THE TOBACCO kingdom was much wider than song, story, and tradition have made it. From its beginning in Virginia it soon spread to Maryland, Kentucky, and North Carolina. Virginians and others were extending its boundaries even in Colonial times into South Carolina and Georgia, and with the flood of immigrants after the Revolution tobacco became the staple crop in this southern Appalachian country from the Fall Line even on up to the foothills.

Jedidiah Morse, known as the “Father of American Geography,” wrote in 1789 that the settlers coming into Georgia were turning their attention to raising tobacco, “and the vast extent of land, with a richness of soil suited to the culture of the plant, renders it probable, that tobacco will shortly become the staple of this state.” A few years later a South Carolinian noted how the upcountry farmers were planting their small fields of tobacco but that there were no great plantations.

Tobacco seeds were sown in beds in the early spring, and within a week or two they were coming up. They were then transplanted in rows about three feet apart and thereafter they were given careful cultivation and attention. Weeds had to be removed, the soil piled up around the stalks, and worms and caterpillars, removed. The tops were pinched off those stalks not left for seed, thus making “the leaves longer and thicker,” and also sprouting suckers were pinched off. When ready to harvest, the stalks were cut off near the ground and carried to the curing house, which was made of logs, with plenty of ventilation. The stalks were hung up on poles spaced far enough apart to keep the leaves from touching one another. Here they were left “to sweat and dry.” The leaves were then stripped off “and classed according to their
respective goodness.” The leaves were tied in small bundles, with a leaf or two being used to bind them, and left to air further. The bundles were firmly pressed into hogsheads or casks preparatory for inspection and the market.  

Since tobacco was marketed in casks or hogsheads and such containers were not open to the view of purchasers, it would be easy to sell inferior tobacco as first grade. Virginia had early provided that all tobacco for sale should be inspected and graded, and this system was adopted by other colonies and states later. Soon enough tobacco was being raised in Colonial Georgia to call for inspection. A law which the General Assembly passed in 1770 recited that as the “encouragement of the Culture of Tobacco in this Province will be attended with great Advantages to the back Settlements . . . where the Lands are particularly adapted to the same, . . . and . . . in Order to prevent any bad or unmerchantable Tobacco being offered for Sale or exported,” a system of inspection was, therefore, being set up. Three inspection centers were established (Savannah, Sunbury, and Augusta), where inspectors should break open all containers and “diligently View and Examine the same,” and if they found the tobacco “free from Trash, Sand and Dirt” they should stamp every container with the word “Georgia” and the name of the inspector. Inspectors were paid six pence for every hundred pounds which they inspected, and if it should be found that the tobacco was improperly passed as merchantable, the inspector should be fined fifteen shillings per hundred pounds, and any person exporting uninspected tobacco should be fined a like amount.

With the coming of independence, the state began to look to tobacco as its principal crop in the interior settlements. Since the cultivation of tobacco was “very considerable and if properly attended to” would “become a most valuable article of exportation,” the legislature in 1785 passed an act setting up an elaborate system of tobacco inspection, using the Colonial statute as a basis. It set up four inspection centers, continuing Savannah and Augusta from Colonial times, changing Sunbury to Hardwick (at the mouth of the Ogeechee River), and in recognition of the settlements in the upcountry above Augusta, setting up inspection at “the mouth of Broad River, at Moss’s.” This last location was, of course, in the vicinity of Petersburg, which was not to get started until the following year.

Warehouses were to be erected at these points where tobacco was to be inspected and stored. The proprietors of warehouses
were to receive one shilling and two pence per hogshead of tobacco stored for a year, and for all tobacco stored for more than a year the charge was six pence per month. These rates, which were to be paid by the tobacco farmers, were supposed to make it attractive financially for the proprietors who were authorized by law to erect warehouses. Two inspectors were required to be in attendance at every warehouse from September to June and for every hogshead “or sack” inspected they should receive one shilling and two pence. By this act inspectors were to be appointed by the governor after proper recommendations, and they were required to break open every container and “without favor or partiallity” determine whether the tobacco was “good, sound, well conditioned, merchantable, and clear of trash.” If found so, it should be repacked in hogsheads forty inches in length, thirty-one inches across the head, and weighing 950 pounds. The casks should then be marked “sweet scented” or “Oronoko,” with various other details as to location, date, and so forth.

“Pickers,” who sorted out the tobacco for the inspectors to grade were to be paid for their services one tenth of the value of the tobacco saved. All spoiled and rejected tobacco must be burned in brick boxes some distance away from the warehouse. High penalties were fixed for any infractions of the rules set up in this act—as for instances, any inspector who should give a receipt for tobacco not actually inspected should be judged guilty of a felony and “shall suffer death . . . without benefit of clergy,” and anyone attempting to carry away any tobacco which had been refused should for every hundredweight be fined three pounds.

Tobacco was much on the minds as well as in the mouths and pipes of Georgians and their legislators and led to frequent amendments, clarifications, elaborations, and repetitions of the tobacco laws. For the relief of small farmers who raised negligible amounts of tobacco, not enough to fill a hogshead, which must weigh at least 950 pounds, the legislature in 1787 allowed several farmers to combine their tobacco to make up a full hogshead and to be paid on its sale according to the amount they had contributed. To guarantee better protection of tobacco stored in warehouses because “great quantities of tobacco have been damaged at some of the inspections for want of good and sufficient shelters,” all warehouse owners were now held accountable for any damage to tobacco in their keeping.

