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Cover: Louisa County Courthouse, 1818-1905

THE LOUISA ECONOMY IN THE YEARS 1765-1812

Contributed by Ransom True
Charlottesville, Virginia

The economy in Louisa County in the years 1765-1812 was totally controlled by agriculture. Whatever prosperity her people enjoyed was due to the products of farm and plantation.¹ So complete was the hold of agriculture on the economic life of the county that no occupations existed which did not depend upon the farm or plantation either for raw materials or for markets. There was no independent commerce, manufacturing, or mining. The lack of the latter was somewhat surprising in view of Louisa's moderate mineral wealth, wealth that was to be tapped in the middle and latter nineteenth century.²

The variety of crops and products that were produced on farms and plantations was most bewildering. Tobacco, of course, was the most important crop raised. Grains such as wheat, corn, rye, buckwheat, and oats were grown by many. Garden crops of beans, cucumbers, greens, onions, potatoes, peas, and turnips were all items of commerce as were fruits such as apples, huckleberries, peaches, plums and watermelons. Cotton and flax were grown for clothes and hemp was raised for fiber. Virtually all types of livestock were raised including horses, mules, hogs, cattle, oxen, sheep and goats. Chickens, ducks, geese and bees were raised to provide food for the table.³

Animal and animal products were processed on the farms and plantations into bacon, beef, beeswax, butter, cheese, pork, tallow and wool and some found their way to market. Cider was made for home consumption. Brandy

1. Most of this information was based upon accounts, account books, bills, and receipts in the personal papers of a number of farmers and planters in the county during the given period. Important papers were those of Garrett Minor (1770-1800), Richard Morris (1776-1812), John Overton (1770-1800), John Ragland Jr. (1760-1769), Samuel Jr. (1780-1804), and David Watson (1798-1815). In addition to the personal papers of Louisa residents, there was substantial economic information in the accounts, appraisals, inventories, and settlements of estates. County tax records were very useful.

The personal papers were the Watson and Overton Family Papers in Alderman Library, University of Virginia; the Overton Papers in the Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary; the Garrett Minor Papers and the David Watson Papers in the U.S. Library of Congress, microfilm copy in the Virginia State Library; and the Earl Crum Papers in the private possession of Mrs. Earl Crum of Greenville, Virginia. The most significant official records of the Louisa County Court were; Louisa County, *Will Books* 1 through 6; Louisa County, *Guardians Bonds and Accounts*; Louisa County, *Land Tax Books* 1782-1810; Louisa County, *Minute Books*, 1773-1800, especially 1784; Louisa County, *Court Order Books*, 1772-1812; Louisa County, *Personal Property Tax Books*, 1782-1815 especially 1782-1786 and 1815 (which was a veritable goldmine); Louisa County, *Judgments, 1792, 1805-1806; and Louisa County, Executions, 1805-1806*. Some information came from, Estate of James Dabney, "Account Book, 1806-1812"; Louisa County (?), "An Inventory and Appraisalment of the Estate of James Dabney's Pottiesville Store (?), Blotter F. Commencing March, 1817"; Pottiesville Store (?), "Blotter K, Commencing November, 1818" and Louisa County, *Stray Book and the Louisa County Deed Books*.

2. Ransom B. True, 3,000 Louisa Placenames, "unpublished manuscript" list some thirty-three mines, including four copper mines, eleven gold mines, ten iron mines, six sulphur mines and two unspecified mines.

3. David Watson, "Militia Accounts, 1813" in David Watson Papers, listed payments to Louisa County people for most of these crops. See also Garrett Minor, *Minute Book, 1787-1789*" in David Watson Papers.

