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Valerie Grim
Iowa State University

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Black farm families in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta: A study of the Brooks Farm community, 1920–1970

Grim, Valerie, Ph.D.

Iowa State University, 1990

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Black farm families in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta:
A study of the Brooks Farm Community, 1920–1970

by

Valerie Grim

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: History
Major: Agricultural History and
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Signature was redacted for privacy.
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For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
1990

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DEDICATION

When I began graduate school in the fall of 1984, I had the support of every member of my family, both nuclear and extended. Along the way, however, I have lost cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandfathers. While the death of these individuals deeply touched me, it was the death of my brother, James, and his daughter, Andrea, that zapped life from my body. It was a tremendous struggle to strike a balance between looking backward and onward. But their deaths gave me strength to finish this course. I am happy to have known James for twenty-six years and Andrea for nine. While I am blessed to have seen James' success, I will never know "Duke's." However, I am convinced that she would have been ingenious and kind as her father was.

I dedicate this dissertation to James and Andrea because, as I prayed for strength to accept their deaths, God granted it and also gave me courage and confidence to face life's challenges and disappointments. Though life is a journey that we sometimes pass through alone, I continue to feel the love and support of these family members which I shall hold dear until that "great getting up morning."

Fare you well, fare you well.
INTRODUCTION

This is a study of a black farming community called Brooks Farm, located in Drew, Mississippi, in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta. The study covers a period of fifty years, 1920-1970, in order to examine changes that occurred in the community. During the 1920s, Brooks Farm was established as a plantation and continued to exist in this form until the owner, P. H. Brooks, sold the land to residents living on the plantation. As a result, the Brooks Farm plantation became the Brooks Farm community during the 1940s. During the 1940s and 1950s, the community held its highest population, with approximately 175-180 families, with an average of eight children per household.

The black farm families of Brooks Farm aimed at more than individual independence. They sought to establish a total community. Hence, residents of Brooks Farm, between 1920-1960, established their own social institutions, such as schools and churches, and devised strategies from within these institutions to develop their community. Brooks Farm residents also constructed various types of mills, stores, and gins to provide additional employment and to give the community a diversified economic base. Because farming was the dominant occupation and the strength of the community's economy, these black farmers secured a cooperative labor force, purchased farm machinery, seeds, and commercial fertilizers, marketed and transported their crops to the market so that they could be productive farmers. Because some of the residents owned land, they established credit by using their land or a percentage of
their crop as collateral. Farming in the Brooks Farm community is a story of successes and failures as residents struggled to survive in the farming business.

For the purpose of this study, fifty individuals were interviewed. Twenty-eight women and twenty-two men agreed to discuss their experiences in the Brooks Farm community. The ages of these individuals varied, ranging from 37-87 years. The participants were both landowners and nonlandowners who resided or had resided in the Brooks Farm community. The interviewees were similar in background. The majority had attended school, but had not completed high school, which for the first generation would have been eight years in Mississippi black rural and country schools. For some members of the second generation who participated in this study, twelve years of school had to be completed before an individual could be considered a high school graduate. This development was not an important issue in the community until the public education of blacks was taken over by the state during the 1950s. However, teachers and parents in the Brooks Farm community, between 1920-1955, worked to ensure that children receive at least four to six years of schooling. This was important to parents, especially since many, before moving to Brooks Farm, had been raised on plantations where education was not important and where children rarely went to school.

Participants in this study were from a farming background. Their parents and grandparents had primarily worked as sharecroppers, tenants, and day laborers, a pattern that existed in many black farm families from generation to generation. While some of the respondents were born in the
community, the majority migrated to Brooks Farm as children, with their parents, or as adults in family units. The fifty participants came from households where belief in God was important. Each came to Brooks Farm with a goal: to improve their living conditions, both socially and economically. They were looking for a community where they could advance, own land, and make decisions. They found Brooks Farm to be stimulating because these opportunities existed.

Participants were asked many questions. All of them were asked the same questions. These were concerned with their background, roles within the family, family life, institutional development, community relations, and farming. There were questions pertaining to their perception and attitude as they related to role play and community development.

Two methodological problems accompanied the use of oral history: validity and reliability. Therefore, in order to make this study of Brooks Farm both valid and reliable, it was necessary to cross-reference information from the interviews to establish internal consistency on issues and points emphasized by the residents. This procedure formed the equivalent of internal reliability and established a basic, community-wide perspective that described and interpreted events and social processes from the people's point of view. Information gathered from the interviews was validated by comparing it to the more objective and empirical data extracted from census reports, school, land and probate records. Historical sources such as federal and state documents and reports, annual reports of the Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension Service, Biennial Reports of the
Superintendent of Education, medical reports, church records, and newspaper articles were used to establish the methodological equivalent of validity.

This dissertation comprises seven chapters. Chapter I explores the development of economic, agricultural, and rural policies in the United States and analyzes their impact on black rural and farm families. This chapter shows how prejudice and discrimination in the implementation of government policies have resulted in limited access to land, restricted credit and usurious interest rates, scarcity of opportunities for advancement, and inequitable share of government benefits for black rural and farm families. Essentially, this chapter points to the significance of Brooks Farm in the sense that it asks how this community of farm families has survived in the farming business despite the disadvantages that most black farm families faced in twentieth century American agriculture.

Chapter II describes the initial founding of the community. It discusses plantation organization and management, labor relations, land tenure, and the role of P. H. Brooks in creating the Brooks Farm community. Farm operations, such as marketing and crop production, including specialization, diversification, and scientific farming were discussed in order to indicate what residents of Brooks Farm were introduced to as they worked for P. H. Brooks on the Brooks Farm plantation. This is an important discussion because these developments can be compared and contrasted as residents became landowners and independent farmers, engaging in crop production without the aid of P. H.
Brooks. Analyses on family life, household composition, medical care, housing, employment, technology, and living conditions are discussed as they related to a plantation economy during the twentieth century.

Chapter III explores family life. It analyzes values, morals, responsibilities, and work ethics as they related to family life and community development in Brooks Farm. Discussions followed the patterns of development from infancy to death in order to show what family life in the Brooks Farm community entailed.

Chapter IV examines the role of women. It describes women's roles as economic contributors, decision-makers, and community builders. The effort is to show that women did not only perform the traditional role within the family and household, but managed to show that they had other abilities as well. These roles were important to the survival of the family, farm, and community.

Chapter V analyzes the roles of rural institutions in the development of the community. While the church established moral values, with emphasis on self-help, the school taught community enhancement skills so that the community could sustain itself.

Chapter VI details changes in Brooks Farm. It describes the significance of road improvement, the automobile, and the erection of taverns in the Brooks Farm community. Changes within the home are discussed as technology became available to residents. This chapter analyzes changes in food and nutrition, housing, and medical care as they related to the adoption of technology. Development of social clubs and purchase of insurance policies were examined as the community developed.
The impact of these developments is described in the context of leisure and wage increase. Mechanization and migration are assessed as the community continued to adopt technology. This chapter shows that as the larger society changed, so did Brooks Farm.

Chapter VII investigates landownership in the community, with emphasis placed on acquisition, intergenerational holding, land tenure and improvement. This chapter also analyzes the economic capacity of the community to foster development through farming and make-shift business established by residents. Discussions on markets, transportation, migration, population changes, labor, technology, credit, and scientific farming are included. In this chapter, the experience farmers gained from working with P. H. Brooks is compared and contrasted with their practice as independent yeoman farmers.

The conclusion to the dissertation summarizes the Brooks Farm experience and makes concluding statements regarding developments in the Brooks Farm community. More important, it discusses the significance of the study to history.
CHAPTER I. THE BLACK FARM FAMILY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to survive in the farming business, black farm families have, historically, had to contend with many adversities: limited credit at exorbitant interest rates, restricted political, economic, and social mobility due to scarcity of opportunities for advancement, and unequal distributions of government benefits. These historical conditions were intensified by racial attitudes prevalent in the South as black farm families struggled to acquire and retain land.\(^1\) Racism and discrimination, a lack of institutional support, both economical and political, and the possession of infertile lands combined with changes and developments in the agricultural economy, such as commercialization, specialization, mechanization, government price and income support programs, and poor economic arrangements, resulting in higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of participation in off-farm employment contributed to disadvantageous noncompetitive positions for black farm families.\(^2\)

This historical analysis is an examination of the impact of historical conditions—racism, a lack of institutional economic support, and possession of marginal lands—on black farm families.\(^3\) It discusses changes within the agricultural economy and shows how these families were affected as they struggled to survive in the farming business.

At the turn of the century and through the middle 1900s, over eighty-five percent (85%) of the black rural population in the United
States engaged in farming. Black farm families worked as sharecroppers, tenants, and owner-operators. Sharecropping was the dominant occupation held by blacks residing on farms. Because the promises of land distribution among the newly freed slaves were never realized, sharecropping, surviving in some places today, replaced slavery as the prevailing relationship between white landowners and black farmers without land. One-tenth of all landowners controlled from one-half to two-thirds of all lands in most southern communities, even though more than seventy percent (70%) of blacks in the southern states were employed in agriculture. In 1880, blacks owned less than eight percent (8%) of all the farms. Because whites owned the best land, only marginal acreages were available for sale to blacks. With limited resources and mostly unfertile landholdings, some black owner operators were forced into sharecropping because many of them could not survive on marginal lands. However, the number of black-owned farms, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, 1900-1920, increased as the agricultural economy experienced some prosperity in the earlier years of the twentieth century. But by the 1950s, the number of black farms has declined to less than one-third of all farms in operation prior to 1960.

Despite gains blacks made in landownership during post-Reconstruction and the early years of the twentieth century, sharecropping, nevertheless, devastated black farm families. While acting as a more subtle form of dominance than slavery, it yielded similar patterns of control and subservience. In Mississippi, for
example, the terms of the contract made between landowners and sharecroppers stipulated that landowners be paid one-half of the crop as rent. In return, landowners provided housing, fuel, animals, and tools. The cost of the fertilizer was deducted from the crop. Landlords weighed and marketed the cotton and other crops while keeping all sales and financial records. Blacks, with no records of the crops, could neither determine the monetary value of the crops nor the percentage to which they were entitled. Food, clothing, and household needs were obtained by the sharecropper, usually on credit at high interest rates. The result of this arrangement kept black farm families poor and dependent as "perennial indebtedness was inescapable for most, and the whole system was an invitation to the practice of deceit and fraud by sharp-dealing merchants." With the law behind them, merchants charged from 25 to 100 percent interest on supplies. In addition, labor contract legislation permitted landlords to secure liens on sharecroppers' crops. Under this system, landlords continued to reap the benefits of blacks' initiative and hard work. Charles Johnson wrote:

It is to the advantage of the owner to encourage the most dependent form of sharecropping as source of largest profits. And he wishes to hold in greatest dependence just those workers who are most efficient. A shiftless and inefficient cropper is of little value to the owner and is expelled. . . . The industrious and thrifty tenant is sought by the landlord. The very qualities which might normally lead a tenant to attain the position of renter, and eventually of owner, are just the ones which make him a permanent asset as a cropper. Landlords, thus, are most concerned with maintaining the system that furnishes labor under their control; that is, in the tenancy class. Ransom and Sutch, on the other hand, argued that sharecropping was
also economically distinctive in the sense that it provided advantages to both the landowners and the croppers. However, even in the most efficient arrangements, sharecropping never became the stepping stone blacks needed to lift themselves from dependency. Under these arrangements, state laws protected the system by making it illegal to recruit or hire croppers who were committed to other landowners. Laws provided punishments for "laborers who had received advances in money or supplies and afterward failed to perform the reasonable service required of them by the terms of the said contract." Apparently, these laws were "sufficient to keep Negro laborers in virtual bondage" as black sharecroppers continued to live under these circumstances.

Just as farm relations in the late nineteenth century proved difficult for sharecroppers, blacks, owning land, were confronted with similar frustrations. In all types of land tenure, owner-operated, rented, and sharecropped farms, blacks had fewer acres of cropland than their white counterparts and their landholdings were less fertile than whites'. In order to compete in the market, black landowners, like sharecroppers, were compelled to work their land more intensely, cultivating a greater proportion of their acreage than whites in order to maximize their yields. Therefore, the ratio of untilled to tilled acres for white farmers was more than twice the ratio for black farmers, regardless of the form of tenure. Despite a greater need for fertilizer to replenish their exhausted soils, black landowners received less financing than whites for this purpose, and as a result, their land was less fertile and less profitable, thereby causing black farmers to be
less productive and more poverty stricken. In many instances, crops grown on poor land did not always generate a steady income for landowners and croppers. As a result, only small amounts of money were available for blacks to invest in their communities. This meant that blacks would have more poorly financed institutions and less money to invest in community development. Black farm families relied more on ingenuity than economic resources to advance their communities.

Despite economic and social disadvantages black farm families encountered, scholars argued that some progress was made during the later part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. A positive development for black farmers during this time was the creation of small, black-owned banks and lending institutions. Beginning in the 1880s, with the combined resources of a few black ministers, entrepreneurs, and educators, more than fifty (50) black-owned lending institutions were established by 1911, with annual transactions worth more than $20 million. These aided black farm families because farmers could secure loans to buy fertilizers, insecticides, and additional holdings. Other significant factors that influenced black agriculture were the increase of literacy and the establishment of black agricultural and teacher colleges, enabling blacks to acquire additional farming skills. These developments occurred in communities where blacks were concerned about advancing. Even though some communities experienced some success, they were few in number as many blacks continued to opt to live on plantations.

At the turn of the century, changes in the agricultural economy
initially improved economic conditions for black farm families as the price of cotton and other staples increased. But these improvements were short-lived as the economy slumped and tensions between the races in the South increased in the twentieth century. By 1910, blacks had purchased millions of acres of land in North and South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. More than 240,000 blacks owned their farms. Another 670,000 blacks were cash renters, constituting 43.6% of all southern tenant farmers. These advances, however, did not come without a price as black farmers had to meet certain requirements before they could progress toward landownership. With the approval of the local white community, black families became landowners if they were considered safe and knew their place. Blacks who became landowners often were chosen by whites in a paternalistic relationship. Otherwise, blacks were most successful if they had large sums of money available to purchase the land outright. According to some authors, blacks had to offer double the asking price for a piece of land. More importantly, prospective black buyers were not permitted to purchase sought-after land. They were restricted to areas with less fertile soil, located in the hills, away from white churches and schools and not too close to the main highways or railroads.

During years of economic stress in Mississippi, 1919-1930, black farm families suffered severely. The system worked against them, thereby causing these farmers to experience more poverty. While credit was extended to white farmers, blacks suffered as the prices of agricultural products declined. With merchants refusing to extend credit to blacks,
thousands of black farmers could not pay off their mortgage and notes of credit and were, therefore, forced to sell their land for a fraction of its value. With the decrease in prices of farm goods during the 1920s and 1930s, coupled with a lack of resources, black farm families continued to experience hardships as they lacked funds to purchase necessities, equipment and supplies, and insecticide to control insects, especially the boll weevil, that destroyed their crops and helped perpetuate poverty within the black community. The boll weevil, by 1921, had spread across the entire Cotton Belt, taking a heavy toll in areas such as the Cotton Belt of Mississippi where a large percentage of black farmers resided. While white farmers secured loans from white lending institutions to keep their land, purchase cattle, and to diversify crops, black lending institutions, by the 1920s, had failed as a result of the collapse of the cotton market, thereby closing off nearly all sources of credit. With mounting debts and no sources of credit, many blacks either abandoned, sold, or lost their farms. Consequently, the black farming community was weakened as landholdings and population decreased and as money, typically used to support institutions, moved out of the community.

The disappearing of black farmers and the weakening of their economic power can be readily seen in the decade 1920-1930. Within this decade, the number of black farm operators declined significantly. With large mortgages that were to be paid under short-term contracts, black landowners could not meet their payments in the continuing years of agricultural depression. With all their earnings invested in the
farms, black farmers consequently lost practically everything, and therefore, were reduced once again to tenancy.\textsuperscript{55} Out of a decline of 42,858 black farm operators in the United States during this period, 1920–1930, 37,596 were owners, 4,159 were tenants, and 1,103 were managers. The number of black-owned farms decreased by 17.2\%, a rate of loss twice that experienced by whites during the same time period.\textsuperscript{56} Due to economic strain between 1920–1930, black farmers lost 2,749,619 acres of land.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, the black farming community was affected by out-migration because, as landholdings were purchased and consolidated, the black farm population declined. While many blacks left the rural for urban sites, many black communities were threatened with extinction and eventually died off as agricultural production required more capital, technology, mechanization, commercialization, and specialization.\textsuperscript{58}

In addition to declining farms, scholars viewed out-migration from the black community as the next most serious result of discrimination and a faltering economy. New job opportunities created in the North, resulting from World War I, provided black farm laborers with an alternative to the hardships they endured as southern farmers and sharecroppers. By 1930, the number of blacks migrating North had increased more than five-fold since the late 1800s. From 1880 to 1910, seventy-nine thousand four hundred (79,400) blacks left the Black Belt for the North. Between 1910 and 1920, the figure rose to 226,900, and from 1920–1930 about 440,400 black farm workers fled the deep South.\textsuperscript{59} Nearly all the persons migrating North were sharecroppers, small owners-operators, or worker in jobs associated with agriculture.
Scholars, examining changes that have occurred within the black farm population, found a link between migration and the impact of government farm policies. Though blacks have been somewhat lax in acquiring and maintaining lands and proper skills to manage farms, the general consensus among scholars, nevertheless, was that black farm families have not greatly benefited from federal farm policies. As a result, the black community has decreased in landholdings and population. Even though many farm policies were established between 1914-1970, it appeared that the legislations formulated in the 1930s had the most devastating affects on black farm families and communities. Among the most noted policies affecting the black farm population was the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA). By 1932, the price of cotton had fallen again to five (5) cents per pound, with worse prospects for 1933. The act sought to raise farm prices through a reduction in production by providing rental or benefit payments to farmers who withdrew acreage from cultivation. The subsequent "plow up" of cotton was estimated to have taken 10,400,000 acres or 25-50% of each producers' acreage out of production. Such a reduction affected black farm families as sharecroppers and tenants were displaced. The reduction in cotton acreage reduced by one-quarter the labor needed to cultivate, harvest, and gin cotton. The AAA instructed landlords to divide benefits with their tenants in proportion to their share in the "plowed up" crop. Because landlords were permitted to collect debts, often at high interest rates, before distributing benefits, black tenants and sharecroppers seldom received cash as payment for their share in the plow up.
According to government and historical studies, most black tenants received a token percentage of the payments, depending on the landlord's perception of their needs. In the case of small landowners, creditors appeared on the benefit checks as joint payees, deducting their debts, leaving only a small amount, if any, of the payment for the farmer. While large plantation owners could reduce their costs by decreasing the number of croppers and tenants, small black landowners had no extra margin of surplus. Therefore, any decrease in production made the loss more imminent for the farm, family, and community.

Black farm families were further affected by the federal government's inability to enforce its policies. Although the 1934 version of the contract, which the government entered into with farmers under the AAA, acknowledged the problems facing tenants and croppers, illiteracy and ignorance of the complexities of the contract rendered black tenants extremely vulnerable. In many instances, black croppers and tenants were forced to sign their benefits over to the landlord. At the national level, it was acknowledged by AAA administrators "that landlords were violating the 1934 contract by evicting black tenants, converting them from tenants to wage laborers, withholding benefit payments from them by various devices, refusing to grant the status of managing share-tenant, and raising rents." At the local level, black farmers could not choose agents or committeemen to represent their interest. They, for the most part, were represented by white agents who, more often than not, represented the interests of the white landowners. Agents and committeemen occupied positions of power, and since black tenant farmers and
landowners were least represented in these positions of power, they were at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. Because they lacked education, black tenants and croppers were susceptible to explanations that benefited the interest of large white landowners.73

The result of government policies in the 1930s for black farm families was chaos. Even though most small farmers experienced difficulties, the black farmers appeared to have suffered greater adversity under the AAA. Black tenants and croppers were exploited. They were coerced into signing over their benefits or credits to their landlords and were downgraded in status to seasonal wage laborers so that they would be ineligible for benefit payments.74 Furthermore, as landlords displaced sharecroppers and renters with machines, black farm families were adversely affected since mechanization was most effectively introduced on cotton plantations, where blacks outnumbered whites.75 Because whites were given preference over blacks for the job as machine operators, the number of black farm laborers declined as blacks were assigned the majority of the menial tasks.76 Because of the problems existing between sharecroppers and landowners, black farm laborers, including tenants, sharecroppers, and farm hands, migrated in large numbers.

Between 1930 and 1960, government agencies were created to succor poor people. However, instead of helping black farm families, these agencies, as it turned out, proved to have been a disservice to most.77 Inequities in public benefits existed in agencies like the Farm Security Administration (FSA), established in 1937 to assist small farmers. Sidney Baldwin explained:
Especially in matters of race, the leaders of the FSA were careful. In their allocation of loan and grant funds, in their personnel appointment(s), in their resettlement projects, and in their public information activities they adhered fairly consistently to southern attitudes and practices regarding race.⁷⁸

Even though some FSA administrators tried to integrate, they were unsuccessful because few, if any, blacks were chosen as members of the county FSA committees that reviewed loan applications and provided advice regarding the establishment of upper and lower purchase loan limits.⁷⁹

Thus, bowing to political pressure, especially at the local level, government agents, in choosing the safest credit risk, discriminated against black applicants in their selection of recipients.⁸⁰ These practices persisted as black farmers continued to seek aid from government agencies.

The discriminatory practices of government agencies were more profound in programs like rural rehabilitation. Black farmers received little help as their needs were mostly overlooked. The standard rural rehabilitation loan program, the most important activity of the FSA, was intended to serve low income farmers, including owner-operators, tenants, sharecroppers.⁸¹ The program was authorized to provide credit, farm and home management planning, technical assistance, and supervision.⁸² By 1934, 695,000 farm families, one of nine farm families, had received loans averaging $240 in 1937 and $600 in 1943.⁸³ As of 1939, about 30% of all borrowers had "been helped to advance from the status of sharecropper to that of tenants."⁸⁴ According to Baldwin, the standard rural rehabilitation loan program was "consciously intended to serve
higher risk client families," and thus it was "paradoxical that it too discriminated against Negro low-income families." While blacks constituted thirty-seven percent (37%) of all low-income farm families in the South, they received only twenty-three percent (23%) of the rehabilitation loans in 1939.  

"White low-income farm family had a two-to-one advantage over a Negro family in obtaining a standard loan; the odds against a Negro family ranged from three-to-one in Tennessee to seven-to-one in Mississippi."  

The tenant-purchase program also perpetuated poverty within the households of black farmers. Although it failed to serve blacks on an equitable basis, this program was authorized to provide loans to tenants, sharecroppers, and farm laborers. The program was designed to help farm laborers become owners of family-sized farms. Even though blacks comprised approximately thirty-five percent (35%) of all tenants in the South, they received only twenty-one percent (21%) of the tenant-purchase (1,919 out of 8,988 loans as of 1940). Despite their disproportional impoverished conditions, black farm families constituted only one-quarter of the families served by homestead projects. As a result, in providing basic emergency assistance and rehabilitation to needy farm families, the grant program bestowed larger grants to whites. With preferential treatment, many whites were able to return to rural areas, while blacks continued to leave farming for industrial employment in urban areas. Thus, black farm families continued to experience the bad effects of government policies during the 1930s and 1940s.

Sources also showed that black farmers experienced similar
discrimination in public education. High rates of illiteracy among blacks facilitated their exploitation as sharecroppers and tenant farmers and restricted their ability to rise to the level of farm owners. Historical sources indicated a high correlation between literacy and landownership as ninety percent (90%) of all black farm owners could read and write, while fifty-eight percent (58%) of the black adult sharecroppers and sixty-four percent (64%) of the black adult tenant farmers were illiterate. Discrimination in Southern education was more profound in rural farms and, as public monies for education decreased, disparities in educational training for both races increased, with white students receiving more than ten times the amount of money spent on education than black students. In some Southern counties, for example, $36.53 was spent educating a white child while $3.11 was used toward educating a black child. Having received poor educational training as children; the disparities within the system proved most detrimental as illiteracy perpetuated blacks' status as tenants and croppers who lacked knowledge and managerial skills in obtaining and managing farms. Research has shown that, among black farm families, farm management has been most effective among those who finished high school and acquired some years of formal education.

Because black rural and farm communities, as a whole, lacked advanced educational and training facilities, the need for some kind of outreach and agricultural advice was evident. The Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture was authorized to provide this service to black farm families but, because of racial segregation,
the ratio of black agents to the black population living on farms in the South was less than half the ratio of white agents to white farm residents. As a result, many black farm families could not be contacted. Furthermore, black tenants and sharecroppers did not receive technical assistance and training because some landlords refused to grant black agents permission to serve sharecroppers and tenants on their holdings. A lack of cooperation between some white landowners and black extension agents hindered black farmers from receiving the assistance they needed so badly. Black farmers continued to grow inferior crops because they lacked the educational training and technical assistance that advocated modern farming. In the early years of its life, the Extension Service was of little help to black farm and rural families because it could not resolve conflicts between agents and landlords. More important, black farmers did not utilize this service as much as they could have because they were not aware of government policies authorizing such aid for them. Race relations in the South were such that neither the most noble white or black agents interfered in conflicts involving blacks and whites, especially the landlord and sharecropper.

During the 1940s and 1950s, some black farm families, primarily tenants and croppers, were affected by improvements in farm equipment and other technological innovations. Mechanization, especially, contributed to changes that occurred in the black population. In the 1940s and 1950s, the success of the tractors combined with mechanical harvesters and chemical weed control led to the displacement of thousands of black farm families. Between 1945 and 1959, the number of black tenant
farmers declined by seventy percent (70%). "Lacking land, the tenant has no defense against mechanization and may find himself displaced if the landlord decides to operate with more machinery and fewer men. He is usually the loser, too, when crop allotments are cut and there is less acreage to be divided among the tenants." On many farms, the sharecroppers were the first to leave. They were followed by the tenants, and both were replaced by farm laborers who landlords, typically, employed to operate the machinery. Between the 1940s and 1950s, machine operators were usually white even though blacks outnumbered whites as farm laborers. On plantations, mechanization, during the initial stages of wide-scale adoption, usually meant lower wages for farm hands not operating the machinery. Since these individuals tended to be black families, working on plantation, they continued to lag far behind owner-operators, both black and white. With less money, neither the sharecropper, farm hand, nor tenant was able to compete with the landlords' use of machinery.

Mechanization also affected the black landowning class. The number of black landowners declined by thirty-three percent (33%) during the 1940s and 1950s. Irrigation spurred cotton production in the West, and many southern farmers were forced out by the competition. Black farmers, who could not afford machines or use them efficiently on small holdings, experienced great difficulties competing in the cotton, soybeans, and corn markets. With machinery and chemicals, large farmers produced more for specialized markets, which they, over time, did not only control but forced small farmers out with their manipulation
over prices of agricultural products and markets. While mechanization proved advantageous for the agricultural economy as a whole, black farm families, with limited knowledge of capital intensive farming, could not afford to mechanize their farms as whites. Many of the individuals, who tried, failed; therefore, providing the opportunity for black farm communities to be infiltrated by white landowners. Black farm families that failed did so because they, to a large extent, could not adjust to mechanization. Some black farmers refused to mechanize, while others tried and were left indebted. When this happened, black farm families experienced the loss of land and people which stemmed mostly from blacks' lack of understanding and the inability of both the government agencies and black agricultural institutions to inform black farm families of the significance of this development and the impact that it could possibly have on their lives.

By mid-century, 1950-1960, the impact of poor economic arrangements, migration, mechanization, and discrimination of government policies and agencies had taken a toll on black farmers. These factors contributed to the decline of black farm families, including the sharecropper, tenant, and owner operator. As we arrived at the twenty-first century, changes in the farm economy have acted against the perpetuation of black farm families.

Developments between 1970-1980 were indicative of the struggles black farm families encountered during the latter half of the twentieth century. The most obvious transformation was the loss of land by black farmers. In previous decades, black farmers had held as much as
twenty percent (20%) of all landholdings in the United States. However, blacks comprised only four percent (4%) of the six million (6,000,000) farm residents between 1970 and 1980.\textsuperscript{116} The loss of land meant a decline in income for farm families, which, over time, led to a weakening of community institutions in terms of population and financial support.

The loss of land by black farmers has been statistically demonstrated. Some changes in American agriculture peaked, by 1970, as the black farm population declined sixty-five percent (65%) compared to a twenty-two percent (22%) decline in the white farm population.\textsuperscript{117} Forty-four percent (44%) of the black farm population was employed in agriculture, compared to fifty-two percent (52%) of the white population.\textsuperscript{118} Research showed that black farm residents in the agricultural labor force were disproportionately under-represented as self-employed workers and over-represented as wage and salary workers.\textsuperscript{119} Of the total 1.7 million farm residents employed in agriculture, approximately sixty-three percent (63%) were self-employed, twenty percent (20%) were employed for wages and salaries, and seventeen percent (17%) were unpaid family workers.\textsuperscript{120} Within the employed black farm population, however, twenty-seven percent (27%) were self-employed, sixty-eight percent (68%) were wage and salary workers, and five percent (5%) were unpaid family workers.\textsuperscript{121}

Southern blacks experienced the majority of the economic strain encountered by black farm families. For example, blacks represented 10.4% of the employed farm population, age fourteen (14) and over, and as much as one-quarter of all Southern farm residents employed in
agriculture for wage and salaries between 1920-1940.\textsuperscript{122} Due to a rapid decline of blacks as farm operators, between the 1970s and 1980s, black farmers represented only 5.6% of the South's farmers.\textsuperscript{123} Eighty-five percent (85%) of all black farm families were located in the South. The largest number of black farm families resided in Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Florida.\textsuperscript{124} According to future projections, the number of black farm families in these states will continue to decline as long as the median income remains low, policies and research continue to ignore their needs, and as long as the tax structure and farm price and income support program continue to benefit the large farm operators.\textsuperscript{125}

Currently, the black community is being affected by the median income earned by black farmers. A smaller income meant less support for schools and other institutions. By 1978, black farm families earned $7,584 compared to $17,323 for white farm families.\textsuperscript{126} In the last decade, researchers have found that fifty-six percent (56%) of the income of farm operator families came from nonfarm sources.\textsuperscript{127} Blacks, who have disproportionately smaller landholdings, have less off-farm employment than whites. Because black farm residents were less likely to be employed off the farm, the unemployment rate in black farm communities was more than four times that for whites in the South in the 1970s, with nine percent (9%) as compared to two percent (2%), respectively.\textsuperscript{128}

Evidence of higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of participation in off-farm employment was evident in black farm communities as black farm residents experienced limited farm
opportunities. According to historical sources, the lower rate of off-farm employment for black farm operators was the result of fewer opportunities made available to blacks because of discrimination, age, and education.\textsuperscript{129} These difficulties coupled with the manufacturing establishment's desire to place industries outside areas with a large concentrated black population proved detrimental to progress in the black community.\textsuperscript{130}

While scholars have historically believed that research, technology, and other innovations improved farming and living conditions within the black community during the post World War II era, they have recently examined the adverse affects of these technological advances, and have concluded that they have not been beneficial to the black farm family.\textsuperscript{131} Research conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture revealed that the cost of farm equipment was much greater in proportion to the number of acres of land for the average black farmers than for white farmers.\textsuperscript{132} Because of the size of their landholdings, black commercial farmers either invested in less farm machinery or invested in machinery that they could not afford, thereby leaving them indebted.\textsuperscript{133} Over-investment in farm machinery placed the farm family and community at risk. The loss of a farm meant economic strain for the family, while the community was subject to a decline in population and institutions, depending on the incomes of all inhabitants. Because black farmers had less money to invest, the black farm community has historically earned smaller profits. Therefore, each person has had to work together to keep the community functioning.
Data from the recent decade also indicated that the survival of the black farm family has been threatened by technology and agricultural research. Scholars have found that agricultural research "has been directed toward the development of crops and livestock and machinery not particularly adaptive to the needs of small farmers." Research has been geared toward capital intensive, large-scale farming while failing to evaluate the economic and social impacts of production efficiency on small farmers.

Research by the United States Department of Agriculture and some land grant colleges has failed to determine the assistance needed by small farm operators so that they can adjust to changes in farming. As the result of a lack of appropriate research and information available to small farmers, especially black farm families, many have not known the best practices to use in the development of the farm and community. Therefore, in order to maintain a standard of living and to prevent falling behind in the farm market, black farmers have been forced to increase production. The emphasis upon production has encouraged black farmers to continue the practice of putting a greater proportion of their lands into crops. Such practices have caused black farmers not to be concerned about conservation and crop rotation. Instead, current research emphasis encouraged continued cultivation of marginal lands.

Like the agricultural research sponsored by the USDA, tax incentives provided to farmers by the federal government have not had a positive impact within the black farm community. Because of the size of most black farms, the tax structure worked to their disadvantage. As a whole,
black farmers fall into low income brackets. Thus, they had less money to invest. As a result, they do not benefit from a tax structure that rewards capital investment. Because of a lack of capital, black farmers have survived by producing labor intensive crops and by using animals that require minimal capital outlays and machinery. Although tax subsidies provide incentives for large farmers and investors to utilize capital intensive technology, black farmers (tenants and croppers) were being displaced because the tax incentives encouraged large investors to transform labor intensive industries into capital intensive industries. Black farmers, with smallholdings and little money, could not expand or utilize available technologies designed to improve livestock and crop production as rapidly as their white counterparts. Therefore, black farm families and communities continued to lag behind the white farming community. Improper use of technology and no incentive to improve farm practices meant that most black farm communities would continue to be marginal and impoverished unless black farm families were taught to take advantage of certain innovations.

The promises of government price and income support programs were yet to materialize within the black farm community. Farm price and support programs have benefited large farm operators, thereby placing both the small and black farmers at a competitive disadvantage. For example, a study of the distribution of direct income support payments under the 1978 farm programs, showed that the smallest thirty percent (30%) received less than four percent (4%) of all payments. The size of
payments varied, with small farmers receiving $365, while large farmers, with 2,500 acres, were paid $36,000. The structure of these programs weighed heavily on the black farm community as large farmers benefitted more from farm commodity programs, which, in turn, permitted them to borrow and invest capital in more land and improved technology. Black farm families, on the other hand, were threatened with the loss of farms because they have not been able to greatly benefit from government price and support programs. Consequently, development and expansion within black farming communities have been stifled.

Development in black farm communities has also been hampered by a lack of credit available to black farm families. Research indicated that black farm families needed operating capital to acquire land, machinery, equipment, livestock, and supplies if they are to survive in farming. A study on farm size and black displacement concluded that "displacement of black operators on large farms, though less than on small farms, was high enough to make one suspect that inability to acquire capital was more important than concentration on small farms in determining the survival rate of blacks in agriculture." The black farm community has experienced difficulties obtaining necessary loans as the avowed policies of most traditional lending institutions have not acted in their best interest as many of them required loans to be made for certain amounts of money. This pattern of lending was typical of many insurance companies, which financed the bulk of farm loans in this country and which also required loans to be at least $100,000. Commercial banks, on the other hand, required loans to be made in smaller amounts, with
repayment expected in five years. More discouraging for the black farming community were the policies of Federal Land Banks that required collateral, often too great for blacks to qualify. Because most black farmers were viewed as liabilities, the distrust and perceptions that most lending institutions had of blacks prevented black farmers from utilizing most financial institutions. Thus, institutions with loan programs designed to meet the needs of struggling farmers have, in some way, contributed to the disappearance of black farmers and communities. With limited resources and few friends in high places, black farm families could not survive.

It is evident that the adverse conditions historically affecting black farm families exist to a large extent today. Most significant is the competitive disadvantage faced by black farmers due to the relatively small size of their landholdings. While the average commercial black-operated farm in the South is 128 acres, the average white-operated farm is more than three times that size—428 acres. The relatively small size of blacks' landholdings combined with current economic conditions, governmental policies, and institutional practices have placed black farmers at a competitive disadvantage with large farm operators and investors, most of whom were white. Research and technology, tax benefits, government price and income supports, and commercial lending acted against the survival of black farm families and the black farm community.

In light of the current problems that the black farm community has had to face, what have existing black farm families done to maintain
their communities and to hold onto their lands? What has been the prevailing structure and organization contributing to survival? What impact have government policies and agencies, research, technology, credit and market arrangements had on community development? What roles have institutions and individual initiatives played in sustaining the community? In the following chapters, these questions will be examined as focus is placed on a black farm community called Brooks Farm.
Endnotes

In this dissertation, the black farm family is defined as any family that primarily depended on agricultural production for its livelihood. These included sharecroppers, tenants, owner/operators, and day laborers. Community refers to a group of people inhabiting a limited area, who have a sense of belonging together, and who, through their organized relationships, share and carry on activities in pursuit of their common interests. When the phrase "black farm community" is used, it refers to that form of association maintained between the people and their institutions in a local area in which they live on dispersed farmsteads which form the center of their common activities.


3 Marable, "Historical Perspective," pp. 5-24. A discussion of


37

6 Ibid.

7 Manning Marable, "Historical Perspective," pp. 3-5.

8 Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, p. 225.

9 Ibid., p. 84.

10 Ibid., p. 87.

11 Ibid., pp. 182-184. An example of landownership among black farmers can be seen in the table below. The table also compares black landownership to white landownership. The table demonstrates the decline of ownership among black owner-operators. Since the time period of the study ends at 1970, the table below covers the years 1900-1969.

Table 1. Farms operated by blacks and whites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>133,973</td>
<td>-50.8</td>
<td>3,089,885</td>
<td>- 9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>272,541</td>
<td>-51.3</td>
<td>3,419,672</td>
<td>-28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>559,980</td>
<td>-17.9</td>
<td>4,802,520</td>
<td>-10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>681,790</td>
<td>-22.8</td>
<td>5,378,913</td>
<td>+ 0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>882,852</td>
<td>- 4.6</td>
<td>5,373,703</td>
<td>- 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>925,710</td>
<td>+ 3.67</td>
<td>5,440,619</td>
<td>+ 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>893,377</td>
<td>+19.6</td>
<td>4,970,129</td>
<td>+ 9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>746,717</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above table, the term "farm" may include all types of farms, including family farms, corporations, cooperatives, prisons, and grazing associations since the Census Bureau's definition of a farm has changed frequently. A person's holding was defined as a farm based primarily on agricultural sales and acreages.

12 See Table 1. See also Calvin C. Beale, "The Negro in American Agriculture," reprinted by USDA from The American Negro Reference Book, edited by John P. Davis.

13 Ibid.

14 Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, pp. 84-87.

15 Ibid., p. 90.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.


20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.


23 Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, pp. 180-183.

24 Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, p. 112.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., p. 113.

27 Manning Marable, "Historical Perspective," p. 11.

28 Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, pp. 182-184.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.
Conclusion was drawn from research data. In Mississippi, for example, over 75 percent of the black population lived in rural communities, especially in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta where blacks primarily lived on plantations. Patterns of randomness in the Delta suggest that blacks in some communities, like Brooks Farm, desired to purchase land more than blacks on neighboring plantations.


Neil McMillen, Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp. 111-150. See also Richard A. McLemore, A History of Mississippi (Hattiesburg, MS:
University College Press, 1970), pp. 171-212. In addition to a system of prejudice and discrimination intact among Mississippi's people and institutions, black farmers in Mississippi were also affected by the arrival of the boll weevil during the early 1920s. With the outbreak of World War I, the price of cotton declined. As cotton prices plunged below cost, credit was slowed and disappeared from blacks as white farmers were first extended credit.


50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Richard A. McLemore, A History of Mississippi, pp. 112-135.


54 Raper, Preface to Peasantry, p. 130.


56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., pp. 7-10.

58 Between 1875-1935, over 100 black rural/farm towns were founded. By mid-century, over eighty-five of these had become extinct. See Carter G. Woodson, Rural Negro. Many black-owned towns could not survive independently because blacks did not have the resources to keep their towns in operation. A lack of economic development led to the establishment of poor economic institutions, or lack of, while the town was too poor to survive independently on farming alone.


62 Community should be interpreted as black farm community. In this instance, the black community refers to the black farmers. Instead of the black community decreasing in landholdings and population due to federal farm policies, this sentence, therefore, means that the black farm community decreased in landholdings and population as black landowners lost their farms during the 1930s, while croppers and tenants were pushed off the land because they, like black farm owners-operators, received little or no help from federal farm policies during the 1930s.


67 Ibid.


70 Conclusion was drawn from research data. See also Powell and Cutter, "Tightening the Cotton Belt," *Harpers*, February 1934, pp. 312-317.


72 Ibid., p. 69.

Blacks were assigned the majority of the tasks, such as chopping and picking cotton. But as machines became available to complete these tasks, blacks lost jobs because whites were given the jobs as machine operators.


Ibid.


Baldwin, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 201.


Ibid.

Ibid.

44


93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 Raper, Preface to Peasantry, p. 306. See also The Decline of Black Farming in America, pp. 14-50.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.


100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Conclusion was drawn from research data.


105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Raper and Reid, Sharecroppers All, p. 53; see also Sterner, The Negro's Share, p. 20.


110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.
Conclusion was drawn from research data.


132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 U.S. Comptroller General, Some Problems Impeding Economic Improvement of Small-Farm Operations: What the Department of Agriculture Could Do (RED 76–2, August 15, 1975; hereafter cited as Some Problems Impeding Economic Improvement of Small Farm Operations). See also U.S. General Accounting Office, Agricultural Research and Extension Programs to Aid Small Farmers (CED-81–18, October 17, 1980; hereafter cited as Agricultural Research and Extension to Aid Small Farmers).

135 Ibid.

136 Some Problems Impeding Economic Improvement of Small-Farm Operations, p. 8.

137 Land and Minority Enterprise, p. 20.

138 Ibid., p. 23.

139 Ibid.

140 Marshall, Small Farmers in the South, p. 70.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 Structure of Agriculture, pp. 101–102. See also Marshall, Small Farmers in the South, p. 73.