In 1791 the legislature repeated the long act of 1785, with several changes. As an eloquent indication of how the raising of
tobacco was sweeping the central and upper part of the state, eleven new inspection centers were set up, including Lexington and Washington in the Upper Broad River Valley. A new warehouse was designated at Petersburg on the land of John Oliver. The judges of the Inferior Court were now to appoint the inspectors; the length of the hogshead was increased to forty-nine inches but the distance across the head was to remain at thirty-one inches; the inspectors were to receive two shillings per hogshead inspected instead of the one shilling and two pence in the former act; the hogsheads must now have six good strong hoops around each one; the brands must be labeled "Sweet scented, leaf," "Stemmed," and "Oronoke, leaf," and the word "Georgia," in letters one inch high must be marked on every container. The period when the warehouse must be open for the inspection of tobacco was changed from September to June; it now must be from October to August.

The two main types of tobacco, Oronoko (Oronoke) and Sweet Scented, differed in that the former grew best on rich bottom land and had a longer and more pointed leaf, while the latter thrived best on sandy loam upland soil and was milder in flavor. Oronoko was generally marketed unstemmed. By later legislation Georgia inspectors were required to grade tobacco into "first, second, third, and fourth qualities." When competent inspectors could not be found in some counties containing warehouses, the law allowed the justices of the Inferior Courts in several counties to act together in selecting inspectors without regard to county lines.

Raising tobacco was long in subsiding after other crops began to engage the attention of farmers and planters. As settlements extended farther up the Savannah River and inland, more tobacco inspection warehouses were authorized, in Athens as late as 1841 and on across the mountains to Rome in 1842. From early times, South Carolina had inspection centers on its side of the Savannah River, having authorized in 1784 an inspection "at the most convenient place at or near the head of the navigation upon Savannah river." In the course of time various changes were made in the charges for storage and in the fees of inspectors and pickers.

The strategic location of Petersburg made it the most important inspection center above Augusta. The Inferior Court of Elbert County regularly appointed the inspectors for its warehouses and there was no dearth of applicants. At one time one of the inspectors was Joel Crawford, a brother of William H. Crawford. There were several warehouses in Petersburg with the principal
ones in 1797 being John Oliver's and William Watkins'. Now and then warehouses changed ownership, though the original establishment of all warehouses had to be authorized by law. In 1801 John Oliver sold his warehouse to LeRoy Pope for $2,000; the next year William Watkins sold his warehouse on Lot 35 to John Oliver for $1,500; and in 1804 LeRoy Pope sold his warehouse back to John Oliver for $1,450—there must have been some other consideration in this last transfer, for Pope was too good a businessman to loose money on a deal.\(^\text{14}\)

It was of primary importance that tobacco be honestly and correctly inspected and graded, for the economic well-being of whole regions depended on the reputation of their tobacco. But with all the minute regulations provided by law and punishments even to the infliction of death for violations, still there were complaints about poor inspection from which Petersburg was not to escape. In 1799 the Grand Jury of Elbert County presented a grievance that the warehouses in Petersburg were not kept in good order.\(^\text{15}\) Complaints probably arose from the fact that at least one of them was not “enclosed,”\(^\text{16}\) a situation which allowed rain to blow in and injure the tobacco. A person commenting on the tobacco trade at this time charged that the inspection at Petersburg was not being properly done at one of the warehouses, “which will be highly injurious to that growing and commercial town.” Some tobacco had been passed “that was not worth its freight to market.” He added that “’tis well known that no part of Georgia does, or can furnish better tobacco than some that comes to the town of Petersburg.” The bad inspection at one of the warehouses would ruin the reputation of all.\(^\text{17}\)

Because some bad Georgia tobacco was being received at Charleston, there was a tendency there to discount all tobacco from that state. Ferdinand Phinizy, now merchandizing in both Augusta and Lexington, answered, “I cannot bear to hear every man abused for those that perhaps have done wrong.” But he added that it was certain that some tobacco had “been very badly inspected, and others damaged by water before it got to Charleston (particularly the Petersburg and other inspections in the country).”\(^\text{18}\) By 1816 when Georgians were less interested in raising tobacco but were still producing some for sale, it was generally agreed that Georgia tobacco was much less desired and sold for much less than Virginia tobacco. The reasons Georgians gave for this situation were that the planters did not give as close attention to curing and packing it and too many of the inspectors showed
a "total want of principle and competence." Some of the tobacco was so green that it could not withstand the voyage to Europe.\footnote{19} Georgia's early market for its tobacco was in Europe. In 1792 the state exported 5,471 hogsheads.\footnote{20} Some of it went through Charleston, but probably most of it went down the river to Savannah. In 1789 there were agents for buyers of tobacco who said they were chartering a ship to take it to England. They would sell the tobacco there for a commission of 5%, buy goods there for a like commission, and insure it all for 5%—making 15% for the whole transaction.\footnote{21}

The common way of transporting tobacco to Petersburg and other river ports was by a method known as rolling. A rod should be inserted through the hogshead and fastened to wheels on each end—the wheels being high enough to lift the hogshead a foot or more off the ground—and with two shafts attached and a horse hitched between the tobacco was rolled to market. Ridge roads were used to avoid crossing streams by fords, and where bigger streams had to be crossed, ferries or bridges were used. The road from Washington, Wilkes County, to Augusta crossed Little River on a bridge, and the fee for rolling a tobacco hogshead across was twenty-five cents.\footnote{22} Of course, most of the tobacco which reached Petersburg went down the river on boats; the rate which merchants paid was $8.00 per hogshead.\footnote{23} Petersburg merchants generally sold their tobacco in Augusta or left it with factors there but some sent it on to Savannah.\footnote{24} However, Petersburg tobacco boats went no farther than Augusta.