TABLE III-1

Size of Landholdings in Acres

Category	1782	1794	1810
Number of Landowners	692	891	1,092
Mean Size	404	334	310
Median Size	208	200	197
Percent of Owners			
Owning X Acres			
1- 99	10	14	17
100-199	29	31	34
200-299	22	18	18
300-399	5	10	6
400-699	21	17	14
700-999	6	5	6
1000+	7	5	5
Percent of Land Owned			
by Owners With X Acres			
1- 99	2	2	3
100-199	9	12	15
200-299	12	12	14
300-399	7	10	7
400-699	26	25	22
700-999	17	10	17
1000+	33	29	23

and whiskey were distilled in the fifty odd stills in the county. Skins were made into leather in the two or three tanyards in the county and many a talented slave made shoes, boots and saddlery which found ready sale to his owner's friends and neighbors. Lampblack was produced from the pine trees in the forests which also supplied the raw materials for a host of tradesmen who worked in small shops or directly upon the farms and plantations. Carpenters, coopers, housewrights and millwrights, sawyers, woodturners and wheelwrights all found work on the farm or plantation as did the ubiquitous blacksmith.⁴

The farms and plantations in Louisa ranged in size from as small as ten acres to as large as six thousand acres. About seventy percent contained between one hundred and six hundred acres. Over the years the farms and plantations tended to get smaller as more and more people owned land. In 1782, for example, there were 692 landowners in the county of whom about forty percent owned less than two hundred acres. The average (mean) size of a farm then was 404 acres. Nearly thirty years later, in 1810, there were 1,092 landowners in the county, of whom over fifty percent owned less than two hundred acres. The average (mean) size of a farm had fallen about twenty-five percent to 310 acres.⁵ (Table 111-1)

Louisa farms were slightly more than two thirds (334 acres) the size of those in Albemarle (454 acres) and Orange (447 acres). Most of this difference arose from the fact that ten percent of all Albemarle landowners had a thousand acres or more and eleven percent of all Orange owners had plantations of that size. In Louisa only five percent of all owners had plantations of a thousand acres or more. In 1794, Louisa plantations averaged 1,806 acres while those in Albemarle were 2,170 acres. In Orange County the mean size was 1,730 acres.⁶

In addition to having smaller size landholdings, Louisa had a higher percentage of slaves in her total population (54% in 1790) than any of the surrounding counties except Hanover.⁷ This meant that there were more slaves on smaller farms than in most of the other counties. The economic effect of this was probably to decrease the capital available for other expenditures (such as farm equipment or more land) and to increase the operating costs per acre of the farm or plantation. Possibly this meant more intensive farming of the land and a quicker depletion of the soil to compensate for the higher costs. This factor further increased operating costs (or more

4. For stills see Samuel Overtons, Jr., "List of Stills in the Territory of Samuel Overton Jr., Collector" Louisa and Spottsylvania Counties in Overton Papers. Louisa County, *Personal Property Tax Books 1815*, listed tanyards and mills. For lampblack see "Cost of Lampblack, 1803" in Watson Papers and Sir Augustus John Foster, *Jeffersonian America Notes on the United States of America Collected in the Years 1805-6-7 and 11-12* by (The Huntington Library; San Marino California; 1954)

5. Figures for the size of farms and plantations were from Louisa County, *Land Tax Books, 1782, 1788, 1794, 1800, 1805, and 1810* See Table 111-1.

5. *List of Property Upon Which There is No Resident and on Which No Taxes Can Be Collected, 1783...1815.*

6. Albemarle County, *Land Tax Books 1794*; Orange County, *Land Tax Book, 1794*. The Albemarle County and Orange County figures were based upon a ten percent sample.

7. United States Bureau of the Census, *Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States....*, (Philadelphia; Child & Swain; 1791) 48-50.

TABLE III-2

Size of Landholdings By Owner In Acres

Category	Louisa 1782	Louisa 1794	Louisa 1810	Albemarle 1794	Orange 1794	Fluvanna 1802
Number of Owners	692	891	1,092	940	630	432
Mean Size of Holding	404	334	310	453	447	330
Median Size of Holding	208	200	197	235	256	180
Percent of Owners With X Acres						
1- 99	10	14	17	14	8	16
100-199	29	31	34	29	29	39
200-299	22	18	18	14	14	19
300-399	5	10	6	8	11	9
400-699	21	17	14	22	22	5
700-999	6	5	6	3	5	4
1000+	7	5	5	10	11	8
Percent of Land Owned by Owners						
1- 99	2	2	3	3	1	3
100-199	9	12	15	15	8	15
2200-299	12	12	14	6	7	13
300-399	7	10	7	7	8	10
400-699	26	25	22	26	26	7
700-999	17	10	17	6	8	9
1000+	33	29	23	46	41	44

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precisely decreased revenues) and may have contributed to the fact that land values in Louisa tended to be somewhat lower than in other places according to contemporary observers.⁸

In Louisa County there were three common types of farms and plantations. The first type was the small farm of between fifty and two hundred fifty acres. The second type was the large farm of between four hundred and six hundred acres, and the third type was the true plantation of a thousand acres or more.

