fully appreciated. In Warren County as elsewhere the founding of a mill by local planters and business leaders represented a high level of capital accumulation. More important, it signified a new approach toward investment. Capital formed in the agricultural sector of the economy was to be invested in manufacturing, rather than returned in its entirety to planting and supporting services. Mills like the one planned for Vicksburg also indicated a new approach to labor.

Mississippi's first textile mills opened in Natchez. All relied on slave labor. None lasted more than a few years. Wesson's Bankston operation employed white wage workers. It proved to be one of the South's most successful businesses. The combination of success and white wage labor was no matter of luck or coincidence. Wesson knew what he was doing. As historians have long known, the continued expansion of the plantation economy into new regions, as well as the intensification of production in older areas, created a great demand for slaves. During the 1850s the price of a prime field hand soared. So frustrated were planters with the apparent shortage of slaves that they talked seriously of reopening the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Incidents of smuggling captive Africans into the Deep South increased. Some Africans even landed at Vicksburg's auction house. However, the same process that created such a demand for slaves also pushed whites off the land and into towns and cities where they formed a pool of cheap labor. But so long as the unemployed caroused through city streets, refusing to seek or accept the patronage and authority of established leaders, neglecting their responsibilities as caretakers of their own families, fraternizing with slaves and free blacks, they flaunted, and hence weakened, the patriarchal order that was the basis of slave society.

Wesson's success lay in his use of free labor. Slaves were simply too expensive. "We use white labour," he explained, "because white is cheapest and really more efficient." But before he could begin hiring wage workers he had to explain to the planters whose cotton he would buy why they should not view his enterprise as a threat to slavery. He rested his case on his conviction that cotton manufacturing would bind poor whites to the slave plantation economy and bring them once again under patriarchal control. "It is a debatable question whether they [poor whites] are benefitted by the peculiar institution, or not." However, a "general system of Manufacturing would raise them above the manual labour performed by the Negro, and identify them with the institution, and make them the connecting link between the producer and the consumer." Wesson provided his workers and their families with regular preaching and Sunday schools to instruct them on the values of "industrious sobriety" and the "economy of time as well as money." Ultimately, "the very dregs of society," that unwanted and worrisome side-effect of slavery and plantation agriculture, would blossom into "a large and prosperous class of population." Wesson's financial success was undeni-
Notes

24. Asabel Gaylord to George Welles, November 29, 1851, Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection, box 2, folder 23, MDAH.

25. John Shannon, Jr., to Howard Morris, January 27, 1845, Crutcher-Shannon Family Papers, box 2E511, folder 1, NTC. Howard Morris to niece, December 6, 1851; Howard Morris to Marmaduke Shannon and Lavina Morris Shannon, December 5, 1852; Howard Morris to Lavina Morris Shannon, December 18, 1853, Crutcher-Shannon Papers, box 3, folder 28, MDAH.

26. Percentage of Rural Household Heads Present in 1860 but Not in 1850

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slaveholders</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonslaveholders</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landowners</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonlandowners</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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N = 359

Source: Study Data.

27. Study Data.

28. For wealth-holding patterns in Vicksburg see Appendix I.

29. Moore, Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom, 173.


33. Vicksburg Weekly Southern Sun, March 10, March 14, 1859.

34. Vicksburg Whig, September 13, 1855, January 22 and 25, September 19, October 7, 1856: November 20, 1857, March 10 and 17, September 29, 1858; March 21, 1860.


37. Vicksburg Weekly Sun, April 4, 1859, reported that 12 slaves, including 6 or 7 males aged 9 to 21 years, recently smuggled into the United States from Africa, were being held in Vicksburg by a seller who wanted $400 for each. None of the slaves spoke English. A week earlier the same paper reported that "sixteen Africans evidently 'fresh caught' passed through" Jackson "on their way to some plantation in Madison County." Weekly Sun, March 28, 1859. On February 28, 1859, the Weekly Sun ran the following notice: "Congo Negroes—We are constantly in receipt of letter from planters desiring us to inform them where they can purchase Congo Negroes. We haven't any of 'em—wish we had. But if those desiring a few will address a certain good looking gentlemen who formerly represented the county of Claiborne in the Legislature at Port Gibson, they can obtain information."

38. Moore, ed., "Textile Industry," 203, 204. At the Vicksburg Southern Commercial Convention, one man dared to propose the use of nonslave labor in fac-