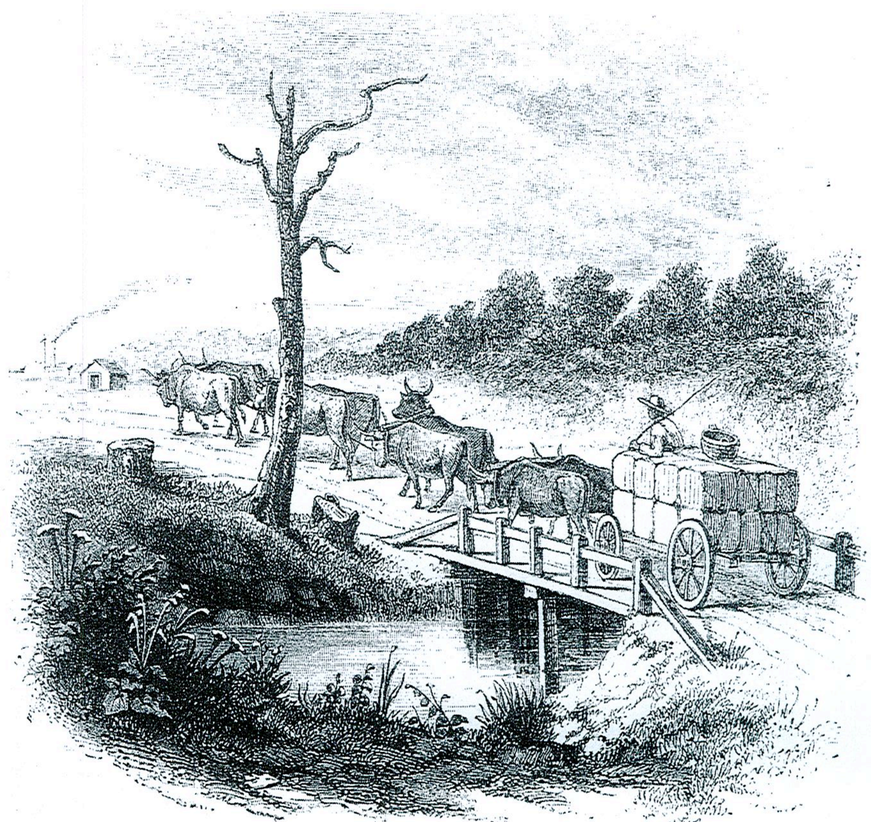
There were differences within the South in the employment of space and time: idiosyncratic differences among planters and, importantly, differences according to the organization of work. More than the gang system, the task system made a distinction between planters' time and the time belonging to the enslaved.[78] Work in the task system was organized more by accomplishment than by time. Bondpeople were given daily work assignments, or "tasks." Once the tasks were completed, typically around midafternoon, bondpeople were permitted to tend to their own gardens, crafts, and other work. Yet even in the South Carolina and Georgia coastal rice plantations structured around the task system, time still had a role to play. Tickets, like passes elsewhere, governed and controlled enslaved people's movement, and planters or managers endeavored to prevent enslaved people from leaving farms without permission. These endeavors had different consequences for women and men.

From Stephanie Camp's Closer to Freedom

SLAVERY, SPACE, AND GENDER

The geography of containment was somewhat more elastic for men than it was for women, in large measure because the work that provided opportunities to leave the plantation was generally reserved for men. Male teamsters transported plantation products to town for sale, retrieved purchases made by their owners, and moved the goods that were sometimes traded among neighbors. When notes, letters, and documents needed to be carried to local recipients, it was bondmen who served as messengers. Thus did men at times gain the opportunity to learn the lay of the land, roads, and waterways.[79] These opportunities were denied to women, who rarely received passes for work purposes. Family obligations, too, presented enslaved men with the occasion to leave the farms on which they lived. In abroad marriages it was generally the man who visited his family, in accordance, probably, with both black and white gender ideals.[80] Likewise, during the weeks and months of romancing that would precede any settled relationship and during the heady days of more casual affairs, it was the men who traveled to woo and sweet-talk.

Men who visited their families and girlfriends were far from unlimited in their mobility, although slaveholders were not always in agreement about how tightly passes should circumscribe the bearer's travel. Larkin Hundley wrote a pass that was good for one month, a "general pass," allowing a bondman named Ben to "pass & repass to his wife." This pass was almost certainly understood to be valid only on Saturday afternoons and Sundays until the evening, or perhaps through early Monday mornings.[81] Whatever



Hauling Cotton to the River, from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, March 1854. Some men were able to leave plantations when they transported goods to town or port for trade. Other work, such as running errands or delivering correspondence and documents, also gave some men a measure of mobility that far fewer women enjoyed. (Manuscripts, Special Collections, University Archives, University of Washington Libraries, UW 22863)