144 Ibid.


146 1974 Census of Agriculture, pp. 1–95.

147 Marshall, Small Farmers in the South, p. 29.

148 Ibid., p. 58. See also Ray Marshall, Small Farmers, p. 46.

149 Ibid.

151 Conclusion was drawn from research data.
CHAPTER II. FROM PLANTATION TO COMMUNITY: P. H. BROOKS AND THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BROOKS FARM COMMUNITY, 1920-1947

Brooks Farm evolved from a plantation into a community of black
landowners because of the efforts of Palmer Herbert Brooks and the
residents of the Brooks Farm community. It was established in the rural
area around a small town called Drew in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta
region. Brooks Farm was organized as a plantation by P. H. Brooks in the
1920s and, during the 1940s, it became the only plantation in the Yazoo-
Mississippi Delta to become a community of black yeoman farmers. Brooks
was an atypical planter. He genuinely cared about his workers, their
progress, and their community development. It was important to Brooks
that the workers on Brooks Farm not remain dependent. He wanted these
black men to become "the boss of their own land and men of their own
decision." To be sure, Brooks' behavior and actions were not typical,
but they were necessary in helping residents of Brooks Farm to achieve
their dream of "having a place where color folk could have a chance to
make a decent living without having somebody always taking 'way your
crops and wages and looking over your shoulder." More important, Brooks
provided the opportunity "for us to finally have a community of our own
since that was why most of us came out here, 'cause we was sick and
tired of living on one plantation after another." When it became clear
that Brooks wanted to help black people, "some every body tried to move
out here, but at times there wasn't enough room, so people wait 'til a
house was build or came open." "Of all the plantation, this was the
best one, 'cause you was gone be treat well and fair, and if you work hard, you was gone get ahead, 'cause that was what Mr. Brooks want for us too."

Not surprisingly, Brooks Farm residents held P. H. Brooks in high esteem. Many believed that he was "god-sent." According to Steve Hearon, a resident and former plantation manager for the P. H. Brooks and Company, "God sent Mr. Brooks to help us poor color people, 'cause he knowed some of us wasn't being treated right." Even though Mississippi had participated in the progressive movement, passing laws that generally improved the lives of white citizens, social, economic, and political conditions for black tenant and sharecropping families, for the most part, remained atrocious. With poor health, no money, houses, or land, the Brooks Farm plantation was an opportunity no black family could resist. "Many of us found our answer out here on Brooksy, the only place I knewed where a white man was fair and was willing to help color people if he could."

This chapter traces the organization and development of Brooks Farm. Emphasis is placed on the life of P. H. Brooks, the man for whom the community was named. This chapter shows that the Brooks Farm community is the result of Brooks' paternalistic instincts and the black people's determination to rise above peonage. During the years on the Brooks Farm plantation, blacks acquired knowledge and skills that were not only useful in agricultural production, but which also gave the residents the chance to make a home for themselves in Brooks Farm.

Plantations were neither new to Mississippi nor the Yazoo-
Mississippi Delta. Eighty percent of the lands in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta region were farmed as plantations, and eighty percent of the black population were plantation workers. Indeed, since the mid-nineteenth century, plantations had formed the core of Mississippi's agriculture and economic development. Black labor also remained as important to twentieth century plantation owners in the Delta as before the Civil War.

Under the new plantation system, operators provided their workers with land, a house, fuel, implements, work stock, seed, supervision, and advanced food and clothing until the crops were made and sold. Under sharecropping arrangements, crops were usually divided on a half-and-half basis. With slight modification, this system continued to dominate Delta agriculture until the 1950s, with some poor white and black croppers progressing to share tenants. However, with their new status, some were usually supervised as closely as were the croppers, and they were as dependent on the planters for furnishings as were the croppers.

By far the most important plantation area of the state between 1900-1950 was the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta. Located in the northwestern section of Mississippi, the Delta comprised an area of some five million acres, approximately eighteen percent of the total land area of the state. This region included twelve counties and parts of nine others. The western boundary was approximately three hundred miles in length along the Mississippi River levee. The area was marked on the east by a ring of low undulating hills that rise out of the river banks near
Memphis and Vicksburg and form a partial crescent by sweeping back some fifty miles from the river at the widest point in the Delta. Elevation of the Delta above sea level ranges from about 100 feet in the southern part to 190 feet in the northern. The surface is almost level, with the higher and better-drained land adjacent to the streams, lakes, and old stream beds.

The soil and climate were quite suitable for large scale agricultural production. The Delta was a floodplain with a soil composed of alluvial deposits. It was flat land, with some elevation along the stream or the cold meander belts of abandoned streams. Overflowing streams deposited coarse materials, resulting in a slight building of land higher than the natural levees. The soils of the Delta were dark, rich, alluvium, composed of sand, silt, and clays. They can be divided into three main types. The first bottom soils were coarser and better drained than the inter-stream areas, and were highly productive soils. The older meander belts were the second bottoms. They contain more clay than the first bottom soils, but were workable and could produce good crops. The third and final bottoms of the Delta were poorly drained swamp deposits and were extremely high in clay content. Nearly all the soils were fertile but poorly drained, and in dry weather, they became granular. They were referred to as buckshot lands. Because of the level of topography and rich soil, the Delta was the most productive and extensive agricultural area of the state. By 1960, only seventy-five percent of the region had been cleared and cultivated.

The climate of the Delta area was semi-tropical, with a frost-free
growing season of from 220-240 days. The winters were usually mild, and while the summers were hot, spring and autumn were usually long and pleasant. The annual average temperature was 85.2 degrees. Between 1920-1970, the annual rainfall of 48.42 inches was usually adequate to support crops and did not fluctuate widely from year to year. The rainfall was usually heaviest in winter and spring and reached its lowest point in late summer and early fall. Light precipitation during the period of fruiting and harvesting allowed for effective insect control measures and the gathering of cotton with minimum weather damage.

When Brooks arrived in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta in the early 1900s, he found soil, climate, and a labor supply that favored plantation farming. With the money he earned in the lumber business in Ohio, West Virginia, and Drew, Mississippi, Brooks purchased 7,000 acres in Sunflower, Leflore, and Bolivar Counties. The Brooks Farm plantation was situated in both Leflore and Sunflower Counties and comprised 2,000 acres. The headquarters was primarily constructed in Sunflower and agricultural production took place in Leflore County, right across the Sunflower County line.

Brooks was born in Giles County, Virginia, October 22, 1877, and was one of eight children, born to William K. and Mary Johnston Brooks, the latter a native of Giles County, Virginia. Brooks' father was born in Tazewell County, Virginia, in 1830. He became a merchant and farmer at Staffordsville in Giles County, and later at Glades Spring in Washington County, where he became a bank president. He served in the Confederate Army, was captured and held as a prisoner of war at Fort Monroe. He and
Mary had five daughters and three sons.

Palmer Herbert Brooks combined the skills he acquired working in the family business with a formal education. After attending public school, Brooks continued his education in Emory and Henry College of Emory, Virginia, St. Albans School at Radford, Virginia, and for a time Tazewell College at Tazewell, Virginia. He then entered the lumber business in West Virginia and moved to Columbus, Ohio, where he continued as a lumber dealer. In 1903, Brooks left Ohio to become a resident of Mississippi and for eight years thereafter, he engaged in the lumber business with the Douglas and Walkey Lumber company. Between 1911 and 1947, the year of his death, Brooks turned his attention to agriculture and established one of the largest plantation companies in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta.

Between 1920 and 1940, Brooks carefully organized the Brooks Farm plantation. First, he created P. H. Brooks and Company to handle all transactions of Brooks Farm. The company appeared to have been formed before massive land purchases occurred. It was a partnership that included two other wealthy businessmen of Drew: W. E. Douglass and R. L. Walkey of the Douglass and Walkey Lumber Company. Brooks was president of the company, Walkey was vice-president, and Douglass was secretary. Many of the company's financial deals were backed by stockholders, of whom Brooks was the primary shareholder.

Brooks secured as much land, capital, and credit as possible. He purchased 2,000 acres of land in Leflore and Sunflower Counties from the state at $1.25 per acre. Additional holdings were acquired from individuals. The land Brooks purchased from the state was virgin soil,
including swamps, bayous, and rivers which served as transportation from the plantation. Both the Quiver and Sunflower Rivers were included in the land purchases. The land also provided timber which Brooks sold to obtain more capital for developing the company.

Capital build-up was essential in managing and operating a company. Like Brooks, approximately ninety percent of the plantation owners invested capital in land, machinery, equipment, buildings, work stock, feed, and seed. Recognizing that the size of the plantation unit was an important factor in successful operation, Brooks and Company continued to expand their operations, purchasing land and machinery and investing in improvements. A study of plantations in the Delta by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics found a positive correlation between the size of operating units and cotton yields per acre. Some of the factors contributing to superior crop production on Brooks Farm were due to superior land and good drainage; more adequate operating capital and equipment; superior management; and a wider range for the section of soils best adapted to cotton production. This meant that the Brooks Farm plantation could be profitable if organizational and managerial skills existed within the plantation management.

In managing a plantation company, Brooks recognized the importance of establishing good credit. From the time he arrived in the Delta in the early 1900s and the time of his death, Brooks did not only establish credit, but extended it to his associates and employees as well. Brooks established credit with banks throughout the Delta and with financial institutions in Ohio and West Virginia. However, the credit
system that was a part of the Brooks Farm plantation operations exacted a high price from both management and labor. There were few plantation operators in the Delta who, in addition to having long-term debts, did not also depend on credit for operating capital. Because of the risks involved in a year's production of cotton and other crops, as well as the uncertainty and fluctuation in prices, credit charges for the majority of plantation owners in the Delta were high. Generally, on the plantation there was the additional "furnish" credit system. Credit was so firmly entrenched in the plantation economy that croppers who had enough funds to provide for their own needs continued to insist on having a furnish.

During the plantation years, P. H. Brooks and Company extended credit for three decades. Brooks provided credit by issuing commodities from the plantation commissary, distributing cash, or issuing coupon books redeemable at the plantation store. According to research on Deltan plantations, a high percentage of plantation operators, especially small and medium-sized ones, provided cash "furnish" rather than commodities through a plantation-owned commissary. Research further showed that the interest on credit varied. On many plantations, the rates were as low as eight percent and were as high as twenty-five percent. Generally, operators who charged more than ten percent interest suggested that the amount above this level was a service charge, designed to help take care of the overall plantation expenses. The practice of making a per acre charge or a flat charge per family to take care of general overhead expenses was followed in a few instances. The usual charges in these cases were approximately $2 per acre or $10 to $12
In 1918, Brooks began his next phase of development, which he called "Operation Green Camp." "Operation Green Camp" was the plan Brooks used to clear the land in order to organize the plantation for farm production. The initial plans of "Operation Green Camp" included employing a labor force of men, primarily single, to clear the land of weeds, trees, and brush. Brooks used the lumber to build a saw mill and to construct houses, buildings, and other facilities. "Operation Green Camp" also employed women to "come in and cook and wash for the men." While houses were being constructed, both the men and women lived in tents. This phase of the plan was implemented during the summer of 1919 and was carried out by hired wage laborers instead of prospective farmers.

Once sufficient land was cleared, Brooks constructed a headquarters, consisting of an office building, several large barns, mills, gins, work stock, and various kinds of farm equipment and implements. Perhaps, the country store was more important than any of these. Commonly called Brooksy store, this was a commissary, stocked with food, clothes, furniture, household items, farm supplies, feed, seeds, fertilizers, and school supplies. When families moved into the community, everything they needed was in the plantation store even though they were free to shop elsewhere.

During the second phase of development, Brooks was concerned with labor, management, and production. Because he expected to employ a large labor force, Brooks located individuals to work in supervisory
positions. These persons were both black and white and acted primarily as overseers, foremen, and farm managers. More important, however, was the need to find laborers. Research on the Brooks Farm community showed that Brooks primarily used three strategies to recruit laborers: advertisements, trips through the Delta, and word of mouth. The local newspaper, The Drew Leader, carried Brooks' calls for workers. Some of the ads read, "Workers Needed Contact P. H. Brooks and Company, Drew Mississippi." Some of the advertisements requested seasonal laborers and emphasized the opportunities offered by the Brooks Farm plantation. Brooks also traveled around the Delta to solicit labor. "I live over in Iverness and Mr. Brooks came out to that area asking folk if they need work." Apparently, Brooks welcomed both regular and seasonal labor as "some of us first came to work off and on when it was time to chop and pick cotton." "If the folk prove to be good workers, Mr. Brooks would keep them on and hire them to work on full-time." As the population increased, "people kept hearing 'bout how much better things was out here, with us having good houses, land to work, garden spots, some animals for food, and better wages than what most of them big white planters was paying." As a result, "Mr. Brooks was getting more request for work than he probably want, but if you was in need, he brought you on to work mostly as a field hand if you didn't want to farm on your own."

Brooks tended to recruit labor in family units. He initially brought in thirty-five families, who recruited others by inviting friends and family members, with Brooks' permission, to join them. As Brooks
Farm became known, families contacted Brooks for employment. A person's background and reputation determined, to a large extent, whether Brooks would provide employment. Brooks brought families in as wage laborers and if they showed they were responsible and capable of farming, he offered to sell them land or to make them tenants.

The labor force that Brooks employed was similar in background. The majority of those who relocated to Brooks Farm were members of a nuclear family, even though relatives lived next door or down the road. Individual were born into households, with both parents present. Although a few had completed high school, the majority spent only three to six years in school. However, they could read and write. Each family invited into the community was involved in farming and were members of families who had farmed for decades. Ages varied. The average age for men and women who moved into the community with their children was twenty-five and twenty-two, respectively. The majority of the children began to work in the fields with their parents at age eight. Brooks recruited families who wanted to improve their lives. They accepted Brooks' terms "just as long as he knowed we was out here to get something for ourself to make our life better." Brooks and his employees were opportunistic; they used each other. From their labor, he became wealthy; and from his kindness, they became free, independent, and owners of their community.

Brooks' labor force did not only include family units, but some seasonal workers who, more often than not, lived in other towns. These workers usually chopped and picked cotton. Although a few other
plantations that were located near towns depended on such workers, most plantation operators in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta preferred to have their workers living on the plantations.\textsuperscript{97} Many planters believed that resident labor was more efficient and most of them did not want to compete for outside labor during seasons of peak labor-load.\textsuperscript{98}

The regular plantation labor force was composed of sharecroppers, wage workers, cropper-wage workers, and tenants.\textsuperscript{99} On the Brooks Farm plantation, Brooks also emphasized specialized wage work and brought in relief workers, domestic servants, and workers from nearby towns.\textsuperscript{100} Most of these came from points in the Delta and Memphis.\textsuperscript{101} Trucks hauled the workers to the plantations in the mornings and back to their homes at night.\textsuperscript{102} The truckers usually transported the workers to and from the fields at so much per head or per 100 pounds of cotton picked by each individual.\textsuperscript{103} Some also supervised the picking, for which they were usually paid 10 cents per hundred pounds of cotton picked by workers under their supervision.\textsuperscript{104} Some plantation operators, including Brooks, provided their own trucks.\textsuperscript{105} Brooks hired pickers from the hill counties, where cotton picking was usually completed several weeks earlier than in the Delta.\textsuperscript{106}

Much of the success that Brooks experienced with his workers was due to an understanding of the arrangement they shared. Brooks understood that he was to provide capital, fuel, housing, medical care, farm supplies, and equipment to the croppers, while they were to supply their "best labor so that we could make a good crop, earn some money, and pay off our debts."\textsuperscript{107} For the tenant farmers, Brooks knew they wanted to
farm on fertile soil; therefore, he often permitted them to farm "the best ground 'cause they was carrying a heavy burden, trying to supply and furnish themselves in order to make more money." Tenants knew that they had to be productive because most were farming the best land and Brooks expected to earn money from their efforts. There were share tenants, who gave one-fourth of their crop to farm the land. Wage workers or day laborers also understood their arrangements with Brooks. They worked for hourly wages and were on call twenty-four hours a day.

Because he was an acute businessman, Brooks negotiated contracts even though most planters did not. Throughout the Delta, contracts between the plantation operator and his labor force were usually oral and informal. Under the system of plantation operation and management, the usual explanation for not having a written contract was that a written agreement with a cropper, who had little or no property, was a unilateral contract binding on the operator but not the cropper. Therefore, the majority of the planters believed that they should not be legally tied to an agreement where the majority of the responsibilities rested upon them. In other words, "since color folk didn't have nothing but they labor, them plantation owners thought that we should take what we could get without tying them down." Consequently, most plantation operators did not bother to make written agreements between themselves and their plantation labor force.

Research on labor relations between plantation operators and their workers showed that, while three-fourths of the operators preferred oral agreements, one-fourth believed that it was necessary to produce written
documents, describing both the responsibilities of the operator and the worker. In some cases, written contracts were essential in order to provide security and stability to tenants and croppers who, over time, had acquired appreciable holdings in milk cows, hogs, poultry, and home furnishings, while proving themselves to be dependable and competent workers. More important, some tenants, croppers, and wage workers sought contracts in order to protect themselves from arbitrary and unfair treatment. However, many plantation owners, like Brooks, hoped that written contracts would lead to long-term planning and diversification on the plantation. The existing system led to mining the soil for one-crop agriculture. A more diverse economy would also employ the work force more steadily through the year.

Despite the very favorable showing made by the plantation system with reference to efficient management and the utilization of land and capital, most plantation owners did not effectively utilize the plantation labor force. Heavy demands for labor occurred from May until approximately the middle of July, when cultivation and hoeing were in progress, and from late August until the latter part of November, the period during which cotton was usually harvested. During the remainder of the year, the plantation labor force was idle most of the time. While planters lost from idleness and unproductiveness at various times, the labor force also lost from underemployment. There were weeks of virtual idleness during mid-winter and mid-summer, followed by periods of intensive work by all members, in addition to seasonal laborers employed to take care of the peak labor load. It was obvious
that, with the exception of a few months during the cropping and harvesting periods, all classes of labor were underemployed.¹²¹

Brooks, on the other hand, did not believe in idleness. He believed that "a idle mind was the devil work shop, so he always had something for us to do."¹²² "In the spring, he had us clearing more ground, draining ditches and swamps, and getting ready for spring planting."¹²³ During the summer, "Mr. Brooks work us from sun up to sun down even though some of us was a cropper or a tenant, supposing to decide them thing for ourself."¹²⁴ The fall was also busy, "'cause we had to harvest the crop and break up the ground 'fore winter came."¹²⁵ During the winter months, Brooks insisted that his workers repair the houses, improve the grounds, and repair the buildings.¹²⁶

Labor turnover on Brooks Farm and in the Delta generally was low and did not rise until the late 1950s and early 1960s, with increasing mechanization.¹²⁷ The sifting and selective processes that took place between 1930 and 1940, when there was a surplus of labor, helped to eliminate the unstable, restless, and less efficient workers.¹²⁸ The lack of alternative opportunities also discouraged farm labor from moving.¹²⁹ As a result, residents on Brooks Farm remained in the community and some have continued to live there. This has been, in contrast to other Delta tenants, wage workers, and croppers, who relocated.¹³⁰ When tenants, croppers, and laborers relocated, they moved from one plantation to another, except for blacks from Delta plantations who tended to move out of the state, usually to the North.¹³¹ Twenty-five of the fifty individuals participating in this study had moved from
plantations outside the Delta into Brooks Farm. Brooks was a successful manager because he utilized scientific knowledge and modern farming techniques. Brooks practiced crop rotation and encouraged his croppers and tenants to do likewise. He advised workers to grow peas, beans, vetch, alfalfa, and clovers, to replenish the soil and encouraged them to use fertilizers, insecticides, and other chemicals to increase yields. Brooks also knew the importance of planting high grade seeds. Brooks primarily grew cotton, corn, oats, wheat, sorghum, hay, and vegetables. He used state-of-the-art equipment: tractors, combines, cultivators, plows, disks, busters, mowers, planters, harrows, rakes, furrows, fertilizer distributors, drills, stalk cutters, and trucks. Workers on the Brooks Farm plantation learned how to operate all equipment.

Because of its size, a plantation demanded a high level of managerial ability. Those without the requisite ability to handle the intricate and detailed problems of farm planning and operation, credit, and labor were eliminated through bankruptcy. There were a number of operational advantages associated with Brooks Farm because of its size. Brooks was able to drain, improve, and bring submarginal lands under production. This was possible because he had access to capital and also because Brooks Farm could handle secondary drainage problems much more efficiently than smaller operating units. Brooks employed full-time soil specialists, hoping to improve and utilize, to the fullest extent, each acre of land. On large plantations, such as Brooks Farm, improved seed breeding was a profitable part of the plantation.
program. Research showed that improved quality and increased yields were due to improved seed breeding by planters in the Delta. Brooks had an advantage because he purchased supplies and equipment to maximize production which increased sale of commodities and crops. Superior managerial ability and volume of purchases and sales were chief factors in helping Brooks become one of the wealthiest planters in Drew and the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta.

As a plantation manager, Brooks was concerned with more than making profits and operating a well-managed business. He wanted his workers to be happy. He helped them with their finances and provided them decent housing and health care. Housing and health were two important considerations for most tenants and croppers, because most plantation owners neglected them. As a region, housing standards and facilities on Deltan plantations were, for the most part, poor. Few modern conveniences were found in the cabins. Running water was not found in the houses, and there were only a few sanitary outdoor toilets, most of which had been constructed by the Works Progress Administration Sanitary Project in the 1930s. By the mid-1940s, approximately eight percent of the houses in the Delta had electricity; fifty-six percent of the houses in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta had screens on the doors and windows. Water was drawn from shallow pump wells close to the house, though in many instances water had to be hauled from a distance.

On the majority of the plantations, medical care was as poor as housing. It was usually provided for by the plantation management. The large plantations retained the services of a plantation doctor on a
monthly or annual basis. The usual practice consisted of the operator's arranging a doctor's visitation or a visit to the doctor's office when medical service was essential. The operator paid the doctor and charged the cost to the individual worker's account. Medical costs were usually high, considering the workers' ability to pay. In the 1940s, medical costs on plantations reached a high of $15 per visit per person. This high cost caused many black families to resort to patent medicines. Unlike the Delta, group health and hospitalization programs, managed by the planters, existed on plantations in other regions of the state. According to medical records, illness on plantations resulted primarily from malaria and venereal disease, even though colds, influenza, pneumonia, and childbirth caused some medical problems.

The housing and medical care that Brooks provided appear to have been superior. Carpenters were employed to build the houses. They were recruited from communities around the Delta and were given homes just as the tenants and croppers were. Between 1918 and 1947, they were paid by P. H. Brooks and Company for constructing and repairing houses. They continued to make a living by doing odd jobs after employment from P. H Brooks and Company ceased. Because Brooks employed a labor force specifically for building and improving homes, residents of the Brooks Farm community had the opportunity to experience better housing, in terms of space, structure, and upkeep. Workers were encouraged to improve their homes as well. They could either invest in materials for maintenance or request that Brooks send the carpenters out for repairs.
While no houses had electricity in the 1930s and 1940s, some of the houses in the Brooks Farm community were screened. Brooks stressed sanitation and contributed to community efforts to keep the homes and community clean. He gave money to the community for wells and extended generous credit for home improvements. Families were able to obtain better household furniture, medical supplies, clothing, and food items.

Because he cared about health and knew that it was important for the profits of the company, Brooks encouraged residents to "take care of themselves." "He didn't like you doing a hold lot of drinking and running round with a lot of women or out running loose and wild 'cause he didn't think that was healthy for you." Brooks primarily wanted his workers to "get a hold lot of rest and be up in the morning working so that you could make a better living for your family." Residents maintained that "Mr. Brooks care more than 'bout us being well enough to work for him 'cause he had plenty of money and was always making some kind of deal to even have more, but he realize that we had to work hard for ourself and that we was the one who need to recognize the advantage of being healthy." This was important because "if you lost work days 'cause you wasn't taking care of yourself, you lose money laying 'round on your back." Furthermore, "the more we show that we was able to look after our own health and welfare, the more Mr. Brooks believe that we could handle being on our own, so that was why he start to ask people to branch out on they own, become they own man, making decision and setting up they own deal without him." Until workers were able to
become independent or "show that we could make it without Mr. Brooks," Brooks insisted that "we permit the doctor to come to the house at the first sign of sickness 'cause he didn't want you laying 'round sick when he could get some help for you." He had more faith in them doctors, but we had more faith in our remedies 'cause they had work for us long 'fore we knewed Mr Brooks." Since families were responsible for their medical care, most were slow to utilize a doctor's services because they used their income to the farm. However, if someone was very sick, Brooks insisted that Dr. Booth, the white plantation doctor, provide necessary medical attention.

Recognizing the relationship between diet and health, Brooks insisted that the residents produce the majority of their food so that "we would have plenty to eat." "Mr. Brooks didn't like us eating a lot of fat back and bread, though we could eat that too, but he want you to eat a lot of lean meat and game so you could keep your strength up." "Mr. Brooks also want you to eat a lot of beans, greens, and fruits 'cause, back then, that was 'pose to help your system and help you work as long as you need to," and "you wouldn't be as weak as you would be, if you was eating a lot of fat back, bread, and beans only."

Thus, each of Brooks' workers had a plot of ground on which to raise a garden and livestock. "Mr. Brooks came by to see what kind of garden you had 'cause he want to see you raising every kind of food that would grow out here, and he want to see some kind of fruit tree, apple, fig, plum, pecan, and any other that would put food on the table." Not all of the workers were as thrifty as others. Brooks, therefore, stocked the
store with foods that families could get on credit or buy with coupons.  "But this was rare 'cause every body out here had food and if there was someone out here who didn't, we all pitch in to help so that they wouldn't have to waste money on food that could be gotten free from family and friends, but we always had plenty of vegetable, fruit, pork, beef, and poultry."  

Brooks' encouraging his tenants and workers to raise their own food differed from the common practice in the Delta. The lack of gardens and livestock benefited plantation operators. When tenants, croppers, and wage workers did not raise food for consumption, the operators made a profit by directing the workers to the plantation store where they sold on credit at high interest. Food could be charged and the amount was deducted from wages during settlement. Because of the disadvantages that workers faced, researchers for both the Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Station encouraged planters to allow their workers to participate in the Extension Service's "Home-Grown Products Program." This program encouraged plantation workers to be home producers so that families could receive proper nutrition. For some, this was a successful program, but for most it was not because most plantation operators were not concerned about proper diet and saving their workers' money. Instead, many continued to line their pockets by encouraging croppers and tenants to grow cotton on every acre of ground.

Many of Brooks' transactions and business deals resulted in his becoming a shrewd businessman. At the time of his death in 1947, he had
amassed a considerable fortune. Receipts from his estate showed that he had made sound investments. The value of his estate was listed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items and Value of Property</th>
<th>Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash on Hand and in Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annuity Contracts Commed Value</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Life of Palmer H. Brooks</td>
<td>$28,779.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life of India B. Brooks</td>
<td>$17,000.95</td>
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<td>Life of Daisy B. Pratts</td>
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<td>Life of Benton S. Brooks</td>
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<td>Life of Berta L. Marshall</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Notes Receivable With Accrued Interest</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>P. H. Brooks, Trustee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geo. P. &amp; Pearl W. Hammack</td>
<td>1,503.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willie and Alice Cooper</td>
<td>1,555.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. E. Ramsey</td>
<td>1,071.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butane Gas, Inc.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>United States Government Bonds</strong></td>
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<td>Series D-Face Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Series E-with Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Series G-Face Value</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Corporate Stocks</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1,150 Shares P. H. Brooks &amp; Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Shares Drew Gin Association</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Shares MinterCity Oil Mill</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Shares Merchants' and Planters Bank</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Life Insurance Payable to Estate</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Real Estate</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Lots in Drew, Mississippi</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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During his lifetime, Brooks realized that money could be made in others'
businesses as well. Consequently, he used his resources to help develop
Drew by adding, to this town, a bank, gin, and a fuel company. Brooks
built Brooksy Gin and helped to found the Merchants and Planters Bank of
Drew and served as president for five years. He also organized the
City Ice and Fuel Company and the Drew Sales Company. These proved
profitable as the need for fuel and ice continued to increase until
electricity and gas became a part of social and economic development in
the Delta.

Even though Brooks was resourceful and opportunistic, he was neither
selfish nor greedy. He shared his earnings quite generously with his
family, friends, laborers, and the community. At the time of his
death in 1947, the local newspaper of Drew, Drew Leaders, declared: 
"He
was a true friend, and those who shared his friendship found him ever to
be a counselor, a comforter, and guide who bore his friends' infirmities." Further descriptions of Brooks' life in the paper stated:

In his every relationship in life Mr. Brooks was loyal. He was zealous, yet he was modest; he was patient in the midst of toil; in the midst of all alarms he was serene. When Mr. Brooks passed away, he took a man's life with him; yet his character survives him in the lives of all who knew him.

It was not surprising that such words were written about Brooks, for
he had given to both the white and black communities. Brooks contributed
to the building of churches, schools, and stores in the white community
of Drew where he lived. In order to ensure that his workers enjoyed
similar privileges, he donated money to build schools, churches, and
stores in the black community of Brooks Farm. This was understandable
since Brooks operated in both worlds, even though he spent the majority of his time among blacks on Brooks Farm, not only because of business, but "'cause he really like black people 'cause they had made lots of money for him and 'cause we was nice to him as he was to us, but he realize that friendship out here had to be combined with work in order for him to be 'cepted by both white and black people."\textsuperscript{198}

Apparently, Brooks was accepted by both races. As the white community mourned his death, the newspaper praised his life and contribution to mankind:

Mr. Brooks was a member of the Christian Church and was a liberal contributor to the finances of all the churches of the community. It was safe to say that Mr. Brooks contributed more to charity than any member of the community. In this generous alms giving he was most unassuming. He was a 32nd Degree Mason and a Shriner, and was a leader in all civic affairs. He was a member of the Rotary Club. Mr. Brooks was God's gentleman. He was a Christian, the highest type of manhood.\textsuperscript{199}

Out in the black community in Brooks Farm, residents mourned the death of their leader. He had taught them "so much 'bout farming and conducting business and had show us that we could make it if we work hard and keep believing."\textsuperscript{200} "When he realize that he was not going to be 'round much longer, he move fast, trying to set every body up as farmers, working on their own and using their own strength to make it."\textsuperscript{201} In his honor, the community held its own memorial service.\textsuperscript{202}

Residents of the Brooks Farm community suggested that they learned how to conduct business by observing Brooks. "Mr. Brooks was always so business like, always taking notes, reading, and trying to figure out what was best and what to do next, and nobody never tried to pull a trick
on him 'cause he was smart and stayed a step ahead on his business." More important, Brooks provided an example to blacks of business skills such as planning, budgeting, and managing. These were skills that blacks on Brooks Farm would need, especially after Brooks was no longer around to guide, direct, and offer advice.

Brooks' paternal philosophy was not only professional but personal. Just as he gave to both the white and black communities, he contributed to his family as well. At the time of his death, he ensured the financial future of family members. Being a nineteenth-century gentleman, Brooks realized the importance of ensuring that "the women of the family was took care of 'cause he always talk to us 'bout taking care of the women and children." Thus, he left property and money for each of his sisters and their children. He also established a trust fund for his brothers and their children.

On a different level, the real beneficiaries, not of Brooks' will, but of his benevolence and kindness, were the residents of the Brooks Farm community. Brooks was willing to teach them what he knew about farming and business. At the time of his death in 1947, Brooks had turned the Brooks Farm plantation into the Brooks Farm community, complete with black yeoman farmers, schools, and churches, built primarily by blacks, desperately trying to take advantage of the opportunity Brooks had created for them. Even though it might appear to some that Brooks' actions resembled those of a dying man who desperately wanted to sell his property, so he could provide for his family during his absence, residents of the Brooks Farm community do not
hesitate to point out that Brooks' charity for mankind began "long 'fore he died 'cause Mr. Brooks 'lowed you to come in the community as a cropper or tenant and he would sell you a plot of land if that was what you want, but most folk want to try it out first, so they work for him or rent from him 'til they was ready to get on they own."210 Moreover, residents, in defending Brooks' intentions, genuinely believed that he wanted to help them "'cause he didn't have to sell his land to color people 'cause there was lots of white folks who was wanting to buy this land and his whole operation so they could keep us on a plantation 'stead of letting us have our own community."211 Research revealed that Kelly Mehan and other white planters showed interest in purchasing the company and plantation, but Brooks refused, while selling Mehan the store, barn, saw mill, and other properties that residents could not afford. In terms of the land, however, Brooks desired to sell it to the residents, those willing to take the risk.212 Furthermore, "Mr. Brooks fix it so we could get this land 'cause he kept after every body out here, with a family, to buy land from him even though you didn't have money."213 However, this was no excuse "'cause Mr. Brooks was willing to let you come up with what you want or thought you could pay for and then he would finance it for you over and over 'til you could get things going right."214

Between 1920 and 1947, residents of the Brooks Farm community had learned plenty from Brooks. He had given them a start and by working with him, they had learned to "work harder 'cause you was working for yo'self and that nobody was gone be taking way your crops and wages
Brooks had taught them the importance of planning, especially the need to begin production on time. "He always believe that the sooner you got started planting, the sooner you could make your crop, harvest it, and move on to selling it so you could make you some money, and then buy what you need to plant your winter wheat, oats, and do some other things as well." At the time of Brooks' death, the Brooks Farm community was already in bloom. These black families had established their schools, churches, and community development schemes that allowed residents to benefit from helping each other. All that was necessary was for them to continue to build upon what they and Brooks had started. This would be a challenge for most. Since Brooks had taught them the importance of improvement, residents knew that they had to continue to improve their lands, homes, farm practices, living conditions, and community. They also knew that they had to find other individuals or institutions to extend credit to them. "Getting some credit this time wasn't so hard 'cause a lot of us had some land and equipment to put on a loan, but we worry 'cause a lot of people want to give us a loan so we could lose the land 'cause we couldn't pay the high mortgage that they had set, so 'stead of being bother with some of them banks, a lot of us set up credit 'mong our self and borrow from each other 'cause some families out here, by the time Mr. Brooks died, had made pretty good, so they would make you a loan to help get you started." Brooks was a man who believed in using the best equipment and fertilizer, so "he encourage us to save money so that we could be in shape to buy better equipment, seeds, feeds, and fertilizer
if we could. According to one man, all the residents of Brooks Farm had to do was "to take things slow, and not try to get too big too soon 'cause Mr. Brooks had given a lot of us a good start in one way or another, and if we conduct our business like he told us, we could make it." Making it in the Brooks Farm community would not be that simple since residents had obstacles to overcome. It would take time, money, and dedication to further develop a community through farming, self-help, and limited resources.
Conclusion was drawn from the information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. Families in Brooks Farm believed that Brooks chose to terminate the plantation and to sell them the land because they had demonstrated they were capable farmers.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from residents of the Brooks Farm community. When plantation owners in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta mechanized, many continued to farm their large holdings using day laborers and machines. Therefore, few, if any, sold their land. More important, there is no indication that plantation owners sold their lands to blacks or turned their plantations into a community of black farm families.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1985. Twenty of the fifty interviewees who knew Brooks personally suggested that he cared about them and their progress. He constantly made visits to their homes to see if people needed help.


Beatrice Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Willie Ivory, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 13 July 1989.

Margaret Ball, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

Ibid.


Conclusion was drawn from information collected from interviews.
conducted in the Brooks Farm community. Furthermore, residents suggested that Brooks was paternalistic in the sense that he was always offering advice and did what he could to help them. He freely provided direction and information relevant to their daily lives.


17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

24 Ibid., pp. 18-25.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.

35 Land Records, Bolivar County, Bolivar County Courthouse, Cleveland, Mississippi; Land Records, Leflore County, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi; and Land Records, Sunflower County, Sunflower County Courthouse, Indianola, Mississippi.

36 Ibid.

37 Palmer Herbert Brooks, Drew Leaders, July 28, 1947, p. 3.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.

42 Land Records, Leflore County, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi, July 15, 1918.

43 Ibid.

44 Land Records, Leflore County, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi; Land Records, Sunflower County, Sunflower County Courthouse, Indianola, Mississippi.

45 Ibid.
Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Land Records, Leflore County, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi, 1915-1945. Residents of the Brooks Farm community described how the Brooks Farm plantation expanded with more houses, barns, shops, workstock and machines.


Conclusions drawn from information obtained from interviews with residents of the Brooks Farm community. Supporting evidence can be found in Frank Welch, *The Plantation Land Tenure System in Mississippi*, pp. 20-49.

P. H. Brooks Estate, Probate Records, July 27, 1947; Sunflower County Courthouse, Indianola, Mississippi; Land Records, Leflore County, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi.


Ibid.

A furnish can be defined as credit advanced by the plantation management to croppers and tenants for their living expenses and their share of the crop production cost.

Many of the sharecroppers on Brooks Farm preferred to have a furnish rather than taking the risk of losing their money. When the landlord provided the initial capital outlay, sharecroppers were free to use their money for personal use. But all debts had to be repaid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Frank J. Welch, *The Plantation Land Tenure System in Mississippi*, pp. 31-32.
Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

76. Drew Leaders, 1923-1940. See advertisements.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. Drew Leaders, 1923-1935. See the sections on Local People.


81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April
1987.

84 Ibid.

85 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

94 Earnest McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

95 Conclusion was drawn from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

96 Information obtained from interview conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

97 Ibid. For additional discussions of the plantation labor force, see Frank Welch, *The Plantation and Land Tenure System*, pp. 35-42.

98 Ibid.


100 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

101 Ibid.
Ibid. See also Frank J. Welch, *The Plantation Land Tenure System in Mississippi*, pp. 36–38.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.


George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June
1989.


125 Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

126 Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

127 Conclusion was drawn from the information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. See also Harald Pedersen, *The Cotton Plantation in Transition*. For comparison and contrast, see Anthony Dunbar, *The Will to Survive: A Study of the Mississippi Plantation Community Based On Its Citizens* (Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Council, Inc., 1969); and George E. Haynes and Benson T. Lendis, *Cotton-Growing Communities: Case Studies of Ten Rural Communities and Nineteen Plantations in Arkansas* (New York: Federal Council of Churches, 1935).

128 Ibid.

129 Conclusion drawn from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.


131 Ibid.

132 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

133 Conclusion drawn from information obtained in interviews with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

134 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Improved seed breeding was a practice that the majority of plantation owners invested in. For a discussion, see Frank Welch, *The Plantation Land Tenure in Mississippi*, pp. 21-22.

The conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Frank J. Welch, *The Plantation Land Tenure System in Mississippi*, pp. 33-34.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid. See also Frank J. Welch, *The Plantation Land Tenure System in Mississippi*, p. 34.
Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989. Supportive information was provided by Edward Scott, Jr., Jodie Hearon, Irene Scott, Alex Scott, Mason Cooper, Beatrice Collins, and Margaret Ball.

Ben Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 August 1988.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Beatrice Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.
Ibid.

Ella Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.


Ibid.

Birdell Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Francis Walker, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 1 May 1987.

Frank J. Welch, *The Plantation Land Tenure System in Mississippi*, p. 31. Information obtained during the interview sessions on Brooks Farm revealed that high interest rate was common on plantations. On each of the plantations where the majority of the residents migrated, Delta plantation operators charged at least eight percent interest, including Brooks. While Brooks continued to manage his plantation at eight percent, others charged as much as twenty or twenty-five percent.

Ibid. Between 1920-1940, when Brooks Farm was a plantation, residents could also recall having the option of charging food and supplies at Brookesy store, which was the commissary store.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. Some of Brooks Farm residents who lived on other plantations before moving to Brooks Farm did not grow large quantities of food because their landlords only permitted them to farm five to ten acres, while insisting that crops, particularly cotton, be grown on all the ground.


*Drew Leaders*, July 28, 1947, p. 3.
Information obtained during the interview sessions pointed to Brooks' generosity. Within the community, he has a reputation for being kind and generous.

Drew Leaders, July 28, 1947, p. 3.

Information obtained from residents of the community supports the article in Drew Leaders. Residents spoke continuously of Brooks' role in helping to build churches and schools in the Brooks Farm community.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989.


Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Conclusion was drawn from the information obtained from interviews in the Brooks Farm community.


Conclusion was drawn from the information obtained from interviews in the Brooks Farm community. Everyone on Brooks Farm believed that they had benefited because Brooks was their landlord. On other plantations, they had not experienced such kindness and fairness in their business operations.
Residents would have to adjust to conducting business deals on a one-to-one basis. They could no longer use Brooks as a source of income or a guarantee of payment. They would have to establish their own credit and acquire a reputation so that they could continue to farm. Farmers in the Brooks Farm community were now their own bosses; therefore, they would have to make their own decisions. More important, they would have to continue to develop their community.
CHAPTER III. FAMILY LIFE IN THE BROOKS FARM COMMUNITY

As pointed out in Chapter II, individuals who came to the Brooks Farm community arrived in family units and found a community where social and economic activities were dominant. The majority of the families comprised household units, with the family acting as the basic unit of social organization from which social and economic activities emerged. In most homes, men and women worked in the fields, with the women returning home to manage the household and to care for the children, while the men also worked in the various saw, molasses and flour mills. Because their parents often "used a strong hand in rearing them," Brooks Farm residents adopted similar patterns of child rearing, closely supervising their children. Children were taught the significance of family help in the sense that they were expected to contribute, especially economically, to the family, while expecting to receive help from the family when situations demanded a family effort. "It was necessary to instill useful values in children," Margaret Ball explained, "because most people out here struggle during the early years, and need the help of the children and other family members to survive." To ensure that both the family and community survive, "families out here on Brooksy," according to Steve Hearon, "decided on some kind of standards and work habits for children and grown-ups so that the community could grow into a place where people live together as kin folks." On Brooks Farm, residents believed that it was important to establish morality, teaching such values as "honesty, hard work, fairness, and loving your
neighbor as yourself." If these values were adopted by the entire community, "people" would in turn "treat everyone as family," in the sense that neighbors and friends "automatically" become members of the kinship network. In this community, while households were primarily nuclear, they were also extended as residents were accepted as members of families even though they were non-kin. Extended relationships were important in a community where people lived in close vicinity and where it took the cooperative efforts of everyone to develop the community.