There was a great clamor for tobacco by Augusta merchants. All were anxious to pay the "highest price," such as George Barnes & Co., who ran the advertisement in the city paper: "The highest price in Cash will be given by the subscriber for TOBACCO."\footnote{25} Tobacco came to be almost as much a medium of exchange as it had been in early Virginia; the Grand Jury of Elbert County presented it as a grievance that tobacco and tobacco warehouse receipts and notes were not made receivable for public taxes.\footnote{26} In 1792 a person sold a slave for 6,000 pounds of tobacco.\footnote{27}

Of course, tobacco in the leaf had to be manufactured for consumption, and that used in Georgia was to some extent manufactured in the state. Certainly for that brief period from 1786 onward to the establishment of the Federal Republic in 1789, manufactured tobacco from abroad was taxed $1.00 a pound on entering the state, according to Georgia's tariff law passed on February 13, 1786.\footnote{28} It should be inferred that some tobacco was manu-
factured in Petersburg, for Shaler Hillyer of the merchant firm of Hillyer & Holt wrote in 1808 that he had a quantity of "manufactured tobacco," which he would like to exchange for sugar, coffee, rum, and other merchandise. He had 2,000 to 2,500 pounds which he would like to exchange.29

Manufacturing tobacco at this time meant converting it into chewing tobacco, "Negro head and pig tail" being varieties;30 "Rappee Snuff," manufactured in Augusta and for sale at 62½ cents per one-pound bottle, "highly approved of" by competent judges;31 and smoking tobacco, which required little processing for most smokers beyond crushing the dried leaves in the palms of their hands—and some chewers probably did the same. Chewing tobacco was sold "by the keg" or in smaller amounts.32

The price of tobacco in the leaf varied widely. In 1801 "Petersburg Inspected Tobacco" was rated at 7 cents a pound in a court suit.33 Its price on the market fluctuated from 31½ cents to 41½ cents until 1811 when it dropped to 2 and 21½ cents a pound.34 This latter low price was brought on by the unsettled conditions leading up to the War of 1812, but it increased until the end of 1815, when it reached from 6 to 7 cents. The next year, influenced by the effects of peace, the price jumped to 14 cents; however, it then began to recede until in 1821 it was down to 3¼ to 4¼ cents.35

Long before this time, tobacco had ceased to be the principal crop among the farmers and planters of the Petersburg region and the Broad River Valley. Of course, the foremost reason was the rise of King Cotton, but even without the interference of His Majesty, there were factors and forces which were making hard sledding for tobacco. There was the progressive losing of the European market, both from competition abroad and from the increasing import duties. In Great Britain these duties rose almost to $1.00 a pound at certain times but were generally lower, however, still practically prohibitive. France also imposed high tariff rates. The commercial turmoil during the Napoleonic wars was a great hindrance to the exportation of tobacco. Almost as great a deterrent to the cultivation of tobacco as the rise of cotton was the effect tobacco had in exhaustion of the fertility of the soil.

Cotton was not unknown to Georgia from early Colonial times, for it had been scatteringly grown from Virginia to Florida even though it was nowhere a staple crop for money either on the domestic market or for export. It was sometimes grown in yards as an ornamental plant and its fibre was mixed with wool as a
filler in homespun cloth. This was the variety of cotton which came to be known as short staple, upland, or green seed. In the late 1780's another variety came to Georgia from the Bahama Islands, which received the name of Sea Island from having been first grown on St. Simons and other coastal islands. It had long staples and black seeds. This cotton first entered world trade and was soon to flourish as raw material for the cotton mills of England, made possible about this time by the inventions of Richard Arkwright, James Hargreaves, Samuel Compton, and Edward Cartwright.

As Sea Island cotton could not be produced except on the islands and on the coast for about thirty miles inland, it was of no interest to Georgians of the interior, who were forced to depend largely on tobacco as their staple crop. Sea Island cotton became a principal crop on coastal plantations because the fibre, which did not cling very tenaciously to the seed, could be easily separated by small machines or gins (as all cotton machines soon came to be called), which could be run by the foot or hand; but these machines could not be used on upland cotton because the fibre of this variety was short and clung very closely to the seeds.

For a long time people with a mechanical turn of mind had been experimenting with contraptions that could separate the lint from this upland cotton seeds, which for the most part was being laboriously pulled apart by hand; as long as this method had to be used, cotton could never be of much value as a crop. In India, where some cotton was being produced, a small roller machine was used with some success. In 1788 it was reported that South Carolina planters were "making experiments in the culture of cotton," because "they have got the gin, or machine for cleaning it, by which the profit of raising it must be much increased."

All of these early gins used a set or two sets of rollers. Joseph Eve of the Bahama Islands had a model going by 1790 consisting of rollers with teeth instead of grooves characteristic of other types. However, it appeared to be more useful for Sea Island cotton than for the short staple of the uplands, though it was being advertised in Augusta. The common type of the small roller gins allowed some seeds to go through with the lint if the rollers were very far apart, but if they were put closer together they cracked some of the seeds which went through with the lint.

About the time when talk about gins was uppermost and excitement was welling up over the possibilities of cotton becoming the miracle crop for the South, Eli Whitney appeared on the scene
in 1792, coming as the guest of Mrs. Nathanael Greene, the widow of the Revolutionary hero, at her Mulberry Grove plantation a few miles from Savannah. Whitney soon caught the contagion, and being long interested in mechanical devices, he developed resplendent visions of great wealth if he could make a gin which would avoid all the little defects in the various types floating around. He became so excited with the prospect that he became very secretive, not writing back to his father in Connecticut until April, 1793, even though he had come to Georgia the preceding year. When he did write, his letters were somewhat rambling; however, he made plain that he had been told by gentlemen at Mrs. Greene’s home that if a machine could be invented which would clean cotton rapidly, “it would be a great thing both to the Country and to the inventor.” Finally when he told his father about his invention he added that he did not want any news of it to be given out to anyone “except my Brothers & Sisters,” and they should keep it “a profound secret.”

