The Sugar Plantations of William J. Minor, 1830-1860

Charles L. Wingfield

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
THE SUGAR PLANTATIONS OF
WILLIAM J. MINOR, 1830-1860

A Thesis
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
Master of Arts
in
The Department of History

by
Charles L. Wingfield
B.A., Louisiana Polytechnic Institute, 1948
June, 1950
MANUSCRIPT THESES

Unpublished theses submitted for the master's and doctor's degrees and deposited in the Louisiana State University Library are available for inspection. Use of any thesis is limited by the rights of the author. Bibliographical references may be noted, but passages may not be copied unless the author has given permission. Credit must be given in subsequent written or published work.

A library which borrows this thesis for use by its clientele is expected to make sure that the borrower is aware of the above restrictions.

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE MINORS AND THEIR LAND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. PLANTATION MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SLAVERY</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. PRODUCTION AND SALE</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. PLANTATION PROBLEMS</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table                                         Page
I.    Stock Farm Profit, by Years               11
II.   Number of Slaves Owned, by Years         61
III.  Wages Paid Slaves for Services          73
IV.   Annual Production of Sugar at Waterloo,  83
      Southdown and Hollywood Plantations,
      in Ascension and Terrebonne Parishes,
      and in Louisiana, by Years
ABSTRACT

When the fertile regions of south Louisiana were devoted to the growth of sugar cane and the production of raw sugar on a commercial scale, resident farmers converted from cotton to the new staple, and planters from neighboring regions invested heavily in the new commodity. One such adventurer was Stephen Minor, whose one plantation in Ascension Parish was expanded into three in Louisiana by his son, William J. Minor. Waterloo plantation, as the Ascension land was called, and the two Terrebonne Parish plantations, Southdown and Hollywood, were operated on an absentee basis by William J. Minor until 1856, when he established residence in Terrebonne Parish. This Natchez, Mississippian, was able to acquire property worth $1,000,000 by 1860.

William J. Minor was typical of the sugar planters of Louisiana. He planted, harvested and manufactured his crop according to the established methods of the time. He found it necessary to borrow heavily to continue operations, yet made a reasonable return on his investment. He purchased and sold slaves, secured supplies through the use of a factor, and sold his produce through agents in New Orleans, New York, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and other port cities. The management of his plantations through overseers was typical, though
his attention to detail may seem unusual. Successful management enabled him to expand through the purchase of additional land and slaves. He attempted experiments in planting, harvesting sugar cane and making sugar, and sought satisfactory solutions to the multitude of problems with which sugar planters were faced.

This study is an attempt to present the phases of plantation management, production, sale and operation which an examination of the records kept by Minor and his overseers has shown. Its writing has been governed by the author's desire to contribute to the monographic material available regarding the economic aspects of sugar plantation management under the slavery regime.
THE MINORS AND THEIR LAND

The name Minor was one of the relatively few family names of ante bellum Louisiana sugar planters which long survived the Civil War.\(^1\) This family, which until late in the period kept its root-stems firmly anchored at Natchez, Mississippi, represented in the annals of Louisiana sugar culture much that was typical of the history of that agricultural commodity. They were among the first of the Mississippi planters who saw the potential wealth of sugar cane culture in the developing regions of south Louisiana.

The family's interest in Louisiana sugar lands began when the administrators of Stephen Minor's estate purchased, early in the nineteenth century, extensive holdings near the town of Donaldsonville, in Ascension Parish. The operation of this plantation, called Waterloo, and the family estate at Concord, near Natchez, was assumed by his son, William J. Minor, upon his return from school in the North in 1829. Later William J. Minor purchased both these plantations from the estate and added to his holdings with the purchase of

\(^1\) Henry Rightor, ed., Standard History of New Orleans (Chicago, 1900), 679.
Southdown plantation near the town of Houma in Terrebonne Parish, in 1845, and Hollywood plantation, which adjoined Southdown, in 1855. Purchases of smaller tracts, usually adjoining one of the plantations, were made as land and the financial means with which to purchase it became available.

The first of the Minor family to emigrate to America was Thomas Minor, who came to Salem, Massachusetts, in 1630. Stephen Minor was the great-great grandson of this pioneer, and the first of the family to come to the South. In 1780, at the age of twenty, he arrived in New Orleans on a mission to procure Revolutionary War military stores for the American posts on the Ohio and Monongahela rivers. When these stores were plundered, he returned to New Orleans and

---

2 This plantation had been purchased by John Minor, brother of Stephen Minor, for the estate of the latter, and in partnership with Van P. Winder. William J. Minor's purchase in 1845 was of Winder's interest in the plantation. See Conveyance Book, Parish of Terrebonne, D 4, March 6, 1828.

3 Conveyance Book, Parish of Terrebonne, U 21, May 27, 1845.

4 Conveyance Book, Parish of Terrebonne, R 18, April 10, 1856.


6 Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, undated letter. Cited hereafter as Minor papers, Minor letter-books, Minor diary, Minor plantation diary, and Minor journal, with dates or page numbers if available. For a description of the collection see bibliography.

fought with youthful governor Bernardo de Galvez in the campaign against Mobile. With the rank of Captain in the Spanish Army, he soon afterward proceeded to Natchez where he became adjutant of the military post. In 1792 he was a resident of the "South District and Sandy Creek," and was well acquainted with Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, commandant of the district. When the latter was made Governor of Louisiana, Stephen Minor became acting-commandant of the Natchez district, serving in that capacity from August 1, 1797, until the evacuation of the area by the Spanish in 1798. Later in the same year he was employed by the Spanish government as a representative in locating the international boundary. Between 1798 and 1804 Major Minor purchased Concord, the historic residence of the Spanish governors at Natchez, from Governor Gayoso. This plantation, with grants which Minor had received from the Spanish government, remained in the possession of the family until after William J. Minor's death in 1869.

---


9 Encyclopedia of Mississippi History, II, 248.

10 Ibid., 312.


12 Encyclopedia of Mississippi History, II, 44-45. These grants are also listed in Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clarke, ed., American State Papers, Class VIII, I (8 vols., Washington, 1832), 876.
Stephen Minor became an influential planter of the old Natchez region, and among other activities served as first president of the Bank of the State of Mississippi, which was established by act of the Territorial Legislature in December, 1809, and incorporated December 23, 1809. He died at the age of 56 on November 29, 1815, at Concord.

William J. Minor, son of Stephen Minor, was born in 1807 of the third marriage of his father, and received his early training at the family home. An unaddressed letter, revelatory of those early years and apparently written as a practice letter by his sister, reads:

Since our return to Concord William & Myself have been attending as usual to the studies of the Latin French Arithmetick Writing Spelling and Reading. We are now in the Book of Virgil and find it more interesting the further we proceed. The French also becomes much easier than at first and I think we shall soon be able to read it with more ease than the Latin.

This early schooling was followed by tutoring in Philadelphia. In 1827 Minor wrote to his mother that he wished to obtain a French tutor, and that he intended to study "Latten & English." "My reason for wishing to have a native French-man, is that I believe no foreigner, capable of teaching the correct pronunciation of a language, so

---

13 Ibid., I, 182.
14 Arthur, 363.
15 Minor papers, unaddressed letter, August, 1820.
difficult as the French." A few days later he wrote, "We are all very well & continue to be pleased with our situation, so much so indeed, that I am of the opinion, we had better not go to New Haven at all; in this opinion, Mr. Dinsmore concurs with me; this city affords decided advantages, over New Haven for learning to speak the French, & I believe possesses every other advantage, that N.H. does, if we except that, of breathing the classick air of the college, which I am afraid, might prove too cold for me, in the winter." He attended conscientiously to his studies while in Philadelphia, attending lectures on chemistry and philosophy and studying English, Latin, French and Spanish. On one occasion Dinsmore wrote to John Minor, brother of Stephen Minor and administrator of the latter's estate: "William [Is] in excellent health and studying very hard. You would be surprised to see how soon and how completely he has laid aside his fox-hunting habits. He never rides and is constantly at his books from breakfast until 6 or 7 in the evening,

16 Minor papers, William J. Minor to Mrs. Catherine Minor, July 7, 1827.

17 James Dinsmore, neighbor and traveling companion of William J. Minor.

18 Minor papers, William J. Minor to Mrs. Catherine Minor, July 25, 1827.
and I have not now the least doubt, that he will do better
where he is than he would have done any where else." Other
interests seem to have existed however, as indicated by this
comment in a letter from a Mr. Ogden\textsuperscript{20} to Mrs. Minor: "He
also delivers to the ladies in the house lectures on those
subjects \textit{Chemistry and natural philosophy} every day, which
proves very amusing to them."\textsuperscript{21} Minor's desire to remain in
Philadelphia may have been prompted in part by his courtship
with his future wife, a native of Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Several letters written during his stay in the North
indicate that Minor was troubled by a skin eruption which
ultimately influenced his return to Mississippi. Late in 1827
Ogden wrote: "Dr. Physic has abandoned the idea of arresting
the eruption on William's hands this winter- he says it
has resisted all his remedies, and the only thing he advises
is that he shall wear gloves lined with flannel, day and night-
his hands are so disfigured almost by this eruption that when
he goes out, he is obliged to wear his gloves all the evening."\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Minor papers, James Dinsmore to John Minor, October
5, 1827.

\textsuperscript{20} Ogden was paid $50 per month for his services as
the guardian of Minor during his period of study in the North.

\textsuperscript{21} Minor papers, Ogden to Mrs. Catherine Minor,
November 11, 1827.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}, November 24, 1827.
In 1829, William J. Minor married Rebecca Gustine of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and returned to Concord. Since the death of his father, the management of the family property had been in the hands of young Minor's uncle, John Minor. His return to Mississippi marked the beginning of his career as one of the more prominent planters of Mississippi and Louisiana. He assumed the managerial position over the family place near Natchez, and purchased from his father's estate Waterloo plantation in Ascension Parish. This plantation had been in the family as early as 1818, when John Minor managed it and other Minor property. William J. Minor produced cotton on this plantation and on land in Concordia Parish, Louisiana, and together with cotton grown at Concord in his mother's name, sold the staple to factors in Liverpool, New Orleans and New York. Until Mrs. Catherine Minor's death in 1844, much of Minor's time was consumed in the prosecution of his mother's affairs.

Minor's acquisition of property began almost immediately after his return to Concord from the North; he purchased Waterloo plantation for $35,000 from his father's estate. In 1837 the plantation consisted of 2,200 acres of land valued at $50 per acre, 183 Negroes worth $500 each, and farming

---

23 Minor papers, Duncan F. Kenner to John Minor, February 25, 1818.
24 Minor papers, Minor to Major Henry Chotard, May 27, 1848.
stock and equipment estimated to be worth $10,000. Thus the total value of the property, as listed in Minor's journal, was $211,500. Taxes for the same year amounted to $277. In spite of frequent inquiries regarding the purchase of land near Waterloo, the acreage had decreased by 1855 to 1,500 acres, valued at $75,000, but the number of slaves had increased to 228 and taxes to $820.32.

The purchase of land in Terrebonne Parish was followed in 1855 by the offering of Waterloo for sale. Plans called for the transfer of slaves from the Ascension place to Terrebonne, but the sale was not completed. The plantation remained in the Minor family until after the Civil War.

In subsequent years Minor's major interest was his sugar estates in Terrebonne Parish. The two adjoining plantations near Houma produced the larger portion of his income, and he eventually made his residence in that parish. Construction of the family home, which stands by the once active Bayou Black, was begun in 1855. The larger of these

---

25 Minor Journal, 1837.
26 Ibid., 5.
27 Minor letter-books, November 19, 1856.
28 Ibid.
29 Minor letter-books, November 28, 1855.
30 Ibid., July 23, 1855.
plantations, Southdown, had been purchased jointly by John Minor and James Dinsmore from James Bowie of Alexandria in 1828.  

John Minor's interest, purchased for the Stephen Minor estate, was later acquired by William J. Minor, who continued the partnership with Dinsmore. In 1849 the plantation contained 2,000 acres, and was priced at $80,000 in an unsuccessful effort to sell. Dinsmore's interest was sold one year later to Van P. Winder for $31,000. The terms of the sale included one half of all horses, cattle, farming utensils and corn or fodder to be made after the current crop.

In 1845 Minor succeeded in gaining possession of the entire plantation, the acreage of which had been increased to approximately 2,800; he purchased Winder's interest for $50,000, giving five promissory notes of $10,000 each, at eight percent interest, falling due in five successive years. The sale was secured by mortgage of the plantation, with delivery promised January 1, 1846. During the next three years the size of the plantation was further increased by one fourth, the total in 1849 being 3,500 acres. In the same

---

31 Conveyance Book, Parish of Terrebonne, D 4, March 6, 1828.
32 Ibid., I 9, December 10, 1841.
33 Ibid., U 21, May 27, 1845.
34 Mortgage Book, Parish of Terrebonne, C, May 24, 1845.
35 Minor letter-books, January 8, 1849.
year there were 210 Negroes and 164 animals, including oxen, cows and sheep.36

The success of Southdown plantation brought about the purchase of Hollywood plantation on the opposite side of the Bayou Black. This purchase from Tobias Gibson included approximately 1,657 acres of land, and was made in consideration of the sum of $36,000, payable in fourths, and bearing eight per cent interest per annum. Delivery was to be made on January 1, 1856.37 No slaves were included in the sale, necessitating the transfer of Negroes from Waterloo and Southdown and the purchase of others. A mortgage of "certain lands in Terrebonne Parish" to Stephen Duncan38 for $81,600 a few months prior to the purchase of Hollywood seems to have been the means of making improvements and purchasing additional slaves.39 By January of 1857 there were 28 slaves on the place,40 and the number had been increased to 58 by July;41 by 1860 there were

36 Minor diary, January 10, 1849.
37 Record of Original Acts, Parish of Terrebonne, 4, November 26, 1855.
38 Prominent Mississippi banker, doctor and agent. See Encyclopedia of Mississippi History, I, 666.
39 Record of Original Acts, Parish of Terrebonne, 4, May 9, 1855.
40 Minor letter-books, January 24, 1857.
41 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, July 26, 1857.
Minor owned property in Louisiana and Mississippi other than his sugar plantations. Separate records were kept after 1839 for the Stock Farm, as the cotton land in Concordia Parish was called. This property, consisting of 525 acres, was valued at $26,250, or $50 per acre. Entries in the account book for the Stock Farm indicate the profit which this land provided, shown in Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Proceeds</th>
<th>Profits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>$4,853.44</td>
<td>$14,926.76</td>
<td>$10,073.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>4,672.69</td>
<td>9,191.77</td>
<td>4,519.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>4,595.96</td>
<td>6,958.10</td>
<td>2,362.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>3,245.78</td>
<td>5,916.55</td>
<td>2,670.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>2,948.71</td>
<td>4,371.44</td>
<td>2,122.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>1,876.79</td>
<td>5,212.67</td>
<td>3,335.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>2,465.80</td>
<td>6,174.67</td>
<td>3,708.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE I
STOCK FARM PROFIT BY YEARS

Soon after the purchase of Southdown plantation, the Stock Farm was sold to L. W. Warner for $15,000.

---

42 Eighth Census of the United States, Louisiana, 1860, Schedule 2, from Microfilm of manuscript schedules, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University. Originals located at Duke University. Census records to be cited hereafter by number.

43 Minor Journal, 2.

44 Ibid., 50, 100-106.

45 Minor letter-books, October 28, 1846.
A larger investment than the Stock Farm was the Training Stable and Breeding Stud. Separate accounts were kept for this activity, which centered at Waterloo plantation, after 1837. An investment of $30,000 included horses valued at $15,000, and Negroes worth an equal amount.\(^{46}\) Entered on this account were all purchases of race horses, expenses for their upkeep, transportation and sale, entrance fees for races, purses won and lost, subscriptions and forfeits, and salaries paid jockies, stable boys and slaves for services. In only one year did Minor incur an actual loss on his race horses, according to records extant. In 1839 a debit of $4,370.12 was recorded, including an item of $3,000 representing ten per cent interest on the investment of $30,000. Other years for which records show a loss include this interest, the exclusion of which leaves a substantial margin of profit. Between 1846 and 1855 the balance was allowed to accumulate each year, and by the latter year the accounts indicated a credit of $21,217.86.\(^{47}\) Heavy gambling losses seem to have played no part in Minor's decision, in 1856, to "retire from the turf."\(^{48}\)

Minor's only other land acquisition of comparable

\(^{46}\) Minor journal, 4.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 3, 35-36, 120-126.

