


Mordecai Historic Park

The Mordecai House and surrounding landscape were part of one of the largest antebellum plantations in central North Carolina.


Five Generations of Lane and Mordecai descendants lived in the home between 1785 and 1964. In addition, over two hundred African American slaves lived on the property in the decades between the American Revolution and the Civil War.

The Mordecai
Story

Pronunciation



For nearly two centuries, those involved in *The Mordecai Story* experienced powerful social and political changes, including the formation of Raleigh as the Capitol of North Carolina in 1792 and the end of slavery in 1865. Today, Mordecai Historic Park stands as a testament to all of the people who once lived here. *The Mordecai Story: Faith, Family, and Community in Raleigh* examines their lives in context with their place and time, and allows their voices to once again be heard.

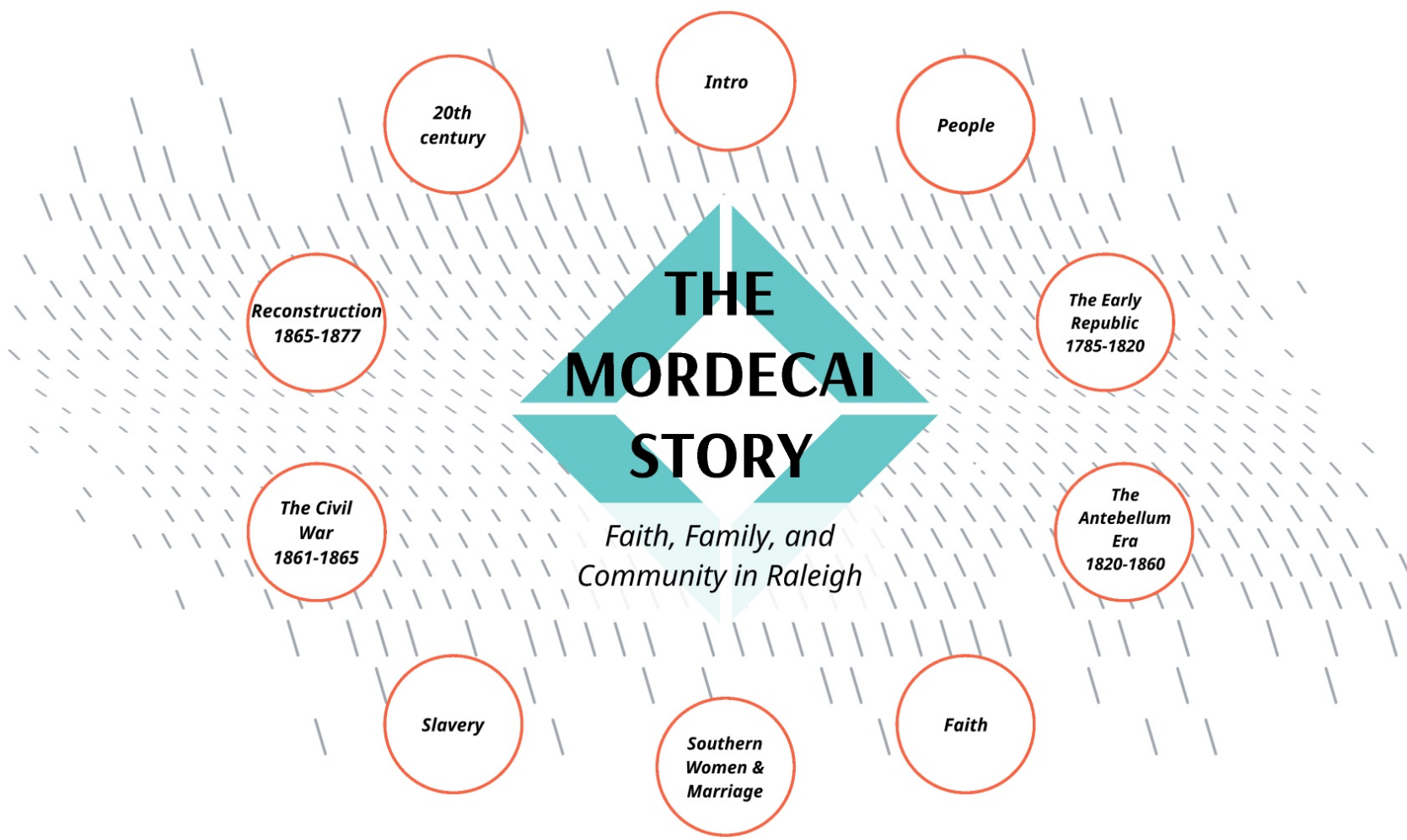





The pronunciation of the
family name.

Click here.

To listen to audio again, navigate away from and back
to this page.





Five generations of Lane and Mordecai descendants lived in the home between 1785 and 1964. Once one of the largest plantations in North Carolina, the Lane-Mordecai property was also home to more than two hundred African American slaves in the decades between the American Revolution and the Civil War.



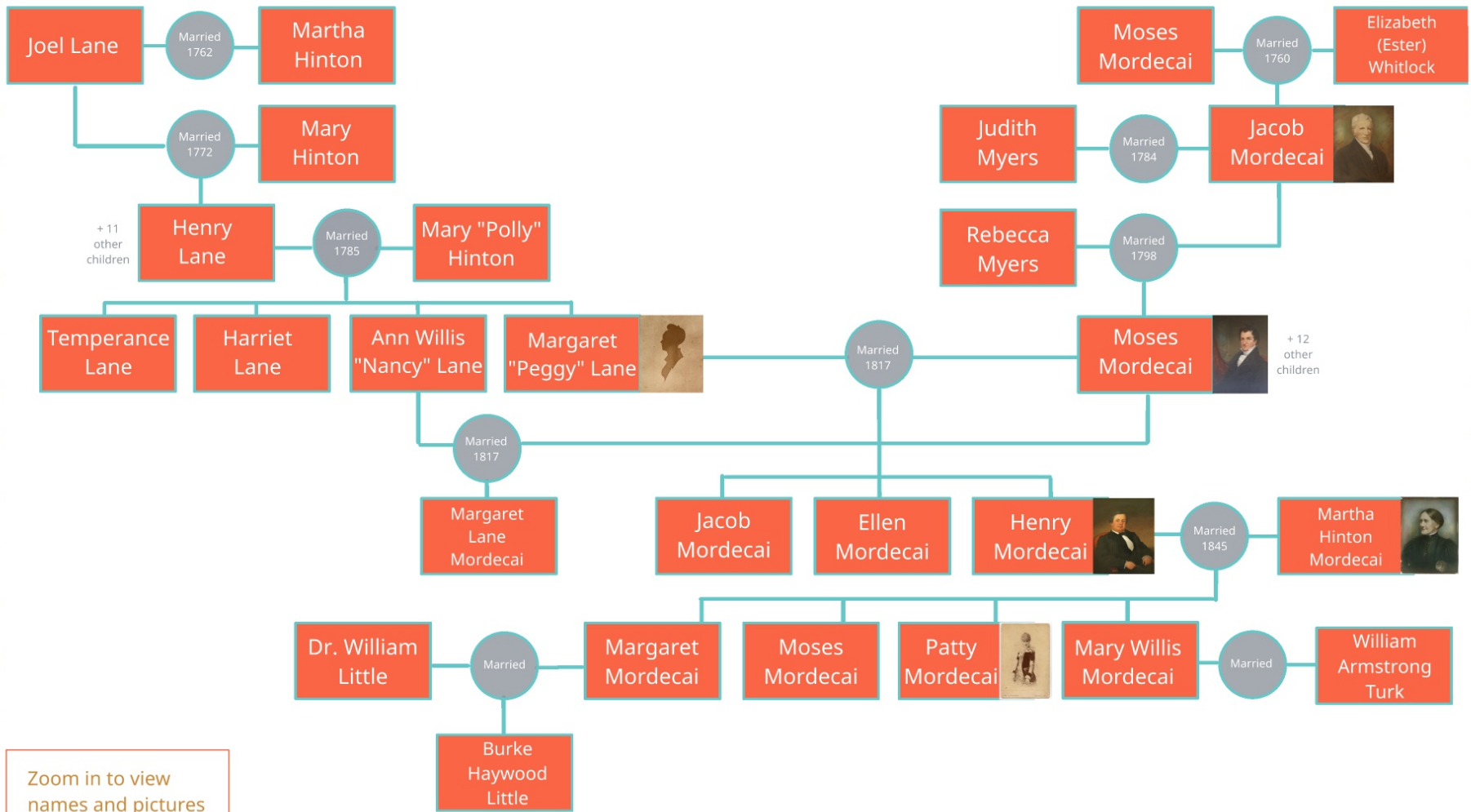
**Mordecai
Family Tree**



**Enslaved
Community**



Mordecai Family Tree



Zoom in to view names and pictures

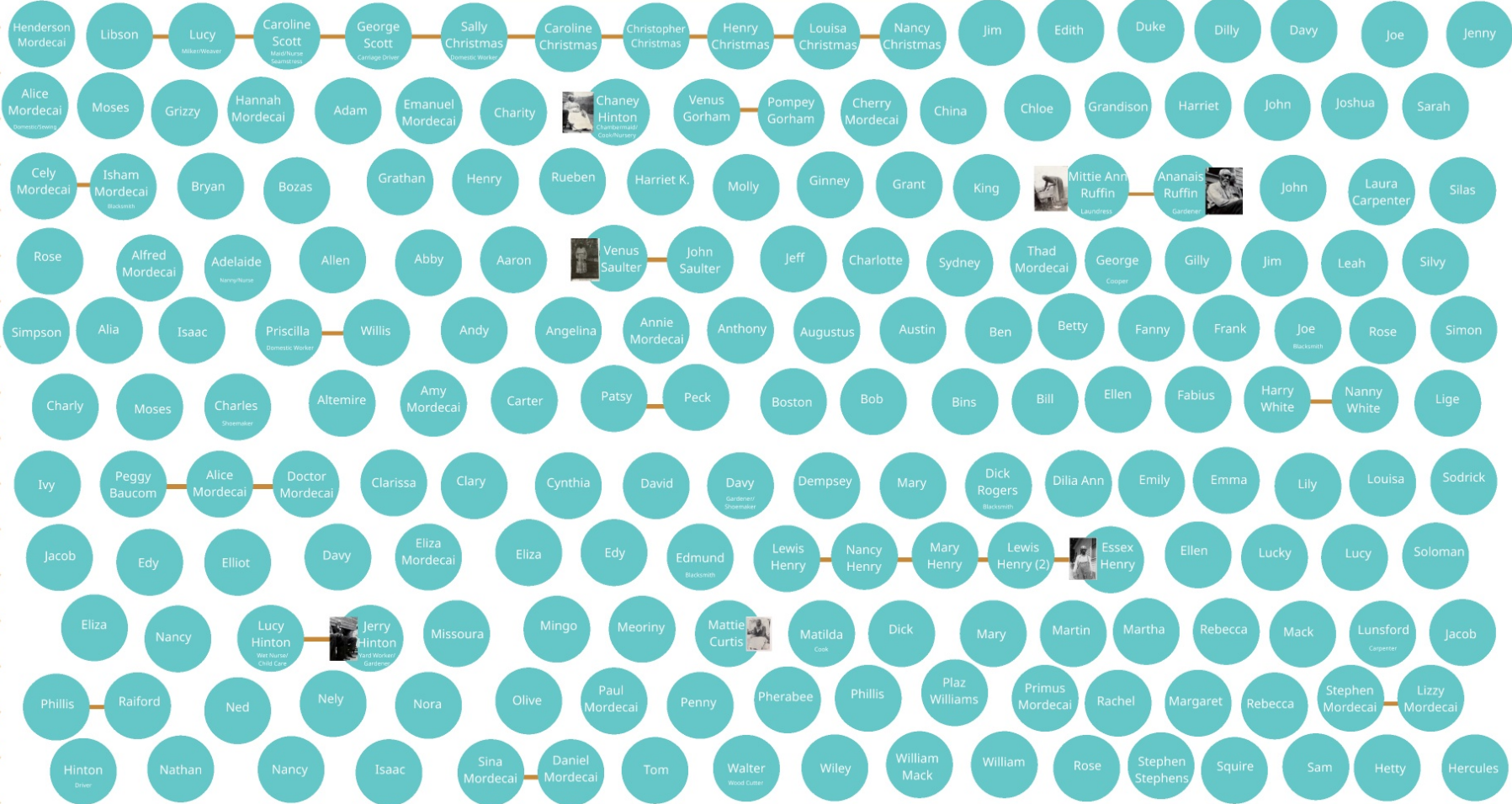
Enslaved Community

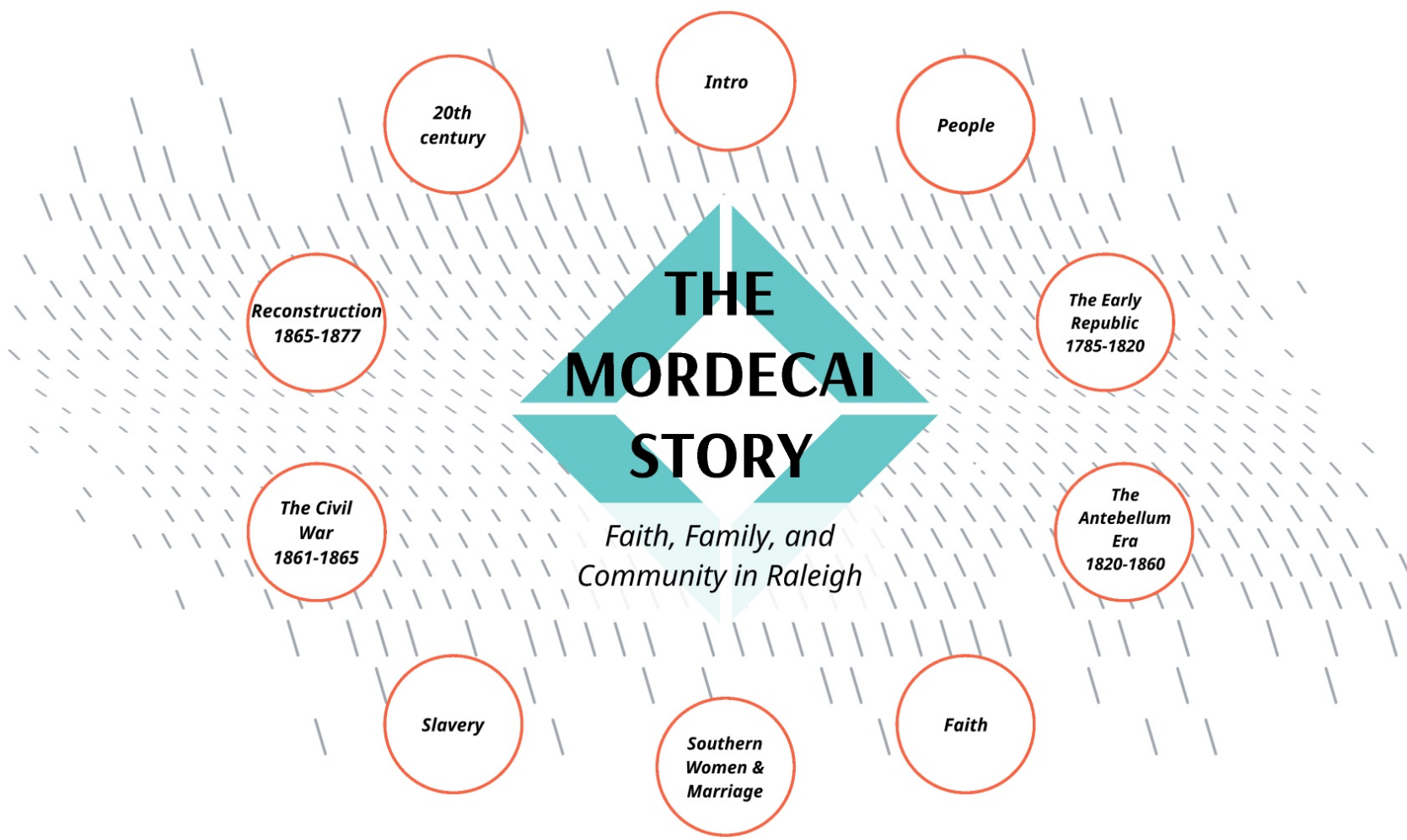
— Indicates Family Relationship

Zoom in to view names and pictures

Billy Holmes
Carriage Driver

Betsy Holmes





Before the Mordecais

The area surrounding Mordecai Historic Park was once part of a large tract of land owned by Joel Lane. A prosperous farmer and prominent political figure, Lane played a major role in the founding of Wake County in 1771 and Raleigh in 1792.

Plan for
Raleigh, 1792

The Henry and
Polly Lane
Home



**Plan for
Raleigh, 1792**

Plan for Raleigh, 1792

In 1792, Joel Lane sold 1,000 acres to the state for the purpose of establishing the capital city. William Christmas surveyed the land and designed the original plan for Raleigh. It included a series of square lots and parks which would eventually surround the State Capitol. Around 1785, Henry Lane - Joel Lane's oldest son - inherited a sizable portion of his father's land. Henry and his new wife, Mary "Polly" Hinton, were the first to live in the home that later became known as the Mordecai House. The original structure, which would have been very comfortable for the time, probably consisted of four rooms. The land surrounding it was rural.