The first type, was by far the most numerous of the farming units in Louisa. Comprising about fifty percent of all farms in 1782, (a figure which grew to nearly sixty percent by 1810) these small farms were located in every part of the county, on every creek and virtually every road. Most of these farms were probably close to subsistence levels. Many raised corn and other food crops to feed their families, slaves, and livestock, and some raised a cash crop which was usually tobacco. A substantial proportion of these small farmers apparently sold their crops locally if they could, either to the merchant or to a planter. Sometimes their needs exceeded the return their crops brought them and they were the most frequent defendants in debt suits in which the plaintiff was a local merchant, tavern keeper or miller.⁹ To improve their cash resources these farmers hired themselves out as laborers and frequently they were small tradesmen, teamsters and other workers. If they were fortunate, sometimes their younger sons served as overseers on the larger farms and plantations.¹⁰

Most of these small farmers in Louisa used slave labor as well as that of their own families and scarcely a third owned no slaves at all. Most owned between one and five slaves (the mean was almost three in 1782), although about one-sixth owned by these small farmers were full hands, and seldom did they own a slave family with young children. Probably they purchased slaves from the larger farmers and planters. Definitely they did not have the capital to raise their own.¹¹ (Table III-3,4).

The second type of farming unit was the large farm containing four hundred to six hundred acres. Comprising about one hundred fifty farms they made up about one-fifth of all the units in the county in 1782 and controlled slightly over one-fourth of the land. Although the amount of land they controlled decreased only slightly in the nearly thirty years from 1782 to 1810,

8. Thomas R. Joynes, "Memorandum Made by Thomas R. Joynes On A. Journey to the States of Ohio and Kentucky, 1810" in *William and Mary Quarterly*, First Series, vol. X, no. 3, (January, 1902), 146-149, described conditions in Hanover and Louisa counties (except for the Green Springs) as the worst he had ever seen. See also David Watson, "Land Values in Louisa County" in Watson Papers.

9. Based upon Ransom B. True, "Suits for Debt in Louisa County, Virginia, 1805", unpublished seminar paper.

10. Based upon a comparison of the names of landowners with fifty to two hundred fifty acres in 1782 with the names of laborers tradesmen and overseers collected from the sources indicated in note 1. Louisa County, *Land Tax Book, 1782*.

11. Based upon a comparison of the land tax for 1782 with the census of 1782. Louisa County, *Land Tax Book, 1782*; Ransom B. True, "The Censuses of 1782 and 1785: Defective Yet Useful and Fascinating", in *Louisa County Historical Magazine*, vol. 5, no. 1 (June, 1973), 6-28. See also Table III-3.

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TABLE III-3
Size of Farm by Number of Slaves

No. of Slaves	Size of Farm in Acres					No. of Farms
	1-249	250-399	400-600	601-999	1000+	
0	67	4	1	0	0	72
1	19	5	1	1	0	26
2	22	2	2	0	0	26
3	16	2	4	1	0	23
4	16	6	3	1	0	26
5	9	3	0	2	0	14
6	5	5	3	0	2	15
7	8	7	4	1	1	21
8	4	1	6	0	0	11
9	5	2	3	1	1	12
10	3	2	6	0	0	11
11-14	4	7	18	7	2	38
15-19	2	4	5	8	5	24
20-29	1	3	10	6	12	32
30+	0	0	0	4	12	16
Total Farms	181	53	66	32	35	367
Total Slaves	517	402	748	569	1,057	3,293
Average	2.9	7.6	11.3	17.8	30.2	9.0

Sample includes 53.0 percent of all 1782 landowners.

