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The Brown Family's Alabama Years

DR. RICKY L. SHERROD

In 1805, John Hunt worked his way from Tennessee into the Mississippi Territory and set up camp near the Big Spring in what is now Huntsville. He could not have imagined that in less than 15 years, this would become the largest and most important town in the newly created state of Alabama. Neither would he have suspected that a well-to-do migrant from the Broad River region of Georgia – one who brought with him “lock, stock, and silverware” – would undermine Hunt’s hope of capitalizing on his “discovery” of a hospitable new place to move his family. His nemesis, LeRoy Pope, not only undercut John Hunt at the Madison County federal land sale of 1809, but Pope spent a small fortune in the process. He paid an exorbitant \$23.50 an acre for the land on which the Big Spring lay. He knew he could recover his outlay and then some by subdividing the area into city lots and re-selling the property in pieces. Thus was established the small but rapidly growing community that would eventually become known as Huntsville.

For his efforts, LeRoy Pope was soon acclaimed the “Father of Huntsville.” He was a public figure *par excellence* – a lawyer; the county’s presiding chief justice; the pension agent for the District of Alabama; member of the Huntsville Episcopal Church; president of the Madison County Bible Society; and member of the original board of directors and the only president that the Huntsville’s Planters’ and Merchants’ Bank would ever have. First among equals, Pope was the acknowledged leader of a group known as Huntsville’s “Royal Party.” Like Pope, the men in this group were Virginia-born migrants who came to Alabama by way of Georgia. After making a very successful trial run at urban development in the Broad River Valley of Petersburg, Georgia, these well-to-do pioneers moved to Madison County, Alabama.

All in the group were intimately bound by extensive and intertwined ties of kinship and marriage. Members of the party included Dr. James Manning, Robert Thompson, William Bibb, Thomas Bibb, John Williams Walker, and William Watkins. While each of these men made a distinctive mark on early Madison County, none realized as much financial success as Pope did through land speculation. For reasons that remain unclear, it was September 1815 before Pope received clear title to the land he patented around the Big Spring about 1810.¹ Technicalities aside, Pope informally transferred possession of many city lots well before official paperwork was complete.

At least one of those sales helped create an economic foundation that the Browns, a plain-folk family just beneath the bottom edge of the planter class, used to establish themselves in Alabama. If the Brown family lacked the glamour and high profile status of the Royal Party on a per capita basis, their experience is in most respects more representative than the story of Pope and company concerning what took place in northeast Alabama during those years when “Alabama Fever” raged. The Browns were typical of the thousands of plain folk who poured into

early-19th century Madison County, seeking their fortunes on America's newest and most promising agricultural frontier. Both their financial rise and their ultimate decision, in the mid-1820s, to depart Madison County were determined by the blind economic forces which determined the temper of the time. Ironically, at the onset, the Brown family's purchases were urban rather than rural.

Very soon after Pope received his patents, John Brown from Cumberland County, Virginia, made payment for his lots on the north side of the Huntsville city square.² On 3 October 1815, in the aftermath of the War of 1812, Brown spent a paltry \$106 for a third part of Lot 28. Less than two weeks later, he sold a portion of that lot to Simon Jennings for \$1,500.³ Still later Brown sold another section of the same lot to "Samuel Houston & Co." for \$1,000.⁴ In a matter of 35 days, Brown – only recently a permanent resident⁵ of Madison County himself – turned a lucrative profit of 2,300%. Granted, Brown had been in physical possession of the Huntsville lots for several years. He had even erected two wood frame warehouses on his lots.⁶ Nevertheless, the profit margin of his sales was nothing short of staggering.

John Brown inherited his business sense and insight honestly. He was the great-great-grandson of Thomas Browne (1605-1682), the author of one of the foremost publications of the 17th century England, *Religio Medici* (*Religion of a Physician*, London, 1642). In 1671, Thomas had been knighted not only in the presence of James, Duke of York (and future James II, r. 1685-1688) but by Charles II (r. 1660-1685), the English monarch himself. With the Puritan era finally behind and England a full decade into the Stuart Restoration, Browne's knighthood came only four months prior to the birth of a grandson christened Buckenham (b. 31 January 1671/2 in Cripplegate Parish, London). Some 33 years later, that same Buckenham Browne led the Brown family to their New World immigration.⁷

Buckenham's business experience may well account for the considerable success - the family's inexorable rise into the lower half of planter status - experienced by Browne's 19th century descendants. The recipient of a royal land grant,⁸ Browne left London between 1703 and 1705,⁹ accompanied by his wife of three years, Elizabeth Mestiche (1669-1728); a daughter Mary (b. 1701 in London);¹⁰ his mother, Mary Glebe Browne; and his brother, Daniel. Although the public record described Browne as a London merchant, he was no mean tradesperson. The celebrity garnered by his grandfather gave the Browne family an acquaintance with, if not ready access to, the English Throne. Moreover, as a metropolitan merchant, Browne had a familiarity with both the Virginia tobacco trade and the financial potential of establishing a turn-of-the-century plantation on Virginia's northwestern frontier. Browne probably well understood that the upper banks of the Rappahannock River, while still in the early stages of development, were not only rich tobacco lands but largely free from the Indian depredations that had threatened the area's earliest European inhabitants until the closing decade of the 17th century.

By the time the 32-year-old Londoner set foot on Virginian soil, the Old Dominion had been an English colony for almost 100 years. Neither a fortune-seeking Cavalier nor a hopeful indentured servant, Browne was part of an extended

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family immigration that came to Virginia with significant financial connections. His family settled in that part of the Rappahannock River Valley established in 1692 as Essex County,¹¹ a region that offered excellent business opportunities. Browne's landholding superbly positioned the family to move their tobacco crop - the highly demanded sweet-scented variety for which the southern bank of the Rappahannock was so widely known.

Sweet-scented tobacco could not, however, protect Virginia producers from the bane of the soil exhaustion that inevitably overwhelmed plantation lands after about three seasons of aggressive cultivation. In the final analysis, many 18th century Virginia planters, particularly sons of original emigrants like Buckenham Browne, chose literally to look for greener pastures. Many Essex Countians, including some of Browne's own sons, traded depleted plantations for new and fertile soil by migrating.

They found such lands to the southwest. Several second generation Brownes were part of a general mid-18th century migratory flow out of the Tidewater and into Virginia's Piedmont.¹² Although the descendants of Buckenham Browne never rose to the stature of better known Piedmont families like the Jeffersons or Randolphs, on the Cumberland County frontier the Browns (as land records attest, about this time the family dropped the "e" from their surname) enjoyed a comfortable existence just beneath the bottom rung of planter status. In the mid-1750s, two of Buckenham Browne's sons, James (1726-1814) and his oldest brother Samuel (1710-1782), joined an extended family migration out of Essex County. The result was a 60 year residence in the tobacco growing valleys and plateaus between Virginia's coastal plain and the Appalachians.