\(^{48}\) Minor letter-books, March 22, 1856.
value was his purchase in 1853 of the family home at Concord from the other heirs. The terms called for a sale price of $16,000, payable in one, two, three and four years, and bearing six per cent interest.\textsuperscript{49} He recorded as taxable property in Adams County (Mississippi) three pleasure carriages, one watch, one clock, six saddles and carriage horses, gold and silver plates worth $1,500, 35 slaves under 60 years of age, and 600 acres of land.\textsuperscript{50}

William J. Minor's position as a planter of the Old South carried with it the customary practices of his class. He entertained, traveled and became involved in lawsuits. He subscribed to the outstanding newspapers and magazines of the day and made an effort to acquire the classic literature which should appear in his library. He purchased champagne and whiskey and made donations to religious and charitable organizations. He was active in civic affairs, and served as a member of the board of trustees of Jefferson College at Washington, Mississippi, about ten miles from Natchez. Further proof of his distinguished position in Mississippi affairs is indicated by the fact that he was President of the Agricultural

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., November 9, 1853.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., June 11, 1857.
Bank of Mississippi in 1839 and 1840. His clothes were ordered from fashionable houses in New York, and instructions for their making were explicit. He demanded that articles purchased for personal and family use be of the highest quality. Like other planters, he borrowed heavily to meet previously incurred obligations and to make improvements. At times debts became so pressing as to cause considerable anxiety; appeals were made in condescending tone to agents in Natchez, New Orleans and New York.

The practice of extensive travel by members of the planter class in the Old South led them to numerous centers of social activity in their own section, to New York and Philadelphia, and occasionally to Europe. Minor made frequent trips to New Orleans, combining the business of plantation management and the pleasure of the gentleman class. During the racing season he spent several days there attending races at the Eclipse Course, entering his thoroughbreds and placing bets on favorites. Mail was usually directed to him in care of William E. Leverich and Son, commission agents with whom he contracted for supplies and the disposal of sugar and molasses.

51 Encyclopedia of Mississippi History, I, 189.
52 Matters of finance are discussed more fully in Chapter five.
Several trips to the North were made by Minor and members of his family. In April, 1843, he wrote to George Green and Son, commission agents in Liverpool, "We shall go North about the 15th of June- I shall want $500 in Eagles & quarter Eagles & about $3,000 in safe Bills on New York maturing from the 15th July to the 20th of August."53 His family accompanied him on this trip, which lasted until October.54 Again on August 12, 1850, he "left for the North via N.O. & Sea," and returned on October 20, "via Lakes & rivers."55 At least one other trip was made prior to the Civil War. He departed in July, 1854, and returned in October. Correspondence was directed to him in care of the firm of Charles P. Leverich, a New York commission house which made purchases in his name from Northern concerns, and which arranged for the sale of portions of his sugar and molasses.

Evidence points to only one trip to Europe. In 1835, an acquaintance in New Orleans wrote to William Odley of Liverpool, "I have much pleasure in introducing to your

53 Minor letter-books, April 21, 1843.

54 No entries appear in the letter-books until October 29, a fact which would seem to indicate the length of Minor's absence from Mississippi.

55 Minor plantation diary, 1847-1850, August 15 and October 20, 1850.
particular acquaintance W. J. Minor Esq of Mississippi who now visits England for the first time."57 Another planned trip abroad in 1851 was postponed, because Minor wished his son "to travel for a year or two after he graduates, which will be in 1852."58 Minor was unable to accompany his son on the journey of 1852.

Education of the Minor children was of a high caliber. Minor employed a tutor whom he paid $1,500 per year and who lived in the family home. This tutor was in charge of classes which were conducted at the Minor home and which were attended by the children of neighbors. Minor informed one inquirer: "It will afford me pleasure to have your three sons attend my school- The hours of tuition are from 8 A.M. to 2 P.M. except Saturday, when the School is dismissed at 10 or 11 o'clock- The discipline is mild, but Strict- No pupil taken for less than one year- No reduction made for non attendance except on account of sickness or dismissal- Terms $100--a year for each pupil- There will be about six weeks holiday during the year."59 Other letters indicate his willingness to accept the children of neighbors for the established tuition fee.7

57 Minor papers, Charles Odley to William Odley, April 12, 1835.
58 Minor letter-books, May 14, 1851.
59 Ibid., October 4, 1856.
Early tutoring for the Minor children at home was followed by preparatory work in Northern schools. In 1849, Minor wrote to John Mosby of Brighton: "I might have placed [his sons] at an other institution at considerably reduced rates—But, being well pleased with the progress of my Nephews, & having, in common with my late Sister, extra-confidence that the most Motherly care would be bestowed upon them by yr. very excellent lady—I determined to continue them under yr. charge—In a short time I expect to send you the younger of these three brothers. Having determined to place James in a counting-house, you will please shape his studies to that end—Instruct him to employ some time daily in booking keeping, computation of interest, discount etc. Stephen I shall send, if possible, to West-Point in a year or two, & wish him to pursue those studies (French, Mathematics, etc) which will best fit him for that institution."60 The eldest son, John, attended Princeton in 1848, although one source relates that he was a graduate of Harvard.61 Stephen was sent to Mr. F. A. Eastes school "at Milton, near Boston,"62 and later to West Point.

---

60 Ibid., April 25, 1849.


62 Minor letter-books, May 24, 1852.
No information has been discovered which would indicate the size of the Minor library. While William J. Minor was away in school, his mother wrote: "I have examined the Library, and do not find any History worthy of mentioning, it is principally composed of Geography, Biography, Travels, and the works of the best poets; if you are able to procure the Books you desire, I should prefer such as are embellished with plates." Entry in account books at a later date show the expenditure of $48.25 for five volumes of "Audubon's Birds." Another order in 1855 was for a "complete set of Ed. Burke's works in leather," while in 1857 he acknowledged receipt of "additional volumes of the 'British Poets', "Redding on Wines" and "the History of the Convention." At the same time he placed an order for "the 4 vols., just published by Little & Brown of 'English & Scottish Ballads'." These were to be bound to match the Poets, which were to be sent as they appeared. In addition Minor subscribed to such papers and periodicals as The Spirit of the Times, New Orleans Price Current, the New Orleans

63 Minor papers, Mrs. Catherine Minor to William J. Minor, August 24, 1828.
64 Minor Journal, 71.
65 Minor letter-books, September 6, 1855.
66 Ibid., May 23, 1857.
Picayune, the American Agriculturalist, and the local newspapers.

Minor's position as a leading citizen of Mississippi and later of Louisiana was responsible for his being called upon to serve in various capacities. He served as executor and administrator of the estates of friends and relatives, including prominent citizens of Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. On numerous occasions he acted as agent in collecting notes and debts and in purchasing and selling land. In 1857 he was made trustee of 75,000 acres of land in Hopkins County, Texas, for Colonel James Riley, Messers Marshall, Gwin and Leflone. For several years he served as the agent of George Green and Son of Liverpool, making purchases and sales in Louisiana and Mississippi and collecting notes in their behalf. One of the larger of such transactions was Minor's purchase, in 1852, of property in New Orleans known as the "Factor's Press," a cotton press with facilities for preparing cotton for shipment. The price which Minor paid for this property was not disclosed, but he informed Green that it had cost Lambeth, the previous owner, $168,000. The Liverpool concern expressed satisfaction with Minor's representation of its interests.

67 Ibid., August 19, 1852.
68 Ibid., August 31, 1852.
In spite of Minor's close association with Colonel Adam Bingaman, his political activities seem to have been few, and with few exceptions were not recorded in letters or diaries. His opinion on the Cuban question was similar to one which Olmstead found—"that the acquisition of Cuba would prove the ruin of our State." In a letter to General T. J. Wells of Alexandria, he further expressed his desire to see Cuban slaves freed:

I am in great hopes they will bully the Spanish Govt. into emancipating all the slaves on the Island—It would be the best thing that could happen for us. They talk about a free negro Island so near as being dangerous. Why we have had St. Domingo a free negro Island only 100 miles further off for the last 70 years. What are Barbadoes & Jamaica but free Negro Islands. If we acquire Cuba we add 800,000 negroes to our already too large slave population—If the slaves in Cuba are emancipated, we at once abstract the greater portion of the articles produced by their labour from the markets of the world—Creating thereby a want of those articles which must greatly advance their value, & consequently the value of the articles produced by our slaves. Slaves & lands in the U.S. would necessarily increase in value with the increased value of products of their labour—In ten years a million of Bags of Sugar would be made in the U.S.: to do which, a large force now employed in the Culture of Cotton would be diverted to the Culture of the Cane. The growers of cotton would therefore be equally benefited with the growers of Sugar.

---

69 Bingaman was a leader of the Whig party in Mississippi, and ran for public offices, including the United States Senate, on several occasions. His interest in blooded horses and the race track brought him into contact with Minor.

70 Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States (New York, 1856), 655.

71 Minor papers, Minor to T. J. Wells, January 5, 1854.
His sentiments regarding secession are best shown in an excerpt from his diary:

Mr. Kenner—D.F.—\[72\] Dined with him today with Genl Trist—A. Bingaman—O. Columbia & Jon. S. Minor—Regretted much to hear how lightly they talked of the 'Union' Messers K & T. thought the Sugar planters might suffer by a dissolution but the cotton planters would not, that some sort of connection would be effected with England—Perfect madness—What might be expected from men who move in favor of taking Cuba and the Nebraska bill—Mr. K is I think about to turn Democrat.\[73\]

During the Civil War Minor was a Unionist. His stand was a result of his belief that war meant the destruction of slavery. F. W. Klingberg records some of his activities during the war.

Captain William J. Minor, \[\text{was}\] an old line Whig and a very prominent Union man whose aid was sought by the Federal authorities in reconstructing the South. An ardent opponent of disruption of the Union, Captain Minor had written the governors of all the southern states, before the Articles of Secession were voted on, and used his influence to prevent their passage. General Benjamin F. Butler at New Orleans consulted him frequently, but William Minor refused a Commission to visit President Lincoln and discuss the state of affairs in the occupied portion of Mississippi and Louisiana, fearing it would bring further danger to his family.\[74\]

Francis Pendleton Gaines lists several traits of the southern plantation owner of romantic tradition—ignorance of business detail, size of estate and amount of income, and

---

72 A neighboring planter and friend of Minor.
73 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, June 28, 1856.
74 Klingberg, 31.
horror at any suggestion of economy—which do not apply to
Minor. Other traits attributed to this gentleman class--
fascination for blooded horses and the race course and
gamblers by nature--do apply. 75 Mention has been made of
Minor's investment in horses and their upkeep, record of
which was kept in a "Training Stable and Breeding Stud"
account. His list of race horses reveals names of champions
which were the contemporary counterparts of noted present-
day thoroughbreds. He was a gambler at heart, and appeared
to be liberal with members of his own family who were less
fortunate in wagers or at the gambling table than he. In
1856 a nephew, S. M. Wilkins, wrote to him confessing his
gambling habits and asking for $500 with which to clear him-
sell. Minor sent the money, but requested a signed pledge
from the young man that he would never "gamble at cards for
money," 76 indicating his distaste for at least one form of
gambling. Friendly bets were made with friends concerning
political contests and other matters. A wager with Colonel
Bingaman over the legal aspects of the organization of the
Commercial Bank of Natchez was for $500 and was "drawn by

---

75 Francis Pendleton Gaines, The Southern Plantation; A Study in the Development and Accuracy of a Tradition (New York, 1924), is an excellent source for the tradition which has grown up around the Southern planter.

76 Minor papers, Minor to S. M. Wilkins, May 6, 1856.
the consent of parties." 77 On the same day Minor bet
"Capt. Nevite $200.00 that Genl Zac Taylor would be elected
President if he is a candidate." 78

Small wagers seem to have been of little consequence
as compared with those centering around racing activities and
the race track. The racing season always found Minor in New
Orleans and Natchez in company with such Louisiana and
Mississippi enthusiasts as Alexander and William Barrow,
William J. Green, Duncan F. Kenner, Adam Bingaman, Montfort
Wells, and others. 79 At one time he was Chairman of the Ex-
ceutive Committee of the Metairie Association, and was respon-
sible for giving the activities of the Association proper
publicity in the newspapers of New Orleans, Natchez, Louisville
and other cities. On one occasion he noted that he expected
to attend the meeting at the National Course in New York during
September, 1854. 80 Through his subscription to the Spirit of
the Times he kept abreast of racing activities in his and other
parts of the nation.

Entries in personal diaries served as reminders to
Minor as to the date, number of subscriptions, number of

77 Minor diary, June 5, 1847.
78 Ibid.
79 Hodding Carter, Lower Mississippi (New York,
1942), 259.
80 Minor letter-books, July 5, 1854.
starters, forfeits, and possible winnings of future races. In January, 1847, he recorded that the November 1st meeting for three year olds at Natchez would start nine and "it may be worth to me $2,400." Another entry gave the entrance fees of an event 18 months in the future, and the possibility of winning $3,475.

Minor's reputation as a trainer of race horses brought inquiries from Kentucky and Tennessee about his acceptance of young horses, usually in exchange for an interest in the horse and a portion of the stakes that might be won. Such an arrangement was made with Charles Bosley of Nashville, whose colt Minor agreed to train for half of the future winnings. If the colt should turn out "no good for running", Minor would receive $50 for training him. Another colt, belonging to R. Hale (probably Richard Haile) of St. Francisville, was taken for half ownership and half of the net winnings of the horse. No small part of the receipts credited to the account of the stable were for the care, training and transportation of horses belonging to other turf enthusiasts, passage and care of horses belonging to Duncan F. Kenner amounting to $474.72 for

---

81 Minor diary, January 30, 1847.
82 Ibid., January 31, 1847.
83 Minor letter-books, May 26, 1850.
84 Ibid., March 28, 1850.
a one year period. The stud services of the horse Doncaster alone amounted to $1,600 over a period of four years.

Minor's most profitable horses were Joman, Voucher and Verifier. Joman returned $690 in 1847, while Voucher won $1,800 in one race. A compilation of the recorded purses brought in by 18 horses shows Minor's winnings between 1840 and 1855 to have been nearly $18,000, while the losses which were entered on the account of the Stable were only $4,066.66. Some of the losses may have been included in entries listed as expenses to and from the track, as these entries varied from as little as $90 for one trip to New Orleans to $700 and $800 for others to that city.

\[\text{Distaste was shown for any departure from the conventional in this entry from a personal diary:} \ \text{"Races terminated yesterday with a mule race--Which was won by Co. [Colonel] Bingaman's mule-- I consider that the Pharsalia Course has been desecrated by this mule race--Bingaman won three races and walked over for the fourth. If the Club survives this mule race it is immortal."}\]

\[\text{While Minor gave the sport his complete support, others considered it something short of a respectable business.}\]

\[85\ \text{Minor diary, 1849, undated.}\]

\[86\ \text{Minor Journal, 120-126.}\]

\[87\ \text{Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, March 22, 1857.}\]
Benjamin L. C. Wailes expressed such an opinion, and apologized that his seeing the champion, Lecompt, run was the first race he had witnessed in 20 years.\footnote{88} As president of the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College, of which Minor was a member, he recalled that the board favored a race track event, which "would narrow the thing down to the association of Sportsmen & that class and of course exclude the ladies and the better class of our community a course which I have ever opposed and cannot consent to give in to now."\footnote{89}

The gay spirit which accompanied Minor to the race track seems to have existed in his home. His exacting demands where business matters and the operation of his plantations were concerned were tempered with a wholesome degree of pleasure and relaxation. On frequent occasions the account books bore entries of payments for champagne, wine and whiskeys. Copies of orders attest to his demands that such purchases by factors be for liquors of only the best quality. Neighboring planters were invited to partake of the hospitality of the table and parlor, and gatherings of large groups were not uncommon. Minor wrote on one occasion that "A heavy rain broke up the picnic of the Knights of the Red Crescent," and that "the company took shelter at Concord and danced til sun

\footnote{88}{Charles S. Sydnor, \textit{A Gentleman of the Old Natchez Region}, Benjamin L. C. Wailes (Durham, 1938), 283.} \footnote{89}{Ibid., 164.}
On another occasion three of the Minor children were baptized and Minor noted that "In the evening we had a large & very successful party."91

An account of Minor's death on September 18, 1869, was recorded in the plantation diary by an employee:

At half past 5 o'clock on the morning of the 18th of Sept. Wm J. Minor died of Apoplexy he was in perfect health and spirits up to 9 or ten o'clock Friday Night the 17th. It was not known how he was first attacked- His son Henry C. Minor was with him at nine o'clock he was engaged writing at his writing desk and was then, perfectly well- his son retired to his bed room opposite to his Father's sat up an hour reading on looking at the transit over his Father's door, he saw his lamp burning- At eleven O'clock he was awakened by his Father calling him in an unnatural voice in the Hall, he went immediately to him and found him holding to the railing of the ![stairs]; on enquiring what was the matter? he answered 'I cannot see and what have I in my hand?' (he had a candle stick and a match) - Henry brought him into his bed room; he enquired where are you taking me to that is not my room. he continued to complain of blindness and a violent pain in his head; his son Stephen was then called they found their Father paralyzed on the left side arm and leg servants were then called and a Physician of Houma immediately sent for. he retained partially his faculties until half past twelve O'clock. he spoke of his intense suffering and compared it to red hot spikes running through his Forhead; he drew his two sons down to him and hugged them and kissed them, saying what a misfortune the rest of the family are not here and I fear I will never again be of any use to my family- The Physician Dr Blanchard arrived and pronounced it a violent case of Apoplexy. Mustard baths had been used and he was rubbed with mustard cupping, Emitic of Ipecac given, injection but nothing

90 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, May 16, 1857.
91 Minor diary, May 7, 1859.
gave any relief he fell into a state of coma, and continued in that state until he breathed his last; at half past five o'clock on the morning of the 18th. His sons Stephen and Henry and several of his most faithful servants performed the last offices of one who in life was respected, beloved and honored by all who knew him. His remains were taken to the Terrebonne Station from thence to the City of New Orleans and from there the Steamer Post-Boy conveyed them to Natchez, where many of his Relatives and Friends met them on the morning of the 23rd and he was taken out to Concord, his Birth place and his loved home of former days. He was buried by the side of his much loved son Duncan Minor, on Wednesday Afternoon at 5 o'clock. At the family burying ground, where his Father his Mother, his Sisters, his Brothers and where three of his sons were buried. His Funeral was large and most respectable. Mississippi has lost her noblest son.