Sample includes 69.3 percent of all 1782 slaves (estimated).

Sample includes 63.4 percent of all resident landowners (estimated).

TABLE III-4
Number of Slaves on Farms and Plantations
By Size of Farm
1782

Number of Slaves	1-249	250-399	400-600	601-999	1000+
0	37.0	7.5	1.5	0.0	0.0
1- 5	45.3	34.0	15.2	15.6	0.0
6- 9	12.2	28.3	24.2	6.3	11.4
10-14	3.9	17.0	36.4	21.9	5.7
15-19	1.1	7.5	7.6	25.0	14.3
20-29	0.6	5.7	15.2	18.8	34.3
30+	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.5	34.3
Mean	2.9	7.6	11.3	17.8	30.2

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their percentage of all farms dropped significantly. Most of this drop was due to the large increase in small farms and not to the drop in the number of large farms which remained relatively stable.¹²

These large farms operated almost exclusively on slave labor. About sixty percent owned between six and fourteen slaves and one-fifth owned more. The average (mean) was eleven. Most of the slaves were in families and the percentage of whole hands to the total slave population approximated the county average.¹³ Most of these farms were single unit farms, with the slave quarters (usually about two), barn, and occasional outbuildings located together with the main dwelling. The largest of these farms, about six hundred acres, was not so large that the labor force had to be divided. However, farms much larger than this tended to become inefficient since the commuting time to the fields was too great.¹⁴(Table III-3) (Table III-4)

Most of these farms raised cash crops, usually tobacco and later wheat. Many seemed to engage in livestock raising during the Revolutionary War, especially beef and pork. These were sold to the commissaries for the use of the armies. Frequently these large farmers hired small farmers as drivers to drive the cattle and hogs to the camps and barracks.¹⁵ After the war many of these larger farmers switched to raising wheat, particularly in the Green Springs region of the county.

Many of these farmers seemed to have a small second income. Sometimes they had a talented slave tradesman, a blacksmith, cooper, shoemaker or other artisan. Sometimes they were small merchants, millers, schoolteachers, surveyors, or builders. Some apparently oversaw the construction of houses, mills, bridges and the county buildings from time to time.¹⁶

The third type of farming unit was the true plantation of a thousand acres or more. Never very numerous in Louisa, the fifty or so planters comprised about seven percent of all farming units in 1782 and about five percent in 1810, although their numbers were the same. The size of the plantations decreased significantly, however, from 1782 to 1810. In 1782 the largest plantation was six thousand acres and the mean size was nearly 1,900 acres. By 1810, the largest plantation was only 3,300 acres and the mean size had dropped to about 1,400 acres. As a result the land controlled by the planters dropped from about a third of the county's total to about one-fifth.

12 See Table III-1.

13. A comparison of the manuscript census return of 1800 with the personal property tax records of 1800 showed this clearly. Although slaves not taxed could be superannuated, this was not common in Louisa judging from the entries in the court order books and the inventories and appraisals of estates. See Ransom B. True, "The Manuscript Return of the Census of 1800" in *Louisa County Historical Magazine*, vol. 4, no. 1 (June, 1972), 21-49. Louisa County, *Personal Property Tax Books, 1800*.

14. See table III-3. Information on the type of buildings was from a comparison of the *Land Tax Book of 1782* with the Census of 1785. Louisa County, *Land Tax Book, 1782*; True, "Census of 1785".

15. The personal property tax books indicated a total of over 9,000 cattle in Louisa in late 1781 and early 1782 and somewhat less than 6,500 in 1785. A comparison of the names of persons who reported significantly fewer cattle in 1782 showed that many, though by no means all, owned between four hundred and six hundred acres. A substantial minority of the plantation owners were also included. Louisa County, *Land Tax Book, 1782* (there were no land tax books for 1783-1786); Louisa County, *Personal Property Tax Books, 1782-1785*.

16. For sources see note 1.

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These plantations were all run with slave labor. Over two-thirds of them had twenty or more slaves in 1782 and nearly one-third thirty or more. Only about ten percent had less than ten slaves and even the smallest one had six, while a few of the very largest plantations had eighty or more slaves in 1782.

