PETERSBURG started out as a collecting, inspecting, and shipping center for tobacco. As it grew and prospered it never got far away from a trading town, whether it be in tobacco, cotton, the minor products of the fields and forests, or in supplying the townsmen and the countrymen of the outlying regions on both sides of the Savannah and Broad rivers with all the importations their hearts desired and their purses allowed. Evidently the center and almost the whole circumference of business activities were collection and distribution. Merchants flocked there from as far away as New York and Boston to set up businesses in which their activities extended from selling a villager a paper of pins to sending a boatload of tobacco to Augusta or Savannah or a shipload of cotton to Boston. These businessmen ran what a century later would be called department stores and they acted as financial agents and factors for the planters of tobacco and cotton even as they themselves had their factors in Augusta, Savannah, New York, and Boston.

There were merchants both great and small, varying in number but always in a good supply. There was much competition among them, some long-lived and some short, consolidations and dissolutions, and associations with other firms in Augusta and Charleston. Among the Petersburg merchants operating before 1800 were Thomas C. Russell & Nathaniel Rossiter, Roundtree & Taylor, Archibald & Thomas Stokes, James Holliday & Company, Matthew Hill & John Jackson, Littlebury & Whitfield Wilson (firm dissolved in 1800), a Gantt firm by a gentleman from Maryland, and Oliver Whyte from Boston.¹

Additionally, LeRoy Pope, who could not resist any business opportunity that came along, was early engaged in merchandizing.
Furthermore, as early as 1798 he and Memorable Walker (both already established as merchants) bought of Joseph Groves (Graves?) a Petersburg lot for $1,500. This transaction indicated that they were engaging also in the real estate business (being "realtors," according to a term later coined), supported by the additional fact that the next year they sold a lot to William J. Hobby, an Augusta merchant out of Connecticut and soon to become a newspaper editor. They were also buying a lot from the merchant firm of Archibald & Thomas Stokes. This same year Walker dissolved his connection with Pope and formed the firm of Memorable & James S. Walker. Pope now entered the firm of James Holliday (sometimes spelled Halliday) & Company. This firm was dissolved in 1800, and Pope announced the same year that he had "once more embarked in the Mercantile Business with Alexander & John M'Clure of Charleston under the firm name of LeRoy Pope and Co." This firm lasted only three years; however, Pope was still merchandizing in 1806, and probably he had such connections as long as he remained in Petersburg.

The Stokes brothers, Archibald and Thomas, besides the main business of their mercantile firm were, like LeRoy Pope, dealing in Petersburg lots. In 1801 Archibald sold to Thomas Lot 82 for $1,000, for now their firm was dissolved, and Archibald announced that he would continue the business of the original firm and that he had "a handsome assortment of Goods." Thomas now doing business alone seemed to have had more than the usual troubles which beset merchants, though as was the custom he announced on occasion the arrival of new goods, listing them in great detail, especially such appetizers as a hogshead of Jamaica rum, a barrel each of sherry wine and Philadelphia ale, and a few dozen bottles of London porter. His main trouble was collecting the debts owed by his indulged customers. With his patience wearing thin he warned in August, 1805, that "that which is due him he must and will have. Those who come forward and pay their accounts, before the first day of December next, like honest Men, will receive his thanks; but those who neglects this little hint, may certainly expect another, which will be attended with some expense to them."

Besides finding it difficult to collect his debts he was unfortunate otherwise. While he was visiting in Augusta in 1808 a thief made away with some of his belongings, and in an attempt to recover them he inserted this notice in the Augusta Chronicle: "39 Lashes Reward. Stolen from off my horse, on Saturday Evening
the 13th inst. at Messrs Harrison and Hamilton's Rack, a pair of Saddle Bags, Containing one Coat and two pair of Pantaloons somewhat worn, three Cravats, two Shirts, one Pair Socks, and one fancy Vest, one white do. with sundry other Cloathing not recollected. Any Damned Rascal that stole them, shall receive the above Reward, or Twenty Dollars to any Gentleman giving information thereof, to be paid on sight, by Thomas Stokes.'