In the Brooks Farm community, residents believed that they had stable families as networks and ties remained consistent and strong.

This chapter on family life in the Brooks Farm community discusses how generations have survived and have reared their families in a culture conducive to creating kinship and extended families. Kinship was at the center of the Brooks Farm community and provides the stability necessary for developing a new settlement. More important, this chapter details the daily life and routines within the community while emphasizing the economic and social imperatives that acted on all age groups and sexes.

In this chapter, family life was examined through the eyes of residents as they grew up, matured into adulthood, and began managing their households, rearing their children, and creating relationships in order to perpetuate community development. The impact of the maturation process was analyzed as the participants in this study described family life within their parents' and their individual households. Research showed that continuity existed within the family, in the sense that what one observed in these residents, in terms of attitude and behavior, was
also evident in their parents and grandparents as family life evolved in the Brooks Farm community.

Residents of Brooks Farm had quite similar backgrounds. Parents of the participants (twenty-eight women and twenty-two men) were born in other communities and moved to Brooks Farm with their parents. They were born into household units that included both parents and other siblings, three to fifteen children. "Every body round here came from big, big families." "There was sisters and brothers all over, and it was common to meet somebody and to know their line of kin." "Our mamma and daddy had lots of kids," she went on, "their mamma and daddy had plenty of them, and so forth; so nearly all of us who lived out here also had a bunch of children, just like our parents." For example, in many of the participants' households, there were as many as twenty children and as few as three. If the participants in this study were an example of family size in the Brooks Farm community, it was evident that large families were a part of development on Brooks Farm. Because parents in the Brooks Farm community desired to be landowners and farmers, many of them wanted large families. Women had children yearly. Birth records and census data showed an increase in family size and children, one to five years of age. Among blacks in Mississippi, families increased by 1.5 children between 1900-1950. In the Brooks Farm community, however, families added one child to the household yearly. Birth certificates held by community residents showed that children were a year apart, with a few families having some children 1-2 years apart.

Besides family size, residents of the Brooks Farm community were
similar in other aspects. Like the participants in this study, many were born into religious families where "folks always took us to church." Each of the participants suggested that morality and spirituality were important developments in "a child's life," and that "we was expected to participate in spiritual training just like the grown people, or else we risk being made ashame by making our folks shame of us and our behavior." Each of the fifty participants were baptized at an early age, 6-8, and began conforming to religiosity during adolescence and early adulthood.

Participants in this study were also members of farming households. The twenty-eight women and twenty-two men interviewed for this study came from families that had worked, at some point in time, as sharecroppers and tenants, with some individuals who eventually became landowners. Farming had been the dominant occupation of blacks during the late nineteenth century, and it continued until the 1950s. In the Brooks Farm community, it was not surprising to find that these respondents overwhelmingly chose farming as a way of life "because farming was what everybody knewed best." "People," according to Willie Wiggins, "believed that it was better than anything else 'cause they was making a honest living and was trying to control their lives." Thus, residents of Brooks Farm were interested in more than "making a living." They also wanted to establish independence and control by erecting their own institutions and eventually as landowners, in charge of making their own decisions. These ideas will be discussed as developments in Brooks Farm are examined.
However, residents of the Brooks Farm community were able to exert some control by eventually accepting education as a part of progress and development. In the first years of settlement, many of the children in the Brooks Farm community came from households where education was not highly valued. Members of the first generation did not view education as the key to success, even though they believed it was important to read and write. Each of the interviewees suggested that their parents encouraged them to "learn how to read and write so that we could take care of our own business and family and keep in touch with the word of God." Such minimum requirements for education may have been encouraged by the first generation in Brooks Farm because they were born during the early 1900s when few blacks in Mississippi went to school. Hence, their attitude toward education was not surprising since the majority had lived in rural communities as children, and had only attended the country school on the plantations since schools for rural blacks were not available. There was, however, a school "for coloreds," but this was opened to blacks who lived in town. Between 1900-1950, each community, whether rural or urban, was responsible for erecting educational facilities for its children. Therefore, as the participants in this study suggested, "Many of the old people did not push education 'cause they had made it without even going to school." For this reason, Willie Street explained, they knew "nothing other than working to survive." To many of the first generation on Brooks Farm, "education was for folks who didn't want to do field work." Since field work was "all that our parents knowed, they kept working in the fields 'cause they
knowed that would help keep clothes on the family's back, food on the table, and a roof over their head." However, "it was good to be able to read and write," Earnest McWilliams explained, "but you had to know how to work if you was going to survive." Even though education was not highly recommended by the first generation of blacks in the Brooks Farm community, schools were established regardless of individual attitudes toward education. It soon became evident that "schooling was an important part of learning and improvement." Residents realized that if the community was to develop, children had to be taught not only how to read and write, but skills, such as carpentry, farming, and domesticity, that would sustain the community.

Opportunities for this kind of educational training were attractive because teachers could be recruited from the community and schoolhouses could be constructed from the community's lumber supply. Supplies, however, could be purchased with donations and with the money raised from the sales of dinners and other fund raisers, organized by parents in the Brooks Farm community. More important, this kind of training did not pose a threat to the white establishment, who rejected militant and progressive teachings, such as encouraging the youth to be vocal, in terms of protesting for political, social, and economic rights. As long as a practical education was advocated, blacks could erect schools and provide training without interference from whites. Moreover, residents of the Brooks Farm community espoused a practical education for their children because this kind of training did not require much time and, therefore, it did not reduce the number of hours children worked in
the fields because the school sessions were organized around the farm season. Children attended school for two sessions, the fall and winter. Since many children were familiar with farming and household responsibilities, the training that they received was designed to improve what they had already learned from their parents.

Because of multi-pregnancies, childhood on Brooks Farm was short-lived. "As soon as you wean one from you, there was no rest," Freddie Wiley explained, "'cause, before you knowed it, you was pregnant again, so the children kept coming for me and everybody else out here." As a result, the oldest children often found themselves pushed into adolescence and adulthood at an early age because they had to assume some of the responsibilities within the household. By the age of four, some children helped around the house, picking up small pieces of wood and looking after the younger infants. Some even swept the floors and made the beds, especially when their mothers were sick or too busy working in the fields. At age five, some women and men cooked, washed, sewed, and took care of sick parents and community residents. Because responsibilities were impressed early upon children in the Brooks Farm community, few experienced difficulties settling into the routine of an adult life.

Before entering adulthood, certain stages of development were important "before we, as children, could be thought of as a grown-up and start taking part in an adult life." Therefore, birth and infancy, childhood and adolescence, courtship and marriage, and adulthood became a part of the maturation process that children of the Brooks Farm community
became involved before they began to manage their households. According to residents, "there was a period of growth that everybody went through, even the children, 'cause we was taught by our parents and grandparents that it was important to go through the stages of life before we tried to be grown." It was important that children learn to make decisions, accept responsibilities, and experience success as well as failure. These experiences would prepare them for adulthood in the Brooks Farm community. On the other hand, parents wanted to protect their children from the hardships of adult life until they had trained them to cope with "responsibilities, worries, and struggles."

One of the first stages of maturation that participants in this study experienced, growing up in their parents' homes, was their parents' ideas concerning childbirth. Because of a lack of money and some distrust for doctors, babies were born at home. "When a woman was about to 'ave a baby, she went over to her mother or she had somebody to come stay with her, 'cause nobody wanted the children to know what was going on; so folks came to help." Women "took pride in helping each other when a woman was 'bout to lay in 'cause you never knewed when your time was coming." More important, "women folks felt more comfortable with women 'round them than a doctor that they didn't know nothing 'bout." Therefore, families rarely sought a doctor's care even though Dr. Booth, a white physician willing to assist Brooks Farm's women and women in surrounding areas, had an established reputation for helping black women during pregnancy and delivery. Dr. Booth provided medical services to many of the babies at the insistence of the plantation owner.
who sought his assistance during difficult deliveries. Therefore, if some women did not want a doctor's help, the plantation owner would employ one if he thought additional attention was needed. 57

In a community where a woman's body was to be seen only by her husband, women, giving birth, used a midwife during delivery. 58 Midwives who delivered babies in the Brooks Farm community were licensed and were members of the community whom residents respected for their abilities. Sarah Walters and Carrie Gordon, long-time residents, were summoned to duty more often than any of the practicing midwives. Carrie Gordon seemed to have been the most active midwife, delivering nearly half of the babies in the community. Gordon was a wife and mother who began delivering babies during the 1920s and continued until the late 1960s. 59 Women in the community placed much faith in Gordon's work, referring to her as the "mother of all the children." 60 Gordon earned a reputation for being thorough and knowledgeable since she rarely lost a child. "In all my work as a midwife," Gordon recalled, "I lost only a few babies, maybe five, but not more than that." 61 Many regarded Gordon as part of the family. "She was known and called Ma Gordon by many." 62

Home birthing was an exciting time, one in which the family and adult community became involved. However, it was "by no means" an open affair. 63 Childbirth was rarely discussed openly, even among women, "because they were afraid that some of we children would hear it and that was what they wanted to keep from us." 64 "Everything about having a baby and how to get one was a secret," Estrella Thomas explained, "even if you had saw your mamma stomach growing, you never thought a baby was in
there; there was no way we could know so we just kept going 'bout our business wondering what the laughs and visits was all about." For farm families in the Brooks Farm community, "it meant more kin and more hands to do the work on the farm." Because the childbirthing process was viewed as an event for adult women, husbands and wives generally agreed that neither the children nor men would be involved. If the birthing was to take place within the home, children were sent to a relative or friend's home or they were closed off in another room. Irene Scott recalled having to go over to her mother's sister house when one of her brothers was born. "If the weather was warm, the oldest children would take the small ones out fishing or out along the dirt roads to play until the child was born 'cause birthing was something that only grown folks had business knowing about." This procedure did not only mean that children and adolescents would be excluded from the childbirthing process, but, by going to the home of a family member or friend, children would also have someone to look after them.

In the Brooks Farm community, parents worked diligently to conceal information about pregnancy, birth control, no matter how primitive, and sex from children. "These was subjects that was not discussed with children," Francis Walker explained, "so, when we first began our own families, we didn't talk about them to our children." As children, participants in this study recalled being told many "make-believe stories about how they was born, that their parents had gone to the woods and got them out of a tree stump when they was babies." Some were even told "that angels came down from heaven and brought the baby to the house."
The failure to explain sex, birth control, and reproduction, in some ways, contributed to the high fertility rate among young women in the community, even though the majority of them were married. Both women and men married at an early age and began having babies shortly thereafter.

In the Brooks Farm community, birthing took on many forms. Even though few medical supplies and tools existed to assist in the delivery, "the thought of having another child was enough to make up for the labor pains a woman felt when she was having the baby." Research on Brooks Farm revealed that women in this community enjoyed having children. They were thought to be "gifts from God." Each of the women who participated in this study wanted children. When having a child, women, according to Carrie Gordon, used several positions to deliver their babies. The most popular position was the one where "women laid on their backs with their knees bent." Some women also gave birth in the squat position, while others, during difficult deliveries, "propped themselves upon the shoulders of two women and used their strength to push the baby forward." During the delivery, the midwife usually carried a bottle of whiskey, some medical pills, scissors, and bandages to use when complications arose.

Childbirthing was a special time because it provided the opportunity for women and families to establish close friendships and the chance for the entire family to extend. Usually, individuals who supported the family during the woman's pregnancy and delivery were thought of as family and were expected to play an active role in the rearing of the
More important, babies became the center of the entire family's attention. Bernice Jones explained:

"Once the baby came, everybody was happy and was ready to make it a part of the family. Almost everybody claim the baby, so the juggling of names started. Even though parents, sisters, brothers, and other kinfolks, and friends gave us some names, most folks knewed the baby would probably take the name the parents had in mind. So naming came next and it was important 'cause people wanted their children name to mean something."

The naming of children in the Brooks Farm community was symbolic. Naming identified the child with the family, especially with its stronger and progressive members. By naming children after their ancestors, the family could carry on its best qualities. It was also a way of establishing family solidarity and providing an inheritance to the child. While this process has been known to occur immediately after birth, it has, in some black communities, taken as long as a year to name a child. In the Brooks Farm community, however, parents usually took a week to name a baby. While family names established lineage in a general sense, a given name was significant to a child's identity. "It was common to name babies after their kin people." Therefore, children in this community were given names that not only symbolized family tradition, but which also linked the newly arrived child with their living and deceased relatives. For example, Eva Glenn named her son, Gerrion Black, after her brother and uncle because she "wanted him to act like them 'cause they was some good men, strong, work hard, and care 'bout their people, family, and other folks as well." Thirty-seven of the fifty persons interviewed had been named after relatives and had either
named one of their children after a family member, or they had observed their names being given to nieces, nephews, cousins, or friends' children. Children's names associated them with many kinship groups and also established them within a kinship system.  

Brooks Farm families followed principles and patterns clearly defined by ancestors when naming their children. Boys were typically named after their fathers, while girls were often named for their grandmothers. "When people had more than one boy," J. C. Turner explained, "the oldest boy usually got their daddy's name, while the others was name for a father's brother or after their grandfather." Naming patterns were important because they reflected the strength of affective bonds among subgroups of kinsmen and between the generations. Therefore, the usual practice of naming children for elder relatives was common within Brooks Farm's kinship system. Because some family members tended not to have property to pass on to their children, this naming pattern established and maintained ties between generations of individuals in the Brooks Farm community who had little else to give to their children and grandchildren, but their names.  

Beyond the infant and toddler years, life for residents, including the participants in this study was quite different. Many suggested that they probably needed time to adjust to the changes they experienced during childhood and adolescence. For the first two to three years of their life, Brooks Farm youth spent a significant amount of time with their parents, grandparents, and other important relatives. This was
necessary because "they want you to know early on that you was love and that they and other folks care about you." According to Mason Cooper, "This was suppose to prepare you for the change, when you got old enough to talk and knowed how to move around on your own, that your parents had to leave you to yourself or with the other children 'cause they had to work." But the transition from being dependent and becoming independent, in this way, was one "that we was suppose to understand 'cause your mamma and daddy love you." It was the love that parents in the Brooks Farm community had for their children that caused them to believe that their parents knew what was best for them during childhood and adolescence.

The need to provide for their families forced parents in the Brooks Farm community to spend long hours away from home, an absence that had a two-fold affect upon the children. First, children were left to fend for themselves; and secondly, they were expected to assume the roles of their parents in their absence. Therefore, it was not unusual for children in this community to perform regular tasks. Before they were old enough to attend school and to work in the fields, many supplied the family with plenty of wood and water. Since everyone's help was essential in keeping the family functioning, boys and girls often performed the same roles. Both cleaned, washed, and even cooked when their parents instructed them to do so. In a cultural setting where survival depended on cooperation among family members, childhood in the Brooks Farm community was characterized by uniform responsibilities and an absence of sex role distinctions.
Although children worked to provide for the household, they were kept socially isolated from the adult world. As already stated, families could not economically afford for one parent only to work. Poverty has always required "every able body in the black family to work." As a result, the very young often spent time alone and away from the adults. However, because "children were children," they were also socially isolated from the adult world. At community functions or church gatherings, children and adults did not mix. "Grown-ups talked to grown-ups and children talked to children." Children in the community understood their place and the punishment that "went along with interrupting grown people." Therefore, at adult social events, they complied with the teachings of the home. Minnie Brown explained:

The one thing that let us knowed that we was children was when company came over. Mamma and daddy and the other grown people sat in one room and we in the other. We didn't make noise or bother them. The same was true when mamma and daddy fixed dinner for the preacher. After church was over on Sunday morning, if it was our time to fix dinner for the preacher, mamma stayed at home, sometimes, to finish cooking and cleaning and to make sure everything was ready for the people when they got to the house. Most of the people at church would come over and eat with the preacher. We had lots of food 'cause we raise it. But when it came to eating, the grown-ups ate first and got out of the way of the children so that they could eat. But we never ate at the same time as they did. So we never knewed what was going on or what the grown folks was talking 'bout. That was the way it was and we accepted it.

In this community, it appears that children accepted such restrictions. This pattern continued through years of adolescence, courtship, young adulthood, and marriage.

Nevertheless, by the age of twelve or thirteen, the time when childhood ended for children on Brooks Farm, the rigid system of
authority had been thoroughly engrained and children carefully conformed to its demands. From their sheltered and controlled life, residents, like the individuals in this study, had learned "what and what not to ask grown folks." Isolated from the adult world and threatened with punishment for disobedience, these interviewees had to learn to trust each other. They had, after all, shared many things, including secrets, clothes, toys, food, and nights at each other's homes. Their upbringing had instilled in them the need to act responsible, dependable, self-reliant, and proud of their heritage.

Participants in this study believed that their pre-adolescent years taught them fundamental lessons of life that prepared them for their later years. As they grew older, their responsibilities increased and their attitude and behavior became more positive about their roles in the family. Boys and girls continued to work, "sometimes taking on more responsibilities." In the years when it was fashionable to make clothes, gather food, work from sunrise to sunset, children in the Brooks Farm community rapidly developed the skills to be good hunters, fishermen, seamstresses, farmers, and in essence contributors to the family.

Although there were several ways in which adults could determine children's maturity, a sure sign was when young teenagers began contributing economically to the family and when they publicly expressed their faith in God. Within this community, child labor was needed and was appreciated, especially when it earned wages and "got the job done." In order to help their families, young girls and boys sought
employment outside the home. Most found work in the fields "by chopping and picking cotton or doing some garden work for some of the farmers in the community."\textsuperscript{116} Periodically, "some of the teenagers was able to work outside of the community in some of the white farmers' fields."\textsuperscript{117} "It didn't matter where we work," George Turner explained, "every little bit help though you might've gotten a little more from the white farmers 'cause they had more money."\textsuperscript{118}

Despite their maturity and demonstrated ability in handling responsibilities, youth continued to be monitored by their parents during adolescence duties. Since this was a time when their bodies were maturing, parents tried to "keep a eye on us."\textsuperscript{119} "Parents thought they knowed what we was thinking and feeling 'cause they had been through it before; but, yet, they would not discuss the changes we was feeling or the meaning of the change that they saw on our body."\textsuperscript{120} Parents often concealed information about sex from their children, hoping not to pique their curiosity about sex and sexual relations.\textsuperscript{121} Instead, they tried to monitor the adolescents' behavior, especially the daughters', particularly "when they showed a real interest in the boys at school or church."\textsuperscript{122} But this system was not foolproof. "Our parents and all the other grown folks," Ocean Myers explained, "kept hiding things from us until it was too late and somebody came up with a baby, thinking that you get them all kinds of ways, but the right way."\textsuperscript{123}

In families with more than one child, parents used siblings to help control "the ones at courting age."\textsuperscript{124} This system of control was not difficult to establish since most brothers and sisters were only a year
apart. As a result, they generally attended the same Sunday School and classroom at school. "Children who served as a watchdog enjoyed it 'cause they always threaten you by make-tending they was going to tell something on you, especially when you did something mamma and daddy told you not to do, like hugging, holding hand, kissing." Parents, aware of the pressure they placed upon both the "child not old enough to court and the one that was courting" often exploited the long-standing expectation "that children should look out for each other and be responsible for each other's behavior." Eva Glenn explained:

"I use to make Fannie go with Lula Mae every where. Whenever they got back, I would have Fannie tell me everything that Lula Mae did while she was gone. When Lula Mae want to go with her boyfriend, I sent Fannie along with them to make sure thing didn't get out of hand; so they didn't, 'cause children knowed what they had coming if they mess up. Sometime threat work; other time, they didn't 'cause children alway found a way to find out if what you have said was true; but if something happen to Lula Mae, Fannie knowed I was going to blame her too, so she kept her eyes open." Other strategies were also adopted to monitor adolescents' behavior. When the presence of a brother or sister appeared not to have been an effective strategy, parents would "team up and keep eyes on each other's children; they would either sit in the same room when boys came over or they passed by the doorway of the room you was sitting in, so much so, that you thought they want to come in." "Since all the girls had a certain time that a boy could stay over to the house or that they could stay out," Willie Curry explained, "parents did not hesitate to ask the boy to leave, and if the girl was late coming home, they waste no time going to look for her." Because of family rules, the majority of the
participants in this study believed that courtship was rigid and often left them, as young men and women, without any authority or independence until marriage.\textsuperscript{130}

The rigid control that many parents established was done to prevent the family from being socially ostracized. Sex outside of marriage was immoral and unwed pregnancies were a source of shame. More important, pregnancy was an economic responsibility that most families could not afford when "the boy's folk didn't have money to help with the baby."\textsuperscript{131} Children out of wedlock caused everyone in the nuclear and extended family to become involved with rearing the children. Families and friends gave food, clothes, and money to the young mother. Whenever the mother needed someone to look after the child while she was away, the kinship was expected to fill this role.\textsuperscript{132} However, in situations where a pregnancy occurred outside of marriage, "the boy usually married the girl so that he could give the baby a name and right the situation."\textsuperscript{133} Within the community, "whenever a young girl fall from grace, she marry so that she wouldn't be shunned."\textsuperscript{134}

The birth of children outside wedlock also meant a different socialization for some of Brooks Farm young adults. "As long as you behave like young people should," Edward Shedd explained, "you could still be with children your age."\textsuperscript{135} "But the minute you start acting like grown folks," according to Ella Hearon, "you had to 'sociate with them and leave all your friends who, you then, had to start calling mister and miss."\textsuperscript{136} The embarrassment that a family experienced for a young lady or man "having step out of line" was punishment enough for the
entire family. In this culture, sex, drinking, and smoking, if desired, were for adults. Therefore, if children or adolescents were caught engaging in these activities, their behavior was viewed as immoral because they had participated in activities not suitable for children, especially if a girl became pregnant. In this sense, children had stepped "over the line." However, all babies, whether born in or outside of marriage, were loved and cared for by the community.

Brooks Farm's women considered the period of courtship more difficult for them "than it was for the boys." Since we was the ones who could have a baby," Willie McWilliams explained, "we was always at a risk and not knowing 'bout birth control and reproduction caused us to be curious about sex, 'specially when boys came calling." Because the community and church were not in favor of children having babies, young girls in the community were always scrutinized and subject to exploitation by the "old double standard that it look bad for girls but was all right for boys 'cause that was the way men behaved, but a girl had to always be a lady." Indeed, the double standard was alive and operated well in the Brooks Farm community. Data from the male interviewees showed that men, even as boys, had a different perception of sexuality even though the church and community "placed the same kind of restrictions on young boys." "But because boys was suppose to go looking for a girl who he might want for a wife," George Turner argued, "they was never really concern 'bout the end or how bad things would look for the girl or would be for the both of them if the girl was spoil." In talking with the
men about courtship and marriage, each suggested that they understood "the church's teaching on the proper place of love and sex," but most added that "constant being reminded that it was wrong did not help 'cause boys was more concern about it." As a result, it soon became obvious "that things didn't happen like we had been told, so a few people got into trouble; some boys and girls became parents at a early age." For some of the residents in the community, pre-marital pregnancies sometimes meant marrying an individual that "you might not want to marry." But the "fact that you had got a baby meant that you had to take care of it, not somebody else who might not want to look after someone else child." For teenagers in the Brooks Farm community who unfortunately became parents before newlyweds, courtship was short and often ended in marriage.

Marriage, however, for most of these residents occurred after an extended courtship. Long courtships, approximately two years, was the norm. This time period gave parents an opportunity to observe future spouses for their children. Prospective couples, however, seemed quite sure that they had chosen the right mate. "Long hours of prayer to God about a husband or wife" were expected in addition to the friendship that couples developed as teenagers while attending church, school, and community functions.

The background of the intended couples was also important in determining whether a marriage would take place. Participants in this study suggested that "you had to be coming from a good family before your mamma and daddy would approve." In the case of Brooks Farm residents,
a "good family" did not mean that the individual's family had to have "a lot of land, money, or education 'though that would help," but it meant that a person should have been a member of a household that was religious and believed in working honestly and diligently for a living. Once these traits were spotted in a person," Fannie Turner explained, "a couple could then go ahead and get marry." Marriage ceremonies in the Brooks Farm community indicated whether families had the economic capacity to afford weddings. "A marriage in this community was simple, nothing fancy, but with all your friends and family." Because most parents could not afford a "big church wedding where you had to pay a preacher and provide some dinner to the folks who came," young couples were married in their homes. The bride did not always wear a wedding dress. "At times, the girls sometimes wore a regular dress made by her mother and the boy wore his regular Sunday suit." Marriage ceremonies continued to be simple "'cause couples need whatever little money they had to begin they marry life, especially if they want to farm and have a family." With such varying degrees of elegance, young people continued to marry, with weddings occurring yearly in the Brooks Farm community.

Because the participants in this study were assigned responsibilities during early childhood, adolescence, and young adult life, many experienced little difficulty making the transition from their parents' household to their own. "We realize," according to J. C. Turner, "that we could no longer be depending on our folks, so we started trying to make it on our own." For most newly married couples in the
community, the first years of marriage were not easy, and "having to come up with money for house items, food, and tools and supplies for the farm and family" was a difficult task (even for children who folks had a pretty good living."159 "The fact of the matter was that problems came for everybody," particularly for the newlyweds who had to learn to work and live together, make decisions, manage the farms, and eventually care for a family and manage a household.160 After the first months of marriage, young couples in the Brooks Farm community settled into the routines of married life and began their life "working and raising children just like our mamma and daddy."161 "In our house," Margaret Ball suggested, "we start to do the things necessary for us to make it."162 For many of these young couples, life would be filled with many roles and responsibilities that included "everybody, every woman, man, boy, and girl."163

Within their households, family life for the participants in this study was routine, and they managed in the same way as their parents. At the center of each of these families were the women who played a variety of roles. In fact, to discuss family life among these residents "is to talk about the women 'cause they was the family and did most things to keep it going, especially if it was something going on inside of the house, rather than outside on the farm."164 Data from the interviews and other sources showed that the social and economic contributions of Brooks Farm women were significant.165 Male and female roles were also clearly defined. Men were primarily responsible for the farm and "some of the duties of fatherhood and being a daddy."166 Women performed all domestic
tasks, including housecleaning, food preservation, meal preparation, laundering, and child care. In each of the homes, women produced a great portion of the foods and goods consumed by their families. Their output was essential and was determined, to a large extent, by family size.\textsuperscript{167}

Men and women began their morning simultaneously. Since most men farmed, they rose early and women "got up with them so that they could begin the day by making sure their husband had some kind of breakfast before he went off to the fields."\textsuperscript{168} After a breakfast that usually consisted of eggs, meat, grits, and biscuits, both the man and woman took up typical and accepted roles. "The men," according to Mary Sargeant, "went off to the fields or to work in one of the mills while the women stay at home to finish some of the housework before they went out to help in the fields."\textsuperscript{169}

Throughout the day, women in the Brooks Farm community performed all the household tasks common to homemakers in the first half of the twentieth century. Without the aid of electricity, these women did not enjoy the luxury of labor-saving devices such as electric washing machines, vacuum cleaners, gas stoves, or electric lights. Therefore, their tasks were laborious and plentiful, with a typical work day beginning with food preparation and preservation.\textsuperscript{170}

For the majority of women in the Brooks Farm community, cooking required considerable time and effort. Meals were prepared thrice daily. Breakfast was served early in the morning, around 6:00 a.m., and dinner at noon. Supper was eaten in the late evening around 7:00 p.m. "Because most men were hard workers and ate a lot," dinner was a full course meal,
consisting of meat, vegetables, bread, homemade desserts, and a beverage, usually ice tea. After dinner, women began planning supper, which also included meat, bread, and a vegetable or grain. When the meals were completed and eaten, the dishes were washed. Cooking and dishwashing required more strenuous labor because most of the meals were prepared over a wood-burning stove with heavy utensils until gas stoves were widely purchased in the 1950s.

Since most farm families were large, food production was also essential and depended on a division of labor. In this area of production, the participants in this study suggested that women played the major role in producing food for the family. Some of the foods that farm families consumed were direct products of women's work. After the plots had been plowed, Brooks Farm women began seeding onions, tomatoes, and potatoes in early April. Within the same month, lettuce, beets, turnips, carrots, sweet potatoes, cabbages, peanuts, peas, and other vegetables were planted. In May, the fruits were planted and watermelons, strawberries, and pumpkins led the list of delicious fruits to be grown. In Brooks Farm, food production continued to be important even though family size decreased as the older children left home.

Livestock production was also a family activity. Unlike black farm families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, farm families in this community raised many animals. Women, mostly, cared for the animals by watering and feeding the turkeys, chickens, and ducks, while the men, when time allowed, primarily looked after the pigs and cows. Most of the livestock in the Brooks Farm community was used for
consumption although pigs and cows were occasionally sold at the market. The central function of the cows was to provide milk that could be manufactured into cheese and butter. Women milked the cows in the mornings and evenings and sometimes provided all the animals with food and water daily. Even though men killed and cleaned the animals, women butchered them and initially salted the meat and packed it in wooden boxes. This form of meat preservation was used until families were able to buy freezers. Children helped in the preservation process "by helping to cut the meat and by wrapping it and stacking it in the meat house."  

The upkeep of the farm houses provided an opportunity for parents and their children to socialize. Farm women and their daughters were responsible for the poultry houses, while boys and their fathers "looked after the cow and pig stalls." On some occasion, the entire family repaired and cleaned the farm houses. On wet days during the summer and warm days during the winter, the family unit gathered to repair the barns and hen houses, fix broken troughs, and to add additional sheds for farm tools if they were needed. Since families in the Brooks Farm community feasted regularly on fresh killed poultry, beef, and pork from the late spring to the early fall, a family's work with the livestock was not complete "until their stalls was clean, their bellies fed, and the eggs and milk had been gathered."  

In addition to raising and preserving food, women were also seamstresses and wash ladies. Sewing was a skill that most farm women acquired and enjoyed. Because most of the family's income was used for
household expenditures, women in the Brooks Farm community sewed in order to keep their families clothed. They sewed dresses for themselves and for their daughters. They also made suits, shirts, and pants for their husbands and sons. Willie Curry seemed to have thought that she was always sewing because her husband was "rough" on clothes. "I was always patching his pants or making some shirts because he got so greasy from working in the fields." Like Curry, women in Brooks Farm sewed throughout the year, "during every season." Despite their sewing responsibilities, women in this community believed that it was easier than making quilts.

To many of Brooks Farm women, quilting may have been "long and boring and hurt the fingers." It, nevertheless, provided the opportunity for mothers to sit, rest, think, and talk with the children. Mothers in the community argued that "sewing and quilting help to keep them sane." "It slowed us down and gave us time to collect ourselves." More important, sewing and quilting were activities that brought different families together. At many of the quilting parties, "women sat and talk and quilt in one room, while the men was in the kitchen talking about farming and business, and the children was outside playing." As a result, quilting and sewing helped to tighten the bonds of kinship and friendship as women often assisted each other in making clothing and other household items for the family.

However, women found it difficult to keep their families supplied with clean clothes. Such a task often involved washing and soap-making. "Before we was able to buy a machine, washing was tired 'cause we could
not afford automatic machines or wringers to help out with the washing." For many years, washing was done on a rub board in a round tub. Because women had to also work in the fields, they soaked the clothes overnight, wrung them in the morning, and hung them out before going to the field. Added to the responsibility of washing came soap-making and ironing "with the old heavy irons." Folding and putting away the clothes also added to the heavy work load. Even though electricity eventually became a part of the home, Brooks Farm women could not afford the luxury of electric irons until the 1960s. Soap-making, however, eventually became a hobby but washing continued to be strenuous until machines could be purchased. A lack of financial resources caused the majority of farm women in the Brooks Farm community to continue washing clothes in the traditional way. Few families had extra money to spend on washing machines. The majority used every available penny to survive and, if they were landowners, to hold onto their land.

Even though women had many domestic responsibilities, their most important role seemed to have been that of nurturing. They had to make sure that the children were eating properly, bathing, attending school, and doing their chores. Families were large and child care took much time. According to Minnie Brown, "taking care of babies took up a lot of time because they had to be constantly watched, cleaned, nourished, and fed." These activities, according to Freddie Wiley, were tiring because the responsibilities were not only great, "but child care coupled with caring for the husband and the house got to be too much."
Participants in this study also played the role of teacher, pastor, and doctor. In thinking about these roles, women suggested that they were responsible for the moral and spiritual training of the children, while the men enforced the rules established by both spouses. Both parents "made sure that the children was raised right and that they had some respect for the elders, mind their manners, and went to church and school." However, women, more often than men, took the children to school and community and church functions.

The female residents, however, accepted the role of teacher as their responsibility. In observing their role as educators in the family, many of Brooks Farm women's experience was similar to Irene Scott's, who stated: "Because my husband was always busy, I had to teach the children and help them with their school work." They also woke the children in the morning, fed them breakfast, and made sure that they were properly dressed before going off to school.

Acting as the family's doctor, Estella Thomas recalled, was fun. "There was not much money in the family, so we relied heavily on old remedies to cure our bodies." Like the women, men were familiar with home remedies and did not hesitate to give them to the children. However, the primary role of doctoring belonged to the women, who learned health and medical care from their mothers. "Whenever my children became ill, I use the formulas my mother taught me." If everything "I knewed fail, I could call some of the old women in the community or send for mamma."

Child rearing and domestic tasks were important responsibilities
that women performed. Even though additional family members would create more work for the woman, these women, like their mothers, never considered controlling family size. Families continued to have many children despite economic strain. According to Beatrice Collins, a mother of thirteen, "birth control never enter my mind." It seems "as if we women was going to have children no matter how hard we had to work." It was common for families, hoping to buy land, to have many children. Freddie Wiley had seventeen children, Beatrice Collins had fifteen, Minnie Brown had twelve, and Francis Walker had ten. Fifty percent of the households in the community had eight children, while others had as few as three and as many as twenty-two. Even though families needed plenty of children for laborers, it soon became clear to the women that their household duties would be more difficult and time-consuming. For this reason, children were encouraged to share the work load.

Because large families represented heavy work loads for women, most children were expected to help with household tasks from early childhood. Girls helped with housework; boys helped on the farm. Before the 1950s, boys and girls usually chopped wood and brought it into the house to keep the fire burning. As they grew older, children also gathered the eggs and fed the livestock without their parents' assistance. Both the chicken house and the barn had to be kept clean daily. Water had to be brought into the home, both during the morning and at night, while the milking and some field work was completed before the children went off to school.
Older children also earned money to support the family. Most teenage boys earned an income by doing field work or other form of day labor. Boys also made money by selling some of the vegetable produce that they raised and by selling the game from hunting and fishing trips. J. C. Turner recalled that he was able to help out by killing and selling ducks, rabbits, and deer. Other residents chopped and picked cotton to earn extra money, while some trapped animals for furs to help "pitch in." As expected, children in the Brooks Farm community took their wages home, and the parents divided the income between them and the family. This practice was common in nearly every household. Many of the residents stated that they had a large number of children because they needed the help on the farm and their income to help keep the family functioning. Like boys, young girls also helped contribute to the family's income. They worked as day laborers in the fields for small amounts of money.

Black families who moved into the Brooks Farm community seem to have experienced little difficulty adjusting. Housing and some form of employment was available. In fact, people did not move into this community unless they were sure that they would have a job and a place to live. Many families had been recruited by landowners. After the first group arrived, they usually encouraged friends and family members to come to Brooks Farm. Many of the landowners also invited family and friends to come to work. Those who did not own land could ask the person for whom they worked to permit other family members and friends to come to the community. In fact, this was one of the ways the community
increased its population and extended its families and kinship networks. 221

The respondents viewed the family as the institution through which they both satisfied their children's material needs and instilled in them the proper social, moral, and religious values. 222 Parents believed that children should be raised to accept responsibility and to work hard, both in and outside of the home. Discussions with the informants revealed their parents' attitude toward life, child rearing, and activities in which children were to be involved. The conversations also indicated that parents took their role as disciplinarians seriously and that they firmly believe "that it was important to chasten the children." 223 Therefore, discipline was strict and was overseen by every adult in the community, following the practices they had known as children in Brooks Farm.

While mothers apparently assumed the major responsibility as disciplinarians, parents often conferred on family matters. Interview data revealed that parents had discussions on family situations ranging from finances to child care. 224 Besides conferring about expenditures, parents in the Brooks Farm community also accepted responsibility for their children's behavior in school and public activities, ensuring that they did not break the laws. 225 Therefore, the commandments forbidding stealing, lying, and killing were extolled within the households of the second and third generation, just as they had been in their parents'. 226

Within the community discipline was administered communally. Children were frequently disciplined by adults. Fannie Turner and others
remembered being punished by individuals other than their parents.  

"Grown-ups did not hesitate to spank or punish you if you was caught acting mannish or fast; the one thing that children got in trouble was for sassing old people or just arguing with grown-ups; it was like calling them a lie." This kind of action was not tolerated and any child found violating society's rules was escorted home to their parents after they had been disciplined by other adults. In the Brooks Farm community, parents always believed the adults were right and tended to agree with whatever they thought or had to say.

Even though participants in this study were second and third generation, research indicated that parental supervision within their households remained strict and appeared to have been more strict for daughters than sons. Women remembered that their parents had established close supervision over them until they married. Girls were not allowed "to go out or to travel about as boys did and when we went out our brothers or father had to be with us." According to Maxine Johnson, "girls had to go in the house when boys came around, 'cause we was not suppose to be out flouncing around, exciting the boys 'cause your mamma and daddy did not want another child to feed." Apparently, participants in this study were as concerned about their daughters having babies as their parents had been about them. Like the former generation, members of the second and third generations were also affected by the death of family members and friends. It was the final phase of life that families in Brooks Farm had to contend with.

The death of a community member created quite an uproar in a
community where families were close and depended on each other for survival. In the Brooks Farm community, rituals were simple. "Most people grieve, organize the funeral, and mourn the loss." Individuals showed that they had accepted the death of a family member when they, if married, dressed in black and declared themselves widows and wept publicly to express their feelings "at the loss of a wife or a child or some other close family member." For many families in this community, death meant not only the loss of a spouse, child, friend, or farm hand, but the end to many "good times that you share with the person."

The death of community members was marked by the tolling of bells from the churches. It was also signaled by the hanging of a white handkerchief from a window within the home. "When folks saw a handkerchief hanging from your house," Eva Glenn remembered, "they stop by to see how you and the family was." "After one person found out that you had death in your family," Leroy Vassel explained, "they would spread the news around and before you knewed you had a house and yard full of folks, 'cause they was coming to see what they could do." During times of bereavement, community members helped families by making funeral arrangements. Since most people belonged to a Burial Society, organizing funerals was not a difficult task. In the event that an individual did not belong to a Burial Society, "folks in the community pitch in to make sure that the person had a decent funeral."

Funerals in the Brooks Farm community were routine. Families gathered to show support, while friends, neighbors, and church members came to "see how everybody was holding up." "If it seemed like the
funeral was going to be tough on a wife or a husband, friends gather round to hold that person up 'cause the other family members was too hurt to be strong." There was great compassion between friends and the relatives of the one who had died. "The compassion that was shown to a person during this time was unconditional, no strings attach, with nobody expecting nothing in return 'cause everybody was family, and we love each other." Because some families had a difficult time "letting go of the dead," and because some individuals had to come back south to the funeral, the time period between death and burial varied. In many instances, many of the older children had moved north to find employment. Therefore, time was allowed for them to arrive back home to attend the funeral, which usually took place six to eight days after the death had occurred.  

Although funerals were sad occasions, they were also happy times when entire families gathered to share the grief. During the funeral, families of the deceased "lined up behind the casket and follow it in the church to show their love." "The family," according to Ocean Myers, "would be lined up according to age, with the husband or wife, whichever was left, and the person's mamma and daddy, if they was alive, marching straight behind the casket." "Brothers and sisters came next and behind them was the person's children, nieces, and nephews, and after them was the grandchildren, if there was some, and all the other kin people who was at the funeral." At the funeral, according to Freddie Wiley, "you knowed the person was finally being laid to rest when family and friends began describing how nice he was, how he tried to serve God,
how he tried to take care of his family, and how he tried to help people."

The final phase of death ended when the casket was lowered into the ground and covered "by friends and relatives who move swiftly to finish the course." The deceased had "been laid to rest and the family had mourn and grieve, so we put our arms 'round each other to move on ahead to the next hour, day, week, month, and year." Within the family, death marked the final stage of maturation and development, for families had survived birth and infancy, childhood and adolescence, courtship and marriage, and the responsibilities associated with an adult life. Therefore, death was taken slowly so that the healing would be steady and complete.

From birth to death, families in the Brooks Farm community developed a rational scheme for rearing children and for creating networks throughout the community. The lessons children learned in honesty, frugality, thriftiness, hard work, and obedience set the stage for young boys and girls to become responsible men and women and heads of households. The nurturing and support that children received from family and community members suggested to them the need to provide similar aid in their adult world. In the Brooks Farm community, family life was communal, and every participant of the community was aware of the roles he or she was to play. In fulfilling these roles, men, women, and children created a culture where life was determined by responsibilities and economic and social conditions imposed by the family.
Endnotes


2 Within households in the Brooks Farm community, the family acted as the institutions where habits and behavior were taught and reinforced. The orientation that emerged within family home set the tone for what was to be accepted and expected of family and community members. The community was settled by married families from all over the Delta. Some families were from out of state. Family life was organized around social and economic activities.

3 Information obtained from the interview data. According to residents, many men in the early years, 1910-1920, worked in the mills, especially the saw mills, where lumber was needed to construct houses in Brooks Farm when P. H. Brooks first created it as a plantation. Mill
work was important to this community because it offered jobs other than farming.