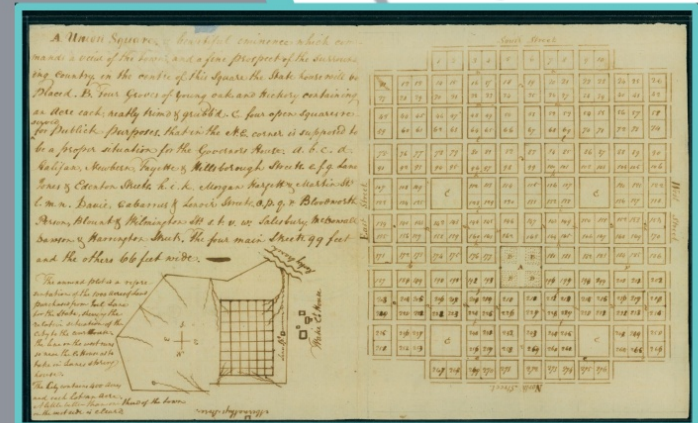


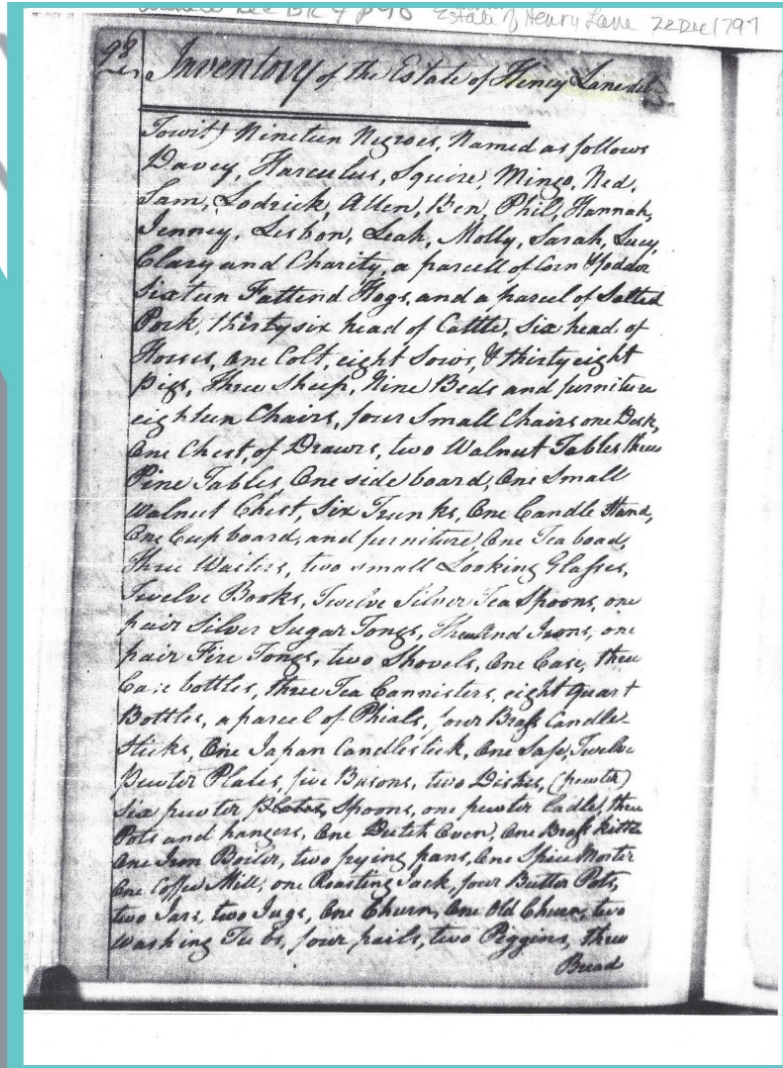
Image courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina



This is
Henry
the M
late 1
Polly
farm
daug
Temp
(Nan
ninet
consi

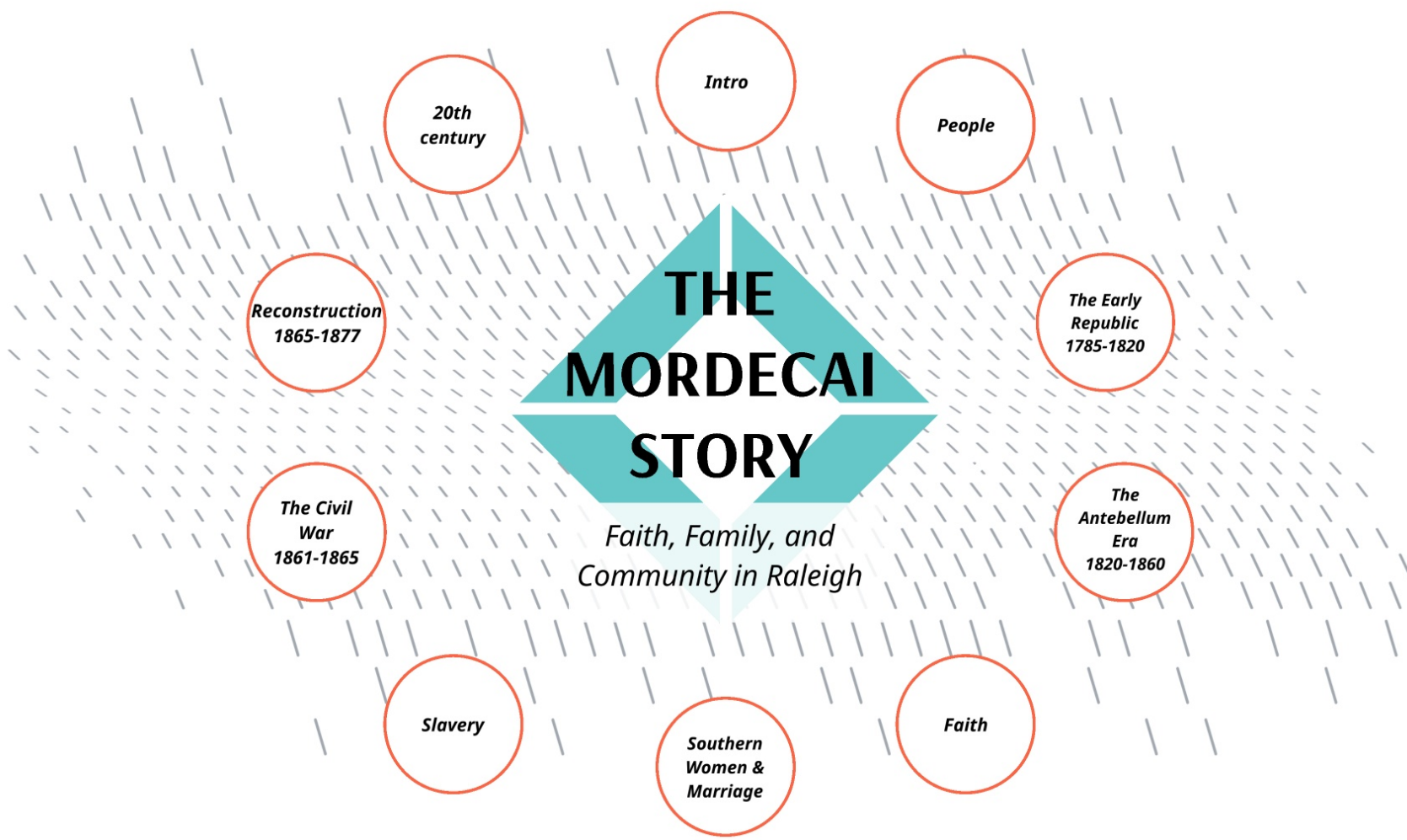
e Home

portrays the
later known as
looked in the
time, Henry and
rs of an active
had four
gy), Harriet,
Ann Willis
s owned
ividuals were



98
Inventory of the Estate of Henry Lane del.

Twelve Nineteen Negroes, Named as follows
Davey, Hercules, Squire, Mingo, Ned,
Sam, Lodrick, Allen, Ben, Phil, Hannah,
Jenny, Lisbon, Leah, Molly, Sarah, Lucy,
Clary and Charitie a parcel of Corn Modden



Moses Mordecai Arrives in Raleigh

Female Education



Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History

Silhouettes, such as this one of Peggy Lane, were fashionable in the early nineteenth century.

Moses Mordecai acquired the Lane property in 1817 when he married Margaret "Peggy" Lane. Moses hailed from Warrenton, North Carolina where his father, Jacob Mordecai, operated the Mordecai Female Academy. A successful young attorney, he chose to establish his practice in Raleigh, a city on the rise. Moses and Peggy had three children; Henry, Ellen, and Jacob. Following Peggy's death in 1821, Moses married her younger sister, Ann Willis "Nancy" Lane. This marriage produced one daughter, Margaret. Moses died of illness, possibly malaria, in 1824 at the age of thirty-nine.

Mordecai Property



Portrait by William Garle Browne. Courtesy of Capital Area Preservation, Inc.

Antebellum Social Structure

Moses Mordecai, c.1820

This 1857 portrait is a copy of a much earlier painting by an unknown artist. The painting shown is on display in the Mordecai House.



when he r
hailed from
father, Jacc
Academy. /
establish h
Moses and
Jacob. Foll
her young
marriage p
died of illn



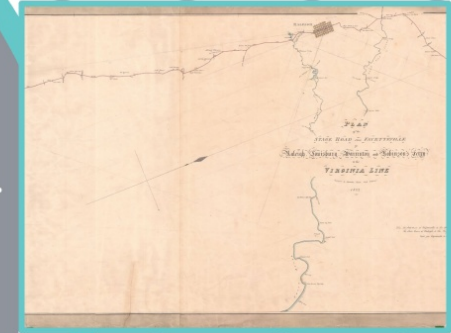
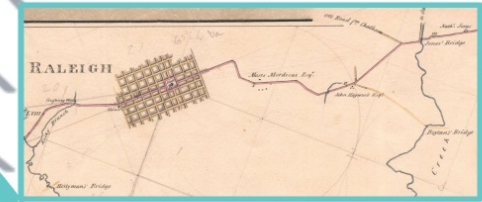


Mordecai Property



Mordecai Property Survey, 1819

Moses Mordecai received a vast amount of land and property upon marrying into the Lane family. By 1819, he owned 958 acres surrounding the home, as well as nineteen slaves.



Maps courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina

"The Current House"

Between 1820 and 1860, the Mordecai property grew, eventually becoming a sprawling plantation complete with a fashionable manor house. Moses Mordecai hired renowned architect William Nichols to design the impressive Greek Revival structure which still stands on the property.

"Plan of the Stage Road," 1822

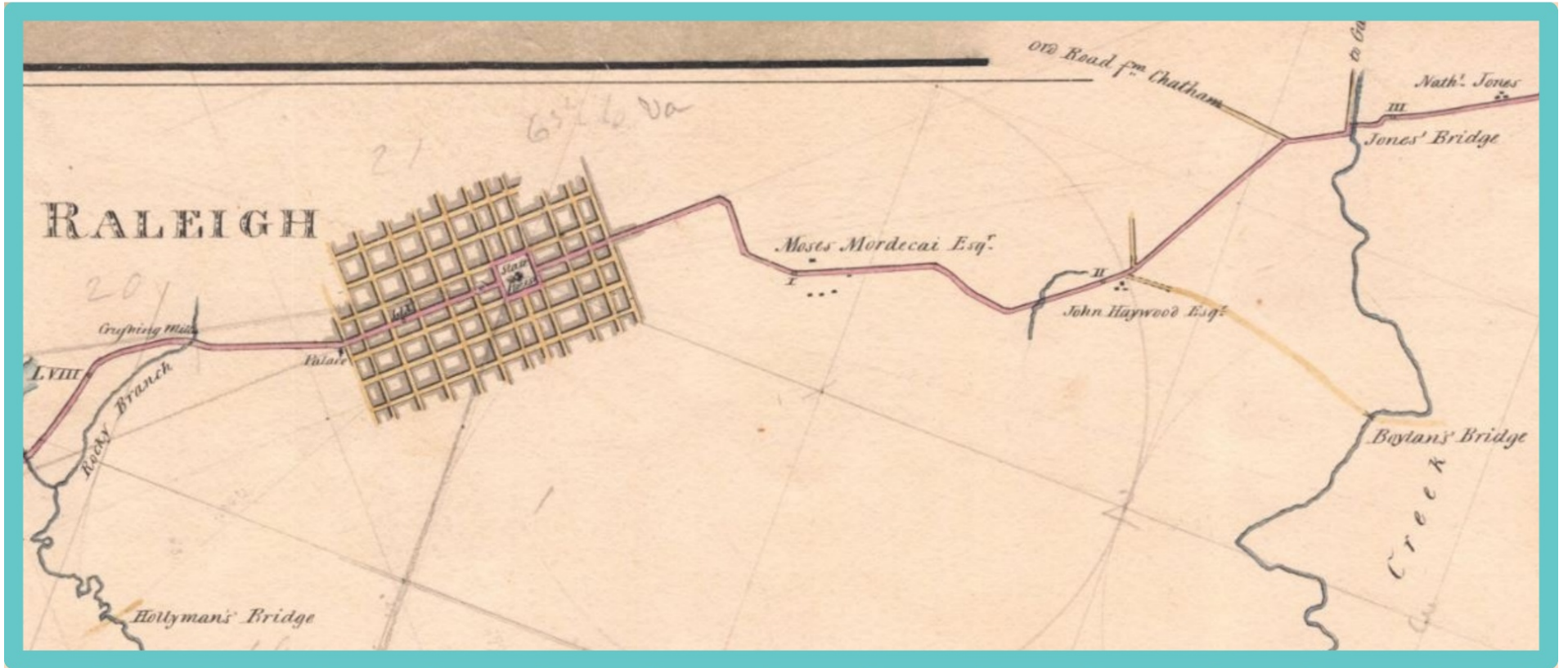
Perched atop a slight elevation and surrounded by cleared land, the Mordecai home would have been visible to those traveling along the Louisburg Road in the early 19th century.



Moses M
and prop
By 1819,
home, as

nd
nily.





Jacob Mordecai operated a well-respected female academy in Warrenton, NC from 1809 until 1819. By this time Moses was a practicing attorney, but several of his siblings lived in Warrenton and assisted with the school.

**FEMALE EDUCATION,
WARRENTON.**

—

J. MORDECAI respectfully informs those who have intimated an intention of entrusting their Daughters to his care, and placing them under his Tuition, that the prescribed number of Pupils is completed, and there will be no vacancy until the 1st of July next.

April 27, 1809. 3t



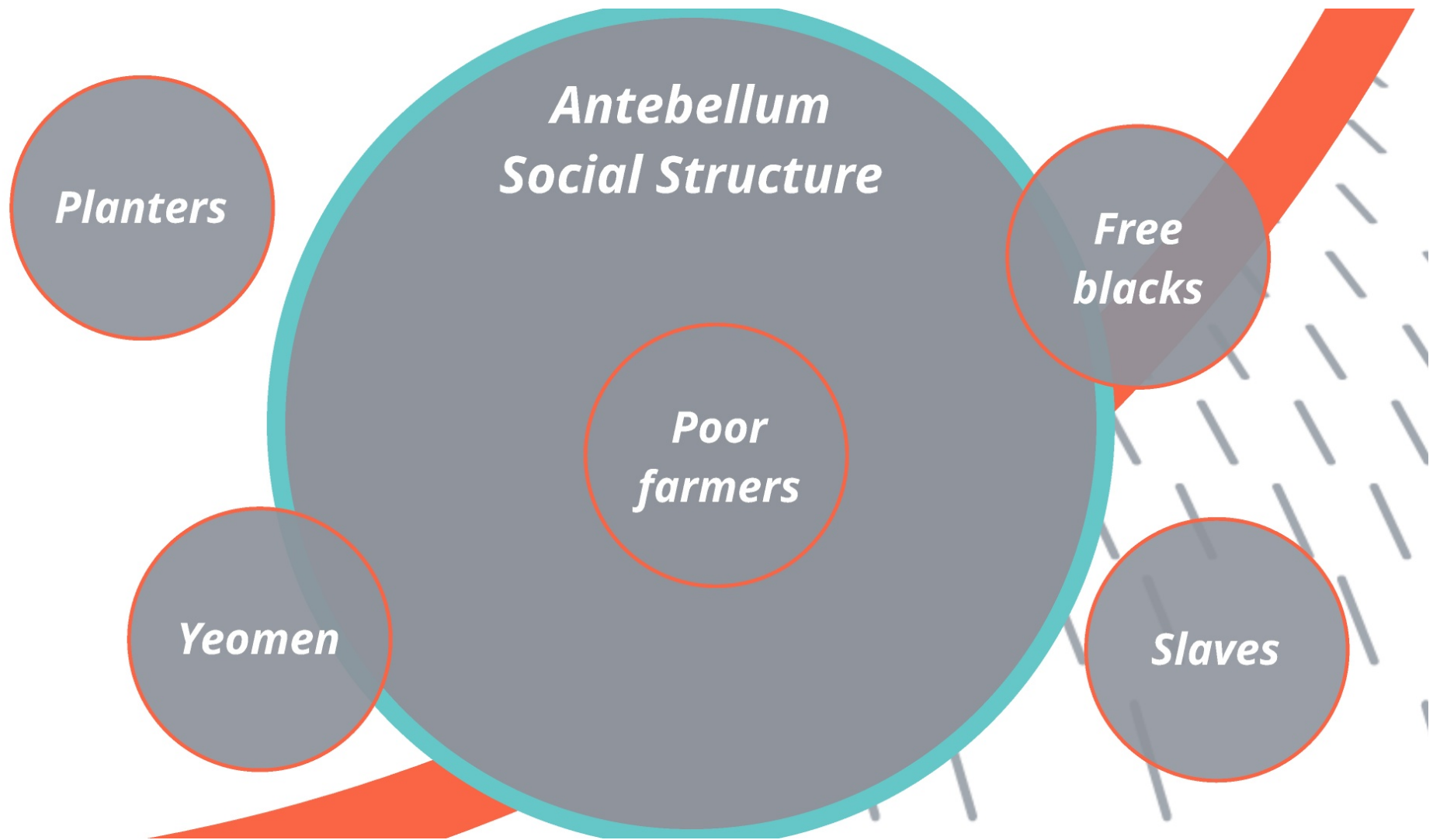
Weekly Raleigh Register,
May 4, 1809


FEMALE EDUCATION, *WARRENTON.*

J. MORDECAI respectfully informs those who have intimated an intention of entrusting their Daughters to his care, and placing them under his Tuition, that the prescribed number of Pupils is completed, and there will be no vacancy until the 1st of July next.

