberal and energetic," would surely succeed in corralling "the iron horse," but it also urged "enterprising and energetic Montgomery" to "lend a helping hand

⁷⁶Ibid., 6 January 1872.

to industrious and manufacturing Prattville." Both locations would benefit from the branch line. "Let us unite the two cities in bonds of iron," urged the Journal, "and each will grow and improve as long as the ties last."⁷⁷

In February, Senator Farden succeeded in getting a railroad bill passed by the senate allowing the Prattville town council to impose a direct tax to raise money for the branch line. The Journal also claimed that Montgomery merchants intended "to render substantial aid to [the road]." Confident Prattvillians had already put forty carts and 100 hands to work grading the road.⁷⁸

A surviving list of subscriptions to the Prattville Railroad indicates that townspeople had made substantial commitments to the line. The total value of railroad subscriptions came to \$125,400. Of this amount, \$50,000 came from the Prattville Corporation, while another \$50,000 came from Daniel Pratt (\$10,000) and his heirs, Merrill Pratt (\$20,000) and Henry DeBardleben (\$20,000). The City of Montgomery subscribed \$7,000, and both Moore, Simpson & Co. (of Indian Hill Factory) and F. E. Smith & Co. subscribed \$3,000. The wealthy Republican planter-attorney Charles Doster subscribed \$1,500. Both Daniel Pratt & Co. and S. S. Booth & Co. committed \$1,000, as did Edward Wingate,

⁷⁷Ibid., 6 January 1872.

⁷⁸Ibid., 16 February 1872.

William Northington, James Hazen, and A. K. McWilliams. Three prominent Republicans, John Alexander, W. G. M. Golson, and Daniel Booth, each committed \$500, as did physician Samuel Parrish Smith and druggist Joseph Hurd. Nine individuals subscribed \$200: Republicans William Boon and Jesse Booth, mechanic Lafayette Ellis, blacksmith John Royals, mill superintendent Joseph Thomas Kent, editor William Howell, attorney Gustavus Northington, and long-time resident Llewellyn Spigner. Six individuals subscribed to \$100 worth of stock, most notably Charles Atwood. Altogether, twenty-five individuals (excluding the Pratts and DeBardeleben) had committed a total of \$10,400 to the project.⁷⁹

Despite this commitment of financial resources, the project somehow fell through. In May, the Journal demanded testily: "What has become of the Prattville Railroad?" With such men as Daniel Pratt involved, the Journal had believed "that the railroad would be in operation at an early day," but over three months had passed and nothing substantive had happened.⁸⁰ Why this endeavor failed is not clear, but whatever the reason, the failure to get the railroad built in 1872 had serious consequences. The Panic of 1873 and the long-lasting depression that followed—not

⁷⁹Subscription List to the Prattville Rail Road, CECP.

⁸⁰Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 16 May 1872.

to mention Pratt's own death in May 1873—no doubt further undermined attempts to construct the road in the 1870s. Prattville did not finally get its railroad until the mid-1890s.

The Reconstruction years, then, were for Pratt a time of both economic triumphs and failures. He had revived his businesses, another mill had started in the Prattville vicinity, and Prattville itself continued to bustle with busy mechanics and merchants. Yet Pratt has not achieved his goal of twenty years, getting a railroad routed through Prattville. Nor had he been able to entice Montgomery capitalists to invest in another mill. If Pratt was disappointed with some of his failures in the economic arena, he probably took some solace in Prattville's rapid return to its antebellum condition as a town of "good morals and good society." Middle-class culture had suffered somewhat during the war, but it quickly recovered. In one respect, of course, the war had fostered middle-class associational activity by causing Prattville's women to form the Ladies Aid Society. After the war, the ladies continued to gather together in groups to promote charitable projects.

History was made in Prattville in May 1866 when some of the town's middle-class ladies held a public meeting and had the minutes published in the Citizen. The subject of their concern, not surprisingly, had to do with the late conflict: to raise funds for "the relief of the destitute

widows and orphans of the deceased soldiers of Autauga County." The Prattville ladies voted to give a concert tableaux and supper to raise funds, appointing one committee to obtain rooms for the purpose and another to decorate them. Designating the ladies' goal "a most noble one," William Howell urged Prattvillians to "respond liberally." A week later, at the Methodist Sunday School Room, the Prattville ladies gave two performances, "consisting of music, charades, tableaux, etc." The Citizen reported that "a considerable amount [of money] was taken in" and urged the ladies to "continue their efforts in the same good cause." The ladies did just that.⁸¹

Many of the women at the May meeting belonged to the Presbyterian Church. The popular Presbyterian minister, James Hazen of Massachusetts, played at this time the leading role in establishing the Presbyterian Orphans Home at Tuskegee, Alabama; and the women among his congregation, including Mary Ticknor Hazen, Augusta Pratt Morgan, Eliza Graham Morris Fay, Hattie Fay Pearce, Maria Graham McLemore, and Mrs. A. K. McWilliams, worked hard to raise

⁸¹Prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 May 1866, 17 May 1866. Another concert tableaux took place at the Methodist Sunday School Room in July 1867. On this occasion, ladies raised money to enclose the Prattville cemetery with "a neat and durable fence." The cemetery, the Citizen angrily noted, was "in a horrid condition, which should be a reproach and a burning shame to the citizens of Prattville." Cows, hogs, and goats roamed freely among the dead. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 11 July 1867.

money for the home through charity suppers, bazaars, and concerts. They also knitted and sewed clothes for the children and made "contributions of money personally as they had it to offer."⁸²

The Home was established in 1868 by the Presbyterian Synod of Alabama. Reverend Hazen served as chairman of the board of trustees. Preference went to the indigent orphans of Confederate soldiers, but other indigent orphans were accepted as well. The goal of the Home was not merely to give food and shelter to the orphans, but to provide them with instruction preparing "them for places of service, trade or still higher education, as the case may demand," in order that they might "become . . . worthy and useful members of society." Hazen and the other trustees, including the much-maligned John Whiting, encouraged ladies aid societies around Alabama to send money or "articles of any kind" for the benefit of the children, and the ladies responded to his pleas, sending gifts from such locations as Hayneville, Greenville, Talladega, Wetumpka, Lafayette, Selma, Montgomery, Tuskegee, Marion, and Prattville. In December 1869, for example, Prattville women sent a package of Christmas presents to the orphans. Presbyterian ladies also set up a restaurant at the Grand State Fair held in

⁸²James M. Graham, History of First Presbyterian Church of Prattville, Ala. (Prattville, 1935), 15-17.

Selma in November 1870, taking in some \$800. By that time, the Home cared for over 100 orphans.⁸³

One of the more elaborate functions staged by the Prattville ladies for the Orphans' Home was a benefit concert held at the Methodist Sabbath School Room on June 12, 1868. Among the performers was Sidney Lanier, the principal of Prattville Academy in the 1867-68 term. Lanier played solo flute on two pieces he had written, "Sounds from the Army" and "Sea-Spray," as well as Strokoschi's "Magic Bell Fantasie." The other performers were the members of the "Quartette Club": Samuel Parrish Smith, James Hazen, Emily Hale Wheat, Hattie Fay Pearce, Abigail Holt Smith, and Elizabeth Morse, a teacher from Massachusetts. These individuals sang pieces by the composers Bellini, Rossini, and Labitzsky. The Citizen proclaimed the concert "a complete success."⁸⁴

Two Prattville organizations that went into eclipse during the Civil War, the Fire Engine Company and the Bible Society, reemerged after the war ended. In December 1866, the Company's members held their first supper since 1860. Oysters, turkey, and roast pig were served, followed by

⁸³Montgomery Daily Mail, 16 June 1868, 27 April, 21 December 1869; Montgomery Advertiser, 15, 17 May 1868, 18 November 1870.

⁸⁴"Concert for the Orphans Prattville June 12 1868" (Program), Charles D. Lanier Collection, John Hopkins University; Montgomery Daily Mail, 20 June 1888, reprinted from the Prattville Autauga Citizen.

fruit and wine. The attendees, including Daniel Pratt, William Allen, Shadrack Mims, William Northington, Henry Livingston, Samuel Booth, James M. Smith, Samuel Parrish Smith, Jesse Booth, George L. Smith, James Wainwright, Daniel Pratt Smith, and William Root, drank some twenty toasts, Pratt and Mims apparently relaxing their stern standards of sobriety on this occasion. James Hazen, William Howell, and John Whiting had been invited but were unable to attend. William Allen, the toastmaster, tipped his glass to Andrew Johnson (at the moment battling Radical Republicans in Congress) and Henry Livingston toasted "Jefferson Davis, who in chains and suffering has become doubly endeared to the South." These political pieties aside, the group got down to the business of lauding their progressive town and its industrious people. Pratt toasted Prattville Manufacturing Company, while Mims drank to the Indian Hill Factory. William H. Northington, once Autauga's leading Yanceyite, delivered a tribute to southern manufacturing: "The Industrial Resources of the South—Crippled but not destroyed." Also receiving toasts were Prattville's mechanics, merchants, physicians, attorneys, and, naturally, the fire engine—"the great squirt of Prattville".⁸⁵

The Prattville Bible Society did not, of course, sponsor such festivities as the Engine Company bacchanalia,

⁸⁵Prattville Autauga Citizen, 6 December 1866.

but, like the Engine Company, it reactivated after the war. In January 1866, an agent of the American Bible Society came to Prattville and reorganized the Prattville Bible Society, giving the group responsibility for distributing Bibles in Autauga and Bibb counties. Methodist minister A. J. Briggs served as president, Presbyterian minister James Hazen as vice president, James M. Smith as secretary, and Samuel Parrish Smith as treasurer. Daniel Pratt, Ferdinand Smith, Shadrack Mims, Samuel Booth, Charles Edwards, A. K. McWilliams, William Bush, and two other men sat on the board of managers. Upon reorganizing, the Society ordered \$800 worth of Bibles, which it planned to sell at cost to those who could afford to pay and to give to those who could not. In April, "a fine assortment of Bibles, of all sizes and descriptions" arrived in Prattville.⁸⁶

Prattvillians continued to promote their churches and schools as well. Churches seem to have flourished during and after the war, as people sought consolation for their woes in religion. School attendance dropped in the same period, however. Even middle-class and wealthy people found they could not afford the cost of education at an institution like Prattville Academy. Fewer mill children than in 1860 appear to have gone to school as well.

⁸⁶Ibid., 11 January, 19 April 1866.

