

Alexander Benjamin Lawton and Narcissa  
Melissa Lawton were master and mistress of a  
plantation in Thomas County, Georgia, during the  
decades of the eighteen-fifties and eighteen-sixties.  
According to family tradition, the name of that  
plantation was Summer Oaks.

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## PREFACE

Alexander Benjamin and Narcissa Melissa Lawton were great, great, great grandparents of Stacey Church. Stacey and Gerald Church are daughter and father.

Our family became intensely interested in life at Summer Oaks plantation when we read the diary written by Narcissa Melissa Lawton while she lived there in the year 1862. Copies of that diary were given as Christmas gifts in 1981 by Margaret Grogan. The original diary is now in the possession of Kathryn Lawton, of Oviedo, Florida. After reading the diary we decided to search out as much information as we could find about Summer Oaks and our ancestors who lived there. The Lawtons of Summer Oaks reports some, but not all, of what we have found.

We have visited Thomasville, Georgia, three times searching for information and becoming generally acquainted with the Lawton's neighborhood. We have walked over land that once was in Summer Oaks plantation; we have stood in the sanctuary and sat in the pews of Liberty Baptist Church, in Grooverville, where on Sunday morning, March 16, 1862, Narcissa Melissa attended church service and a neighbor was ordained a deacon; we have begun taking steps which we hope eventually will lead to the protection and preservation of old Lebanon cemetery.



In Thomas County several people have been especially helpful to us; among them are: Miss Mary Harris, librarian of the Thomasville city library; Thomas Hill, Curator of the Thomas County Historical Museum; Mrs. Francis McLeod, in Grooverville, who first told us about an old cemetery out in the woods where some Lawtons were buried; Robert Lauder, Manager of Merrily plantation, who guided us to old Lebanon cemetery and rescued it from the underbrush; Hector Irving Cook who lived and farmed on land that once was in the plantation; I. Clayton Ramsey, a family historian of the Ramsey family.

Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., of Allendale, South Carolina, and Rev. Dr. Robert E. H. Peebles of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina; both have a vast knowledge of family history and both have been generous in sharing it with us.

Information about descendants of Winborn Theodore came mostly from Ruth Miller Thomas, of Shreveport, Louisiana.

Information about descendants of Clara Isabelle and Robert William came from Kathryn Lawton of Oviedo, Florida.

Information about descendants of Emma Lenora came from Margaret Grogan of Beaumont, Texas, who has possession of Narcissa's original poetry.

The Lawtons of Summer Oaks is truly the result of a family effort. The chart showing descendants of Alexander Benjamin Lawton was drawn by Mary Martha Grogan Lundy of Bloomburg, Texas. Gary Lawton Grogan of Avinger, Texas,

managed the process of production which resulted in the report documents being printed, bound, transported and delivered to the proper place at the proper time. The cost of producing the documents was paid with funds raised by James Tillman Grogan, Sr., of Bloomburg, Texas.

We are grateful for the help, as we are grateful for the family that gave it.

Research for this report was done by Jane Ann Grogan Church, Stacey Allene Church and Gerald Marshall Church. The report document was written by Stacey and Gerald Church.

We will be pleased to receive additional information which will help make our knowledge of this family more thorough. We can be reached at this address:

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## INTRODUCTION

The Lawtons of Summer Oaks was written as a report about research into family history and as a presentation to the annual family reunion of the Lawton and Allied Families Association, meeting in Hardeeville, South Carolina, June 15, 16, 1984. It was also written as a contribution to the growing body of literature about the Lawton family.

Anyone who reads this report should realize that it is only an introduction to its subject. We can ask more questions than we, as yet, can answer. A more detailed story remains to be written, and the information required to write it is available.

Further study should be given to such topics as: (1) the relationship between this branch of the family and the activity, development and influence of other branches, (2) the effect the war between the states had on the family, (3) the question of where they lived and how they prospered while they lived in South Carolina and while they lived in Baker County, Georgia, (4) the descendants not accounted for in this report, especially those of Thomas J. There are other topics also.

The Lawtons and their kin have a long, rich, varied, exciting past. They often have played important parts in the history of their communities, their states, their nations, Colonial, Union and Confederate.

Alexander Benjamin Lawton and Narcissa Melissa Lawton deserve recognition in the story of their family's accomplishments. We welcome this opportunity to focus attention upon them. We thank the members of the Lawton and Allied Families Association for inviting us to make this presentation.

## PART I

### LAWTON FAMILY BACKGROUND

#### William Lawton

William Lawton came to South Carolina from England. Although we do not know when he arrived or what prompted him to leave for America, one family tradition is that he sailed to Charleston from Plymouth. The only thing known about William's father was that he belonged to the Cheshire family.<sup>1</sup>

William's signature on the will of John Sealy in 1737 is the first record of him as a citizen of Charleston County, South Carolina. It is interesting that his was the only signature of the three witnesses; the others signed with their mark.

William Lawton became a planter in St. John's Parish, Edisto Island, Colleton County. When his estate was appraised after his death, he was listed as "Captain." Whether the title came as a result of a career before he left England, a position held in the local militia, or simply as a local gesture of respect is not known.

William Lawton acquired his first 200 acres of land from the estate of William Tilly on Edisto Island, Colleton

County in May of 1744. Four-hundred and sixty adjoining acres were purchased from James Cuthbert in 1756. As was much of South Carolina, the land was swampy and had to be cleared by slaves. Rice became the plantation's leading cash crop through the efforts of thirty-six slaves planting, tending and harvesting the grain.<sup>2</sup> William also raised indigo, pease, and corn. Four bee hives supplied honey; twenty-three turkeys, thirty-one fowls, fifteen geese, and fifty-six hogs insured meat on the table. Sixty-five cattle, thirty-six sheep and six horses grazed the grassy plateau above the swamp.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the crops and livestock William owned, there were the tools and equipment needed to maintain the plantation. Eight rice mills, three corn mills, two spinning wheels, one quilting frame, numerous tools for planting, barrel making, harvesting, and marking livestock kept the plantation productive. William and his family could use a carriage, buggy or a large or small sailing canoe for transportation.<sup>4</sup> Several guns and shrimp and fish nets helped provide food, and probably recreation.

As a prominent planter, William must have been included in influential meetings and local social affairs, because his wardrobe contained many items exclusively for dress-wear. He would be an impressive figure riding his horse Frisk, horsewhip in hand, in his best broadcloth suit with gold sleeve-buttons, silver buckles attached to his shoes,

and his wig arranged firmly on his head.<sup>5</sup> Two hats, three Fustian coats, an old Welch coat, a broadcloth coat, "Coat and Breeches Bagathey," a riding coat, a calico "rapper" and a "lott of clothes" comprised William's everyday wardrobe.<sup>6</sup> The community on Edisto Island by 1750 was enjoying a time of prosperity. Named in honor of King George II, Georgia Colony, officially founded in 1733, was providing a buffer from the warring Spaniards.<sup>7</sup> Immigrants poured into the Colonies from the British Isles and Europe. Despite the terrifying death rate among infants and children, the population was growing. Marriage, especially early marriage, was encouraged and widows often remarried promptly. Excessive child-bearing drained the vitality of many pioneer women, and a number of the largest families, like the Lawton's, were borne by several mothers.<sup>8</sup>

Negro slaves, of whom William Lawton owned several dozen, were being shipped in, purchased, and set to work on the rice and indigo plantations.<sup>9</sup> On at least two occasions, William dealt in the money or slave market with John Calder. Five slaves were secured by them in March 1753, and two slaves in March 1754.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the life on Edisto revolved around religion and the church. Although few records remain, William was probably either a Presbyterian or an Anglican. The minutes of the Vestry of St. John's Colleton, the Anglican Congregation for Edisto, for August 6, 1759, appointed

William as one of the Overseers for the Poor.<sup>11</sup> He was required to meet with the church wardens monthly after services to consult and regulate matters pertaining to the poor and to account to the vestries for their activities. Failing to accept the appointment was subject to fine.<sup>12</sup> The Anglican church was a powerful governing body in the community, so this appointment did not necessarily mean William practiced Anglicanism. James Clark, in his will of April 15, 1750, names William as one of the trustees of a trust fund valued at one hundred English pounds, for the use and support of the Gospel in the Presbyterian Congregation on Edisto Island.<sup>13</sup>

William married three times. His first wife, Mary Clarke, daughter of Jeremiah Clarke, bore four children: Josiah, William Jr. and Jeremiah Lawton all died young and unmarried between 1757 and 1762. Mary Clarke's only surviving child, Sarah, born in 1739, married John Seabrook in 1774. She was the mother of William Seabrook who later made his fortune by introducing sea-island cotton to Edisto.<sup>14</sup>

William's second wife, Mary Winborn (c. 1743-4), a daughter of Thomas Winborn, had two children; a daughter, Mary, who died young; and a son, Winborn. Winborn, born on Edisto in 1745, died on St. James Island September 22, 1809. He married Mary Mathews and had three children: Winborn Lawton Jr., born 1782, died 1861; Beulah Lawton (who married John Hughes, January 29, 1801), and William Lawton.<sup>15</sup>



William Lawton's third wife was Mary Stone Grimball, widow of Paul Grimball. By Paul Grimball, Mary had the following children: Providence Grimball Mikell, John Grimball, Ann Grimball Robert, and Thomas Grimball. William and Mary Stone Grimball Lawton had one child, Joseph Lawton, born on Edisto Island, October 18, 1753.

Mary probably had little life separate from her husband, children and church activities. William provided well for Mary and her family, and her home contained many luxuries. Silver forks and spoons, china, damask table linen, curtains, "looking glasses," pictures, tea tables, desks, and other fine items were enjoyed and used along with the usual ordinary tin ware, "old dishes," and trunks.<sup>16</sup> Although books were rare in the colonies, William's library contained several religious works, and according to the inventory of his estate, he left "a lott of books."<sup>17</sup>

William Lawton's will, dated October 9, 1757, was proved December 9, 1757. It is probable that he died before October 15 of that year by the date of his son Josiah's will, which speaks of the "land left to me by my father."<sup>18</sup> William left Mary, his "beloved wife," nine slaves with their tools, his riding horse Friske and a saddle, one fourth of his stock of cattle and sheep, one-third of his furniture, and for her lifetime, the use of his large canoe and sails and of the "plantation I now live on."<sup>19</sup>

William also generously took care of his children from his previous wives. To Josiah Lawton, who would die soon after his father, he left one negro man, a large silver spoon, a gun, 230 of the original acreage "bought from Mr. Cuthbert," and the large canoe and sails (after Mary's death).

The other 230 acres of the original land was left, along with a Negro man, to William Lawton Jr. Sarah received a Negro woman, and her son received a riding horse and saddle. Daughter Mary also received a Negro woman, and a pair of her father's gold sleeve buttons.

To Joseph, William and Mary Stone Grimball Lawton's only child, William left a Negro girl and boy, a silver watch and silver shoe buckles, and after his mother's death the plantation.

William is buried in a plantation cemetery in an area known as Hanahan's on Steamboat Landing Road, Edisto Island.<sup>20</sup> His daughter Sarah Seabrook, her husband John and their son William are buried there with him. This cemetery is on the property William willed to Mary and on her death to Joseph. Joseph sold the land to John Hanahan on December 13, 1774.<sup>21</sup>

#### Joseph Lawton

After the death of William Lawton, his widow, Mary Stone Grimball Lawton remarried on January 15, 1759. With her third husband, Samuel Fickling, Mary moved her family from Edisto to Prince William's Parish in Granville County.

After her remarriage, Mary released to young Joseph the rights to the Edisto Island Plantation left to her by William.

Joseph married Sarah Roberts, granddaughter of Pierre Robert the French Huguenot Pastor on the Santee, on May 18, 1773.<sup>1</sup> A year later Joseph sold the Edisto Island land, moved to St. Peter's Parish near the future village of Robertville, and established his Mulberry Grove plantation. Joseph and Sarah's first son, William Henry, was born there February 23, 1775. A second son, Joseph James, was born August 18, 1777.

By this time the Declaration of Independence had been signed in Boston. Joseph served as a lieutenant in the South Carolina Militia in the spring and summer of 1778, leading the Black Swamp Company of foot soldiers in protecting the strategic Two Sister's Ferry.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph first intended to produce silk when he moved to Black Swamp. It was never a successful venture, and as he acquired more land and slaves Joseph turned his interests to rice, indigo, and especially, cotton.<sup>3</sup> On July 18, 1773, Joseph Lawton made a land purchase that would affect the lives of generations of Lawtons to come. From George Mosse he purchased a 198 acre parcel of land adjoining his already extensive Mulberry Grove plantation.<sup>4</sup> At this time Joseph and Sarah had four children; William Henry, Joseph James, Thirza, and Benjamin Themistocles Dion who was born in 1782. Their neighbors, George and Phoebe Norton Mosse, had three daughters. Although George Mosse

moved his growing family, which eventually included four more daughters, to Savannah, the family spent the summer months in St. Peter's Parish. As could be expected, three of the Lawton brothers later married Mosse sisters.

Sarah was undoubtedly the matriarch of the large Lawton clan at Black Swamp. She bore three more children after Benjamin: Charlotte Ann, born in 1785; Alexander James, born in 1790; and Winborn Asa, born in 1793. Intelligent and well-educated, Sarah was concerned with her family, the neighborhood, and the church.<sup>5</sup> Joseph and Sarah were church converts from Episcopalian to Baptist. They were supporters of the Pipe Creek Church until 1788, joining at Black Swamp that year.

Between the Revolution and the Civil War, Black Swamp became one of the wealthiest areas in the state. According to one newspaper account,

...the people around this place, with very few exceptions, were in easy circumstances, many owning plantations, with from fifty to two hundred slaves, and several as many as five hundred. Some planters numbered as many as twenty thousand acres of land in their domain. Their sons and daughters were educated at the best Southern and Northern colleges and seminaries.<sup>6</sup>

Education was important to the families in Black Swamp. In 1818 the Black Swamp Academy was incorporated by three Lawtons, two Roberts, and two Maners.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the Academy, Black Swamp could boast of its own courthouse and jail, a small Episcopal Church, a large and splendid Baptist church, stores and professional offices.<sup>8</sup> Joseph's son, William Henry, was the first postmaster of the Federal

Post Office at Black Swamp. Founded in 1800, it became Robertville in 1812.<sup>9</sup>

Joseph was a leader of the community and was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives as a member from St. Peter's Parish, Beaufort District, from 1784 until 1786.<sup>10</sup> He served as a Justice of the Quorum and as a Justice of the Peace in the 1790's. In 1792 and again in 1795, he served as a commissioner upon appointment by the state legislature to lay out public roads from various centers to and through Black Swamp.

Joseph Lawton died in 1815. Up until that time, Joseph had been planting and harvesting in cooperation with his son Alexander. In his will, Joseph left Sarah "the use of my Houses & as much land as she wishes to cultivate, of any lands I own in this Country."<sup>11</sup> He also left his slaves, his stock of horses, cattle, sheep and hogs, household items and tools to her. To Alexander James he left the land and the house.

True to her nature, Sarah went right on managing the plantation after Joseph's death. She lived almost twenty-five years longer than Joseph, with a deep conviction that it was her responsibility to run the plantation, to keep up with their seven surviving children and, as far as possible, the numerous offspring of those children. In her later years, on fine afternoons, she had her well-groomed horses hitched to her carriage, and one of her slaves drove her on

inspection tours of the plantations and for visits to the families.<sup>12</sup> Sarah died in 1839, at the age of eighty-four years and six months.<sup>13</sup>

### Benjamin Themistocles Dion Lawton

Benjamin Themistocles Dion Lawton was the fourth of Joseph and Sarah Lawton's seven children. He was born December 22, 1782, at Mulberry Grove plantation. Like his brothers and sisters, Benjamin T. D. learned early about plantation life.