The same paper which published this announcement published also in late May five years later this item: "Departed this life on the 21st inst. Mr. Thomas Stokes, of Petersburg, Georgia.—He was unfortunate, but lived and died an honest man."

Archibald was more fortunate both in business and longevity. He continued as a merchant, passing through several co-partnerships, such as Stokes, [Nicholas] Pope & Company, Stokes & Sayre, and Stokes & Taylor, continuing on down into the 1820's and being the merchant of longest standing in the history of Petersburg.

Two other merchant brothers, associated in one way or another with Petersburg, were William and Beverly Allen. It seems that they never ran a merchantile establishment in Petersburg, but William began dealing in town lots as early as 1794 and continued for a half dozen years and more; earlier the two brothers were merchants on Beaverdam Creek, a few miles in the interior, where they were able to catch country trade before it could reach Petersburg.

Before joining his brother in the mercantile trade, Beverly Allen had had a varied and somewhat notorious career. Being six feet tall, of a commanding appearance, with a melodious voice and an ardent temperament, he was the perfect type to carry religion to the frontiers. He first came to notice in Chatham County, North Carolina, as a Methodist preacher, where Bishop Francis Asbury noted in 1780 that he met "brother Allen—a promising young man, but a little of a Dissenter." Allen accompanied the Bishop on some of his journeys, and in 1783 he settled in Salisbury, North Carolina, long enough to establish Methodism there. Two years later he was appointed to introduce Methodism into Georgia, but on entering South Carolina he began preaching there and did not continue into Georgia, though it is probable that he did some preaching there later. He became a great favorite with the masses, but his powerful influence got him into some sort of trouble, which led Bishop Asbury to state in 1786, "I was grieved at Beverly Allen's Conduct," and in 1791
the Edisto Circuit in South Carolina expelled him from the ministry for a "flagrant crime."  

Now out of the ministry, the following year he joined his brother as a merchant, and the two were soon supplying their store with merchandize from Charleston. In early January, 1794, they went to Augusta for additional supplies, but instead of paying up their debts to former creditors they began dealing with others, whereupon the former creditors sued out a writ for the arrest of the Allens. Robert Forsyth, the Federal marshal and the father of the John Forsyth of future greatness, in attempting to serve the writ was shot and killed by Beverly. When news of this crime reached Bishop Asbury he was greatly shocked: "Poor Beverly Allen, he has been going from bad to worse these seven or eight years—speaking against me to preachers and people and writing to Mr. [John] Wesley and Doctor [Thomas] Coke, and being thereby the source of most of the mischief that has followed . . . is now in jail for shooting Major Forsyth through the head." For nine years, Asbury continued, he had been doubtful of Allen's integrity, but "I pity, I pray for him—that, if his life be given up to justice, his soul may yet be saved."  

Allen was placed in the Augusta jail, but soon broke out. In announcing the news, the Augusta Chronicle noted that he was "the once so celebrated Methodist preacher, well known in that character in many parts of the Union—nearly six feet high, smooth speech under a thin cloak of sanctity, and about 40 years of age. The apprehension of this man will be liberally rewarded by the respected inhabitants of Augusta, besides the approving voice of every good character in America."  

Allen was soon caught and lodged in the Elbert County jail, but so popular was he among his countrymen that a mob of two hundred people stormed the jail and freed him. Beverly fled to the frontiers of Kentucky, where the law made no effort to follow, and there according to varying reports he entered the ministry again (or became a physician), living to be 90 years of age. William Allen continued a respectable member of the Elbert County community. He held his brother in grateful rememberance and named one of his sons Beverly. This Beverly lived until 1846 and was buried on a knoll overlooking Beaverdam Creek in a community which bore the name Beverly into the twentieth century.

As long as Petersburg lasted, its chief prosperity lay in merchandizing. Stores came and went: Wash and Jones (Thomas Wash and William Jones), Robert S. Sayre, Robert Thompson
Old Petersburg

("Old Blue"), Oliver & Watkins, John E. Stokes, Robert & John Bolton, John I. Smith, William Patterson, and on and on the numbers grew and faded. In 1804 there were nine stores serving Petersburg and the surrounding country and business was so brisk that they were unable to handle all of it, making it necessary for some prospective customers to go to Augusta. In 1804, a Petersburg merchant in writing a North Carolina friend remarked, "Another such season will revive the buildings of Petersburg altho the little stores in the Country draw off much of our cotton trade." Although there was little competition from Lisbon and Vienna, yet in the latter town, Charles W. Wittick & Company carried on an extensive business for many years, certainly as late as 1826, and at this time they had a branch in Petersburg.

