

Lisa Tolbert: Slide Presentation—Landscape case study....Antebellum TN county seats

Work backwards from current landscape to historical landscape—

Modern day landscapes obscure antebellum history of small towns

- Slides present tour of contemporary public squares
- End with Murfreesboro court house today and Civil War era
- Thesis: Landscape evidence documents three townscapes built over time before the Civil War.
- West Main Street facade of Murfreesboro courthouse, built in 1859. This view, taken during the Civil War, shows Union soldiers encamped on the public square (Courtesy Library of Congress).

Phase I of town-building: 1790-1820

Characteristics:

Middle Tennessee developed from the beginning as a network of towns, with county seats connected from Main St. to Main St., not an undifferentiated rural landscape. Regional identity: middle Tennesseans described themselves as westerners almost until the Civil War.

Earliest evidence of town space = maps; street patterns studied by historical geographers in order to evaluate cultural diffusion.

Influence of Philadelphia and PA street grid patterns

Experimentation with town planning—Shelbyville as example

Charters established concept of Main Street and Public Square

- Franklin, Tennessee, platted by Abram Maury in 1799 according to the Philadelphia plan (Courtesy Tennessee State Library and Archives).
- Columbia, Tennessee, established in 1807. Note the central square street pattern follows the Philadelphia plan (Sanborn Map & Publishing Co., Limited, June 1887).
- Shelbyville, Tennessee, laid out in 1810 in an early and very influential example of the central or block square plan (Courtesy Tennessee State Library and Archives). By 1812 Fayetteville, Pulaski, and Winchester—all below Shelbyville on the southern border of Middle Tennessee, had also adopted the central square plan. According to this design, the central square occupied a full block of the town without altering the basic grid street pattern. It was simpler and easier to lay out than the Philadelphia plan, and the block square became the most frequently used county seat plan in new counties of the South and Midwest. Seventy-two percent of courthouse squares created on the Georgia Piedmont between 1811 and 1830 were of this type.

- Murfreesboro, Tennessee, designed in 1811 according to what may have been a hybrid of the block square and the Philadelphia square (Sanborn Map & Publishing Co., Limited, July 1887).

Courthouse squares:

About the same time as Rutherford County citizens came together to select a site for their county seat, Maury County residents gathered on the newly cleared public square in Columbia. Nathan Vaught recalled the scene vividly because it was the day when he and his brother were "taken to a shanty of a Court House on the east side of the Public Squar[e]" to be bound out as apprentices. Unlike the elite men who had toasted the development prospects of their land at the gathering on Lytle's farm, Nathan Vaught had only his labor to offer the people who collected on the new public square in Columbia. As he remembered it, they found themselves,

in the midst of what might be called a new ground clearing[,] large trees cut down and lying loose all about and the brush scattered in every direction all over the Square and the new brick Court House was in progress of being built There was but 2 small houses on the Square and they built of logs and covered with oak boards and fitted in very plain manner for dry goods.¹

It had been about two years since the initial sale of lots and the logs were still strewn about the square. Some of them had been split in half and used to build the "shanty" courthouse while the more permanent brick structure was under construction. A cabinetmaker purchased Vaught's indenture, but the orphaned apprentice was not destined to learn the furniture trade. Since local consumers were in greater need of shelter than furniture, Vaught's employer took up carpentering and Vaught learned to make houses rather than chairs.

- Gideon Blackburn house, built around 1810 in Franklin, Tennessee. A rare survival of this period is the residence of Presbyterian minister Gideon Blackburn of Franklin.

Oldest part of house consists of hewn logs, but the minister quickly covered the logs with sawn clapboards. (Photograph by author)

Phase II of town-building: 1820s-1840s

Characteristics: Period of developing market economy—see John Shoffner letter, 1839.

Mixed use of space, intermingling of domestic and business space, within particular buildings and across the townscape

Vocabulary—broad use of the term "house"—court house, store house; dwelling house.

Such a vocabulary was meaningful in a townscape where commercial and residential spaces were indistinct.

Road building—beginning of turnpike era created town networks.

- Eaton house—under construction by 1818 one block from the Public Square. Decorative elements and composition characteristic of the Federal style sweeping the nation—three bay façade, off-center arched doorway outlined by fanlight and sidelights.
- The building with the sloping roof, second from the left, is the bank built on the public square in Franklin, Tennessee in 1818 (Photograph by author). Construction began the same year as the Eaton house. Originally designed as a free-standing structure. Storefront windows added later in the 19th century. Originally this commercial building shared many of the characteristics of the town's private dwellings—similar three-bay façade compared to Eaton house.
- This "double house" is typical of the form frequently constructed by Nathan Vaught and other Middle Tennessee builders. Often referred to as an I-house by vernacular architecture historians, the form was characteristically one-room deep and two full stories, with the front entrance in the long side (Photograph by author).
- William Strickland designed this Masonic Hall in Philadelphia in 1808 (Courtesy Historical Society of Pennsylvania).
- Facade of Masonic Hall built in Franklin, Tennessee around 1823 (Courtesy Carroll Van West).
- Side view of Masonic Hall, Franklin (Photograph by author).
- United States Bank, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, designed by William Strickland in 1818 (Courtesy Library of Congress).
- State Bank of Tennessee, built in Columbia by Nathan Vaught around 1839 (Courtesy Carroll Van West).

Phase III of town-building: 1850s

Characteristics:

Railroad building

Increasing specialization of commercial space

Diversification of architectural styles and types of building—commercial blocks, villas, cottages

New uses of town space—male and female colleges

Train steaming across Columbia. In 1860, a newspaper editor in Columbia, Tennessee marveled at the town's recent architectural transformation. "Within the past five years," he observed, "there has been almost a complete renovation of the town . . . Upon the crumbling foundations of old frame houses, new and beautiful houses have risen," along with "new and commodious business houses."² Emboldened by the economic potential of the expanding railroad, town residents throughout Middle Tennessee made huge investments to improve their homes and businesses. But local entrepreneurs did much more than simply build bigger, more fashionable houses upon the "crumbling foundations" of the old. Their architectural choices document profound spatial reorganization--the creation of a distinctive new townscape.