In 1866, Prattvillians attempted to build a new Male Academy and convert the current building into a Female Academy, but the project apparently collapsed. Citizens had raised \$3,000 by July, but this amount was not nearly enough to pay construction costs. The original Academy building alone had cost \$8,000. Still, Prattville was fortunate that it had built such a fine structure in 1861, before war would have made such a project impossible. Sidney Lanier, who lived in Montgomery after the Civil War and applied for the post of Principal of Prattville Academy in 1867, was certainly impressed with the building and its furnishings, describing them in a letter to his fiancée as "the best I have ever seen." Prattville itself, he found "a fine manufacturing village." The board of trustees chose Lanier for the post of principal on August 28. The president of the board informed Lanier that he could "expect 150 scholars at an average tuition of 50 Dollars a year," but the estimate proved overly optimistic.⁸⁷

Lanier started his job confidently, hiring two assistants, Nick Williams of Meriwether County, Georgia and

⁸⁷Ibid., 19 July 1866; Sidney Lanier, Letters 1857-1868, ed. by Charles R. Anderson and Aubrey H. Starke (Baltimore, 1945), 308-09. Among the contributors to the school fund were Eliza Fay (\$100), A. K. McWilliams (\$200), William Howell (\$100), Merrill Pratt (\$100), James Wainwright (\$100), Samuel Booth (\$300), Ferdinand Smith (\$50), Franklin Smith (\$50), and William Root (\$50). The trustees themselves subscribed \$1,800. Prattville Autauga Citizen, 19 July 1866.

Augusta Pratt Morgan, Merrill Pratt's sister. He reported that he found Mrs. Morgan "a fine woman," and he predicted that he would "like her extremely." He contracted to pay her \$800 a year to head the primary department. Twenty-one-year-old Nick Williams, who had taken honors at Erskine College, South Carolina, taught French, Italian, and Spanish. Lanier found him "a man of progressive ideas, good-looking, highly compatible, and ready for work." In addition to running the Academy, the busy Lanier taught piano to "five music-scholars," played organ at the Presbyterian church, and also arranged charity concerts and debates for the Prattville Debating Society.⁸⁸

Unfortunately for Lanier, however, his school drew nowhere close to 150 pupils, peaking in November at "nearly ninety" boys and girls. Lanier diagnosed the difficulty as "the terrible depression of the country people"

⁸⁸Lanier, Letters, 316, 334-35, 339, 343, 345. Lanier, however, found intellectual life in Prattville not up to his standard, writing his fiancée: "I find no soul to whom I can talk our talk. I suspect that, besides Mr. Hazen, thou and I will be alone." Ibid., 338. Perhaps Lanier was disappointed with the local reception to his novel, Tiger Lilies. Writing his daughter Mary, who was away at a school in Germany, Samuel Parrish Smith commented: "We are to have for principal of our Academy next year a young man by the name of Lanier. . . . He came recommended very highly as a scholar and polished gentleman. He is also an author, having recently published a book of fiction called 'The Tiger Lilly.' I don't fancy the title much. I haven't seen it and therefore cannot speak of its merits or demerits." Samuel Parrish Smith to Mary Smith, 30 August 1867, Box 96, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

and "the recent poor price of cotton." He hoped the spring would be better, but his hope proved a forlorn one. In January 1868, he wrote despondently: "My school is smaller than last year. The people come to me almost with tears in their eyes, and represent their fearful impoverishment which prevents them from sending their children to school." Lanier had only sixty-five students. By March, he had only "about 50 scholars remaining," and he was forced to let Williams go. In April, Lanier complained, Mrs. Morgan abruptly decided to quit and visit relatives up North. Lanier worried that he would not be able to collect enough from his pupils' parents to enable him to meet his indebtedness to her. Pleading ill health, Lanier resigned in May. He owed the Academy trustees money but left Prattville on amicable terms with his employers, who recognized the difficult situation into which they had placed him. As his replacement, the trustees hired Lanier's former assistant, Nick Williams. The latter man remained principal of the Academy at least through 1870. His Alabamian wife, Amanda, taught the music department of the school that year. The other teachers in the town in 1870 were William Rast of South Carolina and Elizabeth Morse of Massachusetts. Apparently, the situation improved, for a Journal

correspondent claimed in October 1871 that Prattville's schools were "flourishing."⁸⁹

While Prattville schools likely did not progress in the 1860s as Pratt would have desired, churches remained as strong as in 1860. In 1870, the Prattville Presbyterian Church enjoyed a membership of around 87 individuals, an increase from 1860, while the Methodist church probably had over 200 members. After the war, the Union Sunday School broke apart, but each denomination—Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian—began conducting its own school. The Methodists retained Pratt's splendid Sabbath-School room.⁹⁰

Both mechanics and mill operatives continued to join Prattville's churches in the 1860s, but the two groups seem to have again divided by gender. Young men joining a church, such as William Griswold, Henry Jones, and John Tunnell, tended to be mechanics, though a few mill operatives, such as Henry Hall and William Pullen, did so as well. Most of the mill people who became church members, however, were women. Sarah Welden, wife of Simon Welden;

⁸⁹Lanier, Letters, 349, 359, 378, 381, 383-84, 387, 389-90; U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County; Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 31 October 1871.

⁹⁰Church Register, First Methodist Church of Prattville, Alabama, ACHC; James Hazen, Manual of the Presbyterian Church (Richmond, Va., 1871), 4-8, 10; Karen A. Stone, Prattville's First Baptist Church: Sharing Our Past with a Vision for the Future, 1838-1988 (Montgomery, Ala., 1989), 29.

Nancy Skaggs, wife of Sterling Skaggs, and Frances Buckner, wife of James Buckner, all joined the Methodist Church, for example, but their husbands did not. To cite another case, Caroline Hall and her daughters Ellen and Lula all belonged to the Methodist Church, but only one of her three sons did. I have only found one case where both a mill husband and wife belonged to a church. In March 1865, A. J. Weatherly and his wife, Mary, joined the Presbyterian Church, Mary by letter and her husband by exam. Although he was about sixty-two when he found religion, Weatherly quickly became a prominent figure in the church, serving as one of two deacons from January 7, 1866 until his death on November 30, 1868. Still, Weatherly was very much an exception. The typical mill person belonging to a Prattville church appears to have been a woman like thirty-six-year-old Frances Gentry, a widow with all six of her children working in the cotton mill, or a girl like fourteen-year-old mill operative Calista Jones, who followed her mother, Isabella, and sister Ida into the Methodist church in 1873. Thus, while Prattville churches did reach a portion of the mill community during Reconstruction, as in the antebellum period, they certainly did not get to everyone, particularly the men.⁹¹

⁹¹This information is derived from the Methodist Church Register, the Presbyterian Church Manual, and the U.S. Census. Baptist church records apparently have not

Prattville's economic and social institutions admittedly had both ups and downs in the postwar years, but the public reputation of the man who founded the town only climbed during Reconstruction. Both Democrats and Republicans lauded Pratt and his economic vision. In the last years of his life, Pratt became more involved in Alabama politics than ever before in his long career. He also launched his final, most ambitious project, the rekindling of the Oxmoor furnaces.

survived. Surely many families belonged to the Baptist Church.

CHAPTER 12

BUILDING A NEW SOUTH: 1865 TO 1873

After the Civil War, Daniel Pratt, who had warned against secession and urged the South to accelerate its pace of industrialization, seemed, like his biblical namesake, a powerful prophet. He became not only a confidant of Governor Robert Patton—like Pratt a former Whig and passionate industrial booster—but an increasingly powerful political personage in his own right. Pratt's economic vision and his reputation for personal integrity made him, despite his infirmities, a serious contender for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1870. Although he failed to receive it, no one in the state of Alabama exceeded Pratt in personal prestige in the early 1870s. And while his death cut short his effort to propel the economic development of the state during Reconstruction, he lived to see the rekindling of one of the furnaces at Oxmoor and the beginning of the realization of his dream of building a great industrial city in Alabama's mineral belt. The nearly universal esteem in which Alabamians held Pratt at this time challenges Jonathan Wiener's thesis that postwar Alabama was bitterly divided between reactionary planters

and progressive industrialists. On the contrary, many Alabamians proved receptive to what former governor Andrew Barry Moore called the "spirit of ongoing change."¹

Not surprisingly, the Autauga Citizen became one of Alabama's most enthusiastic advocates of southern industrialization. No longer did the Citizen hesitate to assert the primacy of the factory over the plantation. In a December 1866 editorial, "Manufacturing in Alabama", William Howell declared that the sun had gone down on Alabama agriculture:

The loss of slave labor has paralyzed our agricultural interests. The planter this year has been fortunate if he has not lost the little on which he commenced operations. . . . Another such season of failure and disaster to the farmer will involve with them in irremediable ruin our merchants and tradesmen The most sanguine among us feel that to depend upon free negro labor for another cotton crop is indeed to lean upon a broken reed.

Howell added that planters fortunately had "an escape from the impending evils," namely "the establishment of manufactures of cotton and iron and . . . the development of our mineral resources." Manufactures, Howell noted, "have made sterile New England rich." He insisted they would do the same for Alabama, unless planters persisted "in futile

¹Dan T. Carter, When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867 (Baton Rouge and London, 1985), 146. For Wiener's view that an anti-industry planter elite that allegedly controlled Alabama politics in the antebellum period continued to do so into the 1890s, see his Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885 (Baton Rouge and London, 1978).

efforts to regain their lost wealth by the cultivation of cotton."²

In another editorial from the same month, "Southern Manufactures," the Citizen scoffed at the idea that Alabamians "are not adapted to a manufacturing life." Manufactures had met with success "in Georgia and other points prior to the War." Now, "in an age of revolution," southerners would "look steadily forward," not gaze "back mournfully upon the faded past."³

In January 1867, the Citizen reprinted an article from an Atlanta newspaper on southern mechanics. Howell exclaimed happily: "A marked change has occurred in the attitude of Southern people toward white mechanics and laborers, since the downfall of slavery." Whereas the idle "chivalry" had once characterized the artisanal classes "as 'mudsills' and 'greasy mechanics'," now they took "a more liberal and more sensible view of the matter."⁴

Newspapers in Alabama and across the South echoed Howell's views in the aftermath of the Civil War.⁵ To many Alabamians, Daniel Pratt and Prattville revealed to the state the way of the future. Indeed, Pratt became such

²Prattville Autauga Citizen, 13 December 1866.

³Ibid., 20 December 1866.

⁴Ibid., 17 January 1867.

⁵See the perceptive analysis in chapter 4 of Dan Carter's When the War Was Over.

an important figure by 1870 that both Democrats and Republicans touted him as a possible candidate for governor. Many of Pratt's supporters hoped that a Governor Pratt would lead them into a promised land of renewed economic prosperity, based not on plantation agriculture, but on manufacturing and small farms.