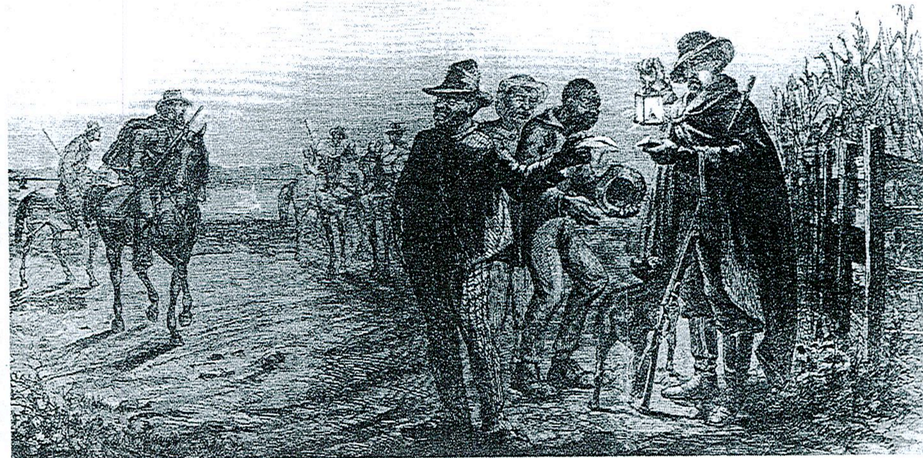
understanding may have accompanied the pass, it was a rarity in the rural South. Such general passes were more common among urban bondpeople and those who hired out their own time.[82] Most rural planters would have disapproved of Hundley's practice and agreed instead with the slaveholder who believed that "no practice is more prejudicial to the community . . . than that of giving them general Pass'es—to go Where they please." This planter strictly refused to give "general Pass'es" and provided only narrowly written passes. These he only granted when a petitioner "first states particularly where he wishes to go, and assigns a cause for his desiring to be absent. if he

had the authorization of his own owner but also to "report himself to the overseer immediately" and ask for "permission" to visit. Should the caller "wish to become a regular visitor," he was required to secure "permission from me."[84] Moreover, bondmen were not always permitted to visit their wives or even to marry women from other farms. Some planters, in search of "perfect order" among their "people," banned such abroad marriages, insisting that their bondpeople were "not to marry from Home."[85]

Even when men who wanted to visit their loved ones asked all the right people and got their documentation in order, there was still potential for trouble. Visiting bondmen had to be extremely careful not to lose their passes, for they could pay dearly for the error. When men were stopped, they were at the mercy of slave patrols who themselves were often motivated by the payment they could gain for capturing a runaway. One bondman, Jim Booker, spent "4 months in jail" when he was "illegally" arrested as a runaway. His owner was outraged by what happened; Booker had shown the patrollers his pass, but one of them "tore [it] up in the presence of witnesses (white) & then took Booker up as a runaway."[86] Passes provided bondmen with a measure of mobility, but that mobility was a mixed privilege.

Because of the allowances sometimes granted men for work and family reasons, the sight of enslaved men transporting letters, messages, goods, and materials and men visiting their girlfriends and families was an ordinary part of antebellum landscapes—as was the mandatory presentation of the pass that legitimated their travel. But their limited travel certainly sparked their imaginations for what lay beyond. The bondman Charly was given written permission to pass between his owner's properties and appears to have made the most of the time he spent on the road. After a few years of moving about for work, Charly was captured as a runaway some five miles from "where he lately lived."[87] Men's dreams of running away could be explored and tried out as they traveled through their neighborhoods and, in some cases, farther afield.

The overall situation was the opposite for women, who were held more firmly than men within plantations. There were exceptions, especially in the upper South. Women who worked as domestics might enjoy the occasional perquisite. For instance, one Virginia planter woman wrote passes for some of the women she owned to take their cotton to "Miss Sally Taylor" and have "simple cloth woven."[88] Women residing in towns or cities, whether permanently or on a yearly hiring basis, might also receive passes to perform their



The Plantation Patrol, from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*, 11 July 1863. Although some bondmen enjoyed a degree of mobility unknown to most enslaved women, they nonetheless were strictly policed. Patrols, gangs of young white men, and ordinary citizens all could and did demand to see passes. They punished those who lacked the proper papers, as well as those who had them. (Virginia Historical Society)

chores, as the Richmond bondwoman Ann did in order to "pass from my *house* to the *Grocery Store* & return." On another occasion Ann was given permission to "pass from my room on *Bank. St.* to my rented house in the valley untill 9 *O'Clock* to night."[89] Doctor women and midwives necessarily took their skills to different places. For truly special occasions, even field women might find themselves stepping out with the permission of their owners. Virginian Richard Eppes once gave a group of men and women "passes to be baptized in Petersburg."[90] Though more common to the upper South, exceptions were not entirely unique to that section. In Louisiana, Bennett Barrow gave "Lucy Mary O[ld]. Hannah Lucky jenny Lize & Leah" passes to go work on a relative's farm.[91]