Although Whitney declared that he had never seen a gin until three months after he had completed his invention, it was similar to gins that he could hardly have escaped from seeing in that it had the customary rollers. The difference was that instead of making grooves in the rollers he inserted wire teeth in one roller and brushes in the other to pull the cotton loose from the teeth—and this was the basis on which he got his patent. The patent was applied for in November, 1793, and not until March of the next year had the application been passed on to the final grant. Patents ran for fourteen years. Phineas Miller from Connecticut, originally having been engaged to tutor the Greene children, now the overseer of Mrs. Greene’s Mulberry Grove plantation and later her second husband, became a partner of Whitney’s in the gin patent and in promoting the gin business over the state and throughout the cotton-raising South.

Immediately after the patent had been granted, Miller inserted advertisements in the newspapers of the state that he would gin “in a manner equal to picking by hand, any quantity of the green seed cotton.” For five pounds of cotton in the seed, he would give one pound “of clean cotton fitted for market.” For the convenience and encouragement of cotton planters he was planning to erect gins widely over the state. This announcement made plain that Miller and Whitney were not building gins for sale. Instead, they would retain possession of all gins and would exact tolls as was the custom of grist mills. The toll was too high to please most
cotton planters, for five pounds of seed cotton would produce one and two-thirds pounds of clean cotton, showing that for every pound of clean cotton the planter received, the gin owners would receive two-thirds of a pound. This toll would amount to Miller and Whitney receiving two-fifths of the whole cotton crop of the South.

Whitney went to New Haven, Connecticut, to manufacture the gins, and Miller began scattering them over the state at strategic locations, to be run by horse power, ox power, water power, or even by hand power for the smaller ones. By 1796 there were thirty gins in various parts of the state.42

The coming of the cotton gin was the forerunner of storm clouds ahead for Petersburg. The town had been born of tobacco and was cradled in tobacco warehouses supplied by the rich lands of the Broad and Savannah river valleys. Now there was arising a contest between the cotton gin and the tobacco warehouse, and the gin was destined ultimately to win out. One of the first of the Miller and Whitney gins was located on the outskirts of Petersburg, to be run by water power, probably on Broad River. It had hardly been set going before a flood washed it away, but it was soon rebuilt. The gin could either be set on a flat in the stream itself or made to straddle a canal. In either case, the power was generated by a barrelled-shaped wheel about four feet in diameter and as long as fifteen feet (to turn more than one gin), lying horizontally flat on the water.43

A tradition that grew with age firmly held that Joseph Watkins, who resided on his plantation near Petersburg, was the first inventor of the cotton gin, and was using it on his plantation when he was visited by the frustrated Eli Whitney, who on seeing it went back to Savannah and soon developed his model which he patented. Watkins, according to the story, was urged to sue Whitney, but having no desire to engage in a controversy he never asserted his claim, or as Hugh N. Starnes, about a century later, said, “but as he was a planter of large means, who pursued the study and application of mechanics more for amusement than profit,” he always refused to act. Pursuing the subject further, Starnes said, “Truth is inevitable and relentless; and, while the position of an iconoclast is unenviable, history must be preserved. All that is here stated regarding Joseph Watkins, can, upon demand, be thoroughly substantiated.”44

This tradition raises the point that it is a singular fact that Miller and Whitney never sued Watkins for infringing their pa-
tent, for his gin was of the same mechanical devise as Whitney's. It might be suggested that Miller and Whitney did not sue because it would be brought out in a suit that Whitney had copied Watkins; or it could be said that the tradition was groundless and that Watkins never developed a gin at all. But the fact still remains and raises another question and some confusion, that "Robert Watkins of Petersburg" did publish in 1796 that he had invented a "Machine for cleaning cotton by Rollers," and that a model of it could be seen in Petersburg soon, and a little later at Augusta. Rights or shares were being allotted to every county in Georgia and South Carolina, six to each county at the price of $60 a share. The purpose in owning a share was to give the purchaser the right to make as many of these gins as he pleased, however, none could be moved out of the county. The gin was very easy to make, "the whole expense of making one is very trifling; [and] two or three persons are sufficient for attending one of any size." Anyone knowing the use of carpenter's tools could do the wood work, and any blacksmith could hammer out the iron needed. Watkins promised that three or four disinterested gentlemen would be allowed to see the machine in operation and if they certified that it did the work, then the purchasers of shares "must pay the money before they can see it." 45

Two months later Watkins published a testimonial signed by four gentlemen, including William Longstreet of Augusta, stating that they had tried the machine and "we conceive its construction simple, and well calculated to clean Cotton with great expedition, without any injury to the staple." Furthermore Watkins' invention "appears to us new and ingenious, may become of great utility to the public, and well deserves their attention." 46 Watkins' publications lends proof to the tradition that there was a Watkins gin, but the time of the announcement of the invention was after the Whitney patent, and the name signed was "Robert Watkins of Petersburg," and not Joseph Watkins. However, there is this possible explanation, that since Robert Watkins and Joseph were brothers, Robert might have been acting for his brother, and in the light of the traditional modesty of Joseph, announced himself as the inventor.

