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Surviving Freedom: African American Farm Households in Cass County, Michigan 1832-1880

By

Marcia Renee Sawyer

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

Surviving Freedom: African American Farm Households in Cass County, Michigan, 1832-1880

By

Marcia R. Sawyer

This study investigates the origins and development of the interracial farming community in Cass County, Michigan between 1832 and 1880. Specifically, it analyzes the variety of strategies devised by the members of these black farm households that insured their survival in the ante-bellum North.

Both formal and informal strategies were essential to the physical, economic and political survival of the black households in Cass County. Formal strategies included an active commitment to the Underground Railroad and to the political control of Calvin township school board elections, the predominately black community in Cass. Informal strategies included the protective posture taken by the locally recruited Federal Census Marshals who, during the 1840 and 1850 enumeration, undercounted the black population, allowing them to stay safely autonomous. Another

informal strategy used successfully during these years involved the employment of farm laborers on farms owned by black and white farmers who could afford their own land. This strategy enabled cash poor black farm laborers to save their wages and eventually become landowners themselves. These strategies insured the physical survival of black farm households on the frontier and their economic survival during the Civil War years and during the severe economic depression that followed the Panic of 1873.

Relations between the races as well as social, religious, political and economic developments were shaped by the frontier conditions that prevailed in the Michigan Territory during the 1830s and 1840s. However, with the coming of the Civil War, the demands of the national market changed and frontier conditions ended. Yeoman farmers in Cass became more enmeshed in the national capitalist economy and were victimized by the economic depression that followed the Panic of 1873. Black family strategies developed in the ante-bellum era provided black farmers with a level of economic stability that their white neighbors could not achieve during these economic transitions. Black farm households gained economic independence in nineteenth century Cass County, Michigan and were able to preserve that independence despite racism, the upheavals of Civil War and economic depression.

For my parents,

Thomas Jason Sawyer, Sr.
and
Sheila Jackson Sawyer

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The double-bind that exists for African American women inside and outside the academy due to the effects of racism and sexism have never been so obvious to me. African American graduate women are placed in a peculiar jeopardy. This jeopardy grows the closer one gets to the completion of a Ph.D.

My two year struggle with sexual harassment nearly destroyed this project. I am especially grateful, therefore, to Allan Kulikoff, who ignored my race and gender and took on this project as a worthy enterprise and focused on me as a developing scholar. I am also grateful to Ruth Hamilton, who consistently, sometimes painfully, tells the truth, and to Darlene Clark-Hine and David Robinson for their consistent support and encouragement.

The Ford Foundation provided generous financial support through a Dissertation Year Fellowship, which made the completion of the project possible.

At first it was not clear that I would be permitted to use the public records in the Probate Court in the Cass County Court House. The documents were guarded by a particularly racist clerk who preferred not to be in the presence

of African Americans. I am grateful, therefore, to Jerry Hart, who introduced me to Jeff Carmen, County Administrator. Together we found a way into those documents. Among other things, Jerry Hart supervised the building of a scaffolding so that I could reach records at the top of a 12 foot vault without breaking my neck.

My difficulties at the Court House were not my typical experience while in Cass. Instead, the staff of librarians at the Cass County Public library willingly helped in many ways and made the work enjoyable. I also would like to thank Lois Cross Hart for her historical insights, unusual hospitality, and kindness during my time in Cassopolis.

Karen Carter, Kathy Biddick and Jo Dohoney were extremely helpful colleagues throughout the research and writing. Leslie Brown and Leslie Parsons lent valuable assistance during the year of data entry and were very patient with my impatience.

My gratitude to my parents is immense. My father, now deceased, was a model for me as a graduate student, working toward his own doctorate for many years. I am sure that he is pleased that one of us finished. My mother is my best friend and has been through it all with me. She continues to teach me about grace, and spiritual strength and the love of God.

And, I am grateful to Tina Turner. God bless her. Her album "Break Every Rule" inspired me all the time. She and I are in similar positions. I hope at some point to be able

to inspire some one with my strength of character the way she has.

Marcia R. Sawyer
1990

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INTRODUCTION

The research for this dissertation grew out of my fascination with the Reconstruction Era. After slavery was abolished an economically exploitative system of sharecropping was worked out as a compromise between the ex-slaves and their former masters. I was sure that in the period before the establishment of sharecropping there were many lost possibilities for economic independence for the ex-slaves. Their skills, developed during slavery, under certain circumstances could have been used to their economic benefit. This research aimed to discover the set of circumstances necessary for the successful establishment of communities of ex-slaves who were economically independent. The free black farming community in nineteenth century Cass County, Michigan seemed an optimal place to discover the conditions necessary for economic independence.

What I found was a community of black farmers who established a protective environment for their families, built schools and worked out a variety of ways to afford their own farmland which was passed on to successive generations. This community existed in the midst of a white community that was both negative, racially prejudiced and actively affirming. Their presence was, on balance, resented more than favored.

However, as the nineteenth century unfolded the economic successes of these black farmers was important to the

economic survival of some of the neighboring white farmers. The Economic Panic of 1873 impacted unevenly on white farmers and many had to scramble to hold onto their own property during the depression that followed. Financial assistance was secured from black neighbors in the form of loans, documented in the voluminous Probate Records for nineteenth century Cass County.

Primary sources for Cass were, unfortunately, scarce for the frontier period, 1832-1850, particularly for the black community. During this period, the protective strategies necessary to the safety of the black farm households, the institutional foundations of their community and the economic base necessary to self-sufficiency were established. Oral histories collected from the descendants of the original settlers, who still live in Cass County, is one important source for data on this crucial period. Documentation for the strength of the farming community in the form of more accurate census records for households and farms, probated records, Civil War Pension records and family geneaologies increased as the nineteenth century progressed.

The chapters that follow tell one part of the story of this remarkable nineteenth century community of African American farmers. They were free folk who assured the survival of their farming households because of the particular combination of political and economic circumstances found in

Cass County, Michigan between 1832 and 1880.

Chapter One The Setting: Cass County, Michigan in 1830

Introduction

The land in southwest Michigan Territory known by 1840 as Cass County initially was settled by Pottawatomie Indian communities. Until 1818 the farm land had not been purchased by white or black Americans. The Pottawatomies were divided into three bands in the 1830s and were spread among at least a dozen villages. These communities of Pottawatomie remained in Cass County throughout the nineteenth century even though the location of their villages changed because of the pressure of black and white settlement.[1]

In 1832 one of the first black farming families, headed by Ezekiel and Winna Anderson, moved their household and personal property out of southern Illinois and into Michigan Territory. Black farm families like the Andersons who migrated into Michigan Territory in the 1820s and 1830s were in search of an environment that would enable them to live free from the threat of enslavement. They also sought a frontier area with inexpensive and available farm land so that they could develop an economic base for the support of their households.

Descendants of the original Anderson family continue to live in Cass County. Documentation about the fortunes and misfortunes of generations of the Anderson family is plenti-

ful in the Population and Agriculture Census, in probate documents, in Civil War pension records and in the oral history that family members have preserved. Therefore, the history of the Anderson family will be discussed throughout this study in order to illustrate patterns among black farm families as they created survival strategies in nineteenth century Cass County.

Black emigrants moved into southwest Michigan from Illinois, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee.[2] Escaping slaves fled Kentucky and Tennessee; free black farming families left North Carolina and Virginia, settled for one or two years in Ohio and Indiana and then moved to Michigan.[3] The move to Michigan was necessary because the states of Ohio and Indiana were actively hostile to the settlement of free black families in the ante-bellum period.

By 1835 lawmakers of both Ohio and Indiana had passed restrictive legislation requiring that any free black person entering the state post a sizable cash bond to insure against vagrancy.[4] At this time Michigan Territory was a frontier area and was less hostile to the settlement of free black families.[5] In many cases, these black Americans found their presence less resented wherever frontier conditions existed and labor was scarce.

Once settled in southwest Michigan, black farmers purchased land and for security purposes assumed a low profile

in an undeveloped area known as Ramptown, named after the wild onions that grew there in profusion. The population surrounding the Afro-American settlement in Ramptown included not only Pottawattomie Indian communities but also Anglo-American settlers, typically from Northeastern states and predominantly from New York.

This study will investigate the origins and development of the interracial community in Cass County between 1832 and 1880. Specifically, it will investigate the strategies devised by black farm households that insured their physical survival on the frontier and their economic survival during the Civil War years and during the severe economic depression that followed the Panic of 1873. Particular attention will be given to the impact of race on farm production, household structures and levels of wealth in the black community.

Relations between the races as well as social, religious, political and economic developments were shaped by the frontier conditions that prevailed in the Michigan Territory during this period. However, with the coming of the Civil War the demands of the national market changed and frontier conditions ended. Yeoman farmers in Cass became more emeshed in the national capitalist economy. As the result of the economic depression following the Panic of 1873, family strategies that maximized farm labor resulted in altered household structures for some black farmers,

unlike those of their white neighbors. Black farmers who remained economically viable throughout the nineteenth Century typically lived in households that were nuclear or extended, much like those of their successful white neighbors.

Research about this community adds to the traditional historical scholarship which focuses either on Afro-Americans in nineteenth century rural Southern communities or on those who lived in the urban Northeast during the ante-bellum period. Also, unlike other studies with a racial or cultural focus, this study will not discuss these farmers in isolation from each other but as interactive elements within one social milieu.[6] This study will contribute to four areas of nineteenth century American History research. These include the growing body of literature on the nineteenth century Afro-American family; research on the Abolitionist Movement; rural and local history of nineteenth century America; and the continuing debate on the expansion of capitalism and its impact on farm economies and agricultural markets.

To date, only two scholarly works have been done on the farming community in Cass County. Benjamin Wilson, in his unpublished dissertation, "Cass County, Michigan: Ante-Bellum Refuge, 1835-1870" (1975),[7] addressed the issues involved in the initial community building in Cass County among the black farmers and Quakers. Wilson's study is

primarily a local study of nineteenth century northern antebellum race relations. He also discussed the establishment of black owned farms, stores, schools and churches and other community institutions. Further, Wilson examined local newspapers that revealed hostile perceptions of some of the white Cass County residents toward the new black emigrants. Wilson concluded that the nineteenth century black community in Cass County was stratified along color and class lines by 1870, with a high degree of importance attached to whether one's ancestors were slave or free. His conclusions are valuable but provide little information about or analysis of the structure of the black households in Cass County, the economic stability of those households, or the effects of emancipation on household structure.

George K. Hesslink, in his sociological study Black Neighbors: Negroes in a Northern Rural Community (1968),[8] analyzed the northern bi-racial rural social structure of the twentieth century community in Cass County. He intended to use this area as a case study of stable race relations which could benefit racially torn and polarized urban areas. The relative racial harmony that Hesslink discussed has been a distinguishing characteristic of the area in the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century.

The subject of the Afro-American family has proved fascinating to a wide range of scholars. Social scientists, historians, and anthropologists have attempted to understand

the historical development of the black family using three broad approaches. These are typically referred to as the pathological, the adaptive, and the institutional approaches. E. Franklin Frazier's The Negro Family in the United States (1939) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's The Negro Family: A Case for National Action (1965) are classic examples of the pathological approach.[9]

Frazier concluded that slavery had severely weakened black family life and that the post-slavery period saw the disruption even of those ties which had been anchored in the plantation system. Moynihan carried this analysis forward in time and found evidence that the black family in the urban ghettos was crumbling because of a pathological family structure which was headed by a black matriarch and lacked male leadership. Further, Moynihan postulated that the pathology found in black families was self-perpetuating, a fact that would continue unless stability was found through black male leadership.

Andrew Billingsley, in Black Families in White America (1968), argued against the Frazier/Moynihan approach, discovering that the majority of black families--even in urban ghettos--were male headed and showed substantial strength in withstanding the oppression and prejudice of the dominant society.[10] Billingsley's work is typical of the adaptive approach. The pathological interpretation posed problems for researchers like Billingsley because it confused social

class with race and it reflected too directly the ideology and prejudices of researchers.

Herbert Gutman's The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (1976) typifies a new direction for the study of the black family, known as the institutional approach. [11] This approach described the black family independent of a real or imagined prevailing American family system (although not independent of the American economic system), and used descriptive terms and concepts developed in cross-cultural studies such as anthropology and sociology. Gutman did this by examining the Afro-American family prior to and after the general emancipation and by studying their cultural beliefs and behavior. He discussed slavery as an oppressive circumstance that tested the adaptive capacities of several generations of men and women. According to Gutman, Frazier and Moynihan did not misperceive the oppressive nature of enslavement but underestimated the survival capacities of the enslaved and subsequent generations.

Anthropologist Sidney W. Mintz provided additional insight into the study of the black family with his studies of Afro-Americans in the Caribbean in An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past (1976).[12] His conclusions pointed to the unique nature of Afro-American culture. Black people in the New World, he argued, had to create new traditions and forms of associations because of the new circumstances in which they found themselves.

Using approaches similar to Gutman and Mintz, several case studies which were published as articles--such as those of late nineteenth century Boston by Elizabeth Pleck; of ante-bellum Philadelphia by Theodore Hershberg; and of Evansville, Indiana by Darrel E. Bigham--have attempted to combine the highly quantitative, analytical approaches of Frazier, Moynihan and Billingsley with new understandings of the variety of family structures and the ways the family functioned as a stabilizing force for black people.[13] The case studies of Bigham, Hershberg and Pleck have allowed them to take the black family seriously on its own terms, and to avoid the restrictive stereotypical understandings of black Americans, of the nature of the "family," or black families. Thus, there has been a broadening of methodological approaches to the study of the Afro-American family, a broader understanding of what constitutes relevant source materials, and a broader definition of family.

This case study approach was first used by W. E. B. DuBois in "The Negro Family," a major chapter in The Philadelphia Negro. (1899)[14] Like Bigham, Hershberg and Pleck, DuBois drew conclusions that emphasized the relative health, normalcy, and pro-active nature of black families rather than their pathological or reactive natures. In addition, DuBois limited his conclusions to various black communities in Philadelphia and avoided over-generalizations and negative stereotypes of the black family.

Two critically important case studies that relate directly to the history of the black family during the colonial and ante-bellum periods are T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes' "Myne Owne Ground" (1980) and Juliet E. K. Walker's Free Frank (1983).[15] Walker's work particularly relates to the ongoing debate about nineteenth century Afro-American slave families. In addition, she examined the lives of slaves in Kentucky, one source of the runaway slave population that escaped to Cass County between 1830 and 1850. Walker used county records to develop the story of Free Frank, a man who was born a slave in South Carolina on the Piedmont frontier in 1777. Although Frank remained a slave for forty-two years, he managed to establish his own saltpeter mining operation in Kentucky, to become a commercial farmer and stock raiser and to purchase sixteen of his family members over a period of forty years for a total of $15,000.

Southern Quakers shared the responsibility for the establishment of the social, political and economic structure in nineteenth century Cass County which allowed three culturally distinct groups to coexist peacefully. This research will contribute to the historical literature that examines Quaker involvement in the manumission and resettlement of slave families from Virginia and North Carolina. It will provide data to test the conclusions about the effectiveness of Quaker involvement in the Abolitionist Movement

as it is discussed by David Brion Davis in Slavery in the Age of Revolution (1975), Stephen B. Weeks in Southern Quakers and Slavery (1896), Thomas E. Drake in Quakers and Slavery in America (1950) and Jean R. Soderlund in Quakers & Slavery (1985).[16]

A third area of historical literature significant for this research is the relatively recent work that focuses attention on nineteenth century rural history and local community studies. Typical of this new literature are David E. Schob's Hired Hands and Plowboys (1975), Don Harrison Doyle's The Social Order of a Frontier Community (1978) and John Mack Faragher's Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (1986).[17]

David E. Schob's discussion of the lives of farm laborers in the Midwest from 1815-1860 speaks directly to the farm labor situation in southwest Michigan, particularly in Cass County. His evidence suggests that those farm laborers, white or black, who arrived in Cass County before 1850, and who began to work and save their money were more likely to be farm owners than those who settled in Cass after 1850. Schob's analysis is helpful because he distinguishes between the fortunes of black farm laborers who were typically the last hired and the first fired on Midwestern farms, and those white farm laborers whose help was most valued. Further, Schob concludes that these farm laborers can not be viewed as unskilled labor due to the specialized

skills that were needed for work such as prairie-breaking, harvesting, horticulture, short-haul teamstering, drainage ditching and well-digging.[18]

Don Harrison Doyle and John Mack Faragher have created local history case studies. Doyle focuses on the establishment of the nineteenth century small town community of Jacksonville, Illinois, while Faragher concentrates on the rural farming area of nineteenth century Sugar Creek, Illinois. Their descriptions of the frontier conditions in Illinois between 1810-1830 mirrors the physical environment of Cass County, Michigan of the same time period. However, one crucial difference existed in the attitudes and actions of the white settler population. Unfortunately, those few black people and native Indians who moved into Jacksonville and Sugar Creek during the early years found themselves among white settlers who were predominantly poor and Southern, typically from Kentucky and Tennessee. Although these folk disliked the institution of slavery they regarded African Americans and native Americans with active disdain.[19] On the frontier in Cass County, on the other hand, the white settlers, many of whom were abolitionist, tended to be a landowning population from the New England states and New York. The Southern Quaker contingent of the settler population in Cass County were not only actively anti-slavery but were also more socially and politically accepting of black and Native Americans. Therefore, this research

will provide a contrasting view of the possibilities for interracial community building on the Midwestern frontier in an environment relatively more tolerant of cultural and racial diversity.

This study will also provide a perspective from which to view the expansion of capitalism and its impact on agricultural markets and the economies of farm households. According to Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude in their Introduction to the edited volume The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation (1985), the "full progress of capitalism, customarily associated so closely with the urban world, rested chiefly on what transpired in the rural world."[20] Capitalist development required "a mobile labor force and a large domestic market for manufactured goods." In addition, it required that the rural producer be "rendered incapable of subsisting without recourse to the market."[21] Cass County farmers were not wholly self-sufficient but before 1860 they certainly were capable of subsisting without access to national markets, participating instead in local exchanges as yeoman farmers who were land owners, headed patriarchal households and produced most of the food needed by the family.[22]

Part Two: Cass County During the Settlement Period

Pottawatomie Indian groups arrived in the area that became Cass County, Michigan during the eighteenth century. Linguistically and culturally, the Pottawatomie are closely related to the Ottawa and to the Ojibwa and, in pre-contact times, they may have been a single cultural group on the northern shores of Lake Huron. During the sixteenth century the Pottawatomie cooperated with the French in the fur trade on the Upper Peninsula and in northern Wisconsin. Then, sometime during the eighteenth century, the Pottawatomie began to migrate to the areas of present day southern Michigan, northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin.[23]

By the time of white and black settlement the Pottawatomie had approximately a dozen villages and sugar camps in Cass County. The economy of this village-dwelling, sedentary people was principally based on hunting and fishing. A village usually consisted of a group of twelve bark huts or wigwams close to a water supply, natural shelter and land suitable for growing corn and other crops. The most important villages in the area were located on the fertile land along the banks of the St. Joseph River.

The three bands of Pottawatomie who remained in Cass County numbered between 400 and 500 and were led by Pokagon, Weesaw and Shavehead. Shavehead's band was the smallest and his reputation among whites and Indians was that of a renegade. His band occupied the southeastern portion of Cass in the present limits of Porter township. Pokagon's

band of more than 200 occupied the prairie in the western part of Cass County that is now named for the chief and the band led by Weesaw lived on the prairie in the northeast portion of county in the area that became Volinia Township.[24]

Public land in Michigan went on sale for the first time in July of 1818 at an auction held in Detroit. Land sold for $1.25 an acre in 1820, payable in cash. Typically, the minimum amount of land purchased was 80 acres; for a hundred dollars a settler could buy an eighty-acre farm.[25] The land in Michigan was considered ideal for settlement with many "oak-openings" for fields and crops. Cass County was particularly attractive due to easy access to the area (with no swamps or swift rivers blocking settlement from the east), fertile soil, numerous streams and nearby forests which provided the necessary lumber for houses and fences.[26] Furthermore, the Detroit-Chicago Road, completed in the latter years of the 1820s, was close to Cass County and insured access to regional markets. By 1835, two stagecoaches a week traveled between Detroit and Chicago.[27]

The migration of white and black farmers to Cass County between 1832 and 1860 has been examined by Benjamin Wilson and Clarence Knuth. They have clearly documented the settlement of black southern farm families who, beginning in 1820s, moved from North Carolina and Virginia by way of Ohio and Indiana into Cass County, Michigan.[28] These families

migrated in order to escape a proscriptive and racist environment that prevented them from voting, educating their children and moving freely within their native state to ply a trade, seek employment or to merely visit a friend. In Cass County they hoped to assume a low profile in order to avoid racist attacks, to earn a livelihood and to raise and educate their children. White farmers made the trek out of New York to Ohio and Indiana and then into southwest Michigan for reasons of economic opportunity and, in the case of the Quakers, to establish and then to situate themselves along the Underground Railroad route in Michigan in order to help runaway slaves.[29]

Black and white farmers left their native states for different reasons but emigrated in the same way--that is, under the auspices of kinship.[30] It is often difficult to demonstrate that black emigrants from the Southeast moved in family groups into the states of the Old Northwest in the early and mid nineteenth century.

Older literature typically depict black Americans, whether slave or free, as individuals who made decisions to emigrate unconcerned for or unaware of the welfare of kin.[31] However, several of the black families that left Virginia and North Carolina in the early decades of the nineteenth century can be traced in the federal census much like white families.

Migration theories that assume that families migrated as a unit or that trace the movement of one member who went

ahead to prepare a place for the family (chain migration of families) typically applied only to white families of the ante bellum period. The understandable assumption of demographers who apply these migration theories seems to be that the most critical variable that influenced the behavior of any black individual or any black family group living in a slave state was the fact of slavery. And, while this was undoubtedly true, family units did exist in Virginia and in North Carolina and they reproduced themselves throughout the period of this study. Further, decisions were made to emigrate out of slave states and into the North by those family units. For example, black families were leaving together from North Carolina in the 1820s.[32]

They were aided by anti-slavery Friends whose activities can be traced in Quaker Meeting Records that exist for the latter years of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century as they rid themselves of the moral burden of slave-holding. In October of 1775 the North Carolina Quaker Yearly Meeting ordered that no member was permitted to either buy or sell a black person without the consent of the meeting to which they belonged. A year later the Quaker governing body found slavery "inconsistent with the law of righteousness" and banned slave-holding entirely. Quaker members began to manumit increasing numbers of slaves even though a North Carolina law passed in 1777 made it illegal to do so.

In order to protect recently freed black people who were rounded up by sheriffs and then sold as slaves at public auction, the Quaker Yearly Meeting established the trustee system of slaveholding. Slaves were given as "gifts" to the Meeting and therefore came under the protection of Quaker leaders. By 1814, six years after the program had been instituted, more than 350 slaves had been transferred and by 1822 the number of trustee-governed slaves had reached 450. In 1826 the total climbed to 729.[33] Problems arose within North Carolina Quaker leadership as the number of slaves owned by the Yearly Meeting increased while the number of Quaker residents decreased. Many of them were leaving North Carolina for Ohio and Indiana. By 1822 the Quaker leadership decided that an answer to this dilemma was to help their trustee-governed slaves emigrate into the free states of the Old Northwest. Slaves could be removed as fast as they were willing to go. Agents who helped to resettle these slaves drew a maximum of $200 per emigrant from the treasury of the Yearly Meeting for this purpose.[34] In the spring of 1826 forty black people traveling in family groups left for Indiana with Quaker escorts, fifty-four traveled to Ohio.[35]

An inherent problem in the approach of North Carolina Quaker leadership became evident when they urged the black people under their care to emigrate despite the breakup of their families. Too often slaves of the Quakers were

married to other slaves held by non-Quaker masters. The children of these marriages were held by non-Quaker masters as well. Trustee-held slaves generally refused emigration unless their spouses and children could accompany them.[36]

In 1835 David White, a trustee of the Eastern Quakers in North Carolina, prepared to escort four women and twenty children to the western free states. Although the husbands of these three women were the property of non-Quakers and unable to emigrate, the women had previously agreed to leave North Carolina without them. However, as the date of departure drew near, the women began to reconsider their plans. Shortly before the departure date they told White that they had decided not to desert their husbands and would remain in North Carolina. Reluctant to abandon plans for the expedition, David White negotiated with the owners of the slave men and managed to purchase them on behalf of the Yearly Meeting for a fraction of their market value. The reunited families then traveled together to the free States.[37]

Other complications arose for Quaker leaders whose slaves were married to free black people who could not afford to emigrate. This made additional expenses necessary as Quakers financed the transportation of people who were not their responsibility. Furthermore, black people who allowed themselves to be resettled as individuals in free states grew disillusioned and lonely and returned to North Carolina to rejoin their families despite all the

prohibitory laws. Also, some Quaker slaves demanded that they only be resettled in particular states, very few were willing to go just anywhere. Preferences of destinations were typically linked to places where family members had already settled.[38]

Tidewater antecedents exist for five black settlements in Michigan, one of which is Cass County. Typically the household heads who lived in Ohio had been born in Virginia while those who lived in Indiana had been born in North Carolina. The migration pattern of these families can be traced in the Federal Census taken in 1830 which documents the presence of twenty-five black families in Ohio and Indiana who are found on the Census in southwestern Michigan by 1850. Fifteen of these twenty-five family names can be found on the Cass County census schedules for 1850.

These family groups were able to establish economically viable households in Ohio, Indiana and later in Cass County, Michigan because of the skills they acquired while in North Carolina. John Hope Franklin's classic study The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860 (1943) amply demonstrates the high level of skills found among black North Carolinians.[39] These emigrants were skilled as carpenters, sawyers, joiners, bricklayers, and stonemasons, skills that had been important in the building of early North Carolina.[40] While enslaved these skilled artisans had been hired out by their owners for building projects.[41] And, according to Bishir

and Guion G. Johnson's research published in Ante-Bellum North Carolina (1937), some of the cash paid by the employer was kept by the slave artisan to use as he chose.[42] Therefore, as slave and freed black North Carolinians left their state of birth for the free states of the Old Northwest they took with them transferable skills that enabled them to support their households. They also had some knowledge of the value of their skills to prospective employers and the costs of the necessities or luxuries needed for their households.

Similar conditions obtained for the slave and free black population in nineteenth century Virginia. In 1790 the number of free black people in Virginia numbered over 12,000 while the number of slaves was 292,000. However, by 1810 there were more than 30,000 freed black Virginians and 392,000 slaves.[43] Virginia lawmakers viewed with alarm this development and responded in the late 1790s and the early 1800s by passing laws prohibiting freed slaves from remaining in Virginia more than twelve months after their manumission. In addition, free black people who were entitled to stay in Virginia were subjected to special restrictions designed to limit their participation and mobility. "They could not vote, they were bound to register every three years and to pay for their certificates of freedom, they had to pay a special tax in addition to their property taxes, and if they failed to meet these obligations they were liable not only to seizure of property but also to being

taken by the sheriff for hiring out." Laws restricting the education of black children were passed in 1805 and continued to be in effect throughout the ante-bellum period. When possible, black Virginians resisted the negative impact of these laws on their families.[44] For instance, after a "flat refusal of the legislature to permit them to operate the school for which they petitioned in 1838, the progressive, free Negroes of Fredericksburg, Virginia immediately undertook a trek to Michigan."[45]

Similar laws passed during this period in North Carolina had propelled the black population to emigrate with the help of Quakers.[46] This assistance was also available to those black Virginians who desired to emigrate. By 1843 there were 18,000 Friends in Ohio and another 30,000 in Indiana who had originated in Virginia. These settlements of Quakers were receptive communities helping freed family groups or escaping slaves North, sometimes to Cass County and other times into Canada.[47]

Also similar to the emigrants from North Carolina was the level of skills black Virginians employed to support themselves and their households once in free states. Freed and slave Virginians were represented in trades such as blacksmithing and other metal working, carpentry and wood work, shoemaking and other leather work, barbering and farming.[48] In addition, property holding was not uncommon among free black Virginians in the early nineteenth century.

Despite the restrictive laws passed during this period their right to acquire, own and sell property was never taken away or abridged.[49]

Thus, in the decade following Nat Turner's rebellion when the greatest number of freed black people left Virginia for free northern states, they were not unprepared to support themselves in frontier conditions. The period of greatest out migration was between 1830 and 1835, about ten years later than the North Carolina free black emigration. Once in Michigan, black household heads began to purchase farmland in Cass County; community development followed.

It was not until several years after the War of 1812 that white settlers, planning to emigrate, began to seriously consider Michigan as a destination. Ohio lands were still cheap, plentiful and closer to the markets on the east coast and in New Orleans. Western New York lands were still fertile and affordable and there was no need to move into the wilderness that easterners assumed lay to the north and west of Ohio.[50]

These difficulties were aggravated by the opening of the Northwest Territory.[51] Agricultural crops were produced cheaply on land in the Ohio Valley and created ruinous competition for those farmers on the rocky and well-worked soils of New England and eastern New York. "Grain growers suffered first as Ohio Valley wheat and corn moving eastward over the Erie Canal invaded coastal markets. The flood of

cereals from virgin western soils lowered prices so radically that thousands of New England farmers gave up the struggle."[52] This agricultural upheaval released thousands of white families for the westward migration. A steady stream of "excess population made its way to the Lake Plains, there to produce more and more grain, ship greater quantities eastward, glut the market, and encourage others to follow in their footsteps." Michigan, lying at the opposite end of Lake Erie, on a receiving end of the Erie Canal, felt the impact first.[53] By 1837 the migration from New England and New York to Michigan frequently reached what the sources refer to as "flood stage." White settlers from these states came in family groups or as individual males traveling alone or as entire congregations emigrating together. As a result, the early white settlers were largely of Yankee origin.[54]

Approximately two thirds of the white settlers originated from western New York. Many of the New Yorkers were natives of New England. A portion of the emigrants came from Ireland, England and Germany. Native-born pioneers came with more money or material possessions than the Upland-South folk of southern Indiana and Illinois.[55] Because of the reputation of the residents of Cass County for abolitionism, white emigrants from Kentucky and Tennessee tended to choose other areas in Michigan to settle.[56]

Black and white emigrants arrived in Cass County from the 1830s through the 1850s from different social and eco-

nomic backgrounds but with similar expectations for the better life available on the Michigan frontier. White families tended to bring more material possessions and wealth with them from their state of origin than the black settlers who had their family members with them, sometimes for the first time. However, even though black and white farm families left their states of origin in relatively unequal economic positions, they arrived in Cass County with the cash, skills and will to become successful farmers.

