

AN IMAGE OF SOUTHERN REPOSE: INTENTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THOMAS

ADDISON RICHARDS'S *RIVER PLANTATION*

by

KATE BRUCE

(Under the Direction of Janice Simon)

ABSTRACT

Landscape artist Thomas Addison Richards (1820-1900) completed *River Plantation*, circa 1855-1860, at a time when America was on the brink of the Civil War (1861-1865). As a present-day viewer, one is left with many questions regarding the artist's intentions. *River Plantation* follows the conventions of a picturesque beautiful landscape, and the painting is filled with iconography specific to the South. Set on a verdant plantation, this image depicts slaves spending a leisurely day by the river on the property of the plantation owners, whose columned antebellum home is barely visible from the midst of the grand oaks. Richards's romantic attention to the landscape, the figures in repose, and the veiled plantation home is noteworthy, and this thesis addresses *River Plantation* and the artist's idyllic handling of a pre-war Southern plantation. In addition, a component of this thesis proposes *River Plantation's* original title and exhibition history.

INDEX WORDS: Thomas Addison Richards; *River Plantation*; Morris Museum of Art; National Academy of Design; the Civil War; picturesque beautiful landscape; Reverend William Gilpin; slaves; antebellum; live oak tree; river; Savannah River; *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Landscape artist Thomas Addison Richards (1820-1900) completed *River Plantation* (Figure 1), circa 1855-1860, at a time when America was on the brink of the Civil War (1861-1865). As a present-day viewer of this painting, one is left with many questions regarding the artist's intentions. *River Plantation* follows the conventions of a picturesque beautiful landscape,¹ and the painting is filled with iconography specific to the southern landscape. Set on a verdant plantation, this pre-war image paradoxically depicts slaves spending a leisurely day by the river on the property of the plantation owners, whose columned antebellum home is barely visible from the midst of the grand oaks that occupy the landscape. In 1853, Richards wrote, "but little has yet been said, either in picture or story, of the natural scenery of the Southern States; so inadequately is its beauty known abroad or appreciated at home."² Throughout his career, Richards showed an immense dedication to the South, and this commitment is typified in *River Plantation*. Richards's romantic attention to the landscape, the figures in repose, and the veiled plantation home within this setting is noteworthy, and this thesis will closely address *River Plantation* and the artist's idyllic handling of a pre-war Southern plantation.

¹ The picturesque beautiful was initially defined by Reverend William Gilpin in *An Essay Upon Prints*, first published anonymously in London, England, in 1768. Influenced by philosopher Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), which differentiated between characteristics of the sublime and the beautiful, Gilpin defined the picturesque as "a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture," in *An Essay Upon Prints: Containing Remarks upon the Principles of Picturesque Beauty, the Different Kinds of Prints, and the Characters of the most noted Masters; illustrated by Criticisms upon particular pieces; To which are added, Some Cautions that may be useful in collecting Prints* (London: Printed for J. Robson, 1768), 2. The theory of the picturesque and how it is exemplified in *River Plantation* will be thoroughly discussed in chapter two.

² Thomas Addison Richards, "The Landscape of the South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 6, no. 36 (1853): 725.

Richards, the son of a Baptist minister, settled with his family in Hudson, New York following their arrival from London, England in 1831.³ The Richards family, which included his brother William, then traveled south, stopping in Charleston, South Carolina before making Penfield, Georgia their home in 1835.⁴ In 1842, the Richards brothers published *Georgia Illustrated, in a Series of Views*, which was described as “a series of views embracing natural scenery...”⁵ Richards traveled, completing writings and sketches of historical and scenic locations in Georgia, and William served as editor.⁶ The brothers again collaborated, forming the magazine *Orion* (1842-1844).⁷ With William again as editor, Richards expanded his travels from Virginia to Louisiana, submitting romanticized and witty novelettes, as well as illustrations of various southern locales. These two successful publications were the impetus for Richards’s professional career as both a writer and painter, and led to subsequent publications in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* such as “The Landscape of the South,” and “The Rice Lands of the South,” commentaries accompanied by revealing illustrations.⁸ Both articles by Richards disclose his deep reverence and sympathies for the southern landscape, and convey his apparent desire to depict imagery synonymous with the South.

³ Mary Levin Koch, “The Romance of the American Landscape: The Art of Thomas Addison Richards, and a listing of his paintings, prints and drawings,” *Georgia Museum of Art Bulletin* 8, no. 2 (1983): 5-9.

⁴ Kenneth Coleman and Charles Stephen Gurr, eds., *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, vol. 2 (Athens: The University of Georgia Press,), 838.

⁵ Louis T. Griffith, “T. Addison Richards: Georgia Scenes by a Nineteenth Century Artist and Tourist,” *Georgia Museum of Art Bulletin* 1 (1974): 9. By 1842, Richards had already completed two works that show his early dedication to the arts, travel, and nature. At age twelve, Richards created a 150-page unpublished, illustrated manuscript of watercolors chronicling his voyage from England to America that occurred when he was eleven. In 1838, at age eighteen, the artist illustrated a book on flower painting, *The American Artist*, which was published in Baltimore, as noted in *National ‘Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York, 1898), 425.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 10. These illustrations, reproduced as steel engravings, were completed by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch and Smillie. One reviewer of *Georgia Illustrated* wrote that Richards’s “beautiful designs...are the most delicious gems of the art we have ever witnessed,” in *The Ladies’ Companion, a Monthly Magazine; Devoted to Literature and the Fine Arts* (1841): 148.

⁷ For more information on the success of the *Orion* in Penfield, and its eventual demise in Charleston, South Carolina, see Edward L. Tucker, “Two Young Brothers and Their *Orion*,” *The Southern Literary Journal* 11 (1978): 63-80. Tucker quotes from an advertisement which states that Richards’s drawings were executed in lithotint by James Smillie, Tucker, 71.

⁸ Koch, 17.

The artist spent the majority of his career in the North, beginning with his formal training at the National Academy of Design in New York City in 1844. He later became the corresponding secretary of the Academy in 1852, a post he occupied for more than forty years.⁹ This said, Richards trekked during the years of 1846-1856 to places not only in the North, such as the Hudson River, but also in the South, in the region of the Carolinas and Georgia, completing copious *plein air* sketches, now preserved at the Smithsonian Institute of Art in the Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C.¹⁰ Mary Levin Koch writes that in 1858, upon his marriage to children's author Mary E. Anthony, Richards and his new wife traveled to Georgia to see his family, thus increasing his portfolio of southern landscapes and writings, such as the aforementioned "The Rice Lands of the South" which was published as the first article in the November 1859 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*.¹¹ It was during this time that Richards displayed seven southern landscapes at the National Academy of Design Exhibition of 1859. *River Plantation* was created during this period, when the artist was at the summit of his artistic career.¹²

River Plantation is in the permanent collection of the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia. This medium-sized oil on canvas measures 20 ¼ x 30 inches.¹³ The official records of

⁹ Koch, 23-25. In addition to his post as corresponding secretary for the National Academy in New York, Richards was appointed professor at New York University in late 1867, where he taught until 1887. He also served as the first director of the Cooper Union School of Design for Women from 1858-1860. Richards was in New York during the Civil War, and frequently exhibited at the Academy and the Brooklyn Art Association during that time and afterwards.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11. Richards's sketches were often times transformed into engravings, and then to paintings, as in *Encountering an Alligator*, which is also in the permanent collection of the Morris Museum of Art. Although these engravings were oftentimes modified by the engraver, they serve as visual reminders of his initial sketches completed while traveling about in America.

¹¹ Ibid., 17-19.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The provenance of *River Plantation*, according to the Registrar of The Morris Museum of Art, Kelly Woolbright, is as follows: the painting was held at Kennedy Galleries in New York, sold to the art dealer Robert Hicklin of Spartanburg, South Carolina, and next purchased by Dr. Robert Coggins of Marietta, Georgia. The painting was then acquired by the Museum in 1989. It would be revealing to know when *River Plantation* obtained its present title, but unfortunately, Kennedy Galleries does not have any information regarding their acquisition of the painting.

the Museum state that the work was most likely painted near Augusta and depicts a familiar scene along the Savannah River.¹⁴ Richards was in fact well-acquainted with the surrounding area, having spent time in Augusta as an art teacher from 1838 to 1841.¹⁵ In opposition to this identification of *River Plantation* as representing a landscape in Georgia is scholar John Michael Vlach, who proposes that the painting was possibly titled *A Water Oak in South Carolina*, which was part of the group of seven works depicting the southern landscape that was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1859.¹⁶ While either location title is plausible, it will become clearer upon investigation of *River Plantation* that the large stately oak in the scene bears a similar resemblance to a live oak (Figure 12), and not a water oak (Figure 13).

Although *River Plantation*'s meaning is not wholly dependent on its presence at the National Academy of Design, the possibility suggested by Koch and explored by Vlach is intriguing, and this thesis will seek to come to terms with Vlach's discrepancy, and designate another possible location title for *River Plantation* by considering the other southern paintings exhibited at the National Academy of Design Exhibition of 1859. In addition to *A Water Oak in South Carolina*, and two paintings of northern scenery, *The Pemigewasset River, New Hampshire* and *The Franconia Mountains, New Hampshire*, Richards presented the following southern landscapes: *Group of Palmettos-South Carolina*; *Bonaventure, near Savannah*,

¹⁴ The Morris Museum of Art, *River Plantation* by Thomas Addison Richards, http://www.themorris.org/art/highlights/richards_riverplantation.html (accessed July, 2007).

¹⁵ Koch, 6, 27. Koch refers to the editor of the *Augusta Mirror*, who wrote that Richards taught "...Landscape, Fruit and Marine painting in oil colors; Landscape and Flower drawing in water colors..." in *Augusta Mirror* 2 (1839): 71. In addition to teaching classes, Richards also contributed to the *Augusta Mirror*. Richards and his brother, William Carey even published a dictionary of southern flora accompanied with illustrations, which was reviewed by the editor of the *Augusta Mirror*. Unfortunately, no copy of "The Southern Flora; or New Guide to Floral Language," exists today.

¹⁶ John Michael Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege and Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 28. Vlach cites Mary Levin Koch, who writes that "not surprisingly, the titles of Richards's paintings have altered during the twentieth century as labels have disappeared from the canvases. Therefore, either *River Plantation* or *Encountering an Alligator* could be one of those seven works exhibited at the 1859 Academy show," in Koch, 29.

*Georgia; The Edisto River, S. Carolina; The Savannah River, South Carolina; Live Oaks in South Carolina and The Keowee River, South Carolina.*¹⁷

As indicated above, Richards's picturesque beautiful *River Plantation* contains three important components that will be addressed in this thesis: the landscape, the figures, and the plantation home. In order to gain a better understanding of the conventions utilized by Richards in composing *River Plantation*, a thorough study of the picturesque and how it is exemplified in the painting is necessary. If displayed at the National Academy of Design in 1859 under a different title, then it could be interpreted as a public showcase of the South and its lush environs, much like his articles on the South that were published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. While Koch and Vlach have commented upon this painting's idyllic setting and Richards's apparent choice to "create appealing images that would further his advocacy on behalf of the virtues of the South,"¹⁸ they have not closely addressed the specifics of the painting that comprise a picturesque landscape in their publications. Chapter two on the picturesque will focus on natural elements such as the river, the sky, and the oak, taking into account other paintings and engravings by Richards in which the environment is paramount.

Within the setting are slaves who freely stroll on the grounds of the plantation. They are not at work, as in the undated painting by Richards, *A Stroll Through the Arcade, Savannah, Georgia* (Figure 21). They are also not stereotyped, as in many genre scenes depicting African-Americans during the time both before and after the Civil War. The third chapter will be dedicated to an analysis of the activity, location, and dress of the figures in *River Plantation*, and how they compare to other depictions by Richards. Additionally, one must consider that while the plantation workers are present, the proprietor of the plantation is not visible to the eye of the

¹⁷ Bartlett Cowdrey, intro., *The National Academy of Design Exhibition Record: 1826-1860*, vol. 2 (New York: J.J. Little & Ives Company, 1943), 95-96.

¹⁸ Vlach, 28.

viewer. As such, a comparison to other paintings by artists such as Henry Lewis's *Cotton Plantation*, 1856 (Figure 27), where the landowner or overseer is visibly evident, will be conducted in order to show Richards's apparent departure from stereotyping slaves in *River Plantation*.

To the left of the figures, the white-columned antebellum home is set behind multiple green oaks. The figures and the home are separated by a white picket fence that encircles the structure, and its positioning within the overall composition of *River Plantation* is significant. Vlach posits that Richards, along with other artists such as John Lord Couper (Figure 30), rendered romantic plantation scenes that "emphasized natural beauty over human enterprise."¹⁹ More specifically, *River Plantation* is not a definitive plantation portrait, as is Couper's *Canon's Point*, c. 1850, and the plantation home is even less dominant than the home depicted by Couper, factors that make this painting even more intriguing in its portrayal. The focus of chapter four will be on Richards's construction of a plantation image in which the antebellum home factors less in the composition than that of the figures and their natural surroundings. The home in *River Plantation* can be contrasted to an engraving completed by Richards that accompanied his article, "The Rice Lands of the South" (Figure 31). In this instance, the vastness of the home is most prevalent with the slave figures standing below the trees.²⁰

A component of chapter four will be to examine additional plantation images completed by Richards in order to show *River Plantation*'s significant composition. A drawing of William Gilmore Simms's southern rice plantation and home in Woodland, South Carolina, c. 1852 was published as an engraving in *Homes of American Authors* in 1853.²¹ Richards also sketched

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

²⁰ Koch, 13-14.

²¹ *Homes of American Authors: Comprising Anecdotal, Personal, and Descriptive Sketches, by Various Artists* (New-York: G. P. Putnam and Co., 1853).

homes, or “seats” of notable figures such as Washington Irving’s “Sunnyside” and Nathaniel Parke Willis’s “Idlewood,” both which are located in New York. These sketches were published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in 1856 and 1858 during *River Plantation*’s estimated conception.²² This comparison, as well as all aforementioned sketches, engravings, and paintings will demonstrate that Richards’s intention in *River Plantation* was to use the elements and conventions of contemporary landscape painting to present to a northern audience the genteel qualities of the southern landscape plantation and its environs.

²² Ibid.

CHAPTER II

DEFINING THE PICTURESQUE: THE LANDSCAPE AND RIVER PLANTATION

In early nineteenth-century America, the enthusiasm for travel and the urge to define the expansive landscape that had been classified as the “New Eden” was paramount to artists, poets, and scientists alike. In the 1820’s, American landscape artist Thomas Cole (1801-1848) traveled throughout the Northeast, sketching and painting the Catskills region of New York, which became, in art historian John Conron’s words, an “*axis mundi* of the American picturesque.”²³ Cole’s travels were exemplified in paintings such as *The Falls of the Kaaterskill* (1826) and *View of the White Mountains* (1827).²⁴ His only student, Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), would continue this dedication to the Northeast, painting the natural wildness of Vermont and the unexplored coast and forests of Maine. Writings on American landscape in the nineteenth century, including Cole’s “Essay on American Scenery” (1836),²⁵ were indebted to the assorted publications on the picturesque and landscape travel first written by wealthy landowners in England portraying the scenery of their country during the mid-to-late eighteenth-century.

Reverend William Gilpin (1724-1804) first conceived the phrase picturesque beauty in his initial publication *Essay on Prints* (1768), and following this text, the first edition of his *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* which was published in London in 1792.²⁶ Gilpin’s urge

²³ John Conron, *American Picturesque* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 10.

²⁴ *The Falls of the Kaaterskill* (1826; Warner Collection in Tuscaloosa, Alabama); and *View of the White Mountains* (1827; The Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Connecticut).

²⁵ Thomas Cole, “Proceeding of the American Lyceum: Essay on American Scenery,” *American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January 1836): 12.

²⁶ The complete title of Gilpin’s book is: *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape: To Which is Added a Poem, On Landscape Painting*. For more on Gilpin, please refer to these two significant studies regarding his life, career, and publications as a scholar of the picturesque: Carl Barbier, *William Gilpin: His Drawings, Teaching, and Theory of the Picturesque* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1965); and William D. Templeman, *The Life and Work of William Gilpin: Master of the Picturesque and Vicar of Boldre* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1939).

for what was phrased as “the pursuit of the picturesque”²⁷ was followed by extensive and somewhat heated debates on the parameters of the term, primarily by two British squires, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight. Gilpin, influenced by philosopher Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), was aware of Burke’s associations in which the sublime was akin to vastness, fear, and obscurity, while the beautiful was defined by smoothness, smallness, and gentleness. In his definition of picturesque travel, Gilpin wrote:

It’s [sic] *object* is beauty of every kind, which either art, or nature can produce: but it is chiefly that species of *beauty*, which we have endeavored to characterize in the preceding essay under the name of *picturesque*. This great object we pursue through the scenery of nature. We seek it among all the ingredients of landscape—trees—rocks—broken grounds—woods—rivers—lakes—plains—vallisies—mountains—and distances. These objects *in themselves* produce infinite variety. No two rocks, or trees are exactly the same. They are varied, a second time, by *combination*; and almost as much, a third time, by different *lights*, and *shades*, and other aerial effects. Sometimes we find among them the exhibition of a *whole*; but oftener we find only beautiful *parts*.²⁸

The compilation of beautiful parts to produce a unified whole brings to mind the pastoral ideal of French artist Claude Lorrain (1602-1682), whose influence on the conventions of landscape painting were paramount to Gilpin, American artists such as Thomas Cole, and followers of Cole such as Frederic Edwin Church. For artists, the compositional arrangement of Claude’s landscapes, formed by a coulisse²⁹ in the foreground, a middleground filled with water, and a mountainous backdrop, created the model of a cohesive pastoral view.³⁰ In just one example of the kind of imagery completed by Gilpin on his travels, *A Picturesque View of Tintern Abbey*

²⁷ William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape: To Which is Added a Poem, On Landscape Painting*, 2nd ed. (London, 1794), 42, as noted by Conron, 10.

²⁸ Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 42.

²⁹ Artists “used the idea [of a coulisse] for a system of landscape in which the sense of recession into space is achieved by leading the eye back into depth by a series of diagonals, usually in the form of rock masses, trees, winding rivers, pathways, and similar devices,” in Irene Earls, *Renaissance Art: A Topical Dictionary* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 71.

³⁰ Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1865*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 196-97.

(Figure 10), the artful display of forms that frame the landscape creates a distinctly picturesque composition. Here, two slender trees rise from the embankment and follow the curve of the oval frame, enclosing the environmental setting in which historic Tintern Abbey is located. The viewer is led into this arrangement by this sloping verdant bank that comes to the edge of the river Wye, as well as by the two figures which are located before the ruinous structure and rising hills.