With fewer than two thousand residents, these small Middle Tennessee county seats were hardly urban places at the beginning of the 1850s. Nevertheless, after a decade of vigorous construction the renovated townscape reflected the town dwellers' urban aspirations. Like their urban counterparts in Philadelphia, New York, and, closer to home, Nashville, county seat residents in Middle Tennessee not only increasingly distinguished domestic from business space, they completely reorganized town commerce by differentiating retail from wholesale zones. Warehouses and commission stores, built near the railroad, removed wholesale commerce from town center to periphery.³ Thereafter, bacon, corn, and oats; mules, hogs, and horses no longer accumulated on the Square, which became primarily devoted to non-manual professions and the retail trade.⁴ Significantly, these spatial changes took place at the same time that the refined ideal of the "Lady" emerged as a measure of town progress and urbanity. New commercial blocks on the Public Square and college campuses designed for a particular class of young women reveal that concerns over gender were deeply intertwined with concerns over town business, and document the important role gender played in spatial reorganization of the renovated townscape.

Commercial Space

- Map of Murfreesboro, shows the development of an industrial wedge and wholesale district south of Sevier Street and west of Church Street. The railroad tracks formed the hypotenuse of the triangle, which encompassed a variety of mills, factories, and commission houses (D. G. Beers & Co., 1878).
- Commercial block built by Nathan Vaught in Columbia around 1859 (Courtesy Columbia Main Street). Vaught commissioned by William J. Dale to build "a brick block of 3 stories high [with] 3 store rooms on the north side of the Square." The Vaught block was originally a free standing structure, but by 1860 it was joined by several equally impressive commercial blocks. Each new block of stores became a segment in a wall of contiguous store facades that surrounded the Square. Although the Square was not completely encircled until the final quarter of the nineteenth century, the commercial block of the 1850s visually redefined the space, setting it apart from other areas of town.
- In 1846, when A. T. Stewart opened the first department store in New York City--a "marble palace" with a ladies parlor on the second floor--Nathan Vaught built the first commercial block in Columbia. Considerably more humble than a "marble palace," Vaught recalled the building was "a very deep and extra wide brick storehouse . . . 2 doors from the corner of the Public Square [with] the first open front in town."⁵ For Murfreesboro merchant, John Spence, the dimensions of the new stores alone signaled a revolution in town commerce. "Merchants, formerly doing business in a twenty feet square room, satisfied with the store and the business," he wrote, "are now making store houses twenty by eighty feet long, still feeling a little crowded [sic]."⁶ But the commercial block was an architectural revolution in more ways than one. "The town was making advances toward city ways," Spence declared, "doing business in particular branches of trades."⁷

Such commercial blocks differentiated among types of merchandise--for instance, the store in the corner building of the Vaught block specialized in furniture.⁸ Local residents praised the "convenience" and "elegance" of the new commercial blocks.⁹ One Columbia newspaper editor took his readers on a tour of "two large business houses" that were "connected with each other by large doors between," located "on the North corner of Main Street and the Square." The interior arrangement made

spatial distinctions between storage and display. While the basement was "thickly crowded," the second floor glittered "with every imaginable species of glassware, china, etc.," and the third floor was "closely packed with articles, of which samples are to be seen below." After examining "the entire establishment," he "pronounce[d] it in every way most elegantly arranged."¹⁰ No longer did ladies have to climb over saddles and farm implements to view the latest china patterns.

Residential space

- Side view of Maney house showing corner of original house with raised roof and rear addition (Photograph by author).
- Maney "villa". James Maney was Murfreesboro physician and merchant. His wife Sally had inherited land from her father; house built in stages that correspond to phases of town development. Original two-room brick house less than a mile from town; embedded in additions. During the 1820s and 1830s the Maneys created a two-story Federal style dwelling with a rear ell. This was the house that Virginia and William Shelton saw in December of 1850, when they visited "Dr. Manney's [a] half mile from town." Neighbors told them simply that "it was a large white house," but Virginia was somewhat more impressed. She described the Maney home as "an ancient & wealthy looking domicile." Though the house still conveyed a sense of the Maney family's preeminence in the community, it already embodied an older architectural standard.
- Front view of Maney house, showing Italianate addition (Photograph by author). Lewis, Dr. Maney's son, and his wife Adeline, added Italianate façade in the late 1850s. Daily living focused on the older sections at the back of the house. The addition focused on genteel pursuits—a library and formal parlor downstairs.
- Front view of Vine Street "cottage," Murfreesboro (Photograph by author). Virginia and William Shelton lived in a "cottage" across town from the Maney "villa," in the same neighborhood as this Vine Street example. Though smaller than the Maneys' villa, the Shelton's cottage also contained specialized social spaces, including a library and parlor. Like the Maney house, this one-story clapboard dwelling was the product of several additions, camouflaged behind a front section that appeared as a single unit. Decorative embellishments were much simpler, though the focal point of the cottage was the same kind of colonnaded verandah that the Maneys attached to their Italianate villa. Both dwellings displayed a hierarchical sense of refinement appropriate to their owners' rank in small-town society.
- Side view of Vine Street "cottage," showing additions (Photograph by author).

- Drawing by Horace Rawdon, a Union soldier from Ohio, showing Murfreesboro about 1863 (Courtesy West Point Museum). Evaluate what it reveals and what it conceals about renovated townscape of the 1850s.

Historical "walking tour": in the footsteps of "ladies"

- Carney family house, Murfreesboro, built during the 1850s. The Carneys sold the house after the Civil War and it was torn down in 1910 (Originally published in Mary B. Hughes, Hearthstones: The Story of Historic Rutherford County Homes, (Murfreesboro: Mid-South Publishing Co., 1942), p. 59).
- Map of Murfreesboro showing the route Kate Carney and her friends took on their afternoon walk. In addition to Soule Female College, the map also shows the location of two other female colleges built during the 1850s.