At the age of twenty-one, on June 16, Benjamin married Jane Mosse, one of the seven Mosse sisters. Jane was twenty. They lived in the Black Swamp area near their family plantations. In 1804 a daughter, Thirza was born to them but died in infancy. In 1806 another daughter, Glorianna, was born. She grew to adulthood and married William Henry Brisbane, her first cousin. In 1807 Robert Themistocles was born. In 1808 a daughter, Phoebe Sarah, was born. Phoebe married Thomas Willingham and became the mother of seventeen children. Alexander Benjamin was born in 1809.

In 1810, in a pioneering movement to the frontier, several families from the area around Black Swamp migrated west across Georgia to the Mississippi River near the present city of Natchez. Benjamin T. D., age twenty-eight, his brother Joseph James and his brother-in-law Thomas Polhill were included in one such group. The United

States government had purchased that area from Spain in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. In 1810 the area still was unsettled, wild and largely under control of the Indians with a heavy influence of the Spanish in Florida. The Battle of New Orleans did not take place until 1815, and Florida was not purchased from Spain until 1819. Keeping these dates in mind may help us appreciate what an undeveloped country these people were moving into when they reached Natchez in 1810.

In March of 1814, Benjamin's brother Alexander noted in his plantation diary,

In this year my Brothers Joseph Lawton & Benjamin T. D. Lawton & sister Thirza (Lawton) Polhill's bereav'd Daughters returned from the Western Country, after a disastrous journey to that country for the purpose of settling there they calculate they sunk about 1800 dollars each. My poor sister, Thirza died in that country (Vicksburg) December 1811.

Benjamin T. D. began building his own plantation in 1814 in the more familiar area of St. Peter's Parish, Beaufort District, less than a dozen miles from his parents. He contributed his name to the community, calling it Lawtonville.<sup>2</sup> Benjamin established a large plantation and became a leader in the community of Lawtonville which grew to become the business, social, and postal center of the surrounding territory. During this time more children were born to the family.

A daughter, Martha, was born. Another daughter, Charlotte Esther, born in the year 1813, married Edward Peeples and



bore fifteen children. Next came a son, William Seabrook, in 1814. Winborn Joseph was born in 1818, and James Stoney in 1821. The youngest child, Mary Elizabeth, was born in 1823 when her mother was forty years old and her father forty-one. Over a period of nineteen years Jane Mosse Lawton bore eleven children, ten of whom lived to maturity. Benjamin T. D. and Jane Mosse Lawton were the grandparents of eighty-nine grandchildren.

In the year 1826 Benjamin T. D. was the leader in a successful effort to move the Pipe Creek Baptist Church to Lawtonville where Winborn Asa Lawton, his brother, became pastor. Benjamin was credited with being a "deacon of historic service to Pipe Creek Baptist Church."<sup>3</sup> After 1884 the church was known as Lawtonville Baptist Church.<sup>4</sup> In the year 1833 the church needed a new pastor because Winborn Asa moved to May River. The job was filled by William Henry Brisbane who was married to Benjamin's daughter Glorianna.

One mark of progress in Lawtonville can be noted by the establishing of a United States post office there on October 18, 1833. The first postmaster was Thomas Willingham who was married to Benjamin's daughter Phoebe Sarah.

Benjamin's youngest child, Mary Elizabeth, married Dr. Theodore Dehon Mathews, sometime medical doctor, preacher, school teacher, political activist and author. They lived in Albany, Georgia, in 1846 when Benjamin went



to visit them. He died there and was buried in Georgia, but back home in Lawtonville a cenotaph was erected for him in the cemetery. It reads:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF  
 BENJAMIN T. D. LAWTON  
 WHO DIED IN ALBANY, BAKER COUNTY, GA.,  
 WHERE HIS REMAINS ARE DEPOSITED  
 ON THE 18th APRIL 1846  
 AGED 63 YEARS 3 MONTHS AND 3 DAYS  
 MOST OF THE LATER YEARS OF HIS LIFE WERE SPENT IN  
 THIS COMMUNITY AND FOR MANY YEARS HE WAS A DEACON  
 OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH. THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED BY  
 HIS CHILDREN AS A TOKEN OF THEIR AFFECTION

Jane Mosse Lawton lived eleven years longer than Benjamin T. D. She died May 23, 1857, at the age of seventy-four. She was buried in Lawtonville cemetery.

Winborn Asa Lawton<sup>1</sup>

Joseph and Sarah Lawton's youngest son, Winborn Asa Lawton, was born June 23, 1793, at Mulberry Grove plantation. Winborn was named after his grandfather's second wife, Mary Winborn.

Winborn was only seventeen years old when he married Mary Cater Rhodes in 1810. At thirty-four Mary was the widow of Thomas Rhodes, who had died the previous year. Through this marriage, Winborn gained property including twenty-eight slaves.

Their first child, Winborn Benjamin, was born in the year 1812. A daughter, Mary Cater was born in 1813 and lived to the age of seven. A son, Alexander Robert was born in the year 1815 and lived to the age of six. Their

last child, Narcissa Melissa, was born March 6, 1817 when her mother was forty-one years old and her father was twenty-four.

According to the United States census of 1820, Winborn Asa owned twenty slaves. And, by 1820 he had been licensed to preach by the Black Swamp Baptist Church and served as a messenger from that church to the annual meeting of the Savannah River Association.

In the year 1823 he was recognized by the Association as an ordained minister and became pastor of the Pipe Creek Church at Lawtonville, South Carolina. Also in that year on February 25, 1823, Winborn's wife, Mary Cater Rhodes, died at the age of forty-seven. She left Winborn with a son eleven and a daughter six.

In 1821 a local medical doctor, Samuel Perry, died. His estate, settled by Alexander James Lawton, Winborn's brother, included a house in Robertville. Winborn and Isadore Perry, the widow, were married. This marriage lasted until September 17, 1826, when Isadore died. There were no children born of the marriage but, once again, at the age of thirty-three, Winborn Asa was a widower this time with a son now fourteen and a daughter nine.

He remained in his home area as pastor of the church at Lawtonville. By January 1830 Winborn was married for a third time, to a widow, Lucinda Walker Landrum, who was ten years younger than he. In September of that year, their

first son, John, was born. They eventually had two more sons Asa and Judson and two daughters Sarah and Anna.

By 1830 Winborn Asa owned thirty slaves. In 1832 he was called to the May River Baptist Church and was replaced in Lawtonville by William Henry Brisbane, son-in-law of Winborn's brother Benjamin T. D. Lawton. He remained at May River Baptist Church, located at Bluffton, South Carolina, between Savannah and Hilton Head Island, until 1850 when he retired to his plantation near Lawtonville. He was fifty-seven years old.

Retirement to the life of a respected member of the local planter aristocracy, though it may have been appealing to Winborn Asa, did not last long. In the year 1850 he resumed his previous post as pastor of the Pipe Creek Church in Lawtonville where he remained until his death. He was a strong leader of that church during the difficult war years when all of Lawtonville was destroyed, except for the church building. In the year 1866 his church reported a membership of 107 people of whom eighty-six were blacks.

By the year 1860 forty-two slaves worked his plantation which was operated by an overseer when Winborn Asa was away.

Winborn Benjamin, his oldest son, became a merchant in Savannah. Their correspondence reveals an active commercial trade between that city and the plantations in the Lawtonville - Robertville area.

In October 1877, Winborn Asa was elected pastor of the church for another year; he was then eighty-four years old. He preached seven sermons in the year 1878, the last on February 17. On February 23, 1878, Winborn Asa Lawton died.

## PART I

## NOTES

William Lawton

<sup>1</sup>Edward P. Lawton, A Saga of the South, (Ft. Myers Beach, Florida, The Island Press, 1965), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Carolyn L. Harrell, Kith and Kin: A Portrait of a Southern Family, (Macon, Georgia, Mercer University Press, 1984), p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., "Captain William Lawton: 18th Century Planter of Edisto," South Carolina Historical Magazine, Vol. 60 (April, 1959), p. 86.

<sup>5</sup>Harrell, Kith and Kin, p. 157.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., "Captain William Lawton," p. 87.

<sup>7</sup>Harrell, Kith and Kin, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas A. Bailey, The American Pageant, (Lexington, Massachusetts, D. C. Heath, 1975), p. 66.

<sup>9</sup>Harrell, Kith and Kin, p. 155.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., "Captain William Lawton," p. 88.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>12</sup>Harrell, Kith and Kin, p. 157.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., "Captain William Lawton," p. 86.

<sup>14</sup>Edward P. Lawton, A Saga of the South, P. 35.

<sup>15</sup>Mary Mathews had one child by a previous marriage-- William Mathews. See Thomas O. Lawton, "Captain William Lawton," p. 89.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 91

<sup>19</sup>Harrell, Kith and Kin, p. 158.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., "Captain William Lawton," p. 92.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

#### Joseph Lawton

<sup>1</sup>Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., "Lieutenant Joseph Lawton (1753-1815) of Edisto Island and Mulberry Grove Plantation, St Peter's Parish, Beaufort District, South Carolina." A presentation to the reunion of the Lawton and Allied Families, 1975, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Harrell, Kith and Kin, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>5</sup>Lawton, Lieutenant Joseph Lawton, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>11</sup>Harrell, Kith and Kin, p. 171.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 177

#### Benjamin Themistocles Dion Lawton

<sup>1</sup>Harrill, Kith and Kin, pp. 169-170.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 170

<sup>3</sup>Coy K. Johnson, Two Centuries of Lawtonville Baptists, 1775-1975 (no publisher given), p. 134.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

Winborn Asa Lawton

<sup>1</sup>Information in this brief description of Winborn Asa Lawton was taken selectively from various places in Coy K. Johnson, Two Centuries of Lawtonville Baptists, 1775-1975.

## PART II

### ALEXANDER BENJAMIN LAWTON AND HIS FAMILY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Alexander Benjamin Lawton was born September 23, 1809, in South Carolina. He was the fifth child of Benjamin Themistocles Dion Lawton and Jane Mosse, one of three Mosse sisters who married three Lawton brothers.<sup>1</sup>

When A.B. was one year old his father joined a family migration to Mississippi. When A.B. was three his father returned and started a plantation in the area near Mulberry Grove, the plantation owned by Alexander Benjamin's grandfather, Joseph Lawton. A.B. grew up in a neighborhood where his grandfather, uncles and other relatives lived on plantations. He had four brothers and five sisters living at home.

Among Alexander Benjamin's many first cousins was Elizabeth Mary Brisbane, who was a year older than he. His mother, Jane Mosse and Elizabeth's mother, Mary Ann Mosse, were sisters. Elizabeth's father was Adam Fowler Brisbane.<sup>2</sup> Another first cousin growing up in the neighborhood was Narcissa Melissa Lawton. Born March 16, 1817, Narcissa was eight years younger than A.B. Her father, Winborn Asa Lawton was the youngest brother of Alexander Benjamin's father.



Narcissa's mother, Mary Cater Rhoades, was a widow with two sons and a daughter when she married Narcissa's father, giving Narcissa two stepbrothers and a step-sister. She also had an older brother, Winborn Benjamin. Two other children died when Narcissa was three and four years old. When Narcissa was six years old, her mother died.

Narcissa's father married a second wife, another widow, Isadore Perry, who died within three years when Narcissa was nine years old.

Alexander Benjamin, when he was twenty years old, in a practice not uncommon in the Lawton family, married his first cousin Elizabeth Mary Brisbane, May 20, 1829.

By January of 1830, Narcissa's father had married a third widow, Lucinda Walker Landrum. Narcissa, now thirteen, had her third mother.

The United States census taken in the summer of 1830 shows a count of people by age brackets; it lists only the name of each head of a household. It shows A.B. Lawton as the head of a household at the age of twenty. In the same household it shows one male and one female between the ages of forty and fifty. It also shows fifteen male and thirteen female slaves. We wonder if A.B. and Elizabeth married and then moved in with the Brisbanes. Elizabeth's father died in the summer of 1830 which may have put A.B. and Elizabeth in control of a Brisbane plantation.

On October 12, 1832, Mary Jane was born to A.B. and Elizabeth, their first child.

Also in 1832, Narcissa and her family moved out of the Lawtonville neighborhood. Her father took a position as pastor of the May River Baptist Church in Bluffton, South Carolina. They maintained their plantation home, however. It was operated by an overseer.

In 1834 a second daughter, Martha S., was born to A.B. and Elizabeth.

Narcissa's older brother, Winborn Benjamin, did not follow the family tradition of becoming a planter. Instead, he became a merchant in Savannah where he served as the business representative for his father selling plantation products, buying supplies, and doing errands in the city for many others in the family. Through her letters to her brother and her early poetry, Narcissa left us an engaging portrait of a young southern lady. Devout, sensitive, and loyal, she was concerned about her family and the neighborhood. Her letters in the year 1835 were full of news about family and friends, gossip and life in the community, and her worries and concerns. On June 20, 1835, Narcissa wrote to her brother saying she was pleased he had chosen Sarah Mathews as a "companion."<sup>3</sup> Although Narcissa thought her an amiable and deserving girl, their father was concerned about her ill health and weakness which he apparently thought would be very expensive for Winborn! In the same letter she warned:

...it seems that some busybody has been trying to set my Grand Mother against you by telling her that you bought a pleasure boat to sail about in while you were neglecting every thing for pleasure but I have just written to her contradicting it as well as I would do don't mention this again for I could not like it to be known but I will tell you every thing that I hear about you because...you are the only brother that I have.

In several letters Narcissa asked her brother to purchase goods for her; a set of curls, in June, "the color of the hair I send," and in July, "Mother begs that you would...get a tin for an easy chair. She sends the money 37½ cents or if they cost too much just to get a large chamber utensil."

In August 1835, when she was eighteen years old, Narcissa wrote to her brother telling of a letter her father received from cousin Joseph Lawton who was away at school in New York.

He gives a horrid account of the yankeys although he likes the institution very much.

In the same letter she asked,

Will you be pleased to send me a bunch of quills and make a few pens for me. If there is money enough do will you send me a paper of pins. If it is not asking too much I would beg you to hav this piece of poetry printed for me I composed it on my mother's grave.

In the collection we have of Narcissa's poetry, we found her poem.

## A Vision of my mother on a bed of illness

I feel her presence with me now,  
Her soft touch on my burning brow,  
A shadowy form is clearly seen,  
Oh! tell me can it be a dream?  
If tis a dream then wake me not,  
But let me still enjoy the thought,  
That she is here with love so deep  
To hold her vigil whilst I sleep.  
On that loved bosom once again,  
Where oft in infancy I've lain,  
My wearied aching head I rest,  
And fondly in her arms am pressed.  
Oh! Mother though long years have passed,  
Since thou went to thy sacred rest;  
Yet often have I felt thee near  
And thought thy spirit must be here.  
When in temptations darkening hour  
Some unseen hand some unseen power,  
Some influence granted strength to me,  
It broke the thrall and made me free.  
Sometimes an impulse I'd restrain  
And over self a victory gain,  
Because my mother I believed,  
When I did wrong that thou wert grieved.