English architectural historian Christopher Hussey traced the evolution of the picturesque in England in his classic study that was first published in 1927. He noted Gilpin's use of the "term Picturesque Beauty to distinguish objects that were actually beautiful and also adapted for use in pictures."³¹ Gilpin's initial modification of Burke's scholarship was expanded with Price's *Essay on the Picturesque*, published in 1794, in which the Whig squire formally established the picturesque as a third category along with the sublime and the beautiful. This aesthetic debate regarding the picturesque was fundamentally rooted in the idea of connoisseurship, and was fully defined during a period of political unrest of England.³² These disputes resulted in numerous publications by Price, Knight, as well as by aesthetician Archibald Alison, the latter known for his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790). For Price and Knight, the picturesque was necessitated by roughness and mixture, and the theorists sought to go beyond Gilpin's original employment of the term. According to Hussey, they believed that the theory of the picturesque had become "a set of working principles for gardeners, architects, and travellers."³³ Knight, known for his fascination with antiquity that resulted in a large donation of ancient bronzes to the British Museum, wrote *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem in*

³¹ Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*, 2nd ed. (London: Archon Books, 1967), 13.

³² As members of the Whig Party, Price and Knight, who served on the British Parliament, were opposed to absolute monarchy. Wealthy land-owners and members of the leisure-class like Price and Knight believed in complete ownership of their land, and wanted to protect the rights of country life of the landed gentry.

³³ Hussey, 65.

1794, the same year as Price's seminal text was published.³⁴ In *The Landscape*, which was dedicated to Price, Knight primarily discussed picturesque features such as mixture, variety, and roughness, and how they were suitable incorporations for landscape gardening on private English country seats.³⁵ Although Price and Knight's complex views will be further explored, Gilpin's initial definition of the picturesque and its development in America will be the primary guide in the analysis of Richards's artistic conventions that were utilized to structure the landscape in *River Plantation*.

In addition to his theoretical essays, Gilpin's tours of England (1770-1776) were published in *Observations on the river Wye* (1782) and *Forest Scenery* (1791). These comprehensive travel guidebooks included notable scenery of the British Isles such as ruins, waterways, and mountains. This inclusion of these landmarks, specified by Gilpin in both word and image, trained the reader on how to view the landscape in terms of the picturesque, the sublime, and the beautiful. Crucially important to note is that these writings by Gilpin were far from purely aesthetic in meaning, and reflected the way in which the picturesque had become associated with British politics and class ranking. In the opening of section one in *Observations on the river Wye*, Gilpin remarked:

We travel for various purposes; to explore the culture of soils; to view the curiosities of art; to survey the beauties of nature; to search for her productions; and to learn the manners of men; their different politics, and modes of life.³⁶

³⁴ Knight viewed nature subjectively, and wrote of this in his *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805), which aligned his views with Alison's Theory of Association. According to Hussey, this theory rejected "objective qualities inherent in objects, accounting for all emotions by the association of ideas aroused in the mind of the spectator. Anything might be beautiful if it aroused pleasant and therefore beautiful ideas. Picturesque objects were simply those that reminded a person of pictures that he had seen; if he had enjoyed them, the emotion would be pleasant, and therefore one of beauty," 15.

³⁵ Sir Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem, in Three Books; Addressed to Uvedale Price, Esq.* (London: W. Bulmer & Co., 1794).

³⁶ William Gilpin, *Observations on the river Wye*, 1782, intro. by Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1991), 1.

In picturesque travel, according to the terms Gilpin provided for the reader, one has the chance to see a variety of views from nature, as well as various cultural classes and their respective politics. Gilpin's contribution to the growing tourism industry in England was generated by his sketches, commercially reproduced in aquatint in his publications, as noted in *A Picturesque View of Tintern Abbey* (Figure 10), as well as his prose, both of which were successfully absorbed by the British public. In turn, these treatises by Gilpin were published in America and encouraged readers to tour their own country, uncover, and promote the untouched landscape.³⁷ Not surprisingly, Gilpin's writings appeared in America, such as his fourth chapter in *Essay of Prints*, "On Picturesque Travel," which was reprinted in *New-York Magazine* in 1793.³⁸ Also, the satirical publication *Tours of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* by William Combe, first published in London in 1812, was published in *Ackerman Political Magazine* in America from 1809-1811. Three editions of this same text, which comically depicted the fictional and comic adventures of a wealthy English clergyman, Dr. Syntax, were also published in Philadelphia.³⁹

As noted, Cole epitomized the role of the artist-traveler, particularly during the 1820's and 30's, and is credited with elevating the genre of landscape painting in America to what he termed a "higher style of landscape."⁴⁰ Cole sought to reveal nature's wonder through on-site sketches which in turn inspired deliberately composed studio compositions that were exhibited at the National Academy of Design, as well as in his poetry, essays, and stories. As will be seen,

³⁷ Gilpin's written descriptions were accompanied by these finished aquatint images of the English landscape that were tailored after his rough plein air sketches from his notebooks.

³⁸ Templeman, 111-112, 295.

³⁹ Earl A. Powell, *Thomas Cole* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), 23, as noted by Kefalos, 17. Images that accompanied Combe's text were completed by English artist Thomas Rowlandson.

⁴⁰ Letter from Cole to Robert Gilmor, Jr., May 28, 1828, quoted in Howard S. Merritt, "Correspondence Between Thomas Cole and Robert Gilmor, Jr.," in *Studies in Thomas Cole, an American Romanticist*, Annual 2 (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1967), 58.

Richards engaged in similar practices during his career, particularly in the 1840's and 50's.⁴¹

Cole's "Essay on American Scenery" focused primarily on the northeastern region of the United States, extolling the distinct character of the Hudson River and the sublime falls of Niagara.

Evident in his essay is an undercurrent of anxiety that the wilderness of America would be lost in light of progress. As he lamented:

Yet I cannot but express my sorrow that the beauty of such landscapes are quickly passing away—the ravages of the axe are daily increasing—the most noble scenes are made desolate, and oftentimes with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation.⁴²

This tension between artists like Cole, who sought to preserve America's wilderness from barbaric consumerism, and others like poet Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), who promoted expansionism and cultivation of American resources, was prevalent in early nineteenth-century American discourse. Emerson, the leading figure in the transcendental movement and a contemporary of Cole's, lectured on America's destiny in his instructive "The Young American," delivered before the Mercantile Library Association in Boston on February 7, 1844.

He noted with great optimism the growth of industry in America:

Gentlemen, the development of our American internal resources, the extension to the utmost of the commercial system, and the appearance of new moral causes which are to modify the state, are giving an aspect of greatness to the Future, which the imagination fears to open. One thing is plain for all men of common sense and common conscience, that here, here in America, is the home of man.⁴³

By the late 1850's, when Richards completed *River Plantation* (Figure 1), the fear of too much cultivation that Cole had so vividly expressed in his essay was a reality for America. The outbreak of the Civil War occurred just one year after the period of *River Plantation*'s estimated

⁴¹ Richards's sketches were completed in graphite and pencil.

⁴² Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," 12.

⁴³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Young American," Lecture, Mercantile Library Association, Boston, February 7, 1844, featured in Robert E. Spiller, intro. and notes, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, vol. 1: Nature, Addresses, and Lectures* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 241.

completion (1855-1860). In the decade preceding the War, economic and political strife plagued America.⁴⁴ While the South relied on slave labor for its agriculturally-based economy, the North's industrial-based economic system could function without the system of slavery.

Along with this difference between the North and the South was the urge to distinguish the landscape of America from that of England, for after all, seats and plantations were viewed as extensions of the estates in the English countryside. In the North, seats of notable businessmen were portrayed by artists such as Cole, as in his painting *The Seat of Mr. Featherstonhaugh in the Distance* (1826; Philadelphia Museum of Art). In the South and also in the 1820's, artists depicted large mansions found on southern plantations such as Rose Hill, located on the Combahee River and on the outskirts of Charleston, South Carolina. These two diverse regions provided varied portrayals of the picturesque.⁴⁵ It is in this milieu of artistic creation that Richards established himself as a landscape artist, utilizing conventions of landscape painting that came to fruition in early-to-mid nineteenth-century America in order to convey both the natural and the national promise of the pre-war South.

While artists like Cole provided extensive coverage of the North, Thomas Addison Richards gave the South its own distinctive classification. Although William Bartram famously

⁴⁴ Several pivotal events contributed to the level of anxiety expressed during the time leading to the Civil War: in 1820, the Missouri Compromise was passed, which outlawed slavery north of Missouri's southern border; in 1821, the Second Missouri Compromise allowed Missouri to become a part of the Union; the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which required the return of runaway slaves; in 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act nullified the goal of the original Missouri Compromise, and allowed slavery in the West; and in 1857, the Dred Scott Case determined that Congress had no restriction over slavery.

⁴⁵ Both sought to portray the landowner as affluent and in possession of his respected property. In *Rose Hill*, c. 1820, by an anonymous artist, the plantation complex shows various outbuildings and slave quarters surrounding the large, columned white mansion that resides on sloping grounds. The painting, now located at the Charleston Museum, Charleston, South Carolina, was commissioned by Nathaniel Heyward, who owned seventeen rice plantations in the Carolina low country, in Duncan Clinch Heyward, *Seeds of Madagascar* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), ix. In the case of an artist like Cole, also working in the 1820's, the focus is on the evolution of the northern autumnal season, a feature that artists would promote as being distinctly American. Cole fills the expansive foreground with deep hues of reds and oranges, and includes a blasted tree, a symbol of nature's power over man. The home becomes diminutive in presence compared to this display before the viewer.

traveled the unexplored areas of the South, particularly Florida, during the periods of 1765-66 and 1773-77, it was Richards's writing of the 1840's and 1850's that more publicly and popularly promoted the South's lush and romantic environs.⁴⁶ By the time of *River Plantation's* estimated conception (1855-1860), Richards had already published *Tallulah and Jocassee* (1852) and *The Romance of American Landscape* (1854).⁴⁷ While his earlier contributions to *Georgia Illustrated* and the *Orion* had given him the title the "Thomas Doughty of the South,"⁴⁸ by Horace Greeley, founder of the *New York Tribune*, these two books specified his role as an artist-traveler.⁴⁹ Additionally, in 1857 Richards served as editor for *Appleton's Companion Hand-Book of Travel*, which is noted for being the first comprehensive guidebook of America and Canada.⁵⁰ Similar to Gilpin's guidebooks, *Appleton's* integrated verbal descriptions of notable American landmarks with accompanying imagery.

⁴⁶ Following the same style as English naturalist Mark Catesby, Bartram chronicled the plants and species that inhabited the South. Bartram collected curious specimens of interest, catalogued in their original Latin name, and produced sketches on location, which were presented in the first textbook on American plants, *Elements of Botany* (Philadelphia, 1803), in Gordon De Wolf, intro., *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida*, by William Bartram (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973), v-xvi. Richards was aware of Bartram's adventures, as indicated in this passage: "When I first read Bartram's account of alligators more than twenty feet long, and how they attacked his boat and bellowed like bulls, and made a sound like distant thunder, I suspected him of exaggeration, but all my inquiries here and in Louisiana convince me that he may be depended upon," in *Appleton's Companion Hand-Book of Travel* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1857), 272.

⁴⁷ *The Crayon* kept their readers informed of artists like Richards, and in 1855, expressed disappointment in the quality of the "worn" engravings featured in *The Romance of American Landscape*, which the writers deemed were "on the whole, not worthy of the text. But as a half a loaf is better than no bread, so poor impressions are better than none at all, for illustrative purposes, and this seems their function here," in "Book Notes," *The Crayon* 1, no. 4 (January 24, 1855): 58.

⁴⁸ *National 'Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York, 1898), 425. Self-taught artist Thomas Doughty (1793-1856) is thought to be a forerunner of the so-called Hudson River School, and reached the height of his career in the 1820's. Working in the mode of the picturesque, Doughty completed numerous landscapes of Northern scenery, most notably *In Nature's Wonderland* (1835), in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts, which epitomizes nature's majesty in the presence of the lone explorer.

⁴⁹ For more information regarding these early publications, please see Roberta Sokolitz Kefalos, "Thomas Addison Richards: The Search for the Picturesque in the South" (master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1996). Kefalos deeply analyzes the imagery and text found in *Georgia Illustrated*.

⁵⁰ Richards's travel guide was filled with descriptions of important places in America and provided suggestions for lodgings. The publication also included maps and engravings of notable locales. In addition to Richards's written and artistic contributions, artists such as Charles Lanman and Frederic Edwin Church submitted illustrations to accompany the extensive text. Their drawings were produced as engravings by the technicians Whitney and Jocelyn. The book was "bound with pliable cloth sides, so as to be convenient for the traveller," Editor, "Reviews," *Peterson's Magazine* 32 (1857): 147.

Using William Gilpin's practical assimilation of the part-to-whole landscape, due to his widely disseminated treatises on picturesque beauty that described to the reader how to map the scenery as such, we will *tour* the natural elements within *River Plantation*, such as the sky, the river, the ever-impressive oak. Throughout our tour of the painting, elements of the picturesque beautiful will become evident, due to Richards's employment of American and European landscape conventions. As previously noted, *River Plantation*, like so many American landscape paintings, utilized Claude's coulisses, with clear divisions into foreground, middleground, and background. In the foreground, areas of lush vegetation cover the worn path that curves along the river and recedes to the background of the painting. Along that path, a large oak tree is rooted at the bank of the river. The calm and idyllic water to the right bears the reflection of the trees which reside on the opposite side of the riverbank. This wild area that lines the vicinity is filled with a variety of foliage, except for a minute area lacking in heavy brush, which is located just to the left of what has been identified as a waterfall (Figure 2).⁵¹ Perhaps this clearing is a neighboring plantation, or a continuation of the slave owner's property. Just below the verdant oak that is rooted on the cultivated side of the river resides an empty wooden boat which remains still on the water (Figure 3). To the left of the flourishing oak is a smaller one, which, along with the hanging branches of the large oak, barely reveals the white antebellum plantation home. Richards's placement of the two oaks calls to mind Gilpin's vital statement about part to whole in the composing of a picturesque landscape:

But it is not only the *form*, and the *composition* of the objects of landscape, which the picturesque eye examines; it connects them with the atmosphere, and seeks for

⁵¹ Morris Museum of Art, "Permanent Collection: Thomas Addison Richards and *River Plantation*." Other suggestions have been given as to determine what this intentional white area of color on the riverside represents. Kefalos concludes that this brushstroke appears frequently in Richards's work, and is a sailboat. However, this does not appear to be the case. The transparency of Richards's coloring suggests that this is water, which trickles in flow toward the bottom of its supply, and supports the Morris Museum's argument for a waterfall. It is also possible that this represents an artesian well, a natural mineral source that is found throughout the Savannah River.

all those various effects, which are produced from that vast, and wonderful storehouse of nature. Nor is there in traveling a greater pleasure, when a scene of grandeur bursts unexpectedly upon the eye, accompanied with some accidental circumstances of the atmosphere, which harmonizes with it, and gives it double value.⁵²

Gilpin's declaration supports Richards's placement of the oak in *River Plantation*, which creates a sense of a harmonious atmosphere of natural forms which are found within this picturesque southern scene.

In fact, the oak, a recurring motif in Richards's work, was highly favored by Gilpin in both his writings and ink-and-wash drawings. In his extensive travelogue *Forest Scenery*, Gilpin admired the oak, writing that "among deciduous trees, the oak presents itself first. It is a happiness to the lovers of the picturesque, that this noble plant is as useful as it is beautiful."⁵³ How appropriate for Richards to include this staple of picturesque scenery in the landscape of *River Plantation*. Unlike Cole's craggy, anthropomorphic trees that writhe and twist, showing time's toll through deep knots and crags (Figure 11), the oak in *River Plantation* is firmly rooted in the earth. Although the stature of the fanning tree shows its old age, it is not a tree in utter decay, nor are its roots revealed as in Cole's painting.

Richards instead shows an oak that is indeed old, but has retained its picturesque beautiful qualities, from the rounded form of the leaves, to the variety in color and form of

⁵² Gilpin, *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty*, 44.

⁵³ William Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery and other Woodland Views*, 1791, vol. 1, ed. by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, Bart (Edinburgh: Fraser & Co. North Bridge, 1834), 61. Gilpin was not the only scholar of the picturesque who admired the appearance of the oak. In his poem *The Landscape*, Knight wrote "Let then of oak your gen'ral masses rise, / Where'er the soil its nutriment supplies: / But if dry chalk and flints, or thirsty sand, / Compose the substance of your barren land, / Let the light beech its gay luxuriance shrew, / And o'er the turf a clearer shadow sheds; / No foliage shines with more reflected lights; / No stem more vary'd forms of tints unites: / Now smooth, in every bark, aloft it shoots; / Now bulging swells, fantastic at its roots; / While flick'ring greens, with lightly scatter'd gray, / Blend their soft colours, and around it play," lines 77-90, 55.

both the leaves and the bark. The fullness of the oak tree, evident in *River Plantation*, was a characteristic Gilpin praised:

Another peculiarity, of which Virgil takes notice in the oak, is its expansive spread...its boughs, however twisted, continually take a horizontal direction, and overshadow a large space of ground. Indeed, where it is fond of its situation, and has room to spread, it extends itself beyond any other tree; and like a monarch takes possession of the soil...I have dwelt longer on the oak, as it is confessedly both the most picturesque tree in itself; and the most accommodating in composition.⁵⁴

Gilpin's remarks about the oak can serve as an analogy to the southern plantation: with every passing season, the plantation expands through cultivation, which in turn increases the visible prosperity of the plantation grounds.

The fertile oak, perhaps the most dominant landscape element in *River Plantation*, is one of the many representations of oak trees that Richards completed throughout his career. Richards's 1859 article for *Harper's*, "The Rice Lands of the South," featured multiple engravings depicting both live oaks and water oaks.⁵⁵ It is by examining two specifically labeled engravings that the proposed original title of *River Plantation* can be contested. Looking closely at the illustration *Live Oak* (Figure 12), one can note Richards's similar rendering of the solitary tree to that of the massive, primary oak in *River Plantation*. In *Live Oak*, the branches extend to each side, filling the space which it occupies, casting an enormous shadow underneath the deep foliage. The thick trunk rises and extends in much the same manner as the oak in *River Plantation*. In Richards's *Live Oak*, a pair of free deer stands to the right of the trunk, sheltered under the live tree, while in *River Plantation*, two slave figures unreservedly walk under the envelope of the green tree. Just as the figures' vertical stance in *River Plantation* mirrors the

⁵⁴ Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, 67, as cited in Kefalos, 16.

⁵⁵ Thomas Addison Richards, "The Rice Lands of the South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 721-38.

