

THE CHANGING NATURE OF SLAVERY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, 1828-1865

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Slavery played a critical role in the early history of the state of Alabama. The study of history in the state is most often connected to agriculture but it played just as a serious role in the state's flagship university. For thirty-seven years, the University of Alabama benefitted in some way from enslaved people. However, this relationship with slavery did not remain unchanged. Slavery at the University of Alabama changed in important ways such as the scope of work of the enslaved people, the amount of enslaved people on campus, and how students and faculty interacted with the enslaved. Keeping these and other developments in mind, this essay follows the transformation and evolution of slavery at the University of Alabama, contending that these developments can be viewed as three distinct periods of slavery at the university.

When examining the role of chattel slavery in the American South prior to 1865, the relationship between universities and the labor of enslaved people is not an area that receives significant attention. Slave labor is most commonly associated with agriculture as the vast majority of enslaved people worked in agriculture, which provided for the economic advancement of the southern slaveholding states (and the political clout which often accompanies economic success) before the Civil War. While slave labor was indeed the impetus for the economic boon in America's agricultural regions, it was also critical to the functioning of universities. In the twenty-first century, scholars and students have paid increasing attention to an important yet relatively ignored facet of slavery: slavery at American institutions of higher learning.

In 2004, the faculty of the University of Alabama made national news when they passed a resolution formally acknowledging the school's history with slavery and apologizing for it. Two other southern institutions, the University of North Carolina and Emory University, took measures to raise awareness for the role of slavery at their schools the following year. In the ensuing decade and a half, multiple schools, like Harvard University, Georgetown University, and the University of Maryland, have conducted studies and forums to bring attention to their respective schools' past relationships with slavery.¹ The research, seminars, and tours conducted by both the students and faculty of these various schools have elucidated the historical relationship between American institutions of higher learning and slavery.

The practice of universities and colleges benefiting from the labor of enslaved people was neither confined to the southern states nor to the period immediately preceding the Civil War. Historical records show that enslaved men and women served the faculty and students at Harvard University in Massachusetts as early as

¹ James T. Campbell, Leslie M. Harris, and Alfred L. Brophy, ed., *Slavery and the University: Histories and Legacies*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 3.

1639.² Harvard had multiple presidents in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who owned enslaved people and the university greatly profited from donations made by wealthy families from the plantation colonies of the British West Indies. Likewise, Princeton University in New Jersey thrived off of large donations from wealthy New England families who had made their wealth in the textile industry off of cotton from plantations in the South.³ Like their counterparts at southern universities, enslaved people worked for Princeton students while the school's presidents and professors owned enslaved people during their time at the university.⁴ Princeton University educated young men from wealthy planter families in the South just like the University of Alabama.⁵

However, as legislatures in northern states outlawed slavery, and universities in these states hosted debates on the morality of enslaving other people, university leaders in the Antebellum South continued their institutional dependence on slavery. The University of Alabama epitomized this dependence. Rather than gradually distancing itself from the practice of employing slave labor like Harvard, slavery became an ever more relevant factor for the function of the University of Alabama. For the first thirty-four years of the university's existence, trustees and faculty continued to devote more and more resources to acquiring and managing slave labor while educating a student body that mostly came from Alabama's major slave holding counties.

Enslaved people provided a critical source of labor for the operation of the university and its physical expansion. From menial daily tasks, like brining water, to the student dormitories, to skilled work, like serving as carpenters in the construction of campus buildings, slave labor was a crucial component to the early decades of the university. The university consistently utilized slave labor for nearly forty years. However, slave labor underwent important developments and changes throughout its decades of use by the school; the function of slavery at the University of Alabama was not the same in 1831 as it was in 1861.

The subject of chattel slavery in the United States (and specifically in the Antebellum South) has been studied extensively. Two historians in particular have made important contributions to the study which are useful in understanding the scope of slavery at the University of Alabama. The published works of James Benson Sellers, former Professor of History at the University of Alabama, covers a variety of historical topics such as slavery, the prohibition movement, and religion in the state of Alabama. Sellers's *History of the University of Alabama: Volume One, 1818-1902* details the university in the nineteenth century including how the university utilized slavery in a variety of roles from construction to maintaining campus grounds.⁶ Another one of his works examined student life at the university before 1860 which dealt with the ways the enslaved served the university's students.⁷ His works reflect a common historiographical approach toward slavery in the 1940s and 1950s, as he does

² Sven Beckert, Balraj Gill, Jim Henle, and Katherine May Stevens, "Harvard and Slavery: A Short History" in *Slavery and the University*, 228.