James was less than nine-years-old at the time of his father's death (1 February 1735 in Tappahannock in Essex County, Virginia). Before James reached age 30, he bid farewell to Essex County. Between 1755 and 1776, he became head of a family of four sons and three daughters. As the youngest child of Buckenham Browne,¹³ perhaps migration was the only choice to ensure James favorable financial fortune. He competed for both attention and inheritance¹⁴ with eight older siblings. If he was to have a future, the developing frontier held the greatest promise. Not surprisingly, James chose a river valley in which to settle.

Near the banks of Piedy Rock Creek, which flowed into the James River tributary, the Willis,¹⁵ James Brown put down roots. In the image of family patriarch Buckenham, the James Brown family built its home "Red Rock"¹⁶ in Southam Parish. He raised his children, grew tobacco, acquired slaves, filled the occasional county office, and supported the Revolutionary cause. The fertile soil along the Piedy's banks proved a hospitable location where the migrant Brown family planted and harvested the tobacco crops providing a livelihood during the final half of the 18th century.

From the family base at Red Rock, both the families of James and his brother, Samuel Brown, waxed large. Samuel's only son Clement, (b. abt. 1750, had a sizeable family that remained steadfastly in the area. Samuel and his children stayed on the south side of Willis River in the eastern half of the county, in proximity to Cartersville Road.¹⁷ James' offspring did the same, all except for one.

Initially, his son John (b. 16 March 1764) appeared destined to remain, like all his siblings, near the extended family. At age 22, in 1786, his first land purchase was a 40-acre tract “on the South side of Willises [sic] River on the branches of little Piedy Rock Creek at small south branches of Willesees [sic].”¹⁸ Five years later, John added another 100 acres in the same vicinity.¹⁹

In 1803, however, about three months after the ink had dried on the paperwork transferring the Louisiana Territory to the United States, John Brown set his compass in a different direction. John’s place in the birth order likely stimulated a migratory spirit. His father, James, was age 37 when John was born. John himself was the fifth of eight children. John’s oldest brother, William, was nine years his senior.

John’s move may also have been inspired by the fact that his wife Elizabeth was pregnant with twin boys, a development that in October 1803 brought the number of Brown’s children to eight. Whatever his inspiration, at age 39, for £512, John Brown purchased a 256 acre tract “together with all woods, Buildings, and Improvements” on the north side of the Appomattox River (the southeastern boundary of Cumberland County) and bounded by Little Guinea Creek.²⁰ This acquisition took him significantly south of the family’s principal Red Rock holdings. In 1804, 1805, and 1806, John continued to purchase property in Little Guinea Creek’s environs.²¹

By 1810, John Brown enjoyed a relatively comfortable, although never opulent, lifestyle. The Cumberland County census of that year found him living next to his father-in-law, Thomas Moore, and only a single household from two members of the Piedmont’s celebrated Randolph family: Martha (who held 19 slaves) and William (who held 21). Brown himself declared ownership of 17 slaves—an increase of 16 since 1787 when the Cumberland County tax assessment listed him with only a single slave. As the 19th century progressed, whatever John Brown may have lost through geographic separation from his extended family, his financial circumstance steadily improved. His county property taxes reflect an unbroken upward trend from 1798 to 1815. In real dollar value, the worth of his assets rose by over four-fold.

John Brown’s departure from Red Rock did not spring from family conflict. The distance separating Piedy and Guinea Creeks was modest at best. Moreover, John was included in his father’s will,²² confuting any notion that a father-son rift had developed. Rather, John’s departure was the product of the push-pull theory of migration that led thousands to the 19th century American cotton frontier.²³ Preservation and expansion of family wealth was the force driving Brown’s migratory movement. Indeed, for families grown large in number, westward migration was not so much a choice as an economic imperative. As promise paled in the Virginia Piedmont, there were attractive options elsewhere.

When, how, and why did the family move occur? John Brown’s departure from Virginia was, of course, in part a mechanical response to the playing out of Cumberland County tobacco lands. As the 19th century began, tobacco cultivation along Cumberland County’s rivers and streams had far less promise than when John’s father, James, arrived in the 1750s. But other factors were involved as well. Rapid growth in turn-of-the-century Cumberland County may have

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distressed the Browns. When the Brown family kinship group arrived in mid-18th century Cumberland County, the county was a developing frontier with boundless opportunities for early arrivals.

In short order, all that changed. Indeed, the very capital of Virginia seemed in pursuit of the stream of settlers flowing into Virginia's Piedmont. Brown family properties were only 40 miles upstream from Richmond, the town that replaced Williamsburg as the state capital in 1780. Perhaps the Piedmont simply became too big for John Brown's comfort. If so, by the second decade of the new century, he had attractive options on the promising, thinly populated agricultural frontier lands coming open in the west.

At the national level, there had long existed a growing awareness of the potential of Alabama's Great Bend area of the Tennessee River. Planters from Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee were especially attracted. A host of slaveholding-Virginians were quick to exploit these fertile frontier reaches. During the early-19th century, these men, their families, and their slaves poured into Madison County, Alabama, an area that at the time was the northeastern corner of the Mississippi Territory. Many among that number were intrigued by prospects of profit, not from tobacco, but cotton cultivation. Eli Whitney's 1793 invention of the cotton gin had made viable the transition from one crop to the other. John Brown was among the group that made the change.

Frank L. Owsley's observation describes, at least in part, where Brown fit into the period's general migratory pattern:

Studies show that in all parts of Alabama as late as 1828, most of those immigrants whose origin could be ascertained came not from tidewater regions of the South Atlantic states, but from the piedmont, where they had been cultivating short staple cotton.... Few of the tidewater planters migrated into the Southwest during this period.²⁶