Spanish moss that hangs from the oak, the horns of the deer in *Live Oak* mirror the same verticality of the hanging foliage.⁵⁶

In contrast to the extended branches of the live oak is Richards's engraving *Water Oak* (Figure 13) for the same article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Narrower in width, both in leafage and trunk, the water oak's dominant presence in the landscape is not as full of life as Richards's illustration of a live oak. Richards fondly remarked on live oaks in the closing statements of "The Rice Lands of the South," stating:

Of all the trees of the South the live oak is perhaps the most remarkable, leading the arboreal beauty of the country no less universally, and even more charmingly, than the elm that of the New England landscape, and with the additional value of perpetual freshness. Its foliage falls in drooping masses, more luxuriant and more graceful than those of the elm, while its branches have the magnificent proportions and the vigorous strength of the old English oak. It is frequently of immense size, overshadowing, between its trunk and its outer limbs, space and verge enough for a mass meeting. Apart from the swamp vegetation, no tree is so richly draped as in the live oak in the festoons of the wondrous moss of the vicinage.⁵⁷

This statement reveals Richards's inclination to inform his readers of the wonders that await the traveler to be seen in the landscape of the southern region, wonders that are absent from the northern landscape.⁵⁸ While the moss hangs from the oak in a "graceful"⁵⁹ manner, its mass creates shadow and dominance over the landscape, at times shielding what lies beneath.

⁵⁶ The deer are noted in additional imagery by Richards, such as the engraving *The Lagoon*, in "The Rice Lands," 727. Richards is not the only artist to include deer in his southern landscapes. The artist Louis Rémy Mignot, who was born in Charleston, South Carolina, similarly rendered a southern scene, *Lowland Landscape with Deer* (c. 1860), in the collection of the Morris Museum of Art, which shows two free deer standing by the side of the slow moving river. For more on Mignot, his career, and his time abroad in the Netherlands, please see Katherine E. Manthorne and John W. Coffey, *Louis Rémy Mignot: A Southern Painter Abroad* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).

⁵⁷ Richards, "The Rice Lands," 738. It is significant that Richards draws a comparison between the northern elm, deemed as "the American tree," and often included in imagery by the Hudson River School, and the southern live oak, noting the superiority of the oak. Richards's statement expresses his apparent devotion in establishing the genial growth of the South as comparable in beauty and stature to that of the North.

⁵⁸ In contrast to oaks seen in southern paintings such as *River Plantation* is Frederic Edwin Church's *Charter Oak*, completed in 1845. This oil on canvas, which is in the collection of the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme, Connecticut, represents an actual oak, in Hartford, Connecticut, which was also Church's hometown. In this instance, the English oak comes to represent something that is distinctly northern: the foundation of Hartford and the historical event that took place.

⁵⁹ Richards, "The Rice Lands," 738.

In *River Plantation*, the overall mass of the sumptuous oak shields the figures who stroll beneath its green foliage, protecting them from the harsh afternoon sun. While active, the slave figures are set within this pastoral locale, and remain controlled by their surroundings. Never to leave the rich variety of the southern landscape to want, Richards briefly commented on the water oak, stating it:

Is scarcely less beautiful than the live oak, though essentially different in character. Its branches, beginning higher up the trunk and standing more erect, give it a more sprightly air...⁶⁰

Richards's writings become the verbal counterpart to his visual landscapes, for what is described by the artist is also depicted in several of his works. Looking solely at Richards's rendering of both the live oak and the water oak, one can see that the primary oak in *River Plantation* is very similar to a live oak, and that the structure as a whole has the luxuriant solidarity of a live oak. This contradicts Vlach's assertion that the painting was previously *A Water Oak in South Carolina*, part of a group of seven works depicting South Carolina landscape displayed at the National Academy of Design in 1859. This discrepancy leaves not only the setting of *River Plantation* open to questioning, but also the type of plantation Richards chose to depict. Perhaps *River Plantation* represents a scene from a rice plantation familiar to the artist, given his apparent curiosity about the workings of such a cultivated system.

Art historian Jessie Poesch remarks that Richards's essay for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* was written about the rice plantations of South Carolina, and that the artist "presumably found comfortable lodgings in Charleston, facilitating his work while

⁶⁰ Ibid.

preparing the article.”⁶¹ Since the oak in *River Plantation* looks similar to the engraving of a live oak in “The Rice Lands,” perhaps this is a scene from South Carolina after all. It is known that Richards often used sketches and illustrations as a starting point for his paintings. Although Richards does not specifically state that his article is solely about the rice plantations of South Carolina, the artist does refer to plantations in the Palmetto State more so than those found in the state of Georgia. Alternatively, as the Morris Museum of Art proposes:

Characteristics of this landscape [*River Plantation*] and the artist's familiarity with the Augusta, Georgia area suggest that this plantation may have been located near Augusta on the Savannah River.⁶²

Additionally, the Morris suggests that it is visually similar to the ruins of a rice plantation near the museum grounds, which is located on the banks of the Savannah River.⁶³ The Museum’s desire to associate the scenery of *River Plantation* to a particular place near their establishment is intriguing, and is in a way reminiscent to Richards’s own apparent desire to convey certain environmental associations of the South through unique landmarks such as the live oak covered with Spanish moss.

The large oak in *River Plantation* is iconographically significant as well in terms of southern landscape because of the moss which languidly hangs from the tree (Figure 9). Richards commented not only on the Spanish moss and its associations in “The Rice Lands of the South,” but also mentioned the hanging vegetation in his earlier article, “The Landscape of the South,” published in 1853. This article can be interpreted as Richards

⁶¹ Jessie Poesch, “Eyes to See: Nineteenth Century Landscapes,” in William W. Freehling, et al., *A Place Not Forgotten: Landscapes of the South from the Morris Museum of Art* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Art Museum, 1995), 17.

⁶² Morris Museum of Art, “Permanent Collection: Thomas Addison Richards and *River Plantation*.” The city of Augusta is located on the eastern border of Georgia.

⁶³ Augusta Museum of History and the Morris Museum of Art, “Georgia Studies: Images and Artifacts. <http://www.themorris.org> (accessed July 2007).

paying homage to the wonders and fascinations with the South and its environs, the foundation of his early adulthood. Richards hauntingly described the South in this passage:

Naught of grace and richness can be imagined which is not seen in the vast rice fields, from the earliest budding of the young plant, to the golden tinting of the ripened grain in the venerable groves of massive oak whose forms are barely discernable in their wealth of trailing moss and vines: and in the ghostly and impressive aspect of the forest swamps and dark lagoons. The giant cypresses, edging on either side as far as the eye may penetrate, the bed of a deep channel in these dark jungles, interlace their branches and form grand cathedral aisles, gorgeously adorned by the pendant vines and the flowering shrubs. Life and death are locked in close embrace, as the budding flowerets cling around the rotting debris of former vegetation. The ever present moss—jestingly called Death’s Banner—in its mournful fall, proclaims the dangers and terrors of these luring haunts, fearfully as the terrible inscription over Dante’s hell. The land is poisonous, and pestilence is in its breath. In solemn harmony with the scene is the fitful cry of the wild bird, the phantom form of the gaunt and skeleton crane, the hiss of the gay coated serpent, and the uncouth apparition of the frightful alligator.⁶⁴

Richards concluded with a short poem:

Nothing of genial growth may here be seen,
Nothing of beautiful! wild ragged trees,
That look like felon specters—fetid shrubs
That taint the gloomy atmosphere—dusk shades,
That gather, half a cloud and half a fiend
In aspect, lurking on the swamps wild edge,
Gloom with their sternness and forbidding frowns,
The general prospect.—⁶⁵

Metaphorically, the hanging of the moss in its “mournful fall”⁶⁶ (i.e. Death’s Banner), could represent the ominous and unsettling events that are overshadowing America during this time. While everything appears to be picturesque on the surface of images such as *River Plantation*, the ominous shadows of the Civil War are “lurking”⁶⁷ in the near future. In its overall composition and context, the moss in *River Plantation* is subtle in comparison to Richards’s

⁶⁴ Richards, “The Landscape of the South,” 730.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

sublime engraving of the swampland, *Southern Swamp* (Figure 14) in “The Landscape of the South.”⁶⁸ Although his labeling of moss as “Death’s Banner”⁶⁹ relates nicely with his imagery of southern swamplands, one can not help but think about the moss in *River Plantation* much in the same way, hovering over the slaves who trail by the river during their leisurely stroll. The image maintains its aspect of the beautiful, but is marked with hints of the sublime.

Richards completed a similar engraving to *River Plantation*, *Lowland River Scene* (Figure 15), which was also featured in “The Landscape of the South.” Identified as representing a scene of the Ashley River, South Carolina,⁷⁰ this image bears similarities to that of *River Plantation*, including the large oak laden with moss that rests by the diagonal riverbed, wild foliage by the banks, and the small boat under the tree. This engraving encompasses more of the picturesque sublime than the picturesque beautiful, due to the stormy sky in the distance, the deeper forest, and the rugged terrain located beneath the oak; also the ground is not as bountiful in foliage as that below the oak in *River Plantation*, and no habitation is visible. A cluster of moss on what is likely a live oak inches toward the lone figure paddling on the small boat, and brings to mind Richards’s description of moss as “Death’s Banner.”⁷¹ The figure leaves the river bank under the lining of trees and heads toward distant clouds. The clouds, signifying an impending storm, are positioned just above the opening of the river that is seen in the distance.

⁶⁸ The phenomenon of the southern swampland was fortified by *Picturesque America* (1872), which was edited by William Cullen Bryant. This successful book of American scenery featured imagery of the southern swamps of Florida and Louisiana. For a detailed discussion of the meaning of the swamp in American art and literature, see David Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth Century American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). It is important to note that although Bryant was credited as the editor of *Picturesque America*, the primary author of the book, Oliver Bell Bunce, was actually the editor. Bryant’s responsibilities were writing the book’s preface and editing the final copy, as discussed in Sue Rainey, *Creating Picturesque America: Monument to the National and Cultural Landscape* (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1994), 46.

⁶⁹ Richards, “The Landscape of the South,” 730.

⁷⁰ In the text below this engraving, Richards poetically described select southern rivers in “The Landscape of the South,” including the Ashley, and concluded this section by stating: “a passage from the [Ashley River] accompanies these inadequate memoranda,” 730, as noted by Kefalos, 36.

⁷¹ Richards, “The Landscape of the South,” 730.

The man who wears a hat, turns his head as he leaves the shelter of the oak-lined riverbank, and moves into the opposite direction where possible dangers lurk both in and on the water.

In *River Plantation*, Richards utilizes conventional landscape methods such as the serpentine shape of the water that curves to the right, as is the oak that leans slightly toward the water source. The pastoral landscapes of Claude most often included this element, and Gilpin dedicated an entire publication to this particular type of waterway in his travelogue *Observations of the river Wye*. Describing his adventure throughout the winding Wye, Gilpin noted:

The beauty of these [picturesque] scenes arises chiefly from two circumstances—the lofty banks of the river, and its mazy course, both which are accurately observed by the poet, when he describes the Wye, as echoing through its winding bounds. It could not well echo, unless its banks were lofty.⁷²

Gilpin, the perceptive traveler, describes the river in detail, allowing the reader to journey with him through the wide river that reverberates with noise. The river figures prominently as well in the composition of *River Plantation*, and its rendering creates a “widening bend of a lazy river...,”⁷³ a phrase Richards used to describe the rivers of the South in “The Landscape of the South.” The calm water reflects the summer haze of the sky, and if not for the green of the trees that curve the riverbank, the two would meet. In a similar manner to Gilpin’s description of the Wye, Richards described the rivers of the South:

...As they [the rivers] leave the hills and enter the sandy soils of the lowlands, they grow lazy and muddy, but their banks are often densely covered with luxuriant foliage, or they rise in huge and grotesque bluffs. The shores of the Savannah, the Alabama, and the Mississippi abound in this latter feature...In the lower parts of the Atlantic and Gulf States the rivers are of singular beauty in the hazy atmosphere, and in their gorgeous drapery of the foliage of the live and water oaks...⁷⁴

⁷² Gilpin, *Observations on the river Wye*, 17.

⁷³ Richards, “The Rice Lands,” 727.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 730.

This reverential pondering from Richards brings to mind the hazy sky in *River Plantation* that resembles that of a hot and sultry summer day. The coloring of the entire painting generates a calm and tranquil mood.

By the river, Richards's forms are looser and more diverse in both color and foliage (Figure 4) compared to the ground cover in the left foreground, which is near Richards's signature (Figure 5). This range creates variety, a characteristic that can be associated with Gilpin's theory of the picturesque. Perhaps this foliage grows more naturally than that on the barren ground to the left because of soil erosion on the riverbank. The abundant foliage, a distinct reminder of nature's lasting presence, is rendered with abbreviated brush strokes, a method that imparts a sense of roughness which is an important trait of the picturesque.⁷⁵ This addition of natural, untamed foliage in *River Plantation* can be compared to another painting by Richards, *The Edisto River* (1859) (Figure 16), which is documented as being exhibited at the 1859 Academy show.⁷⁶

Again, Richards includes his signature, this time in the bottom right foreground in *The Edisto River*, where foliage is absent and light illuminates his name. This marshy scene of the river in South Carolina appears untamed and absent of human life, except for the sailboat,⁷⁷ located in the distant part of the composition. Richards again depicts a serpentine-shaped river, this time more curving, in order to create distance from foreground to background. The painting, abundant in natural, not cultivated life, includes a large oak tree which becomes the focal point of the painting. This tree resembles Richards's description of a water oak, as characterized by its

⁷⁵ Gilpin, *Observations on the river Wye*, 10.

⁷⁶ Cowdrey, 95-96. In a catalogue of works in the Greenville County Museum of Art's collection, Curator Martha Severens discusses this painting and its inclusion in the 1859 National Academy of Design Exhibition. For more information, please refer to Martha Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art: The Southern Collection* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1993), 62.

⁷⁷ Kefalos, 38.

“sprightly air.”⁷⁸ Considering “The Rice Lands,” one can note a visual similarity to the engraving *Water Oak* (Figure 13), as well as Richards’s written description of the sprightly tree.

Art historian Roberta Sokolitz Kefalos agrees, and compares the two works, stating:

As in *The Edisto River*, the day is clear, although slightly hazier and more atmospheric, and a golden-green glow suffuses the entire scene, softening the landscape, and muting the colors of sky and water.⁷⁹

The pervasive yellow tint of *Edisto River* evokes the marshy atmosphere of the deep South, and like *River Plantation*, shows the slow, tranquil nature of life on a southern river.

Both images by Richards employ Gilpin’s focus on a river composition filled with a variety of distinct parts, a component of the picturesque the theorist discussed in *Observations of the river Wye*:

Every view on a river, thus circumstanced, is composed of four grand parts; the area, which is the river itself; the two side-screens, which are the opposite banks, and mark the perspective; and the front-screen, which points out the winding of the river.⁸⁰

In *River Plantation*, loose vegetation lines the edge of the riverbank closest to the viewer, while thick woods blanket the opposite riverside. The ground cover on the cultivated side is colored with tinges of reds, blues, greens, yellows, all of which Gilpin observed in his synopsis of varied ground.⁸¹ In an exhibition review of Richards’s work at Kirby’s [Gallery] in 1883, the editor of *The Art Amateur* had this to say about his approach to the landscape:

His landscapes are always very neatly drawn and colored; the only serious objection to his methods in this line being in regard to the way in which he tries to imitate the looseness and multitudinousness of foliage...⁸²

⁷⁸ Richards, “The Rice Lands,” 738.

⁷⁹ Kefalos, 38.

⁸⁰ William Gilpin, *Observations on the river Wye*, 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸² Editor, “Art Notes” *The Art Amateur: A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household* 8, no. 4 (1883): 86. This critique of Richards’s work is perhaps a result of the rejection of the picturesque toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Like painter Jasper Cropsey (1823-1900), Richards was concerned with imagery that pertained to the flourishing nature of botanical life.⁸³ Richards's sketches (Figure 17) reveal his focus on the flora and fauna of the American landscape, particularly that of the Georgia and South Carolina lowlands.⁸⁴ Art historian Barbara Novak has noted the heightened curiosity with the ecological environment in the nineteenth-century among artists, both in America and Europe, who were immensely fascinated with classifying the natural flora and fauna of the earth.⁸⁵ While Richards's ground cover in *River Plantation* is more general than specific, it shows not only his technique through brushstroke and color, but also his urge to show the sumptuous environs of the Southern landscape as fresh, abundant, and thus, thoroughly romantic.⁸⁶ These inclusions by Richards support his dedication to the South, and serve to show to a northern audience the genteel and inviting atmosphere of the southern landscape plantation, even one occupied by slaves.

⁸³ American artist Jasper Cropsey, whose art typified the autumnal season in paintings such as *Autumn-On the Hudson River* (1860), in the collection of the National Gallery of Art, kept a sketchbook filled with pencil drawings of flora and fauna while exploring the American landscape. While Cropsey paid particular attention in specifying types of plants, complete with their Latin origin, it appears that Richards was not concerned with genealogy. Influenced by British artists such as Joseph Mallord William Turner, Cropsey also sketched numerous drawings of cloud coverage, see Novak, 105. Richards's sketchbook, located at the Smithsonian Institute of Art, The Archives of American Art, does not include focused studies of the sky.

⁸⁴ In addition to this lively sketch, Richards completed several drawings of rivers, as well as trees that are comparable to Thomas Cole's anthropomorphic representations of the same subject.

⁸⁵ Novak, 104.

⁸⁶ In *The Landscape*, Knight reinforces the importance of cataloging natural plants, and for him, those found in Britain, instead of exotic and foreign plants. This idea by Knight is comparable to Richards's desire to specify in both his literature and art trees that are distinctly southern, such as the live oak with Spanish moss. Knight wrote: "Choose therefore, trees which nature's hand has sown / in proper soils, and climates of their own, / or such as, by experience long approv'd, / Are found adopted by the climes they lov'd: / All other foreign plants with caution try, / Nor aim at infinite variety," lines 37-42, 53.

CHAPTER III

RIVER PLANTATION AND THE FIGURES IN REPOSE

The inclusion of figures within Thomas Addison Richards's *River Plantation* (Figure 1) translates to more than just compositional stability for the painting as a whole. Typical of pre-war plantation paintings, the African-American figures indicate in their costume, location, and activities, the narrative of a leisurely afternoon spent by the slaves on the riverside. Their placement in the plantation landscape stands as a visual marker of the landowner's prosperity and a sign of his mastery.⁸⁷ That the slaves in Richards's painting are neither harvesting the crops nor participating in recreational customs by the doorway of their own cabin is even more important. Each of the slave's dress, location within the composition, and distinct activity adds to Richards's conception of *River Plantation* as a picturesque beautiful landscape.

In the years preceding the Civil War, African-American imagery was popularized through genre scenes by American artists such as Eastman Johnson and William Sidney Mount. Richards himself completed several engravings of everyday life⁸⁸ among the African-Americans on a southern plantation in "The Rice Lands of the South." As noted by Kefalos, these scenes tend to represent as "distinctly picturesque those figures chosen from marginal cultural groups."⁸⁹ European landscape art often featured impoverished and ragged figures such as rustics, gypsies, peasants, and banditti, all of whom were considered to be marginalized members of society. In America, and particularly in the antebellum South, these figures translated to Native Americans and African-Americans, and were visualized by artists in an idealized

⁸⁷ Vlach, 2.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 3. Johns adamantly explains that genre paintings extend beyond the definition of "scenes of everyday life." The art historian investigates whose everyday life is being shown, and to whom, in this important study.