³ Beckert et al., "Harvard and Slavery," 228-232.

⁴ Craig B. Hollander and Martha A. Sandweiss, "Princeton and Slavery: Holding the Center" in *Slavery and the University*, 48.

⁵ Hollander and Sandweiss, "Princeton and Slavery," 47-52.

⁶ James B. Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama: Volume One, 1818-1902* (Birmingham, AL: Birmingham Printing Company, 1953).

⁷ James B. Sellers, "Student Life at the University of Alabama Before 1860" in *The Alabama Review* Volume II. (Mobile, AL: Alabama Historical Association, 1949).

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not give significant attention to the enslaved people nor how slavery developed over time at the university.

Recent scholarship has been more instrumental in explaining the social relationships of slavery. Jennifer Bridges Oast is a contemporary historian whose works have focused on the study of slavery in Virginia. She has written extensively on the ways schools like the University of Virginia and the College of William & Mary utilized enslaved labor in *Institutional Slavery: Slaveholding Churches, Schools, Colleges, and Businesses in Virginia, 1680-1860*.⁸ Oast's works have been instrumental in demonstrating how societal norms and the backgrounds that students came from impacted the relationship between college students and enslaved people. Following Oast's scholarship, this essay covers the social facets and relationships of slavery rather than only equating enslaved people to agents of labor.

Sellers and Oast have made impressive contributions to their own respective areas of history. Sellers offers one of the most comprehensive depictions of the University of Alabama in the nineteenth century that any historian has published. Oast's evaluation of slavery at colleges in Virginia sheds light on how the social dynamic of slavery developed at the University of Alabama. Like the university in Charlottesville, the university in Tuscaloosa was intended to educate the state's elite so Oast's analysis can in many ways be extrapolated and applied to Alabama.

This paper is unique in that it seeks to evaluate what is known about the nature of slavery at the University of Alabama and demonstrate how slavery changed at the university. To do so, this paper references a variety of primary sources including the letters of faculty members, resolutions from the Board of Trustees and university records. Included are diary entries and correspondence from two presidents of the university who served during this period. These primary sources come from the perspective of people who were at the top of the university hierarchy and who often directly participated in the punishment and selling of enslaved people. There are scant primary sources from the perspective of the enslaved although this trend extends beyond the university. For instance, the primary sources utilized by Oast in her study of slave holding colleges in Virginia also heavily relies on primary sources that come from university leadership rather than the enslaved. Nonetheless, these primary sources are useful in demonstrating the meaningful alterations of slavery at the University of Alabama from 1828 to 1865.

The Early Years, 1828-1841

Slavery impacted the University of Alabama years before the first students ever stepped on campus. Enslaved people labored in the construction of the university, which began in 1828. Although white men worked in skilled positions like stonecutting, enslaved people provided the majority of the labor for the construction of the campus.⁹ When the university began its initial academic year in 1831, the campus consisted of a two-story laboratory and a three-story tall rotunda which housed the university's library.¹⁰ The faculty and their families lived in the two faculty buildings. Two student dormitories and a university hotel which served as the dining hall for students made up the rest of the original campus. Slave labor provided the source of the arduous labor necessary in the creation of these buildings. As Oast

⁸ Jennifer B. Oast, *Institutional Slavery: Slaveholding Churches, Schools, Colleges, and Businesses in Virginia, 1680-1860* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁹ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 31.