Pratt did not actively seek any office during Reconstruction, with the exception of Prattville Intendant, a position he held from 1866 to his death in 1873. When Prattville incorporated in 1865, elections were held for intendant, town council, town clerk, and town marshal. Pratt did not run that year, and merchant James M. Smith was chosen for Prattville's highest office. The following year, Pratt ran against the incumbent, defeating him by a vote of 59 to 5. Three Prattville mechanics, George Smith, Lafayette Ellis, and Nathan Morris, won places on the town council, as did the staunchly Democratic former postmaster, old Benjamin Durden, and the Citizen's editor, William Howell. Pratt won reelection every year until his death in 1873. A surviving list of polled votes from the 1869 election reveals that Pratt received 101 of 104 votes cast. At least 24 freedmen voted in the election, including gin mechanics Charles Atwood, Richard (Dick) Pratt and William Squires, foundry worker Anthony Thomas, mill worker Gabriel (Gabe) Washington, blacksmith Charles Abbot, and A. M. E. minister George Snowden. Other voters included mill men

Simon Welden, Thomas Hale, A. J. Simmons, James Fitzgerald, James Buckner, G. W. Golden, Thadeus Hoyle, Marion Stewart, and Joseph Kent. The names of numerous mechanics also appear on the list.⁶

The greatest concern of Pratt and his council appears to have been maintaining order in³Prattville. Friction between whites and newly enfranchised blacks threatened to ignite into conflict in the late 1860s. Fearing a freedman crime wave, the previous council already had erected "a neat little guard house, of brick" in January 1866. In the summer of 1867, the council passed two ordinances, one prohibiting the carrying of concealed weapons and the other protecting citizens engaged in holding public meetings. The council hoped that both these measures would help forestall violence during the fall election over whether to hold a constitutional convention. Whether or not the ordinances had any effect is not clear, but the election occurred without incident. Those men participating in the

⁶Prattville Autauga Citizen, 5 October 1865, 6 September 1866; List of Votes Polled for the Town of Prattville, 28 September 1869, Continental Eagle Corporation Papers, Prattville. In the 1869 election, voters returned George Smith and LaFayette Ellis to the council, while also electing three new members: Samuel Parrish Smith, planter Stephen Pearce, and butcher William Morgan. Pratt was again Intendant at his death in 1873. Council members that year were Ellis, Smith, Morgan, Republican John L. Alexander, and Merrill Pratt. Merrill succeeded his uncle as Intendant. S[usan] F[rances] H[ale] Tarrant, ed., Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character (Richmond, Va., 1904), 96.

fall election—most whites had abstained—voted overwhelmingly in favor of holding the constitutional convention. Voters also chose an almost completely Republican delegation to attend the gathering, held in November and December. The convention produced a Constitution enfranchising black males and disfranchising some whites. Democrats balked at these provisions. The ratification election was set for early February, which made January a tense month. Whites hoped that by boycotting the election, they could defeat the Constitution, since ratification hinged upon the support of a majority of registered voters.⁷

In Autauga, most blacks favored the Constitution, while most whites opposed it. Autauga's most prominent white Republican, Charles Doster, defected to the Democrats over the issue of white disfranchisement. In December, fifty-one whites and nine blacks formed the Prattville Conservative Club, which had as its aim the defeat of the Constitution. Among the whites joining the club were Daniel Pratt, Charles Doster, Samuel Parrish Smith, William Northington, George L. Smith, Enoch Poor Robinson, Shadrack Mims, and Hugh Narramore—a constellation of Prattville's professionals, merchants, and shop owners. Among the much

⁷Prattville Autauga Citizen, 11 January 1866, 13 June, 4 July 1867; Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, The Scalawag in Alabama Politics, 1865-1881 (University, Ala., 1977), 18-38. Alabama Democrats frequently referred to themselves during Reconstruction as Democratic-Conservatives, reflecting the fact that many former Whigs belonged to the party as well.

smaller number of blacks joining, we find foundry worker Anthony Thomas and gin mechanic William Squires. Samuel Parrish Smith was elected president of the club, and Narramore was appointed its secretary.⁸

Daniel Pratt fiercely objected to the proposed state Constitution, believing that if Alabama fell under the control of newly freed slaves, poor white "scalawags," and northern "carpetbaggers," economic catastrophe would result. In Pratt's view, everything was going fine in the state until Radical Republicans overturned Presidential Reconstruction. Robert Patton, an industry booster and former Whig, was the kind of man Pratt had always hoped would become governor, but the Republicans would turn him out of office if they took control.⁹

The depths of Pratt's feelings on this subject are clearly evident in two letters he wrote in 1867. The first he sent to Robert Patton in August. The ostensible reason for writing it was Sidney Lanier, whom Patton had recommended for the Prattville job: "Your letter by Mr. Lanier has ben handed me. I am much pleased with the appearance of the young man. I will lay your letter before the Board. I rejoice to see that you feel so great an intrest in our

⁸Montgomery Daily Mail, 21 November, 15 December 1867; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 12 December 1867.

⁹On the governorship of Patton, see Carter, War, 45-47, 258-59; Wiggins, Scalawag, 13-17.

little vilage." That pleasantry aside, Pratt launched into a nearly five-page tirade against the radical Republicans, whom he believed would destroy everything for which he had worked for the last thirty-five years.¹⁰

Pratt declared tht he had drawn much encouragement in 1865 and 1866 from President Johnson's lenient policy toward the South, but that the current ascendancy of the Radicals now plunged him into despair for his state. "I have always contended since I have known Alabama that no state had greater natural advantages and all that was necessary was capital and enterprise," Pratt explained. Patton, he continued bitterly, was "making strong efforts to induce capital to come into our State," but his efforts were doomed to failure. "No intelligent capitalists are coming to Alabama with capital to invest unless they think there investments secure and how can [they] be secure under a Negro Government?" Pratt could only conclude that the Radical Congress had been "mad" when it imposed black enfranchisement and partial white disenfranchisement on the South. "They ought to be confined to an insane Hospital," Pratt exploded.¹¹

¹⁰Daniel Pratt to Robert Patton, 2 August 1867, Governor Patton Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH).

¹¹Ibid. Pratt was not alone in making this argument. See, for example, the Montgomery Daily Mail, 5 November 1867: "To give the Negroes the rule of the State is to keep out white men, and drive away capital. . . . Europeans

That Pratt objected so strenuously to black suffrage is not surprising in light of his deeply ingrained conservatism. In Pratt's opinion, Alabama already had too many uneducated, unpropertied voters, such as those men of Chestnut Creek who drove pitchforks through his 1855 senatorial campaign. "It is a gloomy thought to me that our Law makers and the inteligance of our state are debared from participating in our publick affairs and that it must be left to Negros and a few ignoramuses," he wrote Patton despondently.¹²

With "the infranchising of the Negro," Pratt thought that southern "distruction" was now "complete." Nothing could be expected from a Republican government but corruption and confiscatory taxes. Pratt preferred that the Republicans "take what I have now than to take everything I make by my hard labor anually." He had no desire to keep fighting a fight he could not win. "No man feels a deeper interest in the welfare of Alabama than I do. No man would do more than I would (in proportion to my means) to promote that interest," he insisted. Yet now he saw no hope for the future: "I believe our doom is sealed."¹³

will not invest where ignorant Negroes rule, and where their legal rights may be decided by Negro judges and Negro juries."

¹²Daniel Pratt to Robert Patton, 2 August 1867, Governor Patton Papers, ADAH.

In December, Pratt sent an open letter to the state meeting of the Conservative Club at Montgomery. In this letter he repeated many of the same themes found in his August epistle, though his tone was less despondent and more combative, as befitted a public political event. The Mail reprinted his letter in its entirety, asserting that it would "carry great weight" with the people. Pratt, the Mail noted, was "a Northern man by birth," as well as "a Constitutional Union man." No other Alabamian had "done more to establish Southern manufactures and [to] develop the resources of the State." Indeed, Prattville stood "a lasting monument to his mechanical skill, indomitable energy, and good citizenship." This was a man, in short, whose views compelled respectful attention.¹⁴

Pratt addressed much of his letter to the question of political and social equality for freedmen. The industrialist asserted that blacks were not ready to claim either:

There are different grades of society. A man who works at ditching or plowing and hoeing in the field, or shoveing his jack plane, or working at the anvil, or making shoes, or tailoring, deserves just as much respect in his own sphere as those in high circles in life, but there is, and always will be, different grades who feel more at ease and at home amongst their own associates. Do any of our colored people feel that they, as a class, are on social equality with educated and enlightened citizens?

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Montgomery Daily Mail, 21 December 1867.

Pratt, at least, thought not. He lectured his "colored friends" that Alabama "must be a white man's country and be governed by white men." If freedmen ignored this admonition, their "race" would be "doomed." Whites would allow blacks the "privileges" due them, including the vote, as soon as they "qualified for it", but only if blacks accepted their proper place in Alabama society. "You must bear to their [whites'] counsels and improve yourselves and children by education, and raise yourselves in the community as every person white and black must do if they expect to be respected."¹⁵

Pratt asserted that northern carpetbaggers only wanted to use freedmen to obtain offices and their spoils. He recalled that during his travels the previous summer, he had fallen in "with a negro man from Philadelphia" who called himself Bishop Campbell. Pratt listened one day as Campbell lectured some freedmen. According to Pratt, Campbell warned the group not to expect better treatment in the North: "They could not labor there as mechanics, as they could not get employment; said he, . . . you must be a shoe-black, barber or hostler." Campbell advised the freedmen to "make friends of your old masters and

¹⁵Ibid.

mistresses," who would be their "best friends," given the opportunity.¹⁶

Pratt genuinely may have believed that blacks deserved the opportunity to, as he put it, raise themselves "in the community as every person white and black must do if they expected to be respected." Certainly, Pratt's few surviving written records do not betray the extreme racial animus against blacks evinced by many southern whites during Reconstruction. Shadrack Mims, for example, had retired to a farm outside Prattville by the end of the early 1870s. He angrily complained that his black farm laborers were eating him out of house and home: "Meat is advancing and no money to buy with even at a low price—we can drive the poor mule till he falls in the plow—but darky must have fat meat and gobs of it, or no work." That Mims expressed sympathy for a mule but only hostility for his black workers is telling.¹⁷

Apparently unencumbered by that sort of animosity, Pratt did make some efforts to help blacks raise themselves. He kept many black mechanics in his employ, of course, but he also gave Prattville's freedmen a church and a school. Prattville's blacks did not need Pratt to

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Carter, War, chapter 5; Shadrack Mims to Charles M. Howard, 15 May 1874, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University.