Notes

1. Alfred Mathews, History of Cass County, Michigan (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins and Company, 1882), 45.

2Origins of Black and White Settlers in Five Cass County Townships in 1850:

State/Country	Black	White
Illinois	6.0%	.3%
Indiana	4.0%	4.0%
Vermont	0%	2.0%
Kentucky	5.0%	.4%
Conneticut	0%	1.5%
Michigan	7.0%	35.0%
England	0%	1.0%
North Carolina	22.0%	1.0%
Massachusetts	0%	1.3%
New York	0%	20.0%
New Jersey	0%	1.3%
Ohio	28.2%	21.0%
Pennsylvania	0%	5.4%
Virginia	25.0%	2.3%
Tennessee	4.2%	.4%

Source: United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population of the United States in 1850, Roll 432-349 (Washington, D.C., 1854).

3. Clarence Paul E. Knuth, "Early Immigration and Current Residential Patterns of Negroes in Southwestern Michigan" (Unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 1969), Chapter 3.

4. Carter G. Woodson, A Century of Negro Migration (Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1918), 52.

5. Ibid., 54.

6. The households and farms for the residents of five townships in Cass County, Michigan from 1832-1890 will be analyzed for this dissertation: LaGrange, Porter, Jefferson, Mason and Calvin. These townships were selected based on their similar soil types, farm sizes and racial compositions. Household, individual and agricultural characteristics of these five townships were gathered from the Population Manuscript Census for 1830-1880 and from the Agricultural Census for 1850-1880. These documents will be linked and analyzed to access the importance of three vari-

ables: the economic wealth, race and time of settlement of Cass County farmers.
In addition, I will link Probate Documents dating from 1833-1920 to this Census information to further highlight the economic status of these households and the inheritance patterns between generations. Pension records are also available for Civil War veterans and/or their widows. These soldiers served in the 102nd Colored Infantry. These documents were gathered and used to supply corroborating evidence regarding the economic status of black farm households after the Civil War. These records also provide a wealth of data about neighborhood connections and nineteenth century community institutions in Cass County. Data gathered from oral history interviews provide the final primary source for conclusions drawn in this research. These interviews were necessary to add a qualitative and narrative perspective to the quantitative data about the farm households in nineteenth century Cass County.

7. Benjamin C. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Black Haven: Cass County, 1835-1870," (Unpublished dissertation, Michigan State University, 1975).

8. George K. Hesslink, Black Neighbors: Negroes in a Northern Rural Community (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968).

9. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939); Daniel P. Moynihan, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, Office of Planning and Research, March, 1965).

10. Andrew Billingsley, Black Families in White America (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968).

11. Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Random House, 1976).

12. Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective (Philadelphia: The Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976).

13. Elizabeth H. Pleck, "The Two-Parent Household: Black Family Structure in Late Nineteenth Century Boston," Journal of Social History 6 (Fall 1972); Theodore Hershberg, "Free Blacks in Antebellum Philadelphia: A Study of Ex-Slaves, Freeborn, and Socio-economic Decline," Journal of Social History 5 (Winter 1971-72); Darrell E. Bigham, "Family Structure of Germans and Blacks in Evansville and Vanderburgh County, Indiana in 1880: A Comparative Study," The Old Northwest 7 (Fall 1981).

14. William E. B. DuBois, The Philadelphia Negro: A Social

Study (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899).

15. T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, "Myne Owne Ground:" Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Juliet E. K. Walker, Free Frank: A Black Pioneer on the Antebellum Frontier (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983).

16. David Brion Davis, Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823 (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975); Stephen B. Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1896); Thomas E. Drake, Quakers and Slavery in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950);and Jean R. Soderlund, Quakers & Slavery (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

17. David E. Schob, Hired Hands and Plowboys: Farm Labor in the Midwest, 1815-60 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); Don Harrison Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-70 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); and for a review of this literature see Hal S. Barron's "Rediscovering the Majority: The New Rural History of the Nineteenth-Century North," Historical Methods 19 (Fall 1986).

18. Schob, Hired Hands and Plowboys, 4.

19. Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community, 145-155; Faragher, Sugar Creek, 46-49.

20. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, "Introduction," in Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, beds., The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 12.

21. Ibid., 13.

22Allan Kulikoff, "The Rise and Destruction of the American Yeomanry, 1650-1900," (unpublished manuscript, Princeton University), 4.

23. Ann McElroy Searcy, Contemporary and Traditional Prairie Potawatomi Child Life (Lawrence, Kansas: The University of Kansas, 1965), 5-6.

24. Matthews, History of Cass County, Michigan, 45.

25. Dunbar, Michigan, 184.

26. Taber, "New England Influence...," 307.

27. Dunbar, Michigan, 190.

28. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Haven;" and Knuth, "Early Immigration and Current Residential Patterns of Negroes in Southwestern Michigan."

29. Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982); and Lois Kimball Mathews Rosenberry, The Expansion of New England (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909).

30. Charles Tilly and C. Harold Brown, "On Uprooting, Kinship, and the Auspices of Migration," International Journal of Comparative Sociology 8 (September 1967); John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, "Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood Formation and Social Networks," The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly 42 (January 1964).

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32. Knuth, "Early Immigration and Current Residential Patterns of Negroes in Southwestern Michigan," Chapter 3; Peter Kent Opper, "North Carolina Quakers: Reluctant Slaveholders," The North Carolina Historical Review 52 (January 1975); Roma Jones Stewart, "The Migration of a Free People: Cass County's Black Settlers from North Carolina," Michigan History (January/February 1987).

33. Opper, "North Carolina Quakers:" 37-39.

34. Ibid., 42.

35. Ibid., 46.

36. Ibid., 49.

37. Ibid., 50.

38. Ibid., 51-52.

39. Franklin, The Free Negro in North Carolina, 125, 134-135 and Appendices.

40. Catherine W. Bishir, "Black Builders in Antebellum

North Carolina," The North Carolina Historical Review 59 (October 1984): 429-430.

41. Ibid., 438-439.

42. Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 529-530; Bishir, "Black Builders in Antebellum North Carolina:" 443.

43. Robert McColley, Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 71.

44. Ibid., 72-73.

45. Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 25.

46. Franklin, The Free Negro in North Carolina, Chapter 3.

47. Knuth, "Early Immigration and Current Residential Patterns...," 22-23.

48. Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 75-76; Russell, The Free Negro in Virginia, 150; Raymond B. Pinchbeck, The Virginia Negro Artisan and Tradesman (Richmond, Virginia: The William Byrd Press, Inc., 1926), Chapters 1-5.

49. Russell, The Free Negro in Virginia, 89.

50. Rosenberry, Expansion of New England, 221.

51. Taber, "New England Influence in South Central Michigan:" 306.

52. Billington and Ridge, Westward Expansion, 301.

53. Ibid.

54. Taber, "New England Influence...:" 308.

55. R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest, Vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1950), 97.

56. Mathews, History of Cass County, Michigan, Chapter 17.

Chapter Two: The Settlement of Cass, 1830-1850

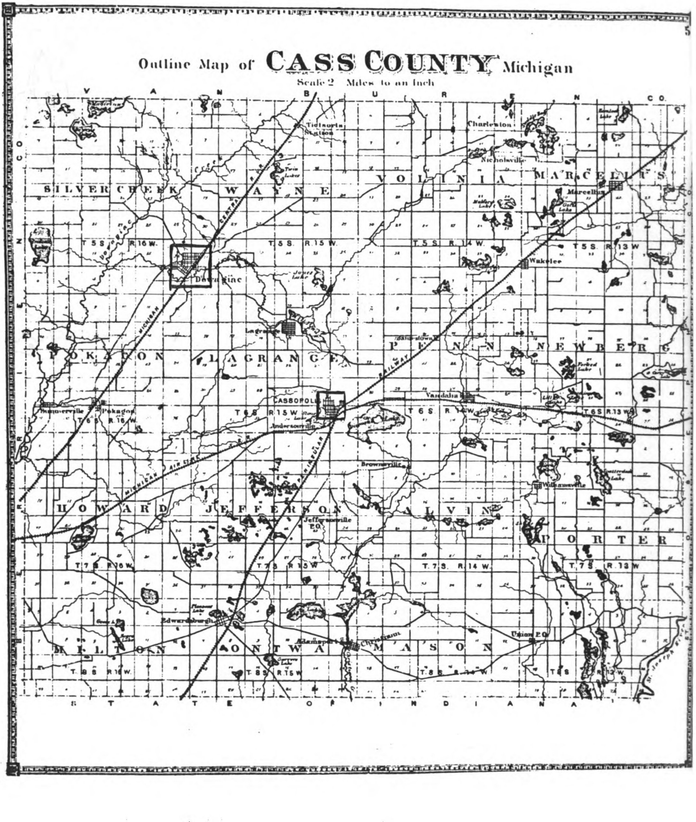
The political economy of Cass County and the surrounding region was transformed in the period between the years of initial settlement and the end of the nineteenth century. This transformation involved the growth and expansion of family farms as farmers responded to the demands of the national market and as the nature of farming changed from labor intensive to capital intensive. Frontier conditions prevailed throughout the 1830s and 40s, ending only as railroad connections were extended into the area in the 1850s. For American settlers frontier conditions meant large tracts of available, affordable and fertile soil for sale by the United States government or speculators, loosely knit political connections within a territorial government and the presence of a group of native Americans who had been subdued or dispossessed. Cass County's frontier economy met all of these expectations; fertile farm lands were situated on several small prairies, the territorial government actively encouraged settlement by keeping land prices low and three bands of Potawatomie had ceded title to their land in the Chicago Treaty of 1821.

For the purposes of this dissertation the household structures and wealth of farmers in five Cass County townships will be analyzed within the context of the political economy of the Old Northwest from 1832-1890. In order to

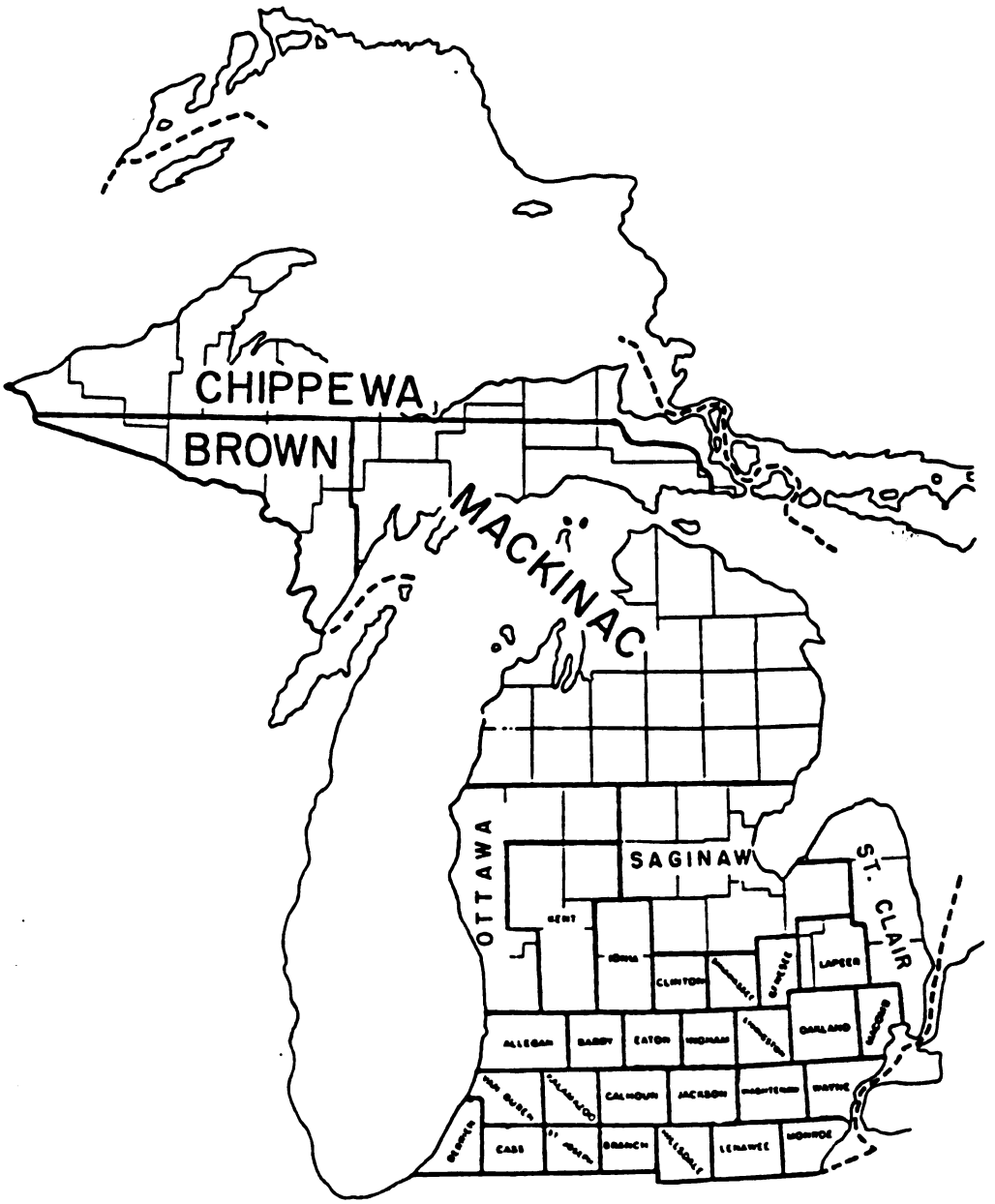
discover the reasons for the success of these farmers and to test the effects of race and time of settlement the townships of Jefferson, Mason, Calvin, Porter and LaGrange were chosen for analysis. The fertility of the soil, crops and distance to markets were similar among the farms in these townships at the beginning of settlement. Farmers, white and black, began to farm facing similar opportunities and hardships.

The households established by these farmers were also similar. The population census of 1840 supplied information about the households of white settlers in Cass County. Evidence about early black households was supplied by oral history interviews and family genealogies.[1] This data suggests that the household structures of early Cass County farmers, white and black, were nuclear with simple extensions or else were composed of a male head alone, having come ahead to prepare a place for the rest of the household. Young families and newly weds also were characteristic of these farm households.

Statistical analysis of the Population and Agricultural Census for 1840-1860 will be presented later in this chapter to prove that early farmers, both white and black, began farming with similar economic advantages and formed households that were much alike. The cultural differences based on race or region were not the powerful


Outline Map of CASS COUNTY Michigan
Scale 2 Miles to an Inch
VAN BUREN CO.
STATE OF INDIANA
SILVER CREEK
WAYNE
VOLINIA
MARCELLUS
POKAGON
LAGRANGE
PENN
NEWBERG
HOWARD
JEFFERSON
CALVIN
PORTER
MILTON
ONTWA
MASON
T 5 S. R 16 W.
T 5 S. R 15 W.
T 5 S. R 14 W.
T 5 S. R 13 W.
T 6 S. R 16 W.
T 6 S. R 15 W.
T 6 S. R 14 W.
T 6 S. R 13 W.
T 7 S. R 16 W.
T 7 S. R 15 W.
T 7 S. R 14 W.
T 7 S. R 13 W.
T 8 S. R 16 W.
T 8 S. R 15 W.
T 8 S. R 14 W.
T 8 S. R 13 W.
Charleston
Nicholsville
Marcellus
Wakelee
Dowagiac
Lagrange
Cassopolis
Andersonville
Vandalia
Pokagon
Brownsville
Williamsville
Jeffersonville P.O.
Edwardsburgh
Adamsport
Christiann
Union P.O.
Tietsorts Station
Twin Lakes
Jones Lake
Gords Lake
Forked Lake
Lilly Lake
Garrows Lake
Pleasant Lake
Michigan Central R.R.
Air Line
Railway
Peninsular
St. Joseph River

Michigan Counties 1840



differentiating factors that they would later become as the nineteenth century progressed. Whether a farmer would succeed or fail in these early years was not predicted by his or her race or origin. However, this structural parity would change as the nation advanced toward the Civil War and as the nature of farming changed to meet the demands of an expanding national market.

Cass County came into existence in 1830 and assumed its current geographic boundaries in 1836. The County included more than 300,000 acres; more than 50% of those acres were fertile but uncleared farm land. At the time of settlement the population of Porter and Calvin townships was racially integrated. The majority of the remaining Potawatomie bands lived in Porter and LaGrange townships. LaGrange Township was also racially integrated and included the County seat of Cassopolis and the only industrial activity in Cass was at the town of Dowagiac. Mason and Jefferson townships were settled by white farmers. None of these townships could boast of farm land that was 100% virgin soil or prime farm land, as was found in Ohio, Indiana and parts of Illinois, but all had soil with a high level of fertility that produced abundant crops of corn, wheat, rye, oats and barley as well as vegetable crops.[2]

Before the settlement of American farmers began in 1830 the political economy of Cass County was controlled by three bands of Potawatomie, led by the Pokagon band, also known as

the Catholic Potawatomie.[3] Theirs was what anthropologists call a horticultural society. Like other horticultural societies in Michigan and elsewhere, the Potawatomie used simple hand tools to till large garden plots where they grew corn, beans and squash. In addition, deer and elk were hunted over a wide area in Indiana and Illinois and fish were abundant in Cass County lakes and streams.[4]

The French and later the British were primarily interested in enlisting the Potawatomie as trappers. The fur trade involved these native Americans in trading patterns that reached from Lake Superior and the upper Mississippi River Valley through French trading posts on the St. Lawrence River and into the markets of Europe. They supplied the raw materials--the peltry--which were shipped to Europe for final processing and sale. This new economic relationship became successful, and the Potawatomie became dependent for tools and weapons on their European trading partners. In effect, they went from a Neolithic or Stone Age technology to the use of machine-made utensils of iron and steel and from an economic system based on local trade with other societies like themselves to a many-layered, mercantilistic, international marketplace. Thus, their economic status was altered and, eventually, weakened.[5]

Potawatomie found themselves used by their European trading partners as primary producers and then ignored during important treaty negotiations that determined the dis-

position of lands that historically were included as a part of their tribal estate. These treaties resulted from the peace negotiations held after the French and Indian Wars in which Potawatomie lands were placed under British sovereignty and the Potawatomie people became subjects of the English king. The Potawatomie were brought under American control at the conclusion of the War of 1812.

These military and political outcomes were crucial for the Potawatomie in the short run, dependent as they were on European supplies and yearly gifts, but also the historical alliances forged between the Potawatomie and the French or the English established them in the minds of American settlers as formidable enemies. Therefore, American settlers coming into territories in the Northwest had no reason to believe that they could live peacefully with Potawatomie Indian communities.[6]

An exception to this rule existed in Cass County where a small band known as the Catholic Potawatomies who had been converted by French missionaries were able to make the economic, cultural and social adjustments necessary for peaceful coexistence with American farmers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When the first permanent American settlers began to arrive, the numbers of Potawatomie were small, but their economic impact was critical. These pioneers contended with the remains of a horticultural society; in some areas they found land that

had been cleared by burning and then tilled in large garden plots, surrounding areas that had been village compounds. For the first decade of settlement, Anglo and Afro-American farmers in Cass County did not advance beyond those agricultural patterns set by the Potawatomie.

The land in southwestern Michigan was purchased by the United States government from the Potawatomie in the Chicago Treaty of 1821.[7] Those lands, which included all of Cass County, were thereafter for sale to settlers and speculators for $1.25 an acre. By 1832 Andrew Jackson had been re-elected as President and Congress had passed an Indian Removal Bill. This law attempted to force all but the Catholic Potawatomie, who received a special dispensation, out of Michigan and onto the dry plains of Kansas.[8]

The typical reaction of the Michigan Potawatomie was to avoid removal, and those in Cass County were no different. They used several tactics during the 1820s, 30s, 40s by various bands to resist removal to Kansas. Between 1000 and 1500 individuals in family groups left for Canada and remained there; another 1000 moved into remote and unsettled areas in northern Michigan and onto reserved lands of the Chippewa and Ottawa. About 1200 Michigan Potawatomie actually were removed to land west of the Mississippi, but many returned east either to Wisconsin or to their old homes in southern Michigan.[9]

The Catholic Potawatomie won the right to stay in Cass County at the Treaty of Chicago in 1833. They were led by

Leopold Pokagon who, within five years of this treaty, obtained title to 874 adjacent acres on Silver Creek in LaGrange Township. He determined that in order to remain in Michigan he and his small band must begin to cultivate the habits of private ownership of land, adopt American-style farming methods, work habits and become Christians. His attempt to assimilate his band into Cass County society was largely successful. Early political activity was directed against the institution of slavery and not against peaceful Potawatomies.[10]

Cass County was settled rapidly between 1828 and 1840. According to the earliest federal census taken in 1834 the boundaries for three of the five townships analyzed here were drawn. In that census 1191 white farmers lived in the townships of LaGrange, Porter, Jefferson. An important route into Cass County was the Chicago Road which ran through Porter Township. During this period the Chicago Road was lined so thickly with white, covered wagons that it was not uncommon to count from ten to twenty traveling daily.[11] By 1837 the population of all five townships had risen to 1961 and by the Census of 1845, 3419 white settlers were enumerated within Jefferson, Calvin, LaGrange, Mason and Porter townships.[12]

Neither Potawatomie Indian groups nor groups of black farmers were counted in this earliest census. Native Americans typically were not counted because they were not

citizens of the United States. Black Americans in Cass County were in the community but were deliberately maintaining a low profile and were not counted, hoping to avoid notice and the accompanying racial hostility that they feared in a new environment.[13]

These settlers followed a predictable migration pattern. White northern settlers moved from New York into Ohio and then to Michigan between 1800-1850. White southern settlers, who typically were Quaker originating in Virginia or North Carolina, also settled in Ohio or in Indiana before their move into southwestern Michigan. Likewise, white emigrants from Kentucky or Tennessee spent a few intervening years in Ohio or Indiana before moving into Cass County. Black settlers in Cass County tended to be either recently freed folk who had previously moved from hostile circumstances or descendants of black Americans who had been granted their freedom after service in the Army during the Revolutionary War.

Table 2-1: Origins of Black and White Settlers in Five Cass County Townships in 1850

State/Country	Black	White
Illinois	6.0%	.3%
Indiana	4.0%	4.0%
Vermont	0%	2.0%
Kentucky	5.0%	.4%
Connecticut	0%	1.5%
Michigan	7.0%	35.0%
England	0%	1.0%
North Carolina	22.0%	1.0%
Massachusetts	0%	1.3%
New York	0%	20.0%

New Jersey	0%	1.3%
Ohio	28.2%	21.0%
Pennsylvania	0%	5.4%
Virginia	25.0%	2.3%
Tennessee	4.2%	.4%

N = 4393 white, 283 black

Source: United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population of the United States in 1850, Roll 432-349 (Washington, D.C., 1854).

These settlers followed predictable and similar migration patterns; so also were their lives similar as pioneers once they reached Cass County. White and black farmers purchased similar farm acreage for similar amounts of money. Except for speculators like George Redfield or the company of Lawrence, Imlay and B. [sic] who bought up huge tracts of land, early Cass County farms ranged in size from 40-80 acres. Differences between the early fortunes of these pioneer farmers resulted from the slight differences in the fertility of the soils, the size of the family that could provide the labor necessary to clear the land, the types of crops that subsequently were grown, the presence of timber on the land that was used for farm buildings, the presence of a water supply and the proximity of the farm to transportation routes to regional markets.

The overall political economies of LaGrange, Calvin, Porter, Jefferson and Mason were similar when early settlement began. Apart from the cultivation of Potawatomie garden plots, the land was undeveloped. Almost a decade would pass before farming produced a surplus of crops for sale.

Early crops included wheat, oats, barley and corn for the livestock. Frontier conditions required strong family ties and cooperative neighbors. Transportation to regional markets was restricted to overland wagons on the Chicago Road or local roads and on the St. Joseph River.[14]

Even though differences based on race or origin did not affect the initial economic fortunes and household structures of the Cass County pioneers, differences did exist in the character of these settlers. The political and religious priorities of the southern Quaker population differed from those of the Afro-American or the northern Anglo-American settlers. These differing priorities and the political activities that grew from them together with changing economic circumstances explain the historical development of nineteenth century Cass County.

More than 100 families of Quakers from Virginia and North Carolina settled in Cass by 1830 on land that would eventually become the townships of Penn, Jefferson, Porter and Calvin.[15] The character of these Quaker settlements was shaped by their vision of religious life. American Quakerism had undergone an ideological transformation between 1830 and 1850, and Cass County Quakers were a part of this transformation. Typically, they regarded good works as one of the best signs of growth in holiness. Between 1830 and 1860 this tendency was heightened as the majority of Orthodox Quakers moved closer to the dominant evangelical

religious culture of the United States.[16] An outgrowth of this change was the increase in abolitionist activity among many groups of Orthodox Quakers. The Indiana Yearly Meeting was profoundly changed when eminent leaders like Charles Osborn, Levi Coffin, Henry Way, Benjamin Stanton and Walter Edgerton left the meeting in the early 1840s to form the Anti-Slavery Friends.[17] Quakers who migrated into Cass County from northern and central Indiana were in search of cheap, fertile land and opportunities to establish godly communities; they were also looking for an area in which to exercise an important social and political mandate--that of abolitionist activity--as they became conductors on the Underground Railroad.

The two Preparative Quaker Meetings in Cass County were initially under the authority of the Indiana Yearly Meeting. One meeting opened in August of 1841 at Birch Lake and functioned as an Orthodox meeting. However, in 1843 an Anti-Slavery Meeting was formed and designated as such to protest the reluctance of the Orthodox Meeting to press for the immediate emancipation of slaves.[18] Interestingly enough, both groups in Cass County participated in the formation and maintainence of the Underground Railroad routes which grew in complexity and efficiency during the 1840s and 1850s.

Quaker conductors of the Underground Railroad included Cass County families like the Jones, Bogues, Easts, Bonines, Osborns, Shugarts, and James who had settled in the Osborn

and East settlements in Calvin and Penn townships. They maintained several important branches of the Underground Railroad which led from the states of Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio into and through Michigan.[19] One story related to the writer by Mrs. Henry Sears, a descendant of Quaker William Jones, illustrates the type of commitment found among these Anti-Slavery Friends.

One spring day late in the evening in 1848 a young black woman who had escaped from slavery approached the farm of William Jones with her infant seeking shelter. She was pursued by a slavecatcher who overtook her on Gards Prairie Road just south of the Jones farm. The slave catcher snatched her infant from her arms, tied the young woman to his horse, and proceeded to lead her south when they encountered William Jones on horseback returning home to his farm. Jones observed the slave catcher's direction, rushed to his house for his rifle and took off after the slavecatcher in order to free the woman and her child. He caught them before they had gotten very far and ordered the slavecatcher to untie the woman and return her child. Jones then helped the woman onto the horse and forced the slavecatcher to walk away. Later that week the young woman and her child were escorted safely into Canada out of the reach of any subsequent kidnapping attempts.[20]

Other Underground Railroad stations were in the homes of Stephen Bogue who lived outside of Cassopolis, Ishmael

Lee who lived south of Cassopolis, and Josiah Osborn who lived near Shavehead Lake in Calvin Township. These families helped hundreds of slaves who traveled as individuals or in family groups to free territory in Canada between 1830 and 1860.[21]

African Americans who had escaped from slavery were not only helped to pass through Cass County, they were also encouraged to settle in the area before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. It was within a few miles of the Birch Lake Quaker Meeting House, in Calvin township, that the core of the county's black population settled.[22] Many black farmers also settled on the 1000 acre farm of Quaker Stephen Bonine where they worked for him, clearing his land, until they were able to purchase their own acreage.[23] By 1850 nearly 400 residents of Cass County were counted by the federal census as free colored persons, this number constituted about 15 percent of the black population of the entire state.[24] The settlements continued to grow during the ante-bellum years, slowed during the Civil War and began to grow again between 1870 and 1880. The existence of affordable and fertile farm land together with the assistance of neighborly Quakers provide two plausible reasons that Cass was chosen by these black farmers for permanent settlement.

There is no clear agreement in the literature about when the first black family arrived in Cass County.[25] The

"first" black settler has been documented in Cass as early as 1832 and then nearly every year until 1839. Adding to the confusion is the virtual non-existence of black settlers in either the 1830 Federal Census or the Michigan Census of 1834 for Cass County. Descendants of those early black settlers argue that their ancestors were maintaining a low profile and refused to be available for the census takers until their status as free people was firmly established. They also had no desire to arouse unwanted attentions which could place them in the kinds of hazardous circumstances they had faced in Ohio or Indiana. One important migration story about an original black settler family was related to this writer by a resident of Cass County who is a descendant of the Anderson-Wilson-Allen family in Calvin township.

The saga of the Anderson family's migration into Cass County followed the pattern typical of other early Afro-American settlers. Ezekiel Anderson was born Ezekiel Cole in southern Illinois in 1788. Oral tradition suggests that he was born free, of mixed racial ancestry and a member of either the Miami or Kickapoo Indian community. Ezekiel was kidnapped at 10 years of age and forcibly removed to South Carolina where he lived as a slave. It was there that his name was changed from Cole to Anderson, to reflect the fact that he was the property of the Anderson family. While in South Carolina he met Winna Gowan, a young slave born in eastern Tennessee of mixed ancestry whose parents, Isaac and

Clata Gowan, were also slaves. Ezekiel and Winna fell in love, married and left South Carolina together. It is not clear whether they escaped or were given their freedom. They traveled first to Ezekiel's home in Illinois, where they found that his village had been destroyed and his people had relocated, leaving the young couple alone to establish a household.