¹⁰ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 31.

succinctly noted, the enslaved were there, “To do the grueling, hard labor that no one else wanted to do.”¹¹

Following the completion of the campus in the early 1830s, the university’s demand for slave labor dropped significantly. The university had to cover the costs of feeding, clothing, and housing enslaved people. With no major construction projects and a relatively small campus, the university was reluctant to devote significant resources for slave labor. There are records that indicate that the university purchased enslaved people; the state of Alabama ordered Isaac Winston of Franklin County to sell Lawrence, his enslaved man, to the university trustees to pay off debt in 1831.¹² However, the university mainly resorted to paying locals for the temporary employment of their enslaved people. This practice of “hiring” the enslaved equated to renting enslaved people and was a common form of acquiring slave labor throughout the South. For the university, paying slave owners for the use of their people was the main method of procuring slave labor in the 1830s.¹³

The university faculty finalized their by-laws which included rules and expectations for the enslaved on campus in October of 1831. The initial expectations for the enslaved were mainly focused on domestic chores. An entry from the Faculty Minutes of that month established the work expected of the enslaved: “Make fires every morning, sweep the private rooms, make beds, carry out dirty water from the bed chambers and furnish the students with clean water,” along with cleaning the students’ shoes twice a week and scouring the floors.¹⁴ Stewards, White men hired by the university, took care of the physical upkeep of the university and campus grounds.¹⁵ Compared to records from the subsequent decades, purchases and agreements to rent enslaved people were not as common. While enslaved people did toil at the university in the 1830s, their labor was mainly to supplement the stewards in working on a campus that only consisted of seven buildings. Oast found the same pattern during the early years of the College of William and Mary, which like the University of Alabama, initially used a combination of white employees along with enslaved Black people before later shifting towards a near total reliance on enslaved people.¹⁶ The university did not yet consist of a campus nor student body large enough to warrant a sizable enslaved presence.

The shift towards reliance on slave labor became palpable towards the end of the 1830s. University President Basil Manly designated Benjamin Whitfield, a university steward, as superintendent of all the enslaved on campus on behalf of the university trustees in 1838.¹⁷ The university faculty also codified the expectations for the university’s enslaved people in 1839; President Manly, in his Annual Report to the Board of Trustees, wrote, “The duties of all college servants were defined.”¹⁸ This solidification of their duties preceded an increase of university purchases of enslaved

¹¹ Oast, *Institutional Slavery*, 158.

¹² University of Alabama Special Libraries Special Collections (UALSC), Early University of Alabama Administrative Records, Financial Records, Court order for sale of slave belonging to Isaac Winston to the University of Alabama, September 20, 1831, Image number u0006_0000001_0000003_0001.

¹³ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 38.

¹⁴ UALSC, Faculty Minutes, 1831-1854, Volume 3, 1838-1841, December 31, 1838.

¹⁵ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 34-38.

¹⁶ Oast, *Institutional Slavery*, 128.

¹⁷ Oast, *Institutional Slavery*, 128.

¹⁸ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly Sr., image number u0003_000900_0000378_0167.

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people. The university authorized the hire of two enslaved men for \$400 in 1839.¹⁹ The following year, the university granted the faculty the ability to hire enslaved people and allotted them \$300 for two enslaved men for the academic year.²⁰ University President Basil Manly wrote directly to Governor Arthur Bagby in 1840 about securing state funding for the university's slave purchases, describing the "necessity" of more slave labor for the university.²¹ These examples demonstrate how university leadership increased their attention to slave labor as the decade drew to a close.

The 1840s would bring a new phase of campus expansion and with it a new era of slavery at the university. Although the university had initially used enslaved labor to support its employees, the faculty and trustees were beginning to recognize the potential value of enslaved labor for the university. The final years of the first era of slavery at the university exhibited an increase in the purchases and investments by the university into slavery. This trend would only increase as the university evolved into a society centered around slavery..

Height of the Slave Society, 1841-1861

Historian Ira Berlin, one of the most respected and acclaimed experts on slavery in North America, made the important distinction that societies with slavery were different from slave societies.²² In the former, slavery is one of many methods of labor that exists alongside wage labor, indentured servitude, or other systems to drive the economy. According to Berlin, a slave society differs in that, "Slavery being the dominant form of labor shapes every other social relationship in that society... relationships between workers and bosses, relationships between rulers and rules."²³ Harvard University in 1630s Massachusetts was a part of a society with slavery. The state of Alabama in the 1850s, politically controlled by the slave holding elite and with nearly half of its population enslaved, was a slave society.²⁴ The university became a microcosm of this slave society where all social relationships and labor methods were influenced by slavery.