Kate Carney's Walk

On 19 March 1859, Kate "went up town" after dinner with her friend and cousin Nannie Black. The girls walked six blocks, passing Soule Female College and several houses along their way, to the public square. [Fig. 4.2] Nannie and Kate zigzagged around the Square from store to store. "We first went to Mr. Neilson's & Crichelow's store, then to Pa's, & then back to the same one, & then across to Jordan's & Elliott's." All three of these stores advertised that same year in Murfreesboro newspapers as dry goods establishments.¹¹ Kate did not record what, if anything, the pair bought.

Having finished their business on the Square for the time being, the girls retraced their steps three blocks down the Lebanon Pike "to the College to call" on some friends who were boarding there. "We staid [sic] some time," Kate wrote, "when Nannie saw Ellen & Mary [Spence] going by." So Kate and Nannie "bid the [College] girls good bye, & went out & caught up with them. Nannie & Ellen walked together, & Mary & I until we came to Crockett's store, & we all went in except Nannie, and she went to Mr. Neilson's & Crichelow's."¹² The three girls "did not remain long in at Mr. Crockett's, as Ellen only wished Bob [Crockett] to carry several letters over to the office for her, we then went in to Mr. Neilson & found Misses Sallie Neilson, Jennie James, & Nannie Black. We all then went to Reed's Bookstore (quite a number six in all) from there we [went to] Mr. Elliott's then walked down Main Street and turned across

to College St., stopping only to bid Miss Sallie & Miss Jennie good evening."¹³ College Street was one block north of the Square, so when Kate realized that she "had forgotten, & left one of Nannie's accountbooks at one of the stores," she and Nannie and the Spence sisters, "walked up & one of the young ladies went in and got it." From the Square, the girls took Lebanon Pike toward home, stopped "by Mrs. Spence's & left Mary & Ellen, then came home, as it had grown quiet late by that time."¹⁴

From her father's store, to Soule Female College, to the Carney home, practically every building Kate entered that March day had been built during her adolescence. It was a townscape designed with particular attention to a "refined" female clientele. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, industrialization redefined the geography of work and home, domesticity was enshrined as the virtuous occupation of the lady, and gender became a volatile national issue.¹⁵ Thus, when Middle Tennesseans reorganized town space at mid-century to create new functional zones--wholesale, retail, and residential districts--their architectural choices also revealed gender as a powerful organizing principle, equally as influential as function, in the design of town space.

- "Gunther the Tailor," this shop was located one block from the public square in Columbia, Tennessee. (From *First Autumn Carnival Given Under the Auspices of Columbia Lodge, No. 686 Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Columbia, Tennessee, September 16 to 21, 1901* [Nashville, TN: Press of Foster & Webb, n.d.]).
- The Crichelow and Rice grocery store on the public square in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. (Courtesy of Mrs. Mabel Pittard.)

At first glance, the public square might seem a uniquely masculine region. Certainly the space was owned by men--Messrs. Neilson & Crichelow, Jordan & Elliot, for example. This impression is reinforced by nineteenth-century photographs that show men lounging on street corners and posing proudly in front of their stores, but rarely include women, even as shoppers. Then enter Kate and Nannie and their four female friends parading around and through the Square, and the scene changes dramatically. The band of girls roamed freely, though not indiscriminately, through the space. Significantly, they patronized particular dry goods stores, owned by family and friends in the same social

circle. They avoided businesses that were inappropriate for young ladies to enter, such as groceries that sold liquor.

The girls demonstrated how gender worked to organize retail commerce on the Square. Merchants depended on female customers for a profitable season, and they selected their merchandise to capture specific male or female customers. This principal was most evident during the "Fall season," when the latest stock arrived from New York and Philadelphia. "Feminine taste and judgment" began to "congregate every day in their stores, to pass sentence upon the styles, to purchase, to prepare themselves" for a winter of parties and fashionable social events. In the fall as at no other time of the year, merchants noticed that "Main Street is alive with ladies visiting and shopping. From morning to night their gay and pleasant faces enlivening its walks, . . . bearing down upon the square like gallant ships in full sail."¹⁶

- The Columbia Female Institute was destroyed by fire in 1959. (Courtesy of Mrs. Jill K. Garrett).

The female college was architecturally and intellectually distinct from earlier town academies. Strangers to town would have been hard pressed to single out the "academy," where local girls learned "all the useful and ornamental branches of an English Education," from reading, writing, and arithmetic to French and Italian languages, needlework, and painting.¹⁷ Indeed, private citizens often opened such schools in their own homes. In the early 1830s, the first session of the Shelbyville Female Academy commenced "in a large commodious room in a retired part of town."¹⁸ The difference between this humble academy and the female college was much more than a matter of semantics, particularly when the transformation is measured by architectural scale rather than by curricular innovation.

- Originally built in the mid-1830s as the residence of Samuel Polk Walker, nephew of James K. Polk. The house became the Athenaeum Rectory when Franklin Gillette Smith opened the school in 1852 (Courtesy Carroll Van West).
- Columbia Athenaeum campus, showing the auditorium and rotunda. The Athenaeum stood until 1915, when the buildings were razed to make way for a public high school (Courtesy of Mrs. Jill K. Garrett).

When it opened in 1852, the Columbia Athenaeum, with its multi-building arrangement, became the most architecturally ambitious college for women in the region. The Rectory, adorned with an exotic Moorish portico, set the tone for a campus that would become an eclectic architectural catalog of mid-nineteenth-century revivalism. In 1860, local carpenter, Nathan Vaught, enlarged the central building, known as the auditorium or "Athenaeum Hall." He described its most impressive feature as "a very heavy portico at the north and south ends," supported by Doric columns rising a full two stories.¹⁹ The auditorium was accompanied by two octagonal brick rotundas, each connected by a series of two story rectangular brick buildings--the whole embellished with Italianate bracketing and colonnaded walks, and crowned by fleur de lis. On the hill above Columbia the enlightened residents of this new "Athens of the West" displayed their knowledge of the great architectural traditions in history.