Information obtained from the interview data. For more information, see the United States Census of Population, Mississippi, 1900-1960. See employment series, especially for the Delta Counties (Bolivar, Coahoma, Tumia, Sunflower, Leflore, Issaquena, Tallahatchie, Humphrey, Yazoo, Washington, Quitman, and Sharkey).

Margaret Ball, personal interview. Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987. Each of the participants in the study suggested that they understood the need for them to work as children. Families in the Brooks Farm community did not have a great sum of money; therefore, children were taught and were expected to work at an early age for wages.

Steve Hearon, personal interview. Drew, Mississippi, 16 July 1989. In the Brooks Farm community, the family, church, and school worked together to encourage constructive work habits among adults and children. If the community was to grow, each participant knew that he or she had to contribute in some way. For more information on commercial effort to fight poverty, see Alan R. Bird, Poverty in Rural Areas of the United States (United States Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Economic Report 63, 1964), 46 pp.


Conclusion was drawn from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Conclusion was drawn from interview data. In discussing family life with the participants, each suggested that they had a stable family life which consisted of many kin and friends of the family who were considered as family members. Considerable research indicated that many black communities consisted of kinship and extended kinship arrangements. For more information, see John Dollard, Caste and Class in a Southern Town (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1937, reprinted in 1949 and 1957); Hortense Powdermaker, After Freedom: A Cultural Study in the Deep South (New York: The Viking Press, 1939); Herbert Aptheker, ed., A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, Vol. 2 (New York: Citadel Press, 1964); James E. Blackwell, The Black Community Diversity and Unity (New York: Dodd, Head and Company, 1975); John W. Blasingame, The Slave Community (New York: Oxford University, 1979); Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner, Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941).

Beatrice Collins, personal interview. Drew, Mississippi, 30 April

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.
16 Ibid.
17 Copies of birth certificates from individuals who participated in this study as well as their children. Birth certificates showed that children were born frequently, one to two years apart. Census data for the state of Mississippi also showed an increase. For more information, see United States Census of the Population, 1900-1970 and Census of Mississippi, 1900-1970. See especially the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta counties (Bolivar, Coahoma, Humphrey, Issaquena, Leflore, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tumica, Washington, and Yazoo); and Mississippi Vital Statistics, 1920-1970 (see Delta counties). For more information on birth records, see Mississippi State Board of Health, Biennial Reports, 1920-1970 (Department of Health, Mississippi State Archives, Jackson, Mississippi). See especially County reports.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Freddie Wiley, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 11 June 1989. In the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta religion appeared to have been important to most black rural families, especially those living on farms and plantations. Many of the plantations in the Delta Region had at least one church, constructed by the landlord to appease the laborers. For more information, see the United Census of Religion Study; Ruby F. Johnston, The Development of Negro Religion (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954); and Howard Thurman, The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947); and Reverdy C. Ransom, ed., Yearbook of Negro Churches (Wilberforce, OH: Bishops of the A. M. E. Church, 1935-1936).
Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.


George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

Conclusion drawn from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Biennial Reports of the Superintendent of Education of Mississippi, 1920-1955 (Department of Education, Mississippi State Archives, Jackson, Mississippi).

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Willie Street, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Earnest McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 18 June 1989.


38 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


43 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in Brooks Farm.


46 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


48 Edna Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.


50 Conclusion was drawn from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

51 Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

52 Conclusion was drawn from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.


Birdell Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in Brooks Farm. Dr. Booth had been associated with the Brooks Farm community since its early days when P. H. Brooks first established Brooks Farm as a company's community. However, residents primarily decided if they wanted to utilize Dr. Booth's services.

Information gathered from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Carrie Gordon, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 18 May 1987. The use of a midwife in black rural communities was common or standard practice. For more information on childbirthing practices of black women, see the U.S. Bureau of Census, 1900 Household Manuscripts.

J. G. Fountain, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987. Everyone in this community knew Carrie Gordon. The respect she has earned as a midwife showed that people cared for her.


Francis Walker, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 1 May 1987.

Minnie Brown, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 5 June 1989. Childbirthing was a secretive affair that only adults were concerned with. It was one of those activities that was not broadcast. Each of the female participants in this study concealed childbirth from their children, just as their parents had concealed such information from them.


Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.
Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in Brooks Farm. Each of the participants suggested that only women were present during the delivery. If a man was present, he was there to help make difficult decisions about the delivery, especially if the life of the child or mother was at stake.

Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Francis Walker, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 1 May 1987.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

It is my contention that the lack of knowledge concerning birth control and reproduction contributed to the multi-pregnancies in the Brooks Farm community. If the primitive form of birth control would have been discussed, young women would have had a choice concerning the number of children they would have had. But young women continued to have many children because they were not told how to control reproduction.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Conclusion was drawn from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.
82 Bernice Jones, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 18 August 1988.

83 Naming patterns among the Brooks Farm residents closely followed a network of affective bonds similar to those described by Herbert B. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), pp. 185-229. As Gutman demonstrated, naming practices were one way of showing unity and affectionate bonds in a community where kinship and extended families were important. See also Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *Promisedland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community*, pp. 145-170.

84 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

85 Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

86 Conclusion was drawn from interview data. It was important for children to know their background.

87 Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

88 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.


90 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with Brooks Farm residents. See also Bethel, *Promisedland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community*, pp. 145-170.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in Brooks Farm.

94 Ibid.

95 Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Conclusion was drawn from interview data. Common themes of socialization in the Brooks Farm community were early weaning, repression of sexuality, control of aggression, and negative reinforcement. These
are characteristics of rural socialization. For more information, see Allison Davis and John Dollard, *Children of Bondage* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1940), pp. 263-278.

99 Conclusion was drawn from interview data.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid. For more information, see R. R. Sears, Eleanor Maccoby, and H. Levine, *Patterns of Childbearing* (Evanston, IL: Row and Peterson, 1957).

102 Conclusion was drawn from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community. See also Bethel, *Promiseland: A Century of Farming in a Negro Community*, pp. 145-170.

103 Minnie Brown, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 5 June 1989.


105 Maxine Johnson, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 May 1988. This seemed to have been a socialization process, common among black rural families.


107 Ibid.

108 Theodore Hooper, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 8 July 1989.

109 Information gathered from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

110 Conclusion drawn from interviews with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

111 Ibid.


113 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.
George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1985.


George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.


Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Leroy Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 16 August 1988.

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, 10 June 1989.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Willie Curry, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 May 1987.

Conclusions drawn from interview data.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in
133 Earnest McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.


136 Ella Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

137 West Sargent, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1987.

138 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

139 Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

140 Ibid.

141 Birdell Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

142 Jodie Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

143 George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

144 Jodie Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

145 Ibid.

146 Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

147 Ibid.

148 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

149 Fannie Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 12 July 1988.

150 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Beatrice Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.
157 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.
159 George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.
160 Ibid. Each of the respondents could recall periods of difficulties during the early years of marriage while adjusting to a new husband and family.
161 Margaret Ball, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.
162 Ibid. Margaret Ball and her husband sharecropped and eventually bought land from Brooks. They also sold produce, did custom work, and worked as day laborers to earn money for the family.
164 Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.
165 Conclusion was drawn from interview data.
166 Minnie Brown, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 5 June 1989.
167 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Mary Sargent, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in Brooks Farm.

Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

Beatrice Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Willie M. Curry, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 May 1987.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Francis Walker, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 1 May 1987.

Ibid.
Eva Glenn continued to make soap even though they could afford to buy it during the 1950s and 1960s.

Information collected from interviews conducted in Brooks Farm data.


Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

Information collected from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Francis Walker, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 1 May 1987.

Conclusion drawn from interview data. Between 1900-1940, wages were extremely low in Mississippi, especially for black farm workers. The economic ability of families to adequately provide additional care
for their children, in terms of schooling and medical care, was difficult even though clothes and food items were produced from within the home. See also Dorothy Dickins, *Owner Farm Families in Poor Agricultural Areas* and *Cropper Farm Families in Rich Agricultural Areas* (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin No. 359, June 1941), 19 pp.


207 Ibid.


209 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

210 Ibid. This appeared to have been the children's responsibility until parents in the Brooks Farm community began to purchase gas stores.

211 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

212 Ibid.


214 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Conclusion was drawn from the interview data.

Ibid.

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.


Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.


Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Leroy Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 16 August 1988.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. Records of burial societies to which blacks in Brooks Farm and the Delta belonged can be found in the Annual Report of the Insurance Department of the State of Mississippi, 1920-1970.


Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April

243 Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

244 Information collected from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

245 Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.


248 Ibid.

249 Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

250 Ibid.

251 Conclusion was based upon the interview data.
CHAPTER IV. WOMEN IN THE BROOKS FARM COMMUNITY: THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS, ROLES, AND LIFE EXPERIENCES

This chapter examines Brooks Farm women's roles as decision-makers, economic contributors, and community builders. It shows that women succeeded in doing more than "raising children and working in the fields." As economic contributors and decision-makers, Brooks Farm women contributed to the efficiency of the family by earning an income to help support the household unit as well as by making decisions that helped the family function more smoothly. As community builders, they used their organizational skills to ensure that community relations and support networks developed. This was important in a community that depended on cooperation for survival.

In Chapter III, women's roles were discussed in the context of family life. This chapter, however, analyzes Brooks Farm women's attitudes and perceptions of their household responsibilities as well as the significance of their roles as economic contributors to the family. Women's roles as community builders and decision-makers are examined in order to show the pride Brooks Farm women had in their work as well as the respect their contributions gained over time.

The women of the Brooks Farm community have their own history. They have served as the linchpin of the community, providing it with stability and order. Like many of America's black farm women, Brooks Farm's women have both "prayed and worked" to survive. If asked what caused them to be content during their years in the community, they would say, "long
prayers and hard, long hours in the field, church and home. Indeed, "Brooksy" women's prayers and labor meant much not only to themselves, but to their husbands, the community, and their peers. "The courage, faith, and hard work of my wife Ruby, and some other women, caused me to believe in this community."7 "I know this community would not have lasted as long as it did if it was not for some of these women," according to Willie Ivory, "because most of them, after coming from the field and garden, found time to help other in the community, and because of this, Brooksy held up [held together] for many years."8 Women were the backbone and expected to excel. Minnie Brown explained:

Women was the backbone out there on the Brooksy plantation. Nearly everything was left for them to do and they did it all, from having babies to raising chickens, to running the house and the church, and to planting the garden, gathering the crop, and everything else necessary to keep the family together. Of course now, our husband help some, but we did the bulk of the work, especially where the home, family, children, church, and community was concern. We took part in everything that involve us and our family. And women was the main leaders in getting things done 'cause men was out there in the field or busy doing something else. For the most part, we did all that work 'cause we was told that was what we was suppose to do 'cause we was the women, and women was suppose to take care of the family and look after things in the community.9

Women in the Brooks Farm community accepted the responsibility of caring for the family and community because they were instructed to do so. "When your mama and daddy and the preacher and old folks in the church tell you that you had to do all kind of work to survive, you end up doing it 'cause you realize how necessary it was to do this work."10 More important, "if we hadn't, there would be a lot of confusion and nobody would've progress if we didn't do our part."11
community values and emphasis on development, "all the women work in the church, house, field, and the community." Women in Brooks Farm did not believe their responsibilities were burdensome "since all the women work, that made it easy 'cause we all was doing the same thing." As Brooks Farm women increasingly accepted work roles outside the home, their work in the community eventually improved their status in Brooks Farm. Over time, women and their work would be considered important.

It is apparent from the above testimonies that women made significant contributions to the Brooks Farm community. However, it is more important to realize that these women's struggles and experiences symbolized a life of expectations, not of anyone, particularly, but mostly of themselves. Willie Curry's statements attested to this fact:

Most people 'round here look for the women and mothers to do their part, but what made it so strange is that we expect more of ourselves. We could never settle for good enough. Everything had to be perfect; therefore, we had high expectation. We work hard at making things turn out all right.

Curry's words demonstrated the type of attitude prevalent among Brooks Farm women. Although many of their responsibilities—childrearing, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the family—were typical to those of other farm women, the women in this community differed from traditional farm women in their attitude regarding their role and importance in the community. "We knowed that we was doing some good when we was out in the community seeing 'bout people and how they was doing." More important, "we did what our family and community need us to do in order to help out, but we enjoy it 'cause we didn't mind
pitching in." Women in the Brooks Farm community recognized their importance, accepted their roles, and held themselves in high esteem. Therefore, they also expected their spouses and peers to treat them as "people who had sense, knowed how to do things, and did important work in the community."^19

Community values influenced attitudes toward patriarchy and the women's determination to meet high standards in their own work. Women knew men's roles were thought to be the important ones because they did most of the farm work and conducted the farm business, while also working at the gin and in the mills. Even though women accepted their roles as complementary, it was an accepted fact in Brooks Farm that women would be active and that their work in the church, community, and home would be respected even though men were the dominant personality.^22

Respect for women's work did not readily appear. It evolved as men were reminded of women's contributions. "$'Cause the church taught that men were the head of the family, the men didn't always want to think that the woman's work was just as important as the work they did." However, "they realize how good our work was after we women and the preacher remind them that we work hard and deserve some credit for helping to keep things going out here in this community." Even the minister," according to Mae Liza Williams, "used to tell our husband to love and respect us because we was as much the backbone to family as the men was." Williams further explained the emphasis placed upon the need for men to become more appreciative of women's work:
Reverend Sykes, when he was alive, used to say that the men would not know what to do if the women left. Everything, including the farm, would be in a bad shape. Rev. Sykes knew who was doing a lot of the work. That was why he used to say all those things and he was right to try to get everybody, especially the men, to see just how helpful we was. Yes, it was amazing how much work we used to do out there on the farm and people could see just how hard we work to help our husband, family, church, and community. \(^7\)

Recognition of their importance to the family and farm had been realized by nearly every woman who resided in the Brooks Farm community. \(^8\) Fannie Turner explained:

Because women, themselves, begin thinking about how they help out, men really had no choice but to change their way of thinking and start appreciating women's work 'cause we could remind them of what we did and how much we help out. You know, a few years ago, men didn't think we women could do nothing, but we show them and they knew all along that we did our part. I mean, every woman out here work all day long. The men did too, but we always gave them credit. But since they didn't like to give us much, we give ourselves credit 'cause we deserve it for all that work. We work during those days, and I mean hard. Now, the men see it even though back in those days, they did not want to own up to it. \(^9\)

Women on Brooks Farm believed that men were slow to compliment their work during the early years, 1920-1940, because "back in those days, a man had to believe that he was in charge and taking care of the family." \(^10\) It appeared that it was important for men to believe that they, only, were working because "if somebody bragged 'bout how much work women did, it made the men look bad 'cause they had been taught that they was suppose to look after the family, making sure that their wife and children was safe and had enough food, clothes, and other things to make it." \(^11\) As a result, "men did all they could to outdo women," according to Fannie Turner, "'cause they had to make it look like they was working
the hardest 'cause if they had not, then people would have been saying they wasn't working and taking care of their family. " Furthermore, "the men would get a visit from the preacher and deacons who would come by to talk to them 'bout working and taking care of their family. " In the Brooks Farm community, women's work gained more credibility as it increasingly added to the family's income and strengthened family and community bonds.  

Women in the Brooks Farm community described their role as an economic contributor as one where they did not only add money to the family's budget, but also saved the family from some unnecessary expenses. An analysis of how women prevented the family from expending money will be discussed first because these activities were significant during the early years of the community's history, 1920-1950. During this time, families in the Brooks Farm community were poor and worked primarily as sharecroppers, tenants, and day laborers. Therefore, self-sufficiency was important to community development. More important, the county had not experienced the technological, agricultural, and industrial build-up that it experienced during post-World War II. Consequently, Brooks Farm residents did not have many opportunities to improve their economic conditions. Therefore, women had to contribute economically. Between 1920-1945, Brooks Farm's residents' financial resources were scarce as Mississippi's agricultural economy was unpredictable, with fluctuating cotton prices and periodical depressions. As a result, many of the responsibilities women carried out proved to have been economically advantageous to the family. At
least these women thought so "'cause we rarely had to buy things and spent money mostly trying to help our husband farm, 'specially after we got on our own place."39

Women saved the family money by working in the fields, having children, sewing, producing and canning food, and quilting. All of the women in the Brooks Farm community did field work. They primarily worked as field hands for their husbands.40 In the case of Margaret Ball, who had only one child who died during infancy, field work was difficult because she was the family's labor force, especially during the chopping season.41 As field hands, women acted as farmers. They helped to plant, cultivate, and harvest the crop. Some plowed the fields, chopped and picked cotton, packed the cotton trailers, carried the crop to the gin or grain elevator, and made frequent trips to town "to pick up some machine parts, seeds, feeds, or whatever our husband need 'cause they couldn't go and couldn't pay nobody to go for them, which was all right 'cause we women could come in out of the field and go for them."42 Brooks Farm women's work in the fields was important to farm production even though the income they helped to make was counted as their husband's, since he was head of the family.43

In addition to working in the fields, women also had "a lot of children to help work the crop."44 By doing so, they contributed to the family economically because "a large number of children meant we could work more land and grow more crops."45 With a sufficient labor supply to work small acreages prior to 1945, the potential to earn money was evident.46 In thinking about her role as an economic contributor, Josie
Fountain replied:

Whenever my husband did not hire labor, I add to the family's money supply. I work until we had children to help us work in the fields. I had many children so that we would have some workers. And even before they got large enough to help out, I work in the field so that we could save money.47

Brooks Farm women cited other examples of their economic worth.

"Whenever I raised food or made clothes," Birdell Vassel explained, "I had help my husband save money because, rather than spending money on food and clothes for the family, he could use it for the farm."48 Vassel's attitude was typical of women who worked to help provide for the family.

Because they had large families, women helped to decrease expenses by producing the majority of the family's food.49 Although men helped with the livestock, women on Brooks Farm maintained that they produced most of the food. "We didn't have to spend money on food 'cause we women was out in the garden planting all kind of vegetable for the family to eat."50 As food producers, the women raised onions, tomatoes, Irish potatoes, lettuce, beets, greens, carrots, sweet potatoes, cabbages, peanuts, and peas. They planted fruit trees such as peach, plum, apricot, and fig.51 "Once the food had come up out of the ground," according to Willie McWilliams, "we start hoeing out the garden so the vegetables could grow and we took the children and had them help us clean the garden and clean up 'round the fruit trees."52 Even though they cultivated the garden, women continued to work in the fields. "We work in the field until 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. and would leave the field and go to the garden or we, sometimes, got up early in the morning and work
When the garden produce was ready for consumption, Brooks Farm women daily fed their families from the garden, while also canning the majority of the produce for the winter months. By using jars, women canned all the vegetables and used the fruits to make "preserves," jam, and jelly. Added to the vegetable and fruit supply were various kinds of poultry. While men primarily took care of the hogs and cows, women raised chickens, turkeys, ducks, and guineas. They managed to preserve the poultry by cooking it and placing it in a jar of water and vinegar.

Records of the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service showed that farm women's work in food production saved families $150 to $200 per year prior to the 1950s. Both black and white women reported their production to the Extension Service and Experiment Station. The value of their work was calculated according to the prices families would have paid had the food been purchased.

Women in the Brooks Farm community also recognized the importance of acquiring sewing skills. "When we was sharecropping and when we first bought land, we couldn't 'ford to buy cloth or clothes or curtains or rugs." All these items were made within the home. Between 1920 and 1950, flour sacks were used as cloth. The women used them "to make dresses, shirts, skirts, undergarments, blouses, and pants." Curtains were also made. Floor mats were made from straw and were placed on the floors during the winter months. Bedspreads and quilts were also made "'cause we couldn't 'ford to buy them kind of thing." It was not important to buy quilts and bedspreads "'cause we women made them from
In Brooks Farm women also created ways to make extra money through home production. This income was used to pay bills and to purchase some household items and appliances such as flour, rice, sugar, and wooden stoves and heaters. Farm duties aside, nearly every Brooks Farm woman, between 1920 and 1950, sold eggs, butter, milk, cheese, butter, and vegetable produce. There was a local market in Drew. Many elderly white persons in Drew and nearby towns bought from blacks because their products could be purchased cheaper than those sold in the stores or by white food producers. Some women were beauticians and used their homes to style hair. They charged twenty-five to fifty cents per head. Female seamstresses charged five to ten dollars to make a suit, two dollars for a pair of pants, one dollar and a half for a dress, shirt, or blouse, and one dollar for a shirt. In addition, some women took in laundry for three dollars per week. Women such as Iona Fountain and Carrie Gordon worked for elderly white women. "We wash women went to town, pick up the clothes, wash 'em, bring 'em out to dry, iron 'em, fold 'em, and took 'em back to town to get our pay." Whenever farm prices were low or when the family failed to harvest the crop because of bad weather, women in the Brooks Farm community usually "found a way to earn some money." When financial support could not be earned from the home business, Brooks Farm women earned an income from off-farm employment. Between 1950 and 1970, off-farm employment became increasingly important in Brooks Farm as mass production during the 1950s decreased the need for
home-produced butter, milk, and cheese. With increases in farm prices and wages, rural Mississippians began to purchase many of the items that had been made or produced within the home. With the purchase of electricity and labor-saving devices such as sewing and washing machines, gas stoves and heaters, refrigerators and freezers, during the 1950s and mid-1960s, women's workload declined. Because the traditional household responsibilities were no longer decreasing the family's expenses, many women secured employment outside the home in order to help pay for some of the newly purchased household technologies. This was an important recognition since technological advances improved agriculture, thereby tying men to the farm even though they were using improved farm machinery. Technology, however, provided the opportunity for women to leave the farm and to work outside the home.

Each of the twenty-eight women interviewed had worked outside the home by 1960. Many worked in the domestic service first. During the 1940s, six of the twenty-eight women had worked as domestics for white families in Drew. During World War II and thereafter, white women in Drew and surrounding towns were employed by the factories and, therefore, needed domestic help. They employed women from Brooks Farm. During the 1950s, women in Brooks Farm continued to work as house servants, while a few secured employment in the factories. Women like Irene Scott and Alberta Armstrong were employed at International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) in Drew. Others, during the late 1950s and 1960s, worked in school cafeterias as cooks, dishwashers, and janitors. Some women worked in the public schools as
teachers' aides. A few women continued to work for Brooks' store, helping to sell groceries. Based upon their response to the question—did you contribute economically to the family?—it is not difficult to understand why these women believed that they had both saved and earned money to help their families.

As community builders, women in Brooks engaged in a variety of activities. Many of these were responsibilities that their parents and ancestors accepted as roles that women were not only capable of performing, but ones that were created for women to act upon because they required nurturing and support. Historically, women have always had significant roles in the community, attending to its citizens while monitoring the development of community relations. In the Brooks Farm community, women primarily established extended relations that acted as support networks for community members. This was evident in the assistance they provided during bereavement, illness, and childbirth.

Women in the Brooks Farm community provided much assistance to the sick and elderly. In this capacity, some of the women took turns visiting the sick. On weekends, women generally stayed at the homes of those who were very ill in order to provide care for them if help was needed. If the sick needed someone to be with them during weekdays or at night, a relative, usually a woman, would often stay or the oldest children within the community would assist. If no one was available to stay overnight, some of the women would bring the sick person into their homes. While some women cared for the sick, others ensured the safety of their material possessions by watching their homes, livestock, garden,
and other items. For the elderly persons who did not have much mobility, women in the community did their shopping, bought groceries, cooked meals, and washed and ironed their clothes. Before gas and electricity became readily available, women and children made sure that the elderly had an adequate supply of water, food, and firewood.

Describing the importance of the assistance that women in the Brooks Farm community provided to the sick and elderly, Estella Thomas stated:

"Women, most of all, look after the sick and old people back in those days. We didn't have a lot of doctor like we do now. If we would've had them, it wouldn't made a difference, 'cause nobody could 'ford to go to them 'less you was really sick. So we use all kind of remedies to heal our body, and since people back then believe in praying, we pray a lot for the sick and old. Sometime a group of women would get together and go by the sick's house and pray for hour that God would heal them. Women visit people houses and if they was sick, we found a way to get them some medicine or sometime everybody pitch in together to take a sick person to the doctor or have a doctor come out to the farm. But alway during sickness, the women would help out any way that they could 'cause they knowed more about taking care of the sick. This was all right 'cause we all b'lieve that we would be treat the same way. So, we women didn't mind this responsibility 'cause that was what the church taught and that was what God expect us to do."

Some of the women in Brooks Farm raised gardens to help the elderly save money on their food allowance. By supplying the elderly and sick with food, women hoped that the sick would use their money for medicine, if needed, and other household items that were not produced on the farm.

During childbirth, women provided similar assistance to families. When a woman was about to deliver, some of the women visited and provided support during delivery. They often assisted the midwife in delivering the baby by providing warm water and clean towels. These women not only talked to the expecting mother and each other during childbirth, but
often prayed together, especially when the delivery was difficult.\footnote{87} After the baby was born, women in the community helped to take care of the new mother's household by cooking and feeding her family, while taking the youngest children home with them.\footnote{88} Because they believed that a new mother should "lay in wait," the female residents also ironed, washed, cleaned, and helped the husband with additional responsibilities that he inherited during the childbirthing period.\footnote{89} Carrie Gordon explained the responsibilities women in the community assumed during childbirth:

I can remember when I use to deliver babies, people use to be so happy even though the woman would be in pain. The expectation of a new life seem like it was exciting to the whole community, 'specially the mama and papa even though they already had children. What make this a special occasion was that the whole community offer support. The church pray for mothers who was going to be having a baby. We like having little children in the church and community, so we would go in prayer asking God to bless the mother to have a healthy baby and safe delivery. Before her delivery, some of the women try to make sure that the woman had a healthy baby. The women would come in and take care of the woman and her family. No matter what she need, the women in the community made sure she had it. The mama didn't have a thing to worry 'bout 'cause the other women took care of her household. Even when she was ready to deliver, the mama had the support of the other women in the community who came in to help me or to keep the mama calm. Some women were good at talking the mama through the pain. Some would be standing by heating water, preparing towel and cloth, while other stood by praying. It was alway good to have that kind of support so that the mama and her family could see that they didn't have to go through these thing alone.\footnote{90}

Brooks Farm women also provided assistance during "times of mourning."\footnote{91} In the event that a family lost a member because of death, for example, the women in the community organized as a group and provided assistance and support. They assisted in funeral arrangements, child and
health care, if necessary, housework, and provided food during bereavement. George Turner experienced community and women's support when his wife Ruby died:

I receive a lot of support when my wife Ruby pass. The care of the people in this community pull me through. I didn't want for nothing 'cause whatever I need I could tell some of them women and some of them would cook, wash, and clean up for me. When Ruby died, the women done all they could to make things pleasant 'til I could do for myself.

As community builders, women in the Brooks Farm community performed roles that made the community stronger as a body of people. In their role as community organizer, however, these women sought to strengthen community relations by organizing activities that included men and children. Brooks Farm women arranged dances, picnics, parties, and community dinners, usually held at church, for families to socialize. Meetings of this sort provided the opportunity for intimate conversations about children and family as well as the chance for individuals to see persons whom they had not visited for some periods of time. These social gatherings were not organized for community members only, but also for families in neighboring communities. An open invitation to Brooks Farm's community activities showed that residents desired to establish relations with individuals outside of the community because persons within the community had relatives residing on neighboring plantations or living in nearby areas.

The role of Brooks Farm women as economic contributors and community builders created opportunities for women to participate in the decision-making process. In order to determine Brooks Farm women's role as
decision-makers, respondents were asked questions pertaining to the primary decision-maker within the family. Questions were also asked concerning the types of decisions made by the husband, the wife, or jointly. The inquiry into women's role as decision-makers showed that this responsibility changed over time. Between 1940 and 1970, these women increasingly became more important in the decision-making process. Beginning in the 1940s as families became landowners, women increasingly voiced their opinions and made decisions "'cause, whereas we didn't own land or a house before the forties, we women just let the men make most of the decisions 'cause they was the one speaking with Mr. Brooks." However, "when some folks, like us, start to buy land and other property, we women was out in the field, driving the mule or tractor, selling eggs, milk, and butter just to help pay for the land and things." As the years passed, however, "the men realize that the women had a right to help decide some things 'cause we was working too." More important, "they start to ask us what we thought 'cause they didn't know whether we was going to keep working or quit if they didn't start asking how we felt 'bout some things."

Changes in the decision-making process not only resulted from men's recognition of women's work in the fields, but from a decrease in family size, technological innovations, and diversification in farming. These changes strengthened Brook Farm women's position within the family. "As the family got smaller and the children older, we could take jobs outside the home even though they did not pay much." Women's off-farm employment was aided by technology because electricity and electrical
household appliances helped reduce the amount of time spent completing housework. As a result, women had some available time, especially when mechanization and the production of staples other than cotton decreased the number of hours they worked in the fields during the late 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, women's decision-making power improved as their economic and social contributions became more visible in the community. Nevertheless, the sharing of the decision-making power was a gradual process that evolved over time. Between 1920-1950, community values in Brooks Farm were traditional in the sense that men were thought to be the decision-maker. But as families identified with the larger society through television, radio, newspapers, and the telephone, Brooks Farm women slowly eroded the idea that men were the only decision-makers.

It should be pointed out that in the Brooks Farm community, decision-making was associated with responsibilities and was affected by the sexual division of labor. Women and men made decisions concerning the tasks in which they were involved. For instance, since the farm woman primarily operated within the household, she, more than her spouse, determined what would exist in the home in terms of furniture and other household items. Women also made decisions relating to family meals, clothing, recreation and health care. The farm woman managed the home with little interference except when money had to be spent. "Whenever I had to buy something, I had to sit and talk with my husband as to whether we could really afford what I was wanting to buy or whether we should wait and use the money for something, like when hard times came."

Even though women were the ones who made sure that the children were
properly fed and clothed, "we could not decide on our own how the children was gone be raise or discipline 'cause it would take both of us to agree on raising the children so the children would know what we expect them to do." Together, the husband and wife determined the types of engagements or social functions their children would attend, the age they would begin to date, and the extent to which they would be expected to adhere to religious training. Other than discussing child rearing or discipline for the children and spending money, women made the decisions concerning household management.

On the other hand, the farm man, being primarily responsible for the farm operation, had at his discretion the right to determine what was not beneficial for the farm. The man decided which crops he would plant. He determined whether he would use fertilizers, rotate crops, and where and when to market the crop. The husband usually made these decisions without interference from the wife. Wives generally intervened when husbands wanted to spend money for a tractor, land, or automobile. Since women were expected to help pay for the property, men consulted their wives before making a purchase. Generally, women did not want the family to suffer because of the farm. As long as the family had some money left, husbands could engage in farming as they deemed necessary.

In responding to the question—did you and your spouse ever become joint decision-makers about everything that involved the family and farm?—women in the Brooks Farm community suggested a change in attitude occurred. Most women believed that the change occurred during the late 1950s, while some believed that the transition occurred later.
Each, however, suggested that the change in attitude toward decision-making was evident by 1970. According to the male and female respondents, men began consulting their wives not only about the purchase of farm equipment or transportation vehicles, but about marketing and crops and livestock production. Willie McWilliams explained:

My husband would now come to me and ask me how much cotton I thought he should plant since I wasn't gone be doing as much field work 'cause I had a job. He want to know whether I thought it was best to raise hogs or cows to sell. He even want to know whether I thought he should look 'round for different buyers for the crop.

Willie McWilliams' experience appeared to have been common among Brooks Farm women. Each of these women pointed out that their husbands began to ask their opinions even though they made the final decision.

Like the men, women suggested that they sought their husbands' opinions and solicited their support in making decisions. "When it came time to buy house appliances or furniture, I didn't want to just let him know that I want to spend money, but I want him to help me and go to town with me and help me pick out what I thought we needed." These were important developments within the family "'cause it felt like we was sharing and that we wasn't living in two worlds, with him deciding on farming and me on the house all by ourself." The changes that occurred, however, were typical of Brooks Farm because residents continued to adjust and to adopt a pattern of behavior conducive for progress.

The change in attitude evolved as families became more economically stable. This trend developed during the 1950s and continued as women
increasingly engaged in off-farm employment. The women in Brooks Farm suggested that their added income was the reason for the shared decision-making power. Therefore, they believed that their economic contribution to the family helped narrow the gap in the decision-making process. As women added money to the family's income, the need for the men to be the primary decision-maker slowly declined. Thus, Brooks Farm women began to acquire more power within the household, thereby earning more respect for their skills, abilities, and contributions.

During a time when most black farm families struggled to survive, 1920-1970, women in Brooks Farm were valuable assets to the family, farm, and community. They performed roles within and outside of the household that provided stability and order within the community and family. This was evident in the nourishment and support they provided which created strong community ties among residential families. Although they continued to perform historical and traditional roles, Brooks Farm women remained at the center of the family, farm, and community, without allowing themselves to become insignificant. They worked hard at being productive because they and their husbands wanted their children to inherit a farm and community committed to progress and human development. "If I am able to provide for my children a lifestyle that I never had," according to Mae Liza Williams, "then I do not mind the hard work." Williams' statement seemed to have summarized what most women in the Brooks Farm community felt about their responsibilities and roles. It was necessary for them to be economic contributors, community builders,
and decision-makers because women, after all, had much invested in the family, farm, and community. More important, these women's experiences were examples of the responsibilities farm women accepted in order to help the community function and survive.
Endnotes

The idea of this chapter is to show the variety of roles women played other than the traditional role of housemother, caring for the family. The effort is to show women's roles beyond family responsibilities. Women in the Brooks Farm community did not want to take full credit for the success that their families experienced. Each woman believed that her husband was as much responsible for the family and farm. But since they (women) had the added responsibilities of taking care of the children, house, and sick and elderly in the community, the women of Brooks Farm believed that they were the social and cultural strengths within the community because they tried to touch base with everyone in the community and tried to involve everyone in community functions in order to strengthen family and community bonds as well as to establish support networks or extended kinships.

2 Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

3 The family and community functioned more smoothly because women accepted the responsibilities of caring for the community and completed many chores to save the family money.

4 Support networks refer to the extended kinship arrangement that did not only include family members, but friends and neighbors as well.

5 Bernice Jones, personal interview, Greenwood, Mississippi, 18 August 1988. In this interview, Jones stated most of the women on Brooksy (short for Brooks Farm) spent a lot of their time praying and working. According to this respondent, the church and the home were primarily responsible for women's attitude toward prayer and work. Women were encouraged to work and were instructed to spend time praying for their family, home, and community. It was believed that prayer, along with their work, would improve the surroundings. Like Jones, the other thirty-nine women suggested that they spent a considerable amount of time praying. They believed and had been taught that prayer could change any situation, including family, farm, and community needs. For additional information on the importance of religion and faith and the role that they have played in black communities, especially in developing black women's attitudes toward work roles and community responsibilities, see Bert J. Lowenberg, Black Women in Nineteenth Century American Life: Their words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976); and Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women in White America: A Documentary History (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).


7 George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

9. Minnie Brown, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 5 June 1989. Brown's response to this question does not appear to be atypical because each of the women interviewed believed that she was important to the family, farm, and community. Each cited examples of the ways in which she had contributed to the progress and development of the community.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.


16. This conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. Like Curry, the majority of the women suggested that they worked diligently because they wanted to provide the best of care for their families. Additional information demonstrating ways in which Brooks Farm women's experience paralleled those of black farm women of the past can be found in Karen Sachs and Dorothy Remy, eds., My Troubles Are Going to Have Trouble with Me (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984); Bert J. Lowenberg, Black Women in Nineteenth Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976); Herbert Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976); Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg, The Afro-American Women Struggles and Images (Port Washington, NY: National University Publications, 1978); Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York: Bantam Books, 1985); Dorothy Sterling, We Are Your Sisters (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1984); and Jean E. Friedman and William G. Shade, Our American Sisters (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976).


18. Freddie Wiley, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 11 June 1989. It appeared that Brooks Farm women did not believe that their roles and responsibilities were just another job. They believed in the roles they performed and felt that they were important to community and family development. As a result, the women in the Brooks Farm community, unlike historical farm women, recognized the importance of their work.

19 Fannie Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 12 July 1989. Each of the women suggested that she expected to be treated with respect, even though her spouse usually received the most recognition for providing for the family and farm.

20 Community values refer to the moral and religious standards adopted by the community. The church established these standards, which primarily taught that self-help was essential in developing the community. Emphasis placed upon male leadership and domination, as well as the man being head of the household, caused men to be thought of as the important ones in the community. Because they were head of the farm or usually worked a job that earned a steady income, the tendency was for them to be perceived as important even though women supplied the labor and worked in the fields as much as they did, while also finding time to act upon other responsibilities.

21 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from the interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

22 Ibid.


24 Edna R. Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.


26 Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

27 Ibid.

28 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from the interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. See also C. Bescher-Donnelly and

29 Fannie Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 12 July 1989. The idea that women should be acknowledged for their farm and household work was espoused by Julia Spruill and Margaret J. Hagwood Spruill's historical book, Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies, dispelled the belief of farm women's inferiority and lack of importance on the farm and within the households. By describing women's daily experiences, Spruill concluded that Southern women were very active and that they played important roles in the family (Julia Spruill and Margaret J. Hagwood, Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938). For additional information concerning the idea that women should be acknowledged for their work, see Peter Rossi, "Measuring Household Social Standing," Social Science Research 3 (September 1975):169-190; Cornelia Butler Flora, "Farm Women, Farming Systems, and Agricultural Structure Suggestions for Scholarship," The Rural Sociologist 1 (June 1974):383-386; Nona Glazer-Mablin, "Housework," Signs 1 (April 1973):905-932; and Allyson Sherman Grossman, "Women in Domestic Work: Yesterday and Today," Labor Review 3 (August 1980):1-21.

30 Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.


32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from the interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

35 Ibid. The concept of farm women as economic contributors has created debate among scholars interested in this idea. Among the articles that have appeared, Murray Straus, prior to the 1960s, wrote the most controversial one. In "The Role of the Wife in the Settlement of the Columbia Basin Project," Straus argued that women's economic contribution to the farm did not contribute to the success of the farm. According to the author, a farm can only be successful if the wife played supportive and complementary roles. Because most farms were moderately successful, the wife, as pointed out by Straus, was not an economic contributor, but a nurturer and supporter. Even though Straus's conclusions were drawn from a study of 210 families in an agricultural settlement, the implications were far reaching. If his findings were true for these 210 families, then the same or similar conclusions could have been accepted
about all of America's farm families. However, few people bought his argument because scholars continued to research this concept. Some scholars, on the other hand, have suggested that women contributed economically to the family. This was evident in the Brooks Farm community as women provided their families with some economic assistance. Each woman in the Brooks Farm community suggested that she contributed financially to the family.

36 Many of the makeshift businesses, such as selling butter, eggs, vegetable produce, and taking in laundry, would not be as important during the 1960s as they were prior to 1950.

37 Each of the residents produced as much food as possible and made many of their house furnishings and appliances in order to avoid spending money on items that could be produced on the farm. See Ester Boseup, Women's Role in Economic Development (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970).


40 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. See also Toni Cadel, The Black Woman (New York: New American Library, 1970).

41 Margaret Ball, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.


43 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. See also Ruth Atler, The Value of Women in the Production of Cotton (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1931); Georgia Clark-Binnie, Wheat and Women (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); Dee A. Brown, The Female Farmers: Women of the Old West (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); and Dorothy K. Gray, Women of the West (Milbrae, CA: Les Femmes, 1976).

44 Willie Curry, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 May 1987.

45 Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April
Prior to 1945, the majority of the families farmed a small number of acres, approximately 10-25 acres. With a large number of children as most families had, it was possible to plant and harvest the crop on time. With laborers, a family was able to produce more.


Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. For a discussion of work status and occupation, see Milton C. Coughenour and Louis Swanson, "Work Statuses and Occupations of Men and Women in Farm Families and the Structure of Farms," *Rural Sociology* 48(1)(1979):23-43.

Maxine Johnson, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 May 1988. A comparison of Brooks Farm women can be made with women in other communities. For a discussion, see Masuma Downie and Christina H. Gladman, "Florida Farm Wives: They Help the Family Farm Survive," (Food and Resource Economics Department, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1981).

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.


Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.


60 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. For additional analyses of the work roles of farm and rural women, see A. R. Lamier, "Women in the Rural Areas," Political Science Annual 375 (January 1971):115-123. For a comparison and contrast, see Leslie Lilly, "Women and Work in Appalachia: The Waging War," Human Services and the Rural Environment 1(1)(1963):40-45.


62 Ibid. See also S. Berk, Women and Household Labor (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980). Examples of roles that both the black and white women performed to contribute economically can be found in Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).
Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.