For the university, construction of new buildings in 1841 marked a new phase where slave labor became imperative. This new phase of expansion included the construction of the President's Mansion in 1841, the Observatory in 1844, and a new dormitory in 1854 along with various smaller buildings like the stables and carriage houses.²⁵ With the size of campus effectively doubling in the early 1840s, the university needed to expand its labor force. Slave labor became a major part of the university budget as enslaved people facilitated the growth of the campus. The scope of slave labor expanded as enslaved people took on skilled work and duties that had traditionally been left to white employees. This growth in the significance of slavery

¹⁹ UALSC, Early University of Alabama Administrative Letters, Slave Labor Documents, Order for payments for two servants for hire at the University of Alabama, 1839, image number u0006_0000001_0000020_0001.

²⁰ UALSC, Early University of Alabama Administrative Records, Slave Labor Documents, Resolution to authorize servant hire for faculty at the University of Alabama, 1840, image number u0006_0000001_0000059_0001.

²¹ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000378_0181.

²² Ira Berlin, "Societies with Slaves vs. Slave Societies," The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

²³ Berlin, "Societies with Slaves vs. Slave Societies."

²⁴ Leah Rawls Atkins, *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1994), 112.

²⁵ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 31-35.

at the university mirrored the growing significance of slavery for the state. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the slave population in Alabama increased dramatically as slave labor had become the paramount factor underpinning the state's agricultural economy.²⁶ By 1860, taxes derived in some way from slavery provided most of the state of Alabama's revenue.²⁷ Asserting that the state's main university would also become dependent on slavery is a natural evolution.

Besides the construction of new buildings on campus, the maintenance of the original campus buildings became a major focus for the university. President Manly and the trustees looked to enslaved men with skills like carpentry to address this issue, highlighting an expansion of roles for the enslaved as well as a confidence in their craftsmanship. The university hired William and Anderson in 1841 and 1843, respectively, and both enslaved men used their carpentry experience in projects around campus.²⁸ Manly wrote of William in 1841, "His ready use of tools has been turned to good account."²⁹ In July of 1846, William and Willis, another enslaved carpenter, replaced the shingles on the roofs of the dormitories amounting to the installation of 30,750 shingles.³⁰

Analyzing how much money the trustees invested into slave labor for issues like repairs is also an effective tool to understanding the degree to which the university depended on slavery. The university undertook multiple repair projects across campus in 1846 such as fixing fire damage and repainting buildings in addition to replacing the shingles on dormitory roofs.³¹ The university heavily relied on slave labor for these projects; Manly's records indicate that more than a quarter of all the money the university spent on the repairs in 1846 was solely for slave labor.³²

Two examples of labor procurement explain why the university strengthened its ties to slavery. In 1838, towards the end of the first period of slavery at the university, the faculty decided to replace a white laborer who worked under the stewards because at, "\$35 a month, it was found impractical to pay a man to their duties for that sum."³³ In contrast, the university could rent an enslaved laborer for an entire year at the cost of \$150 in 1858, at the end of the slave society period. While there was a significant difference in financial cost (\$420 versus \$150 per year), faculty and students could exercise much more authority and scrutiny with the enslaved laborer than they could with the free and compensated laborer. Manly had the ability to whip an enslaved man for not properly doing a job; he could not do the same to a white laborer. The university continued to use slave labor because it allowed projects to be accomplished, "in a manner as thorough and as cheap as possible."³⁴ The

²⁶ Atkins, *Alabama*, 112.

²⁷ Atkins, *Alabama*, 112.

²⁸ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 3, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000379_0016.; UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 3, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000379_0087.

²⁹ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000378_0268.

³⁰ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 3, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000379_0087.

³¹ University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections (UALSC), Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 3, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000379_0093.

³² UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000378_0422.

³³ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_000900_0000378_0152.

³⁴ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000378_0420.