- Soule Female College, named for Methodist Bishop Joshua Soule of Nashville. After the Civil War Kate Carney took charge of the academic department for a short time. The school closed in 1917, and the building was torn down to be replaced by a public high school (Courtesy Mrs. Mabel Pittard).

Though perhaps less architecturally exuberant than Columbia's Athenaeum, female colleges became a standard, conspicuous feature of renovated townscapes across Middle Tennessee.²⁰ In Murfreesboro, a group of prominent businessmen, including Kate Carney's father, organized Soule Female College in 1853. A few blocks from the Public Square, on a campus of about four acres, they built a substantial three story brick building with two recessed wings. The trustees assured their patrons that this structure had been designed with particular attention "to the convenience and . . . health" of the students. Inside, the rooms were "large, airy, and well ventilated" and the halls were "spacious and well adapted to indoor exercise in bad weather." Outside, the campus, with its grove of trees, provided "ample room for pleasant and healthful recreation."²¹

In contrast to their academic predecessors, female colleges targeted an audience far beyond the town and surrounding countryside. No longer were girls from the country expected to find boarding with respectable town families, as had been the custom for female academies twenty years earlier.²² Trustees of Soule passed "an ordinance making it an absolute requirement, that all boarding pupils shall board in

the College."²³ By housing students together in dormitories, female colleges became highly specialized town regions defined by gender more explicitly than any other town space. This was class-based segregation as well, for these colleges were designed for young "ladies" in particular.

Spatial segregation made college campuses the appropriate sites for highly regulated female performance. Students displayed their accomplishments in public exams and concerts at the end of each school session. The Athenaeum regularly gave `soirees' "devoted to Vocal and Instrumental Music, conversation, etc." On such evenings the study hall was "open for promenades," and "friends and patrons of the school" were encouraged to come and "meet the teacher and pupils."²⁴ These events demonstrated more than the skills of individual students; they reflected the level of refinement of the entire town.

The trustees of female colleges spent considerable sums to build these schools at precisely the same moment they were investing heavily in railroads, commercial blocks, courthouses, and elaborate additions to their homes. Even Kate Carney worried that her father was "in debt a great deal," noting, "our expenses have been very heavy for the last six or seven years."²⁵ Soule Female College cost Murfreesboro subscribers about \$25,000; while in Columbia, Methodists confidently sought \$10,000 in subscriptions from "the people of Maury and the adjoining counties," to build the female seminary they sponsored.²⁶ This "preoccupation with buildings" demonstrated more than the trustees' intention to create permanent institutions; they fully expected a return on their investment.²⁷

Female colleges occupied a prominent place in the renovated townscape because their male designers defined them as integral to larger economic and cultural town goals. In Columbia alone three female colleges were educating seven hundred scholars by 1860.²⁸ Town residents there were encouraged to support these schools because they would "enhance the value of your town property--your lands--will open up a fine market in your county town and put in circulation, annually thousands of dollars . . . which but for them, would be confined to other sections."²⁹ One Columbia paper went so far as to claim that "were our schools permanently to suspend operations, Columbia would be a place of no very great importance in any point of view. Indeed, the rapid growth of the town would be greatly retarded, and

business, now so lively, would materially fall below its present standard."³⁰ The female college had become a new kind of town industry in which the production of ladies was a key element of generalized communal prosperity. Town residents considered these colleges essential to their cultural reputation and economic progress--integral to population growth, improved property values, and commercial success.

The same editor who listed female colleges among Columbia's most important business advantages also argued that the "greatest and main attraction" of Columbia was that it offered "the best location for a home" to be found "anywhere in the broad limits of the South."³¹ Female colleges occupied a strategic position at the center of a new division between commerce and domesticity in the renovated townscape of the 1850s. While they contributed substantially to the economic prosperity of the community, these institutions were ultimately designed to train young ladies in their proper domestic roles. Thus, commerce and domesticity converged in the female college, making it the appropriate symbol to represent dialectical town roles--town as marketplace and town as home.

In the footsteps of "store clerks" and students:

- Small buildings like Dr. McPhail's office in Franklin and the Polk law office in Columbia (below) often housed youthful clerks and students (Courtesy Carroll Van West).
- Polk law office in Columbia (Courtesy Jill K. Garrett).
- First Monday on the Square in Columbia (Courtesy Columbia Main Street). See Edmund Cooper letter for description of store clerk's day.

Male Colleges: In 1836, the same year that the Columbia Female Institute was built, the trustees of Jackson College moved their school for young men from its rural location on Rutherford Creek into Columbia. Both colleges began in a burst of civic aspiration. Duncan Brown Frierson exclaimed that "each person appears to overreach the other in Contributions for the creation of large edifices for the dissemination of learning among male and female." He proclaimed the female school to be "of immense

size" and boasted that the male college would be "much larger . . . so that in a year from this time Columbia will be the Yale of the south."³² A national economic depression postponed local ambitions, and when Columbia residents recovered they devoted themselves overwhelmingly to female education.

- Map of Murfreesboro showing location of Union University (at right edge of map) at the opposite end of Main Street from the public square (D. G. Beers & Co., 1878).