convince them of the importance of education. According to the admittedly spotty census records, more black than white children had attended school in 1870. For example, Robert Taylor, a forty-seven-year-old black carriage shop worker had two sons, Austin and Cato, who worked in the cotton mill, but his four youngest children, Robert (eleven), Cora (ten), Caroline (nine), and Solomon (five), went to school. Similarly, Charles Atwood's two oldest children, Horatio (ten) and Charles (five), also attended school. Other black shop workers with children in school included William Squires (four attending school, two working in the gin shop), Benjamin Wilson (three in school), John Williams (three in school, one working in a cotton mill), and Anthony Thomas (two in school).¹⁸

In August 1867, Samuel Parrish Smith reported to his daughter Mary: "There is considerable excitement among the Negroes about getting up a high school for their children. . . . They are having a meeting every week to make arrangements and to organize a system of education." Pratt gave the freedmen the old wooden Methodist church building to serve as both a church and a school, the school on the first floor and the church on the second. The building and its lot were valued at \$1,500. Charles Atwood and Charles Doster both served as trustees of the church school. In

¹⁸U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County.

his 1873 eulogy to Pratt, Charles Doster effusively praised Pratt's gift: "The splendid schoolhouse and church of our colored people—so highly appreciated by them, their pride and their glory—and the lot on which they stand, were a free offering from him to them." Doster believed "that race should honor and revere his memory, because he was their friend, and did for them many acts of charity."¹⁹

If Pratt really believed that all white Alabamians had nothing but good will toward the freedman, however, he was uncharacteristically naive. In Prattville itself, the Citizen, a paper that followed its master Charles Doster in and out of the Republican party several times, often displayed a very uncharitable attitude toward blacks. For example, in February 1867, the Citizen, reflecting white bitterness with the ratification of the new state Constitution, lashed out at blacks by reprinting an article from the Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, a Democratic paper edited by Ryland Randolph, one of Alabama's most inflammatory newspaper editors, in which Randolph called on Tuscaloosans to hire only white mechanics. "We are informed that some men will enquire of a white mechanic, what they would ask for their work, and then go to a negro, and contract with him for lower wages," reported an outraged

¹⁹Samuel Parrish Smith to Mary Smith, 30 August 1867, Box 96, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; Shadrack Mims, Untitled Manuscript, Box 37, McMillan Collection, Auburn University; Tarrant, ed., Daniel Pratt, 138.

Randolph. "The consequence of this course will be that all of our best white mechanics will leave us, as many have already done, and we will be left to the botch work of the darkie." Randolph insisted that "a white man cannot live upon what a negro can" and that customers therefore should not ask him to do so.²⁰ Howell's object in reprinting this article in the Citizen obviously could not have been to help blacks raise themselves, yet Pratt ignored such anti-black sentiments. It seems fair to conclude that Pratt's overriding concern with the promotion of Alabama industry blinded him to the problems faced by the freedman, just as it blinded him to the evils of slavery. Blacks always remained peripheral to Pratt's expansive economic and social vision.

Although there was obvious tension between Prattville's whites and blacks, apparently only one case of racial violence occurred in the town during Reconstruction. This event occurred during the campaign over the ratification of the state Constitution, on January 11, 1868. Accounts of the event are provided by Hassan Allen, Sidney Lanier, and the Montgomery newspapers. Allen, the brother of ruined merchant William Allen, wrote a two-page account of the affair the day after it took place. Hassan Allen faulted the Republicans, who had held a rally for the

²⁰Prattville Autauga Citizen, 21 February 1867, reprinted from the Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor.

Constitution and their political ticket, which included state senate candidate James Farden, an Ohio carpetbagger. Allen admitted that heckling had occurred during the Republicans' speeches. Afterward, some freedmen retired to the livery stables of Republican W. G. M. Golson, returning with a whiskey jug from which they freely imbibed. When Charles Doster, who had recently defected from the Republicans to the Democrats, mounted the podium to respond to the Republicans, freedman Gabe Robinson "commenced making a disturbance." Rebuffing efforts to quiet him, Robinson drew a concealed pistol (violating a town ordinance) and "discharged it into the air." Councilman George Smith thereupon ordered Robinson to surrender his weapon. Robinson refused, swearing "he would shoot anyone who come near him." Smith, procuring his own pistol, again ordered Robinson to "deliver up his arms," but the angry freedman again refused. At this point, Smith "rushed at [Robinson] & bore him down." According to Allen, "a general melee ensued."²¹

Several people were injured in the brawl, but no one died. Among the whites, Llewellyn Spigner "received a cut from a knife," painter George Simmons was shot in the face, Alph Hall, a visitor from Montgomery, was shot in the

²¹Hassan Allen to William C. Allen, 12 January 1868, William C. Allen Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

shoulder, and another man, probably wool mill operative Matthew Hale, was "shot in the hat." Among blacks, Gabe Robinson "was seriously cut & badly beaten about the head," house carpenter Dick Gardner was "wounded in the arm," and "Painter Bill" (probably William Beavers) was "severely cut and shot." Allen noted that the latter man "is an outspoken conservative & I think some negro wounded him." Prattville whites began gathering all the arms they could lay their hands on and "called out that all well disposed negroes, those that did not want a fight, had better leave the place at once." This threat finally "scattered" the freedmen.²²

A Republican newspaper, the Montgomery Daily State Sentinel, edited by Pratt's old supporter John Hardy, placed the blame for the riot squarely on the shoulders of "a parcel of rowdies and rebels" who attempted to disrupt the Republican speaking. Hardy declared ominously that "the rebels" had "commenced their plots of bringing on a war of the races." According to Sidney Lanier, however, many in Prattville's white community feared that the freedmen wanted to start a racial conflagration. "I begin to entertain serious doubts of the safety of remaining out of the city [Montgomery]," Lanier wrote his father. "There

²²Ibid. Sidney Lanier's account is substantially the same as Hassan Allen's, though with less detail and greater flair. See Sidney Lanier, Letters 1857-1868, ed. Charles R. Anderson and Aubrey H. Starke (Baltimore, 1945), 365.

are strong indications of much bad feeling between whites and blacks, especially those engaged in the late row at this place." Lanier had "fears, which are shared by Mr. Pratt and many citizens here, that some indiscretion of the more thoughtless of the whites may plunge us into bloodshed. The whites have no organization at all, and the affair would be a mere butchery."²³

The day before Lanier penned his letter, one hundred Republicans, armed with rifles and shotguns for protection, met for another Prattville rally. Hardy reported that the group had "resolved that the outrage [at the previous meeting] should not be repeated, unless at a risk of a terrible retaliation on the guilty parties." Clearly, the Republicans had succeeded in throwing a scare into their Democratic opponents.²⁴

After the unpleasantness of January, the two groups seem to have avoided any more outright violence in the town. Pratt remained staunchly opposed to the Republicans, becoming chairman of Autauga's "Conservative" party. He and other prominent Prattvillians, including Samuel Parrish Smith, Llewellyn Spigner, A. K. McWilliams, Shadrack Mims, Charles Doster, and John L. Alexander, were chosen as delegates to the state Democratic convention held in June 1868.

²³Montgomery Daily State Sentinel, 13 January 1868; Lanier, Letters, 372-73.

²⁴Montgomery Daily State Sentinel, 22 January 1868.

At the state convention, attendees selected Pratt as an alternate delegate to the national Democratic convention. Yet Pratt and the other conservative business leaders in Prattville confined their opposition to Republicans to the political arena. For their part, Autauga's Republicans also apparently hoped to avoid trouble. Particularly after Charles Doster returned to the party, it took on a more conservative tone. By the early 1870s, Republicans, including Autauga's carpetbagger state senator, James Farden, worked closely with Democrats to promote such economic projects as the branch railroad.²⁵

Both Democrats and Republicans agreed in 1870 that Pratt would make an excellent governor, and a serious "draft Pratt" movement started among the former group. Pratt had admittedly come into criticism from one Republican paper in 1867. In June of that year, former admirer John Hardy blasted Pratt in the pages of the paper he edited, the Montgomery Daily State Sentinel. Hardy noted angrily that Pratt had circulated an open letter "around

²⁵Montgomery Daily Advertiser, 6 May, 6 June 1868; Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 12 December 1871, 6, 9 January, 16 February 1872. For a perceptive article on the closeness of some Reconstruction Democrats and Republicans on issues "of economic development, the promotion of community progress and even race," see Paul D. Escot, "Clinton Cilley, Yankee War Hero in the Postwar South: A Study in the Compatibility of Regional Values," North Carolina Historical Review 68 (October 1991): 404-26. Also see Michael Perman, The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879 (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London, 1984).

rebel newspapers," in which he had expressed indignation that southern white men would become Republicans, allegedly "for the sake of office, popularity, or money-making." An offended Hardy denounced Pratt as a "most violent disunionist" who had "done as much or more for the rebellion of Jeff Davis, than almost any other man in Alabama." When William Howell challenged Hardy, countering that "Mr. Pratt was bitterly opposed to secession," Hardy refused to give ground, forcefully insisting that Pratt

went heartily into the rebellion with the vim characteristic of him and contributed his money and his influence unceasingly to dissolve the Union. His public record as a member of the legislature like his private conduct places him where we stated he was. Few men, too, in the late insurgent States invested as promptly and as liberally in Confederate and State bonds as Mr. Pratt.²⁶

By 1870, the Republican attitude to Pratt had changed from one of resentment to admiration. When the Democratic Montgomery Mail floated Pratt's name as a possible gubernatorial candidate in April, the Republican organ, the Montgomery Journal, responded with great enthusiasm to the idea, while simultaneously getting in some good jabs at the Democratic party. The Mail had asked: "Why would not Daniel Pratt, of Autauga, be a good candidate for Governor of Alabama?" The Journal allowed that Pratt "would make not only a good candidate, but an able ruler, as far as

²⁶Montgomery Daily State Sentinel, 6, 15 July 1867; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 11 July 1867.

the highest qualities of manhood contribute to that end." Nevertheless, the Journal saw many objections to Pratt as the candidate of the Democrats:

Pratt is a "damned Yankee," and orthodox Democrats detest Yankees. He is a "carpet-bagger," and carpet-baggers are odious to the Democracy. He is a laborer with his own hands, a mechanic . . . which is, being Democratically interpreted, a "mudsill," "essentially a slave," something that stinks in the delicate nostrils of the "chivalry."

The most "insuperable objection to Mr. Pratt, as a Democratic candidate," involved, according to the Journal, "his fine sense and uniform respect for law." Pratt "would not be sufficiently urgent and earnest in busting up the government." Moreover, he was "too decent to blackguard opponents on account of political differences, too kind to concentrate his ability and energy in a war upon the struggling colored men of the state." The Journal ironically concluded: "Altogether, we can't think of a more utterly unfit man for Democratic candidacy."²⁷

The Demopolis Southern Republican agreed with the Journal that Pratt would make a wonderful gubernatorial candidate—for the Republicans. As "a regular New Hampshire Yankee," "a good old Whig of the Henry Clay school," and "a large manufacturer," Pratt would be the perfect man, declared the Republican. The paper warned Pratt's

²⁷Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 7 April 1870.