⁸⁹ Kefalos, 45.

fashion.⁹⁰ Debates on the picturesque in eighteenth-century England by theorists like Price and Knight were deeply rooted in the principles of taste and their effects on political stability. This phenomenon is a primary focus of contemporary scholar Sidney Robinson's publication, *Inquiry into the Picturesque*, in which he remarks:

Certain attitudes toward exercising the power to compose the relationship of part to part to a whole link politics and aesthetics. One is against absolute political power, the other is against an unmixed aesthetic system. They both prefer compositions built up from distinctive smaller parts combined and mixed together by means neither wholly rationalized nor completely random.⁹¹

This statement by Robinson can be associated with the time period in which Price and Knight wrote their treatises on the picturesque. Both scholars' writings reflect their political alliance with the Whig party, which was opposed to absolute political control, and advocated the rights of land ownership in the English countryside. As Robinson indicates, both a political and aesthetic system flourish under a system of "distinctive smaller parts,"⁹² that comprise the whole, a statement which clearly exemplifies how the picturesque had become associated with politics in eighteenth-century England.⁹³ As for Richards's picturesque painting, the figures in *River Plantation* can be analyzed as distinctive *parts*, a favored term of Gilpin's, parts that fit into the overall composition of Richards's landscape painting. Although the artist does utilize the picturesque in his rendering of the figures' clothing, location, and activity, he has chosen not to overtly stereotype the African-American slaves, which was common in genre scenes of the antebellum period. This departure will become apparent by comparing select images completed by the artist and his contemporaries. The inclusion of the figures in *River Plantation* is purposeful, and contributes to the picturesque beautiful landscape in which the plantation-

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Sidney Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 48.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ For more on politics and the picturesque, see Robinson's chapter "Compositions of Politics and Money," 46-69.

owning South was promoted, all of this in a painting that was possibly displayed at the National Academy of Design in 1859.

In *River Plantation*, the quietude of the environment and the figures in repose contributes to the quality of the picturesque. A peaceful moment in time has been depicted by Richards, where the plantation workers are in repose, and their owners are not visible to the viewer's eye. Iconographical details such as the moss-laden live oak, the slow-curving river, and the veiled plantation home that Richards effectively included in *River Plantation*, frame the figures who occupy the middle part of the canvas. Although separated into distinctive parts of the composition, the three figural groupings share the same obligation to the landscape they occupy, and ultimately, work for. Marginalized figures were often associated with the land itself, and Richards remarked on this relationship in "The Rice Lands," stating:

The negroes, and negroes only, of human kind, met at every step and turn, present an individuality in the scene scarcely less striking than is the special and unique vegetation in flower and tree.⁹⁴

The lush landscape of the South, toiled over by African-Americans but owned by the genteel, is enjoyed by the slave figures in Richards's antebellum painting. These "special and unique"⁹⁵ features found in nature, in Gilpin's "wonderful storehouse of nature,"⁹⁶ are maintained solely by the African-Americans whom Richards's deemed as equal to the vegetation, and in the case of *River Plantation*, vegetation specific to the South.

The landscape in *River Plantation* is divided into a foreground, middleground, and background. Within this formula are groupings that distinguish the actions of each of the figures

⁹⁴ Richards, "The Rice Lands," 731. In her discussion of marginal figures as represented in genre scenes by Richards in his engravings for this article, Kefalos writes: "He assimilated these figures through the idealizing and sentimentalizing process of the picturesque, showing their labor in life in the landscape of the dominant, white, land and slave-owning faction. Richards's portrayal emphasizes a pleasurable, spirited, humorous life for blacks, linking them closely to the land, with which, as property, they were actually synonymous," 45. While several of Richards's engravings do show the "spirited" life of slaves, I do not believe that Richards shows them in a humorous style.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Gilpin, *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty*, 44.

who occupy that specific space (Figure 6). Conron maintains that there are four primary principles of the picturesque that took precedence in nineteenth-century picturesque theory.⁹⁷ They are balance, hierarchization, gradation, and repetition.⁹⁸ While principles such as balance and hierarchization are primarily seen in the structure of *River Plantation*'s landscape composition, principle terms such as gradation and repetition can be compared to the rendering of the figures within the landscape. Figures recede, shapes repeat. In the foreground, a small dog, which resembles a mutt, sniffs the flat soil of the property (Figure 7). The stance of the dog mirrors the light brown horse, which is one of three that face the viewer.⁹⁹ The dog is an important addition to the scene, for it indicates its domestication and loyalty to the owner, who is to the right of the small dog.¹⁰⁰ The black worker sits unsaddled¹⁰¹ atop a white horse, and this is a fascinating distinction. This contrast, a term used in describing the picturesque, is "achieved by incorporating roughness, irregularity, and abrupt variation,"¹⁰² a feature surely evident in the exchange between black and white.

The African-American, most likely a stableman, turns his back to the viewer, a common convention of nineteenth-century landscape painting, and looks in the direction of the two pairs

⁹⁷ Conron's argument was influenced by painter, inventor, theorist, and first president of the National Academy of Design (1826-1842), Samuel F. B. Morse's *Lectures on the Affinity of Painting with Other Fine Arts*. Morse's argument regarding these four principles as discussed by Conron can be found in Lecture Four, in Samuel F. B. Morse, *Lectures on the Affinity of Painting with Other Fine Arts*, ed. and intro. by Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 85-112.

⁹⁸ Conron, 68.

⁹⁹ Koch believes that one of the horses appears to be asleep, and although she does not specify which one, it is likely the horse to the far left, whose face we cannot see. This proposal would indeed seem to support the relaxing nature of this scene as portrayed by Richards.

¹⁰⁰ This mutt contrasts the elite dog of fine breed that the planter and members of his family owned, as seen in a painting by Francis Guy, *Perry Hall*, c. 1805, in the collection of The Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland. The inclusion of the mutt, which serves to indicate domestication and loyalty to its owner who is the slave, could also serve to stand for the slave's domestication and loyalty to *his* owner.

¹⁰¹ That this man is unsaddled reinforces his occupation within the plantation landscape. Upper-class men, women, and children rode on a saddled horse. This slave is directly seated upon the horse, and reinforces the common stereotype of the time period which was that African-Americans were close to nature and therefore more bestial in nature.

¹⁰² Robinson, 132.

of figures who trail into the distance. While the stableman looks toward the direction of the figures, the animals look in another direction, and this opposition shows another contrast.¹⁰³

Even though a clear and domesticated path along the riverside has been constructed, a path that one might say the viewer can enter, the back of the worker remains to the viewer and prevents the viewer's entrance into the scene. It is possible that as viewers of the image, we become the plantation owner, watching over the slaves. The path, an ever-present element in British landscape gardening, was viewed as a link to the various parts that occupied its space, yet "no sooner does a pattern get started, than the picturesque breaks its predictability."¹⁰⁴ In the case of *River Plantation*, various representations of dress break that pattern. On the path in *River Plantation*, the man holds the reins as if in control of the horse. While the human and the animals in the foreground are illuminated with light, similar to the two figures in the distant background, the man and woman in the middle appear to be sheltered under the shade of the large live oak tree, which visually creates the contrast so desirable in the picturesque view.

The dress and location of the figures are important, for they indicate their status and role within the landscape. Richards utilizes harmony of color by continuing the color of red fabric in each of the figural groups (Figure 6). This repetition allows the viewer's eye to travel along the path; yet one stops to look at each of the figures' established placement in the composition.

Conron remarked upon the viewer's perception of a picturesque composition, writing:

The best perspective is that which complements most powerfully the principal effect of a scene. For picturesquely beautiful effects, it is that point from which the principal forms are seen to compose themselves symmetrically, carrying the eye to the center of the picture—the repose of forms reiterated in that of their arrangement.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Because of the angle of the figure, it is also possible that he is looking at the plantation home.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Conron, 76.

In the foreground, the male slave is barefoot, and the worn heels of his feet show the effects of his labor, as well as his natural connection to the soil (Figure 7). His rough denim or woolen pants, clothing that was often assigned to slaves by their wealthy owners, are contrasted by his bright red vest that covers a long-sleeved white shirt.¹⁰⁶ His hat, similar in style to a Scotch cap, covers his dark hair. This man noticeably wears the colors of the American flag, red, white, and blue. This national referent also appeared in paintings of northern scenery by artists such as Frederic Edwin Church, as in *Otter Creek, Mt. Desert* (1850), in which the white male figure before nature's grand display also exhibits the colors of the American flag.¹⁰⁷ Just as the North was perceived as quintessentially American, so too was the South and the African-American slaves who tilled the land, as envisioned by Richards in *River Plantation*.¹⁰⁸ Genre images by American artist James Goodwyn Clonney such as *In The Woodshed* (Figure 18) of 1838, which features an African-American slave in the framework of a shed, shows a similarly dressed figure, although the pants on this slave are not the bright blue of those worn by the man in *River Plantation*.¹⁰⁹ Richards's portrayal of this figure could indicate his status as a particular type of stableman who has been given control of the horses, which are an integral part of the plantation work force.

The man on the horse looks to the figures behind him, and one wonders about his relationship to the figures. While the two pairs of slaves continue to walk away from him, his

¹⁰⁶ This man's costume indicates that he is not a driver. Drivers most often wore clothing made of elegant silks and rich brocade. Records show that on one particular South Carolina plantation, "each male slave every autumn received an allotment of one cotton shirt, one pair of woolen pants, and one woolen jacket. In the spring each man got one shirt and two pairs of cotton plants," in Edward D. Campbell, Jr. and Kym S. Rice, eds., *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 109.

¹⁰⁷ This painting is in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

¹⁰⁸ Richards is not forthright in his position regarding slavery. The artist simply outlines the interworkings of the plantation system and slave life on the plantation in literature such as "The Rice Lands."

¹⁰⁹ This red vest also appears in *Waking Up* (1851), also by Clonney. Both paintings by Clonney are in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

position indicates that he will continue along the well-worn path that fades into the right foreground, where there are possibly stables to secure the horses. A definite distinction arises between him and the rest of the group, and this is due to the distance shown between him and the next set of figures strolling under the shade provided by the oak in the middleground (Figure 8).¹¹⁰ A male figure stands close to the left of a female, and they both glance to their right. This man wears a tan straw hat, an indication of his worker status and also a preventative measure against the strong and penetrating sun. His earth-toned worn clothing expresses his occupation as a worker, and also serves as a reminder of his relationship to the environment that he sustains. He recalls similarly disheveled African-America figures represented in genre scenes by artists such as William Sidney Mount.¹¹¹ Conron writes that in Mount's scenes, as well as in fellow artist George Caleb Bingham's:

Boots, trouser cuffs and knees, and the elbows and necks of shirts calibrate the rhythmic stresses of stoop labor; waistlines and trouser pockets sag from these stresses as well.¹¹²

It is important to acknowledge that while this worker's outfit is worn to an extent in order to show his occupation and status that link him to qualities of the picturesque that were portrayed by marginalized figures, he is not shown in worn rags.¹¹³ Nor is he portrayed with his obligatory instrument, the banjo, played often at times of rest and leisure, as is the case in Richards's portrayal of "Dandy Jim of Caroline," in "The Rice Lands" (Figure 19).¹¹⁴ Richards refrains from showing the male worker in such tatters or at various stages of musical merriment as was common in stereotyped images of African-Americans.

¹¹⁰ Conron, 79. According to Conron, distancing "tends to socialize forms, defining them by their relationships to other forms and to their environing spaces."

¹¹¹ Ibid., 102.

¹¹² Ibid., 53.

¹¹³ The worker's worn appearance is noted by his ill-fitted baggy pants and rough work shirt.

¹¹⁴ Richards included this engraving of "A Carolina Rice Planter" at the close of his article, and wrote "we once heard a jovial young scamp-the pet and gallant, the merry-maker and the mischief-maker of his set..." 732.

A solid red shawl is wrapped around the woman's shoulders (Figure 8), a possible indication of the change of day, when the air becomes cooler. Securing her hair is a tightly wrapped white handkerchief which ties on the nape of her neck. This, along with her simple white apron, provides a visual clue indicating her position as a "mammy" servant. Assigned to take care of the white woman's children, the black servant became a sort of surrogate mother for these young children. Her status then, became elevated among blacks, since she was categorically closer to the upper-class gentry of a plantation. It is significant that Richards does not portray the woman as heavyset, or wearing checkered turbans, as was conveyed sometimes by artists wishing to represent the African-American "mammy."¹¹⁵ These women were also shown at times with the children for whom they so diligently cared. In *River Plantation*, however, this woman spends time, *her* leisure time, with people from among her own race. This inclusion of a specific type reiterates her role within the plantation landscape, just as the stableman conveys another type of occupation.

The paired female slaves in the background (Figure 8) wear clothes comparable in class to those before them. Both women wear the same brightly colored red shawl that the "mammy" servant wears. The figure to the right wears a blue skirt with a white turban on her head, while the left figure wears a blue turban. These turbans became an eclectic way for slaves to distinguish their heritage from that of their upper-class plantation owners. As Griebel notes, the turban "functioned as a 'uniform of rebellion' signifying absolute resistance to loss of self-

¹¹⁵ Jo-Ann Morgan, "Mammy the Huckster: Selling the Old South for the New Century," *American Art* 9, no. 1 (1995): 91-92. Morgan focuses on mammy representations in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century. She discusses the shift in the role of the mammy, writing that "the nursemaid or servant cook is known today as mammy or Aunt partly because of nineteenth-century fiction and its accompanying illustrations that identify her by name." This stereotype can be identified in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), where the cook is described as someone "whose plump countenance beams with satisfaction and contentment from under her well-starched checked turban." Much of Morgan's discussion revolves around the tendency of this representation after the Civil War.

definition.”¹¹⁶ In addition to sewing their own clothes, slaves often dyed their brightly colored garments, which included pieces such as shawls and turbans, and would frequently share yards of fabric.¹¹⁷ This tradition drew on an African customs, and was modified by slave women in the American South, who tailored their garments made from homemade dyes in order to give them an individual character.¹¹⁸

The roundness of the women’s headwraps echoes the roundness of the trees above. In defining picturesque beauty, Gilpin associated rounded curves as feminine, and the feminine as the beautiful. Because of the perspective utilized by Richards, they are too tiny for the viewer to be certain of their age. Time seems unimportant. There is no agenda; the figures’ actions are slow, but steady. The horses are still, as is the river, the trees, and sky.¹¹⁹

The human figures in *River Plantation* show various degrees of action, which is an important element of the picturesque.¹²⁰ As previously noted, the man on horseback is poised but still as he glances toward the figures that recede into the backdrop of the plantation landscape, as if he has stopped for a brief moment. The figures in the middle-ground look to their right, as if in mid-action, while the figures furthest away from the viewer appear to be

¹¹⁶ Helen Bradley Griebel, “The African-American Woman’s Headwrap: Unwinding the Symbols,” *Art, Design, and Visual Thinking*, <http://char.txa.cornell.edu/Griebel.htm> (accessed, May 2007), 1. Griebel developed this article from her *New Raiments of Self: African-American Clothing in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

¹¹⁷ Shane White and Graham White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Past and Present*, no. 148 (1995): 169. Architect and writer Frederick Law Olmsted extensively chronicled the daily life of slaves on southern plantations. This effort was published completely in his 1861 book *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller’s Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States*. As the Whites indicated: “Olmsted astutely pointed out that the slaves took ‘a real pleasure, for instance, such as it is a rare thing for a white man to be able to feel, in bright and strongly contrasting colors....’ Kefalos remarks that Olmsted “was capable of the most lyrical picturesque descriptions of landscape, but he was also a social reformer who used travel writing to voice his arguments against slavery,” 49.

¹¹⁸ White, 167. One slave from North Carolina, Tempie Durham, recounts the skill of Mammy Rachel, stating “[d]ey wuzn’ nothin’ she didn’ know ‘bout dyein.’ She knew every kind of root, bark, leaf an’ berry dat made red, blue, green, or whatever color she wanted...[a]n’ when she hang dem up on de line in de sun, dey was every color of de rainbow.”

¹¹⁹ Stillness is another component of the beautiful.

¹²⁰ Conron, 91-92. A compelling image that is comparable to figures that exemplify varying degrees of action is Enoch Perry’s 1876 genre painting in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The True American*, which features, in Conron’s opinion “laborers to loungers and dozers,” 54.

walking down a sloping lawn. This visual gradation sets the viewer's eye down the path, along the riverbank, and to the figures who enjoy their surroundings. Like genre scenes by artists such as William Sidney Mount, Richards utilizes lighting effects that spotlight their place along the riverbank.¹²¹ This soft light contrasts with the strong light that would become apparent without the large oaks. As previously mentioned, the red costuming of the slaves retreats into the background and sustains the set path, and this device successfully creates continuity. The tiniest hint of red (Figure 9), possibly a flower, "the most delicate and beautiful of all inanimate objects,"¹²² grows on the other side of the fence where the antebellum structure is situated. The inclusion of the red flower, the red vest worn by the stableman, and the red shawl worn around the shoulders of the mammy figure, create a sense of dynamism that allows the viewer's eye to travel through the narrative created by Richards, and reinforces their placement so near the plantation home. The slaves are established along the path, and it appears as if the figures will continue their restful journey along the river.

It is important to examine images completed by Richards that are in marked contrast to the reposeful plantation workers in *River Plantation*. This comparison will allow for a better understanding of Richards's intentional renderings. For this, a return to Richards's "The Rice Lands of the South," is necessary. The artist dedicated a large portion of his article to the arduous life of a slave on a southern plantation, while also making sure to include the restful periods of time spent by the workers. Richards's engraving *Planting the Rice* (Figure 20) shows slaves hard at work in the low country rice fields. The figures are left with no shade or comfort on the flat lands of the rice field in this stark illustration. Confronting the viewer, the figures in

¹²¹ Ibid., 92-93. Conron notes that "figural groupings are the chief means of defining the path; lighting may also be used both to draw the viewer's gaze along it and to control the speed of the gaze, as well as to accentuate particularly significant images."

¹²² Uvedale Price, *An essay on the picturesque, as compared with the sublime and beautiful; and on the use of studying pictures, for the purposes of improving real landscape* (London: Printed for J. Robson, 1796), 127.

the deep expanse of the field clutch hoes, particularly the woman in the foreground, and the artist has rendered the slaves to be in rhythmic unity while hard at work.¹²³ Richards commented on the dress of slaves in his article:

The appearance of the negroes at work in their plantation rig is not very elegant, and not so picturesque as it might be with a little change from the inflexible regulation hue of hueless gray; though, to be sure, the handkerchiefs worn on the head by the women (they never don bonnets, not even on Sunday or on gala days) afford some slight relief. In the cut of coat and skirt there is always variety enough, and so in the fashion of the ever-changing hat.¹²⁴

Although parts of the figures' dress in *River Plantation* are hueless, it is possible that since the figures are not at work, they are wearing their finer clothes. If so, then it can be suggested that the slaves, who had only Sundays off, are taking pleasure in a Sunday afternoon, traveling to or from church or en route to visit a nearby plantation. Richards dedicated a portion of his article to the Sunday activity of slaves, writing that while wearing their "rainbow *pot pourri*"¹²⁵ of clothing, the slaves enjoyed this gala day, where:

They interchange visits with relatives and friends on neighboring plantations, generally bearing with them some present or other; most often of an edible character, as a turkey, a chicken, a goose, a cake, or a confection. Whether at home or abroad, however, on Sunday, they are pretty sure to repair to the church when an accessible one is open.¹²⁶

Richards also discussed the importance of religion to African-Americans in his article, and completed an engraving of slaves attending church, as well as participating in a funeral.¹²⁷

¹²³ Richards, "The Rice Lands," 725. The artist wrote: "with this primitive instrument [used by the negroes] the earth is made as fine and friable as possible." Again, Richards overtly draws a comparison between the slaves and the soil.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 732.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 734.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 733.