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growing slave population of the region only made finding enslaved laborers easier; by 1860, enslaved people made up forty-four percent of Tuscaloosa County and multiple neighboring counties had majority slave populations.³⁵

In 1840, the university granted the faculty the authority to purchase enslaved people and thereafter the faculty played a more active role in the management of the enslaved people at the university.³⁶ A July 1848 resolution from the faculty endorsed the sale of a university-owned slave for another slave demonstrating the professors' participation in the exchange of slaves on campus.³⁷ Entries from the Faculty Minutes from the 1840s and 1850s also indicate that the faculty had to approve the sale of the university slaves.³⁸ The trustees even assigned modern language professor George Benagh to travel to Virginia and spend \$7,000 on purchasing more enslaved people for the university in 1853.³⁹

Enslaved people had to carry out all the essential tasks vital to the operation of a plantation, and this rule extended to the university. Every morning, enslaved people swept the dormitories, made the beds of the students and faculty, exchanged dirty water for clean water, and made the fires which warmed every building on campus.⁴⁰ The university hired enslaved people solely for service in the dormitories and serving meals to students.⁴¹ Slaves were necessary for the university's operation throughout the year as evident from an order for a domestic slave which stipulated, "Their service during meals and also during vacations."⁴² Without the convenience of indoor heating and plumbing, routine tasks had to be done by human labor. Records from the university as well as historians show that these routine yet essential tasks always fell to the enslaved.⁴³

The enslaved also performed essential tasks outside the scope of domestic work or hard labor. Professor A. P. Barnard, who taught mathematics and natural philosophy, used an enslaved man named Sam for assistance in conducting experiments on multiple occasions when he could not hire other assistants.⁴⁴ Sam also operated a barber shop for students in the cellar of the Washington dormitory.⁴⁵ A faculty regulation passed in 1846 granted students the authority to command enslaved

³⁵ Edwin Hergesheimer, *Map showing the distribution of the slave population of the southern states of the United States Compiled from the census of*. Washington Henry S. Graham, 1861. Map.

³⁶ UALSC, Early University of Alabama Administrative Letters, Slave Labor Documents, Resolution to authorize servant hire for faculty at the University of Alabama, 1840, Image number u0006_0000001_0000059_0001.

³⁷ UALSC, Early University of Alabama Administrative Records, Resolution to authorize sale of slave, University of Alabama, July 14, 1848 image number u0006_0000001_0000061_0001.

³⁸ UALSC, Faculty Minutes, 1831-1854, Volume 3, 1838-1841, January 1, 1841; Volume 4, 1842-1854, February, 17, 1851.

³⁹ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 38.

⁴⁰ Sellers, "Student Life at the University of Alabama Before 1860," 280.

⁴¹ UALSC, Early University of Alabama Administrative Letters, Order for servant hire and boarding, Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama, 1842, image number u0006_0000001_0000053_001.

⁴² UALSC, Early University of Alabama Administrative Letters, Order for servant hire and boarding, Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama, 1842, image number u0006_0000001_0000053_001.

⁴³ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_0000900_0000378_0157.

⁴⁴ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 69-70.

⁴⁵ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 41.

people to carry out tasks and errands for them as long as these commands did not conflict with university rules.⁴⁶ The services rendered by the enslaved to the students even existed outside the scope of domestic chores: an enslaved man named Morgan was known to pimp out Professor Barnard's enslaved women to students.⁴⁷

The relationship between the enslaved and the whites on campus was another aspect of the slave society of the 1840s and 1850s. Both students and faculty asserted their dominance over the enslaved, as the utter subservience of the enslaved was a major element of a slave society. While the university faculty had authority over the students, every white person on campus had inherent authority over the university's enslaved people. Like most young men who attended college in the Antebellum South, the students at the University of Alabama often came from slave owning families and were accustomed to the subservience of the enslaved.⁴⁸ Students often exercised their authority over the enslaved even if their demands countered the demands of the faculty.⁴⁹

