

Marx E. Cohen and Clear Springs: Rethinking a Jewish Plantation Owner

An essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for graduation from the

Honors College at the College of Charleston

with a Bachelor of Arts in

History

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May 2013

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“In the olden time, when he possessed wealth and comfort, his hospitality was unbounded, and many are the happy memories of the joyous days passed in his genial home in Charleston, or at his pleasant country house at Clear Springs!”

Remarks by Charles H. Moise at the Funeral of Marx Edwin Cohen.
Sumter, South Carolina.
March 7, 1882.



Figure 1: Marx E. Cohen. Source: “A Portion of the People Online Exhibition.”

Acknowledgements

This monograph represents the culmination of my undergraduate studies with the Honors College at the College of Charleston. This has been a truly challenging research project and as such, a great many thanks are in order. I am deeply appreciative of all the help I have received from the staff and faculty at the College of Charleston Special Collections Department, the Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance Office, the College of Charleston Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, the Charleston County Public Library, the South Carolina Historical Society, the College of Charleston History Department, and the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library. I also wish to thank Henry Fulmer, Kate Boyd, and the rest of the Manuscripts Division at the South Caroliniana Library for helping me obtain a microfilm copy of the original Clear Springs plantation records. I also owe a special debt to Harlan Greene for his invaluable lessons in reading Marx's Cohen's handwriting. Dale Rosengarten and Adam Mendelsohn have been truly superlative advisors throughout the research, writing, and editing process—this essay would not have been possible without their steadfast guidance and I thank them both for all their help. Jill Conway and Maria Richardson, who have been my advisors throughout college, also provided me with invaluable advice and encouragement along the way. But most importantly of all, I wish to thank my parents, Andrew and Deborah, for always believing in me.

Introduction

The study of Southern Jewish history is a relatively new subject of academic enquiry. Fifty years ago, little scholarship existed on the topic. Many Americans think of the Northeast as the epicenter of American Jewish life, and it seems as if historians were for a time also of this mindset in their assessment of the Jewish American experience. However, since the founding of

the Southern Jewish Historical Society in 1976, new scholarship on the Southern Jew not only has germinated but continues to grow as scholars have begun asking important questions in their attempts to assess Southern Jewish history. What is distinct about southern Jewish life and how has it changed over time? How and why does it differ from other regions of the country? How has the South shaped Jews and how have Jews shaped the South? Though the answers to such questions are elusive, Eliza McGraw, author of “An ‘Intense Heritage’: Southern Jewishness in Literature and Film,” reminds us that being Jewish in the South is not “merely plural (and oxymoronic).”¹ Rather, Jews in the South have forged a “hybrid identity” which is a unique confluence of two separate worldviews.² Southern Jewish identity is a unique aspect of both Jewish and Southern life and this alone makes its study worthwhile.

As scholar Mark Bauman notes, “American Jewish history is not New York City Jewish history writ large.”³ To fully explicate the breadth of the American Jewish experience, the skilled historian cannot concentrate on Hollywood or the large urban centers of the Northeast where some of America’s more eminent, wealthy, or visible Jews live. Though smaller in numbers than their Northern counterparts, Southern Jews have made important contributions to the region’s society, economy, politics, intellectual movements, and arts. All Jews, regardless of their communities’ numbers or location have collectively contributed to the totality of what we may today call American Jewish history. This was what Jacob Rader Marcus meant when he said that

¹ Mark I Greenberg, “One Religion, Different Worlds: Sephardic and Ashkenazi Immigrants in Eighteenth-Century Savannah,” in *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil* ed. Marcie Cohen Ferris et al. (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2006), 2.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

a full and accurate telling of American Jewish history can only be accomplished by looking at the “the horizontal spread of the many” as opposed to “the eminence of a few.”⁴

It was my intention to more fully understand what Marcus called the “spread of the many” when I discovered the plantation records of Marx E. Cohen at the Manuscripts Division at the South Caroliniana Library. Cohen was one of only a few Jewish plantation owners in the antebellum South and I had hoped to use these records to create a microhistory of Clear Springs, his rice plantation on the Ashley River roughly 15 miles outside Charleston. I had hoped to explore the life and times of Cohen, in order to add his life story to a large corpus of literature on Lowcountry rice planters. To have done so would have been a historiographical milestone because no one has ever attempted to produce a full biography of a Jewish planter. However, as is usually the case with historical scholarship, the more I researched the plantation records, the more I realized that both I and other historians had made unfounded assumptions in our approach to examining Cohen. My analysis of the Clear Springs records revealed a disparity between the realities of Marx Cohen’s management of the plantation and the way in which some historians have portrayed it. While most historians, amateur and scholarly alike, have seen fit to call Marx Cohen a “rice planter,” my research has lead me to conclude that this title would be misleading. Like other historians, I had succumbed all too easily to the assumption that Cohen must have grown rice if he owned a rice plantation. Yet it is the historian’s duty to question basic assumptions. This essay will show that while Cohen, did own a rice plantation, life on his plantation did not conform to the prototypical economic pattern of a Charleston rice plantation.

⁴ Gary P. Zola, “Why Study Southern Jewish History?” *Southern Jewish History: Journal Of The Southern Jewish Historical Society* Vol. 1 (1998): 5.

Instead he generated income from a variety of economic activities, primarily the production and sale of bricks and lumber, but seem to have grown little rice.⁵

This finding is at odds with assumptions long made by historians who have written about Southern Jewish life in the antebellum period. Historian Clive Webb writes in his book, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights*, that in seeking to understand more about Jews as slave owners and planters,

it is important to stress the paucity and poor quality of the sources. The methodological problems posed to the scholar are most clearly illustrated by the plantation records of Marx E. Cohen. Cohen owned one thousand acres on the Ashley River in South Carolina, fourteen miles from the city of Charleston. Although his records are the most extensive bequeathed by any Jewish slaveholder, they are singularly unenlightening.⁶

While I believe this essay will show that Cohen's plantation records are in fact quite enlightening, Webb nevertheless is accurate in his assessment of the primary sources left behind by Jewish planters. Aside from various deeds and wills which show us that Jews did indeed own plantations in the Old South, there is little primary source material to help us understand the ways in which Jewish-owned plantations were operated on a day to day basis. The dominant narrative of Southern Jewish history is one of acceptance and inclusion of Jews in Southern society. One need not look beyond the title of some of the best-known books on Southern Jewish history to witness this trend. Rosengarten and Rosengarten's *A Portion of the People*, Hagy's *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston*, Ferris and Greenberg's *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil*, and Rosen's *The Jewish Confederates* all bear witness to this dominant theme, and rightly so. But because Jews were so highly integrated into Southern

⁵ This thesis is based solely upon my understanding of the available plantation records. It is quite plausible that Cohen may have kept other records that documented his rice growing operation. However, until such records are discovered, my thesis will remain defensible.

⁶ Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 2.

Society, some historians may have been tempted to assume too much. What few descriptions there are of Marx Cohen all seem to convey the same message: that he was a planter who used his plantation to produce large quantities of cash crops. Isaac Marken's *The Hebrews in America: A Series of Biographical Sketches* describes Cohen as "an extensive planter."⁷ Korn's *Jewry and the Civil War* lists Marx Cohen as one of the South's only Jewish planters.⁸ Elzas's *The Jews of South Carolina* describes Cohen as "a planter, who lived near Charleston."⁹ One website even claims that Cohen "produced about six to eight 550-pound bales cotton each year" which is totally unsubstantiated.¹⁰ Such assessments of Cohen could not have been based on a critical analysis of the extant Cohen plantation records. Instead, these historians have in all probability assumed that because Cohen lists himself as a planter in the Charleston City Directories of 1849 and 1855, as well as in a national census conducted in 1860, that Cohen must have in fact planted for a living.¹¹ If the Cohen plantation records are as Rosen has said, the most "extensive" historians have at their disposal; it may be worth reevaluating this assumption.

Using plantation to records to elucidate the life and times of antebellum plantation owners is by no means unprecedented. *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter*, *The South Carolina Rice Plantation as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F.W Allston*, and *Life and Labor on Argyle Island*, to name just a few examples, are all excellent studies which have done just

⁷ Isaac Markins, *The Hebrews in America: a Series of Historical and Biographical Sketches* (New York: Published by the Author, 1888), 60.

⁸ Betram Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), xxiv.

⁹ Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina from the Earliest Times to Present Day* (Spartanburg: Reprint Co., 1974), 188.

¹⁰ Richard N. Côté, "The Marx E. Cohen House, c. 1845," last modified September 28, 2007, <http://www.bookdoctor.com/85king.html>

¹¹ John Price Radford, "Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure in Charleston, South Carolina, 1860—1880" (PhD diss., Clark University, 1974), 330 and James William Hagy, *Directories for the city of Charleston, South Carolina: for the years 1849, 1852, and 1855* (Baltimore: Clearfield, 1998), 9 and 124.

that. However, to the knowledge of myself and Dr. Dale Rosengarten, my Bachelor's Essay advisor, no one has yet attempted to use primary sources in the form of plantation records to create a microhistory of a Jewish planter. Though Cohen's plantation journals have sat on the shelves of the South Caroliniana Library Manuscript Division for more than 15 years, no one to my knowledge has closely analyzed these records for the purposes of researching a book, scholarly article, or dissertation. This essay is, in short, an unprecedented biographical sketch of a Jewish plantation owner.

Though my research will be useful to students of plantation life and Southern Jewish history, it is primarily intended as a contextual guide to the plantation records on which the essay is based. According to Mr. Henry G. Fulmer, Director of the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, the Cohen plantation records are in the process of being digitized for online viewing. It is my hope that my essay will also be made available online to add clarity and depth to the records. Besides this essay, I have created metadata (for the first of the three volumes) to accompany scans of the records, which provides online viewers a short description of the contents of each journal page. Cohen's handwriting is inscrutable, to say the least, and having a general idea of the contents of each page should make reading the journal easier for those unfamiliar with nineteenth century diction and agricultural colloquialisms. The first volume of Cohen's journal can be viewed at Appendix A at the end of the essay.

So what exactly makes up the plantation records left by Cohen? The archivists at the South Caroliniana Library saw fit to name these records a "journal," which had more to do with their structure (daily entries) than with the records' content. One who undertakes the reading of a journal might expect something in the way of a diary and anticipate learning about the author's interior feelings and reflections about friends, family, current events, etc. Sadly, for those

interested in understanding Cohen's personal life, the Clear Springs records are empty of such information. There is nothing to indicate how Cohen may have felt about the battle to reform Charleston's Hebrew synagogue, Southern secessionism, and his participation in that peculiar institution known as slavery. Nonetheless, the plantation records are rich in important information for historians. We might appropriately call the first volume of the plantation records (1840—1861) Cohen's "Day Book," wherein he records the day-to-day proceedings of running the plantation. We learn such details as how much work a given number of slaves were able to accomplish in a single day, what Cohen fed and provided to his slaves, if a slave's age or gender affected his or her daily responsibilities, the wages Cohen paid to his overseer, the type of livestock he owned, the crops he grew, as well a daily weather report. The second volume (1840—1864) of the plantation records are more like an accountant's ledger than they are journals. They tell us about Cohen's customers (buyers of bricks and timber), some of his financial investments, and the prices and volume of commodities he sold. The third volume (1861) has fewer but longer narrative entries regarding daily life and activities on the plantation. Throughout the essay, I shall cite my own metadata when appropriate.

Why were there so few Jewish Plantation Owners?

While Jewish plantation owners were rare in the Old South, it is unsurprising that South Carolina was home to a substantial number, including but not limited to Marx E. Cohen, his brother David Cohen, Nathan Nathans, Jacob Barrett, Solomon Cohen, Isaac Dacosta, Myer Jacobs, Edward Levy, Isaac Lyons, Samuel Minks, Isaiah Moses, and Moses Winstock.¹² The South in general offered Jews a high degree of social mobility and there is probably no better

¹² Dale Rosengarten, "Plantation Life," in *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*, ed. Theodore Rosengarten, et al. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 101.

example of this than in the city of Charleston.¹³ Some historians, such as Robert Rosen, would even go so far as to argue that there was less anti-Semitism in the South compared to the North.¹⁴ The Jews of Charleston were the first Jews in modern Western history to achieve full citizenship and male suffrage (pending land ownership), or be permitted to serve in public office.¹⁵ But if this were the case, why were there not more Jewish planters in Charleston, or the South in general?

There are both sociological and economic factors that can explain why, in proportion to their gentile neighbors, so few Jews reached the status of plantation owner. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the majority of Jews in America were first or second generation immigrants, hailing from Europe and the West Indies. In most of Europe Jews had not been allowed to own land and consequently came to the United States with very little experience in agriculture.¹⁶ Even if immigrants had come to America with ample planting experience, they were still usually too poor to obtain plantations. Upon moving to the South, the average Jew began his life as an American as a peddler or storekeeper, and would not have had the considerable wealth required to own land and a great number of slaves.¹⁷ Furthermore, because many Jews made a living as travelling peddlers, some were averse to owning land and being tied down to one region of the country.

Aside from poverty, Jews were further limited from planting do to their general preference for mercantile professions in urban areas. Jews favored cities where they could “share

¹³ James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: the Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 1.

¹⁴ Robert Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 34.

¹⁵ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 29.

¹⁶ Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, xxiii.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, xxiii.

each other's fellowship and find support in each other's presence."¹⁸ If Jews desired to remain true to their faith, they needed to live in proximity to synagogues, rabbis, and purveyors of kosher foods, which would not have been accessible if they dwelled on isolated rural plantations. It was also important for Jewish communities to be centered around a town in order to make sure young Jews had the opportunity to marry within the faith. Even so, Jews and Gentiles were probably equally drawn to the lure of planting and the social prestige that came with it: those Jews who could afford to buy plantations or own large numbers of slaves did so.¹⁹

Jews As Slave Owners

Historians and laymen alike have long been intrigued by the paradoxical idea of Jewish slave masters. The irony of an ethnic group escaping enslavement in biblical Egypt then going on to own slaves in the antebellum South is lost on few. Did the Jew's participation in slavery differ from that of southern gentiles? The short answer is no. Studies of southern Jewry all tend to trace "a pattern of almost complete conformity to slave society in the Old South on the part of its Jewish citizens. They participated in the buying, owning, and selling of slaves, and their exploitation, along with their neighbors."²⁰ Slavery was inexorably tied to southern culture, economics, and politics. Because Jews quite successfully assimilated into the South, slavery was very much a part of their lives. All Southern Jews with the means to do so, had "every reason to become slave-owners."²¹ Most Jews living below the Mason Dixon line accepted the Southern way of life, including its code of honor, dueling, slavery, and notions about race and state's

¹⁸ Ibid, xxiii.

¹⁹ Rosengarten, "Plantation Life," 100.

²⁰ Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, xlvii.