Virtually all of these planters were commercial farmers and raised the cash crops of tobacco and wheat. They often served as markets for the small farmer, especially for his corn and other food crops. Sometimes they handled tobacco and later wheat on a commission basis - often for Liverpool, Glasgow and London merchants. Sometimes they purchased both commodities on their own account. Frequently they provided services for both the small and large farmer, such as blacksmithing, cooperage and other trades. Those trades they did not control on their own plantations. They patronized outside and usually they were the most important clientele for artisans such as brickmakers, masons, carpenters, housewrights, and other construction trades. Sometimes they also ran a small plantation store or mill and occasionally a tavern.¹⁷

In between the small and large farm was a group of farmers who had between two hundred fifty and four hundred acres. They comprised about eleven percent of the farming units and controlled about the same percentage of the county's land. However, they were not a clearly defined group. Some were little more than subsistence farmers with but a little more land. Others were large farms in all but acreage. A number were located in the far western part of the county and along the southern border where land was generally poorer. Some were located in the Green Springs and even along the terrace plains of the North and South Anna Rivers. Most used some form of slave labor, and nearly two-thirds of the farmers owned between one and nine slaves. A few owned none, a few owned as many as twenty.¹⁸

A second amorphous group of farming units existed between the large farms and the true plantations. These were the farmers (planters?) who owned between six hundred and one thousand acres. Comprising about nine percent of the farming units in the county, they controlled about fifteen percent of its land. Some of these owners were merely large farms, and some clearly owned extra land in more than one tract. Many more were probably small planters, both in scope of operations and in style of living. Interestingly, better than ten percent of this group were justices of the peace, a higher percentage than found in any other group.¹⁹

All of the farming units in this group used slave labor and only a fifth used less than ten slaves. Over thirty percent had twenty or more. The average number of slaves (mean number) was almost eighteen, only two less than the normal definition of a plantation.²⁰

The agricultural practices on the farms and plantations in Louisa were probably quite similar to those followed in other areas of piedmont Virginia.

17. See especially the dealings of Richard Morris in the 1780's and 1790's in Morris Papers. "Account Book, 1782-1784" in Watson Papers. True, *Louisa Placenames* for names of mill and tavern owners.

18. See Table III-3.

19. See Table III-1 and note 9. Louisa County, *Land Tax Book, 1782*; Louisa County, *Court Order Book, 1782-1783*.

20. See Table III-3.

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Many of these were imposed by the nature of the crops raised, the climate, growing season and the inclinations of the particular farmer or planter. They seemed to vary little from year to year.

Most farmers seemed to prepare tobacco beds in February and March, plant corn in late April and transplant tobacco in late May or early June. They cut their wheat in late June and early July, suckered and topped tobacco throughout the summer and trod out their wheat in August. Sowing wheat commenced in late August or early September and was interspersed with cutting tobacco and pulling fodder. Tobacco was cured, stemmed and primed in the fall. Corn was cut and harvested in late October or early November. Tobacco was sometimes ready for market by late November and was rolled or waggoned to the warehouses in December. As Christmas approached new lands cleared, some plowing done and the year started over again.²¹

Yields of crops varied considerably from year to year and from farm to farm. John Overton and William Merewether, in a joint venture, raised some 6,600 pounds of tobacco in addition to an unspecified amount of corn, oats and wheat with seven hands. This came to an average of 933 pounds of tobacco per hand, somewhat low by piedmont standards. In the same year, 1789, Garrett Minor raised some six to seven hogheads of tobacco on 400 acres with eight slaves and an overseer. A few years later he switched to wheat and raised some forty to ninety acres of it, receiving yields ranging from two to five bushels per acre. At the same time he also put up eleven hogsheads of cider, "some good, some poor" as he reported.²²

In general there was little experimenting with crops and methods. However, Garrett Minor tried several different varieties of tobacco in the late 1780's; Richard Morris had a threshing machine built for him in 1799 and Thomas Hardin and John Overton were using a bare share plow tipped with steel (instead of iron) in 1804.²³ Some men seemed to realize that the poor husbandry hurt their lands. Many seemed willing to use crop rotation to try to cut down on soil exhaustion, or at least to delay it. Landlords who rented tenements on long term leases spelled out these crop rotation practices in detail in the leases. One lease, from Charles Merewether to Robert Thomson and James Trice in 1803, specified that newly cleared land could be planted in either corn or tobacco for the first two years, then one year in wheat, followed by another year in corn. Thereafter it was to be planted in corn oftener than once every three years. Old land could be planted one year in corn, one year in wheat and a third year in corn. Then it had to lie fallow two out of every three years.²⁴ Other leases contained similar provisions.