His beloved wife and son William Minor arrived at Southdown Plantation nine hours after his death. His son William was informed of this fearful loss at the Terrebonne Station. Mrs. Minor not informed of it until within a mile of her home, Words will never be able to convey the fearful agony of that announcement—reason tottered on its throne. His beloved remains were followed by his wife and his sons William and Henry and were joined by his son Francis at Natchez. His son Stephen had to remain at Southdown as he was complaining with a severe cold.92

He was survived by his wife, one daughter, and four sons.

92 Minor plantation diary, 1869, undated.
PLANTATION MANAGEMENT

The ownership of three sugar plantations did not encourage William J. Minor to neglect the supervision of any of his holdings. Capable overseers were sought for the immediate supervision of planting, harvesting and care of slaves; but the watchful eye of a businessman with an investment of nearly $1,000,000 in 1860 insured the proper conduct of affairs on these plantations. Frequent attendance at sporting events in New Orleans did not take from the plantations such management as was necessary for their success. Meticulous attention to detail in all phases of large scale operation wrought gains comparable to those of the most successful planters.

With the exception of one period of two years, the Minor plantations were operated on an absentee basis until 1856, when Minor established residence in Terrebonne Parish. After that date, the plantations in that parish were under his more direct supervision, while the Ascension Parish land continued to be operated as before. During both periods however, overseers were employed. Contact with the plantations was maintained through letters between overseer and owner, and through frequent visits to the plantations. No schedule of dates, with regularity, existed for such visits; they were
made as frequently as twice monthly when necessary, or dispensed with for intervals as long as two months, depending upon the season of the year, the nature of operations underway, and the pressure of other demands upon the owner. Most trips consisted of a visit at all three plantations, and included an over-night stop in New Orleans. Minor went by river boat to Waterloo, thence to New Orleans, and returned by way of Southdown and Hollywood.

During the grinding season, which usually began between October 15 and November 1, and ended near Christmas, Minor remained on the plantations. A week at one was followed by several days at each of the others. If weather, the condition of the sugar mills, and satisfaction with the work of those engaged in converting the standing cane to raw sugar permitted, he departed for Concord to visit his family and attend to business matters which had accumulated during his absence. His immediate return to a plantation needed only the slightest provocation; a break-down could be costly, as it was sometimes necessary to continue operations on a 24 hour basis in order to prevent damage by frost or ruin of cane or sugar being processed. The nature of sugar cane harvesting demanded his presence or availability during the entire grinding season. Only when cholera or yellow fever existed among the Negroes or on a neighboring plantation did Minor vacate during the grinding season or remain away from the plantations for over two months at other times. During absences of this type
correspondence with the overseers was regular and contained specific information and instructions regarding operations. Two such absences occurred in the year 1855. Early in the year Minor spent several months in Natchez, depending upon written instructions to overseers to accomplish the tasks which he considered it his responsibility to supervise.

During the grinding season of the same year an epidemic of yellow fever isolated Minor in Natchez, and it was not until November 29 that overseer Gray thought it safe for the owner to return.  

One of the most demanding aspects of plantation management was the acquisition of supplies. The responsibility of keeping adequate food and clothing available for slaves was assumed in this case by the owner. Records of supplies on hand, kept by the overseer, served as inventory from which Minor deduced the needs of his plantations. Inquiries in letters to factors provided the names of suppliers with the best product at the cheapest price. Purchases were made from those dealers who offered the best assurance that restitution would be made in the case of unsatisfactory merchandise.

The largest expense for a single item of food was for pork. Purchased in barrels, it was the meat staple in the

---

1 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, November 29, 1855.
slaves' diet. During one year, 1838, consumption of this food staple was 130 barrels on Waterloo plantation. The expenditure of approximately $1,000 annually on each plantation for this item demanded the careful watching of price quotations from the various dealers; Minor once wrote, for example, to E. I. Gay of St. Louis, "What will probably be the opening price of Pork in the fall?" Further indication of his determination to save on his purchases of pork is shown in an order for 420 barrels in 1858. A postscript on the order informed the addresses that the writer had just learned of an increase in price to $13, and that the order must be held until it could be obtained for $11. The size of the order would indicate that the purchase was for all three plantations.

Most purchases for beef and pork were from the firm of Eli Odom of Gallatin, Tennessee. Prices fluctuated from year to year, ranging from $12.75 for prime pork in 1847 to $10.50 in 1849 and $7.50 in 1850. Expenditures in the latter year for pork and beef amounted to $953.08, and in 1851 the cost was $1,436.23.

---

2 Minor journal, 4.
3 Minor letter-books, July 11, 1855.
4 Ibid., January 21, 1858.
5 Minor diary, March 4, 1847, March 4, 1849, March 6, 1850.
6 Minor diary, March 6, 1850; Minor letter-books, May 23, 1851.
The care exercised in purchases of pork was typical of all purchases. In 1855 Minor wrote to a Cincinnati concern the terms upon which he would purchase the item:

I will give you Twelve dollars & fifty cents ($12.50) a barrel for Four hundred & twenty five (425) barrels best Mess Pork delivered free of expense to me—25 barrels at Natchez care John H. Hames—200 at Waterloo Plantation, 2 miles below the foot of Claiborne Island, opposite side of the river—& 200 at Donaldsonville—care—Gintry, Post Master—or on board of one of the Lafourche boats at Donaldsonville, or New Orleans. The pork to be fully guaranteed in every respect—that is to keep sound & sweet for twelve months, to weigh out not less than 200 lbs a barrel, to be packed with coarse or rock salt, to be corn fed heavy Mess meat, none but mess pieces, according to the strictest rules of packing best Mess pork, to be put in—You to agree to refund, in case of loss by reason of non-fulfillment of any one of the above stipulations, on the statement of one of my overseers. If, you accept the above terms, you can draw on me at ninety days.

Another item which Minor considered it his responsibility to purchase was clothing for the Negroes. Included in orders for clothing were cloth, buttons, hats, head handkerchiefs, and shoes and boots. Cloth purchases were for jeans and linsey, in lots of several hundred yards. One diary entry served as a reminder that there was need for 975 yards jeans at 38 cents per yard, and 755 yards linsey at 28 cents per yard. Waterloo, Southdown and Natchez Negroes were to be supplied by this order. Later in the same month an entry

---

7 Minor letter-books, February 5, 1855.
8 Minor diary, February, 1847.
showed an increase in the size of the order. The Waterloo needs had increased to 1,250 yards of jeans and linsey, while the amount for Southdown was listed as 950 yards.9

Shifting, or material for women's skirts, was ordered in lots of 300 or 400 yards for each plantation. "Pensacola cotton" was used for men's shirts, and one order for supplies included an item of "1,000 plantation buttons."10 Male field hands received "glazed hats," and "head handkerchiefs" were given to women laborers.11 Other orders included "stuff for children 100 yds", cradle blankets, white jeans and linsey, blue denim, white cotton for shirting, brown cotton for shifting, and white cotton for lining.12 One shipment, received in 1850, consisted of 4,250 yards of jeans, linsey, lining, shifting and blue denim, and was divided between Waterloo and Southdown.13

On trips to the plantations, Minor recorded in his pocket diary the supplies which each place needed. The above orders for cloth were compiled from such notations, as were orders for shoes, medicine, machinery and miscellaneous

9 Ibid., March 22, 1847.
10 Minor letter-books, July 10, 1848.
11 Minor diary, October 13, 1847.
12 Ibid., October 24, 1847; Minor letter-books, March 31, 1850.
13 Minor diary, March 30, 1850.
articles. Waterloo Negroes used 162 pairs of shoes in 1840, and in 1848 an order showed the need for 334 pairs of shoes and 88 pairs of boots for Southdown and Waterloo.\textsuperscript{14} Expenditures for shoes and boots for these two places in 1849 were $552.20.\textsuperscript{15} By 1857, after the acquisition of Hollywood plantation, 587 pairs of shoes were required.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Purchases of medicine were made through factors in New Orleans and New York. Physicians recommended prescriptions annually for combating the plagues of cholera and yellow fever; Minor purchased the ingredients for these concoctions and prepared them on the plantations.} One particularly interesting order, from a factor in New York, was for opium, sulfate of copper, Peruvian bark, gentian extract, aloes, oil of sassafras and ammonia. Instructions for shipping were explicit: half of the merchandise was to be purchased in one store and half in another. Shipping boxes were to be of the best construction and water tight, and no one was to be allowed to see the bill of medicine, the cost of which was about $200.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Minor letter-books, February 5, 1848.

\textsuperscript{15} Minor diary, January 28, 1850.

\textsuperscript{16} Minor letter-books, September 1, 1857.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., January 25, 1843.
Besides the phases of management which the care of slaves required, Minor concerned himself with the purchase of all other supplies for the operation of his plantations. Lumber for the construction and repair of buildings, "Sheldon's fire proof paint," material for making carts, saws, files—all were purchased by the owner. [The duties of the overseer did not extend to the purchase of such supplies, except when specific instructions were given for such action] In 1857 Minor informed the overseer at Waterloo that he could "draw on Messrs Wm. E. Leverich & Co—New Orleans for the price of the shingles," and that he should draw his draft "after the form enclosed."\(^{18}\) Commission agents in New Orleans were informed when a change in overseers occurred, and were instructed to honor his orders. When Isaac Gibson was employed as overseer at Waterloo, the employer instructed E. Layton and Company of New Orleans to accord him the privilege of ordering supplies;\(^{19}\) but other evidence seems to indicate that overseers were not unrestricted in the purchase of supplies.

Minor showed no lack of interest in the daily progress being made on the plantations and in the condition of crops. He demanded that his overseers correspond regularly with him during periods of his absence, and that their letters contain

\(^{18}\) [*Ibid.*., March 7, 1857.]

\(^{19}\) [*Ibid.*., June 5, 1934.]
accurate figures as to the size of the cane, its condition, and any irregularities which might exist. He complained once that overseer Douglas had written from Southdown and "did not say one word about the crop." 20 His instructions to his son William, bookkeeper at Southdown, were to have the overseer "write by the Princess & give me the height of the cane. Do you write also, if you can't come up, & tell me every thing that is going on—How the cane & corn look, & how the peas in the different cuts are, as to stand, etc.—I want a list of all the stock." 21

Frequent letters to the overseers contained instructions about planting, working the crops, and conservation of feed. One overseer was instructed to "make the boys put all their ploughs in side the lot . . . They have got in the habit of leaving them in the road." 22 Another letter reads: "I have not heard from you for some time; but, understand you had a good rain some days since—Which I hope will save yr. corn crop— As I have before observed don't let yr corn suffer a day for the want of work— I have ordered for you in all 900 bushels corn & oats which must last you till the 1st of September, or longer. Pick out some of the best corn & keep it for seed." 23

20 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, June 6, 1857.
21 Minor letter-books, July 14, 1855.
22 Ibid., July 22, 1855.
23 Ibid., May 22, 1855.
Overseers were required to write in the plantation diary each day the work which had been accomplished. These entries listed the number of ploughs working in each field, the number of negroes engaged in performing each job, and the amount of work done, such as the acreage broken or planted. Minor examined these diaries when he made visits to the plantations, and often commented on the judgment of his overseers in matters of planting and working crops.

Entries in personal diaries indicate that Minor watched closely the operations of his neighbors, and compared the fruits of their labor with those of his own. After a visit to Mr. Doyal's field, he observed that his ploughs "cut about 8 ins deep by 14 wide with 3 yoke of oxen & a man & a boy. I think the shape of Mr. D's mould board is better than mine [though] in all other respects I think my ploughs are the best." When he found his neighbors conducting operations which might be superior to his, he recorded their methods and waited to compare the results, using them himself if they proved to be advantageous. More often his observations were of practices which he thought to be poor management. He considered Mr. Doyal's practice of planting inferior, uncut tops "6 & 8 in a row--covering about 1½ ins deep" to be bad judgment.

24 Minor plantation diary, 1847-1850, February 8, 1849.
25 Ibid.
When cholera broke out on Duncan F. Kenner's plantation, Minor thought it "due to bad management or no management at all."26

These neighbors criticized Minor's management with equal severity. He recorded in his diary one remark made by Kenner: "I was informed today that Mr. Kenner was of the opinion that my Front Cling field was so wet when it was planted that it would not come up— Stick a pin here & see what Mr K's opinion is worth— Mr. Doyal was of the opinion that the above field was covered too deep I told him—I endeavoured to cover 4 ins deep as recommended by Mr. Bingaman— he said B was a very good lawyer but he expected he was a poor planter."27 These remarks may have been justified, as Minor found it necessary later to replant the "Cling Field in the front," observing that "a great deal of the cane sprouted" but the shoots were "dead under ground."28 Further evidence of his interest in the comparison of his crops with those of his neighbors is shown by entries giving the production of sugar on their places and his. In most cases his cane proved to be inferior in size to that of neighboring planters.

26 Minor letter-books, January 8, 1849.
27 Minor plantation diary, 1847-1850, January 24, 1849.
28 Ibid., April 6, 1849.
Minor's observations extended further than to the condition of crops in the immediate vicinity of his plantations. Since the success of plantation economy depended upon a knowledge of potential production, he endeavoured to familiarize himself with the prospects for prices and production. In 1849 he considered that "near 1/3d of the plant cane in this Parish [Ascension] will not come up." He compared the condition of crops in the current year to that of past years, and commented in 1853 that although the crop looked very well, it was a full three weeks behind that of the previous year. Two years later he opined, "The corn crop of Miss & La will be the best corn grown in those states- The cotton crop is very promising- The cane crop is generally not good, the stand of cane being bad, & the crop backward for the season." In arriving at the price which he would set for his 1857 crop of sugar he used sound judgment.

The crop of Sugar of 1854 was 346,000 Hoags & that of 1855 was 231,000 & I got nine (9) cents- The crop of 1856 was only 73,000 Hoags & I got 11 cents- The crop of 1857 can not exceed 300,000 Hoags with light Stock all over the world & the Cuba crop proving shorter than was expected, any thing like prime Sugar, such a crop, for instance at Hollywood will, in my judgment, go up to seven cents. The crop of 1854 & 5 added together make 577,000- Those of 1856 & 7 make only 373,000 Hoags--or 200,000 Hoags less

29 Minor letter-books, April 12, 1849.
30 Ibid., May 12, 1853.
31 Ibid., July 11, 1855.
for the two years. 32

Thus he justified his action in refusing six cents for his
crop, and in ordering that it be held for seven cents.

While the greater portion of Minor's relationships
with neighboring planters were either entirely friendly or in
a wholesome spirit of competition, there were times when law
suits arose to settle disputes over land titles, breach of
contract or the payment of damages. One such suit, the de-
tails of which will be discussed more fully in a later chapter,
arose when Minor presented Henry Doyal with a bill for $31,260
covering damages incurred to his property as a result of a
crevass on Doyal's place. 33 A Natchez lawyer was directed, in
1849, to bring suit against Brown Cozzens for failure to comply
with a contract to supply Minor with a certain amount of lumber
during the month of August. 34 A warning was issued to Edwin
Griffin:

A party of men have been & are now cutting & wasting
my timber in a most shameful manner for the purpose,
as they say, of making or mending the New River road,
& by yr authority- I know of no law by which you or
any one else can take my timber, without my consent,
to mend or make even a public road--much less a private
one--As this road is known to be- I shall therefore hold
you responsible for all timber that has been or may be
cut on my land, & I hereby warn you not to cut, yrself,
or allow any one else, under yr authority, to cut

32 Ibid., March 9, 1858.
33 Ibid., 1852, undated.
34 Ibid., May 6, 1849.
timber on my land for any purpose whatsoever.\(^{35}\)

On another occasion he "found Wm. Botts & Thos. Norwood taking wood off my land & putting it on a boat—Requested them to desist which they refused to do—Told me to see no name given."\(^{36}\) Arbitration was suggested by Minor when a Philadelphia concern, R. Patterson and Company, charged in excess of the agreed price of $5 per hogshead for freight on sugar. He suggested that each party choose one member of an arbitration board, both to choose a third in case of disagreement.\(^{37}\)

In keeping with his practice of remaining well informed on the latest methods of production and the most efficient means of increasing crop yield, Minor made inquiries concerning the cost of new equipment, and purchased additional machinery when such action assured greater efficiency or production. He wrote Cook and Fallen, New Orleans suppliers, concerning the cost of lengthening his sugar mill boilers. He desired boilers of sufficient length to supply the required amount of steam to produce 30 hogsheads of sugar in 24 hours.\(^{38}\) He was among the early planters who saw the advantage of steam over horse power for the operation of sugar mills. He conducted numerous

---

35 Ibid., August 8, 1848.
36 Minor diary, June 6, 1849.
37 Minor letter-books, November 1, 1850.
38 Ibid., March 6, 1857.
experiments on the plantations with various types of cane and methods of processing sugar. 39

While the owner assumed the duties of purchasing supplies, making improvements and formulating policies, the immediate supervision of slave labor and discipline, planting and harvesting was the responsibility of the plantation overseer. One writer has said that to this employee was frequently entrusted property worth $50,000 to $100,000. 40 In the case of the William J. Minor sugar plantations in Louisiana the value of property entrusted to his three overseers was nearer $1,000,000 by 1860. 41 Minor sought for the position of overseer men who had the advantage of several years of experience in managing sugar plantations. The degree of control over daily tasks which the owner delegated to him carried with it the responsibility of making a profit, a factor which determined the length of his period of employment. The overseer who, through his incapability or negligence, failed to

39 Experiments and attempts at scientific farming are discussed in Chapter five.


41 See James D. Hill, "Some Economic Aspects of Slavery, 1850-60," The South Atlantic Quarterly, XXVI (1927), 166; Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Economic Cost of Slaveholding," Political Science Quarterly, XX (1905), 267. Prime field hands brought $1,800 in Georgia in 1860; it is safe to assume that prices were higher in the fertile regions of Louisiana. In 1860 Minor owned 566 slaves, three plantations, and the equipment and implements necessary to operate them.
return for the owner a fair margin of profit, or who failed to maintain the standards which an elaborate set of regulations set forth, was relieved of his duties at the expiration of his contract.