April 27, 1809.


3t






Planters were wealthy landholders who owned twenty or more slaves. Only 6% of North Carolinians were considered planters in the antebellum era. Nevertheless, planters held the bulk of the economic and political power in North Carolina and across the South. "Planters" are also referred to as the "gentry" or "elites" due to their elevated social status.

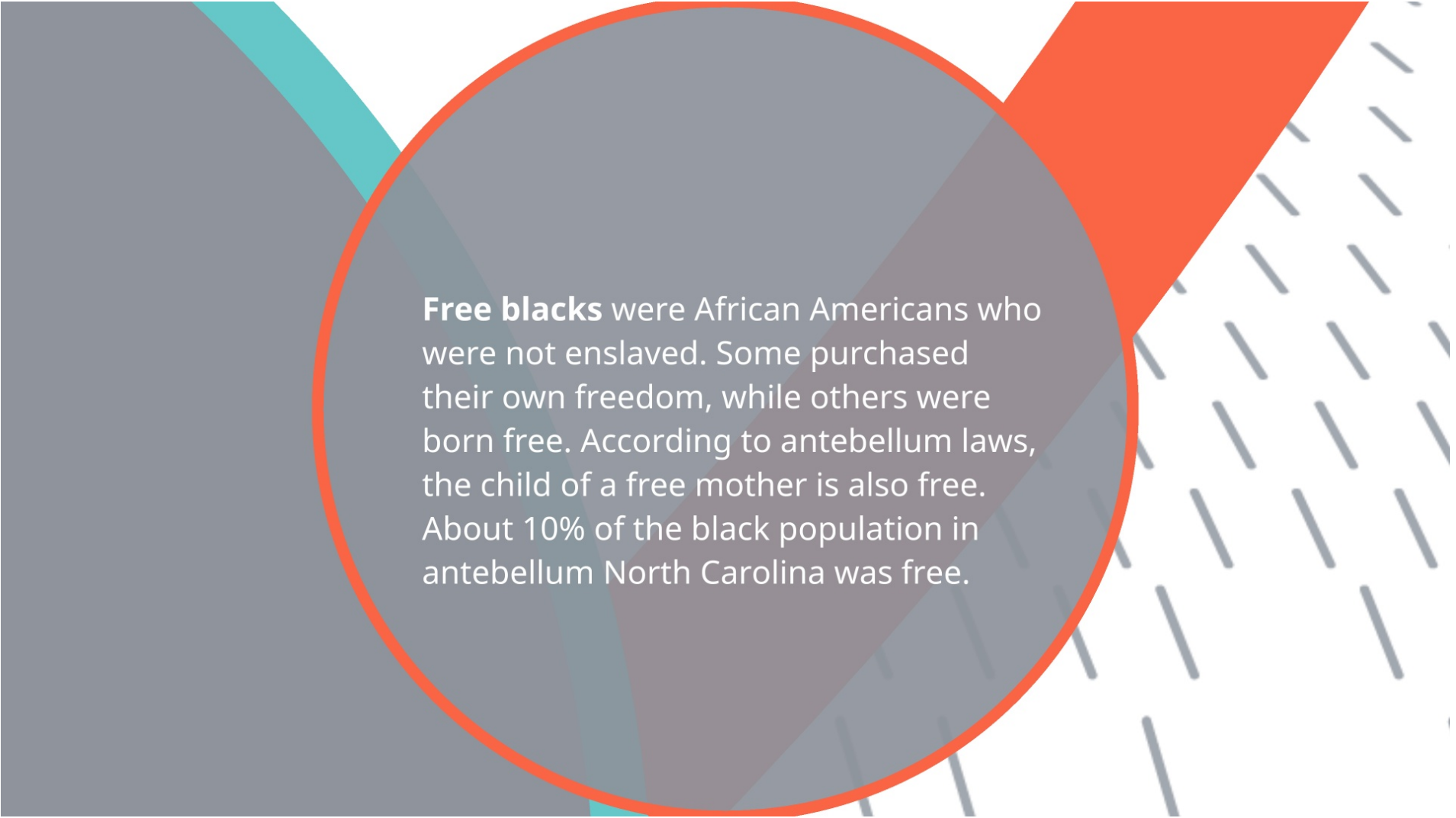





Yeomen were landowning farmers who were below planters on the class scale. Some yeomen were relatively well-to-do and even owned a few slaves. Mostly yeomen families, however, were of modest means and did not own slaves. About 65% of North Carolinians were non-slaveholding yeomen. "Yeomen" were also sometimes referred to as "plain folk" or "common whites".



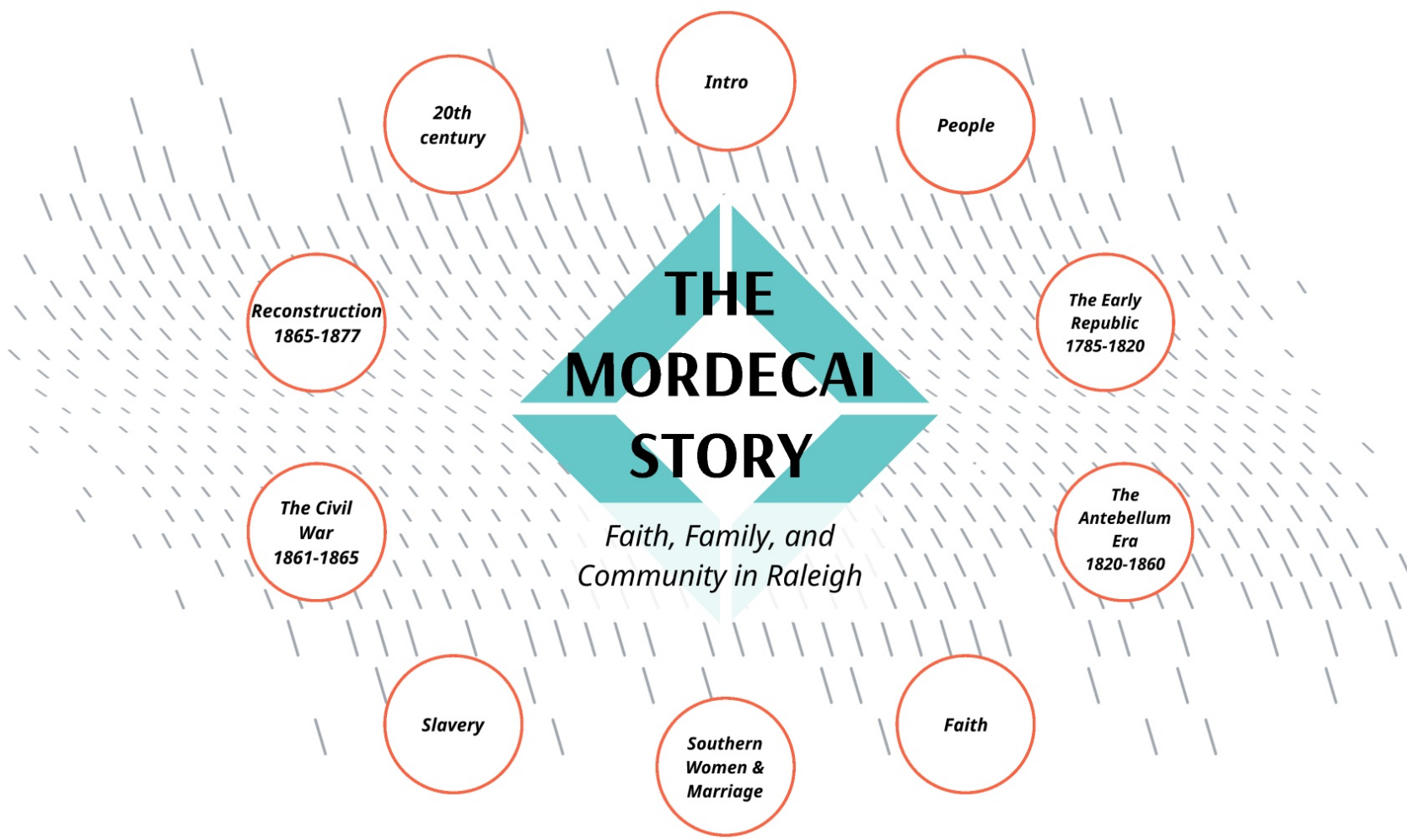
Poor farmers & laborers were individuals that did not own land. Most were tenant farmers who rented land. Around 10% of antebellum North Carolinians fell into this category.



Free blacks were African Americans who were not enslaved. Some purchased their own freedom, while others were born free. According to antebellum laws, the child of a free mother is also free. About 10% of the black population in antebellum North Carolina was free.



Slaves, according to antebellum laws, were people of African ancestry who could be bought and sold as property. In the late antebellum era, approximately 1/3 of North Carolina's population were slaves.



Faith

'Virtue in Whatever Garb it Appeared'

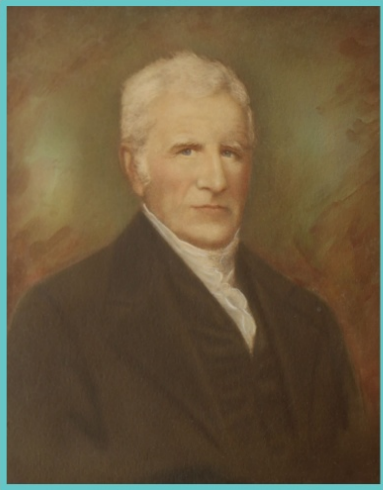
The Mordecais descended from Jewish immigrants who left Bonn, Germany for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania around 1750. Philadelphia had a thriving Jewish community which allowed the first generation of Mordecais in America to live and worship among brethren. A generation later, in the late 1700s, the Jacob Mordecai family moved to North Carolina. In the rural South they were distanced from a synagogue to fellow Jews. Jacob insisted that his family observe to Sabbath and Jewish holidays within their home, but encouraged them to follow "virtue in whatever garb it appeared" in their daily lives. Jacob Mordecai recommitted himself to Judaism in the early 19th century. Yet most of his children eventually embraced Christianity.



Image courtesy of Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives

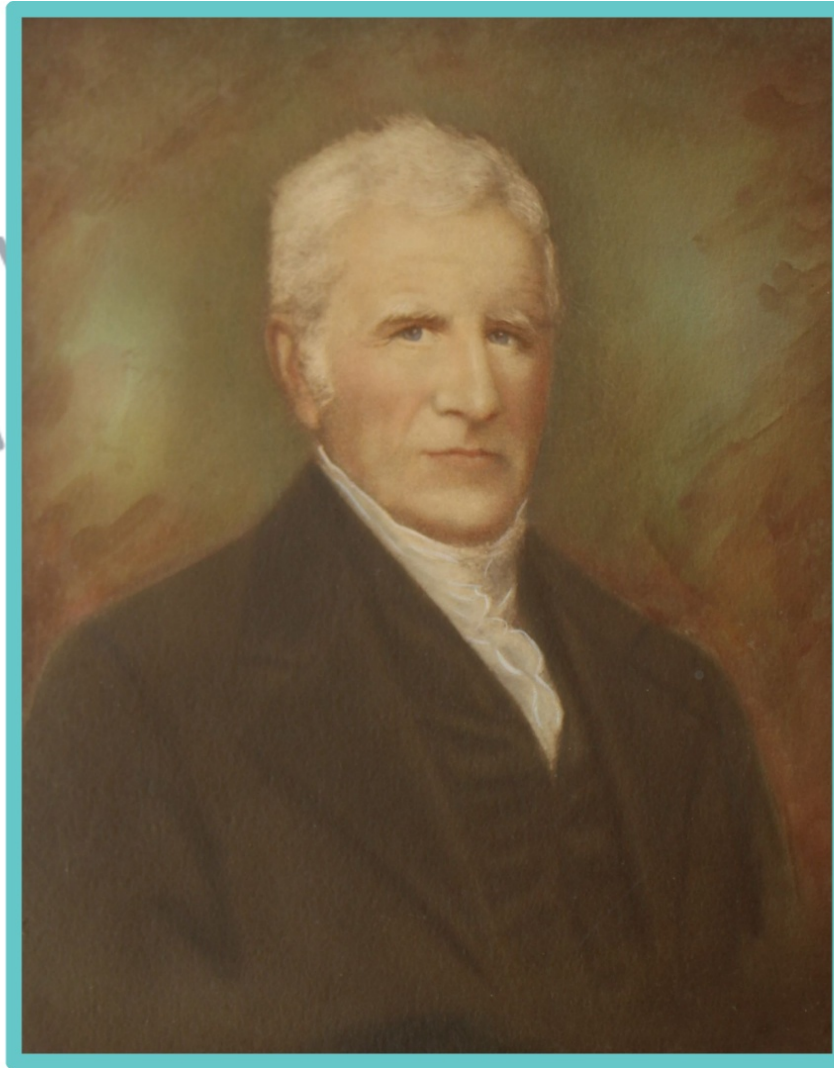
Kahal Kadosh Beth Shalome, Richmond, Virginia

After his children were grown, Jacob reaffirmed his commitment to Judaism. He moved to Richmond in 1819 and was instrumental in the construction of Kahal Kadosh Beth Shalome, the first synagogue in Virginia. Jacob delivered the keynote address at the opening of Beth Shalome in 1822.



Courtesy of Capital Area Preservation, Inc

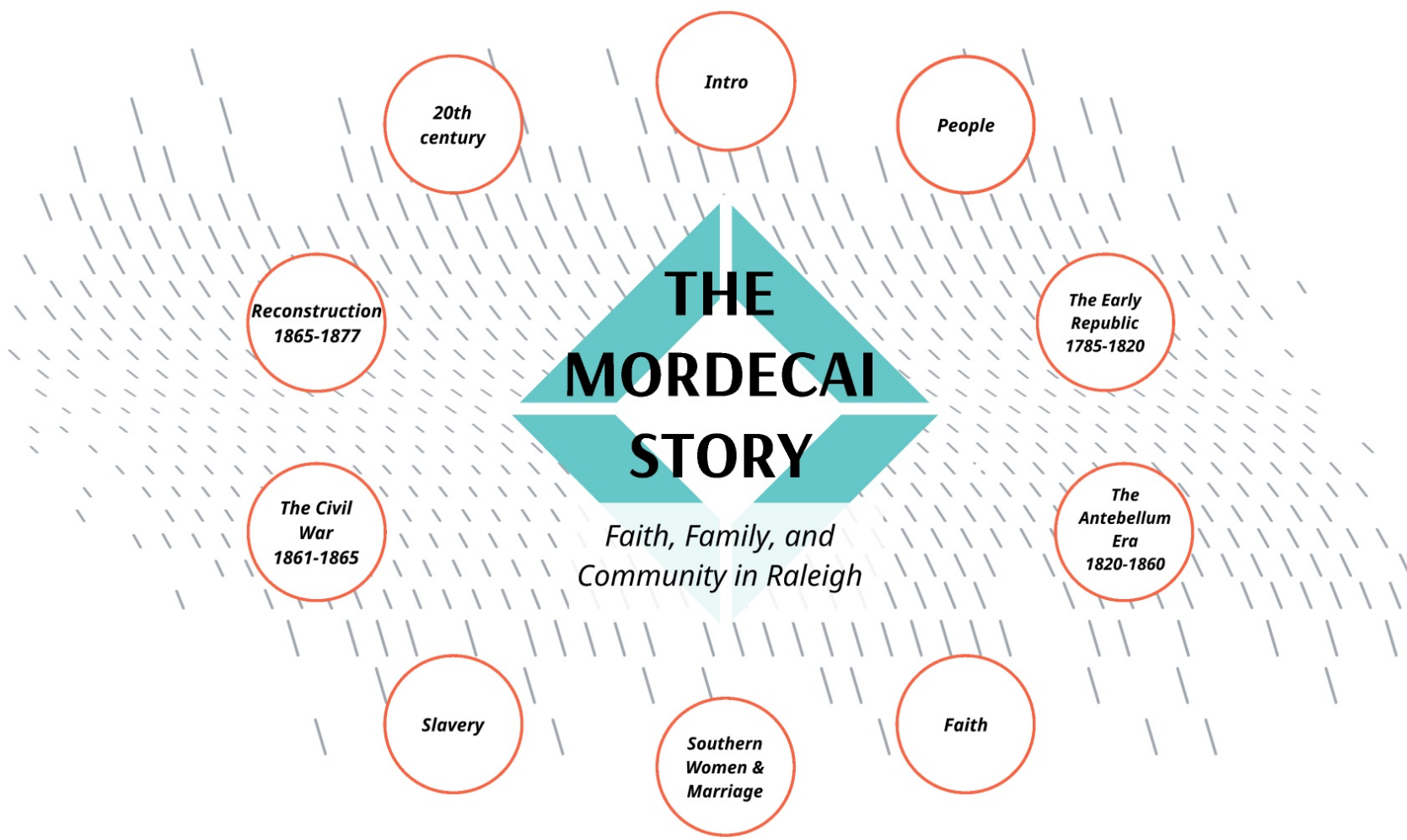
Jacob Mordecai, 1826



The Mordecai M. Noah, who left Pennsylvania to establish a Jewish colony in the rural South, was a fellow Jew who observed the Sabbath.

