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C. A. Haulman



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CHANGES IN THE ECONOMIC POWER STRUCTURE IN DUVAL COUNTY, FLORIDA, DURING THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

by C. A. HAULMAN*

AMERICA'S TURBULENT DECADE of the 1860s brought dramatic changes to the South. Destruction of property was overwhelming, the collapse of the southern monetary and credit system was complete, and the large capital investment in slaves disappeared.¹ In Florida, invasions of the coastal areas, raids into the thinly-settled interior, and disruption of the economy caused a percentage decline in property values greater even than that suffered by war-torn Virginia.² This intense upheaval of the war period was followed by the complexities of the Reconstruction experience. Earlier interpretations of Reconstruction generally pictured a prostrate South where, according to Vernon L. Wharton, "the villains were carpetbaggers, scalawags (usually unidentified), and a great faceless mass of ignorant, barbarous, and often ridiculous Negroes (and) the southern heroes were the whites who had suffered indignities with bravery and patience and who finally, with northern support, had overcome the rabble and

* Mr. Haulman is associate professor of economics, College of William and Mary. This is a revision of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Florida Historical Society, Jacksonville, May 12, 1972. The author acknowledges the aid of Taylor Cousins and Charles Cullen.

1. Of the total assessed property valuation of \$4,363,000,000 in the eleven seceded states in 1860, \$1,603,000,000 was estimated to remain by the end of the war. The emancipation of slaves accounted for \$1,634,000,000 of the decrease in valuation, with the remaining decline resulting from losses or reduced values. When changes in the value of currency are accounted for, "at the end of the war decade the wealth of the South was decreased 30 per cent, and to recover the evaluation of 1860 would require an increase of 43 per cent upon the amount of wealth reported in 1870." See James L. Sellers, "The Economic Incidence of the Civil War in the South" in Ralph Andreado, ed., *Economic Impact of the American Civil War* (Cambridge, 1967), 100-01.
2. Rembert W. Patrick, *Reconstruction of the Nation* (New York, 1967), 4. Joe M. Richardson, *Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tallahassee, 1965), 5. According to Richardson, "Disruption of the economy was more responsible for the decline in property values than was destruction of war."

restored the rule of virtue, intelligence and property."³ The more recent revisionist approach to Reconstruction has expanded the basic information concerning the period and reinterpreted the events of Reconstruction.⁴ The revisionists have generally found that the Reconstruction experience was much more beneficial and less disruptive than the earlier studies indicated. For example, according to Joe M. Richardson, in Florida,

No man's rights of person were invaded under the guise of the law, the Democrat's life, property, and business were safe, his path to the ballot box was not obstructed by force, no one attempted to interfere with his freedom of speech, nor was he boycotted because of his political principles. The Negro was more able and less venal than charged. Republicans made significant contributions to the State including public education, a more democratic government, creation of public institutions, rights for Negroes, and an improved financial structure. Taxation was not unreasonable, the state debt was not excessive, and corruption of the period has been exaggerated.⁵

While substantial support for the revisionist interpretation of political Reconstruction has appeared, very little evidence has been presented concerning the economic questions regarding just what immediate and lasting influences Reconstruction exerted upon the southern economy.⁶ Did carpetbaggers and scoundrels gain substantial economic control during the years following the war, or did those who were in control economically in

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3. Vernon L. Wharton, "Reconstruction," in Arthur S. Link and R. W. Patrick, eds., *Writing Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 1965), 307-08. See works of the Dunning school, such as William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic 1865-1877* (New York, 1907); Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York, 1905); and William W. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1964). See also E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1947).
 4. For a basic revisionist view, see Kenneth M. Stampp, *Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York, 1965); Patrick, *Reconstruction*; and James G. Randall and David Donald, *Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston, 1961). Revisionist interpretations of Reconstruction in Florida include, Merlin G. Cox, "Military Reconstruction in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLVI (January 1968), 219-33; Jerrell H. Shofner, "Political Reconstruction in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLV (October 1966), 145-70; and Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction*.
 5. Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction*, 223.
 6. A critique of revisionism appears in Fletcher M. Green's introduction to the facsimile of William W. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (Gainesville, 1964).

1860 remain in power during Reconstruction? Further, to the extent that changes in the economic power structure did or did not occur, what was the impact upon southern economic growth of the Reconstruction experience? This study attempts to provide a methodology for viewing the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction upon the economic power structure of the South and presents the results of such a study for Duval County Florida. While the experience of one county does not furnish a complete picture of the economic effects of the period upon the South, it provides a test of the methodology presented and supplies additional economic information concerning the revisionist controversy surrounding Reconstruction.