Democratic supporters to "call the nominating convention pretty soon," before the Republicans stole him away.²⁸

The Democratic Mail astutely noted that "the fact that the Radical newspapers have all been at a loss to know where or how to attack [Mr. Pratt's] personal record is the very best evidence that he is peculiarly available as a candidate." Moreover, Pratt joined the quality of availability "with great purity of character, mental rigor and decision, unflinching devotion to political principles, and a long life of deserving and arduous labors." "Daniel Pratt's personal record," the Mail concluded, "is invulnerable."²⁹

The Mail returned to the subject of Daniel Pratt four days later. The paper argued that Pratt as governor would represent the interests of both industry and "the laboring classes." Pratt, the Mail emphasized, stood as "a noble monument to that social pride of the Southern people which delights in honoring merit and industry" and "an imposing rebuke to" Republicans who charged Democrats "with despising labor." The Yankee had come to Alabama "as an humble mechanic, without friends, and with nothing to push him

²⁸Montgomery Daily Mail, 2 April 1870, reprinted from the Demopolis Southern Republican. Jonathan Wiener writes that the Republican "taunted Pratt for betraying his true class interests," which is a mischaracterization. Rather, the paper taunted the Democrats for not living up to Pratt's standards. Wiener, Social Origins, 152.

²⁹Montgomery Daily Mail, 2 April 1870.

forward, but an unconquerable will and a strong arm"; and he had "built up a flourishing town and furnished occupation to hundreds of families." For these accomplishments, he now "commanded the respect of the whole State."³⁰

Eight days later, the Mail finally gave an official endorsement of Pratt for governor, along with a long letter on Pratt's life, submitted by one "Montgomery." Asserting that Alabamians had "entered upon a career in which the surplus revenues of our lands must seek investment in factories and mining," the Mail asked "who would be better able to guide, direct and encourage the labor interests of Alabama than such a man as DANIEL PRATT?"³¹

The Mail emphasized that Pratt had been "an old Whig" and had opposed secession. Moreover, he personally extended "all charity and protection to the negroes" freed as a result of the Civil War. Nevertheless, he also "ardently opposed . . . all attempts looking towards social equality of the races." Moreover, despite his humble origins as a mechanic, Pratt had an "intelligence . . . recognized by distinguished men of letters." According to the Mail, one of the state's best lawyers, a man who had known Pratt for

³⁰Ibid., 6 April 1870.

³¹Ibid., 14 April 1870.

twenty years, had remarked that "he had never found the judgement of DANIEL PRATT at fault."³²

The Mail allowed that Pratt was "an old man," but the paper insisted that he was "still in the vigor of life." As proof, it cited Pratt's tireless activity of the last five years. At war's end, he had suffered terrible financial losses and faced utter ruin, yet, amid "difficulties which crushed younger men to the earth," Pratt had triumphed:

He rose with his mountain of adversities pressing upon his shoulders, shook them off like the moral giant he is, restored order out of chaos, re-opened his factories, marched into the assembly of the great cotton lords of New England, took his seat as Chairman of the Manufacturer's Association of America, visited the Northern cities and opened up markets for his goods, returned to set his wheels in motion, gave occupation once again to the town he had founded, and offered bread to hundreds of laboring families.³³

The Mail was not, by any means, the only paper to speak highly of Pratt in the election year of 1870. The Elyton Herald, edited by Henry Hale, a son of Gardner Hale, declared that no man deserved "the honor of the Gubernatorial chair" more than Pratt. In August, the Talladega Watchtower insisted that Pratt was "undoubtedly the choice of a large majority of the intelligent and taxpaying citizens of Talladega county, as the Democratic candidate

³²Ibid. The lawyer referred to was likely former governor Thomas Hill Watts.

³³Ibid.

for Governor." These comments from newspapers located in northern Alabama suggest the popularity of Pratt in a region that stood to benefit enormously from the development of the coal and iron industries. Significantly, many of Talledega's "intelligent and taxpaying citizens" were, in fact, planters.³⁴

Pratt also received favorable mention from the Montgomery Daily Advertiser, a paper that Wiener classifies as part of the "planter press." To be sure, the Advertiser never got behind the idea of a Pratt candidacy with the same gusto as the Mail. Nevertheless, the paper bestowed lavish praise on Pratt in the period leading up to the state Democratic Convention. In July, the paper called Pratt a "great Alabamian" and extolled "his wonderful energy and influence in the further development of Alabama's resources," while in September, it speculated that "there is no man in Alabama who is more thoroughly esteemed in all the relations of life than the benevolent and energetic Founder of the flourishing village of Prattville."³⁵

Not surprisingly, the Democratic convention in Autauga County, held on August 6 at Autaugaville, strongly urged the nomination of Daniel Pratt for governor. Pratt, the

³⁴Montgomery Daily Mail, 19 April 1870; Montgomery Daily Advertiser, 21 August 1870.

³⁵Montgomery Daily Advertiser, 30 July, 13 September 1870.

convention declared, had endeavored all his life "to give dignity to labor" and had contributed greatly to the development of Alabama's "industrial resources" through his "industry, energy and perseverance." Moreover, Pratt possessed "high social, moral and religious virtues, exemplifying an enlarged public liberality no less than an enlightened Christian beneficence." Therefore, the convention resolved to instruct their county delegates to the state Democratic convention to "urge [Pratt's] claims to the nomination with an earnestness equal to our estimate of his worth and qualifications."³⁶

Daniel Pratt enjoyed more support than that of the Autauga delegation at the Democratic state convention. When that body met in early September, former governor Thomas Hill Watts, a Montgomery attorney and probably the most prominent old Whig in southern Alabama, placed Pratt's name in nomination. On the first ballot, Pratt came in second behind Robert Burns Lindsay, a Douglas Democrat who had come originally from Scotland and practiced law in Tusculumbia, a town in the Tennessee Valley. Pratt received 73 5/6 votes to Lindsay's 102 5/6. Four other men received votes as well: William C. Oates (48 1/3), William H.

³⁶Ibid., 10 August 1870. The Autauga delegates to the state convention included many farmers from around the county, as well as Prattvillians Llewellyn Spigner, Samuel Parrish Smith, A. K. McWilliams, Henry DeBardeleben, Merrill Pratt, and Gustavus Northington.

Barnes (47), George Goldthwaite (40), and W. B. Modawell (7). Before the second ballot, the names of Goldthwaite and Modawell were withdrawn. When the vote was taken, Pratt dropped to third, with $60 \frac{5}{6}$ votes. Ahead of him were Lindsay ($172 \frac{1}{2}$) and Barnes (69). Oates came in fourth, with $33 \frac{2}{3}$ votes. Before the third ballot, Oates dropped out of the race. Governor Watts attempted to withdraw Pratt's name as well but was ruled out of order, as voting had already commenced. Clearly, his motion had an effect, however, as Pratt's vote total dropped on the third ballot to 17. Lindsay rolled ahead of Barnes, $220 \frac{5}{6}$ to $96 \frac{5}{6}$. Barnes thereupon dropped out, leaving Lindsay to be declared the convention's unanimous choice for governor.³⁷

Pratt's ultimate defeat at the 1870 convention should not be viewed as a planter victory over manufacturers. Lindsay, the only candidate from northern Alabama, enjoyed something of a regional advantage. Moreover, Pratt's age and poor health likely crippled his chances. The elderly Pratt had no heroic war record to parade before the delegates, as did such men as Lindsay and Oates, the famous one-armed hero of Little Round Top. For example, the Journal noted sarcastically that the man who nominated Lindsay made a rousing martial speech, "which would have

³⁷Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 2 September 1870; Montgomery Daily Mail, 2 September 1870.

done honor to any member of the Secession Convention of 1861." More seriously, Pratt's obviously bad health must have weighed heavily on delegates' minds. In 1867, Pratt had spent some time at Hot Springs, Arkansas. In July 1870, he traveled to Healing Springs, Virginia in an effort to regain his health. Pratt remained there until mid-September, after the Democratic Convention had ended. In late July, the Advertiser reported that Pratt was "rapidly recovering his health" in Virginia, but his absence in early September must have sown doubt in delegates' minds. When Pratt finally returned to Alabama, the Advertiser reported that Pratt enjoyed "greatly improved health and spirits," but by then the convention had ended.³⁸

Whether or not Pratt's health had temporarily improved, it soon began inexorably to decline. In 1871, Pratt effectively handed the management of the gin factory over to Merrill Pratt and Henry DeBardleben, though he still kept a hand in things when he could. In June 1872, less than a year before his death, Pratt complained in a letter to Shadrack Mims: "I have been laid up about two weeks not able to attend to business. My hand is so lame now I am hardly able to hold a pen." Pratt admitted he would have liked to take a cure at Talladega Springs,

³⁸Montgomery Daily State Sentinel, 6 July 1867; Montgomery Daily Advertiser, 15, 30 July, 13 September 1870; Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 2 September 1870.

believing, as he rather pessimistically put it, that "it would be more beneficial to me than anything I am to do." Nevertheless, he did not see how he could leave his "business in the situation it now is."³⁹

Despite his failing health, Pratt remained an important figure on the public scene until his death in May 1873. On January 22, 1872, for example, the stockholders of Montgomery's First National Bank elected Daniel Pratt one of its directors. The Journal congratulated the "flourishing and enterprising" bank for having secured "the services of that well known gentleman, who has done so much for our State, and has succeeded in infusing his energetic spirit into the good people of Autauga and elsewhere." The paper rejoiced "to see Daniel Pratt giving our city attention" and concluded that he would "prove an invaluable acquisition to the [bank] directors."⁴⁰

Pratt kept abreast of the current events discussed in the newspapers. One development troubled him exceedingly, prompting him to write agitated letters to the Citizen. What bothered Pratt so much in the years following the Civil War was the movement to limit by law the working

³⁹Alabama Vol. 2, p. 12, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration; Daniel Pratt to Shadrack Mims, 3 June 1872, Box 37, McMillan Collection.