Male colleges occupied a distinctly different position in the townscape than female colleges. Trustees of female colleges located their schools on large lots in residential areas of town. Columbia's Female Institute and Athenaeum stood on adjoining lots at the western border of town in the most fashionable residential district. By contrast, the trustees of Jackson College built their school at the southern end of Main Street, outside corporation limits. [Fig. 5.4] Matthew Delamere Cooper described the location as "the margin of the town."³³

- This view of Union University was printed on stationery Virginia Shelton used in 1856. Meanwhile, in Murfreesboro, town residents celebrated the cornerstone laying at Union University in 1849. Symbolically, Union anchored one end of Main Street balanced at the other end by the Courthouse at the center of the public square. Those entering and leaving town via Main Street could not miss the university and the courthouse--the two prominent institutions of oratory and debate, skills of masculine authority in the antebellum town.

- Union University, built in Murfreesboro in 1849. The University closed in 1873. This view of the building was taken sometime after the Civil War (Courtesy Mrs. Mabel Pittard).
In addition to their distinctive juxtapositions in the townscape, male and female colleges also applied significantly different spatial strategies to accommodate their scholars. Most importantly, male schools did not incorporate the chief innovation of the female college--dormitory space. Before the 1850s, local girls from town and neighboring countryside lived at home or boarded with "respectable" families when they attended town academies. In a dramatic departure from this pattern, residential female colleges of the 1850s sought a clientele far beyond Middle Tennessee and housed the students together in buildings designed especially to instruct young ladies in their proper domestic responsibilities. Thus, in addition to classrooms and an auditorium, Soule Female College included a parlor where the boarders entertained visitors, just as they would be expected to do as mistresses of their own households.³⁴ Union University and Jackson College were both substantial three story brick buildings, but neither institution

housed students or contained parlors for the reception of visitors. Instead, male students arranged their own lodging and boarding with local residents, while college space was devoted to classrooms, scientific laboratories, libraries, and chapels or auditoriums for public speaking exercises.³⁵ At the end of the winter session in 1850, members of the Calliopean Society at Union University invited townsfolk to attend their debate. According to Virginia Shelton, "The subject debated was 'ought woman to be as thoroughly educated as man?'" She did not reveal the conclusion the students reached, only offering her own enigmatic evaluation of the evening--"There are some youths of pretty good talents in the University."³⁶

Small-town slaves

In 1830, 556 slaves lived in Franklin—42 percent of the town's population.³⁷ The proportion remained the same twenty years later. Meanwhile, 46 percent of Murfreesboro residents were slaves, and, although they constituted a smaller proportion of the population in Shelbyville and Columbia, more than one third of the residents in those towns were slaves in 1850.³⁸ A town slave was generally young and almost as likely to be male as female. Because they worked primarily as domestic servants, it is not surprising that women in bondage outnumbered men in the small town; nevertheless, the sexual imbalance among slaves was not dramatic.³⁹ In 1850, 55 percent of slaves in Franklin were women. In Murfreesboro, where 52 percent of slaves were women, the ratio of women to men was virtually equal. Whether male or female, town slaves tended to be children or young adults rather than old people. More than half of the slaves who lived in Franklin in 1850 were twenty or younger; over one third were children under the age of ten.⁴⁰

Black residents were almost always slaves. Altogether, for example, only 23 free black men and women lived in Franklin in 1850, about 1% of the town's population.

Slaveholding was widespread—in 1850, 77% of households in Murfreesboro owned slaves. In Shelbyville, 51% of household held slaves. Slave owners ran the gamut from wealthy physicians to shoemaker John Burch, who owned a twelve-year-old boy; and John Short, a stone cutter who owned a twenty-year old woman; and Elijah Porter, a mulatto laborer who owned 3 slaves. Most small-town slave owners owned only one or two slaves.

Actual slave ownership was only part of the story of town slavery. Many householders not counted among slave owners nevertheless hired cooks, laundresses, and stable hands. Thus, widespread slave ownership and hiring practices distributed the slave population evenly across the townscape.

- Map showing much of Henry's route. Notice in particular the location of the McConnell house at the corner of Margin Street and the Columbia turnpike, Hannah Henderson's house on Indigo Street, the Bennett house on Main Street, and the tanyard on the Columbia Turnpike. The public square is one block below Indigo Street, just beyond range of the map.
- Rear view of Carter house near Franklin (Courtesy Carroll Van West).
- Row of service buildings at Carter house, a working farm within walking distance of Franklin (Photograph by author).

Kate Carney habitually took afternoon walks for exercise and enjoyment. Edmund Cooper paraded town streets proudly in his fancy militia uniform. Town streets held an altogether different set of meanings and possibilities for the slave, Henry. Henry's movements one weekend in the winter of 1850 reveal some of the patterns of work and leisure for slaves in a small town, where streets and shop floors rather than farm fields were the routine sites of action.⁴¹

Monday, the 25th of February was no ordinary day in Franklin. It was the day after two white men, John Eelbeck and William Barham, had been stabbed to death by a black man they had suspected of stealing hams. We know something of how Henry spent his weekend not because he kept a diary, but because he was accused of murder. Testimony at Henry's trial offers a rare glimpse of the everyday world

of town slavery from the slave's perspective. Many of the trial witnesses were slaves who saw the murders on Sunday night as they walked to their homes from the prayer meeting at Hannah Henderson's house. These witnesses were as guilty of breaking the local curfew as the slave who apparently stole hams from a local smokehouse. They watched nervously as the white men accosted the supposed thief and panicked when they fell to the street, not because the witnesses were afraid the murderer would turn on them, but because they feared punishment for being out so late. Thus, Henry's story also raises questions about order and control in small towns where slaves made up nearly half the population.

The fact that the murders took place in a small town mattered. The testimony reveals the outlines of a system with its own unique characteristics—a type of slavery that was qualitatively different compared to urban or rural forms of the institution. Furthermore, hearing this story from the perspective of slaves enables us to see more fully how slaves were active participants in town life. Questions of law and order in a slave town will be addressed more fully in an upcoming section of this chapter.⁴² Of particular concern here are the more mundane aspects of Henry's weekend.