To determine the extent to which changes in the economic power structure occurred this study considers changes in wealth holdings between 1860 and 1870.⁷ Although scholars have attacked the rich planter-poor white stereotype of antebellum society,⁸ more recent evidence indicates that not only was wealth unequally distributed by 1860 in a number of southern and western cities and rural counties, but that a substantial degree of mal-distribution existed earlier in the nineteenth century.⁹ This evidence does not deny the existence of an important middle class yeomanry; it does, however, indicate that a relatively small group of individuals held tremendous economic influence in the South by the time of the Civil War. Changes in wealth holdings,

7. *Eighth Census of the United States: 1860* (Washington, 1862); *Ninth Census of the United States: 1870* (Washington, 1872).

8. The work of the "Owsley School" is the center of the effort to overturn the idea of a completely aristocratic society in the antebellum South. See Frank L. and Harriet C. Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," *Journal of Southern History*, VI (February 1940), 24-26; Frank L. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge, 1950); B. H. Clark, *Tennessee Yeoman, 1840-1860* (Nashville, 1942); Roger W. Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1939). For early criticism of the Owsley approach see Fabian Linden, "Economic Democracy in the Slave South," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXI (April 1946), 140-89, and review of Owsley's *Plain Folk of the Old South*, by Ruppert Vance, in *Journal of Southern History*, XVI (November 1950), 545-47.

9. See Robert Gallman, "Trends in the Size Distribution of Wealth in the Nineteenth Century," in Lee Soltow, ed., *Six Papers on the Size Distribution of Wealth and Income* (New York, 1969); Edward Pessen, "The Egalitarian Myth and the American Social Reality: Wealth, Mobility, and Equality in the Era of the Common Man," *American Historical Review*, 76 (October 1971), 989-1034; and Lee Soltow, "Economic Inequality in the United States in the Period from 1790-1860," *Journal of Economic History*, 31 (December 1971), 822-39.

therefore, will be determined by use of data relating to the very wealthy.¹⁰ A sample, composed of all individuals and their dependents holding substantial wealth in the Duval County area, was taken from both the manuscript census of 1860 and 1870, and the samples were compared to determine whether those considered rich in 1860 were among those listed as holding substantial wealth in 1870. The extent to which the composition of the samples changed indicates changes in wealth holdings and thus in the economic power structure of the area being studied.

Use of the manuscript censuses as historical sources can be traced to Gustavus Dyer and Ulrich Phillips at about the turn of the twentieth century.¹¹ Subsequently, much more extensive uses of these sources were made by the "Owsley School," Barnes Lathrop and, more recently, by Robert Gallman and Lee Soltow.¹² While the manuscript census reports provide a wealth of information, they are not without serious problems. For this study, the most important problem is the validity of the wealth information of the manuscripts. Although in the South the 1860 census is generally considered quite complete and accurate, the 1870 census has been subject to criticism on grounds of incomplete reporting and biased or underestimated values of real and personal estate.¹³ If, however, the incomplete and biased reporting has a relatively consistent nature, it is possible to obtain meaningful results from the 1870 manuscripts. Therefore, the assumption of relatively consistent underreporting and underestimation of wealth information in the 1870 census will be made.¹⁴

A second methodological problem involves choosing a popula-

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10. This study equates the very wealthy with the economic power structure of the area. Such an assumption is made because it is likely that those individuals holding substantial wealth are the same ones who make or influence the decisions which affect the local economy and because the necessary wealth data are readily available from manuscript census.
 11. Gustavus W. Dyer, *Democracy in the South Before the Civil War* (Nashville, 1906); Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Origin and Growth of the Southern Black Belts," *American Historical Review*, XI (July 1906), 798-816.
 12. Barnes F. Lathrop, "History From the Census Returns," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LI (April 1948), 293-312; Barnes F. Lathrop, *Migrations into East Texas 1835-1860: A Study From the United States Census* (Austin, 1949).
 13. See Gallman, "Trends in Size Distribution," appendix; Lathrop, "History From the Census," 304; Carroll D. Wright and William C. Hunt, *History and Growth of the United States Census* (Washington, 1900); and *Ninth Census: 1870, III, Taxation and Wealth*, introduction.
 14. This assumption is the weakest point of the methodology but without it any study is impossible.

tion base against which to compare the rich and considering the role of the freedmen in such a decision. Prior to emancipation, slaves were considered property and were not in a position to be considered as potential wealth holders. By 1870, their position had changed, but few freedmen had the opportunity to gain wealth. Thus if the rich as a percentage of all potential wealth holders in both 1860 and 1870 is considered, the base will be distorted by emancipation. Because of the base problem and because family wealth rather than individual wealth appears to be a more meaningful measure of economic power, this study considers the rich relative only to the number of white families in the area studied.¹⁵