The very novelty of such passes, however, only highlights the rarity with which they were given to women. Over the course of their lives, bondwomen would leave their home plantations, with permission, extremely rarely. On Christmas Day 1848, slaveholder Rebecca S. C. Pilsbury granted "all the *Boys*" permission to be "absent" on "holiday." She required that they return the following day but was not entirely confident that they would obey her orders. Pilsbury was alone with her slaves that day and noted nervously in her

... undermined her own authority by granting a second holiday against her judgment and in contradiction to the farm's general policy of never allowing bondmen to leave "after sunset." Self-recrimination ensued: "I really believe I should give them permission to run away if they but wished it." Yet her anxious permissiveness did not extend to the bondwomen she owned. Pilsbury granted permission to leave during these holidays to only one woman. After Christmas was over, a woman named Fanny was allowed to go and visit her family.[92] Pilsbury did not perceive her bondwomen as frightening or intimidating. Consequently, her enslaved women did not gain the concessions that could be won from a jittery slaveholder like Pilsbury.

Within plantation boundaries, women sometimes occupied spaces different from those of men. Many women served in the slaveholding homes at some point in their lives, ordinarily during childhood, pregnancies, and again in old age. Women thus found themselves in the yard, kitchen, and interior of slaveholders' homes at intervals throughout their lives. On the rice plantations of coastal South Carolina, gender difference in space was even greater, for rice cultivation was largely female work. While male supervisors regulated the flow of water over the rice, and the rest of the men worked in other crops and on plantation maintenance, women on large rice plantations worked in the fields, planting seeds, hoeing and transplanting seedlings, weeding continuously, and then harvesting mature plants.[93] Men and women who produced rice worked in different fields, occupying different physical locations in the rice swamps.

If gender altered women's locations in some southern spaces, it also configured plantation time differently for women and men. Generally, men and women both quit working in the fields at or about sunset, but women's evenings were less easily "off" time than men's, for they arrived home only to begin their "second shift" of household work. "Women had to work all day in de fields an' den come home an' do de housework at night," one bondwoman recalled.[94] After they had all quit their daily labor in the fields, the women did "dere cookin' at night." To be sure, bondmen also labored for the benefit of their families: they hunted, fished, gathered firewood, and contributed craft work to their households. Together, women and men "attend[ed] to [the] duties of their own dear homes," as the formerly enslaved Thomas Jones put it.[95] Men also sometimes performed extra field work at night, such as burning brush and various chores "'round de place."[96] But women's second shift of labor was a greater and more consistent burden. Most bondwomen arrived at

candles; and to wash and mend their own and their family's clothing. They also had to make that clothing, as well as any bed linens, bonnets, or other extras that some enjoyed, and produce textiles for general plantation use.

Enslaved women, then, worked tiring second shifts during which they had to "wash, iron, patch, and get ready for the next day."[97] Women worked these second shifts whether they labored according to gang or task organization, and they were held to similarly high standards by their managers. When one Georgia woman failed to complete her "task of spinning," her manager "called her up," cursed her, "made her strip stark naked," and tied her to a post. Her arms were wrapped around the post and held by her husband while the overseer thrashed her with some seventy stripes.[98] Women's second shifts of work intensified the time-based controls that enslaved people throughout the South experienced. They also compounded women's greater spatial immobility by making escape difficult.

A final distinction characterized women's experiences of the geography of containment: its enforcement. When women were physically punished, the violence directed against them was not infrequently laced with sexual overtones. The hint of sadism charged the atmosphere when women were stripped, tied down, and thrashed. In an infamous passage from the autobiography of Solomon Northup, the author recounted the flogging of Patsey, an enslaved woman who was her owner's unwilling mistress and his jealously guarded possession. When she visited a friend on a neighboring plantation, her owner suspected that she had another lover, and his sexual rage issued in brutality. Patsey was stripped of "every article of dress," laid down "upon her face" completely "naked," and beaten cruelly. "Nowhere on that day, on the face of the whole earth, I venture to say, was there such a demoniac exhibition witnessed as then ensued. . . . She was terribly lacerated—I may say, without exaggeration, literally flayed."[99]

Cruelties that twisted such intimacies as sexual possessiveness, or the private body, into public events and violent acts were familiar features of women's lives in slavery. When women broke the rules and moved out of bounds, they risked and received punishments that were more than physically painful and heartbreaking; some were sexually degrading. Charlie Hudson sensed the sexual overtones in the whippings his overseer inflicted on the bondwomen in his charge. The man "had whuppins all time saved up special for de 'omans. He made 'em take off deir waistes and den he whipped 'em on deir bar backs 'til he was satisfied. He done all de whuppin' atter supper by candle light." Hudson could not remember "dat he ever whupped a man. He

ment did not hold women and men in the same ways, nor to the same degree, and it did not impose the same toll on all. Neither did it entirely enclose bondpeople of either sex.