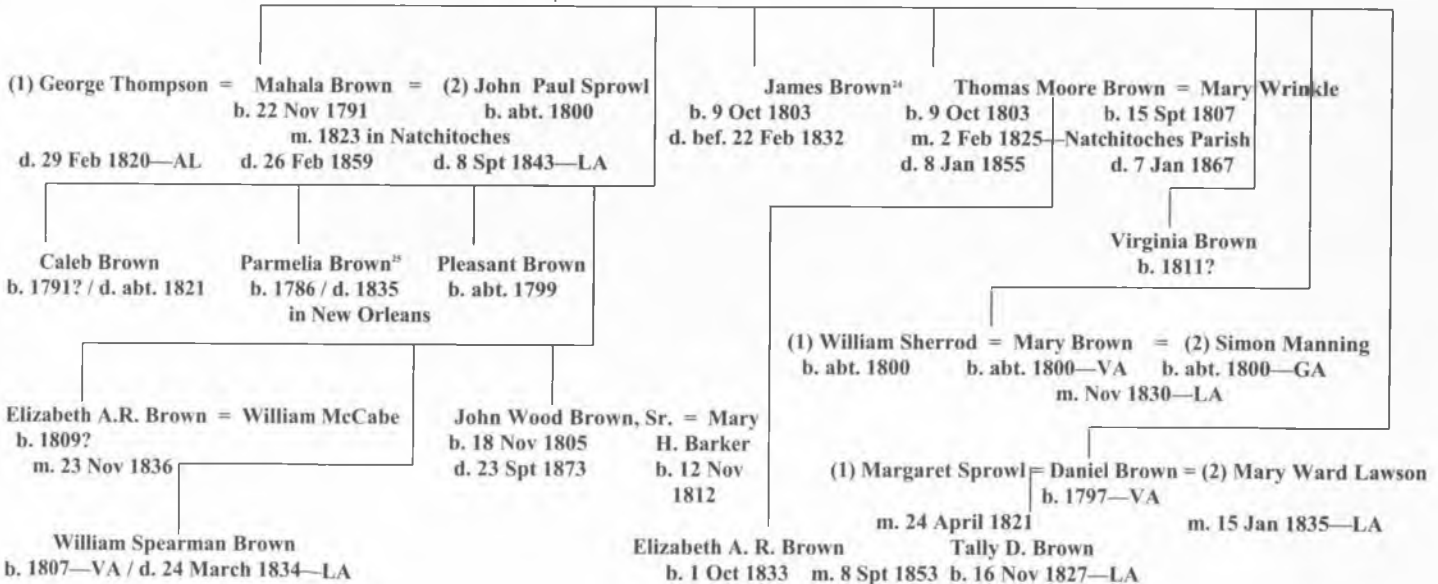
John Brown was among the many that migrated to Alabama from the Virginia Piedmont. He may or may not have experimented with cotton planting before his departure. Agriculturalists from his area in Cumberland County focused primarily on tobacco. Nevertheless, Brown was certainly well-acquainted with cotton's cash crop potential from other Virginia planters and farmers who had already made the switch.

Like most Virginia planter-migrants or, as Marion Nelson Winship styles them, "portable planters,"²⁷ Brown came with at least some of the 17 slaves that he listed in the 1810 Cumberland County federal census. Although his brothers and sisters remained in Cumberland County, John could not resist the Alabama Fever that characterized the time.²⁸

Brown actually followed his father-in-law and Cumberland County neighbor, Thomas Moore, to Alabama. When Brown, his wife Elizabeth Ann Roe Moore, and their family of 12 children moved southwest out of Virginia, Alabama offered hope and promise. Over the next few years, the Brown family gathered to itself rich agricultural Alabama tracts including some 350 acres along Madison County's Flint River.²⁹ Not surprisingly, in Alabama, the Browns chose a location similar

Brown Family Tree

John Brown = Elizabeth Ann Roe Moore
 b. 16 March 1764—Cumberland Co., VA b. 1767
 d. 1830 d. abt. 1825



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to their former Virginia home. As Pledy Rock Creek and the Willis were to the James, so was the Flint to the Tennessee.

These former Virginians were nestled comfortably in an attractive river valley, flanked by the properties of George Thompson and John Sprowl. Both families, sooner or later, became tied by marriage to the Browns. "Brown's Mill" stood on family acreage. The Browns' residence was on an island situated on a tributary to the Flint. One conveyance described the boundaries of the family property in idyllic terms: running down to the Flint River, and from there along that river "to the place where a bayou or creek leaves said river, thence across said river and down said bayou or creek, which forms an island, including the island to the said John Brown line; thence west to the aforesaid George Thompson³⁰ corner of the beginning." Predictably, the Browns prospered.

Life in early Brownsboro where John Brown settled is well-captured by Mia Taylor, the son of a migrant family that moved into the area in 1810. After the Revolutionary War, Mia's father, war veteran George W. Taylor, took his family to Oglethorpe County, Georgia. By 1806, the growing population of that region compelled Taylor, who never felt comfortable in a crowd, to continue west. In the spring of that year, he settled in south central Tennessee on the Elk River not far from the Tennessee-Alabama line.³¹ Although the Taylors remained in Tennessee for another three years, they found compelling the stories of "adventurous hunters" who reported streams that flowed southward, merging into one strong and clear rapid little river, that they called the Flint.... Men now living in this country can have but little conception of the richness and beauty of the region between Brownsboro and Huntsville.... It was one continued grove of magnificent Poplar interspersed in the lowlands with Oaks, Walnut, and Hickory.

In this halcyon setting, John Brown's father-in-law, Thomas Moore, carved out a plantation "along the base of Monte Sano near" a "cool sparkling spring" where he and his family lived, like everyone else in the area, in a log cabin.³² Indeed, 1810 Madison County tax records, the 1816 Alabama Census, and Moore's own 4 March 1813 last will (which left his son-in-law, John Brown in charge of his Cumberland County, Virginia estate) all suggest that Moore—not Brown—led the family migration to the nation's newest and most desirable real estate in northeast Alabama.³³

By presidential proclamation, the celebrated land sale of Madison County acreage began in Nashville on the first Monday of August 1809. The 47-year-old John Brown was among the earliest patentees of federal land in the southeastern portion of the county. So was his father-in-law, Thomas Moore. No later than 1811, John Brown had patented 319.2 acres literally along the Flint River.³⁴ An important tributary stream, the Flint flowed southward out of Tennessee and through Alabama before eventually emptying into the Tennessee River about eighteen miles south-southwest of the John Brown homestead near Brownsboro.³⁵ It was amidst this area's fertile and hospitable hills, about 11 miles east of the fast-growing town of Huntsville, that the Brown clan lived for about a decade. Considering the family's habitual location on the periphery of settlement, it is no surprise that the official border of Cherokee Indian Lands ran only a short distance to the east of the John

Brown property. Nevertheless, by the time Browns permanently left Virginia, any threat of conflict with Alabama's Indian population had diminished. Rule of law in Madison County was both in place and functioning.

At the same time John Brown purchased potential cotton lands, he also acquired prime real estate in city of Huntsville itself,³⁶ buying from Pope his two lots on the north side of the city square.³⁷ Anticipating the impending explosion of cotton production in Madison County, he forthwith erected two warehouses. Brown's foresighted construction project reflected the business sense evident within the Brown family since its arrival on early-18th century Virginia shores. Meanwhile, within only about four years, Brown parlayed his city property into working capital to develop a successful cotton planting operation.