¹²⁷ Of this day of worship, Richards remarked: "The state of excitement and exaltation to which their impressionable natures are so easily wrought, especially in religious matters, is manifest in their singing and even more strangely than in their preaching and praying. These performances though, are, with all their grotesqueness and absurdity, often very effective and beautiful..." 735.

While the slaves in *River Plantation* are enjoying their surroundings, they are shown tending to their surroundings in Richards's painting *A Stroll Through the Arcade, Savannah, Georgia* (Figure 21).¹²⁸ The date of this oil on canvas is unknown, but it is noteworthy that the overall coloring of the image is very similar to that of *River Plantation*, and the two paintings are virtually the same size.¹²⁹ Richards has also adorned the workers in red attire, clothing similar to his description for the slave's clothing worn while at work as described in his 1859 article. Furthermore, the red flower, the striking element which connected the figures to their plantation surroundings in *River Plantation*, is prominent in *A Stroll Through the Arcade*. It takes over the foreground of the painting, showing nature's abundance. The inclusion of red coloring is certainly utilized as a conventional method of representation within the landscape painting, and it also serves to highlight the very homemade clothing that women dyed from natural elements found from the earth such as berries. This perceptible addition by Richards can *also* be seen as following the conventions of seventeenth and eighteenth century European landscape painting, which often depicted marginalized figures such as banditti, peasants, and shepherds in noticeable colors in order to "mark" their place within the setting. For Claude, the colors worn by the idealized figures were often bright and noticeable, while other artists such as Englishman Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) included subdued

¹²⁸ This painting resides in the Collection of David and Janice Miller, Marietta, Georgia.

¹²⁹ Upon acquiring this painting, the Millers had to have it professionally cleaned. In the bottom right-hand corner is Richards's signature, with an illegible date. Beside the date is the inscription "Savannah, GA." The owners believe that this painting was completed in 1838, which distances this work from Richards's other paintings of the southern landscape. It is significant that this painting measures 20 x 30 inches, and furthermore, is also in a period frame, this one gilded gold with an ornate grapevine that traces the edge of the frame.

tonalities of color in order to more closely associate marginalized figures with their environment,¹³⁰ such that he:

Painted the picturesque with genius, and to him is directly attributable the cult of the picturesque peasant, hovel, gipsy...Gainsborough left his rustics and children as simply “picturesque”—agreeable objects suitable to lanes and woods.¹³¹

An example of this feature presents itself in his pastoral *Landscape with Woodcutter Courting a Milkmaid* (1755), and like the imagery of *A Stroll Through the Arcade*, though more muted, depicts marginalized figures in red clothing, in this case shepherdess and shepherd, on the outskirts of the pictorial frame.¹³²

There are a variety of figures in *A Stroll Through the Arcade, Savannah, Georgia*. African-American slaves occupy the right plane between foreground and middleground, and show varying degrees of action. A male slave pulls a wheelbarrow while another plows the ground, and a woman who wears a bright yellow sash around her waist bends over, holding what looks like weeds or flowers that she has possibly pulled from the ground in her hands. To the left of the male slave who directs the wheelbarrow is a small African-American child carrying a basket. Their actions, completed in close proximity to each other, signify that they are busily tending to the ground that they maintain. This gestural action of the slaves on the right side of the painting contrasts with the relaxed pose of the two figures directly across the painting on the left. A white male leisurely crosses his legs, while a white woman joins him on the lush ground. Perhaps he is the overseer to the busy slaves who tend the fertile grounds. Working under the umbrella of numerous

¹³⁰ John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 6,9.

¹³¹ Hussey, 256-57.

¹³² This painting is in the private collection of Marquess of Tavistock and the Trustees of the Bedford Estate, England. Other paintings by Gainsborough also feature red costuming, such as *The Woodsman* (1787) and *The Cottage Door* (1780). It is important to note here that this costuming worn by marginalized figures is not that of fine silk, as seen in other paintings by Gainsborough, but that made from material less in worth.

oaks that line the arcade, the workers are in the same locality as the paired figures who leisurely stroll on the cultivated path which they maintain. These socially marginalized slaves literally skirt the outside lines of the avenue, as well as the pictorial frame, toiling under the canopy of oaks.

Avenues, a staple in plantation landscape design, were also incorporated into British gardening plots, and discussed in British picturesque theory.¹³³ Uvedale Price compared avenues to aisles from the naves of Gothic churches, and looked to Burke, who had likened the endless aisle of the avenue to elements of the sublime.¹³⁴ In his telling of the journey to a fifteenth-century castle, Price tells of the “deep gloom of the avenue,” and ends his story by commenting upon the avenue’s “romantic effects.”¹³⁵ As Hussey noted of Price’s narrative:

Price admits that in this case his sympathy was romantic, rather than picturesque. Yet, if the picturesque is visual romanticism, a professor of one cannot escape references to the other.¹³⁶

In Richards’s romantic telling of the southern rice plantation in “The Rice Lands,” the artist commented upon a stretch of oak-lined avenue familiar to him:

A hundred years or more ago there were planted on a manorial estate near the city of Savannah numerous wide avenues of live oaks, which have since interlaced their spreading branches in grand Gothic looking arches, and now, in venerable and moss-covered age, cast their solemn shade upon the graves and monuments of the dead. This remarkable spot is the far-famed Bonaventure.¹³⁷

This written description is visually comparable to Richards’s undated painting, *A Stroll Through the Arcade, Savannah, Georgia*. Given the painting’s style and features, and most importantly Richards’s summation of Bonaventure in his article, one can deduce that

¹³³ Hussey, 176.

¹³⁴ Price, 272.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Hussey, 176.

¹³⁷ Richards, “The Rice Lands,” 738.

this painting was previously titled *Bonaventure, near Savannah Georgia*, which was one of the seven southern paintings displayed at the National Academy of Design Exhibition of 1859.¹³⁸ In the exhibition's catalogue, preserved in its entirety at the New York Public Library, the description under the painting's title, the only text provided for any of Richards's nine paintings shown, records the following poem:

Along a corridor I tread,
High over-arched ancient trees,
While like a tapestry o'erhead,
The gray moss floats upon the breeze.¹³⁹

The live-oak filled corridor as described above for *Bonaventure, near Savannah, Georgia* (*A Stroll Through The Arcade*) is similar to a later engraving of the cemetery published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (Figure 22). This image is almost identical in comparison to Richards's, and illustrates Bonaventure's main avenue. This prominent avenue of Bonaventure, as portrayed by Richards in *A Stroll Through the Arcade*, shows visitors leaving the "monuments of the dead,"¹⁴⁰ which are the vertical white markers in the distance.

Where the slaves assume the activity of the stroll in *River Plantation*, they presume the action of labor in *A Stroll Through the Arcade*. Richards again uses the moss as an artistic device that mirrors both the verticality of the thick and illuminated tree trunks

¹³⁸ Bonaventure Cemetery is four miles southeast of downtown Savannah, from John Kevin Risk, "Shadow, Memory, Inscription: Interpreting Multiple Layers of History in Savannah's Bonaventure Cemetery" (master of landscape architecture thesis, The University of Georgia, 1997), 14. An anonymous critic reviewed this painting, writing "quite a novelty from this gentleman's pencil. It is clever, with all its indefiniteness. The distance is hardly done. Mr. R. should be a little more tender," in *Critical Guide to the Exhibition at the National Academy of Design, in Tenth Street; For 1859*, By an Amateur (New York: Robert M. De Witt, Publisher, 1859), 7.

¹³⁹ Correspondence on September 24, 2007 with Vincenzo Rutigliano, Librarian, Art and Architecture, New York Public Library, regarding the *Exhibition Catalogue for the National Academy of Design Exhibition*, 1859. It is likely that Richards penned this short poem.

¹⁴⁰ Richards, "The Rice Lands," 738. On December 1, 1860, two engravings after drawings by Richards were published in *Harper's Weekly*. These engravings were *Entrance to Bonaventure Cemetery, Savannah Georgia*, and *Bonaventure Cemetery, Savannah, Georgia*, and accompanied a short article regarding the landmark, in the Miller's file on Richards.

and the people who walk on the path. The workers' posture mirrors the dipping oaks which shade the enclosed area. Much of this enclosed area in the space between foreground and middleground is empty, and this, along with the yellow spotlighting, allows the viewer to enter into the canopy of seclusion. The structural composition of *A Stroll Through the Arcade* is similar to the engraving *A Live Oak Avenue* (Figure 23) in "The Rice Lands," and it is possible that this image served as a study for his painting, although the engraving does not include African-American slaves.¹⁴¹ Richards's image of the slaves at work in *A Stroll Through the Arcade* is one of several that he completed during his career, and portrays qualities of the picturesque beautiful, such as the orderly oaks and their rounded forms, more so than engravings of the same subject published in "The Rice Lands of the South."

The figures in repose in *River Plantation* contrast with images of African-American slaves at work, as well as other antebellum genre images of slaves singing, dancing, and enjoying the "spirited, humorous life"¹⁴² that was commonly expressed by artists depicting everyday scenes of slave life. *River Plantation*'s atypical narrative can perhaps best be contrasted with an image that was certainly exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1859, and generated much praise for its depiction of slave life. This painting, by Eastman Johnson, is his genre scene *Negro Life at the South (Old Kentucky Home)* (Figure 24).¹⁴³ In a review of the National

¹⁴¹ This engraving is modeled after a drawing by Richards in the collection of the Georgia Museum of Art. Several structural features are similar in both *A Live Oak Avenue* and *A Stroll Through the Arcade*, including the thick live oak corridor, unpaved walkway, and overhanging Spanish moss. Also, figures move toward the viewer. *Live Oak Avenue* is also comparable to an undated painting by Richards, *Morning Walk*, though in this painting, figures walk on a paved avenue under thin, overhanging trees. It is important to note that the drawing *A Live Oak Avenue* features only two sets of figures, while the engraving of the same name includes multiple figural groupings. What is absent in both *A Live Oak Avenue* and *Morning Walk* are African-American slaves at work, as in *A Stroll Through the Arcade*.

¹⁴² Kefalos, 45.

¹⁴³ John Davis, "Eastman Johnson's 'Negro Life at the South' and Urban Slavery in Washington, D.C." *The Art Bulletin* 80, no.1 (1998), 69. Johnson worked on the painting in a New York studio in late spring of 1858, then

Academy of Design Exhibition, the editor of *Spirit of the Times* commended Johnson's painting first in the article:

We hold it very difficult to present negroes pleasantly on canvass; no phase of their life is really agreeable, but their simple hearty enjoyment, and its expression suggests a fellow feeling, which, if it makes us not wondrous kind towards them, at least causes agreeable emotions, and calls forth our cordial sympathy. In this picture of negro life we have everything to admire. The figures are natural, and naturally occupied. The old fellow with the banjo is the very personification of a light heart, and the lovers in the corner are earnest on one side and coquettish on the other, exactly to the point of negro sentiment and civilization. The little children engaged in playful sports, the light streaming through the chinks of the old building, the mosses on the roofs, the accessories, small and great, prominent and unimportant, are all excellent, and all necessary to tell the story. The introduction of the "young missis" is managed with great good taste; her presence sheds a refinement over the scene, and as she is not startled, we need not be, at witnessing the innocent enjoyment of negro Southern life.¹⁴⁴

What a different story *River Plantation* tells. Although Richards utilizes African-American "types" for his composition, his portrayal of the slaves veers from the stereotypical fashioning of their culture that is seen in paintings such as Johnson's. Scholar John Davis points out that *Negro Life at the South's* location is actually the urban setting of Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, as narrowly missed by critics of the time, except for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*.¹⁴⁵

Although the meaning of Johnson's painting has shifted throughout the years, particularly after the close of the Civil War, when nostalgic remembrance for "the good old times"¹⁴⁶ was in effect, taken at face value, this image utilized specific types that were popular in minstrel shows and had been written about in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle*

likely went back to Washington, D.C. to finish his work. He then sent it to the National Academy of Design Exhibition in April, but not before allowing reporters access to view the painting before its submission. Davis proposes that "the painter saw his work as a bid for the national spotlight and a place in the front ranks of American artists."

¹⁴⁴ Editor, *Spirit of the Times* 29, no. 12 (1859): 133.

¹⁴⁵ The Editor indicated that "the scene is in a city," in "Editor's Easy Chair," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 19 (1859): 126, as noted by Davis, 70.

¹⁴⁶ Editor, "Fine Arts: The Wright-Derby Collection," *New York Evening Post* (1867), in Davis, 87.

Tom's Cabin (1852). This urban account of slavery that exhibits the marginalized African-American figures as “types” categorically diverges from *River Plantation*'s prosaic depiction of slave life in the American South.

The depiction of African-American “types,” similar to those described by critics who categorized the “mammy,” the banjo man, etc. in *Negro Life at the South*, can also be observed in an engraving by Richards, *Negroes at Home* (Figure 25). This genre scene, found in the pages of “The Rice Lands of the South,” shows the contained environment of the slaves, and not the expanse of the plantation setting, as visualized by panoramic artist John Banvard in his *Mississippi River Plantation Scene* (Figure 26), c. 1850. In *Negroes at Home*, an African-American woman and man both smoke pipes,¹⁴⁷ while other figures, young and old, gather near the doorway of the house where they presumably live; it is similar to the composition of *Negro Life at the South*. A small dog is again present among the figures, and Richards shows the slaves in varying degrees of relaxation. Sitting, standing, moving, resting, leaning—these slaves occupy their space, and are nowhere in close proximity to the planter's mansion, as in *River Plantation*. Banvard's oil on canvas, *Mississippi River Plantation Scene*, also possesses similarities to *Negro Life at the South*, in that the slaves are merrily dancing, a visual reminder of “thoughtless recreations.”¹⁴⁸ Richards himself remarked on the life of the slaves in “The Rice Lands,” observing that “they are continuously joyous and *insouciant*; and it is often pleasant to witness their glad, thoughtless recreations as the twilight of the evening hours set in.”¹⁴⁹ While this imagery and prose is suggestive of particular racial stereotypes, the artist's refined account

¹⁴⁷ Richards, “The Rice Lands, 732-33. Richards wrote: “Men and women all smoke habitually, whether at work or at rest. Near any squad or gang a fire may always be seen, made for the double use of lighting pipes and as a rendezvous in gossip hours, for your genuine African is never quite warm enough.”

¹⁴⁸ Richards, “The Rice Lands,” 733. This painting by Banvard is the only one of thirty-nine images of this large panorama of the river that survived. This panorama was shown in New York City for sixteen months, in Vlach, 25-26.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 732.

of slave life remains, especially when considering the two images on hand. In *Mississippi River Plantation Scene*, the workers are unabashed in their actions, and contrast with Richards's more refined and dignified engraving. Furthermore, whereas Banvard's rendering is stark and desolate with broken logs scattered about in a disheveled and unruly manner, Richards manages to portray the workers in an orderly and clean environment in *Negroes at Home*. In considering the difference of *Mississippi River Plantation Scene* to *River Plantation*, Banvard chose to show the overall expanse of the plantation landscape through the use of the ever-popular panoramic view, while Richards chose to show a confined space in which the figures occupy the same ground as the antebellum home in his painting.

The slaves in *River Plantation* are not busily planting rice, nor are they merrily clustered before their modest abode. The landowners are not present in this scene, and the plantation home, though barely visible, provides the only indication of the painting's setting and context for the slaves. They are not receiving orders while at work as in Henry Lewis's *Cotton Plantation*, 1856 (Figure 27). In this colored lithograph for *Das Illustrierte Mississippithal (The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated)*,¹⁵⁰ two slaves carry heavy bushels of cotton, while the overseer or landowner, indicated by his finer clothing, administers the transaction. While two slaves carry the product of their labor, one stands picking the cotton which will be taken away for processing. The large columned home and the prominent plantation grounds are placed in the distance behind the laborers in the foreground. The mansion is diagonally positioned on the river, while the other buildings that comprise a sophisticated plantation plot are noticeable to the left and at the rear of the "big house." As in *River Plantation*, lush vegetation skirts the edge of the river.

¹⁵⁰ This publication was a result of Lewis's journey on the Mississippi River during the 1840's. A product of this lengthy trip that he took with other artists was a panorama, completed in 1848, that traveled to Düsseldorf. In 1853, Heinrich Arnz published seventy-eight sketches as lithographs, thus representing an early comprehensive view of the Mississippi, in John E. Sunder, "Review of *The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated* by Henry Lewis, Hermina Poatgieter, and Bertha L. Heilbron," *The Journal of American History* 55, no. 2 (1968): 401.

Lewis's lithograph, modeled after Zachary Taylor's Cypress Grove Plantation in Rodney, Mississippi, shows progress, work by laborers, and the fruit of their labor, while *River Plantation* shows the workers at rest by the river, enjoying the environment that surrounds the antebellum home on the grounds of the plantation.¹⁵¹

The aim of these comparisons is to show Richards's departure from creating an antebellum image of slaves at work or slaves as "insouciant"¹⁵² members of society in *River Plantation*. He features his African-American slaves in repose, during a time when Richards's contemporaries were creating something quite different. Formulaic genre images crafted to promote a particular "type" for the American public were manifested in numerous spheres of art. Johnson's *Negro Life at the South*, the breakthrough painting of over eight-hundred works of art exhibited at the 1859 Exhibition, the largest number to ever be shown at that point in the Academy's history, was likely to have overshadowed something as subdued as *River Plantation*. Occupying a space seemingly close to that of their owners, these African-American slaves become symbolic conveyers of the state of affairs in the South as romantically envisioned by Richards. They comprise an important part of the whole picturesque beautiful landscape. The implications of their inclusion within the landscape are shaped by their location by the river, their activity of strolling, which conveys a state of leisure and repose, and their clothing, which communicate particular African-American "types." In short, Richards's portrayal of the slaves visually reinforces their oneness with the land, just as he poetically described them in his "The Rice Lands of the South."¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Vlach, 25. Vlach reiterates that Lewis's image "was a highly improvised composition, containing figures that suggest the scene was based more on his imagination than on his actual travel experiences." Also, Lewis was influenced by John Rowson Smith's view of Taylor's estate that was published in *Graham's Magazine* in 1849.