In addition to limiting the planting of corn and tobacco, many leases

21. David Watson, "Diary" in Watson Papers.

22. For John Overton's venture see "Tobacco Made in the Year 1789" and "Overseer's Agreement, December 23, 1788" in Overton Family Papers. For Garrett Minor see "Account Book, 1789" in Watson Papers. Wheat yields in the Green Springs were much higher. David Watson reported in his "Diary" in 1810, "The Overseer said 15 for one a great crop and hopes to make 20 bus. to the acre.

23. "Letter Garrett Minor to James Maury, December 6, 1787" in Watson Papers; "Receipts, 1799" in Morris papers; "Account James Dabney's Smith to Thomas Hardin and John Overton", 1804 in Overton Family Papers.

24. Charles Merewether to Robert Thomson and James Trice, January 15, 1803 in Louisa County, *Deed Book J.* 493.

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required the tenant to plant apple trees which the landlord would supply, to keep the crops well fenced and to permit no waste. In 1803, Charles Merewether even required his two tenants to clear one acre of meadowland per year and to plant it in timothy. This was one of the earliest uses of green crops to preserve the land in Louisa, although other planters began to sow fields in clover towards 1810.²⁵

One bad practice which most Louisa planters seemed to avoid was hiring overseers for a percentage of the crop. Overseers were common in Louisa, perhaps as many as fifty a year found employment, but almost always they received cash wages.²⁶ Wages varied considerably over the period from about ten pounds a year in 1770 to over forty pounds a year in 1807. The average (mean) was closer to about twenty-five pounds annually. Often an overseer's house was provided and frequently some corn and pork were included. Louisa overseers did turn over frequently, like overseers elsewhere, but many seemed to work for a number of years for the same planter. One overseer, John Vest, worked some nine years in a row for Richard Morris. Morris was one of the most successful men in the county and also one of the most cantankerous, but he paid Vest well and they must have gotten along together.²⁷ Supplementing the overseers, many planters and large farmers hired small farmers as day laborers. Wages again varied, from about one shilling eight pence (29¢) per day in 1767 to over four shillings (41¢) a day in 1811. The normal wage, however, seemed to run about two shillings sixpence per day, with additional pay, of course, if the laborer provided a horse, team, wagon or yoke of oxen.²⁸ In general, farm wages seemed to have doubled throughout the period. Furthermore some evidence suggested that rental fees for slaves increased by a minimum of one-fourth during the period 1765-1812.²⁹

Once the crops had been raised and processed, they had to be taken to market. This was a real problem for the Louisa farmer or planter. Usually the local markets were inadequate to absorb his crops and products and adequate markets were some distance away in Fredericksburg or Richmond.

One market for Louisa products was the local Louisa merchant. Unfortunately most of them were very small and did not have the capacity to absorb more than a fraction of the crops and products available. The largest of the local merchants and the only one of more than neighborhood importance was the firm of Pottie and Dick. This firm was the outgrowth of Francis Jerdone's mercantile activities in the 1750's and 1760's. Run by George Pottie (Jerdone's son-in-law) and his son (after George Sr.'s death)

25. Louisa County, *Deed Book J*, 493; David Watson, for example, was purchasing clover seed in the early 1800's and planting it regularly by 1806.

26. Louisa County, *Personal Property Tax Books, 1782, 1785*. These list by name all free white males over sixteen whose tax was paid by someone else. All known overseers were included in this part of the tax lists. Only two of twenty overseer's contracts called for payment in a percentage of the crop.