Not all was easy. Evidence suggests that John Brown's permanent relocation in Madison County came in fits and starts. Relevant to that process, historian Sam Bowers Hilliard observes:

Parts of the Old Southwest, such as the Tennessee River Valley, the area around Mobile, and the Natchez District of Mississippi, were settled by a few farmers and planters who raised cotton on a small scale before 1812. After about 1815, a host of ambitious planters and farmers dispersed from these small nuclei searching for new lands from which they hoped to wrest a living or perhaps a modest fortune.... The cotton producer found northern Louisiana better suited to his needs.... Many bypassed the low-lying [Mississippi] floodplain in their migration westward, some pushing into Texas even before it became a state.³⁸

The coming of the War of 1812 complicated John Brown's migration to Alabama. He retained both slaves and property in Virginia for at least a few years after his initial purchases of Madison County lands.³⁹ Brown probably was hedging his bet in case the lands of the then-Mississippi Territory treated him unkindly. Moreover, the outbreak of the war probably gave him second thoughts about a wartime migration to the very edge of American civilization. The Anglo-American conflict injected an unexpected uncertainty which likely explains Brown's continuing presence on the annual Cumberland County tax rolls through 26 February 1816.⁴⁰ If Brown intended to move to Alabama immediately after his initial land patents, the War of 1812 shook his confidence, at least temporarily. Whatever his motivation, he deferred until the conflict's favorable outcome. *Mia Taylor's* recollections about early Brownsboro support this notion:

In the year 1810 and 1811 there was but little increase in the population of the Flint River Colony. There were rumors of Indian wars.... Many who had sought land at the land sales in 1809, delayed bringing their families to the new territory at a time when the temper of the Indian tribes was unsettled, and war appeared probable.... But with the year 1811 [the year of John Brown's initial patents in the area] hostilities seem to have passed away, and settlers began pouring into the

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county east of the Flint River....[Then,] in the year 1812 our peaceful community was disturbed by rumors of war with the Indians [and the 'war with Great Britain']....Many settlers who had bought their lands in the new country had delayed removal of their families until the trouble had passed.⁴¹

Little wonder that Brown's permanent move came only after Andrew Jackson's victory over the British at New Orleans (January 8, 1815), a triumph that decisively secured American territories west of the Appalachians.

After the war, the price of cotton ascended to extraordinary heights. The quickening pace of textile production in the English Midlands, combined with "the high price of cotton during the years following the close of the second war with England....gave Alabama her first great influx of population."⁴² Renewed international stability, combined with the promise of quick and easy profits, drew John Brown who probably traveled down the Great Valley of Virginia into Madison County. After the war, he returned in earnest.

In October and November 1815, Brown sold his Huntsville lots on the square at a handsome price, giving him liquid capital to transfer his family, slaves, and moveable assets to Alabama. By 1816, the price of cotton had climbed to 30¢ a pound. That same year, Madison County produced 10,000 bales of cotton. Although the price fell the following year to 27¢, the value of prime cotton-growing land in Alabama river bottoms—land originally sold by the federal government for a mere \$2 per acre—rose by 1818 (the year Alabama land sales peaked) to between \$50 – \$100 an acre, a price more than double the average cost of good cotton land in other locations.

Thus, in March 1818, having at long last abandoned the tobacco-growing cash crop culture of Virginia, John Brown, enjoyed his island home in the midst of a tributary to the Flint River, becoming a cotton planter.⁴³ The timing was auspicious. In 1817, successful lawyer and future presiding officer over the State Constitutional Convention, John Williams Walker declared: "With lands making a hundred dollars worth of cotton to the acre, with the cheapest system of labor in the world, no part of the Union offered a better investment of capital than Madison County."⁴⁴

The Brown family was well-positioned to exploit this circumstance. As part of that wave of settlement following the initial squatter era, John Brown was also among the first to import civilization and internal improvements to the Flint River Valley. Brownsboro (Brownsborough) located in east-central Madison County was established in 1821. John Brown built a mill there on the Flint River and later sold it to Robert Scott. First settlers were Benjamin Lawler who bought land there in 1818 and Charles McCartney who established a business in 1820. Brownsboro was incorporated in 1825. The Flint River Navigation Company shipped cotton on flatboats down the Tennessee River and on to New Orleans.⁴⁵

Given John Brown's fertile acreage along the Flint River, he hoped the Flint might one day become a shipping lane on which his cotton crops could be easily ferried to the watery highway of the Tennessee River. These

expectations are well-captured in a 13 July 1821 advertisement in the *Alabama Republican*. John Brown's neighbors, James and John McCartney, announced the establishment of Brownsboro:

The highest point of Boat Navigation on the Flint River...has been laid off into Lots by the Proprietors [the McCartneys], and will be sold on Monday the 23rd day of July next, on the premises. The situation of this town warrants the calculation that it will improve and flourish. Several boats loaded with cotton were shipped the last season from here, and passed into the Tennessee River without impediment; and by an act of the last Legislature, Flint river was made a public highway, and a company has been incorporated for opening and improving the navigation to this place. The country around the town is good and fertile. Here will be shipped and disposed of the surplus produce, and here will be had the family supplies for the adjoining country of both Madison and Jackson counties....A plan of the town can be seen in Huntsville in the counting room of Bierne & Patton. June 22

The McCartneys' advertisement captures the contemporary optimism about opening the Flint to transport cotton downstream. This prospect inspired John Brown, his neighbors John Sprowl, James McCartney, David Walker, Stephen Pond, and eight other Brownsboro area residents to charter the Flint River Navigation Company.

On 20 December 1820, the recently formed Alabama Senate and House of Representatives convened in General Assembly and enacted legislation to incorporate the entity.⁴⁶ Its purpose was to direct "the improvement of the navigation of the Flint River in Madison County from Capt. Scott's Mills, to the Tennessee River." Section 2 of the legislation stipulated "that if any person, or persons shall cut, or fall a tree into said river, and shall not remove the same, or shall otherwise obstruct the navigation of said river, shall for every such offence forfeit and pay the sum of three dollars for every day the same is thus obstructed." Money collected as fines was, of course, to be "applied to the improvement of the navigation of the river."

Efforts to open the Flint to navigation expressed the general American enthusiasm of the age for canal building and internal improvements. While John Brown and his neighbors devised their scheme to turn the Flint into a major transportation artery, in Huntsville to the west, the leading city fathers guided by LeRoy Pope crafted a similar plan. Their Indian Creek Navigation Company, chartered one day after the legislature established its Flint River counterpart, aspired to complete a 17-mile-long canal connecting Hunt's Big Spring at the center of Huntsville to Triana on the Tennessee River. In fact, according to some sources, neither the Indian Creek Navigation Company nor the Flint River Navigation Company succeeded. Regarding the latter:

Large trees grew in profusion on the banks of this stream [the Flint]. It was thought advisable to remove all growth and timber from near the

water's edge, thereby preventing any possible hindrance to navigation, resulting from the falling of these trees into the stream, with the fallacious hope that the force of the spring freshets would wash them out of the channel into the Tennessee. It was fortune's bitter irony, however, that these spring freshets which were considered by the company to be inadequate to the task of clearing the stream of fallen trees after navigation had begun, were commensurately inadequate to this same task, before navigation was begun. So it was that the first work done was that of destruction rather than construction. History records the projected accomplishment of the Flint River Navigation Company's efforts with the ugly, yet appropriate, term 'failure,' spelled with a capital 'F.'⁴⁷

In an ironic twist, the well intentioned efforts of John Brown and his partners actually blocked free and open navigation of the river.