²¹ Ibid, xxv.

rights.²² Perhaps Southern Jew Oscar Straus put it best when he wrote in his memoirs that “As a boy brought up in the South I never questioned the rights or wrongs of slavery. Its existence I regarded as a matter of course, as most other customs or institutions.”²³ According to a national census conducted in 1820, 96 of the 109 Jewish families of Charleston owned at least one slave.²⁴ In short, the only constraints limiting Jewish ownership of slaves came from financial circumstance; with a few notable exceptions, most Jewish Southerners found nothing incompatible about being a Jew and a slaveholder.

Today some Jews may be embarrassed or surprised by the acquiescence of Southern Jews in the institution of slavery. However, to argue that Jews only partook in slavery because they wished to remain inconspicuous or avoid persecution would be erroneous. According to historian Bertram Korn, there is simply “no iota of evidence...which would lead us to believe that these Jews gave conscious support of the slave system out of fear of arousing anti-Jewish prejudice.”²⁵ Many antebellum Southern Jews were recent immigrants, peddlers, and merchants whose livelihood depended on amicable relations with gentile customers. Their acceptance of slavery had much less to do with fear of discrimination than it did with simply wanting to fit in and prosper in their new homes.²⁶ After all, many Jews had immigrated from societies where there were a variety of forms of bonded labor; their own religious tradition sanctioned the practice in those countries too.

²² Rosen N Rosen, “Jewish Confederates” in *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil* ed. Marcie Cohen Ferris et al. (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2006), 110.

²³ Quoted in Ferris, *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil*, 110.

²⁴ Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, xxvi.

²⁵ Ibid, liv.

²⁶ Ibid, liv.

There is also the theory of white solidarity to consider. Southern society fostered a rigid caste system that created a hierarchy of power between the races, not on religious grounds.²⁷ In the nineteenth century, Jews were for all intents and purposes considered white, which probably accounts for the markedly higher social and political status achieved by Southern Jews when compared to Northern Jews.²⁸ In other words, “the road to social and economic advancement and acceptance for many Jews was smoothed by the ever-present race distinction which imputed superiority to all whites.”²⁹ While it may be puzzling that Jews owned slaves, given their biblical experience in Egypt, it is more ironic, I think, that the atmosphere of equality enjoyed by Southern Jews came from their willingness to accept the inferiority of the black slaves they owned.

Portrait of a Jewish Plantation Master

Marx Cohen was born on July 25, 1810 and became a plantation master the same way that most others did in the nineteenth century: by being born into a family of exceptional wealth. Cohen’s father, Mordecai Cohen (1763—1848), was one of the richest men in all of South Carolina.³⁰ Born in 1763 in Zamosc Poland, Mordecai Cohen came to the United States in 1788.³¹ While it is unclear where he first arrived, the first record of him in South Carolina was a certificate of him having taken an oath of allegiance to the United States.³² Though poor at first, Mordecai Cohen’s hard work propelled him from peddler, to shop keeper, to merchant, and

²⁷ Ibid, liv.

²⁸ Ibid, liv.

²⁹ Ibid, lv.

³⁰ Theodore Rosengarten and Dale Rosengarten, “First Families” in *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*, ed. Theodore Rosengarten, et al. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 81 and Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 45

³¹ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 25.

³² Ibid, 194.

finally a wealthy landowner.³³ Besides his Ashley River plantation, the senior Cohen had impressive land holdings in downtown Charleston, upstate South Carolina, and even in North Carolina.³⁴ At the age of 32, Mordecai married a woman named Leah Lazarus, the eldest daughter from a respectable Sephardic family.³⁵ As he rose to prominence, Mordecai Cohen served as commissioner of the Charleston Poor House and Orphan House, commissioner of markets, and director of the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad. According to a national census conducted in 1820, Cohen had one of the largest slave holdings of any Southern Jew.³⁶ When General Lafayette visited Charleston in 1825, the gold plate and silver used at the banquet in his honor was borrowed from the Cohen household.³⁷ Such was the affluence of the Cohen family that in remarks made at Marx Cohen's funeral, he is described as a man "born to fortune" and "reared in luxury."³⁸ While few Jewish immigrants ever reached the same level of prosperity and affluence as Mordecai Cohen, the fact that he was able to do so is still telling; Jews were free to rise to nearly the highest strata of Southern Society.

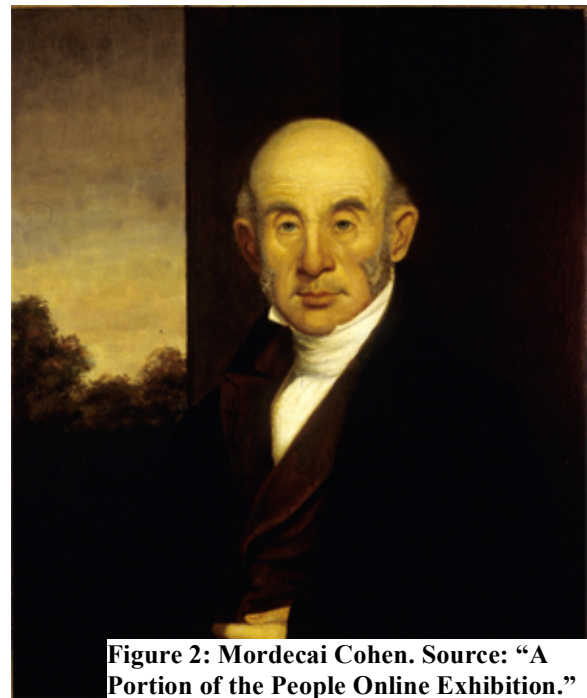


Figure 2: Mordecai Cohen. Source: "A Portion of the People Online Exhibition."

³³ Rosengarten and Rosengarten, "First Families," 81.

³⁴ Ibid, 81.

³⁵ Ibid, 81.

³⁶ Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, xxvi.

³⁷ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 194.

³⁸ Mr. Charles H. Möise, "Remarks at the Funeral of Mr. Marx E. Cohen," *The Watchman and Southron*, March 7, 1882. Accessed April 20, 2013.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn93067846/1882-03-07/ed-1/seq-3/>

Marx Cohen was educated at the University of Glasgow in Scotland and married Armida Harby (1820—1895), the daughter of the famed intellectual Isaac Harby, on November 14, 1838.³⁹ Together with Armida, Marx sired four daughters and one son, Marx Cohen Junior, who fought and died in the Civil War. Though only a third generation American and a dentist by trade, Marx Junior was a proud southerner who enlisted in the Confederate cavalry early on in the war.⁴⁰ Had Marx Junior sought to avoid combat, he could have called upon the “twenty-negro law,” which permitted families to retain an extra white man for every twenty slaves they owned.⁴¹ Yet this was not the case and by 1864, Cohen had made his way to Hart’s artillery company, which served in Hampton’s cavalry brigade.⁴² Marx Junior’s demise was a tragic one. Though he left a duel with another Confederate soldier unscathed on the morning of March 19, 1865, he was killed by artillery fire that same day at the Battle of Bentonville, the last major battle of the Civil War.⁴³ Marx Junior’s participation in the tradition of dueling along with his willingness to fight for the Southern cause, show that, like other Jewish Confederates, he considered himself as much a part of Southern society as any other upper class white person.

The same could be said of another of Marx E. Cohen’s children, his daughter Leah Cohen (1849—1918). But while Marx Junior displayed his devotion to the South on the battlefield with saber and pistol, Leah used her pen on paper. Like other young women of her status, she was educated at home by both her family and private tutors.⁴⁴ The Cohen family was rife with literary

³⁹ Malcom H. Stern, *First American Jewish Families; 600 Genealogies, 1654—1988* (Baltimore: Ottenheimer Publishers, 1991), 93.

⁴⁰ Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 314.

⁴¹ James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: southern planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Norton, 1977) 47.

⁴² Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 314.

⁴³ Ibid, 314.

⁴⁴ Nancy Baker Jones, "HARBY, LEE COHEN," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Accessed April 20, 2013. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fhaem>

role models for the young Leah. Her aunt Octavia Harby Moses and great aunt Caroline de Litchfield Harby both were poets and her older sister, Carolina Cohen, wrote for newspapers, magazines, and Jewish periodicals.⁴⁵ In 1869, Leah married her cousin John de la Motta Harby and the couple moved to Texas, where Leah found the subject matter for her more historical works. The American Historical Association (AHA) published her articles “The Earliest Texans” and “The Tejas: Their Habits, Government, and Superstitions” in the *AHA Annual Report* for 1891 and 1894, respectively.⁴⁶ Her article “City of a Prince,” an account of the founding of the German community of New Braunfels, Texas, appeared in the *Magazine of American History* in 1888. But Leah Cohen is no doubt remembered best for her composition of “Flag Song of Texas,” composed for a contest sponsored by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and which later became the official flag song of Texas. To understand Leah’s love of her heritage, one need look no further than the Victorian lyrics of her “Flag Song”

*Oh, prairie breeze, blow sweet and pure,
And, Southern sun, shine bright
To bless our flag wher'er may gleam
Its single star of light;
But should thy sky grow dark with wrath,
The Tempest burst and rave,
It still shall float undauntedly—
The standard of the brave!*⁴⁷

Leah was no doubt a proud American and Confederate; her participation in the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the Confederacy, along with her devotion to the historical societies of Texas, New York, and South Carolina, as well as to the AHA, affirms

⁴⁵ Henry, Mary Ellen. "Leah Cohen Harby." *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, Jewish Women's Archive, Accessed April 20, 2013, last modified March 1, 2009. <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/harby-leah-cohen>

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Davis Foute Eagleton, *Writers and Writings of Texas* (New York: Boardway Publishing Company, 1913), 358.

her commitment to celebrating the present through understanding the past. While Leah Cohen is best known for her poetry and verses, she was also considered one of America's earliest feminists.⁴⁸ Her essay "On Women and Their Possibilities" advised Jewish women to become educated and self-reliant, and she used Sorosis, a women's club in New York City, as a venue for the promotion of the intellectual freedom of women.⁴⁹ The life and times of Leah Cohen epitomize not only the extent to which Southern society welcomed Jews but also the impact Jews, in turn, had upon the South.

Aside from Judah P. Benjamin, there is perhaps no Southern Jew more well known to posterity than Marx Cohen's father-in-law, Isaac Harby (1788—1828). Isaac Harby was the intellectual backbone of the Reformed Society of Israelites, the first formalized effort to reform Judaism in of North America.⁵⁰ Before turning his attention to reforming Judaism, Harby was an editor and newspaper publisher, a playwright, an educator, and a respected political and social commentator at a time when Charleston was one of America's most important cultural centers.⁵¹ Gary Zola's biography of Harby describes him as "a man who was one of the most distinguished publicist, litterateurs, journalists, and critics of...American history."⁵² Though Isaac Harby and Marx Cohen may have never met, Cohen in small part contributed to the reforms that Harby had instigated. On July 26, 1840, members of Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) synagogue voted on whether or not to install an organ in the temple. Though seemingly trivial, such a reform would have broken with over a millennia of Jewish tradition because most rabbis believed that the destruction of the First Temple warranted the removal of joy from religious

⁴⁸ Henry, "Leah Cohen Harby."

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Gary Phillip Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788- 1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1994), xi.

⁵¹ Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston*, xii.

⁵² Ibid, xi.

services. It was believed that as long as Jews remained in exile, they should not play music in synagogue.⁵³ Nevertheless, the proposal to install the organ passed by a vote of 46 to 40 with Marx Cohen and his father Mordecai both voting in favor of the “Organ Party.”⁵⁴

While Marx Cohen did vote to reform KKBE’s services, it may not be appropriate to call him a spiritual person. The remarks by Mr. Charles H. Möise at Marx Cohen’s funeral, reprinted in an issue of *The Watchman and Southron* newspaper on March 7, 1882 leave very little in this regard to the imagination. “He was not,” said Möise, “what we call a religious man. He did not pretend to sentiments which he did not feel...in addition to the fine qualities of head and heart which he possessed, a pious faith was not be vouchsafed to him.”⁵⁵ While his voting record at KKBE may suggest that Cohen, like Isaac Harby and the other reformers, wanted to make Judaism more relevant to life in antebellum Charleston, his obituary indicates Cohen was anything but a religious-minded man.⁵⁶

Marx Cohen acquired Clear Springs from his father in a deed of gift dated October 23, 1833 (see Appendix C). According to the deed, Clear Springs contained 673 acres of forested highlands, 484 acres of rice fields, 28 acres of salt march, and 26 acres of freshwater swamp.⁵⁷ Along with land, the senior Cohen also gave his son a score of slaves, including two unnamed infants priced at \$100 each, and Sam, who presumably had some special skill set, valued at \$350. The value of the other enslaved individuals fell somewhere between these two figures. Though Clear Springs was technically a rice plantation, growing rice hardly sums up the plantation’s

⁵³ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 243.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 271 and 243.

⁵⁵ Möise, “Remarks at the Funeral of Marx E. Cohen.”

⁵⁶ It is worth noting that Temple Sinai in Sumter was historically founded as a reform synagogue in 1895. It is therefore most unlikely that Möise was an Orthodox Jew passing judgments on Cohen for his adherence to the reform movement in Charleston.

⁵⁷ Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance. Deeds of Gift. Unit E 10: pages 384-386. Dated October 23, 1833.

various activities; Cohen also operated a substantial brick and timber business at it his plantation as well.

Clear Springs produced subsistence crops and livestock, which Cohen principally used to sustain his labor force, rather than take to market. Field hands at Clear Springs grew small quantities of peas, white corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and, of course, rice.⁵⁸ It was common for rice planters to use a portion of their land to grow subsistence crops. Because tidal river plantations are geographically spread out an even distance from one another along a river, rather than clustered together in a town, their geographic constraints necessitated that they evolve into self-sufficient institutions.⁵⁹ Cohen raised dairy cattle, hogs, sheep and poultry of both common and exotic varieties.⁶⁰ Since Cohen's book keeping never mentions the sale of this livestock, one can safely assume it was meant for household consumption.⁶¹ The ample amount of bacon that Cohen distributed to his slaves supports this conclusion as well.⁶²

Cohen's plantation records reveal that, like most rice plantation owners, he organized his slaves along the so called "task system" of labor. Most southern planters used gang labor to grow cotton, tobacco, and sugar while the task system was specific to the Lowcountry's cultivation of rice and provision food crops.⁶³ While some variations exist, the gang system generally was characterized by a small group of people working in unison under the supervision of a taskmaster or overseer. Slaves finished a day's work and returned to their living quarters only after being

⁵⁸ See Marx E. Cohen, *Plantation Records*, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. 1840—1868. Volume I.

⁵⁹ Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 131.

⁶⁰ See Cohen, *Plantation Records*, Volume I.

⁶¹ See Cohen, *Plantation Records*, Volume II.

⁶² See Cohen *Plantation Records*, Volume I.