The social position of the overseer was somewhere between that of the free Negro and the mass of white non-slave holders. As such, his position was not an enviable one, and his relations with his owner-master were in a business, and rarely a social vein. Living in a house owned by the plantation owner, and receiving his supplies from the big house, he was eternally in a position of subjugation. Unless his abilities gained for him the respect of his employer, thereby guaranteeing to some extent his continued stay, he had no assurance of employment beyond the end of the current season. Writers have depicted him as a wanderer, seeking an owner with whom his relations would be more cordial, or merely abandoning his job for a look at more country. In either case, he was the means whereby the plantation owner was relieved of the arduous tasks of everyday plantation management, and Minor never attempted the supervision of his plantations without an overseer's aid.42

42 Planter-overseer relations are treated in John R. Commons, and others, ed., A Documentary History of American Industrial Society (10 vols., Cleveland, 1910); Edwin Adams Davis, Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, 1836-1846, As Reflected In the Diary of Bennett H. Barrow (New York, 1943); Weymouth T. Jordan, Hugh Davis and His Alabama Plantation (University, Alabama, 1948); Ulrich Bonnell Phillips and James David Glunt, ed., Florida Plantation Records from the papers of George Noble Jones (St. Louis, 1927). See also Bassett.
The daily routine of the overseer consisted of working / the slaves in groups, usually with the aid of a "driver," see ing that stock had proper care, ringing the curfew bell, and making the rounds of the cabins. His duties were to care for stock and slaves, see that good food was produced for use on the place, raise the commodity which the plantation pro duced, discipline and attend to the moral care of the slaves, administer regulations governing marriage, and inspect food to see that it was wholesome. Minor formulated his own set of rules and regulations for his overseers. Its reproduction here is to show the demands which years of experience had proved to be necessary for the successful operation of a large sugar plantation. These rules and regulations might be called typical of those any plantation owner would have required his overseer to follow. Their entry in a "Rule Book" is dated 1861, but is it safe to assume that they constitute a summary of the rules by which overseers had been required to operate for years prior to that date.

Rules and Regulations

He will give the whole of his time and talents to the interests of his employer. He must treat all the negroes with Kindness and humanity both in sickness and in health. When sick he must see that they have every necessary attention & convenience & that the Doctors directions are strictly attended to in every particular. He must see that the hands are at work as soon as they can to work and that one and all do a good days work according to their strength.

---

44 Ibid., 11.
He will give most particular attention to the hands at work in the field while engaged in planting the crops of various kinds. At other periods he will give as much of his time to the field hands, as he can possibly spare from the other necessary duties of the plantation.

He must not strike the negroes with anything but his whip, except in self defense. He must not cut the skin when punishing, nor punish in a passion; He must not use abusive language to nor threaten the negroes, as it makes them unhappy and sometimes induces them to run away.

He must examine the quarters (after ringing of the bell at night to see whether the negroes are all at home or not) once or twice a week & he must require the drivers to do it every night and to report absentes every morning in the field.

The bell for retiring to their own house, must be rung at 9 o'clock at night and the people must be in their own houses in 15 minutes after in spring and summer & in 30 minutes fall & winter.

He must not allow the negroes to go off the place without a pass nor must he allow negroes to come on the place without a pass & must require them to present themselves & passes to him before going into the quarters or about the place. He must not allow preaching of any sort on the place nor allow the negroes to go off the place to hear any kind of exhortation.

Men must not be allowed to beat their wives nor parents or other relations to punish the children severely.

Marriages must not take place until after a months notice of the intentions to be given by both parties. Divorce can only take place after similar notice. Parties divorced can not remarry without agreeing to receive 25 lashes laid on. Unless they had agreed to take that number for the privilege of parting.

He must cause the stock to be counted and sueted twice a week. The sheep and hogs must be pruned and counted every night, any increase or decrease reported immediately. The sheep work horses & oxen must be sueted twice a week, report of the quantity of the various kinds of stock must be entered. He must not suffer the negroes to swear or to use bad language in his presence or hearing or do any thing disrespectful--nor make a MSS. illegible in the quarters--nor talk loudly while at work. Neither must he allow any quarreling or fighting among the people--or any of them to Keep dangerous Knives or weapons of any Kind.

He must not allow the negroes to keep or use spiritous liquors of any Kind.
He must see the various rations given out & that the food (particularly the bread & vegetables) be well cooked & delivered at proper hours to the houses.

He must visit the stable every day at 12 o'clock and at night & see that the horses & mules are well fed. He must see that the gearing of the work horses and oxen is properly adjusted and that it does not pull, shafe or fret them.

Note
(Negroes are in the habit of regulating the depth of the plow by the back hand, thereby throwing the whole weight of the draft on the back of the animal working they are also fond of reining upon the head of the animals in such a manner as to prevent them from throwing their weight into the collar.)

He must see that the houses & Quarters are cleaned up once a week--Especially the back yards.
He will see that the negroes dress clean every Sunday.
He will not allow the Mechanics to make or sell any of their work without special permission.
He will not allow any of the mechanics hired on the place to strike or in any way to ill-treat the hands put under them.

When necessary to punish, he will inflict it, in a serious, firm & gentlemanly manner & endeavor to impress the culprit that he is punished for his bad conduct only and not for revenge or passion.

He will take care that the farming utensils are regularly brot home & put away in order, so that they may be ready at a moment's warning. It is a bad way to put away tools in bad order & then have to repair them when wanted.

He will see that all ditches drain well. He will work them as he works the crop & so Keep them clear all the year.

He must not allow the negroes to use the horses, carts or waggons with out special permission. Neither must he allow the hands to ride to and from the fields in the carts when they happen to be going and coming at the same time, serious accidents have occurred from the habit.

He must have a book in which he will record all the Births and deaths as they occur on the place.

A receipt & forwarding book in which all articles received at the place or sent or shipped from the place are to be entered with the date of each transaction, prices & name of vessel or boat when Known.

Also a plantation book in which he will record im- portant and interesting events, such as when the planting of cane commenced & finishes ditto corn, potatoes etc.
When it first marks the rows, when it begins to sucker—
when he commences to lay by & when he finished & the
sizes of the cane at these periods.
Also a wood a book in which he will record at
night the amt cut that day as reported by the receiver.
He must require the seamstresses to make the
clothes in a neat and strong manner & to put a mark
upon weak piece as will distinguish it.
He must preserve all the manure that he can.
He must be ready if possible to commence grinding
by the lat day of October, if possible.
He must have the wood cut for each year as soon
as possible after planting & have it split, when the
timber will admit it as fine as steamboat wood.
He must take care and have the land well prepared
before planting and plant in the neatest and best
manner.
He must require the person who has charge of the
Engine to report every week the state and condition
of the Engine & Grist mill.
He must require the persons who grind corn to re-
port every night that the fire in all the boilers is
out and he must go and see that it is so.
He must not leave the plantation except on business
of his Employer. He must never remain off the place
at night under any circumstances, without the consent
or Knowledge of his Employer. 45

It will be noticed that more attention is given in
these rules to the care of slaves than to the other duties
of the overseer. This seems a natural development if the
investment which Minor had in Negroes is considered. By 1860,

45 Minor plantation diary, 1861-1868. Minor's in-
structions to overseers contain points included in published
articles concerning the management of plantations and slaves.
See De Bow's Review, X, 325-328, 621-625; XVII, 421-426; XIX,
358-363; XXI, 617-620; XXII, 376-381; XXXII, 154-157.
there were 566 slaves on the three plantations in Louisiana, representing an investment of over $500,000. No degree of laxity could be tolerated in the prevention of loss by epidemics of disease, runaways or cruel beatings.

The sugar plantation overseer in Louisiana was paid more than the overseer in the cotton producing areas. While those of Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi were receiving salaries ranging from $200 to $750 per year, Minor was paying his overseers $1,200 and $1,500. This was probably due to the greater margin of profit in sugar and the necessity of employing an overseer who could assure the success of the individual crops. Sound observation and judgment were necessary in a battle with the elements to overcome the vicissitudes of sugar cane culture. If high salaries were necessary to get men who could win over the problems, the sugar planters were willing to pay them. As early as 1836, Minor paid the Waterloo overseer $1,250 per year. The salary of the same overseer was increased to $1,500 in 1840, but dropped in 1843 to $1,200. An inexperienced hand, who had served as carpenter, was employed as overseer for $600 in 1848. The average salary for an experienced man seems to have been $1,200, with increases up to $1,500 if his work proved satisfactory. In addition to regular salary a bonus was paid in some years, probably for

---

46 Compiled from Eighth Census, Schedule 2.

47 Minor Journal, 58 et seq.
extra work and increased produce. This bonus seldom exceeded $200 or $300.

No record of written contracts between Minor and his overseers has been found. Diary entries noted the hiring of new overseers, and gave the terms by which the period of employment was governed. The habit of leaving a job at a crucial time prompted Minor to make the agreement that an increase in salary would be made if an overseer stayed as long as a year. In 1847 he "Employed Mr. Jas. Scott as overseer at Waterloo at $800 per annum if he stays the year, and if not, at $50 a month for the time he may stay." The same terms were given James K. Metcalf in 1852, while Arthur St. Amant was engaged at the rate of $1,200, "the engagement to be dissolved by either party when ever dissatisfied." Such verbal agreements evidently proved sufficient.

Minor had only seven overseers between 1830 and 1860 who were satisfactory enough to remain in his employ for more than two years. Of these, two died while in his employ, and another became unsatisfactory and was discharged. Of those who remained for less than two years, various reasons caused their discharges; incompetence, insolence, and negligence of duty were responsible in most cases.

48 Minor diary, January 21, 1847.
49 Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, December 13, 1852.
50 Ibid., December 29, 1853.
The first overseer of record was Isaac Gibson of Waterloo. From 1836 until 1840 he received a salary of $1,250, and in 1844 an increase was made to $1,500. His relations with Minor were friendly at and after the time of his departure in 1845. It is probable that he left Minor's employ to farm his own land, as Minor attempted to sell him a slave some months after he left. Correspondence between the two points toward their continued friendship.

Gibson's successor at Waterloo was John C. Potts, whose length of service was somewhat shorter. Early in 1847 he was replaced by another unsatisfactory overseer, James Scott. Scott's salary was set at $800 for the year, unless he left before the year was out. In that event he was to receive $50 per month for the time he had served. In August, at the end of his seventh month with Minor, he was paid $350 and released.

Minor's experience with these two men obviously prompted his action in replacing Scott. Instead of hiring another overseer with whom he had no acquaintance, he promoted Alexander Nisbet, a carpenter who had been in his employ for two years. Since Nisbet was inexperienced as an overseer, he was unable to obtain an increase in salary. His pay was

51 Minor journal, 62.
52 Minor letter-books, January 14, 1845.
53 Minor diary, August 16, 1847.
$50 per month, the same as he had received as a carpenter. He proved to be a capable overseer, and remained in Minor's service until his death as a result of a heart attack in 1852. By that time his account had been credited with $4,000, the disposal of which was made through the guardian of his heirs in Pennsylvania.

When Nisbet died Minor was forced to engage another man whose abilities were questionable. He hired James K. Metcalf at the same terms given Scott; Metcalf remained one year and two days, at the end of which Minor recorded that "Mr. Metcalf's year having expired on the 13th Settled with him & declined to reengage him for another year--At which he was much enraged & left vowing vengeance."

Minor's willingness to pay a high salary for an experienced and capable man is shown by his attempt a few days after Metcalf's dismissal to hire the overseer of a neighboring planter. He wrote to Mr. Butler, of Callon plantation:

I understand yr overseer Mr Miller is looking out for a place next year, & as he has been very highly recommended to me, I should like to employ him, if you intend to part with him. I will give him at the rate of $1,250 a year, if he remains less than a year with me, & $1,500--for the year, if he remains with me the whole--It being understood, we part when

54 Minor Journal, 146.
55 Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, July 25, 1852.
56 Minor letter-books, June 5, 1854.
57 Minor diary, December 15, 1853.
either becomes dissatisfied- I will furnish him with coffee & sugar, bacon or pork & flour--& fresh meat in season- If, you contemplate parting with Mr. Miller please show him this letter & oblige. 58

The attempt was unsuccessful however, and Minor hired Arthur St. Amant, whose salary of $1,200 would indicate the planter's anticipation of his satisfactory service. 59 No reason was given for the discontinuance of his duties in 1854, after he had served one year at Waterloo.

In 1855 Minor hired David Gray as overseer at Waterloo, and Gray proved to be satisfactory in his work for three years. He received $1,325 for his first 17 months of service, and proved to be worth $1,200 for the year 1857. 60 Diary entries throughout the year show Minor's satisfaction with the progress being made at Waterloo, and Gray was rehired for the year 1858. Early in the summer however, Minor complained that Gray had been going off the place and had the measles, and expressed his fear that the disease would spread. In May the overseer left for Donaldsonville, and Minor "had to send him down & all his family & goods." 61 He was replaced by the overseer at Hollywood plantation, William Harson, who

58 Minor letter-books, December 19, 1853.
59 Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, December 29, 1853.
60 Minor journal, 142.
61 Minor plantation diary, 1858-1861, May 5, 1858.
remained at Waterloo through 1859 and received $60 per month for his services. 62

Difficulties with overseers at Southdown were less frequent than at Waterloo. Soon after the sale of Dinsmore's interest in the plantation to Winder, the overseer at Minor's stock farm, W. F. Gray, was transferred to Southdown, where he remained until his death in 1856. 63 His salary was increased from $1,250 in 1850 to $1,500 in 1852, and in one year he received $2,000. 64 The only incompetent overseer who served at Southdown was hired after Gray's death. Minor's son, employed as business manager at the plantation, wrote that he "fired the overseer Mr. Deputy for insolence." 65 He was of the opinion that the new overseer, Andrew Douglas, would be satisfactory. Douglas, who had been employed as a carpenter, remained at Southdown through 1860, and was paid $800 per year. 66

When Minor assumed ownership of Hollywood plantation in January, 1856, he placed William Harson in charge as overseer. Harson served until the previously mentioned transfer to Waterloo in 1858. Only one other overseer is on record as having served at Hollywood, and no information exists with which to evaluate his services. It is probable that Minor

62 Minor journal, 136.
63 Minor letter-books, February 14, 1856.
64 Minor journal, 27.
65 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, May 20, 1856.
66 Minor journal, 74.
assumed a more direct supervisory position over that plantation when he established residence there in 1856, for the type of records kept during the period of absentee ownership was discontinued after that date.

To assist the overseer in working and disciplining the slaves, certain duties were delegated to first and second drivers. The first driver was required to obey the orders of the overseer, see that all hands under him in the field did their duty, and administer punishment when necessary. It was his responsibility to maintain order in the quarters, reporting anything which he considered to be improper. He was required to ring the bell in the morning and to awake the overseer. The position of first driver was held by one of the more responsible Negroes, as his duties indicate that he lived on the street. He was instructed to "conduct himself that there shall be no complaint of his being too intimate with the wives and daughters of the other men." He should by no means attempt to become the "Ondidonk" over the people, "for if he does burnt brandy should not save him from the most severe punishment." 67

The duties of the second driver were to obey the orders of the overseer and the first driver, and to see that the hands under him performed their duty. Like the first driver,

67 Minor plantation diary, 1861-1868.
he was required to report everything which he believed to be irregular. 68

Minor employed help other than the overseer on his plantations. Operations during the grinding season required the services of an engineer to superintend the sugar mill and make any necessary repairs on the machinery. These engineers were hired to insure the maximum degree of efficiency and speed in processing the sugar, and to avoid delays when mechanical difficulties arose. They were required to remain on the plantation from the beginning of preparations for grinding until the mill was closed for the season, and were paid according to the amount of sugar made. In 1849 Minor employed Jean Duhan "to make the sugar at Southdown at $1. a Hoag provided the crop does not exceed 400, if it does, the $400 for the whole crop." 69 A Mr. Terrio was employed on the same terms in 1855, 70 while a salary of $150 per month was given Mr. Young to repair the mills and engines at Southdown and Hollywood, and to superintend the Southdown mill in 1859.