Internal improvements to serve the interests of Madison County planters remained unrealized until the age of rail. Even if Brown and his neighbors had cleared the Flint, problems with marketing Madison County cotton remained legion. The difficulty was less getting their fleecy fiber of Flint River Valley cotton to the Tennessee River than the physical obstacle encountered some 70 miles downstream. Passage along the Tennessee through northwestern Alabama was highly uncertain due to Muscle Shoals, a 40 mile stretch of rapids filled with rock reefs, gravel bars, log snags, and shallow channels.

This difficult-to-navigate corridor not only slowed the trip; it made the passage dangerous and unpredictable. If the water was too low, pilots had to portage. Madison County planters risked the loss of an entire crop should a cotton barge crash along the rocky labyrinth as the barge pilot negotiated the shallow waters of the rapidly flowing Tennessee. Whether portaging or moving upon the water itself, getting through the narrow bottleneck often damaged or soiled the cotton. This commonplace misfortune both lowered the asking price in New Orleans and gave Alabama cotton a reputation as a poor quality product. In hopes of high water, Madison County planters generally shipped cotton to market in the late winter—January or February—when water levels were sufficient to facilitate safe passage. This restrictive time frame impinged on the cotton factor's ability to get the best product price for the planter.

Before steamboat travel reached Madison County—something which postdated the Brown departure from Alabama—not only was transporting cotton to New Orleans an ever-present challenge; getting consumer goods into the upper Tennessee River Valley took several months and involved numerous portages. The cost of goods shipped from the metropolis rose accordingly. Describing conditions as they existed in 1824, Daniel S. Dupre wrote:

With work progressing on the Muscle Shoals canal, that scheme offered the prospect of stepping on board a boat in Huntsville and disembarking in New Orleans, effectively shattering the isolation of Madison County.... [Another] possibility excited some in the community; building a railroad either directly to the Tennessee or to connect with

Obstacles like those described above eventually weakened the Brown family's will to remain in Alabama. Some migrants to Madison County recognized the potential of better areas, particularly the Louisiana frontier, almost as soon as they arrived in Alabama. Even before his migration from Petersburg, Georgia to northeastern Alabama, lawyer-politician John Williams Walker wrote: "We shall soon have it in our power, if we go on at this rate, to send out a colony to Louisiana, without diminishing our present stock."

It is possible that John Brown explored the potential of Louisiana first-hand. Alabama cotton planters sometimes accompanied their crops to market. It might well be that John Brown first recognized Louisiana's promise on a business trip to New Orleans. Perhaps he or some of his older sons tarried on their return trip to Madison County, taking time to probe possibilities, identifying vacant new cotton lands along the Mississippi and Red rivers. If so, they found an abundance of relatively untapped virgin soil along the banks of the Mississippi's substantial tributary, the Red River. Any such scouting expedition revealed many advantages that the Red River might one day have over the Tennessee.

However the Browns "discovered" Louisiana, by the early 1820s, John Brown was warming to the thought of trading the uncertainties of the long and unpredictable farm-to-market flow from the Flint to New Orleans for the shorter and more promising route of the upper Red River to the Mississippi and out through the Crescent City. In addition, the development of an effective cotton factorage system in New Orleans probably partly inspired the Brown extended family move to Louisiana. Easier access to New Orleans was simply a good idea.

The Red River Valley provided proximity to the men who sold the family's cash crop. A trip down the Red from Natchitoches Parish was measured in days, not months. Living along the Red not only improved the prospect of getting a cotton crop to market; it made possible annual or semi-annual trips, sometimes combining business and recreation, to "The City." It also provided for face-to-face contact with cotton factors. All these considerations made marketing a cash crop along the banks of the Red far more viable than the long downstream journey from Madison County, Alabama.

By the 1820s, there were other compelling reasons that made a move to Louisiana attractive. The boom years of postwar cotton prices collapsed in 1819. The price paid for cotton plummeted some 60%. Cotton that fetched Madison County planters 25¢ a pound in 1818 brought no more than 10¢ in 1820. Unrestrained postwar speculation, followed by the land sale of 1818, made the effects of depression in Madison County particularly pervasive. The county no longer offered unbridled prosperity and a limitless future. Dupre describes the mentality that evolved:

The economic collapse that followed the Panic shattered the citizens' dreams of wealth and prosperity and exposed the fragility of their self-sufficient independence. Struggling to cope with the aftereffects of the

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Panic, they searched for ways to pull their rough-and-tumble frontier community into a prosperous future and to regain a sense of mastery and control over their lives.⁴⁹

The Panic of 1819 was the nation's first major crisis tied to the business cycle. Buffeted by a combination of foreclosures, a tightening of credit, failure of banks, and the collapse of the economic expansion fueled by the recent war, the country reeled economically. The economic downturn precipitated unemployment as well as a crippling slump in both agriculture and manufacturing. In the Brown's specific sector of the economy, the falling price of cotton pounded thousands of farmers who had moved to Alabama, hoping to make their fortune in a bull cotton market. Instead, many found themselves saddled with crushing, impossible debt.

The contrast between prosperity of the postwar period and the economic dislocation after the Panic eventually inspired the Brown family's decision to seek more favorable circumstances in a new more auspiciously located river valley. The family also simply may have longed for a new and refreshing setting without the political strife and economic uncertainty that had become the norm in their little corner of the world. Pulling the 61-year-old John Brown, then, was the realization that fertile cotton lands with more reliable transportation—down the Red and Mississippi and out to the international marketplace—might secure the future he hoped to bequeath to his sizeable band of offspring coming to maturity. The same impulse that moved him from Virginia to Alabama carried him further southwest to Louisiana.

It may well be that one additional factor contributed. From the initial federal land sale of 1809, Madison County experienced extraordinarily rapid population growth. Reflecting on the disorienting speed at which the population of Madison County had expanded, one commentator observed, "In many respects Madison County grew like a hungry adolescent. It practically attained its full size within its first 20 years. By 1820 the population had swelled to 17,481: 8,813 whites, and 8,668 blacks. Ten years later it reached its peak for the antebellum years at 27,990: 13,855 whites and 14,135 blacks."⁵⁰ Why such expansion? The second federal land sale—this one held in Huntsville—began on 2 February 1818. Easy credit and high cotton prices multiplied the number of migrants flowing to Madison County. The sale became "one of the greatest speculative booms in frontier history."⁵¹