Oh! Mother do not leave me now,  
 Still press they hand upon my brow  
 Still whisper words of love and peace  
 and bid these painful throbbins cease.  
 Twas but a dream - and she is gone  
 I am awake and all alone -  
 Yet still I think she has been here  
 Her words still linger in my ear -  
 Live near thy God kneel oft in prayer  
 Remember I am hovering near  
 When suffering nature calls for aid  
 go, shrink not in the time of need;  
 And when your pilgrimage is done  
 And setting is your earthly sun  
 Thy mother's spirit then will come,  
 To bear thee to thy heavenly home

N. M. Lawton

Winborn Benjamin probably indulged his younger sister  
 and purchased her pins and curls and had her poetry printed  
 for her. As most big brothers do at one time or another,  
 he also probably teased her about the boys. In a letter  
 written in August of 1836, she seems to be responding to  
 such teasing. Narcissa was nineteen.

I regret very much to see that you hear that I  
 was engaged to be married to any one but either  
 of the two that you mentioned. I should never  
 think of (it) for one I hold in utter contempt  
 and the other I could never reconcile it to my  
 conscience to marry as he is a first cousin.  
 I wish that you would put a stop to that report

for I think too much of myself and my proud family ever to disgrace them by a union with that insignificant little puppy.

No my dear Brother I never think of marrying and as regard making conquests of the young men I never try to do it because I know that I should make a total failure.

We do not know the exact date, but sometime between mid 1836 and October 29, 1839, a third daughter was born to Alexander Benjamin and Elizabeth Mary Brisbane Lawton. They named the daughter Eusebia. On October 29, 1839, tragedy struck the family of A.B. His wife, Elizabeth, died. A.B., thirty years old, was left with three daughters: Mary Jane, seven; Martha, five; Eusebia, an infant.

Sometime between February and October 1840, despite her assurances to her brother that she would never marry a first cousin, Narcissa Melissa Lawton became the second wife of Alexander Benjamin Lawton.

Taking on responsibility for a husband, three small children and a home must have been difficult for Narcissa. The United States census for 1840 shows A.B. and Narcissa living with Mary Jane, Martha and Eusebia.

In 1841, Narcissa gave birth to a son. He was named Alexander for his father and Cater for Narcissa's mother, Alexander Cater Lawton. Narcissa would always have a special love for this first-born son. While he was still young, she wrote a poem to him entitled, "My Eldest Born."

## My eldest born

My son, I am thinking of the time,  
When you a little boy,  
First woke the mother in my heart,  
With proudest throb of joy.

When in those happy days of yore  
Thy fair young face I'de scan  
And marveled if that tiny form  
Would ever be a man.

And when thy little toddling steps  
First ventured out alone,  
My heart beat fast with happiness  
For thee my eldest born.

And as successive years rolled on,  
My hopes for thee would rise,  
Each well developed feature mark  
Each noble trait I'de prize.

My son let not thy mother's hopes  
Like castles built in air  
Prove false illusions of the mind  
All shaddowy, but fair.

But always have an honest pride  
To bravely do what's right,  
And spurn those vices which allure  
The youth with smile so bright.

I'de love to see in those dark eyes  
And on that kindling cheek,  
An intellectual fire burn,  
A soaring genious speak.

Thy Father's councils bear in mind  
And strict his word obey.  
Remember that in life's decline  
That thou should'st be his stay.

And early in thy flush of youth  
True light and wisdom seek.  
And always yield thee to the sway  
Of pure religion meek.

These are my hopes for thee my son  
Oh! let them not be vain.  
Strike in the first fair dawn of youth  
For some high noble aim.

On February 6, 1843, Narcissa's second son, Winborn Theodore, was born.



## PART II

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Annie Elizabeth Miller, Our Family Circle,  
(Linden, Tennessee: Continental Book Company, 1975),  
p. 347.

<sup>2</sup>E. Haviland Hillman, "The Brisbanes," The South  
Carolina Historical and Geneological Magazine, Vol. XIX  
(October 1913) No. 4, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup>Quotations from the letters of Narcissa Melissa  
Lawton are from letters provided to us by Thomas O. Lawton, Jr.

### PART III

#### ALEXANDER BENJAMIN LAWTON, HIS FAMILY AND SUMMER OAKS PLANTATION

Winborn Theodore, born February 6, 1843, was the last child born while the family lived in South Carolina. Clara Isabelle, born May 28, 1845, was the first child born while the family lived in Georgia. Sometime between those two dates, we do not yet know exactly when, the family moved their place of residence. In a letter from Albany, Georgia, dated October 10, 1844, a reference to Alexander Benjamin locates him there. Theodore Dehon Mathews wrote to Winborn Benjamin Lawton commenting on politics and reporting on local support for Henry Clay. In his letter Mathews wrote, "I suppose you have heard that I was an advocate of Mr. Clay's election. This may be a matter of surprise to you. Capt. A.B.L. and myself joined the Clay Club at the same time, but the moment Polk was nominated, he abandoned the support of Clay..."<sup>1</sup> This reference tells us the family was in Albany, Georgia, before October 1844, and gives us other information too. It tells us that Alexander Benjamin was known as Captain Lawton sixteen years before his first cousin, Alexander Robert, with Georgia militiamen, occupied Ft. Pulaski and helped

begin the war between the states. His title, whether military or honorary, must have originated in some event that occurred well before the war. The family that moved to Georgia included Alexander Benjamin, Narcissa Melissa, Mary Jane, Martha, and possibly Eusebia, the three children of Alexander Benjamin by his first wife, and Alexander Cater, who his mother called Alex, and Winborn Theodore who his mother called Winny, the two children by Narcissa.

They did not move west alone. As members of the family had some thirty-five years earlier when Alexander Benjamin's father migrated to Mississippi, they had the company of other members of the family. The Central of Georgia Railroad was completed from Savannah to Macon in 1843 making transportation easier. Family members were becoming planters and businessmen in the city of Macon and southward into Baker County.<sup>2</sup>

On May 28, 1845, Clara Isabelle was born to A. B. and Narcissa. Clara was Narcissa's third child, the first girl and the first child born in Georgia. Narcissa celebrated the child's arrival by writing a poem entitled "My Little Daughter Clara."

My little daughter Clara

Protect her dearest Lord,  
Thru all the paths of youth.  
Help her to shun temptation's snare,  
And early seek thy truth.

And oh incline her heart  
 To gentleness and love  
 And may no stormy passions e'er  
 Her tender bosom move.

And as she grows in years  
 Still may her mind unfold  
 And brightly gleam that inner light,  
 Like jems of purest gold.

Oh! may this blooming bud  
 Which thou hast given me,  
 Mature in loveliness,  
 Guided and watched by thee.

Should adverse winds oer cast,  
 The brightness of her day  
 Bereft of fond parental care  
 Oh! be thou then her stay.

And when at last in death,  
 She calmly sinks to rest  
 Then may her happy spirit soar  
 To regions of the blessed.

by her Mother

On April 18, 1846, Benjamin Themistocles Dion Lawton, father of A.B. died while visiting his children in Albany, Georgia. Whether A.B. inherited property from his father we have not yet discovered.

On June 16, 1847, a third son, Robert William, was born. Sometime between August 18, 1848, and August 18, 1849, a son named Benjamin F. was born.

The census of 1850 listed nine Lawton families living in five counties in Georgia. It showed Alexander Benjamin's family living in Baker County. The value of his property was shown as \$10,000. His daughter Eusebia had died earlier; she was not shown in the 1850 census which listed A.B., Narcissa, and the children Mary Jane, Martha, Alex, Winborn, Clara, Robert and Benjamin who was one year old.

On March 30, 1850, Alexander Benjamin bought land in Baker County, Georgia. For the sum of \$1,100 he purchased land lots 205, 234, 235 from George and Henry Carter of New York. This purchase was recorded originally in Muscogee County, Georgia. The amount of land involved was not stated in the indenture.<sup>3</sup>

In the year 1851 a fifth son, Thomas J., was born into the family. Also, by 1851, Alexander Benjamin was a businessman as well as a planter. On November 25, 1851, the Macon newspaper, Georgia Telegraph, printed his business advertisement, as shown in figure 1. According to the advertisement, Alexander Benjamin's business was located in Oglethorpe, Georgia, which was situated approximately half way between the city of Macon to the north and Baker County to the south, along the Southwestern railroad. By the year 1860, the Southwestern ran south from Macon into the city of Albany and almost to Baker County.

Figure 1. Newspaper advertisement  
for a Lawton business in Georgia in the year  
1851.

A. B. LAWTON & CO.,  
Ware-House and Commission Merchants.  
Oglethorpe, Ga.  
WM. S. LAWTON & CO.,  
Ware-House and Commission Merchants.  
Corner of Second and Poplar Streets Macon, Ga.  
LAWTON, DOWELL & CO.,  
No. 210 Bay Street  
Savannah, Ga.  
A. B. LAWTON---W. S. LAWTON---SAM'L L.  
DOWELL

Tender their services to their friends and the  
public, hoping from their long experience in business  
to be able to give satisfaction.

They beg leave to refer to Samuel J. Ray, Macon,  
Ga.; Judge B. F. Porter, Charleston, S. C.; T.  
Willingham, and E. H. Peeples, Esqs., Lawtonville,  
S. C.; Col. W. J. Lawton, Screven County, Ga.; W. A.  
Cumming, Coweta County, Ga.; N. Dudley, Esq., Rome,  
Ga.; Gov. C. J. McDonald, Marietta, Ga.

The company in which A.B. was a partner included his  
brother William Seabrook Lawton.<sup>4</sup> In connection with his  
business in Oglethorpe, on December 9, 1851, A.B. accepted  
a promissory note from Josiah A. Flournoy, a son of Alex-  
ander's cousin Sarah Asena Lawton Flournoy. In the note,  
Flournoy agreed to pay \$4,000 on January 5 next and \$2,000  
on June 1 next. When the first note came due, cousin  
Flournoy failed to make his payment. Five days later A.B.  
appeared before a justice of the peace in Monroe County,  
swore that his \$4,000 was in danger, and on January 10  
petitioned the Monroe County Superior Court asking for an  
action to regain payment of the debt and damages in the  
amount of \$8,000. On January 19, cousin Flournoy was

ordered to appear in court the first Monday in March to defend himself. Within a few days, business relationships with cousin Flournoy improved dramatically. On January 31, 1852, A.B. signed a receipt for payment of both of Flournoy's notes in the amount of \$6,000, and sold to the same Josiah Flournoy land lots 234, 235 and 246 in district two, Baker County. These lots, containing 750 acres, more or less, were sold for \$5,500 or \$7.30 an acre.<sup>5</sup>

The year 1852 was an important one for A.B. and Narcissa. Since they both were raised on plantations, they probably considered plantation living as the best way of life for themselves and their children, and they probably considered plantation ownership to be symbolic of their success. Doubtless, they were very happy people on December 14, 1852, when they made their first purchase of land, 1,319 acres, in Thomas County, Georgia, and began building Summer Oaks for their family. See figure 2.

Figure 2. Land purchased in Thomas County.<sup>6</sup> Deed dated December 14, 1852.

Purchased from John C. Cochran (who bought it from Anderson Peeler)

Part of lot 123	
Part of lot <u>124</u>	940 acres (the Robert Hurst place)
Part of lot 153	379 acres
Total	1,319 acres

Cost: \$5,000 which equals \$3.79 an acre  
In Thomas County a land lot contained 486 acres.

One month after his first purchase, A.B. bought more land for Summer Oaks plantation. See figure 3.

Figure 3. Land purchased in Thomas County.<sup>7</sup>  
Deed dated January 14, 1853.

Purchased from William Peeler  
The south half of lot 125 245 acres

Cost: \$500 which equals \$2.04 an acre  
Two neighbors, Leonard Tuggle and John Sheffield  
were witnesses to the sale.

Although this may have been an exciting time for the family, a time of growth and plantation building, of moving to a new place, of meeting new people, it also was a time of sadness. In the summer of 1853, A.B. and Narcissa lost one of their children. In twelve years Narcissa gave birth to six children. She was pregnant with the seventh when her son Benjamin died at the age of four. Narcissa, who felt the loss deeply, expressed her grief in the way that was most natural for her. She commemorated Benjamin in a poem published on September 4, 1853, entitled "On the Death of Little Benny."

#### On the Death of Little Benny

The silver chord is loosed,  
By death's resistless dart.  
And broken is the golden bowl,  
That shrined by darling's heart.  
His sparkling eyes are closed,  
His prattling tongue is still;



Father of heaven let me be  
    Submissive to thy will.  
My little boy has gone  
    Unto that happy land  
Where he aspired to go  
    To join the infant band.  
And well he loved us all,  
    With feelings pure and warm.  
The trees, the birds, the flowers  
    All had for him a charm.  
Ah, often did he sing  
    In his sweet childish tone,  
Of the bright "happy land,"  
    And of his heavenly home.  
Once with an earnest look  
    He took me by the hand  
Hear, mama, list the birds, he said  
    Can sing of "happy land."  
He fancied that the birds,  
    Sang praise to God all day  
So dearly did he love  
    To lisp his hymns and pray  
He is an Angel now  
    In the bright world above  
And strikes a golden harp  
    In bliss, and joy, and love.

Farewell my blessed one,  
 This last fond kiss receive.  
 Be calm my bursting heart,  
 For him I should not grieve.

Narcissa M. Lawton  
 Thomas Co., Ga., Sept. 4, 1853

Narcissa's poetry contains three poems dealing with the death of a child. "On the Death of Little Benny," is one; "The Death Bed," is a second; a third poem has no title. "The Death Bed," no doubt was written about Benjamin since it refers to a male child and Benjamin was the only known male child in the family who died.

#### The death bed

The earth looked beautiful and fair  
 That mournful sabbath even.  
 And proudly rolled the harvest moon  
 Through the calm azure heaven.

The air was laden with perfume,  
 Of indian summer's flowers,  
 And sweetly flying minstrels sang,  
 From lovely vine draped bowers.

The trees were clothed in silver sheen,  
 And through the casement streaming,  
 The yellow light fell all around,  
 In softened radiance gleaming.

And lovingly it glanced upon,  
A little couch where lying,  
With quivering breath and stifled sigh,  
A lovely child was dying.

In dull and torpid state he lay,  
And painful was his sleeping,  
And fondly hovering round him there,  
Were anxious watchers weeping.

Throughout the lingering hours of night  
That fatal sleep unbroken  
No longer could that sweet voice sound  
Nor words by him be spoken.

When daylight dawned upon the earth,  
No joy by it was given,  
For he the beautiful and bright,  
Had winged his flight to heaven.

Oh rest thee lovely one beneath  
The trees where birds are singing.  
And where the wild flowers bloom around,  
Their gentle fragrance flinging.

This is Narcissa's untitled poem which she may have  
written to commemorate the death of her son Benjamin.

Far-far into that spirit land  
I see a little smiling band  
And hear sweet lingering notes of song  
From many a warbling infants tongue.

Those strains divine how passing sweet  
But faster quick my pulses beat  
One little form I there descry  
One Loving glance has met mine eye.

I see thee in they bright attire,  
I hear thee strike thy golden lyre.  
Love, I'd not have thee here again,  
To suffer in this world of pain.

Then let they little fingers sweep  
Thy lute strings, breathe her music deep.  
Thy spirit home gleams very bright,  
In yonder crystal spheres of light

Strike, strike, sweet love those blessed strains,  
Pour forth they love to him who reigns,  
To him in whose bright diadem,  
Thou has become another jem.

On November 5, 1853, soon after the death of Benjamin, Emma Lenora was born. This girl, who was known as Lona, was the only child we know of who was born at Summer Oaks plantation. Lona was the last child born to A.B. and Narcissa.