Since Miller and Whitney were so grasping in their high toll rates, since it was so easy to make the simple Whitney gin either with or without the wire teeth attached to the rollers, since already gins were being made before Whitney's was patented, and since there was no likelihood that the Whitney gins would be in
sufficient supply to take care of the large cotton crop anticipated for 1794, various people, besides Watkins, set to work making gins of their own, some to be patented and others not. Before the end of the year (1796) William Longstreet, who was one of those gentlemen who had so highly recommended Watkins' gin, now announced that he had invented a gin "whereby the art of ginning by rollers is reduced to the greatest simplicity," and it would be sold "upon the most liberal principles." He had a statement signed by eight gentlemen, certifying that they had "attended to the performance" of the gin, that it was an entirely new constructed cotton gin, and that in simplicity, expedition, and durability, "it excelles, in our opinion, any thing of the kind now extant." They stated further that the rollers could be "arranged to move with less friction, or in a less space."  

Watkins had announced that he was selling the right to make his gins. Longstreet proceeded on a different principle in that he would sell his gins for $150 apiece. Both of these methods differed from Whitney's, for he was not selling his gin at all, but later he offered to sell rights to the gin, and a few states bought them. Longstreet was liberal in his terms, giving eighteen months time in which to make payments. With an indirect reference to Whitney, he added that "this invention is not intended for private benefit only." He had applied for a patent and expected it to be granted within three or four months. This gin would clean from 80 to 100 pounds a day of green seed cotton and twice that of black seed.  

Now "Robert Watkins of Petersburg" put in a word. He charged that Longstreet, after having seen the Watkins gin and certified to its value, proceeded to copy it and claim it as his own. Watkins declared "that the invention is none of his, that he has no right to dispose of it," and he warned all people against dealing with Longstreet. Denying that his gin was a copy of Watkins' gin, Longstreet produced a statement from a John Catlett asserting that Longstreet had shown him a model at least four years ago constructed on the principles as the present one. Longstreet added that his gin and the Watkins gin were "as different from each other in their principles, as it is possible for two roller gins to be, except their both being worked by coggs." Six months later Longstreet announced that he had improved his gin to where it would clean 120 pounds of cotton daily and the price would now be $120. He expected to scatter his gins all over Georgia and South Carolina in sufficient numbers to "clean a considerable part
of the crop of cotton now growing." He announced that one of his gins being fed by one person had cleaned in eight days 598 pounds of cotton.

There seemed to be no end to the cotton-gin inventors who entered the lists with their machines. Hodgen Holmes of Augusta, who could not even write his name but was a clever mechanic, received a patent on a gin he had constructed in 1796, differing from Whitney's by having saw teeth instead of wire, and on this basis the patent was granted. Then there was Edward Lyon, living near old Wrightsboro, who made and sold gins more like Holmes' than Whitney's. In December, 1796, John Currie, living "near the Shoals of Ogeechee," announced that he had invented a gin with a variety of rollers which "may be made to feed themselves," and anyone wanting one of these gins must make payment "before the model is seen; and if the gins, on trial, are not superior to every other plan that has yet appeared, it shall be returned."

Whitney had apparently set the style for secrecy among these gin inventors, until they could secure patents; and before the contest died down about a dozen patents, including Whitney's, had been secured. It became a stock story that spies dressed in women's clothing were able to get permission to see models and that they thus stole information from one another. Tradition has this and various other forms of skulduggery and deceit being used: that Lyon dressed as a woman saw Whitney's model; that Whitney went to Petersburg and that Joseph Watkins in entertaining him as a gentleman should, showed him the Watkins gin; that shortly before Whitney's model came out, a person dressed as a woman was allowed to see Longstreet's gin; that Whitney's shop at Mulberry Grove plantation was broken into and his model copied. Relative to the story of Whitney's shop being broken into, it was stated by D. A. Tompkins, a competent authority, that as to its truth "there is not a word in the voluminous records of evidence in the infringement suits, extending over 13 years." And the women stories seem to be equally devoid of fact.

Whitney was in part, at least, the architect of his own misfortunes. His greedy attempt to rob the South of almost half of its cotton crop by exacting high tolls was at the bottom of his troubles, as also were the facts that gins were very simple to make and were being made about like the Whitney model, though less effective, before he came to Georgia, and that his gin was little different from them. Unfortunately Miller had got mixed up in
the Yazoo land sales, which were held by most Georgians to have been fraudulent and were resented with high emotions; it was easy enough to transfer this hostility to the Whitney gin. Also the fact that Holmes had been granted a patent in 1796 was considered proof that Whitney's pretense to originality was a fraud, as outrageous and far-reaching as the Yazoo Fraud. Georgians did not like monopolies, and Whitney's monopoly was liked least of all, for it was an attempt to rob the planters of their fair chance now to become wealthy raising cotton. Governor John Milledge in 1803 denounced the Whitney patent in his message to the legislature, and a joint committee of that body responded with a report in which it declared "that monopolies are at all times odious, particularly in free governments, and that some remedy ought to be applied to the wound which the cotton gin monopoly has given, and will otherwise continue to give, to the culture and cleaning of that precious and increasing staple."

Miller and Whitney took to the courts for the protection of their patent, and in the course of a few years they had instituted more than sixty law suits, most of which they lost on the grounds that their patent was not being infringed. For example, Archibald and Thomas Stokes, Petersburg merchants, announced that they had given a note to Miller and Whitney in 1800 "for the privilege of running the Saw-Gins; and as it appears that they were not the proper Patentees, we are determined not to pay said note." Robert Watkins of Augusta was the council for the defense in many of these suits, and he often entered counter suits against Miller and Whitney for court costs, winning them in such amounts as $8.33, $9.88, $15.33, and $16.53. In 1803, in the midst of his troubles, Whitney wrote: "I have a set of the most depraved villains to combat and I might as well go to hell in search of happiness as to apply to a Georgia Court for justice." Whitney's patent ran out in 1808; and he could now look back on blasted hopes of making almost as much money ginning cotton as Southern planters would make in raising it. He wrote Robert Fulton, another inventor, who fared little better with his steamboat than Whitney had with his cotton gin, that his invention was new and was not made up of anything previously known.