Minor was strict in his demands regarding the behavior of employees on the plantations. Rules for the overseers prohibited the mechanics from mistreating slaves, and required

68 Ibid.
69 Minor diary, July 4, 1849.
70 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, October 25, 1855.
special permission to make or sell any article on the planta-
tion. They were required to report the condition of the
engines and mill once a week. Sobriety was in order, as Minor
"discharged Mr. Patrick B. Cochran for drunkeness." Any
employee had to receive special permission to leave the plan-
tation.

When Minor's sons had completed their education, he
placed two of them in charge of the plantations. William was
made business manager and bookkeeper at Southdown and Hollywood,
and Stephen assumed that position at Waterloo. His demands on
them seem to have been as severe as on the overseers, as he
wrote in 1858 that on his arrival at Waterloo he found Stephen
on the river fishing and Gray, the overseer, on a showboat. Later he complained that Stephen had left at 9:30 A.M. for a
point four miles away and had not returned by 7:30 P.M. "He
was much wanted here to day, as we were planting cane, scal-
ping stubble, breaking up flat boat & receiving pickits-
He seems never to think of the business of the Plantation, but
is willing to leave it on any pretext whatever & generally
Stays away from 6 to 26 hours." Letters from the father
to his son advising him to stop gambling and drinking went
unanswered.

71 Ibid., 1858-1861, June 25, 1859.
72 Ibid., March 16, 1858.
73 Ibid., March 23, 1859.
From the evidence of all existent records, William J. Minor considered the welfare of his plantations to be of the utmost importance. The services of capable overseers were sought at all times, and the owner was not negligent in inspecting the places to determine the effectiveness of these men. Such records were kept as would provide Minor with figures for comparison from year to year; he demanded that they be kept according to his orders, and laxity in the attendance to duties brought the immediate dismissal of an overseer. Capable plantation management was to him the prime requisite to successful operation.
SLAVERY

There were 137 slaves on Waterloo plantation in 1840.\(^1\) Although there is no record of additional purchases, the number had increased by 1847 to 274, including 104 men and boys, 90 women and girls, and 80 children.\(^2\) Such classifications usually listed as children any Negroes under eleven years of age. A list compiled sixteen months later for taxation purposes listed a total of 312, of which 117 were children, 33 were over 50 years of age, and 22 were unsound.\(^3\)

The number remained fairly constant through 1850, when there were 311,\(^4\) but dropped to 271 in 1852.\(^5\) The acquisition of Hollywood plantation brought a further decline after 1856, as Negroes were transferred to the new plantation. Within a

\(^1\) Sixth Census.

\(^2\) Minor diary, March 21, 1847.

\(^3\) Minor letter-books, July 31, 1848.

\(^4\) Seventh Census.

\(^5\) Minor papers, List of Negroes at Waterloo Plantation.

The estimated average number of working slaves on Ascension Parish plantations in 1853 was 85. In Terrebonne Parish the number in that year was 47. See V. Alton Moody, "Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, VII (1924), 12.
few days after Minor began operating the plantation there remained only 179 Negroes at Waterloo,\(^6\) and additional transfers were made during the next two years. In January, 1857, 29 of the Waterloo Negroes were shipped to Terrebonne Parish via the Steamer Princess,\(^7\) and three months later Minor carried with him to Houma six men and three women.\(^8\) Additional purchases were evidently made, as 165 Negroes remained on the plantation in Ascension Parish.\(^9\) No increase was recorded until 1860, when there were 223 Negroes at Waterloo.\(^10\)

The first available records show the management of Southdown under its overseer in 1830, and list the number of slaves at 40, of whom 17 were males.\(^11\) By 1847 the number had been increased to 203, including 85 men and boys, 64 women and girls, and 54 children.\(^12\) No appreciable change occurred in the number during the following years until the purchase of Hollywood plantation. As with Waterloo, Southdown Negroes were used to work the new plantation, and by December, 1856,

\(^6\) Minor diary, January 11, 1856.
\(^7\) Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, January 25, 1857.
\(^8\) Ibid., April 26, 1857.
\(^9\) Ibid., August 24, 1857.
\(^10\) Eighth Census.
\(^11\) Fifth Census.
\(^12\) Minor diary, March 20, 1847.
the end of the year in which ownership of the new place was assumed, there were 156 slaves at Southdown,\(^{13}\) indicating the transfer of approximately 40 Negroes to Hollywood. After that date the number did not exceed 176 until 1860, when 218 were listed in the Census. These Negroes were housed in 65 slave cabins,\(^{14}\) a number of which are still occupied by Negro laborers on the plantation.

By July, 1857, there were 33 men and boys and 25 women and girls at Hollywood, making a total of 58 slaves.\(^{15}\) In 1859 there were 86 slaves on the smaller plantation in Terrebonne Parish,\(^{16}\) and by 1860 the number had been increased to 125; the Census for that year listed 24 slave houses on the plantation.\(^{17}\) The total number of slaves which Minor owned in the given years is shown in Table II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of slaves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table II**

| NUMBER OF SLAVES OWNED |

---

\(^{13}\) Minor diary, 1856, undated.  
\(^{14}\) Eighth Census.  
\(^{15}\) Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, July 26, 1857.  
\(^{16}\) Minor diary, March 2, 1859.  
\(^{17}\) Eighth Census.
The decrease between 1850 and 1852 was the result of a cholera epidemic in 1851 which caused the death of at least 39 Negroes. In 1855 there was an epidemic of yellow fever, and although Minor failed to list the number of slaves he lost, he had at one time 51 cases under treatment. After 1856 natural increase by birth and purchases accounted for the increase. Between 1856 and 1860 births exceeded deaths by more than 60 at Waterloo and Southdown alone.

It has been impossible to arrive at an accurate figure which would represent the annual cost of clothing, food, medical care and housing for the Minor slaves. Attending physicians' fees ranged from $200 to $500 per year, and medical supplies usually cost less than $100 for each plantation. Shoes and clothing accounted for an annual expenditure of $1,500 to $2,000 at Waterloo, where $900 to $1,500 worth of pork was consumed each year. A compilation of the total expenses at Waterloo for the 17 year period ending in 1855 shows the cost of operating the plantation to have been $137,419.04. The figure includes only those entries for slave supplies and the annual accounts with Leverich and Company of New Orleans. Assuming that 50% of the value of the accounts with that concern was for the upkeep of slaves at the plantation,

---

18 Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, April 27, 1851.
19 Ibid., 1855-1858, October 4, 1855.
20 Compiled from tables of births and deaths for Waterloo and Southdown plantations.
the annual cost per slave was approximately $21.50. If the
total amount spent with Leverich was for slave supplies, the
annual cost was $36.02 per slave. Any figure arrived at
through such means is arbitrary, as no itemized account has
been found which would show the portion of the Leverich ac-
counts attributable to slave upkeep.21 It is probable that
the actual cash expenditure for the feeding, clothing and
medical care of slaves approached the latter figure, as it
compares more favorably with the conclusions of those who have
made extensive studies from more complete records.22 The
monetary value of fresh meat, vegetables and other supplies
produced on the plantation would have to be considered in ar-
riving at a figure which would represent both the direct and
the indirect cost of slave upkeep.

21 Compiled from figures in the Minor Journal, pages
25, 48, 58-69, and 172 et seq.

22 See Robert W. Smith, "Was Slavery unprofitable in
the Ante-Bellum South?" Agricultural History, XX (1946),
62-63; Frederick Law Olmsted, Journeys and Explorations in the
Cotton Kingdom (2 vols., New York, 1862), II, 236-237. These
estimates vary from $3.46 in the Carolinas to $30 and $44 in
Louisiana. One writer estimates the cost to have been $55
per slave for provisions and clothing. See Louisiana Senator-
ial Debates, 1853, cited in Roger W. Shugg, Origins of Class
Struggle in Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1939), 89. An estimate of
$30 to $40 has been used in Francis Butler Simkins, The South
Old and New, a History, 1820 to 1947 (New York, 1947), 50; see
also Clement Eaton, A History of the Old South (New York, 1949),
261.
Minor seldom mentioned in his diaries or recorded in the account books the purchase or sale of slaves. The only source of information regarding the acquisition of slaves is a collection of letter copies, in which complaint is made concerning purchases or inquiry made by letter as to the availability of slaves. The earliest of such references was in 1840, when Minor agreed to purchase two women from Mr. Beaumont of Natchez. He had not seen the slaves, and authorized Mr. Dinsmore, the partner at Southdown, to appraise them.\(^{23}\) In 1850 he instructed Leverich of New Orleans to engage for him a "free negro man servant-. If, a slave, his owner must take the risk of his running off."\(^{24}\) He offered Eli Odom of Tennessee $1,200 for a cooper in 1855,\(^{25}\) and in 1856 paid $3,700 for five Negroes belonging to James C. Wilkins.\(^{26}\) In November of that year he offered a Terrebonne Parish planter $2,500 for five Negroes.\(^{27}\)

On several occasions Minor discovered that slaves he had purchased were unsound, and demanded a refund of the purchase price or the exchange of the unsound slave for another.

\(^{23}\) Minor letter-books, May 10, 1840.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., July 8, 1850.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., July 10, 1855.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., January 2, 1856.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., November 27, 1856.
In July, 1847, he noted in a diary that "the man Horace bot. of Dr. Caldwell has Diabetes & has been severely whipped," and later he wrote to the vendor:

I found the negro Horace unsound & worthless & returned him to you on the 21st inst. I regret to say, the man Amos you recommended so highly ran off on the night or rather morning of the 21st inst. He had behaved very well & went off for no reason what so ever-- I presume it is a habit & that he was sold on account of it. I should like to have my money back for those negroes Twenty four hundred dollars which you will please pay over to Messers Wm. E. Leverich & Co--No. 24 Old Levee street, whose receipt will be good.

On another occasion he communicated with John J. Lugenebull of New Orleans:

The boy Clarke Townsend I bot. of you had not reached my place on the 15th inst., & he should have been there on the 14th-- I fear, he has run off-- Please communicate with my friends Messers Wm E Leverich & Co No 24 Old Levee Street on the subject-- If he ran off after you delivered him to the R.R. I will be obliged to you to have him caught & put in jail & inform Messers Wm. E. L & Co. of it. If, the boy has not run off, but is only unwilling to leave the city, please inform Wm. E. L & Co. of it, & they will receive him.

Records of the sale of slaves are even less frequent. Early in 1856 Minor sold a slave named Anderson for $500, and in the same year he offered to Mrs. T. Floyd four Negroes for $4,300. The prices for the individual slaves were $900, $500,

28 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, July 19, 1857.
29 Minor letter-books, July 22, 1857.
30 Ibid., January 19, 1857.
$1,500 and $1,500, with a reduction of $100 on the first two if purchased together. 31

The temporary need for additional labor on the Minor plantations was satisfied on many occasions by the use of hired slaves. The earliest instance occurred at the stock farm, where Minor employed the use of three Negroes belonging to Louisa Wilkins. She was paid $250 per year for the use of the Negroes. 32 In 1840 F. L. Claiborne was paid $200 for the services of an unmentioned number of Negroes, 33 and later the hire of four slaves for one year and seven months cost Minor $435. 34 For several years prior to 1860 Minor paid R. R. Wilkins a total of $1,220.12 for the use of Negroes, the rate being $7.50 and $10 per month. 35

Since the Southern planter often had a greater investment in slaves than in land and improvements, the health and care of his slaves was of primary concern. Epidemics of cholera and yellow fever could cost heavily in deaths of Negroes, while carelessness with machinery and insufficient attention to minor injuries could increase the loss. On the Minor

31 Ibid., June 22, 1856.
32 Minor Journal, 77.
33 Ibid., 38.
34 Ibid., 176.
35 Ibid., 112-113. This is considerably lower than the average which Phillips places at $200 per year. See Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South (Boston, 1929), 181.
plantations the services of a physician were available through a contract with a local practician. He was engaged for a fixed annual fee, usually $200 or $300. The agreement between him and the plantation owner was in writing, and provided for a visit at the plantation twice each week without being called, and whenever called. In addition to the fee, he was permitted to charge extra for surgical cases. 36 Minor instructed the overseer at Southdown in 1855 to engage a doctor at $200 per year; in 1854 the Houma physician had been paid $330. 37 The attending physician at Waterloo for 1848 received $300, 38 and in the epidemic year of 1851 his professional services cost Minor $500. 39 Expenditures for medicine and medical supplies varied from $14 at Waterloo in 1847 40 to $179.80 at Southdown in 1853. 41 The total recorded cost of such supplies at Southdown from 1846 to 1855 was $697.20, 42 and at Waterloo expenditures reached $773.87 during the period from 1838 to 1855. 43 It is possible that medical supplies were included in other accounts, itemized lists of which are not available.

36 Minor letter-books, May 25, 1855.
37 Minor journal, 150 et seq.
38 Ibid., 66.
39 Ibid., 72.
40 Ibid., 66.
41 Ibid., 150 et seq.
42 Ibid., 25, 48, 58-69, 172 et seq.
43 Ibid., 150 et seq.
Minor copied in the plantation diaries for the benefit of the overseers, remedies and prescriptions for the diseases commonly occurring on the plantations. He noted Colonel Bingaman's recipe for dysentery: "Raspings of Buckshorn filings of Iron one or two ounces of each— Dissolve in a quart of Medera wine— Dose a table spoon full 3 times a day." The ingredients used to fumigate for cholera were black oxide of manganese and common salt, mixed one part of the former to three parts of salt. Cholera could be prevented by the use of "a tea spoon full of powdered charcoal taken 3 or 4 times a week in tea or coffee or water," and the disease could be cured with "Equal parts of Charcoal powder—Brandy or Whiskey & Laudanum— Dose a tea spoon full every 5 minutes till better then less often as the disease disappears." Since cholera posed the greatest danger and was the most frequent disease reaching epidemic proportions, Minor cautioned his overseers to watch the slaves closely when the disease existed at other plantations. He advised Gray at Waterloo to "Exercise them as little as possible & work them lightly while their bowels are loose & cholera are about. Be very careful not to give out tainted meat or musty meal--

44 Minor diary, May 25, 1850.
46 Ibid., February 4, 1859.
Have a load of pumpkins hauled to the cook shed & let the negroes have all the vegetables you can. See that everything about the kitchen is clean & that the food is well cooked.  

News of a death from cholera near Waterloo in 1855 was followed by detailed instructions to the overseer as to what course he should follow:

You must, if the cholera breaks out in the Quarters out poles & make Palmetto Camps & move all the people into them & the storm sheds. Establish & keep up a constant watch on the hands & have all reported that have even one loose operation. Stop the person, give the Blackburn mixture & follow it with ten grains of Calomel—Repeating the mixture if any more loose discharges take place—If the discharges are any thing like rice water put a large blister over the region of the liver & repeat the calomel & mixture according to circumstances. Oil & turpentine are bad medicine when any thing like cholera is about. I ordered a lot of medicine some time since—Some of the Blackburn mixture should be taken into the field with the hands & given when ever a loose operation is passed. The person should be made to ride home & treated at once as above described & the Doctor sent for immediately. Look up Cartwrights directions about cholera & read them over & show them to Dr. Jennings who you will here after employ—And in all cases see that his positive directions are carried out.

Only one epidemic of cholera occurred on Minor’s plantations during the years covered by this study. He avoided loss from an epidemic in 1849 which caused the deaths of 24 slaves belonging to Duncan F. Kenner and 20 belonging to Henry Doyal. No slaves died on Minor’s plantations, but he

47 Minor letter-books, August 21, 1855.

48 Ibid., June 5, 1855.
lost two Negroes who were in New Orleans attending his race horses. He was less fortunate in 1851 however, as in that year 39 deaths occurred at Waterloo as a result of the disease.

After the first death, which occurred on April 24, Minor moved his Negroes from the "Old Quarters," and on May 1, he noted that there had been no deaths since his action. Another Negro died on that day however, and the physician was summoned; he informed Minor that cholera did not exist on the place. Minor attributed a death the following day to "bowell complaint."

He made no mention of cholera when he recorded the deaths of two others on May 4; these had become sick in the morning and were dead by night. By May 16, the number of deaths since the preceding April 24 had been eighteen. By that date Minor had become convinced that cholera existed, and he observed that it had become worse when the weather changed from clear to cloudy. He departed for Natchez, and upon his return 27 days later found that he had lost 40 Negroes, 37 of whom had died as a result of cholera. Of the 40, 25 were adults.