For Lona, Narcissa wrote a poem which she entitled "To My Babe."

To My Babe

Sweet one on my bosom lying,  
Sometimes smiling sometimes sighing,  
Whilest the daylight hour is dying,  
Art thou dreaming love of bliss?  
Are the angels talking to thee  
Of that brighter land of glory  
Are they smiling as they woo thee  
To live in their happiness?

See her rosy lips are parting,  
O'er her features smiles are darting,  
Dimples to her cheeks are starting,  
Where the angels stooped to kiss.  
On her cheek the print grows deeper,  
To the view of that young sleeper,  
Is unclosed a vision sweeter,  
Than the worldlings dream of bliss.

But her smile of joy is leaving,  
And her tiny bosom heaving,  
Shews her tender spirit grieving,  
As the future looms in sight.

Dost thou dream of coming sorrow  
Far into the distant marrow  
Is thy young heart filled with terror  
And entombed thy visions bright?

Come lay thy cheek against mine dearest  
Ope those azure eyes the clearest,  
Smooth that snowey brow the fairest,  
Where the sunny ringlets curl.  
If angels love my little Lona,  
And kissing leave their impress on her,  
She surely is a lovely flower,  
My darling little girl.

Land lot number 124 was part of the land A.B. first purchased in Thomas County. An acquaintance with its location is important to our understanding of where Summer Oaks plantation was and it is an especially important part of our effort to locate the site of the plantation house. A map showing lot 124 is shown in figure 11 in this report.

Through lot 124 a main local road ran generally southwest to northeast, from Monticello, Florida, to Grooverville in Brooks County, Georgia. Today, it is a blacktop state road number 133. Near the south end of lot 124 is a crossroad corner where Nine Mile Post Road crosses state road 133. In appearance this crossroad corner looks very much like the corner where Lawtonville once stood in South Carolina.

During the decades of the eighteen-forties and eighteen-fifties, a small settlement was located at the place where that corner is now. Prior to 1849 the place was called Ramsey Station; from 1849 to 1859 a United States Post Office was located there and the place was called Station; by 1908 it was identified as Aucilla. At this corner, December 2, 1853, A.B. sold five acres of land to J. T. Herring and S. Manning, a business firm in Thomas County. According to the deed, the property sold contained a "Store house and dwelling and out buildings." He sold it for \$100 or \$20 an acre. Witnesses were J. A. Mallett and John N. Dugger. The clerk who signed the entry in the records was Jared Everitt.<sup>8</sup>

In the summer of 1854, Alexander's oldest daughter, Mary Jane, was married to David Montague Laffitte of South Carolina. On June 17, a contract was signed between A.B. and his daughter. In the contract Mary Jane gave up her claim to any property she had coming to her through the marriage contract between her parents Alexander Benjamin Lawton and Elizabeth Mary Brisbane, and transferred the ownership of that property to her father. In return, she received assurance that she would be one of her father's equal heirs. Mary Jane was twenty-two years old when she signed the contract.

On June 19 another contract was signed. This one involved A.B., Mary Jane and Mary Jane's intended husband

David Montague Laffitte. The purpose of this contract was to provide separate property for Mary Jane from any property she might inherit. In part, the contract provided, "...all sum or sums of money that may be paid over or be received through Alexander J. Lawton of the State of South Carolina, trustee of the estate of the grandmother of the said Mary Jane...in the right of the said Mary Jane, shall be invested in the purchase of a young female slave or slaves which said slave or slaves together with their natural increase shall be and remain to the said Mary Jane as her separate property..."<sup>9</sup> Although she was not identified by name, the grandmother mentioned here must have been Mary Jane's maternal grandmother Mary Ann Mosse Brisbane who died forty days before this contract was signed. Mary Jane's paternal grandmother lived another three years. Another provision of the contract appointed A.B. as trustee of Mary Jane's property and gave him control of it.

A year later, on June 28, 1855, Alexander Benjamin's second daughter, Martha, signed a contract with him. In return for ten dollars and assurance she would receive a share as one of the heirs to her father's estate, Martha granted to him all her rights to property that would come to her from the marriage contract between him and her mother, Elizabeth Mary Brisbane Lawton.<sup>10</sup> Martha was twenty-one years old when she made this contract. What motivated Martha to give up her inheritance we do not yet know.



By the year 1856 the family must have been well established in Thomas County, on Summer Oaks plantation which then contained 1,559 acres. They had lived there four years. However, early in that year the family suffered a loss. Mary Jane, who married David Montague Laffitte, gave birth to her first child, a girl who was named Mary Edla Laffitte. On February 6, 1856, this child, the first grandchild of A.B., died and was buried in the cemetery of Lebanon church, a Methodist church located within a half mile of the plantation house, on land surrounded by Summer Oaks plantation. On May 1, Mary Jane Lawton Laffitte died and was buried beside her daughter in Lebanon cemetery. Mary Jane was twenty-three years old.

Approximately one year later, on May 23, 1857, Alexander Benjamin's mother, Jane Mosse Lawton, died and was buried in the cemetery at Lawtonville, South Carolina. Whether A.B. inherited any property from his mother we have not yet discovered.

When Mary Jane Lawton and David Montague Laffitte were married in the summer of 1854, they signed marriage contracts that provided separate ownership of property for Mary Jane. Nevertheless, after the death of Mary Jane and her child Mary Edla, David Montague Laffitte claimed to be the heir to property that would have come to his child. He sued A.B. in the Superior Court of Thomas County. The suit was settled July 30, 1858. Alexander Benjamin agreed to

pay Laffitte \$2,000 on the first of January 1859, 1860 and 1861. Laffitte was identified in the suit as being from Jefferson County, Florida, which was immediately over the Florida border less than a mile south of the plantation.<sup>11</sup>

In 1859 A.B. increased the number of tillable acres in the plantation by a land trade with a neighbor, Cassandra C. Tillman. Examination of a map showing the area and of the deed describing the land suggests that A.B. traded swamp and lake property for land on which crops could be grown. He lost nothing by trading away the lake property since he had access to the same lake from other property. Land involved in the trade is described in figure 4. Summer Oaks plantation contained 1,556 acres after the trade with Cassandra Tillman.

Figure 4. Land traded with Cassandra C. Tillman.<sup>12</sup> Deed dated August 6, 1859.

This is what Lawton gave.

Fifty-four acres on the Northeast corner of land lot 123 lying on and in Lake Linton, adjoining lands of C. C. Tillman and Moses Linton on the East and North.

This is what Lawton got.

Fifty-one acres on land lot 107. Start at the Southwest corner of #107 and run East along Lawton's land line for 42½ chains in length, then go North for 12 chains then West for 42 chains, then South for 12 chains to the point where

the measurement first commenced.  
This joins land owned by Josiah  
Everett on the West.

Note: A surveyor's chain measurement equals sixty-six feet in length.

The land trade with Cassandra Tillman occurred in August. Less than three months later, in October 1859, A.B. increased the size of Summer Oaks again. This time, he purchased 520 acres from James Connell, as shown in figure 5.

Figure 5. Land purchased in Thomas County.<sup>13</sup>  
Deed dated October 31, 1859.

Purchased from James Connell:

All of land lot 154 excepting 111 acres previously sold to Joshua B. Everette on February 12, 1855 on the Eastern end of said lot.

The Western half of fractional lot 169 containing  $92\frac{1}{2}$  acres.

In the Southeast corner of lot 123, 40 acres that Connell bought from Moses Linton on January 20, 1849.

Also 8 acres in the Southwest corner of lot 122 down to the low water mark on the lake and adjoining land of Joshua B. Everette on the East.

The total amount of land purchased here was 520 acres.

Cost: \$5,200 which equals \$10 an acre

The United States census was taken on June 1, 1860, in Thomas County. It gives us a description of the family then living at Summer Oaks plantation.<sup>14</sup> See figure 6.

On February 9, 1961, A.B. made a purchase of land that brought Summer Oaks plantation to the largest size it

Figure 6-CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES TAKEN JUNE 1, 1860  
 THOMAS COUNTY GEORGIA, PAGE 49, HOUSEHOLD NUMBER 386

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Value Of Real Estate	Value Of Personal Estate	Attended School In Year	Birth Place
1. A. B. LAWTON	50	M	FARMER	\$20,000	\$70,000		S. C.
2. N. M. LAWTON	43	F					S. C.
3. MARTHA LAWTON	25	F					S. C.
4. A. C. LAWTON	19	M	MANAGER				S. C.
5. W. T. LAWTON	17	M				YES	S. C.
6. C. J. LAWTON	15	F				YES	GA.
7. R. W. LAWTON	13	M				YES	GA.
8. T. J. LAWTON	9	M				YES	GA.
9. E. L. LAWTON	7	F				YES	GA.

would ever attain. He bought five acres from Anderson Peeler. The five acres, described in the deed as the Methodist Church lot, were located in land lot 124 surrounded by Lawton's land on the North, East, and South and by the public road leading from Grooverville, Georgia, to Monticello, Florida, on the Northwest. The deed to the property contained this provision: "....with the reserve of the burying ground to the use of those interested by the relatives now interred therein...."<sup>15</sup> Alexander Benjamin paid \$100 for the five acres.

We believe this Methodist Church lot and burying ground was the site referred to in later documents as Lebanon church and cemetery. We examined the site in 1983. We found, in good condition, a gravestone for Mary Jane and one for Mary Edla. We also found the remains of three grave-size piles of bricks arranged side by side as if to mark the graves of three members of the same family. We are not yet sure who the three people were.

One witness whose name appears on the deed to the Methodist Church lot was Josiah A. Everette, a good friend and close neighbor to the family. Everette owned an adjoining plantation where the plantation house still stands. Not far from the house is the plantation cemetery. When Alexander Benjamin bought the Methodist church lot and burying ground, he may have considered that he was providing a similar plantation cemetery for Summer Oaks, as it was

customary in those days to do. Acquiring the cemetery would have been especially important to him because his daughter and granddaughter were buried there and, perhaps, his son Benjamin was buried there too.

In the Spring of 1861 Summer Oaks plantation contained 2,081 acres. For that land A.B. had paid \$10,700 or an average of \$5.14 an acre. Obviously, the purchase of this land expended most of the \$11,500 he got from Josiah Flournoy when he sold the Baker County land in 1852, for \$7.30 an acre.

The Fall season of 1860 and the Spring of 1861 must have been happy times for the Lawtons of Summer Oaks plantation. Summer Oaks was one of the largest plantations in Thomas County, Georgia. Alexander Benjamin and Narcissa had good reason to feel they were successful in the way other members of their family had been successful for a century.

Springtime was planting time on the plantation and Alexander Benjamin probably tried to ignore his various aches and pains as he went about his daily business of seeing that necessary work got done as it should and seeing that the plantation manager, his son Alex, learned all he should learn about managing.

We know very little about Alexander Benjamin's physical condition during his lifetime. In Narcissa's poetry there is a poem entitled "My Husband," in which she prays that he might be restored to good health. If we reason that

writing a poem requires a long period of contemplation and repetition of various experimental word arrangements until the poet is able to create one that is satisfying, we might deduce that Alexander Benjamin's illness did not begin and end suddenly but, instead, lasted long enough for Narcissa to write about it.

### My Husband

A heart to sympathise,  
In every way with me,  
A judgement clear and good,  
From prejudices free.

A mind by nature far  
Superior to my own;  
And one who will reprove my faults,  
With kind and gentle tone.

A eye from whose dark depths,  
Beams forth a loving light,  
A brow where sits enthroned  
An intellect that's bright.

Who has an ear not deaf,  
To sorrow's pleading cry,  
But has an ever ready hand,  
The orphan's tear to dry.

And can I kneel and say,  
I thank thee gracious heaven,  
Though all unworthy I may be,  
Still this to me is given.

While still on bended knees,  
And in my silent room,  
Dear Father I would humbly crave  
From thee another boon.

Tis not for honors great  
And not for glittering wealth,  
But oh, be pleased to hear my prayer  
And grant him once more health.

Now spare him in his prime,  
Let feelings as of yore  
Come bounding through his weakened frame,  
And all his strength restore.

On Thursday, May 16, A.B. felt badly enough to agree that a doctor should come to see him. The family summoned Dr. Oliveros. Any one of several medical doctors might have been called; Dr. Godfrey was a close neighbor. Dr. Oliveros lived about seven miles directly west of the plantation in a community called Glasgow. He advertised in the local newspaper describing himself as a physician and surgeon. He came to the house on Thursday, treated A.B. and returned home.



On Friday, May 17, Dr. Oliveros came to see A.B. again. After treating him, Oliveros went home. By Saturday, May 18, Dr. Oliveros knew that A.B. was very seriously ill; when he came to the house on that day, Dr. Oliveros came prepared to stay overnight. Through Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Dr. Oliveros treated A.B. day and night, but nothing could be done to restore the health for which Narcissa had prayed. By Thursday morning, May 23, 1861, Alexander Benjamin Lawton, master of Summer Oaks plantation was dead.<sup>16</sup>

The newspaper Southern Enterprise was published in Thomasville every Wednesday. On Wednesday, May 29, it carried an obituary for A.B.

### Obituary<sup>17</sup>

Departed this life on the morning of the 23rd of May, Capt. A. B. Lawton in the 53d year of his age.

Capt. Lawton was originally from South Carolina, but had resided in this county (Thomas) for eight years, during which time his life was zealously devoted in the advancement and prosperity of her welfare. Well may our county mourn the loss of so good a man. He was a consistent member of the Baptist church and during his last hours of consciousness spoke freely of Jesus. He said 'he had no fear to die.' He leaves an affectionate family and numerous friends to mourn their loss. Of him it can be said ---

'None knew him but to love him  
None named him but to praise.'

A Friend

On the following Wednesday, June 5, the paper published this tribute:

# TRIBUTE OF RESPECT<sup>18</sup>

At the regular meeting of the Volunteer Company at Grooverville, on Saturday, May 25th, the following Tribute of Respect was unanimously adopted:

That since our last meeting death has removed a valued and esteemed member, our Captain, A. B. Lawton. In all relations he was remarkable for the manly integrity of his character - blending with it a frank, ingenious, and friendly disposition. His memory will be long cherished, not only as the Captain of his Company, but by the many warm and sincere friends left among its members. As but an inadequate expression of regret; be it

Resolved, That as a Company, we do deeply deplore the loss of an inestimable Captain and that in his loss this Company has been deprived of a head which it will find hard to fill.

Resolved, That this Company do sympathize with the bereaved family in their irreparable loss; and their loss, we sincerely trust, has been his everlasting gain.

Resolved, That this Tribute be published in the Thomasville papers.

John L. Linton  
Thomas Groover      Committee  
Henry Ramsey

According to Narcissa Melissa, Alexander Benjamin left a will. Writing in her diary, April 16, 1862, she said:

I have just laid aside the last will and testament of my beloved husband, my tears blinded me too much to read any more so I locked it up in my rosewood box. They never carried out the instructions of my husband in the division of the property and I have indeed but little to support me... <sup>19</sup>

Alexander Benjamin died at the age of fifty-one. Why his instructions were never carried out is one of the mysteries we are not yet able to solve. After the death of A.B. steps

were taken rapidly to begin dismantling the plantation. The Court of Thomas County appointed a committee of local citizens to take an inventory of all the property of A.B. and to put a value on it. An inventory was taken on June 12, 1861. It was an inventory of land, goods and chattels.<sup>20</sup> The committee consisted of Josiah Everette, Wiley Blewet, Moses Linton, Allen Hagen and J. A. Malette.