Henry worked for Samuel Tenneswood at the local tanyard on the Columbia Turnpike. [Fig 6.1] Before sundown on Sunday evening, the 24th of February, Henry walked over as usual to Mrs. Doyle's house on the corner of Margin and Church Streets to get his employer's supper, which consisted of "a coffeepot and a plate of battercakes."⁴³ Catherine Doyle was the widow of a prosperous baker and businessman. Mourning, one of Mrs. Doyle's four slaves, met Henry at the kitchen door. Henry always had to grab a piece of Mrs. Doyle's stovewood to fend off the neighborhood dogs, and Mourning later remembered that she had accidentally kicked over the stick he had propped against the wall as she handed him the meal she had prepared. A similar stick would be found at the murder scene a few hours later. Henry balanced the components of Tenneswood's supper precariously, "coffee pot in one hand, and plate and stick in the other," as he set off to make his delivery.

Despite his evening errand for Tenneswood, Henry had had at least part of the day to himself. He spent some of his time off playing cards at Ragsdale's shop.⁴⁴ About one o'clock in the afternoon, Henry

stopped at Ragsdale's gate to chat with Tom, slave of William P. Campbell, who was on his way to prepare the sacrament for the Sunday service at the Cambellite church.⁴⁵ Henry does not seem to have attended church or even the late-night prayer meeting at Hannah Henderson's house.

Henderson, a free black woman, lived on Indigo Street, a block up from Main, where a group of at least eleven or twelve slaves met for Sunday prayer, including Henry's neighbor, Isabella. Isabella worked for the Wells family who owned a carriage factory next door to Henry's current residence—the McConnell kitchen. Peter McConnell was a tobacconist from Pennsylvania who owned one slave, a forty-year-old woman named Susan. Henry "was in the habit of staying at night" with Susan in the kitchen which stood at the back of a V-shaped lot where the Columbia Turnpike met Margin and Main streets.⁴⁶ Susan and Isabella probably broke the monotony of cooking, laundry, and other housework by visiting across the unfenced property line between the McConnell and Wells households. When the prayer meeting at Hannah Henderson's ended around ten thirty, Isabella took a roundabout route back to her employer's house, first visiting the household of her owner and then stopping by the McConnell kitchen to tell Susan the evening's news. Isabella noticed that Henry had returned to the kitchen to sleep.

Early Monday morning Henry rose before daylight and put on a clean white homespun shirt and his grey roundabout coat with its red flannel lining. His first task was to cut the firewood Susan would need for cooking and laundry that day. He made the fire in the McConnell kitchen, slung the ax over his shoulder, and proceeded to his next job--sweeping the floor at King's grocery on the Square. James King, who also lived in the store, had hired Jake Childress "to make fires for him." Jake had in turn employed Henry. For the past two or three weeks Henry had walked up Main Street early every morning to clean King's room, sweep out the store, and chop the firewood.

Along the way to King's, Henry was used to seeing Jeff, slave of Hugh Duff, who started his work early at Short's stone yard near the grocery. Town slaves began their work day before sunrise, so Henry and Jeff were among the first town residents to appear on the public square Monday morning.

Henry finished sweeping out the grocery just after daybreak, and once again slung the ax over his shoulder and walked back up Main Street to his job at the tanyard on Columbia Turnpike.

These circumstantial details of Henry's life seem insignificant by themselves, but taken as a whole these ordinary activities and encounters begin to outline the contours of small-town slavery. From hard and bloody labor in the tanyard, to odd jobs and errands, to casual conversations and card games, Henry came into contact with other slaves more often than with white residents. Besides Susan, there was the neighbor Isabella; Jake, who exchanged chores with Henry; Jeff, who worked across the Square from one of his early morning jobs; Mourning, who cooked supper for his employer; Tom, a church sexton; card players at Ragsdale's shop; and many others. Whether Henry took his walks in the pursuit of a particular work duty or as part of his own leisure time, town streets offered numerous opportunities for casual conversations with those he met along the way.

What these interactions show is that Henry exerted a certain amount of flexibility and control over his work routine. Small-town streets were full of slaves running errands for their masters or employers, who took the same opportunities that Henry did to choose their own routes and stop to talk to friends and acquaintances along the way.

Besides the flexibility of errand running, Henry was not under the close supervision of an overseer at the tanyard. His employer, Samuel Tenneswood, described Henry as "always attentive" and "perfectly honest." On occasion Tenneswood left Henry to work alone because, as Tenneswood explained, "he knew what his work was."

Though most slaves were household servants like Susan and Isabella—cooks, washerwomen, stable hands, dining room servants—Henry was one of the numerous slaves whose work took them beyond individual households. His story suggests some of the ways that slaves used small-town hiring practices to shape their own lives. Samuel Tenneswood was Henry's employer, not his owner. A farmer named John Bennett, whose house stood on Main Street, actually owned Henry and eleven other slaves. But Henry's actions on that February weekend in 1850 show that he neither lived in the Bennett

household nor worked as a field hand for Bennett. Before Tenneswood, George Neely had hired Henry for one year as a butcher.

In addition to his full-time employment at the tanyard, Henry had also taken the initiative to arrange odd jobs to earn extra money. Small towns offered a variety of ways for slaves to earn some extra cash, and those opportunities were expanding in the prosperous 1850s. Indeed, in the last few years, Henry had performed a variety of jobs including butcher, wood-hauler, and meat vendor, selling game he hunted in the vicinity of town. This pattern of localized hiring was more typical than the long-range hiring practices of some antebellum cities, where business was brisk enough to support hiring agents who connected slaves or their masters with potential employers. Hired slaves in the small town tended to have masters who lived in the town or county where they worked. As we shall see, slaves themselves often took an active part in hiring negotiations in a small-town context.