27. Vest worked for Morris from 1798 through 1807 at least. Morris paid him forty pounds a year for the first four years and forty-five pounds a year for the last five. "Receipts, 1807" in Morris Papers.

28. Based upon thirty-one wage payments for hired free labor from 1768-1811.

29. A compilation of rental costs for slave labor was attempted and showed the increase which was probably quite low. There seemed to be an increasing use of younger slaves for hire in the latter parts of the 1765-1812 period which resulted in the low calculation of the increase.

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and Archibald Dick, the firm had a store grist mill, saw mill and blacksmith shop at Pottiesville in the northeast corner of the county. They dealt in tobacco, wheat, an corn as well as most of the secondary crops and products, usually on an account credit basis. They also supplied most types of merchandise carried by the Fredericksburg merchants (for whom they were factors off and on) on both a cash and a credit basis. They were one of the most important local sources of credit and were owed some £1,563 by 124 persons in 1796, mostly for store accounts. However, they owned some forty-five mortgages at various times, nearly ten percent of all the recorded mortgages in the county in the years 1765-1812 and over a third of those held by Louisa merchants.³⁰

In addition to Pottie and Dick, there were fourteen other firms or persons who ran stores or functioned as merchants in Louisa in these years. Most of them were very small and only one, the store run by the Anderson family, was in business throughout the entire period 1765-1812. It apparently failed in the War of 1812. Two other merchants went bankrupt - Thomas Pleasants in 1803 and David Johnson and Company some time around 1808.³¹

The three largest Louisa merchants other than Pottie and Dick apparently were Thomas Mitchell on Deep Creek, Ludwell Bramham and Company at the junction of the Charlottesville Road and the Main Louisa Road and Arthur Clayton and James Young in the Goldmine Creek area. Altogether they might have done about the amount of business that Pottie and Dick did, judging from the number of mortgages they held and the number of debt suits they were involved in. Members of all three firms became justices of the peace some years after they were established, which testified more to their local importance than to their economic influence.

One other Louisa firm, Robert Yancey and Company provided a modest market for certain products and a source for some credit. They were the builders of Yanceyville on the South Anna River where they established a grist mill, a saw mill, a distillery, blacksmith shop, cooperage and store. After 1806 they also ran the Post Office there. Their mercantile business apparently was not as important as the distillery and neither was as significant as the grist mill. While they were in business they provided a market for Louisa wheat as they made a number of contracts with wheat planters calling for delivery of wheat to the Southanna Mills.³² Whether or not the Yancey's profited is not certain, the mills burned in 1806 and Robert Yancey was accused of arson. While they functioned, however, the company was a source of credit for some people and the Yanceys eventually owned some ten mortgages in the years

30. "List of Debts Due Pottie and Dick, 1796" in Overton Papers; Pottiesville Store, "Blotter F. Commencing March, 1817" and Pottiesville Store, "Blotter K, Commencing November, 1818" in Clerk's Office, Louisa, Virginia

31. Throughout the period the average number of merchants in Louisa was five at any one time. The Andersons were no longer in business in 1815, apparently they ceased during the War of 1812. Louisa County, *Personal Property Tax Books, 1782-1815*. For bankruptcies see Louisa County, *Judgments, 1805* and "David Johnson to John Overton, 1808" showing him as only the postmaster in Yanceyville, in Overton Family Papers.

32. These contracts stipulated either a set price per bushel for wheat. In the latter case the price was set at the Richmond price as of that day less on shilling to one shilling sixpence per bushel (which represented about twenty percent of the selling price).

before 1807.³³

No mills in the county approached the scale of operations of the Southanna Mills. Some, notably Morris's, Todd's, Price and Dabney's and Bullock's mills apparently purchased grain outright and thus provided some small local markets. After grinding the grain they sold the flour or meal on their own account taking the speculative profits or losses.³⁴ Most of the other two dozen or so millers merely ground the grain and took their toll for doing so. Thus they provided only a paid service for the farmer or planter and did not provide a market for his crops.³⁵