⁴⁰Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 23 January 1872. Merchant Marcus Munter and cotton broker John W. Durr were also elected directors.

hours of factory laborers. In 1866, he criticized proposals that state governments set a working day of ten or eight hours maximum in a Citizen article entitled "a Few Words to Those Who Choose to Read Them." Pratt noted that advocates of the ten or eight hour day asserted that a shortened working day gave the laborer "more time to do small jobs for himself," "an opportunity to read and improve his mind," "a chance to spend more time with his family," and "relaxation from labor, therefore strengthening his constitution and giving him better health." With his extra time, the worker might even "study mechanics, make drawings of different sorts of machinery, make improvements [and] get up new inventions, thereby benefitting the world in which he lives." Having set out these hopeful notions, Pratt proceeded to throw a bucket of cold water on them, asserting that "probably not one out of twenty [laborers] improve their leisure hours to benefit themselves or the community in which they live." Pratt proclaimed man "naturally a social being." During leisure time, most workers liked to socialize among themselves, drinking and smoking "a segar or pipe." After supper, they continued loafing:

They feel that another smoke is necessary. They can enjoy it better with their old associates. They meet again, and sometimes spend the evening to a late hour, without improving their minds or benefitting their families. It is not important they should retire early, as they have a leisure hour in the morning, in which they can make up their lost rest or sleep.

Pratt asserted that the truly industrious mechanic would make profitable use of whatever amount of leisure time he had. He offered himself as an example: "I have been a laboring mechanic the past fifty years. . . . I have made it a rule to commence work about sunrise, and quit at sunset, the year round. Never light up to work after dark." Clearly, Pratt took the "Early to bed, Early to rise" maxim to heart.⁴¹

In 1873, Pratt found that this irksome movement had worked its way into his back yard. In March of that year, the Alabama House of Representatives almost unanimously passed a bill regulating "the hours of labor, especially of women and children, in the cotton factories in Alabama, so as to provide that it shall be unlawful to require labor therein, except from seven in the morning till six in the afternoon." This bill, which set the maximum work day for mill workers at eleven hours, was precisely the sort of legislation that Pratt had feared. As the bill made its way into the Senate, Pratt wrote a rather frantic letter

⁴¹prattville Autauga Citizen, 10 May 1866. The eight-hour movement came into great prominence in December 1865 when Congress began hearings on whether it should establish an eight-hour day for federal workers. Pratt likely read articles on this subject in such northern magazines as North American Review and The Nation. David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872 (Urbana, Ill. and Chicago, 1967), 233-49. Pratt's argument that the worker would not use his extra time wisely mirrored the declarations made by northern capitalists. "I believe," declared one man, "that too much leisure is a detriment to his welfare." Ibid., 235.

denouncing the effort to legislate working hours. "Labor must and will regulate itself," he testily lectured. "If interfered with in our State or neighborhood, it will go where it is not . . . labor will follow capital, and capital will go where it receives the greatest encouragement. Any man with two eyes can see that."⁴²

Pratt's letter offers tantalizing hints that the ten hour movement claimed some vocal adherents in Prattville. Pratt complained of some persons in the town who "have not business of their own to attend to, who occupy their time in interfering with the business of others, for the sake, as they think, of making themselves popular with a certain class of persons." Pratt angrily asserted that these designing men "would have the Legislature interfere with private contracts, tamper with a business they know but little about, and to seriously affect the interest of those whom they pretend to benefit."⁴³

Before Pratt died, he had the pleasure of seeing the bill brought to a dead stop in the Alabama Senate, although he must have found some of the rhetoric spoken in favor of the bill infuriating. Charles Doster, Autauga's Republican state senator, led the opposition to the bill, while John Martin of Tuscaloosa acted as its warmest advocate. Martin

⁴²Prattville Autauga Citizen, 20 March 1873; Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 13 March 1873.

⁴³Prattville Autauga Citizen, 20 March 1873.

argued that long work hours destroyed the health of helpless women and children. The senator asked: "Who has ever seen an old person that was an operative in a factory?" He answered that no one had, because "the heated rooms of factories and the incessant cruel toil demanded of the poor creatures . . . consigned them all to early graves." Martin spoke passionately "of the wan, sallow, death-like appearance of operatives generally" and declared that if senators could but see these poor people themselves, they would not dare oppose the bill. Martin also claimed that a reduction in working hours would foster "self-culture and moral and intellectual improvement."⁴⁴

Martin had no kind words for capitalists who opposed the bill. He spoke witheringly of "the huge fortunes built up by manufacturers," which were "made up of the bones of their fellow men . . . cemented with their hearts' blood." Martin could not believe "any creature desired to wring from helpless women and children more than eleven hours of toil per day." If there were such a creature, Martin "hoped never to see him, and prayed that heaven in its mercy would spare the state of such a presence . . . a leprous splotch upon the body politic."⁴⁵ With these strident words, Martin challenged the ascendant notion that

⁴⁴Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 23 April 1873.

⁴⁵Ibid.

mill owners were benevolent saviors of humanity. Instead, he shunned them as moral lepers mercilessly exploiting women and children. For the first time, a state political figure had splattered mud on Pratt's lily white personal reputation.

Charles Doster countered that such a bill would damage Alabama's industrial prospects. After the Civil War, Alabama lay "impoverished and full of widows and orphans." Its one remaining asset was its "undeveloped mineral and manufacturing wealth." Now Martin would have the government drive capital out of the state. Doster asserted, moreover, that operatives desired to work in the factories as much as possible. "Their labor is voluntary, not coerced. They, or their parents, make their own contracts, and the more work they do, the more money they get."⁴⁶

Doster also addressed Martin's dramatic attacks on textile manufacturers, which he labeled "the heated but honest fancies of a wild imagination." Doster denied that mill operatives were "overworked victims of manufacturing tyrants, wasted away by disease" and that mill owners were "heartless tyrants and unfeeling shylocks." He challenged such "unjust and untrue" charges with the example of the town he had known for over a quarter century, Prattville. "The venerable Daniel Pratt," he asserted, was "a noble

⁴⁶Ibid.

illustration of all the virtues of an elevated humanity." In the town he had founded, mill workers were "a most estimable part of the population," attending churches and Sunday schools and benefitting greatly from "their present association, social friction, contact and relationship." These people, Doster concluded, were "generally intelligent, happy, virtuous, and prosperous," but the bill, if passed, would only succeed in throwing many of them out of work. Doster closed by condemning the bill as a dangerous example of socialism:

This species of legislation is wrong. It is agitating, agrarian—incendiary—and disturbs the peaceful relations now existing in our state between capital and labor. It unhappily introduces into our midst the old irrepressible conflict now threatening Northern and European prosperity, and which has been the nefarious implacable enemy of the social compact and the peace and good order of society since the day of Caius and Tiberius Gracchus.⁴⁷

Not only did the Senate heed Doster's arguments and turn back the bill regulating the hours of the work day, the body also passed a bill, later enacted, to encourage manufacturing and the industrial and mechanical arts in Alabama. The act provided that "all buildings, factories, works and machinery, erected . . . to the value of \$100,000" would be exempted from municipal, county, or state taxation for five years.⁴⁸ After a good scare, Pratt

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Montgomery Daily Alabama Journal, 9 March, 3 April 1873.

must have drawn considerable satisfaction with the result of the spring session of the 1873 legislature.

Pratt addressed Alabama industrial policy in his last known publication, an article entitled "A Practical View of Alabama," which appeared in a New York magazine entitled The South on April 5, 1873. Pratt prescribed for Alabama "good, wholesome laws, such as will foster and encourage enterprise, do away with all surplus offices and economise our State expenses." He also urged the state: "Encourage capitalists to invest in manufacturing by not taxing their capital invested in a reasonable length of time." If such "good, wholesome laws" were indeed enacted, Alabama would become "what nature designed her, a thriving, prosperous and desirable State, such as will not only attract the people of other States but also those of Europe."⁴⁹

In his article in The South, Pratt devoted a paragraph to Prattville, of which he declared: "There is no better or more desirable place in Alabama for investments in

⁴⁹The South, 5 April 1873. Pratt's plea for laws eliminating surplus offices and economizing on government expenses was, no doubt, in part a response to the concerns of many Democrats that the state had drastically overextended itself in lending aid to railroad companies, a policy that Pratt had eagerly supported. See Perman, Redemption, 101-02; Mark W. Summers, Railroads, Reconstruction, and the Gospel of Prosperity: Aid under the Radical Republicans, 1865-1877 (Princeton, N. J., 1984), 213-36. Pratt also touched on agriculture in his article, urging that "the owners of large tracts of land divide it into small farms and make it an inducement for persons of small means to settle among us."

manufacturing." Nevertheless, Pratt spent most of his time discussing his final project, the Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company. According to Ethel Armes, in the spring of 1872, Pratt and his son-in-law, Henry DeBardleben, acquired a "controlling interest" in the company, whose furnaces at Oxmoor had been wrecked by federal forces in 1865. Pratt and another man put up most of the money to construct two new twenty-five ton charcoal furnaces. Shareholders elected Pratt president of the company, and DeBardleben became its superintendent and general manager.⁵⁰

In April 1873, Pratt boasted in The South that the company had "two hot blast iron furnaces nearly ready to go into operation, which are calculated to make fifty tons pig iron per day." Noting that the company owned 7,000 acres of land rich in iron ore and coal located by the South and North Railroad, Pratt confidently predicted: "Such persons as are desirous to engage in the iron business would do well to examine the location. The vicinity will, no doubt, be the great centre of the iron business." Pratt also

⁵⁰The South, 5 April 1873; Ethel Armes, The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama (Birmingham, 1910), 238-39; Montgomery Daily Advertiser and Mail, 15, 20 May 1873. According to Pratt, the capital stock of Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company was \$1,000,000, which would seem to make it rather doubtful that he and his son-in-law could have obtained a controlling interest in the company. In 1870, Pratt's wealth, according to the census of that year, was \$84,450. U.S. Census, Alabama, 1870, Population Schedule, Autauga County. Nevertheless, he clearly must have been the key man in the company, judging from contemporaneous newspaper accounts.

urged investors to "look at Birmingham, which is located at the foot of Red Mountain. It is about two years since the town was laid out and now there are, I suppose, between three and four thousand inhabitants." Pratt clearly envisioned a great new manufacturing city built upon the riches of Red Mountain, but he was not destined to reach this industrial promised land.⁵¹

Soon after the publication of his article in The South, Daniel Pratt fell seriously ill, presumably with his "old complaint," neuralgia. On April 24, the Citizen relievedly reported that Pratt had recovered, but he quickly relapsed and, on May 13, died "after a long, lingering and painful illness." During his last days, he learned that one of the Oxmoor furnaces had gone into blast. Henry DeBardleben returned to Prattville with pig iron specimens from the furnace about a week before Pratt died. Yet in Pratt's final days, his thoughts were of religion, not business. According to Shadrack Mims, his last words, spoken to George Smith, who was sitting up with him, were "George, work for the church, work for the church."⁵²

⁵¹The South, 5 April 1873.

⁵²Prattville Autauga Citizen, 24 April, 8, 15 May 1873; Tarrant, ed., Daniel Pratt, 36; Shadrack Mims to Charles M. Howard, 17 September 1883, Box 37, McMillan Collection; Shadrack Mims, Untitled Manuscript, Box 37, McMillan Collection.