⁶³ Leigh Ann Pruneau, "All the Time is Work Time: Gender and the Task System on Antebellum Lowcountry Rice Plantations" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1977), 28.

given explicit permission to do so. The task system, on the other hand, involved slaves working on individual tasks with little or no supervision; if a slave finished his or her task(s) early in the day, then he or she may have had some measure of free time to hunt, fish, craft, cultivate a garden, cook, sew, care for children, or socialize. Why the task system became tradition in South Carolina and Georgia rice plantations but nowhere else remains a subject of debate.⁶⁴ The most probable explanation is that because a single slave could attend to the needs of many more acres of rice than say, sugar or cotton, planters willingly developed social and labor customs which maximized rice production, even at the risk of losing a degree of control over the enslaved.⁶⁵ The contrast between these two methods of labor organization has led some historical studies of the task system to be “celebratory in nature,” arguing that the task system enhanced a field hand’s control over his or her own day-to-day life and that this made it advantageous to be enslaved on a rice plantation.⁶⁶ This argument is a most dubious one. Leigh A. Pruneau’s dissertation, “All the Time is Work Time: Gender and the Task System on Antebellum Lowcountry Rice Plantation,” does a thorough job of explaining how and why the task system “contributed to the development of a far more complex, exploitative, and multifaceted” labor system than has been previously supposed by historians.⁶⁷ Pruneau argues that while some slaves could and did finish their daily tasks early enough in the day to pursue their own interests, it does not necessarily mean that to earn such time was easy, routine, or simply a matter of individual motivation as implied by the accounts of some planters.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Pruneau, “All the Time is Work Time,” 40.

⁶⁵ William DusiBerre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery In The American Rice Swamps*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 180.

⁶⁶ Pruneau, “All the Time is Work Time,” 12.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 103.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 102.

Cohen's plantation day-book offers revealing records of the task system at work. In a given day, his field hands undertook a variety of tasks without close supervision. For example, on November 15, 1840, Cohen's workers split into separate groups to make bricks, cut wood, and tend to potatoes.⁶⁹ Based on the Clear Springs records, it would seem unlikely that Cohen's slaves had enough free time to grow their own crops or make their own clothes. If this were the case, Cohen would probably have been less preoccupied with feeding and clothing the field hands himself.⁷⁰ Indeed, Cohen was also a typical master in that he provided his slaves consistent rations at fixed intervals of time.⁷¹ Each week, Cohen provided some variety of potatoes, fish, tobacco, bacon, rice, and corn to his field hands. The amounts of each seem to have been based upon need, rather than productivity. For example, in one tallying of rations, Cohen gave more potatoes to women with children than he did to men, even though the men had been more productive than the mothers at cutting wood during the prior week.⁷² Clear Springs was also an archetypal rice plantation come Christmas time. Though Cohen was Jewish, rice planter tradition dictated that Christmas day was the slave's one true break from work and Clear Springs was no exception.⁷³ Cohen's slaves, in all probability, very much looked forward to their annual Christmas "play day."⁷⁴

Cohen's plantation records also lend insight into the study of gender among rice slaves. One might have expected that because growing rice was so labor intensive, women would have been spared from this strenuous work. This, however, was not the case. Gender played a role in

⁶⁹ Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume I, 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 126.

⁷¹ Roger L. Ransom, *One kind of freedom: the economic consequences of emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 57.

⁷² Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume I, 53.

⁷³ Dusiinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 159.

⁷⁴ Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume I, 11.

the assignment of certain occupations among the enslaved. Only women were nurses and only men were taskmasters, but both men and women could be field hands. Once a field hand, a slave's physical condition and age had far more to do with the amount of labor he or she performed in a given day than gender.⁷⁵ Some scholars believe that this labor practice was in part developed by the enslaved brought to the South from West Africa, where rice cultivation also heavily relied on female labor.⁷⁶ Unless pregnant, women were expected not only to do the same tasks as men, but also finish in the same amount of time as the men.⁷⁷ In a survey of sixteen rice plantations, eleven reported that eighty percent or more of their "prime field hands," (those fit for a full days work) were women.⁷⁸ The sort of archival records required to either refute or sustain conjectures on gender on the rice plantation are rare, but the Clear Springs records are superlative in this regard. At Clear Springs, Cohen and his slave drivers usually had field hands perform the same task (typically cutting wood or clearing land), separated by gender. It is also evident that Cohen gave his slaves the same tools to complete their tasks, regardless of gender, further demonstrating that men and women had the same kinds of labor assignments.⁷⁹ It also seems that some women on Clear Springs were capable of working as efficiently as men. For example, two slaves named Penny and Edward both took a day to cut eighteen cords of wood.⁸⁰ In another instance, a female slave named Patty cut thirty-six cords of wood the same day a male named Bob cut only thirty-four cords.⁸¹ In short, Cohen's plantation records give credence to

⁷⁵ Pruneau, "All the Time is Work Time," 64.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 35.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 64.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 65.

⁷⁹ Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume I, 30.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 30.

⁸¹ Ibid, 40.

Pruneau's assertion that "on any given day, the labor of field women drove the engine of most Lowcountry rice plantations."⁸²

Cohen's plantation records also shed light on the role of white overseers on rice plantations. Most rice plantations relied on a strict hierarchy of management. At the top of the chain of command was the planter himself, followed by the white overseer, then the colored taskmaster, and finally, at the bottom, numerous field hands.⁸³ An overseer on a Lowcountry rice plantation had many responsibilities: he had to exercise sound judgment in the speed of rice milling, manage adjusting the rice fields' water levels, plant at the right time, and anticipate floods.⁸⁴ Rice planters were a wealthy contingent, but it seems that the antebellum supply of sound overseers fell far short of their demand.⁸⁵ Finding an overseer worth his salt was no easy task and Cohen's plantation records bear this out. On May 24, 1841, Cohen hired a "Mr. Martin" to be his overseer through November 24, at a rate of eleven dollars per month.⁸⁶ Mr. Martin was not rehired. In fact, Cohen never again hired a white overseer. Perhaps Cohen did not think an overseer was really worth the cost, or maybe Mr. Martin's "bad management" of the field hands soured Cohen's view of overseers in general.⁸⁷ In any case, even if one assumed Cohen could have afforded an overseer, most planters considered a ratio of one overseer to fifty slaves satisfactory. It is not then surprising that Cohen never hired a successor to Mr. Martin, given that Cohen only kept about twenty-five field hands at Clear Springs.⁸⁸

⁸² Pruneau, "All the Time is Work Time," 70.

⁸³ David Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting in the South Carolina low country* (Charleston: Charleston Museum, 1970), 30.

⁸⁴ Dusiñberre, *Them Dark Days*, 10.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 11.

⁸⁶ Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume I, 5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 7.

⁸⁸ Pruneau, "All the Time is Work Time," 190.

Clients of Clear Springs: The Jewish Connection

It is lamentable for posterity's sake that the Clear Springs plantation records do not contain much in the way of Marx Cohen's correspondences with Jews and other Charlestonians. Without personal letters, a diary, or anything else of this ilk, it has hard to make inferences about Cohen's personal life or his social circles. In light of this deficiency of primary sources, I have sought to understand Cohen's personal life through an analysis of some of his business customers. Cohen sold timber and bricks to a small but quite influential list of clients, most of whom were Jewish.⁸⁹ I believe that a brief survey of some of Clear Springs' patrons could help shed light on the parts of Cohen's life absent in his plantation records. Considering Cohen dealt with David Lopez Junior, Moses Cohen Mordecai, and the Hebrew Orphan Society, Cohen probably mingled with Charleston societies' highest echelon of Jews.

Cohen's best brick and timber customer was renowned builder and contractor David Lopez Junior (1809—1884) whose demand for building materials was all but insatiable after Charleston's Great Fire of 1838.⁹⁰ Born in Charleston and educated at Yale, Lopez first was exposed to construction when he worked as a supplier of building materials for other contractors.⁹¹ Though it is unclear exactly when Lopez began building, his resume remains impressive. Lopez built houses, apartments, commercial and civic buildings, churches, and he forever solidified his place in South Carolina history by designing Institute Hall, where the South Carolina Ordinance of Secession was signed in 1860.⁹² However, Lopez's first "big break" came when he obtained a contract to rebuild Charleston's synagogue, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

⁸⁹ See Cohen, *Plantation Records*, Volume II.

⁹⁰ Barry Steifel, "David Lopez Jr: Builder, Industrialist, and Defender of the Confederacy," *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 64: 1-2, 57.

http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/2012_64_01_00_stiefel.pdf

⁹¹ Ibid, 57.

⁹² Steifel, "David Lopez Jr," 53.

(KKBE), after it was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1838.⁹³ When Lopez signed his building contract on September 25, 1839, he set a historical precedent by becoming the first practicing Jew to erect a synagogue in the Americas.⁹⁴ Lopez's purchases from Cohen during the construction years of KKBE (1839—1841) suggest that Cohen may have produced some of the building materials that still support the synagogue today on 90 Hasell Street in Charleston. In 1850, Lopez was appointed to a committee of citizens which made arrangements for the most elaborate funeral in Charleston history, that of John C. Calhoun. During the Civil War, Lopez was put in charge of most of South Carolina's arms production. He innovated and built some of the first torpedo boats that the Confederacy used to attempt to break through the Union blockade of Charleston's harbor.⁹⁵ Lopez, like Cohen, was firmly entrenched among Charleston's most well-to-do Jews.

Another renowned customer at Clear Springs was Moses Cohen Mordecai (1804—1888) who was “by the standards of his day, a shipping tycoon and a civic colossus.”⁹⁶ Making his fortune as an importer of fruit, sugar, tobacco, and coffee, Mordecai was probably the most prominent Jew in all of Charleston, representing South Carolina in both the Senate and House of Representatives.⁹⁷ Even the less-than-tolerant South Carolina Governor James Henry Hammond, who once called Mordecai's brother Isaac “a miserable Jew,” had to admit that Mordecai was “a man of impressive force and influence.”⁹⁸ As a senator, Mordecai expressed deep-felt reservations about secession and he had a controlling stake in *The Southern Standard*, a

⁹³ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 239.

⁹⁴ Steifel, “David Lopez Jr,” 58.

⁹⁵ Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 143.

⁹⁶ Theodore Rosengarten and Dale Rosengarten, “The Lost Cause” in *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*, ed. Theodore Rosengarten, et al. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 129.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 129.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 130.

newspaper intellectually devoted to opposing South Carolina's exit from the Union.⁹⁹ Though Mordecai opposed secession, he whole-heartedly embraced the Confederacy once the Civil War began. In April 1861, Mordecai's steamer, the *Isabel*, removed union defenders from Fort Sumter and went on to become a blockade runner for the Confederacy.¹⁰⁰ Mordecai's shipping company also brought home the bodies of South Carolina soldiers killed at Gettysburg, at no cost to the deceased's families.¹⁰¹ Mordecai was also a member of a delegation sent to discuss South Carolina's return to the Union with President Andrew Johnson in 1865.¹⁰² All in all, there was probably never a more distinguished purchaser of wood and brick from Clear Springs than M.C. Mordecai, who lost twelve buildings in the fire of 1838 and frequently appears in Marx Cohen's ledger.¹⁰³

With clients like David Lopez and M. C. Mordecai, there can be little doubt that Cohen was a part of Charleston's upper class in the years leading to the Civil War. If his business customers do not provide satisfactory evidence of this, then Cohen's cornucopia of property holdings in downtown Charleston certainly do.¹⁰⁴ And like many of Charleston's other distinguished Jewish citizens, Cohen supported the city's Hebrew Orphan House. From time to time, Cohen sold the orphan house white corn grown on Clear Springs.¹⁰⁵ Founded in 1801, the

⁹⁹ Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 40.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰¹ Rosengarten and Rosengarten, "The Lost Cause," 128.

¹⁰² Ibid, 130.

¹⁰³ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 112.

¹⁰⁴ Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance. Deeds and Mortgages. Direct Index Book: CO-CZ, 173.

¹⁰⁵ Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume II.

Hebrew Orphan Society is the oldest Jewish charitable group in the United States.¹⁰⁶ The preamble to the society's constitution stated that:

a Hebrew society should be formed for the purpose of relieving widows, educating, clothing, and maintaining orphans...making it a particular care to inculcate strict principals of piety, morality, and industry...so that they may freely assume an equal station in this favored land with the cheering conviction that their virtues and acquirements may lead them to every honor and advantage their fellow citizens can attain.¹⁰⁷

The Hebrew Orphan Society's first president was none other than David Lopez, the father of the renowned builder who shares his namesake. Marx's father, Mordecai Cohen, was also among the society's twenty-two founders. As a board member and benefactor to the Hebrew Orphan House for more than four decades, Mordecai Cohen's tombstone remembers his generous spirit stating, "by his strict integrity, his just and charitable disposition, he won the confidence and esteem of his community."¹⁰⁸ In 1836, the Orphan Society purchased a substantial property on 88 Broad Street, although there is little evidence to suggest the building actually housed orphans, except during the chaos of the Civil War.¹⁰⁹ Instead, most children were placed in the homes of responsible citizens.¹¹⁰ Though Charleston had few Jewish orphans, the Orphan House was open to children of all faiths.¹¹¹ It is rumored that Judah P. Benjamin, the Confederate Attorney General and Secretary of War, was tutored at the Hebrew Orphan Society during his impecunious youth, but there is scant evidence to either confirm or deny this.¹¹² Whether the corn Marx Cohen brought to the orphan house was merely a symbolic gesture or attention to a

¹⁰⁶ Thomas J. Tobias, *The Hebrew Orphan Society of Charleston, S.C. Founded 1801. An Historical Sketch* (Charleston: Hebrew Orphan Society, 1957), 1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 10.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 10.

¹¹¹ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 71.

¹¹² Tobias, *The Hebrew Orphan Society*, 10.

vital need is uncertain; but in either case, it is evident that Cohen took part in the same charitable responsibilities conferred upon the rest of Charleston's well to do Jews.

Marx's Cohen's Post War Experience

Though Cohen seems to have prospered in the years leading up to the Civil War, the same could not be said of him after the war. Historian James Roark's description of Southern plantation owners' experience after the Civil War seems to fit well fairly with that of Cohen's. "Often," writes Roark, "a planter's postwar experience was a prosaic tale of gradual decline and relative poverty. Most escaped total collapse, but few escaped hardship."¹¹³ The Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance Office records reveal that during and immediately after the war, Cohen mortgaged or sold most of his property in Charleston.¹¹⁴ The fates of Clear Springs and Cohen's slaves are unknown. I could not find the plantation in the Conveyance Office records nor was I able to find any records of anyone having owned or operated Clear Springs after the Cohen family. One of Cohen's grandsons claims in his unpublished memoirs that the plantation was sold to phosphate prospectors but thereafter quickly fell into dereliction, although he does specify when or to whom the property was sold.¹¹⁵ Though it is unclear exactly when, sometime after the war, Cohen and his family moved to Sumter.¹¹⁶ Perhaps the move was a result of financial troubles. Or maybe Cohen was too bereaved from losing his only son at the Battle of Bentonville to continue living in Charleston. Whatever his reasons were for moving, on August 20, 1870, Cohen entered the mercantile business with a \$4,000 investment in a hardware and dry

¹¹³ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 176.