¹⁵² Richards, "The Rice Lands," 732-33.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 731.

CHAPTER IV

ANTEBELLUM REFINEMENT: THE PLANTER'S MANSION IN *RIVER PLANTATION*

The antebellum home, a fundamental iconographical indication of the landowner's wealth and a staple in plantation landscape imagery, is barely detectable in *River Plantation* (1855-1860) (Figure 1). This purposeful choice by the artist is significant, for most artists constructing prewar plantation imagery sought to visibly portray the monumental structure within their composition, making it the primarily dominant focal point. Furthermore, the painting's title, which was added later, does not indicate any particular plantation, so it is therefore not a plantation portrait. As will become apparent in this chapter through a comparison to other plantation images completed by Richards and his fellow artists, the dominant focal point of the composition is the nearest plane to the viewer's vantage point, which is comprised of the figures who stroll by the riverside, two of which occupy the space under the canopy of the verdant live oak tree. Given this veiling of the plantation home, it is important to consider that instead of showing a display of the plantation setting, Richards was more concerned with depicting a river setting, and more specifically, a *southern river scene* where nature's beauty reigns paramount. Richards's veiling of the plantation home in the painting, the third important part to the whole composition, contributes to his intentional rendering of a picturesque beautiful landscape.

As early as the eighteenth century, artists like Charles Willson Peale depicted images of property owned by landed gentry as a way to show wealth and prosperity, as in the 1775 painting *Mount Clare* (Figure 28).¹⁵⁴ Peale shows Mount Clare's expansive grounds and substantial

¹⁵⁴ Vlach, 6-7. Peale's earlier portrait of the Edward Lloyd family (1771; H.F. Du Pont Museum, Winterthur, Delaware), who also landed on the shores of Maryland, shows the country home of the family behind the sitters.

home in Maryland owned by Charles Carroll, who is featured in the foreground along with his small dog and two associates. Images throughout the early nineteenth-century and years preceding the Civil War usually depicted the columnar façade of the plantation home, utilizing the perspective often captured when the artists themselves were sketching the plot.¹⁵⁵ Lawn and trees often framed the home in its frontal glory, as envisioned by artists such as Frederic Edwin Church in his pencil drawing of Shirley Plantation in Virginia (Figure 29). But, due to focus given exclusively to the home, and not the interworkings of the plantation system, most plantation paintings were not explicit and definitive records of a plantation.¹⁵⁶ This construction of the plantation home contrasts with the more documentary imagery, completed by surveyors and mapmakers that focused on the agricultural prosperity of a plantation estate.¹⁵⁷ These plantation portraits, however specific or non-specific did, it seems, serve to show their very existence in order to promote their economic, cultural, and social stability in the southern United States.

Art historian Paul Grootkerk compares the southern plantation domain to that of a small New England town, where virtually everything necessary to live on and by could be found on the grounds of a planter's estate. Additionally, Grootkerk links this societal formation to one across the Atlantic:

Economically and culturally, southern planters looked to England, developing a British-style class system where eventually a small group of wealthy plantation families transformed themselves into landed gentry. The plantations of these southern aristocratic families became renowned for their symbols of culture and wealth that emulated the life and style of English country gentlemen. Prominent among these symbols was the grand main house of the plantations (which resembled

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹⁵⁶ Vlach, 20.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

the fine country houses of British estates) dominating all other plantation structures, including the slave quarter.¹⁵⁸

The estates of British squires Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight come to mind, whose discourses on the picturesque, as previously discussed, feature their concentration on land ownership in the English countryside. Knight inherited his family's wealthy estate near Ludlow, Herefordshire, England, which included Downton Castle, and completely remodeled the grounds during the period of 1774-1781.¹⁵⁹ For Knight, the castle, complete with a Gothic exterior and classical Roman interior, mixed with the variety of the English garden that surrounded the structure, was quintessentially picturesque.¹⁶⁰ In considering the attraction of a rice plantation that Richards found to be picturesque, he remarked of its capability:

Many of the rice plantations are of great extent, sometimes covering from one to two thousand acres, and employing seven or eight-hundred hands. The inhabitants make a large community of themselves alone. The mansion of the planter with its numerous out-houses, the residence of the overseer, and the long streets of negro cabins, give to a single settlement the aspect of a large and busy village or town. Then besides this, each estate, being much isolated in its neighborhood, has of necessity, all the concomitants of wagon, tool, machine, and other shops—jail, hospitals, store, and storehouses of all kinds—and still, in addition, maybe a church!¹⁶¹

The site of much progress, the southern plantation through the eyes of Richards seemed to embody success, plenitude, and picturesque scenery, from the slaves who tend the grounds, to the southern gentry who “makes of his business itself his social enjoyment and his true life.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Paul Grootkerk, “Artistic Images of Mythological Reality: The Antebellum Plantation,” *The Southern Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1994): 33.

¹⁵⁹ Robinson, 97-98. Part of the restructuring of his estate included an inclusion of a small waterfall and cottage gardens near the Teme River.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Knight completed this process by eliminating the historical iron forges and furnace that had graced the family estate for years.

¹⁶¹ Richards, “The Rice Lands,” 730.

¹⁶² Ibid., 736.

As previously noted, *River Plantation* depicts a lush landscape being actively enjoyed by the workers of a southern plantation property. Absent are the plantation owners, and just visible is their antebellum plantation home architecturally constructed with a white columned facade.¹⁶³ The fact that Richards chose to shift the attention of the image to the plantation workers taking pleasure in their surroundings is significant in and of itself, given the apparent restricted roles of plantation workers in the time preceding the Civil War. That he also chose to veil the plantation home is striking. Richards chose to create engaging works that would promote the qualities of his adopted South rather than focus on topics that might create political and social controversy among his viewers. In order to avoid controversy, Richards concentrated on the beauty of the natural surroundings, where “nature acts as a curtain that shields the plantation from all but the most prying eyes.”¹⁶⁴

In *River Plantation*, the white antebellum home is set in the left background of the composition (Figure 9).¹⁶⁵ The angle in which the vertical columns of the façade are constructed mirror the diagonal riverside in arrangement.¹⁶⁶ This positioning would possibly allow the owners to view the scenic southern river from the expanse of their front porch. The repetition of the solid white columns falls into the category of the picturesque, and the smooth nature of their finished surface is characteristic of the beautiful.¹⁶⁷ In the area of the plantation home, there are a variety of shapes and forms. Columns rise, moss falls, and a window peeks from behind the

¹⁶³ Ibid., 736-7. Richards writes that during the months of June through October, plantation owners usually traveled and were not present at their plantation homes.

¹⁶⁴ Vlach, 28.

¹⁶⁵ In contrast to the clean, gleaming posts of the antebellum home are the slave quarters in Johnson’s *Negro Life at the South*. One critic wrote of the broken posts and leaning posts, stating “How fitly do the dilapidated and decaying negro quarters typify the approaching destruction of the “system” they serve to illustrate,” Conron, 36.

¹⁶⁶ The diagonal composition of the river is “paralleled by a hedge of low shrubs on the far side,” Kefalos 38. The far side of the river is actually bordered by trees and this repetition is a component of the picturesque.

¹⁶⁷ Conron, 16.

branches of a live oak. Conron, quoting from Andrew Jackson Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1869), remarks that in picturesque architecture:

The varying but congruent "arrangement, sizes, or forms of the different parts"—makes it adaptable to any habitable landscape, and the play of brilliant Northern light, its "broad and deep shadows" accentuating both the "real form" of the house and the ornaments that catch the light, completes its integration into the landscape. The unity of the picturesque house is the product of "an agreement made in the midst of the variety of forms...by some one feeling which pervades the whole," and that brings all of its parts into an "agreeable relation with each other"—just as in painting a "pervading tone" (and in actual landscapes a soft atmosphere) harmonizes variations and contrasts of color and form.¹⁶⁸

The light source, the late afternoon sun, shadows the right side of the white columns, following the same pattern that is noticeable on the clothing of the slaves, who remain on the other side of the white, wooden fence that separates the home from the figures in repose.

American John Lord Couper (1835-1868) is an artist whose work can be compared to Richards's *River Plantation*, due to both its similar date of completion and to his romanticizing and idealizing of plantation scenes "that emphasized natural beauty over human enterprise."¹⁶⁹ *Canon's Point* (Figure 30), circa 1850, depicts the actual plantation home of Couper's grandfather, who was fascinated with exotic plants such as the olive tree.¹⁷⁰ Located on St. Simons Island in the Georgia low country, the painting now resides at the Coastal Georgia Historical Society in St. Simons.¹⁷¹ Couper successfully shows the thick, natural foliage of these exotic trees and shrubs that surrounded the house. Because of this rendering, the home becomes

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 156.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 29.

¹⁷⁰ Jane Webb Smith, *Georgia's Legacy: History Charted Through the Arts: An Exhibition Organized on the Occasion of the Bicentennial of The University of Georgia, 1785-1985* (Athens, Georgia: Georgia Museum of Art, 1985), 160. In addition to experimenting with planting olive trees, sugar cane, mulberry trees, and grape vines, the Couper family made their fortune through the cultivation of "sea cotton; lemon, orange, and peach trees; and date palms imported from Persia."

¹⁷¹ Cynthia Miles, the Curator of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society, provided the following information regarding the provenance of *Cannon's Point*: donated by Miss Page King Sanger, and originally displayed at the home of Couper's father John Couper.

“unassuming” due to the garden, according to Vlach.¹⁷² But, the starkness of the white Federal style structure¹⁷³ contrasts with the green environs, making it stand out to the viewer.

Furthermore, the height and mass of the structure is not overshadowed by trees, as is the antebellum home featured in *River Plantation*. Although Couper completed the scene in order to show his grandfather’s affinity for the exotic, he still found room to showcase the family’s flourishing prosperity through the plantation home. The figures are barely discernable in the image, and their positioning within the composition is less important than their grandiose surroundings. Like *River Plantation*, figures are clustered to indicate their place within the composition. Two figures remain in the left foreground on the grounds of the plantation, while two more stand on the front porch which wraps around the façade of the home.

Richards’s intentional placement of the antebellum home behind the surroundings of expansive oaks in *River Plantation*’s composition, diverges from an engraving in his article “The Rice Lands of the South.” *A Planter’s Mansion* (Figure 31) follows the standard format for depicting a planter’s mansion.¹⁷⁴ Trees frame the home, which is poised slightly at an angle, and a large front yard leads to the steps of the home. Slaves mingle in the left foreground, and to the other side of the plantation home are their presumed dwellings, which are separated from the larger home by a fence. Like *River Plantation*, slaves stand under the shade of the tree, and the scale between figures to home is distinct.

Distance that creates social spaces becomes increasingly apparent in the work of French immigrant artist Marie Adrien Persac (1823-1873), who was known for his depictions of

¹⁷² Vlach, 30.

¹⁷³ Smith, 160. This one-story piazza, built and designed by Couper, had “a raised English basement of tabby and clapboarded second and third stories.” This well-documented painting varies from the ambiguous antebellum home in *River Plantation*.

¹⁷⁴ Vlach, 12.

Louisiana plantation landscapes.¹⁷⁵ Persac incorporates important attributes of the picturesque, such as distance and scale, in his gouache and collage *St. John Plantation* (Figure 32), completed in 1861. This illustration is of an actual plantation located in the Teche County region of Louisiana, and shows Alexandre de Clouet's sugar plantation and refinery.¹⁷⁶ Persac utilizes distance in order to show the spectator the immense space on the grounds before, beside, and behind the antebellum home. The vertical rows of agricultural prosperity reinforce this distance not only for the viewer, but also for the slaves who stand in that natural space. They are separated by not one, but two fences which are included in the composition, and which seem to be a recurring motif in his plantation views. This spatial separation, enforced by a fence, is similar to that of *River Plantation*'s, and conveys to the viewer the slave's status and occupation. Their class is additionally reinforced by the rendering of white upper-class individuals in fancy costume who ride on horseback between the two fences. To the viewer's left of the mansion, a white couple walks under the neat rows of trees that line the walkway. Their clothing, along with that of those riding on horseback, is constructed of fine silks and chintz compared to the rough and rather patchy outfits of the three African-American men in the foreground. The vantage point employed by Persac allows the viewer to be elevated over the plantation landscape and the slaves who occupy a cordoned part of it. By contrast, in *River Plantation*, due to the path and the unsaddled man on horse, the viewer occupies the same space as the African-American slaves.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 95. Persac contributed to the popular *Norman's Chart of the Mississippi River*. Benjamin Moore Norman, a prominent New Orleans publisher, set out to publish a chart of the Mississippi River, equipped with illustrations as steel engravings by Persac. This chart surveyed all the plantations on the river and became a popular way for landowners to showcase their affluence. This foray was the impetus for his success as a plantation painter, incorporating his architectural interests into the work. Vlach states that "human figures might enliven a scene and he did sprinkle them liberally about his paintings. However, because buildings constituted the central theme to his paintings, people were never a dominant element."

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 103.

Persac's slaves look on, and the varying degrees of action of the figures advocate the painting's picturesque quality. The evidence of cultivation and prosperity is compelling in this image, from the rows of sugar cane or beets to the impressive smoking brick sugarhouse on the far right, and of course, to the imposing white planter's double-porched mansion. Framed by "avenues of pines flanked by oaks,"¹⁷⁷ the Federal style mansion is apparent due to its size, as well as by the horizontal road which leads to the mansion and the figure on horseback who directly faces the home. Persac's painting displays the growth and cultivation of the land, and leisure of its upper class owners on the premises of the large plantation complex. In *River Plantation*, the workers in repose are the only ones shown enjoying that space.

Richards *did* complete drawings of a specific southern plantation during the 1850's. These images were of Richards's friend and fellow southern littéraire William Gilmore Simms's Woodland Plantation.¹⁷⁸ Published in the book *Homes of American Authors* in 1853 as an engraving, *Residence of William Gilmore Simms, Woodland, South Carolina* (Figure 33) is more discernable than the darkly printed engraving, and shows the author's dominant plantation home in South Carolina.¹⁷⁹ Framed by two trees, the plantation landscape is not as abundant in foliage as the grounds before the home in *River Plantation*. Richards's quick hand shows the impressive home and its picturesque surroundings, but it is not overtly *about* the picturesque surroundings, as is *River Plantation*.¹⁸⁰ The goal of this drawing seems to be to show the affluence and success

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Koch, 13-14. In 1855, Richards rendered eighteen drawings of Bryant's home in Long Island, New York, which was called "Cedarmere."

¹⁷⁹ *Homes of American Authors*, 257. Earlier that year, "A Visit to Woodlands" by Richards was published in *Temperance Souvenir* with no illustrations, in Koch, 13. In the engraving of Simms's plantation home, the oaks are thicker and fuller in coverage, and the home lighter in coloration. This contrast, probably due to the engraving process, makes the home prominent within the plantation grounds. The oval canopy created by Richards in both the engraving and drawing give the effect of the viewer looking into a scene of southern life and culture.

¹⁸⁰ Richards, *Appleton's*, 420. Richards described the plantation setup, stating "Yonder, in that wide and spreading lawn, stands our author's mansion—an old-fashioned brick structure, with massive and strange portico. The ranks

of the southern author, who was a proponent of slavery, as is noted in his book *Morals of Slavery* (1838). It is likely that it was Richards who remarked on Simms's plantation in his guidebook

Appleton's Hand-Book Guide of Travel (1857):

A stroll over Mr. Simms' plantation will give you a pleasant inkling of almost every feature of the Southern lowlands, in natural scenery, social life, and the character and position of the slave population. You may sleep sweetly and soundly within his hospitable walls, secure of a happy day on the morrow, whether the rain holds you prisoner within doors, or the glad sunshine drags you abroad...¹⁸¹

This idyllic description of the grounds of Simms's plantation is intriguing, leaving the reader to ponder what the plantation was really like day to day, given Simms's apparent support of a system so vilified by some, but supported by many.

During the period of *River Plantation's* estimated completion (1855-1860), and the publication of "The Rice Lands," (1859), Richards also penned two articles that extensively described the homes of famous authors Washington Irving and Nathaniel Parker Willis, both of whom resided in the state of New York. These articles, respectively titled "Sunnyside, The Home of Washington Irving," (1856), and "Idlewild, The Home of N.P. Willis," (1858) were both published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, the same publication that printed "The Rice Lands."¹⁸² These stately "seats" of the North, as seen in this engraving of Willis's home by the Hudson River (Figure 34), were showcased.¹⁸³ Richards wrote of the writer "Mr. Willis [who] comes of good, sturdy English stock:"

of orange trees and live oak which sentinel his castle, are the objects of his tenderest care—true and ardent lover of Nature as he is..."

¹⁸¹ Ibid. Richards distinguished between the industrious slave versus the idle slave, or "lazy fellow" in a passage following the account of Simms's plantation, remarking that while they are "thieving," they are "generously provided with all they can require," 255.

¹⁸² Thomas Addison Richards, "Sunnyside: The Home of Washington Irving," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 14, no. 79 (1856): 1-22; idem, "Idlewild: The Home of N.P. Willis," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 16, no. 92 (1858): 145-166.

¹⁸³ Koch, 14. Koch notes that Richards seemed most focused on showing the architectural structure of Willis's home.

Here our poet, while secluded to his heart's content amidst the primitive wilderness of Nature, has yet within his reach, when it pleases him to extend his hand, all the resources and delights of the most cultivated and generous society. On all sides villages, villas, farms, teeming with happy, intelligent, and elegant life, encompass him about.¹⁸⁴

In this case, the private estate of Willis, just sixty miles north of New York City, is described as a retreat. This comparison between Simms's¹⁸⁵ and Willis's property, or rather, contrast, shows two different spatial, cultural, and political spheres. In *River Plantation*, Richards chose to take a completely different avenue in this image that was possibly displayed at the National Academy of Design.

These different spheres, the North and the South, two sides that would come into direct conflict soon after *River Plantation*'s estimated completion, were prolifically portrayed by Richards. In addition to the articles regarding the estates of Irving and Willis, Richards contributed ten articles to *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* during the 1850's and 60's that thematically addressed important northern locales. They were: "Lake George" (July 1853); "The Susquehanna" (October 1853); "The Catskills" (July 1854); "The Juniata" (March 1856); "Valley of the Connecticut" (August 1856); "A Forest Story" (August 1859); "Croton Aqueduct" (December 1860); "New York Circumnavigated" (July 1861); "Central Park, New York" (August 1861); and "The Norwich Armories" (March 1864). All articles focus on a particular waterway or include extensive descriptions of various and notable lakes, rivers, and the like. These articles were synonymous with enumerable paintings by Richards that were displayed at exhibitions for the American Art-Union and the National Academy of Design during this same period of his career. Like his fellow artists, Richards was keenly aware of the importance of a place, and the distinctive environmental elements that established it as such. This was codified

¹⁸⁴ Richards, "Idlewild," 147.