The inventory showed that the value of the plantation consisted of the following:

Land, 2,084 acres at \$9 an acre.....	\$18,756
Chattels, 72 slaves.....	50,000
Goods .....	<u>10,402</u>
Total value \$79,158	

Our accounting of acreage in the plantation totals 2,081 acres while the inventory totals 2,084 acres. We can only guess at why there is a difference of three acres. A copy of the inventory appears in this report as Appendix 2.

On July 18, 1861, less than sixty days after the death of their father, the two oldest boys, Alex and Win-born left home to join the army of the Confederate States of America. Alex was twenty years of age and Winny was eighteen. Why both of them decided to leave at this crucial time when they were needed at home is one of those questions we cannot yet answer. Alex was the plantation manager; Winny certainly was old enough to be of significant help. Their departure left Bobby, only fourteen years of age, as the oldest family male at home.

If the wartime cause of the Confederacy had been in danger, we might better understand why Alex and Winny left home to fight. However, that was not the case; quite the contrary. On the day they left, opening skirmishes took place in the battle of Manassas, Virginia, a notable victory for the South. Two days after they left, July 20, 1861, the Congress of the Confederate States of America first convened in Richmond, Virginia, having moved there from Montgomery, Alabama, in order to be near the battlefield. According to a description by President Jefferson Davis, "The Generals, like myself, were well content with what had been done."<sup>21</sup> At the time Alex and Winny left home, the South was strong and confident; Summer Oaks was weak and leaderless.

Responsibility for managing Summer Oaks now fell upon Narcissa Melissa, a poetess. Without a husband, without the help of either of her two older sons, she was left to manage a disintegrating plantation. She felt alone, confused, and powerless. In desperation, she reached out for help in the only direction she knew, back home to South Carolina.<sup>22</sup>

Grooverville September 29, 1861

My dear brother, No doubt you and dear sister Sarah thought very strangely of my not writing to you before this, but the only excuse that I can render is my deep troubles and perplexities. I have no one now to attend to this place but an Overseer, who only attends to the out door business, or plantation matters. You know that brother Joe Lawton is the executor of the estate and he is in Virginia and my two oldest boys Alexander and Winborn, are with

him. They are in Tom Cobbs Legion, they have been gone about two months. My oldest son who is at home is only fourteen years of age. He is my only protector, and indeed he is very useful to me, but there are other things that he nor an overseer can not do. I have written to Davant and Lawton, to advance money on cotton, to pay confederate taxes and they cannot do it. I have tried several men who used to buy cotton out here, and they say that they are unable to do it now. I have been told that if I do not pay the taxes, that the property would be levied on. I have no one to advise me what to do. My dear old Father has kindly offered to render me any assistance or advice that I may need, but he is so old that I dislike to trouble him. And indeed my dear brother you know that I shrink from annoying or disturbing any one with my troubles. I am now going to make a request of you to try and get the money advanced on five bales of cotton, I just want enough money to pay taxes. You know other men of business besides Davant & Son who may be willing to buy or to advance money on cotton. My dear brother if you will only attend to this for me you will relieve my mind of a great deal of trouble. Tell sister S that I will write to her. I received her kind letter. It was some consolation to find that I had friends to sympathize with me in my hour of deep distress and bereavement. Give my love to each member of your dear family, and accept the same from each of us.

Your sister, N M Lawton

It is immaterial to me at what price the cotton is sold for so as I can get the money to relieve me. Do my dear brother write to me immediately and direct to Grooverville. N M Lawton

Her brother, Winborn, responded and on October 11, she wrote to thank him.<sup>23</sup>

Grooverville Oct 11th 1861

My dear brother, I received your letter of the 6th inst. and was glad to hear from you. We are all quite well at this time and hope that you and yours may be the same. We received a great fright on yesterday. Our overseer rushed into the house and told us that he had bad news to tell us, he had heard that Lincolns fleet had taken St. Marks, and the lighthouse, which is about forty miles from here,

and the governor of Florida had sent despatches to call all the men in the country around to prevent their landing, our overseer among the rest had to go, as the governor was afraid that they would take Tallahassee. So we were left here last night in a terrible state of suspense but early this morning our minds were relieved as our overseer returned and told us that it was impossible for them to do us any harm. About forty of them had landed from the blockading squadron and were just skulking around the coast, but they went back to their vessels very quickly. The coast I believe is very well guarded.

You were right in saying I was mistaken about the taxes. A neighbor told me on yester evening, that it was the state taxes, and not the confederate that I had to pay at this time. I shall thankfully accept of your kind offer of the loan of a hundred dollars, as what I need money for is to pay taxes. I have just received a letter from my boys in Virginia, they are in Yorktown, they wrote me that they had just returned from a scouting expedition, but had not come near enough to the yankees to catch them but they had seen some at a distance. I wish my dear brother that you would come and see me, and if you could only bring your family with you I would be oh so glad to see them. Give my love to Sarah and each of the children, and accept the same from your affectionate sister N M Lawton

On December 27, another step was taken to dismantle the plantation. The slaves were divided among the heirs to the estate. There were eight heirs, Narcissa and seven children. The slaves were put into eight groups, approximately equal in dollar value at \$6,200, each group called a share. Then, according to the record, this is what happened:

...the shares were numbered 1 2 3 4 etc and were assigned to the distributees in the following manner, to wit, the names of the distributees were written on a piece of paper and placed in a hat. The numbers were written on another piece of paper and put in another hat. The hats were both well shaken. A name was then drawn from the hat containing the names then a number was drawn from the hat containing the numbers and in that manner continued till all were drawn...<sup>24</sup>  
(see Appendix 3)



The next day, on December 28, Summer Oaks suffered the ultimate indignity; there was an auction; supplies, tools, equipment, livestock, perishable and personal property at the plantation were sold. Forty-two neighbors made purchases. Along with others, Narcissa was required to bid for whatever she kept. She bought equipment and livestock. William Stegall bought her piano for eighty dollars.<sup>25</sup> The value of the goods sold was recorded as \$6,491.22. A copy of the auction record appears in this report as Appendix 4.

Our best record for the year 1862 comes from Narcissa's diary. Although her diary probably was longer, we have only the months from March through December. On March 9, she recorded that Winny and Tommy went to Montecello in the buggy. This tells us that Winny had returned home from the army, but he was gone again soon. On March 27, Narcissa wrote that Winny received a letter inviting him to Albany, Georgia, to join his uncle Joseph's regiment. The uncle was Colonel Winborn Joseph Lawton, brother to Alexander Benjamin, and commander of the second Georgia Cavalry Regiment. He also was appointed by the court as guardian of Alexander Benjamin's minor children. The diary tells us much about Narcissa's view of her situation under steadily worsening wartime conditions and gives us a few details about life at the plantation.

A portion of the land was reserved for the use of Narcissa to provide for her support. It was referred to as

her Dower Property and included 689 acres or approximately one third of the land in the plantation. Land other than the Dower Property was sold at an auction by Josiah Everette, administrator of the estate. The sale took place at the door of the Thomas County courthouse in Thomasville on the morning of the first Tuesday in November, 1863. These sales, as recorded in three separate documents, are shown below in figures 7, 8, 9.

Figure 7. Land sold to John T. Lyons<sup>26</sup>  
Deed dated January 16, 1864.

Part of lot #125 (the William Peeler place)  
containing 247 acres.

Sale price: \$4,075.00 which equals \$16.50 an acre

Figure 8. Land sold to John T. Lyons<sup>27</sup>  
Deed dated January 16, 1864.

Part of lot #153 (the Robert Hurst place)  
containing 227 acres.

Sale price: \$3,745.00 which equals \$16.50 an acre

Figure 9. Land sold to Archibald T. McIntyre<sup>28</sup>  
(the Connell place)  
Deed dated March 19, 1864

All of lot #154 excepting 111 acres sold to Joshua B. Everette by James Connell on February 12, 1855 on the Eastern end of said lot.

The western half of fractional lot #169 containing 92-1/2 acres.

Forty acres bought of Moses Linton by James Connell on the 20th of January 1849, lying in the South East corner of lot #123.

Eight acres in the South West corner of lot #122 being all of lots #122 and #123 South of the Lake down to low water mark on the lake and adjoining lands of Joshua B. Everette on the East.

In all, a total of 520 acres.

Sale price: \$15,906.80 which equals \$30.59 an acre



Our record of these land sales is not yet complete. The total land acreage accounted for in figures 7, 8, 9, is 994 acres. When added to the Dower Property of 689 acres, the addition gives a total of 1,683 acres for which we can account. Subtracted from the 2,081 acres we know were in the plantation, this total leaves 398 acres which we can not yet trace.

In the records of the Thomas County Court there appears a statement of account for the estate describing income from the sale of plantation land along with certain other income and payment of debts.<sup>29</sup> A copy of that statement appears in this report as Appendix 5.

Narcissa Melissa lived on her Dower Property for several years. However, by 1870 the time had come to sell the last of the plantation land. On August 29, Alex and Robert, both of whom were living in Orange County, Florida, gave their power of attorney to a lawyer, Walter Gwynn, who was married to their half sister Martha, and who was to represent them in the land sale. The document which conferred their power of attorney is important to us because in it the property to be sold was described in this way:

Six hundred and forty (640) acres more or less on which was situated the homestead or residence of the said Alexander B. Lawton deceased...and which was set apart as the dower of our mother Narcissa M. Lawton.<sup>30</sup>

The power of attorney document tells us the plantation house was located in the Dower Property but does not tell us

where the Dower Property was. Fortunately, we have another document which does tell us. On November 23, 1870, the Dower Property was sold to J. L. Simkins of Jefferson County, Florida. In the record of that sale, the property was described. See figure 10 for a description of the sale. See figure 11 for a map showing lot #124 and the Dower Property in Thomas County.

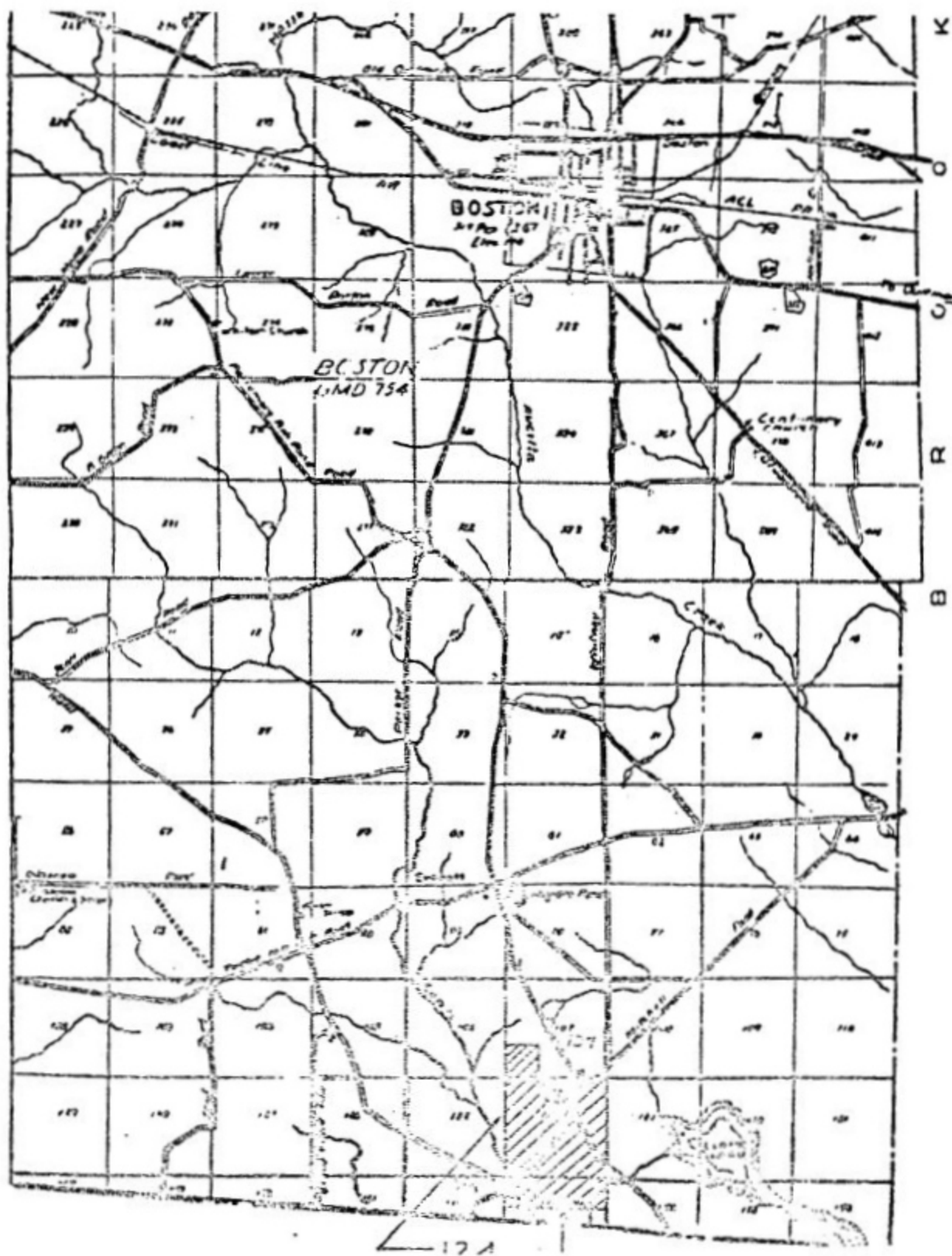
Figure 10. Sale of the Dower Property<sup>31</sup>  
Deed dated November 23, 1870

Land description  
the whole of lot #124 comprising 486 acres  
51 acres of lot #107  
152 acres of lot #153 taken off the north side.

Total number of acres sold, 689.  
Sale price: \$1,000 which equals \$1.45 an acre

As she thought about the approach of November 23, 1870, it must have seemed to Narcissa Melissa as if that day would be one of the saddest of all days. She and four of her seven children were to sign a document that would pass from family ownership the last piece of land that was part of their plantation. Formally and finally it would mark the end of Summer Oaks, seventeen years, eleven months and twenty-three days after it began. Alex, Winnie and Bobby were to be represented by their attorney, who as Martha's husband, was also their brother-in-law. Martha, Clara, Lona and Tommie were present to sign for themselves. As they gathered in the office of the attorney in Monticello, Florida, Narcissa probably thought back to the good years at Summer

Figure 11. Lot #124 and the Dower Property in Thomas County, Georgia



Oaks, years when the family of nine was all together, when the children were growing up, when crops were bountiful, the market was dependable, the plantation was prosperous. She and A.B. had left the comfort of South Carolina and gone to the frontier searching for opportunity. They had worked hard for their plantation. Now, looking back, she may have wondered why they were not able to complete doing what three generations of Lawtons before them had done over a period of a hundred years.

Perhaps in respect for her position as head of the family, the children asked their mother to sign the document first. She probably paused a moment because she really did not want to do it. But, finally she accepted the pen that was offered to her by the attorney, took a deep breath to steady her hand and signed her name: N (for Narcissa) M (for Melissa) Lawton. And Summer Oaks ended.

## PART III

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Theodore Dehon Mathews was married to Mary Elizabeth Lawton, youngest sister of Alexander Benjamin. In this letter, he wrote to Winborn Benjamin Lawton, who was married to Mathews' sister Sarah. Winborn Benjamin was also the older brother of Narcissa Melissa. A copy of his letter was provided by Thomas O. Lawton, Jr.

<sup>2</sup>Carolyn L. Harrell, Kith and Kin (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984), pp. 190-198.

<sup>3</sup>Baker County, Georgia, Superior Court, June 5, 1850, Book 11, page 433.