¹¹⁴ Charleston County Register Conveyance. Deeds and Mortgages. Cross Index Book: C-D, Part I, 209 and 210.

¹¹⁵ Herbert A. Moses, "Pertaining to The Moses Family," June 2, 1961 (unpublished memoirs: College of Charleston, Special Collections.), 27.

¹¹⁶ Rosengarten, "Plantation Life," 102.

goods store located on the northwest corner of Main and Liberty Streets in Sumter.¹¹⁷ Cohen's business partners were two men named Cambell E. Stubbs and Levander G Pate.¹¹⁸ Given that there is no record of either man at the Sumter synagogue, Temple Sinai, it is most likely neither was Jewish. According to Aaron Anderson's *Builders of a New South*, after the Civil War recently immigrated Jews usually formed business partnerships with other immigrant Jews, while native-born Southerners typically went into business with other Southerners.¹¹⁹ Cohen would have had more in common culturally, linguistically, and politically with gentile southerners than with Jewish immigrants and it is unsurprising he chose Campbell and Pate as business partners. While the initial \$4,000 investment forged a partnership to last one year, it appears as if Cohen stayed in the dry goods much longer, owning his own store no later than 1873.¹²⁰ Though Cohen made off better than many other plantation owners who went bankrupt after the war, the transition from planter to shopkeeper was likely a demoralizing process. Cohen was probably of a worldview, like all pre-war Charleston elites, which considered a struggling planter more genteel and noble than a thriving urban merchant.¹²¹ Despite their best efforts, planters rarely were able to restore their antebellum level of prosperity and according to Cohen's obituary, "in late years, his fortune was seriously impaired."¹²² When Cohen died on February 24, 1882, he

¹¹⁷ Marx E. Cohen, L.G. Pate, and C.E Stubbs, "State of South Carolina. County of Sumpter: Special Copartnership," *The Watchman and Southron*, October 27, 1870. Accessed April 20, 2013. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026917/1870-10-26/ed-1/seq-3/>

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Aaron D. Anderson, *Builders of a New South: Merchants, Capital, and the Remaking of Natchez, 1865-1914* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 42.

¹²⁰ "Bills of Sale from Sumter (S.C.) Stores," Jewish Heritage Collection, Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

¹²¹ Radford, "Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure," 52.

¹²² Moïse, "Remarks at the Funeral of Marx E. Cohen."

was buried in Sumter's Temple Sinai cemetery and when Armida died thirteen years later, the two were laid to rest beside one another.¹²³

A General Assessment of the Lowcountry Plantocracy

Before considering how Cohen did or did not differ from the typical rice planter, it will be first necessary to paint a general picture of the plantocracy in the Carolina Lowcountry. In Edgar Tristram Thompson's *The Plantation*, he defines the subject of his dissertation as a "large landed estate located in an area of open resources, in which social relations between diverse racial or cultural groups are based upon authority, involving the subordination of resident laborers to a planter for the purposes of producing an agricultural staple which is sold in a world market."¹²⁴ While Thompson is correct in his assessment of the physical nature of the plantation and its reliance on coerced labor, this definition is nevertheless lacking. Southern plantations represented much more to their owners than merely property or means to an income. Besides being a source of wealth, the plantation was also an important source of identity, status, and prestige in Southern society. One must understand that when Marx E. Cohen listed himself as a planter in the 1849 Charleston City Directory, Cohen was not attempting to make it known that he planted for a living, but rather *was* a planter.¹²⁵

As James Roark explains, "The plantation was at the heart of the master's world... The plantation was for the master the concrete expression of what was for many others an elusive abstraction—the 'Southern way of life.'"¹²⁶ Being a plantation owner was a self-defining vocational identity. When rice planter (and future president of the College of Charleston)

¹²³ The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. "Temple Sinai Cemetery," last modified March 8, 2013. Accessed April 20, 2013. http://www.jhssc.org/Temple_SinaiCemetery.html

¹²⁴ Edgar Tristram Thompson, *The Plantation* (1932; reprint, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 3.

¹²⁵ Hagy, *Directories*, 9.

¹²⁶ Roark, *Master's Without Slaves*, 35.

Nathaniel Middleton proclaimed that he was “not sure that we have duly estimated agriculture as an element of national dignity and national wealth” he was arguing that southern agriculture (which was defined at that time as the plantation system) provided the framework for an honorable and dignified society.¹²⁷ Planters thought of themselves as noble heirs to a class of landed gentry, tracing their roots back to the elite landowners of England.¹²⁸ While many planters supported secessionism so as to maintain control over their slaves and economic livelihood, the fact that many of them could not imagine being anything other than planters may have been equally compelling in their fight against abolitionism and the Union. While planting was a way to make money, it “was often an affair of heart and mind as well. The plantation was [a] way of life.”¹²⁹ From the colonial era until Reconstruction, and perhaps even beyond, the distinctive identity of the American South’s haut monde has in many ways stemmed from plantation agriculture.¹³⁰

Little needs to be said about the economic significance of the plantation to the master. Buying a plantation was a tremendous capital investment and would have cost anywhere between \$50,000 – \$500,000 in twenty-first century dollars.¹³¹ With the usage of enslaved labor, those who had the wealth to purchase plantations and slaves saw tremendous returns on their capital investments.¹³² Though cotton tended to be the crop of choice among southern plantation owners, rice planters were the wealthiest of all plantation owners in the American South.¹³³ For

¹²⁷ Quoted James H. Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide: the Fall of the South Carolina Rice Kingdom* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 33.

¹²⁸ Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting*, 39.

¹²⁹ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 46.

¹³⁰ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 11.

¹³¹ James M. Clifton, *Life and Labor on Argyle Island: letters and documents of a Savannah River rice plantation, 1833-1867* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1978), xiii.

¹³² Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 11.

¹³³ DusiBerre, *Them Dark Days*, 6.

example, when Nathaniel Hayward died in 1851, he was the richest man in all of South Carolina, owning 2,340 slaves who labored on seventeen different rice plantations.¹³⁴ To be sure, great rewards came with great risks. While Charles Manigault, owner of Gowrie plantation, sometimes earned profits of more than twenty-five percent in a given year, a hurricane, slave-killing cholera outbreak, or poor harvest could just as easily produce losses of equal or greater magnitude.¹³⁵

Rice planting was a chancy business, but those who fared well could afford the most opulent of existences. As one Charleston school master attested,

most of the boys [in Charleston] whose parents were conspicuous for wealth and social position were the sons of rice planters. That industry was very prosperous ...and up to the Civil War...the rice planters who had residences in Charleston were, socially, the dominant class in that city.¹³⁶

With such wealth came lives of luxury; perhaps the most desirable amenities of all were the planter's "big house" and the accompanying servants who stood as powerful and iconic symbols of wealth, power, prestige, and elegance.¹³⁷ Plantation owners often sent their children to the best colleges and many vacationed in Europe.¹³⁸ Marx E. Cohen attended the University of Glasgow in Scotland.¹³⁹ Because plantations occupied vast acreages to grow crops, their owners enjoyed private means to a wide range of outdoor activities, including hunting and fishing. Planters also were fond of aristocratic pastimes such as gambling, horseback riding, and sailing.¹⁴⁰ During the summer months, Lowcountry plantation owners would migrate to posh town houses in Charleston in order to escape the heat, humidity, and diseases of the plantation

¹³⁴ Ibid, 33.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 12.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Dusi Berre, *Them Dark Days*, 396.

¹³⁷ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 33.

¹³⁸ Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting*, 40.

¹³⁹ Henry, "Leah Cohen Harby."

¹⁴⁰ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 35.

environment.¹⁴¹ Cohen commissioned the building of such a summerhouse in 1845, choosing Greek revival architecture then in vogue. The house still stands at 85 King Street in downtown Charleston.¹⁴² The Cohen plantation records mention visits to Charleston in the summer months.¹⁴³ Even in the financially constrained years after the Civil War, planters continued to (or at least attempted to) live grandly in an effort to convey their wealth, style, and supposed gentlemanly virtues.

The economic affluence of planting was accompanied by political privilege in South Carolina. Throughout the nineteenth century, Lowcountry planters firmly retained political control of the state up to the Civil War.¹⁴⁴ Though a wave of constitutional reform swept the South between 1830 and 1840, democratizing the average southerner's worldview, such reforms were the least influential in South Carolina.¹⁴⁵ While universal white male suffrage was the law, many elite planters shared the sentiments of South Carolina rice plantation owner Alfred Huger, who cautioned that giving "men without property the privilege of deciding how far property can be taxed" was a danger to South Carolina's best interests.¹⁴⁶ As historian William Freehling, in a study of South Carolina politics, explains:

Throughout the pre-Civil War era, South Carolina's political order reflected the high-toned conservatism of an entrenched landed aristocracy. The planters' political ideal was the House of Lords rather than the Halls of Congress and their political assumptions derived from the elitist cult of the English country gentry. Nowhere else in America did the wealthy class so successfully conspire to keep power away from the common man.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ Radford, "Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure," 49.

¹⁴² Côté, "The Marx E. Cohen House, c. 1845."

¹⁴³ Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume I, 97.

¹⁴⁴ Radford, "Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure," 44.

¹⁴⁵ For further reading, see *The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819—1848* by Charles S. Sydnor (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1948).

¹⁴⁶ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 18.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Radford, "Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure," 45.

South Carolina's planter elites retained their political power through their land holdings.

Substantial property qualifications were a prerequisite to membership in the state legislature and planters were grossly overrepresented, especially in the most important legislative body of all, the State Senate.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the great rice planters of South Carolina "were the most prominent beneficiaries in the 1850's of South Carolina's uniquely antidemocratic political system, which avoided popular election either of national presidential electors or of the state's governors."¹⁴⁹

Mordecai Cohen was one of the richest men in all of South Carolina and a member of the planter elite.¹⁵⁰ Marx Cohen himself served in civic offices, including the Charleston Board of Health (1846—1849) and as a magistrate in St. Andrews Parish (1843—1845).¹⁵¹ While Clear Springs was a modest size for a rice plantation, Cohen's property holdings in downtown Charleston were befitting a true aristocrat. He owned dozens of buildings on Ashley Street, King Street, and throughout the downtown area.¹⁵² In short, antebellum planters firmly controlled South Carolina politics and Marx Cohen was a member of this plantocracy.

It is difficult to describe the temperament or characteristics of South Carolina's plantation owners as a whole without making unsubstantiated generalizations. However, there is one stereotype of the plantation owner worth refuting. All too often, "tradition commonly portrays the planter as a casual manager, uninterested in production and cost figures, careless about routine and organization, generally slipshod and disorderly in his agricultural operations."¹⁵³ Certainly, planters may have clung to inefficient agricultural practices out of tradition, but they

¹⁴⁸ Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 352.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 352.

¹⁵⁰ Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 45 and Rosengarten and Rosengarten, "First Families," 81.

¹⁵¹ Côté, "The Marx E. Cohen House, c. 1845."

¹⁵² Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance. Deeds and Mortgages. Direct Index Book: CO-CZ, 173.

¹⁵³ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 70.

were more often than not pragmatic and methodical men who would have been financially ruined by indifference to the management of their plantation's finance or labor.¹⁵⁴ Rice plantations, more so than any other producers of staple crops, were especially vulnerable to maladies as a result of inattention. As journalist Edward King observed on a tour of South Carolina, "A rice plantation is in fact a huge hydraulic machine, maintained by constant war against the rivers," and as a result "the utmost attention and vigilance is necessary, and the labor must be ready at a moment's notice for the most exhaustive of efforts."¹⁵⁵ Like the plantation described above, Cohen's rice-growing operations (although altogether unimportant compared to his brick and timber business) would have depended on tidal river irrigation.

The Development of Lowcountry Rice Cultivation

Rice was first grown in the colony of Carolina as early as 1690.¹⁵⁶ At first, English colonists struggled to cultivate rice because they planted it in the same dry ground that they knew was suitable for the grains they brought from England.¹⁵⁷ Rice production began in earnest only after the colonists discovered that the wetlands of inland swamps were far better suited to rice cultivation than dry earth at higher elevations. By the first decade of the eighteenth century, rice had become a profitable export in South Carolina, yet the crop was geographically restricted. Before swampland could be used to grow rice, the land first had to be cleared and drained. This was a dangerous and exhaustive endeavor. With the use of hand tools, laborers uprooted stumps and cut down trees, working in water sometimes up the waist. In the warmer months of the year, tropical heat and humidity further beleaguered workers, along with gnats, mosquitos, other biting insects, poisonous plants, venomous snakes, and alligators. Most lethal of all were diseases such

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 70.

¹⁵⁵ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 25.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 12.

¹⁵⁷ Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 56.

as yellow fever, cholera, and malaria. It is therefore no historical coincidence that rice cultivation grew in tandem with slave purchases in the Lowcountry.¹⁵⁸ As one commentator noted, “After 1713 negroes were brought to South Carolina in such numbers that...it was actually more profitable to work [slaves] to death than to take care of [them].”¹⁵⁹ The scarcity of arable swampland made plots of soil suitable for rice cultivation the most valuable land in the South, selling for more than twice the value of the best sugar-growing property on the Mississippi River.¹⁶⁰ Since Marx Cohen obtained Clear Springs as a gift from his father and without a record of sale, it is difficult to estimate the plantation’s value (see Appendix B). In an appendix at the end of historian John Pric Radford’s dissertation, “Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure in Charleston, South Carolina, 1860—1880,” he estimates that Clear Springs was worth \$10,200 in 1860, but it is unclear what primary sources he used to reach this conclusion.¹⁶¹

Though the first South Carolina rice-growing operations were set up in inland swamps, this did not remain the case after the relocation (or rather displacement) of Native Americans living in the Ashepoo-Combahee-Edisto basin in the early eighteenth century.¹⁶² When these lands were repopulated with colonists, English royal grants were used to set up some of the first Lowcountry tidal river rice plantations. On May 5, 1704, a royal grant was given to a man named Shem Butler who named his property Tipseeboo— this land would eventually become

¹⁵⁸ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 12.

¹⁵⁹ Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting*, 35.

¹⁶⁰ Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xii.

¹⁶¹ Radford, “Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure,” 329.

¹⁶² Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 12.