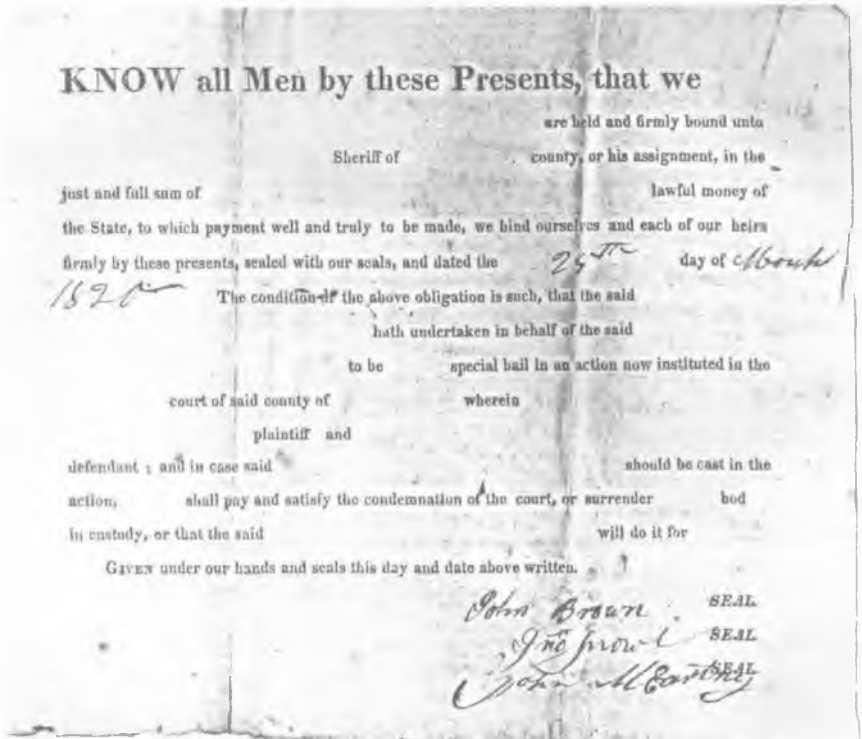
During the early 1820s and the collapse of cotton prices, many extended family discussions no doubt ensued, debating whether Alabama was the place of the future—whether it had become too claustrophobic for the Brown kinship group. In the final analysis, family members decided to migrate. This would be the third time that John Brown moved from a burgeoning, developing environment to the edge of the raw frontier.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that Brown's move to the Pelican State was conceived not long after the Panic of 1819 engulfed Madison County freeholders. Brownsboro area gossip alleged that John Brown intended to vacate the county to escape a hopelessly impossible debt incurred in October 1818.⁵² Brown, of course, denied any intention to depart. Whether or not the idea of a migration to

Louisiana dates from this event—whether his financial predicament inspired the idea of moving to the newest cotton frontier—the details of this story are both remarkable and representative of a general trend.

On 9 March 1819, John and Elizabeth Brown sold 350 family acres to their eldest son Caleb (b. ca. 1791) for \$17,500.⁵³ Within 13½ months, things changed dramatically. The Panic engulfed Madison County. More personally, Caleb Brown died without heirs. The Flint River acreage reverted to Caleb’s father, John who held the property in trust for his remaining children. By June 1820, value of the Brown’s Madison County riverfront holdings was \$57.14 an acre or an aggregate total of \$20,000. But the family’s fortune—its property, slaves, and cash—stood in jeopardy of catastrophic loss.

The detailed story emerges primarily from an April 1820 lawsuit that Brown brought against Raleigh, North Carolina land speculator John Evans. The litigation preserves a fascinating anecdote capturing the heady mentality driving reckless Alabama land purchases on the eve of the Panic. According to Brown’s account, Evans craftily seduced him into an irresponsible 640-acre purchase a little less than two miles south-southwest of Brown’s principal family holdings on the Flint River.⁵⁴ One of those who came to John Brown’s aid during his legal wranglings with Evans was his loyal friend and neighbor, John Sprowl. Bound by ties of friendship and intermarriage, in Alabama, Louisiana and Texas the fortunes of these two families remained tightly intertwined for half a century.



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Amidst the claims and counterclaims hurled by both Brown and Evans, the latter's charges led to Brown's arrest for failure to pay the money Evans claimed he was owed. John Sprowl, as well as Brownsboro neighbor, John McCartney, assisted posted bond on 25 March 1820 allowing Brown to go free. By this time, the Sprowls and Browns had begun to work hand-in-glove in many of their enterprises and endeavors. Although Sprowl arrived in Alabama several years in advance of Brown, the two must have developed a comfortable relationship quickly. From 1820 through 1822, Sprowl's name regularly appeared alongside several members of the extended Brown kinship group in a variety of documents, including the *Brown v. Evans* litigation, as well as the estate sales for both John Brown's father-in-law, Thomas Moore, and Brown's son-in-law, George Thompson (d. 29 February 1820). Thompson's widow, Mahala Brown, would become John Sprowl's daughter-in-law in 1823. On 10 June 1822, Sprowl joined his son-in-law, Daniel Brown (husband of Mary Margaret Sprowl), acting as security for John Brown's Madison County Orphan Court appointment as guardian of Sarah Ann Thompson, William Waddy Thompson, and Alexander M. Thompson, the minor children of the widowed Mahala.

Little wonder that Sprowl rendered moral and financial support when Evans threatened to ruin the Brown family fortunes. The terms of Evans' transaction specified that Brown, following the 1818 Huntsville land sale, make an initial 28 October payment of \$3,800 to Evans. Thereafter, Brown owed on four subsequent notes, each for \$8,650. Payments came due on 25 December in 1819 – 1822. The total sale price came to a whopping \$38,4000 or \$60 an acre.

In his 1820 suit, Brown declared that he had been "drawn into the aforesaid contract by a deep laid and premeditated scheme of Fraud on the part of the Defendant,"⁵⁵ Evans. Describing himself somewhat inaccurately as an "ignorant hard laboring man," the legally astute Brown related a tale of treachery in which Evans cloaked his greedy designs in Christian garb. The Tar Heel speculator gained admission to Brown's home by presenting himself as a minister of Brown's own Methodist "church & persuasion. He remained some time with our complainant endeavoring to give his confidence by religious conversations." Then, Evans artfully led the conversation to the probable prospects and improvement in value of the Lands in this County and more particularly of those above mentioned [the acreage that Evans proposed to sell to Brown], said that he had on the best information from abroad of the state of foreign trade and of the cotton market that the price of cotton must continue to be high, that the Town of Evansburg laid out on the lands aforesaid must become an important and flourishing place and that your complainant must make a fortune by buying these lands to enable him. To affect his scheme of deception he induced a certain John Hammer (who also professed to be a Methodist) to come with him to your complainant, and to pretend that he had purchased of said defendant some land, about a quarter section lying in said County, for which said Hammer said he had given the defendant about sixty dollars per acre.⁵⁶

Brown subsequently discovered that Hammer never made any such purchase. In fact, the tract of land supposedly sold by Evans to Hammer was given by the



John Brown's original homestead lay in section 20 on the east bank of the Flint River; the property Evans purported to sell lay in nearby sections 30 and 31 lying along both banks of the Flint.

North Carolinian to Brownsboro area resident, James McCartney, in lieu of a debt that the former owed the latter. Brown further accused Evans of falsely promising to erect a warehouse along that portion of the Flint River which passed through the eastern edge of the property purchased by Brown from the defendant.