Somewhat akin to merchants were vendue-masters, later called auctioneers, who sold articles at public outcry to the highest bidders. They were strictly regulated by state law. Petersburg was awarded one in 1797. They were given authority "to set up and expose to sale by public outcry and vendue, all and any houses, lands, ships and vessels, goods and wares, and merchandize and property whatsoever." They should pay the state 1% of their gross sales, and they should receive for selling houses, lands, slaves, and ships 21/2%, and for all other items, 5%.

If not the chief businessman in Petersburg, Shaler Hillyer was close behind LeRoy Pope who might well have carried that distinction, for certainly after 1810, when Pope deserted Petersburg for Alabama, it could hardly be said that Shaler had a rival—though he did precede Pope out of Petersburg by moving up Broad River a few miles to a plantation. However, Shaler always maintained important interests in Petersburg as much as if he lived within its corporate limits.

Shaler Hillyer was born in Granby, Connecticut, in 1776, and when he became of age he made a trip to Boston, where he met Oliver Whyte, a young man who had established a store in Petersburg. Whyte persuaded Hillyer to become a clerk in his Petersburg store. After arranging his affairs in Connecticut, Hillyer set sail for Savannah in 1799, and from there proceeded to Petersburg by land. His clerkship soon developed into a co-partnership with Whyte. The constant necessity of prodding customers to pay their store accounts, which often called on the law for help, led Hillyer to become a lawyer—a "collecting lawyer," who never entered into general practice nor lessened his interest in merchandizing.

Growing weary of Petersburg and merchandizing conditions
there, Whyte in 1805 sold out his ownership in the store to Hillyer and returned to Boston,\textsuperscript{27} but his interest in Petersburg and Hillyer never dimmed even to the end of Hillyer's life, for two reasons. The two reasons were first, Whyte immediately announced that he was offering his services to the Petersburg trade "in the Commission line,"\textsuperscript{28} and second, the debt (said to be $20,000) which Hillyer owed him was long in being paid, though for the rest of his life he devoted the profits of his businesses to paying it—both always remaining on the most correct and friendly terms, socially and financially.\textsuperscript{29} Hillyer sent Whyte cotton on his own account and on commission for his customers, frequently acting as a collector for notes and judgments owned by Whyte.\textsuperscript{30} Now and then Whyte made visits to Petersburg and was entertained by Hillyer at his "Poplar Grove" plantation home.\textsuperscript{31}

Before moving to his Poplar Grove plantation in 1807 Hillyer had become much discouraged with the way his business was progressing in Petersburg. He wrote to Whyte in November, 1806, that he had lost more than $2,000 in "Bad Debts," and that he had tried to sell out: "If I could get rid of my Possessions in Petersburg I would quit business," and he doubted that he could get $800 for his store lot and house. Yet during the year he had sold at wholesale $3,500 in supplies and at retail $2,733. Ending up in a more hopeful spirit he said, "My business is tolerable good—and I may by continuing make Something for myself."\textsuperscript{32}

In moving to the plantation he intended to set up a store there and retail an assortment of goods: "I am Sick very Sick of selling goods in the country by whole sale and am I think finally cured of the credit killing eppedemic." There he could engage also in planting activities and some factoring for the bigger planters until he could get out of debt, "When God preserving me and mine I intend to move Northward."\textsuperscript{33}