Clear Springs.¹⁶³ In fact, the name “Clear Springs” is a literal translation of the Cusabo Indian word “Tibseeboo.”¹⁶⁴

Royal grants for such riverside plantations signaled the dawn of a new era of rice planting.¹⁶⁵ Whereas inland swamps tended to drain and flood unpredictably, tidal river zones, with creeks that ebbed and flowed with the ocean tide, were much easier to control.¹⁶⁶ Using the tides to control water levels in the rice fields was nothing short of revolutionary. By designing massive embankments and flood gates called “trunks,” planters no longer had to worry about the devastating flash floods of the swamps. They could use the river water to kill grass and weeds which stole nutrients from rice plants; the growing season was shortened, and per acre crop yields significantly increased.¹⁶⁷ However, use of the tides further limited where rice could be grown: a rice plantation too close to the sea suffered from periodic saltwater encroachments which ruined entire harvests, while one too far from the sea would be unaffected by the tides. The result was that only a stretch of ten to twenty miles on any given tidal river was suitable for rice planting.¹⁶⁸ Geographic restrictions on rice planting were thus so severe that, according to historian James Clifton, in 1850, Cohen was one of fewer than 500 rice plantation owners in all of South Carolina.¹⁶⁹

The move from inland swamps to tidal estuaries neither reduced the labor demands of rice production nor improved the quality of life of the slaves who toiled on them. Indeed, the deadliness of Lowcountry rice planting accounts for the high volume of slaves who were bought

¹⁶³ Henry A. M. Smith, “The Ashley River: Its Seat and Settlements,” *The South Carolina Historical Genealogical Magazine*, 20: 2 (1919): 81.

¹⁶⁴ Rosengarten, “Plantation Life,” 101.

¹⁶⁵ Tuten, *Lowcountry Rime and Tide*, 12.

¹⁶⁶ Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xi.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, xi.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, xii.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, xiv.

and sold in Charleston up until the Civil War.¹⁷⁰ Writing in 1829, Scottish naval captain Basil Hall reported:

The cultivation of rice was described to me as by far the most unhealthy work in which the slaves were employed, and in spite of every care, that they sank under it in great numbers...Great numbers [of slaves] are....absorbed by South Carolina and Georgia, where the cultivation of rice thins the black population so fast, as to render a constant fresh supply of negroes indispensable.¹⁷¹

While we must take Hall's account with some skepticism, as it is a retelling of another's description of rice planting, there is still ample evidence which shows that rice plantations had extremely high slave mortality rates compared to producers of cotton, tobacco, and indigo.¹⁷² The reasons for this are twofold. First, rice is an extremely labor intensive crop throughout the entire year. At the end of summer, to prepare harvested rice for market, slaves "threshed" rice by beating it with sticks to remove the grains from their stalks, then pounded the rice to detach outer husks from the edible grains. Until the late eighteenth century, both tasks were performed by hand and were quite onerous by any standards.¹⁷³ In spring, field hands busily planted the rice seed, and in summer, slaves hoed the fields in addition to manning the flood gates. The rigor of this work is evidenced by the increase of plantation runaways during the hot summer months.¹⁷⁴ In fall and early winter, slaves would enter the boggy rice fields with sickles, cut the rice from stalks, and carry them, sometimes distances of more than a mile, into the plantation processing yard. Added to this, was the year round task of digging new water canals and doing maintenance

¹⁷⁰ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 12.

¹⁷¹ Dusiinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 81.

¹⁷² Pruneau, "All the Time is Work Time," 12.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 44.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 48.

work on the tidal irrigation system which required nothing short of a “corps of carpenters.”¹⁷⁵

Rice plantation slaves, in short, labored year round, much to the detriment of their health.

The other major reason rice plantations were so deadly to slaves was the rice fields and slave quarters’ proximity to large bodies of water, which were breeding grounds for insects carrying vector-borne diseases. Since slaves slogged in the wet rice fields on the coldest days of the year as well as the hottest, they were especially vulnerable to pneumonia, malaria, yellow fever, measles, cholera, and other sicknesses less prevalent on other kinds of plantations.¹⁷⁶ These sicknesses were not necessarily lethal, but the lack of treatment provided to slaves, and their inability to take time off of work to rest, often were. Diseases were especially fatal to children. One modern estimate suggests that at least fifty-five percent of the children born on nineteenth century rice plantations died before the age of fifteen while only thirty-eight percent of children born on cotton and sugar plantations died by age fifteen.¹⁷⁷ From start to finish, growing rice was more laborious and hazardous to workers’ health than any other crop (with the possible exception of sugar), which, among other factors, explains why the Carolina rice coast had such a brisk slave trade at the dawn of the Civil War.¹⁷⁸

Although rice plantations depended on the deplorable practice of slavery, their levels of output are nevertheless impressive. While the charge has been made that southern agricultural was unprofitable in the first half of the nineteenth century, and its failure resulted in the South’s secession from the Union in a frantic attempt to establish more advantageous political and

¹⁷⁵ Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting*, 30.

¹⁷⁶ Dusiinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 74.

¹⁷⁷ Dusiinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 80.

¹⁷⁸ Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xiii.

economic conditions for plantation owners, this thesis remains a suspicious one.¹⁷⁹ Though rice production in the Lowcountry briefly dropped in the 1820s due to trade embargoes, the War of 1812, and a brief recession, it steadily increased up until the eve of the Civil War.¹⁸⁰ Carolina rice plantations were in fact so productive between 1850 and 1860 that some have called this decade the “zenith” or “golden era” of South Carolina rice planting.¹⁸¹ One study estimates that of the 5,000,000 bushels of American rice grown in 1860, South Carolina plantations produced 3,500,000.¹⁸² Rice prices slowly rose from the late 1790s until the 1860s and when all went well on the plantation, profits could be astounding.¹⁸³ Charles Manigault of Georgia effused in a 1847 letter that his rice plantation had “in 14 years paid for itself twice, and is going on to pay for itself a third time...by placing \$20,000 down I have... by a little industry made a moderate sum produce a steady income which it would require more than \$200,000—placed at Legal Interest to yield.”¹⁸⁴ In William DusiBerre’s book, *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps*, he estimates that Gowrie made over \$266,000 in profit from an original investment of less than \$49,500, which, all things considered, was “not an inconsiderable return.”¹⁸⁵

Common sense dictates that because rice planters did not have to pay wages to their enslaved labor, such high returns are to be expected. While there is no doubt that emancipation irrevocably destroyed the profitability of Lowcountry rice planting (to be discussed at greater length later), such an evaluation of Lowcountry rice plantations’ economic success would be

¹⁷⁹ See Louis M. Hacker’s *The Triumph of American Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), Chapter 22.

¹⁸⁰ DusiBerre, *Them Dark Days*, 388

¹⁸¹ Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting*, 41 and Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xvi.

¹⁸² Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting*, 43.

¹⁸³ Alfred Glaze Smith, *Economic readjustment of an old cotton state: South Carolina, 1820—1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1958), 225.

¹⁸⁴ DusiBerre, *Them Dark Days*, 13.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 16.

insufficient, as the total number of slaves on Carolina rice plantations actually decreased during the so called “zenith” of rice planting. In 1850, roughly 58,000 slaves lived on tidal rice plantations but by 1860, they numbered only 48,000.¹⁸⁶ How then was more rice grown with fewer slaves? The answer lies in greater returns from economies of scale.¹⁸⁷ Setting up a rice plantation’s irrigation system was expensive and complex, but once completed, adding additional labor and land to the system was relatively easy.

By 1860, South Carolina had the largest average size farms of any state—doubtless due to the massive acreage of rice plantations, which on average, totaled around 1,000 acres.¹⁸⁸ Case in point, Clear Springs was roughly 1,000 acres.¹⁸⁹ While there were fewer rice slaves in South Carolina between 1850 and 1860, there was also a considerable consolidation of rice plantations.¹⁹⁰ For example, Georgetown County had 88 planters in 1860; but one of these produced a crop larger than four million pounds, another more than two million, and ten others in excess of one million. These figures, compared to those of 1849, when only four plantations harvested more than a million pounds in a pool of many more individual plantations suggests that the output of each individual plantation greatly increased.¹⁹¹ Yet the economies of scale of large rice plantations was only possible through coerced labor; indeed, “so entangled were slavery and the plantation that a blow to one was immediately felt by the other.”¹⁹² It is symbolic that South Carolina was the first state to secede from the Union because its state assembly was controlled by the one group in society which had the most to lose from emancipation—

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 388.

¹⁸⁷ Improvements in the mechanization of rice threshing also contributed to greater output per field hand.

¹⁸⁸ Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xiv and Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 1.

¹⁸⁹ Rosengarten, “Plantation Life,” 101.

¹⁹⁰ Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xiv.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, xiv.

¹⁹² Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 77.

Lowcountry planters. It is therefore surprising that, according to his obituary, Cohen “did not enter heart and soul into the secession movement.”¹⁹³ Perhaps Cohen shared the mindset of capitalist entrepreneurs such as M.C Mordecai, who worried that the disunion of the states would be bad for business. Whatever Cohen’s reasons for not supporting Confederate independence may have been, he was certainly in the minority of Lowcountry aristocrats to have abstained from doing so.

“Of all the major agricultural staples of the Old South,” writes historian James Clifton, “rice was hardest hit by the repercussions of the Civil War and emancipation.”¹⁹⁴ Indeed, the decline in postbellum Lowcountry rice production was nothing short of catastrophic. In 1859, the state of South Carolina produced some 119,100,528 pounds of rice; but in 1869, the figure had dropped to 32,304,825 pounds, never again to reach the antebellum levels.¹⁹⁵ Many factors undercut Lowcountry rice production, but the loss of slave labor was probably the most significant, certainly in the short term. Most planters understood their utter dependence on slavery. Upon hearing of the freeing of the slaves, one plantation owner wrote to his business partner saying:

The Yankees have declared the negroes all free...we have no authority to control them...our country and town are filled with idle negroes, crops abandoned in many cases. On some plantations *all* the negroes have left...In all our material interests, we are hopelessly ruined. The loss of our slaves, to a very great extent destroys the value of all other property.¹⁹⁶

The fact of the matter was that labor on rice plantations was so arduous and unhealthy that planation owners usually could not supply wages to any free person— be they white or black—

¹⁹³ Möise, “Remarks at the Funeral of Marx E. Cohen.”

¹⁹⁴ James Clifton, “Twilight Comes to the Rice Kingdom: Postbellum Rice Culture on the South Atlantic Coast,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 62: 2 (1978): 146.

¹⁹⁵ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 43.

¹⁹⁶ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 106.

to make working in the rice fields worthwhile. Freedmen and freedwomen were particularly averse to the freezing-cold “hateful winter work” of ditching and repairing the irrigation systems, which was an “indispensible element in the annual cycle of rice cultivation.”¹⁹⁷ Though many free blacks actively sought work in the Lowcountry and even sometimes on plantations, they tended to avoid rice cultivation because, as one Freedmen’s Bureau agent reported, “they certainly know all about slavery and have no idea of returning to any such condition.”¹⁹⁸ Moreover, because each tidewater rice plantation depended on a single byzantine irrigation system, developing a post-war tenant labor system for rice proved impossible.¹⁹⁹ A rice plantation’s irrigation system requires centralized planning and control: it would have been unfeasible for different families of tenant farmers to try and cultivate different rice fields on the same plantation independent from one another.

Aside from depriving planters of their labor, the course of the Civil War brought physical destruction as well. One historian has estimated that Confederate wealth declined by as much as forty-three percent in the war years, excluding the value of freed slaves.²⁰⁰ A great deal of this had to do with declining land values. Plantations that had once been productive were used by both the Northern and Southern armies as battlefields, hospitals, barracks, provision centers, labor pools, and recreation areas rather than for growing rice. Both Confederate and Union troops looted and stole from plantations as well. While the war raged, the destruction of man was accompanied by that of Mother Nature as swamps gradually reclaimed rice fields all over South

¹⁹⁷ Dusiinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 136.

¹⁹⁸ Thavolia Glymph, “Freedpeople and Ex-Masters: Shaping a New Order in the Postbellum South, 1865—1868,” in *Essays On the Postbellum Southern Economy*, ed. Thavolia Glymph et al. (Arlington: University of Texas A&M Press, 1985), 51.

¹⁹⁹ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 173.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 77.

Carolina.²⁰¹ According to data compiled by the U.S. Census of Agriculture, in 1860 there were 4,472,060 acres of arable land in all of South Carolina, with the aggregate value of farms totaling \$139,653, 508. By 1870, these figures had respectively dropped down to 3,010, 539 acres and \$44,808,783.²⁰² While many planters attempted to restore the profitability of their rice plantations, doing so required a substantial capital investment and was made especially difficult by a lack of credit. With the loss of slaves and plummeting land values, plantation owners had insufficient collateral for loans, which had never been more expensive.²⁰³ Moreover, planters who invested in Confederate war bonds all saw negative returns on their investments and the wartime Confederate currency which they had adopted, either out of patriotism or coercion, was worthless as the war came to an end.²⁰⁴

Planters were keenly aware of the Civil War's destruction of capital and disruption of labor and many of them blamed the war for their poor fortunes. But as historian James Tuten saliently points out, "rice culture would hardly have remained a static institution in any case. Its gradual decline would have occurred eventually, given market forces," regardless of the Civil War.²⁰⁵ While the United States fought the Civil War, the global rice market underwent profound changes driven by the completion of the Suez Canal in Egypt in 1869 and the widespread adoption of steam-powered ships.²⁰⁶ Steamships and the Suez Canal greatly reduced the cost and time of shipping rice from Bengal, Java, and other East Indian countries to Europe, which made South Carolina rice much less competitive in global markets. In 1876, the United States granted Hawaii "most favorite nation status" with regard to trade and Americans were for the first time

²⁰¹ Ibid, 173.

²⁰² Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 24.

²⁰³ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 148.

²⁰⁴ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 24.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 22.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 43.

able to import Hawaiian rice without excessive duties and taxes.²⁰⁷ Lowcountry planters also faced increasing competition domestically. As the Civil War disrupted rice production in the Carolinas and Georgia, farmers in the Southwest, especially Louisiana, began growing rice using new forms of machinery which were much less labor intensive than tidal irrigation systems.²⁰⁸ By making use of mechanical reapers, tractors, and seed drills southwestern states produced rice more cheaply and efficiently than their southeastern counterparts. Rice cultivation's success in the prairie states resulted in a dramatic increase in rice output; by 1900, New Orleans had supplanted Charleston as the center of the North American rice business.²⁰⁹ In the aftermath of the Civil War "plantations were reorganized, but prosperity remained elusive."²¹⁰ More often than not, plantation owners had little choice but to abandon their identities as "masters of the big house" and forge a new life for themselves and their children. Marx E. Cohen was one of countless plantation owners who did not return to planting after the war.²¹¹ As former plantation owner George Bagby eloquently stated, "The houses, indeed, are still there, little changed, it may be on the outside, but the light, the life, the charm, are gone forever. 'The soul is fled.'"²¹²

Rethinking Cohen's Rice Growing Operations at Clear Springs

An analysis of Cohen's plantation records, along with the few available primary sources that lend insight into Cohen's life, reveal that Clear Springs was quite different from the typical Lowcountry rice plantation described above. Why? Simply put, it does not appear that Cohen primarily used Clear Springs to produce rice. To be sure, the plantation records I have studied in writing this monograph could well be only a small remaining sample of the records Cohen kept.