Carrie Gordon, personal interview, Cleveland, Mississippi. An analysis of the roles black women performed can be found in Molly C. Dougherty, Becoming a Woman in Rural Black Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978); Carl W. Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. Research on technology and its impact on farm women has sparked debate. Some scholars argued that it decreased women's power within the household, while others suggest that women's power increased. Elizabeth Baker's work was an example of this kind of research pertaining to farm women. In Technology and Women Work, Baker showed how technology significantly changed women's lives. According to the author, farm women's responsibilities decreased as technology and other innovations became more available. Apparently, the farm women's work became less valuable to the family as technology replaced women's work. Therefore, as the author argued, women's bargaining power decreased because they no longer had a long list of chores to perform. The more tasks the women performed, the more power she possessed. As pointed out in Chapter Eight, "Women on the Farm," technological transformations worked to women's disadvantage because some of the tasks that they used to take pride in completing, which also caused them to have more value to the family, were being accomplished by machinery. In contrast to Baker's findings, information compiled from the interviews revealed that women in the Brooks Farm community obtained more power due to technological advances. As the chores at home diminished, many of Brooks Farm women acquired employment outside of the home. It appeared that technological improvements did not only lessen the drudgeries of ironing, cooking, washing, and cleaning, but they permitted women to become more involved in the community.
Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from the interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. Additional research also revealed that farm women made economic contributions to the family. Priscilla Salant's "Farm women: Contribution to Farm and Family," was typical of the research analyzing farm women and off-farm employment. In an analysis of fifty percent or more of the farm women in the Sand Clay Hills of Mississippi and Tennessee, Salant analyzed the economic contribution of farm women employed outside of the home. She found that the most common off-farm occupations included nursing, teaching, secretarial, and production work. Thus, Salant concluded that farm women made significant contributions to the household income. Those who reported off-farm income averaged over $7,500 in earnings. She also found that farm women between the ages of 35 and 54 tended to work outside the home more frequently than either younger or older women, and were most likely to join the labor force after their children had begun school. Within the black population, however, farm women have always worked outside of the home, from the cotton fields and the big house during slavery to service, factory, and farming jobs in the twentieth century. Brooks Farm women began working outside the home at an early age. By age twenty-two, the majority of the females had married, borne children, and had held jobs outside of the home. Because black farm families could not afford for the woman to be a housewife only, black farm women often joined their husbands as day laborers before many of them became landowners. As landowners, they continued to work outside the home in the cotton fields, domestic service, and others. For more information, see Priscilla Salant, Farm Women: Contribution to Farm and Family (Washington, D.C.: USDA Economic Research Service in Cooperation with Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Experiment Station, 1983), 216 pp. For additional information on women's role as economic contributor, see Masuma Downie and Christina H. Gladwin, "Florida Farm Wives: They Help the Family Survive," Food and Resource Economics Department, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1981); Seena Kohl, Working Together: Women and Family in Southwestern Saskatchewan (Montreal: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1976); Robert W. Smuts, Women and Work in America (New York: Schocken Boos, 1971); Wallace E. Huffman, "The Value of the Production Time of Farm Wives: Iowa, North Carolina, and Oklahoma," American Journal of Agricultural Economics 58 (December 1969):836-841; James A. Sweet, "The Employment of Rural Farm Wives," Rural Sociology 37(4)(1985):553-577; and Janet Bokemeier, Carolyn Sachs, and Verna Keith, "Labor Force Participation of Metropolitan, Nonmetropolitan, and Farm Women: A Comparative Study," Rural Sociology 4(48):515-539; and Karen Anderson, Wartime Women (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1979).

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.
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community.

75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.


79 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.

85 Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

86 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.

89 Carrie Gordon, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 18 August 1987.
90 Ibid.
92 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.
George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. Scholars, examining decision-making within farm families, found that power sharing within the household, was based upon income. Eugene A. Wilkening, analyzing the class of people most affected by the decision-making power, found that joint decision-making in farm families was most prevalent in medium income farm families. For low income farm families, the woman was less likely to participate in the farm decisions. In the Brooks Farm community, decision-making was the same across economic class. Wives of non-landowners participated in the decision-making process similar to those who owned land. Eugene A. Wilkening, "Joint Decision-making in Farm Families as a Function of Status and Role," American Sociological Review 23 (April 1958):187-192. For additional information on the decision-making process within farm families, see Eugene A. Wilkening and Lakshmi K. Bharadava, "Dimensions of Aspirations, Work Roles, and Decision-making Among Farm Households and Wives in Wisconsin," Journal of Marriage and Family 29 (November 1976):703-711; Barbara J. Sawer, "Predictors of Farm Wife's Involvement

107 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

108 Ibid.


110 Mary Sargent, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

111 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

120 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

121 Ibid.

122 Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

123 Ibid.
Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Women in the Brooks Farm community contend that they spent their money wisely, and as a result, their actions indicated that they too could be decision-makers.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.
CHAPTER V. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH AND SCHOOL IN THE BROOKS FARM COMMUNITY

The rural school and church in the Brooks Farm community were neighborhood and community centers. Their facilities were not only planned for classroom and laboratory use, but also acted as centers for community meetings and entertainment. Like the family, the church and school occupied much prominence because their programs and activities complemented the teachings of the home and established relations between the school, church, and family for community development. Although parents generally wanted their children to learn the basic fundamentals of education and religion, they were more concerned that "the church and school teach children skills that improve community life." Thus, the school and church participated in community development.

The church and school educated the communicants to be active participants in the community and established cultural norms in Brooks Farm typical for community advancement. The influence of the church, however, extended far beyond that of the school. The role of the church was fundamental to the social, economic, and political life of the community. Thus, the church will receive extended treatment in this chapter.

Patterns of support for the church and the school revealed the social structure of the Brooks Farm community. Their governing boards revealed the structure of leadership, while the location of the buildings and the pattern of regular attendance showed the high degree of community
support they enjoyed. The church and the school were the institutional embodiments of the community's aspirations for collective growth and individual achievement.

Scholars examining the significance of the church and school in black rural communities have found that these institutions were not only important factors in rural progress, but influential in the vitality of rural community life. Many of the studies suggested that the church has been, and continues to be, the outstanding social institution in the black community. Its function was not only to inspire its communicants, but to take the lead in calling for progress and change. Among rural blacks, scholars further believed that the church was the only institution that provided an effective organization, an approved and tolerated place for social activities, a forum for expression on issues, an outlet for repressed feelings, and a plan for social living.

During the time period under study, 1920-1970, research on black churches in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta showed how the church evolved into a complex institution, meeting a wide variety of needs. The church became the conserver of morals, a strengthener of family life, an advocate for development and improvement, and the final authority on what was good and right.

The school performed a similar role to that of the church. Scholars believed that the black country school was an effective institution which also preserved morals and taught skills that were essential for improving the community. Students were taught good health practices, sanitation, carpentry, masonry, and were given lessons on community help; that is,
assisting community members in time of need. Residents in Brooks Farm favored a practical education because most black farm communities between 1920 and 1950 were more concerned about farming than traditional academic education. Therefore, the country school taught manual skills. Students were taught community enhancement skills, thriftiness, and the importance of hard work. Like the church, traditional rural black schools were owned and controlled by the community and, therefore, became an effective institution in community development.

Scholars have sharply criticized the black country school. While some researchers have admitted that the country schools generally provided sound instruction, others have suggested that the schools were too lax and failed to provide more than a rudimentary education. Between 1920 and 1950, community values dictated the kind of education offered in Brooks Farm. The community's rural character and the limits that segregation posed to black occupational advancement focused the community's attention on the short-term goal of preserving the existing social and economic system. It was one that needed skilled farmers more than it needed doctors, lawyers, and college professors.

Establishing and maintaining the church and the school gave Brooks Farm residents a feeling of pride and independence. Steve Hearn explained:

Being able to do things for ourselves help us realize that we could make it as long as we stuck together. Out here we want the children to see that they was coming from a place where folks did things for themselves and where folks took pride in their work and community. We taught ourselves and then our children how to create, build, and use what they had to help themselves.
As the need for schools and churches persisted, the culture of "doing things for oneself" became dominant as Brooks Farm residents adapted to this social need and others in order to stabilize and encourage growth within their community. Between 1920-1960, black self-help led to the establishment of churches and schools even though they were eventually affected by out-migration, funding, and changes in the farm economy. Nevertheless, the community's pride in these institutions persisted, despite changes in the social and economic character of the community.

The establishment of churches and schools grew out of both individual and community initiatives. Between 1920-1960, four schools and five churches were founded. The church came first and the school followed. By 1920, East Mount Olive Baptist Church and Palestine Church of God in Christ were constructed with funds donated by Rev. James Thomas for East Mount Olive and Elder Robert Smith of Palenstine Church. Additional funding came from participating members and from P. H. Brooks who contributed money and deeded the land on which the churches were built. With churches constructed for worshipping, residents turned their attention to the need of education. By 1923, the Spruill School had been established. Like the churches, Spruill was constructed with funds donated by Brooks Farm residents. By the end of the 1920s, 1929-1930, another school, Rosenwald School, had been constructed, with the aid of Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Fund that donated money for building materials and other supplies in impoverished communities.

The fact that residents in Brooks Farm needed assistance in establishing educational and religious institutions revealed weakness in
the farm economy. In the 1920s, laborers worked for as little as $.20 a day. For tenants and landowners in the community, returns were not much better because the price of cotton was low and debts weighed heavily against profits. Most of the money that residents had during the 1920s and 1930s was used for household expenses.

Despite meager economic resources in the 1920s, institutional development in the Brooks Farm community continued through the 1950s. In the early 1930s, more churches and schools appeared. Another Rosenwald School was built, while P. H. Brooks contributed funds and building supplies for the construction of his first school, Brooks School, in 1932. Later, the Rev. William James and supporting members established the first Methodist Church in the Brooks Farm community. By the 1940s, four schools, grades first through eighth, except for Brooks which offered twelve years of schooling during the 1950s, had been built. Although attendance continued to increase, no new buildings were constructed during the 1940s. By the time attendance had peaked in the early 1950s, the county voted to provide for the education of blacks and the community no longer needed to provide its own buildings.

When the county provided for the educational training of blacks in the Brooks Farm community, its services came almost a century late. Revisions to the Mississippi State Constitution in 1868 made provisions for black education. Although schools were to be separate, blacks were to receive a public education, supported by the state. Their tax dollars were to be matched by the state, while the state was supposed to provide the buildings, school supplies, and teachers. In practice, however,
this did not happen because rural communities, like Brooks Farm, did not receive the financial support that the state was to provide from the income it received from poll taxes, interest on the Chickasaw School fund, the Per-Capital Fund, and property taxes. However, in the urban community, the state provided some assistance. But it continued to ignore the needs of black rural children. Whites complained that taxpayers’ money should not be spent on black education. However, research showed that blacks paid twice the amount of taxes whites paid for education, even though state officials funneled the funds to the white schools. Because the state did not support black schools, black students studied under the most adverse conditions with poor facilities and training supplies for textbooks and overcrowding. Under these conditions, it was impossible for students in the Brooks Farm community to receive a diverse education. More important, a lack of financial support for rural schools meant that people living in rural areas would have to create, fund, and solicit support for their own schools.

Due to alarming rates of poverty in Mississippi in the first half of the twentieth century, blacks sought additional assistance in education from other sources. In addition to the Rosenwald fund, black education throughout Mississippi was supported by the Jeanes Fund and Slater Fund. These funds were used to build schoolhouses and to pay Jeanes teachers to supervise elementary schools in black rural communities. The Jeanes teachers were black elementary teachers, employed on the county level. They were not visible in the Brooks Farm community. In order to complement efforts initiated by wealthy philanthropists,
residents in the Brooks Farm community raised money through bake sales and rallies.\textsuperscript{37} Parents also consented to pay a $1.00 fee for each child attending the schools.\textsuperscript{38} In some instances, lumber and other necessary equipment were donated to construct school buildings.\textsuperscript{39}

The need to support schools meant less money to support churches. Between 1920 and 1960, funding for churches was derived in similar fashion.\textsuperscript{40} Because funds tended to be short, the church depended on pledges in order to remain in operation.\textsuperscript{41} In the East Mount Olive and Merry Grove Baptist churches, for example, church members agreed to pledge a certain amount of their income. For instances, members of East Mount Olive pledged to pay $.50 once a month in the 1920s and continued to pay this amount until the Great Depression when a special effort to raise money was needed to keep the church operating.\textsuperscript{42} As the economy improved during the 1950 decade, church members increased their giving to $.65 monthly for each member.\textsuperscript{43} In the 1940s, each member was donating $.75 per month.\textsuperscript{44} With a membership of more than seventy-five families in the 1950s, the East Mount Olive church survived by each member donating $1.50 per month.\textsuperscript{45} By the 1960s, the monetary contributions increased to $2.00 a month.\textsuperscript{46} In some instances where church members did not have cash readily available for church use, some members set aside a portion of their crop or livestock and donated a percentage of the sale to church.\textsuperscript{47}

The financial support evident at Merry Grove Baptist Church also provided some additional insight into ways churches in the Brooks Farm community took in money. Since most of the members had incomes similar to members of the East Mount Olive Church, Merry Grove raised crops on
its land to earn some income. When the land was not farmed by members, the board voted to rent the acres either to a member or interested persons. \(^{48}\) Merry Grove also raised funds during holidays. On New Year's, Easter, Mother's and Father's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, the church invited not only church members, but others as well "to come out to have a good time, eating, and enjoying the singing and preaching." \(^{49}\) Although large sums of money were not raised, enough was given so that church programs could continue. \(^{50}\) Programs such as Pastor's Anniversary and Building Fund also raised money. \(^{51}\) In fact, each board in the church had yearly programs. \(^{52}\) Throughout the year, the mother, usher, deacon, choir, trustee, and home mission boards were required to organize a fund raiser. \(^{53}\)

Realizing that community members could not travel great distances, churches and schools were placed at sites "where people could come out and take part without having too many problems." \(^{54}\) Schools and churches, constructed between 1920-1955, were built along the Brooks road, the main road built through the center of the community. The Brooks road extended the complete distance of the community from east to west. The Rosenwald schools, the East Mount Olive Baptist Church, and Palenstine Church of God and Christ were located at the western end of Brooks Road. The Brooks School and the Smith Methodist Church were established at the center (or midway the community), while the Spruill School, New Light, and Morning Star Churches were erected at the extreme eastern end of the community. Merry Grove Baptist Church, which also served as a school during weekdays, was
While the schools were generally attended by children in the Brooks Farm community, the churches frequently held individuals from neighboring communities.

The strategic location of churches and schools showed that residents began to think early of ways to develop the community and the individuals who were to dwell within it. "With the schools and churches being built where they was, we could keep eyes on each other, making sure that children at least spent some days in schools and that the grown folks would spend some time at the church." For many of Brooks Farm residents who did not grow up in the community, but who lived on plantations as children in other communities, the freedom to attend church and school was greatly appreciated because they had been taken from school and church meetings by their landlords to work in the fields. When it became evident that life on the plantations was not going to improve, many "pick up their families and left and some move right here to Brooks Farm, where they had heard that Mr. Brooks try to help colored folk and treat them fair."

Brooks Farm residents seriously considered the location of their institutions. According to Steve Hearn, "We built the schools and churches at points where nobody would have a excuse for not going to school or church." "We want people to learn how to live better," Edward Scott explained, "therefore, we encourage people to go out to the class meetings and the church meetings so that the teaching would help them live better in the home, church, and community." "Wanting to be different from folks on plantations," Earnest McWilliams explained,
"'cause the people on Brooksy to think about how they could develop the community and the people at the same time."62 Therefore, "they built schools and churches at different places to encourage people to attend all the programs and services and activities."63 The erection of schools and churches at various locations proved to have been an effective strategy since the community's infrastructure had not been fully developed.64

Transportation and transporting facilities helped determine the location and the number of schools and churches established in the Brooks Farm community between 1920 and 1950. In the early years of the community, the roads were dirt roads and were often too muddy when it rained and too dusty when they dried. Therefore, Brooks Farm residents constructed churches and schools close to the homes.65 "Nobody want to get dirty or wet when they was going to church and the children didn't like being dusty neither."66 It was not until gravel was placed on the roads in the 1940s that Brooks Farm residents "felt comfortable traveling to churches in other sections of the community 'cause gravel kept the roads from being so dusty and it help the people keep their clothes clean."67

Churches and schools were constructed at several locations because residents of Brooks Farm did not have adequate transportation. Between 1920-1950, the wagon, hitched to mules or horses, was the only means of transportation that residents in the community could afford other than walking.68 According to George Turner, "Everybody walk where they need to go except for going to town when you had to bring back lot of
supplies; the children and teachers walk to school and everybody walk to
church."69 Unless we got bad weather," West Sargeant explained, "we all
walk and in the winter folks didn't move 'round much 'cause of the cold
and if they had to, they took the horse 'cause they was rest and had not
been working like they had in the summer."70 During the winter,
residents did not mind walking because the weather was warm, averaging
forty-five degrees, with no snow or ice.71 Walking and horse-driven
wagons remained the dominant form of transportation in the Brooks Farm
community until the automobile was widely purchased in the 1940s.72

Brooks Farm members tried to overcome their transportation
difficulties. In the 1930s, the community threw its support behind Moses
Scott, whose idea was to buy a bus that could be used by the community.
Since the Scotts were leaders of the community, many trusted M. Scott's
judgment and, therefore, supported his decision.73 The primary use of
the bus was to ensure that "every child had a way to attend school."74
Since school attendance was expected, "we did not want parents or
children making excuses for not showing up at the school."75 In addition
to transporting the children to school, the bus was used for other
community functions as well. It generally transported individuals to
church on Sundays and was used for community trips to other schools,
churches, and community activities.76 The need for the community bus
became less important as Brooks Farm residents purchased automobiles.77
With the development of a state-wide educational program, the
transporting of children to the public school became the state's
responsibility.78 Thus, the location of schools and churches ceased to
be important issues after the 1950s.

The Brooks Farm community devoted much of its scarce resources to caring for its schools and churches. Between 1920-1950, the schools were a one-room country school. This was true in most black communities. In all the schools, according to the residents of the community, the windows were arranged so light could enter the room at the left of the pupils. The school relied on natural light until electricity was installed in the 1950s. To control the amount of sunlight, the women made shades that could be raised from the bottom or lowered from the top.

The physical condition of churches in the Brooks Farm community was similar to the schools. Churches were frame buildings, well-built, painted, cleaned, and in good repair. Merry Grove and East Mount Olive had an additional room which was used for educational purposes. Each of the four churches had land that was used for burial and recreational activities. Over time, churches in the Brooks Farm community were improved tremendously. By the mid-1960s, churches in this community were remodeled, with more room, better seats, and floors. Cracks were repaired. Bathrooms and running water were added in the 1970s.

The community took pride in their schools and churches. All residents, especially the children, were encouraged to plant trees and flowers around the buildings. The female students were responsible for decorating the walls, while the males kept the lawn cleaned and mowed. The School Board encouraged Brooks Farm's teachers to teach students and community members to appreciate the
natural environment. The community provided flowers, shrubs, and trees for the school and church grounds. The schools were constructed on grounds where good drainage existed. Each school was built near inadequate water supply where wells, streams, and risks were located. According to Edward Scott, a former School Board member, "it was important to be near water so clean water could be brought in for the children to wash their hands 'fore they ate." More important, "you need fresh drinking water and sometime, the floor and windows had to be wash, so you need plenty of water to keep things clean." It was also important to be near a water supply because "the plants need some water, and in case a fire broke out in the school, you need water to keep the school from burning down."

To ensure that both the church and school operated smoothly, each created governing boards that were elected and were authorized to oversee the functions of the church and school. Such a creation provided Brooks Farm residents, especially the men, an opportunity to participate in democracy and the chance to manage an institution, other than the home. Under the church laws, each adult member would have the opportunity to nominate and vote on individuals for positions. In the case of the deacons, they voted whether to accept an individual as a deacon. This was an important practice because it gave members choices, an important right in democratic principles. The church had bylaws which were established by the national headquarters and passed on to churches that agreed to follow the guidelines specified by the denominational headquarters. The bylaws granted the congregation mass
participation in church affairs.  

For the church, the Sunday School Board was the overseer. In Brooks Farm, each of the six churches had its own board. The Sunday School Board in Brooks Farm operated quite similar to other church boards adhering to denominational bylaws. For example, the behavior of Sunday School boards in Brooks Farm highly resembled the activities of church boards described by Elizabeth Rauh Bethel in *Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community*. In the Brooks Farm community, as it was in Promiseland, South Carolina, officers and Sunday School teachers were elected to the board by the adult membership. The Sunday School superintendent was usually a man who conducted board meetings. He also directed regular church services and was responsible for the basic organizational matters of church business. The board secretary, typically male, kept minutes of all official meetings and maintained church records. The position of secretary required a literate person who could keep accurate written records of all church business and events. The jobs of the superintendent and secretary overlapped even though they were separate and were held by different individuals. Other offices of the Sunday School Board included an assistant superintendent, treasurer, and librarian, responsible for ordering Sunday School lessons, hymnal books, and church Bibles. Persons, occupying these offices, were primarily responsible for the church's administrative work. Officeholders rarely initiated discussions of issues, neither did they become involved in issue-related debates. If there was a conflict, the church body had the right to raise questions and to request
the presence of the minister and members to discuss solutions to problems. 104

Sunday School teachers, like board members, were elected to their positions by popular vote. They were usually the male school teachers, landowners, or individuals who appeared to have known the scriptures and were capable of interpreting them. 105 The male teachers taught all the Sunday School classes except the young children who were typically taught by the female teachers. 106 Thus, the positions held by teachers and board officers were a reflection of their prestige and status in the church congregation and community. 107 Teachers met regularly with the board to discuss the lessons for the coming Sunday. The board did not function as an oligarchy. 108 Positions were announced, issues debated, and in the end solutions and decisions were reached through consensus. 109 The method was an effective one that prevented divisions within the leadership structure. None of those interviewed recalled any decline in church membership due to dissension. Church members generally accepted decisions made by the leadership. 110

The Sunday School Board also exercised considerable control over the Sunday School teachers and members' behavior. The Board's control was occasionally informal and was usually imposed upon negligent teachers or church members. 111 George Turner explained:

Sometime during Sunday School a Board member would get up and 'nounce 'bout 'tending and how it was important for people to come out to learn and fellowship. The head man would be alway fussing at us 'bout doing the thing that the Bible told us to do; so the Board tried to guide people so they wouldn't miss out on they blessings by not acting right and doing the right thing. 112
The Board was serious in the discipline of Sunday School teachers, officers, and members, and the fact that individuals submitted themselves to interrogation and even to expulsion was an index of the Board's disciplinary power within the church and community. The Board promoted the social morality of the community, while the preacher concentrated on the spiritual morality.

Within the educational system, the School Board operated similarly to the Sunday School Board. The educational level of the Board varied. The School Board was comprised of individuals who had completed and who had not finished high school. However, the ones who had finished high school were expected to take the lead in establishing educational standards within the community. The Board members between 1920-1950 were primarily members of the first and second generations. The School Board was comprised of community members who were primarily landowners and individuals who knew the importance of reading, writing, adding and subtracting, and manual skills for community development. Elected by popular vote, the School Board had the power to hire and fire teachers. The Board established standards and expected teachers, parents, and students to achieve them. Men dominated the Board, while women attended the parent-teacher meetings in larger numbers. School Board members monitored attendance and curriculum development and organized activities to improve the schools and to pay teachers' salaries.

The Sunday School Board and School Board were not the only boards that residents of the Brooks Farm community joined in order to practice grassroots democracy. Every adult member of the community could be a
part of the School Board's parent-teacher organization. They could join the decoration, social, fund-raising, or repair committees. The official positions of president, vice-president, secretary, assistant secretary, reporter, and treasurer were rotated, with the opportunity available for everyone to hold an office.124

Within the church, also women and men were members of various boards. Men were usually members of the Deacons and Trustee Boards, while women joined the Mother and Home Mission Boards. Both men and women were members of the Usher, Choir, and Pastor Aid Society.125 Each of these boards had responsibilities primarily associated with the operation of the church.126 Women outnumbered men on each board in which both women and men were members.127 Records of board meetings at the Merry Grove Church showed that between 1940 and 1970, women outnumbered men two to one. In 1940, women numbered 25 to 13; in 1950, they were 28 to 15; 27 to 18 in 1960; and by 1970, 25 women and 16 men acted as board members.128 The boards' primary functions were to raise money and to recommend ways in which church and school organizations could help improve community and church life.129 Money was especially provided for community functions such as picnics, dinners, and donations to needy families.130

Indeed, the church and school encouraged children and adults to participate in community affairs. Sermons focused on civic responsibilities, leadership development, and community improvement skills.131 For example, Rev. Fox McCann, pastor of Merry Grove and East Mount Olive, "preached that husbands and wives were responsible for their
behavior and the conduct of their children."\textsuperscript{132} Women and men were encouraged to live by the Bible, "keeping themselves and their children from sin."\textsuperscript{133} According to some residents, "the preacher always preach to us 'bout being obedience and moral 'cause it was important for spiritual growth."\textsuperscript{134} Therefore, as Freddie Wiley pointed out, "people 'round here believed that if they shunned fornication, adultery, drunkenness, lying, stealing, killing, and all manners of wrong doing that the community and the people would get better 'cause God would bless our effort."\textsuperscript{135} Hard work, thriftiness, love, and sharing were emphasized within the church because "if the people believe that these was important values, then everyone would work to make sure that the community survived."\textsuperscript{136} "But this encouragement had to come from the church so that the people would believe that this was what God want for us."\textsuperscript{137} Thus, it appeared that Brooks Farm residents tried to live a Godly life so that their community would prosper through their work, physically, economically, and spiritually, and through God's blessings.\textsuperscript{138} Consequently, the church's teachings became a strategy for community development and improvement. Since God, to the residents of this community, favored improvement, Brooks Farm residents worked to improve themselves and the community.\textsuperscript{139} "How could we not do better when the Bible has told us that all things is possible if we believe, and we did."\textsuperscript{140} Therefore, "everybody worked hard, knowing things was going to get better."\textsuperscript{141} The hope that existed in this community was the foundation on which many aspirations were built. Even though they struggled, they continued to believe that life was going "to get
The education that Brooks Farm youth received in the school was designed to complement the teachings of the church. Included in the curriculum were courses on agriculture and home economics. Boys were primarily instructed in farming, learning the techniques of growing crops and raising livestock. Girls, on the other hand, were taught homemaking skills, and both sexes were instructed in reading, math, and writing. Boys received additional training in carpentry, bricklaying, household and mechanical repair. These were courses that the School Board, teachers, and parents believed were important for youth in the Brooks Farm community to learn, "since the community was going to need young people to keep it going." The courses were important to the economic and social development of the community. They suggest self-sufficiency, a community that contains a balanced variety of necessary skills and expects little development from immigration into the community. This community was small and, therefore, expected limited contact with the larger region or national market. Therefore, it was important that the community be self-reliant.

More important, however, than the course work that children received from the community's schools were the instructions on conduct, morality, and values. At the school, the first minutes of class began with a song, scripture, and prayer led by the students. These activities were followed by short talks on religion, behavior, and work habits. Children were told "that if they were obedient and served God, they life and health would not only prosper, but would be lengthen."
was encourage," according to Irene Scott, "to learn all they could in the school 'cause they was going to take over and become the leader of the church, school, and community."\textsuperscript{150}

Although the community and School Board were primarily concerned that children be taught basic skills, they were more concerned that teachers "fitted into the community" and possessed the type of attitude and behavior necessary in providing youth with community enhancement skills.\textsuperscript{151} The general expectation of the Board and community showed the seriousness of their concern for rural training and development as teachers were expected to know the interests and ways of farm people, their problems, new inventions relating to farming, and what they meant for the farm family.\textsuperscript{152} Teachers were expected to help introduce farm families into rural life by providing them with information on changes in the rural community such as improvement in health and medical care, food and nutrition, and housing and sanitation.\textsuperscript{153} Teachers had to learn about farm neighborhoods, farm groups, and farm communities, and how to relate the school to life in the community.\textsuperscript{154} In general, the community and School Board expected the teachers to make the school an adequate place of social organization. Because the processes learned in school were quite different from those outside the classroom, teachers were to encourage group activities in the school programs so that students would be prepared for group participation in their adult and community life.\textsuperscript{155} School clubs, such as the nature and sewing clubs, emphasized group participation as students were grouped into teams to complete class projects on nature and garment designing.\textsuperscript{156} This was important since
residents were expected to work together in community functions. The idea was to teach children how to get along with others.

Since it was important in the Brooks Farm community that close working relationships between the community and school be established, teachers and the School Board developed a unique plan of adult education along with its elementary and high school instructions. Parents were provided with instructions ranging from baby care to farm management. Men and women followed separate classes and discussions based upon their interest. Women mostly received lessons in home economics, while men were trained in vocational agriculture where they were provided with instructions in plant and animal care, fertilizing, pest and weed control, poultry breeding, and farm machinery. Since many of the teachers were college graduates from Hampton, Alcorn, or Tuskegee, parents within the community believed that they could also learn from these teachers. Therefore, many visited the classrooms, especially during the winter sessions.

Adults were often invited into the school to demonstrate home and farm skills and community needs. "The women," according to Minnie Brown, "was invite to the school to talk about cooking, cleaning, and household production and things, like taking care of the children, the old, and the needy, that women could do in the community to help make it a better place to live." In addition, Jodie Hearn and other men were "invited in to talk about farming and repair and building skills that boys need to know so that things wouldn't become run down in the community." The instructions that Brooks Farm residents provided in
the schools reinforced the training that teachers provided within the classroom. The association of the school and the community, nevertheless, tied the family to the school, thus reinforcing the idea of community involvement and development.

In order to ensure that teachers taught desired courses, certain incentives were provided. These tended to tie the teachers to the community. First of all, teachers were provided a monetary salary and were sometimes given household items and farm produce as appreciation gifts. Secondly, teachers were given some control within the school, deciding what needed to have been taught, in addition to what the community desired, and the manner in which it would be discussed. Finally, the instructors were provided with facilities that made them a part of the Brooks Farm community. A home was constructed with donations from P. H. Brooks for teachers to live in while they taught in the community or until they were able to purchase land and build their own home.

In order to encourage participation in the community programs between 1920 and 1960, the Sunday School Board and the Church Board were authorized to monitor attendance to school programs and church services. It was the School Board's responsibility to see that children attended classes, especially around planting and harvesting seasons. Children in this community attended school three to six months yearly. The school term was divided into two sections. Children attended school from January to April and from October to December. Because their families depended on them for labor, many school-age
children worked during the spring, summer, and fall, with the School Board and teachers using their authority to persuade parents to send children to school during the winter school term. Between 1920 and 1950, before the institution of a county- and state-funded educational system for blacks in Mississippi, eight years of schooling were required for a high school graduation certificate. In the Brooks Farm community, parents, teachers and the School Board worked together to ensure that future leaders of the community had at least three to five years of education, even though some children did not complete high school.

School records for Brooks, Spruill, and the two Rosenwald schools showed that schools in the Brooks Farm community were well-attended. The Biennial Reports showed a steady increase in school enrollment between 1920 and 1950. The sex ratio was almost even, with girls slightly outnumbering boys. During the winter months, parents often visited the school, especially to show their support and appreciation to children for organizing and presenting Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas programs. Parents wanted their children to know that their efforts and ideas were supported. More important, parents realized that it was important to convince black children that they could achieve goals. Much of the support and reinforcement that children received in the Brooks Farm community was designed to make them strong, confident, and independent. These were characteristics that black children in Mississippi's rural society needed in order to determine their self-worth.
It was also important to the Sunday School Board that church members attend worshipping services and other church activities. The Board regularly monitored attendance by calling roll during Sunday School. Noticeably absent persons were paid a visit by members of the Board who expected an acceptable explanation concerning their lack of attendance. To be sure, the Board could not force an individual to attend church, but its scrutiny caused community members to be concerned about their attendance. Records of the Merry Grove Baptist Church showed that Sunday School, prayer meeting, and Bible class were regularly attended, with the membership increasing by 10 to 15 persons during a given year. Decreases also occurred. A decline in attendance for both the school and church did not mean that families were unhappy with school and church programs. It usually meant that the community had experienced "quite a few deaths" or that people were leaving, especially youthful individuals born after 1950. The church roll was dominated by children who, after reaching their teenage years or finishing high school, left for jobs in the city. Some stayed, but many of the third and fourth generations left the Brooks Farm community during the 1960s. Between 1950 and 1970, over five hundred children left the community. The desire for a college education and jobs in the northern cities encouraged many youths to leave the community. However, the religious and educational training that they had received in Brooks Farm prepared them to participate in an adult society.

Even though the Sunday School Board was concerned about attendance, the church's greatest contribution to residents of the Brooks Farm
community was not the role it played as the conserver of morals, a
strengthener of family life, or an advocate for development and
improvement. The church in this community was more significant for the
role it played as a social, economic, and political institution.

From the beginning of settlement, the community church was the most
important institution. The church censored unconventional and immoral
behavior and expelled those who violated church rules. More
important, it became an agency totally dominated by males. Within the
church, there has been opportunity for self-assertion and the assumption
of leadership, especially for the men. Willie Wiggins explained:

Men have alway occupy the most important leadership
position within the church 'cause they was taught to believe
that they could do a better job and that it was the men who was
'posed to run the church and not the women 'cause they was
'pose to get behind the men and push them. So, the church was
a place for men to grow 'cause the leadership made sure men was
running everything.181

Naturally, this resulted in a pattern of autocratic leadership which
carried over into organized social life among the residents, especially
since social life developed from within the church and remained under the
leadership of the preacher and elderly statesmen of the church and
community.182

In order to understand the significance of the church as a social
institution and the role it has played in the restructuring of black
family life, it is necessary to have a clear conception of the situation
which confronted black religion and family within the peculiar
institution. During slavery, black families, according to some scholars,
were an amorphous group gathered around the mother or some female on the
In many instances, the father, more often than not, was a visitor to the household without any legal or recognized status in family relations. Therefore, the men had few familial responsibilities. However, black men would have the opportunity to act as heads of households as established black churches and missionaries helped them form legal and strong family units.

During reconstruction and thereafter, the black church became primarily concerned with establishing patriarchy within black communities because new economic conditions, resulting from emancipation, tended to place black men in a position of authority in family relations. Moreover, "there was moral support for a patriarchal family to be found in the Bible, and this fact contributed, undoubtedly, to the new authority of the black men in the family." The black church dictated patterns of behavior and established guidelines to which every community member aspired. Because new communal life had to be created during post-emancipation, the black church, using the teachings of the Bible, established male domination among black men, with the support of their family. Thus, as some scholars argued, the leaders in creating a new community life were men who worked land or began to buy land or worked as skilled artisans. These pioneers generally built a church as home. Because of the importance of religion in the black community, many of the pioneer leaders were preachers "who gathered their communities about them and became the leaders of the black community."

In the Brooks Farm community, the church continued to adopt the philosophy of the traditional black church as far as family life was
concerned. Because blacks had limited rights in Mississippi, racism encouraged the community to emphasize male leadership.\textsuperscript{191} The church in this community encouraged men to act not only as heads of the family, but leaders of the community. This institution encouraged men to become the dominant personality, acting as the breadwinner of the family and protecting their wives from the evils of society.\textsuperscript{191} In terms of family, the church in the Brooks Farm community also taught submissiveness to women.\textsuperscript{192} Using Biblical scriptures, ministers cautioned women against usurping authority from their husbands.\textsuperscript{193} Women were told to be obedient and to follow their husbands, and to acknowledge the "natural order of things, where God intend man to be the head of the family and leader in the community."\textsuperscript{194} In the Brooks Farm community, the church took the position that "in order for the community to survive, the men had to be the ones out in front if the family was to be strong."\textsuperscript{195} The men were to continue "to accept responsibility as the head of the family and the leaders in the church and community."\textsuperscript{196} With these kinds of instructions, the church in this community succeeded in influencing household structure, especially among the young people.\textsuperscript{197} Young couples married and men became heads of the households, "just like the church taught."\textsuperscript{198} These attitudes reflect the thinking of the general society in that society had treated the male as the dominant figure within the home and church. Thus, residents of the Brooks Farm community did not escape some of the values of the larger society.

As a social institution, the church, within this community, also advocated community development and improvement.\textsuperscript{199} According to some
residents, the church acted as a leader in arousing the people to participate in activities that improved conditions in the community. For example, families were encouraged to take pride in their community. In doing so, the church encourage community members to keep their lawns mowed and the yard decorated with trees and flowers. "If church members did this," Rev. Fox McCann explained, "they would be showing God that they appreciate what he had given them." Sanitation and cleanliness were urged since "cleanliness was the next best thing to Godliness." Ministers, deacons, and church members, through P. H. Brooks, advertised the need for better roads because "good roads made it possible for folks to go back and forth to town if they need to and out to evening and night church services." "With more people attending church," Freddie Wiley explained, "the more money we could raise to help the church and community." In many of the programs or campaigns for improvement, "the people relied on the leaders in the church and community to get things started." "The preacher didn't have to be a expert," according to Willie Street, "he had to know and be 'ware of what the community need and what country folks need to better their lot and family life." Improvement in roads also meant more money for church programs "because farmers could use better roads to take crops and other produce to the market." "The sooner we could get to the gin, cotton house, and other place of business," Leroy Vassel explained, "the sooner we could sell the crop and get some money to pay our bills and to give to the church." The church's interest in improved roads or improvements, in general, was not self-serving, although it appeared to have been.
Since the church was the institution where Brooks Farm residents looked for advice and leadership, church leaders seemed to have been comfortable advising the community even though the church was likely to gain from advancements made in the community.

In addition to campaigning for better roads, the church also took the lead in advocating other important improvements. "Because the church realize that children didn't care about roads, school conditions, or home improvement," Steve Hearon explained, "it also support activities for young folks so that they would be encourage to stay in the community." The leadership within the church suggested "that games and picnics be put together so that the children and young adults could visit together." More important, this was the church's strategy for continual development within the home, church, and community. "When people fellowship," according to George Turner, "they got to know each other and they learn 'bout one 'nother so when the time came to help each other or to stand together, the people could, 'cause they been helping each other all along and the church was there to show support for good things happening in the community." 

The church in the Brooks Farm community also viewed advancement in education as one of its social responsibilities. The religious establishment understood the importance of education, if for no other reason than learning to read the Bible. The clergyman was one of the first educators in this community, responsible for the propagation of the gospel. Although the church created Sunday Schools for general educational purposes, the leadership, nevertheless, urged parents to
build schools. Irene Scott explained:

The preacher and some of the members thought the children could learn more 'bout farming and sewing and raising animals and other things by sending the children to school. Therefore, the church encourage families to contribute to building schools, which many obeyed by organizing church suppers to raise money. So we went to school to learn how to read, write, and add and subtract and we learn some other things as well.

Cooperation between the church and people existed in the Brooks Farm community. In order to establish their own church, Brooks residents pooled their meager economic resources to build churches. Community members contributed some of their small earnings for building supplies and church equipment. More important, members gave money to support mutual aid societies. Although these aid societies were formally known as "sickness and burial societies," they emerged within the twentieth century black church as home-mission societies, with similar purposes. In the Brooks Farm community, societies of this sort were organized within the church, with the purpose of providing assistance to families in need. As a church body, members donated money to the "poor saint treasury" so that money could either be donated or loaned to members who needed some assistance. For example, Margaret Ball, a member of Merry Grove, received help in paying her electric bill. Sarah Kendrick was given money when she asked the church to assist her in taking care of household responsibilities. During illness, church records for Merry Grove, 1950-1970, also showed small donations being given to nearly every member and some nonmembers of the congregation. This was the most valuable economic service that the church provided to families through its home missionary work.
The religious establishment was significant in economic development in another area. Because Brooks Farm was a farming community, the church encouraged residents to purchase land. "Since Mr. Brooks want to sell his land to black folks," according to C. B. Myes, "the preacher and some other church folks who owned land try to 'suade us to take advantage of the opportunity." Steve Hearon suggested, "talks was gave 'bout how the Lord had sent this blessing our way and that he was using Mr. Brooks to help black folks." Within this community, the church continued to urge men to buy land so "that they could be their own boss and decision-maker and so that they could own some kind of property, 'cause if you own property, you had something to bargain with." In addition to purchasing land, the church in the Brooks Farm community also encouraged communal farming. Few, if any persons, could afford to buy farm supplies and equipment outright between 1920 and 1950. Therefore, the church urged residents to invest in equipment communally. As a result, farmers in the community purchased plows, mules, and other equipment jointly until people were able to purchase their own farm tools and implements. Schedules worked out among the owners stated the time that each individual would use the plows and other tools. But the owners did not hesitate to rearrange the schedule if one individual was running behind. Communal farming was not universal. Some families like the Scotts and Hearons could afford their own equipment, but they did not hesitate to help others when their assistance was requested.

In all of its important roles, the church in the Brooks Farm
community also acted as a civic institution. Blacks in the South prior to 1960 were eliminated from the political life of the American community. Therefore, the church became the arena for the practice of democracy. It was the main area of social life in which Brooks Farm residents could aspire to become leaders, and the place where ambitious individuals could achieve distinction and status. C. B. Myes explained:

If you was someone who want to be in a position of authority, the church was the place 'cause you was alway up and talking and you had a chance to make decisions. If you want to be a leader, you got your training in the church 'cause you was going to be leading the people. One way of moving up to a big wheel in the church was to be head of a board, like the deacon.  

Therefore, in the Brooks Farm community the church was the arena in which the yearning for power could be satisfied, especially for men who had never been able to assert themselves and assume the dominant role defined by the American society.

Furthermore, the church in Brooks Farm was meaningful for the majority of the population. Having been denied the right to vote in the American community prior to 1965, the masses within the community engaged in electing officers.  

The electing of officers and representatives to attend conventions was not only a serious activity, but "one which we all look forward to 'cause it gave us a chance to decide on a number of things, people, and community needs."  

"We always want to choose folks who want to help our church, the people in the community, and someone who was going to stand up for right to be in the head positions." Usually, men were chosen because they were believed to have possessed leadership
For Brooks Farm residents, as it was for most black rural Americans between 1920 and 1970, the church was a safe haven which did not only provide social and moral isolation, but which also complemented and supported every facet of the black experience. In Brooks Farm, the church provided a structural life in which residents could express themselves while at the same time, experience psychological satisfaction, spiritual peace, and positive social reinforcement.

The teaching and training that evolved from the church and school within the Brooks Farm community between 1920 and 1970 were essential to community improvement and development. These institutions not only taught the fundamentals of religion and education, but they instructed residents of the Brooks Farm community in the way of life so that they could do more than read, write, and praise God. The church and school provided residents the opportunity to take part in the development of their community, and more important, in deciding their fate.
Endnotes


Ibid. Research on the Brooks Farm community indicated that educational training consisted of reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as classwork that taught children community enhancement skills. Children were taught a variety of home economics, domestic, vocational, and agricultural skills that helped and sustained the community. An example of a community's support of manual training can be found in

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.
16. Ibid.


18. Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. For a discussion of monetary support given to the state of Mississippi for the support of black rural schools, see Julius Rosenwald Fund, *Reports, 1920-1950*, Mississippi State Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.

19. Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.


24. Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

25. Ibid.


27. Ibid. See also Neil McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow*, pp. 50-60.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

32. Ibid.

33. Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age*


35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. Nearly all blacks paid tuition fees to keep the small country school in their community in operation. See Neil R. McMillen, Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow; Richard A. McLemore, A History of Mississippi; and James Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935.

38 Ibid.

39 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.
Ibid. See also Merry Grove, Missionary Baptist Church, *Annual Reports, 1940–1955*, Drew, Mississippi.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.


The following residents experienced being taken out of schools as children living on other plantations: Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987; Beatrice Collins, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987; Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987; Willie Street, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 2 May 1988; Mary Sargent, personal interview, Memphis Tennessee, 3 July 1989; West Sargent, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989; George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989. Each of these individuals is over eighty years of age.

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.
Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1989.

Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. For a discussion of the horse and buggy days in the rural South and Mississippi, see Mitchell B. Garrett, *Horse and Buggy Days on Hatchet Creek* (Montgomery, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1957).

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

West Sargent, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid. As residents purchased cars during the late 1940s, the need
for a bus to transport residents diminished as cars were purchased in large numbers during the 1950s.

78 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community. Reports of the Superintendent of Education, Leflore County, Annual Report 1954, Leflore County Board of Education, Greenwood, Mississippi.

79 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid. For a discussion of indoor plumbing and its arrival into the Brooks Farm community, see Chapter VI, "Changes in the Brooks Farm Community." See the section on housing.

84 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

90 Ibid.

91 Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.


93 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid. See also Bethel, Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community, pp. 74-94.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. See also Bethel, Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community, pp. 74-94.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid. See also Merry Grove Missionary Baptist Church, *Annual Reports, 1940-1970*, Drew, Mississippi, 1940-1970.
129 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Fox McCann, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 6 June 1989.
133 Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.
136 Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.
137 Ibid.
138 Conclusion drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.
139 Ibid.
140 Minnie Brown, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 5 June 1989.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
143 Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.
144 Ibid.
145 Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July
Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.


Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

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Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Merry Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Annual Reports, 1940–1970, Drew, Mississippi.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Conclusion was drawn from the information collected from interviews with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Conclusion was drawn from the information collected from interviews with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), pp. 37–38. For comparison, see Herbert Gutman,


185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.

187 Ibid., p. 39.

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

190 Ibid., p. 40.

191 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

192 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


194 Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Fox McCann, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 6 June 1989.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1919.


Ben Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 August 1988.

Willie Street, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 2 May 1987.

Earnest McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Leroy Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 16 August 1988.


Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, 10 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America, p. 41.
215 Ibid.

216 E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America, p. 41.

217 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

218 Margaret Ball, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

219 Merry Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Annual Records, August 16, 1971, Drew, Mississippi.

220 Merry Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Annual Reports, 1910-1970, Drew, Mississippi.


223 Beatrice Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.


225 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brook's Farm community.

226 Ibid.

227 Ibid.


229 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.


231 Ella Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.
CHAPTER VI. CHANGES IN THE BROOKS FARM COMMUNITY, 1920-1970

Changes in the Brooks Farm community were primarily technological and social. As farm incomes and wages improved, residents of the Brooks Farm community used their increased purchasing power to participate in a mass-production and mass consumption society that brought the community into the twentieth century. In the process of developing their community, Brooks Farm residents reacted to developments in the broader society by adopting a middle class standard of living during the post-World War II era and thereafter.

In Chapter II, "From Plantation to Community," and Chapter VII, "Farming in the Brooks Farm Community," developments and changes were discussed. These showed how the Brooks Farm people established and developed their community. This chapter, "Changes in the Brooks Farm Community, 1920-1970," examines the various forces that prompted technological and social changes within the Brooks Farm community and the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta. Brooks Farm residents willingly participated in the agricultural, technical, and economic revolution that occurred in the 1940s and thereafter. They generally experienced an increase in wages, which many used to purchase land from P. H. Brooks and farm equipment to improve their production. At the same time, wanting to "keep up with the white folks in some ways," they used their larger incomes to model their community on the larger society of Mississippi.

The transitions were rooted in the community's ethic of self-help, which in turn developed as modernity impacted the community. In Chapter
III, "Family Life," Chapter IV, "Role of Women," and Chapter V, "Significance of the Church and School," it has been shown that community values on Brooks Farm were centered upon development and self-help. More important, research also indicated that Brooks Farm residents, in trying to build a community where progress could be implanted, did not only adopt values that encouraged self-help and community support, but also expanded their philosophical beliefs concerning community development to include help from external initiatives as well as from individuals who had the ability to connect the Brooks Farm community with the larger society. The residents of the community saw this as "our way of getting ahead." To make things better for us out here," Steve Hearon continued, "we always had our eye and ear open for something or someone to come 'long to let us know what was going on, 'cause we had no way of knowing some things, 'cause we didn't have the kind of things, like the TV and radio, that we have nowadays." Therefore, it was not surprising that, when farm income shifted and wages increased, Brooks Farm residents assimilated the values of the larger society into the community. Self-help and community support remained important, but it also became essential to behave similar to the larger society so that Brooks Farm could appear progressive and be accepted by a larger community that owned most of the property, especially the lending institutions which later became active in black communities. The transition to a place in the larger Mississippi society began a process of cultural change that the Brooks Farm residents, on the whole, welcomed. "When we 'came able to buy some of the modern things like the radio and TV," Willie E.
McWilliams explained, "it gave us a chance to learn 'bout the white community and to do some of the things they was doing to get ahead." 14 Although we couldn't 'ford them like the whites could," McWilliams continued, "we knewed what we had to do to keep up, so we continue to work hard to earn some money so that we could later on do some of the things that white folks was doing to keep the community going." 15 As farm income and wages increased, the residents adopted modern technology and values that encouraged mass consumption. 16 Their community survived by adapting its values.

In examining changes in the Brooks Farm community, two important questions were analyzed. How did the community change? What was the result of the changes? The desire to enter the mainstream of economic and social development put the community on a track that many other rural communities followed. Brooks Farm's development followed a path from plantation community to commercial town. In the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, blacks primarily lived on plantations. Plantation culture, for the first three decades of the twentieth century, was quite similar to plantation societies of the middle nineteenth century. 17 Plantations in the "Delta," prior to 1950, were closed societies, with black sharecroppers and tenants living in confinement due to a lack of economic and technological development. 18 On many of these large farming estates, blacks lived under constant supervision and instructions from the plantation owner or landlord. 19 The economic structure destined them for permanent destitution. Because of poor roads and transportation facilities, leisure time was mostly spent on the plantations, visiting
friends and relatives, attending church and other social functions. Since the plantation was organized for self-sufficiency, inhabitants rarely left their plantation communities. The plantation store usually supplied what the residents needed. Items ranged from food products, clothing materials, household goods and furniture, to farm supplies and tools. Twentieth century plantation workers, like those in the nineteenth century, supplemented their purchases by making their own essential household items and farming tools.

On the majority of Deltan plantations, cotton was the major crop prior to 1970. One of the most serious consequences of monoculture in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta's farm economy was meager wages for individuals who did not have the capital to finance their farm operations. This was especially true of the majority of blacks engaged in farming, 1920-1950, who constantly borrowed money to farm because over-production of cotton caused low prices and, therefore, low wages for the small producers. Black farmers were more likely than white farmers to be caught in the lien system. The lien system tied black tenants and croppers to the plantation system and kept black farm families from advancing economically and socially. Large debts also prevented relocation and constantly supplied the plantations with laborers until the need for croppers, tenants, and day laborers ceased. For many black plantation workers and dwellers, debts continued to mount as poverty became more engrained in the black plantation community. The limitations of plantation culture and poor economic conditions compelled many plantation workers, tenants and croppers alike, to seek employment
elsewhere. Many black Mississippians migrated to northern cities. For those who stayed, life remained a constant struggle until World War II. The war provided some economic relief, particularly for whites, but it saved many farm families from starvation.

The nature of social and economic reform in the 1920s and 1930s perpetuated poverty in Mississippi's black communities, especially on Deltan plantations. These reforms consciously overlooked the needs of blacks in Mississippi. Discrimination inherent in New Deal farm and relief policies kept Yazoo-Mississippi Delta farm families in poverty. With the aid of the Agricultural Adjustment Act, planters could continue farming, while using the income they earned from participating in layout programs to push tenants and croppers off the land. Under the combined pressure of federal farm policy in the 1930s, advancing agricultural science and technology in the 1940s, and increased competition both from foreign and southwestern cotton growers and from foreign synthetic fibers in the 1950s, the cotton South by 1940 was on the brink of social and economic revolution, with the sharecroppers, tenants, and day laborers in the shadow of a dying system. In Mississippi, black sharecroppers and tenants were never able to move into the mainstream of farming in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta. They remained peons until they, voluntarily, left the Delta in search of better wages and improved living conditions.

Change, however, in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta and the state, as a whole, gradually began during the depression. With New Deal acreage reductions and price-support programs that primarily benefited the large
landowners, the need for laborers reduced as the increased utilization of machinery was subsidized by federal subsidies and credit. Changes in the agricultural economy accelerated sharply during the Second World War, which brought higher cotton prices, labor shortages, new opportunities for blacks, especially Mississippians, outside agriculture, and additional pressures for mechanization. The transformation that began in the late 1930s in Mississippi was, according to some scholars, completed by the 1960s. These same economic and technological changes shaped the Brooks Farm community.

Between 1900-1940, changes in living conditions for blacks in Mississippi were not fostered by social and political reform. They were, however, the result of economic development, primarily wage increase, that largely benefited urban communities. Some blacks in urban Mississippi managed to share in the opportunities created by post-World War II developments. Blacks secured employment in the medical, law, and journalism professions. Wage laborers, likewise, managed to obtain jobs in the manufacturing and service industries. They also worked construction and were hired as city employees. Unlike urban blacks, African-Americans in the rural towns of Mississippi, as well as the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, did not benefit from economic development in Mississippi as much as their urban counterparts. Plantation workers, especially, did not have the same opportunities. They, on the other hand, continued to live on plantations and worked the traditional occupations, supplying labor as gardeners, cooks, launderers, and untrained nurses. In the Brooks Farm community, residents held jobs in
the traditional occupations, while also working in saw and molasses mills and at the gin. The majority of the black race in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, between 1900-1950, continued to work in agricultural related positions. This was especially true for residents of the Brooks Farm community who, along with their parents and foreparents, knew "nothing else but working in the field and on the farm, for white folk first, and then our self."^43

Whether the wages of black employees during the early years, 1900-1940, equaled those of their white counterparts has been difficult to document since the Census Bureau did not begin to track employment statistics until 1940. In fact, the question of wage differentials in Mississippi was less easily answered than the question of occupational discrimination. Yet, if past experiences of Brooks Farm residents could serve as the example, research should show that whites were likely to make three to four times more money than blacks for doing the same or similar work. George Turner, an eighty-five year old resident, recalled working for Mr. Henry Smith, a plantation owner in the Delta, who paid him a dollar per week during the 1920s. While working for Smith, Turner, maintained that he was paid less than the white workers, who at times earned as much as five dollars per week during the same time period. Although the Census Bureau did not systematically compile statistics by race until 1940, Brooks Farm residents maintained that they received inferior pay until they moved to Brooks Farm, where they believed that P. H. Brooks paid fair and competitive wages.

The 1940s appeared to have been a turning point for residents of the
Brooks Farm community. Changes began with economic development. In Chapter VII, economic progress was defined in terms of land acquisition, available credit and market, increase in yields, and utilization of farm machinery as well as the ability of farmers in the Brooks Farm community to fully participate in the agricultural revolution. Increases in wages were also used to determine economic growth, especially as men and women began to participate in off-farm employment. In fact, it was the addition of off-farm employment combined with women's home business that actually increased the wages of farm families, thereby permitting them to participate in the developments of a modern society. In analyzing changes in the Brooks Farm community, it is not necessary to repeat these findings. However, it is important to point out that economic development was defined as improvements in living conditions and the use of technologies.

Changes in the Brooks Farm community began with increases in purchasing power. Between 1949 and 1970, Mississippi farmers almost doubled their income from crops, livestock, and government payment programs. Although large farmers received most of the benefits, average family income in the state grew from $273 in 1929 to $123 in 1933, $755 in 1950, and $2575 in 1970. Of course, in black rural and farm communities, the average income per family was much lower. Oral histories showed that wages in black rural and farm communities averaged about one-third to one-half below the average for the state. In many instances, "after working all year in the field trying to produce a crop, the weather, rain or drought, destroyed the entire crop year." What
the weather did not take, however, landlords often took.\textsuperscript{59} Therefore, at settlement time, black tenants, croppers, and day laborers often went home with less than fifty dollars.\textsuperscript{60} In the Brooks Farm community, however, blacks, aided by P. H. Brooks until his death in 1947, appeared to have had an advantage. Brooks paid competitive wages, offered to sell land to the residents, and financed their farm operations in order to help them make a "good crop."\textsuperscript{61}

Increases in wages and shifts in farm income allowed Brooks Farm residents to make changes similar to those made by most farm and rural people during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.\textsuperscript{62} They improved the roads as well as the interior and exterior of the home, purchased electricity, added many electrical appliances to the household, invested in improved health and medical care and nutrition, purchased automobiles, farm machinery, newspapers, insurance, joined fraternities, and formed community clubs.\textsuperscript{63} Concerned more about mobility and increased yields, Brooks Farm residents purchased the automobile and farm machinery before significant improvement was made on the interior and exterior of the home.\textsuperscript{64} All physical changes within the community followed the improvement in roads and the adoption of the automobile and farm machinery.

One sure sign of change was the improvement in roads and widespread use of the automobile. Road repair in Mississippi had been a major campaign issue since the early 1900s and continued to evoke debates until the 1950s.\textsuperscript{65} But little work had been completed by the 1940s. However, the state had taken the initiative to lay bricks for a highway in the
capital city, while roads in rural communities continued to be poorly developed. For residents of the Brooks Farm community, a gravel road during the 1930s had been laid by P. H. Brooks who paid to have Broosky Road, the main road built through the entire community, east and west, graveled. Additional gravel roads were developed by residents of the community.

During the 1940s, dirt roads in the Brooks Farm community were covered with gravel, purchased by residents of the community. For example, in the northwestern section of the community where James Walter purchased 120 acres of land, gravel was placed on the road leading to his farm in the 1940s. In the central area of the community where the Cooper family purchased land, gravel was placed on dirt roads in this section of Brooks Farm by the Coopers and other residents residing close to their homestead. In the southwestern sections of the community where Totsy Williams and Leroy Vassel owned farms, residents in this section of Brooks Farm did not purchase gravel until the late 1940s and early 1950s. Recognizing the importance of the need to repair the roads, several other individuals also took the initiative to improve roads within the Brooks Farm community. Residents believed that this was an important development since road conditions were important in transporting farm produce. Some residents used their income to hire individuals to bring gravel to their homestead, but many roads, including main entrances and exits, were not covered until the 1960s after residents pressured county officials for gravel and general road improvement.
Improved roads were economically and socially important to the development of the community. In terms of economics, Steve Hearon explained:

We had saw and heard from the whites in town how better things work with the gravel. In talking to one 'nother, they would say how fast they was able to go back and forth without having so much mud. You know, the trailer pull easier and the heavy tractor and truck could roll 'long better. When I did custom work for Mr. Brooks, I found out it was true what they was saying when Mr. Brooks sent me down to the white folks' community to pick up some things. So we, out here on Brooksy, thought it would be good for us to have gravel so we could keep up, and get our cotton, corn, beans, and everything to town and the market as soon as we could. On rainy days, these gravels help everybody out. They just made moving 'round in the community much better for us out on the farm. The quicker we was able to move, the faster we could do things. Back then, time was money, and if you was slowed down in working and harvesting your crop, you need a way to get it to the market or the gin as soon as possible, or you would lose out. Time was money and gravel help us cut down on losing time, 'specially when it had rain.75

In the Brooks Farm community, road improvement bolstered the economy. In the 1940s, two farmers, George Smith and Willie White, built gins in the community. Others, such as Moses Scott, Jimmie Hearon, and Martin Cooper, built molasses, flour, and saw mills.76 "It was them changes made on the roads that help they business out the most."77 As gravel improved road conditions, business "pick up for Mr. White and Mr. Smith, as well as some of them other."78 "People," according to Mae Liza Williams, "didn't act like they mind coming all the way down here to buy things or to have they flour milled or lumber sawed or they cotton ginned."79 Consequently, "trading pick up," Leroy Vassel explained, "when the gravel road came."80 "I can remember," Birdell Vassel recalled, "seeing wagons, mules, and cars coming down here to do business
now that we had some better roads." According to Edward Scott, Jr., whose father Moses Scott owned a molasses mill, "the gravel road brought folks out to the mill more often than they came when we didn't have them." Although Scott could not recall the exact cost of making molasses or the income earned from it, he, nevertheless, remembered his father discussing "how well the mill was doing" and "how the money from the business was gone help to buy more land, tractors, and other thing we need to make ends meet." Edward Scott, Sr., the patriarch of the Scott family, must have experienced some success with the molasses mill and farming as well, since he managed to acquire over 1,000 acres of land.

Even though it appeared that the black-owned establishments located at the southeastern section of the community would have been supported by blacks regardless of road conditions, many of the participants in this study maintained, as did C. B. Myes, that road improvement "triggered" the change. When asked whether better roads was the reason that many people started to trade at the eastern end of the community, Myes summed it up best. He replied:

Why else would we go out so far? For so many years, mud and dirt had cause us to trade close up 'round Brooksy store 'cause folks had got to the point where they didn't want to be bother with a lot of dirt and mud if they could help it. Then too, lot of folks, 'fore they got on they own, had no choice but to trade close by or up to the store 'cause many of them was still on Mr. Brooks, who at that time was still running the plantation, until he could talk all us black people into buying the land from him. But when Mr. Brooks got rid of the plantation and sold us the land, and the store and mill to somebody else, we didn't have to trade up at the store less we want to, which some of us did sometime. But 'cause we wasn't tied to the plantation no more, a lot of us look for some other place to do business 'cause after Mr. Brooks left from out here and died, them other people try to get over on color folk,
pushing up the prices in the store and at the mill. But we didn't have to do business with them 'cause we could go somewhere else, 'specially since the roads had done got better. We didn't mind the distance so much no more, so a lot of us went on down to the eastern end where some black folk was milling and ginning. With them gravels, we could go faster and get back quicker and start doing something else.

Individuals who participated in this study suggested that improvement in the road system was one of the most important developments in making Brooks Farm a modern and respectable community. "Our place out here was starting to look like some of the other people who was making a start in the right direction." "Though the majority of the white community had gravel," Earnest McWilliams explained, "it was good for us to have some 'cause it show that we was moving on ahead and that sooner or later we was going to get better." "Since gravels was cheaper to 'ford than some of the other things we was trying to get, we start with them first to show that we was not lazy, just waiting on other folks to get things going for us." "Better roads show that we was trying to get ahead and that we was not gone be left behind." "The one thing that work to our favor," Edward Scott, Jr. argued, "was that Mr. Brooks saw what we was trying to do, and 'cause he alway encourage improvement, he did not hesitate to help when he saw what the folks out here was trying to do with the roads." Therefore, as many of the residents suggested, gravel roads did not only open the community to better economic opportunity, but furthered interaction between Brooks Farm residents and neighboring communities of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta.

Improved road conditions were one of the avenues to more social interaction between residents and neighbors. Gravel roads preceded the
automobile and were believed "to be blessings from God." "Even with horse and buggy," Minnie Brown recalled, "people visit more when we got some gravel, and since we was one of the first to have our dirt road cover, folks came out here on Brooksy even more." "I can remember folks coming from surrounding plantations on Saturday and Sunday evening to visit and to go to church," Margaret Ball remembered, "'cause it didn't take so long to push through all that mud and dirt, and even when it rained, folk on the other plantation didn't mind coming out." As development in the community became more important, gravel roads became significant in helping to bring economic and social improvement to the Brooks Farm experience.

The automobile was another improvement that encouraged interaction among residents in Brooks Farm and neighboring communities. The car and truck provided evidence of continued progress. In Mississippi, the automobile had been popular among middle class whites since the 1930s. Because of low wages, the majority of blacks and poor whites in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta continued to use horse-drawn wagons. As wages and farm income increased in the 1950s, the majority of Deltans purchased a car of some sort. Between 1940-1970, the most common cars were the Ford, Chevrolet, and Pontiac.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the automobile was Brooks Farm's passage into modern America. According to participants in this study, "the car open us up to places we never could go before." Having this way of moving 'round," according to Willie Street, "gave us lot of time 'cause it didn't take us so long to get to where we had to go like it did with
According to Freddie Wiley, "we could visit more, go to church everywhere, 'cause you didn't have to worry 'bout getting dusty and dirty like you did in the past." Moreover, for many of Brooks Farm residents, the car was the linkage between immediate and extended kin. "It gave us a way to go out of town, out of state to see folks who we left behind in other places and people who had move into town and some of the cities." However, as research has shown, Brooks Farm residents used their car primarily for visiting and attending social and religious functions within the community.

In the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, the automobile removed confinement. Deltans could travel throughout the region and the state. Of the fifty persons participating in this study, fifteen owned cars in the 1940s, thirty-seven in the 1950s, and forty-five in the 1960s. "As soon as folks got able, they went and got them a car 'cause nobody want to be left out." "To have a car mean you was doing something to do better," according to George Turner, "'cause you then had a better way of getting where you need to go, 'specially place of business and church on Sunday morning, 'cause it didn't look good to show up late at neither one of them places." "So when folks saw you had got you a car, they knowed you mean business." As a result, people were no longer confined to their plantations and immediate surroundings. Still, "the most important reason that some of us out there got us a car was so that we could add to the community." "We didn't want people saying that folks out on Brooksy wasn't doing nothing." More important, "having a car gave us some bargaining power to use when we need to borrow a loan or something,
'cause when white people ask you if you had something to show or put up, you would be able to say yes, 'stead of no sir." For this reason, "having a car was a stepping stone to bringing some other things out in the community that we need, like machines and housing appliances, 'til a house or some land could be used for bargaining power." As the car or truck was widely purchased in the 1950s and 1960s, research showed that many blacks in Mississippi left the Delta for a visit North and never returned. Thus, the automobile became a factor in both inward and outward migration.

The car also exposed children and students to a different world. With the automobile, the younger generation was introduced to different values, cultures, and ideas. As families spent more time visiting neighboring communities and states, "the children could see how other folk behave, 'specially in the larger cities and towns where music, dancing, ball games, and other things was going on." The result of "this going out of the community and having a car made the older children want to drive so that they could go out to town to some of the juke-joints, 'cause the town children was driving and going to the dance places." According to Ocean Myes, "so many of the things we had shield from the children, when we just had a horse and buggy, could no longer be kept from 'em 'cause, with everybody getting cars and with the children getting older, with they own mind, it got harder to keep them in line." "Even when you said no, some of the older children could catch a ride out from here to where they was wanting to go." Consequently, as Mason Cooper asserted, "the car, 'long with some other things, just
took the children from the farm to town, and when that was over, many children just kept going 'til they ended up in another state, somewhere up north."\textsuperscript{116}

Furthermore, during the time that the car was being popularized, public education in the 1950s was being taken over by the state.\textsuperscript{117} The community's loss of control over the education of its children undoubtedly influenced values and rural life.\textsuperscript{118} Whereas community enhancement skills had been strongly reinforced in the community-owned schools, in the public schools the training was broadened and "children was encourage to 'tend school and college and to move on 'cause things was changing."\textsuperscript{119} "With the car, they could move 'round and see more than we ever seen 'cause they had a way out to see things and to leave the farm."\textsuperscript{120} According to Howard Williams, a college graduate and former student living in the Brooks Farm community during the time when both the car and state's educational programs impacted the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, "life in the community began to change in the fifties, and by the sixties, Brooksy was changing, like most farm areas, with people moving out even though there was some improvement in living, farming, and community life."\textsuperscript{121} "Because of a more diverse education and better transportation," Williams explained, "the community was no longer closed off as people came in and out more often."\textsuperscript{122} Williams further suggested "that the car and better roads opened Brooks Farm up to many things, to the point where we had become a part of the Delta, as folks from all over the Delta came to visit."\textsuperscript{123} Finally, according to Carrie Curry Cooper, also a college graduate and a student of the
community schools in the early 1950s, "the car opened the way to the meeting of culture as we learned so much about other people life on the plantations around the Delta." "It took us to places where we could see people worst off than us," Curry continued, "and it was through the process of moving about that we saw Brooksy developing into a community of people doing everything they could to keep up with the changes that were taking place all over." 

Indeed, the car had provided residents of Brooks Farm with opportunities. The purchase of the truck continued progress in the community. When the truck was added, it provided another mode of transportation. Although it was primarily used for farming, as opposed to socializing, the truck became an important instrument among Brooks Farm property holders. Between 1940 and 1970, thirty-five of the fifty participants in this study had purchased a truck during various periods of time. Essentially, residents used the truck to haul supplies, carry produce to the market, and to pull trailers to the gin. Although some farmers in the community owned the large bed trucks, the majority of farm families in the Brooks Farm community owned a "pick-up" or a half bed until the 1970s.

Nevertheless, the truck was used both economically and socially. For those individuals, usually the landless families, who could not afford to buy both vehicles, the truck was purchased first. Because most of these families were involved with farming, "we thought it was best to get something that would help out with farming, so we, and folks like us who didn't have a lot of money, got the truck first 'cause we could put
But one thing we found out was that them trucks could carry you where you need to go just like the car. "So we hopped in our truck and went on, me and my husband and our children, even though they didn't like riding round in it, 'specially on the back when we went to town or to church." However, "our children, and some of the other folk children who had to do as our had to, came to 'preciate the fact that we was bless to have a truck 'cause some folks was still walking." As more families in the communities purchased trucks, and as the children "was able to see that some of the white children was also riding on the back of the truck, it came to be accepted as something more than a work truck, 'cause you could use it for more than farm and field work." Therefore, on weekends, families with a truck only used it to visit family and friends and to attend church until they were able to purchase a car.

With better roads, transportation, and increases in income, some residents of Brooks Farm took advantage of these improvements by encouraging more assimilation of the American culture into the community. That is, some residents began setting up taverns at the edge of the community. The rise of the "juke-joint" culture on Brooks Farm signaled a change in the values of the community. As taverns and night clubs increasingly became a popular part of the American culture during post-World War II, they spread to rural and small town America. The automobile took people to places where it became obvious that Brooks Farm was lacking in "worldly" entertainment, even though this was the initial intention of the pioneers.
In order to fill that void within the community, some individuals saw the need to create places where persons, especially the men, could go to relax and be entertained. Being that Brooks Farm was a religiously conscious community, it was surprising to discover that many people generally felt comfortable attending "these little holes in the wall and juke-joints." As society change, so did the people out here 'cause they was being expose to a lot," Mae Liza Williams recalled, "and this was why people start to think that it was all right to do all the things like dancing, playing card, drinking, smoking, and even cursing 'cause they could see other folks doing it, so it became all right with lots of folks to do it out here." In talking about the change in attitude and the rise of the "juke-joint culture", George Turner added:

Even though folk attend church and confess and repent of they sin and said they believe in God, that didn't stop some from doing what they want 'cause many didn't see nothing wrong with enjoying life and having a little fun. So they continue on with it, drinking a little whiskey, and playing cards, and even a little gambling was all done in fun. Folk in the community expect that some faith would be stronger than other so they just tried to encourage the people to live a better Christian life; some did and some didn't.

Individuals interested in expanding their horizons beyond church and school meetings often found time to build "juke-joints" for socializing. "You see, there was something that folk could do at these fun houses," Estella Thomas explained, "that they couldn't do nowhere else, 'specially not at the school and church functions." "They could be loud and talk 'bout all kinds of things and still be consider a Christian and a decent person."

Of course, "juke-joints" met with some opposition. The "less
faithful" communicants were scrutinized by those who believed that such behavior was not necessary in a community that was "trying to grow in the Lord." Eva Glenn explained:

Some of us was trying to live right; so we didn't want to be a part of the world; neither did we want our children caught up in that kind of thing. As a manner of fact, we didn't even want the children to see or hear 'bout it 'cause it was not good for them. So, we argue and the church fuss 'bout folk coming in and setting up these sin houses.

Because of this opposition, "juke-joints" were usually located at the edge of the community, bordering Brooks Farm and some neighboring plantations. In fact, according to one respondent, "them taverns was built so far from the center of the community 'til you had a hard time trying to figure out who club it was, even though a lot of Brooksy folk would be in them." According to Willie Shedd, "folks who like these clubs had to go to great length to hide it, 'specially from Mr. Brooks 'cause he didn't care for them 'cause he was trying to get folk to save their money and time for work and the farm, but he couldn't do much 'cause a lot of folk was owning their farms, and they was enjoying themselves." Whether Brooks and the God-fearing residents favored the establishment of clubs in the community did not seem that important as construction of these "juke-joints" proceeded cautiously, in the sense that their growth was slow because of opposition.

It is not exactly clear when night clubs began to appear on the outskirts of the community, although they were visible during the late 1940s. They had, however, been in operation in Drew, Mississippi, in the white community, since the early 1900s. Taverns and clubs were set up
for whites only. Laws in the South prohibited socialization between the races.  

Therefore, William Smith of Brooks Farm built a tavern in the community in the 1940s. Others followed Smith's lead as additional houses of entertainment were built. Between the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were six clubs serving Brooks Farm and surrounding communities. These were opened and managed by blacks. Two were operated from the back room of owners' homes. Men, both married and single, mostly attended these gatherings, while primarily single women attended. "Women of decent and moral standards, 'specially married women, didn't 'tend these places 'cause it wasn't they place." According to Minnie Brown, "women was look down on if they went to the clubs, 'though it was all right for men to go even though all of them probably had wives."  

Like much of rural America in the first half of the twentieth century, double standards were intact in the Brooks Farm community. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the thinking of who should and should not attend the "juke-joints." "Men was expected to go out, smoke, drink, and have fun, while the woman was to stay home and keep up the house and the family." According to many of the females, some of the goings on in the taverns were not "suitable for good women, but if you didn't mind smelling like smoke and whiskey and didn't care 'bout men flirting and cursing, then you could be happy. . . ." Like women, men generally believed that "juke-joints was a place mostly for men 'cause we could handle being out late, 'cause in the morning, all we had to do was get up, throw some clothes on, and go out there and start working; but a
woman had to have rest 'cause she was the one up in the morning trying to
cook, clean, and get the children ready for going to school or coming out
to the fields to work."\textsuperscript{151} "If the woman was too tired from being out in
the juke-joint, who was gone take care of everything in the house?"\textsuperscript{152}
Women who attended these social gatherings continued to be ostracized
until the "juke-joint" ceased to be a part of Brooks Farm's community life.

For some of the Brooks Farm residents, the taverns were not only a
place to drink and have fun. To some, it was another place to socialize.
According to Steve Hearon, "everyone who came out wasn't thinking 'bout
acting wild, but just to sit and talk and catch up on the old news."\textsuperscript{153}
In this instance, the tavern became a place to discuss farming and other
business opportunities as well as wages and living conditions. The
"juke-joints" were also places where people could find out what was going
on around them. "Since folk came from other places to visit, this was a
way to find out what was going on and to get 'quainted with folk that had
weather or long working hours had kept you from seeing."\textsuperscript{154}

Many of the community's concerns over the taverns were not the noise
or busy nights of traveling on the roads, although they were troublesome
at times. Conflicts, however, arose when the night clubs kept late
hours.\textsuperscript{155} "You see, if you work for somebody, like we did," Freddie
Wiley explained, "they didn't want you out all time of night 'cause you
wouldn't be able to work or give a good day's work on the next day."\textsuperscript{156}
Critics of the taverns also believed that "regular visits to the devil's
house would in the long run take away from the family 'cause that time
and money could be spent for the family."

Others in the community also believed that the "juke-joints cause the men folk to be too relax and not hardworking enough, 'cause that liquor was telling them that everything was all right." "So, 'stead of thinking 'bout ways to pitch in here and there, I think too many of the young people spent too much time thinking 'bout the fun they was having." Although it was "understandable that men in they twenties and thirties, back then in the forties when these things came along, was just having a little fun, us older people constantly remind them that they need to be saving they time and money." "The day," according to C. B. Myes, "was coming when them old juke houses was not gone be there, and some of them young people was going to have to go through the trouble of learning to live without them." "It was best that they didn't get caught up with them."

But the juke-joints turned out to be a passing fancy of a community that had been so long denied opportunities for recreation. When money was short or "when people realize that it didn't take all of that to live and to make it, them night clubs slowly fell by the wayside 'cause people stop supporting them." Essentially, the idea was that life could be fun and enjoyable without the clubs. Consequently, by the mid-1950s a return to morality and limited resources put an end to the taverns. Nevertheless, because night clubs had become a popular part of American culture during the 1940s and 1950s, some residents of the Brooks Farm community supported them as additional places of entertainment.

As plantation owners began slowly mechanizing in the 1930s and 1940s, it soon became obvious to residents of the Brooks Farm community
"that this was the next step to advancing." You can't keep up if you weren't willing to change. As residents built better roads, purchased automobiles, built "juke-joints" to have fun, "I knowed that as soon as they saw them white farmers getting better 'quipment to farm, I knowed that it wouldn't be long 'fore we wouldn't try to get us a lot of different kinds of machines and things 'specially since folks was saying them machines could do a lot more work and could help you make more money." Still, unlike the white planters, farmers in this community continued to use the horse, mule, and small plow until the early 1960s. In contrast to the small farmers in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta and on Brooks Farm, plantation owners rapidly adopted machine power in order to increase yields. Because Brooks Farm's farmers were generally poor, few could afford to mechanize as rapidly. Since 1945, farmers, particularly the white, have used more machines to plant and harvest their crops and to care for their livestock. The first tractor was introduced to the state during the 1920s. Following World War II, Mississippi farmers purchased them in large numbers. By 1950, there were five times as many tractors in the state as in 1940. In the early 1950s, farmers introduced the mechanical cotton picker and used chemical weed killers, sprayed from tractors or airplanes, herbicides, fertilizers, and other commercial chemicals to increase yields and production.

On small family holdings in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, such as those that existed in the Brooks Farm community, the impact of mechanization and the adoption of technology was not wholly experienced
until the late 1960s and early 1970s, some ten to fifteen years behind
the large white planters and farmers. Although families like the
Scotts and Hearons bought into the technological age early, the majority
of Brooks Farm residents slowly added modern equipment to their
holdings. While all the farmers saw the need to purchase a tractor,
many could not afford to buy it, a combine, cotton picker, and truck
unless they were working enough land to cover expenses and the cost of
production. Between 1950-1970, a farmer needed to have worked
approximately two hundred acres of land to afford a variety of farm
equipment simultaneously. As demonstrated in Chapter VII, the
majority of farmers in the community worked from forty to five hundred
acres of land, depending on family size and economic capacity to
produce. As a whole, many of the farm families in the Brooks Farm
community, during the 1950s and 1960s, continued to use labor-intensive
farming to produce their crop. They relied heavily on family members,
hired hands, and farmed communally while employing "custom work" when
they did not have the equipment to complete a particular job.

In the 1950s, the standard of living in Brooks Farm improved
significantly. If economic development can also be indicated through
material well-being, more social well-being, and embrace not only growth,
as in per capita income, but social, cultural, and institutional change,
Brooks Farm progressed significantly as changes made in the material
culture, particularly in the standard of living and within the household,
helped to further develop the community. The interior of the home was
changed first. Internal improvement can be seen as old hand-made
furniture was replaced with manufactured dressers, beds, and chairs. Couches, tables, and additional household items, such as linens, clothes, curtains, and table and silverware, were added during the 1950s. Many of the hand-made mats and rugs were replaced with manufactured ones purchased in the early 1960s. These were used extensively to cover cracked, cold, and wooden floors until houses could be repaired. In some homes, the wood-burning stove and heater were replaced by gas heaters and stoves, while electrical appliances were purchased to improve efficiency in household management. During the 1950s and 1960s, Brooks Farm became a mass-purchasing community, buying not only food, but nearly every essential household and personal item.

At the time that many improvements within the interior of the home were being made, electricity, electrical household items, and the telephone were transforming Mississippi's rural life. Before World War II, many farms had been relatively isolated and enjoyed few modern conveniences. After the war, this changed as the Mississippi Power and Light Company supplied the community with electricity during the 1950s. This meant better living standards, with the aid of the refrigerator, washing machine, and freezer. It also meant the introduction of the radio and television, which connected families in Brooks Farm to urban America.

With the installation of electricity within the home in the 1950s, families continued to improve the interior by purchasing additional household items and appliances. To the list of purchased items in the 1950s and 1960s were added electric lights, the refrigerator, radio,
television, freezer, washing machine, sewing machine, and electric iron. With electricity, these items contributed quite significantly to improving living conditions. Sanitation and the quality of life improved as technology made it possible for families to do more work, especially inside the home. According to Minnie Brown, significant changes within the community and household began with the arrival of electricity. Brown explained:

Electricity made lots of things possible for us. When we finally got it out here, it made a world of difference. Having not to sit in the dark no more and being able to run all kind of machine in the house and outside on the farm help out a lot 'cause we didn't have to do so much work. Then too, when we got electricity, we could keep up with the rest of the world without working as hard, 'specially if you was a woman doing all that housework.

Electricity, in turn, generated community discussion of household appliances. Estella Thomas described the enthusiasm family members felt when they got a washing machine. "When we got us a washing machine in the fifties, we was glad to get that old wringer even though we had to haul water to full it up; that was still a lot of work, but it wasn't as much as it had been." Women in the Brooks Farm community believed that the washing machine was an essential addition to the home. "We thought that this was a good thing to buy 'cause that rub-board and tub got to be hard on your back and hand, having alway to bend over and moving your arm and hand up and down that tin." More important, to the women of the Brooks Farm community, the washing machine was a solution to "a long and slow process 'cause we could wash faster and get so much more of the washing done."
Another item that "we was glad to have," according to Willie Curry, "was the sewing machine." Even though most farm families in the Brooks Farm community could not afford electric sewing machines until the 1960s, even manually-operated machines were an improvement "over the rub-board and tub and the hand needle and thread that we all use to wash and sew clothes." A number of women used the Maytag washing machines while the majority in the Brooks Farm community purchased a Singer sewing machine and continued to use this brand throughout the 1960s. The sewing machine also became a popular household item because it helped to reduce pains and tensions associated with housework. "All them machine and thing help us live better 'cause it took some of the work off of us which 'lowed us to rest a little more so our body wouldn't get so tired and run down, and I think most of us out here really did like that peddle machine 'cause it help us sew faster and make many more clothes than we could years ago."

Although the peddle sewing machine had been available for many decades, the majority of residents in the Brooks Farm community could not afford it until the 1940s and early 1950s.

Families in the Brooks Farm community also found that the gas stove helped to decrease a heavy work load. It allowed women to use the time once spent to gather wood and build fires in the wooden stove to perform additional chores. For obvious reasons, the purchase of this item would cause some jubilation. "I can remember when I got us a gas stove in 1958, when Jodie and me went to town to pick it up, 'cause I was thinking 'bout not having no more hot fires to build in that old wooden stove." Having a gas stove also meant "not having to haul no more
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wood either." More important, gas as a fuel as opposed to wood signaled that "things was looking up." 

"When we got that gas stove, we could cook faster, control the heat, and not burn the food." And as an additional household appliance, "it was a big help 'cause it was less of a risk for us and the house 'cause we didn't have to work with open fire no more." Essentially, the gas stove did not only represent a "quicker way of preparing the food," but it became a valuable possession among women in the community who began to purchase it in large numbers in the 1950s. Because of the gas stove, "we got the food ready and move on to the next job in the house, and 'cause of some of them other thing we had got, the housework had ease up, so we could spend time out of the house doing some other things since we wasn't tied to the house like we had been."

By the same token, residents of Brooks Farm felt fortunate to replace the wood-burning heater with a gas one. Although families were pleased to have a gas stove, they were equally as proud of the gas heater. George Turner explained:

You know, that gas heater was something else. I guess I couldn't b'lieve that we had move 'long that far. You take a person like me, born 'fore 1910, would never thought that color people would get pass burning coals, sticks, straws, and everything else to keep warm. But we did and we was happy 'bout that 'cause it show us that we could make it.

According to the resident, "most folks out here had gas hook up to they houses in the 1950s and began to use that 'stead of wood," for heating and cooking. This was an important development in material culture because "it took 'way worrying 'bout finding wood and coal to burn,
'though we had to now worry 'bout paying for gas, but that was all right 'cause that gas heater took away some of the work and gave us time to be doing some other things.' Moreover, the gas heater proved to have been less of a threat because "it lessen the chance of burning down the house 'cause some people had lost they home when the wood heater got too hot and caught on fire." Of course, "this could happen with a gas stove and heater, but we just felt safer with them 'stead of burning a fire in them old wood heater and stove." Even though a gas stove posed some risk and families were not always able to pay gas bills, "all of them thing—the heater, stove, washing machine, sewing machine, and even much the 'frigerator and deep freezer and everything else—was a blessing for us and we was ready when they came 'long."

Electricity made it possible for ironing to continue. Since the wooden stove and heater, traditionally used for heating the irons, had been removed from the home, electric irons became a popular item in the Delta in the 1950s and was not used in large numbers in the Brooks Farm community until the 1960s. Recalling her experience with replacing the smoothing iron with an electrical one, Eva Glenn remembered:

Sometime it would be too hot to iron and so many time you be too tired to stand up while you was trying to iron. 'Cause you done work in the fields and house all day, you was too tired to be lifting up them old heavy iron. Child, I tell you this, I was some mighty glad when I didn't have to iron like we did in the old days, fixing up a fire, a board to iron on, and standing there heating the iron on the hot stove.