Perhaps it is no coincidence then that the antebellum Southerner who drew the clearest distinctions among urban, rural, and small-town life was a slave. We can only speculate about Henry's thoughts and attitudes, but the remarkable autobiography of one small-town slave opens a window onto the distinctiveness of small-town slavery. Harriet Jacobs, who grew up in Edenton, North Carolina, defined herself explicitly as a small-town slave. "How often did I rejoice that I lived in a town where all the inhabitants knew each other!" she declared. "If I had been on a remote plantation, or lost among the multitude of a crowded city, I should not be a living woman at this day."⁴⁷

The essential distinction of town life, Jacobs felt, was intimacy—a strong contrast to isolation or anonymity. Jacobs exploited the social dynamic of the small town to her advantage when she rejected the unwanted advances of her master, Dr. James Norcum. She reasoned that she was protected by her abusive owner's concern for his own good name as a wealthy doctor and plantation owner in Edenton. "It was lucky for me that I did not live on a distant plantation," she carefully explained, "but in a town not so large that the inhabitants were ignorant of each other's affairs. Bad as are the laws and customs in a

slaveholding community, the doctor, as a professional man, deemed it prudent to keep up some outward show of decency."⁴⁸

But Norcum's public image was not the only reputation that mattered. Harriet's grandmother, Molly Horniblow, cultivated a powerful one of her own. Horniblow had secured personal freedom in 1828 and operated a bakery in the heart of town. "Her presence in the neighborhood was some protection to me," Harriet argued. The doctor "dreaded her scorching rebukes," but more importantly, "she was known and patronized by many people; and he did not wish to have his villainy made public."⁴⁹ The interactions of James Norcum, Molly Horniblow, and her influential white clientele, illuminate the complex racial dynamic that distinguished Southern towns.

Of course it was not the complexity of race relations that distinguished small towns from farms and cities. Interactions between white and black were rarely simple anywhere in the antebellum South. It was the spatial and social proximity of mixed race households that made small-town servitude distinctive.

Henry, who was ultimately executed for murder, might have come to a different conclusion about the protective possibilities of living in a small town where everybody knew each other. His daily movements were widely known. His occupation as a butcher and tanner of hides made him a handy murder suspect. (Doctors who examined the bodies of the murder victims agreed that they must have been inflicted by someone who "had knowledge where the vital organs lay," and "great skill with the use of the knife.") He lived with Susan in the McConnell kitchen along the murderer's getaway route.

And Harriet Jacobs, much as she appreciated the advantages of small-town living, was in fact herself victimized by small-town intimacy. When she became a fugitive, her escape was threatened by myriad possibilities of discovery. For a while, she was unable even to send her grandmother a message because "every one who went in or out of her house was closely watched."⁵⁰ For better or worse, lives of white and black were intimately intertwined in a small town where "all the inhabitants knew each other." Slaves managed to turn this situation to their own advantage whenever possible—negotiating

employment and housing arrangements, for example—but communal intimacy brought its own dangers and limitations for small-town slaves.

Recent historians have emphasized the possibilities for community building on plantations where African-American slaves were often the majority of residents.⁵¹ Similarly, historians of urban slavery have found that free blacks and slaves who lived in antebellum cities were able to accumulate property, to maintain separate households, to form social organizations, to build independent churches, in short, to create autonomous African-American communities.⁵² In small towns, by contrast, slaves did not have the opportunity to create physically segregated black communities. Nevertheless, antebellum town space was racially configured; its communities separated by powerful social customs. Yet Harriet Jacobs expressed her preference for town life as a slave, despite the seemingly limited opportunities for building communal autonomy in a place "where all the inhabitants knew each other."

Architectural evidence and spatial experience in Middle Tennessee show that the small-town South must be understood on its own terms concerning slavery. Above all, town slavery had the potential to produce extremely complex living and working arrangements that slaves themselves played an influential role in formulating. As much as elite female college students or bored young store clerks, slave experience defined the distinctiveness of small-town life.

¹From the reminiscences of Nathan Vaught, transcribed in Tinker, "Nathan Vaught, Master Builder," 95. Photocopies of the original memoir, titled "Youth and Old Age," are also available at the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville, Tenn., and at the Maury County Public Library in Columbia, Tenn.

²The Maury Press, 7 March 1860.

³John Spence, The Annals of Rutherford County, Vol. 2: 1829-1870 (Murfreesboro, TN: The Rutherford County Historical Society, 1991), p. 102. Spence, describes the creation in Murfreesboro of "Depot Hill" just after the arrival of the first train.

⁴Stuart Blumin examines the development of urban retail centers specializing in non-manual business interests of the middle class. See, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 83-107

⁵From the "Reminiscences of Nathan Vaught" in Nancy C. Tinker, "Nathan Vaught, Master Builder of Maury County: A Study of Middle Tennessee Greek Revival Architecture" (MA thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1983), pp. 113-114.

⁶Spence, Vol. 2, p. 114.

⁷Spence, Vol. 2, p. 123.

⁸The Maury Press, 2 May 1860, advertisement for new furniture store, corner building of W. J. Dale's new block, north side public square, includes list of furniture for sale and advertises related undertaking business.

⁹The Maury Press, 4 April 1860.

¹⁰The Maury Press, 4 April 1861.

¹See Murfreesboro News, 2 February 1859, in which Neilson & Crichelow advertised their new partnership. Jordan and Elliot's dry goods store is also advertised in that issue of the News. Kate's father, Legrand Carney had recently built a new building for his dry goods store on the Square. He had previously been a partner in one of the town's first drugstores, see Murfreesboro Telegraph, 13 November 1845.

²Crockett's dry goods store is advertised in Murfreesboro News, 2 February 1859.

³According to the Murfreesboro News, 2 February 1859 and 26 September 1860, Reed's Bookstore was on the south side of the public square. Reed described himself as a bookseller, stationer, and dealer in wall papers; and sold everything from music and musical instruments including violins, "accordeons," flutinas, guitars, banjoes, flutes, and "zitheras," to chess and backgammon sets, dice, gold pens, inkstands, paper weights, razors, and "R. D. Reed's Superior Steel Pen."