Living on a plantation gave him a quieter life and more time to catch up on his correspondence, as well as "more leisure than formerly and being more secluded from the 'calls of social friendship' than when in Petersburg."\textsuperscript{34} Having about forty slaves, inherited from his father-in-law, John Freeman,\textsuperscript{35} he could engage in extensive planting, which he directed mostly into cotton. To add to the grazing offered by the native wild grasses, he ordered from the North white clover seed, timothy (called also "herd grass"), and blue grass ("By the Yankeys [called] English Grass," Hillyer observed).\textsuperscript{36}
For a short time he established a partnership with John Saunders Holt in the mercantile business under the firm name of Hillyer & Holt; and the assortment of goods which was offered for sale indicated a clientele of enlightened taste—good sherry wine, Malaga, Jamaica rum, chocolate, cinnamon, ginger, and all that “assortment of Fashionable Fancy Goods” for men’s and women’s wear, so often announced by merchants. Supplies especially for the plantations were “good cargo pork” at $10 a barrel (for slaves), middling pork at $11, and prime pork at $12, also “Patent Riveted Hoes of a superior quality,” not to mention many other items.

Never deserted by that New England business imagination and acumen and yet never quite successful in business, Hillyer was soon the originator and moving force in a mercantile adventure which he thought was based on a firm foundation and had every reason to succeed. In a letter to Whyte which he wrote in 1809 Hillyer gave a hint that “there is a prospect of my forming a connection in Trade on a permanent and extensive plan”; and in another letter which he wrote Whyte he was more explicit, saying that the planters in the regions around Petersburg, embracing several counties, were “about associating themselves into a Mercantile Company.” This firm was organized on August 4, 1809. Its president was William Barnett, physician, former sheriff of Elbert County, and later a member of Congress. Hillyer was one of its two directors. The firm was capitalized at $30,000, with the promise of going to $100,000 if desired. Stock in the firm was offered to planters and others at $50 a share. Originally the number of shares was 225, but within a year they were increased to 600. No one living more than twenty-five miles from Petersburg could be elected president or director. The name of the firm was Petersburg Mercantile Company, and its store was called the Planters Store. Although its headquarters and main establishment must be in Petersburg, it was allowable to erect one or more branch stores out in the country.

Hillyer was enthusiastic over his new venture. Within less than a year it had made a profit of $5.33 on each share, and he was anxious to have Whyte to take twenty shares. Explaining further the purpose of the firm he informed Whyte that “a number of the planters in the neighborhood have associated themselves together for the purpose of carrying on trade in Petersburg for their mutual advantage.” Already (in early 1810) $12,000 had been subscribed, business having begun “last fall” with a small stock of
goods, and sales were “equal to our most sanguine expectations.” In promoting a firm financial standing with suppliers, Hillyer stated that the company’s credit would not be extended “beyond our real and substantial capital.” Stockholders in the company were “some of the first rate planters in the up country . . . of undoubted credit as individuals.” the “novelty of our Company” should not create any doubt as to its responsibility.

Since the Petersburg Mercantile Company was Hillyer’s creation its promotion and management fell to him. To cater to planters’ wants he saw to it that there was a good selection of planter supplies. He was soon ordering 500 pounds of “good iron suitable for Plantation use,” which blacksmiths would pound and weld into whatever was needed, and out went an order to Augusta for 200 bushels of salt which provident planters would use in curing and preserving pork instead of having to buy it. He wanted the salt sent in good, strong four-bushel sacks, which could later be used as “Mill Bags.” Of course, there were many other items which the Planters Store constantly kept.

Much of Hillyer’s trade went overland to and from Augusta in wagons, and what he had to sell was for the most part cotton and whiskey, both of which he received in trade from planters or by acting as their factor, and some of which Hillyer himself supplied. In early 1813 on sending a wagon load of whiskey to Augusta he noted that this “is my first attempt this year. I am told that twill bring 62 1/2 cents [per gallon] but you must sell without storing if twill bring 50. Do the best you can with it. The casks you will reserve if possible as they are an article Difficult to procure.” A little later he sent five casks of whiskey, consisting of 277 gallons, all on one wagon. This year Hillyer put up a distillery “on the New plan,” which he described in some detail.

By mid-summer of 1813 the Petersburg Mercantile Company failed and Hillyer bought its assets including debts owed to it assuming the debts it owed, most of which he thought would be good. Now for the next few years he had the task of trying to collect these debts but he had little success. He continued to run the store on his plantation, which must have been an important part of the Petersburg Mercantile firm’s organization. Living on his plantation up Broad River, he was often associated with legislation dealing with that river. In 1809 he was appointed one of the commissioners to view Broad River and to prevent and remove obstructions in the river; the next year he was one of the incorporators of the Broad River Navigation Com-
pany, as previously noted, and in 1815, he was appointed one of the commissioners to improve navigation on Broad River and charge a toll.

