

Collection: Cary H. WHITAKER Farm Book
Halifax County, N.C. 1883-1890

P.C. 1780.1

Physical Description: One volume of 225 pages (p.167-199 and 208-225 being blank) and seven loose items laid into the volume.

Acquisition: Gift of Mrs. Anna S. Thompson, Macon, N.C., August 30, 1990.

*North Carolina State Archives
Raleigh, North Carolina*

Description: This volume contains the financial record of a small farm owned by Cary Hamilton Whitaker in southern Halifax County for the years from 1883 through 1890, and particularly the record of hired farm labor. Whitaker's father, Lawrence B., had been a small farmer owning about 240 acres and a family of four slaves, but died in 1864 leaving a widow and three small children. The father's estate amounted to personalty valued at \$300 and realty valued at \$1000. This patrimony was wiped out, finally, when the land was sold to settle the estate's debts in 1869. By 1880, however, the widow and her two sons, Cary Hamilton and Clifton Lawrence, had acquired another smaller farm of 116 acres of which 35 acres were under cultivation. In 1879 the farm produced 100 bushels of corn, 25 bushels of oats, 4 bales of cotton, and 100 bushels of apples. After his twenty-first birthday in November 1882, the young Cary H. Whitaker assumed control of the farm and hired as laborers the family of a neighboring black tenant farmer, Dan Whitaker, who appears to have died in 1881 or 1882, and with the help of this family produced crops from the year 1883 through the year 1890. Profits from the farming enterprise appear to have been sufficient to pay for the education of the two brothers, both of whom entered the Methodist Protestant ministry. Dr. Clifton L. Whitaker, subsequently president of the N.C. Methodist Protestant Conference, and before his death librarian of High Point College, died in 1926 three months before his sixty-third birthday. An obituary has not been found for the death of Dr. Cary H. Whitaker.

Of the black family of Whitakers who worked on Cary H. Whitaker's farm near Enfield, all of them, from the widow down to the youngest child, worked according to their capacity. Patty Whitaker, the widow, was hired to cook and launder for the brothers. Her oldest son Granville was hired as the principal farm hand. All the younger children (Jack, Penelope, Fanny, Roberta, Marietta, and Winney) helped plant and harvest corn, hoed in the fields, and picked cotton. The labor accounts for the employment of this black family (and other occasional laborers) include the terms of employment for the adults. The

accounts were maintained in a columnar fashion for reckoning, much like the debit and credit columns of ordinary bookkeeping. In this instance, however, the "debit" column represents advances of foodstuffs, clothing, tobacco, or money; the "credit" column represents the amount earned by actual labor. By striking a periodic balance, the employer could determine whether there was a "credit" balance reflecting wages to be paid by him or whether there was a "debit" balance of additional hours of work to be performed by the laborer. The accounts are laboriously kept. Those for Patty Whitaker's labor, for instance, run from pages 19 (1883), 52 (1884), 76 (1885-1886), 110 (1887-1888), 138 (1889-1890) and 154 (1890). Similar accounts are to be found for Granville Whitaker and his sisters. Occasional laborers from other families have their own accounts, as well.

In addition to the farm labor accounts, there are the usual general farm expense accounts and accounts payable to the stores of Enfield merchants. A special account was kept for weekly cotton picking (weight picked daily by each picker's name) for the years 1885 and 1886, and is to be found at pages 150-153. For the years from 1883 through 1886 a special table was prepared to report the weight and cost of cotton seed planted and a record of the sales of bales of cotton from it; at the same time a status report on the value of the farm at the beginning of the year was prepared based on the value of corn, fodder, cottonseed, potatoes, and pork produced (see pages 200-207). A separate account of cotton produced by Granville Whitaker on his own account in 1886 will be found at page 207. The yearly valuation does not report produce of the orchard, which may have been retained for eating and preserving for the family and the hands. Page 1 of the account book records the grafting of nine apple trees by variety in 1886 and another six trees in 1889 (as well as May cherries and Leconte pear slips planted). Page 2 records the planting of eight peach trees by variety or source in 1887.

The seven loose items are: two store accounts for 1889; an 1889 bill from the Methodist Protestant Board of Publications; a list of members of the Enfield Sub-alliance of the Farmers' State Alliance who died in 1889; an 1889 business "card" of the business agent for the N.C. Farmers' State Alliance; and two poems clipped from two undated periodical publications.

Finding aid completed September 5, 1990, by George Stevenson.

Subject entries for computer

Agricultural labor
Agricultural wages
Apple trees
Cotton marketing
Cotton picking
Farm management
Farmers' State Alliance
Halifax County
Peach trees
Whitaker, Cary Hamilton
Whitaker, Clifton Lawrence
Whitaker family (Blacks)