In the Brooks Farm community, many families "got a iron after they got some of the other important thing." Apparently, "it was best that we got washing machine, sewing machine, and gas hook up to the house 'cause
you could always put them iron on the gas stove and just keep a ironing 'til you could do better." Nevertheless, an electric iron was more effective. "When we finally was able to get a 'lectric iron, that was a happy time 'cause you had done got tired of doing that kind of ironing." While many individuals in the community favored different household appliances, some appreciated the electric iron as much as the other household technologies. "Though I 'preciate my washing machine and stove and all them other thing, I like my 'lectric iron too 'cause it brought some mighty good help, 'specially after more and more clothes had to be iron."215

The refrigerator and freezer were among the last appliances that Brooks Farm residents added to the household. In the 1960s, these were widely purchased. "When people start to buy these in the sixties, nobody really knowed that they was going to help like they did, 'cause for some time, we had been salting meat down, canning, and doing all sorts of things to preserve the foods, but this kind of work was getting hard to keep up." Therefore, according to some residents, "when the 'frigerator and deep freezer came 'long, we was able to preserve more food, and eat different kind of food too." The problem, however, that confronted most families in the early years when the refrigerator and freezer became available was the lack of money to afford them. "Though they was not cheap back then, we did all we could to scrape up the money to 'ford them 'cause they was good to have in the house, 'specially the 'frigerator, 'cause when you come from the field for dinner at twelve (12:00 p.m.), there would be something cold to drink in
the 'frigerator or lot of ice in the freezer so you could make you some good old cold water." By far the greatest advantage of acquiring these appliances was "you could cook at night and leave the food in the 'frigerator, so you wouldn't have to come home at noon and cook, since you could just get the food out of the 'frigerator and warm it up to eat." Because families had acquired many of these household technologies, work time on the farm improved because meals were prepared on time and many of the other chores were completed in less time, thereby permitting more time to be given to the family, farm, and community.

The use of technology and farm machinery created leisure time for families in the Brooks Farm community. This was evident by the number of individuals participating in fraternities and community clubs during the 1950s. Fraternal clubs and like organizations which had been part of the black experience since the eighteenth century were established in Mississippi in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Mississippi, these clubs were formed to provide their members burial insurance. In fact, they were inseparable as many of the organizations' initial purpose was to write policies, first, and to socialize secondly. Throughout Mississippi, the Masons were the largest fraternal order. Other organizations, such as the "colored" Phythians, Elks, and Woodmen, or Brothers and Sisters of Love and Charity, Sacred Order of Perfection, Fisherman of the Red Cross Relief, Lone Star Race Pride, Black Sons and Daughters, and the Knights and Daughters of Tabor, acted as important agencies of black social and cultural uplift. They provided opportunities for pleasure and leadership as well as strength for the
black community.

Although many of the national organizations did not exist in the Brooks Farm community, two important organizations emerged: the Masons for men and Eastern Star for women. Men and women also participated in a fraternity called Sir Knight and Daughter. While the number of black lodges that existed in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta was not clear, it was apparent that men and women in the Brooks Farm community, who belonged to these organizations, joined lodges, centrally located in the nearby towns of Ruleville and Minter City. Of the twenty-two men participating in this study, eight were members of Masonic Lodges and ten of them grew up in households with fathers who belonged to the order. Research showed that ten of the twenty-eight female respondents had been members of sister organizations to which the males belonged. In some instances, depending on the year that they joined, both the parents and their daughters and sons belonged to fraternal organizations during the same time period. These organizations were ways of taking up increased leisure time by extending the community associations that the church and school had previously established.

In addition to participating in national organizations and fraternities, Brooks Farm residents found time to form local or community clubs. These clubs were devices for maintaining the solidarity of the entire community. They were especially important for individuals who did not have the time or money to participate in national organizations. The Brooks Homemaker Club for women and Farmers Club for men were the two most popular community organizations in which most people
participated. These clubs were primarily concerned with development in the community. The women organizations met to discuss ways to improve housing conditions, health, food and nutrition, medical care, sewing, and general improvement in household responsibilities. Men, on the other hand, discussed "the business of farming, what to grow, what not to grow, when it was best to plant, and where to take the crops to sell 'em" in their meetings, and they "talk 'bout ways we could help each other farm and make things better in the community for our wife and children." Both the men and women groups were well-respected and wielded considerable power in local functions, simply because they organized many of the community's activities.

Membership in the community organizations fluctuated. Between 1940 and 1970, it increased and decreased, with a peak in membership occurring for both clubs during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Since every adult in the community was encouraged to join, membership was affected by shifts in the population. During the time that participation increased, enrollment in school and church also improved. While both the school and church enrollment remained considerably large during the 1950s, membership in community organizations never equaled that of the rural institutions. Local clubs, however, managed to achieve a membership as large as thirty for the women organization and twenty-three for the men. Even though this was a community with at least one hundred seventy-five families, during certain periods of time, individuals who did not participate were not interested or were too busy to attend the meetings.
The adoption of technology also put an end to drudgery farm and housework. More important, it began devaluation of this kind of work. Because families could do more, the need for labor, especially child labor, declined. Children, on the other hand, "realizing that they wasn't needed as much, saw the important of the advances." To them," according to Steve Hearon, "they no longer had to stay 'round since the field and housework could be done so much faster, and many of them by the fifties and sixties want to get off the farm to go to the city, so these different tractors and other machines and all those things that the women start to use in the house just gave many of the young people a reason to leave." This fact, coupled with the media's portrayal of town and city life in the 1950s and 1960s, drove many youths from the farm to urban areas in search of the extravagant life, so alluringly portrayed by the radio, television, and newspapers.

Between 1950 and 1970, it was evident that residents in the Brooks Farm community had been affected by the popular culture. The radio, television, and telephone taught blacks in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta not only about their condition, but about society as a whole. In Mississippi, the radio became a popular household item in the 1930s and 1940s, but did not serve as Brooks Farm's first contact with the outside world until the 1950s. Fannie Turner explained:

It was something else to have something like a radio in the house. To hear a voice in the house other than your own or your folks' was different. That was really something special. We had not seen anything like it before. To sit there listening to the news, ball games, and all kinds of other
things was so unusual. Everybody was excited 'bout being able to buy one of them little things 'cause you knowed what was going on. The news and the rest of the programs made us yearn for more, back then, when that was really the only way you could find out 'bout things without leaving home or the community.  

Many Brooks Farm residents experienced excitement when they acquired the radio. "The radio," according to Edward Scott, "was a fantastic thing 'cause we could, then, hear different things from 'round the whole state and Delta." "Everybody," Ella Hearon remembered, "was talking 'bout it and if they didn't have one they was going to get it as soon as they got some other things they needed, and got some of the bills paid." For individuals who could not immediately afford a radio, "they was welcome to come to our house or go to some of the other folks' house who had one to listen to." Sometimes on a Saturday evening, people would get together so that they could listen to the radio and talk 'bout what they heard and pass on the information 'cause that was the way we share things back then." In the 1950s, twenty-five of the fifty families had a radio, while nearly everyone had acquired one by the 1960s. The radio came to symbolize hope "for if we could ever find out was going on or what everybody else was doing, we would know what to do." With the radio, Brooks Farm residents no longer felt isolated. They had been connected with the rest of the world. 

Until the radio became available, the church had supported the adoption of various technologies and had even encouraged the purchase and use of the automobile and farm machinery, hoping that they would work together to increase membership and attendance. However, its attitude
toward the radio was ambiguous. On the one hand, it was good for church members to purchase this popular item because the radio was an informer. It gave Brooks Farm residents the opportunity to learn "what was going on in the world and with the white people." For so long people try to get out to town or up to Brookesy store," the main trading store in the community, "to find out what the white people knowed 'cause they could tell you what was going if they want to." But as most of us found out," Jodie Hearon continued, "white folk didn't do much talking 'round color people, though Mr. Brooks, 'til he died, was good for us 'cause he would tell us all we need to know, 'specially 'bout farming." Because blacks in the Brooks Farm community could not afford to subscribe to newspapers until the late 1950s, it appeared that they believed that the white community had an advantage because they could "'ford newspaper to keep them inform even before the radio was a part of they community." Therefore, according to Francis Walker, whites "could not only afford to keep up with the news everywhere, but by having more money, they made everything available to them first, 'specially things like good roads, cars, good equipment, better houses, land, and the best TV, radio, and telephone." Therefore, Walker continued, "when we was able to get some of these things, we felt like we had caught up and made some progress, little as it was, with the rest of the world." Thus, as Brooks Farm residents suggested, "the radio help the people out here catch up to the rest of the world," even though the church worried about its adverse affect.

The church was suspicious of the affect the radio would have on the
community. Despite the broadcasting of the news, church leadership, on the other hand, encouraged members not to become attached to secular entertainments. Music and ball games presented on the radio were believed to be ungodly activities that "church people shouldn't take part in or be caught up with 'cause when you was thinking 'bout them things, you wouldn't be thinking 'bout God like you should." Thus, "the church took the position that Christian folks should be praying and doing God's work and not be concerned 'bout soap opera, ball games, music, and dancing." The church generally feared that the radio would eventually cause some to "forget 'bout the need to concentrate on the Lord work." If this happened, the church warned, attendance and support for the church could decline.

If the radio created ambivalent feelings, the television and telephone caused more concern. "When the TV arrived," Birdell Vassell remembered, "the radio, all of a sudden, was not so bad, 'cause you could only hear a voice, but with the TV you could hear and see all kinds of things." For this reason, according to Beatrice Collins, "the preacher caution 'gainst watching too much TV 'cause you couldn't get your work done or even pray like you was 'pose to if you spent all of your free time watching that TV." More important, "the preacher didn't want to see church folk acting like the folk on the TV, 'specially in the 1960s, when so much was going on in the world." "The church," according to Mae Liza Williams, "just want us to keep living a good and clean life, working hard, coming to church, and enjoying one 'nother." Even though most television programs were quite homely in the 1950s,
church leadership feared "that it was just that way to get people hook on it and then it would change and start showing all kind of thing that influence the folk who watch it, so it was better not to get tangle up in it in the first place." Despite the church's warning, some individuals purchased the television—although the majority did not obtain it until the 1960s.

The purchase of the television was a slow process for blacks in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta. As a whole, during the 1950s, the television set was too expensive for the majority of blacks and poor whites to afford when they first became available to the public in mass quantities. Because it was viewed as a luxury item, few people risked such a debt in the early going. Instead, in the Brooks Farm community, the landowners usually were the ones in the community to purchase new technology. Based upon their recommendations, others in the community followed their lead or continued to live with what they had. Interviewee data, however, showed an increase in the number of persons acquiring televisions since the 1950s. As the viewing audience within the community increased, social interaction was generally affected "'cause when time allow, we would sometime stay at home and enjoy the TV 'stead of getting out in the community like we use to, but there was no need 'cause by the sixties, everybody was getting 'long all right."

Even though the church raised some concerns about the disadvantages of the radio and television, both came to play influential roles in changing styles and standards of living in the Brooks Farm community. For example, many of the women who participated in this study suggested
that they learned important information from public service announcements regarding health, medical care, and eating habits. Some of the announcements advertised good health tips "like what to do when children got sick or where a person could go for some medical help or supplies when the home remedies was not working." Women in the Brooks Farm community incorporated some of the information they learned from the radio and television into their daily lives. Margaret Ball recalled "taking some time to relax and rest each day, even though it was only for a few minutes," after she had watched a show on television where a housewife did this. Some women learned more about nutrition "after watching how some of them women on TV prepare their family dinner, making sure all the important food group was a part of the meal." "From listening to both the TV and radio, we learn more 'bout washing and the best kind of soap or washing detergent to use." The consensus among women was that these technologies were excellent additions to the household "cause we learn so much 'bout every area of life."

In some ways, the radio and television were necessary household items because "with one or the other," farmers could plan their farming activities. Weather forecasts "help we men," Mason Cooper explained, "know what to do from day to day, 'specially when you couldn't predict the weather like you use to." Historically, residents could predict whether it would rain by "watching the way the smoke broke up in the air, watching the cloud, if some of the old people bones ached." When farmers could no longer predict when to plant, the radio served as the informer. "It help us know more 'bout when to plant, plow, fertilize,
run water furrow, disk, and when to start gathering the crop.". When
we hear more 'bout the sun and rain and all the other kind of weather,
that just help us.". "Not only did the TV and radio give out weather
report," Edward Scott explained, "they also help us know 'bout farm sale,
grains, fertilizer and where to go in the Delta to do business."

During the decade of the 1960s, when telephones, insurance
organizations, and newspapers became a part of Brooks Farm's culture, it
seemed as if the community had been thoroughly assimilated into a modern
society. Although the radio and television had adequately linked Brooks
Farm and the rest of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, the telephone and
newspapers extended the connection beyond the state and Delta region to
areas of life where neither the television or radio had an impact.

With the television and radio, residents of the community became familiar
with general world development. Newspapers, on the other hand, "talked
'bout more than the big news.". "With it," Jodie Hearon explained,
"some of us could read more 'bout situations 'round us, like what was
going on in Minter City, Ruleville, and lots of other places where black
folk was living.". According to Edward Scott, who also subscribed to a
newspaper in the 1960s, "we could read 'bout the weather, market report,
and other if we miss the news report.". The most commonly read
newspapers in the community were the Greenwood Common Wealth, and the
Memphis Commercial Appeal. Although many of the residents were not
regular subscribers, some suggested that they periodically purchased a
local paper like the Sunflower County News.

The telephone, on the other hand, "went in hand with everything
else." For many reasons, it was a welcome addition to the community "'cause if you need to know something or if you miss out on the news or even something going on in the community, you could get on the phone and call someone to find out what was going on." The one nice thing 'bout the phone was that it help out on running errand, 'specially to town when you could just call and see if a store had what you need before you made a blank trip out there." More important, "if you need to know something or get a word to somebody," Golden Walker explained, "you just get on the phone and call to the closest place where a phone was and ask that person to take a message to who you was wanting to speak to." "For us out here, this work out all right 'til everybody could get they own phone." Most families in the Brooks Farm community obtained a telephone in the 1970s, even though it was evident that some families had them during the 1960s.

Many of the changes occurring in the Brooks Farm community were associated with parents' involvement with the broader society. For example, when public education was taken over by the state, parents were forced to attend Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings in order to keep abreast of school developments. Research data indicated that Brooks Farm residents were not only informed about curricula and school programs, but community needs as well. At these meetings, discussions focused on subjects such as better health and medical care, sanitation, nutrition and others because these related so closely to school life and students' performances. Early studies by the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service had shown that students performed more
efficiently when they received proper nutrition. Health and medical care were topics of discussion because, in a large setting, germs could be spread. Therefore, it was important for families with school-age children to know about health in order to prevent the spread of diseases commonly associated with children.

One of the most interesting developments, however, that evolved from external association was the need of families to invest in insurance. Although newspaper, television, and radio broadcasts emphasized this need, some of the Brooks Farm residents maintained that insurance became a topic of discussion in the PTA, Masonic, church, and club meetings as well. As a result, many individuals purchased company policies for life or burial insurance. Although insurance had been a popular developed business among urban blacks during the first half of the twentieth century, many black rural and farm families did not largely become involved until the latter half of the twentieth century. During the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, residents of the Brooks Farm community purchased life or burial policies primarily from such organizations as Roy Funeral, Central Funeral, and Delta Burial. "It mean you was looking out for your family and was not depending on other folks to take care of your family and to put you away." For years in the black community, the burial of the deceased as well as providing for his or her family had been a responsibility of family and community members. The availability of private insurance now made it possible for families to relieve themselves and the community of a potentially serious burden. Research showed that eighty-five percent of the
individuals living in the community belonged to an insurance or burial organization by the 1960s.  

If external influences encouraged investment in insurance, it must have also persuaded individuals to improve housing. Although interiors had been improved with new furniture and appliances, the exteriors remained the same until the 1960s and 1970s. Structural changes in housing were the last major development. House designs had not changed much between 1910 and 1940. Now, they underwent major renovations to accommodate modern conveniences.

As a plantation community, houses on Brooks Farm first appeared between 1910 and 1930. They were constructed by P. H. Brooks, the owner of the plantation. Steve Hearon, the oldest living resident, recalled that "houses on Brooksy was quite different, and they was made of several style and seem to had more room in them." According to Edward Scott, "it seem like more time was put in building the houses 'cause Brooks Farm had the best houses of any plantation 'round here in the Delta."  

Jodie Hearon also remembered "that Brooks had some good and stable houses built on the plantation, but you had to repair and improve 'em over time." Each of the twenty-two men interviewed believed that housing on Brooks Farm was "better than what our folks and most of us had seen." "But that don't say much 'cause all the houses 'round the Delta was raggy and in bad shape."  

Women's impressions of the houses on Brooks Farm were similar to the men's. Each suggested that housing "was better or as good as the one we ever had 'cause some of them white plantation owners didn't care what
they put you in, just as long as you was able to work and hold up your end of the bargain, 'cause to them we was bless to be able to live in them shacks." The general consensus among the women in the community was that housing was better because "Mr. Brooks had a crew that came 'round monthly to find out what the houses need, and he tried to do what people ask just as long as they was willing to help and to take care of the house like they should." More important to the women was "the extra room that Mr. Brooks provide." "It was enough to spread out a little and to have a little more space and some privacy." "The rooms was big enough to put some two or three beds in for the children, and that left at least one room for the man and wife."

In the rural communities of Mississippi, houses varied in size. Except for the homes of the large planters, houses were small, with three to six rooms in them. The common combinations of rooms for houses included 'a three-room house, with two bedrooms and a kitchen. In a four-room house, there could be three bedrooms and a kitchen; or two bedrooms, living room, and a kitchen; or two bedrooms, dining room, and a kitchen. In a five-room home, there could be two bedrooms, living room, dining room, and a kitchen; or three bedrooms, living room, and a kitchen. For a six-room home, some families had three bedrooms, living room, dining room, and a kitchen. The larger size homes were usually found in the white farm communities.

In the Brooks Farm community, houses were commonly called shotgun, bungalow, or flat-top and had three to five rooms within them. They were frame houses, usually painted. Some houses were covered with tar
strips. They were built off the grounds on blocks, with wooden floors. Houses had front and back doors, with a window in each room. Between 1920–1960, none of these houses had indoor plumbing. Therefore, dishwashing, bathing, and other chores were done in the traditional way. Because they had no running water, it was hauled from sites or from the community wells. Many individuals used cisterns and pumps to get water. Pumps were often difficult to prime. Ashes were used to purify or soften both the pump water and stream water. Lye was added in order to separate the rust. Until water could be connected to the inside of the houses, water sites were given important consideration before any construction occurred. Between 1920 and 1940, families in the Brooks Farm community primarily used their homes for eating and sleeping quarters, especially if there were only three or four rooms. The inside furnishings of the homes were sparse until the 1950s. Within the bedrooms were beds, dressers, and chairs, all made by family members with lumber from the farm. In the kitchen stood a wooden stove and table and chairs. A few dishes were placed inside homemade cabinets, while rugs, made by the women, were spread over the floors. These conditions began to change during the 1940s and continued through the 1960s.

Although some of the original houses were not occupied, some still stand. They have changed significantly. With electricity, some families added running water, bathrooms, and indoor plumbing. The kitchens were changed to include sinks which water was piped through. Even though many people improved their kitchen, the majority did not add
bathrooms in their homes until the early 1970s. Because housing renovations were expensive, many families continued to use their income to operate and improve the farm. Although some brick houses were constructed, they never were a significant part of the community as houses, old and new, continued to be frame. During construction, however, the sizes of the home changed. The three- and four-room houses were abandoned for houses that comprised six rooms, with some families having homes that included as many as seven to twelve rooms.

The result of many of the changes in housing and household improvements in the homes in the Brooks Farm community was improved medical and health care and nutrition. With electricity and running water, according to many of the residents, sanitation was easier. "Simple thing like bathing and cooking was so much better 'cause you didn't have to worry 'bout the flies and insects as much or hauling water that sometime got dirty in the barrel." More important, "people didn't get sick as much and didn't stay sick as long after we learn more 'bout taking better care of ourself."

Medical care and food preparation changed "when the children start to go to the public school and when they brought home paper talking 'bout the need to have good health and better food 'cause that was 'pose to make the children do better in school." "'Cause the community was getting more folks out here, and folk concern 'bout they help, more people start to go to the doctor and health department to find out what they need to do." More important, "a lot of us was making a better living and had learn more 'bout the doctor's medicine, so we start to go
to the doctor 'stead of relying on them old remedy." Prior to the mid-1950s, when health and nutrition became important to Brooks Farm, many illnesses were treated with natural products. For example, alcohol, corn shucks, teas, and weeds were used to treat the measles, headaches, cramps, whooping cough, pellagra, and tuberculosis. When electricity was added to the home, food preparation changed, as families slowly decreased large amounts of salt, proven to be unhealthy by research, to preserve food. Even though public education and awareness were credited with improving medical and health care and nutrition, Brooks Farm residents maintained that their practices changed as more people moved into the community "with knowledge 'bout food and medicine."

By 1970, the effect of these changes in the community could be seen. The population had decreased. Houses were vacant, churches abandoned and poorly attended. Machinery had displaced many individuals, those not owning land, and the youth had moved away. Although Census Reports showed that population in the Delta counties had been declining since 1930, research showed some growth in small communities. Even though black migration in Mississippi was external, Brooks Farm continued to experience some growth between 1940 and 1960. Church and school records, as well as the testimonies of residents in this community, support this conclusion. Out-migration from Brooks Farm did not peak until the 1960s. Names of families slowly disappeared from the roster of school and church records from year to year.

Between 1920 and 1970, the Brooks Farm community experienced many changes. These were primarily technological and social. As the economy
improved, increases in farm income and wages helped to foster developments. Like most rural Americans, residents of the Brooks Farm community associated progress with their ability to obtain and maintain a style of living acceptable to most Americans, particularly the white community. Therefore, as the country changed, so did Brooks Farm. In the Brooks Farm community, change represented progress, while changes by the use of technology signaled development. The changes in the Brooks Farm community were not unique. They showed a people's desire to keep abreast of developments in America. Their lives were impacted by a mass production and consumption society as they adopted the values of the larger society and assimilated them into the Brooks Farm community.
Endnotes

1 In the Brooks Farm community, there was a relationship between technology and social changes. Technology prompted social changes in the sense that as washing and sewing machines, gas heaters and stoves, freezers, refrigerators, farm machines, fertilizers, and other chemicals decreased homework for women and field work for men, population changes resulted as household technologies and farm machinery decreased the need for large numbers of people to work on the farm.

2 Increased purchasing power refers to the post-World War II period when mass production and big spending, as well as economic development throughout the United States, increased farm prices and incomes during the 1940s. Standard of living increased as more people joined the work force during the 1940s and continued to work off the farm during the post-war period.

3 With off-farm employment and increase in farm wages, Brooks Farm families began purchasing many of the items that they had manufactured from the home. During the 1940s, they began to buy cars and furniture. More important, increased purchasing power helped them to buy land fertilizers and other farm supplies and tools.

For the purpose of this study, middle class standard of living refers to improvement in the material culture, and families' economic capacity to purchase household appliances and farm machinery that the majority of Americans were purchasing during that time. Brooks Farm residents had adopted a middle class standard of living when they decided that it was important for them to participate in a mass consumption society.

4 See Chapter II and Chapter VII for a discussion of developments in the Brooks Farm community at a different level.

5 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. For a discussion of Mississippi's participation in the agricultural, technological, and economic revolution of the 1940s, see Richard A. McLemore, A History of Mississippi (Hattiesburg, MS: University and College Press, 1973), pp. 177-212; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Base Book of Mississippi Agriculture 1866-1953; and John L. Fulmer, Agricultural Progress in the Cotton Belt Since 1920 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1950).

6 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

7 Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

8 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community. For a discussion of self-help to
blacks' progress, see Herbert A. Aptheker, ed., Documentary History of
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South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1941); Caroline Bond Day, A Study of Some
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Harvard University, 1932); E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United
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9 Ibid. Lorenzo Greene and Carter G. Woodson, The Negro Wage Earner
(Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and
History, 1930).

10 Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June
1989. See also Henry S. Enck, "Black Self-Help in the Progressive Era:
The Northern Campaigns of Smaller Southern Black Industrial Schools,

11 Ibid.

12 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews
conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

13 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews
conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

14 Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June
1989.

15 Ibid.

16 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews
conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. Increases in farm
income and wages allowed Brooks Farm residents the opportunity to
identify and participate in the developments of the larger society.
Since society advocated and adopted technology, Brooks Farm residents,
associating technology with improvement, adopted values that resulted in
their buying advanced technology instead of continuing to use traditional
household appliances and farm machinery. For a discussion of farm income
and wage increase, see Ray Marshall, The Negro Worker (New York: Random
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Plantation Economy After the Civil War (Durham, NC: Duke University
Press, 1978); Donald D. Scarborough, Economic Study of Negro Farmers as
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thomas J. Woofter, Seven Lean Years (Work Projects Administration,
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Economic Journal 16 (October 1949): 189-196; Dorothy Dickins, "How Income
Was Earned and Spent," Mississippi Farm Research 22 (December 1959): 2-3;
Journal of Farm Economics 22 (February 1940): 188-197; Mary Frederickson,
"Four Decades of Change: Black Workers in Southern Textiles, 1941-1942,"
Radical America, 16(6)(1953): 27-45; William E. Hendrix, "Size and
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Business Week 12 (February 1933): 1; Charles S. Johnson, "The Changing
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Political and Social Science 190 (November 1928): 128-177; John L. McCoy
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Frank J. Welch, The Plantation Land Tenure System in Mississippi
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pp. 1-54.

Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
37 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews with residents of the Brooks Farm community.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

See Chapter VII, "Farming in the Brooks Farm Community."

Ibid.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community. See also Neil R. McMillen, Dark Journey, pp. 160-163.

Because families in Brooks Farm did not make large sums of money, it would be difficult to describe economic development in the community in terms of capital or industry build-up. Economic development was measured by increases in the material culture.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.


Ibid.

Neil R. McMillen, Dark Journey, pp. 45, 55, 124, and 163.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April
1987.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Leroy Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 16 August 1988.

81 Birdell Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

82 Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.


86 Ibid.

87 Earnest McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

91 Edward Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

92 Ibid.


95 Margaret Ball, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

96 Loewen and Sallis, Mississippi Conflict and Change, p. 213.

97 Ibid. See also Mitchell B. Garrett, Horse and Buggy Days in Hatchet Creek (Montgomery, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1957);

98 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

99 Willie Street, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 2 May 1987.

100 Freddie Wiley, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 11 June 1989.

101 Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1989.

102 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


104 George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

105 Ibid.

106 J. C. Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 15 July 1989. Residents of the Brooks Farm community believed that the more property they possessed, the more progressive the community would seem.

107 Ibid.


109 Ibid.

110 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

111 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. Families who remained in the community suggested that the purchase of the automobile tempted many people in the community, especially those who thought a city life would be better. Therefore, when they were able to purchase a car, they used it to leave Mississippi and the Delta, especially during the 1950s as mechanization began to displace croppers and tenants.

112 Selest Ester, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 21 August
1989.

113 Ocean Myes, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 19 June 1989.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.

116 Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

117 Biennial Reports of the Superintendent of Education of Mississippi, 1954, Department of Education, Mississippi State Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.

118 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


120 Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

121 Howard Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 December 1989.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 Carrie Curry Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 May 1988.

125 Ibid.

126 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

127 Ibid.


129 Ibid.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.
Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.


Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987. Most people in Brooks Farm appeared to have believed that it was ungodly to dance, gamble, drink, and smoke, but many felt comfortable going to places where these activities existed.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Ibid.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Ibid.

Leroy Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 16 August 1988.


Information obtained from residents conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Ella Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

West Sargent, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989.


Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987. The phrase, "all of that to live and to make it," refers to the idea that one did not need clubs to enjoy life. With family, friends, and socializing at church and community functions, many believed that life was filled with enough fun and activities. The majority of these people believed that it was best to live a simple life, without the frustrations of taverns or juke-joints.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.
Conclusion was drawn from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Theodore Hooper, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 8 July 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. Farmers, working hundreds of acres of land, combined the land they farmed with acres they rented outside the community.

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989. Custom work refers to hiring individuals with cotton pickers or combines to harvest the crop.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in Brooks Farm.


Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Ibid.
Willie Curry, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 May 1987.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ella Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in Brooks Farm.


George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Ibid.

Beatrice Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.


Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Conclusion drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid. See also Neil McMillen, Dark Journey, pp. 182-184.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid. See also Andrew Baird and Wilfred C. Bailey, Community Development Clubs (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 597, May 1960); Raymond Payne and A. Alexander Fanelli, Community Organizations in Mississippi (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Circular 183, April 1953), 11 pp.; Raymond Payne and Harold F. Kaufman, Organizational Activities of Rural People in Mississippi (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Circular 189, November 1953), 15 pp.; and Raymond Payne, Organizational Activities of Rural Negroes in Mississippi (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Circular 192, December 1953, 15 pp.).
Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 16 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

School and church records showed an increase in the number of families joining churches and attending school. For more information, see Merry Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Annual Reports, 1940-1960, Drew, Mississippi; and Records of the Superintendent of Education, 1920-1955, Leflore County Board of Education, Greenwood, Mississippi. (See especially reports on Spruill, Brooks, and Rosenwald schools.)

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid. As household appliances were used to complete many household chores, the efforts women used to complete tasks within the house were minimized.

Steve Hearon, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 11 June 1989.

Ibid.

Conclusion drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Edward Scott, personal interview, Drew Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

Ella Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

Conclusion was drawn from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Personal interview, Jodie Hearon, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

Francis Walker, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 1 May 1987.

Eva Glenn, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

Fox McCann, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 6 June 1989.

Birdell Vassell, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Beatrice Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

Information obtained from the interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.
During the 1950s, fifteen of the fifty persons interviewed had purchased televisions. During the 1960s, the percentage increased, with ninety percent of the participants in this study owning televisions during the 1960s.


Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Margaret Ball, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

Ibid.

Ella Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.


Mason Cooper, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 3 June 1989.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Edward Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Ibid.
Edward Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.

Edna Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1987.


Willie McWilliams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community. See also Dorothy Dickins, Improving Levels of Living Among Tenant Families (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 365, January 1942).

Dorothy Dickins, A Nutritional Investigation of Negro Tenants in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 254, June 1930), 54 pp. See also W. E. Ayres, Vegetables and Truck for Home Use (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 210, March 1922), 16 pp.; E. A. Curveym, Home Vegetable Gardens for the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 311, May 1936), 21 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, A Study of Food Habits in Two Contrasting Areas of Mississippi (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 245, November 1927), 31 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, Food and Health (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 255, July 1928), 20 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, A Nutritional Investigation of Negro Tenants in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 254, June 1930), 54 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, Traditional Food Preparation Rules (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 418, June 1945), 60 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, Preparation of Vegetables in Small Town Families of Mississippi (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 449, July 1947), 44 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, Some Factors Related to Food Production (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 433, May 1946), 34 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, Time Activities in Homemaking (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 424, October 1945), 26 pp.; Dorothy Dickins,

301 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

302 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

303 Ibid. See also Mississippi Association of Insurance, Reports 1920-1940, Department of Insurance, Mississippi State Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.

304 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

305 Ibid.

306 Ibid.


308 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

309 Ibid.


311 Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989. See also Florence W. Sillers, The History of Bolivar County (Jackson, MS: Hederman Brothers, 1948). See especially the chapter on housing in Bolivar County, Mississippi. This was a Delta county. The study provides description of housing in the Delta.

312 Jodie Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.


315 Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

316 Beatrice Collins, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April 1987.

317 Ibid.


319 Dorothy Dickins, Family Living on Poorer and Better Soil (Mississippi Agriculture and Experiment Station, Bulletin 320, September 1937), 46 pp. See also Dorothy Dickins, Owner Farmer Families in Poor Agricultural Areas and Cropper Areas (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 359, June 1941), 19 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, Levels of Living of Young White Farm Operator Families in Mississippi (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 579, June 1959), 16 pp.; Dorothy Dickins, Levels of Living of Young Negro Farm Operators in Mississippi (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 580, July 1959), 16 pp. Each of these bulletins discussed housing in Mississippi's rural
communities. For more information, see references listed in footnote 310. These also describe rural housing.

320 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

321 Ibid.
322 Ibid.
323 Ibid.
324 Ibid.
325 Ibid.
326 Ibid.
327 Ibid.
328 Ibid.
329 Ibid.
330 Ibid.
331 Ibid.

332 Estella Thomas, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987.

333 Ibid.

335 Ibid.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Irene Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1987.


Merry Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Annual Records, 1940-1970, Drew, Mississippi, Leflore County, School Reports, 1920-1955, Leflore County Board of Education, Greenwood, Mississippi (see especially enrollment records for Spruill, Brooks, and Rosenwald schools); School Reports, 1920-1955, Sunflower County Courthouse, Indianola, Mississippi (see especially enrollment records for Rosenwald schools).

Ibid.
CHAPTER VII. FARMING IN THE BROOKS FARM COMMUNITY, 1947-1970

An analysis of farming in the Brooks Farm community begins with the 1940s when many black families became independent landowners. This chapter is a discussion of family and community life in the context of economic development and change. It focuses on landownership and farming, the dominant features of the community. It analyzes the systems of farming, with emphasis placed on capital, credit, labor, landownership and tenure, crop production, marketing, and property ownership. Finally, the chapter argues that residents of the Brooks Farm community were capable farmers even though they struggled to manage their farms and to hold onto their lands.

Below, Table 1 demonstrates the importance of agriculture in the Brooks Farm community. It shows that farming continued to dominate the economic structure on Brooks Farm, just as it provided occupations for the majority of the black population that lived in rural towns and communities during the first half of the twentieth century.

As demonstrated in Table 1, a "bourgeoisie economy" that leaders of the black race hoped would develop in black rural communities, like Brooks Farm, never materialized. Banks, cafes, funeral homes, beauty shops, restaurants, and other businesses were never a part of this community. However, a few makeshift businesses, such as ginning and milling, developed, even though Brooks Farm residents, for the most part, continued to work in the traditional occupations. Table 1 shows not only the occupational distribution and business establishments on Brooks
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*Source: Interview data, Brooks Farm community.*
Table 1. (Continued)

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Farm, but also indicated the extent to which many residents engaged in various professions simultaneously.\textsuperscript{6}

The numbers that appear in Table 1 were derived from interview data and were supported by empirical data from the Bureau of the Census.\textsuperscript{7} Respondents were asked which occupation they and their parents held. This question helped to establish inter-generational occupations within the community.\textsuperscript{8} As Table 1 indicates, occupational distribution varied. This was due, in part, to the fact that many of Brooks Farm residents worked in several occupations. While an individual primarily worked in agriculture, he or she also engaged in teaching, preaching, and home businesses. For example, Edward Scott, Sr. was a landowner, and as a result, his primary occupation was in agriculture, while he also worked as a miller, earning an income from working in his molasses mill.\textsuperscript{9} More important, by owning land and a mill, Scott provided jobs for landless residents as well as family members.\textsuperscript{10} As the years progressed, the number of individuals employed in the Brooks Farm community changed with in- and out-migration and the death of elderly residents. Nearly everyone on Brooks Farm worked until death. No one, prior to 1970, retired unless illnesses caused them to discontinue working.\textsuperscript{11} As a result, the land in the Brooks Farm community continued to provide for a large labor force.

It should be pointed out that residents of the Brooks Farm community were primarily employed by P. H. Brooks and Company between 1920-1947 and as a result, they earned their living from Brooks. For each of the occupational categories in Table 1, the numbers represent a person,
except for agriculture, where family units were employed. Thus, Brooks and landowners in the community employed a number of families. However, the labor force was much larger because women and children were expected to work even though they were not singled out in the contract arrangements. In agriculture, persons worked as field hands (laborers) and farmers (sharecroppers, tenants, and owners). Until 1950, Brooks, in addition to supplying employment in agriculture, also provided domestic jobs. While men worked as gardeners and handy persons around the headquarters and homes, women were hired to cook and to do laundry.

Local businesses in the community included ginning, milling, bar keeping, and wholesaling. While Brooks owned the majority of these, some residents owned their own gins, mills, and commissary stores. Robert McCoy, for example, built gins and mills, while Maggie Jenkins and Ella Hearon operated small general stores. Brooks did not invest in taverns, so all jobs provided by this business were created by the residents. The tavern business was small and provided an income for only the owner and his family.

Brooks employed more individuals in the milling, ginning, and wholesale industries. His gins, mills, and commissary stores were much larger, and therefore, required more laborers. Until his death in 1947, Brooks continued to provide employment at the gins, mills, and stores. However, as farms became mechanized and the need for saw and molasses mills decreased, jobs in these occupations were slowly removed to the town of Drew. The commissary store continued to employ residents as individuals opted to trade within the community as opposed
to purchasing grocery and other items from town. Perhaps this choice was made because many items at Brooks' store could be purchased on credit. 19 Employees at Brooks' store worked as janitors, stockers, and dockers who loaded and unloaded trucks. 20 Because every kind of household item and farm supply were sold at the store, men were employed in larger numbers than women. This was due, in part, to the amount of weight that had to be lifted as well as the idea that men and women occupied certain jobs. 21

Many residents combined occupations such as teaching, preaching, craftsman, home business, and midwifery with farming. In fact, all occupations were combined with farming. 22 Many continued to farm while making it known within the community that they were available to teach and preach. When work was available, they could earn a modest income from working in these professions. 23 These circumstances also existed for craftsmen who, as carpenters, brick and stone masons, painters, blacksmiths, and shoemakers, earned additional wages by doing odd jobs in the community and in Drew. 24 Although everyone in the community could sew, dress hair, wash their own clothes and produce their own dairy products and eggs, many women earned extra money by offering their services for a small fee. In the event that an individual needed a nice attire for a wedding or some other social functions, residents generally sought out persons who could sew extremely well to make suits, formals, and other outfits. "And since folk want something nice and that would last, they didn't mind paying someone else, other than they wife, to make it 'cause you was gone be using it a lot." 25 Consequently, seamstresses in the community earned an extra income by hiring out. 26 Hairdressers,
dairy and egg producers, and boarders offered their services in similar fashion and, therefore, managed to earn an income. Furthermore, a considerable number of individuals worked as wage workers, offering their labor for any available job. For instance, if someone needed their drainages cleaned, trailers "trumped," water furrows dug, or seeds planted, they employed individuals as wage workers. These were usually the teenagers who worked cheaper than adults.

Finally, the smallest number of people earned an income from delivering babies and mail. In the Brooks Farm community, the Bedford Post Office employed three persons for a period of thirty years until it was removed from the community in the 1950s. Unlike mail services, medical services, in the form of midwifery, continued to be a viable profession for those who had the skills and credentials to deliver babies. Although there was never a large number of women delivering infants, twenty women, over fifty years, earned an income, ranging from $10 to $25 per baby between 1920-1970. Like many of the occupations, midwifery was combined with farming.

Landownership was the basis of the agricultural economy on Brooks Farms. Although many residents did not purchase land until the 1940s, some had acquired small holdings during the 1920s. Land was acquired in various ways and has followed a pattern typical to other communities where small holdings have existed. Table 2 shows land tenure in the Brooks Farm community.

As Table 2 shows, landowners were always a minority in terms of numbers. They never outnumbered the landless. During the 1920s, six
Table 2. Brooks Farm population by land tenure, 1920-1970\textsuperscript{a}

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population in households</th>
<th>% landed</th>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}Source: Land Record, Leflore County Court House, Greenwood, Mississippi, 1920-1970.

households out of sixty owned land. These were small acreages, averaging approximately 15 acres per family.\textsuperscript{33} The holdings had been purchased from both the state and from Brooks. However, during the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, these few black landowners lost their land.\textsuperscript{34} Many of these small farms were purchased by Brooks and refinanced to the former owner. Consequently, some blacks in the Brooks Farm community managed to farm their own holdings during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{35} Between 1930 and 1940, the number of black families owning land in this community increased from 6 to 11.\textsuperscript{36} This small increase resulted from in-migration. As more people moved into the community, the new migrants brought money and usually a small deposit for "down payment on a few acres of land."\textsuperscript{37} Moreover, as families obtained better wages, the old residents increasingly used their savings to purchase land.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, by the 1940s there were 45 families in the Brooks Farm community who owned land, 57 during the 1950s, while 46 landowning families were
residents of the community during the 1960s.  

The size of the holdings varied, ranging from as little as forty acres to as much as three hundred acres. For many, the original purchases made by the first generation remained the same. Few families added to their holdings. If additional land was needed, some chose to rent from elderly owners. As the cost of living rose and taxes increased, the original holdings became too small to support a family. Therefore, some of the larger landowners, like Jodie Hearon and Edward Scott, chose to rent land outside the community. More important, as children got older, many of them moved because there was not enough land in the family that could be divided among them to live comfortably. Only a few could afford to rent outside the community when land was available. More important, by the time children were adults, their parents were still alive and as a result, they had to go elsewhere to earn a living.

Land acquisition in the Brooks Farm community was primarily of two forms. It was purchased and inherited. A typical example of the manner in which Brooks Farm residents acquired land can be seen in the transaction that occurred between Brooks and some of the residents of the Brooks Farm community. The circumstances surrounding Stanfield Jackson's agreement served as an example. The deed to the land that Jackson purchased from Brooks stated that the former would pay the latter $3,412.50 for forty acres, at 5 percent interest, over a period of thirteen years. One annual payment was due each year. Brooks held a lien on the land until all payments had been received. In this land
deal, as it was with all of the ones Brooks made within the community, buyers had access to the roads lying within the plantation. They could not, however, "interfere with the efficient use of and the growing of crops on the lands adjoining the plantation roads."\textsuperscript{49} The deed stipulated that the buyers would pay all taxes and special assessments levied against their holdings.\textsuperscript{50}

Between 1920 and 1970, the percentage of landownership within the community fluctuated, with twenty-five percent of the families on Brooks Farm owning land over fifty years. As the population increased, the proportion and the number of landowners did not steadily increase although it was important for each family to own their land.\textsuperscript{51} Landownership was the major source of status, prestige, power, and security on Brooks Farm. It also provided the basis for community pride, something that set Brooks Farm apart.\textsuperscript{52}

When land was inherited, it, too, was weighed with conditions. The recipients were usually a spouse or children or both. If there was a surviving spouse, the husband or wife took possession of the property unless a will stipulated otherwise.\textsuperscript{53} For example, when Margaret Ball's husband, Dick Ball, died, she inherited the land, house, workstock, and all other possessions they owned.\textsuperscript{54} Likewise, the death of Lue Ella Allen left her husband, Pleas Allen, with all the family property. The son, Willie Allen, was to inherit this property upon P. Allen's death. In the event that Willie Allen did not live to inherit the land and house, his eight children were to become heirs of the estate.\textsuperscript{55} Generally, an effort was made to keep land within the family.\textsuperscript{56} When
Edward Scott, Sr. died in 1957, he divided his estate equally among his children. If one family member decided to sell their land or other possessions, they were expected to offer their holdings to a brother or sister or extended kin. For some individuals, it was important for the land to remain within the community and in the possession of blacks. Therefore, in order for heirs to claim their inheritance, they had to sign a statement, agreeing to such.