10





The dilemma was not lost on Jacob's sons. In an 1834 letter likely penned at Mordecai House, George Washington Mordecai confided to his brother Samuel.

"There is no one thing that I have felt more sensibly than the peculiarly disagreeable and unfortunate situation of our sisters in this respect. They are either obliged to lead a life of seclusion and celibacy, marry a man whom they cannot admire or esteem...or they must incur the certain and lasting displeasure of their parents by marrying out of the pale of their religion... It does seem very unreasonable in them to acquire their daughters to do what no one can do- control their affections and direct them in a particular channel."
-George Washington Mordecai letter, 1834

The 'Unfortunate Situation of Our Sisters'

Marriage in the 19th century was often a family decision where fathers had ultimate authority. Fathers expected their daughters to marry men who could provide a comfortable home. Many also expected their daughters to marry into families that shared similar religious and cultural backgrounds. This occasionally proved to be a burden for Southern women, including some of the Mordecai daughters. In the early 19th century, Jacob Mordecai insisted that his daughters marry Jewish men. Jacob's intentions were noble. He was determined to observe Jewish law, as well as fulfill his duty to family and community. Still, the expectation put pressure on some of his daughters. On one hand, they wanted to honor their father and their religious obligation to marry within the faith. On the other hand, however, they wanted to marry according to their own wishes.

Margaret
Mordecai

Will's
Forest



**Margaret
Mordecai**



Original portrait by John Henry Brown.
Courtesy of Frick Art Reference Library

Margaret Mordecai Devereux, 1846

This portrait of Margaret Mordecai Devereux was painted approximately four years after she married. The couple inherited "Runeroi Meadows," a Devereux plantation on the Roanoke River in Bertie County. They spent summers at family plantations in Raleigh.

Selecting the right marriage partner was particularly important to the Southern gentry. A "good" marriage—such as the 1842 union between Margaret Mordecai and John Devereux Jr.—combined family wealth, increased land holdings, and strengthened kin networks. By all accounts the Mordecai-Devereux marriage was a happy one. Yet diaries and letters suggest that women were occasionally trapped in unhappy marriages. Some chose to never marry.



Margaret

This portrait
Devereux
four years
couple inh
a Devereux
Roanoke R
spent sum
in Raleigh

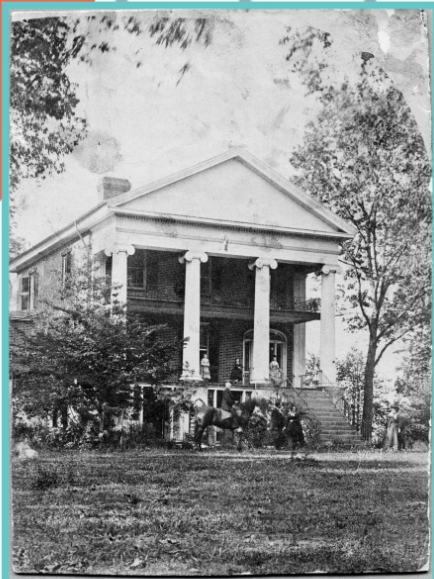


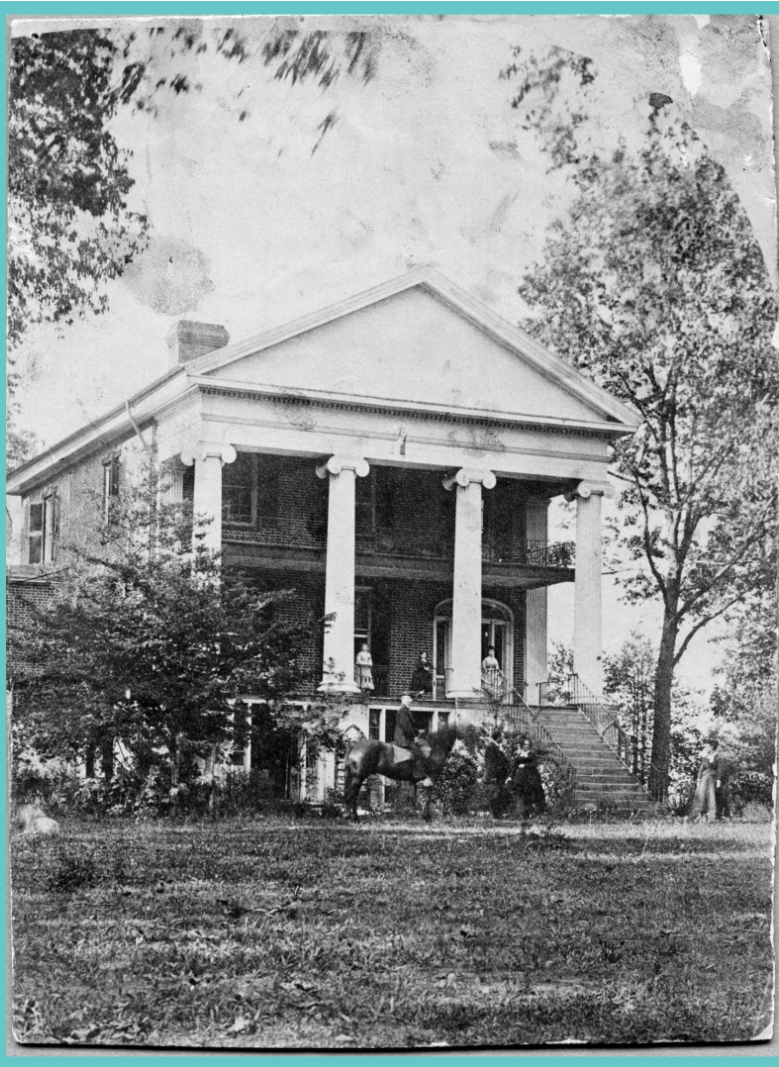
Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History

Will's Forest, 1897

Marriage allowed the Raleigh plantation known as Will's Forest to pass from the Lanes to the Mordecais and eventually to the Devereuxs. Ann Willis Lane Mordecai built Will's Forest in 1840 when her eldest son, Henry, took over management of the Mordecai plantation. Will's Forest later passed to John and Margaret Mordecai Devereux. The main house at Will's Forest stood approximately one mile west of the Mordecai House, near today's intersection of Peace Street and Glenwood Avenue.



This photograph is in *Plantation Sketches*, a memoir written by Margaret Mordecai Devereux about her early life in the plantation South. The memoir was published in 1906.

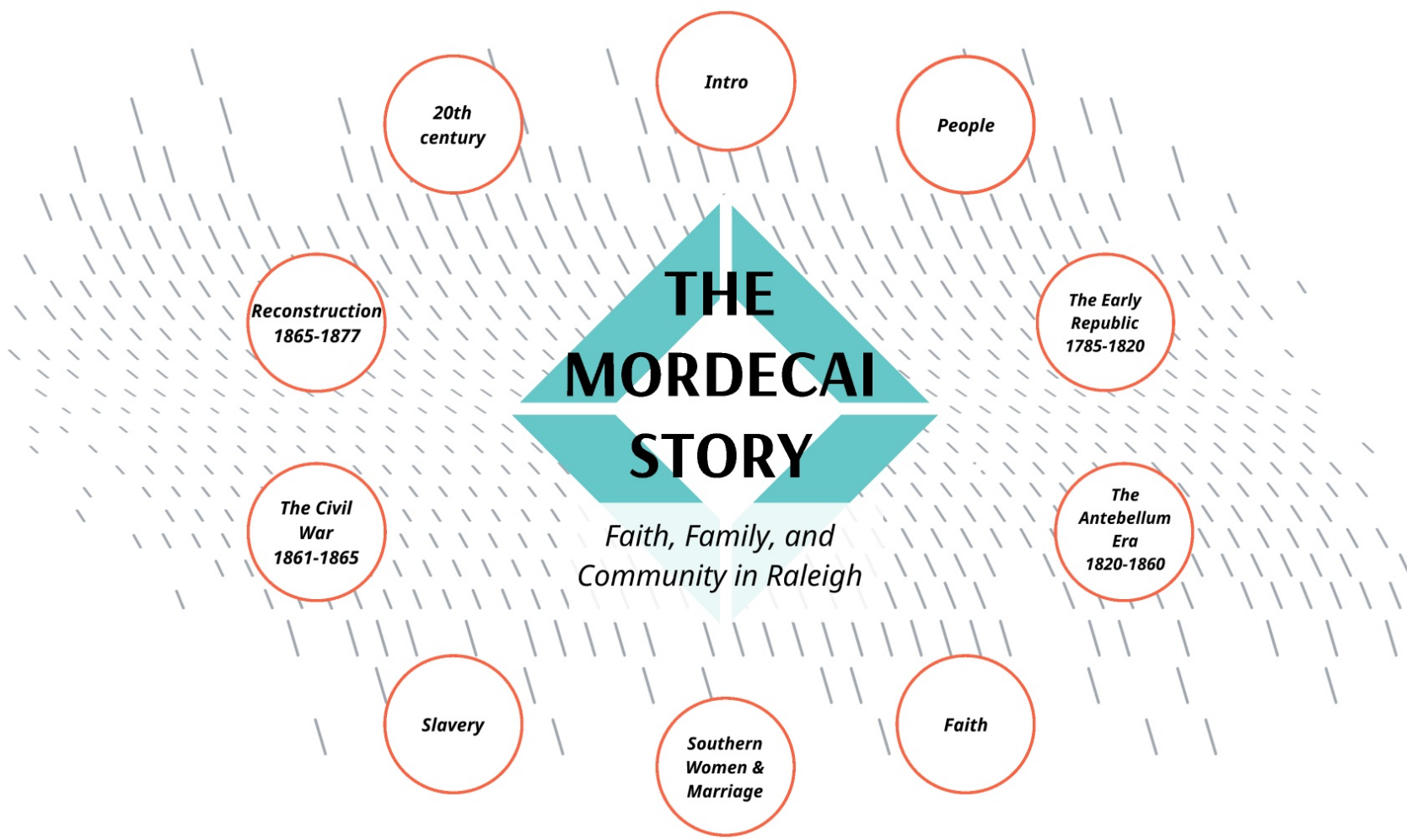


Wi

Marriage allowed
as Will's Forest
Mordecais and
Ann Willis Lan
1840 when he
management
Will's Forest la
Mordecai Dev
Forest stood a

wn





Documents

A slaveholding family

By the end of the antebellum era, the Mordecais were one of the largest slave-holding families in North Carolina. Moses Mordecai acquired approximately twenty slaves and 950 acres in Raleigh when he married into the Lane family. At the time of his death in 1824, Moses owned approximately thirty slaves, as well as land in several North Carolina counties including Wake, Johnson, Wayne, and Edgecombe.

In their
own
words

Raleigh
plantation

Johnston
Plantation

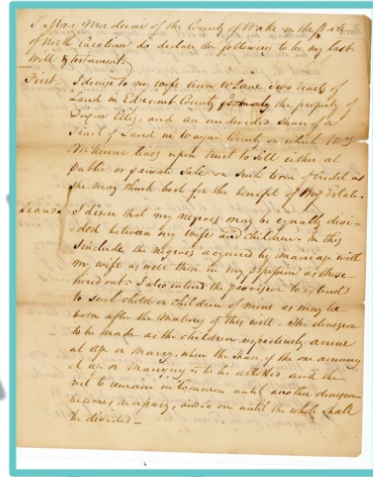
Edgecombe
Plantation



Raleigh plantation

The Moses Mordecai Place

A century after his death, locals still referred to the house and plantation as "The Moses Mordecai Place." The Mordecai plantation reached its height between 1830 and 1860. After Moses's death, his younger brother, George Washington Mordecai, purchased more land and slaves on behalf of the Moses Mordecai estate. Henry Mordecai, Moses's son, inherited the plantation in 1840. By the Civil War the plantation included a number of structures such as a mill, a blacksmith shop, a cotton gin, and a cotton press. Slaves lived in a line of cabins which probably stood about a quarter of a mile northwest of the Mordecai House. The Mordecais owned several plantations in Wake, Johnston, and Edgecombe counties. The "Johnston Plantation" was located along the Neuse River about fifteen miles southeast of Raleigh. Their plantation in Edgecombe county was "on the North side of Tar River, half way between Rocky Mount and Tarboro."



Moses's Mordecai's Final Will

In his final will, Moses Mordecai requested that his land and slaves be divided among his widow and children. Moses died in 1824.



Images courtesy of Capital Area Preservation, Inc.

Moses Mordecai

I, Moses Ma deced of the County of Wake in the State
of North Carolina do declare the following to be my last
will & testament.

First- I devise to my wife Ann W Lane two tracts of
Land in Edgemont County formerly the property of
Dixon Ellis, and an undivided share of a
Tract of Land in Wayne County on which Mrs
McKinnis lives upon trust to sell either at
public or private sale on such term of Credit as
she may think best for the benefit of my Estate.

Second- I desire that my negroes may be equally divi-
ded between my wife and children. In this
I include the negroes acquired by marriage with
my wife as well those in my possession as those
hired out. I also intend the provision to extend
to such child or children of mine as may be
born after the making of this will - the division
to be made as the children respectively arrive
at age a Mary, when the share of the one arriving
at age a Mary is to be allotted and the
rest to remain in common until another division
becomes necessary, and so on until the whole shall
be divided -

A ce
house a
The Mord
and 1860
Washingt
behalf of
Moses's s
War the p
mill, a bla
Slaves liv

to the
e."
n 1830
George
aves on
ai,
e Civil
such as a
ress.
about a



"The Johnston Plantation [had] a nice log house with two rooms and comfortably built...The house sat under a magnificent whiteoak [sic] tree...There was a garden down there behind the house, in which there were always fine tomatoes in season and plenty of lavender...The wagon used to go up every Saturday night and always had something good in it; pears, cherries, or apples; honey, and beautiful butter."
-Ellen Mordecai recalled in *Gleanings from Long Ago*



at

on

d

VS

S,



at

on

d

VS

S,



Slave Inventory

TALL COTTON PICKING IN OLD EDGECOMBE.
Rocky Mount, N. C. Oct. 20.
Messrs. Editors:—The following remarkable picking of cotton was performed on the farm of Henry Mordecai, Esq., in old Edgewcombe, yesterday:

Alex. Braswell, 13 years old picked,	778 lbs.
Negro boy James, 10 years old,	761 "
John, owned by Hall,	1090 "
Toney, owned by W. S. Battle,	1048 "
Rand, aged 14 years,	775 "
Ellen, 15 years old,	718 "
Harriet, 12 years,	789 "
Nathan, 16 years,	612 "
Henry, 10 years,	498 "
Total	7,014

Alex. Braswell is a white boy, and son of Mr. W. H. Braswell. The cotton was picked and weighed in the presence of several of the neighbors.
Respectfully yours, W. W. P.

"Tall picking in Old Edgewcombe"

The Standard, Oct. 29 1859

The Mordecais raised livestock and grew a variety of crops, particularly corn, here in Raleigh. The Mordecais may have focused solely on cotton production in "Olde Edgewcombe."

"My Land in Edgewcombe county...containing twenty-six hundred and fifty (2,650) acres...is considered one of the best cotton farms in the country." -Henry Mordecai, *The Tarboro Southerner*, 1869



Image courtesy of Capital Area Preservation, Inc.

Henry Mordecai, 1861 Slave inventory, 1840

Henry Mordecai inherited the Mordecai plantation in 1840 when he reached the age of twenty-one. This inventory indicates that the Mordecai estate owned 122 slaves at that time. As the inventory suggests, slaves were considered property.

TALL COTTON PICKING IN OLD EDGECOMBE.

ROCKY MOUNT, N. C. Oct. 20.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—The following remarkable picking of cotton was performed on the farm of Henry Mordecai, Esq., in old Edgecombe, yesterday:

Alex. Braswell, 13 years old picked,	778 lbs.
Negro boy James, 10 years old,	761 "
John, owned by Hall,	1090 "
Toney, owned by W. S. Battle,	1048 "
Rand, aged 14 years,	775 "
Ellen, 15 years old,	718 "
Harriet, 12 years,	739 "
Nathan, 16 years,	612 "
Henry, 10 years,	493 "

Total 7,014.

Alex. Braswell is a white boy, and son of Mr. W. H. Braswell. The cotton was picked and weighed in the presence of several of the neighbors.

Respectfully yours, W. W. P.

"Tal
The
The
varie
Rale
on c
"My
twor

solely

"

g

is



In their own words

In the 1930s federal employees with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) interviewed thousands of former slaves. The WPA conducted a number of interviews in Raleigh, and a few of these shed light on the experiences of Mordecai slaves. Rather than remembering the old times fondly, they recalled a life of uncertainty, pain, and hardship.