²⁰⁷Ibid, 44.

²⁰⁸ Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting*, 42.

²⁰⁹ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 45.

²¹⁰ Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 208.

²¹¹ Rosengarten, "Plantation Life," 102.

²¹² Quoted in Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 209.

It is possible that Cohen recorded all of his rice growing affairs in a separate source, which has been lost, rather than never having existed at all. Nonetheless, I believe my argument that Cohen did not plant substantial quantities of rice, and therefore should not necessarily be considered a planter on the merit that he owned a plantation, is a compelling one.

According to one study of the antebellum period, there were 53,536 acres of rice-growing land spread over 227 South Carolina tidal river plantations which on average produced sixty-six bushels of rice per acre.²¹³ (One bushel is equivalent to forty-five pounds.) Based on these statistics, we would have expected Clear Springs, which had 484 acres of rice fields, to have produced roughly 1,437,480 pounds of rice per year. Yet Cohen's plantation day book (spanning from 1840-1861) and his ledger of sales (spanning 1840 to 1864) bear no indication of extensive rice cultivation during this period, nor do they make any mention of the all important irrigation equipment needed to grow large quantities of rice on tidal rivers. Based on the available evidence, Cohen seems to have grown rice in the same modest proportions as peas, potatoes, corn, and other subsistence crops that Cohen used to feed his field hands.

There are a number of sensible reasons that could explain why Clear Springs didn't produce much rice. To start, the banks of the Ashley River did not provide the optimal conditions for growing rice in the Lowcountry. The most productive Lowcountry tidal rice plantations were found either on the east branch of the Cooper River or the Santee, Waccamaw, Savannah and Combahee rivers. Indeed, many Ashley River plantations, such as Middleton or Magnolia, with their sprawling and grandiose gardens, were used as venues of entertainment, rather than to grow cash crops. Both the Middleton and Drayton families, respective owners of the Middleton and Magnolia Plantations, owned many other properties on which they depended for income. To the

²¹³ Doar, *Rice and Rice Planting*, 41.

best of my knowledge there is no record of any previous owners of Clear Springs, such as the Butler family, ever having grown rice in bulk, or at all for that matter. An unpublished memoir written by one of Marx Cohen's grandchildren, Herbert E. Moses, describes Clear Springs as a lovely country residence, rather than a rice growing operation.²¹⁴

In any case, even if the Ashley River had provided the Lowcountry's preeminent soil and tidal flows for rice cultivation, Clear Springs was drastically understaffed by any standards of rice planting. From 1840 to 1861, Cohen never owned more than twenty-five able-bodied field hands.²¹⁵ (Some of his slaves had children who were too young to be put to work and he probably owned other slaves who served him at his urban Charleston properties.) While Clear Springs was the average size of a tidal rice plantation, the number of slaves in residence was far below average: a survey of twenty-three variously sized rice plantation between 1802 and 1859 reveals that on average, each plantation had fifty-nine field hands.²¹⁶ To put it differently, in the 1850s most agricultural journals preached that a plantation master required approximately one slave per seven acres of rice field.²¹⁷ By this measure, Cohen would only have had enough manpower to cultivate 175 acres per year in order to produce around 6,125 bushels of rice annually. This is still far more than what Cohen's plantation records indicate he actually produced. Why Cohen did not purchase more slaves to increase his rice production remains unclear. To be sure, doing so would have been no small investment; if Cohen had sought to add seventy-five to a hundred field hands to his plantation, they would probably have cost more than double the value of the land which Clear Springs sat upon (valued at \$10,200 in 1860).²¹⁸ For

²¹⁴ Moses, "Pertaining to The Moses Family," 18.

²¹⁵ Marx E. Cohen, *Plantation Records*, Volume I, 2-3.

²¹⁶ Pruneau, "All the Time is Work Time," 61.

²¹⁷ Clifton, *Life and Labor*, xxxix.

²¹⁸ Radford, "Culture, Economy, and Urban Structure," 329.

Cohen, maximizing Clear Spring's rice production by adding more slaves simply would not have been a cost effective business model. Given that Cohen had a hard time keeping the slaves he owned well provisioned and fed, it seems as if he could hardly have afforded to buy more slaves, even if he wanted to.

Nevertheless, Clear Springs was most likely not a financially draining enterprise. While he did not grow much rice, Cohen used Clear Springs to house a thriving brick and timber businesses. Because planting was risky even in the best of times, many planters were in the habit of seeking diverse non-agricultural incomes.²¹⁹ They were, in a sense, more capitalist entrepreneurs than pure agrarians. Yet Cohen is anomalous because instead of using brick and timber to supplement the cultivation of cash crops, he seems to have used them in lieu of planting. Cohen's field hands spent most of their days either hauling and chopping wood or making bricks. With the advantage of a wharf located on the outskirts of his property, Cohen was able to send his bricks and timber downriver to Charleston, where they would have been in high demand. It is most telling that Cohen's business receipts from the West Point rice mill in Charleston show that the mill paid Cohen for lumber, rather than Cohen having paid the mill to process rice.²²⁰ While there is no record of Cohen having sold any rice in May of 1853, he did however manage to sell more than 150,000 hard brown, soft brown, gray, and red bricks.²²¹ Clear Springs was also endowed with a variety of timber species including oak, loblolly, and yellow pine.²²² While his slaves seem to have spent the most time cutting loblolly, yellow pine was considered the most valuable.²²³

²¹⁹ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 54.

²²⁰ See Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume II.

²²¹ Rosengarten, "Plantation Life, 102 and Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume II.

²²² Rosengarten, "Plantation Life," 102.

²²³ Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide*, 55.

One might attribute Cohen's reliance on brick and timber incomes, as I have argued above, to his labor constraints. However, Cohen's business practices may plausibly be explained as a pragmatic response to the Great Charleston Fire of 1838. On the eve of April 27, a fire ignited near the corner of King and Beresford [Fulton] streets and destroyed 500 properties and 1100 buildings in the heart of Charleston's commercial district.²²⁴ Many Charlestonians blamed the fire's rampant destruction on the fact that most of the affected buildings were made of wood, rather than brick. Following the fire, Charleston City Council passed a series of ordinances limiting the use of wood for reconstruction.²²⁵ On June 1, 1838, the South Carolina General Assembly ratified *An Act for Rebuilding the City of Charleston* "proposing to rebuild that portion of the city of Charleston now lying in ruins."²²⁶ Builders were offered state issued loans on the "condition, that the money loaned shall ... be expended in the erection of brick or stone buildings."²²⁷ The Great Fire and the legislation which followed caused a tremendous increase in Charlestonians' demand for bricks and may explain why Cohen thought his workers' time was most valuably spent making bricks.

Moreover, Cohen's income stream from real estate probably dwarfed the annual profits (or losses) he gleaned from Clear Springs. A census of Charleston conducted in 1860 reveals that a Mr. E. Megher and Mr. Edward Simons lived as tenants in buildings Cohen owned at what was then, respectively, 128 King Street and 37 Ashley Street.²²⁸ Yet this is only the tip of the iceberg. The records held at the Charleston Register Mesne Conveyance reveal that between 1842 and

²²⁴ Preservation Society of Charleston, "1838 (April 27-28) Fire," last modified 2013, <http://www.halseymap.com/flash/window.asp?HMID=48>

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Quoted in Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid

²²⁸ Frederick A. Ford, *Census of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, for the year 1861* (Charleston: Evans & Cogswell, 1861), 30 and 118.

1869, Cohen acquired sixteen properties in downtown Charleston. These same records also reveal that between 1839 and 1869, Cohen sold or mortgaged over fifty different properties in and around Charleston.²²⁹ Given these properties, along with the more than \$10,000 worth of railroad bonds which Cohen held in 1853 alone, it seems that Clear Springs was probably not Cohen's principal source of income.²³⁰ It is abundantly clear that while Cohen was incredibly wealthy, this wealth was not derived from the conventional plantation production of cash crops.

In light of the Cohen family's impressive land holdings, I would argue that Mordecai Cohen probably gave Marx Cohen Clear Springs to serve as a symbol of wealth and gentility, rather than for pecuniary reasons. While much has already been said about the importance of land ownership in antebellum Charleston, William and Jane Pease, authors of *The Web of Progress: Private Values and Public Styles in Boston and Charleston, 1828-1843* discuss the appeal of plantation ownership in further detail, saying:

Successful careers in the mercantile world were often only stepping-stones to a planter's life. The successful merchant frequently used his profits to buy plantation land and slaves...It was not necessarily because commercial profits were smaller in Charleston that those who had the choice opted for planting, for such noneconomic values as social prestige and political power were vested in the conduct of large scale agricultural pursuits.²³¹

In other words, a great landed estate was linked to high social status in Charleston. This was evident to both outsiders as well as Charlestonians. Karl Theodor Griesinger, a German newspaper editor who toured the South in the 1850s, no doubt noticed the evident parallels between Southern plantation owners and Prussian Junker aristocrats of his native country, writing that "he [the planter] certainly does not place the title of count or baron before his name,

²²⁹ Charleston County Register Conveyance. Deeds and Mortgages. Cross Index Book: C-D, Part I, 209 and 210.

²³⁰ See Cohen, Plantation Records, Volume II.

²³¹ William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, *The Web of Progress: Private Values and Public Styles in Boston and Charleston, 1828-1843* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 14.

but he still considers himself the ‘exclusive gentleman’ and pretends that everyone who is not in the position of owning a large landed estate and having his bondsmen work the fields for him, simply has no right to consider himself as being on the same level as the planter.”²³²

Of course, not everyone was so critical of the Lowcountry plantocracy. Jacob Cardozo, editor of the *Southern Patriot*, though not an elite aristocrat, thought that Charleston greatly benefited from its planters. He described them as living “in a style of princely hospitality,” and remarked that “To the low country planter, Charleston was indebted for much of its gaiety... He, in fact, imparted a tone of refinement.”²³³ It seems most likely that Clear Springs served Marx Cohen as a genteel country house for entertaining guests, rather than a means to an income. According to the remarks made by Mr. Charles H. Möise at Cohen’s funeral in Sumter, “many are the happy memories of the joyous days passed in [Cohen’s] genial home in Charleston, or at his pleasant county house at Clear Springs!”²³⁴

Comparisons: The Oaks at Goose Creek

Jewish plantation masters were few and far between in the Old South and it is difficult to draw comparisons between the experience of Cohen and that of other Jewish planters. One cannot assume that because Cohen did not use Clear Springs for cash crop production, that other Jews did the same uniformly. However, the Oaks Plantation at Goose Creek, located some seventeen miles outside of Charleston seems to fit this pattern well enough. Created in 1680 as a warrant to Edward Middleton by the British Lord Proprietors, the Oaks remained in the

²³² Quoted in Shearer Davis Bowman, *Masters and Lords: mid-19th Century U.S. Planters and Prussian Junkers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 27.

²³³ Quoted in Maurie D. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 25.

²³⁴ Möise, “Remarks at the Funeral of Marx E. Cohen.”

Middleton family until they sold it in 1794.²³⁵ In 1813, the Oaks was purchased by a Bavarian-born Jew named Isaiah Moses and his wife Rebecca.²³⁶ Like Mordecai Cohen, Isaiah had immigrated to Charleston, in search of prosperity and did quite well for himself, at least initially. Between 1801 and 1813, Isaiah progressed from “grocer” to “shopkeeper” and then finally “planter” in the Charleston city directory.²³⁷ Like Marx Cohen, Moses saw fit to list himself as a planter, despite the fact that his wealth principally came from non-agrarian pursuits.

A plat of the Oak, based on a land survey conducted in 1817, shows 328 acres of cleared land, 389 acres of woodlands, but only sixty acres of rice-growing land—far short of the acreage necessary to justify the expense of a tidal irrigation system.²³⁸

Indeed, the Middleton family had owned many plantations in their heyday; they built the Oaks in order to flaunt their wealth and entertain, rather than grow cash crops.²³⁹

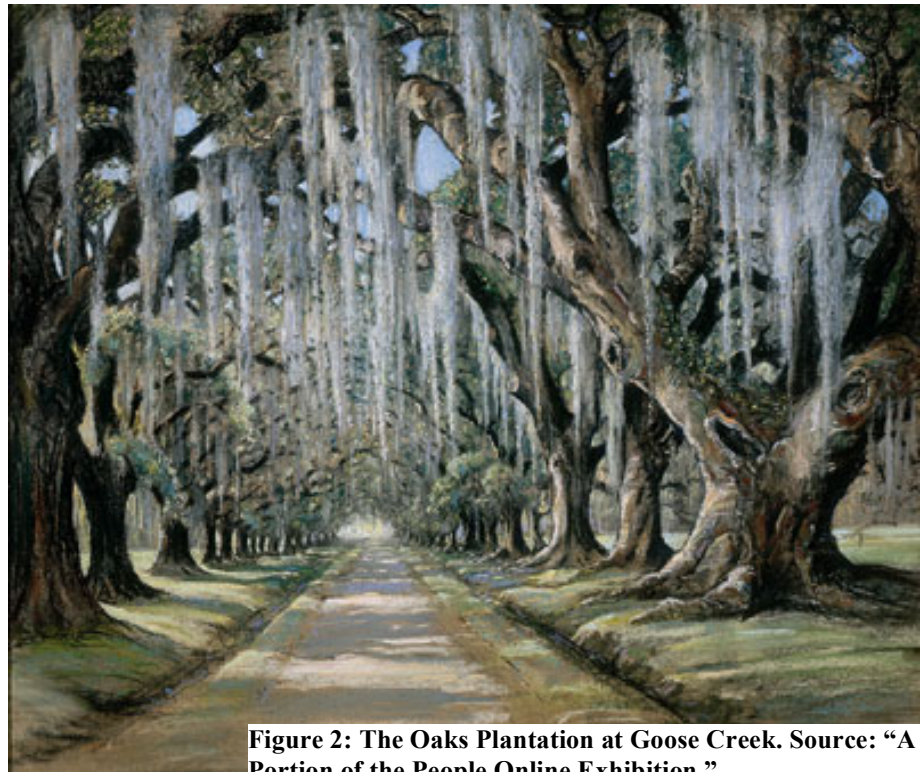


Figure 2: The Oaks Plantation at Goose Creek. Source: “A Portion of the People Online Exhibition.”

²³⁵ Judith Alexander Weil Shanks, *Old family Things: an Affectionate Look Back* (Washington D.C: Judith W. Shanks, 2011), 13.

²³⁶ Ibid, 13.