¹⁸⁵ Richards did not write an article for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* on Simms's Woodland Plantation.

by sketches of specific waterways such as the calm water of Lake George, the vicinity around the Hudson River, which was an immensely popular stomping ground for fellow artists like travel mate Sanford Robinson Gifford, and particular mountain peaks such as the White Mountains, which Cole had dedicated much of his time to sketching on-site. For an artist like Richards, the emphasis was on nature.

Richards's dedication to nature, as exemplified in other paintings, sketches, and engravings by Richards included in this study, articles for *Harper's* such as "The Landscape of the South," and "The Rice Lands of the South," and most importantly, *River Plantation*, convey the sense that Richards, throughout his career, was interested in promoting the picturesque, the beautiful, and the sublime environs of the South as equal in representation to those found in the North.¹⁸⁶ This dedication is especially important when considering Richards's presence at the 1859 Academy show which was held in New York City, and becomes an integral part of this thesis on *River Plantation's* notable setting. As Vlach notes of *River Plantation*, "here nature acts as a curtain that shields the plantation from all but the most prying eyes."¹⁸⁷ The emphasis on nature as the primary element rather than the planter's mansion supports the notion that this painting is not to be interpreted as a plantation portrait, outfitted with the proverbial and monumental antebellum home, but rather a scene on a southern river.

Richards's presence at the National Academy of Design in 1859, at this time the largest exhibition in the Academy's history, yielded nine paintings of American scenery. In addition to the two northern paintings on display by Richards, which were *The Pemigewasset River*, *New*

¹⁸⁶ Kefalos remarks upon this dedication in her thesis, particularly noting the influence of artists like Cole on Richards, as well as Richards's contributions to northern-based magazines such as *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. According to Kefalos, the "magazine managed to avoid all socially or politically sensitive topics, including slavery, except for very idealized versions like Richards. This made the magazine popular in the South as well as the North, up until the time of actual blockade of the Civil War," 51-53.

¹⁸⁷ Vlach, 28.

Hampshire and *The Franconia Mountains, New Hampshire*, Richards displayed the following southern scenes: *A Water Oak in South Carolina*; *Group of Palmettos-South Carolina*; *Bonaventure, near Savannah, Georgia*; *The Edisto River, South Carolina*; *The Savannah River, South Carolina*; *Live Oaks in South Carolina*, and *The Keowee River, South Carolina*.

Returning once again to *Appleton's*, we can conclude that by the intentions and implications of *River Plantation* as presented by Richards in the years preceding the Civil War, this painting can be interpreted as a river scene, and more specifically, a river scene of the Savannah River (Figure 35).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Thomas Addison Richards frequently painted imagery synonymous with the South. In particular, he captured the region's most outstanding features, such as the lofty river banks, the expansive live oak, or the lush Cyprus-filled swampland, to name a few. In the case of *River Plantation*, as we have seen, Richards depicts slaves spending a leisurely day by the lush riverside on the property of a plantation. It is apparent that the artist highly regarded this particular type of river composition, for it appears more than once. One can note strong similarities between *River Plantation* (Figure 1) and the engraving, *Savannah River* (Figure 35), similarities that are too significant to dismiss.¹⁸⁸ Featured in *Appleton's* (1857), the *Savannah River* is accompanied by text in which Richards described the river:

The Savannah divides the States of Georgia and South Carolina, though half their lengths, its course, exclusive of its branches, is about 450 miles. The cities of Augusta and Savannah are upon its banks, and it enters the Atlantic 18 miles below the latter place. From June to November it is navigable for large vessels as large as Savannah, and for steamboats up to Augusta, 230 miles. The river voyage between these points is a very pleasant one, presenting to the eyes of the stranger many picturesque novelties, in the cotton fields which lie along the banks, through the upper part of the passage; and in the rice plantations below. Approaching Savannah, the tourist will be particularly delighted with the mystic glens of the wild swamp reaches, and with the luxuriant groves of live-oak which shadow the ancient-looking manors of the planters.¹⁸⁹

Although included in the section on Georgia, the reader can deduce that Richards was particularly engaged in depicting the Savannah River in his engravings and paintings, whether

¹⁸⁸ James M. Sauls, Curator of the Robert P. Coggins Collection in 1984, also noted the similarities between these two images, and in his discussion of *Appleton's* and Richards's description of alligator hunting, wrote: "on the same page on which this incident is related appeared a view of the Savannah River that is close in many of its features to *River Plantation*," in Bruce Chambers, *Art and Artists of the South: The Robert P. Coggins Collection* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 20. Sauls does not include this engraving in his study, nor does he elaborate upon these similarities. Discovered during my own research, these features will be described on the following page.

¹⁸⁹ Richards, *Appleton's*, 270-71.

from the Georgia or South Carolina side of the river, as additionally noted in another engraving in “The Landscape of the South” (Figure 36).¹⁹⁰

Like the composition of *River Plantation*, this engraving in Appleton’s, *The Savannah River* (Figure 35), features the diagonal riverside with a large and moss-filled live oak tree. The focus remains on the elements presented by the artist in the plane closest to the viewer.¹⁹¹

Behind the prominent tree are smaller oaks, and this repeated element follows the recession of the riverbank and creates a sense of depth. Along the riverbank and on the populated side is magnificent foliage, which because of its loose and varied brushwork, contrasts with the thick brush of woods on the opposite bank. Both sides of the river portray nature’s abundance within this calm and idyllic scene. Also quite similar to *River Plantation* are the African-American figures who enjoy their surroundings. In this particular instance, they are situated again, on a well-lit path, but closer to the river. Like the pair of slaves in *River Plantation*’s composition, they look to the right and point somewhere, perhaps in admiration for the picturesque beauty that surrounds them. They too are in repose and remain seated by the riverbank. And quite aptly, Richards has included his signature in the lower right hand corner of the composition, so near to where his signature is located in *River Plantation*. Considering these definitive similarities, and Richards’s presence at the 1859 National Academy of Design Exhibition, I propose that *River Plantation*’s original title was *The Savannah River, South Carolina*, one of the seven southern

¹⁹⁰ In his 1853 article, Richards described the rivers of the South, and ends his discussion by referring to the engraving of the Savannah River: “Our frontispiece also is a taste of the same quality [“singular beauty in the hazy atmosphere”]; a glimpse on the Savannah River with the spires of the Georgian metropolis in the distance: the middle ground occupied by a rice-mill, and in the foreground the rice flats and the live oak,” in “The Rice Lands,” 730. Also, in 1860, 141 pictures, studies, and sketches by Richards were up for sale at the Artists’ Fund Society of New York in their First Annual Exhibition. Included in this group was the work *The Savannah River*, number 80, in *Artists’ Fund Society of New York, Catalogue of the First Annual Exhibition, 1860, Galleries of the National Academy of Design* (New York: GA Whitehorne, 1860).

¹⁹¹ So much so that art historians Koch and Kefalos did not mention the veiled plantation home in their discussion of *River Plantation*, “which shows a generalized, broader river vista,” in Kefalos, 38.

paintings on display, most of which depicted scenery from the state of South Carolina.¹⁹²

Compared to the image of the Keowee River (Figure 37), also featured in *Appleton's* and perhaps similar to Richards's painting *The Keowee River, South Carolina* that Richards also exhibited in 1859, one can see why the Savannah River is more likely the river in *River Plantation*.¹⁹³

Though Thomas Addison Richards relocated to the North to train at the National Academy, and continued his stay there during the Civil War, the artist was inclined to align himself with the South during a time when other artists warily did.¹⁹⁴ A review from a critic writing for *New York Semi-Weekly Tribune* offers a glimpse into how delicate the situation between the North and the South was during this period in history. In the first of three reviews for the National Academy of Design Exhibition of 1859 that the *Semi-Weekly Tribune* produced, a critic reviewed Richards's *Group of Palmettos*, a painting which probably originated from a sketch and the engraving (Figure 38) published in "The Rice Lands." The anonymous critic wrote, "a *Group of Palmettos* is the first picture in the second gallery. It is by Richards; but we are not willing to believe that these are the palmettos of the sovereign State of South Carolina, which we have been taught to dread."¹⁹⁵ This remark discloses a possible mindset that Richards was determined to overcome. Significantly, after the Civil War, the number of Richards's paintings of Southern imagery displayed at the American-Art Union and the National Academy of Design dropped considerably. Instead, still-life paintings such as *Basket of Peaches* (1865; Morris Museum of Art) and landscapes of the Swiss Alps, produced after his 1867 trip to Europe, were the prominent kinds of representations presented to the public.

¹⁹² It is possible that this painting is even the same one that was for sale at the 1860 Artists' Fund Society Exhibition.

¹⁹³ Richards, *Appleton's*, 291.

¹⁹⁴ The Editor of *The Crayon* wrote that in 1860, "Mr. T. Addison Richards, having withdrawn from the Cooper Union as director of the School of Design for Women, has opened a studio for professional practice, also for the instruction of amateurs and other students in art, at No. 756 Broadway, corner of Eighth Street, over Nichol's Gallery," in "Domestic Art Gossip," *The Crayon* 7 (1860): 299.

¹⁹⁵ "Exhibition of the Academy of Design," *New York Semi-Weekly Tribune* (1859), 2.

In 1859, Richards exhibited seven southern landscape scenes in a northern venue, and then contributed his highly detailed “The Rice Lands of the South,” to *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* for their November issue. Although no direct criticism or evidence shows that *River Plantation* was definitively included in this important exhibition, one must ask how it could have been excluded from the show. Completed during the period of 1855 to 1860, *River Plantation*, suggested as originally titled *The Savannah River, South Carolina*, promotes the lush, picturesque beautiful southern landscape. The promoter was Richards, an artist who knew, through his travels, that it indeed did exist, and that it only awaited the eager traveler willing to explore its infinite potential.

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Figure 1: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, 1855-1860, Oil on Canvas, 20 ¼ x 30 inches, Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.



Figure 2: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, Detail.



Figure 3: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, Detail.



Figure 4: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, Detail.



Figure 5: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, Detail.



Figure 6: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, Detail.



Figure 7: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, Detail.



Figure 8: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, Detail.



Figure 9: Thomas Addison Richards, *River Plantation*, Detail.



Figure 10: William Gilpin, *A Picturesque View of Tintern Abbey*, From *Observations on the river Wye*, 1782, Aquatint, Image Courtesy of the Lamar Dodd School of Art, Art History Digital Archive.



Figure 11: Thomas Cole, *Sunset in the Catskills*, 1841, Detail of Tree at Left, Oil on Canvas, 22 ½ x 30 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, in Conron, *Picturesque America*, 116.



A LIVE OAK.

Figure 12: Thomas Addison Richards, *A Live Oak*, Engraving in “*The Rice Lands of the South*,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 734.



Figure 13: Thomas Addison Richards, *A Water Oak*, Engraving in "The Rice Lands of the South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 737.

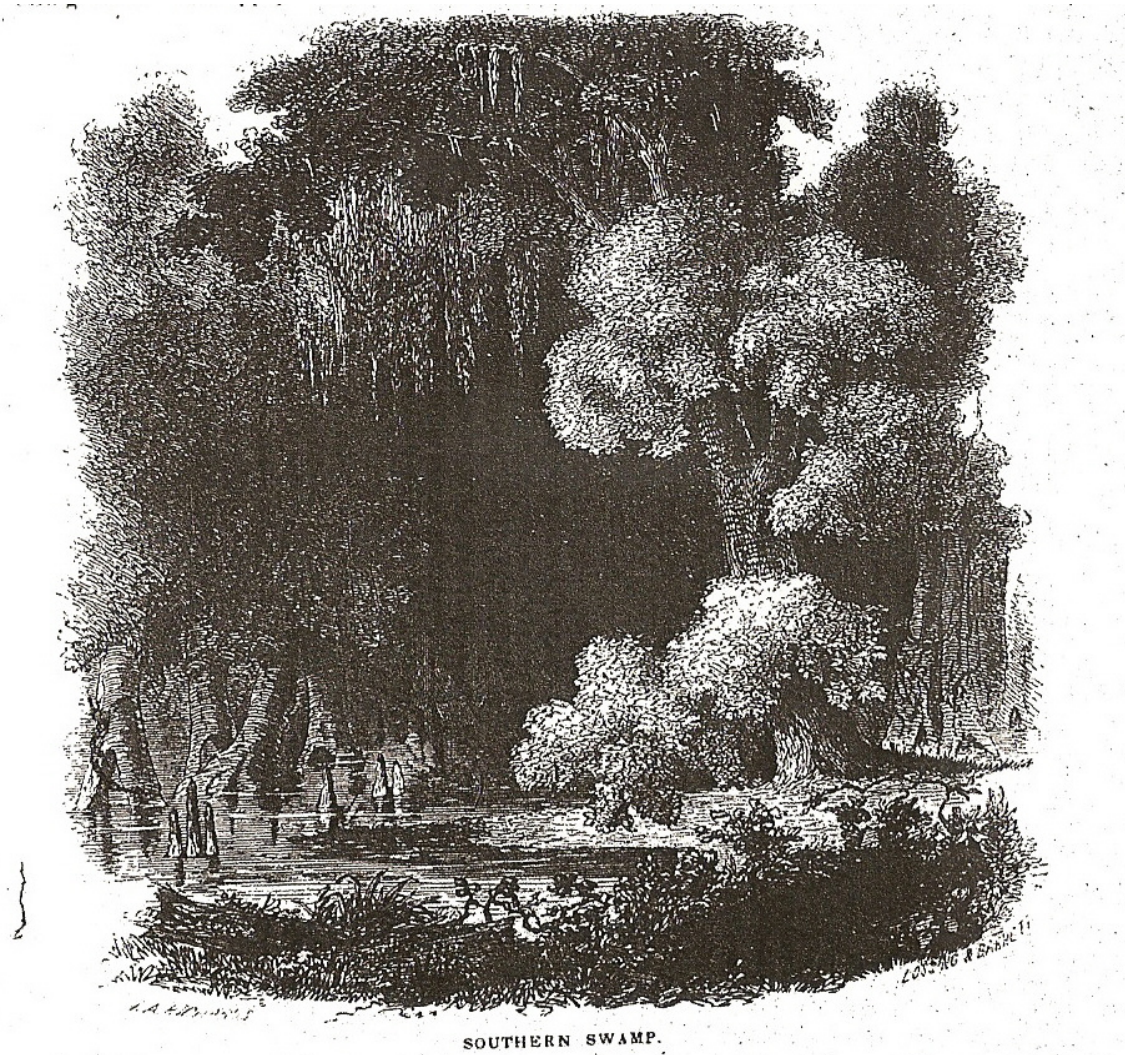


Figure 14: Thomas Addison Richards, *Southern Swamp*, Engraving in "The Landscape of the South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 36, no. 6 (1853): 729.



Figure 15: Thomas Addison Richards, *Lowland River Scene*, Engraving in “The Landscape of the South,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 36, no. 6 (1853): 730.



Figure 16: Thomas Addison Richards, *The Edisto River, South Carolina*, 1858, Oil on Canvas, 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches, signed, lower right: 1858 T. Addison Richards, Greenville Museum of Art, Greenville, South Carolina, Museum Purchase with Funds Donated by the Arthur and Holly Magill Foundation, in Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art*, 63.



Figure 17: Thomas Addison Richards, *Sketch*, 1852-1856, Smithsonian Institute of Art, The Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.



Figure 18: James Goodwyn Clonney, *In The Woodshed*, 1838, Oil on Canvas, 43.18 x 35.24, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, Gift of the Martha C. Karolik for the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815-1865, 1947, http://mfa.org/collections/search_art.asp?coll_keywords=james+goodwyn+clonney.



Figure 19: Thomas Addison Richards, *A Carolina Rice Planter*, Engraving in “The Rice Lands of the South,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 738.



PLANTING THE RICE.

Figure 20: Thomas Addison Richards, *Planting the Rice*, Engraving in “The Rice Lands of the South,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 726.



Figure 21: Thomas Addison Richards, *A Stroll Through the Arcade, Savannah, Georgia*, No Date, Oil on Canvas, 20 x 30 inches, Collection of David and Janice Miller, <http://www.askart.com/askart/artist.aspx?artist=135595>.

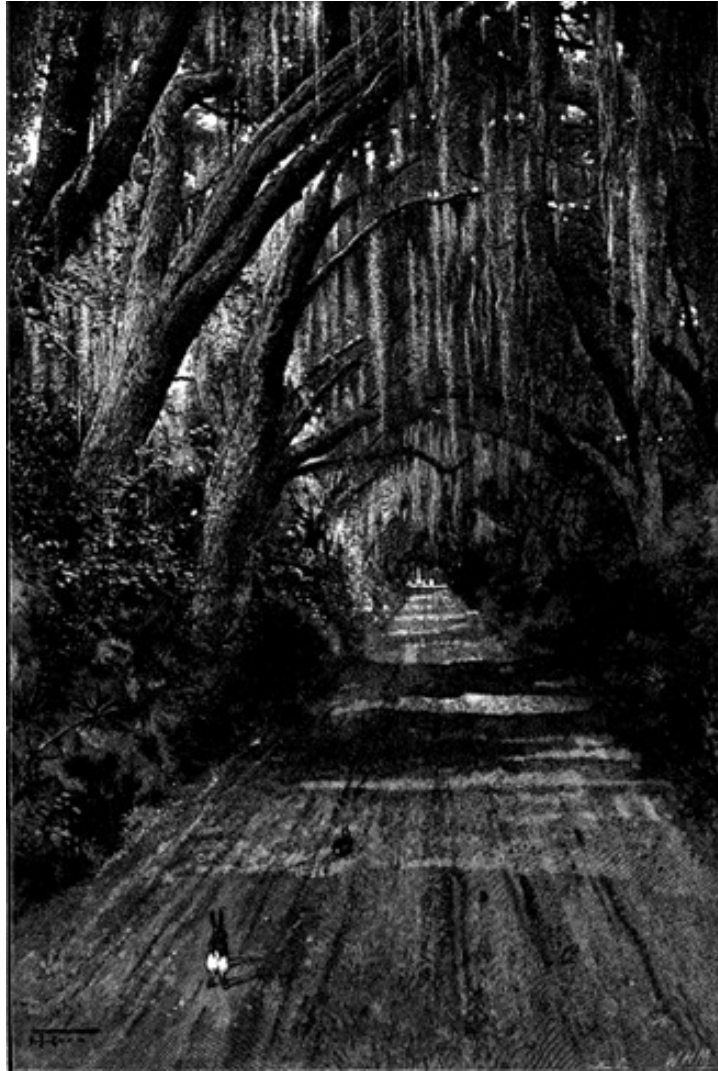


Figure 22: J.W. Avery, *Main Avenue, Bonaventure Cemetery*, in “The City of Savannah Georgia,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 76, no. 452 (1888): 267.



Figure 23: Thomas Addison Richards, *A Live Oak Avenue*, Engraving in "The Rice Lands of the South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 733.



Figure 24: Eastman Johnson, *Negro Life at the South (Old Kentucky Home)*, 1859, Oil on Canvas, 36 x 45 inches, The New-York Historical Society, New York, New York, in Davis, "Eastman Johnson's *Negro Life at the South*," 68.