<sup>4</sup>Harrell, Kith and Kin, p. 192.

<sup>5</sup>Baker County, Georgia, Superior Court, October 16, 1853, Book 14, page 41.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book F, page 176.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book F, page 255.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book F, page 537.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court of Ordinary, General Index L-Z, 1826-1939, page 529.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book G, page 20.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book H, page 424.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book H, page 615.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book H, page 627.

<sup>14</sup>United States Census 1860, Thomas County, Georgia, page 49, Household Number 386.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book I, page 284.

<sup>16</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court of Ordinary General Index L-Z, 1826-1939. The index shows a bill for services presented by Dr. Oliveros to the estate for payment. A copy of that bill appears as Appendix 1 in this report. See Appendix.

<sup>17</sup>The Southern Enterprise, Thomasville, Georgia, Wednesday, May 29, 1861.

<sup>18</sup>The Southern Enterprise, Thomasville, Georgia, Wednesday, June 5, 1861.

<sup>19</sup>Diary of Narcissa Melissa Lawton, March 9 to December 28, 1862. The original diary is in the possession of Kathryn Lawton of Oviedo, Florida.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas County, Georgia. Judge of Probate Court, General Index L-Z, 1826-1939, page 413. A copy of the inventory appears as Appendix 2 in the report. See Appendix.

<sup>21</sup>Jefferson Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, 2 vols. (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Publisher, 1958 reprint edition), vol. 1, p. 360.

<sup>22</sup>Narcissa Melissa Lawton to Winborn Benjamin Lawton, September 29, 1861. A copy of this letter was provided by Thomas O. Lawton, Jr.

<sup>23</sup>Narcissa Melissa Lawton to Winborn Benjamin Lawton, October 11, 1861. A copy of this letter was provided by Thomas O. Lawton, Jr.

<sup>24</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court of Ordinary, General Index L-Z, 1826-1939, p. 215. A copy of this document appears as Appendix 3 in this report. See Appendix.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court of Ordinary General Index L-Z, 1826-1939, p. 255. A copy of this document appears as Appendix 4 in this report. See Appendix.

<sup>26</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book K, page 135.

<sup>27</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book K, page 134.

<sup>28</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book K, page 73.

<sup>29</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court of Ordinary, General Index L-Z, 1826-1939, page 263. A copy of the statement appears in this report as Appendix 5.

<sup>30</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book L, page 572.

<sup>31</sup>Thomas County, Georgia, Thomas Court Deed Record, Book L, page 574.

## PART IV

### LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF SUMMER OAKS PLANTATION

We are still searching for the site of the plantation house at Summer Oaks. Although we think we can locate it approximately, we would like to be more precise in our judgement. As yet, we have found no reliable description of where it was or how it looked.

We know the residence was located in the Dower Property. Narcissa lived there until perhaps as late as 1870. A map showing the location of that property appears as figure 11 in this report.

A map of Thomas County dated 1908 is on display in the Thomas County Historical Museum; we have found no earlier map. The 1908 map shows roads through the Dower Property in the same place they are in today. Although it also shows the location of several buildings, they are not standing today so we have little way of knowing if any of those buildings formerly belonged to Summer Oaks plantation. Until we find an earlier map, we must speculate that roads appearing on the 1908 map were in existence in 1860, however risky that speculation may be.



Running through the plantation Dower Property, the main road was probably the one from Monticello, Florida, on the south to Grooverville, Georgia, on the northeast and then farther to Groover Station on the Atlantic and Gulf railway. This main road was probably the road we now identify as state highway number 133. On several occasions, Narcissa wrote in her diary as if her house were situated close to this main road. These are some excerpts from her diary which may suggest this close location.

July 21 "Martha went in the stage which came up to the house for her this afternoon at four o'clock from Groover Station from there she expects to go to Atlanta to spend one or two months."

August 1 "Today a regiment passed here on their way to the seat of the war."

October 5 "This morning I was surprised to see a number of soldiers going by our avenue. Bobby walked down to inquire what was their destination as they were going the opposite way from that which they usually went. They told him they were on the way to Jacksonville, Florida, to retake it if they could."

October 12 "Some soldiers came to me tonight after supper to beg me to send them in my wagon to Grooverville. I went out and spoke to them and gave them two bottles of wine and some cold supper I had in the house. Poor fellows, they were very grateful to me for it, I loaned them my

wagon and an extra horse. They are going to protect Savannah as it is daily expecting an attack from the enemy."

These comments by Narcissa indicate the house was situated along the main road and was close enough to encourage convenient notice and communication between people in the house and people in the traffic using the road. How close would that be? Perhaps one hundred yards? If we suppose the house was no more than one hundred yards from highway 133, then today as we walk or drive along that highway through the property, at some point we probably are within one hundred yards of where Narcissa sat as she wrote in her diary.

Our only information about the size of the plantation house comes from the inventory taken in June 1861 (see Appendix 2). Household furniture was evaluated in nine rooms and the value listed for each. One of the nine rooms was a pantry. A kitchen was listed in addition to the nine rooms and was probably in a room separate from the plantation house. In the list of nine rooms, the pantry was number five. The house may have had four rooms downstairs, four rooms upstairs, a pantry built on the ground floor at the rear of the house and a kitchen separate to the rear of the pantry.

A similar house belonged to Josiah Everette, a friend, close neighbor, and administrator of the estate of Alexander Benjamin. On September 2, 1862, Narcissa wrote in her diary, "I rode over to Mr. Everette's today. Clara went with me. We spent quite a pleasant morning there." A picture of

Josiah Everette standing in front of his house is in the files of the Thomas County Historical Museum. His house has been well cared for and is a beautiful home today. It appears to be a house that could have had nine rooms as the Lawton's house had and probably provides for us the best example we have of what the plantation house at Summer Oaks looked like.

Hector Irving Cook was born in the year 1903. His parents lived in a house situated near the corner of highway 133 and Nine Mile Post Road. His father, also named Hector Cook, began farming in 1879 on land, part of which, had been in the Lawton plantation. According to Cook, his grandparents who lived on the same place before his parents, remembered the Lawton family.

Until he was nineteen years old and again several years later, Irving Cook lived and farmed on his father's land. Jane and Gerald Church met Cook at his home in Boston, Georgia, during December 1983, and listened while he described his early recollections about the neighborhood. He was well acquainted with the nearby cemetery which he had always known as the Lawton cemetery. His father told him that Mr. and Mrs. Lawton were buried under the piles of bricks. He did not know why there were three piles of bricks rather than two. Nearby, and marked by gravestones, were the graves of an adult and a child belonging to the Lawton family. Other people may have been buried there also, but he did not know who they were.

The creek which crosses highway 133 just north of the corner was known to Cook as the old Lawton mill creek. A large mill stone laid on the ground a few yards to the west of the highway. Cook did not remember a building there but the presence of the mill stone and a dam indicated that a mill must have been there at one time. When we asked Cook if the mill stone is still there, he replied that it probably is because it is too big for anyone to move.

Cook described a house, a barn, and a well that he thought served the Lawton plantation. They were located east of the corner about a hundred yards on the north side of Nine Mile Post Road. The house was called the old Lawton house. It was shaped like the letter L with three rooms in the long wing of the house, a kitchen and pantry in the short wing. The house was very old. Cook and his father tore it down so they could farm the land on which it sat.

Between the house and the road was a well. Cook filled in the well many years ago because he lost a mule that fell into it.

Near the house and well was a very large barn. Cook estimated that it was at least seventy-five by sixty feet in size. The barn was very old and Cook eventually could not use it so he tore it down. Cook said he thought this was a barn that served the plantation because it was so old and so large.

We know the plantation had an overseer, and we suspect the house described by Irving Cook was the overseer's house. It does not fit the description of a nine room house with a separate kitchen and an avenue leading down to the main road as we think the plantation house should be described.

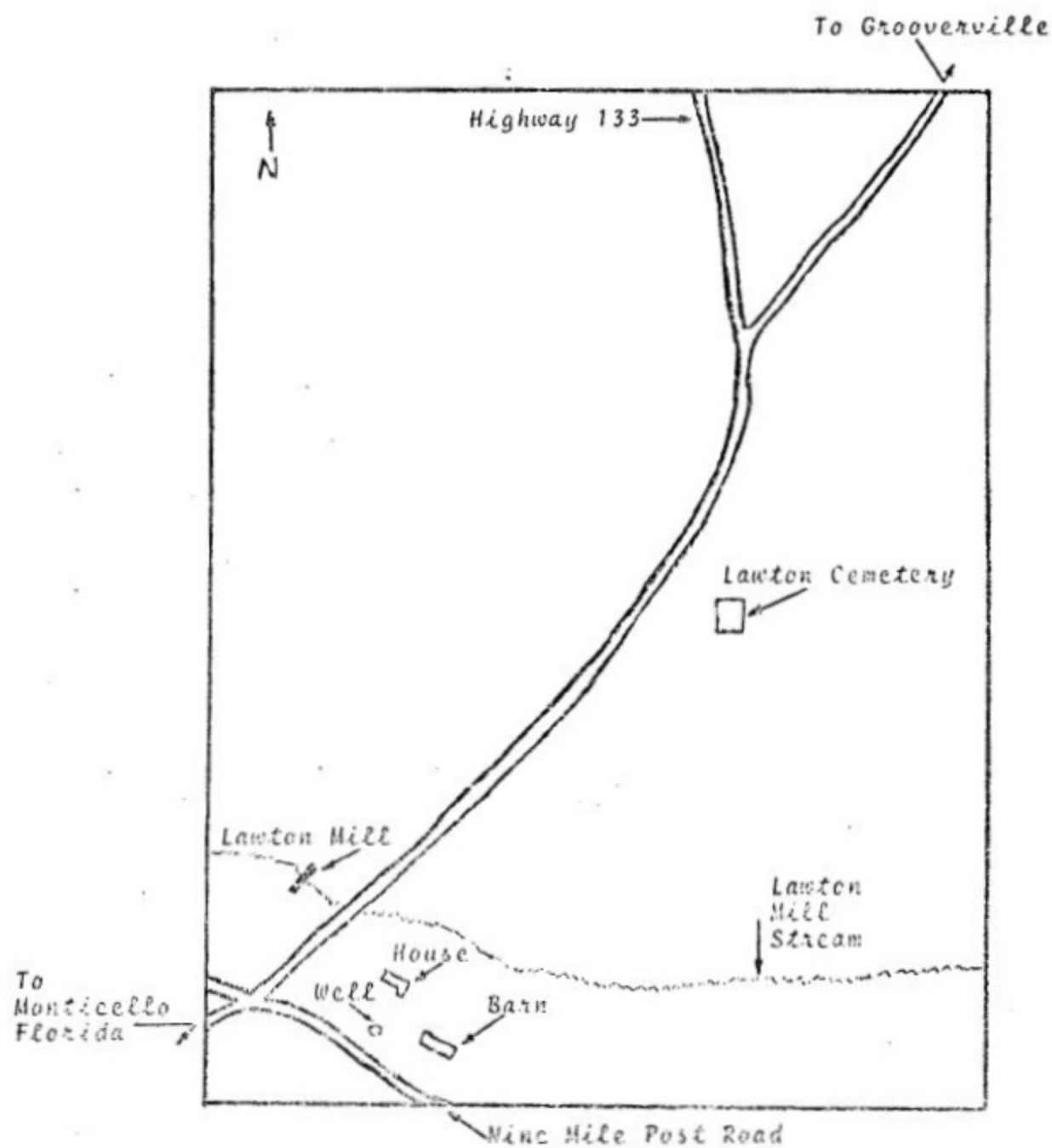
Relics of the Lawton plantation as described by Hector Irving Cook are shown in figure 12 of this report.

Another impression of what the plantation was like may be inferred from an examination of the inventory of lands, goods and chattles taken in 1861. The inventory included seventy-two slaves. In 1860 there were eleven slave owners in Thomas County who owned between 70 and 100 slaves.

"In 1860 there were 4,488 whites and of these 403 or one out of eleven owned slaves. Most of the people who owned slaves owned less than ten."<sup>1</sup> The acreage in Summer Oaks made it one of the largest plantations in the county. There were 265 head of livestock including mules, sheep, cattle, hogs, horses and oxen. Machinery included three sugar boilers, one sugar mill, a cotton gin and a large steam engine. A reading of the inventory leaves one with the impression Summer Oaks was a large, well staffed, well equipped working plantation.

This description, regrettably meager, is the best we can provide from our current research.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 12. Relics of the Lawton plantation as described by H. I. Cook



## PART IV

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>William Warren Rogers, Ante-Bellum Thomas County 1825-1861, (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, 1963), p. 68-69.

<sup>2</sup>We have a letter written August 16, 1942, from Sycamore, Georgia, by Annie Narcissa Lawton Long to a granddaughter of Winborn Theodore Lawton. In her letter Annie gave a brief and highly fanciful description of Summer Oaks plantation. Her letter is the earliest written reference we have found that uses the name Summer Oaks. Some of the information in the letter is factually refuted by the documented inventory we have noted. Other claims by Annie are refuted by another original source document. Accordingly, we have not used her letter in this part and mention it here only to record that we know about the letter and its contents.

## PART V

### WHERE IS ALEXANDER BENJAMIN LAWTON?

Wherever his burial site was located, it was close enough to be reached during a casual buggy ride. On June 28, 1861, Narcissa Melissa wrote in her diary: "This has been an uncommonly hot day. I went to ride this evening in the buggy with Bobby. I went to my dear husband's grave."

Where was A.B. buried? We have found no written eye-witness report, no gravestone, no documentary material which seems convincingly authentic leaving us assured after we read it that we know the answer to our question. We have circumstantial evidence from Narcissa Melissa, a suspect account by Annie Narcissa Lawton Long, and hearsay from Irving Cook. Nevertheless, the bits of information when pieced together may be taken to infer that A.B. was buried in the cemetery we think was Lebanon, and we find that inference to be quite persuasive.

On February 9, 1861, A.B. purchased the Methodist Church lot and burying ground. Could he have known that three months later he would need a site for his own burial? The location of that burying ground as it was described in the



deed can be interpreted to fit the location of the cemetery we have found where his daughter and grandchild and perhaps his son were buried. It seems reasonable to suppose A.B. would have wished to be buried next to them. But, was that Lebanon cemetery?

Historian William Rogers describes Lebanon in this way.

William H. Ramsey, a Methodist pioneer resident, moved into the area from North Carolina in 1832. Ramsey developed a plantation southwest of Grooverville and erected a brush-arbor near his home where his family and slaves worshipped. When other Methodists moved into the community, a log church was built on the main road to St. Marks. The church was named Lebanon and in the 1840's was made a regular monthly preaching appointment.

Grooverville became a trading center for cotton and was on the stage line from Thomasville to Troupville. It seemed advantageous to move Lebanon to Grooverville, and in 1856 this was done. The church name was changed to Grooverville.<sup>1</sup>

The Grooverville-Monticello road through the plantation (present highway 133) was the road to St. Marks, Florida.

Members of the Ramsey family still live in the neighborhood. I. Clayton Ramsey, a Ramsey family historian, has told us his family is confident the old cemetery we have located, where Mary Jane and Mary Edla were buried, was Lebanon cemetery.

A letter written eighty-one years after the fact by a granddaughter of A.B. contained a statement purporting to tell where he was buried. This letter must be used cautiously since much of what the writer said was, at best, inexact. After describing the plantation, she asserted: "The Old Mount Lebanon Cemetery is near, where sleep our grandparents,

and, nearby, the poor lonely slaves, many of whom died broken hearted."<sup>2</sup> Disputing that assertion, other members of the family have told us Narcissa Melissa was buried in Oviedo, Florida.