A final problem concerns the question of what to consider as substantial wealth. Because of the general decline in wealth in the South and the depreciation of the currency following the Civil War, it is difficult to fix a specific dollar value of wealth holdings as a criterion for considering families as rich. This study, therefore, considers the top five per cent of white families as the rich. Based upon Gallman's finding, that for the nation in 1860 the top five per cent of families held fifty-four per cent of personal wealth, such a criterion should isolate the major wealth holders in an area and thus provide an excellent picture of the area's economic power structure.¹⁶

Changes in the families which compose the samples of the richest five per cent of white families from the 1860 and 1870 manuscript censuses thus reveal a measure of the change in the economic power structure. In addition, where changes in the economic power structure have occurred, the census includes information on the origin of the newcomers to the power structure through individual place of birth data. When the new wealth holders have children, it is possible to obtain a more complete picture of the families' migration pattern.¹⁷ This information indicates whether the new wealth holders were merely local families who moved up the wealth structure during the decade, whether they were families from other parts of the same state or

15. Gallman, "Trends in Size Distribution," 19-20.

16. *Ibid.*, 6.

17. While place of birth information has a number of shortcomings it is the only readily available data on the origin of the new wealth holders.

other southern states moving to gain an advantage from the situation, or whether they were from the North.

Duval County is considered important because of its war and post-war experience. Jacksonville was occupied four times during the war. The effects of the consequent disruption— including the burning of an important area of the city during the evacuation following the third occupation— were significant.¹⁸ A census comparison (summarized in Table I) indicates, however, the destruction and disruption of the war years were far behind by the time of the 1870 census. Duval County's population grew dramatically during the 1860s, the most important development being the 211 per cent increase in the black population.¹⁹ More important were the economic changes during this period. Despite the war, total wealth increased 18.8 per cent in Duval County between 1860 and 1870, and the area became the state's most important economic center, contributing 40.1 per cent of the value of products produced in Florida, 24.9 per cent of the state's capital value, and 26.8 per cent of the employed.²⁰

The data contained in these and later census reports indicate that the latter part of the 1860s and the decade of the 1870s provided the basis for Duval County's development into the major area of Florida's growth. The method of census comparison, particularly comparison of changes in the economic power structure during the 1860s, reveals the role the county's power structure played in this development.

To establish a background for viewing changes in the economic power structure during the 1860s, changes during the previous decade are considered by sampling the top five per cent of wealth holders from the 1850 and 1860 Censuses. (Table II presents a summary of the results) Of the twenty-nine heads of households considered rich in 1860, nine can be traced to in-

18. For a description of the war experience, see T. Frederick Davis, *History of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity 1513 to 1924* (St. Augustine, 1925; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1964), 116-37. Conditions in Jacksonville at the end of the war are described in Davis, *History of Jacksonville*, 149-50.

19. Some of this large increase in population was probably temporary because Jacksonville was a center of the military occupation of Florida until 1869 and thus provided an attraction for freedmen.

20. These economic data may overstate Duval County's position because the census returns can be expected to be more accurate in this more heavily pro-Union and earlier occupied area than in most of the state's other

POWER STRUCTURE IN DUVAL COUNTY

TABLE I
Population and Economic Changes in Duval County

<i>Population</i>						
Year	White	Free Colored	Slave	Total	Change in Total	
1850	2338	95	2106	4539		
1860	2925	162	1987	5074	11.7%	
1870	5141	6780	-----	11,921	134.9%	
<i>Wealth</i>						
Year	Real Estate	Personal Estate	Total Estate		Change in Total	
1860	\$ 937,265	\$1,901,990	\$2,839,255			
1878	\$2,612,245	\$ 761,404	\$3,373,649		18.8%	
<i>White Families¹</i>						
Year	Number			Five Per cent		
1850	442			22		
1860	561			28		
1870	1078			54		
<i>Economic</i>						
Year	Hands Employed Number of State	Per cent of State	Capital Value	Per cent of State	Products Value	Per cent of State
1850	64	6.5	\$ 49,000	9.0	\$ 114,500	17.1
1860	214	8.7	\$120,100	6.4	\$ 356,100	14.5
1870	739	26.8	\$419,450	24.9	\$1,883,225	40.1

Sources: Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Census.

¹Based upon average persons per family for Florida. 1850, 5.29; 1860, 5.21; 1870, 4.77.