Their efforts to establish themselves economically in southern Illinois must have met with some degree of success because their household grew; they were the parents of six children by 1830. It was while Winna carried their seventh child that they made their decision to move to Michigan.[26] The Federal Census of 1850 lists Harriet Anderson as their seventh child, establishes her age as 18 and Michigan as her state of origin.

The reasons that the Andersons chose to migrate to the southwestern part of Michigan Territory can be easily understood. Southern Illinois was close to the slave states of Missouri and Kentucky, and life for Americans of mixed racial ancestry could not have been secure. Residents of southern Illinois hated slavery but held many prejudices against African Americans and Native Americans, regarded them as members of an inferior race and treated them as such. Black Americans listed as "free colored" on the Federal Census for Illinois in 1830 actually labored under indenture contracts, specifically designed to discourage

free black immigration.[27] Nor did Indiana or Ohio offer security from active white hostility during these years.[28]

It is possible that the Anderson family knew of the Quaker community in northern Indiana and in southwestern Michigan before their move. Their knowledge of those communities together with the availability of farm land must have encouraged the Andersons to settle in the area known as Ramptown on land owned by Stephen Bonine, an abolitionist Quaker.[29] They were joined in Ramptown by the Harrises, the Allens, the Stewarts and the Wilsons, who were also free black families.[30]

Ramptown was an important point of initial settlement for hundreds of Cass County black residents who were either escaping slaves or had been previously freed. Many of these farmers established households on five acres of Bonine's property in exchange for their help in clearing his land. After they earned enough cash to purchase their own acreage, many became land owners and farmed in Calvin township. Cash for land purchases was earned through the sale of their crops, cords of wood, charcoal and in a variety of innovative ways.

An important example of this innovative economic activity comes out of the Henry Wilson household. The Wilsons arrived in Cass County in the late 1840s or early 1850s from Indiana and settled initially in Ramptown. Henry Wilson's son mastered the art of trapping and raising Canada

geese. Oral tradition indicates that this young man knew what kinds of grain would tempt the geese to the ground as they flew south in their migratory patterns. In addition, he knew how to trap these geese, clip their wings and raise them on property that became known as the Wild Goose Farm. Pillows and mattresses stuffed with the feathers and goose down plucked from these geese were sold by the Wilsons.[31]

In later years this innovative economic activity continued in the Ramptown settlement. Early in the 1850s and throughout the 1860s George Peters learned to extract semen from the champion work horses that he had purchased in Indiana and sold both the semen and his skills in artificial insemination to his neighbors who wished to breed their work horses with his.[32] The cash gained from these enterprising activities typically went into land purchases; other commodities needed by these self-sufficient folk could be obtained through bartering with their neighbors.

Neighborhoods of black farm households were established on land in Calvin and Porter townships between 1832 and 1850. Often these migrants moved together in groups to Cass County from Virginia, Ohio or Indiana. For example, a party of Quakers escorted a group of former slaves across the Appalachians in 1846 and helped them to settle on land in northern Indiana, Ohio and in Cass County, Michigan.[33] Likewise, a colony of black farmers composed of the families of Hardy Wade, Gaston Tare, Nathan Brown, Crawford and

Turner Byrd, Kinchen Artis and Harrison Ash moved from Logan County, Ohio into Cass County in 1845 and 1846 and settled together in Calvin township.[34]

Another group of 47 black ex-slaves arrived in Cass County in the fall of 1849 from Cabell County, Virginia. A white planter, Sampson Saunders, had left instructions in his will that his slaves be freed after his death and that his executors spend as much as $15,000 to establish new homes for them in a free state. They eventually chose Cass County as the site of this resettlement because land was cheap, the white people in the neighborhood were friendly and the presence of 200-300 black farmers who owned land and were already farming in the community bode well for the success of the Saunders. They purchased 485 acres, or 4 lots of land, in Calvin and in Porter townships that were adjacent to the Quaker settlement and the black community. These lots of land totaled $3,637.00 or about $8.00 an acre, giving each person in the Saunders group about 9 acres. Additional money was spent on tools, seeds and livestock.[35]

Notes

1. Interview with Ruth Walker, March 19, 1987, Niles, Michigan; Historical Records Survey. Michigan, "History of the Colored People of Calvin Township (1828-1939)," Box 2, Cass County, Calvin Township, Folder: Cass Historical; Michigan Historical Collections, "Brief History of William Allen," #4963, Allen Family. [Cass County] Genealogical Material, 1939; Historical Records Survey. Michigan, "Biographical Sketches of Pioneers of Calvin Township (1805-1921)," Box 2, Cass County, Calvin Township, Folder: Cass-Historical, 1921(?).

2. J. O. Veatch, Agricultrual Land Classification and Land Types of Michigan (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State College, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1933).

3. Alfred Mathews, History of Cass County, Michigan (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins and Company, 1882), 45.

4. James A. Clifton, George L. Cornell and James M. McClurken, People of the Three Fires: The Ottawa, Potawatomi and Ojibway of Michigan (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Grand Rapids Inter-Tribal Council, 1986), 40-41.

5. Ibid., 48-49.

6. Ibid., Chapter 3.

7. Ibid., 58 and 59; R. David Edmunds, The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 220.

8. Clifton, Cornell and McClurken, People of the Three Fires, 61.

9. Ibid., 64.

10. Ibid., 65-70.

11. Mathews, History of Cass County, 304.

12. Territorial Census, 1837, taken prior to Statehood; Michigan Census, 1845.

13. Walker interview.

14. Mathews, History of Cass County, Chapters 26, 30, 35, 36, 38.

15. Clarence Paul E. Knuth, "Early Immigration and Current Residential Patterns of Negroes in Southwestern Michigan"

(Unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 1969), 36; only those in Jefferson, Porter and Calvin will be discussed.

16. Thomas D. Hamm, The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 10 and 20.

17. John William Buys, "Quakers in Indiana in the Nineteenth Century" (Unpublished dissertation, University of Florida, 1973), 121.

18. Willard Heiss, A List of All the Friends Meetings that Exist or Ever Have Existed in Indiana, 1807-1955 (Indianapolis: Willard Heiss, 1959), 57.

19. Benjamin C. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Black Haven: Cass County, 1835-1870" (Unpublished dissertation, Michigan State University, 1975), 12 and 17.

20. Interview with Henry and Mary Sears, January 27, 1987, Cassopolis, Michigan.

21. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Haven," 18-19.

22. Ibid., 14.

23. Ibid., 34 and 35.

24. Harold B. Fields, Free Negroes in Cass County Before the Civil War," Michigan History 44 (December, 1960), 378.

25. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Haven;" Knuth, "Early Immigration," 55; Fields, "Free Negroes in Cass County," 376; Mathews, History of Cass County.

26. Walker interview.

27. John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven: Yale Univerity Press, 1986), 48.

28. Emma Lou Thornbrough, The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957), 31; Carter G. Woodson, A Century of Negro Migration (Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1918).

29. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Haven," 34 and 35.

30. Walker interview.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Knuth, "Early Immigration," 55.

34. Historical Records Survey, "History of Colored People," 1.

35. Ibid.

Chapter Three: Frontier Farming in Cass County, 1850-60

Cass County continued to be a popular destination among freed black Americans migrating either from the states of the old South or the midwest in the antebellum decade. These settlers established family and community strategies that constituted both formal and informal networks that insured their survival. Family strategies emphasized the importance of safety in a racially hostile Midwest, farm ownership and literacy. Community strategies focused on cooperative economics, shared labor and an active involvement in political movements, particularly anti-slavery. The success of these strategies is clear when the economic, cultural and political progress of the black farming community in Cass is analyzed for the decade spanning the years 1850-1860.

These strategies unfolded in a larger community that included a dependable number of white Quakers who were committed to the anti-slavery cause. The activism of these whites was demonstrated in the South Bend Fugitive Slave case also known as the Kentucky raid. The details of this case are important to the relative security that was possible for the black farming community in Cass.

This chapter will analyze the strategies created in this interracial farming community by farm households that insured their survival and safety as they were supported by

progressively more profitable farms. Further, this chapter will analyze the impact of this familial and economic autonomy on rates of literacy and political activism which broke new ground for black Americans in Michigan on the local level and at the state level. The black farming community in Cass established the foundations of their later success during the decade 1850-1860. This foundation can be seen in their household structures which emphasized family protection and in their farming strategies that encouraged cooperation among established farmers and relative newcomers. In addition, their success can be seen in the growing adult black literacy rate which increased from 27% in 1850 to 46% by 1860. The political voice of these farmers was first heard at local school board elections in the predominately black township of Calvin. From that political base, black men from Cass became leaders in the movement for the franchise for black male Michigan residents at the state and the national levels.

The data presented in this Chapter which will support this argument was gathered from the Federal Manuscript Censuses for Population and Agricultural for 1850-1860. They shed partial light on the types of households and farms established by black and white settlers. Oral history accounts and probate documents provide a more complete picture of these early settlers and of their farming community in the antebellum years.

The population of the five townships surveyed here reached a total of 4317 in 1850. Residents were divided into 72 non-farm households and 796 farming households. Unfortunately, the 1850 Census Marshal for Agriculture in the five surveyed townships only enumerated 350 farms, three of which were black-owned. Luckily, the Census Marshal who was responsible for the Population returns in 1850 did a more thorough job of counting Cass County residents than the Marshal responsible for the farms. According to those Population returns there were 56 black households in the five surveyed townships, 42 of these claimed to be farm-owning households, headed by farmers; the remainder were without farm land and were headed by farm laborers.[1] Similarly, there were 740 white households, 716 of these were land-owning, headed by farmers. The 1850 Agricultural Census enumerated only 347 of these white farms. This Census was the first of its kind and perhaps the marshal was not certain of his instructions which may explain why half of the white farms and the majority of the black farms were missed.

For instance, according to the land deeds for 1850 and the earliest platt maps for the county, drawn in 1860, land holding patterns did not change much in Calvin township in the decade 1850-1860.[2] Therefore, together with the Population Census returns it is possible to establish which farmers were left out of the Agricultural Census. The farm-

ing household headed by Solomon Saunders, Sr. claimed $1600 worth of real estate but was not included in this census. Neither were the black farm households of Daniel Saunders, who held $1000 worth of property, Joseph Allen who held $650 worth of property nor Kinchen Artis whose property was worth $400. Only the black farm households of Green Allen, who owned $800 worth of real estate, Turner Byrd who held $800 worth of property, and Harrison Ash, whose farm was valued at $600, were enumerated. These farmers lived in close proximity to each other in the northern half of Calvin Township, the only part of the township which was visited by the Census Marshal.

This problem also exists for the 1860 Agricultural Census but not with such severity. There is at least a sample of 51 black farms that were enumerated in the five surveyed townships out of a possible 167 black farming households. The undercount also continued for whites. In 1860 there were 1076 white farming households in the five surveyed townships according to the Population Census yet we have agricultural statistics for only 612 of their farms.

The sexual ratio throughout this period was nearly one-to-one with a slight majority in favor of males. The balanced ratio between men and women was the result of the migration of families instead of young males moving alone into new territory.[3]

Black residents may have contributed to this undercount in ways that further hampered the work of the census mar-

shal. Oral histories collected about early settlement patterns in Calvin township suggest that the total of black and mulatto residents was higher by approximately 200 people than the 1850 Population Census documents indicate. They were consistently under-counted, oral history suggests, because they deliberately kept a low profile during census taking, understanding that the less notice they received, the more likely it was that their families and households would remain secure. Census takers tended to be neighbors or local residents who knew either casually or personally the people who were enumerated. Therefore, it is likely that black emigrants who wished to remain invisible prevailed upon the Census Marshal who understood the extent of their jeopardy, to skip specific households of fugitive slaves or free black people recently arrived.[4]

There were a number of good historical reasons that the black community in Cass needed to maintain the low profiles claimed by the oral histories of the 19th century community. One reason relates to the general legal position of free black people in the North. Legal and extralegal racial discrimination restricted northern African-Americans in virtually every aspect of their existence. Where laws were lacking or ineffectual, public opinion provided its own racist remedies. "The policy and power of the national and state governments are against them," wrote a Philadelphia Quaker in 1831. "The popular feeling is against them, the

interest of our citizens are against them. The small degree of compassion once cherished toward them in the commonwealths which got rid of slavery...appears to be exhausted. Their prospects either as free, or bond men, are dreary and comfortless."[5]

Nearly every northern state considered, and many adopted, measures to prohibit or restrict the immigration of black Americans. The professed aim of immigration restriction was to settle the problem of racial relations by expelling black settlers or at least by preventing any sizable increase of their numbers. Many whites feared that the northern state would be inundated with emancipated slaves, who would be too old to be anything but a burden on their community. This fear was particularly strong in those free states which bordered on the slave states, which moved them to adopt restrictive measures. Senator Stephen Douglas defended the restrictionist Illinois legislation asserting that his state would not become an asylum for the old, decrepit and "broken-down negroes that may emigrate or be sent to it."[6]

Indiana lawmakers also indicated their unwillingness to become the "Liberia of the South." A delegate to the Indiana state constitutional convention stated that "it would be better to kill them off at once, if there is no other way to get rid of them. In southern Ohio, an aggressively hostile populace prevented the attempt to settle the

518 emancipated slaves of Virginia's John Randolph. Their actions were defended by an Ohio congressman who warned that "if the test must come and they must resort to force to effect their object, the banks of the Ohio...would be lined with men with muskets on their shoulders to keep off the emancipated slaves."[7]

The state of Ohio provides a classic example of the use of anti-immigration legislation for the harassment of black residents. The restrictive statutes were known as Black Laws and were enacted in 1804 and 1807. They required African-Americans entering the state to post a $500 bond guaranteeing their good behavior and to produce a court certificate as evidence of their freedom. No serious effort was made to enforce the bond requirement until 1829, when the increase of the black population alarmed white folk in Cincinnati. The city authorities announced in that year that the Black Laws would be enforced and ordered black residents to pay the required bond or leave within thirty days.[8]

The nature of this restrictionist legislation varied from state to state. Most of the states carved out of the Northwest Territory either explicitly forbad black settlement or permitted them entry only after they had produced certified proof of their freedom and had posted a bond which ranged from $500 to $1000, guaranteeing good behavior. Violators were subject to expulsion and fines, the non-

payment of which would result in whippings, being hired out or advertised and sold at public auction. White or black residents who employed violators were subjected to heavy fines.[9]

Added to the memory of these Midwestern hostilities, shared by nearly 40% of the black settlers of Cass County who gave as a state of origin either Ohio, Illinois or Indiana, was the very local and specific problem of the fate of a family of escaped slaves headed by David and Lucy Powell.[10] There were no Black Laws passed in Michigan in 1850 to restrict their settlement, but escaped slaves nevertheless risked capture by whites who pursued them through Indiana and into southwestern Michigan. Such was the case with David and Lucy Powell whose well publicized court case must have further encouraged black Cass County residents to stay away from public scrutiny and out of the pages of the Census.[11]

David and Lucy Powell and their four sons had been the property of John Norris of Boone County, Kentucky until their escape into Indiana on October 9, 1847. By an unknown Underground Railroad route and with the help of unnamed conductors they made their way to Cass County. There they joined the growing community of black farmers and enjoyed freedom and security for two years. John Norris discovered their whereabouts in 1849 and traveled into Michigan with a small party of friends to capture the fugitives and return

them to slavery in Kentucky. On the evening of September 27, 1849 Norris discovered the home of the Powells and held them at gun point. Lucy Powell and three of her sons were bound and gagged and placed in a covered wagon. Her husband and one of the younger boys were away at the time. Three other black men were also in house that evening as well as a white farmer from the neighborhood, but they were unarmed and offered no resistance. An armed guard remained at the Powell home to prevent them from spreading the alarm and raising assistance from the surrounding farms.[12]

Norris got as far as South Bend, Indiana without attracting attention. However, he was followed by Wright Maudlin, a white friend of the Powell family who found an anti-slavery attorney and spread the word around town that "a gang of kidnappers had just gone through town with a lot of negroes that they had kidnapped over in Michigan."[13] Maudlin, joined by black and white friends of the Powells and the deputy sheriff, pursued Norris to the outskirts of South Bend, where they had stopped to feed their horses. A crowd alleged to be 15 to 20 by the friends of the Powells and at more than 140 by Norris and his associates gathered around the wagon as the deputy sheriff served the writ of habeas corpus for the captives. The Powells were placed in jail for their own safety until the trial.[14]

Norris never again held the Powells in his custody. Judge Egbert, in charge of the hearing, ruled that Norris

had not obtained the appropriate warrants and therefore had not met the requirements of the Fugitive Act of 1793. The Powells were released and were taken back to Cass and then spirited away to Canada to prevent a repeat of the kidnapping.[15]

Meanwhile Norris appealed the decision of the South Bend judge in the federal courts of Indiana. The case was tried at Indianapolis in May of 1850 with associate Supreme Court Justice John McLean jointly presiding with District Judge Elisha M. Huntington. The jury found that the nine defendants named in Norris' suit were guilty of harboring fugitive slaves and aiding in their escape, in violation of section four of the Fugitive Act which provided a penalty of $500 for any person who obstructed or hindered anyone lawfully claiming a fugitive slave or who concealed, harbored or rescued a fugitive. Norris eventually collected at least $5192 from the defendants as his final compensation for one woman, one young man and two teenage boys rescued from slavery by the combined efforts of the black and white citizens of Cass County and South Bend.[16]

Norris and his associates conspired in what became known popularly as the Kentucky Raid and must have added to the sense of jeopardy felt in the black community regarding their security. Under the circumstances, avoiding any additional attention made good sense. Luckily for this research effort, 56 black household heads felt secure enough in their

family's status as free folk to answer the questions of the Census Marshall in 1850; that number had increased to 167 by 1860 in the five surveyed townships.

Ezekiel Anderson was technically an escaped slave as well as the head of a large family by 1850. He and his wife had settled in Cass with their seven children in 1832, one of the original black farming families. Anderson felt secure enough to expose his family to the enumeration process in 1850, as did his son John Anderson, who lived with his wife and child in a separate household near his parents. Ezekiel Anderson was a 59 year old farmer in 1850 with $100 worth of real estate. He and his wife Winna, 53, were both illiterate. Their household included eight of their ten children, five young women and three young men. Mary was the oldest child in the household at 25 years of age and Amos was the youngest at 8 years old. The two oldest adult children, Mary and Matilda, were literate. This census did not record the literacy status of anyone below the age of 20 so we cannot know which if any of the younger children had mastered the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. The Anderson household also included John Stewart, a 33 year old literate laborer who claimed $150 worth of real estate. He was originally from North Carolina. It is likely that this large household was supported by the combined farm land owned by Anderson and Stewart and worked with the help of the Anderson children.

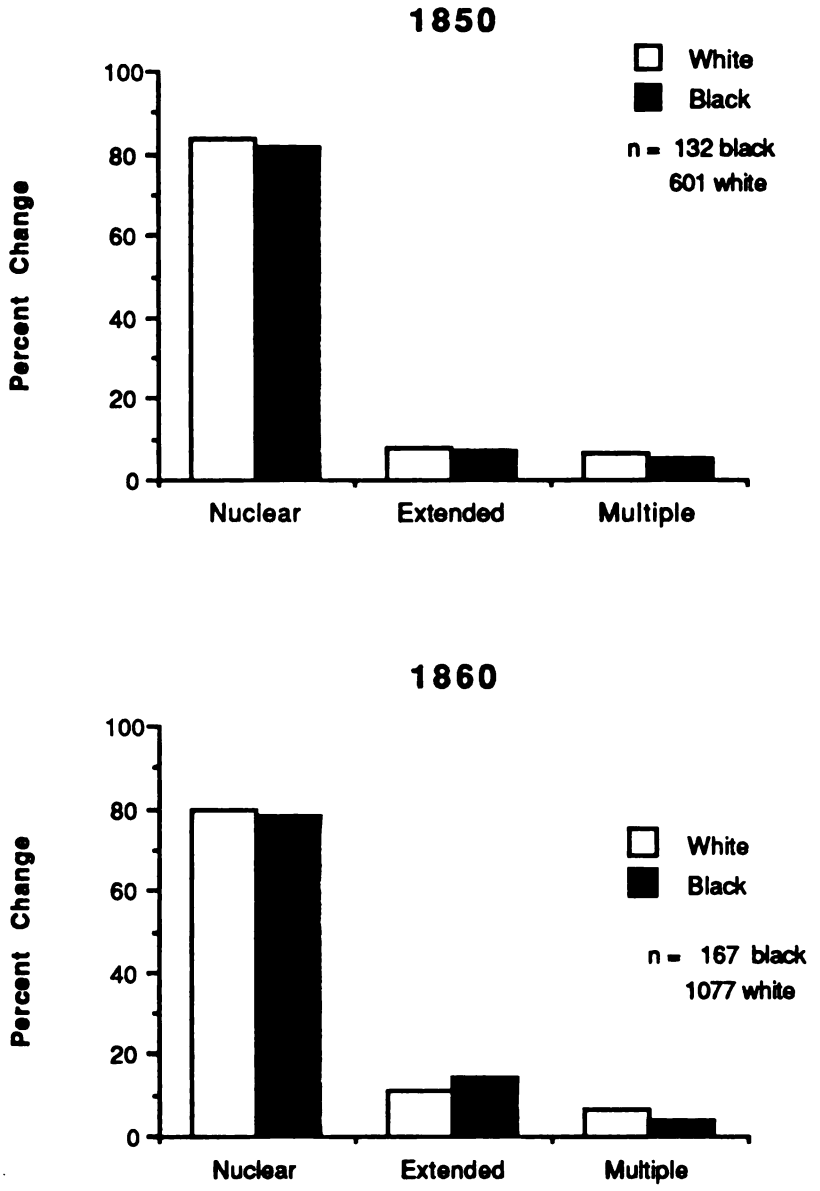
The 1850 Agricultural Census did not record the Anderson/Stewart farm, one of several not enumerated.[17]

Living close by were John and Francis Anderson, relative newlyweds. John was one of the oldest Anderson sons. He was a 23 year old literate laborer who claimed no property. He and his wife Francis Allen Anderson, who was 20 years old and literate, lived with their infant son Jethro, and Rachel Allen, Francis' 6 year old sister. Again, it is likely that John worked as a farm laborer with his father and John Stewart on the family farm in order to support his new family.[18]

These two households were not structured in ways that were typical in the black and white farming community in 1850. Parents lived with their children in nuclear units, and only occasionally (about 7% of the time) were their households extended with the addition of an unattached family member. The presence of an unrelated laborer, as in the case of John Stewart, was much rarer. However, the pattern seen in these households of extension and augmentation became more typical in the black community as the century progressed. This pattern emphasized the importance of labor on the farm and cooperative farming among neighbors. (See bar graph 3.1)

In general, white and black households were structured similarly in the antebellum period. The households of settlers during the pioneer period, 1830 and 1840, typically

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES OF BLACK AND WHITE FARMERS IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1850 & 1860



Source: United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population of the United States in 1850, (Washington, D.C., 1854); United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864).

included nuclear households of newly weds or those with young children or extended households that included a nuclear unit with an elderly parent, a cousin, or sibling or multiple households and men living alone who had come to Cass County ahead of their families so that they could establish themselves on acreage and build a shelter before their families arrived.[19]

Nuclear households also dominated on these family farms in 1850 and were similar across racial lines: 83.7% of the white households were nuclear and 81.8% of the black households were nuclear, 8% of the white households were extended and 7.3% of the black households were extended, 6.7% of the white households were multiple and a similar number, or 5.5% of the black households were multiple.[20]

In addition to the statistics gathered for household structures, data was collected to describe the structures of the primary family unit in the household which was the unit related directly to the household head. This information provides a fuller picture of the specific relationships among household members.

The primary type of family structure in 1850 was, regardless of race, the nuclear unit, consisting of a married couple and their children. The results for 1850 show that households that were not nuclear but were extended or multiple consisted of family members who were related to each other across generations and not boarders or lodgers or

fictive kin who needed shelter.[21] A small percentage of these families did not classify as a family unit per see because it was made up of only one person, the male head, who lived alone.

Very little variation existed among household structures between black and white families in 1850. The separate totals calculated for the townships reflect the uniformity of choice among the settlers as they chose to live with relatives in overwhelmingly nuclear units.[22]

In 1860 the household structures of white and black farmers remained similar and showed stability between census years. The overwhelming majority of households were nuclear, with 79.6% of the white population living in a nuclear household and 78.4% of the black population. Slight differences in the percentage of multiple and extended households were evident in 1860 when 11.2% of the white population lived in extended households and 14.4% of the black population were in extended households. Further, 6.6% of white households were multiple as compared to 3.6% of black households which were multiple.

The people within the households that were structured as extended or multiple were related to each other, as they had been in 1850. The majority of the primary families within the households that were not nuclear were simple extensions, indicating that the non-nuclear person was an unmarried younger or widowed older relative. Those families

in multiple households were typically related across generations as elder parents moved in with their child's family.

The differences between white and black households that occurred in 1860 were due to the timing of immigration into the County. The occurrences of men living alone happened more often for black residents than for white in 1860. This is evidence for the continuing emigration of black farmers and coincides with population figures that show a rapid increase in the numbers of black residents between 1850 and 1860.

White families in 1860 were more often resident in multiple households of the stem type, in which two generations shared the resources of the family farm.[23] However, overall the household structures in this antebellum, interracial, northern farming community were the picture of stability.

Another source of evidence of the stability of the household unit comes from probate court records.[24] Women and their dependent children were sheltered and financially protected after the death of husband and father either by adult children or by the courts. Dower rights allowed the widow one-third of the estate of the deceased and thereby provided for a continuing livelihood for the family of the deceased. (Cite Michigan law here)

For example, of the 29 probate court records examined for 1838-1860, the judge, in twenty cases, granted dower rights to the widow for her continued support and pro-

tection. In three cases there was no mention of dower rights or any other provisions for the widow and in the remaining six cases the widow had predeceased her husband.[25] The official and legal inclination to provide for widows and any dependent children strengthened the antebellum structure of Cass County households whether white or black.

Part Two: The Frontier Farming Economy in Ante-Bellum Cass County

The Cass County economy was dominated by yeoman farmers during the ante-bellum era. Cass County farmers were a part of the American yeomanry in this ante bellum decade because they sought economic independence through land ownership, assumed the leadership of patriarchal households on farms that produced most of the food needed to feed their families. These farmers figure significantly into the American debate over agrarian capitalism which is typically a debate over the nature of the economic exchange between farm households in the Northeast and upland South.[26] Because of the interracial nature of the farming community in Cass County and because of their residence in the mid-west, the economic priorities of these frontier farmers add an important dimension to this debate.

The evidence suggests that these yeoman farmers were not yet embedded in the national capitalist markets in the

decade 1850-60 but were still involved in local exchange. This is based on the presence of active credit networks between farm households, the scarcity of cash in these households and the low dollar value of crops produced for sale on the market.

The Probate documents surveyed for the ante-bellum decade reveal a pattern of lending among farm families of typically small sums of money. There was not much cash circulating in this frontier economy and farmers who needed small sums of cash relied on each other for loans. Of the thirty-one probated estates analyzed, all but two listed credit activity. Lenders typically were white people, borrowers were both white and black.

One of the earliest probated estates, that of Serign Cleveland held notes of various and undisclosed amounts against seven white farmers who were his neighbors in 1839. He died holding approximately $400 in personal property with $7371.00 worth of real estate. The estate of John Peticrew, probated in 1842, was not as valuable as Cleveland's, nevertheless he held notes against five neighbors totaling about $36.00. He had also loaned $3.37 to Issac Shingledecker who rented the Peticrew sawmill for $150.00 annually. The estate of Moses Joy was worth $15,000 in 1854 and included 500 acres of fertile farm land. Mr. Joy had made the practice of lending money a lucrative business according to his accounting books. Seven of Joy's neighbors

owed his estate $989.00 plus an additional $52.36 in interest, payable over the subsequent five years.

However, the Moses Joy estate was unusual. The smaller estates of Leonard Rickert, probated in 1856, Charles White, probated in 1858, John D. Goldsmith, probated in 1859 and Elias Simpson, probated in 1860 were more typical. They each held between $2000 and $7000 worth of real estate and had made modest loans to one or two white and black neighbors, totaling approximately $200.00, with no record of interest payments. The estate of one of the black farmers, Kinchen Artis was worth $2000 when it was probated in 1859, $1500 of which was real estate. The Artis estate did not hold notes against any family members or friends but instead owed Charles Hill $20.00, borrowed in 1851. Hill was a successful, white, grain mill owner who lived in Cassopolis.

Farmers also helped each other meet their financial obligations through this network of exchange. Evidence of exchange networks that were active in areas besides lending and borrowing is also found in probate court records. A clear pattern emerges from these documents of a community that accepted payment in kind for debts owed to them by the deceased. Also, neighbors of the deceased helped the widow to raise the necessary cash to settle debts through their purchase of household items, farm equipment and bushels of crops from the estate sale. In this way they helped themselves too, by purchasing used items at reasonable prices.