Finally, we have the testimony of Irving Cook, that his father told him Mr. and Mrs. Lawton were buried beneath the piles of bricks in the old Lawton cemetery.

On the basis of the information we have now, we surmise that: The Methodist Church lot and buying ground; Lebanon church and cemetery; Mount Lebanon cemetery; and, old Lawton cemetery, were all the same place and that place is the cemetery relic to which Robert Lauder guided us in the woods along highway 133.

Where was A.B. buried? We conjecture that in 1853 little Benny was buried in Lebanon cemetery; in 1856 first Mary Edla and second Mary Jane were buried in Lebanon cemetery; in 1861 Lebanon became the plantation cemetery for Summer Oaks and, in May of that year, Alexander Benjamin Lawton was buried there too.

But why are there three piles of bricks? Who lies buried beneath them? The reports from Annie Long and Irving Cook agree that A.B. and Narcissa are there. Could it be that the three piles of bricks mark the graves of Alexander Benjamin, Narcissa Melissa, and their son, Benjamin F.? If that could be, then why is there a gravestone for Narcissa in Oviedo, Florida?

## PART V

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>William Warren Rogers, Ante-Bellum Thomas County 1825-1861, (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, 1963), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Annie Narcissa Lawton Long to Clara Curtis Lawton Lienhard, August 16, 1942. See note 2 at the end of Part IV of this report for our comment on this letter.

## PART VI

### DESCENDANTS OF THE SUMMER OAKS FAMILY

Accompanying this report is a chart prepared by Mary Martha Grogan Lundy on which we have named the descendants (and their families) of Alexander Benjamin Lawton as completely as our current information allows us to do. We will continue to gather information that will contribute either to a future report dealing only with the descendants of Summer Oaks or dealing with an enlarged and improved edition of the present report. Correspondents who wish to elaborate on the lives of people named on the chart or who wish to identify descendants whose names should be added may send information to Dr. Church at the address given in the Preface to this report. Any information provided should explain the subject person's descent from Alexander Benjamin Lawton.

In this part of our report we write about Narcissa Melissa and each of Alexander Benjamin's children briefly describing what happened to them in later years.

#### Narcissa Melissa Lawton

On December 28, 1862, Narcissa wrote the last entry in the part of her diary we have, giving us our last impression

of her life during that period. She continued to live at the plantation on her Dower Property through the years of the war. We have a report from her son, Winborn Theodore, that he was with her at home in the Fall of the year 1866 when he and Alex both left home once again and for the final time. She may have continued to live there between the Fall of 1866 and November of 1870 when the Dower Property was sold. She lived her later years in Oviedo, Florida, with her daughter Lona. Narcissa Melissa Lawton died August 16, 1883, at the age of sixty-six. There is a gravestone for her in the Oviedo cemetery in Oviedo, Florida, and members of the family in Florida are confident she was buried there.

Mary Jane Lawton

Alexander Benjamin's oldest daughter married David Montague Laffitte in 1854. They had one daughter who was named Mary Edla Laffitte, and who died as an infant on February 6, 1856. Mary Jane died three months later on May 1, 1856. They both were buried in Lebanon cemetery which later became the cemetery for Summer Oaks plantation. Their graves and gravestones are now in the relic of Lebanon cemetery, in land lot #124 in Thomas County, about seventy-five yards off the east side of state highway 133, north of the creek, at the top of the hill. We have visited them there.

Martha S. Lawton

Martha S. married Walter Gwynn, an attorney who lived in Monticello, Florida. He later became a judge. They had no children.

In January 1890, her sister Clara wrote in a letter, "Sister Mattie has gone North to be under a doctor--her health is very bad and has been for many years."

In May, 1892, her sister Lona wrote from Oviedo, "I made a short visit to Sanford to see sister Mattie last week taking my two little girls--Mary and Mattie--with me." Sanford is a city in Florida located close to Oviedo.

We have no further information about Martha.

Eusebia Lawton

Eusebia was born between 1836 and 1839. She died sometime before 1850. We do not know where she was buried.

Alexander Cater Lawton

After the war, Alex returned to Summer Oaks, where he stayed until the Fall of 1866 when he and his brother, Winborn Theodore, both left home. Alex went to Monticello, Florida, where, on November 29, 1866, he married Sarah A. Godfrey. They had one child, Annie Narcissa Lawton born July 22, 1877.

We know very little about Alex. During the decade of the 1890's he was living near his brother, Winborn Theodore,

somewhere around Caddo Parish, Louisiana. Alexander Cater Lawton died July 26, 1921, in Sycamore, Georgia, at the age of eighty.

Winborn Theodore Lawton

We have a "Brief Sketch of My Life" by Winborn T. Lawton, taken from his scrapbook by his daughter, Josie Adams, and provided to us by Ruth Thomas. His sketch is quoted below.

1865...In the spring of the year I closed my military career as a soldier in the Confederate Army. I returned home, taught Tommie and Lona (my brother and sister), then in the Fall served as an apprentice in the wheelwright trade under Reverend B. S. Fuller, where I remained until Christmas.

1866.... In the Spring, engaged in the lime and turpentine business with Captain Walker Gwynn and my brother-in-law, Walter Gwynn. In the Summer, returned to my mother's and in the Fall, in company with my brother, A. C. Lawton, went to Chattahoochee, Florida, where we separated. I went to Alabama and he went to Monticello, Florida. The same Fall I went to work for Reverend Wm. Hilliard in the wheelwright business, where I remained until Christmas, 1866.

1867.... The second Monday in January I went in co-partnership with Mr. Sanford Bason, teaching school in Brundidge where I remained until Summer and took a school at a place called 'The Level' or 'Hepsibah Baptist Church.' On the 27th of June I married. My school continued until Fall when I emigrated to Louisiana. I stopped at Greenwood took the agency of a plantation called 'Pages Home Place,' remained until the Summer of 1869 when I took a school in Shreveport, Louisiana until 1870; taught school at Line Creek in Caddo Parish, Louisiana 1871.

The woman Winborn Theodore married in 1867 was Mary Ann Whaley. When they married, Winnie was twenty-four years old; Mary Ann was fifteen.

Winborn Theodore was a farmer, a deacon and occasional Baptist preacher, and a school teacher. Over a period of several years he taught in various schools in the area of east Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Around the year 1882, the family moved to a farm of 160 acres located in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, in a community named Frog Level. Winborn Theodore lived there until he died at the age of forty-nine, November 14, 1892. He was buried in the cemetery at Munnerlyn Chapel, located on the Mira-Atlanta road in Caddo Parish, Louisiana.

Mary Ann Whaley Lawton gave birth to ten children in twenty-two years. Her sixth child was a girl named Birdie Lawton, who married James Wilburn Grogan of Bloomburg, Texas. She became the mother of James Tillman Grogan, the grandmother of Jane Ann Grogan Church, and the great-grandmother of Stacey Allene Church, who is co-author of this report.

#### Clara Isabella Lawton

Clara married John Thomas Wheeler. They had two children, both boys.

Our information about Clara comes from a few letters between several members of the family.

In May, 1888, Emma Lenora (Lona), wrote that Clara and her husband were living in Hernando County, Florida. Wheeler was ill and dying. Clara was planning to move back to Oviedo after the death of her husband.



In January, 1890, Clara, now a widow, wrote to her brother Winnie.

I suppose you heard my husband died leaving me no property with two little boys--one eight and the other twelve.

I am teaching school three miles from Oviedo. I walk a mile and a half which is the distance to the school house. I am living in one of Tom's houses and board his clerk. I do all my own work and have no help so you can see my time is pretty well occupied. My brothers and sisters are all well off. They have fine bearing orange groves. Tom has a large fine store and is doing a good business here but Rob is richer than any of the rest--in other words he is well off, he is having a splendid two-story house built all nicely plastered. I have no house of my own.

In May 1892, Lona wrote a letter saying Clara lived a half mile away.

In February 1895, Clara wrote to her niece Lona Lawton at Frog Level, Louisiana.

I am living near brother Robert Lawton and in one of his immense orange groves with my two sons Benjamin Franklin and Robert Lee--the former seventeen--the latter nearly fourteen. I have only two children.

I am living in sight of your Aunt Lona for whom you are named.

Clara Isabelle died in 1912 at the age of sixty-seven.

#### Robert William Lawton

Robert married Mary Gwynn and lived in Oviedo, Florida. According to his sister Clara, Robert was a successful farmer. He owned the largest orange grove in the family and was quite prosperous.

Robert was an active church worker serving, at one time, as pastor of a church in Oviedo.

Robert and Mary had five children who lived to maturity.

Robert William Lawton died in 1909 at the age of sixty-two.

Benjamin F. Lawton

Benjamin was born in 1848 or 1849 and died shortly before September 4, 1853. He may have been buried in Lebanon cemetery at Summer Oaks.

Thomas J. Lawton

We have very little information about Thomas. We have a letter dated May 17, 1888, from Oviedo, Florida, in which he gave this description.

My wife's name is Josephene. We only have one child, and his name is 'Tom Lawton' nothing more, he is not a year old yet. I have been married twice, have had five children but they are all dead and gone but our little boy now.

In January 1890, his sister Clara wrote that Tom owned a store in Oviedo. In May 1892, his sister Lona wrote that he was living in Arcadia, Florida.

We would like to find more information about Thomas and his descendants.

Emma Lenora Lawton

Emma Lenora (Lona) married Andrew Aulin an immigrant from Sweden. They were pioneer settlers of Oviedo, Florida.

Four children were born into this family. Their third child was a girl named Mary Hannah Aulin. After

Mary's cousin Birdie Lawton Grogan died, Mary Hannah Aulin became the second wife of James Wilburn Grogan in Bloomburg, Texas.

In March 1887 Lona wrote saying that they had 500 orange trees and that her husband had given up storckkeeping in order to devote his full time to his orange grove and to farming. They raised potatoes, turnips and had a cow that Lona milked. Apparently they kept ownership of their store because in May 1892, she wrote that Theodore, her oldest son, was helping his father in the store.

Emma Lenora died July 29, 1907, at the age of 53.

## PART VII

### EPILOGUE

Alexander Cater Lawton, oldest son of Alexander Benjamin, lived to a later date than any other member of the Summer Oaks family. From 1809 when A.B. was born, to 1921 when Alex died was a period of 112 years that saw the Lawton's fortunes and style of life change completely. A.B. was born into a way of life which probably seemed safely under the control of the members of his large family, a pastoral, largely self-reliant plantation life, comfortable, yet dependent upon slave labor for its continuation, and the existence of slavery ultimately was beyond the limits of public tolerance in a free nation.

Narcissa Melissa lived to see the destruction of the plantation based, large family, life style she knew so well. She recorded in poetry the events she experienced and emotions she felt from the time of her early girlhood in South Carolina to the time of her retirement in Florida. In later years her poetry grew reflective as she reviewed her life, remembered the people she had known and loved, and prepared for whatever would come next. "To My Old Album" is a poem which helped her close out her life.

## To my old Album

Tis a record long forgotten,  
With its time worn faded leaves.  
Sad I turn the pages over,  
And a sigh my bosom heaves.  
There are names, oh, how familiar  
Once they sounded to my ear,  
Strangers now and separated,  
Every friendship once so dear.  
Some whose fingers traced these verses  
With a fair and steady hand,  
Long ago have made their exits  
To the brighter better land.  
Sad momentos, how I linger,  
On each name that meets my view,  
And my heart its pulses quicken,  
At those words of friendship true.  
I may not see those forms that bounded  
Once so merrily and free.  
I may not hear the tones that sounded  
With such melody to me.  
But before my mental vision  
When these faded lines I trace  
Rises up in quick succession  
Every form, and voice, and face.

Narcissa Melissa Lawton

1817-1883

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A presentation to the Reunion of the Lawton and Allied Families, 1975.

Skillfully researched, well written. Our best source on Joseph Lawton. If you wish to get a copy, contact Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., Memorial Avenue, Allendale, South Carolina 29810. Phone 803/534-3838.

Maps. Good maps giving much local detail information are available. Write to the Branch of Distribution, U.S. Geological Survey, 1200 Eads Street, Arlington, Virginia 22202.

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The Southern Enterprise, Thomasville, Georgia, May 29, 1861  
and June 5, 1861.



APPENDIX 1. Dr. Olivero's bill for treating Capt. A.B.Lawton

of the amount of the bill is now of  
 Linton in/Dean pay at night to the  
 school. R.R. Linton/Dean pay at night to the  
 school for the 2nd of June 1861  
 Received of Joseph J. Everett Adm'r on the Estate of  
 N. B. Linton/Dean pay at night to the school in payment of principal & int  
 on the bill of the 2nd of June 1861  
 L.R. Robinson

Monetary No. 35

Capt A. B. Linton

To E. J. Oliveros Lr

1861			
May/	16	Night Milage & Night to Self	5 50
"	"	Attention during Night	15 00
"	17	Milage & Night to Self	5 00
"	18	Milage & Night to Self	5 00
"	19	Attention during day and Night	15 00
"	20	Attention during day & Night	15 00
"	21	Attention during day & Night	15 00
"	22	Attention during day & Night	15 00
			85 50
		Deduction on Bill	20 00
			65 50
		Interest for one Year	4 79

Received of Joseph J. Everett Adm'r on the Estate of A. B. Linton twenty three  
 dollars & fifty cents being the full amount of Dr E. J. Oliveros Medical account  
 for 1861 Jan 4 to 8/63  
 E. A. Armfield Agent  
 for E. J. Oliveros. M.D.