Pratt's obituaries in the Citizen and the Montgomery papers uniformly treated the man as a fallen hero. The state Republican organ, the Journal, called Pratt "one of the best and most useful men that ever lived in the state of Alabama." He left "but few, if any, equals behind him him," making his death "a public loss." The Advertiser and Mail, the Democratic organ, also gave Pratt an adulatory eulogy. "The death of this singularly pure and upright man," the paper pronounced, "will be received with emotions of profound sorrow throughout the entire State." The editors emphasized that his stunningly successful career in Alabama absolutely refuted "the charge that Northern men are not respected at the South." The death of this Yankee industrialist was "a great public calamity." While the editors gave Pratt's family their deepest sympathies "in this hour of trial and deep gloom," they could not help but extend "to each and every citizen of Alabama a similar recognition of the loss which in this instance we have one and all sustained."⁵³ Without a doubt, Pratt closed his forty-year career in Alabama as one of the most admired men in the state. If few men matched his level of accomplishment, many men respected him for what he had done and hoped others would daringly follow the path he had blazed.

⁵³Prattville Autauga Citizen, 15 May 1873; Montgomery Daily Journal, 14 May 1873; Montgomery Daily Advertiser and Mail, 14 May 1873.

EPILOGUE: DANIEL PRATT'S LEGACY

Daniel Pratt began disposing of his real property in 1871, deeding most of it to his daughter, Ellen DeBardleben, and his nephew Merrill. Less than two weeks before his death on May 3, 1873, Pratt signed a deed of trust, under which Samuel Parrish Smith, as trustee for Esther Pratt, was conveyed all Pratt's remaining property, consisting mainly of stock in the First National Bank of Montgomery, the Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company, and Prattville Manufacturing Company. Pratt made clear in the deed that Esther Pratt would have complete power to "manage, control, handle and dispose" of the property "just as she pleases." Samuel Parrish Smith had no other interest in the property than that of a "mere naked trustee." When Esther Pratt died in February 1875, she made her daughter, Ellen DeBardleben, her principal beneficiary.¹

With Daniel Pratt's wealth to bankroll him, Henry DeBardleben began purchasing more mineral land in Jefferson County. In June 1875, DeBardleben became president of the

¹Deed Book 19, 497, Deed Book 21, 440, Probate Office, Autauga County Courthouse, Prattville; Justin Fuller, "Henry F. DeBardleben: Industrialialist of the New South," Alabama Review 42 (January 1986): 5.

Eureka Company, the successor corporation to the Red Mountain Iron and Coal Company. In 1878, he and two other capitalists formed the Pratt Coal and Coke Company. Within a few years, DeBardleben bought out his partners, leaving him sole owner of "the largest and most successful coal and coke company in Alabama." In 1882, he liquidated his interests in Prattville, selling Ellen's sixty-one shares in Prattville Manufacturing Company at \$1,000 apiece to Henry Faber and her half interest in the gin factory to Merrill Pratt. Merrill also purchased Daniel Pratt's mansion from the DeBardlebens. During the 1880s, DeBardleben started several other important companies, most notably the Bessemer Land and Improvement Company, which developed the industrial city of Bessemer in Jefferson County, and the DeBardleben Coal and Iron Company. By 1890, DeBardleben was said to be "the richest man in Alabama," worth from three to eight million dollars; but he lost most of his fortune in a characteristically risky financial gamble in 1893. The next year, Ellen DeBardleben died at the age of forty-nine. When a heart attack felled Henry DeBardleben in 1910, he was worth \$84,000.²

²Fuller, "DeBardleben," 5-16; Prattville Autauga Citizen, 3 June 1875; Prattville Southern Signal, 6 January, 9 June, 20 October 1882; Prattville Progress, 24 January 1890, reprinted from Birmingham Age-Herald, 16 February 1894.

Although Pratt would have frowned on DeBardleben's recklessness, he would have taken great pleasure in seeing his son-in-law play a major role in industrializing northern Alabama. Shadrack Mims, who visited DeBardleben's Pratt Mines at the age of seventy-five in 1881, probably expressed sentiments Pratt would have shared when he declared: "It absolutely strikes me with wonder and agreeable surprise how any man could accomplish so much in so short a time. . . . It is nothing more than natural for an old man to feel proud of such an enterprising man reared up and educated in the workshops of Prattville."³

While the restless Henry DeBardleben played around with one big manufacturing scheme after another, Merrill Pratt remained true to Prattville. After buying out Ellen DeBardleben's interest in the gin factory in 1882, Merrill became sole proprietor of the business, which continued to prosper in the 1880s and 1890s. After a freshet destroyed the cotton mill in 1886, Merrill helped form the Prattville Cotton Mill and Banking Company, which quickly rebuilt the factory building and filled it with machinery. In 1889, the company added an additional building and more machinery. Original stockholders of the company included

³Prattville Southern Signal, 17 June 1881. Mims made no mention of DeBardleben's use of convict labor at the Pratt Mines. See Allen Johnston Going, Bourbon Democracy in Alabama 1874-1890, (Tuscaloosa, Ala. and London, 1951), 178.

Merrill Pratt and his eldest son, Daniel: Lafayette Ellis; Charles Doster; and William T. Northington, a son of William H. Northington, a son-in-law of Samuel Parrish Smith, and a brother-in-law of Merrill Pratt.⁴

At Merrill Pratt's death in 1889, his son Daniel succeeded him as head of the gin factory, and his brother-in-law William T. Northington became president of the Cotton Mill and Banking Company. Lafayette Ellis and Daniel Pratt II served, respectively, as vice-president and secretary-treasurer. In 1898, twenty-five years after the first Daniel Pratt's death, the gin factory made 1,500 gins annually, and the cotton mill produced 18,000 to 22,000 yards of cloth per day. Both mill buildings had 300 looms and 10,000 spindles and were equipped with an electric plant with 430 incandescent lights.⁵

Like his uncle, Merrill Pratt tried but failed in his lifetime to get a railroad routed through Prattville. At one point in the 1890s, the editor of the town's paper lamented that "when the good Lord . . . made the earth He never intended that a railroad should pass through the little valley in which Prattville is situated." Finally, by 1898 Prattville achieved its goal of over forty years,

⁴Prattville Progress, 11 November 1898.

⁵Ibid. By 1892, Daniel Pratt & Co. had shipped 1,000 gins to Russia, including an exhibition gin of black walnut with nickel-plated iron work and a silver-plated inscription valued at \$500. Ibid., 8 August 1890, 29 July 1892.

obtaining connections to two major rail systems, the Louisville and Nashville and the Mobile and Ohio.⁶

No doubt chiefly because of railroads, Prattville's population nearly tripled between 1890 and 1900, nearly surpassing 2,000. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Prattville also received electric lighting. In 1894, the Globe Light and Heat Company of Chicago installed some fifty street lamps in the town. In addition, a telephone exchange was erected in 1897. In 1902, Abigail Holt Smith wrote Sidney Lanier's widow of the great changes: "The village has become quite city like with its two Rail Roads, Electric lights, etc." Prattville's aptly named newspaper, the Progress, embodied the town's go-ahead attitude with its motto: "Push and Perseverance Bring Progress and Power."⁷

Prattvillians remained concerned with moral as well as economic improvement, founding a great range of benevolent societies in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Many of these groups were women's organizations, such as

⁶Prattville Progress, 15 February 1895, 11 November 1898.

⁷W. Craig Remington and Thomas J. Kallsen, Historical Atlas of Alabama, Vol. I, Historical Locations by County (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1997), 5; Prattville Progress, 16 March 1894, 16 July 1897; Mrs. George Smith to Mrs. Lanier, 30 December 1902, Charles P. Lanier Collection, Johns Hopkins University. The factory offices at Prattville already had been added to the telephone exchange in 1883. Prattville Southern Signal, 14 September 1883.

the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Women's Missionary Society, and the Merrill Pratt Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy. Merrill Pratt's widow, Julia, headed all three of these groups. The major project of the Women's Missionary Society in the 1880s was "to educate a Chinese girl in the Christian faith, to labor in her own native land in aid of missionary work." The Society planned to name the girl Esther Pratt, "in grateful memory of the noble deceased woman [who] bore that name as the beloved wife of the illustrious Daniel Pratt."⁸

Newspapers continued to describe Prattville as Alabama's model factory town. Indeed, the town's paper made Prattville sound like a modern day Utopia: "Our society is one harmonious and agreeable family, and we know of no place, so congenial, pleasant and profitable to the factory man as is peaceful, busy and lovely little Prattville." The town's white laboring population enjoyed "neat and comfortable houses . . . with gardens" and benefitted from strong sanitary regulations, good physicians and churches, concerned charitable organizations like the Prattville Benevolent Society and "one of the best public schools in the State, where the poorest boy or girl can attend free of charge, for a full scholastic year." Prattville, the paper insisted, had "no 'strikes,' no complaints of imposition by

⁸Prattville Progress, 17, 24 March 1893, 30 July 1903; Prattville Southern Signal, 10 June 1882.

employer upon employee, no prejudices and unpleasant relations between the classes."⁹

Prattville's African-American population, however, did not share in this good life described by the newspapers. Black economic opportunities declined over the last quarter of the nineteenth century, notwithstanding Pratt's assurance that white Alabamians had the best interests of their "colored friends" at heart. When Charles Atwood died around 1890, he left a great void in the black community, one that could not be filled. Atwood's daughter, Alice, spent two years at Clark University in Atlanta in the 1880s, later becoming the assistant to the principal of Prattville's "colored school," but Atwood's sons did not fare so well. In 1894, his three youngest sons, Gilmore, Henry, and Pratt, became involved in a bloody fight with a black barber and his assistant. Henry Atwood lost his left ear in the melee and was convicted later that year of carrying a concealed pistol. Pratt Atwood remained in Prattville all his life, working as a laborer in the cotton gin factory. Charles Atwood's oldest son, Horatio, also stayed in Prattville, holding onto the family house until his death. Horatio Atwood worked an occasional odd job,

⁹Prattville Southern Signal, 19 February 1886.

but according to one of his nieces, spent most of his time at home "doing nothing."¹⁰

Mostly blind to the aspirations of Alabama's freedmen, Pratt would have been very pleased with Prattville's position in the quarter century after his death. He would have found the broader economic and political condition of Alabama somewhat troubling, however. After Democrats "redeemed" the state from Republican rule in 1874 by winning both the governorship and the two legislative houses, the state government moved away from the policies of promoting internal improvements through state aid and encouraging industry through special tax breaks. The ambitious railroad aid programs previously supported by both Democrats and Republicans had mired the state in corruption and debt, leading to a powerful reemergence in the Democratic party of Jacksonian opposition to an activist state government. Austerity became the byword of Alabama's ruling Democratic party. Still, this retrenchment did not necessarily reflect agrarian animus against industry. As Allen Going, the historian of this so-called "Bourbon" period of Alabama

¹⁰Prattville Progress, 12 May 1893, 16 March, 23 November 1894; Oral Interview with Lillian Atwood Strong, 16 August 1995; U.S. Census, 1910, Alabama, Population Schedule, Autauga County. A white former neighbor, John Barnes (born in 1910), recalls seeing Horatio Atwood picking fruit off his pear trees and quarreling with Barnes's parents over whether the Barnes's rose bushes were on his property. He remembers "old Horatio" as a "curiosity." Oral interview with John Barnes, 21 August 1997.

history, has admitted, "a majority of Democratic leaders and newspapers espoused the cause of industrial progress in Alabama."¹¹ Most Alabamians wanted more industry in their state. They simply did not want to have to pay out of their own pockets to attract it.

