

APPENDIX E

EXCERPT FROM REPORT ON SOUTH CAROLINA

Prepared for the
Black Economic Research Center
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The focus of my study was on Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, Hampton and Charleston Counties. They are a part of the Coastal Plains region of South Carolina for which a Penn Center based economic development effort is being initiated. It is also a part of the tri-state Coastal Plains Economic Development Region at which the efforts of the four year old Coastal Plains Regional Commission are aimed.

Hilton Head Island and Fripp Island, which are being developed as deluxe resort areas are in Beaufort County. The black population is significant, ranging from 57% in Jasper, 48.9% in Hampton, 46.8% in Colleton, 33.8% in Beaufort and 31.4% in Charleston. Numerous small plots of land are owned by blacks. Up to 10-15 years ago, almost all of the Sea Islands, located largely in Beaufort and Charleston Counties, with a few in Jasper and Colleton, were owned by blacks. At that time the attractiveness of the semi-tropical climate, the rich soil, access to unpolluted waterways and a recognition of the value of the land attracted whites to the area. Three main methods were used to wrest the land from black control, the first two more prevalent during the first spurt of acquisition, the latter utilized more as blacks became more knowledgeable and sophisticated about the former.

The first two are tax sales and partition sales. The last

Field Order No. 15 which set aside the islands and the lands 30 miles inland for the exclusive settlement of black people. Although the titles of the 20 and 40 acre plots settled under this order were never confirmed by Congress, many plots of about this size were bought by blacks when abandoned plantations were sold by federal tax commissioners during the latter part and after the Civil War. The vagaries of the confiscation, hesitation, and sale by federal, often military authorities are too complex to detail here, suffice it to say that large tracts were initially confiscated for non-payment of the federal tax imposed to carry on the war and that on several occasions land in tracts small enough for blacks to afford were sold by auction, and blacks acquired other tracts through a federal pre-emption plan that was quickly halted.

Especially during the first years of federal occupation, abandoned plantations were worked by federal authorities using blacks as wage laborers. This plan allowed the laborers to accumulate some savings which then could be used as payment for a small plot of their own. Groups of blacks also pooled their funds to buy land which they then worked cooperatively. I have found no data on the eventual outcome of such cooperative efforts, however, I have found no such farms in operation now.

The history, and the fact that Sea Island cotton and rice, the main plantation crops, never regained their antebellum

prominence in the area, helped insure that most black landholdings would be relatively small and helped blacks to strongly establish their ownership. Sea Island cotton and rice were no longer raised on a large scale because of the loss of much of the special cotton seed and the refusal of blacks to haul the marsh grasses needed to fertilize the soil for it and the destruction of the intricate irrigation system needed for rice growing and the great distaste of blacks for working in groups as was necessary for rice cultivation.

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