As has already amply appeared, the Petersburg merchants procured their supplies in Augusta, Savannah, and Charleston, in the South, and principally in New York and Boston in the North; but Hillyer also dealt sometimes with Seth Craig & Company in Philadelphia. Although Hillyer had considerable dealings with Oliver Whyte in Boston, he carried on more extensive operations with New York firms, among them being Moses Jarvis & Company, Brisbane & Brannan, Clendenning & Adams, Abram R. Lawrence & Company, George Newbold, W. & C. M. Slocum, John & George Tredwell, Benjamin & Joseph Strong, Robert H. Bowne & Company, and Wright & Tibbals. Generally a friendly and personal relationship existed with these suppliers and factors, for such extensive merchants as Hillyer and the Stokeses often visited them to make purchases on the spot. Trips were made by sea almost invariably, starting either in Savannah or Charleston. In making a trip to New York in 1806, Hillyer went to Augusta and then on to Savannah, requiring three days for the latter part of the land trip, and he wrote his wife Rebecca "no accident happened to me on the road."
The close personal friendship that existed between Hillyer and his Savannah factors Beggs & Groves is reflected in a letter which he wrote to Groves when he heard of Beggs' death: "We may lament, but we cannot restore. It is a state that awaits us all. A little more Bustle & noise seems allotted to you & me in this world but we shall soon take the road friend Beggs has gone."

One of the merchandizing Stokes family, Armistead Y., in reporting to his brother on a trip to New York in 1821 to buy supplies for his Petersburg store, mentioned that he had arrived "after a passage of 11 days from Augusta," not indicating whether he boarded the ship in Charleston or Savannah, but most likely in the former port. His trip was not the usual one to New York harbor, for he passed up the Delaware River and was entranced by its scenery: "During my passage of the delaware, the most beautiful river in the world, every vale a vilage & every Hill abounding with cotages. The sun sunk behind the embattled clouds leaving there illuminated points tinged with a thousand colours and as these changed, first deepning & then fading, the evening Star appeared in the blue Sky trembling above the dark clouds which appeared like some extensive forest stretched along
the Horizon; then add the Swift Passage of the steam boat it gave a silent and solitary majesty to every object around particularly situated as I was without any acquaintance on board."

In New York he shopped around among suppliers and soon completed his purchases, amounting to $7,000 "at very fair prices." He expected to make a profit of from 70% to 90% on these goods "and sell much lower than usual." 50

As an index to how people lived in Petersburg in the later 1700's and early 1800's a partial list of what merchants bought and sold, slightly repetitious of items already mentioned, should be useful. The merchant could probably take care of anything a person wanted or had to sell, whether it be fresh venison at 50 cents a quarter, new goose feathers for feather beds, horses (from $145 to $230 apiece), "fowles," furs (grey fox at 32 cents apiece, raccoon at 25 cents, wild cat at 32 cents, otter, muskrat, beaver, and other "little folks of the fields and forests"), or Indian blankets.

For clothing and accessories (man and woman), a merchant could supply almost any taste: silks, "lustrings and pelongs," linens, satins, nankeens and osneburgs (for slaves), platillas, bombardette, cassimere, corduroy, velveteen, muslin, calico, silk florentine, "superfine blue cloth," lace, lady's hats, hair ribbons, hair powder, "white pic nic gloves," lady's long gloves, lady's kid skin gloves, lady's silk gloves, tortoise hair combs, fine tooth combs, ivory and horn combs, lady's cotton hose, broad rib stocking, lady's "plain and lace clock hose," veils, Leghorn and willow bonnets, muslin shawls, yarn, pomatum (a dressing perfume), vials of bergamot, "diaper tape," "nuns thread," brass thimbles, pen knives, small scissors, white thread, girl's hats, umbrellas, and other items.