Neighbors attended the estate sale of Elias Simpson in LaGrange township in 1860. They paid with notes or in cash for used farm equipment, household items such as a bedstead, a wash stand, and one set of chairs, livestock and bushels of potatoes, corn and wheat. Two volumes, the History of the World and the History of Slavery were sold as well as one clock. The widow collected $549.18.[27] Similar estate sales were held after the death of Serign Cleveland in 1838 when personal and farming items were sold to friends and neighbors for a total of $148.22. The widow of Leonard Rickert, Martha Ann Rickert, of Calvin township sold pieces of farm equipment, livestock and crops to approximately thirty of the neighborhood farmers, both white and black after the death of her husband. In this way farm equipment that was not purchased new or shared among the farmers could be purchased from neighbors in need of cash. Also, the purchase of crops during these estate sales gives evidence of local exchange among yeoman farm households that were not yet tied to the national and capitalist market. [28]

The scarcity of cash was more severe for black farmers in Cass County than it was for their white neighbors. Financial information was not collected for the 1850 population, but in 1860 black households in Cass County had an average of $156.59 in personal wealth while white households had an average of $595.81, compared with an overall average of $536.57. These amounts are about half of what was neces-

sary to successfully own and operate a farm according to the advice given to farmers at the time.[29] Therefore, cooperation among these farmers was essential to their maintenance and to the growth of their crop production.

This pattern of a cash poor black population was reflective of the national trend during the antebellum years. In the north an overwhelming proportion of the free black population typically found themselves among the poorest households in the community. In the Midwest "the color of their skin alone was sufficient to reduce accumulated household wealth by almost $1600."[30] Households headed by a white person had an average of thirteen and one half times as much wealth as an otherwise identical one headed by a black person. The proportionate wealth loss from being born black was lowest for farmers.[31] Therefore, the black farmers in Cass County, even though they had started and stayed financially behind their white counterparts, had the best chance to advance financially by virtue of the wealth they held in land and the progress possible through consistent community cooperation.

Farm households were bound together in these networks of financial obligations and cooperation. These farmers were fortunate to have neighbors who were able and willing to lend them the necessary cash for farming operations. The first banking institution was not established in Cassopolis until 1855 by Asa and Charles Kingsbury. By that time a

cooperative credit exchange was already established within the farming community.

This banking activity complimented the steadily increasing agricultural business conducted on the Michigan Central Railroad. The tracks were completed to the city of Niles, approximately 15 miles southwest of Cassopolis, on October 7, 1848. In the winter of 1851-52 the road was opened to Michigan City and in the spring of 1852 completed to Chicago. The first trains ran through Cassopolis in June of 1871. Dowagiac Station in Cass County was not established until 1875.[32]

The Agriculture Census gathered for 1850 and 1860 documents the importance of the production of farm crops for local exchange and the lack of a food surplus in these frontier farming households. These records shed light on farming habits and patterns of production established during the settlement period, 1832-1850. They reflect priorities established by pioneer farmers who were primarily interested in feeding their households.

Specifically, farmers in the five Cass County townships surveyed here cultivated an average of sixty-two and one-half acres in 1850, this increased only slightly to an average of sixty-eight and one-half acres by 1860. The range between the larger and smaller of these cultivated fields was not dramatic, with smaller acreages found in Calvin, Porter and Mason townships where most of the poorer

white and black farmers lived and slightly larger acreages located in LaGrange and Jefferson.[33]

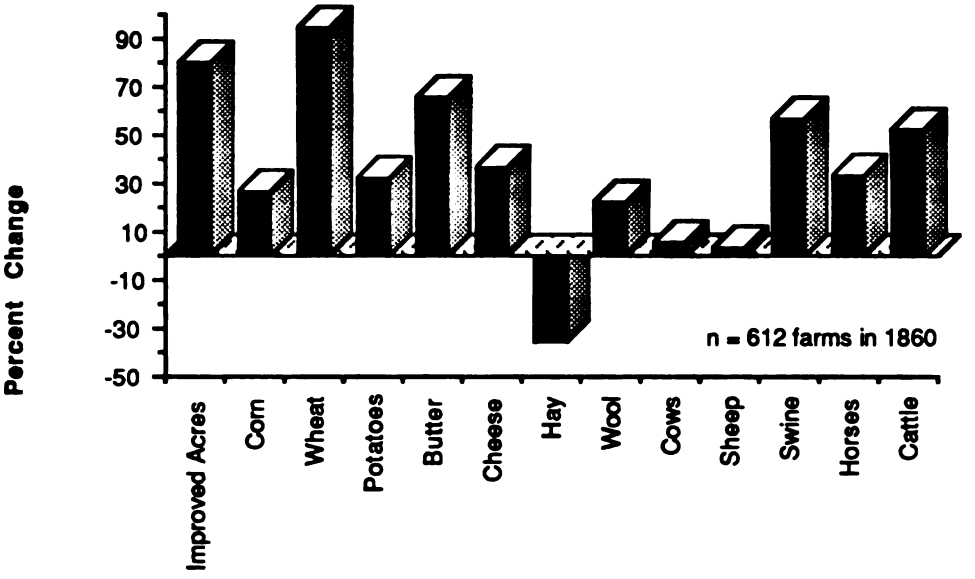
However, this acreage did not make up the total of the income producing land. Substantial acreage was found in the woods and forests located on individual holdings. In 1850 the average acreage of woods and forests on a farm was 78.3 acres. When the woods and forests are added to the tilled acreage of Cass County farms the size of these holdings increases to an average of 140 acres.[34]

Because of cooperation between these farmers they were able, in 1850, to produce crops of Indian corn, oats, potatoes, wheat and buckwheat. Corn and oats were important crops to pioneers because they fed both household members and livestock and could be planted with success on land that was not yet fully cleared.[35] (See bar graph 3-2)

Cass County farmers spent an average of $216.34 on livestock in 1850. Sheep, swine, a few head of cattle, milk cows, a few horses and an average of only one oxen were kept by these farmers. They depended more on work horses than on oxen to help with clearing the land and cultivating the soil.[36]

Crop production reported for 1860 was similar in the types and quantity of crops reported for the previous decade. That is, crops of potatoes, wheat, corn and rye were preferred and were grown on tilled acreage that had increased only slightly since the previous decade. Produ

PERCENT CHANGES IN FARM PRODUCTION IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1854 - 1860



Source: Secretary of State of Michigan, Census of the State of Michigan, 1854 (Lansing: John A. Kerr & Co. 1855): United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864)

ction of hay and rye increased to feed the additional livestock, primarily hogs and horses. The dollar value of animals slaughtered more than doubled between 1850 and 1860, from an average of $47.93 in 1850 to $98.80 in 1860, to meet the demand for meat from the growing population. Production of maple sugar fell as the acreage covered with woods and forests continued to be cleared. In 1850 144.1 pounds of maple sugar had been produced. However, only an average of 32.3 pound of sugar were produced in 1860.

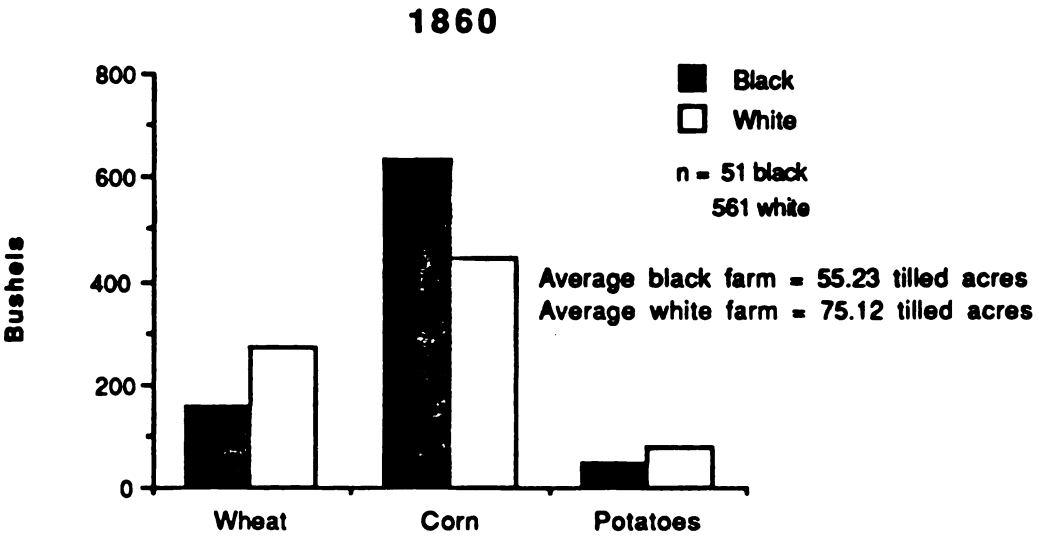
Two areas of growth in production were reported in 1860. One was the tobacco crop and the other in the dollar value of orchard products. The tobacco crop increased from nothing in 1850 to an average of 3.9 pounds in 1860, clearly for personal use or barter. All of this tobacco was grown in either Calvin or Porter townships. These townships were also the home of the majority of the black and white population of Cass County with southern origins who had retained habits of southern crop production. Farmers in Calvin township produced a total of 25.7 pounds of tobacco in 1860 and continued to grow small amounts of tobacco throughout the nineteenth century. The dollar value of orchard products increased dramatically between 1850 and 1860 as fruit trees grew to maturity and began to be sources of food for farm households and sources of income in local markets. The average dollar value of orchard products jumped from $9.80 in 1850 to $48.80 in 1860.

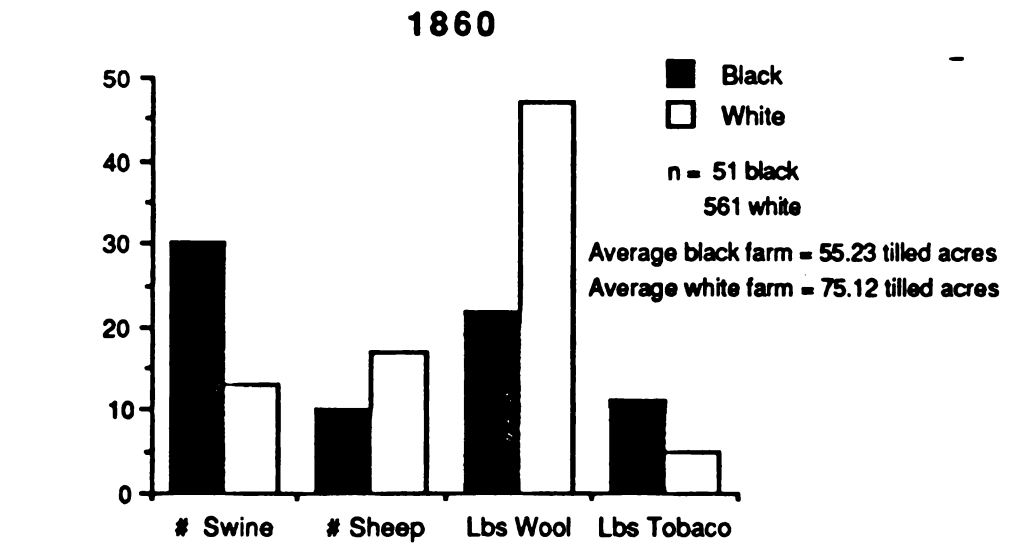
An analysis of the decisions made by Cass County landowning farmers in 1850 and 1860 regarding the crops that they chose to grow for the support of their households or for trade in local markets reveals a group of yeoman farmers who were not yet oriented toward the demands of the national market. Although 1860 was at the end of the settlement period, the ways in which these farmers made a living still showed signs of "safety-first" agriculture. They continued to consume much of the food they produced and produced other commodities, such as maple sugar, cheese, butter and household manufactures for sale or barter at local markets.

In addition, the patterns of crop production on black and white farms in Cass were typical of the regional preferences of black Southerners and white Northerners in this ante-bellum decade. Comparisons of the corn, wheat, and hog production in Cass identify the habits of Southern hog and corn farming among black farmers and the habits of Yankee wheat farmers among the white farmers.[37] These regional farming habits also account for the increases in the wheat and corn crops and the increase in the herd of swine between the enumeration of the state of Michigan census in 1854 and the federal census for agriculture in 1860. (See bar graph 3-3)

The majority of the black farming population originated in the Southern states of Virginia (26%), North Carolina (23%), Tennessee (4%) and Kentucky (5%). The white farmers

MEAN FARM PRODUCTION ON BLACK AND WHITE FARMS IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1860





Source: United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Agriculture of the U.S. in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864)

had either been born in Michigan (35%), or were from the Northern states of New York (20%), or Ohio (21%).[38]

The Cass County farming community lacked a surplus of food according to the census data for 1860. This can be determined by the dollar value of farm produce which measured the value of market crops on every farm visited by the Census Marshals. This information was not collected in 1850 and an average of only $1.31 in farm produce was reported in 1860. The importance of the local and national markets can clearly be seen by 1870, however, when the average dollar value of farm produce jumped to $941.58.[39]

This lack of farm surplus in 1850 and 1860 is analyzed by Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman in their quantitative monograph on antebellum northern agriculture. Farms that they surveyed in townships in Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire had a food deficit for the households and livestock in 1860. They depended on a community of cooperative neighbors to meet these shortfalls. Farms in townships of the upper northern states were marginal surplus producers compared to other midwestern farms at this period. They produced enough to satisfy the needs of those in their immediate vicinity but had nothing left over for sale on the national market.[40]

However, despite this lack of marketable surplus, black farmers had made significant progress in the last ante bellum decade. They had established productive farming

households and were farming acreage that was steadily expanding and becoming profitable. Their desires to educate their children and to claim political rights were also strong during these years. Landownership, as well as the issues of literacy and the right to vote, was critical to the strong community foundation laid by these black farming folk.

Part Three: Education and Political Activism on the Frontier in Cass County

Education was one of the most important goals in communities of free Northern black Americans before the Civil War. The ambition which motivated their desire for economic independence also included an awareness of their need for literacy as a way to insure the permanence of their material success.[41] The issues of literacy and political participation merged in the decade before the Civil War in Cass County, as the black majority in Calvin Township insisted on their right to control their school district through the election of district officers.

Black farmers in Cass County shared the drive for education with other communities of free black northern folk although that enthusiasm was not well reflected in the 1850 Population Census count of school attendance. Problems with the 1850 census that were detailed earlier in this chapter

apply also to the low percentage of black school age children enumerated in school during that census year. A clearer way to understand the importance to black farmers of both education and the community control of schools in Cass is through an investigation of the origins of their battle for the right of suffrage.

The level of enthusiasm for establishing schools in the black frontier farming community in Cass is difficult to determine using either local histories or the school attendance data in the 1850 Federal census. Only twenty-seven percent of the African American population in Cass was literate according to the 1850 Census figures, and only thirty-two percent of the school age population was attending school. These proportions rose sharply between 1850 and 1860 when forty-six percent of the black population was enumerated as literate and fifty-eight percent of the school age population attended school. The lack of interest in the education of children that is indicated in the 1850 census is difficult to reconcile with two contradictory trends: the eighty percent increase in school attendance by 1860 and the intensity of educational and political activity that surrounded the Calvin Township school district between 1850 and 1855.

The organization and control of public schools in Calvin township led to the extension of important suffrage rights to black farmers. In 1855, after repeated demands and

much organized petitioning, they were granted legal permission to vote at school district meetings and to hold district offices.[42] These rights were not extended to other black Michigan residents nor were these local suffrage rights intended to include Calvin township residents in the County, State or National electoral process. General enfranchisement would have to wait for the continuing political pressure from black Michigan residents during the Civil War decade and the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment.

An emphasis on school building was typical in the state of Michigan during the nineteenth century. Establishing schools had been a priority during territorial days and continued through the Civil War years. By 1860 a total of 4087 school districts had been formed in Michigan that employed 7,921 teachers, typically supported by taxation. Although not all of the schools were free public schools, seventy-five percent of the children between the ages of four and eighteen attended public schools in 1860.[43]

Legislation specifically authorizing any school district with more than 200 children to establish a high school and to vote a tax for its support was passed in 1859. The majority of local schools, however, were conducted in a single room at the elementary level, where children from five to sixteen years old recited their lessons.[44]

The majority of midwestern whites were satisfied with the status quo in segregated education. Despite Republican

control of every state legislature in 1864 black children were excluded from the public schools of Indiana, were not provided for in the education laws of Illinois, and were segregated into separate schools by statue in most parts of Ohio. In Minnesota, Iowa and Michigan legislators refused to consider changes, and in Dubuque, Detroit and St. Paul local action forced black pupils into separate schools.[45]

Table 3-1: Children in School or in School and at Work in Five Cass County Townships, 1850 and 1860

	White		Black	
	1850	1860	1850	1860
School	1210	1609	33	239
School & Work	48	169	0	16

Source: United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population of the United States in 1850, Roll T1164, #1 (Washington, D.C., 1854); United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860, Roll T1164, #7 (Washington, D.C., 1864)

Table 3-2: Percentage of School Age Population in School in Five Cass County Townships, 1850 and 1860

White		Black	
1850	1860	1850	1860
71.2	82.0	32.3	58.0

Source: United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population of the United States in 1850, Roll T1164, #1 (Washington, D.C., 1854); United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860, Roll T1164, #7 (Washington, D.C., 1864).

Table 3-3: Black and White Children in School by Age Group in Five Cass County Townships, 1850 and 1860

Ages	Black		White	
	1850	1860	1850	1860
5-9	18	84	606	625
Males 10-14	10	50	262	345
Males 15-19	1	27	87	194
Females 10-14	3	50	222	312
Females 15-19	1	28	81	302
Totals	33	239	1258	1778

Source: United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population of the United States in 1850, Roll T1164, #1 (Washington, D.C., 1854); United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860, Roll T1164, #7 (Washington, D.C., 1864).

The enthusiasm for education and school building in the black Cass County community despite the low count of children in school extended into a private donation of land made for a school house in the mid-1850s. A black farmer in Calvin township, Irvin James, donated the land for the school house in the mid-1850s. It was known as the James School. Several additional schools were opened in Calvin township at Brownsville, Mount Zion, Willow Pond, Long, Calvin Center, Calvin Hill and Day.[46]

One black community leader in Calvin, the Reverend M. T. Newson, not satisfied with the elementary level of the schools, proposed to establish a school for higher learning in Calvin in the late 1850s. He proposed to erect a school house at the cost of $2500, for "the purpose of instruction in the higher branches of learning, and to purchase a farm

worth $1500 on which the students may labor for their support while attending school." The Methodist Conference was asked to supply teachers and the public was asked to assist financially. Although the project failed to materialize during or after the Civil War its ambitious design gives a clear indication of the educational expectations of the black farming community from which Rev. Newson came.[47]

Two white school teachers lived and worked in Calvin township in the decade before the Civil War, a black teacher was not enumerated until the 1870 census. By 1860 373 children attended Calvin township schools, where the majority of the black population lived. A total of 198 of these students were black and 174 were white.[48] Whether these classrooms were racially segregated or integrated is an issue that is open for debate until the early 1870s. Officially, a Republican dominated Senate approved separate but self-controlled black schools in Calvin township.[49] However, oral histories collected locally suggest that residents took integrated schools for granted. They basically ignored the State's directive that the schools be segregated and took to heart their right to control the racial composition of the educational institutions in their communities.[50] By the early 1870s School Census Records verify the local history accounts of racially integrated classrooms even though racially segregated schools remained the norm in Northern communities.[51]

Therefore, educational opportunities that were available to Cass County black children may have been very unusual in the Midwest and in the North during this period. Separate school funds for segregated school facilities were not created by law in Cass; both black and white children benefited from money raised by taxes.

Therefore, not only were black farmers in Cass County able to make economic progress as landowners so that they were typically ahead of any other comparable free northern black community, but they also used their position as landowners to build schools and to insist on the local political control of those schools. In this way they advanced the cause of the extension of suffrage rights for black men in Michigan in the ante-bellum period. The material progress made during these years slowed during the Civil War decade as farmers became soldiers, but the community foundations held securely and progress resumed after the fighting ended.

Notes

1. United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population of the United States in 1850, Roll 432-349 (Washington, D.C., 1854).

2. These records of land deeds are available in Cassopolis, Michigan in the Land Assessor Office; Map of the Counties, Cass, Van Buren and Berrien, Michigan (Philadelphia: Geil, Harley & Silverd, 1860).

3. U. S. Census Office, Seventh Census, Population of the United States in 1850, Roll 432-349 (Washington, D.C., 1854); U. S. Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860, Roll 653-541 (Washington, D.C., 1864).

4. Interview with Ruth Walker, March 19, 1987, Niles, Michigan. Mrs. Walker is a descendant of the original Anderson family who were among the first black farm families in Cass County. She has done an extensive genealogy on her family's history, both in the Washington, D.C. Archives and in colllecting oral histories from her oldest relatives.

5. Leon F. Litwack, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961) 64.

6. Ibid., 67.

7. Ibid., 67-68.

8. Ibid,, 72.

9. Ibid., 70.

10. United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population.

11. Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980) Chapter 9.

12. Patrick J. Furlong, "The South Bend Fugitive Slave Case," in We the People: Indiana and the United States Constitution, Indiana Association of Historians. eds. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1987), 7-8.

13. Ibid., 8.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 9-12.

16. Ibid., 17 and 21.

17. United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population.

18. Ibid. and family geneology done by Ruth Walker.

19 . I have used six types of household structures to explain the kinds of households found in Cass County: 1. "only head" households included one person who was head of the household, 2. "coresidential kin" households included family members who lived together without parents, spouses or children, such as two sisters or several cousins, 3. "nuclear" households were the most common and were households with one or more parents with their children, 4. "extended" households included a nuclear unit with one or more kin who was unattached to a marriage partner. Within households that were extended and included more than one nuclear unit there was further need to describe the type of extension--in those cases the categories of "stem" and "joint" were used. These describe households that included one or more generation as in the "stem" category, or a household that included siblings living together with their spouses and/or young children as in a "joint" household, 5. "multiple" households were those with more than one nuclear family unit who may or may not be related to each other and 6. "condominium" households had several unrelated people living together as in a boarding house or in a poor house. U. S. Census Office, Fifth Census, Population of the United States in 1830 (Washington, D.C., 1834); U. S. Census Office, Sixth Census, Population of the United States in 1840 (Washington, D.C., 1844).

20. United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population.

24The probate records for Cass County are located in the County Courthouse in Cassopolis, Michigan. The records gathered for this research included documents for all of the probated estates for households in the five surveyed townships (Calvin, LaGrange, Mason, Porter and Jefferson) starting with the earliest document in 1828 through 1880. I divided the resulting 489 sets of probate records into townships and then divided them chronologically by decade.

I then randomly selected one-third of the records from each township and analyzed them 1. for the prevalence of exchange networks among farm households and 2. for the disposition of the property of the deceased among his heirs.

25. Probate 401, Estate of Peter Marmon, Jr., 1852; Probate 106, Estate of Maxwell Zane, 1842; Probate 103, Estate of Elias Simpsom, 1860; Probate 669, Estate of Kinchen Artis, 1859; Probate 475, Estate of Moses Joy, 1854; Probate 53, Estate of John Peticrew, 1850; Probate 197, Estate of Jonathan Prater, 1847; Probate 94, Estate of Lemuel Bolter, 1840; Probate 510, Estate of Issac Powell, 1854; Probate 630, Estate of Daniel Curtis, 1858; Probate 632, Estate of Charles White, 1858; Probate 668, Estate of John D. Goldsmith, 1859; Probate 152, Estate of Cannon Smith, 1844; Probate 482, Estate of Armstrong Davidson, 1846; Probate 40, Estate of Richard Sears, 1838; Probate 678, Estate of Sylvanus Beckwith, 1859; Probate 722, Estate of Harlin Loomis, 1861; Probate 975, Estate of Eli Sanders, 1860; Probate 629, Estate of Eli P. Bonnell, 1857; Probate 314, Estate of Elihu C. Quick, 1850; Probate 367, Estate of John White, Jr., 1851; Probate 368, Estate of John White, Sr. 1951; Probate 404, Estate of Cornelius P.Stevenson, 1853; Probate 395, Estate of James Horner, 1852; Probate 472, Estate of Elihu Hess, 1854; Probate 293, Estate of Henry Follet, 1850; Probate 352, Estate of John McDaniel, 1851; Probate 467, Estate of Leonard Rickert, 1854; Probate 39, Estate of Serign Cleveland, 1838; Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan.

26. Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," The William and Mary Quarterly 46 (January 1989), 126.

27. Probate 103, Estate of Elais Simpson, 1860.

28. Probate 39, Estate of Serign Cleveland, 1838; Probate 467, Estate of Leonard Rickert, 1854.

29. Danhof, "Farm-Making Costs," 320.

30. Atack and Bateman, To Their Own Soil, 93.

31. Ibid., 94 and 95.

32. Alfred Mathews, History of Cass County, Michigan, (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins and Co., 1882), 79.

33. U. S. Census Office, Seventh Census, Agricultural of the United States in 1850 (Washington, D.C., 1854).

34. Ibid.

35. Danhof, "Farm-Making Costs," 351.

36. U. S. Census Office, Seventh Census, Agriculture.

37. Steven Hahn, The Roots of Southern Populism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 26 & 29.

38. United States Census Office, Seventh Census, Population.

39. U. S. Census Office, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Census, Agriculture.

40. Mathews, History of Cass County, 406; Atack and Bateman, 214-215.

41. Litwack, Leon F. North of Slavery, Chapt. 4.

42. Ronald P. Formisano, "Edge of Caste: Colored Suffrage in Michigan, 1827-1861," Michigan History 56 (1972), 36.

43. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State, 337.

44. Ibid., 338.

45V. Jacque Voegeli, Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro During the Civil War (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 172.

46. Benjamin C. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Balck Haven: Cass County, 1835-1870," (Unpublished dissertation, Michigan State University, 1975), 68-69.

47. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Haven," 70.

48. United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860, Roll 653-541 (Washington, D.C., 1864); United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870, Roll 593-668 (Washington, D.C., 1874).

49. Ronald P. Formisano, "Edge of Caste: Colored Suffrage in Michigan, 1827-1861," Michigan History 56 (1972), 36.

50. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Haven," 68.

51. School District Report #4, 1870 and 1873, Township of Porter, County of Cass and State of Michigan (Chicago: Adams, Blackmer & Lyon, 1875); C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (Oxford: New York, 1966), 17-29.

Chapter Four: Civil War and the Agricultural Revolution Comes to Cass County

The demands made on the agricultural community in Cass County during the years of the Civil War caused changes in the farm economy which resulted in the integration of Cass County farms into the national market. Concurrent with these economic changes were political advances and continuing progress in levels of literacy in the interracial farming community. The process of the economic integration did not differ from the economic processes that other states in the old Northwest, like Ohio, Indiana and Illinois had begun before the Civil War. However, from its formation, Cass County was and remained a unique social and political entity due to the presence of the successful and growing community of black farmers in Calvin and Porter townships and the substantial support they found among some of their white neighbors.

Several issues highlight the unique social and political circumstances found in Cass: the presence of black landowners who constituted a majority of the population in Calvin township, educational initiatives in the black community, the struggle for black suffrage, and the enthusiastic participation of black farmers in the Union Army set Cass County apart from other Michigan counties of this period.

Sources for the economic and social history of the Civil War era are plentiful. The analysis in this Chapter is supported by the Census taken for the State of Michigan in 1854 and 1864 for agriculture and population. Figures for total farm production were collected for every township within Michigan counties. The production figures collected at mid-decade will be compared with the Agricultural Census taken by the Federal government in 1860 and 1870 in order to establish trends in production levels.

Farm production for households in Cass will be divided and analyzed according to the race of the household head, based on a merged data set that includes a sample of farming households from both the Population and Agricultural Census for 1860 and 1870. This data will be used to analyze the economic prosperity and production trends of black and white farm households every ten years. In 1860 51 black farms and 452 white farms were analyzed. In 1870 production data exists for 132 black farms and for 601 white farms.[1]

Sources for the analysis of black and white household structures, and the growth of community institutions are more often qualitative than quantitative. These sources include County histories, newspapers like the Cassopolis Vigilant and National Democrat, Civil War pension records and probate court records. The adjustments within farm households that were necessary during the Civil War years due to the Army enlistments can be deduced from enlistment

figures. They document the extent of the labor drain from farm fields. That the women who were left behind successfully shouldered the bulk of the farming responsibilities can be seen in letters, diaries and farm production data of these women written during the war years.

Part One: Market Trends and Farm Production in Cass County during the Civil War

All together, 90,000 Michigan men, most of them farmers, left their land to fight in the Civil War. The exodus of manpower from Michigan's farms created a serious labor shortage. Approximately, 38% of the white farmers in the five surveyed Cass County townships enlisted for service in the Union Army and, once they were permitted, nearly 60% of the black farmers became soldiers.[2] Unknowingly, they ignited a scientific transformation in the states' agriculture.[3]

The economic integration of the Cass County farming community into the national market was completed during the years of the Civil War. In many ways these years were a watershed in the economic history of Cass County. Before the Civil War agricultural products like wheat, corn, oats or hay were consumed as food by household members and farm livestock or sold at local or regional markets located in Niles, Kalamazoo or Battle Creek.

However, circumstances resulting from the Civil War made the purchase of labor-saving farm machinery essential,

and made possible the expanded production of specific food crops needed to supply the Union Army, sold nationally, for escalating prices. These crops were shipped via railroads from Dowagiac or Cassopolis to the national trading markets found at Detroit or Chicago.

The division of labor between men and women changed in farm households during the Civil War years. This new division of labor, necessary because of the high rate of enlistment among able-bodied men in Michigan, redefined the position of women within farm management and production. They were responsible for meeting and maintaining production levels while their husbands, brothers, and fathers were Union Army soldiers.

As has been noted, a higher proportion of black farmers from Cass County enlisted in the Union Army than did white farmers. White farmers were more likely to pay for a replacement than to serve the required enlistment period. Once black soldiers were accepted into the Army in 1863, they enlisted in large numbers, leaving Calvin or Porter townships. Consequently, the labor drain on black farms as more severe than on white farms.