²³⁷ Shanks, *Old Family Things*, 9.

²³⁸ Rosengarten, “Plantation Life,” 105.

²³⁹ Shanks, *Old Family Things* 13.

While the rice fields are peripheral to the Oaks, the avenue leading up the to big house was visible from the road, lined with beautifully picturesque oak trees (see Figure 3). Several published accounts marveling at the Oaks beautiful entrance uphold the supposition that this plantation was first and foremost meant to be seen by passing travellers.²⁴⁰ Despite Isaiah's best efforts, the Oaks did not turn out very much rice. Even though as many fifty field hands labored on the plantation, which was hardly warranted given the small size of the rice fields, he struggled to produce rice and revenue. Like Marx Cohen, Moses added a brickyard to the plantation to try and boost proceeds yet this also proved futile. In 1840, he had to cut his losses after the plantation house burned down, selling the Oaks to settle a debt for some \$2,000 less than he had paid for it.²⁴¹ The key difference between Moses and Cohen was that the latter presumably could afford Clear Springs as a vanity project while the former relied on the Oaks for much needed income. Nevertheless, Isaiah Moses and the Oaks, just like Marx Cohen and Clear Springs, demonstrate that ownership of a plantation did not automatically make one a typical planter.

Conclusion

There are few Jewish families in the antebellum South who rivaled the Cohens in wealth or prestige. Though I have argued that Marx Cohen hardly planted rice, he was without question still a member of the antebellum plantocracy. This fact was never subject for debate. Instead, this essay has sought to use Cohen's plantation records to illuminate how one of the South's few Jewish plantation owners managed his land, capital, and slaves. There has been a tremendous amount of scholarship describing rice plantations on Lowcountry tidal rivers and their manifold distinct features: a large labor force, complex tidal irrigation systems, and use of the task system. The majority of these rice plantations were massive undertakings that produced an extraordinary

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 13.

²⁴¹ Rosengarten, "Plantation Life," 103.

amount of rice, creating vast fortunes due to returns from economies of scale. Clear Springs does not appear to fit this model. It would seem that, given the available evidence, the plantation served more as a symbol of Cohen's wealth than a means to an income. Cohen's other property holdings, along with the brick and timber produced at Clear Springs, most likely served the latter purpose. While I would not argue that the majority of Jewish-owned plantations did not produce sufficient crops for their owners to be considered true planters, Clear Springs and the Oaks show that historians cannot simply assume that ownership of a plantation one a vocational planter in the Old South. This essay should serve as a reminder to all disciplines: assumptions, no matter how logical or seemingly obvious, have no place in scholarly research.

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Appendix A: Cohen Plantation Records as Metadata (Volume I). Some pages were accidentally copied twice, which is why some entries are exact replicas of one another.
Page 1: Clipped in newspaper article. "Interesting Facts Concerning the Sorgho or Chinese Sugar Cane" in The Vincennes Weekly Western Sun. April 25, 1857. See http://www.accessible.com.nuncio.cofc.edu/accessible/prINTERfriendlyDoc.jsp
Page 2: Notations on plantation acreage (1840-1850).
Page 3: List of field hand deaths, with notation of names (1844-1847).
Page 3: List of field hand births, with notation of names (1839-1848). List of field hand deaths, with notations of names (1839-1848).
Page 4: List of field hand of births, with notation of names and one death (1850-1860).
Page 5: Notations of a working agreement with Mr. Martin as overseer, noting salary and schedule. (May 1841).
Page 6: Notations of plantation fields and acreage (1859).
Page 7: Account of work accomplished, noting "bad management of Driver" (July - November 1840). Notations of weather and personal health. Account of brick making, cutting wood, and loading boat with notations on weather.
Page 8: Account of brick making, digging potatoes, cutting wood, with remarks on weather (November 15-27, 1840).
Page 9: Account of cutting wood and clearing land, with remarks on weather. (November 18-December 8, 1840).
Page 10: Account of cutting wood, clearing land, and making bricks, with remarks on weather (December 1840).
Page 11: Account of cutting wood, clearing land, with remarks on weather and notation of Christmas Day. (December 1840 - January 1841). Field hands given "Play Day" on December 27 and 29.
Page 12: Account of burning brush and cutting wood, with remarks on weather (January 1841). Notation of no work on January 15 'on account of rain.'
Page 13: Account of cutting wood, clearing land, with remarks on weather (January - February 1841). Notation of working on a boat on (January, 23).
Page 14: Account of cutting wood, cutting hay, and digging potatoes, with remarks on weather (February 1841).
Page 15: Account of cutting wood, digging potatoes, and planting corn, with remarks on weather. (February 1841). Notation of visit to the country (November 2, 1841). Notation of visit to the country (January 10, 1843).
Page 16: Notations of digging potatoes and cutting cord wood (1843).
Page 17: Miscellaneous notations of cutting wood.
Page 18: Exact copy of page 16.
Page 19: Exact copy of page 17.
Page 20: List field hands, with notations of names (May 1, 1845).
Page 21: Notations of cutting wood (November, 1845).
Page 22: Notations of cutting wood and making bricks (1845- 1848).
Page 23: List of poultry varieties, with notations of number of each type owned (November 15, 1846).
Page 24: Notations of cutting wood (January, 1847).

Page 25: Account of field hands borrowing tools with, notation of names (1848).
Page: 26: Exact copy of page 24.
Page 27: Exact copy of page 25.
Page 28: Notations of planting sweet potatoes, planting corn, and making bricks.
Page 29: Notations of wood cutting (July 19, 1849).
Page 30: Notations of planting potatoes (1848). Account of field hands borrowing tools with notation of names (1849-1850).
Page 31: Account of hands cutting wood with notation of names (1848-1852).
Page 32: List of poultry varieties, with notations of number of each type owned (1848). Notations on planting potatoes, planting corn, and cutting wood (1849.)
Page 33: Notations of poultry owned and cutting wood (1849).
Page 34: Notations of cutting wood (November 14, 1849).
Page 35: Notations of cutting wood (1850).
Page 36: Notations of cutting wood and brick making (May, 1850).
Page 37: Account of field hands cutting wood, with notation of names. Notation of building rails [presumably for a fence] (1851).
Page 38: Notations of hands cutting wood, with notation of names (December - September, 1851).
Page 39: Miscellaneous notations. (May, 1851)
Page 40: Notations of hands cutting wood, with notation of names.
Page 41: Notations of allowance of potatoes to field hands, with notations of names (July 15, 1852).
Page 42: Notations of cutting wood and making bricks. Miscellaneous notations.
Page 43: Notations of hands cutting wood, with notation of names.
Page 44: Exact copy of page 42.
Page 45: Exact copy of page 43.
Page 46: Notations of cutting wood and storing potatoes (1852).
Page 47: Notations of allowance of potatoes and corn to field hands (1852). Miscellaneous notations.
page 48: Notations of potatoes rotting. Notations of allowance corn to field hands (May 8, 1852).
Page 49: List of poultry varieties, with notations of number of each type owned (November 10, 1852). Notations of storing potatoes.
Page 50: Notations of cutting wood (December, 1852).
Page 51: Account of field hands cutting wood, with notation of names.
Page 52: Notations of cutting wood (1853).
Page 53: Notations of allowance of potatoes to field hands (July, 1853). Notations of cutting wood.
Page 54: Notations of cutting wood cut (July, 1853).
Page 55: 'Memo of potatoes after allowance:' account of potatoes given to field hands, with notation of names (1853).
Page 56: Exact copy of page 54.
Page 57: Exact copy of page 55.
Page 58: Account of brick making and cutting wood (1853).

Page 59: Notations of allowance of corn to field hands (1853). Notations of allowance of bacon to field hands (November 13, 1853).
Page 60: Account of potatoes rotting. Account of allowance of corn to field hands (8th May, 1852).
Page 61: Notations of poultry varieties, owned (November 10th, 1852). Notations of wood cut.
Page 62: Account of field hands cutting wood, with notation of names (December 3, 1852). Miscellaneous notations.
Page 63: Account of field hands cutting wood, with notation of names (December, 1852 and January, 1853).
Page 64: Notations of cutting wood (January, 1853).
Page 65: Account of allowance of potatoes to field hands, with notation of names (January, 1853).
Page 66: Notations of cutting wood and clearing land (1853).
Page 67: 'Memo of Potatoes:' account of allowance to field hands, with notation of names (1853). Miscellaneous notations (May 13, 1853).
Page 68: Exact copy of Page 66.
Page 69: Exact copy of Page 67.
Page 70: Account of cutting wood (1853). Account of brick making (May 31, 1853).
Page 71: Account of brick making(1853). Account of bacon given to field hands (November 13, 1853). Miscellaneous notations.
Page 72: Notations of cutting wood (1853).
Page 73: Notations of clearing land and cutting wood (1853). Account of death of field hand, with notation of name (January 14, 1854).
Page 74: Notations of allowance of bacon and potatoes to field hands. Miscellaneous notations of cutting wood (1854).
Page 75: Notations of wood cut and bricks made (1854). Notations of allowance of bacon and corn to field hands.
Page 76: Notations of brick making and clearing land. Notations of allowance of corn and bacon to field hands.
Page 77: Notations of brick making (July, 1854).
Page 78: Exact Copy of Page 76.
Page 79: Exact Copy of Page 77
Page 80: 'Corn allowance:' account of allowance of corn given to field hands, with notation of names (May 15, 1854). Notations of brick making.
Page 81: Account of brick making, cutting wood, and potatoes harvesting potatoes (August 27, 1854). List of poultry varieties with notations of number of each type owned.
Page 82: List of live stock varieties, with notations of number each typed owned (1854). Notations of brick making (1854).
Page 83: Notations of cutting wood. Notations of allowance of corn to field hands. Notations of brick making.
Page 84: Notations of cutting wood (1854). Notations of allowance of bacon to field hands, with notation of names.
Page 85: Account of allowance of bacon and fish to field hands (December 24, 1854). Notations of brick making. Account of field hands cutting wood, with notations names.

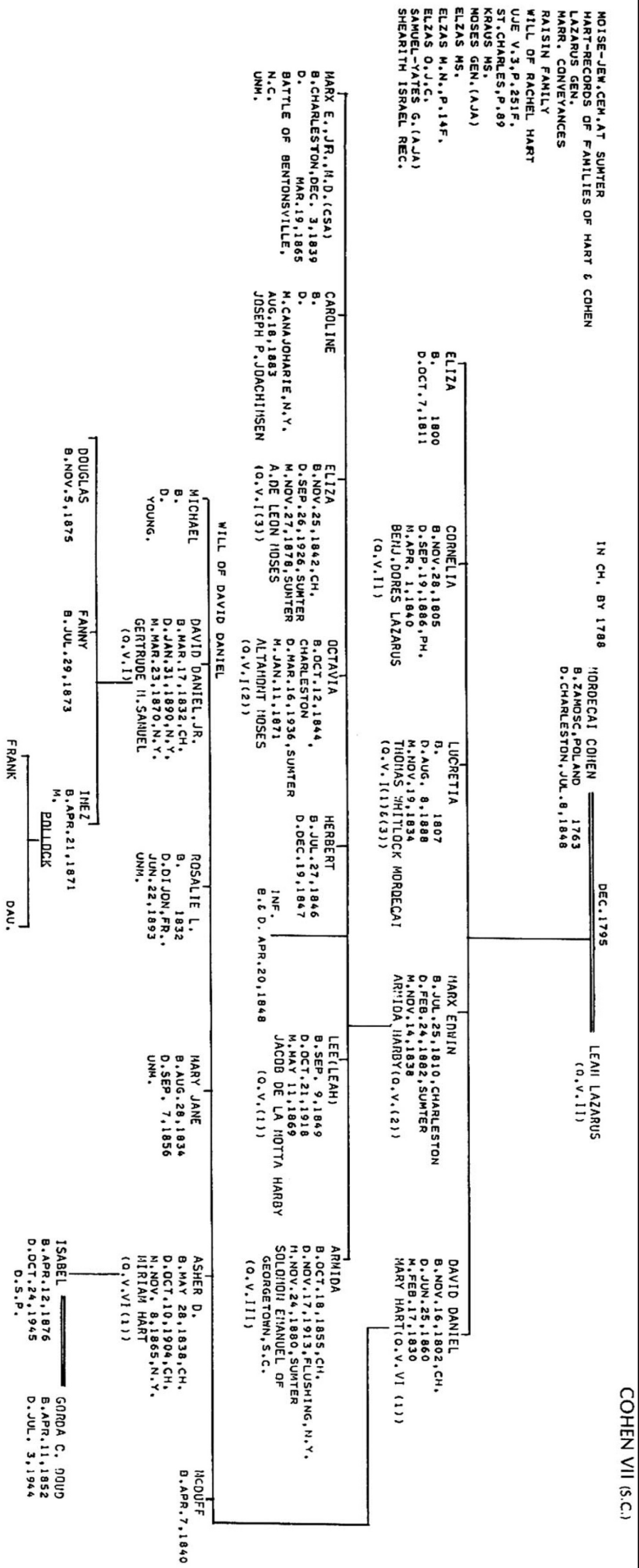
Page 86: Exact Copy of Page 84.
Page 87: Exact Copy of Page 86.
Page 89: Account of brick making and cutting wood. Notations of allowance of fish and bacon to field hands (January, 1853).
Page 90: Notations of allowance of fish, potatoes, and tobacco to field hands. Notations of cutting wood (January 23, 1853).
Page 91: Notations of cutting wood (July 18). Notations of allowance of potatoes and bacon to field hands. List of live stock varieties, with notations on branding (March 5, 1855).
Page 92: Notations of cutting wood. Notations of allowance of fish, potatoes, and corn to field hands.
Page 93: Image of unknown origin.
Page 94: Account of cutting wood (April 1, 1855). Account of field hands borrowing tools, with notation of names (April 1, 1855).
Page 95: List of poultry and livestock varieties, with notations of number of each type owned (April, 1855). Notations of cutting wood and making bricks (April, 1855).
Page 96: Account of a journey to Charleston (September 21, 1855). Notations of livestock varieties owned.
Page 97: Notations of allowance of corn and potatoes to field hands. Notations of cutting wood (1855).
Page 98: Account of hands cutting wood (1856). Miscellaneous notations.
Page 99: Notations of allowance to field hands, with notations of names. Notations of cutting wood.
Page 100: Notations of cutting wood. Account of allowance of potatoes to field hands. (July 17, 1856).
Page 101: Notations of cutting wood. Notations of selling and corn and potatoes. List of live stock varieties, with notations of each typed owned.
Page 102: Notations of allowance of corn to field hands (April 3, 1856). Notations of selling corn.
Page 103: Account of allowance of corn to field hands, with notation of names (1856). Notations of cutting wood.
Page 104: Exact copy of page 102.
Page 105: Exact copy of page 103.
Page 106: Account of allowance of potatoes to field hands (November 17, 1856). Notations of cutting wood and selling corn. List of live stock varieties owned (November 18, 1856).
Page 107: Notations of cutting wood and allowance of potatoes and corn to field hands.
Page 108: Notations of cutting wood and grinding corn. Account of allowance of potatoes to field hands (December 29, 1856). Account of allowance of potatoes to field hands (January 4, 1857).
Page 109: Notations of smoking bacon (January 8, 1857). Notations of selling corn.
Page 110: Exact copy of page 108.
Page 111: Exact copy of page 109.
Page 112: Account of grinding corn (January 1857).
Page 113: Notations of grinding corn (January 1857). Notations of allowance of corn to field hands.