**Mittie
Ann**

**Leather
Shoe**

Audio





**Plaz
Williams**
click here



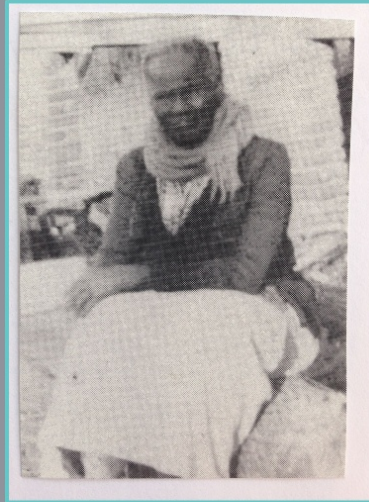
We have chosen to leave the interviews in dialect as they were originally transcribed in the 1930s. Due to the sensitive nature of the content, only a portion of the interviews are on display and some words have been edited. WPA narratives are an important primary source. Yet inaccuracies exist, as they do in any memoir or recollection. Various factors are responsible, including the effect of time on memory—the WPA conducted these interviews more than 60 years after slavery ended. One inconsistency is found in Mattie Curtis’s description of Moses Mordecai, a man who died in 1824, years before she was born. This is not pointed out to challenge Mattie’s powerful story, but rather to illuminate a known discrepancy in fairness to Moses’s memory and his many living descendants.
[Interviews and accompanying images courtesy of the Library of Congress]



**Mattie
Curtis**
click here

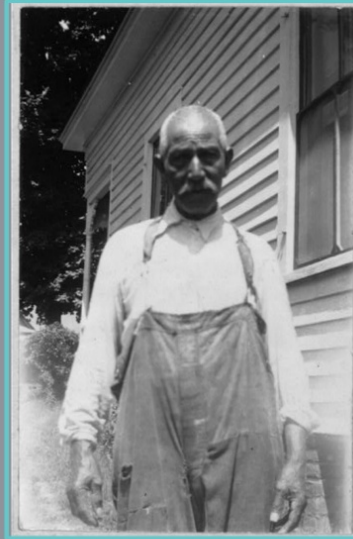
**Essex
Henry**
click here

An Interview with Mattie Curtis, 98 years old, of Raleigh, North Carolina, Route #4

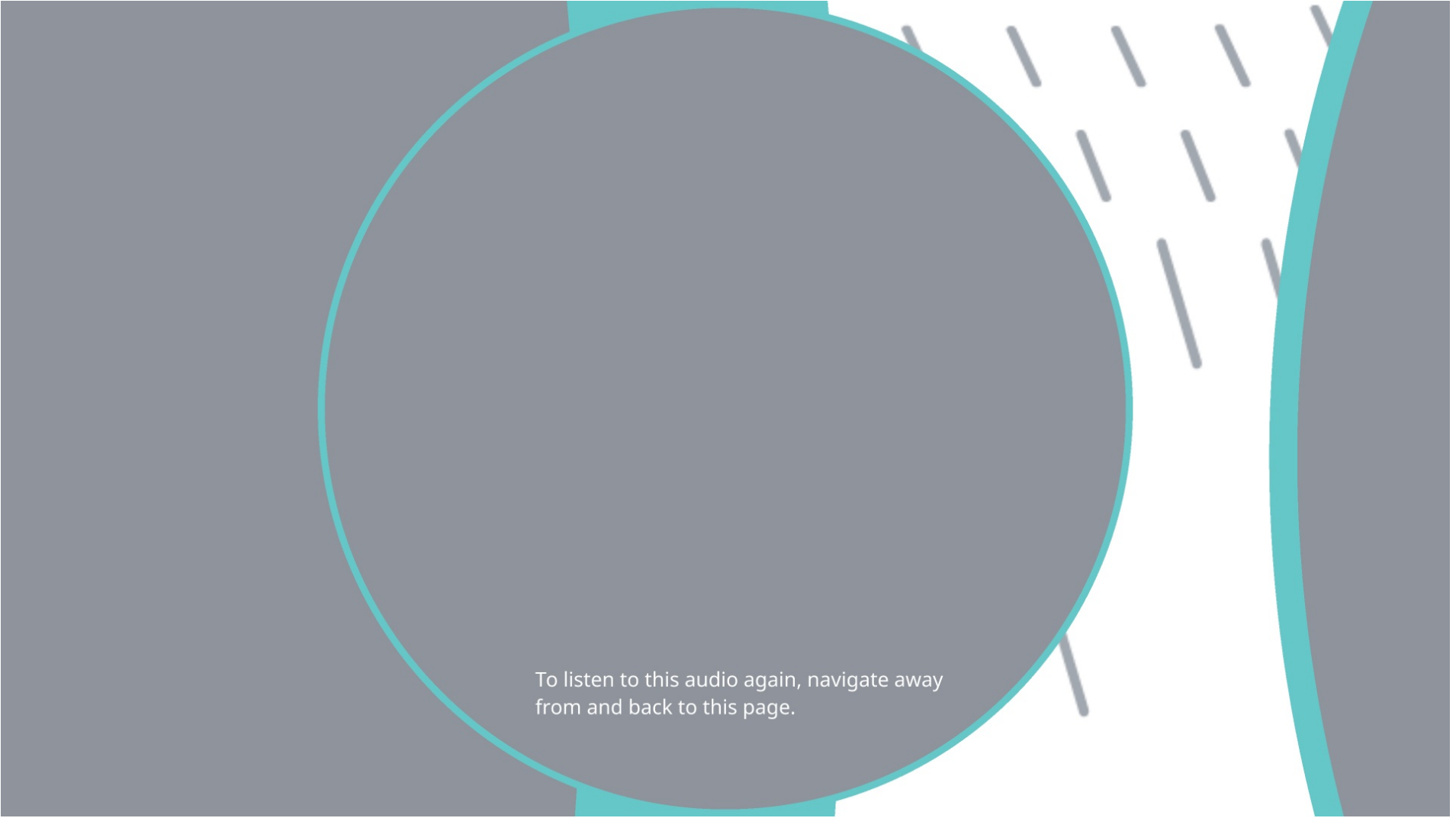


To listen to this audio again, navigate away from and back to this page.

An Interview with Essex Henry, 83, of 713
S. East Street, Raleigh, N.C.



To listen to this audio again, navigate away
from and back to this page.



To listen to this audio again, navigate away from and back to this page.

'Leather shoe found in cellar wall of the Mordecai House'

In her memoir entitled, *Gleanings from Long Ago*, Ellen Mordecai recalled "Ung Charles" making shoes in his cabin which was located near the spring. Ellen also remembered that Nanny spun the thread needed to piece the shoes together. Although no evidence confirms who made this shoe, it is representative of the type of work that a slave cobbler and weaver may have produced. The shoe is fascinating on another level as well. Hiding shoes in walls was a British folk custom that colonial settlers brought along to America. Superstition held that a concealed shoe would ward off evil spirits. It is quite possible that the shoe dates to the 1780s when the Lanes constructed the earliest portion of the house.



d
tes
e

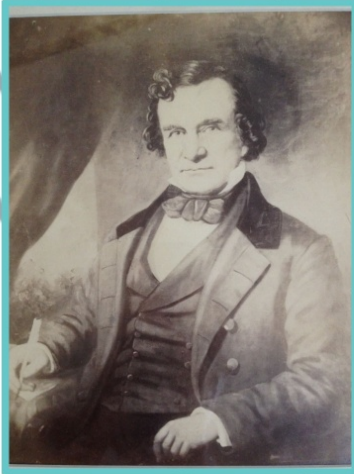




Image courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina

Mittie Ann at the Spring c. 1900

While most slaves worked in the fields, domestic workers, such as Mittie Ann, labored in the plantation home and surrounding yard. Mittie Ann would have been an important link between the Mordecais and the slave community. Information obtained while on duty often initiated a "grapevine" that kept the slave community current on news and gossip.

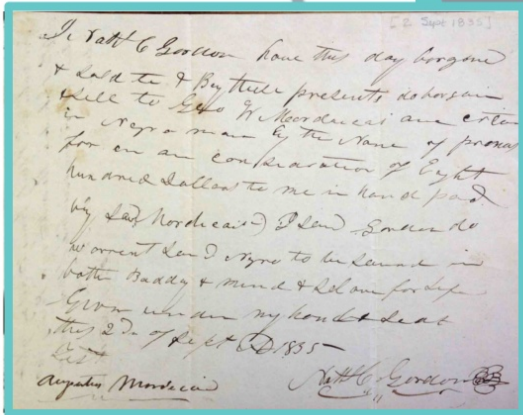


George Washington Mordecai c. 1845

Documents

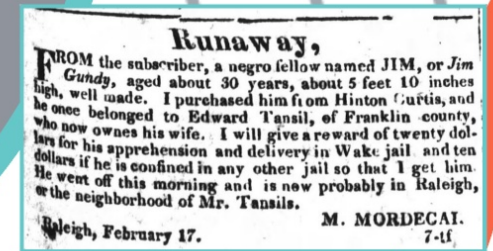
"Runaway Notice." *The Star and North Carolina State Gazette*, Feb 18, 1820.

In February of 1820, Moses Mordecai posted a reward notice for the return of a fugitive slave named Jim Gundy. Running away was a common form of slave resistance. Some escaped to freedom, but most remained local and only stayed temporarily. As the notice indicates, Moses assumed that Jim was attempting to visit his wife in Franklin County. Notices such as this were common in antebellum newspapers.



"Bill of Sale for Primus"

In 1835, George W. Mordecai purchased a man named Primus for \$800. The bill of sale states that Primus would henceforth be "bound [to Mordecai] in both body and mind & sol and for life."



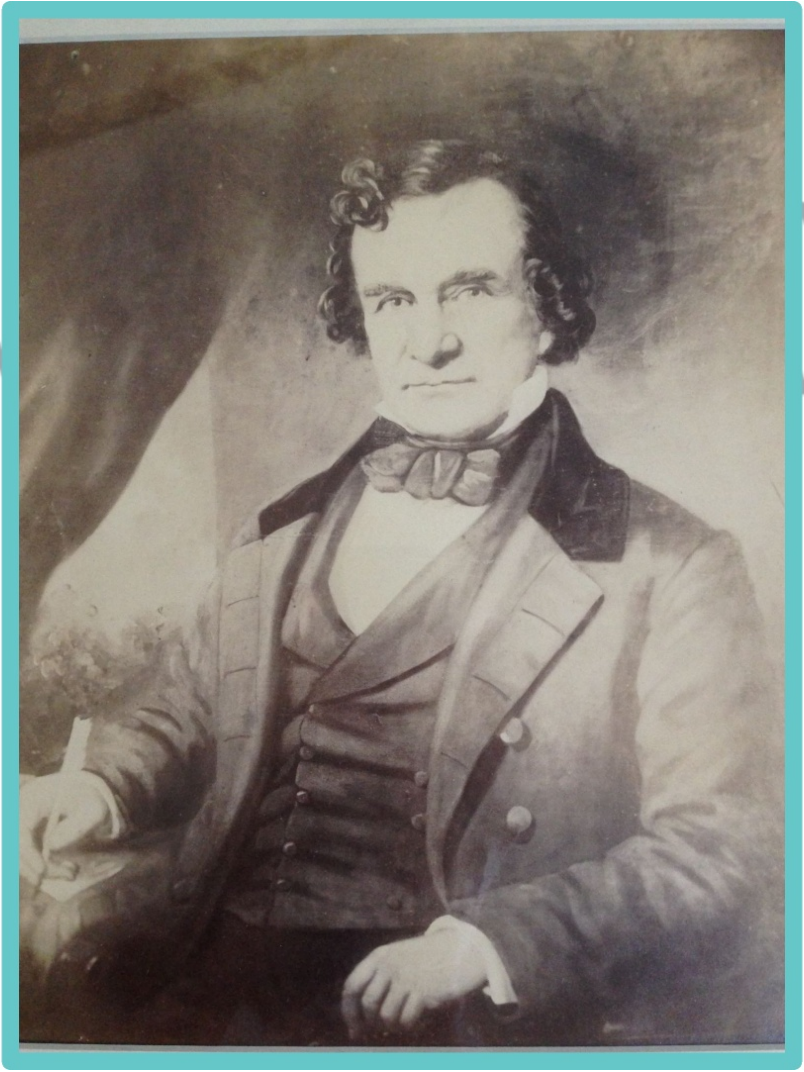
Runaway,

FROM the subscriber, a negro fellow named JIM, or *Jim Gundy*, aged about 30 years, about 5 feet 10 inches high, well made. I purchased him from Hinton Curtis, and he once belonged to Edward Tansil, of Franklin county, who now owns his wife. I will give a reward of twenty dollars for his apprehension and delivery in Wake jail and ten dollars if he is confined in any other jail so that I get him. He went off this morning and is now probably in Raleigh, or the neighborhood of Mr. Tansils.

M. MORDECAI.

7-1f

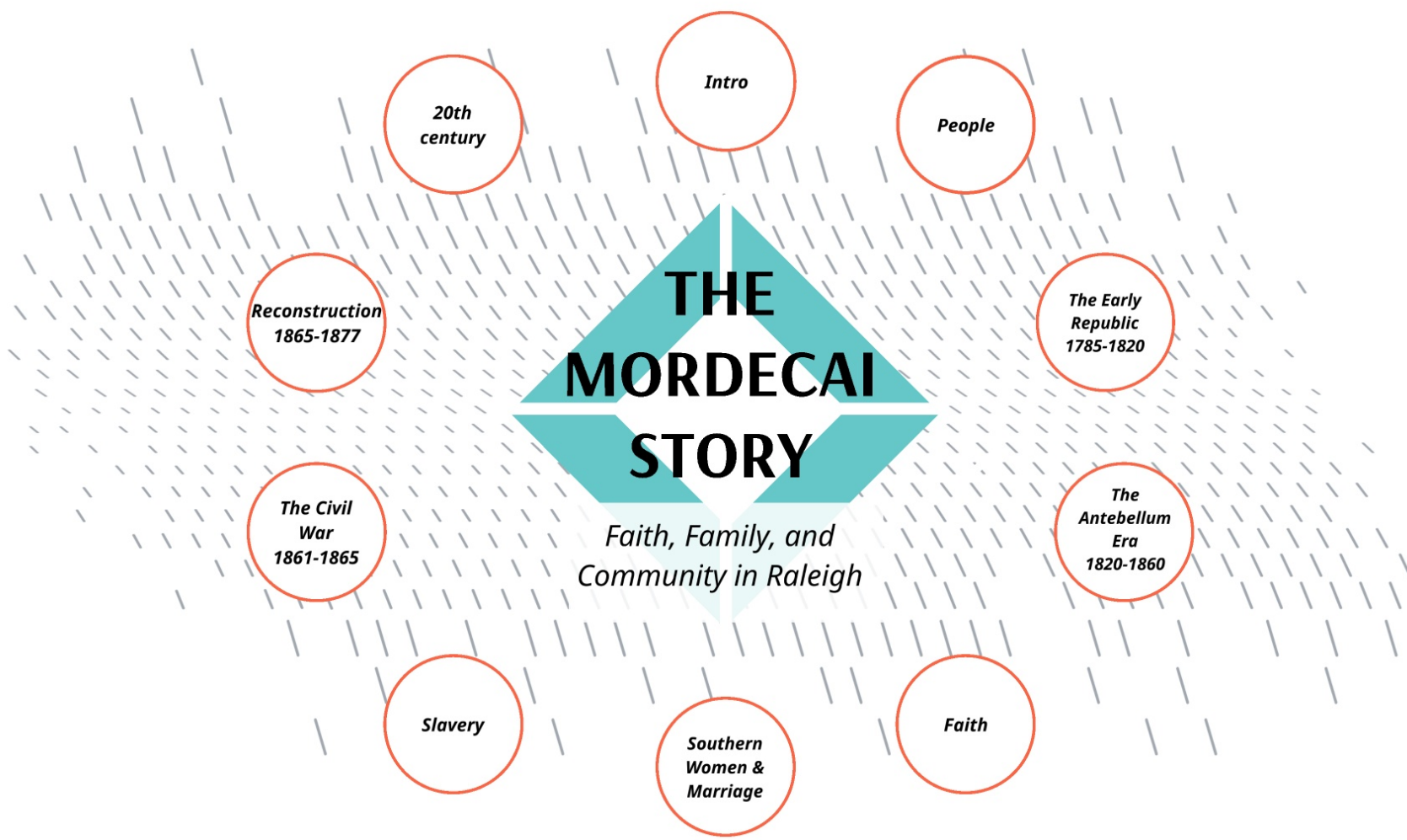
Raleigh, February 17.



[2. Sept 1835]

I Nathl C Gordon have this day bargained
 & sold to & by the presents do hereby
 sell to Geo W Nordcais an estate
 in negro man by the name of proxa
 for an consideration of Eight
 hundred dollars to me in hand paid
 by said Nordcais. I send Gordon do
 warrant her I agree to be bound in
 both body & mind & helme for life
 Given under my hand & seal
 this 2^d of Sept 1835—
 Nathl C Gordon
 Augustus Nordcais

"Bill
 In 18
 purch
 \$800
 Prim
 [to N
 & so



A War Over Slavery

During the early republic and antebellum eras, Americans debated- often violently- the meanings of liberty, independence, and citizenship.

Slavery was the primary issue tearing the nation apart. Northern and southern politicians began clashing over slavery at the Constitutional Conventions in the 1780s. The struggle intensified as the United States started expanding westward after 1820. By the mid-19th century, some Southerners were suggesting that the South should withdraw-or secede-from the United States.