In addition to the few millers and merchants, some of the larger planters provided markets for the smaller farmers as was mentioned above. Sometimes they would purchase tobacco and wheat and market it along with their own, on a commission basis. Frequently, they would purchase crops and products outright, taking the speculative profit or loss for their own. Frequently, they would purchase food stocks from the smaller farmers for their own consumption. This type of market was a haphazard and uncertain one. It depended more upon the relationship between the planter and the farmer than upon the normal channels of trade. A much more stable marketing arrangement was necessary, one similar to the food market the plantation provided. Unfortunately, the stable market did not develop in these years in Louisa County.³⁶

There were no local markets adequate to take care of the products of the farm and plantation in Louisa and the farmer or planter was thrust precariously into the hands of the Richmond or Fredericksburg merchant who alone had the facilities to market his crops and products. What social effect this had upon the Louisa farmer or planter was pure conjecture. However, there was a hard and cruel economic effect - namely higher costs for getting his products to market and greater costs for receiving goods in return.

Transportation costs to Fredericksburg and Richmond remained reasonably stable from year to year. In general, tobacco could be hauled to Fredericksburg for about twelve shillings per hoghead and wheat for about six pence per bushel. Rates to Richmond were about fifty percent higher, about eighteen to twenty shillings a hoghead for tobacco and about nine pence per bushel for wheat. This represented about four to seven percent of the selling price of tobacco and about ten to thirteen percent of the selling price of wheat. A planter could probably save some part of the transportation costs if he had a reliable slave, a wagon and a team to take the crops to market himself. However, he risked his crops doing so and most planters seemed to

33. Overton Papers.

34. Scattered accounts showed that each of these mills purchased some grain outright and paid the farmer or planter in cash or credit. Some of the other mills may also have purchased grain on their own account, although no evidence existed to prove that they had done this.

35. In 1815 mills were valued and taxed. Louisa had thirty-six mills valued at \$3,824 or an average of \$107 per mill. Probably five or six of these mills were saw mills, one was a fulling mill and the rest were grist mills. Louisa County, *Personal Property Tax Books, 1815*.

36. Richard Morris was a factor for James Maury and Company of Liverpool for a number of years. He purchased tobacco on commission for them. John Overton apparently purchased on his own account. See Morris Papers and Overton Family Papers. See also the discussion of the Louisa plantation above.

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prefer to hire smaller farmers or local teamsters to do their hauling.³⁷

Once his crops and products were taken to market, the farmer or planter usually had to take goods in payment from the Fredericksburg merchant (at about a 200% markup) or take a reduced price for cash. Richmond merchants were more willing to give cash and a slightly higher price but they charged a commission ranging from two and a half to five percent for selling the crops.³⁸

The critical element in the whole Louisa economy was not the size of the farms or plantations that the crops were raised upon or the marketing arrangements, haphazard or steady, but rather the prices received for the crops and products. These prices varied considerably from year to year and from product to product. The prices and price movements of some sixteen crops and products of Louisa farms and plantations and some eight commonly purchased items was felt to be important to an understanding of the Louisa economy. Three crops, tobacco, wheat and corn were so important that they were considered separately. The remaining crops and products were dealt with together in a farm products index, while eight purchased items were similarly treated in a purchased goods index.³⁹

(Continued)

Mr. *John Morris Watkins*
 To the Sheriff of Louisa County, Dr.

1857

To Tax on	531 Acres of Land,		
To Tax on	Whites, 11	Slaves,	23.01
To Tax on	7 Horses, 68	Head of Stock, 1	} 18.28
	Watch, 1	Clock, Piano, Plate \$55	
	Household Furniture \$300	Bonds \$	} 6.73
To 7 Levies,	75 cents each,		
Received payment,	<i>Geo. P. Gook P.O.</i>	\$	148.04
	<i>Wm. J. Gook</i>	Sheriff, Louisa County.	

37. This was based on several receipts which showed the amount of the crop, the place to which it was taken the date, total price and the name of the person doing the hauling.

38. See contracts with the Yanceys and David Watson and Garrett Minor "Robert Yancey to Garrett Minor, March 19, 1796" and David Watson, "Memorandum Book, 1802" in Watson Papers. "Account Book" in Overton Papers. See also note 1.

39. See Appendix II for a detailed discussion of the price statistics and price information presented in this chapter.