Despite this handicap, the process of economic development continued in the black farming community in the decade from 1860-1870. Between these census years, the average number of improved acres increased on black farms almost 20% and the subsequent value of their farm land increased by

128%. In addition, the increases in crop production further document improving conditions on black-owned farms although at a slower pace than for their white neighbors.[4]

An agricultural depression marked the first years of the war throughout the state and nation. Prices were generally depressed and businesses were weak as the national economy adjusted to the financial implications of the loss of Southern markets and capital investments. In 1860, after Lincoln's election but before he took office, southern bankers withdrew their deposits from northern banks. In addition, Southern planters and other businessmen repudiated their debts to northern merchants. Northerners had lost approximately $300 million before hostilities actually began. This caused financial and trading problems in the north through 1861.[5]

The depression hit hard but its effects were not disastrous. The Federal Government intervened with the creation of a currency that caused an inflationary spiral but met the financial needs of the farm community in the North. Inflation began with the Legal-Tender Act of 1862. Farmers were in need of paper money after the end of specie payments by banks in 1861. In February of 1862, Congress provided for the issue of $550 million worth of legal-tender notes backed only with the authority of law and the "confidence of the people in the government." This paper money rapidly depreciated in value and simultaneously prices began to

rise. By 1864 $100 in greenbacks equalled only $39 in gold.[6]

Government officials explained that this inflated currency would allow them to afford the costs of the war. And, to raise more funds, the Secretary of the Treasury decided to tax every commodity that could be taxed. This speeded inflation, raised prices and increased the costs of the war.[7]

The agricultural depression in Michigan reached its lowest ebb in August and September of 1861 when the Detroit market listed red wheat at eighty-four cents a bushel, down from ninety cents a bushel. Some places in the state sold wheat for as low as seventy-five cents a bushel. However, by the end of 1861, economic recovery had begun as the result of greenback inflation, government purchases and shortages in Europe. Wheat closed that year at about one dollar a bushel. By mid-year in 1862 the Detroit Board of Trade recorded the average price of wheat at one dollar eighty-two cents a bushel.[8]

Other prices also rose as economic recovery continued. For example, the price of butter rose from a low of nine cents a pound in 1861 to as high as forty-five to fifty cents by 1864. Corn prices jumped from forty-one cents to $1.25 during the same period.[9]

With more money available to them, farmers, particularly in the Mid-West, began to purchase labor-saving

machines. Corn and especially wheat could be grown economically on a large scale with the critical help of farm implements. In 1862 wheat production reached a new high of 177 million bushels. This increase in production was possible because of the use of farm machinery, previously available, but not used on a large scale.[10]

Before 1860 patents had been issued for the basic principles of the most modern farm machinery. These included steel and chilled-iron plows, disc harrows, grain drills and planters, reapers and other harvesters, a grain binder, threshing machines and straddle-row cultivators.[11]

The most important developments in agricultural machinery were those connected with harvesting grain. During the war years the horse-drawn reapers and mowers gained wide-spread acceptance on Michigan farms.[12] In 1863 a farmer from Pontiac wrote "over 250 mowing machines have been sold in town this season, and the demand was not fully met..."[13] Grain drills were used on the level and cleared acreage in Michigan and on other improved Mid-Western farms by 1870.[14]

Other types of labor-saving farm equipment also spread through rural communities in Michigan. Improved harrows, wheat drills, gang plows, iron-beam plows, corn shellers, horse rakes, horse pitchforks, cultivators, threshing machines, broadcast sowing machines and stump lifters helped ease the lack of male labor during the war years. Only hay

tedders, used for spreading and turning hay and corn planters, found little use in Michigan fields.[15]

The impetus that the demands of the war years gave to the use of labor-saving farm machinery was reflected in the increase of the value of those implements and in the increase of businesses created to manufacture this equipment between 1860 and 1870. During that decade, the value of farm machinery used in Michigan rose from $5,819,832 on 612 farms to $13,711,979 on 849 farms. In 1850 there were only 13 business establishments which manufactured $30,600 worth of equipment. In 1860, 108 firms produced machinery worth $684,913 and by 1870, 164 firms were producing $1,569,596 worth of implements.[16]

Despite the rapid spread of these improved farm tools extraordinary effort was required of the civilian population in order to meet the demands of planting, cultivation and harvest. Women, children, hired hands and retired farmers spent long and tedious hours in the fields, with the new farm equipment taking up the slack left by the Army drafts of able-bodied men. Fortunately, machines were also invented to assist women with housework.

The introduction of sewing, washing and wringing machines allowed farm wives to rearrange their working hours. Priority time was given over to the management of the production of crops and less time was possible for household work. In August of 1864 the Detroit Free Press

observed that "It is no uncommon thing to see women in the fields at work. A large portion of the corn in this state has been cultivated by women."[17]

Farm laborers who were able to avoid military service found employment easily and received rising wages. Wages before the War were commonly $1.25 a day. "Now," commented a Cass County resident in 1864 "in harvest they are $2.50, and by the month from $20 to $26. In former years...wages have been but about one-half the present rates."[18]

Wheat was the most valuable crop raised by this labor force of women, children, hired hands and retired farmers in Michigan. In 1859 the state had been the nation's ninth leading producer of that grain supplying 4.8 percent of the nation's total. In ten years Michigan farmers doubled the annual rate of wheat production, growing 16,265,773 bushels for 5.6 percent of the nation's wheat crop. Only Illinois, Indiana and Ohio reaped larger harvests.

Much of this increased production can be seen as normal agricultural development, necessary for a growing population. However, the War was undoubtedly a stimulating factor because of the hungry armies, together with the high demand from England and the continent where crops failed in 1860, 1861 and 1862.[19]

Other important crops and farm products in Michigan during this period were hops, wool and dairy farming. Hops became an important crop because it was used in brewing

beer. Between 1859 and 1869 Michigan's output expanded thirteen times, from 60,602 to 828,269 pounds. Also, the number of breweries jumped from 54 to 94 in the southern part of Michigan, providing a home market for the crop. This expanded production was due largely to a tax on whiskey which made its cost prohibitive; the drinking public turned in increasing numbers to beer. Michigan hops were of the best quality and received top prices in eastern and mid-western markets. Hops were commonly planted and harvested by women and children and therefore fitted into farm production at a time when male labor was costly and hard to come by.[20]

Wool was another farm product that could be supplied by a labor force changed by the Civil War. Michigan farmers had been disappointed by the wheat harvests for several seasons before the Civil War and had turned to raising sheep. Because of this breeding of sheep, Michigan farmers could respond speedily to government orders for Army uniforms and blankets. This demand, together with the removal of southern cotton, high prices and a measure of protection against foreign competition, combined to encourage larger wool production. Herds of sheep required a minimum of attention and were not difficult to care for. Therefore, by 1864 Michigan farmers more than doubled the amount of wool produced in 1861.

An important development also occurred in dairy farming in Michigan during the Civil War. The factory system of

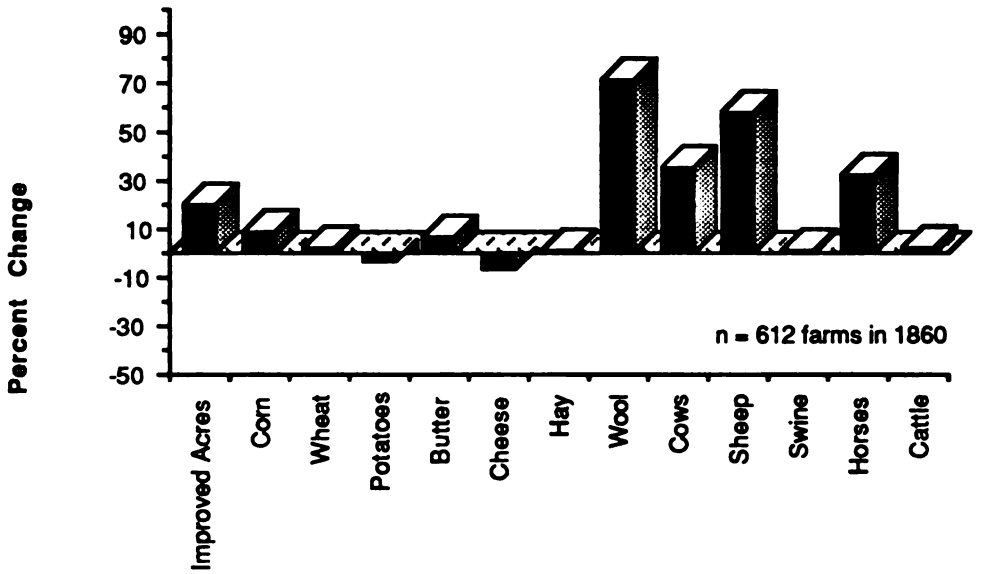
butter and cheese production was introduced. Michigan farmers had been unable to provide enough butter and cheese for their own consumption and as inflated prices for dairy products tripled more attention was given to establishing factories. It was not until January of 1866 that the first cheese factory began operation in Michigan.

The early plants made only cheese, but farmers soon discovered it expedient to add the manufacture of butter to the process and in that way save the butter particles carried in the whey. By 1870 there were thirty dairy establishments in operation. Between 1860 and 1870 Michigan's butter production rose from 15,503,482 pounds to 24,400,185 and cheese from 1,641,897 to 2,400,946. The number of milking cows increased to supply these products from 179,543 to 250,859.[21]

As in other Michigan farming communities, Cass County farmers also responded to the opportunity offered by higher prices with increased productivity, particularly with wheat production. The census taken in 1860 and 1864 provides a clear picture of production increase in crops and livestock during the Civil War. This increase in production was based on the ability of Cass County farmers, who typically were women, to rapidly increase the number of improved acres or tillable pasture on their holdings.[22] (See bar graph 4-1)

Cass County farmers were not only providing for their own constantly rising numbers, but also managed to ship east

PERCENT CHANGES IN FARM PRODUCTION IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1860 - 1864



Source: Secretary of State of Michigan, Census of the State of Michigan, 1864 (Lansing: John A. Kerr & Co. 1865): United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864)

large amounts of wheat, corn, and wool to feed and clothe soldiers in the Union Army, operatives in New England factories and European populations. These farmers operated within an agricultural region made up of the southern tier of counties in Michigan which included Calhoun, St. Joseph, Jackson and Washtenaw counties. Most Michigan wheat was harvested from fields in these counties. They also led in the production of oats, barley, rye, buckwheat, hay and potatoes.[23]

Crop production on the typical mid-western farms in 1860 emphasized corn, wheat and hay. Farmers there typically devoted double the proportion of land to corn that northeastern farmers did. The surge in wheat production occurred as it became a major cash crop for export during the 1850s. Mid-western farmers responded to that opportunity by allotting almost 50 percent more of their land to wheat than did northeastern farmers. Hay was an important crop throughout the North. It was easily marketable in urban areas and was the superior feed for livestock.[24]

The leading wheat states were Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin, where farmers planted more than a quarter of their acreage in wheat and then sold the surplus on the national market. Clarence Danhof's conclusion that "By the 1850's market-oriented agriculture was firmly established as the dominant type, clearly distinguishable from the semi subsistence approach" relates more to these states than to Michigan.[25]

In Michigan, at the time of the 1860 Agricultural Census family farms did not have a surplus but had on average a deficit in food and feed for the family and farm livestock. These deficits were not large and they did not apply to all foods. Most had a surplus of dairy products and a deficit of grains and meat. Michigan farmers typically shared this status with other farms in states of the upper North.[26]

The following chart lists farm production levels for 614 farms enumerated in five Cass County townships in 1860 and 849 farms in 1870. Crops were grown on farms that averaged 68.5 acres in 1860 and 70.6 acres in 1870.[27] The values are expressed as means.

Table 4-1: Farm Production in Five Cass County Townships 1860 and 1870

Farm Products	1860	1870	% change
Bshls of wheat	250.5	262.0	+less than 1
Bshls of corn	420.1	256.2	-40
Bshls potatoes	72.0	89.2	+24
Lbs of butter	177.5	183.4	+less than 1
Lbs of cheese	27.4	3.1	-89
Bshls of oats	64.4	64.6	+less than 1
Tons of hay	9.3	11.8	+27
# Swine	13.6	10.7	-21
# Sheep	15.0	16.4	+1
# Horses	2.8	3.2	+14
# Cattle	3.9	2.5	-36
# Cows	2.7	2.2	-19
Lbs of wool	42.5	65.8	+55

Source: United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860, Roll T1164 #7 (Washington, D.C., 1864); United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1870, T1164 #17 (Washington, D.C., 1874).

By the Agricultural Census of 1870 mid-western farmers were no longer reacting to the demands of the national market which the Civil War had so radically altered. The increased production levels revealed in the 1864 State of Michigan Census did not continue.

Unfortunately, it is not yet possible to compare the level of farm production on 1870 Cass County farms with other Michigan, mid-western or northeastern farms. Because of the influence of Frederick Jackson Turner's theories about the frontier, there are very few studies of older

settled agricultural communities. Depictions of rural life in the post bellum period typically focus on the development of new farm areas. There has been little effort made to examine farm society after the transition to a commercialized economy.[28] This study of Cass County farming communities after the Civil War will contribute to this neglected area and suggest directions for future research.

In order to analyze these farms according to the race of the farm owner and household head I merged the Population and Agricultural Census for each census year between 1850 and 1880. The names of the household head from the Population Census were matched with the names of the farm owners found in the Agricultural Census in order to determine the race of the farm owner. Black farmers owned 51 farms in 1860 and whites owned 452. By 1870 132 farms had black owners and 601 were white owned.

The following chart lists farm production for white-owned farms in Cass County in 1860 and 1870. Crops were grown on farms that averaged 75.12 acres in 1860 and 76.81 in 1870, an increase of less than 1 percent.[29] Values are expressed as means.

Table 4-2: Farm Production on White-Owned Farms in Five Cass County Townships, 1860 and 1870

Farm Products	1860	1870	% change
Bshls of wheat	272.24	285.19	+less than 1
Bshls of corn	443.48	283.10	-36
Bshls of potatoes	79.44	98.24	+24
Lbs of butter	203.57	202.14	-14
Lbs of cheese	36.36	4.39	-88
Bshls of oats	71.96	69.77	+less than 1
Tons of hay	10.66	13.09	+23
# Swine	12.75	11.72	-less than 1
# Sheep	17.34	17.17	-less than 1
# Horses	2.95	3.45	+17
# Cattle	4.22	2.75	-35
# Cows	2.85	2.39	-16
Lbs of wool	47.35	71.89	+52

Source: United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860, Roll T1164 #7 (Washington, D.C., 1864); United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1870, T1164 #17 (Washington, D.C., 1874).

The following chart lists farm production on black-owned farms in 1860 and 1870. These crops were grown on farms that averaged 55.23 acres in 1860 and 65.95 acres in 1870 or an increase of 19 percent.[30] The values are expressed as means.

Table 4-3: Farm Production on Black-Owned Farms in Five Cass County Townships, 1860 and 1870

Farm Products	1860	1870	% change
Bshls of wheat	158.09	247.51	+57
Bshls of corn	634.42	272.47	-57
Bshls of potatoes	45.88	82.37	+80
Lbs of butter	34.49	164.10	+376
Lbs of cheese	0	0	0
Bshls of oats	14.42	41.91	+190
Tons of hay	3.41	8.76	+157
# Swine	29.57	13.06	-56
# Sheep	10.00	12.74	+27
# Horses	3.51	4.45	+27
# Cattle	4.21	2.21	-48
# Cows	3.1	2.56	-17
Lbs of wool	21.66	49.55	+129

Source: United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860, Roll T1164 #7 (Washington, D.C., 1864); United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1870, T1164 #17 (Washington, D.C., 1874).

The production trends on black farms on Cass were different in 1860 from whites but became similar by 1870. Southern farming patterns dominated farm production on 1860 black farms, but by 1870 the urgency of the Civil War and profitability of trading in the national market caught the attention of Cass County farmers and the differences that had been race-linked virtually ceased. Black farmers grew larger wheat and potato crops than the average Cass County farmer in 1870, but in proportions much like their white neighbors, unlike their 1860 production levels.

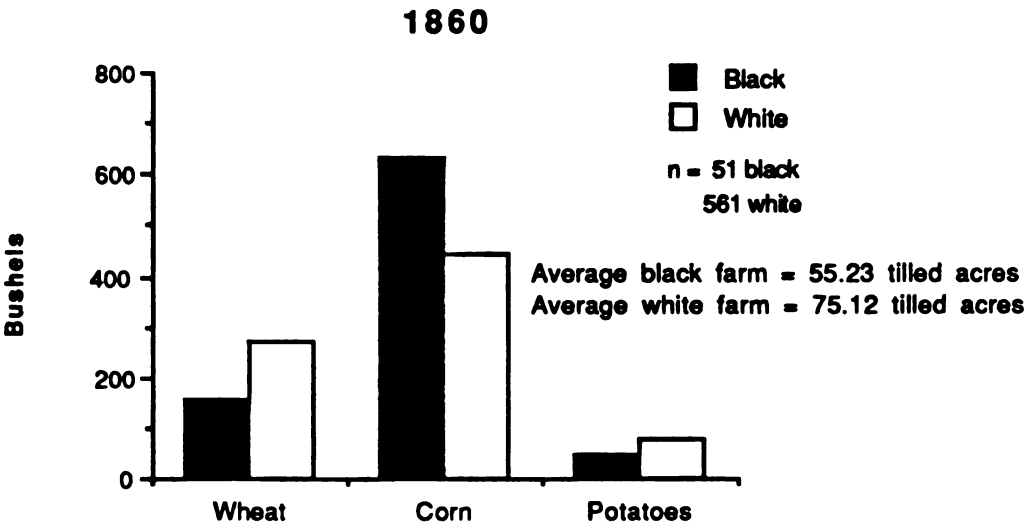
Further, more than the average number of acres were brought under cultivation by black farmers and correspondingly, their land values rose at a faster rate than was usual. Further, black farmers owned more teams of horses than their white counterparts and the value of their farm implements rose more than twice as much as those on the typical Cass County farm. (See bar graphs 4-2 and 4-3)

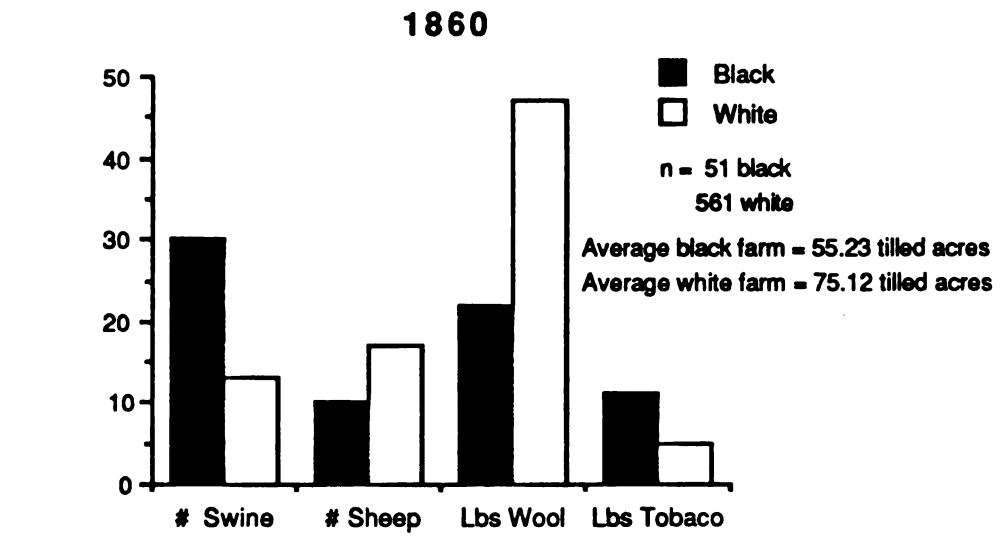
Substantial changes had occurred within the farming economy of Cass by 1870. National markets no longer took second place to regional and local markets as had been the case prior to the Civil War. Commercialized agricultural producers appeared where marginal surplus producers previously had been. Cass County farmers found that they enjoyed the high prices commanded by their crops. However, they also found themselves increasingly less independent from the price fluxuations typical of the national market during this period. Increasing attention had to be paid to middlemen and railroad rates. Increasing amounts of capital were necessary as the nature of farming changed due to changing technology and market demands, and farming became more capital intensive.

Part Two: Women Farmers and their Households during the Civil War

In order to insure and maintain these levels of production the structure and activities of farming households had

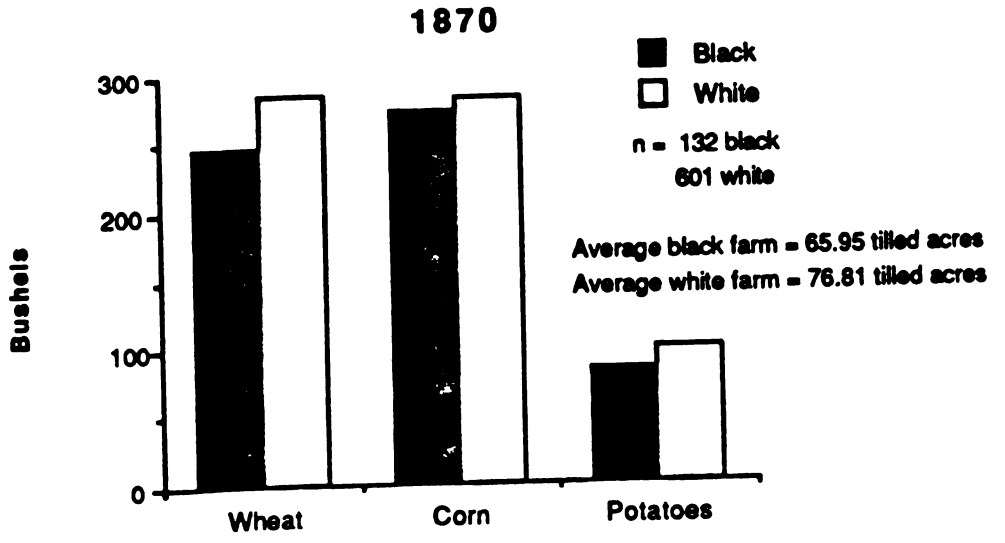
MEAN FARM PRODUCTION ON BLACK AND WHITE FARMS IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1860

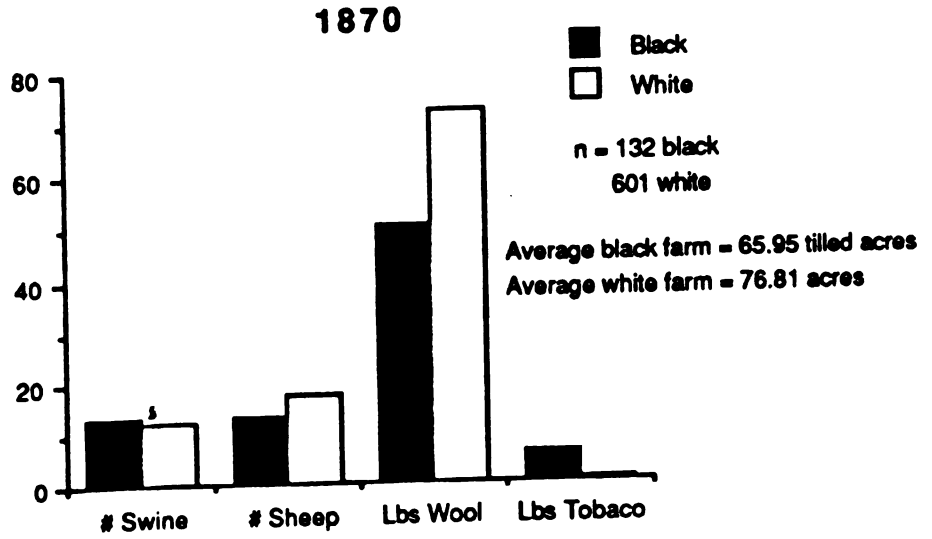




Source: United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Agriculture of the U.S. in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864)

MEAN FARM PRODUCTION ON BLACK AND WHITE FARMS IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1870





Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the U.S. in 1870 (Washington, D.C., 1874)

to change to accommodate an altered division of labor. Two sets of documents from these households illustrate the type of lives led by women farmers during the Civil War. One set is in the form of letters written between Lydia Watkins and her son Benton Lewis, who enlisted in the Union Army in May of 1863. Their farm was located near Grand Rapids. The second set of documents comes from the diary of a farm woman, Mary Austin Wallace, who managed the family farm of 160 acres in Burlington township, Calhoun County, while her husband was a soldier.[31]

The household and farm family that Benton Lewis left when he enlisted in the Spring of 1863 had to rearrange the way they had managed their labor in order to cover normal farm activities plus the fields that he owned. Lydia Watkins' second husband, John Watkins, was too old for the draft and had depended on Benton's labor to run the farm.

Lydia's letters to Benton complained about the scarcity of labor during the harvest season. They needed help with the haying, the harvest and with washing and shearing the sheep. She often asked for advice about how to handle his affairs since he was owed money by neighbors and how to dispose of his money when his crops sold for good prices.[32]

Benton's wheat crop sold for $1.60 a bushel in Grand Rapids in 1864. High prices were also paid for his crops of oats, corn and potatoes. The family was tending thirty head of sheep. They appeared to be Lydia's responsibility.[33]

Lydia reported to her son in July of 1864 that almost all of the farmers in their area had mowing machines and reapers. Hired help received $3 a day during harvest. She and other family members were busy during the harvest season of 1864 organizing the harvest of the orchard products, particularly the cherries.[34]

The diary of Mary Austin Wallace provides more detail about the endless difficult labor of farm women during the Civil War. On August 5, 1862 her husband, Robert Bruce Wallace, aged twenty-nine, enlisted in Company C of the 19th Michigan Volunteer Infantry. Mary was twenty-four. She was left at home with the care of a young son and an infant, nursing, daughter. She bore the full responsibility for the children and for their 160 acre farm which Robert had bought with gold he had found in California.[35]

Mary's diary began in August of 1862. It details the care she took with the corn crop and the problems that she had in the corn fields caused by a neighbor's pigs that fed on the corn crop that she had planted earlier in the summer. She gathered wood, hauled ashes for boiling soap, hoed turnips, "baggas" and cut corn.

On October 25, 1862 Mary recorded that she "unloaded my molasses, loaded up seven bags of chess" (a kind of grass), "and two bushels of wheat for flour. Went to Union with my grist..." On October 29 "I dug the early June potatoes, buried them for winter...I put a door in the corn crib. I

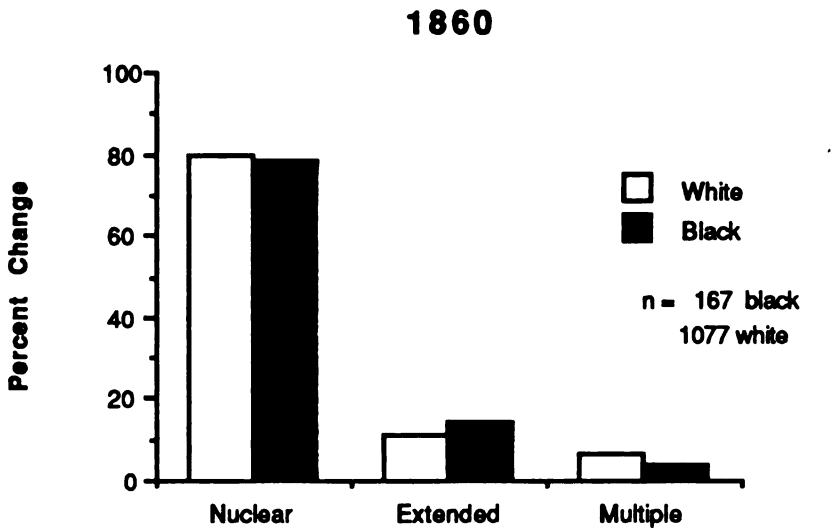
husked corn. The next day "I hitched up the horses on the wagon went in the north cornfield. Husked a load of corn. Drawed it to the crib, unloaded it. Drawed a load of pumpkins." On November 7 "I traded pa the fat pig for his white yearling heifer. The old sow and one pig for a parlor stove and the pipe with it..."[36]

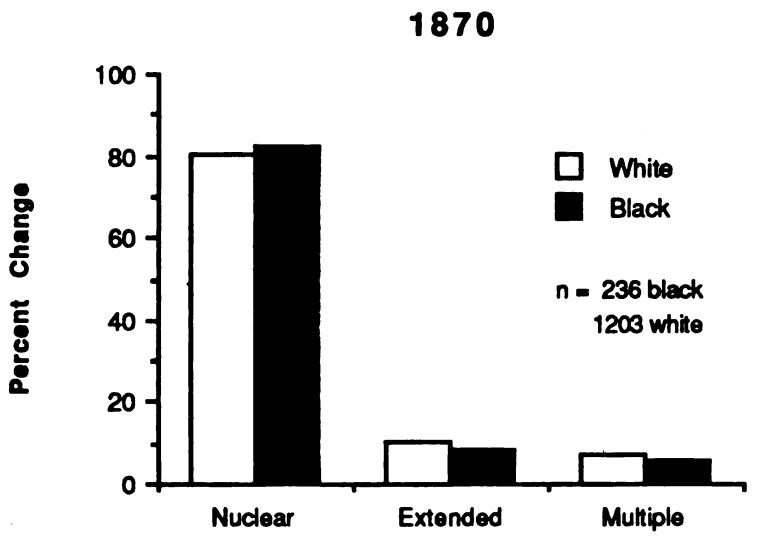
These two examples of farming women at heavy agricultural tasks were the rule in Michigan from 1861-1865 rather than the exception. A popular refrain reprinted in the Detroit Free Press was "Just take your gun and go; for Ruth can drive the oxen, John, and I can use the hoe!"[37]

However, the United States Population Census for 1870 reflected no permanent changes in household structures resulting from these changes in the division of labor on Cass County farms. The War years did not alter the typical nuclear household pattern of these white and black farm families. (See bar graph 4-4)

The decade of the Civil War began in 1860 with 75-80 percent of the black or white households in Cass containing one married couple and their children. In 1870 these percentages had not changed. The white households in Jefferson and Mason (there were no black households in these townships in 1870) each had dominant patterns of nuclear households. Out of 211 households, 171 or 81 percent of the households in Jefferson were nuclear and nearly ten percent were extended, which meant that the additional household members

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES OF BLACK AND WHITE FARMERS IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1860 & 1870





Source: United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1850. (Washington, D.C., 1864); United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870 (Washington, D.C., 1874).

were relatives. In Mason township 115 households out of 154 were nuclear or 74.7 percent. An additional 26 or 16.9 percent of these farm household also were extended.[38]

In 1870 only two of the 206 households in LaGrange township were Afro-American households. These two were both nuclear, as were 80.9 percent of the white households in LaGrange. An additional 9.3 percent of the white households were multiple and 8.8 percent were extended. The multiple households were stem families, which meant that two or more generations lived together.