Brown admitted that “said defendant by his conversation almost infatuated” him. Brown was quick, however, to inform the Court that prior to the sale, Evans had “positively and unequivocally agreed” that the buyer had the right to withdraw from the transaction if he the “said complainant should at any time before the first land sale, to take place in Huntsville, thereafter informs said defendant that he... was dissatisfied with his bargain.” Brown charged that “the price aforesaid is fully if not more than double what the aforesaid Bonds were worth or could have been sold for during the highest State of the Land market in this County.”

Brown’s *coup de grâce* came when he produced a written agreement between himself and the defendant showing that the latter had promised the former a “clear title to the Lands” within five weeks of “said Sale.”⁵⁷ The main reason that Evans failed to produce such documentation was that Stephen Lee owned at least a portion of the acreage which Evans purported to sell. More importantly, Lee had no intention whatsoever of selling the disputed acreage to Evans. Upon learning of the conflicting claim, Brown personally confronted Evans, declaring that the defendant’s bad faith had “nullified the original contract.” Nevertheless, Evans “even then acted with a view to conceal his true character, still, talked of the golden harvest which this complainant might reap from the crops which he had sown.”

With the encouragement and “aid of his friends,” Brown persisted in his determination to cancel the transaction. Evans temporarily relented, according to Brown, “from fear of being exposed to the world, which might prevent the function of some other scheme of baseness.” But rather than formally annulling their bargain, Evans stalled, hoping to persuade Brown to make good his annual payments. Before the end of 1818, Evans left Madison County, returning to North Carolina. Suspecting that Evans might attempt to hold him to the payment of his specious notes, and worse still, fearing that his good name might be tarnished, Brown published a notice in the *Alabama Republican* proclaiming that the notes “had been fraudulently obtained and forewarned all persons from taking assignments of them some time in the year 1819.”

In spite of his predicament and far from planning his departure from Alabama, Brown affirmed that he had ample resources to make full payment to Evans. Brown believed that “he could give sufficient security in almost any amount for his appearance and for his fair conduct in this or any other transaction yet he believes he could not give security subject to the risk of paying so large a sum of money and he would be very unwilling to subject any of his friends to this risk.” Brown’s ultimate goal in his suit against Evans reads thus:

That said Evans may be decreed to refund to your complainant the money received from him as aforesaid on receiving a Conveyance from Your Complainant of the Land which has been conveyed by him to your Complainant, and that your Complainant may have such other further

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relief as to this Honorable Court may seem fit & right may it please your
Honor to grant.⁵⁸

An April 17, 1820 court ruling granted Brown his wishes, ordering Evans to restore to Brown by the same calendar date in 1822 the sum of \$4,000. A July 18, 1825 conveyance housed in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana but sent from the Madison County Circuit Court confirms that by February 1823, Evans made full payment to Brown—\$4,000 with the interest that was due him. Both the document and its detailed marginalia demonstrate that the payment was equally dispersed as inheritances amongst Brown's ten surviving offspring, almost all of whom migrated to Louisiana with him in the mid-1820s.

John Brown did not live many years after his trek to the Pelican State. He died in 1830. Evans payment ultimately went to Brown's sons and daughters. At the time of the litigation, five of them were over age 21: Parmelia, Mahala, Daniel, Pleasant, and Mary. Five were not. The \$2,000 that Evans paid Brown in 1820 went to those children who were already of age.⁵⁹ Two notes were to be paid after April 17, 1820, each for \$1,000 with interest. This remuneration went to the remaining siblings—James, Thomas Moore, John Wood, William Spearman, and Elizabeth Ann Roe Brown—children who, in 1820, were still legally minors.

The money that the Browns recovered from Evans gave John Brown and his children a running start in their migration from Alabama to Louisiana. If Alabama proved a promising but disappointing frontier on which to cross the threshold from plain folk to planter, it *had* provided the extended Brown family with the seed capital and resources not only to move on to northwest Louisiana's Red River Valley, but soon to become numbered among that fertile frontier's most successful planter-citizens.

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END NOTES

¹ James Record, *A Dream Come True: The Story of Madison County and Incidentally of Alabama and the United States*, Vol. I (Huntsville, Alabama, 1970), 49, 50, 55. See also Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, Intro. by W. Stanley Hoole and Addie S. Hoole, *A History of Madison County and Incidentally of North Alabama, 1732-1840* (Confederate Publishing Company, 1976), 33-39, 44; Old Huntsville Magazine, s.v. "Purchases of Huntsville town lots from original owners," <http://www.OLDHuntsville.com/p588.htm>.

² Madison County Deed Book A, 204—November 8, 1815. See also Old Huntsville Magazine, s.v. "Purchases of Huntsville town lots from original owners," <http://www.OLDHuntsville.com/p588.htm>.

³ Madison County Deed Book B, 134 (October 20, 1815).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 206 (November 8, 1815).

⁵ Interestingly, Brown named his daughter born about 1811 "Virginia," an act that suggests affection for the State that he would soon depart.

⁶ Sarah Huff Fisk, *Civilization Comes to the Big Spring: Huntsville, Alabama 1823* (Huntsville: Pinhook Publishing Company, 1997), 71-76. See also Old Huntsville Magazine, s.v. "Purchases of Huntsville town lots from original owners," <http://www.OLDHuntsville.com/p588.htm>.

⁷ See Cumberland County Historical Society. *Cumberland County, Virginia and Its People*. (Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Co., 1983), 81-85. See also "Life of Sir Thomas Browne," http://penelope.uchicago.edu/browne_bio/wood_1692.html and The Life of Sir Thomas Browne, Kt. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/browne_bio/rep_life_1712.html.

⁸ Volume IV of *The Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography* indicates that Buckenham Browne received "from the king a large grant of land in Essex" County "where he settled and spent the remainder of his life" (Cited in RootsWeb, "Carl Rush Family of Virginia," January 17, 2004, Ord. Bk. 5, 737).

⁹ Essex County Deeds, Book 12, 99 (August 21, 1703).

¹⁰ See *Cumberland County, Virginia and Its People*, 81.

¹¹ See Essex County Deed Books 2, 228; 4, 260; and 10, 102; Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, *Colonial Virginia: A History* (White Plains, New York: KTO Press, 1986), 25.

¹² On the Piedmont as frontier, see Billings, et. al., *Colonial Virginia*, 16-17, 200, 224, 251, 272, 370-371. On the rapid growth of the Piedmont, see 208, 252-253; Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo, eds., *Colonial Chesapeake Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 434-437, 447-449, 479, 482-483; Thomas Perkins Abernethy, "The Southern Frontier, an Interpretation," in Wyman and Clifton B. Kroeber, *The Frontier in Perspective*, 132-133.

¹³ Regarding the "younger son syndrome," see David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 37.

¹⁴ See RootsWeb, "Carl Rush Family of Virginia," January 17, 2004, Will Book 5, 344-346.

¹⁵ See "John Guthrie, Emigrant to America in the Seventeenth Century, and Descendants." <http://www.brightok.net/~lguthrie/Bookone.htm>.