Even without the impetus which Whitney's gin gave to the production of cotton, planters were becoming excited over the prospects of growing this crop, and whether Whitney had come to Georgia or not, out of the various models floating around someone would soon have devised an efficient machine to clean
cotton. Since little was known concerning the best methods of raising the crop, notices were appearing in the newspapers before it was generally known that Whitney was working on a gin, calling for the help of persons "acquainted with the culture of cotton." And what little cotton there was on the market was eagerly sought after, being put on the basis of tobacco as a medium of exchange as early as 1793; for example, a bookseller announced that he would exchange books for cotton. Articles were soon appearing in newspapers and almanacs on the best methods of planting and cultivating cotton. As the cotton kingdom began to extend beyond the river bottoms and hardwood lands calls were going out for persons who had "a proper knowledge of the cultivation of Cotton on good Pine Land.''

As early as 1788 people were begging for cotton seed and offering to give "a generous price," and this year it was announced that South Carolina planters were "making experiments in the culture of cotton." By the early 1800's cotton bales or bags were crowding against hogsheads in tobacco warehouses, and the price of the staple was soon being listed with that of tobacco. In 1803 it was reported that the cotton crop was "most excellent and abundant." A few years later a Federal judge had occasion to say, "Individuals who were depressed with poverty and sunk in idleness, have suddenly risen to wealth and responsibility. Our debts have been paid off. Our capitals have increased, and our lands trebled themselves in value."

Cotton was soon on the mind of everyone, including the rhymester:

De little bee suck de blossom,
De big bee make de honey,
De nigger make de cotton,
And de white folks tote de money.

Travelers passing through the upcountry were soon noting that the planters and farmers were turning away from tobacco to plant cotton. A writer three-quarters of a century later made this romanticised description of what was happening in those early times: "Broomsedge and sassafras disappeared from the fields, and the new grounds smoked in the early spring, and the cheery song of the laborer amidst the fallen forest trees rose on the frosty air, as acre after acre of virgin soil was reclaimed to whiten in season [the fields] with its tribute of snowy fleece."

Just as Georgia had deemed it necessary to set up methods for
the inspection of tobacco, it appeared equally necessary to inspect
cotton. The reputation of the state for its merchantable products
should not be allowed to suffer. The production of cotton had
made such a deep impression on the lawmakers by 1796 that they
set up a system of cotton inspection whereby all cotton before it
should be passed to the market should be "well ginned and
cleaned, so as to be made good merchantable cotton." The in-
spector had to stamp his name on the bale after the words, "In-
spected by me," and it must also bear the planter's name and the
word "Georgia." The inspector's fee was one-eighth of a dollar
for every 100 pounds to be paid by the owner of the cotton. After
inspection the cotton should be stored in a safe dry place until
the owner called for it and paid 10 cents per 100 pounds ware-
house rent.74

This act must have produced a great outcry as an unneeded
interference with the marketing of cotton because the bales could
be easily inspected by any buyer. Early the next year the legisla-
ture repealed the law, stating that it had been "found in its opera-
tion not competent to the objects proposed, by no means benefi-
cial to the interest of the State, and an unnecessary burthen on the
planters of that article."75 The custom soon grew up among
merchants who bought cotton from the planters to deduct two
pounds from every bale and to exact further charges for weighing
it. Declaring that this custom operated "injuriously to the people
of the State," the legislature in 1806 forbade any deductions from
any "bale, bag or package of cotton" and any charges of more
than six and a quarter cents for weighing it.76

The legislature also found it necessary to regulate the opera-
tions of cotton gins in relation to their disposal of the seeds. As
no use in the early times had been found for cotton seed except
for planting, they were thrown out in heaps to rot or be eaten by
livestock. In either case they were considered a nuisance, and to
abate it the legislature in 1803 required all gins in any town or
village or nearby to "enclose the seeds in such a manner" as to
prevent stock, "especially hogs from eating them," and they should
be kept dry or removed out into the country "to prevent all the
unwelcomed effects resulting from the stench and vapours arising
from the seed, in their putrid state, if suffered to remain in
heaps," and when they were removed out into the country still
they should be enclosed to prevent stock from feeding on them.77

The repeal of the cotton inspection law led to bad results. Small
rocks and gravels seemed to have been purposely placed in cotton
bales by some planters. Now and then seeds, pieces of the hulls,
enclosing bowls, and fragments of stems got accidently mixed in.
Governor James Jackson called the attention of the legislature to
“the deceptions in the package” of cotton, and asked the legisla-
ture to do something about it, for the reputation of Georgia cot-
tton was suffering and the price was going down. However, that
was not all, for “such infamous practices tend to stamp on our
character as a people a total want of honor, justice, and moral-
ity.” The legislature did nothing. Certain evil practices con-
tinued and the next year an Augusta newspaper editor reported
that twenty bales had been received in that town, unmerchantable
because they had quantities of seeds mixed in. This “fraud ought
not to pass unpunished,” he argued. The situation which was
now left to the consciences of the planters, assisted by inspection
by cotton buyers, gradually righted itself. And even the rhymester
came in to add this bit of help:

Your Corn secur’d, your Cotton GIN with care,
Make tight their roofs, and where they need it, mend,
Your Corn and Cotton houses, now attend,
The price will compensate for packing fair.