Black households were more numerous in Porter and Calvin townships in 1870. Calvin was the site of the original black farm settlement and continued to be the center of black community life in Cass County throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. In 1870 the majority of the households in Calvin were black (57%). Of these households 83.6 percent were nuclear and 8.5 percent were extended. White and black households were similar, 81.4 percent of the white households were nuclear and 10 percent were extended.

Black households made up only 10 percent of the total in Porter township in 1870. Nuclear households made up 76.9 percent of those black households. However, different patterns of multiple and extended household structures can be seen in black households. Ten percent of these households were multiple in which two generations of family lived and

5.1 percent were extended. Seven percent of the black households in Porter were "only head" which meant that these were one person households, compared with only 1.1 percent of the black households in Calvin which had only one person, and were categorized as "only head."

The white households in Porter were more often nuclear than the black ones. Eighty-two percent were nuclear, 8 percent were multiple in which two generation of family lived and 7 percent were extended.

Part Three: Educational Progress and Political Activism

Educational issues were critical to the developing black community in Calvin and Porter townships during the Civil War decade. Black community leaders sought to expand educational opportunities for the growing population.

In 1867 Michigan advocates for equal rights won a major victory regarding segregated schools. After a long fight which stretched over a 30 year period, the legal protection for school segregation was abolished. In January of 1867, former Governor Austin Blair filed a writ of mandamus in the Michigan Supreme Court which ordered a white school in Jackson, Michigan to admit a black student. Within a month's time, however, the outcome of that case was rendered moot when the Republican legislature passed a bill eliminating de

jure school segregation in the state. The board of education in Detroit would later admit that the black schools, created during the years before the Civil War were "poorly calculated for school purposes."[39] In spite of the new law, Detroit's schools remained segregated, due to residential segregation, until the 1870's. Other Northern communities continued school segregation into the twentieth century.[40] The New Haven Board of Education admitted in 1860 that few black students graduated from their school with a sufficient knowledge of arithmetic to enable them to be either clerks or independent businessmen.[41]

The extension of even limited voting rights to black male members of the farming community in Calvin township set that community apart from the experiences of the black population in Detroit, and in other northern urban or rural communities. Only one other positive result obtained from the struggle for black suffrage in Michigan before the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. It involved a court case heard before the Michigan Supreme Court in 1866.

In People vs Dean the Court ruled that William Dean, a mulatto from Nankin Township near Detroit, was a lawful elector and entitled to the privileges of the ballot. The Court had to decide who was legally white or black, and thus a lawful elector, under the state constitution. The State Supreme Court's decision over ruled the lower Court's judgment that a man who had less than one-sixteenth African

ancestry was white. Thereafter, any man with less than one-quarter African ancestry was legally white.

Local boards of registration, however, continued to refuse to enroll anyone they considered Afro-American. Six Nankin township black men who fell within the Count's definition of a white man, including William Dean's son were turned away by registrars and had to obtain court writs to vote.[42] Typically, black residents of Detroit remained totally disfranchised. They were unable to participate in local school board elections because the Detroit Board of Education was appointed not elected.[43]

At the State level, the struggle for the franchise virtually disappeared during the tense electoral campaign of 1860. Republicans won the state of Michigan by a comfortable margin in that election. During the next year, before Lincoln called out the troops, the Republican legislature showed even less willingness than previous legislatures to consider "colored suffrage" seriously.[44]

In 1861 a small group of petitions again asked the legislature for "colored suffrage." These included one from a convention of black Michigan residents who protested "Taxation without Representation." The Republican House Judiciary Committee on Elections accepted the petitions but then lectured the black petitioners on the proper way to write petitions. Further, they predicted that the legislature would not allow enfranchisement in the foreseeable

future because of popular sentiment which was far from ready to approve of giving ballots to black men.[45]

One clue to the popular sentiments of residents in Michigan and the Mid-West toward issues like black enfranchisement, emancipation and equal rights can be found in the newspapers of the period. Local newspapers typically have been used as evidence for the highly partisan nature of Michigan politics. In addition, the newspapers of the Mid-West best revealed the complex and consistent nature of Negrophobia in the decade following the outbreak of the Civil War.

Two newspapers published in Cass County and printed in Cassopolis, the county seat, were The National Democrat, a staunchly partisan weekly and the Cassopolis Vigilant, "A Live Republican Journal," according to the masthead, also published weekly. They reflected the partisan positions taken also by the Democratic Detroit Free Press and the Republican Detroit Tribune.

Democratic newspapers in the Mid-West typically predicted an invasion of their communities by hordes of Africans if policy makers acted favorably regarding equal rights. The Democratic press ridiculed and slandered Afro-Americans and reinforced the widely held stereotype of the lazy, shiftless, vicious and biologically peculiar black person. According to Democratic editors, free black people were naturally indolent and criminal. And, if allowed to

remain in the United States, would reduce the South to a waste land or blight and degrade the North. One particularly vicious critic of Negro character was the Chicago Times editor Wilbur F. Storey. He characterized black people as half-human and half-beast, with an idiotic countenance that naturally provoked loathing in "the great masses of people."[46]

The Republican press hastened to reassure its readers that black freed men and women would remain in the South because they preferred warmer climates and that, in fact, Northern black people were likely to return South after Emancipation.[47] Although Republican editors in the Mid-West did not relish the prospect of an invasion of freed black people and exslaves, they were not as publicly abusive as were Democrats. However. they refused to defend black people against attack because they too had little confidence in the ability of black people and were unwilling to be labeled in the press as the party that supported equal rights.

To avoid this label, Republican papers frequently referred to black people as Sambo, Cuffie or niggers and mocked their dialect. The Milwaukee Sentinel, a moderate Republican publication, expressed disdain for the abilities of freed blacks when it predicted "Let slavery release its grasp from him, and he will shuffle from the stage with the utmost celerity; and...sink quietly into the pit--a most unimportant and unobserved spectator, troubling no one."

These sentiments found some supporters in Cass County newspapers during the Civil War era. Like their counterparts throughout the Mid-West, local editors of both parties expressed a low opinion of their black neighbors. However, the black community of Calvin and Porter townships also found advocates, primarily in the Republican press.

The Cass County Republican and the Cass Advocate supported the cause of anti-slavery and the struggle of the local black farmers as they pushed for equal rights. An article entitled the "Colored Population of Cass County" published in the Cass County Republican before the outbreak of the Civil War supported the presence of that community and their rights to equal privileges of citizenship. "From a census just taken," the article read, "we learn that there are at present 932 colored inhabitants in this county, comprising about 250 families and that they own 7541 acres...averaging about 30 acres to the family...When we take into consideration the fact that his great body of colored people annually pay into the county treasury a large amount of taxes, does it not seem a little like injustice to prohibit them from enjoying any of the privileges of citizenship?"[48]

The National Democrat also published in Cass differed with the opinions expressed by the editor of the Cass County Republican. A poem entitled "I'm Not An Abolitionist!" left no question as to the editorial stance of the National Democrat:

I'm not an abolitionist!
E'en Moses could not steal
The men of Israel from their King
To whom they owed their leal.
Day after day, by God's command,
With miracles of woe,
He waited for their owner's voice,
"I'll let your people go." [49]

The Biblical injunctions in support of slavery were elaborated in the pages of the National Democrat to support its pro-slavery, pro-States' rights stance. In a piece entitled "The Two Gospels Contrasted" the National Democrat reprinted an article originally sent to the editor of the Chicago Times by a Kentuckian. The author compared and contrasted the Gospel of Christ with the Gospel of abolitionism, and found the latter gospel based on heresy and blasphemy. An exegesis of the several New Testament scriptures pertaining to slavery led the writer to conclude that abolitionist heretics "in order to dissolve the Divinely-decreed relation subsisting between negro slaves and their masters in the States of America, have kindled the fires of a fierce sectional warfare, and, rather than fail in their purposes, would not only exterminate the rebel population of the South, but would light the fires of civil war in the North, drench the soil of loyal States with northern

blood, and lay its cities in ruins."[50]

It was surely no surprise to the readers of the National Democrat when the editor objected to the manner in which the Republican administration conducted the war. Particularly odious to the editor was the growing identification of abolitionism with Republicanism. That Party had been swallowed by the Abolitionist fanatics, he maintained in an article entitled "A New War Policy", whose real aim was "a complete triumph over the Constitution and the laws and a total overthrow of all the rights of person and property held sacred by the civilized world."[51]

This particular viewpoint was also turned against Afro-Americans in articles which slandered their African heritage and railed against miscegenation. In March of 1864 an article entitled "The Fat Women of Africa" appeared, reprinted from an English publication authored by Captain John Hanning Speke, the first Englishman to locate the source of the Nile. The author had been informed and later himself observed that the wives of kings and princes in Africa were "fattened to such an extent that they could not stand upright..." These women lived in huts, strewn with grass and partitioned like stalls for sleeping compartments. He found in these huts women of "extraordinary dimensions." So large were the arms of these women that "between the joints the flesh hung down like large, loose stuffed puddings." Captain Speke's informant told him that the women were fed

constantly from their youth "as it is the fashion at the court to have very fat wives."[52]

The insulting tone of this kind of journalism was aimed not only at the degradation of the black community but also to forestall those who might think miscegenation appropriate. In a lengthy and equally insulting poetic piece, "Miscegenation," the editor blasted those whites who approved of race mixing. The last stanza illustrates the sentiment of the whole poem. "Death to our freedom and death to our nation, this is the meaning of miscegenation, filled with mulattos and mongrels the nation, this is the meaning of miscegenation!"[53]

According to the Census of 1860 nearly 450 black adults were literate in Cass County.[54] Black readers of these newspaper articles doubtless understood the jeopardy of their positions despite Quaker and Abolitionist support. Particularly compelling was the Democratic Directory listed on the front page of the September 7, 1864 issue of the National Democrat. Township committees for the Democratic party existed in ten out of fifteen townships in Cass. The notable exceptions were Calvin and Penn townships where the populations were majority black or Quaker.

This listing of Democratic Party officers included leading businessmen and financiers like Misters C. H. Kingsbury, G. B. Turner, H. C. Lybrook, B. Mead, Lafayette Beebe, Henry Thompson and L. H. Glover.[55] The affiliation

and leadership of these men with the party dedicated to States' rights and the perpetuation of slavery must have limited the access to capital for black farmers and thus closed several doors of financial opportunity for black economic development in the black community in Cass. Black farmers who hoped to expand their farms or improve their lands must have avoided contact with these leading businessmen and bankers whenever possible.

In response to this racial climate so typical of conditions in the North, one hundred and forty-four delegates met in Syracuse at the 1864 National Convention of Colored Men. These men, from eighteen states, including seven slave states, proceeded to organize the National Equal Rights League in order to address in a united way the issues of education, the battle for suffrage and the struggle for equality.

In the declaration that announced the formation of the League, the delegates petitioned Congress to eliminate the "invidious distinctions, based upon color, as to pay, labor, and promotion" among black soldiers. They expressed appreciation to the President and Congress for abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, for the recognition of the black republics of Haiti and Liberia and for the retaliatory military order issued because of the particularly vicious treatment of black soldiers captured by the rebels. Special thanks were extended to Senator Charles

Sumner and General Benjamin Butler for their activities on behalf of black Americans. With the adjournment of the Syracuse Convention, the National Negro Convention Movement of the pre-Civil War and the Civil War era came to an end.[56]

The response of the black communities in Michigan to their tenuous position can be found in the report of the Colored Men's Convention held in Detroit on September 12-13, 1865. They met to discuss the proceedings of the National Convention of Colored Men which had met in Syracuse, New York in September of 1864 and to write the Constitution of the Equal Rights League for the State of Michigan.[57]

Cass County was represented by two delegates, Thomas J. Martin, from Dowagiac and Dr. Greenberry Cousins, who served on the Executive Committee. These man participated in the framing of the Convention Resolutions that stated the position of the Convention towards the Administration's policy of Reconstruction. The delegates resolved "That in the judgment of this Convention the policy of reconstruction, as developed by the present administration in restoring the seceded States to their former practical relations to the general government, is unwise, unfaithful and self-sacrificing during the four years of desperate war...And that this Convention pledges itself to use all intelligent and legitimate means to reconstruct upon no basis other than the basis of Universal Suffrage."[58]

However, Conventions continued to meet at the State level, in New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan and in

Ohio. In Michigan thirty-six black men met at the Second Baptist Church in Detroit in September of 1865. They proceeded to pass resolutions organizing the Equal Rights League of the State of Michigan having as "its object the securing of the rights of the colored people of this State and United States, acting in harmony with the intentions of the National League."[59] Officers were elected and committees appointed.

The resolution passed by the Equal Rights League that September in 1865 was followed with a campaign designed to heighten the awareness of the Michigan black community regarding the suffrage issue. A vote on the Amendment was scheduled in Michigan for November 1866. The Equal Rights League decided to appoint and employ agents to canvass the State in support of the Suffrage Amendment. Fundraising projects were held to cover the expenses of the canvassing agents. These expenses were met by the willing contributions of the black communities, primarily in Detroit and Cass County.

In other parts of the Mid-West black people were actively promoting the cause of the Equal Rights League. An Association was formed in Chicago in 1864 to work for the repeal of the Illinois Black Laws, a fund-raising festival was held to support the efforts of the suffrage workers and the city's policy of racial segregation was challenged in the public schools. Black Americans in Ohio and Indiana

formed state auxiliaries of the National Equal Rights League and petitioned their state legislators for the ballot and for state funds to support their schools. In Michigan, a delegation petitioned the legislature for equality, including the ballot, and complained that they were excluded from the secondary schools in Detroit and in other parts of the state.[60]

The question of suffrage for black Americans had been raised in Congress as early as 1864 and became inextricably linked to the debate over the Fourteenth Amendment. At first, the popular view at the national level was that newly freed black people were not fit for citizenship much less competent to vote. However, after President Lincoln was assassinated Republicans became alarmed by President Johnson's conciliatory policy towards the South. In order to insure Republican dominance in Congress it was necessary to enfranchise black Americans so that the fifteen additional Congressional seats would not be filled by Democrats. The South gained additional seats after Emancipation when black Southerners were no longer counted as three-fifths but on an equal basis with whites. Republican leaders supported suffrage for black people in order to save the Republican Party and to preserve the hard won victories of the Civil War. However, despite these practical, partisan issues the Republican political constituency in the North and particularly in the Mid-West was not ready to support suffrage for black Americans.[61]

Mid-Western Democrats polled approximately forty-four percent of the votes in the election of 1864 and led in the opposition to emancipation, extension of suffrage and any other form of racial equality. They denounced the Thirteenth Amendment, black soldiers, black immigration to the North, miscegenation, the creation of the Freedman's Bureau, bills that would remove racial distinctions from state and federal laws, attempts to enfranchise men of color and all Republican measures to reconstruct the Union. Democrats saw that their hopes for political control after the war depended on the traditional leadership in the South and the defeat of the Suffrage Amendment. Therefore, Negrophobic reaction continued to dominate the Democratic press and political speeches.[62]

Republican leaders in the Mid-West differed according to the state they represented on the question of equal rights. The states of Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan were usually more progressive than those of the lower Mid-West. Indiana was clearly the more conservative state where Republicans and Unionists could not raise enough votes to eliminate any of the Black Laws, despite their control of the state legislature.[63]

A more tolerant attitude was evident in the Mid-Western Republican press. Specific incidents of racial discrimination came under attack from a few of the bolder editors. The Chicago Tribune disapproved of the laws that inflicted

heavier penalties on black criminals than on white ones. The Milwaukee Sentinel denounced the ejection of black riders from streetcars in New York City and the Cleveland Leader helped to organize a successful drive to outlaw segregation on the city's street cars and harshly reprimanded the local Academy of Music for barring persons of color.[64]

After the War Republicans in Michigan began to understand the potential in a loyal block of black voters and began to alter their public views of racial equality. Michigan Senator Jacob M. Howard who, in 1862, had referred to black people as "wool" only fit for shipment to Canada, in 1866 spoke of his devotion to "elementary principles of human right." He maintained that "no man ever was born to be a slave; that all men were created equal before their maker, and that they ought to be treated as equal before the law."[65]

Senator Howard was only one of a growing group of Radical Republicans from Michigan. At first, this element of the Republican party in Michigan consisted of a few uncompromising leaders like Zachariah Chandler and Jacob Howard, who were friends of Charles Sumner and Benjamin Wade. As the estrangement from the Johnson administration grew, however, the Radical faction in Michigan controlled more members of the Party. Conservative Republicans joined with the Radicals in opposition to Presidential Reconstruction.[66]

This coalition of Republican legislators passed two Reconstruction Acts over President Johnson's veto in March of 1867. One of these acts removed General Ulysses S. Grant from Presidential Control and placed him under control of Congress. The other eliminated the government of ten southern states which had been established under Johnson's plan and put the entire South under military control. In order to be readmitted into the Union each state was required to frame a new constitution that included the guarantee of black male suffrage.

Meanwhile, the suffrage issue remained unpopular among most Northerners. Five different state and territories refused to extend the suffrage to black males in 1865; these were not all Mid-Western states. Connecticut voters rejected it by more that fifty-five percent. Nebraska Territory rejected black suffrage in June of 1866 and in 1867 Kansas voted fifty-five percent against the Amendment.[67]

The climate for black suffrage was tested in Michigan in April of 1868. The Constitution of 1850 required that the issue of constitutional revision be submitted to the electorate once every sixteen years. Accordingly, in 1866 an amended constitution was submitted to the voters for their approval. The question of suffrage was debated at length by the Michigan delegates and was included in the final document. The delegates also debated the issue of suffrage for women but decided not to include it. The docu-

ment was submitted to the public for their approval at the April, 1868 election. It was decisively defeated by a vote that tallied 71,729 for and 110,582 against.

The proposed Constitution had included other controversial issues, namely a small increase in the salaries of state officials and a provision for a railroad subsidy of up to ten percent of the assessed value of local municipalities. However, neither of these issues were as unpopular as the suffrage issue which clearly spelled the defeat of the amended state constitution.[68]

In spite of this voter hostility throughout the North, Republicans in December of 1868 proceeded to frame, approve and submit to the states the Fifteenth Amendment, prohibiting any state from denying the ballot to any male citizen regardless of race, color or previous condition of servitude. Unfortunately, it left the states free to control suffrage with the use of educational, intelligence or property tests and with poll taxes. This section weakened the Amendment while it catered to the moderate Republicans. In this way the Republican authors hoped to assure the passage of the Amendment and thus safeguard the nation against the menace of Democratic Party control, which they equated with the party of traitors.[69]

In Michigan, as in other states, ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment became a test of party loyalty. In the legislature, every Democrat in both houses voted against

ratification and every Republican voted for it. The partisan nature of this issue was, of course, reflected in the newspapers of the period.

The editor of the Detroit Free Press, the strongest Democratic newspaper in the State, wrote "The ratification of the so-called constitutional amendment by the Legislature of this state by a strict party vote is one of the most open and direct insults ever offered to the people of the State by any body of men, claiming to act as their servants." The Niles Republican calmly pointed out that the Amendment did not rule out the adoption of educational or property qualifications which would limit the right of suffrage. It urged its readers to accept the amendment and to insist that legislators more closely define who could vote.[70]

Significantly, even with the presence of black voters in the November election of 1870, the Amendment was barely ratified. The final count was 54,105 in favor of passage and 50,598 opposed. The amendment passed in Wayne County, which included Detroit, but it was defeated in Cass County, despite the presence of a block of black voters and sympathetic whites.[71]

Despite the political activism of the black population in Michigan, the right to vote was barely won. The petitions, letter writing and fundraising campaigns run by the agents who were canvassing the state kept the suffrage issue alive in the black communities. The activism initiated and

maintained by the delegates of the Michigan Equal Rights League was key to the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in Michigan. Black voters numbered 1300 in 1868 and increased to 2400 in 1872, hardly numbers which threatened the white majority in either Party. They worked in an atmosphere that fluctuated between open hostility and fearful ignorance. Racism was rampant among the Democrats and continued to tarnish the Republican claims to humanitarianism.[72]

In spite of the active hostility of white Northerners to equal access to educational opportunities or equal political rights black men volunteered in large numbers to fight in the Union Army. The outstanding record of black Union soldiers must be understood within the context of the active hostility of the white majority in the North and the changing priorities of the Republican Administration. Because of public sentiment and political expediency the Lincoln administration supported policies that prevented the enlistment of black men as volunteers in the Union Army in the early years of the Civil War. The war was not speedily won, as had been predicted by Northern Army officers after the firing on Fort Sumner in 1861. National policy changed to meet war time necessities; by 1863 the need for manpower to fill the Army quotas was pressing.

In the first year of the war many Northern black men offered their services as soldiers to the Union government. In Pittsburgh, black men, caught up in a patriotic fever,

formed an organization called the "Hannibal Guards." In Cleveland and Cincinnati black men tried to join the regiments that were being raised there. But the government and white Northerners considered the Civil War a "white man's war" and refused to accept the offers.[73]

Frederick Douglass was one of the most persistent and eloquent advocates of arming black men. In August of 1861, when the war was more than four months old and the North had yet to win one major victory, Douglass, in disgust, wrote an editorial entitled "Fighting Rebels with Only One Hand," published in Douglass' Monthly. "What upon earth is the matter with the American Government and people? " asked Douglass, "Do they really covet the worlds' ridicule as well as their own social and political ruin?...Our Presidents, Governors, Generals and Secretaries are calling, with almost frantic vehemence for men. 'Men! Men! send us Men!' they scream, or the cause of the Union is gone;...and yet these very officers,...steadily and persistently refuse to receive the very class of men which have a deeper interest in the defeat and humiliation of the rebels, than all others...Men in earnest don't fight with one hand, when they might fight with two, and a man drowning would not refuse to be saved even by a colored hand."[74]

Black leaders and white abolitionists pointed out that black men had already fought for America in the Revolutionary War and in the War of 1812. Douglass sarcastically

underlined this point in a February 1862 editorial. "Colored men were good enough to fight under Washington. They are not good enough to fight under McClellan. They were good enough to fight under Andrew Jackson. They are not good enough to fight under General Halleck. They were good enough to help win American independence, but they are not good enough to help preserve that independence against treason and rebellion.[75]

There were two main objections to the use of black men as soldiers. First of all Northern white soldiers felt themselves too superior a race to fight beside black men. Secondly, most people in the North believed that black men and especially ex-slaves were too servile and too cowardly to perform well as soldiers. Lincoln refused, on more than one occasion, to accept regiments of black men as soldiers. He was fearful that the residents of the loyal Border states would turn against the Union cause.[76] Therefore, public sentiment and political considerations prevented the formation of black regiments in the first two years of war.

However, public sentiment in the North began to change in the summer of 1862. Northern morale suffered as the result of a series of military defeats and because of war-weariness which began to sap the willingness of white men to join the Army. The Lincoln Administration began to more seriously consider the possibility of recruiting black men to fight.[77]

In February of 1863 the House of Representatives passed the Negro Regiment Bill, guaranteeing each black soldier $10 a month, $3 of which could be used for clothing. This rate of pay was a typical discriminatory tactic used against black soldiers, as white soldiers consistently received $13 a month plus clothing. Unfortunately, discrimination in pay was not the only inequality imposed on black troops.[78]

Because of these racially discriminatory policies and for other economic reasons, Northern black men were less eager to enlist in the Union Army than they had been at the outbreak of the War. The war economy had created full employment and prosperity for black people as well as white. Black men in Boston and Cincinnati were reluctant to volunteer and leave jobs and family. Especially when rumors from Confederate sources were received that captured black soldiers were not treated a ordinary prisoners of war but were typically killed or sold into slavery by Confederates with no retaliatory or protective measures taken by the Union government.

In addition, the War Department stipulated that all commissioned officers in the black regiments must be white men. Secretary of War Stanton and President Lincoln feared the political effect on Northern public opinion if black men became officers. In spite of resentment among Northern black men regarding these government policies nearly 186,000

enlisted between 1863 and 1865, nearly ten percent of the Union Army.[79]

The call to arms was first heard in Cass County at the industrial town of Dowagiac. White men from surrounding townships volunteered there for service in a number of Army units: the 42nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry was organized April 22, 1861, Company D of the 6th Michigan Infantry was organized in the summer of 1861. Company D left for Baltimore at the end of August 1861 with 944 men enlisted. White soldiers from Cass also enlisted in the 12th Michigan Infantry organized at Niles in March 1862, in the 19th Michigan Infantry organized at Dowagiac in September 1862 as were the 1st and 2nd Michigan Cavalry and the 1st Michigan Light Artillery.[80]

The authority was received for raising black troops in Michigan in July of 1863. Governor Austin Blair was authorized by the Secretary of War to raise one regiment of infantry, composed of black troops to be mustered into service for the United States for three years. Bounties of fifteen dollars were authorized for payment to Michigan troops, white and black, for enlisting. It was paid in the form of a bond, redeemable at a later date. Slightly more that one hundred black soldiers from Cass enlisted in the 1st Michigan Colored Volunteer Infantry, organized in Kalamazoo in 1863 and divided into nine Companies.[81]

Fifty-one military units were raised by Michigan communities. These included 30 of Infantry, one of which was

for black soldiers, eleven of Cavalry, one of Artillery, one of Engineers and Mechanics, one of Sharpshooters and six Guards, Lancers or Engineers.[82]

Despite the fact that military necessity mandated the use of black troops Democrats in Cassopolis were still denouncing the policy in August of 1863. In an article entitled "The Negro Conscription" published in the National Democrat the reporter predicted that the "inborn hatred which a rebel bears to a recreant negro will not admit of civilized warfare, and they will be maltreated or murdered whenever captured...There will consequently be complaint, constant breaches of the cartel, and constant retaliations; the result of which will fall upon white soldiers...They must fight for the negro in the Federal army, and lanquish and die for him in rebel prisons. The prospect is not encouraging."[83]

By July of 1864, however, the editor of the National Democrat was urging local white men to find a black man to enlist as a substitute. He thought this issue of "practical importance owing to the great quantity of 'shades' who reside in Calvin township...Our citizens who stand in fear of the draft will do well to get a 'snuff colored individual' in the army as a substitute for them as soon as possible."[84] This type of racist journalism dominated the Democratic press throughout Michigan during the war years.

The 1st Michigan Colored Volunteers was stationed at Hilton Head, South Carolina beginning in April of 1865. The

regiment was federalized and became the One Hundred Second U. S. Colored Infantry, specializing in heavy artillery.[85]

These soldiers returned to Cass in 1865, to farms that had been maintained by their wives and children in their absence. The labor drain occasioned by enlistment in the Union Army did not seriously jeopardize the profitability of their farms nor does the data show that their household structures were adversely affected. Instead, the community foundations composed of profitable farms, political awareness and activism and expanding educational opportunities, all of which were in place by 1860, were strong enough to support black farming families through the crisis of the Civil War years. They would need that strength to withstand the financial Panic of 1873 and the subsequent depression of the 1870s, the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1. The households and farms for the residents of five townships in Cass County, Michigan in the nineteenth Century will be analyzed for this dissertation: LaGrange, Porter, Jefferson, Mason and Calvin. These townships were selected based on their similar soil types, farm sizes and racial compositions. Household, individual and agricultural characteristics of these five townships were gathered from the Population Manuscript Census for 1830-1880 and from the Agricultural Census for 1850-1880. These documents were linked and analyzed to understand racial and class differences in the levels of farm production in farm households.
In addition, I gathered and analyzed Probate Documents for farm households in the five townships dating from 1828 to 1920. The wills and financial inventories further highlight the economic status of these households. Pension record are available for the soldiers and widows of Civil War veterns who served in the 102nd Colored Infantry. They were gathered to supply coorborating information regarding the economic status of black farm households after the Civil War. These records also provide a wealth of data about neighborhood connections and nineteenth Century community institutions in Cass County.

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5. John T. Schlebecker, Whereby we Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607-1972 (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1975), 151.

6. Ibid., 153.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 8 and 9.

9. Ibid., 8.

10. Schlebecker, Whereby We Thrive, 152; Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1897 (New York:

Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1945), 126.

11. Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier, 128.

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13. Sewell, "Michigan Farmers and the Civil War," 355.

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 355 and 356.

17. Ibid., 356.

18. Ibid., 359.

19. Ibid., 361

20. Ibid., 362 and 363.

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26. Atack and Bateman, To Their Own Soil, 214 and 216.

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44. Formisano, "Edge of Caste," 37 and 38.

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47. Katzman, Before the Ghetto, 36.

48. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Haven," 64.

49. "I'm Not An Abolitionsit," Cassopolis National Democrat, 12 May 1863.

50. "The Two Gospels Contrasted," Cassopolis National Democrat, 25 August 1863.

51. "A New War Policy," Cassopolis National Democrat, 11 August 1863.

52. "The Fat Women of Africa," Cassopolis National Democrat, 8 March 1864.

53. "Miscegenation," Cassopolis National Democrat, 28 June 1864.