The idea of the mastery of students over the enslaved people on campus was not new during the height of the slave society; this dynamic had existed since the inception of the university. However, the period from 1841 up until the beginning of the Civil War is noteworthy in illustrating this dynamic for two reasons. First, as Sellers pointed out, the increasing number of enslaved people at the university meant more opportunities for students to demonstrate their dominance over the enslaved.⁵⁰ The other key reason is that the proportion of the student body which came from the major slave holding counties in the state increased over the years, which meant more of the student body came from backgrounds where they were accustomed (and expected) to demand obedience from enslaved people. In 1833, thirty-seven percent of the student body hailed from the Black Belt, the Central Alabama counties with the highest proportion of enslaved people where most of the state's cotton farming took place due to the dark, rich soil.⁵¹ By 1860, forty-seven percent of the student body came from these major slave holding counties in addition to students who came from counties in Mississippi and Texas with a majority enslaved population.⁵² In regard to Virginia institutions of higher learning before the Civil War, Oast contended the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary were the most similar in that they educated the men of elite families who were trying to establish their place in society, "Through the careful perseveration of their honor and exhibitions of their mastery over their inferior."⁵³ The University of Alabama served the same purpose and its student demographic trends reflected the growing importance of slave-driven agriculture in the state. As more of Alabama's economy came from the regions with a large slave population, so too did the university's student body and thus a student body with a background in subjugating enslaved people.

These factors culminated in an increase in the recorded incidents between students and the enslaved on campus. A major motivator for the students'

⁴⁶ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 236.

⁴⁷ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 4, Basil Manly Sr., 1848-1855, image number u0003_000900_0000380_0087.

⁴⁸ Oast, *Institutional Slavery*, 137.

⁴⁹ Oast, "Negotiating the Honor Culture," in *Slavery and the University*, 91-93.

⁵⁰ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 234.

⁵¹ UALSC, Catalogue of the officers and students of the University of Alabama, January 1833, image number u0002_0000024_0000001_009.

⁵² UALSC, Catalogue of the officers and students of the University of Alabama, 1860-1861, image number u0002_0000024_0000027_009.

⁵³ Oast, *Institutional Slavery*, 160.

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mistreatment of the enslaved comes from the concept of honor which played a very important role in southern society in the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ While honor influenced all levels of society in the Antebellum South, it was especially important for the young men of the upper class which made up much of the university's student body during this era. In addition to receiving an education, the college experience for boys in the Antebellum South was the time to learn the skills and behavior expected of men of the upper class, notably honor and prestige.⁵⁵ For these boys, establishing one's honor meant demonstrating one's superiority over those beneath him and in the context of the university, this meant exerting a racialized superiority over the enslaved people on campus.⁵⁶

This concept necessitated the use of violence in order to enforce one's will. Students often resorted to violence on the university's enslaved people to establish their own personal sense of honor as well as to display this honor to their peers.⁵⁷ Despite the faculty's warnings against wanton abuse, students continuously harassed and attacked the enslaved people on campus.⁵⁸ For example, in 1845, a bedridden student broke the arm of an enslaved man with a crutch because he deemed the man to be incapable of following his commands.⁵⁹

However, the students were not alone in employing barbaric punishment under the guise of honor. Manly whipped Sam because he had not cooperated with a man who had brought a shipment of coal to the university.⁶⁰ Believing Sam's misbehavior to be potentially disparaging for the university and himself, Manly punished Sam in front of the other faculty members in order to demonstrate his dominance over the enslaved man and to reconcile the damage to his reputation. Manly brought Sam in for a second set round of whippings as he believed the initial whippings had not served their purpose in breaking Sam down.⁶¹ The relationship between the master and the enslaved was a crucial component of the slave society and these examples illustrate the conduct and actions that students and faculty of the university thought appropriate in their society.⁶²

The Final Years, 1861-1865

Despite the destruction and upheaval of the Civil War, the faculty attempted to carry on the normal operations of the university to the best of their ability. The university assumed the role of the state's military academy with Confederate officers serving on the faculty as members of the "Military Department" alongside the chairs of the academic departments.⁶³ The student population (now referred to as the "Corps of Cadets") swelled to 137 in 1861, the largest number since the school's establishment.⁶⁴ The university continued to use slave labor and insuring ample slave labor remained a priority for the faculty, though this became more of a problem as the

⁵⁴ A. James Fuller, "I Whipped Him a Second Time, Very Severely" in *Slavery and the University*, 114-115.

⁵⁵ Oast, *Slavery and the University*, 90.