For men's dressing wants, the merchant had: suspenders, "swandon vests," Cashmere vests, "overals," boots, half boots, cuff links, razors and shaving boxes, beaver gloves, plated knee buckles, jack knives, snuff boxes, bandanna handkerchiefs, and other articles "too tedious and numerous to mention."

For his kitchen and dining room the Petersburger could buy almost anything he might want: salt, pepper, coffee, tea, ginger, brown sugar, allspice, "best Northward Cheese," tea kettles, carving knives, "jappanned sugar boxes," "Dutch ovens" (for the outside), pewter plates, coffee mills and pots, iron pots, frying pans, earthen plates, milk pots, gallon measures, cream pots, "baking dishes," all sorts of cutlery, silverware, linen tablecloths, and so on.

For refreshments with alcoholic contents there was a variety
of wines, rums, porters (a mixture of ale and stout), and whiskies of local manufacture. To relieve small aches and pains too trivial to demand the attention of a physician, and to provide chemicals for other needs, the merchant had: "camphire," smelling salts, "bottle bitters," British oil, "batman drops," Glover salts, brimstone, copperas, white lead, salt petre, lime, linseed oil—and many drugs which a sick person able to be on his feet could get by going to a physician's office.

For various amusements and pastimes a person could buy jews-harps, playing cards, gun powder, buck shot, hawk-bill knives, fishing lines, and fish hooks. And for barnyard and plantation use, the merchant could supply anything needed: hoes (weeding, hilling, and broad), riding chairs, rope, whips, saddles and saddle bags, bridles, lady's saddles, curry combs, surcingle, horse brushes, horseshoes, hand and claw hammers, rasps, drawing knives, rat-tail files, carpenter's squares, blacksmith's bellows, plows, plow lines, cradle sticks (for reaping cradles), nails, chisels, gimlets, funnels, hinges, screws, gun locks, and many other hardware items.51

Such were some of the items which entered into the lives of the Petersbergers and their neighbors in the surrounding country; a quarter century later Petersburgers and their neighbors would be buying the same necessities and conveniences, but there would be some progress in the fineries and elegancies which they had taken on. Silks more than ever would be in style. Ladies would now be dressed out in "elegant white lace veils" ($8.00); "elegant silk shawls" ($6.50); white silk hose ($3.00) or blue silk hose ($2.50); they would be carrying a silk purse containing a phial of "Oder of Roses," an "elegant parasol" ($5.00), and an "elegant feather fan"; and they would be wearing gold earrings ($10.00), gold necklaces ($6.90), and gold breastpins ($10.00).

A gentleman might be seen riding a $250 horse, on an "elegant saddle" ($24.00), with a "loaded horse whip" ($2.50), and carrying a $7.50 pocket pistol and an "elegant gold watch," for which he paid $150. If on foot, on special occasions he might be wearing an "elegant sword" attached to an "elegant sword belt," and if he wanted a "military feather" in his hat, it would cost 50 cents. To enliven himself, he might drink Madeira wine at $2.50 a gallon or rum at $2.25. Whiskey could be got for $1.25 a gallon. If he smoked it would be Spanish segars at 25 cents a dozen or Petersburg-manufactured tobacco at 50 cents a pound. Those who chewed paid 12½ cents for either a plug or twist—undoubtedly large size. For the river, boat poles could be bought for 18¾ cents
apiece. And fishing lines would cost the same price apiece, while three dozen fish hooks would cost only 12½ cents. Children wishing to play marbles could buy them for 12½ cents a dozen.

Blue was the most stylish color, whether in lady's hose, cloth, or chinaware. Elegant blue cloth cost $9.00 a yard, but "Super Blue Cloth" sold at $13.20 a yard. An "elegant sett blue dining ware" could be bought for as little as $30.00. Cut glass goblets cost $12.00 a dozen, and a dozen silver table spoons cost the ladies of Petersburg $40.00. Two dozen "elegant fancy chairs" cost $84.00. A set of "elegant shovel and tongs" cost $6.50, while $20.00 was necessary to buy an "Imperial rug." "Elegant gold luster pitchers" and bowls, which must always be accompanied by "transparent soap" costing $5.50 a pair.