The majority of the parents in this community did not leave a will, and the probate followed common law. The farm was divided equally among the children. Since it was common for black farmers to be in debt, not every case of intestate inheritance proceeded without problems. When this was the case and claims were pressed against the estate, land and personal property could be sold at public auction in order to clear the indebtedness. However, in some instances, families pooled their resources and paid the debt so that the land could remain in the family and community. This was possible because many of the landowners in the community did not die until the late 1950s or early 1960s when living conditions had improved and families were earning better incomes. More important, many of their siblings and older children had moved north to find employment. As a result, when financial assistance was needed, family members, working in the factories and plants in the cities, could send money to save the farm from foreclosure or public sale.

For individuals in the Brooks Farm community whose parents managed to leave a debt-free farm, life was not any easier. The cost of living made it almost impossible for a family unit to survive off the holdings
left to them during the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, members of the second generation were forced to make critical choices. Regardless of the size of their holdings or the lack of production, taxes on the property they inherited had to be paid. If they remained in the Brooks Farm community on the small acreages they inherited, many would encounter difficulties earning a living. Without additional employment to supplement the income they earned from crop production, heirs could lose their land. For many, the answer to this dilemma was out-migration.

Between 1950 and 1960, individuals migrating from the community were, primarily, those who had no land or too small a farm to be profitable. As land was parceled out to the children of the second and third generations, a pattern of absentee ownership developed, especially for smaller holdings. If one decided to farm in the community, he had to farm not only his own parcel, but his siblings' as well.

Consequently, kinship bonds were reflected in the patterns of land acquisition that emerged during the early years of the twentieth century. New landowners were tied by birth or marriage to first generation landowners. The gradual increase in landownership involved a division of the original holding into small parcels. These were not large enough to sustain individual families. Therefore, intergenerational holdings caused financially abled individuals not to purchase land in large amounts since families continued to possess and pass on their holdings. Between 1940 and 1950, all the available land in the Brooks Farm community had been purchased by these
black families.

Because of the love for land and family, few of the aging farmers offered even small home lots for sale to persons outside their own families. When land passed to individuals outside of the family or the Brooks Farm community, it usually happened because the owner did not have any surviving family member or relatives who were interested in farming. Between 1950 and 1970, three hundred fifty acres passed to new holders or non-kin. Essentially, the heirs of the first and second generations controlled the land.

Patterns of landownership and acquisition in the Brooks Farm community did not change household structure. In some of the black farming communities, when land became scarce and could not be purchased outright, the result was out-migration of the husband, who went to the city to find employment. The wife, however, remained in the community with her family or friends, working in the fields or as a domestic. The idea was for the men to secure employment and send back money to help the family until he was able to move them north. Some families succeeded in this venture, while others failed. For families who never reunited, a newly and identifiable group of female-headed households emerged. This household structure was different from the landowners, tenants, or croppers in the sense that it was not a nuclear family. Because the woman was forced to take care of the family, she often moved her mother or other relatives into the household. As more people moved into the household, opportunity for survival increased significantly. In the Brooks Farm community, however, these factors were not evident. When
migration became the answer to economic pressures placed upon the land, people migrated in family units. Thus, female-headed households were never a significant aspect of community life on Brooks Farm between 1920-1970.  

However, land patterns did create a household structure, comprised of single household units headed by males, because the size of the parcels were not sufficient to provide for an entire family. A few single men, without children, headed their own households and farmed. Although they comprised a small percent in the community population, they provided labor and economic support to the schools and churches. Two of the men rented small holdings, while the others worked as laborers. Because single men were generally too poor to farm independently, some farmed cooperatively in order to afford labor or to provide themselves with room and board. Ned Smith and Walter Beamon each headed households composed, not only of themselves, but four other men. These developments were the result of domestic arrangements designed to aid poor blacks who wished to farm.

Indeed, the development of the Brooks Farm community was determined by landownership. Before credit was extended to residents, land had to be owned. Ownership determined whether money could be borrowed. Purchases could be charged or bought on credit if property of some kind was owned. The majority of the lenders wanted land because it could be taken from blacks for a small sum and could be cultivated or sold for thousands of dollars. In some instances, if the borrowers
did not own land or other forms of property, credit was not extended to
them. When money was requested to buy land, institutions took the
financing of these kinds of deals more seriously even though they
otherwise hesitated to help blacks.

Because blacks in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta tended not to be
property holders, many continued to borrow from landlords or local
merchant until the plantation system dissolved during the machine
age. For the most part, the credit system in this region operated
similar to the one established by plantation owners during the second
half of the nineteenth century. Under these arrangements, the landlord
or the local merchant usually extended credit to blacks because neither
community members nor financial institutions would loan them money.
Items such as furniture and household appliances and automobiles were
purchased on a long-term basis and could be repossessed if payments were
not made. The merchants, with their general stores, were responsible
for supplying credit to all farmers and planters, giving them canned
goods, fine cloth, flour, sugar, seed, and farm equipment in the winter
and early spring of each year in return for a promised share of the
farmers' fall profits. This pattern of merchant-dominated economy
existed in county after county. Cotton towns such as Drew, which had
only one bank, relied heavily on the merchants. The person who
borrowed from a landlord used the crop as collateral. When he borrowed
from a local merchant, he used the crop, land, or some other form of
property.

Throughout the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, county merchants were
charged anywhere from 3 to 15 percent interest by wholesale merchants and suppliers for their goods.\textsuperscript{95} The local merchants not only passed these expenses along to rural consumers, but made a prosperous living by extending credit for periods of less than one year at extraordinarily high rates.\textsuperscript{96} Part of the reason for these exorbitant rates was that the majority of communities in the Delta contained only one or two stores within a radius of ten or fifteen miles.\textsuperscript{97} Sometimes an affluent merchant would purchase property and become a landlord or manager of sharecroppers; occasionally, the planters themselves went into the grocery store business.\textsuperscript{98} Generally, a single owner of a store or group of stores developed a small but tight monopoly for himself at the expense of poor farmers and tenants in the county.\textsuperscript{99}

Black sharecroppers and small planters alike depended upon the rural merchants in the country stores throughout the Delta region to extend adequate credit during each growing season.\textsuperscript{100} These county merchants, who were often in debt to their regional suppliers and investors, demanded that cotton be planted. As a result, many black farmers who might have planted corn or other vegetables for their families were forced to grow cotton, which led to further depletion of the soil and annual reductions in yields. Cotton's monopoly across the Delta made millions of dollars for white planters, affluent merchants, businessmen, and cotton market speculators.\textsuperscript{101} It also degraded black and white labor, depleted the soil, and concentrated the bulk of the best farmland in the hands of wealthy planters.\textsuperscript{102}

Residents of the Brooks Farm community did not experience problems
with local merchants in the same way that many blacks and poor white farmers in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta encountered them. Between 1920 and 1950, Brooks and Company provided tenants, croppers, and day laborers with credit so they, who were willing to take the risk, could become landowners. In all of these arrangements, the crop was corroborated until land could be used as collateral. The numbers in Table 3 represent families who owned land that was used to secure credit. The entire population is not represented in this table because everyone in the Brooks Farm community did not own land. The majority of the families came to the community offering only their labor, which P. H. Brooks and Company capitalized. They utilized the labor to maximize profits. Table 3 shows that Brooks and Company was the dominant lending agent, extending credit to sixty-seven families with property between 1920 and 1950. Until the late 1940s when he died from lung cancer, Brooks continued to supply the community with credit.

Credit activities in the Brooks Farm community changed significantly after 1950. Between 1950-1959, the primary lenders were residents within the community. According to participants in this study, the majority of property holders preferred to borrow money from each other because the interest was lower and the lenders were more understanding than any of the formal institutions. In this decade, eighty-five business deals, or forty-five percent, occurred between individuals in the community. Banking institutions comprised the second highest percentage, twenty-four percent, with forty-six transactions. Not everyone who needed credit was able to obtain it from their neighbors. Resources in the community
Table 3. Lending institutions, Brooks Farm community, 1920-1970

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Land Records, Leflore county Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi.*
were limited. Hence, residents sought credit from insurance companies, gins, lumber companies, credit associations, cotton corporations, and finance companies.\textsuperscript{108} Such transactions, however, were not widespread. Within the community, sixteen agreements were made with insurance companies: four with gins; eight with lumber companies; fourteen with credit associations; fifteen with finance corporations; and ten with the Delta Board of Levee Commission.\textsuperscript{109}

Increasingly during the 1960s, Brooks Farm residents sought support outside the community. Community help decreased by fifty percent (50%).\textsuperscript{110} This led to financial deals with cotton corporations and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).\textsuperscript{111} The Staple Cotton and Land Corporation was the most active cotton corporation in the community. Between 1950-1960, it financed twenty-nine deals (ten percent) with farmers of the community.\textsuperscript{112} This organization was active until the mid-1970s when farmers in the Brooks Farm community began to seek help from the USDA in large numbers.\textsuperscript{113} Hence, the USDA financed the farm activities of eight farm families during the 1950s; ten during the 1960s; and by 1970, fifteen persons had utilized the USDA's resources.\textsuperscript{114} However, the real impact of this government organization was not felt until the 1970s and thereafter, when some residents began participating in government programs.\textsuperscript{115} Since 1970, the majority of the farmers in this community had taken advantage of the programs offered by the federal government.

Between 1960 and 1970, two important agencies, created specifically to meet the needs of black farmers, became active in this community. The
Black Economic Research Center and the Emergency Land Fund provided assistance to ten families between 1965-1970. Because these agencies were not organized until the late 1960s, their impact would be difficult to determine since the majority of the landowners were in debt to other lending institutions by the time these new institutions became active within the Brooks Farm community.

In the majority of the deals made between residents of the Brooks Farm community and the lending agents or institutions, land or the crop was used as collateral. The majority of the lenders preferred that farmers in the Brooks Farm community use their land. Although institutions were willing to extend credit to these farmers, neither their lives nor farm business was necessarily improved. Crop failures, low prices, high interest rates, and a lack of managerial skills acted against the success and profitability of black farms.

Farmers in the Brooks Farm community used their loans and charging privileges to clear accounts and to begin production. Seeds, feeds, fertilizers, and equipment were purchased from local businessmen in Drew, Ruleville, Minter City, and Schalter. In the spring of the year, the ground was prepared for planting and cultivation. During the summer, the crops were "cleaned out" as women and children chopped the cotton and corn, weeded the beans, and removed all grasses from the truck crops, picked and sold at the local market. Okra, cucumbers, beans, tomatoes, fresh garden corn, sugar cane, sorghum, and fruits were sold commercially. Truck crops matured when cotton and soybeans were waiting to bloom and to be harvested. In the fall, beginning in late August
and lasting through the end of October, families picked cotton and cut their soybeans. Soybeans, however, were not grown in large quantities on Brooks Farm until the 1940s. Cotton was the cash crop and it dominated Brooks Farm and the Delta's economy over half a century. During the winter months, farmers continued to disk their lands when the weather permitted. Some even planted winter wheat, oats, hay, and vegetables.

Farmers in the Brooks Farm community grew a variety of crops. Cotton was the main staple. Soybeans, rice, wheat, oats, and vegetable crops were also grown. Table 4 demonstrates the cultivation patterns in the Brooks Farm community, 1920-1970. The numbers are representative of the fifty individuals who participated in this study. Individuals were asked to describe the crop(s) that they or their parents raised during the fifty years under question.

Table 4. Crop production of individual farmers in the Brooks Farm community, 1920-1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck crops</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^Source: Interview data, Brooks Farm community.
Of all the staples produced, cotton was grown in larger percentages. It also comprised the largest acreages, averaging 65 acres over fifty years. Sixty-five acres of cotton were grown on farms with eighty or more acres. Between 1920 and 1970, each of the participants in this study was a member of households where cotton dominated agricultural production. If a family like George Turner's, for example, farmed forty acres, twenty-five would be in cotton, while the rest of the land was utilized for growing vegetable crops and grains. Cotton was always supplemented by one of the minor staples, soybeans, wheat, and oats. Because most families desired to be self-sufficient in order to decrease cost, each produced their food. Thus, next to cotton, more families produced their own meats, eggs, and vegetables. Families continued to raise livestock. Hogs, chickens, turkeys, ducks, guineas, and cows were raised. Cows were raised in small numbers because pastures were limited. Livestock and vegetables were grown for consumption and commercial sale. Even after Brooks' death, sorghum and grain crops continued to be important in the Brooks Farm community, although they were not produced in large acreages. As the chart shows, staple crop production increasingly played a significant role in the economic structure of Brooks Farm. Over the years, farmers in this community tried to diversify their production. Rice and soybean production were added. As these crops proved profitable and less labor intensive, many families started to devote larger acreages to them, even though cotton remained the dominant staple. Rice was never as popular as soybeans because it required irrigation and more capital to produce even
though it was believed to have been less soil exhausting. However, the price of cotton and the lack of equipment to effectively cultivate and harvest soybeans and rice caused many to grow cotton. With family labor, cotton could be harvested without machines, while machinery was essential in harvesting rice and soybeans.139

Generally, farmers in the Brooks Farm community experienced few, if any, problems locating individuals to help produce the crops.140 They utilized their family. Women and children were the primary source of labor. If additional workers were needed, day laborers were hired from the community.141

The most significant change that occurred in farming, from a labor perspective, was in management. Prior to 1950, nearly everyone had worked for P. H. Brooks and Company. Brooks gave the orders and provided direction as well as financial assistance. When he died, the individuals to whom he sold the land became the new leaders and decision-makers within the community. The landowners were responsible for providing instructions, goods, and supplies not only for themselves, but for those who also worked for them. Consequently, landowners in the Brooks Farm community were faced with questions that managers of all businesses had to answer. Who would they employ? What would they pay? What would be the hours? Under what arrangements would employees work?145

Since more than half of the residents in the community did not own land, provisions were made for them to earn a living. Many sharecropped, rented, and worked as day laborers and tenant farmers. Croppers, day
laborers, and tenants did not look to make lots of money, but to survive since the smallholdings that they worked were not sufficient to produce high yields or large sums of money.\textsuperscript{147} Below, Table 5 shows the composition of the work force in the Brooks Farm community. The numbers are based upon information collected from the participants in this study who were asked if they ever provided labor to landowners as sharecroppers, tenants, day workers, or renters.\textsuperscript{148} Table 5 does not only show labor composition, but also demonstrates how land was farmed and by whom.\textsuperscript{149} The numbers represent labor not provided by family members.

Table 5. Labor in the Brooks Farm community, 1940-1970\textsuperscript{a}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharecroppers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day laborers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash renters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}Source: Interview data, Brooks Farm community.

Participants in this study were asked if they or their parents employed additional help or allowed some of their acres to be farmed by others. The numbers in the table represent the number of individuals, out of fifty, who provided labor under different arrangements. For example, the number 15 in the sharecropping category during the 1940s does not mean that there were only fifteen (15) sharecropping families in
the community, but fifteen of the fifty persons interviewed worked on a 
sharecropping unit during this time.\textsuperscript{150} Table 5 shows that day laborers 
were employed in larger numbers. These were usually families who did not 
want to take the "risk of working their own crops."\textsuperscript{151} Many of these 
individuals feared that they would not have been able to make a profit at 
settlement time.\textsuperscript{152} Hence, they chose to work by the hours when work was 
available.\textsuperscript{153} Women and children who worked as day laborers were 
employed seasonally. They found plenty of work during the summer and 
fall.\textsuperscript{154} Their husbands usually worked in the fields, driving the mules 
and tractors and digging water furrows, and completing other tasks 
assigned to them.\textsuperscript{155}

When residents became landowners in the 1940s, some often permitted 
the landless to farm five to ten acres as sharecroppers.\textsuperscript{156} These small 
acres were planted in cotton, which provided a cash income.\textsuperscript{157} Under 
this arrangement, the landowners provided the equipment, seeds, and other 
supplies.\textsuperscript{158} The tenant farmers, on the other hand, provided their own 
equipment and labor, while agreeing to pay the owner with a share of the 
crop.\textsuperscript{159} Apparently, many families in the Brooks Farm community 
preferred to work under these kinds of arrangements. For example, Edward 
Scott, Jr. employed fifty-four families during the 1950s.\textsuperscript{160} Jodie 
Hearon's work force consisted of fifty families.\textsuperscript{161} Steve Hearon 
permitted ten families to work for him.\textsuperscript{162} James Walter employed five 
families.\textsuperscript{163} Lewis Wilchie provided employment for three families.\textsuperscript{164} 
Alex Scott allowed twelve families to work for him.\textsuperscript{165} Other landowners 
also relied on a labor force other than family members.\textsuperscript{166} In some
instances, some of the older children, who desired to farm but who did not become owners, worked as tenants and croppers on their parents' estate. 167 C. J. Hearon, son of Jodie Hearon, worked as a sharecropper on his father's farm. He worked twenty-five acres of land during the 1950s. 168 In another example, some of the parents in the community rented land from some of the elderly and allowed their children to sharecrop on the lands they rented. George Turner rented land from Stanfield Jackson and permitted his son and family, J. C. and Fannie Turner, to sharecrop on the land. 169

Even though the majority of the farm families in the Brooks Farm community did not own land, they, however, managed to acquire some property. Table 6 shows the personal property ownership of twenty-four individuals who did not own land in the Brooks Farm community.

Among the twenty-four landless participants in this study, over seventy-five percent owned household goods such as furniture and

Table 6. Personal property of non-landholders, Brooks Farm community, 1940-1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household goods</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm machinery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic animals</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aSource: Interview data, Brooks Farm community.
Seventy-five percent owned tools such as hoes, shovels, rakes, and wrenches. More than eighty percent, between 1940-1970, owned domestic animals which included pork, beef, and poultry. While not owning automobiles in large numbers during the 1940s, forty-one percent owned them during the 1950s; eighty-three percent had acquired a truck or a car by 1970. Because they worked as croppers and day laborers, housing and farm machinery were provided by the landowners.

The real challenge, however, for landowners, who employed a labor force, was to create good work relations with their employees. Most of the working arrangements were verbal agreements, and residents believed they were workable and effective. West and Mary Sargent sharecropped and worked as day laborers for Jodie Hearon. The Sargents believed that "he was fair and hold up the end of his bargain." Many individuals suggested that it was good for them to work on "Brooksy" "'cause they wasn't worry 'bout being cheated and 'cause you just knowed that a black person understood some things a little better even though they expect you to do your work and to earn the money you was getting paid." Even though landowners in the Brooks Farm community could not pay wages as high as those offered by some white planters, they, nevertheless, "gave you some kind of respect and want to see you do well." For this reason, employers in the Brooks Farm community did not have a high turnover rate. Instead, many people lived on "Brooksy" for years, while others stayed until death. When migration occurred, it was not because landowners and their workers were having endless conflicts. Instead, it became difficult to earn a living in farming as
croppers, tenants, or day laborers during the 1960s. Moreover, since mechanization made it possible for farmers to reduce their labor supply, many left because machines were replacing human labor. Thus, mechanization also became a factor in out-migration.\textsuperscript{182}

On Brooks Farm, landowners believed that their workers were cooperative. "We didn't have much trouble getting people to work and to do the jobs you need them to do."\textsuperscript{183} More important, "most of them tried to be careful in using the equipment so that it wouldn't get tore up."\textsuperscript{184} However, relations did not operate smoothly when workers were careless and damaged the landlord's equipment.\textsuperscript{185} When workers continually misused equipment, their wages were docked and they were finally dismissed.\textsuperscript{186} When landlords failed to provide promised assistance, workers left to work for a different person, either in Brooks Farm or from white farmers in the area.\textsuperscript{187} Such dissatisfactions were rare, however, and both the landowners and landless maintained that work relations were productive.\textsuperscript{188}

Moderate application of scientific farming aided labor and crop production in this farming community. P. H. Brooks was a progressive farmer who introduced Brooks Farm workers to methods of scientific farming. Brooks used fertilizers and insecticides. He encouraged the planting of nitrogenous plants to replenish the soil. He advised his tenants and croppers to rotate their crops and instructed them in the use of farm equipment in order to improve production and efficiency on the farm. He informed his workers about plant distribution and hoeing practices.\textsuperscript{189}
When Brooks died, scientific farming in the Brooks Farm community declined but did not completely disappear. This was because residents of Brooks Farm did not have the capital and credit to continue what Brooks had taught them. Consequently, they had to adjust their scientific knowledge to their economic circumstances. As a result, many continued to plant many acres in cotton, while decreasing allocations for soil replenishing crops. Cotton was money and every available acre was used to grow it. This meant that crops were not going to be rotated as often as they had during Brooks' tenure. Neither would diversification be considered as seriously as it had been during Brooks' lifetime. Because they were labor intensive farmers, the use of commercial fertilizers would decrease, especially among those who farmed less than fifty acres of land. As long as families were large and laborers available, crops were kept clean without the use of weed killers. They were plowed regularly, hoping to stimulate growth through constant cultivation. Large landowners, on the other hand, continued to use some commercial fertilizers. They also rotated crops and invested in crops other than cotton. But even they could not farm at the level of most plantation owners or large farmers during the 1950s and thereafter.

As years passed, farmers on Brooks Farm slowly adopted scientific techniques. Instead of purchasing large amounts of fertilizer, they invested in machinery. Cotton pickers and combines were purchased by a small number of people. With better equipment and maximum utilization of the labor force, especially for chopping and picking, farmers believed
that they could increase profits. Farmers in the Brooks Farm community did not combine chemical and fertilizer usage with machinery until the 1960s. During the 1960s, crop rotation seemed to have become important. Some of the cotton patches were turned into pasture for raising livestock. A few farmers invested in the cattle business, while others heavily engaged in producing pork for the market. During the 1960s, land was "laid out" (not farmed) in order to maintain the nitrogen contents of the soil. Farmers in this community learned more about farming scientifically as they became involved in government programs during the 1970s and 1980s.

Marketing the crops appeared to have been a rather simple process. Once the crops were harvested, farmers sought out agents to purchase them. In a sharecropping or tenancy arrangement with the landowners on Brooks Farm, the tenant or cropper marketed the crop and divided the receipts with the landowner. For owners and renters, the marketing of the crop was strictly their responsibility. Once the product passed inspection, negotiations began. If the buyer believed the asking price was too high, he tried to negotiate for a reduced price. If the farmer was not happy with the price he had been offered, he could find other buyers. This, however, was not easy because black farmers' cotton was believed to be of poorer quality than white farmers'. In most instances, however, farmers in the Brooks Farm community maintained that they were treated fairly.

Farmers in the Brooks Farm community experienced their greatest problems as managers. Most had difficulty organizing their farm as a
business. To be sure, it was important to "own land and to be your own boss," but it was more important to invest profits in ways that increased income. Although farmers often cleared something at the end of the year, they often failed to use that money to improve their prospects. "If we would've recognize how important it was to save the little bit of money we had earn, so that we could begin some farming on our own, we wouldn't had to be asking for a furnish or a loan and we might even have done more better in making the farm make more money." Many of the residents believed that if they would have taken the money and invested it in the farm, they would have been able to furnish themselves, while avoiding the risk of "tying the land up in debt and losing it to the folk who held a lien on your land." Farmers on Brooks Farm suggested that they would have been more successful if they had "not been satisfied with breaking even or with farming from one year to the other." More important, "we probably would have gone farther in farming, 'specially with buying more land outside the community." According to farmers in Brooks Farm, profits were made, but many farmers and laborers, instead of saving the income, used it to go on vacation during the winter months. "They would leave from down here, go up north to visit, and spend all they money drinking and having a good time, and would come back home with no money, looking for someone to furnish them or to borrow money from." In the Brooks Farm community, farm management forced croppers, tenants, and owner-operators to make critical decisions. Questions, such as when to book or sell the crop; when to buy equipment; should the crop
be insured; which crop to plant; how to complete a job with less cost, required decision-making skills which many of them did not possess. \(^{220}\) A lack of education and business skills made it difficult for these farmers to think profitably and to turn their family farms into profitable businesses. \(^{221}\) After all, what many of them knew about farming and managing a farm business, they acquired through hands-on experience and from observing the methods employed by previous generations. \(^{222}\) As a result, crops were not always sold at the most competitive price. \(^{223}\) The most efficient machinery for the size of the holdings was not always purchased. \(^{224}\) For example, some of the farmers could have used tractors with more power so that they could cover more ground. \(^{225}\) The old Farmall and John Deere continued to be used by many. \(^{226}\) It is possible that more profits could have been made had some of the farmers invested in cotton pickers and combines, instead of hiring out to custom work. \(^{227}\) Usually, their crops were not harvested until those who owned the machinery had harvested their crops first. \(^{228}\) More important, the value of the farm would have increased had the majority of these farmers recognized the importance of improving the land, farm buildings and machinery, and housing. \(^{229}\) Research on competitive wages, organization of a labor force, crop insurance, chemical composition of the soil, and alternative farming would have aided these farmers. \(^{230}\) One of the problems for farmers in the Brooks Farm community was that they did not know what was available and what was useful to them. \(^{231}\) Without assistance from agricultural extension agents and research from the agricultural experiment station, between 1940 and 1970, farmers in this
community continued to struggle with the business of farming, planning, budgeting, and record keeping.\textsuperscript{232}

Farming in the Brooks Farm community was not an easy task. Land had to be secured; capital and credit obtained; crops had to be produced and marketed; labor had to be secured and managed; and supplies and furnishings had to be provided. Despite the many struggles that farm families in this community faced, their lives and habits were controlled by landownership. Landownership was dominated by kinship, and as a result, it was limited to family members and was rarely available for sale outside the kinship. Once the original tracts were purchased from Brooks, ownership remained within the family and was passed from one generation to the next. Intergenerational holding prevented massive sale of land. As holdings were divided, the original plots became too small for heirs to survive on. Therefore, some were forced to rent both internally and outside the community. Many of the children of the first generation either lost interest in farming or left the community, believing that they could no longer make a comfortable living growing cotton. As a result, the land of the elderly became available for rent, but not to buy.\textsuperscript{233}

Still, landownership decided whether credit would be extended to members of the Brooks Farm community. Without land, it was nearly impossible to receive credit from lending institutions as well as support from government agencies and programs.

Between 1940 and 1970, landownership dictated crop production, in the sense that if a small amount of land was rented, owned, or farmed by
croppers and tenants, cotton was grown because the farms were too small to be used to produce other staples. Thus, landownership shaped cultivation patterns and in the process, determined the extent of scientific farming.

Crop rotation, mechanization, and the use of fertilizers depended on the amount of land owned and farmed. Many of the croppers, tenants, and owner-operators did not use the most efficient chemicals, plant nitrogenous plants to replenish the soil, or use the most advanced farming techniques because it would have been too costly, and the small plots that they farmed would not have produced enough yields or bales to cover the indebtedness.

The pattern of labor that evolved within the community was determined by landownership. As long as the landless worked as croppers, renters, and tenants, labor was available to the landowners. And as long as day laborers could earn a living by helping to work the crops, ownership of land was not important to them, since the land had provided a rural economy that fed, housed, and helped those with and without land earn a living. This was important for residents of the Brooks Farm community who depended on an agricultural economy for survival.
Endnotes

1 Family life was at the center of economic development in the sense that family labor was used to foster economic and community growth, especially in farming.

2 With their limited resources, farmers in the Brooks Farm community realized what they needed to do in order to be successful in farming. They knew the importance of securing a cooperative workforce; they recognized the need to obtain credit; they also knew that it was important to seek the highest price for their produce. Although they were aware of these needs, they did not manage their profits in the most efficient way. This problem, coupled with fluctuating market prices, often squeezed their financial resources to the point where some struggled to continue farming. The result for some was indebtedness.

3 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


5 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

6 Every family in the Brooks Farm community combined farming with additional occupations, such as milling, ginning, or teaching, preaching, or carpentry.

7 Census data for occupational distribution in Leflore County showed that blacks primarily held these occupations. While Leflore County does not comprise Brooks Farm only, the data, nevertheless, reflect occupation distribution in Brooks Farm as well.

8 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. In the Brooks Farm community, many of the residents and their offspring occupied occupations similar to their parents and grandparents.

9 Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.
Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Ibid.

Leroy Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 16 August 1988. Ella Hearon, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989. These individuals' stories were supported by residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Francis Walker, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 1 May 1987.

Ibid.


Information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Mae Liza Williams, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 April
1987; Leroy Vassel, personal interview, Minter City, Mississippi, 16 August 1988. Records in Leflore County Courthouse showed that the Bedford Post Office existed. Many individuals listed their address at the Bedford Post Office prior to the 1950s.

30 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

31 Ibid. See also Land Records, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi. See particularly sections 3, 5, 6, 7 and 15.

32 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

33 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. See also Land Records, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi.


35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Theodore Hooper, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 8 July 1989.

38 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

39 Ibid. See also Land Records, 1920–1940, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi. See especially sections 5, 6, and 7.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Conclusion drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

43 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. See Land Records, 1920–1970, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid. See Alfred H. Stone, "The Negro Farmer in the Mississippi

46 Ibid.

47 Land Records, Leflore County, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi. See sections 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 15.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid. See especially sections 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11, with P. H. Brooks's signature.

50 Ibid.

51 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


53 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

54 Margaret Ball, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 April 1867.


56 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

57 Edward Scott, Sr.'s Estate, Probate Records, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi, July 1957.
Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. These conditions have also existed in some other black communities. For discussion, see Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), pp. 61-72.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

A typical example of land acquired by non-kin would be the purchase of Steve Hearon's farm by Moses Scott and Annie Williams's plot by Earnest McWilliams. See Land Records, Leflore County, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi. See sections 5 and 6.

This pattern has been identified by Elizabeth Rauh Bethel in Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1981), pp. 121-123.
Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid. See also Bethel, Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community, pp. 61-72 and 95-117.

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96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

104 Ibid.

105 Conclusion drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

106 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

107 Land Records, Leflore County, Leflore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi. See sections 5 and 6, especially.

108 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. See also Land Records, sections 5 and 6, of Leflore County.
Leflore County.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid. The Emergency Land Fund was sponsored by the Black Economic Research Center. This agency was involved not only in providing technical assistance, but in financially underwriting the cost of keeping troubled black landholdings viable and in black hands.


118 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

119 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from residents of the Brooks Farm community.


121 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid. In Mississippi, 1920-1970, cotton was the dominant staple grown throughout the state. See also McLemore, A History of Mississippi,
Station, Miscellaneous Number 10, June 1952), 53 pp.; Robert D. Bell, Progress Report on Organization of Negro Owner Operated Farms in Northeast Mississippi (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 529, February 1955), 92 pp.

128 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

129 George Turner, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

130 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community. For more information on crop production, see Fred T. Cooper, Jr., J. M. Anderson, and Arthur M. Heagler, Crop Budgets and Planning Data for Major Farm Enterprises in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 794, 1945), 55 pp.; Marvin Guin and D. W. Farrin, An Economic Study of Truck Farming in Copiah County, Mississippi, 1938-1940 (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 361, June 1941), 35 pp.; Roy Kuykendall, Fertilizers Response and Requirements for Profitable Crop Production in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 333, July 1939), 11 pp.; Roy Kuykendall, Small Grain Production (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 334, September 1939), 19 pp.; M. G. Vaiden, J. O. Smith, and W. E. Ayres, Making Cotton Cheaper (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 298, June 1932), 15 pp.; and H. A. York, Soybeans in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta (Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 331, June 1939, 31 pp.

131 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.
The idea here is to show that labor was contracted in various forms. If the land was worked by anyone other than the owner, the individual working the land or working for the owner was counted as a laborer.

The idea is to show who primarily worked the land in the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brook's Farm community.

Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.


163 Fannie Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 12 July 1989. Turner was one of the families employed by James and Sarah Walker.

164 J. G. Fountain, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 29 April 1987. Fountain's sister's family was one of the families employed by Lewis Wilchie.

165 Alex Scott, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 28 May 1988.

166 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

167 Ibid.


169 George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

170 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 Ibid.

176 West and Mary Sargent, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

177 Mary Sargent, personal interview, Memphis, Tennessee, 3 July 1989.

178 Willie M. Curry, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 30 May 1987.

179 George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June
Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted in the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.


Edward Scott, Jr., personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 7 July 1989.

Ibid.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.
Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Why crop rotation became important during this time is not clear. My assumption, however, is that fewer people were depending on the land by the 1960s. Therefore, the number of people farming declined, thereby permitting the small holdings farmed by tenants and croppers to be worked by landowners in the community. The more land a person could rent, the more he could afford to rotate crops during the 1960s.
Ibid. Because black farmers used less chemicals and fertilizers and often farmed with inferior equipment, it was believed that their crops were not of the same quality as white farmers, because the process of production was not the same. White farmers generally used superior seeds and fertilizers and, therefore, received better quality and yield.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

George Turner, personal interview, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Earnest McWilliams, personal interviews, Drew, Mississippi, 10 June 1989.

Theodore Hooper, personal interview, Ruleville, Mississippi, 8 July 1989.


Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.


Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents of the Brooks Farm community.

Ibid.

Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in
the Brooks Farm community.

227 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

228 Information obtained from interviews conducted with residents in the Brooks Farm community.

229 Conclusion was drawn from information obtained from interviews conducted with respondents in the Brooks Farm community.

230 Ibid.

231 Ibid.

232 Ibid.

233 Ibid.

234 Ibid.
This dissertation was an examination of community life and interaction. It showed how a community of people used their ideas, values, and limited resources to establish themselves. Although they received considerable help from P. H. Brooks, these Brooks Farm residents recognized the need to further add to the knowledge and skills they acquired from generations of farming and from working for P. H. Brooks and Company. They accomplished this by extending their personal, social, and business interactions beyond the community. The automobile made this possible as well as increases in farm wages and farm income. More important, the death of Brooks forced landowners and property holders to establish business relations outside the community. As a result, the community became involved in the larger society.

Residents of the Brooks Farm community desired to be more than peons. They wanted a life free from manipulation and domination, experiences they encountered while living on various plantations before moving to Brooks Farm. The families who came to Brooks Farm had a vision of improving their livelihood. Although they did not have much upon arrival, they understood the terms established by Brooks and worked to better their lot. With the help of Brooks, many acquired farm tools and supplies, houses, household appliances, and other forms of technologies to improve their economic and social surroundings.

In order not to appear dependent, residents took the lead in building their schools and churches. Although they accepted financial
support from external initiatives, such as the Rosenwald Fund, they always believed that religious and educational training was their responsibilities. Therefore, they paid tuition, bought supplies, books, and building materials to create and manage their institutions. They organized fund raisers, like dinners and rallies to raise money, and used the wages they earned from the saw and molasses mills, gins, taverns, and domestic work to keep their churches and schools in operation. This was essential because these rural institutions were important to community development. They shaped the community social life and established morals and values that enhanced the community's goal of development and improvement.

Within the community, the family was another important institution. It reinforced the morals and values established by the church and school. Family life was important to these black farm families because much of the socialization occurred within the home. It was within the home where children learned their roles and parents established control, monitoring the development of their children from infancy to adulthood. Chapter III, "Family Life," is an example of the values people adopted in order to sustain their community, ideas, and goals in a society inhibited by prejudice and discrimination.

Individuals arrived in Brooks Farm in family units. The household structure was primarily nuclear, with parents and children comprising the household units. Although some individuals were fortunate to settle next to kin, the majority settled where vacant homes existed. Having a house next to kin was not an important issue in the community because communal
relations were close, affectionate, and compassionate. Every non-kin individual became a member of an extended household. This process established a kinship network that did not only include nuclear and extended families, but community members who were expected to contribute to each household when the need arose. This meant that individuals in the community would always have food, clothes, medical care, and help with the farm. This was significant because it made the residents equally responsible for the progress, development, and upkeep of the community and its inhabitants.

Families in Brooks Farm were large and self-sufficient prior to the 1950s. These individuals supplied themselves with food, medical and health care, clothing, and furniture. They continued to produce for consumption until they were able to participate in a mass production and consumption society. When they became financially abled, they bought furniture, clothes, and household appliances. As technology became available, they slowly purchased washing and sewing machines, gas stoves and heaters, deep freezers, refrigerators, radios, and televisions. Electricity significantly improved their homes as electric lights and running water eased the burden of housework and helped to improve sanitation and farm production within the community.

As farmers, these black families understood some of the complexities of farming. Many knew they needed land and equipment, a cooperative workforce, which was supplied primarily by family members, credit, marketing strategies, and transporting facilities to get the crops to the markets. Some recognized the importance of saving, while others failed to save.
Many recognized the significance of owning land. Therefore, they took the risk to acquire it and used the land as collateral to obtain credit to expand their operations. For some, expansion included purchasing better equipment, seeds, and commercial fertilizers, while others, in addition, rented more land or purchased it outside the community. Only a minority participated in this development.

Land was important. It dictated patterns of ownership as well as cultivation practices. If a family farmed only a few acres, 25 or less, they usually planted cotton because the holdings were too small to diversify. If forty or more acres were planted, cotton was produced on eighty-five percent on the land. The scarcity of land, especially among intergenerational holders, determined whether an individual family would farm in the community or become an absentee holder. For many, the latter proved true as divisions of original plots caused some family's holdings to be small and inefficient for large scale production. When this happened, the owner either allowed a sibling or relative to farm the land or rented it to individuals in Brooks Farm. Landownership was significant in this community because it became the basis of the economy. The majority of the people earned a living from the land and farming, between 1920 and 1970, than from any other occupation.

Technological development in the Brooks Farm community was also significant. Residents recognized the advantages of acquiring household appliances, farm machinery, and the automobile. They knew that these could help improve housework, farm production, and interaction within the community. The acquisition of technology did not only mean
improvement in health and medical care, food and nutrition, and housing, but they signaled a development in Brooks Farm similar to the larger society. Since Brooks Farm residents associated progress with being able to model their community after white communities, it was important to them that their material culture resembled the larger society even though their personal values, morals, and family life differed.

Changes in the Brooks Farm community occurred over time. As household technologies and farm equipment decreased the need for large families and a large labor force, the population slowly declined. The peak of this shift was not evident until the late 1950s and thereafter. The decline was due, in part, to out-migration and an increasing death rate among the elderly. By the 1950s, members of the first generation were dying. Research showed that the majority of the second generation's parents had died by 1960. This development coupled with the loss of the youthful population, primarily to the city and to college during the 1960s, and the displacement of workers due to mechanization, caused the population to decrease. In terms of farming, however, the community was not affected by the decline in population during the 1960s because machines supplied the labor. And it was no longer possible for day laborers, croppers, and tenants to survive in farming. They could not compete with mechanization. Institutions, on the other hand, especially the church, felt the impact of the loss because financial support declined as the population diminished.

In the economic scheme, both the men and women were important. While men's economic contribution to the family primarily consisted of
the income they earned from farming and working in the mills, women's economic contribution included farm work and the income they earned from home production. Some women sold produce, dressed hair, made clothes, and secured domestic employment to aid the farm, family, and community. Perhaps, women's greatest service, in addition to their economic contribution, was the role they played as community builders. Because men spent the majority of their time farming and conducting farm business, women accepted the role of creating extended relations as their responsibility. Therefore, they took care of the elderly and the sick; they visited homes to ensure that families had the necessities; they organized activities for socialization; and they established extended kinship within the community.

Brooks Farm community experienced some success because it was structured. Through self-help, residents organized their community around family life and used the church and school to inspire development within the community. The story of Brooks Farm is the struggle of a people to rise above peonage. Through both internal and external initiatives, they succeeded in achieving their goal of becoming a community of yeoman farmers, capable of managing their farm, family, and community.

Why is Brooks Farm important? What does an analysis of this community contribute to the study of history, particularly agricultural and rural history? Brooks Farm is significant because it adds to the limited research on black farm/rural communities. Although sociologists, historians, and economists have examined farm tenancy, farm income,
Impact of technology on rural infrastructures and household units as they related to farm and rural families, they have not researched, in great detail, the interdynamics of the community. Many of the studies are based on statistical and empirical data and lacked the human perspective. This study of the Brooks Farm community, however, attempted to combine both in order to portray an experience from the vantage point of the people who lived in Brooks Farm.

An analysis of Brooks Farm contributes to the study of history because we know very little about the human aspect of the black experience on twentieth century plantations. We know about farming systems, land use and tenure; however, we know little about people's perceptions or feelings regarding their experiences on plantations. While economic studies of twentieth century plantations are plentiful, social and cultural analyses are not. Thus, we know little about interaction between people on plantations; that is, between management and employees as well as relationships among plantation dwellers. Research would provide more insight into workers' ideas and goals, if they had any, or needs, other than those provided by the plantation owners. There are studies that describe the roles urban blacks played in building their communities. However, they are few studies that describe how blacks on twentieth century plantations used the concept of self-help to establish, control, and manage their own institutions.

Brooks Farm cannot be generalized to fit every black farm community, but it offers some analyses on the internal dynamics of a black
rural/farm community. All communities are different, but, together, they can portray a whole picture.
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