54. United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864).

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79. Hondon B. Hargrove, Black Union Soldiers in the Civil War (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1988), 206.

80. Alfred Mathews, History of Cass County, Michigan (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins and Co., 1882), Chapter 18.

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83. "The Negro Conscription," Cassopolis National Democrat 25 August 1863.

84. "Colored Men Accepted as Substitutes," Cassopolis National Democrat, 19 July 1864.

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Chapter Five: A Thriving Black Farming Community, 1870-1880

The decade following the Civil War brought important demographic and economic changes to the interracial farming community in Cass County. The African-American community grew in Cass County by more than 400 people during the Civil War decade. Specifically, the number grew from 972 black residents in 1860 to 1387 in 1870, and their farms became more prosperous.[1] Family strategies were created that enabled Cass County farmers to meet the economic challenge posed by the Panic of 1873. These strategies were typically more successful in black farm households than they were in white ones.

The types of black farm households changed as more frequently the presence of unattached kinsfolk transformed formerly nuclear households into extended ones. The economic variations within the African-American community that appeared first in the 1850 census became more pronounced after the Civil War and will be described and analyzed. These differences typically are revealed in the census as the differences between the black and mulatto populations.

According to the perceptions of the Cass County census marshals, the majority of the African-American population in Cass were "mulattos," defined as persons of European and African ancestry. Census Marshals had only their own racial

perceptions to rely on in determining the racial mix of Cass County residents because their official instructions asked that they leave a blank space when the person was white, and "in all cases where the person is black, insert the letter B; if mulatto, insert M. It is very desirable that these particulars be carefully regarded."[2] In 1870 the mulatto-identified portion of the African-American population numbered 1078 or 77%. In the same census year the black-identified portion of that population numbered 309 or 23%.

It is difficult to conceive of a group of African-Americans as large as 23% that could have been excluded from the definition of mulatto in 1870 given the prevalence of interracial sexual contact throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. White Americans during the nineteenth century were exposed to the pseudo-scientific theories of race that reinforced their beliefs in black inferiority and white superiority; those beliefs were reflected in the way that the Federal census in Cass County was recorded in the nineteenth Century.

The African American population there had the opportunity to become more economically successful and more literate on average than other African-American communities in the North or South after the Civil War, contradicting the prevailing racist stereotypes of the lazy, shiftless, vicious black person. Observing and acknowledging the economic success of the African-American farming community in Calvin and in Porter townships led the census marshals to

list those farm owners as "mulatto" and thus implicitly credit that success to their Caucasian ancestry. As we shall see those people among the African-American community who were not as literate or as economically successful were more often categorized as "black."[3]

We have no real indications from the records of the actual "racial mix" of these farm folk. Oral traditions and a few pictures from the period document the fair complexions found among this population,[4] but the precise color tones that differentiate the "black" and "mulatto" populations were distinctions in the mind of the census takers and relate more to their racial biases than to the actual racial identifications of these farmers.

An example of the difficulty that Census Marshals had in consistently identifying "blacks" and "mulattos" and the methodological confusion that can arise is seen in the racial designation of the household of the farmer James Boyd. When he and his family first appear in the 1860 Census, they were all identified as "black." They claimed $300 worth of real estate and $200 worth of personal property. By 1870, James Boyd had successfully acquired $1000 worth of real estate and $400 worth of personal property, and his racial designation had changed to "mulatto," in fact, his whole family was now "mulatto" instead of "black." In 1880 this confusion deepened because the household of James Boyd, Jr. was enumerated for the first time; he was

listed as a "black" male, after having been identified as "mulatto" in the previous census. His father and mother had died in the intervening decade. Everyone in James, Jr's household was listed as "black" except his sister, who for some reason known only to the census marshal, remained "mulatto" between 1870 and 1880. The value of real and personal property were not given in the 1880 census, so it is not possible to analyze for these households the relationship of wealth to racial identification in nineteenth century Cass County.[5]

Despite these problems of racial perception it is possible to use the 1870 Census to analyze the economic stratification in both the African American community and the European American community. One way to analyze the extend of that stratification is found in an analysis of the financial information given in the United States Census for Agricultural and Population. The racial categories of "white," "black" and "mulatto" will be used in a limited way to speculate about the nature of the economic divisions in the population, but care will be used in drawing hard and fast conclusions about the real reasons for the economic stratification, some of which were unrelated to skin tones.

Part One: The Impact of the Economic Panic of 1873 on Cass County Farms

By 1870, five years after the end of the Civil War, economic indicators were still favorable for the black and white farming communities in Cass County. Inflated currency circulated during the War years had created general prosperity among farmers all over the Midwest including Cass County farm households. However, the success of this community was based on more than just economically profitable farms. Literacy rates also expanded, providing an additional indication of a successful and strong community. And the high level of stability found among these farmers allowed successive generations to expand and improve family farms, raising the standard of living for each generation. These three indicators of success will be discussed and analyzed in this chapter in an effort to document for the latter years of the nineteenth century the growth and strength of this unusual interracial farming community where black farmers were able to maintain profitable farms despite both the virulent racism that characterized American society during these years and an economic depression.

An important test of the economic strength of the Cass County farming community began during the harvest season of 1873. In September of that year the banking firm of Jay Cooke and Company, headquartered in New York City and

Philadelphia, collapsed, causing an economic panic that slowed the expansion of the American economy, including, of course, farms in the midwest. The economic depression that followed the Panic had an unequal effect on the white and black farm households in Cass. Data collected from the Federal Manuscript Census for Agriculture in 1870 and 1880 and for the State of Michigan Census for Agriculture in 1874 and 1884 document not only changes in levels of productivity between 1870 and 1874 but also the narrowing gap between the production levels and the prosperity of white and black farm households during these years.[6] It will be argued first of all that the Panic of 1873 slowed the production levels of white farms in Cass but did not have a similarly adverse effect on the production of black farms, and secondly that the production on white farms was slowed to such an extent that black farm households were able to match the production levels of their white neighbors, thus narrowing a gap that had previously existed between white and black farm production.

The six years following 1873 were one of the longest periods of economic contraction in American history. Banks failed, railroads declared bankruptcy and industry in general was badly crippled. It was not until 1879 and 1880 that economic conditions began to show improvement.[7]

The effects of the panic were felt most acutely by farmers on the upper midwest and central prairie frontier.

These farmers who had borrowed money during periods of high prices in order to increase their holdings or pioneer new land now found themselves in an almost hopeless struggle against their accumulated debts. Interest and principal had to be paid on money borrowed in the inflated period of war prosperity, but the prices of farm products were steadily falling, making repayment problematic. The falling prices were chiefly caused by the rapid opening of western farm lands to white and black American settlements, which glutted the national market with food. Further, these farmers were hurt by the fiscal policy of the federal government which deflated the currency.[8] Because of their limited resources these pioneer farmers in the upper midwest and on the central prairie were less able to with-stand these financial strains than their better established neighbors.[9]

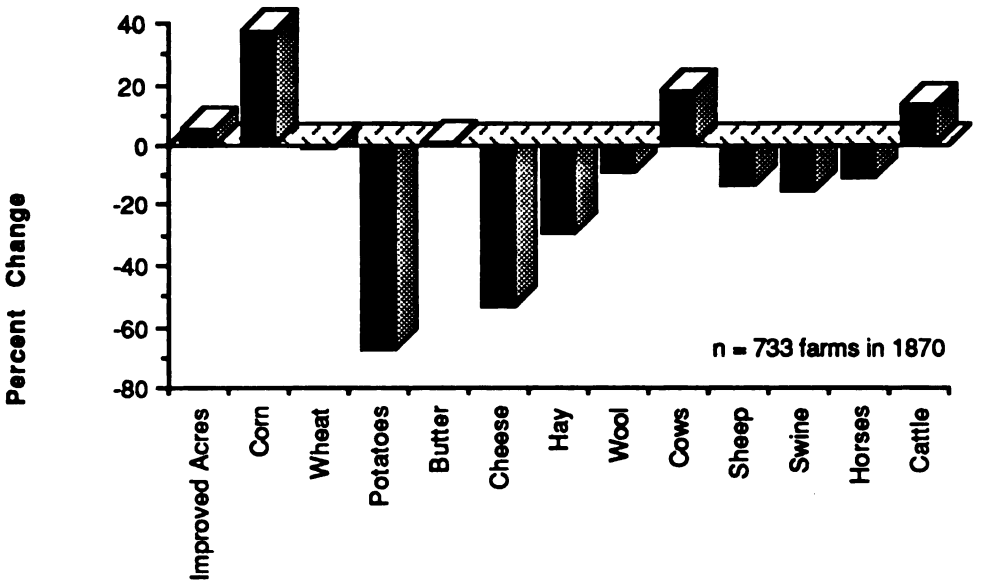
Despite these economic problems at the national level Cass County farmers believed they had no reason to worry because the price of wheat remained high. The quality and quantity of the Michigan wheat crop during October 1873 was reported to have grown, "nearly a full crop of wheat of very good quality, well secured and generally exceeding the expectation in thrashing." Prices for wheat were quoted at ninety-six cents a bushel, up from ninety-five cents paid the previous year.[10]

In addition to the optimism about the price of their wheat crops, farmers in Cass also placed their confidence in

the Chicago financial community. In the October 27, 1873 issue of the Vigilant, the newspaper reporter admitted that everyone had suffered more or less from the effects of the panic. Yet "the solidly established and prudently managed houses weathered the blast bravely." And in Chicago where "bankers and merchants set an example for her sister cities, the chief inconvenience was the distrust begotten of the panic, which temporarily prevented the use of their own resources. But business quickly resumed its normal condition, and the bursting granaries of the West, whose gateway is the Garden City, compelled the currency of the East and the gold of Europe to flow hither in a constant stream, to purchase food for the hungry."[11] Despite this optimism and confidence, however, levels of farm production decreased and crop prices fell during 1874. By 1875 wheat prices had slid to less than ninety cents a bushel.[12]

The effect of this economic decline on the farmers in Cass County can be seen in the reported figures for farm production in both the Federal Manuscript Census for Agriculture in 1870 and in the figures collected by the state of Michigan for Agriculture in 1874. (See bar graph 5-1)

PERCENT CHANGES IN FARM PRODUCTION IN FIVE CASS TOWNSHIPS 1870 - 1874



Source: Secretary of State of Michigan, Census of the State of Michigan, 1864 (Lansing: John A. Kerr & Co. 1865): United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864)

Table 5-1: Percent Changes in Farm Production in Five Cass County Townships, 1870 and 1874

Farm Products	%change	1864-70	%change	1870-74
Acres Improved	+18%	59,939.4	+5%	63,118
Bushels Corn	-9%	217,513.8	+37%	297,670
Bushels Wheat	+42%	222,438.0	-1%	220,905
Bushels Potatoes	+78%	75,730.8	-68%	23,981
Pounds Butter	+33%	155,706.6	+1%	157,275
Pounds Cheese	-83%	2,631.9	-53%	1,227
Tons Hay	+74%	10,018.2	-29%	7,101
Pounds Wool	+25%	55,864.2	-9%	50,730
Cows	-17%	1,867.8	+18%	2,212
Sheep	-4%	13,923.6	-13%	12,121
Swine	+8%	9,084.3	-15%	7,739
Horses	+19%	2,716.8	-11%	2,419
Cattle	-13%	2,122.5	+13%	2,392

Note: The first percent change is calculated from the State of Michigan figures for Agriculture in 1864, and the second percent change is calculated from the Federal Manuscript Census for Agriculture, 1870. Aggregate farm production data was compared from these two censuses in order to calculate percent change.

Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1870, Roll T1164 #7 (Washington, D.C.); Secretary of the State of Michigan, Census and Statistics of the State of Michigan, 1874 (Lansing: John A. Kerr & Co., 1875).

Although a high level of crop production would resume by 1880, these data show that there was a slowing of produc-

tion of some important crops like wheat, which declined in 1874 for the first time since agricultural statistics were collected for Cass County. The number of acres improved for cultivation were reduced also, slowing the growth of farm size. This, correlated with the eleven percent decline in the number of horses and the virtual absence of work oxen, is evidence that Cass farmers lacked the necessary work animals needed to clear new lands. Less hay was produced since there were fewer horses to feed. Other livestock herds declined, like sheep and swine, accompanied by a decline in wool production. However, the number of milk cows increased as did the number of cattle, along with an increase in the corn crop, used as feed for these animals.

Therefore, despite the optimism found in the pages of the Vigilant about the impact of the economic downturn that began in the last quarter of 1873, by harvest time in 1874 farmers had seen the need to cut back on their farm production, even on basic crops like wheat and potatoes. However, farm output would show increases in Cass by the next Census year (1880) as it would for farmers throughout the Midwest.

Table 5-2: Farm Production in Five Cass County Townships, 1874 and 1880

Farm Products	%change	1870-74	%change	1874-80
Acres Improved	+5%	63,118	+14%	71,750.0
Bushels Corn	+37%	297,670	+88%	558,625.0

Bushels Wheat	-1%	220,905	+73%	383,350.0
Bushels Potatoes	-68%	23,981	+115%	51,557.5
Pounds Butter	+1%	157,275	+57%	246,820.0
Pounds Cheese	-53%	1,227	+50%	1,845.0
Tons Hay	-29%	7,101	+89%	13,427.5
Pounds Wool	-9%	50,730	not recorded	
Cows	+18%	2,212	+16%	2,562.0
Sheep	-13%	12,121	+48%	17,937.0
Swine	-15%	7,739	+133%	18,040.0
Horses	-11%	2,419	+35%	3,280.0
Cattle	+13%	2,392	+58%	3,792.0

Source: Secretary of State of Michigan, Census and Statistics of the State of Michigan, 1874 (Lansing: John A. Kerr & Co., 1875); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1880 Roll T1164 #33, (Washington, D.C., 1884).

These data show a substantial increase in farm production in the five surveyed townships between 1874 and 1880. Particularly significant were the increases in the wheat, corn and potato crops and in the livestock holdings of swine and horses. Further investigation showed that these increases occurred more often on black-owned farms than on white-owned ones, as can be seen on Tables 5-3 and 5-4 below. White farmers held on to their gains but made no additional gains between the Panic of 1873 and 1880. Black farmers were able to continue their growth despite the economic depression because they had never had access to or depended on the financial resources that had fueled white farm growth.

Table 5-3: Farm Production on Black Owned-Farms in Five Cass County Townships, 1870 and 1880

Farm Products	1870	1880	%change
Acres Improved	65.95	84.91	+29%
Bushels Wheat	247.51	573.35	+132%
Bushels Corn	272.47	924.90	+239%
Bushels Potatoes	82.37	92.29	+12%
Pounds Butter	164.10	235.04	+43%
Pounds Cheese	0.00	13.68	-
Bushels Oats	41.91	208.97	+399%
Tons Hay	8.76	8.33	-less than 1%
Pounds Wool	49.55	0.00	-100%
Swine	13.00	30.00	+127%
Sheep	13.00	8.00	-39%
Horses	4.00	5.00	+25%
Cattle	2.00	5.00	+144%
Cows	3.00	3.00	no change

Note: Values reported are means.

Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1870, Roll T1164 #17 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1880, Roll T1164 #33 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

During this decade the number of improved acres increased much more on black farms than on white-owned ones, in fact the average black-owned farm was larger than the average white-owned farm in the five surveyed townships in Cass by 1880. The average black farmer was able to improve almost 19 additional acres (18.96 acres) on his farm while the average white farmer improved an average of one-half acre. On those additional acres, black farmers grew larger

crops of corn to feed their increasing herds of swine. While, in 1870, black farmers had trailed behind white farmers in wheat production by an average of 38 bushels, by 1880 they had out produced white farmers by an average of 195 bushels of wheat. The size of the potato crop also increased on black farms at a faster pace than on white farms. In 1870, black farmers were behind white farmers in potato production by an average of sixteen bushels; however, by 1880 black farmers were out-producing whites by forty-six bushels of potatoes on the average. Since black households had additional mouths to feed it is possible that this crop was consumed in the household and not sold as a cash crop. Curiously, hay production increased to an all time high on white farms in 1870, beyond the consumption needs of their livestock. At the same time, a growing number of horses were bought by black farmers. Since hay production fell slightly on black-owned farms, perhaps white farmers were producing and selling hay to their black neighbors who had additional horses but less feed for them.

Table 5-4: Farm Production on White-Owned Farms in Five Cass County Townships, 1870 and 1880

Farm Products	1870	1880	%change
Acres Improved	76.81	77.32	+less than 1%
Bushels Wheat	285.19	378.64	+33%
Bushels Corn	283.17	564.27	+99%
Bushels Potatoes	98.24	45.98	-53%

Pounds Butter	202.14	271.68	+34%
Pounds Cheese	4.39	2.39	-45%
Bushels Oats	69.77	147.02	+111%
Tons Hay	13.09	17.14	+31%
Pounds Wool	71.89	.26	-100%
Swine	12	19	+58%
Sheep	17	21	+24%
Horses	3	3	no change
Cattle	3	4	+33%
Cows	2	3	+5%

Note: Values are reported as means

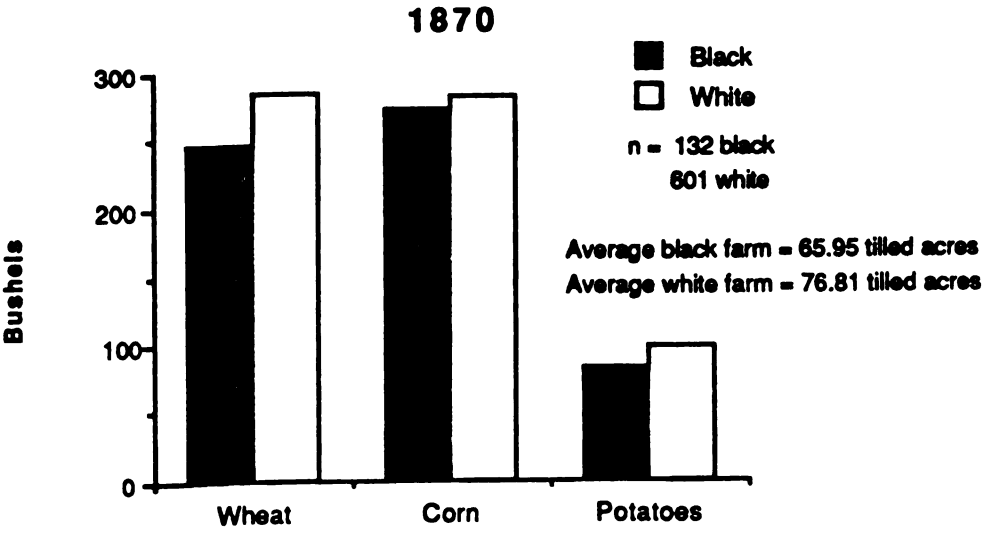
Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1870, Roll T1164, #17 (Washington, D.C., 1874);

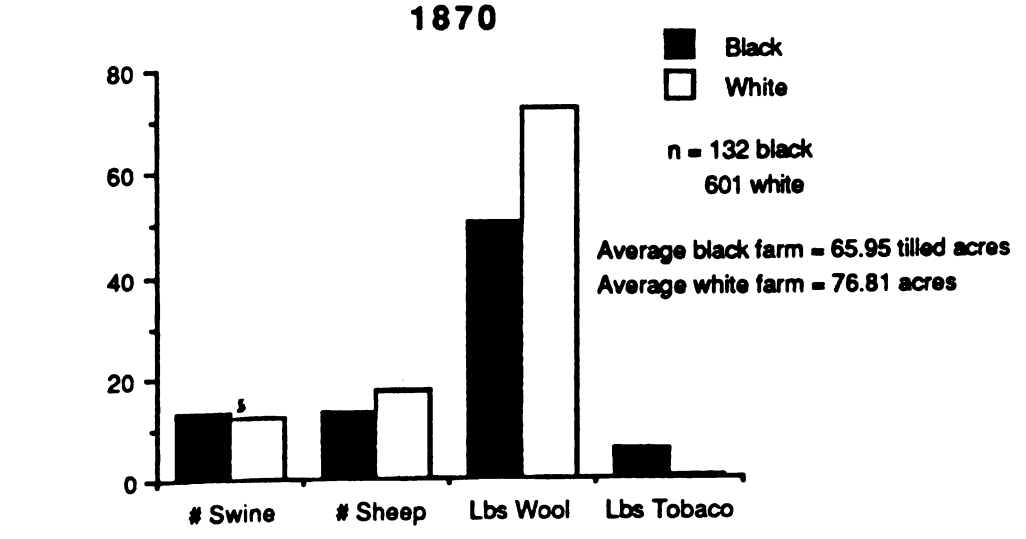
(See bar graphs 5-2 and 5-3)

These data show that the Panic of 1873 and the depression that followed did not affect Cass County farm households equally. In 1870 there were 132 black farm households in the five surveyed townships as compared with 601 white farm households. By 1880 the number of black farm households had increased to 138 while the number of white farm households had decreased to 485. Perhaps white farmers, hit hard by the economic panic, were unable to hold on to their farms, while black farmers were able to not only survive the depression but increase their holdings.

The resources that black farmers in Cass had at this juncture were not as much financial as the resource represented by the extra labor of unattached relatives in their farm households. An example of the strategies

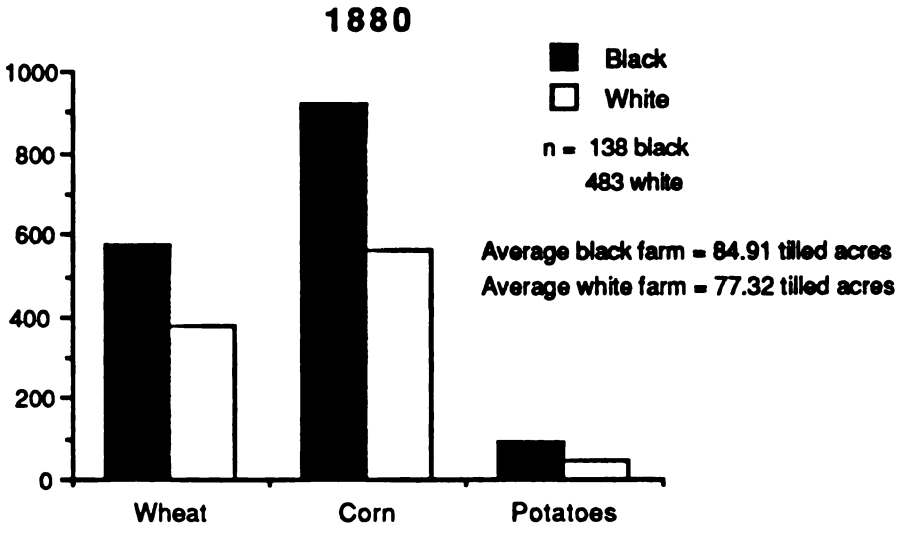
MEAN FARM PRODUCTION ON BLACK AND WHITE FARMS IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1870

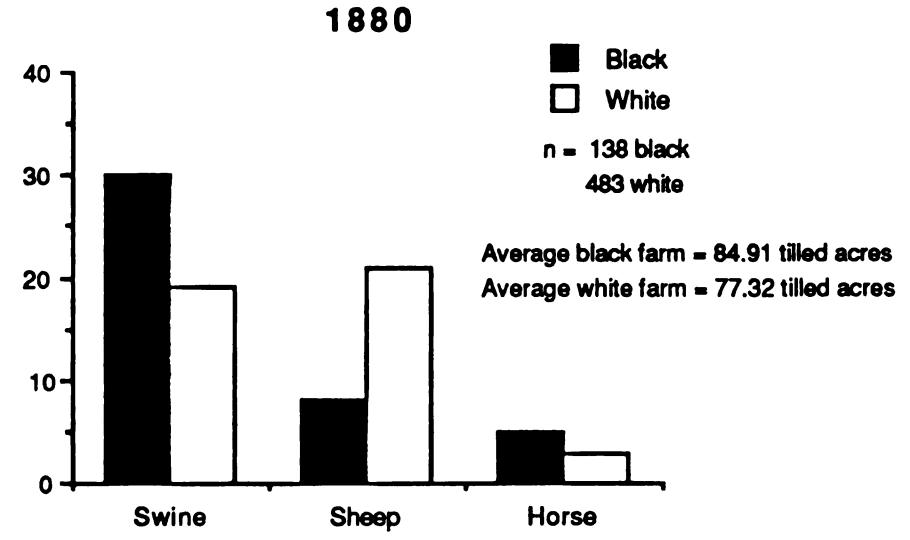




Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the U.S. in 1870 (Washington, D.C., 1874)

MEAN FARM PRODUCTION ON BLACK AND WHITE FARMS IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1880





Source: United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Agriculture of the U.S. in 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1884)

employed by black farmers that insured their economic survival and success despite the depression and other hardships comes from the Anderson household in Porter township. Winna Anderson was 70 year old in 1870, a widow who was keeping house on her farm located close to the household and farm of her son Jefferson. She held $1600 worth of real estate which she shared with her son Amon, who lived with her, together with his wife Susan and their two year old daughter, Arlena. Amon Anderson was a 27 year old literate farmer. He and Susan, who was 25 year old, were working the family farm that had been established by his parents nearly fifty years earlier when the family emigrated from Illinois.[13]

In the same section of Porter township, Jefferson and Amanda Anderson lived with their family. He was a 54 years old literate black farmer in 1870 with $2000 worth of real estate and $600 worth of personal property. There were eight children in the household between the ages of 17 and 2 years old. The oldest sons, John and Perry, ages 17 and 14, worked on the farm with their father. And, as was typical of the poor enumeration of black school attendance in 1870 in Cass, only these two oldest children were listed in school, even though five of the other children were school age.[14] Three other sons were also old enough to share farming responsibilities. They were Redman, age 11, Monroe, 10, and Jefferson, Jr., 8.

With the help of these five sons, Amanda and Jefferson, Sr. farmed 35 acres in 1870 worth $2000. They owned three horses, one milk cow, nine sheep and ten swine. These livestock were worth $450. Their production priorities focused on their wheat and corn crop. One hundred and thirty-five bushels of wheat and one hundred and fifty bushels of corn were raised for the 1869 harvest. To these cash crops were added three tons of hay and sixty bushels for oats for the animals and one hundred bushels of potatoes, fifty pounds of butter, fifty pounds of tobacco and $50.00 worth of orchard products for household consumption. This level of wealth and farm production was typical of the second economic quartile among Cass County farm households in 1870. The Anderson household had had only enough wealth for the lowest economic quartile in 1860. In the intervening decade they had successfully cleared their acreage and increased their production so that they were better off economically in 1870 and in the next higher economic quartile.

This progress was not slowed between 1870 and 1880 as it was for many white farmers in Cass. In the Anderson household in 1880 was Jefferson Anderson, now 63 years old and his six sons and four daughters. Amanda Anderson died in 1878. She had given birth to four more children in the previous decade. All of the older children were literate young men, ages 27 to 18, and were listed as farm laborers.

Their oldest sister, Naomia, was 14 years old, keeping house in her mother's place and in school. Also in school were Eliza Ann, age 12, Ellenora, age 10 and Zachariah, age 8. The two youngest children, Moses, age 5, and Talitha, age 2 were not yet enrolled in school.[15] This household was supported by a larger farm that produced larger crops, than in previous census years, inspite of the economic hard times that followed 1873 and despite the fact that Jefferson, Sr. had grown progressively more ill over the years which limited his strength for farm work.

Jefferson Anderson had returned from the Civil War with a debilitating illness contracted during his time as a soldier. He made his first application to the government for a pension in December of 1883.[16] Jefferson's application stated that in September of 1864 he had contracted a fever and dysentery which developed into a disease of the heart. He claimed partial disability from the manual work necessary to his farming responsibilities. He was able to do only "light work about my farm but not able to make more than half a hand at the usual work on the farm."[17]

Jefferson had been attended to by two medical doctors in Cass. Dr. John S. Harris, a black physician, lived within two miles of Jefferson's farm, had served with him in the 102nd Colored Infantry during the Civil War and had known Jefferson for 29 years. John Harris had been with Jefferson when he came down with the fever that had disabled

him from his duties as a soldier. Since his discharge, Jefferson had been unable to perform more than one-third of his normal farm duties, according to the affidavit filled out by Dr. Harris for the Bureau of Pensions. He had treated Jefferson for chronic diarrhea from September 1885 to April 1886. Anderson had also been treated by a white doctor in Cass, a Dr. Cyrus S. Bulhard, who also lived close to the Anderson farm and had been acquainted with Jefferson Anderson for twelve years. Dr. Bulhard began to treat him for chronic diarrhea in August of 1880 at which time "I found him confined to his bed suffering much pain with frequent discharges from bowels of blood...I attended him for about 10 days at which time I left him able to sit up and apparently convalescent."[18] The Bureau of Pensions was convinced by the affidavits of these physicians and those of close neighbors who testified to Anderson's pre-enlistment health and to his current disabilities.[19] Therefore, Jefferson Anderson was awarded a pension of six dollars a month for the rest of his life.

The composition of the Anderson farm household in 1880 reflected the family's adjustment to the senior Jefferson's illness and perhaps their adjustment to the economic constraints of the depression years. All of the oldest male children were still living at home. They had not married and apparently did not have the resources to begin their own farms. Instead, they stayed on their father's farm and made

a success of it. John, Perry, Redman and Jefferson, Jr., with partial assistance (and probably much advice) from their father, enlarged their improved acreage to 38 acres in 1880 and had 2 acres reserved for permanent pasture for livestock. In addition to their labor, they hired extra help for two weeks a year and paid the hired hand $30 in wages. During the decade 1870-1880 they had purchased an additional work horse, making two teams of horses. In addition they owned one milk cow, one head of cattle for beef, and eight swine. They harvested 440 bushels of wheat in 1879 and 60 bushels of corn. Eight tons of hay were grown to feed the horses. The potato crop yielded 120 bushels, probably consumed by the household. This farm expansion was accomplished before the six dollar monthly pension check began arriving in 1883.[20]

The Anderson farm household maintained their position in the second economic quartile in 1880 primarily because of the labor of the oldest sons who chose to remain on the family farm instead of leaving home to find their personal fortunes in some other way or in some other location. By himself, Jefferson, Sr. would not have been able to maintain his economic position. This household is an example of the importance of family labor to the economic success of black farm households during the critical years between 1870 and 1880.