⁴Kate Carney Diary, 19 March 1859.

⁵The issue was originally defined in the classic article by Welter, "Cult of True Womanhood." Numerous subsequent studies have analyzed the mid-nineteenth-century redefinition of domesticity and femininity from diverse points of view. See Sklar, Catharine Beecher; and Douglas, Feminization of American Culture.

⁶The Maury Press, 26 September 1860.

¹⁷Western Freeman, 6 March 1832.

¹⁸Western Freeman, 6 March 1832.

¹⁹"Reminiscences of Nathan Vaught" in Tinker, p. 118.

²⁰Residents in all four county seats built female colleges during the 1850s: the Athenaeum, and the Methodist Female College in Columbia; Soule College and Eaton Female College in Murfreesboro; the Franklin Female Institute; and the Shelbyville Female College, built in 1858 at a cost of \$15,000. See The Goodspeed Histories of Maury, Williamson, Rutherford, Wilson, Bedford, & Marshal Counties of Tennessee, reprinted from Goodspeed's History of Tennessee (Columbia, TN: Woodward & Stinson Printing Co., 1971, originally published, 1886).

²¹Murfreesboro News, 2 February 1859.

²²For example, the Shelbyville Female Academy had advised the parents of potential students that "young ladies from the county can be accomodated [sic] with boarding in respectable families on reasonable terms." Western Freeman, 6 March 1832.

²³Murfreesboro News, 2 February 1859. Eaton Female College in Murfreesboro also made "ample arrangements . . . for boarding in the Institution--Murfreesboro News, 26 September 1860. By contrast the Murfreesboro Military Academy, located in a building opposite the Methodist Female College in Murfreesboro informed potential male students that boarding "can be had with private families on reasonable terms." See Murfreesboro News, 2 February 1859.

²⁴The Columbia Mirror, 12 November 1857.

²⁵Kate Carney Diary, 22 February 1859, SHC.

²⁶The Columbia Beacon, 15 January 1847.

²⁷Shirley Ann Hickson, "The Development of Higher Education for Women in the Antebellum South," (PhD. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1985), p. 79. Hickson discovered that the time and effort trustees spend on property management was second only to their responsibilities for managing school finances, but she simply interprets this as part of the evidence that female colleges were intended to be permanent institutions. On the other hand, in her book, Alma Mater, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz offers thorough and insightful architectural analysis, but considers female colleges in isolation rather than in the context of a townscape. See Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

²⁸The Maury Press, 7 March 1860.

²⁹The Columbia Beacon, 15 January 1847.

³⁰The Maury Intelligencer, 4 January 1849.

³¹The Maury Press, 7 March 1860.

³²Duncan Brown Frierson to William F. Cooper, 12 January 1836, Cooper Family Papers.

³³Matthew Delamere Cooper to William, 18 January 1837, Cooper Family Papers.

³⁴Kate Carney Diary, 9 March 1859.

³⁵Garrett, "The Burning of Jackson College," in Hither and Yon, 1:7-8.

³⁶Virginia Shelton to her aunt, 23 December 1850, Campbell Family Papers.

³⁷1830 Census. Total population in Franklin was 1318.

³⁸Calculated from 1850 manuscript census. 39 percent of Columbia residents were slaves. 37 percent of Shelbyville residents were slaves.

³⁹Richard Wade found that slave women far outnumbered slave men in antebellum cities, Slavery in the Cities, 23-25. Ira Berlin discovered a similar pattern among free blacks. In nineteenth-century Southern cities African American women outnumbered African American men by a widening margin. Slaves Without Masters, 151; 177. In Middle Tennessee, Anita Goodstein found relative sexual equilibrium in antebellum Nashville. "Although black women outnumbered black men in every census tally from 1830 to 1860, the imbalance was not great, and it was physically easier in the city to contract marriages across slave owners' property lines," Nashville, 139.

⁴⁰Calculated from the 1850 manuscript census. In Columbia, 56 percent of slaves were younger than twenty. In Murfreesboro, 52 percent of slaves were younger than twenty. In Shelbyville, 60 percent of slaves were younger than twenty. By comparison, most household servants in America before 1870 were in their teens and twenties and those younger than fifteen may have represented as much as 15 percent of the total servant force. See Sutherland, Americans and Their Servants, 53.

⁴¹Henry's routine has been reconstructed from testimony given in the Supreme Court trial, Henry, A Slave vs. State of Tennessee, Middle Tennessee Supreme Court, Box 92A, TSLA.

⁴²Henry's murder trial is analyzed in greater depth in the section titled: "Murder, Theft, Arson, and Suspicion: Law and Order in the Townscape of Slavery."

⁴³For a history and provenance of the Doyle house see Bowman, Historic Williamson County, 140-141.

⁴⁴According to the 1850 census there were two Ragsdale's in Franklin--Robert, a thirty-two year old shoemaker who owned nine slaves, and William, a twenty-one year old cabinetmaker who owned one slave. It is not clear which shop served as venue for the card game.

⁴⁵Middle Tennesseans often referred to members of the Church of Christ as Campbellites after the founder of the group, Alexander Campbell.

⁴⁶This was the testimony of I. L. Littleton at Henry's murder trial. See Henry, A Slave vs. State of Tennessee, Middle Tennessee Supreme Court, Box 92A, TSLA.

⁴⁷Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 35.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 97.

⁵¹Vlach, Back of the Big House. Genovese, Roll Jordan, Roll. Rhys Isaac argues that the communal ethos slave quarter presented a sharp contrast by the end of the eighteenth century to the increasingly privatized dwellings of slave owners, see Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790.

⁵²Brown and Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond." David R. Goldfield, "Black Life in Old South Cities," in Campbell, Before Freedom Came, 123-153. Tyler-McGraw and Kimball, In Bondage and Freedom. Berlin, Slaves Without Masters. Wade, Slavery in the Cities. Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South.