¹⁶ *Cumberland County, Virginia and Its People*, 83.

¹⁷ See Cumberland County Deed Book 3, 191-192—August 24, 1761; Deed Book 6,

408-409 and Deed Book 7, 218; Deed Book 10, 50; Deed Book 13, 13.

¹⁸ Cumberland County Deed Book 8, 56-57—June 26, 1786.

¹⁹ Cumberland County Deed Book 7, 116-117—September 24, 1791.

²⁰ Cumberland County Deed Book 9, 244-245—July 17, 1803, a date only three months after the Louisiana Purchase.

²¹ Cumberland County Deed Book 10, 55—63 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres on April 2, 1804. See also Deed Book 10, 127—40 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres on December 10, 1805 and Deed Book 10, 251—120 acres on April 3, 1806.

²² See RootsWeb, “Carl Rush Family of Virginia,” January 17, 2004, Will Book 5, 279; Deed Book 17, 267; Natchitoches Parish Conveyance Book 3, 1.

²³ See Daniel S. Dupre, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier: Madison County, Alabama, 1800-1840* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 12, 47. Cf. John Solomon Otto, “The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis,” *Journal of Southern History*, 51 no. 2 (May 1985), 196, 198.

²⁴ At the time of his death (no later than 22 February 1832), he owned 83 acres in T11N R9W, section 16, bounded above by Simon Manning’s land in T11N R9W.

²⁵ Her husband was named John Sprowl and was the father of the John Paul Sprowl who wed Mahala Brown.

²⁶ Frank L. Owsley, “The Pattern of Migration and Settlement on the Southern Frontier,” *Journal of Southern History*, 11 (May 1945), 170.

²⁷ Cited in Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 163, 173. See also 228.

²⁸ See Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *The Formative Period in Alabama, 1815-1828*, rev. ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1965), 37, 74, 84, 171. See also 29-30, 39, 182 footnote 14; James David Miller, *South by Southwest: Planter Emigration and Identity in the Slave South* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 2-7, 21, 33. Cf. 4, 7, 39, 48, 51, 54, 58, 60-61, 76, 78, 82-83, 124.

²⁹ Section 31, Township 3S Range 2E (Madison County Deed Book F, 260, 297-298) and U.S. Government Patents 516-517 cited in Government Entries, Madison County, Alabama, 190 as T3S R2E. On January 5, 1819, John Brown purchased S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ in section 31 of 3S 2E for \$1,600 (\$24,429) from John Calvert.

³⁰ Madison County Deed Book F, 260, 297-298.

³¹ Mia Taylor, “Early Recollections of Madison County” *Huntsville Historical Review*, 2 no. 2 (April 1972), 21-28.

³² *Ibid.*, 29, 32.

³³ *Tennessee Valley Leaves*, “Madison County, Mississippi Territory Tax Lists, 1810-1813, 1815,” Vol. 4 No. 4, 3-55.

³⁴ Brown’s initial purchases came on January 25, 1811 and are listed in the Tract Book for Madison County, 217, 220—159.3 acres in NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 29 T3S R2E (number 516) and 159.9 acres in SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 20 T3S R2E (number 517). The latter is cited in Government Entries, Madison County, Alabama, 190 as T3S R2E.

³⁵ On the early settlement of Brownsboro, see Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, Intro. by W. Stanley Hoole and Addie S. Hoole, *A History of Madison County and Incidentally of North Alabama, 1732-1840* (Confederate Publishing Company, 1976), 18, 20, 29, 79-80, 84-85. See also Dupre, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier*, 15-16, 19-22, 32.

³⁶ Brown officially purchased these lots in the fall of 1815. See Madison County Deed Book A, 204.

³⁷ On the sale of town lots in Huntsville, see Taylor, *A History of Madison County*, 39-41, 49; Elise Hopkins Stephens, *Historic Huntsville: A City of New Beginnings* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, 1984), 31; Edward Chambers Betts,

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Historic Huntsville from Early History of Huntsville, Alabama, 1804 to 1870 (Southern University Press, 1966), 14-15, 23-24.

³⁸ *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 16-17.

³⁹ Brown is listed as a Madison County taxpayer as early as 1813. See *Tennessee Valley Leaves*, "Madison County, Mississippi Territory Tax Lists, 1810-1813, 1815," 3-55.

⁴⁰ In addition to Cumberland County tax records, Madison County estate records (Volume 115, 2 relevant to George Brown, deceased) make reference to "receipt of John Brown of Virginia, 4 Oct., 1815, for accounts to be collected." Interestingly, John Brown's father-in-law, Thomas Moore, who lived next to Brown in the 1810 Cumberland County census, is found in the 1816 Alabama census. John Brown is not listed in that record.

⁴¹ Taylor, "Early Recollections of Madison County," 30-32, 34-35.

⁴² Abernethy, *The Formative Period in Alabama, 1815-1828*, 82-83.

⁴³ Madison County Deed Book E, 9. Brown purchased this property from George W. Taylor on March 6, 1818.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *A History of Madison County*, 36, 42, 54.

⁴⁵ *Heritage of Madison County, Alabama* (1998), 5.

⁴⁶ See "An act to incorporate the Flint River Navigation Company," http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/acts_and_journals/Acts_1820/Acts_51-55.html. See also Betts, *Historic Huntsville*, 69-70.

⁴⁷ Betts, *Historic Huntsville*, 69-70. See also Lou L. Sams, "The Cobb Families of Madison County, Alabama," http://freepaes.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~cobb/cobb_madal_main.htm.

⁴⁸ Dupre, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier*, 13-14, 19, 107, 113-114, 127, 129, 234.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6. See also 49.

⁵⁰ Stephens, *Historic Huntsville*, 17, 36.

⁵¹ Dupre, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier*, 42, 44, 46, 48, 101.

⁵² In a March 27, 1820 suit brought by John Evans against Brown, the former alleged: "John Brown gives it out in speeches that he intends removing himself out of this state with all his property & estate for the purpose of defaulting the payment of said debt to your orator" (Madison County, Alabama Chancery Superior Record A [1811-1821], 178).

⁵³ Madison County Deed Book E, 353.

⁵⁴ Section 20 of T3N R2E. Brown resided on his original federal purchase in section 20 of T3N R2E along the Flint River. The acreage Evans sold was SE ¼ and SW ¼ of section 30 and NE ¼ and NW ¼ section 31, all in T3N R2E.

⁵⁵ The quotation comes from Madison County, Alabama Chancery Superior Record A (1811-1821), 175. Brown believed himself to be "the victim of a plot . . . greatly deceived and completely taken in when he made the trade" (174).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 172-179. The depth of Brown's Methodist conviction is evident in his declaration, "Your complainant before and at the time of said Contract of Sale was and yet is a member of the Methodist Church" (173-174, 177).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 173.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

⁵⁹ Madison County Deed Book F.260, 297-298.