According to the Federal Manuscript Census for Population, the number of black farm laborers was consistently

higher than the number of white farm laborers after the Civil War. For example, in Calvin township where the majority of the black population lived, there were more black farm laborers than black farm owners in 1870. And, by 1880, there were still a significant number of black farm laborers while the number of white farm laborers fell by more than one-half.

Table 5-5: Farmers and Farm laborers in Calvin Township, 1870 and 1880

	1870		1880	
	White	Black	White	Black
Farmers	102	122	120	145
Farm laborers	85	134	38	101

Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870, Roll 593-668 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880, Roll T9-575 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

White farm owners attempted to compensate for their labor problems by hiring help. In 1870 the average white farm owner spent $94.76 on wages compared to an average of $28.80 spent by black farmers for hired help. Although the

white farm population fell between the census years, the wages paid by white farmers to hired help remained twice as much as those paid by black farmers. In 1880 whites paid an average of $86.43 and black farmers paid an average of $39.77 to hired help.

An important gauge of the economic progress of these black and white farm households is found in an analysis of their relative levels of wealth. Economic quartiles were created for farm households in the five surveyed townships based on the dollar value of their real estate as collected in the Federal Manuscript Census for Population, 1850-1880. This value correlated closely to the dollar value of their farm land, as collected in the Federal Manuscript Census for Agriculture, 1850-1880.[21]

On the table below are listed the four quartiles of wealth and the number of white, black and mulatto farmers in each in 1870 and 1880. As previously discussed, the mulatto/black divisions in the African-American population can not be taken as an indication of actual racial divisions in the black farming community because those labels were arbitrarily assigned by white census marshals; the same African-American household was listed as mulatto, then black, then mulatto again in consecutive census years. The categories of black and mulatto are included here because it is interesting to watch even the black-identified farm households progress economically in the depression years between 1870 and 1880.

Table 5-6: Number of Farm Households by Racial Classification in Five Cass County Township by Economic Quartiles, 1870 and 1880

	1870			1880		
	White	Black	Mulatto	White	Black	Mulatto
(lowest) 1	135	16	45	84	19	49
* %of total	(22%)	(48%)	(45%)	(17%)	(50%)	(49%)
2	125	12	30	133	10	30
	(21%)	(36%)	(30%)	(27%)	(26%)	(30%)
3	163	5	18	118	5	15
	(27%)	(15%)	(18%)	(24%)	(13%)	(15%)
4	178	0	6	148	4	6
	(30%)	(0%)	(6%)	(30%)	(10%)	(6%)
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Totals	601	33	99	483	38	100

*Rounded to nearest percent

Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1870, Roll T1164 #7 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880, Roll T9-575 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

Not surprisingly, white households were more often found in the upper quartiles than were the black and mulatto households during this period. Further, the economic depression increased economic stratification within each racial community in Cass County. In 1870, 5% of the white farm households held 14% of the wealth within the white com-

munity and by 1880 the same number of households held 19% of the wealth. Among black farm households, 5% held 23% of the black community's wealth in 1870 and this stratification increased in 1880 when 5% of the black households held 26% of the wealth. Thus, rich white farmers were able to hold onto their wealth even though their farm production declined. This growing economic stratification among whites was of course aided by the decline in the number of white farmers, as those who could not hold onto their land sold out to those who could afford to purchase it, be they white or black farmers, who had weathered the economic crisis well.

Economic progress in the black farming community can most clearly be seen when farm production is divided according to these economic quartiles. (Please refer to Table 5-7.) Between 1870 and 1880, black farmers at all economic levels were able to enlarge their farms from a three acre average low in the poorest quartile to an eleven acre average among the richest. White farmers in the second and third quartile were able to enlarge their holdings by average amounts of 9 acres and 4.6 acres respectively, but the poorest group of white farmers lost more ground in 1880 as their farms decreased by more than 20 acres, while the poorest group of black farmers continued to enlarge their holdings despite the depression.

Production of the wheat crop for the market is a useful indication of the performance of white and black farmers as

Table 5-7: Farm Production by Wealth Quartiles in Five Cass County Townships, 1870 and 1880

	Acres Tilled		Bushels Wheat		Bushels Corn		Bushels Potatoes		Swine		Horses		Tons Hay		Cattle		Cows	
1870 (poorest)	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
1	48.9	20.8	212.7	61.4	151.0	97.2	72.5	36.8	7	3	2	2	8.7	2.2	1	1	2	1
2	38.2	32.3	134.9	123.0	147.8	107.5	91.0	38.0	10	6	2	2	6.3	0.2	1	1	2	1
3	67.8	54.2	257.2	242.0	258.0	147.1	91.5	51.7	13	11	4	3	11.5	9.2	2	1	2	2
4 (richest)	133.3	128.8	471.3	448.8	501.5	651.7	129.0	59.2	15	20	5	5	22.6	35.3	5	5	3	3
1880	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
1	28.7	23.0	142.3	134.3	264.5	304.8	38.0	30.1	8	9	2	2	5.7	1.7	2	1	2	1
2	47.3	40.8	222.0	461.7	362.3	464.2	36.2	48.6	11	14	3	2	6.3	3.7	3	2	2	2
3	72.4	60.0	371.5	341.1	555.9	671.0	46.0	63.0	19	20	3	3	25.9	5.0	4	2	3	2
4	134.7	140.6	650.0	626.3	918.0	1274	59.2	89.8	30	39	5	6	26.1	26.5	6	16	4	3

Values are reported as means

they adjusted to the lean years after 1873. Black farmers as a whole did not grow a bigger wheat crop than white farmers during this period. However, by 1880 black farmers in the second economic quartile produced more than twice as much wheat as their white counterparts, additional evidence that extra hands were available in black farm households that were not in white farm households.

Black farmers out-produced whites in all economic quartiles in the production of the 1879 corn crop, a more labor-intensive crop than wheat. Much of this corn was needed as feed for the livestock, particularly the cattle and milk cows. Cattle herds grew from an average to 5 to 16 head on the richest black farms by 1880. This accounts for the increase in the corn crop also found on the richest black farms.

The size of black farms exceeded that of whites only in the richest quartile in 1880. Yet, even though the size of black farms was smaller than the white counterpart when compared across quartiles, black farm households were able to hold onto their land during the worst depression of the nineteenth century and out-produce their white neighbors in important crops.[22]

Limited amounts of capital were also available to help finance the expansion of black-owned farms in Cass. This money came from a financial network operating during this decade among the white and black farm households. Records

of these financial transactions are documented in the "Warrant and Inventory" listing that was part of the legal paperwork necessary to probate an estate. This document was "a true and perfect inventory of all the Real Estate, Goods, Chattels, Rights and Credits" of the deceased. On it the executor of the estate listed all assets that belonged to the estate. Loans made to friends, neighbors or trusted acquaintances were duly listed with other estate property.

The Probate Court documents for nineteenth century Cass County farm households are numerous, especially for white households. For the ten year period between 1870 and 1880 they reflect an active network of loans which circulated among white and black farmers. These loans typically originated in white households in the early 1870s. They were for amounts as small as $10.20 and as large as $600. Probated estates typically included a list of notes due and the name of the individuals, both white and black, who had borrowed money.[23]

There were far fewer probated estates for black farm households in the 1880s than in the 1870s. And those that did receive the attention of the court were the estates of those black farmers whose wealth elevated them into the third and fourth quartile. For example, when Greenbury Cousins, M.D. died in 1879 his wife repaid a mortgage loan made by an unnamed neighbor with two hundred and forty bushels of winter wheat, valued at $228. Dr. Cousins was

one of the wealthier black farmers in the county. His estate documents did not list loans made to his neighbors, as in the estates of white farmers in a similar economic bracket, but Dr. Cousins had borrowed funds to buy land. When he died his estate was worth $4500.[24]

Likewise, the probate documents for the estate of Newson Tann, a black farmer, which was also worth $4500 in 1879 give evidence of money owned and money loaned. The Tann estate owed another black farmer, James Stewart for 45 days of work, during which time Mr. Stewart had worked with his team on the Tann farm. He had also supplied a mowing machine which he rented to Tann for $1.50. All together Stewart was owed $114 for his work, his team and his machine.[25]

The economics of borrowing and lending that were reflected in the probated documents changed for white and black farmers in the 1880s. As the depression continued fewer loans were made because there was less money in circulation in the farming community.[26] Loan transactions were still recorded for white farmers in the second, third and fourth economic quartiles but they were not as numerous as they previously had been. Despite the harder times overall, for the first time black farmers like Green Allen and Woodford Sanders were able to loan money to family and trusted friends, indicating prosperity for black people in spite of a generally bad economic climate.

Green Allen's estate was owed for loans that totaled $859.89 when he did in the winter of 1879. These loans had been made in the latter years of the 1870s to both white and black individuals. They ranged from a low of $8.98 to a high of $304.95. Woodford Sanders' estate probated in 1887, included a mortgage document held by Sanders and his wife Arbellion Sanders against William A. Storey, a white farmer, for the sum of $284. His estate listed an additional sixteen notes of amounts under $20 made to friends and neighbors, both black and white.[27]

The years following the expansion of black farms had allowed black farmers to borrow less from their white neighbors and to begin to return the favor and make loans themselves. Loan activity did not stop completely in the white community but continued at a much slower pace. This slower pace was also reflected in the levels of their crop productions, as has been previously discussed.[28]

Part Two: Expanding Educational Opportunities

A further explanation for the continued success of this black farming community is found in the high rate of literacy for the adult population and in the importance of school attendance for black children in Cass. An analysis of the 1870 Federal Census for Population documents a drop in the literacy rates for black adults from 46% literate in 1860 to

34% in 1870. There are two possible explanations for this decline. First of all, the census marshal assigned to Cass County in 1870 may have undercounted the number of black children in school; he may have also neglected to ask the appropriate questions regarding the literacy of the black adults he enumerated. Also, as has been previously discussed, unattached black Southerners, recently freed from slavery joined their family members in the black farming in Cass after the Civil War. These new migrants had had severely limited opportunities for schooling and were more often illiterate than their relatives in Cass who had been free sometimes for several generations. However, effective schooling and high rates of school attendance corrected this handicap by the 1880 Census. By that time fully 63% of the adult black population could read and write. The white literacy rate was 83%.[29]

The number of black women employed as school teachers also increased between 1870 and 1880. Only one was enumerated in 1870, but by 1880 there were three black school teachers in Calvin and Porter townships. These teachers often taught racially integrated groups of school age children. According to a School District Record Census which listed the names and ages of school children in District #4 located in Porter township, white and black children continued to share the same one room school, taught by the same teacher.[30] This was also the case for school chil-

dren in Calvin township, where the majority of the black population lived.

Table 5-8: Total School Age Population in Five Cass County Townships, 1870 and 1880

	White		Black	
Number	1870	1880	1870	1880
Enrolled	2168	1665	620	514
%of total	34.5%	31.3%	44%	38%

Table 5-9: Children in School or in School and at Work in Five Cass County Townships, 1870 and 1880

	White		Black	
	1870	1880	1870	1880
School	953	1200	96	335
School and Work	180	188	13	50
Totals	1133	1388	109	385

Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

Table 5-10: Percentage of School Age Population in School in Five Cass County Townships, 1860, 1870 and 1880

White			Black		
1860	1870	1880	1860	1870	1880
82%	52.3%	83.3%	58%	17.6%	75%

Source: United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860 (Washington, D. C., 1864); United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

The census marshal for Cass County apparently was able to more accurately count the number of black children of school age in 1880. However, as illustrated by the data in Tables 5-9 and 5-10 black children in school and those who both attended school and worked in 1870 were consistently undercounted. A larger percentage of school age black children were enrolled than were whites consistently. White school children appear to have been undercounted also, but not as severely as were black children. This becomes even clearer when the percentage of the black school age population in school in 1870 is compared to the more accurate census figures for 1860 and 1880 found in Table 10.

Table 5-11: Black and White Children in School by Age Group in Five Cass County Townships, 1870 and 1880

Ages	Black		White	
	1870	1880	1870	1880
5-9	9	121	105	434
Males 10-14	30	77	262	266
Males 15-19	12	58	199	200
Females 10-14	30	77	272	234
Females 15-19	7	37	126	167
Totals	88	370	924	1301

Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870, Roll 593-668 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880, Roll T1164 #33 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

There were 235 black children, ages 5-9 years old in Cass County in 1870. However, the Federal Census Marshal listed only nine of them in school. In the 1880 Census 189 black children between the ages of 5 and 9 were eligible for school and of this group 121 were attending school. This discrepancy between Census years extends through the age ranges for both girls and boys. There is no data to suggest that black children were withheld from school by their parents in 1870. Neither is there evidence that the one room school houses in Cass had been destroyed or closed in the late 1860s. Black children from Porter township listed by name on the School District Record census in 1870 were not listed as in school by the Federal Census Marshall. That they were undercounted seems certain given the evidence in the local school census and the striking contrast between census years.

This attention to education was a strong foundation for the economic successes of this black farming community. The relationship between literacy and economic success is well documented for the populations in settled agricultural communities.[31] The racially integrated educational system in Cass County was unusual in the midwest and northeast during these years.[32] The relative harmony within the schools was strengthened by the fact that many of the early settlers, white and black, had settled permanently in the county and had raised their children in the same community. Likewise,

the second and third generations of those early settlers remained in Cass and established their families on farms.

Part Three: Changing Farm Households

There was a high degree of permanence in the Cass County farming community (the rate of this permanence will be calculated) between the 1832 and 1880. The periods of greatest population change were after the Civil War as more black Southerners moved into Cass and again after the Panic of 1873 when whites who had lost their farm holdings left the county. However, these population shifts did not change the patterns that had been established within the structures of farm households.

The overwhelming majority of all white and black households in the sampled population for 1870 and 1880 remained nuclear. This indicates that Cass County farm families preferred to establish households that included parents with their children at all points of the lifecycle. Typically, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles were not a part of individual farm households. However, changes did occur within the categories of nuclear and extended in white and black households.

Typically, the percentage of nuclear households decreased and the percentage of extended households increased between 1870 and 1880, signaling the addition of

more unattached but related family members in these households. Changes in the structure of these households changed according to the race of the household.

Table 5-12: Farm Household Structures by Race in Five Cass County Townships, 1870 and 1880

	1870		1880	
	Black	White	Black	White
CoResKin	3	3	5	14
*%of total	1%	-	2%	1%
Extended	18	101	55	141
	8%	10%	20%	13%
Multiple	14	82	6	62
	6%	8%	2%	6%
Nuclear	190	842	185	872
	83%	80%	70%	78%
Only Head	5	16	15	24
	2%	2%	6%	2%
Percent	100	100	100	100
Totals	230	1044	266	1113

*Rounded to the nearest percent

Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

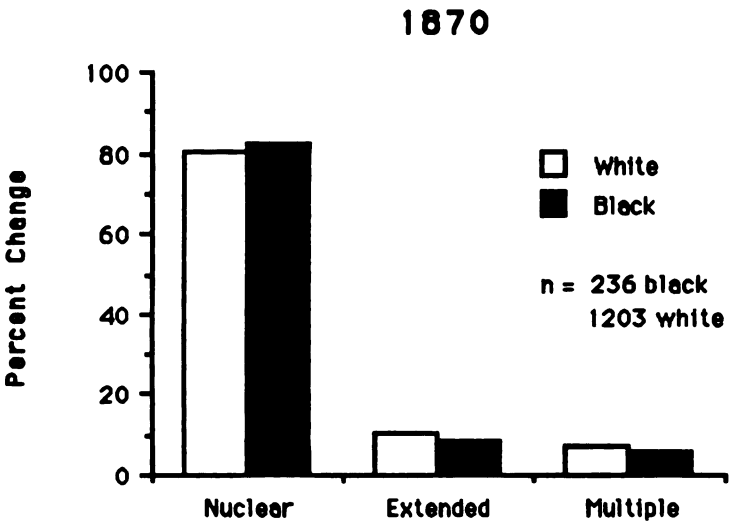
These data show that the household structures of black farmers changed to accommodate unattached family members more often than did the households of white farmers. White

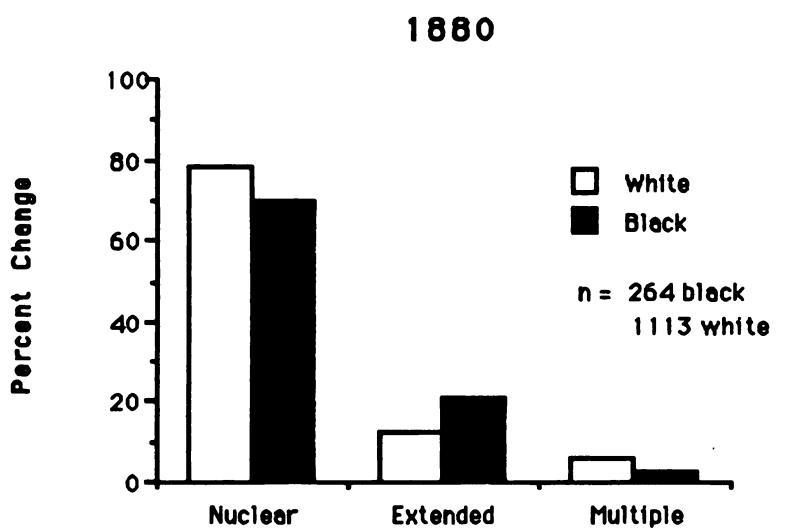
farm households showed no significant changes between 1870 and 1880 despite the adjustments that were necessary after the economic panic. Unattached family members like aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings and/or elderly parents were more commonly included in black households than in white ones during this period. It is a sign of the strength of these black households that they had both the resources and the flexibility to accommodate the needs of their family members. The strength of these farm households contributed, of course, to the economic success of black farms, supplying the labor necessary to improve the land and expand production. By 1880, extended households in the black farming community had tripled compared to their number in 1870. However, the overwhelming majority of households both white and black remained nuclear. (See bar graph 5-4)

This structural analysis of household structures in Cass County is restricted by the limitations of the Federal manuscript censuses which shed little light on the actual functioning of these households. In order to determine the extent of kinship networks and the reciprocal obligations that existed among them, extensive oral histories must be collected from descendants, white and black. In this way more specific information about daily life can be collected and analyzed.[33]

These three factors, economically viable farms, high rates of literacy and a high rate of permanence on farm land

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES OF BLACK AND WHITE FARMERS IN FIVE CASS COUNTY TOWNSHIPS 1870 & 1880





Source: United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870, (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

owned by individuals in strong and flexible households account for the success of the black farm households during the decade 1870-1880. It is true, of course, that white farm households also benefited from these same factors, even though their rate of economic growth was slower. The white community also had high rates of literacy and strong households that managed family farm land from one generation to the next.

Cass County was remarkable because black and white people lived in an interracial farming community that achieved relative harmony at a time that racial violence was the rule, particularly in the South where most of the African-American population lived. The early strength of the black farming community, the financial success of the black farm households in Calvin and Porter townships and the tolerance of the surrounding white farmers assured an economic foundation for the black farmers, rich and poor, that was not destroyed, even during the worse depression of the nineteenth century.

Notes

1The total population of the five surveyed townships by 1870 was 7668, 6275 of these were white. These individuals lived in 1274 households on 849 farms. Two hundred thirty of the households were black in 1870 and 1044 were white. By 1880 the population had fallen to 6668. The biggest population decline was among the white farmers. There were 5303 white residents in the five townships in 1880 and 1350 black. These individuals lived in 1379 households on 1025 farms.

2United States Census Office, "Instructions to Marshals and Assistant Marshals" Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864).

3Leon Litwack, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 182-183.

4Benjamin C. Wilson, "Michigan's Ante-Bellum Black Haven: Cass County, 1835-1870," (Unpublished dissertation, Michigan State University, 1975), 177-188.

5United States Census Office, Eighth Census, Population of the United States in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1864); United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1884).

6United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1870 (Washington, D.C., 1874); United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1884); Secretary of State of Michigan, Census and Statistics of the State of Michigan, 1874 (Lansing: John A. Kerr & Co., 1875); Secretary of State of Michigan, Census and Statistics of the State of Michigan, 1884 (Lansing: John A. Kerr & Co., 1885).

7Gilbert C. Fite and Jim E. Reese, An Economic History of the United States (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 303-304.

8Felix Flugel and Harold Underwood Faulkner, Readings in the Economic and Social History of the United States (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929), 685.

9Gilbert C. Fite, The Farmers' Frontier, 1865-1900 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 55.

10"The Wheat Crop," Cassopolis Vigilant, 9 October 1873.

11"Chicago Correspondence," Cassopolis Vigilant, 27 October 1873.

12Fite and Reese, An Economic History of the United States, 435.

13United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870.

14Ibid.; the problems of school attendance enumeration in the 1870 Census will be discussed later in this chapter.

15United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880.

16"Invalid Claim for Pension," Jefferson B. Anderson, Applicant, January 3, 1884, United States Pension Office, (Washington, D.C.).

17Ibid.

18"Physician's Affidavit," submitted by John S. Harris, January 1884, Pension Claim Number 503211, Jefferson B. Anderson, applicant; "Physician's Affidavit," submitted by Cyrus S. Bulhard, January 1884, Pension Claim Number 503211, Jefferson B. Anderson, applicant, United States Pension Office, Washington, D.C.

19"General Affidavit," submitted by William Allen, June 10, 1887; John H. Keene, April 9, 1887; Stephen Guess, April 1, 1887; Henry Morton, April 9, 1889; Henry Stewart, July 15, 1887; Joseph Hartman, July 12, 1887, for Pension Claim Number 503211, Jefferson B. Anderson, applicant, United States Pension Office, (Washington, D.C.).

20United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880; United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1880.

21The economic quartiles were calculated for 1870 using the dollar value of the real estate of black and white farm owners in the five surveyed townships in Cass County; for 1880 the dollar value of farm land was used, after the determination was made that these two variables significantly correlate. The value of these wealth intervals for 1870 and 1880 are:

1870	1880
1 = $0 - 1600	1 = $0 - 1400
2 = $1601 - 3240	2 = $1401 - 3000
3 = $3241 - 6800	3 = $3001 - 5400
4 = $6801 - 35,000	4 = $4501 - 35,000

22Eric Foner, Reconstruction

23Estate of Green Allen, 1879, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Newsom Tann, 1879, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Issac Hull, 1876, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Samuel Warner, 1875, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Lucius Rathburn, 1875, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of David Brady, 1878, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Charles Carter, 1873, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Nathan Morse, 1870, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Benjamin D. Compton, 1874, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of William Jewell, 1879, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Greenbury Cousins, 1870, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Samuel F. Anderson, 1877, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Henry L. Ritter, 1872, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan.

24Estate of Greenbury Cousins, 1870, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan.

25Estate of Newson Tann, 1879, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan.

26Fite and Reese, An Economic History of the United States, Chapter 24.

27Estate of Green Allen, 1879, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Woodford Sanders, 1887, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan.

28Estate of Woodford Sanders, 1887, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of William Allen, 1890, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Robert Watson, 1881, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Jonathan Colyar, 1887, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Joseph C. Ash, 1890, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Peter Day, 1883, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Lewis Rinehart, 1880, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Horace Hunt, 1880, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Isaac Bovee, 1886, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan; Estate of Findley Chess, 1882, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan.

29United States Census Office, Ninth Census, Population of the United States in 1870; United States Census Office, Tenth Census, Population of the United States in 1880.

30School District Report #4, 1870 and 1873, Township of Porter, County of Cass and State of Michigan (Chicago: Adams, Blackmer & Lyon, 1875).

31Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press), Chapter Six.

32W. E. B. DuBois, The Philadelphia Negro (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 88-89, 349-350; Kenneth L. Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 61-64.

33Shepard Krech III, "Black Family Organization in the Nineteenth Century: An Ethnological Perspective," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 12 (1982), 429-452.

Conclusion: From Surviving Freedom to Economic Independence

When African-American farmers established households on the frontier in Cass County in the nineteenth century they relied heavily on both formal and informal networks of support. Informally these networks involved the protection of the identity and location of black farm households during census taking and the secret support necessary for the successful functioning of the Underground Railroad. Formally, these supportive networks included building schools, churches and the encouragement of political activism at the local and state levels. Those networks became institutionalized as the foundations of a strong black farming community capable of directing its own community growth as it participated in the wider and typically white, economic, social and political milieu.

The reporting of the 1850 Population and Agricultural Census reveals strategies engaged in by blacks and whites to combat the forces of racism which challenged and jeopardized the safety of black farmers in Cass County. Census Marshals deliberately underenumerated both black and white residents. The specific strategies shaping such incompetence are difficult to discern, but we do know that the whites in the immediate vicinity surrounding the black settlement in Calvin township were deeply involved in Abolitionist activity

throughout the midwest. The story of the Powell family illustrates the activities of these Abolitionists who, as conductors of the Underground Railroad were willing to finance the legal fees necessary for the rescue of the Powell family during the Kentucky Raid. We also know that the Census Marshals were not strangers to the neighborhood in which they worked. They knew their neighbors and were participating in an informal network of support created to safeguard the lives and insure the survival of the black families. African-Americans who were either recently freed, escaped slaves or had been free for two generations all received the same benefits from the tightly knit, protective community.

Such protective strategies were of economic benefit to African-American farmers on the frontier between 1832 and 1850. They insured stability. Black farmers did not have to move away from Cass County to protect the safety of their household. Frontier farming conditions also assured affordable land and valued farm labor. Black men who moved into the county as poor and landless could hope to work for a white or black farmer, clearing land and earning a wage that could then be applied to the purchase of farm acreage.

The link between physical safety, economic stability, improvements in literacy rates and political activism can also be seen in the Cass County black farming community. The control of the political elections to the local school

board in Calvin township was critical in the argument for the extension of suffrage to black men in Michigan in the ante-bellum decade. Both the rising literacy rate and the political activism in the black community are evidence of the existence of a formal network of support that was deliberately constructed by the black farmers to build a strong base for their community. Education was, of course, key to these black folk, as the presence of their children of all ages in school reveal.

The fight against slavery transformed local conditions in the ante-bellum decade as leaders from the black community participated in Abolitionist activity at the state level and then enlisted as soldiers in the 102nd Colored Infantry of the Union Army. The Civil War years contributed to ending frontier conditions as farm economies grew more integrated into the national market. Yeoman farmers became capitalist agricultural producers. This process in Cass County was reflected in the changes in farm production figures between 1860 and 1870. In 1860 black and white farmers had farmed according to their regional orientation. White farmers had behaved as Yankee wheat farmers, growing larger crops of wheat than black farmers who behaved as if they were Southern corn and hog farmers. However, by 1870 the composition of their crop production levels virtually matched. Both groups grew comparable amounts of wheat and corn, and raised similar numbers of livestock for sale on the national market.

Cass County farm households, black and white, held their own during the Civil War years despite the labor shortage on farms. Women on farms all over the midwest successfully planted, cultivated and harvested crops to feed not only Union Army soldiers, but also, the population in the urban North. They placed particular emphasis on the production of wool because herds of sheep were relatively easy to care for and because wool was a valuable commodity for the manufacture of Army uniforms. When their men returned from the Army and resumed farming they simply continued the production priorities established by the female members of their families with adjustments necessary to the peace-time economy.

The real test of the strength of the support networks established by Cass County farm households came after the economic Panic of 1873. White farmers who had participated in the economic expansion of the post-bellum period fell behind their previous levels of production. In Cass the white population actually declined. They often chose to sell their land and move on West. Those who stayed farmed smaller acres that were worth less than in the years before the panic. The black population grew during this period as did the number of acres that they farmed and the value of their farm land. Agricultural and Population data gathered for 1880 document the remarkable success of African-American farmers in Cass, not only in farming but also in literacy

rates and continuing political involvement primarily at the local level.

The community in Cass illustrates the impressive possibilities for economic independence among nineteenth century black farmers when conditions allowed them to earn a wage and invest that money in land. The success of that community stands as a testimony to the possibilities that existed for all ex-slaves at the end of the Civil War. The profitability of the black farms in Cass County compare in an important way with the Davis Bend Experiment conducted during the War in Mississippi by the federal government. On the Davis Bend Plantation 181 black farm families settled in 1863 and purchased abandoned plantation lands from the federal government, formerly owned by Jefferson Davis. They handled the planting, cultivating and harvesting of crops for one year and turned an impressive profit after the crops were sold and their bills were paid. Unfortunately, the time and money invested in the Davis Bend Experiment was lost to these black farmers when President Johnson pardoned Jefferson Davis and returned his land to him after the Civil War.

The success of the Davis Bend Experiment shows that the potential for the growth of an economically autonomous black population was very real in the South, especially given the value and shortage of labor on Southern plantations after the end of the fighting. The tragedy of Reconstruction was

that the opportunities and conditions that resulted in networks of support in Cass County for black farmers were not a part of the plan for reconstructing the economy of the South after the end of slavery. The tragic economic dependence that characterized the population of Southern ex-slaves resulted.

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Estate of Benjamin D. Compton, 1874, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of William Jewell, 1879, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of Greenbury Cousins, 1870, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of Samuel F. Anderson, 1877, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of Henry L. Ritter, 1872, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan.

Estate of Woodford Sanders, 1887, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of William Allen, 1890, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of Robert Watson, 1881, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of Jonathan Colyar, 1887, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of Joseph C. Ash, 1890, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

Estate of Peter Day, 1883, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan;

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Estate of Leonard Rickert, 1854, Probate Court Records, Cassopolis, Michigan.

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