---

49 Ibid., June 15, 1849.
50 Minor papers, List of Deaths at Waterloo Plantation.
51 Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, May 3, 1851.
52 Ibid., May 16, 1851.
53 Ibid., July 10, 1851.
only one other year, with the exception of the 1855 yellow fever epidemic, did a disease reach epidemic proportions on a Minor plantation. In 1860, 15 of the 24 deaths at Southdown were the result of whooping cough.  

Lists of births and deaths were made for Waterloo from 1834 until 1858, and for Southdown from 1846 until 1860. During the period at Waterloo for which figures are available, there were recorded 229 births and 128 deaths. Cholera and whooping cough accounted for 42 and 11 of the deaths respectively, while fever, dysentery and "affected brain" claimed five each. The other deaths were attributed to one or more of 24 causes, from a "flow of blood to the head" and old age to "tetany" and being "devoured by a hog."  

During the 14 year period in which births and deaths were recorded at Southdown, there were 161 births and 94 deaths. The greatest number of deaths in a single year on that plantation occurred in 1860 when whooping cough took 15 and miscellaneous causes resulted in the deaths of nine others. One unusual death was recorded by Minor in a diary:

---

54 Minor papers, List of Deaths at Southdown Plantation, 1860.
55 Minor papers, List of Births and Deaths at Waterloo Plantation.
56 Ibid.
57 Minor papers, List of Births and Deaths at Southdown Plantation.
This morning I gave Bill Dinsmore a bottle of 'Tonic Mixture' prescribed by Dr. S. A. Cartwright & put at Wm. C. Fox's old stand in Natchez told him to take only half a dose (half a table spoonful) which I presume he did at about 1 o'clock at 2 1/2 o'clock he came & asked me if it was the same medicine he took before. He thought it was not that he felt very strange, as if his insides were coming up, as if the top of his head was coming off - his hands felt strange - He had a silly sort of a smile on his face & as the mixture was a tonic one I concluded it had to some extent effected his brain - His pulse was good, but his skin was moist & cold - I told him to go to the Hospital & lay down. In half an hour Patsey reported he was about as he was when he first went up & that she thought he was drunk - About 3 1/2 o'clock I went to the Hospital & found he (Bill) had gone to his house near the stable. I concluded he had got over his strange feeling. At ten minutes before 5 o'clock Sam Waller came to me & said Bill Dinsmore was dead. I suspected the medicine & gave some to a small chicken - It made him sick for a while but did not kill it.

None of the deaths recorded was attributed to beatings or cruelty, and only four were results of accidents.

Male slaves were used for the ordinary tasks assigned to men workers--ploughing, cutting cane, hauling, cutting wood, digging ditches and caring for stock. Lighter work was assigned to the women; they were assigned to gangs for hoeing, "pulling back ditch banks & putting...wood over the levee." Other entries in plantation diaries speak of women cutting cane and dumping dirt on the levee. Children were sent to the field to pick up trash and pile cane trash in the rows.

58 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, September 24, 1857.

59 Ibid., 1850, January 26, 1850.
When the weather warranted, field work was discontinued; numerous entries give rain as a reason for work stoppage. At one time "All hands stopped at Dinner time on account of wet cold boisterous weather." No lack of consideration for the welfare of the Negroes was shown in that respect.

Slaves were permitted to cultivate small lots near their cabins for produce for their own consumption. Such work was usually done on Sundays, as no field work was done on that day except for punishment. Negroes who held positions of responsibility were paid for their services. In one year Negroes at Waterloo received $209.75, and the rates paid in 1858 are shown in Table III.

| Slaves were permitted to cultivate small lots near their cabins for produce for their own consumption. Such work was usually done on Sundays, as no field work was done on that day except for punishment. Negroes who held positions of responsibility were paid for their services. In one year Negroes at Waterloo received $209.75, and the rates paid in 1858 are shown in Table III. |

| First driver       | $10 |
| Second driver      | 5   |
| Third driver       | 2.50|
| First engineer     | 10  |
| Second engineer    | 5   |
| First ploughman    | 2.50|
| First horseman     | 2.50|
| First fireman      | 2.50|
| Second fireman     | 1.50|
| First spark        | 1.00|
| Second spark       | 1.00|
| First cane shed    | 3.00|

**TABLE III**

**WAGES PAID SLAVES FOR SERVICES**

---

60 [Ibid.], February 13, 1850.
61 Minor Journal, 131.
62 Minor diary, July 24, 1859.
The most common group punishment was Sunday work. When the person guilty of stealing food could not be found, the entire slave population was put to work. During a period when Minor was away from Southdown, the overseer wrote that the Negroes had stolen nearly all the pomegranates and had killed some sheep. He wrote later that they had stolen six pigs in one week. Such discoveries were followed by diary entries describing the Sunday work. Thefts of sugar from the sugar house and of turkeys or other fowl brought the same punishment.

Individual punishment was not so lenient. Minor arrived at Southdown in 1855 and "found Charles Thompson absent without leave on horse back in Forrest not at stable;" Minor "flogged C.T. & put him in the field." Runaway slaves were brought back to the plantation, but no record of the punishment meted out is given. Minor was informed in 1857 that one of his Negroes was apprehended in Baton Rouge and put in jail, and the following year two others were returned at an expense to Minor of $64.

That the morals of the slaves were closely watched is indicated by the following letter, written to a Mr. Wright of Houma:

---

63 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, September 27, 1855.
64 Ibid., June 24, 1855.
65 Ibid., 1858-1861, September 25, 1858.
I send by my servant Charles a coat, pants, pumps, knife & walking stick which are said to belong to you & were found in the room of my woman Emalie by my late overseer Mr. Gray.--Who says you were in the habit of coming here at night to see Emalie. I trust you will cease this practice--if you have been guilty of it--I have long been acquainted & friendly with your Father & would regret very much to be compelled to do anything to injure one of his family.

He discovered the source of whiskey which his slaves had been found to possess, and recorded his version of the affair:

Went over to see Mr. Dominique about his man Julian who has been selling whiskey to my negroes--I had written to Mr. D. informing him of the fact & requesting him to bring the man Julian over here to be punished but he did not answer my letter--This afternoon Mr. D. admitted in presence of Mr. Peck (H.D.'s overseer) & of Mr. D. J. Gray my overseer that he, D. had examined into the matter & that Julian was guilty of all I had charged him with--And promised to bring him (J) over here tomorrow by 10 or 11 o'clock A.M. to be punished.

Apparently Minor's objection to whiskey on the place was a result of the amount which the Negroes had consumed, and not of his opposition to their having the liquor in moderate amounts. Near Christmas of 1856 he ordered four barrels for Hollywood plantation.

66 Minor letter-books, February 14, 1856.
67 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, January 31, 1857.
68 Minor letter-books, December 25, 1856.
PRODUCTION AND SAIE

The growing of sugar cane was a year-round operation. After the conclusion of grinding the season's cane, attention was turned to preparing the ground and seed for planting the next year's crop. On the Minor plantations, efforts were made to begin planting by January 15, and with favorable weather the operation was concluded late in February. In 1857, for example, the Waterloo crop was planted by February 16, while that at Southdown was finished on February 20. The Hollywood crop was seeded five days later. ¹

Minor endeavored to plant as much of his land as was possible with "plant cane," or the joints from good cane of the previous season. The selected stalks to be used for plant cane were woven into "mats" and protected from the weather until planting time. Plant cane produced the greatest amount of sugar per acre, and the planter was limited in the amount of plant cane used only by his own judgment as to the amount of standing cane which could be spared for making mats.

Land which was not planted in seed cane, or plant cane, produced from either first or second year rattoons. First year rattoons included the cane growing from the stubble

¹ Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, February 16, 1857 et seq.
of the previous year's cane, which had been cut for the grinding season of that year. Second year rattoons were those remaining from the crop of two years previous, and offered a very poor yield.

The rate of planting cane varied according to the condition of the ground and the weather; under favorable conditions, 10 to 15 acres could be planted in one day.\(^2\) Hard or "cloddy" ground slowed planting considerably, as eight days were required on one occasion to plant a field of 36 acres in that condition.\(^3\) The proper distance between rows Minor thought to be six feet, and the hills should be three feet apart. A distance of five and one half feet between rows was considered too close, "because when using the 2 horse ploughs the horses tread in the cane."\(^4\) Using the six by three proportions it was possible to plant 2,420 plants to each acre.\(^5\) By 1850 Minor had "come to the conclusion that 2 ins. is deep enough to cover cane."\(^6\)

Little attention was required after the successful planting of cane until the approach of the grinding season.

\(^2\) Ibid., 1851-1855, March 15, 1854.

\(^3\) Ibid., 1847-1850, February 18, 1850.

\(^4\) Ibid., May 21, 1850.

\(^5\) Ibid., undated.

\(^6\) Ibid., March 1, 1850.
Occasional ploughing kept it free of grass and ridged up around the young stalks to prevent water from standing at the base of the stalk. During the month of May the middles of the cane rows were ploughed deep for the last time, as after that time lateral roots grew from the stalks near the surface, and further ploughing resulted in their injury. If the middles were ploughed at this time, these roots would tend to grow downward, thereby escaping injury in the laying by process. A third reason for such action was the fact that it decreased the labor of laying by with hoes by assuring more pulverized and less cloddy ground.\(^7\)

Laying by was done with hoes, and consisted of ridging up around the stalks to prevent water from standing about them. The hoes followed single ploughs, the purpose of which was to throw dirt toward the rows. Minor's observations regarding the proper method of preparing the cane for its final period of growth were recorded for the guidance of overseers:

It is more important in laying by Cane that the earth should be well placed around the stalk so as to prevent the water standing about them--which it will do when the earth settles around them & becomes hard if it is depressed--Again if two furrows be thrown to the cane with the one horse ploughs & the middles well ploughed out with the 2 horse ploughs, it gives, to use a platform, from which, when you come to lay by, the single ploughs can throw dirt well into the Cane-- When the middles are first broken out care should be taken not to ridge up too much, but rather to make

\(^7\) Ibid., undated.
a broad & rather flat bed--& that gives full room for the single plough that runs next the cane to take a good furrow slice & by that means give plenty of dirt to the cane without running deep & cutting the roots-- it also leaves much less for the hoes to do--and in laying by a broad flat ridge of good height is better than a narrow high one; because, it gives a greater amt of pulverized earth for the lateral roots of the cane to run in, before they have to go down to avoid coming in contact with the air.8

The most important factor to be considered in establishing a date for the beginning of grinding was the weather. Heavy frosts and light freezes proved injurious to the standing cane; it was therefore necessary to begin operations early enough to insure sufficient time for cutting cane which might be affected by a frost after grinding had begun. At the same time, the planter wished to derive the benefit of as many extra days growing time near the end of the season, so as to permit the saccharine content of the cane to be increased as much as possible. While the rules and regulations for the overseers required that they be ready to begin grinding on October 1,9 it is probable that the date was set as a precaution in case it was found that early frosts demanded an early beginning. Grinding was begun near October 15 in some years, and as late as November 1 when it was thought that the yield would be greater and when the threat of a damaging

8 Ibid., undated.

9 See Rules and Regulations, Chapter three.
frost was not eminent.\textsuperscript{10} Most seasons permitted the beginning of this operation during the latter week of October.\textsuperscript{11} Efforts were made to conclude the grinding operations before December 25, and in most years Minor was able to return to his home for the Christmas season. In one year however, his departure was delayed until January 12.\textsuperscript{12}

It has been impossible to determine the number of acres under cultivation for sugar cane during each of the years covered by this study. Only scattered entries listed the proposed number of acres to be planted in cane, and in most cases subsequent entries proved these to have been inaccurate estimates. With available figures, it is estimated that at Waterloo the average acreage planted in cane each year did not exceed 450 or 500, while in some years as few as 300 acres were planted,\textsuperscript{13} and in one year, 1847, the total was 584 acres.\textsuperscript{14} A list of the fields at Waterloo shows the number to have been 55, comprising a total acreage of 1,216.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{10}Minor plantation diary, 1847-1850, October 31, 1850.  
\textsuperscript{11}Diary entries for various years show the beginning date to have been between October 23 and October 30.  
\textsuperscript{12}Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, January 12, 1855.  
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 1855-1858, January 22, 1857.  
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 1847-1850, undated.  
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., undated.
Peas, corn, potatoes, pumpkins and other items for food were planted in the fields not devoted to sugar cane, while a number of fields lay idle each year. Minor's crop rotation will be discussed with other phases of scientific farming in the following chapter.

No such list of fields has been found for either of the other two plantations, but the infrequent notations as to acreage planted plus the records of annual production permit what is thought to be a reasonably accurate estimate. Apparently more acres were given to sugar cane at Southdown prior to the purchase of Hollywood plantation, the production records indicating that 650 to 850 acres were planted each year. After 1855 there are records for only two years showing the amount planted; in 1857 there were 352 acres planted at the larger plantation, and in 1859 the acreage had been increased to 643. Hollywood produced 250 hogsheads of sugar in 1859, when 292 acres were planted in sugar cane, and since production remained near that amount during the four year period from 1856 to 1860, it is safe to assume that not more than 300 acres were planted in any year.


17 Minor diary, November 5, 1856.

18 Ibid., May 4, 1859.

19 Ibid., May 7, 1859.
In attempting to arrive at his probable crop, Minor estimated the yield from plant cane to be one and one half hogsheads per acre. First year rattoons would, he thought, yield one hogshead per acre. Thus in 1859, before the cane had matured, he had computed the number of hogsheads to be made on the three plantations at 1,253, which, if sold at $60 per hogshead, would bring $75,180. Proceeds from molasses were expected to be $20,000, raising his income to $95,180. An examination of the reported crops for the three plantations shows his estimate, made five months prior to the beginning of grinding, to have been only 39 hogsheads above the actual yield.

The production by year at each of the Minor plantations is shown in the Table IV. The figures are from entries in plantation diaries and from the annual statements issued by Champomier for the years listed in that publication. Also listed are the total production of Terrebonne and Ascension Parishes and of the state when available.

20 Ibid., May 10, 1859.
21 Champomier, 1859.
22 Records for 1846, 1847, 1848 and 1849 were not available from Champomier.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>WATERLOO (Hhds.)</th>
<th>SOUTHDOWN (Hhds.)</th>
<th>HOLLYWOOD (Hhds.)</th>
<th>TOTAL ASCENSION (Hhds.)</th>
<th>TOTAL TERREBONNE (Hhds.)</th>
<th>TOTAL STATE (Hhds.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>812</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19,223</td>
<td></td>
<td>191,324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>474</td>
<td></td>
<td>16,906</td>
<td>12,080</td>
<td>186,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>315</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>405</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>303</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>618</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,096</td>
<td>13,758</td>
<td>211,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td></td>
<td>685</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,034</td>
<td>13,498</td>
<td>236,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>831</td>
<td></td>
<td>23,623</td>
<td>16,834</td>
<td>321,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>939</td>
<td></td>
<td>30,760</td>
<td>24,393</td>
<td>449,324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>775</td>
<td></td>
<td>26,084</td>
<td>18,925</td>
<td>346,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>14,475</td>
<td>15,403</td>
<td>231,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,133</td>
<td>5,574</td>
<td>73,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>20,112</td>
<td>14,600</td>
<td>279,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>28,444</td>
<td>22,815</td>
<td>362,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>15,496</td>
<td>14,983</td>
<td>221,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>14,301</td>
<td>16,222</td>
<td>228,753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE IV**

Annual Production of Sugar at Waterloo, Southdown and Hollywood Plantations, in Ascension and Terrebonne Parishes, and in Louisiana, by Years.

The factor, or commission agent, was of inestimable value in helping the planter dispose of his produce. His office was in New Orleans, New York, or any other city
accessible to water transportation, and he acted as banker, agent, and purchasing and selling representative for the inland or up-river planter. Most of Minor's business relations with factors were confined to one each in New Orleans and New York. The greatest volume of business was done with William E. Leverich and Son, New Orleans. Between 1839 and 1840 Minor's credited account with that concern showed a balance in his favor of $72,099.31; during the same period the balance was liquidated by the purchase of supplies and the payment of drafts, indicating a tremendous volume of business. In general, the New Orleans commission agent did not buy so heavily above the deposits of the planter as to keep the latter constantly in debt to him, and these figures would seem to indicate that such was the case with Minor. The New York firm of Charles Leverich purchased supplies not easily obtained in New Orleans, and served as selling agent for the Minor produce when greater profits could be made by selling in the North. During one year Minor credited his account with the New York concern with $20,289.01, and owed $8,634.54 to balance the account.