School children could buy at a Petersburg store primers, spelling books, dictionaries, and slates. Merchants had for sale also writing paper, dutch quills, ink stands, ink, and ink powder. No household was any more complete without an almanac than without a Bible, and Petersburg merchants could always supply both, the almanac selling for 18¾ cents around 1820. Large family Bibles were supplied at $10.00 apiece. Morse's Geography and the Columbian Orator were $1.00 each and the Life of Franklin was $1.12½. Erasmus could be had for 56½ cents. There were other books for sale, generally of a religious and moral character, as American Moralist, American Preceptor, and Watts Hymns.62

As it has been previously noted, Petersburg was an excellent trading center for varied merchandise unequalled in Georgia north of Augusta and drawing customers from far up the Broad River and across the Savannah in South Carolina. The Calhouns were regular customers for "elegant" goods,53 and Moses Waddel, over in his Willington school community, came frequently to trade at the Petersburg stores. George Cook and John Dooly from across the Broad River in Lincoln County came to trade and engage in law business, and old Elijah Clarke from over in Wilkes County could now and then be seen on the streets of Petersburg up to the very year of his death in 1799. On May 6th he settled up his debt at a Petersburg store "in full 6.00."

Petersburg merchants acting as factors for planters in the surrounding country marketed their cotton and tobacco for them and supplied them with their general plantation wants. But often these Petersburg merchants had for themselves factors in the large trading centers in both the South and the North so that between the planter and the final purchaser there might be two or three
middlemen, each exacting his commission. The merchants generally expected ninety days credit in what they bought in these factor transactions where they did not pay with products, but when they did send products to their factors and did not take merchandise in return they wanted payment immediately. In 1806 Hillyer sued a factor who sold three hogsheads of tobacco for him but did not remit the proceeds.

Acting as factors for planters in the first instance these Petersburg merchants were in reality engaging in barter trade. There was considerable barter trade every day with the small purchasers, who brought in fowls, vegetables, and other country produce. Merchants often advertised their wares “for cash, cotton and tobacco.”

The merchant always needed a clerk or two, unless his business was very meagre. A successful clerk needed training and advice in how best to handle his customers. Probably then there was no slogan such as “The customer is always right”; but a clerk must be polite and conduct himself in such a way as to lead the customer to want to come back without being begged to do so. There was brisk competition among Petersburg merchants, making good clerks, therefore, doubly important.

A Petersburg merchant in 1818 looking for someone to replace a clerk who had returned to his New Jersey home explained to a young man whom he was trying to interest in the position the duties of a clerk and the opportunity that would come his way in advancement. The salary to begin with would be $150 a year, “merely to keep you in good clothes.” He would be given instruction in bookkeeping and in the general duties of a clerk. Anyone wanting to become a merchant should start out as a clerk, “For no man can learn to navigate a ship unless he has been first a sailor, nor no man can command an army unless first a Soldier nor no man can be a merchant & know his business & be capable of teaching others, unless he is first a Clerk, & goes through all the difficulties and hardships (as young men please to call them) which naturally attach themselves to that business, for a man to suppose that he can be a merchant & succeed will be at the start without complete knowledge of the business is absurd, as your Father & myself can both testify. I can give you more information in six months than I had at the end of three years. My wit was bought at a very dear rate.”

Everyone must be at work by 9 o’clock in the morning, and there must be no gambling or sitting up late. “You must assist in
cutting your wood, Drawing your water, making your fires, sweeping your store,” and in getting everything in order before breakfast. “This is a good morning employment & good for your health.” In the evening the bookkeeper never quits “until the work of the previous day is copied.” “The secrets of our business & family are always to be kept inviolate, [and] . . . every principle of honour & honesty” must be respected—“no cheating any one out of any thing, and more particularly the ignorant. I would view one of my young men in a most contemptuous light who would cheat an ignorant person or a poor Negro out a 3s½d, because such is ill gotten gain.”