In the progress of time, cotton was packed and marketed in
varying shapes, sizes, and weights, and referred to as bales, bags,
and packages. In the infancy of the crop, before the appearance
of gins, it was packed in bags of about 150 pounds each. Miller
and Whitney packed their cotton in bales weighing from 260 to
320 pounds each. Some of the cotton came down Broad River
to Petersburg in round bales about two feet in diameter and seven
feet long, one lot of seven bales weighing from 274 to 340 pounds
each.

Petersburg had started out as a tobacco inspection town and
its first business prosperity had come from the tobacco trade, but
now that cotton was a booming crop, in sharp competition with
tobacco and destined ultimately to displace it in Petersburg, in
the Broad River Valley, and in all the rest of upper Georgia, it
was to the interest of the town to get into the cotton trade as far
and as quickly as possible. For the year the inspection act of
1796 was in force, Petersburg became an inspection center for
the upper part of the state; and John Oliver was appointed in-
spector, no doubt carrying out his brief career as inspector in his
tobacco warehouse. The price of cotton varied as widely as that
of tobacco, but it was always considerably higher. By 1800 Peters-
burg merchants were trading for as much cotton as might be brought down the Broad and Savannah rivers and from the intervening hinterland by wagons. Petersburg merchants were paying from 25 to 28 cents per pound at this time, but the price dropped for the next few years and until Congress passed the Embargo Act in December 1807, cotton was selling on the Petersburg and Augusta markets from 15 to 18 cents per pound. In December 1806 a cargo of seventeen bales from Petersburg sold on the Savannah market for 19½ cents. Even with the gins at work, cotton could be sold in the seed on the Petersburg market. LeRoy Pope agreed in 1803 to pay Memorable Walker 2½ cents a pound for all the cotton he might bring in “as fast as he could get it out of his field in good Merchandable order to be delivered in the Town of Petersburg.”

Throughout the period of the Embargo (1808 to early 1809) the price in Augusta was from 8 to 10 cents; and the planters in and around Petersburg were allowed a fixed price for cotton stored there, with any increase when the Embargo was repealed. Shaler Hillyer, who had now moved out of Petersburg to the plantation of his father-in-law, John Freeman, shipped his cotton to New York and Boston (coastwise traffic being permitted under the Embargo regulations) on a basis of a fixed price of 16 cents per pound with any increase to be added when trade loosened up. But many planters preferred to keep their cotton on their plantations while awaiting a rise in price.

The repeal of the Embargo took place in early 1809 to be superceded by the Non-Intercourse Act, which cut off trade with England and France but left it open to the rest of the world and would restore trade to either England or France, depending on which nation removed its objectionable restrictions on American trade. In this period of uncertainty, planters expected the price to go up, and the rumor was soon out in Petersburg “that cotton has been sold in Augusta for 15 cents.” The belief was that the difficulties would soon be settled with England, but Hillyer soon came to the conclusion that “the state of the world” was such that the price of cotton might never reach what it formerly was, for with the repeal of the Embargo the price had not risen. In fact, during the ensuing few years leading up to the war with England, which was declared in June of 1812, the price dropped to 6 cents. Hillyer was able to get 6½ cents a pound on eight bales which he sold in December of 1812.

The war was not going to last always, and to those with a spec-
ulative mind this period opened up visions of immense wealth to be made by buying up cotton at bottom prices and holding it until peacetimes. Hillyer saw this possibility and he tried to borrow from $7,000 to $10,000, stating that he had “an open contract for cotton which I can make very profitable if I can obtain money.”

He could buy cotton in the Petersburg region for 6 cents and send it to Oliver Whyte in Boston.

By the fall of 1814 cotton had jumped to 16 cents in anticipation of the war ending soon. The Senate ratified the Treaty of Peace in February 1815, and the price of cotton began advancing. By summer it was 19 cents, and the “price of Cotton is still advancing in our market,” reported the *Augusta Chronicle*. With the new crop coming in during the fall, the price jumped to $21\frac{1}{2}$ in Augusta and went up to 26 cents in New York. In October it reached 26 cents in Petersburg and Augusta, and continued at that rate until the spring of 1816 when it was quoted at 30 cents. Hillyer, who had not been able to borrow the money to carry out his wartime speculation, which would have cleared him of all his debts, still had the foresight to plant a large cotton crop. In July (1816) he wrote to his friend and factor in Boston, Oliver Whyte, that “great indeed is the Cotton fever in this Country, and I should not be at all surprised if corn was to rise to one dollar a bushel.” The next year he planted 85 acres in cotton.

Cotton prices continued high for the next several years, reaching even $31\frac{1}{4}$ cents in the fall of 1817; but with panicky conditions developing in 1819, the price dropped to 16 cents, and by the spring of 1821 it was down to 11 cents. With the cotton depression on, Hillyer wrote that the “great fall of Cotton in Georgia has had the effect of depressing the price of every article offered for sale, among other things Negroes have fallen at least 25%.”