APPENDIX 2. Inventory of land, goods, and chattels at  
Summer Oaks plantation, June 12, 1861

State of Georgia Thomas County  
By the Honorable the Ordinance of Said County  
To Josiah J. Enright Henry W. Blewett Moses W.  
Linton Allen Hagen & A. Mallett

These are to authorize and empower you, or  
any three of you to make a just and true appra-  
isment of all and singular the Horas and Chattels  
(ready Money excepted) of Alexander B. Lawton late  
of Said County deceased in Dollars and Cents as shall  
be produced by and pointed out to you by Winbourn  
J. Lawton the Administrator, Ad-Executorem  
of the Estate of the Said Alexandre B. Lawton  
deceased you and each of you first taking  
the Oath required by law either in the presence  
of each other or before some Justice of the Peace  
for Said County and that you will return the  
Same Certified under your hands and also a  
Certificate of your having taken the Oath thereof  
annexed unto the Said Ordinance within the time  
prescribed by Law

In witness whereof I have  
 hereunto set my hand and Official Signature  
 this the 28<sup>th</sup> day of May A.D. 1861  
 Henry H. Tooke  
Drainary

Inventory and Appraisement of the Estate of  
 Alexander B. Lawton deceased

	2084 Acres Land @ \$9 per acre	18750 00
1	Will a Negro Man Valued at	1500 00
2	Israel " " "	1500 00
	<u>Amt carried forward</u>	
3	Sheaanic R. amt not forward Valued at	1400 00
4	Piran R. " "	1250 00
5	Rristin " "	900 00
6	Ben " "	1250 00
7	John " "	1100 00
8	Tommy " "	1250 00
9	Alec " "	1300 00
10	Lemas " "	850 00
11	Newton	

11	Nector				1300 00
12	Gicks				900 00
13	Richard				1100 00
14	Byras				1350 00
15	John (Little)				1300 00
16	Robin (Gicks)				1500 00
17	Alfred				800 00
18	Morris (Old)				7500
19	Pleasant	a Woman	thin 4 children		2400 00
20	Ellin		1 child		1250 00
21	Grace				800 00
22	Levey		5 children		2500 00
23	Delia		Girl		900 00
24	Lavenia				850 00
25	Tenn				700 00
26	Leah		Woman thin 3 children		1500 00
27	Lucy		Girl		950 00
28	Busan				600 00
29	Willie				450 00
30	George		Boy		700 00
31	Tanner		Woman thin 3 children		1000 00

32	Susan	"	"	" 1 child	"	"	1200 00
33	Esther	"	live	"	"	"	800 00
34	Judy	"	"	"	"	"	650 00
35	Laura	"	"	"	"	"	550 00
36	Anthony	"	Boy	"	"	"	700 00
37	Louisa	"	Woman	"	"	"	800 00
38	Hannah	"	Woman	(old)	"	"	750 00
39	Samai	"	"	"	"	"	750 00
40	Tenah	"	"	thir 1 child	"	"	1100 00
41	Mariah	"	"	" 4 children	"	"	2500 00
42	Nancy	"	live	"	"	"	600 00
43	Will little	Boy	"	"	"	"	750 00
44	Ana, alene	a Woman	"	"	"	"	1000 00
45	Lebelia	"	Girl	"	"	"	1100 00
46	Jayra	"	Girl	"	"	"	625 00
47	Ezrah	"	"	"	"	"	550 00
48	Rose	"	"	"	"	"	450 00
				Carried forward			

# Continued

	Unit Port forward	
49	Stephen a Boy	Valued at 750 00
50	Grace " live	350 00
52	Household Furniture Room #1	600 00
53	" " " 2	75 00
54	" " " 3	60 00
55	" " " 4	80 00
56	" " " 5 Pantry	135 00
57	" " " 6	60 00
58	" " " 7	50 00
59	" " " 8	30 00
60	" " " 9	30 00
61	Kitchen	12 00
62	16 Mules @ \$150 each	2400 00
63	70 Sheep @ 1.50	105 00
64	73 Head Stock cattle @ \$5.50	401 50
65	100 Head Hogs @ \$2 head	200 00
66	4 Head Horses	500 00
67	1 Bridgway & Harness	140 00
68	1 Harness	15 00



70

1 Horse Cart	30 00
1 Old Wagon	30 00
1 Wagon	75 00
3 Sugar Bailers	20 00
1 Mill	25 00
8 Wheel Barrows	20 00
1 Corn Sheller	6 00
Lot Plantation Tools	3 50
Saddles	10 00
1 Wash Pot	3 00
1 Yoke Oxen + Cart	70 00
1 Carriage	75 00
1 Cotton Gin + 2 Whippers	100 00
1 Steam Mill	2000 00
4 Seed Planters	32 00
2 Roller Gins	100 00
3 Old Sights + Gradals	2 00
1 Set Blacksmith Tools	40 00
Lot Iron	12 00
Plows + Appertinances	100 00
Plow Gear	24 00
35 Wreaths	10 00

16 Axes  
 Lot Carpenter Tools & Vice  
Amt forward

Amt Brought forward

4 Guns  
 Lot Nails  
 2 Brides & piece of Leather  
 Lot Saddles  
 140 Shares A & L R R Stock @ 70 cts pr  
Aggregate

	8 00
	19 00
	30 00
	7 50
	8 00
	2 00
	28 00 50
	<u>79 18 00</u>

Georgia Thomas County

We do certify upon oath that as far as was  
produced to us by the administrator the above  
and foregoing contains a true appraisement of  
the Goods Chattle & Credits of the Estate of Alexan-  
-an B Lawton deceased to the best of our judg-  
-ment and understanding

And we do hereby certify that  
we were duly sworn by each other according  
to Law

Given under our hands and  
Official Signatures this 12 day of June 1861

Josiah J. Emvitt

Wiley Blawitt

Moses W. Linton

Allen Hagen

} Appraisers

APPENDIX 3. Distribution of slaves among eight heirs

Georgia } By virtue of an order from the  
Thomas County } Honorable Court of Ordinary of  
Said County, on the first Monday in  
December Inst. is undirected, authorizing me to  
write/make distribution of the Estate of the  
late, Alexandre B. Lawton, deceased among the  
distributors, entitled to said estate we proceed this  
day to the performance of that duty. There were  
eight distributors to wit N. M. Lawton widow  
and relict of said Alexandre B. Lawton deceased  
Martha Lawton daughter of said A. B. Lawton  
heirs of full age and A. B. Lawton, W. J. Lawton  
H. J. Lawton, P. W. Lawton, S. J. Lawton, E. L. Lawton  
minor children of said A. B. Lawton deceased  
whose interests in said distribution were represented  
by W. J. Lawton & J. J. Cornett Administrators of said  
minor children of Alexandre B. Lawton and  
N. M. Lawton the shares were numbered 1 2 3 4 &c  
and were assigned to the distributors in the following  
manner, to wit. the names of the distributors were  
written on a piece of paper and placed in a Hat

written on a piece of paper and placed in a Hat  
 The Numbers were written on another piece of paper  
 and put in another Hat the Hats were both  
 over

well, Then a Name was then drawn from  
 the Hat Containing the Names then a Number  
 was drawn from the Hat Containing the  
 Numbers and in that manner continued till  
 all were drawn. the following is the  
 result

Number 1 Consists of Hector Valued at

Robin " "  
 Antony " "  
 Little John " "  
 Esther " "  
 Topsy " "

Drawn by C. J. Lawton

Number 2 Consist of Elie Valued at

Dick " "  
 Tenah Bot and an Infant " "  
 Luvenia Valued " "  
 H. e. e. l. i. e. " "  
 (Name)

1300 00	
1350 00	
700 00	
1300 00	
800 00	
750 00	
<hr/>	
	\$6250 00
1250 00	
800 00	
1050 00	
700 00	
1000 00	

	Rose	1000 00	
	Angelina	450 00	
Drawn by J. J. Lawton		1000 00	6250 00
No 3 Consists of Family Valued at		1250 00	
John		1100 00	
James 3 Children + Infant		1900 00	
Susan Edward + Infant		1300 00	
Sarah		600 00	
Drawn by Mr J Lawton			6250 00
No 4 Consists of Family Valued at		600 00	
Laura		500 00	
Will		1000 00	
Alfred		800 00	
Louisa		800 00	
Oliver, Isaac, Samuel, Khloey James + Ellis		2500 00	
Drawn by E. J. Lawton			6250 00
No 5 Consists of Simms Valued at		900 00	
Leah, Nathan, Ben, Paul + Infant		1650 00	
Lyons + Infant		1100 00	
George		700 00	
Louisa		600 00	



Susan  
 Susan  
 Drawn by M. S. Lawton  
 No. 6. Consists of Richard Valued at  
 Monah, Moses, Sophia, Pleasant & David  
 Will  
 Nancy

600	00	
1300	00	
		6250 00
1100	00	
2300	00	
750	00	
500	00	

Ephraim  
 Grace,  
 Drawn by Mrs. A. M. Lawton  
 No. 7. Consists of Ben Valued at  
 Oliver & Sidney  
 Tenah  
 Stephen  
 Frank  
 Grace  
 Lylla

1300	00	
350	00	
		6350 00
1300	00	
600	00	
600	00	
750	00	
1250	00	
800	00	
450	00	
		5750 00
900	00	
2800	00	

Drawn by A. M. Lawton  
 No. 8. Consists of Orister Valued at  
 Ahloa, Ephraim, David, Isaac, Leah & Jacob



It consists of Orister      Valued at  
 1100. Elfrans David Isaac Jacob  
 Delia  
 Dorael  
 Simai  
 Given by A. W. Lawton

900	00
2200	00
800	00
1500	00
7500	

6125 00

Georgia, Thomas County  
 we the undersigned commissioners  
 appointed by the Ordinance of said County to  
 divide the Estate of A. B. Lawton deceased equally  
 among the several distributees entitled thereto do  
 solemnly swear in the presence & before each other  
 that we will make a just and correct & true division am-  
 -ong the several distributees of said Estate entitled thereto  
 of said Estate, to the best of our understanding of  
 the law we help us God & we certify that the follo-  
 -wing is a just true and correct division thereof  
 January 27<sup>th</sup> 1861  
 Joshua B. Corvitt  
 Allen Hagan Comr.  
 Allen B. Sanders Comr.

We do hereby certify that the following is a true and correct list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the records of the Court of Ordinary, February 3rd 1862

Joshua P. Bennett

Allen Hagan Esq

Henry B. Sanders Esq

John P. Smith Esq

John H. Steele Esq

Georgia Thomas County

Court of Ordinary, February 3rd 1862

The within and foregoing proceedings in relation to a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the records of the Court of Ordinary, February 3rd 1862, are hereby ordered by the Court that the same be admitted to the records in this Court

Henry B. Sanders  
Ordinary

Records February 3rd 1862

Henry B. Sanders

APPENDIX 4. Auction sale at the plantation,  
December 28, 1861

# Georgia Thomas County

Inventory and Sale of the perishable property of  
A. B. Sanborn Decided on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of December  
1861 & Sold on a credit of 12 Months

Enoch Parlin	purchased	Blacksmith Tools	45 00
J. D. Whaley	"	Cotton Planter	6 00
J. B. Cornitt	"	"	4 50
Cooper Roberts	"	Horse Mill	26 00
J. E. Seward	"	Lot plows	19 00
Enoch Parlin	"	"	7 00
A. Oliver	"	"	7 00
Wm. Stegall	"	"	14 50
Geo. McDonald	"	"	5 40
E. A. Powell	"	"	3 82
J. B. Jones	"	"	2 00
J. Oliver	"	"	2 00
J. J. Monroe	"	"	1 50
R. B. Mardine	"	Iron	14 32
Wm. J. Youngblood	"	Plows	1 50
N. Cochran	"	"	1 00
Wm. McEmanon	"	Cotton Seed	105 00

J. J. Mays	" More Oxen	71 00
" " "	" Ox Cart	10 00
" " "	" Curryall	30 75
N. M. Lawton	" Horse Cart	25 00
J. O. Mahony	" Wheel Barrow	2 12
F. Oliver	" " "	1 75
N. M. Lawton	" " "	1 00
Wm. H. Hall	" 2 " "	5 00
J. G. Summers	" " "	3 40
N. M. Lawton	" 4 Cane Knives	1 30
F. Oliver	" 4 Plow Hooks & Knives	9 80
J. P. Heath	" 2 " "	2 50
J. J. Monroe	" Set weeding Hoes	1 80
F. Oliver	" " " "	4 00
J. J. Monroe	" " " "	1 02
W. F. Gungblood	" " Axes	1 50
A. Halman	" " Hoes	77
" " "	" " Hoes	90
G. W. Powell	" " Axes	2 00
Jos. Grover	" Iron Wedge	68
W. F. Gungblood	" 2 " "	1 00

Thos. Little	" Lot Shad & Shovels	1 85
A. M. Sawton	" Bungay & Stames	125 00
E. Carrin	" Carriage	125 00
	" Lot Plows	2 50
A. M. Sawton purchases	Lot Plows	10 00
T. J. Munroe	" Wheel Barrow	3 00
Sam. Bingham	" Lot Carpenters Tools	5 00
A. Stallman	" one Vice	8 10
W. B. Taylor	" Corn Sheller	10 00
A. H. Wilson	" Sugar Boiler	10 00
A. M. Sawton	" 2 "	25 00
J. J. Mayo	" Mule Rose	175 25
A. M. Sawton	" " Hester	178 00
W. B. Taylor	" " Pump	210 00
" "	" " Comp.	150 00
J. J. Linton	" " Bull	1 00 00
J. J. Mayo	" " Aero	121 00
J. Oliver	" " Oct	55 00
Wm. E. Egan	" " Hammah	140 50
J. E. Godfrey	" " Jim Carter	25 00

J. J. Lawton	" Mike	150 00
" " "	" Tenah	169 50
" " "	" Kit	197 00
J. Oliver	" Olofin	50 00
N. M. Lawton	" Blackberry Cuts	150 00
J. A. Munroe	" Kale	120 00
N. M. Lawton	" Horse Bill	70 00
	" Match Horses (200)	125 00
Wm. L. Hall	" 13 Hoop	110 00
Abel Johnson	" 9 Hoop	24 00
N. M. Lawton	" 2 Sows + 15 Pigs	57 00
John O. Taylor	" 16 Hoop	71 00
N. M. Lawton	" 12 Sheep	40 00
Jas. S. Leland	" 27 "	162 00
J. J. Mayo	" 34 Dead Cows @ 8 1/4 per Head	285 00
M. Munroe	" 1 Road Wagon	178 00
N. M. Lawton	" 1 Small "	67 00
J. J. Mayo	" 4 Carrel's Sigsbee	110 00
J. Oliver	" 100 Bushels Corn	100 00
P. B. Remington	" 176 "	130 60
N. M. Lawton	" 1 Starbuck's	12 00



Thom Hill	" 1 "	6 25
S. Leo	" 5 "	41 50
Wm S Ramsey	" 1 "	8 00
J H Whitfield	" "	0 30
Wm Shawman	" 5 Bushels Salt	27 50
Wm Lenzell	" 1 Piano	40 00
J. S. Mayo	" 1st Level	12 50
J. J. Mayo	" 4 Axes	8 00
H. S. Sanders	" Jack Plaim	7 50
J B Corritt	" Bull & Jack Plaim	13 00
T Oliver	" Snythe Blade	1 00
J A Mallette	" Box Tricors	2 00
J B Corritt	" Broad Ax	2 25
J J Mayo	" Plow Gear	9 25
Jas Poragoff	" Broad Ax	1 25
J J Linton	" 2 Hunter 2 Pliers	5 00
Jas Poragoff	" Lot Chuts & Sacks	2 50
N M Sawton	" Grande Stone & 2 Axes	5 00
" " "	" 1 Pot	3 00
" " "	" 12 Head Cattle	60 00
" " "	" 1 Sow	15 00
" " "	" 1 Hog	5 00



J. J. Einton	" Old Mangon	12 25
" " "	" Stretch + 5th Chain	5 00
" " "	" Got Old Hames	1 50
Chas Praeger	" 1 Stretch	1 00
Walter Clark	" Grindstone	2 55
" " "	" Spinning Wheel	5 00
" Oliver	" pr Leas	2 00
Thomas Hill	" Got Old Iron	4 00
A. B. Ewitt	" 2 Cotton Seed Planters	5 15
E. Simpkins	Steam Mill	17 00
Total <sup>and</sup> Sale held on December		64 91 22
28th 1861 by	W. J. Lawton & J. J. Ewitt	

Georgia Thomas County  
 Court of Ordinary Jan'y 28<sup>th</sup> 1862  
 the within and foregoing account sales of the Perishable property Belonging to the Estate of A. B. Lawton Dec<sup>d</sup> having been presented and filed in Court and having also been examined and found to be in

APPENDIX 5. Statement of Account for the estate

Decreased in Account with said Estate

June 2 1863	By Cash Received from Sale of 10 Shares of A. B. & C. Stock	4957 50
	Cash Received on the Sale of Steammill on Doct. Smith's Note he bidding of the Mill at \$1700	1450 00
	but afterwards filed failure of consideration and the Administrator led the Note for	15906 80
	Cash from Sale of Land (Connell Place)	3745 50
	" " " " (Hurst " )	4075 50
	" " " " (Puler " )	1930 00
	" " " " Lake Field	600 00
	Rent of Land for 1863	32665 30
	Amount Brought from debit side debit	32615 27