The 1860 election of President Abraham Lincoln proved to be a breaking point. Believing that Lincoln was a threat to slavery and the South, eleven southern states seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America in 1860-61. North Carolina was the last southern state to secede on May 20, 1861.

Southern Perspectives on the Civil War

The Civil War at Mordecai Plantation

Henry Mordecai

Soldier Boy

Divided family



Henry Mordecai



Portrait by William Garle Browne.
Courtesy of Capital Area Preservation, Inc.

On October 1, 1863, Henry Mordecai supplied the Confederate Army with 250 cords of wood and 100,000 clapboards.

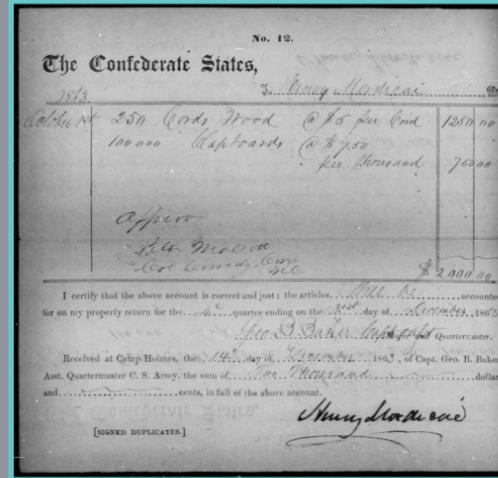


Image courtesy of the U.S. National Archives

Receipt for goods sold to the Confederate States

IMPORTANT MOVEMENT.—The following gentlemen have undertaken to arm and equip, thoroughly, a Flying Artillery Company, now being organized in Raleigh—to the amount of \$20,000 if needed, viz: Dr. F. J. Haywood, Wm. Grimes, Wm. Boylan, Henry Mordecai, Jacob Mordecai, A. M. Lewis, W. M. Boylan and Ex-Gov. Manly. We learn also that a million and a half of dollars can be obtained here for Volunteer purposes, by donation.—*State Journal*.

'Important Movement'
The Wilmington Daily Herald,
April 22, 1861

In April of 1861, Henry Mordecai and other prominent men in Raleigh donated \$20,000 to establish a Confederate artillery company.

Henry Mordecai, 1861

This painting, which is on display in the Mordecai House, shows Henry Mordecai around the start of the Civil War.



No. 12.

The Confederate States,

1863

To *Mary Modreai* Dr.

<i>October</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>Cords Wood</i>	<i>@ \$5 per cord</i>	<i>1250 00</i>
	<i>100 000</i>	<i>Shapboards</i>	<i>@ \$7.50 per thousand</i>	<i>750 00</i>

Approved

*Geo. Mallett
Asst. Comdr. Genl.*

\$ 2000 00

I certify that the above account is correct and just; the articles *will be* accounted for on my property return for the *4th* quarter ending on the *31st* day of *December* 1863.

Geo. B. Baker Major and Quartermaster.

Received at Camp Holmes, the *14th* day of *December* 1863, of Capt. Geo. B. Baker, Asst. Quartermaster C. S. Army, the sum of *Two Thousand* dollars and *00* cents, in full of the above account.

Mary Modreai

[SIGNED DUPLICATES.]

IMPORTANT MOVEMENT.—The following gentlemen have undertaken to arm and equip, thoroughly, a Flying Artillery Company, now being organized in Raleigh—to the amount of \$20,000 if needed, viz: Dr. F. J. Haywood, Wm. Grimes, Wm. Boylan, Henry Mordecai, Jacob Mordecai, A. M. Lewis, W. M. Boylan and Ex-Gov. Manly. We learn also that a million and a half of dollars can be obtained here for Volunteer purposes, by donation.—*State Journal.*

Bridle



Portrait by Thomas Sully.
Courtesy of Mary Miley Theobald

Major Alfred Mordecai, 1836

Not all of the family supported the Confederacy, Alfred Mordecai- a brother of Moses- was a career military officer who graduated top of his class from West Point in 1823. During the Civil War he refused to bear arms against either side. He resigned from the United States Army and declined a commission in the Confederate Army.

Split Family

"The Gunboat Fund" *Semi-Weekly Standard*, May 24, 1862
Martha Hinton Mordecai and other women in Raleigh raised money for the construction of a Confederate ironclad.



Image courtesy of Capital Area Preservation, Inc.

Martha Hinton Mordecai, c. 1880s

This postwar image, currently on display in the Mordecai House, shows Martha in the late 19th century.

For the Standard.
THE GUNBOAT FUND.
Those ladies of the city of Raleigh who have taken an active part in soliciting and collecting money for the purpose of building an iron-clad gun-boat for the defence of our State, feel it to be their duty to publish the amount received and by whom contributed. Owing to the changed condition of affairs, it is now taken for granted that the idea of building such gun-boat must be abandoned. The money collected, amounting to \$1,965, has been deposited in the Bank of North-Carolina as a special deposit, in the name of the "Gun-Boat Fund." In addition to this, various articles of valuable jewelry, plate, &c., have been contributed. The question is, what is now to be done with this fund? Those who have most interested themselves in this business hereby give public notice to the several contributors, that they can, at their option, either call at the Bank and receive the sums respectively contributed by them, or they may let it remain for awhile, and await the developments of the next few weeks. In case of the seat of war being transferred to North-Carolina, a great battle within our borders will render necessary enlarged hospital accommodations for the wounded, and that probably in the City of Raleigh. That is a praiseworthy object to which this fund might be applied. Or the fund might be applied in distributing it among the indigent widows of such North-Carolina soldiers as may die in the service either in battle or from disease. Still, inasmuch as the contributions were made for a special object, which is now impracticable, those who choose may call at the Bank, and have returned to them the sums contributed. A list of the names, with the amount of contributions, will be left at the Bank, and Mr. W. E. Anderson, the Teller, has kindly agreed to attend to those who may apply for the reception of their contributions.

Bridle



Split

"T
S
M
o
m
C

d

deracy,
s a
o of his
e Civil
er side.
y and



ting i
Carol
battle
tribu
now
the E
tribu
contr
E. A
to th
contr

Martha Hinckley
This postwar
display in the
Martha in th

Family

"The Gunboat Fund" *Semi-Weekly Standard*, May 24, 1862
Catherine Hinton Mordecai and other women in Raleigh raised money for the construction of a Confederate ironclad.



For the Standard.
THE GUNBOAT FUND.
Those ladies of the city of Raleigh who have taken an active part in soliciting and collecting money for the purpose of building an iron-clad gun-boat for the defence of our State, feel it to be their duty to publish the amount received and by whom contributed. Owing to the changed condition of affairs, it is now taken for granted that the idea of building such gun-boat must be abandoned. The money collected, amounting to \$1,965, has been deposited in the Bank of North-Carolina as a special deposite, in the name of the "Gun-Boat Fund." In addition to this, various articles of valuable jewelry, plate, &c., have been contributed. The question is, what is now to be done with this fund? Those who have most interested themselves in this business hereby give public notice to the several contributors, that they can, at their option, either call at the Bank and receive the sums respectively contributed by them, or they may let it remain for awhile, and await the developments of the next few weeks. In case of the seat of war being transferred to North-Carolina, a great battle within our borders will render necessary enlarged hospital accommodations for the wounded, and that probably in the City of Raleigh. That is a praiseworthy object to which this fund might be applied. Or the fund might be applied in distributing it among the indigent widows of such North-Carolina soldiers as may die in the service either in battle or from disease. Still, inasmuch as the contributions were made for a special object, which is now impracticable, those who choose may call at the Bank, and have returned to them the sums contributed. A list of the names, with the amount of contributions, will be left at the Bank, and Mr. W. E. Anderson, the Teller, has kindly agreed to attend to those who may apply for the reception of their contributions.



Bridle

***British Army bridle, c. 1855,
owned by Alfred Mordecai***

In the 1850s, just a few years before the Civil War began, Alfred Mordecai had been part of the U.S. Military Commission to the Crimea. While there, Alfred traveled with the British Army and compiled a report on European warfare. Alfred likely purchased the bridle or received it as a gift from a British officer.



War
U.S.
re,

d
gift



So how did Southerners view the Civil War?

We often imagine the Civil War as a struggle between North and South. Yet, in reality, Southerners were divided. Many black southerners viewed the war as a fight to end slavery. Finding inspiration in the Old Testament, they believed that God was leading them out of bondage, just as he had left the ancient Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Both slaves and free blacks were active participants in the struggle for emancipation. Often slave men fled the plantation and joined the Federal army.

White southerners were not of a single mind. Some supported the Confederacy. Others showed little enthusiasm for secession and the war. The divisions ran largely among class lines. Yeomen and poor farmers were the most reluctant to support the Southern war effort. Planters including the Mordecais were often staunch defenders of the Confederacy.



Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

Company E 4th US Colored Infantry, c. 1863-66

The 4th Colored Infantry included former North Carolina slaves. The regiment participated in the capture of Raleigh in April 1865.



Image courtesy of the U.S. National Archives

Map of the Rebel Lines at Raleigh, N.C.

Notice the "H. Mordecai" property just north of town. The Confederate breastworks were approximately a quarter of a mile from the main house.



W
a
M
sl
th
th
fr

North

and
believed
had left
s and

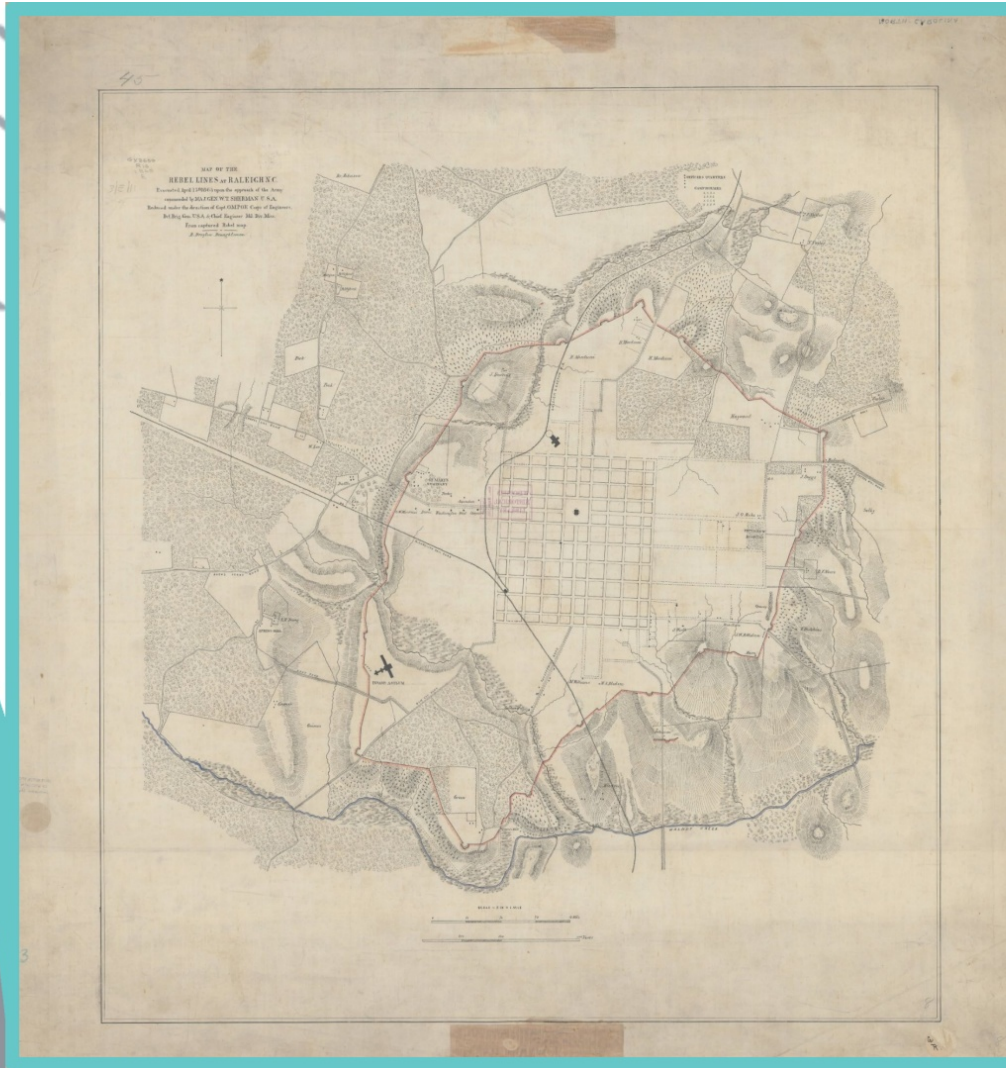




Image courtesy of the U.S. National Archives

Major Hazen c. 1865

" I have the honor to report that I... am now camped one mile and a half northeast of the town of Raleigh; headquarters near the house of Mr. Mordecai." Hazen led the Fifteenth U.S. Army Corps which occupied the vicinity of the Mordecai plantation in April 1865.

Civil War at Mordecai Plantation

The Mordecai plantation was an active place during the Civil War. In 1863, slaves from across the state were sent to Raleigh to dig entrenchments and build a wall around the city. The fortification, known as the Raleigh breastworks, ran through the Mordecai property. Hundreds of workers would have passed to and fro on a regular basis. Thousands of Federal Troops under William T. Sherman reached Raleigh in the final days of the war. They occupied the city for several weeks following the Confederate surrender in the spring of 1865.

Sherman's Arrival



The North Carolina government called in slaves from across the state to help construct the breastworks. Mordecai slaves such as Stephen Stephens, pictured here, were among those forced into service. Many years later, he recalled his wartime experience in *The News & Observer*.



The
du
acr
en
city



Sherman's Arrival

"hyar comes de Yankees a ridin', an dey sez dat dey had tentions o' hangin' Mr. Jake on de big oak in de yard iffen he'uv been dar, but he ain't. He an' his family had flewed de coop."

-Henry

Reactions to the Union occupation were decidedly different depending on who you were. For instance, many slaves cheered the arrival of Sherman's army. They embraced the opportunity to abandon the plantation and seek shelter in Union camps. However, planters feared Sherman's arrival. Some, such as Jacob Mordecai, fled into the country for safety.

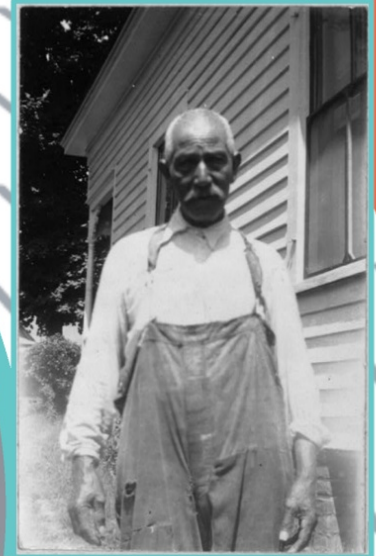
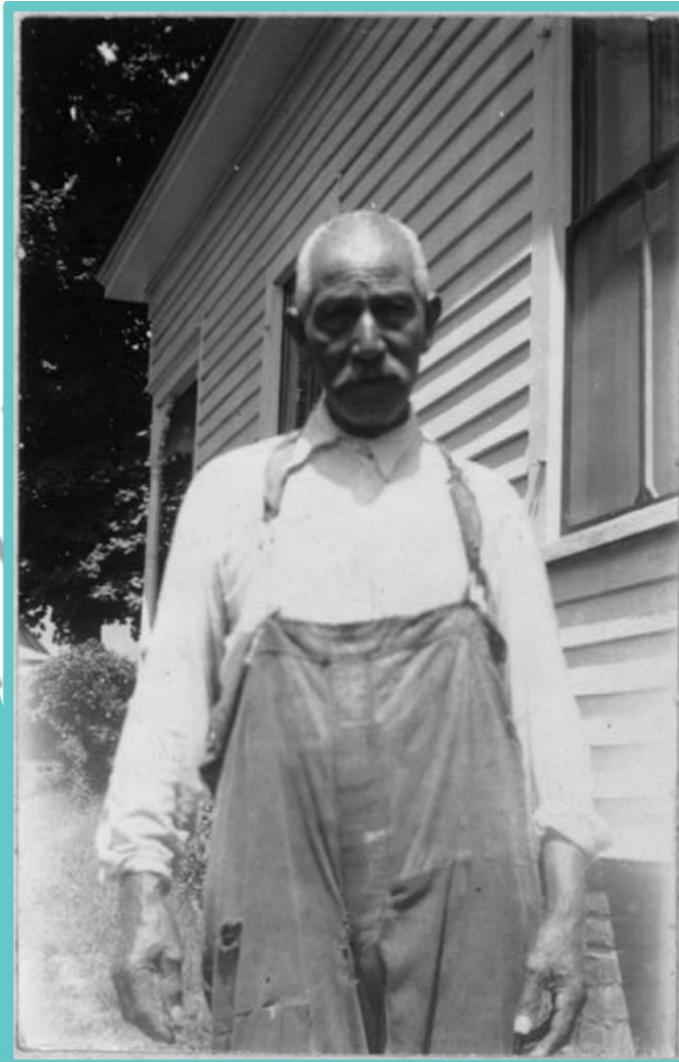


Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

Essex Henry at age 86, c. 1930s

This photo was taken approximately seventy years after the Civil War. By this time, slavery had ended. Essex and his wife Milly owned a "shack" located at 713 S. East Street in Raleigh.