Minor's relations with commission agents were usually

---

23 Minor Journal, 40 et seq.
24 Bassett, 224.
25 Minor Journal, 46.
firm but amiable. It was expected that supplies which proved to be unsatisfactory or which were of sub-standard quality would be returned for credit. In 1849 Minor informed the New Orleans agent that his overseer, Gray, "writes, the first lot of corn sent to Southdown is so inferior, he apprehends it will make both negroes & horses sick." 26 Instructions regarding the purchase of supplies were detailed; carts to be used for hauling cane from the field were to have "large & Strong bodies--Wheels 5 feet high--tires 3 1/2 ins. wide. Higher wheels increase the labour of loading very much. The axels must be of wrought iron & the hubs cast." 27

Before the sale of the Stock Farm in Concordia Parish, Natchez merchants were used for the purchase of supplies. Minor found their services less satisfactory than the New Orleans agent, and informed one not to furnish any article "to any one, White or black, either for my Mother or myself, as we are determined henceforth not to pay debts contracted for us by other persons." 28 In general, however, letters exchanged between the planter and his factor were of a friendly nature, many concerning family matters. Others contained numerous instructions for the purchase of goods or for the

---

26 Minor letter-books, April 12, 1849.
27 Ibid., July 13, 1848.
28 Ibid., February, 1841.
payment of notes and drafts. In one letter Minor instructed Leverich of New Orleans to pay bills to two concerns, withhold payment to another because of supplies not sent, deliver a message to the captain of a steamer, ship pork to Southdown, and follow certain instructions regarding the shipment of goods to his plantations. The following letter is reproduced because it is typical of the mass of correspondence which flowed between Minor and his New Orleans agent:

Gentlemen

I have yrs. of the 17th inst. I shall want 1,000 fire bricks for Waterloo--& 4,000 for Southdown & Hollywood together, if I put up a Bagass furnace I shall want more--. If, you can't do better you can contract for the 5,000--at $26.50 per M. to be delivered before the 1st. of April-- They must be the best dark English Fire Bricks. I think, you ought to get them at $25 per M-- I see they are posted at $26 or $33 per M.

You might make the contract for the 5,000 with the privilege of taking 7,000--more if you should need them. Please send to Southdown 25 barrels best western Lime.

I have authorized Shotwell of Louisville to purchase some Pork for me & to draw on you at Short Sight in payment.

I am much pleased to hear Mr Wm. E. L. is so much better. Send the Pork to Waterloo on the Princess.

Yrs. truly

W. J. Minor

In the sale of sugar and molasses, Minor gave his factors considerable liberty with regard to the price to be asked.

During the years in which there was uncertainty as to

29 Ibid., February 25, 1857.
30 Ibid., February 19, 1857.
what the price of those items would be by the time they arrived in New Orleans, the factor was instructed to do the best he could. In 1840 Minor wrote to Leverich that he would "be satisfied with what you can do with my Sugar."31 He advised a Philadelphia merchant that "at this time it is impossible for me to give specific instructions, I must therefore place the crop entirely at your disposal."32 The entire Waterloo crop of sugar, 530 hogsheads, had been shipped to the merchant. The same instructions were given Leverich of New York, except that they must take care "if you sell on a credit, that the security is undoubted & not to held on to it too long, as to allow the new crop to come in--to market, which at present promises to be abundant."33

An unusual arrangement was made with a Pittsburg firm regarding molasses of the 1848 crop. Minor agreed to let the firm have his molasses provided he were permitted to fix the price on any day of his choice between February 15 and March 15. If he should fail to fix the price by the latter date, the price on that day would determine the sale.34 This arrangement was not with a factor, however, but was made with a concern making an actual purchase.

31 Ibid., March 10, 1840.
32 Ibid., July 5, 1834.
33 Ibid., August 7, 1837.
34 Ibid., November 8, 1848.
When Minor had reason to believe that prices would advance, he instructed his agents to store sugar and molasses until a named price could be obtained. Minor advised Leverich of New Orleans in 1857 that he wanted the Southdown sugar "stored at Algiers as it comes over; unless you can sell it for eleven (11) cents a pound, as it arrives, hold on till it all gets over." Molasses barrels should be laid on their sides, and if "fermenting on arrival have it brot. to the City & sold. If not, fermenting Store at Algiers also, & hold till it all gets over, unless you can sell, on arrival, at sixty two (62) cents a gallon."  

Factors in New Orleans were instructed to ship sugar on hand to the North when prices were too low at the Southern port. In 1839, James H. Leverich, predecessor to the concern of William E. Leverich, was instructed to ship the crop of the previous year to New York unless it could be sold for six cents on the plantation or for six and three quarters cents in New Orleans. Another New Orleans concern was instructed to send 200 hogsheads to New York with orders to hold until further notice, unless a price of six cents per pound could be obtained.

36 Ibid., January 11, 1839.
37 Ibid., January 25, 1838.
Minor disposed of his sugar and molasses not only by sale through agents in New Orleans and New York, but through agents in other cities and by sale "on plantation" to captains of river boats. In 1843 sugar was sold in Nashville and Baltimore, and in 1845 a small portion was sold in the latter city and in Louisville. The cost of transportation and insurance for the conveyance of sugar to distant cities discouraged the practice unless the price to be received was somewhat greater than that which could be obtained through sale on the plantation. In one year the sugar brought only one cent per pound more in the North than that which was sold on the plantation.

The crops of at least two years were sold to Captain Dugan, evidently a steamer captain who purchased for himself for resale or for a Cincinnati concern. In 1856 the entire Southdown crop of the previous year, 570 hogsheads, was sold to Dugan for six and one half cents per pound delivered at the sugar house on the plantation, and the entire crop at Hollywood and Southdown in 1857 was sold to him at six cents per pound. Other "on plantation" sales were made each year, either

---

38 Minor Journal, 60.
39 Ibid., 62.
40 Ibid., January 10, 1856.
41 Minor diary, April 22, 1856.
42 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, March 10, 1858.
in large or small quantities. A large portion of the 1844 crop at Waterloo was sold at the plantation to Snad and Thomp-son for six cents per pound, and sales of one and two hogsheads to friends in New Orleans and Natchez were made on terms calling for transportation charges to be paid by the pur-
chaser.

The approach of the grinding season found Minor in possession of a portion of the previous year's crop on many occasions. The lack of storage facilities and the need for money required him to dispose of sugar held until the latter part of the year. In 1844 he made arrangements to ship 100 hogsheads to New York, and advised the agent there that if his price could be obtained he wished them to take another shipment of equal size, as a large crop would call for the storage space of those two hundred hogsheads. At times he refused to sell until late in the season because of the low price being paid, and in November of 1842 he advised an agent that "Sugar must go up; if you can get 5½ on plantation for mine, sell it." A financial obligation had forced him to sell in the previous year in February, taking five and three quarters cents per pound, a price which he did not like.

43 Minor Journal, 61.
44 Minor letter-books, November 12, 1844.
46 Ibid., February 4, 1841.
Concessions were made in order to insure a satisfactory sale. Of the 1847 crop, Minor informed his agent in New Orleans that he "would take 4 cents for [his] Waterloo crop on the place to be weighed on or before the 1st of Feb., the purchaser to have the privilege of rejecting 18 Hoags out of the 490--Which Nisbet says are bad." At other times the purchaser was required to furnish barrels in which to put molasses, the price to be determined by the one current at the time of sale. In 1857 the crop was offered to a Cincinnati concern before grinding started, "at the rate current on plantation the 20th of February, 1858," the purchaser to furnish barrels for the molasses.

The study of Minor's method of production and means of sale shows them to have been typical of those of other Louisiana sugar planters. The factor, indispensable agent of the planter, disposed of produce on the most favorable terms, and received a commission of two and one half per cent, the usual fee. In years of great production and consequential low prices, the planter held his produce for a larger price, stored to await a greater profit, or sold to buyers who called at the dock or received delivery at the sugar house.

47 Ibid., October 14, 1837.
48 Ibid., October 5, 1857.
PLANTATION PROBLEMS

The demands which changing conditions and the elements made upon the sugar planter required his constant attention to the disclosure of improved methods for cane growth and sugar manufacture. In addition to information received from periodicals, Minor conducted experiments on his plantations, such experiments yielding profit in cases and being abandoned in others.

One of the more successful of his experiments was one concerned with the proper way to preserve cane which was cut prior to grinding time as a result of early frosts. The process was known as windrowing, and consisted of laying the stalks of cane end to end along the middles of the rows, and covering lightly with soil to protect from the weather. In 1850 he noted that windrowed cane kept better than standing cane, and wrote:

This cane was windrowed after the frost on the 17th & 18th & was killed to the ground, but not frozen. The time to begin windrowing is on the 15th of November if the top of the cane has been killed—whether it rains or not.¹

At the conclusion of that season he noted that cane windrowed after the vegetation was killed would keep six or eight weeks;

¹ Minor plantation diary, 1847-1850, November 30, 1850.
If the cane was killed to the ground, but not frozen, it would keep four weeks, while that left standing would not keep "more than 8 or 10 days." The cane preserved in this manner was not so full of juice, but it made sugar faster than any he had ever boiled. After the normal grinding season had been concluded in one year, he observed that a neighbor was still grinding cane that had been windrowed for three months, and that it was making good sugar.

The windrowing process had been used thus far only as a means of preserving cane for the mill. Only small amounts had been put up for seed. In 1855, however, Minor found that the cane put up into mats for seed was spoiling, and "determined to leave a quantity of windrowed cane sufficient to make up for the estimated probable deficit in the mats." At the end of the season during which cane grown from this windrowed seed cane was ground, his experiment was complete.

He wrote:

\[\text{The land was planted with windrowed seed which appears to be perfect. Not a stalk was thrown away. I burrie this seed cane on each side, then run over it & throw it out with the ploughs, then followed with the hoes two men acting together & pulled up that which was not thrown up & out by the}\]

---

ploughs, then the shookers followed and laid it in piles or heaps as we do cane cut for the mill the carts pass between the heaps & are loaded from both sides- Managed in this way cane can be got from the field with less labour & in less time than from mats- It can certainly be put down for seed in half the time & with half the labour that it can be put into mats.5

Other experiments were of less importance than the windrowing experiment. Frequent notations served as reminders that certain practices should be discontinued, as harmful results were evident. He found that cane planted before grinding was finished, if planted too early, usually felt the effects of unfavorable weather.6 He intended to profit by one dry period by observing whether mats put up in dry weather would be preserved.7 He later found that they kept better than those put up in wet weather one month later, and attributed the difference to the fact that those put up in dry weather were greener.8

The proper way to prepare land for planting corn he described in a diary entry:

It does not do to plant corn on a high ridge because you can not get mould enough to it..... The best way to prepare land for corn is to ridge up early, as high as possible, then just before planting throw back 4

---

5 Ibid., 1855-1858, January 29, 1857.
6 Ibid., 1847-1850, December 16, 1850.
7 Ibid., 1851-1855, October 20, 1852.
8 Ibid., February 9, 1853.
furrows run the cultivators over them & plant im-
mediately. Run light harrows over the corn as soon
as it begins to come up, then it will stand without
work till it is large enough to be moulded.9

Another notation reminded him that cane broken by hail had
suckered better and earlier than that not damaged.10

New kinds of cane were tried on an experimental basis.
While in New Orleans in 1850 Minor sent some Cuba cane to
Waterloo with instructions that it be planted in a designated
field.11 He wrote from Natchez to Leverish in New Orleans
with instructions to send "a new kind of Sugar Cane for sale
at 90 Camp Street" to Waterloo. Some of the new cane was
planted at Natchez, but Minor failed to comment on the variety
or the results of the experiment.12

In 1835 Minor became interested in a sugar manufactur-
ing process owned by one W. H. Gilbert. A part of the process
called for the mixture of one quart of bisulphate of lime to
every ten inches of common lime used in making sugar.13
Gilbert made the process available to planters on the condition
that they pay one dollar per hogshead for 30 to 50 trial
hogsheads; if it proved satisfactory the planter could purchase

9 Ibid., May 14, 1852.
10 Ibid., April 24, 1852.
11 Ibid., 1847-1850, March 21, 1850.
12 Minor letter-books, July 18, 1855.
13 Minor plantation diary, 1855-1858, December 8, 1856.
the right to use the plan. Minor was pleased with the process, and informed Gilbert that his draft for $600 was forthcoming, that amount entitling him to use Gilbert's process at Southdown plantation.

Minor's comments on the results of coal would seem to indicate that the use of the fuel for boiling sugar did not advance beyond the experimental stage until 1859, although he had at one time 3,500 barrels on hand. The first recorded instance of the use of coal was in 1850, when he found that it did very well considering that "we did not have the right kind of grates." Two years later he noted that it was not satisfactory, except for a short time until "the grates [became] stopped up with the cinders." By 1859 he had converted to coal at Southdown, ordering 6,865 barrels at a cost of 38¢ per barrel. In that year he made better sugar in the kettles heated by coal than in those fired with wood, but complained that two hogsheads were lost each 24 hours by stopping to clean off the grates.

---

14 Minor letter-books, October 4, 1853.
15 Ibid., June 24, 1854.
16 Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, October 14, 1854.
17 Minor papers, Minor to John Minor, December 28, 1850.
18 Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, November 10, 1852.
19 Ibid., 1858-1861, March 19, 1859.
20 Ibid., November 17, 1859.
Another experiment consisted of burning off trash in the fields to facilitate ploughing. He wrote:

The object of the experiment is to burn off the dry leaves that are knocked off the cane stalks & fall on the top of the ridge & interfere with the ploughing. I find the right time to burn off is after the top or outside leaves of the tops appear quite dead or dry. If you burn before that time or while the tops are green a sufficient quantity of the trash top will not burn so as to enable you to do good ploughing unless you send the hoes a head.  

A diary entry made after the season of 1850 serves as an excellent summary of Minor's ideas concerning several phases of cane culture:

Never plant New Land solid. Never windrow new land cane. Begin always by the 15th of October to grind—no matter how green the cane may be for you are certain to lose twice as much from the 15th of Dec to the 1st of Jan., as you are from the 15th of Octo., to the 1st November. It is a mistake too to keep New ground cane for the last grinding. It is far more injuriously affected by frost than cane on old land, which is riper. Never mat or windrow crooked canes. Always put up that which is most convenient to land you intend to plant. I find the heads of the mats, that were covered with dirt are badly spoilt, while those parts of the mats that had no dirt put on them are very slightly injured. I attribute this to the fact that, when canes are tramped very hard, & all the air excluded they either sprout or dry rot. The dirt excludes the air. I find canes planted before the . . . very cold weather which were covered 2 ins deep are not hurt by the severe frost of the 20th Jan., . . . when the Thermometer was down to 14 1/2° in New Orleans.

21 Ibid., 1851-1855, October 31, 1854.

22 Ibid., undated.
Minor recognized the importance of crop rotation. Lists of fields in plantation diaries contain a record of the use made of each field during each successive year, and give the notations on what plans were made concerning each for the following season. While a large portion of the fields lay fallow, a second group produced corn, peas, potatoes, pumpkins and other vegetables and feeds, and approximately one fourth of the total cleared acreage was planted in cane. The following year the previously fallow land was planted in cane, while the plant cane land of the previous year produced from rattoons. The past year's vegetable land was idle. This procedure was not followed in all cases every year. Changes were made, and an extremely fertile field might be planted in cane for four or five successive years. Fields which were found to be poor in soil would lie fallow two and three years, and some were converted to pasture.

Minor was optimistic over the prospects of a steam plow which he described in a letter to DeBow's Review. He pictured it as "a velocipede on wheels sixteen feet high, and eighteen feet apart, with a governing wheel eight feet high." It would contain fifteen plows on three frames, and upon reaching the end of the row the plows would "be unset eight or ten feet off the ground . . . the machine will turn short around, the plow passing over the top of the fence." Minor

---

23 Ibid., 1851-1855. List of fields.
thought it would go 25 miles per hour on a smooth road.\textsuperscript{24}

A serious problem with Minor, as with other planters, was that of the availability and cost of transportation. The Ascension Parish plantation, being located on the Mississippi River, was less affected than were the two Terrebonne plantations. During extremely dry seasons, Bayous La Fourche and Black, the avenues of transportation for those plantations, were not navigable. In July, 1850, Minor ordered supplies for his sugar mill, and warned that they should be sent as soon as possible, "as the Bayou La. Fourche is falling rapidly."\textsuperscript{25} Later he regretted that "the Sugar & Molasses from Southdown could not get out on a/c of the low water."\textsuperscript{26} When overland transportation was the means of conveying produce, the condition of the roads was a problem to both buyer and vendor. He advised the purchaser of the 1855 sugar crop to haul it to Thibodeaux immediately, "as a little rain causes the roads to cut up in a way not understood by those who have not seen it."\textsuperscript{27}

Before the completion of the railroad line through Terrebonne Parish Minor engaged small boats in some years to

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{DeBow's Review}, VII (1849), 562-563.
\textsuperscript{25} Minor letter-books, July 10, 1850.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, January 26, 1851.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, May 2, 1855.
transport his sugar to market. In 1837 a New Orleans concern provided a vessel to take 360 hogsheads to New York, and in another year it was necessary to secure a vessel capable of carrying 300 hogsheads. The cost for the latter trip was $5 per hogshead. Any compilation designed to show the cost of transportation however, would have to include expenses for enlarging canals and bayous. In 1850 such work at Waterloo cost $1,285.56, and Thomas Kehoe was paid $12,325.22 between 1848 and 1854 for the same type of work at Southdown and Hollywood. Transportation of sugar and molasses from the plantations in Terrebonne Parish to the "Terrebonne crossing" in 1855 cost "$1 a Hoag and 50¢ a barrel," while the expenses on 150 hogsheads from Waterloo to New Orleans were $635.44, or $4.24 per hogshead.