NEGROES AT HOME.

Figure 25: Thomas Addison Richards, *Negroes at Home*, Engraving in “The Rice Lands of the South,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 724.



Figure 26: John Banvard, *Mississippi River Plantation Scene*, c. 1850, Oil on Canvas, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul Minnesota, in Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect*, 26.

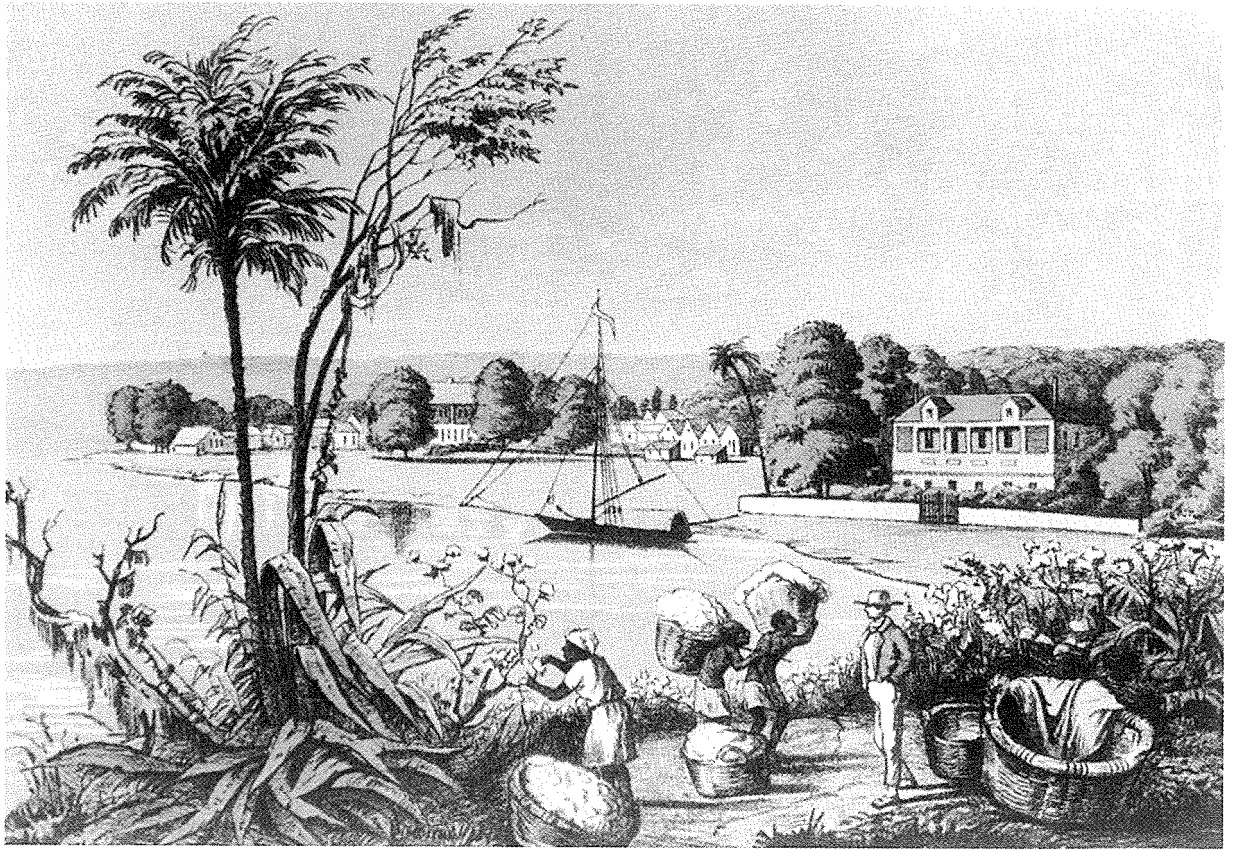


Figure 27: Henry Lewis, *Cotton Plantation*, 1856, Colored Lithograph, Illustration for *Das Illustrierte Mississippithal*, Library of Congress, Rare Books, in Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect*, 27.



Figure 28: Charles Willson Peale, *Mount Clare*, 1775, Oil on Canvas, Private Collection, Current Whereabouts Unknown, Photograph Courtesy of the Rick Art Reference Library, New York, New York, in Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect*, 7.



Figure 29: Frederic Edwin Church, *Shirley*, 1851, Pencil on Paper, Courtesy of the Carter Collection at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library, in Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect*, 15.

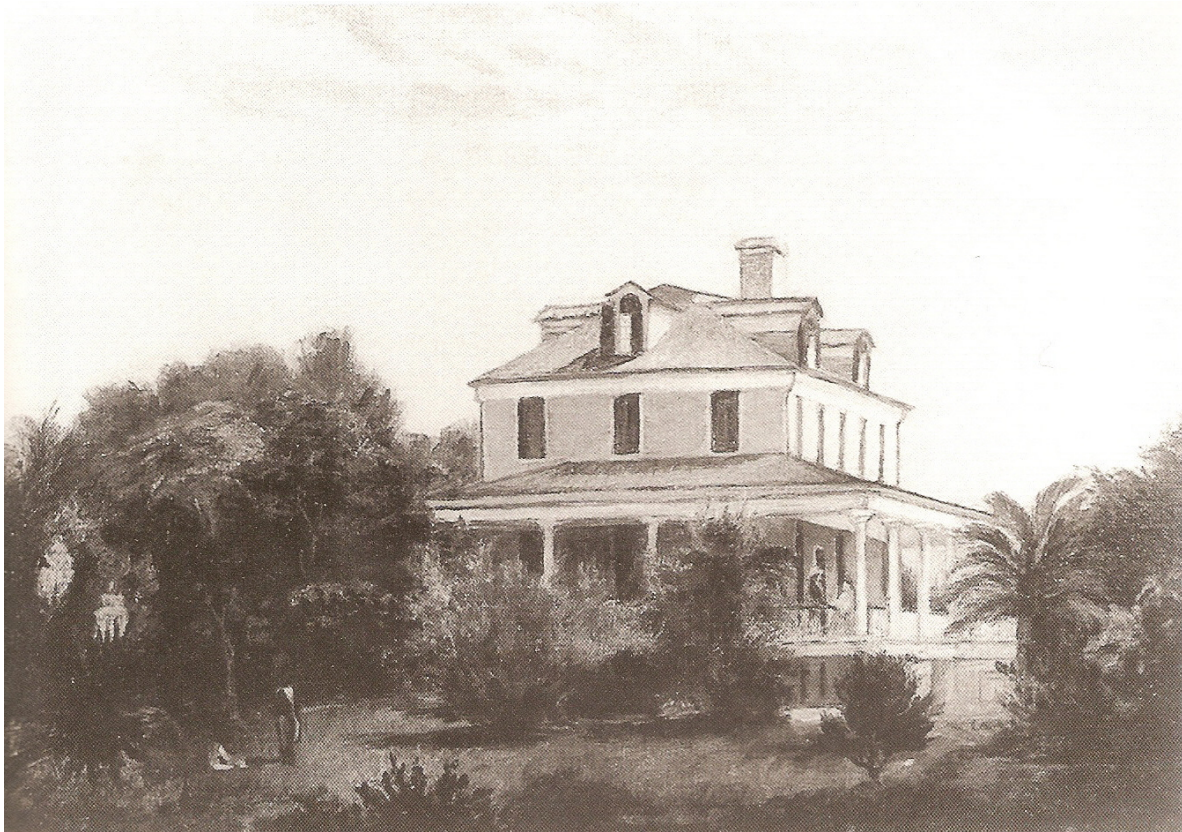
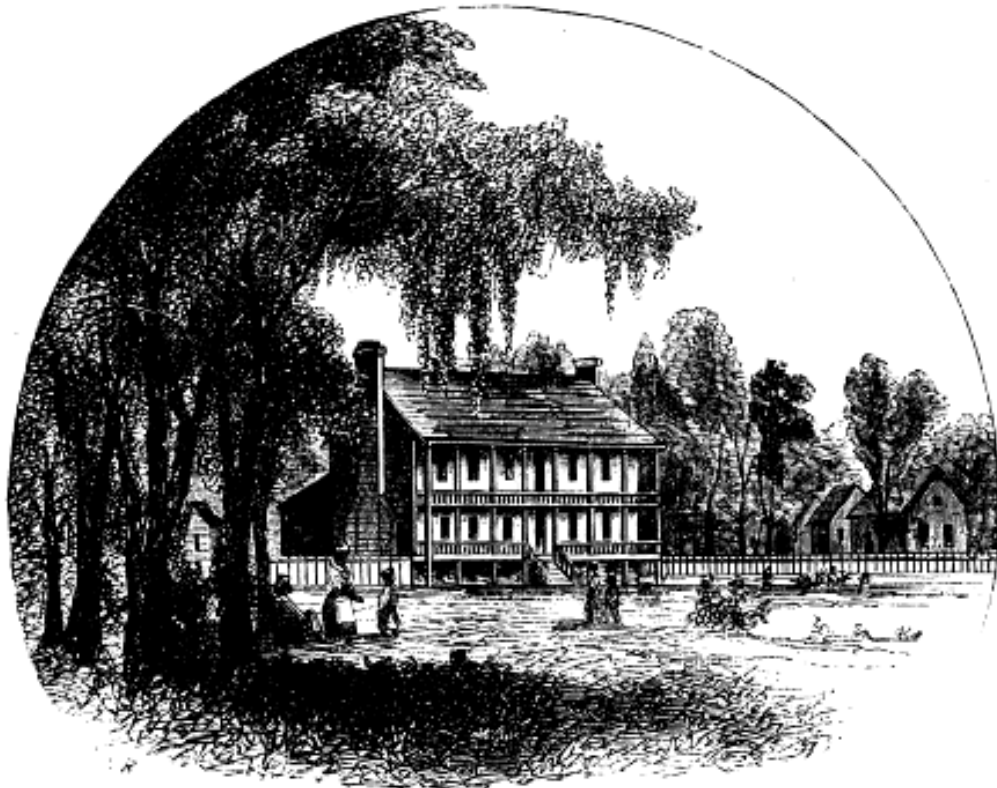


Figure 30: John Lord Couper, *Cannon's Point*, c. 1850, Oil on Canvas, Coastal Georgia Historical Society, St. Simons Island, Georgia, in Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect*, 31.



A PLANTER'S MANSION.

Figure 31: Thomas Addison Richards, *A Planter's Mansion*, Engraving in "The Rice Lands of the South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 732.

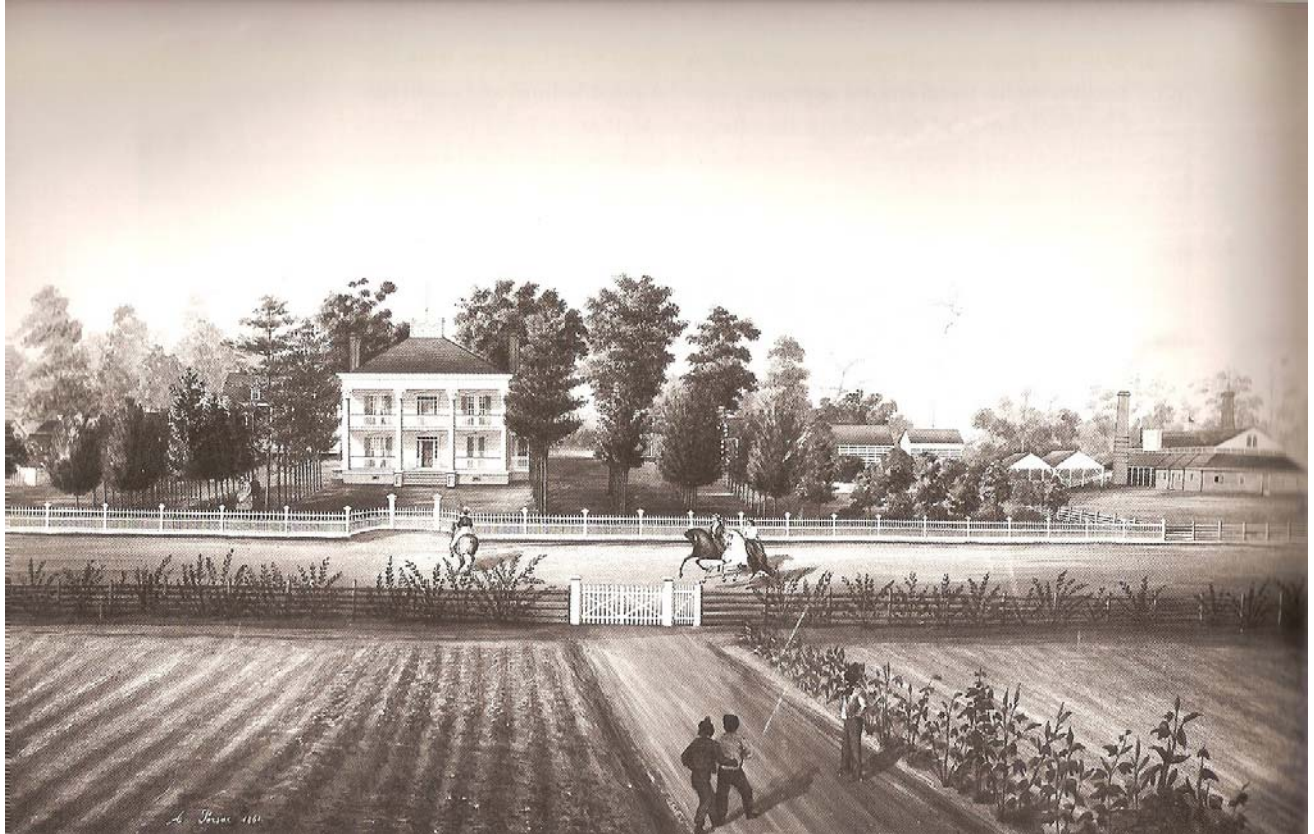


Figure 32: Marie Adrien Persac, *St. John Plantation*, 1861, Gouache and Collage on Paper, Anglo-American Art Museum, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect*, 104.



Figure 33: Thomas Addison Richards, *Residence of William Gilmore Simms, Woodland, South Carolina*, 1852, Graphite on Paper, 5 ½ x 7 7/8 inches, Collection of William Nathaniel Banks, Newnan, Georgia, in Koch, "The Romance of American Landscape," 13.



VIEW WITHIN THE PIG-TIGHT GATE.

Figure 34: Thomas Addison Richards, *View within the Pig-Tight Gate*, Engraving in “Idlewild: The Home of N.P. Willis,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 16, no. 92 (1858): 150.

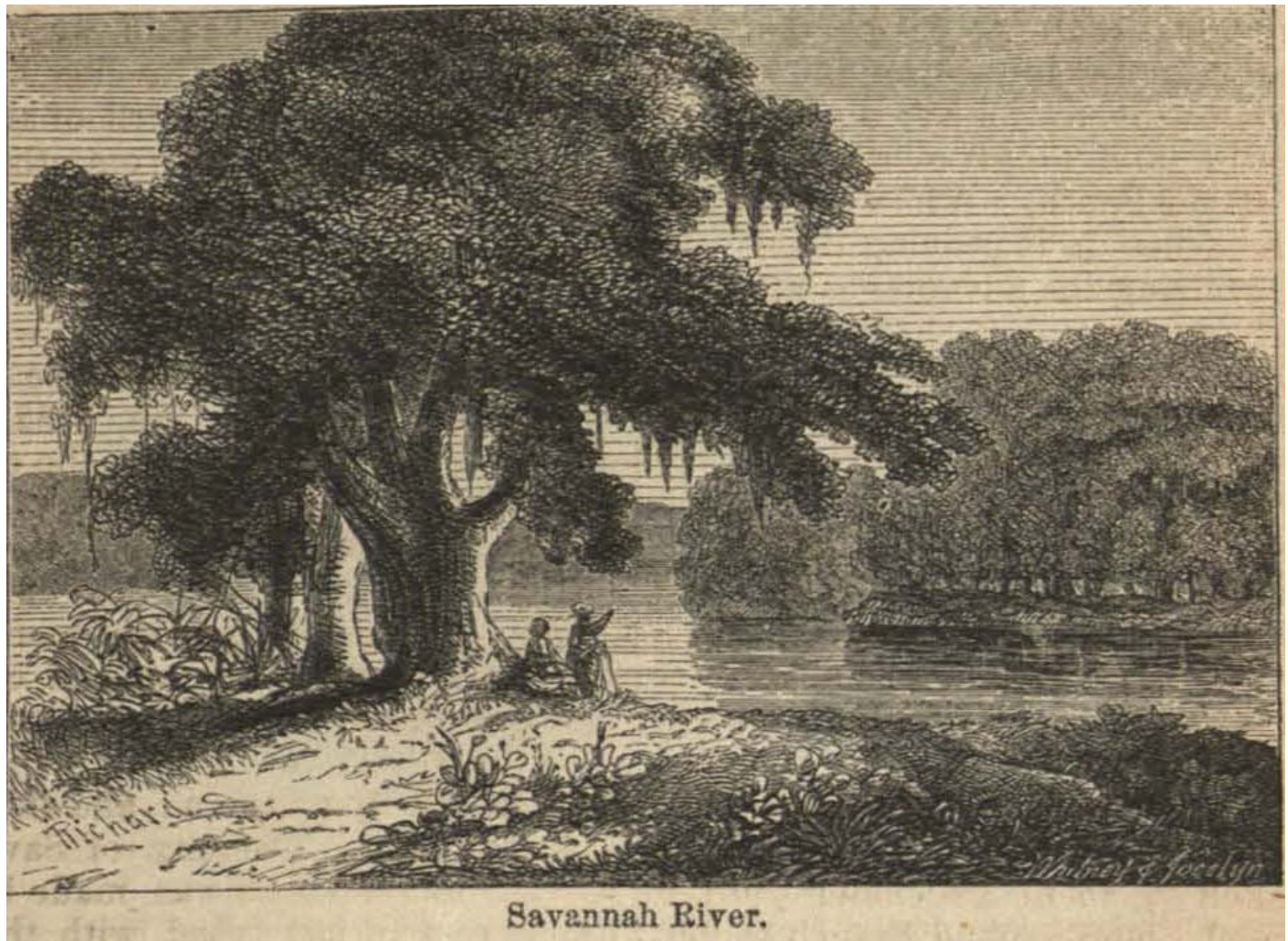


Figure 35: Thomas Addison Richards, *Savannah River*, Engraving in *Appleton's Hand-Book Guide to Travel*, 1857, 271.



Figure 36: Thomas Addison Richards, *Rice-Mill on the Savannah*, Engraving in “The Landscape of the South,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 11, no. 36 (1853): 725.



The Keowee River, S. C.

Figure 37: *The Keowee River, S.C.*, Engraving in *Appleton's Hand-Book Guide to Travel*, 1857, 201.



GROUP OF PALMETTOES.

Figure 38: Thomas Addison Richards, *Group of Palmettos*, Engraving in “The Rice Lands of the South,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 114 (1859): 735.