were
who you
eered the
nbraced the
tion and seek
planters
ch as Jacob



My Soldier Boy

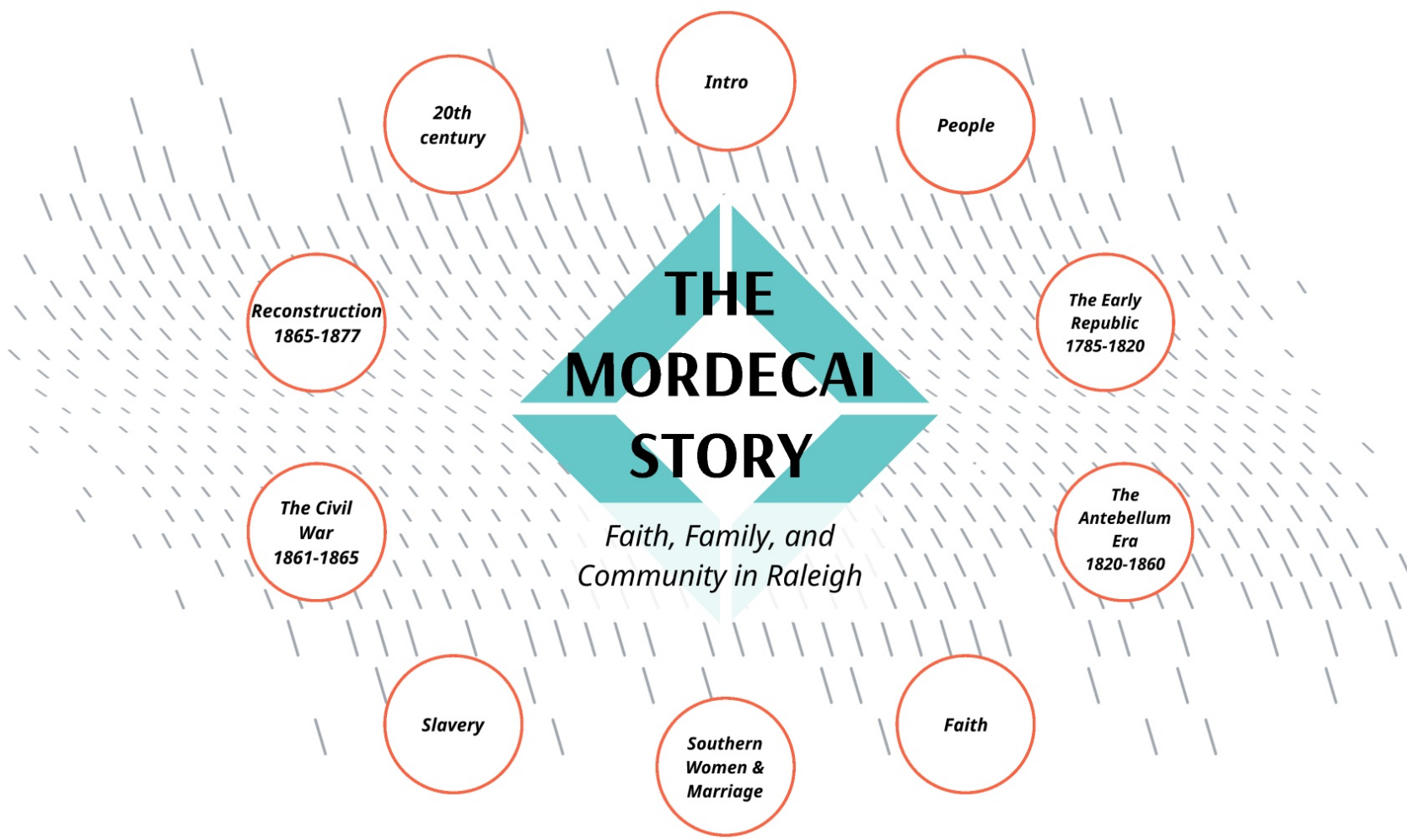
Local women helped care for soldiers suffering from sickness and war wounds in Raleigh hospitals. The inscription surrounding this c. 1880 photograph, which was found in a Mordecai picture album, reads:
"Robert R. Johnson, my soldier boy in the Confederacy where he lost his left arm. I nursed him till he could go home to Georgia. When he was a man he sent this photograph and in a grateful letter he told me he was a Methodist preacher."



Image courtesy of Capital Area Preservation, Inc.

...diers suffering
... Raleigh
...nding this c. 1880
...a Mordecai
...y in the
...t arm. I nursed
...rgia. When he was
...nd in a grateful
...dist preacher."





**Claiming
Freedom**

The South Facing Emancipation and Confederate Defeat

**Betsy
Holmes**

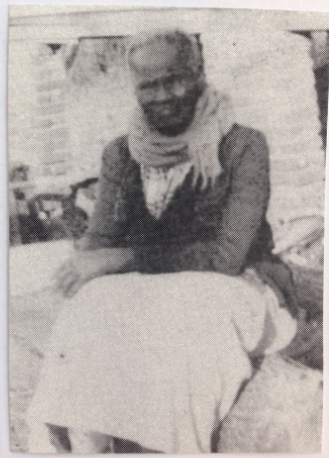
The period of Reconstruction ushered in an era of change in America. Major legislation passed during Reconstruction as Congress adopted the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments which outlawed slavery, guaranteed citizenship, and protected civil rights. During the late 1860s, black men voted and held office for the first time in the nation's history. Still, Reconstruction was a challenging time for many Southerners. Though the Civil War ended in 1865, Federal troops occupied Raleigh and other southern cities until 1877. Some Southerners felt threatened by the military presence. Plantation mistresses, such as Martha Hinton Mordecai, occasionally lashed out in anger. At the same time, the end of slavery was troubling to planters and their families. Planter women, such as Ellen Mordecai, found it difficult to face household chores once assigned to female slaves.

**Ellen
Mordecai**

**Freed-
people**



Claiming Freedom

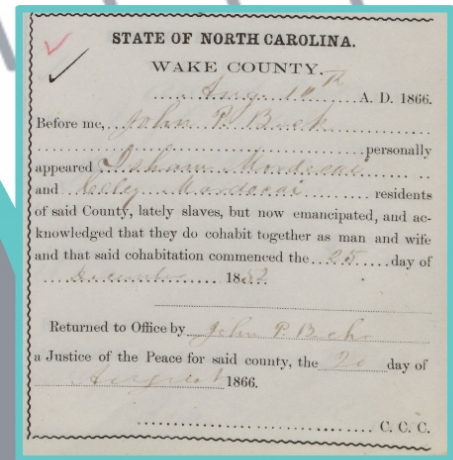


Mattie Curtis c. 1937

This photo was taken approximately seventy years after slavery ended. Mattie was still living in Raleigh.

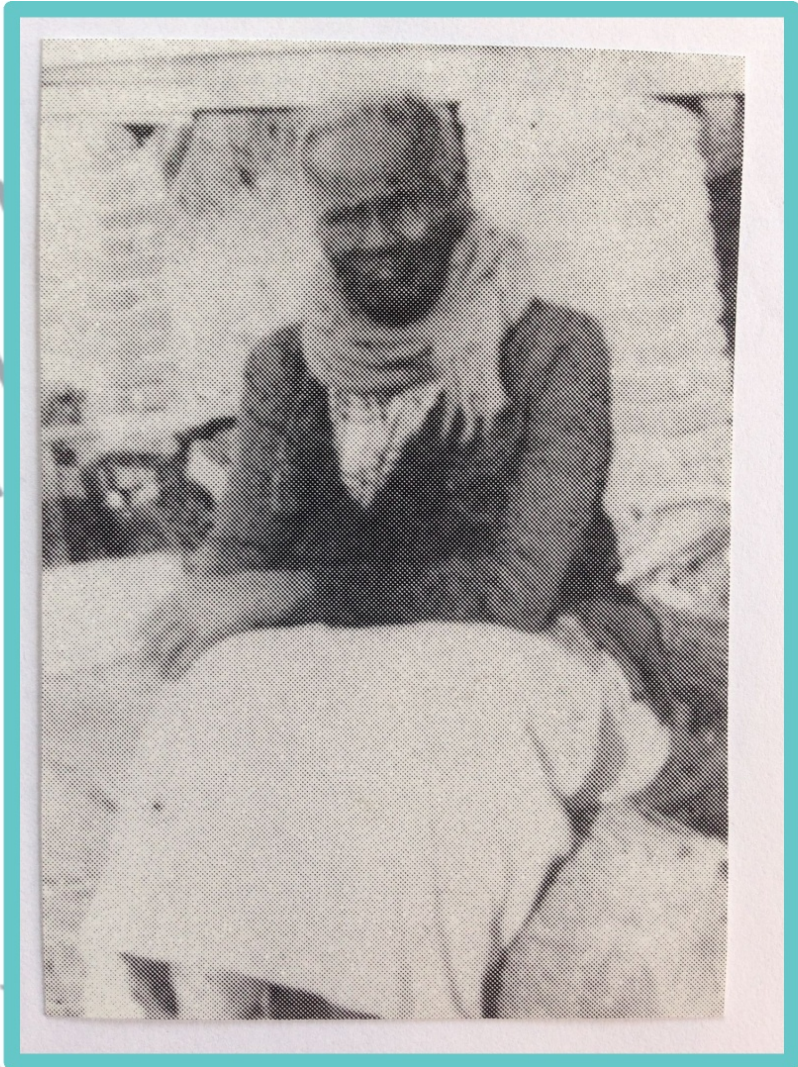
Former slaves- or freedpeople- embraced emancipation in a number of ways. Many left the plantation and hoped to never return. Some freedpeople had marriages recognized by law. Freedpeople also tried to find family members who had been "sold off." Between 1830 and 1860, thousands of North Carolina slaves had been sold to cotton planters in Deep South states such as Alabama and Mississippi. Some families were able to reunite, but others were less fortunate.

"Right atter de war northen preachers come around wid a little book a-marrying slaves an' I seed one of dem marry my pappy an' mammy. "My parents tried to find dere fourteen oldest chillums what wus sold away, but dey never did find but three of dem."
-Mattie Curtis, former slave of Henry & Martha Mordecai



Cohabitation Record of Isham and Cely Mordecai.

Although Isham and Cely had considered themselves husband and wife since 1852, they had their marriage recognized before a Wake County Justice of the Peace in 1866.



For
ema
the
free
Free
who
thou
to c
Alab

left
Some
law.
oers
d 1860,
en sold
ch as
ere able

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA.
WAKE COUNTY.
..... Aug. 11th A. D. 1866.
Before me, *John P. Beck*
..... personally
appeared *Isaham Mordecai*
and *Geley Mordecai* residents
of said County, lately slaves, but now emancipated, and ac-
knowledged that they do cohabit together as man and wife
and that said cohabitation commenced the ... *25* ... day of
..... *December* 18*52* ..
Returned to Office by *John P. Beck*
a Justice of the Peace for said county, the *20* day of
August 1866.
..... C. C. C.

Betsy Holmes

Betsy and her carriage

Purchasing land and a home was perhaps the ultimate expression of freedom. Billy and Betsy Holmes-both former Mordecai slaves-eventually bought a farm located near Marsh Creek, just a few miles north of present day Mordecai Historic Park. Betsy Holmes traveled by bull and cart to City Market where she sold produce. In the 1930s, Alfred Mordecai remembered that Betsy sold common vegetables and herbs from a stand. On the side she sold folk remedies that locals bought for medicinal purposes.

"In winter she had holly with pretty red berries; sometimes mistletoe and teaberries. In the spring there were little posies of trailing arbutus. In the summer big bunches of daisies; and, in autumn, goldenrod and bunches of brightly colored autumn leaves along with a few pumpkins...[Betsy Holmes also] ran the more serious business of crude drugs, such as Snake-root, Pink-root, Lions-tongue, Indian-physic, Cramp-bark, Cat-nip, Golden-seal and the like."

-Alfred Mordecai, writing in the early 20th century

an institution so good and wholesome, she made so much sunshine and inspired so much cockle-warming laughter with so good a grace, that it was self-cruelty to think of her as coming to an end. Consequently the news of her death was a shock for which Raleigh was fatuously not prepared. It is pleasant to think that there was no remorse in the surprise; the people of Raleigh were good to Aunt Betsy as she was good to them. She goes away, well loved.

Today at one o'clock she will be buried in the Jacob Mordecai grounds near New Hope Baptist church (white) to which she belonged before she changed her membership to the Raleigh church.

"Betsy Holmes Obituary" The North Carolinian, Feb. 15, 1906.

Local newspapers such as The North Carolinian, paid tribute to Betsy Holmes following her death in 1906. She was buried "in the Jacob Mordecai grounds," located near her farm on Marsh Creek.

an institution so good and wholesome, she made so much sunshine and inspired so much cockle-warming laughter with so good a grace, that it was self-cruelty to think of her as coming to an end. Consequently the news of her death was a shock for which Raleigh was fatuously not prepared. It is pleasant to think that there was no remorse in the surprise; the people of Raleigh were good to Aunt Betsy as she was good to them. She goes away well loved.

... will be remembered.
Today at one o'clock she will be buried in the Jacob Mordecai grounds near New Hope Baptist church (white) to which she belonged before she changed her membership to the Raleigh church.

"Betsy Holmes Obituary"



Betsy and her carriage



Image courtesy of the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

"Aunt Betsy Holmes and Her Horseless Carriage"

Betsy Holmes and her bull, Joe, were known around Raleigh. They were featured on several local postcards in the early 20th century.



Billy Holmes standing in a cornfield around the turn of the 20th century. This photo may have been taken on the Holmes farm on Marsh Creek.



"Billy Holmes" & Betsy Holmes

Betsy Holmes in her bull drawn carriage. Perhaps she was on her way to City Market.





"At
Ho
Be
arc
sev
cer

ere known
ed on
y 20th

cornfield around
y. This photo may
lmes farm on





© 12206 Aunt Betsy Holmes and her Horseless Carriage, Raleigh, N. C.

Down Home
W.G.H.



The Automobull: Aunt Betsy, Uncle Bill and Joe, the Bull

3136

"E

Ellen Mordecai



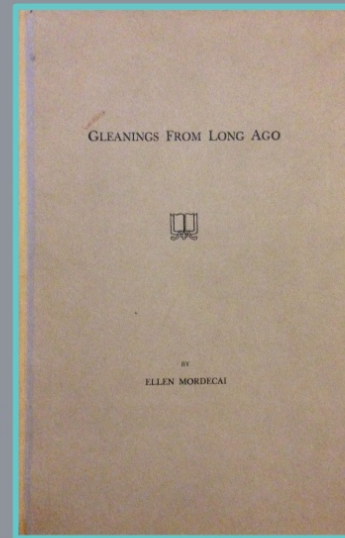
Ellen Mordecai, c. 1900

This image shows Ellen approximately thirty-five years after the end of the Civil War.

"The day that she (Sally) left my house for the first time after the surrender I shall never forget, and I said, 'I can never keep house without Sally.'"
-Ellen Mordecai, recalled in *Gleanings from Long Ago*

Gleanings from Long Ago, 1933

Prior to her death in 1916, Ellen Mordecai recorded "reminiscences" of her youth and young adulthood at Mordecai House. Family members published Ellen's memoir in 1933 under the title, *Gleanings from Long Ago*.



Mrs. Mordecai's creed, it is no wonder she considered the confederate constitution and theory of government the perfection of human wisdom, and that she now views those who prevented the triumphant vindication of that experiment with emotions of the bitterest enmity. She does. If ever I saw mingled contempt and detestation concentrated in a face—a by no means inexpressive face—in my life, it was when Mrs. Mordecai was holding a brief conversation, in my presence, with two officers of Gen. Corse's staff. These officers are pleasant courteous gentlemen. One of them, Captain Edwards, has a face, figure, and manner that should disarm resentment in the breast of any woman; but neither soft words from Yankee lips nor personal comeliness in Yankee form could appease her wrath, nor could good tempered remonstrance and rebuke do more than induce her to place some slight constraint upon the vigorous effervescence of her language.

"Raleigh As Is." *Janesville Weekly Gazette*, May 4, 1865

This article printed in a Wisconsin newspaper sheds light on the resentment felt by "female rebels" in Raleigh—including "Mrs. Mordecai"—following the Confederate surrender.