These difficulties and expenses, plus the inconvenience caused by unsatisfactory service, prompted Minor on two occasions to contribute to the cost of building boats to run on Bayous Black and La Fourche. In 1843 the first of these

28 Ibid., June 22, 1837.
29 Ibid., February 12, 1851.
30 Ibid., undated.
31 Minor Journal, 111.
32 Minor diary, January 3, 1856.
33 Ibid., March 26, 1859.
34 Minor letter-books, November 24, 1850.
ventures failed when the "Don Juan" was damaged beyond repair. Five years later he co-operated with other subscribers in building the "Houma", his share being $1,000. The boat was commanded by Captain D. R. Faussett, whose fraudulent practices incurred so many debts that Minor directed that his share be sold.

The construction of the Orleans and Opelousas Railroad through Terrebonne Parish relieved to some extent the problems of transportation. In 1855, when work on the line was nearing completion, Minor instructed his overseer at Southdown to sell no more molasses on the plantation; shipment to New Orleans over the new line would bring a better price. The first recorded instance in which Minor ordered supplies shipped via the line was in the following year. He showed his interest in the improvement of rail transportation by attending meetings for the purpose, recording after one meeting that "very good feeling was evinced."

The severity of damage from Mississippi River crevasses is indicated by the loss of the entire Waterloo crop of 1851.

35 Ibid., November 8, 1843.  
36 Ibid., May 22, 1848.  
37 Ibid., May 1, 1852.  
38 Ibid., August 21, 1855.  
39 Ibid., December 25, 1856.  
40 Minor diary, April 16, 1859.
as a result of flood waters. Earlier instances of levee
breaks are overshadowed by the events of 1851 which resulted
in a damage suit against Henry Doyal, a neighboring planter
whom Minor blamed for the loss of his crop. A break in the
levee near Minor's place had occurred in 1849, but no further
mention was made of damage as a result. Repeated breaks on
Doyal's place in 1850 doubtless affected Minor's attitude
when the damaging flood of 1851 occurred. A crevasse on Doyal's
place in May, 1850, was arrested with the aid of Minor's Ne-
groes, and in June of that year another break in Doyal's
levee necessitated the replanting of corn and peas in the
Minor fields covered by water. Water overflowed the banks
of the Bayou La Fourche in that year, but no record was made
of damage which Minor had feared.

In 1851 Minor suffered loss for the second time in two
years, the cause for which he considered to be poor judgment
on the part of his neighbor. In March, shortly after the first
levee break, he recorded:

41 There is no record of a harvest in the Waterloo
plantation diary for that year, and Champomier lists no
production for the plantation.

42 Minor plantation diary, 1847-1850, March 8, 1849.
43 Minor diary, June 9, 1850.
44 Ibid., June 18, 1850.
45 Minor plantation diary, 1847-1850, July 21, 1850.
46 Minor diary, June 10, 1850.
Mr. Doyal made a great mistake in cutting away part of his old levee to make his new one. . . . Mr. Doyal cut his old levee above his house to let the water in against his new one. It soon broke the crop levee I put up between us, on my levee line, then the one at my gate & the one at the old Land & by 9 1/2 o'clock my main levee near the upper end of the new part gave way & it threatened & would have given way a dozen other places if it had not in this. This levee is 20 feet base & 6 ft high about 4 feet was made with carts & the balance with handbarrows. It was made in a very dry time & there has been no long & heavy rain since it was made & the water was let on it too suddenly. Men. Don't make a levee in a very dry time, nor let the water against it suddenly or all at once. But above all things don't cut away any part of the old Levee to make the new one. 47

Additional breaks occurred on March 23 and March 28, 48 and Minor spoke derisively of Doyal's efforts to arrest them. Most of his slaves were sent to Doyal's place to assist in levee building, and the services of some were required to erect a levee around Minor's house and buildings and to elevate the sugar in the sugar house. 49

The experiences of that year Minor used to his advantage by strengthening his levee. He added "20 ins to its height, and extended the base to include 10 feet more and made the width at the top 6 ft." 50

47 Minor plantation diary, 1851-1855, March 21 and March 22, 1851.
48 Ibid., March 23 and March 28, 1851.
49 Ibid., March 30, 1851.
50 Ibid., September 10, 1851.
In 1852 Minor computed his loss as a result of the series of levee breaks on Doyal's plantation, and presented him a bill for $31,260. He had lost 250 acres of plant cane, 240 acres first year rattoons, 400 acres of corn, and two oxen, and asked payment for damages to bridges, to stock through "confinement and want of green food," to his house, and to his slave quarters. When Doyal failed to pay, Minor placed the matter in the hands of a Donaldsonville lawyer. He claimed payment on the basis that Doyal had not instructed Minor's Negroes to stop working when they had been sent to aid in stopping the crevass. He assumed that Doyal was responsible for any work done on his place unless he ordered it stopped. Apparently Minor requested payment for only the work done by his slaves. It is probable that he received no judgment in the case, as he was attempting as late as 1857 to have it brought to court, and transferred the case to other lawyers.

These events precipitated others between the two men. Some of them are summarized in a letter which Minor sent to Doyal in 1853:

I will send my man down to point out the one he bot.

---

51 Minor letter-books, undated.
52 Ibid., March 26, 1857.
53 Ibid., March 11, 1857.
54 Ibid., May 9, 1857.
the syrup of- Yr negro will of course deny it- Should you in that case /not/ feel yourself called upon to refund the money to my negro--I will pay him myself One of the 17 chickens stolen came back one Friday morning- None of the balance have yet been seen here so say my negroes- But, suppose yr. man had brot. them back & turned them loose, as he says he did- I will ask you, if you think that was the correct way to return them. According to yr own statement you sent the chickens back by the thief & expected him to deliver them- Suppose I had taken yr sugar & thrown it over the fence into yr field- I should have /not/ been satisfied that I was doing . . . right and yet, that is just what yr man says he did- He did not turn them loose where he got them; for he broke open the chicken house to get them- He delivered them to some one, & can not therefore be /held/ either in law or justice, to have /done right/- You did not return the horse for the one stolen by yr negro in that way. I am well aware--& I am also aware that, the horse you sent me was not worth more than half as much as the one that was stolen- But, as I thought you intended to do what was right in the matter, I said nothing about it, & would not now, if you had not mentioned the subject.

I make it, & have always made it, a rule to pay for every thing that my negroes steal when such is found on the negro.

But I would not agree to pay for cattle, because the hides were found on my land- It would be an easy matter for other persons to kill cattle /and throw/ the hides either on yr. land or /mine/.

I say the card playing took place on the land between us- But even if yr negroes had lost money to mine, I can't think it excusable or an excuse for their stealing, even if the gambling had taken place on my land.55

Minor was involved in lawsuits with other neighboring planters. In 1840 he instructed his agent in New Orleans to remind a New Orleans lawyer occasionally of a case which was

55 Ibid., February 9, 1853.
pending over the ownership of certain land near Waterloo. He asked his Waterloo overseer to watch for new evidence in another case, the details of which were not described. Another case in which Minor was involved with a Mr. Tillotson was probably an outgrowth of events which had occurred in 1850. Minor wrote to Tillotson requesting him to clean out his portion of the "New River", and informed him that trees, branches and moss had caused the river bed to fill with earth, grass, weeds, bushes, and logs, causing water to back up on Minor's land. He received no satisfaction in the matter, and was obliged to pay $550.70 for having the job done.

Writers have contended that one of the most pressing worries of the Southern planter was the acquisition of capital. Crop failures were more serious for the sugar planter than for the cotton planter. If an entire crop was destroyed, the planter lost not only his revenue for that season, but the seed for the crop of the following year. This factor, when added to those problems common to all planters, created a demand for capital which the planter could not meet without the aid of bankers, commission houses, and influential friends.

56 Ibid., January 28, 1840.
57 Ibid., February 11, 1840.
58 Ibid., June 25, 1850.
59 Ibid., undated.
Hardly a year passed in which Minor did not record payments on existing debts or the consumation of new ones. One of the earlier instances shows his indebtedness to Stephen Duncan for $10,000. He had previously written to a debtor in Baton Rouge that he would need as much money as he could raise, and requested payment of accounts due him. He instructed that cotton be sold to meet a $10,000 obligation in New York in January, 1840, and a few days later had need for $2,200 in specie at his home.

In 1841 Minor was obliged to request an additional month in which to meet an obligation to Dr. William Newton Mercer of Laurel Hill (Mississippi), his reason being that the weather had affected operations. This note for $5,000 was renewed in 1843, and an additional one for $8,394.37 was signed. The period from 1841 to 1843 seems to have been one of financial difficulty for the planter. At one time he was forced to sell his sugar at a price below what he would have received by waiting; he instructed Leverich of New Orleans to let the sugar go at what it would bring, as certain payments

60 Ibid., January 25, 1839.
61 Ibid., October 28, 1837.
62 Ibid., October 29, 1839.
63 Ibid., November 7, 1839.
64 Ibid., January 16, 1841.
65 Ibid., April 14, 1843.
had to be made without delay. Matters were no better a year later, when he wrote to Leverich:

If you can't sell the Sugar I don't know what I shall do—There is a man here, who thinks, he will have by the 1st of June, some $5 or 6000 to loan.67

A few months later he complained that "Sugar must go up," and instructed his agent to sell if he could get five cents on the plantation.68 In 1842 one racing event won for him $800, a sum which he considered "not bad in these times."69

When the "Don Juan" was damaged, Minor ordered that supplies be sent for the amount of the insurance, but instructed that the order be cancelled if the insurance could not be collected.70

High bills and short crops presented a discouraging picture in 1847,71 and two years later Minor attempted to mortgage Southdown plantation with two hundred Negroes for $50,000.72 This loan apparently was not completed, for Minor made an appeal to Stephen Duncan a few months later:

I mentioned I should want to borrow about $20,000

66 Ibid., February 4, 1841.
67 Ibid., March 1, 1842.
68 Ibid., November 24, 1842.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., November 8, 1843.
71 Ibid., July 3, 1847.
72 Ibid., January 8, 1849.
next year, unless I made good crops— I am now satisfied my crop will not exceed that of 1848, & it is therefore necessary I should effect a loan—which I should be glad to do on the same terms as the last I made of you— To wit--The principal payable in New York at the end of five years from the 1st. of May 1850—The discount payable annually in New York on the 1st. of May each year—My notes to be secured by mortgage on Southdown (3,500 acres) which is fast becoming one of the best improved places in La., & as I shall pay off on the 1st. March next, the last payt. on it--it will make yrs, the first mortgage, & as I think very ample security. Yr. bills on New Orleans payable lst. May 1850—will answer my purpose.73

One note of $10,000 had already become due earlier that year.74 During 1850 Minor made notes totaling $40,000, all of which were sent to Leverich of New Orleans, and were to be used in meeting his previous obligations.75 Two years later his notes totaled $25,000,76 and in 1853 he made provisions for a renewal of the loan from Stephen Duncan and an additional loan, the total of the two being $60,000. Terms called for repayment in four equal installments, the first one to fall due in four years. Interest during the period prior to the first payment was to be $14,400.77

Minor expressed a need for $20,000 on April 1,

73 Ibid., November 18, 1849.
74 Ibid., May 7, 1849.
75 Ibid., April 11, 1850.
76 Ibid., May 5, 1852.
77 Ibid., September 10, 1853.
1856, and two years later noted that his notes totaling $65,800 matured in that year. Part of that amount he expected to receive through debts owed him, but he informed James Ferguson of New Orleans:

I mentioned I feared that parties owing me some $23,000 would not be able to meet their judgement- Now I feel pretty certain that they will disappoint me, & makes it necessary for me to raise that Sum. I would like that Sum of you for five years, at Six per cent per annum the interest payable annually.

These problems, solutions, and attempts at scientific farming provide insight into the difficulties facing the south Louisiana sugar planter and the vicissitudes of cane culture and plantation operation. Minor's approach to them shows his knowledge of contemporary solutions used by other planters. His experiences represent no departure from the historically validated accounts of plantation operation. In fact, the examination of his records substantiates evidence presented by those who have made studies from more complete accounts and records.

One question which has not been satisfactorily answered however, is that of the profitability of plantations under the slavery regime. The Minor plantations returned a reasonable margin of profit during the 30 year period prior to the Civil

78 Ibid., March 13, 1856.
79 Ibid., February 6, 1858.
80 Ibid., February 5, 1858.
War. Debts contracted were at length paid; the fact that Minor borrowed heavily to meet obligations and to expand does not necessarily imply that the operation of his plantations was not a profitable enterprise. On the other hand, partial proof of the contention that Minor profited in the operation of his plantations is seen in the fact that during the period covered by this study, 1830-1860, he was able to purchase two additional plantations and to maintain financial stability. The financial return of his first plantation insured his ability to repay money borrowed to purchase additional holdings. In addition, those who made such loans considered his plantations to be sound financial investments, and readily accepted security in the form of mortgages.

Further proof of the financial stability of his economic holdings is seen in the ability of the family to survive the Civil War. While other ante bellum planters were forced to lease their land after the war, thus surrendering the unity of a compact economic organization, members of the Minor family not only retained title to their land but expanded their holdings and continued operations until the economic hardships common to all sugar planters in the second decade of the twentieth century forced them into bankruptcy.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University.

This study is based on the Minor papers, which cover the period from 1748 to 1898, the greatest amount of material being concentrated in the period 1830-1870. The collection consists of 410 items and 38 volumes. The loose items, including bills, receipts, letters, drafts, notes and accounts, are contained in three boxes, and for the most part have been well preserved. The bound volumes include 10 personal diaries, averaging about 100 pages per volume, one journal, two ledgers, three letter-books of 400 pages each, five notebooks, 13 plantation diaries, each containing 200 to 300 pages, and four miscellaneous volumes.

Personal diaries usually recorded memorandum; Minor noted the needs of his plantations in such books, and later prepared orders. These small diaries, although poorly bound, have remained in a good state of preservation. Plantation diaries, large volumes in which daily operations were recorded, present no particular problem to the reader. The ravages of a century, although plainly visible, have not rendered them useless.

The letter-books are perhaps the most valuable and the least useable of the volumes in the collection. Each letter Minor wrote was copied on tissue-thin paper, the sheets being bound approximately 400 to a volume. Many pages show the sign of water, the effect of which has been to erase the ink; whole pages appear blank. An attempt to make these illegible pages visible on infra-red microfilm failed, but it was possible to read many with the aid of ultra-violet light. It is estimated that 20% of the letters cannot be used.

These letter-books offer an excellent source for information concerning most phases of Minor's life and his plantation operations. When used with the journal, which contains accounts for the separate plantations, and the plantation diaries, they give a near-complete picture of the vicissitudes of sugar cane culture.

In addition to the items contained in boxes, the following bound volumes have been used:

1. Diary, 1820-1845.
2. Diary, 1847-1848.
3. Diary, 1849.
4. Diary, 1850.
5. Diary, 1851.
6. Diary, 1856.
7. Diary, 1856-1857.
8. Diary, 1859.
11. Ledger, 1834-1883.
18. List of Births and Deaths, 1846-1865.
25. Plantation Diary, 1847-1850.
26. Plantation Diary, 1850.
27. Plantation Diary, 1851-1855.
28. Plantation Diary, 1856.
29. Plantation Diary, 1855-1858.
30. Plantation Diary, 1858-1859.
31. Plantation Diary, 1858-1861.
35. Plantation Diary, 1869.
Unpublished Terrebonne Parish Records


General Conveyance Index, 1822-1906, Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. Located in Terrebonne Parish Courthouse, Houma, Louisiana.


Federal Census Manuscripts

Fifth Census of the United States, Louisiana, 1830. Microfilm in Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, of originals in possession of Duke University.

Sixth Census of the United States, Louisiana, 1840. Microfilm in Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, of originals in possession of Duke University.


Inventories

Louisiana Historical Records Survey Project, "Inventory of the Parish Archives of Louisiana: Terrebonne Parish," Department of Archives, Louisiana State University.
Guides


Articles


Smith, Robert W. "Was Slavery Unprofitable in the Antebellum South?" Agricultural History, XX (1946), 62-64.


"The Sugar-Cane Plant, Seed Cane, etc.," DeBow's Review, XIII (1853), 57-62.

General Works


———. *Life and Labor in the Old South.* Boston, 1929.


VITA
VITA

The writer was born January 16, 1926, in Emerson, Arkansas, where he was graduated from high school in January, 1943. He entered Louisiana Polytechnic Institute, Ruston, Louisiana, and in May of that year enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve. He was commissioned upon completion of training at the Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School, Fort Schuyler, New York, and served in the Pacific Theater of Operations. In August, 1945, he was married to Miss Dorothy Wallace of Ruston, Louisiana.

He returned to Louisiana Polytechnic Institute after his discharge from active duty, and was graduated in June, 1948, with the degree of B.A. in Education. Since September, 1948, he has been enrolled as a graduate student in history at Louisiana State University, where he holds a graduate assistantship.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Charles Lincoln Wingfield

Major Field: History

Title of Thesis: The Sugar Plantations of William J. Minor, 1830-1860

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination:

January 11, 1950