TABLE II
Major Wealth Holders in Duval County
1850, 1860, and 1870

Richest Five Per cent of White Families			
Year	Number	Value of Estate	Per cent of Total
1850	21	\$ 322,000	—
1860	29	\$1,192,700	42.0
1870	54	\$1,875,300	55.5

Sources: Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Census.

dividuals or families who were rich in 1850, and another twelve to individuals or families who resided in the county in 1850 but who were not identified as rich.²¹ Of the remaining eight, four came from other places in Florida, three from northern states, and one not reported. Apparently there was a major reordering of Duval County's economic power structure during the 1850s.²² It resulted mainly from an upward mobility, however, and because of the continued local dominance of the economic power structure, it probably had little impact upon the nature or direction of economic change.²³

A similar comparison of the top five per cent of wealth holders for the period 1860-1870 reveals a number of results. Only thirteen of the twenty-nine heads of households considered rich in 1860 maintained this position in 1870. Eleven more of the 1870 rich can be traced to individuals or families who were residents of the county in 1860, but who were not included among the rich. Thus of the fifty-four heads of households labelled rich in 1870, only twenty-four were residents or descendents of area residents in 1860. Of the remaining thirty, place of birth information indicates that four came from other parts of Florida, three from other southern states, two from border states, two from foreign countries, and nineteen from northern states. In addition, eight of the nineteen new wealth holders from the North were there during or just after the Civil War according to their children's place of birth. Duval's economic power structure therefore appears to have been substantially reordered during the 1860s with most of the change stemming from the movement of new wealth holders into the county, mainly from the North. This experience was different from the 1850s.

Data on the enumerated occupations of the top wealth holders in Duval County indicate that a movement toward a commercial orientation for these wealth holders was developing during the 1850s. (Table III) Not until the 1860s, however, did the business interest become dominant. The new orientation was mainly a result of the thirty newcomers among the major wealth holders, fourteen of whom were listed as businessmen and ten whose oc-

21. From a search of the manuscript census.

22. From census place of birth information of the individual or his children.

23. Of the twenty-one heads of households considered rich in 1850, nine remained among the rich in 1860, and five remained in the area but were no longer considered rich.

TABLE III
Occupation of Major Wealth Holders in Duval County
1950, 1860, and 1870

Year	Occupation	Number
1850	Planter-farmer	13
	Merchant-businessman	4
	Professional	2
	Unreported	2
1860	Planter-farmer	11
	Merchant-businessman	10
	Professional	3
	Gentleman	3
	Unreported	2
1870	Farmer	8
	Merchant-businessman	22
	Professional	9
	Other	3
	Unreported	12

Sources: Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Census.

cupations were not reported. In addition, because of the business orientation of the new rich, it is likely that the change in the economic power structure brought about by the newcomers contributed significantly to the recovery of Duval's economy after the Civil War and its emergence as Florida's leading economic area in 1870.

The long-term effects of the change in the economic power structure are not as clear, however. While four of the newcomers are mentioned by Davis as contributing significantly to the area after 1870,²⁴ no mention can be found of the majority, and several appear to have left Duval County soon after 1870.²⁵ Thus little can be determined about the long-term impact of the change in the economic power structure during the 1860s except that the rapid recovery of the late 1860s provided a stronger economic base for future development.

24. Davis, *History of Jacksonville*, mentions Baya, 364; Bostwick, 191, 302; Brock, 363; and Hubbard, 480.

25. One is Franklin Dibble, a banker whose bank Davis found no record of after 1870. Davis, *History of Jacksonville*, 478. Others include Cheney and Dockray mentioned as carpetbaggers by Wallace. John Wallace, *Carpet-Bag Rule in Florida* (Jacksonville, 1888; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1964), 129. Jacksonville Alderman Friedenberg and Requa are also mentioned in Davis, *History of Jacksonville*, 295.

Census comparison is a valuable method of studying the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction upon the economic power structure of the South, especially when viewed as a test of the revisionist interpretation of the period. When the procedure is applied to the experience of Duval County, the results indicate that less than half of those considered rich in 1860 maintained their position at the end of the decade, and that the top of the 1870 wealth structure was dominated by newcomers to the county, almost two-thirds of whom came into the area from the North. It thus appears that those who were in control economically in 1860 did not remain in power during Reconstruction. The affluent newcomers were more commercially oriented than older wealth holders, and, very likely, their presence contributed to the rapid economic recovery of the area after the war. Also, while no case for the lasting impact of the change in the economic power structure can be made from the data, the rapid economic recovery of the late 1860's probably had a positive influence on the long-term development of the area.

Newcomers to Duval County's economic power structure during the 1860s thus appear to have made a positive contribution, and the picture of a prostrate South being exploited by carpetbaggers and scalawags does not appear to have been the case here. Yet while this preliminary study generally supports a revisionist interpretation of Reconstruction in Duval County, a number of important questions remain. To what degree is the county representative of the experience of Florida and the South during the decade? Further, what was the source of the wealth held by these rich newcomers? Was it largely local wealth which changed hands, new wealth created in the years following the war, or new money brought into the area after the war? Finally, what was the long-term economic impact of the change in the economic power structure during the 1860s? Only further study using census comparison combined with the development of other techniques to utilize additional information from tax and other local records will provide answers to these questions.