Throughout the nineteenth century, newspaper correspondents making pilgrimages to Prattville continued to evoke the name of Pratt with admiration and respect. Perhaps Prattville's greatest moment in the press spotlight occurred in 1882, when the town hosted the Alabama Press Association and Governor Rufus W. Cobb. A reception was held in the Sabbath School room of the Methodist church building, which, thirty years earlier, Pratt had called "probably the best brick building in Alabama." Under a

¹¹Going, Bourbon Democracy, 18-26, 109-46. Also see Michael Perman, The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1867-1878 (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London, 1984); Mark W. Summers, Railroads, Reconstruction and the Gospel of Prosperity: Aid under the Radical Republicans, 1865-1877 (Princeton, N.J., 1985); Samuel L. Webb, "A Jacksonian Democrat in Postbellum Alabama: The Ideology and Influence of Journalist Robert McKee, 1869-1896," Journal of Southern History (May 1996): 239-74. Ironically, Alabama's austerity policy inflicted great financial hardship on Merrill Pratt. In 1879, the government had repealed, for reasons of expense, the section of the Alabama Code requiring an annual examination of the State Treasurer's books. In 1883, State Treasurer Isaac Vincent fled to Mexico after having lost \$230,569 in state money through speculating in cotton futures. Vincent had signed a bond for \$250,000, but the only surety who had the financial wherewithal to pay after Vincent absconded was Merrill Pratt. The state finally reached a settlement with Daniel Pratt's nephew, whereby he paid Alabama \$37,000. Going, Bourbon Democracy, 88-89.

banner emblazoned with the legend "Welcome to the Press of Alabama," hung portraits of Daniel and Esther Pratt. Speeches were made by Charles Doster and the governor, the latter declaiming on how Pratt had not only built up Prattville, but also had left the means by which "much of the mineral wealth of Alabama had been developed." After the speeches, Merrill Pratt conducted the group on a tour of the town's factories. At the cotton mill, "factory girls" handed the press delegation bouquets of flowers, pinned with cards bearing messages such as this: "Our compliments with the hope that you, as one of the Pressmen of Alabama, will aid us in securing a railroad." After the tour, Prattvillians treated their guests to a bountiful barbecue in the town park, Magnolia Grove.¹²

When the press representatives returned home, they promptly printed extremely favorable notices about Prattville in the newspapers they edited, which included southern Alabama papers like the Montgomery Advertiser, the Opelika Times, the Hayneville Examiner, the Union Springs Journal, the Greenville Advocate, the Troy Messenger, and the Evergreen News and northern Alabama papers like the Decatur Weekly News, the Randolph County News, the Talladega Mountain Home, and the Fort Payne Journal. The statements expressed by the Greenville Advocate make clear that

¹²Prattville Southern Signal, 12, 19 May 1882. See also Ibid., 29 May 1885.

"New South" sentiment in Alabama had hardly died with Reconstruction:

What manufacturing can do for a Southern town, Prattville shows so plainly that he who runs may read. Prattville is a standing instance of the blessings which result from diversified industries in our Southern land. To the great fact that the South can, if it will, become pre-eminently the manufacturing section of the globe, Prattville bears mighty and convincing testimony.

For its part, the Montgomery Advertiser paid homage to Daniel Pratt, noting: "Prattville shows what one man can do." Nevertheless, the paper urged Alabamians not to sit around waiting for a Daniel Pratt to rescue them from the economic doldrums:

Are the citizens of the hundred and one little cities of Alabama, with natural advantages in their favor, to sit quietly down and grow old crying for Moses to lead them to the land of promise? If Mobile, Selma, Montgomery, Huntsville and other cities of smaller size have no Pratt among their people, cannot their citizens by combining their means, energy and enterprise, do the work of Pratt?¹³

The great lesson we should draw from Daniel Pratt's very successful career in Alabama is that, contrary to the assertions of a few contemporaries and the claims of certain historians, many southerners, before and after the Civil War, did want manufactures. That Daniel Pratt became a cultural hero in Alabama shows that the South was a much more diverse region than scholars often have allowed. From the 1840s to the 1870s, Daniel Pratt preached his

¹³Ibid., 12, 19 May 1882.

industrial gospel to a largely sympathetic audience, and when he died, he left his listeners an inspiring legacy of accomplishment to emulate, if they could.

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VITA

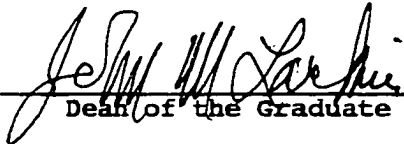
Curt J. Evans was born in Vermillion, South Dakota, October 30, 1965. He attended primary and secondary schools in Northport, Alabama. In 1983, he entered the University of Alabama; he received his bachelor of arts degree from that institution in 1987. The same year, he entered the law school of Vanderbilt University, and he received his juris doctor degree from Vanderbilt in 1990. He enrolled in 1991 at Louisiana State University, where he did graduate work in history. He received his master of arts degree from that institution in 1993. He was elected a member of the Alabama Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, 1987. He is currently a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, which will be conferred in May 1998.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Curt John Evans
Major Field: History
Title of Dissertation: Daniel Pratt of Prattville: A Northern Industrialist and a Southern Town

Approved:



Major Professor and Chairman

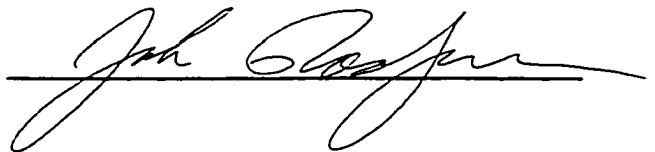

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:





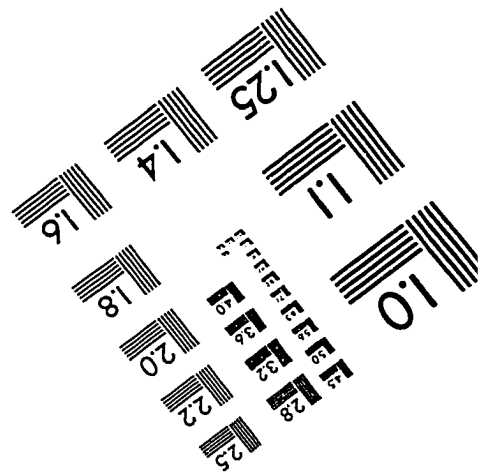
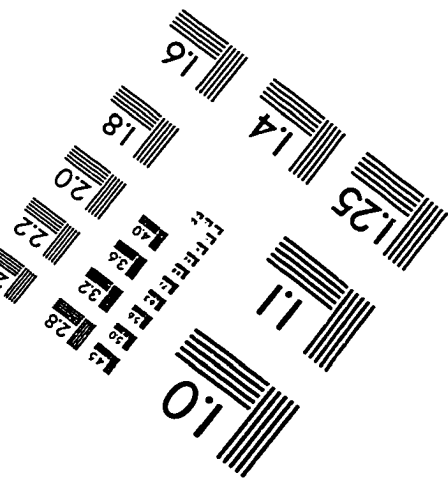
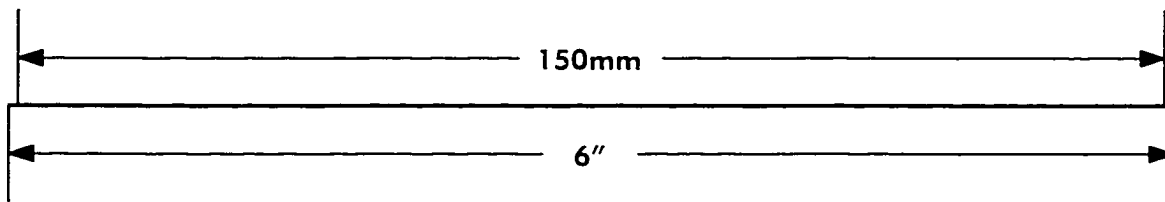
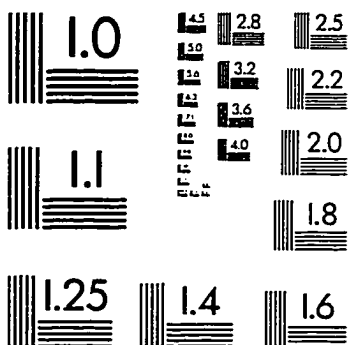
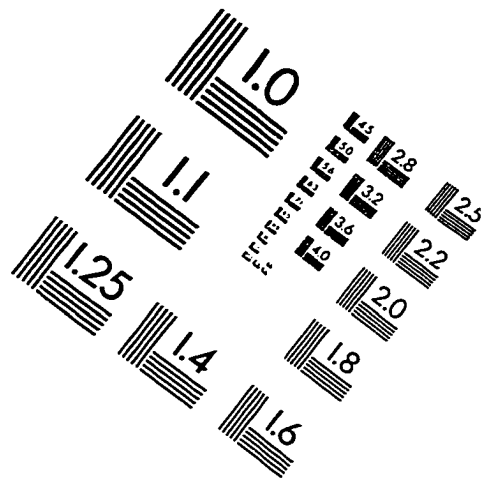
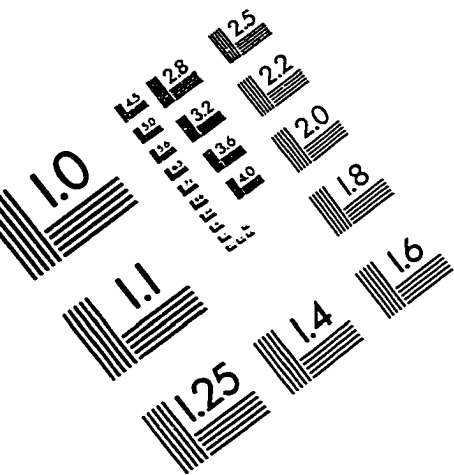




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