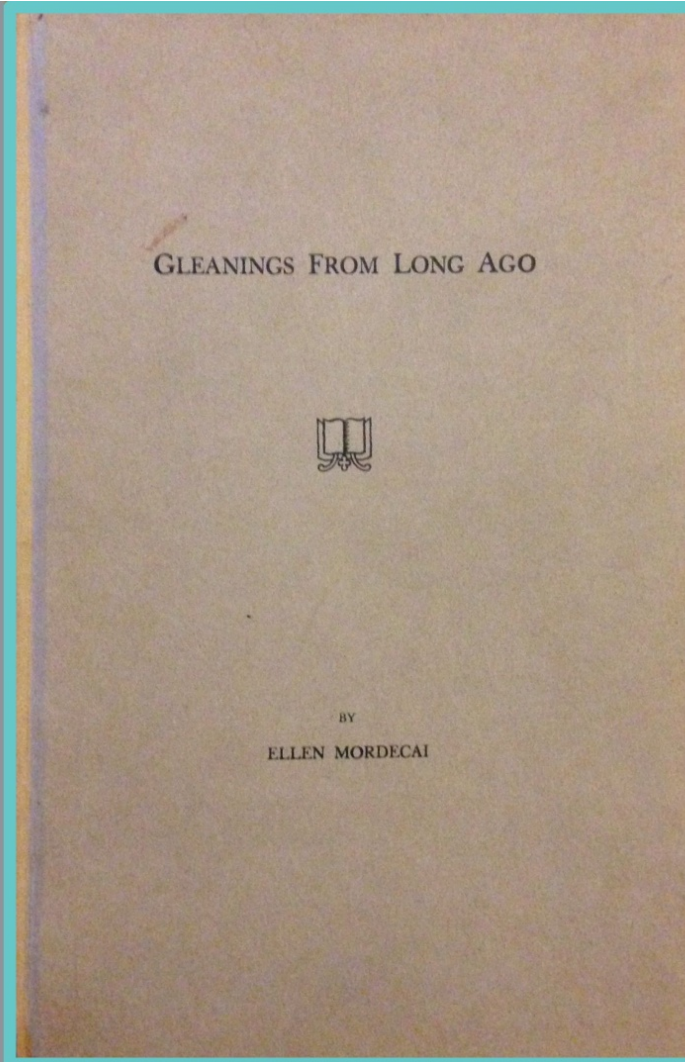


E
"The day that
for the first time
shall never for
never keep ho
-Ellen Mordecai
from Long Ago

ai

Mrs. Mordecai's creed, it is no wonder she considered the confederate constitution and theory of government the perfection of human wisdom, and that she now views those who prevented the triumphant vindication of that experiment with emotions of the bitterest enmity. She does. If ever I saw mingled contempt and detestation concentrated in a face—a by no means inexpressive face—in my life, it was when Mrs. Mordecai was holding a brief conversation, in my presence, with two officers of Gen. Corse's staff. These officers are pleasant courteous gentlemen. One of them, Captain Edwards, has a face, figure, and manner that should disarm resentment in the breast of any woman; but neither soft words from Yankee lips nor personal comeliness in Yankee form could appease her wrath, nor could good tempered remonstrance and rebuke do more than induce her to place some slight constraint upon the vigorous effervescence of her language.

From Long Ago, 1933
In 1916, Ellen
ded
of her youth and
d at Mordecai
members published
n 1933 under the
From Long Ago.



appease her wrath, nor could remonstrance and rebuke induce her to place some upon the vigorous effervescence.

"Raleigh As Is."
Weekly Gazette,
This article printed
Wisconsin newspaper
light on the reser
by "female rebels
including "Mrs. M
following the Cor
surrender

Freedpeople



Photo courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina

Servant with Carriage

c. 1880

Domestic servant, possibly Chaney Hinton, with a carriage in front of Mordecai House.

Hintons

Unlike Billy and Betsy Holmes, not all freedpeople were able to purchase land. Many rented farmland or worked as sharecroppers. Some even remained on the plantation and accepted wage work with former masters and mistresses.



"Big House Personnel" c. 1900

Several freedpeople remained on the Mordecai plantation after emancipation. From left to right are Ananias Ruffin, Mittie Ann Ruffin, Jerry Hinton, and Chaney Hinton. The Ruffins spent their lives at Mordecai plantation. Both died in the early 20th century and were buried at Mount Hope Cemetery near downtown Raleigh. Jerry and Chaney were possibly siblings or cousins.



and.

on
ork





Hintons

Chainie Hinton, who has for almost her whole life been in the service of the Mordecai families in this city, died Sunday and the funeral was held from the First Baptist church (colored) this afternoon at 5 o'clock. Chainie was known among all of the best people in Raleigh. As a nurse she was ever devoted to the children in her care and her fidelity to those with whom she lived has marked her life as an exemplary one. Many members of the white families with whom she has worked and some of those whom she nursed and who have grown to maturity attended her funeral.

"Obituaries of Chaney and Lucy Hinton"

The Evening Visitor reported the death of Lucy Hinton (wife of Jerry Hinton, pictured in "Big House Personnel") in June 1890. *The Raleigh Times* reported Chaney Hinton's death ten years later in May 1900.

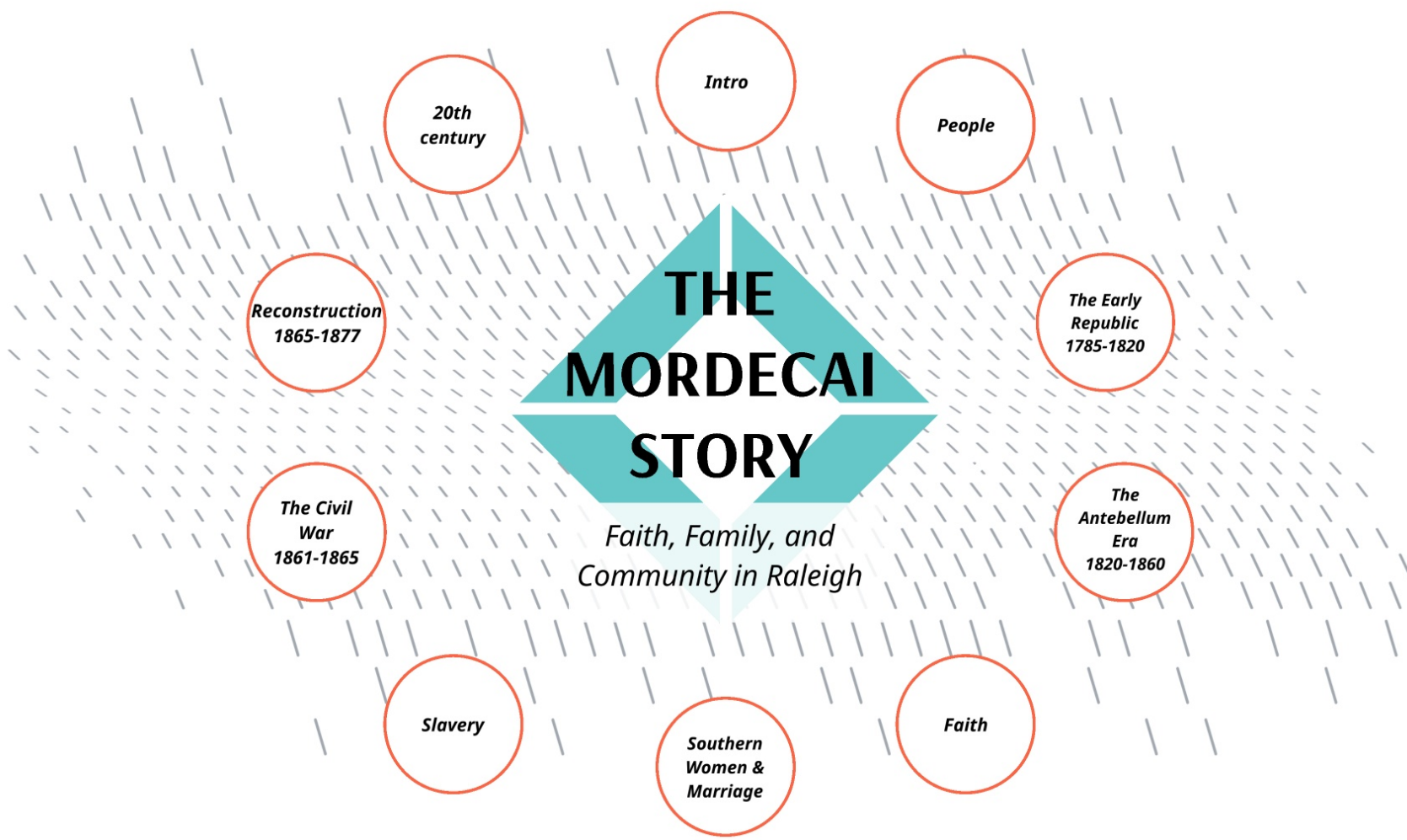
Lucy Hinton, the wife of Jerry Hinton, died very suddenly yesterday of heart disease at the residence of Mrs Henry Mordecai, just north of the city. Aunt Lucy was a most extraordinary woman, celebrated for her high character, integrity, honesty and faithfulness. She belonged to the old school of family servants, and had lived her entire life in the Mordecai family, of this city. She nursed all of Mrs Mordecai's children, and at her death was nursing Mrs Mordecai's youngest grand child. She died in the harness crowned with the glory of a well spent life, enjoying the love and confidence of all who knew her, both white and black. *

Chainie Hinton, who has for almost her whole life been in the service of the Mordecai families in this city, died Sunday and the funeral was held from the First Baptist church (colored) this afternoon at 5 o'clock. Chainie was known among all of the best people in Raleigh. As a nurse she was ever devoted to the children in her care and her fidelity to those with whom she lived has marked her life as an exemplary one. Many members of the white families with whom she has worked and some of those whom she nursed and who have grown to maturity attended her funeral.

"On
The
Luc
in '
Rah
dea

Lucy Hinton"
death of
, pictured
e 1890. *The*
Hinton's
0.

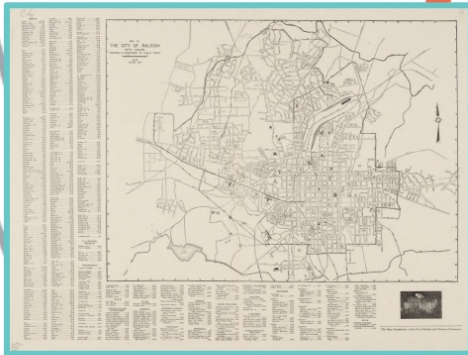
Lucy Hinton, the wife of Jerry Hinton, died very suddenly yesterday of heart disease at the residence of Mrs Henry Mordecai, just north of the city. Aunt Lucy was a most extraordinary woman, celebrated for her high character, integrity, honesty and faithfulness. She belonged to the old school of family servants, and had lived her entire life in the Mordecai family, of this city. She nursed all of Mrs Mordecai's children, and at her death was nursing Mrs Mordecai's youngest grand child. She died in the harness crowned with the glory of a well spent life, enjoying the love and confidence of all who knew her, both white and black. *



Patty
Mordecai

Investing in the Future

In the decades surrounding 1900, the Mordecai family profited from the sale of one of their greatest assets: land. Raleigh landmarks such as Oakwood Cemetery and the Oakwood neighborhood, as well as neighborhoods along Glenwood Avenue, were built on former Mordecai land. Much of the turn of the century business transactions can be attributed to Patty Mordecai, the daughter of Henry and Martha, who received full title of the property in 1914. In addition to selling land, she invested in stocks and bonds with companies such as R.J. Reynolds Tobacco and Carolina Power and Light.



Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

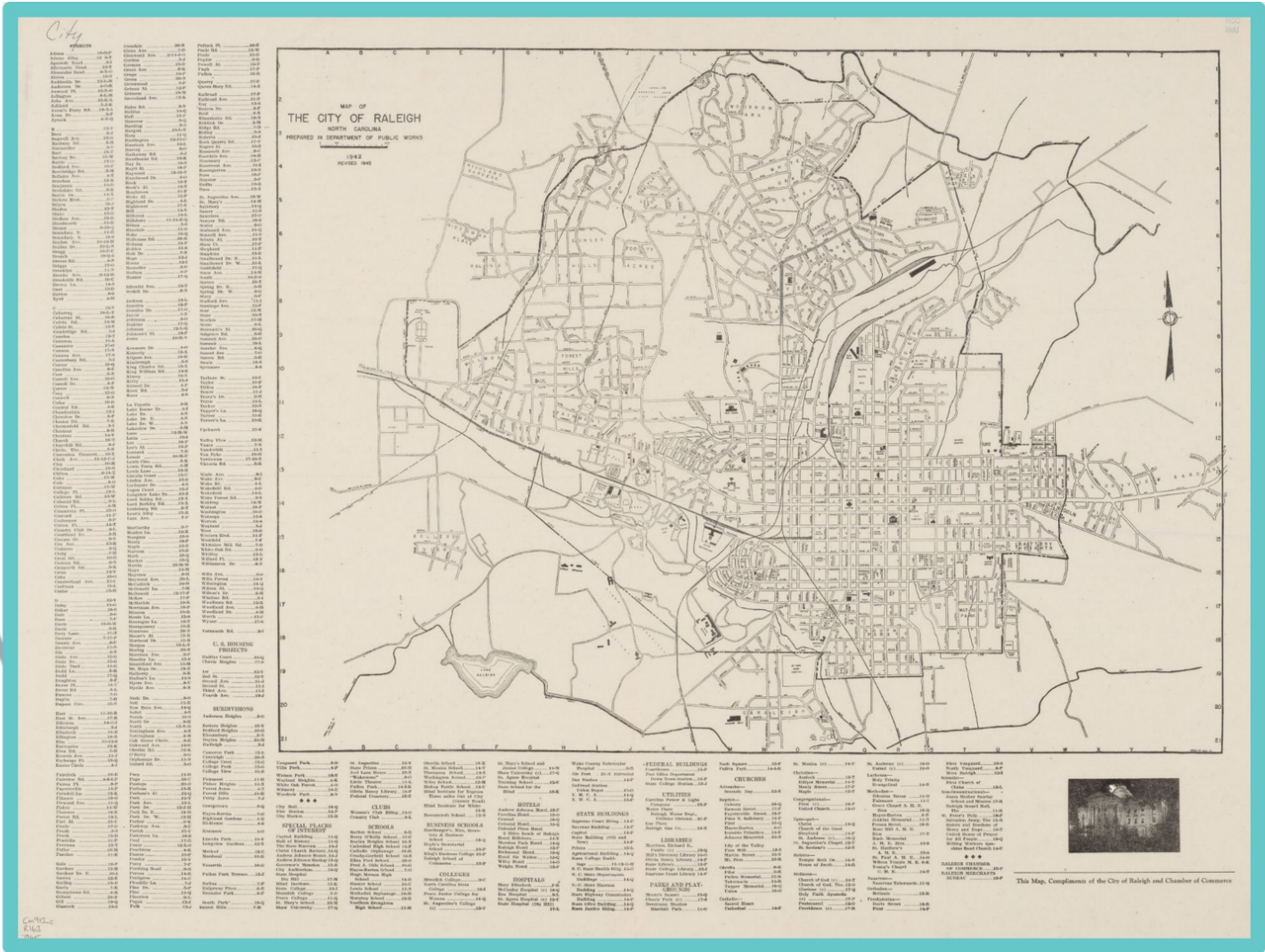
Map of Raleigh showing Mordecai Place, 1945. Mordecai Place was one of Raleigh's first suburb neighborhoods.

Mordecai
House



"Advertisement for Mordecai Place"

In 1922, Patty Mordecai contracted with noted Raleigh developers Gavin Dortch and Daniel Allen to create Mordecai Place Inc, a residential area that is now the Mordecai neighborhood.



II
 pl
 R:
 O
 G
 M
 be
 ar
 Ir

family
 assets: land.
 and the
 goods along
 Mordecai land.
 actions can

NEWS AND OBSERVER, RALEIGH, N. C., THURSDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13, 1938.

LIONISM STANDS FOR STANDARDS
 Public Health Practices Highest Means of Human Civilization

CIVILIAN PRESIDENT SEIZES LIONS CLUB

THE LIONS CLUB AND ITS MEANING
 Of Kings of Tolerances He Is King There: Most Fight Collectively

HERE'S A LIVE UP-TO-DATE DRUG STORE THAT BELONGS TO YOU

WALK-OVER
 Special Showing of two famous shoes for WOMEN

Build Your Home in Hayes-Barton or Mordecai Place
 Raleigh's Smartest Residential Sections

Beautiful Hayes-Barton
 Just far enough from the heart of town to avoid all disagreeable noises, and close, yet only five minutes ride to the Capitol.

Mordecai Place
 The newest residential section in Raleigh answers the call for more room for high class homes in the Capital City.
 Terms Reasonable

ALLEN BROTHERS
 Capital Club Building Phone 2188 N. C. House, Lion Raleigh, N. C.

The logo for Mordecai House features a large grey circle with a teal border. The text "Mordecai House" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font inside the circle. To the right of the circle, there is a red vertical bar with the letters "P", "D", "C", "r", "t" stacked vertically. The background of the slide has a pattern of grey diagonal lines.

Mordecai House



Mordecai house and interior c. early 20th century

Most of the objects are still on display in the home today.



Margaret Mordecai married William Little, a respected surgeon and Confederate veteran. After William's early death, Margaret and her five sons lived at Mordecai House. The Little brothers were Henry, George, William, Alfred, and Burke (second from left)

Mordecai Place
street sign,
c. mid-20th century



Images courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History





Mordecai
street sign



Alfred, and Burke (second from left)



ected
erate
n's early
her five
ai House.
ere
am,
cond

ACE





Patty Mordecai

Patty Mordecai's life spanned a period of significant change in the United States. Born in 1860, she came of age during the Civil War and Reconstruction. As an adult, she lived through the Influenza Epidemic of 1918 and along with other women gained the right to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. She watched prohibition come and go, survived the Great Depression, and experienced two World Wars. Patty's generation witnessed major transformations in transportation as well, including the development of airplanes and automobiles in the early 20th century. Patty Mordecai died in 1949. Having never married, she willed the Mordecai House and her property to her nephew, Burke Haywood Little, who lived in the home until the early 1960s. Burke was the last person to occupy the home as a private resident. The City of Raleigh purchased the house in 1969.



Patty Mordecai c. 1880s

In some ways, Patty, who did not work outside of the home, was bound by tradition. In other ways, however, she was a "modern" woman with business savvy. Patty Mordecai enjoyed entertaining, and was known for her sense of style. This photo was made by William Eckardt in Baltimore, MD.



Patty More
change in th
during the C
lived throug
with other v
passage of t
prohibition
and experie
witnessed n
including th
the early 20
never marri
property to