Georgia manufactured little of the cotton it raised; some of it went to the North to be manufactured, but a great amount was exported. In 1820 the whole South exported 127,860,000 pounds. According to a tradition, which is wholly erroneous, the first cotton mill in the South was erected in Petersburg. It is very unlikely that there was ever a cotton mill there, but a few miles above Petersburg, there was in operation a cotton factory on Broad River in the late 1840’s which ran 5,000 spindles and another on Beaverdam Creek, which flowed into the Savannah not far above Petersburg.
Cotton and tobacco were the so-called "money crops," but, of course, agriculture was not limited to them alone. There was, at least, one other "money crop," which was early tried in the Petersburg-Augusta region, and raised with some little success for a short time—indigo. In 1787 Thomas Cole announced that he had indigo seed for sale, saved from last year's crop; and those planters who knew how to grow it now and then published information on the subject. Many of the planters around Petersburg raised flax in small quantities, which could be spun into "beautiful sewing thread" and also be made into ropes and bed cords, some of which were manufactured in Petersburg. There was, of course, small grain raised for food and feed—wheat, rye, buckwheat, corn, and barley, for which there was a market in Petersburg and in Augusta (anything which Petersburg traders bought could be easily floated down the Savannah to the Augusta market). And practically everyone had a kitchen garden to produce everything expected from such a place, and often extensive enough to provide Irish potatoes and especially the delectable sweet potatoes. There were fewer fruit orchards than gardens; however, anyone growing more peaches and horse apples than needed for home use could find a ready market in Petersburg and in the down-river markets at Augusta.

Next to cotton and tobacco in importance was corn, a crop which was basic for home food and feed for livestock, and for which there was always a local market for surpluses. The price of corn was reflected little in international trade, for little or none was exported, but in the general economy corn had to take its place. When the price of cotton was low in 1809 and selling for 10 cents per pound, the price of corn sank with it to 37 ½ cents per bushel. Even though in 1811 it was up to 75 cents, throughout the war period (1812-1815) the price was from 50 to 56 cents. In June of 1815 corn took a spurt to $1.00 a bushel, which continued for only a short time, for during the next few years it was 50 to 75 cents per bushel. The panicky years from 1819 to 1821 pushed the price down to 37 ½ cents; however, in December of the latter year corn was bringing $1.00 a bushel.

Even with the amount of corn being raised, the cotton surge at times invaded the lands which should have been given over to corn. The cry was raised which was to be heard for the next century, that more food and feed crops should be raised, and especially corn. In 1807 an agricultural reformer recommended...
to planters "to raise more corn & less cotton; for he thinks that a man well clothed, but with an empty belly does not look or feel so well." 102

Some of the principal Petersburgers owned plantations, and though considering themselves townsmen and spending much time in Petersburg on business interests, they lived for the most part on their plantations. A plantation without slaves was hardly to be thought of and certainly not to be successfully run. And no Petersburger of any standing could get along without a few household servants and several slaves to help in any business he might be conducting. Hillyer owned a dozen or more on his plantation up Broad River, and many years later, in 1860, when Petersburg had become more of a cotton field than a town, Drury B. Cade owned 59 slaves.

With the need Petersburgers had for slaves as household servants and with the demand of planters for slaves to work in their cotton and tobacco fields, slave-trading became a part of Petersburg's business activities. In 1797 the firm of Pope and Walker, merchants, bought twelve slaves for $3,200, consisting of eight girls, Betty, Sally, Hager, Vina, Amy, Silvey, Tenny, and Lilla; and four boys, Mingo, Phill, Toby, and Sander. 103 Probably these were sold in town as household servants. In 1805 John Manning advertised in the town newspaper: "AFRICANS. Likely young Africans for sale, either for Cash, Tobacco, Cotton, or on credit for approved notes." 104 The newspaper editors had a slave for sale, who had been raised near Louisville, now being offered for sale "not in consequence of any failing more than is incident to his species. None but a person who, it may be presumed, would treat him as a rational being, need make application." 105 Thomas Bibb, brother of William Wyatt Bibb and destined to be the second governor of Alabama, announced at this time that he had "a few Likely Africans for Sale," among them being a boy about thirteen years old, who had been in this country about a year but "speaks pretty good English, and of an excellent disposition." Bibb offered to take in payment "Cash, Cotton or Approved Notes." 106

Hillyer had a prize slave named Bob, whom he was thinking of selling but he hardly knew how to proceed. He had been offered $1,000 for Bob by a person "who would have made him a good master," but Bob vetoed the deal. Hillyer said that he "would not sell him to a man that I think would treat him ill," and he had come to the conclusion that Bob was satisfied where
he was and would not agree to being sold. Hillyer said that he had hired out Bob at times for $12.00 a month.\textsuperscript{107}

All slaves in and around Petersburg were not as satisfied with their masters or their stations in life as was Bob. LeRoy Pope advertised in several newspapers that his slave Emanuel, who had been bought in Alexandria, Virginia, by Farish Carter, had run away, and he thought might be trying to get back to Virginia. He offered $20.00 to anyone who would bring him back to Petersburg.\textsuperscript{108} John Ousley wanted information from anyone who might have seen his slave, "a negro wench named Henny, about 5 feet high, a large lively eye, a plump round face and a small foot." She sometimes called herself Fanny. Ousley thought that she might be hiding around LeRoy Pope's plantation.\textsuperscript{109} Another runaway got as far as Augusta, where she was taken up and lodged in the Richmond County jail. She said that her name was Juno. She was "about 24 or 25 years old, and is pregnant, says she belongs to Major Oliver, of Petersburg."\textsuperscript{110} In addition to slaves, there were a few apprentices in Petersburg, who being no more satisfied with their lot than were some of the slaves with theirs, ran away and were pursued by the offers of rewards ranging from "six and a quarter cents" to $10.00, the latter reward being offered to anyone bringing back Henry McBride, "somewhat cross eyed."\textsuperscript{111}

There was, at least, one free Negro in Petersburg around 1800, Thomas Evans, who was "up and about" sufficiently to engage in a few real estate transactions. In 1800 he bought from Memorable Walker a twelfth of Lot 79 for $30.00. Three years later he sold one sixth of Lot 20 for $120.\textsuperscript{112} Infrequently some Petersburger recorded in his will freedom for a slave or two.\textsuperscript{113}