Page 114: Notations of smoking bacon (July 19, 1857). Notations of cutting wood.
Page 115: Notations of making bricks (July 1857).
Page 116: Notations of grinding corn and cutting wood.
Page 117: Notations of selling corn (April 8, 1857).
Page 118: Exact copy of page 116.
Page 119: Exact copy of page 117.
Page 120: Notations of selling corn. Account of field hands borrowing tools, with notations of names (May 3, 1857).
Page 121: Notations of cutting wood and grinding corn. Notations of allowance of corn to field hands.
Page 122: Notations of selling peas and corn. Miscellaneous notations.
Page 123: Notations of selling corn and potatoes. Notations of grinding corn.
Page 124: Notations of selling corn (November, 1857).
Page 125: Account of selling corn (November 17, 1857). 'Cattle List:' list of live stock varieties owned, with notation of animals' names (November 16, 1857).
Page 126: Account of giving cloth and other supplies to field hands (November 22, 1857). Notations of cutting wood. Notations of livestock varieties list of live stock varieties owned.
Page 127: Notations of selling corn (December, 1857).
Page 128: Notations of corn sold (January, 1858).
Page 129: Account of allowance of fish, bacon, corn, peas, and potatoes to field hands (January 24, 1858). Notations of grinding corn.
Page 130: Exact copy of page 128.
Page 131: Exact copy of page 129.
Page 132: Account of selling wood (July 13, 1858). Notations of cutting wood and making bricks (March, 1858). Account of selling potatoes and allowance of potatoes to field hands. (July 25, 1858).
Page 133: Notations of selling corn and allowance of bacon to field hands (March, 1858).
Page 134: Account of allowance of corn to field hands, with notations of names (April 11, 1858). Notations of allowance to hands (April 3, 1858).
Page 135: Notations of selling potatoes and corn. Notations of allowance of bacon to field hands.
Page 136: Exact copy of page 134.
Page 137: Exact copy of page 135.
Page 138: Account of selling corn and potatoes. Notations of cutting wood (May 2, 1858). Notations of allowance of corn and fish to field hands (May 16, 1858).
Page 138: Account of adding new bricks to wharf (May 16, 1858). Notations of cutting wood. Account of field hands borrowing tools with notation of names.
Page 139: List of tools, food, and other dry goods stored at plantation. Account of field hands cutting wood, with notation of names (July 8, 1858).
Page 140: List of live stock varieties owned, with notations of numbers of each (July 10, 1858). Notations of cutting wood (August 29, 1858).
Page 141: Exact copy of page 139.
Page 142: Exact copy of page 140.
Page 143: Notations of allowance of potatoes to field hands. Notations of cutting wood and clearing land.

Page 144: Notations of cutting wood (October, 1858). Notations of visit to the country (November 16, 1858). Notations of digging potatoes.
Page 144: List of live stock varieties owned (November 27, 1858). Notations of selling corn (November 30, 1858).
Page 145: Account of allowance of cloth and other dry goods given to field to hands (December 7, 1858). Notations of dry goods sold.
Page 146: List of tools and other inventory owned (December 7, 1858).
Page 147: List of tools and other inventory owned [continued from page 146] (December 7, 1858).
Page 148: List of poultry varieties, with notations of number of each type owned (November 28, 1858). Notations of cutting wood.
Page 149: Account of field hands cutting wood, with notation of names. Notations of making bricks.
Page 150: Notations of cutting wood and grinding corn (1859).
Page 151: Account of cutting wood (July 6, 1859). Notations of allowance of corn to field hands.
Page 152: Notations of cutting wood and smoking bacon (July, 1859).
Page 153: Notations of cutting wood and cutting hay. Notations of grinding corn.
Page 154: Exact copy of page 152.
Page 155: Exact copy of page 153.
Page 156: Notations of grinding corn. Notations of allowance of corn to field hands (March, 1859).
Page 157: Notations of allowance of potatoes to field hands. Notations of cutting wood and grinding corn.
Page 158: Account of allowance of corn to field hands, with notation of names (May 1, 1859). Notations of poultry varieties owned.
Page 159: Exact copy of page 157.
Page 160: Exact copy of page 158.
Page 161: Notations of allowance of corn to field hands (May, 1859). Notations of grinding corn.
Page 162: Notations of grinding corn. Notations of allowance of corn to field hands (May-June, 1859).
Page 163: Exact copy of page 161.
Page 164: Exact copy of page 162.
Page 165: Exact copy of page 161.
Page 165: Exact copy of page: 162.
Page 166: Notations of allowance of corn to field hands. Notations of grinding corn.
Page 167: Notations of grinding corn and cutting wood. Account of poultry varieties owned (April 7, 1859).
Page 168: Exact copy of page 166.
Page 169: Exact copy of page 167.
Page 170: Exact copy of page 166.
Page 171: Exact copy of page 167.
Page 172: Notations of digging potatoes and cutting wood. Account of trip to country, with remarks on weather (November 13, 1859).
Page 173: List of poultry and live stock varieties, with notations of number of each type owned

(November, 1859). Notations of grinding corn.
Page 174: List of poultry varieties, with notations of number of each type owned (January 16, 1860.) Notations of selling corn.
Page 175: Account of earthquake (January 19, 1860).
Page 176: Notations of allowance of corn to field hands. Remarks on weather (July 6, 1860).
Page 177: Notations of cutting wood. Miscellaneous notations.
Page 178: Notations on cutting wood and allowance of corn to field hands.
Page 179: Account of allowance of corn to field hands (March 24, 1860). Account of allowance of corn to field hands (April 15, 1860). List of cattle and other livestock owned (April 15, 1860).
Page 180: List of livestock and poultry owned (April 21, 1860). Account of field hands borrowing tools.
Page 181: Account of allowance of corn to field hands (April 21, 1860). List of live stock varieties owned (May 18, 1860).
Page 182: Exact copy of page 180.
Page 183: Exact copy of page 181.
Page 184: Inventory of tools and other dry goods at plantation (May 18, 1860).
Page 185: Inventory of tools and other dry goods at plantation [continued from page 184] (May 18, 1860).
Page 186: Notations of grinding corn. Account of visit to plantation, with remarks on weather (November 19, 1860). List of poultry varieties with notations of number of each type owned (May 18, 1860).
Page 187: Notations of allowance of potatoes to field hands. Notations of digging potatoes. Account field hands cutting wood, with notation of names (November 25, 1860).
Page 187: List of poultry varieties, with notations of number of each type owned (May 18, 1860). Account of trip to country, with remarks on weather (November 19, 1860).
Page 188: Miscellaneous notations.
Page 189: Miscellaneous notations.
Page 190: Notations of cutting wood. Notations of allowance of potatoes and corn to field hands.
Page 191: Exact copy of page 189.
Page 192: Exact copy of page 190.
Page 193: Miscellaneous notations.
Page 194: Miscellaneous notations.
Page 195: Exact copy of page 193.
Page 196: Exact copy of page 194.
Page 197: Miscellaneous notations.
Page 198: Notations of allowance to field hands.
Page 199: Exact copy of page 197.
Page 200: Exact copy of page 198.

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Appendix C: Deed of Gift From Mordecai Cohen to Marx Cohen (Charleston County Register Mesne Conveyance. Deeds of Gift. Unit E 10: pages 384-386.)

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by act and deed deliver the within written deed: and that he with Thomas Grimke witnessed the Execution thereof sworn before me this 23rd day of October 1833. Wm. Jones, W.P. Recorded & Examined this 23 October 1833.

Maurel J. Jones 1833

Mordecai Cohen
To
Marx E. Cohen
Deed of Gift

The State of South Carolina Knowall men by these presents, that I Mordecai Cohen of the City of Charleston in the State aforesaid, for and in consideration of the love and affection which I have, and heartily

my Son Marx E. Cohen, and to advance him in life, have given given granted bargained sold conveyed released and confirm and by these presents, do give grant bargain sell convey release and confirm unto my said Son Marx E. Cohen, all that plantation or tract of land known by the name of "Went Spring" situated lying and being on Ashley River in the Parish of St. Andrews State aforesaid, said plantation containing Six Hundred & Seventy three acres more or less, to wit: of high land Bay Swamp and so forth Eight Hundred & Eighty four acres of Rice Field Twenty Six acres, of Swamp Land Twenty eight acres, and of Chalk Marsh One Hundred and thirty four acres, and having such buttings and boundaries as are represented in and by a plat of the said plantation drawn by Charles Parker Esq. and bearing date the twenty second day of March Anno domini Eighteen Hundred and thirty three, which said plat was annexed to a deed of bargain and sale of the said plantation from Henry C. Armstrong and J. C. Coleman to the said Mordecai Cohen bearing date the seventeenth day of January Anno Domini Eighteen Hundred and thirty three duly executed and recorded in the Office of the Register of Mean Conveyances for Charleston District. Together with all and singular the right members hereditarily appurtenances subject however to all the reservations contained in my title to the said plantation, and also all the Cattle horses carts ploughs guns furniture out buildings repairs and other matters and things to the said premises belonging him as usufructuary or appurtenant; which said premises with the appurtenances and incidents above mentioned are valued by the said Marx E. Cohen at the sum in figures of Fifteen Hundred & 500 dollars. To have and to hold all and singular the premises above mentioned with the appurtenances and incidents aforesaid (except however to the reservations aforesaid) unto the said Marx E. Cohen his heirs Executors administrators and assigns forever according to the nature of the several Estates. And know ye further, that I

385 the said Mordca Cohen for the consideration and the purposes
aforesaid have also given, bargained sold and delivered and by these
present do also give bargain sell and deliver unto my son ^{son} Marx
Cohen all and singular the negro Slaves hereinafter mentioned
to wit Seven negro Slaves, Sam, Isaac, Moses, Jonathan Sam-
mon, Tom and Nat, valued by the said Marx Cohen at the sum
or price of Three Hundred and fifty \$350 each in all Two Thou-
sand and Four Hundred and fifty dollars One negro Slave Han-
nibal valued by the said Marx Cohen at the sum or price
of Two Hundred \$200 dollars the four negro Slaves, Abby,
Catty, Rachel and Sam valued by the said Marx Cohen
at the price of Three Hundred \$300 each dollar in all Twelve
Hundred \$1200 dollars One negro Slave Pinky valued by
the said Marx Cohen at the sum or price of Two Hundred
dollar \$200 the four negro Slaves, Charles, Bob, Robert and
Stephen valued by the said Marx Cohen at the sum
or price of Three Hundred \$300 dollars each in all twelve
Hundred \$1200 dollars and the nine negro Slaves, Louisa,
Edward, Daniel, Andy, Philip, Maria Sam, and the infant
valued by the said Marx Cohen at the average sum or
price of One Hundred dollars each in all at nine Hundred
\$900 dollars and also the sum of Two Thousand Three Hundred
and fifty dollars \$2350, to complete the amount of Ten Thousand
dollars \$10,000 being equivalent to the amount given and agreed
by the said Mordca Cohen to his eldest son David Cohen
To have and to hold all and singular the said negro Slaves with
the future price and increase of the females and also the said sum of
Two Thousand Three Hundred and fifty \$2350 dollars paid to the
said Marx Cohen in cash unto the said Marx Cohen his in-
cumbent administrators and assigns forever And I the said Mordca Cohen
do hereby bind myself my heirs executors and administrators to war-
rant and forever defend all and singular the Premises here men-
tioned unto the said Marx Cohen his heirs executors and administrators
and assigns, according to the nature of the several Estates, from
and against myself my heirs executors and administrators and
all other Persons lawfully claiming or to claim the same
in any part thereof And I do hereby expressly declare and record
that the property real and personal above given and advanced to
my said son Marx Cohen so much as of my the said Mordca
Cohen's death intestate or without a last will and testament
fully executed & operative in Law, as to all or any part of my
Estate, to be taken, considered & received by my said son Marx
Cohen, as so much on account of his share of my Estate of

380 which I shall or may die intestate as aforesaid in order to equal-
ize his proportion thereof with that of my other heirs or distributees
at the valuation above stated, to wit, at the valuation of Ten
Thousand \$10,000. Dollars. In Witness Whereof I the said
Mordecai Cohen, have hereunto set my hand and affixed my
Seal, this Twenty First day of October in the Year of our Lord
One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty three, and in the Fif-
teenth Year of the Sovereignty and Independence of the United States
of America. Mordecai Cohen. (S)

Signed Sealed and delivered in the presence of Henry D. Sazany
Michael Sazany - State of South Carolina Charleston District
Personally appeared Benjamin D. Sazany and made oath that he
saw Mordecai Cohen sign Seal this deed as his act and deed
and that he with Mich. Sazany witnessed the same. Given under my
hand this 30th day of October 1833. Tho. S. Jones Notary Public -
Leah Cohen. The State of South Carolina Charleston Dist.
Ben. of Dover } Ct Richard Meadon Junr, a Justice of the Peace
in and for the district and State aforesaid, do hereby certify unto
all whom it may concern that Leah Cohen, the wife of the within
named Mordecai Cohen, did this day appear before me and
upon being privately and separately examined by me, did declare
that she does freely voluntarily and without any compulsion or
fear of any person or persons whomsoever renounce release &
approve relinquish unto the within named Mordecai Cohen
his heirs and assigns all her interest and Estate and also all her
right and claim of Dover, for or to all and singular the pre-
mises within mentioned and released - Given under my hand
and Seal at Charleston (the word "Certify" being first intimated
this Twenty first day of October Anno Domini One Thousand
Eight Hundred and Thirty three Richard Meadon Junr. Secy, S.
Leah Cohen. Recorded & Examined this 23d. October 1833 -
words run or intimated page 385. Tho. S. Jones Depy Regr

John Man

Catherine Man

to
Semina Findley for
Conveyance

State of South Carolina City of Charleston
This Indenture made the 5th day of Septem-
ber in the Year of our Lord One Thousand
Eight Hundred and thirty three Between
John Man of the State & City aforesaid Rich-
laved and Catherine his wife of the first part
and his Sister Mrs Semina Findley and at her death her two
daughters Semina Arabella and Sophia Western of the second part
witnesseth that the said John Man & Catherine his wife for &