⁵⁶ Fuller, *Slavery and the University*, 118.

⁵⁷ Oast, *Slavery and the University*, 91-96.

⁵⁸ Sellers, "Student Life at the University of Alabama Before 1860," 290-291.

⁵⁹ Sellers, "Student Life at the University of Alabama Before 1860," 290-291.

⁶⁰ Fuller, *Slavery and the University*, 114-118.

⁶¹ Fuller, *Slavery and the University*, 114-118.

⁶² Berlin, "Societies with Slaves vs. Slave Societies."

⁶³ UALSC, Catalogue of the officers and students of the University of Alabama, 1860-1861, image number u0002_0000024_0000027_005.

⁶⁴ UALSC, Catalogue of the officers and students of the University of Alabama, 1860-1861, image number u0002_0000024_0000027_009.

war dragged on. The final years of slavery at the University of Alabama resembled the previous periods in some regards but the period was also marked by immense pressure caused by the war's attrition. Slave labor continued at the university until the day Union forces took Tuscaloosa on April 4, 1865, but cracks in the foundation of slavery were beginning to show well before the war concluded.

Correspondence from Manly's successor in 1855, President Landon Garland, and faculty showed that the hiring of slave labor continued throughout the war. On New Year's Day in 1863, the faculty approved a resolution to rent York, Wash, Lewis, Dan, and Sally from a woman named Mrs. Comegys. The rental terms would not seem out of the ordinary for a slave contract before the war: the resolution contains the details for the price and living arrangements for the enslaved people.⁶⁵ Like a typical agreement for renting enslaved people, the resolution states these enslaved people would begin work at the university in January and then would return to Mrs. Comegys in December of the same year.⁶⁶ By the fall of 1863, the circumstances regarding hiring slaves had changed. Garland cited, "The great difficulty and expense of feeding and clothing slaves," along with the university's inability to withdraw money from the bank for contract payments in a letter to a Mrs. Watson in October 1863.⁶⁷ Between the times of the January resolution and Garland's letter in October, the Confederacy had suffered two critical blows: the defeat at Gettysburg had eliminated the Confederacy's offensive capabilities and the capitulation at Vicksburg left the Union with total control of the Mississippi River. These defeats along with the continuous attrition of the Union blockade and mounting casualties only compounded the stress on the southern states.

The labor shortage situation would only worsen as the war progressed. With the Union Army threatening northern Mississippi, Garland wanted to build defensive fortifications for the university but found this to be infeasible due to the inability to find adequate labor. In a January 1864, letter to Alabama Governor T. H. Watts about this project, Garland explained that the impressment of laborers had been unsuccessful and that the university's only option was to hire enslaved men. However, Garland did not believe this to be an effective plan, bluntly writing, "As it was difficult to procure the labor by impressment—there is not the slightest hope of being able to procure it by hiring."⁶⁸ Just as trends with slavery at the university mirrored larger trends in the state, the inability to find enslaved people to hire late in the war was not unique to the university. Even at twice the daily rate the university was paying, the Confederate States government could not find any available enslaved people to hire in the area.⁶⁹

The labor shortage directly impacted the students as well. The university's shoemaker had been conscripted to military service, which left a crucial vacancy that could not be filled. Garland lamented in a letter to Governor Watts in March of 1864: "For a shoemaker. I have tried to procure one in this community, but one of neither color is to be hired. Our necessities are very great."⁷⁰ As demonstrated by the previous letter to the governor about constructing defenses for the university, the inability to hire enslaved people (both as laborers and for skilled work like shoemaking) was causing significant problems for the school. A letter from Garland to Confederate

⁶⁵ UALSC, University of Alabama Board of Trustees, Resolutions 1863, Records Box: 19809824-001, Folder: 27.

⁶⁶ UALSC, University of Alabama Board of Trustees, Resolutions 1863, Records Box: 19809824-001, Folder: 27.

⁶⁷ UALSC, Landon Cabell Garland Letters, Garland Letterbooks, vol. 2, 75.

⁶⁸ UALSC, Landon Cabell Garland Letters, Garland Letterbooks, vol. 2, 271-272.

⁶⁹ UALSC, Landon Cabell Garland Letters, Garland Letterbooks, vol. 2, 271-272.

⁷⁰ UALSC, Landon Cabell Garland Letters, Garland Letterbooks, vol. 2, 403-404.

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States officials a year later, in March 1865, revealed that much of the cadets were destitute, a stark contrast of the circumstances from the zenith of the slave society a decade earlier.⁷¹

The end of slavery at the University of Alabama came when Union soldiers took the city of Tuscaloosa on April 4, 1865. Despite the knowledge that Union forces were in the area, the university faculty continued to utilize slave labor as they ordered their enslaved people to hide silver, jewels, and family heirlooms.⁷² As the Union Army advanced into Tuscaloosa, President Garland ordered the drum corps, comprised of enslaved boys, to play the cadences to wake the students and notify them to prepare for battle. President Garland's final command to the university's enslaved people was to pack food and supplies for the student cadets as they prepared to meet the advancing Union soldiers. A battle between the Union Army and the University of Alabama cadets would never take place as President Garland later ordered the cadets to stand down.⁷³ With the Union's capture of Tuscaloosa, the school's decades long practice of slavery was over.

Conclusion

Slavery was a constant presence on the campus of the University of Alabama for over three decades, but it did not exist as a stagnant monolith. Slavery changed at the University of Alabama because it emulated changes in the state of Alabama. As agriculture driven by slavery began to dominate the state's economy, more of the state's elite and the university's student body came from the major slave holding counties of Central Alabama. These young men were from backgrounds where they expected subservience from enslaved people and they expected the same from the enslaved people at the university.⁷⁴

Slave labor originally supplemented wage labor but the state's growing enslaved population made acquiring slave labor easier and cheaper, which ultimately led to it becoming the primary labor source for the work that was necessary for the function of the university. Because enslaved people were becoming more prevalent in the area and could be held to harsher standards, the school reached a point where it could decrease its reliance on paid White laborers in favor of utilizing slave labor.⁷⁵ The state's enslaved population grew at an enormous rate: from 1830 to 1860, Alabama's enslaved population grew 270 percent and comprised nearly half of the state's total population by 1860.⁷⁶ This cheaper form of labor became increasingly useful for a growing campus. The university consisted of six professors and ninety-three students in 1833 but had grown to thirteen professors and cadet instructors with 137 students at the onset of the Civil War.⁷⁷

Even as the Confederacy collapsed in 1865, the University of Alabama utilized slave labor in some form with enslaved people working for the university in the final hours before Union troops seized Tuscaloosa.⁷⁸ The participation of

⁷¹ UALSC, Landon Cabell Garland Letters, Garland Letterbooks, vol. 3, 459.

⁷² Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 283-286.

⁷³ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 283-286.

⁷⁴ Oast, *Slavery and the University*, 89.

⁷⁵ UALSC, Manly Family Papers, Diary Number 2, Basil Manly Sr., 1834-1846, image number u0003_000900_0000378_0152.

⁷⁶ Atkins, *Alabama*, 112.

⁷⁷ UALSC, Catalogue of the officers and students of the University for Alabama, 1833, image numbers u0002_0000024_0000001_0004 and u0002_0000024_0000001_0009; UALSC, Catalogue of the officers and students of the University for Alabama, 1860-1861, image numbers u0002_0000024_0000027_0005 and u0002_0000024_0000027_0009.

⁷⁸ Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 283-286.

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American institutions of higher learning in the practice of slavery had been a continuous issue for academics of the time. Just as the Methodist Church was divided along regional boundaries over the issue of slavery, universities and colleges in the North and South disagreed over whether their respective schools should participate in the institution of slavery.⁷⁹

The defeat of the Confederacy and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 answered this question that had begun at the nation's oldest universities in the seventeenth century. For the University of Alabama, the relationship between school and the enslaved was substantial both for the operation and expansion of the university, as well as being an important factor that influenced the decision-making of the university's trustees and faculty. However, this relationship underwent important developments and alterations that were brought on by external factors and a changing university.

⁷⁹ Patrick Jamieson, "Making Their Case: Religion, Pedagogy, and the Slavery Question at Antebellum Emory College," in *Slavery and the University*, 101.

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