The bane of a merchant’s existence was giving credit to his customers which in the absence of a sufficient supply of money scattered among the masses was looked upon as a necessity. Credit was the prime cause of the failure of merchants, who frequently belabored their customers to pay up, as unfortunate Thomas Stokes had done, and frequently with no more success. Sometimes the refusal or delay in settling store debts, as well as others, was based on a dispute as to the correctness of the amount demanded. Rather than bring suit in the courts, there was a legal method in use to bring about a settlement. The Superior Court now and then, and frequently in the 1790's and early 1800's, would refer the dispute to a set of arbitrators whose decision would be final. As an example, the Elbert County Superior Court referred the dispute of Abram Colson and Jacob Bugg against E. Ragland to these gentlemen: Benjamin Taliaferro, Thomas Wooton, Thomas C. Russell, and LeRoy Pope. They met in Petersburg, went over the account in dispute, and found that Ragland owed Colson and Bugg 54 pounds, 3 shillings, and 9 pence.

Threats of war with England, embargoes disrupting trade, and prices of cotton and tobacco approaching the vanishing point made economic conditions in Georgia calamitous. To help the debtor class, to which most people belonged, the legislature began passing stay and alleviating laws. The first came in May, 1808, which stayed any execution against any debtor until the following Christmas if he should give security for the amount of the judgment and costs. Supposing that conditions had improved a little, the legislature in December, 1808, continued its alleviating policy by staying any judgment if the debtor gave good security for the debt and paid one third of the amount and of costs. This law was to continue in force until Christmas, 1809, but since conditions did not improve, the legislature in December, 1809, continued the
law until Christmas, 1810. Where a third had been paid before Christmas, 1809, the next third would not be due until May 1, 1810, making the final payment due before Christmas, 1810. With the outbreak of war in 1812, so great were the economic uncertainties that the legislature passed a law in November (1812) withdrawing the right of a creditor to issue any civil processes against property unless the debtor was about to squander it. Then a judgment might be secured, and if the debtor was about to leave the state the execution of the judgment might be made. To protect the solvency of banks, the legislature the next year allowed them to sue, get judgments, and levy on property. In 1814 debtors were allowed a year’s grace if they gave good security, but no soldier could be sued while in the service and within six months thereafter.

Petersburg merchants were hard hit by these laws. Hillyer wrote to his friend Whyte in Boston that the Georgia stay law had “stopped all proceedings” in courts for the collection of debts. “This procedure, as oppressive as immoral, has quieted the fears & I might add the consciences of the debtors so that no more exertion is made for the settlement of accounts by them. Where this demoralizing principle will end, God only knows.” He wished he could meet all of his debts to Whyte but “the untoward circumstances of the country—added to the wicked proceedings of the Legislature have interfered.” A little later in 1809 Hillyer wrote that the “times for collecting money in this country are more distressing than I have ever known them. Legislative interference still prevents our collecting money by law.”

In 1810 Hillyer gave a little description of the way in which the law worked. Debtor—“Mr. what do you intend doing with me about [what] I am due you?” Creditor—“If you don’t pay me I am ruined.” Debtor—“Well I never saw money so hard to get in my days. I mean to pay all I owe. I don’t think any better of the thirding law than you do. I am determined that I will third no more. I am above it. If you can wait till Christmas I will pay you every cent.” Relying on such promises, the creditor waits, but no one pays him a cent. He then sues, but it is too late to collect the one third for that year. Hillyer declared that he was going to sue every one of his debtors possible.

The bustling town of Petersburg had, of course, to provide its people with services other than the buyings and sellings carried on by the merchants; however, none of the needed little occupations approached merchandizing in extent and importance. There
was a tan yard which provided leather for the cobblers and harness-makers; Jeremiah Burdine engaged in cabinet-making; and blacksmiths would shoe a horse for $1.25 in 1799. Jane Rucker, a seamstress, in 1806 inserted a notice in the Petersburg newspaper soliciting further business and correcting certain reports which had been going the rounds: “She hopes for a continuation of those favors, assuring . . . [the public] that her work will be inferior to none, fashionable and at the most reduced prices. Punctuality and dispatch will be strictly adhered to.” She was publishing this notice because a rumor had been started that she said, “I did not mean to take in any more work, that I could live without it, and that I stood in no need of any.” She wished to inform the person who started the report “that I stand in as great need of work as the most indigent of my neighbors, and have ever been anxiously bent on industry which I mean to pursue to the termination of my days.”

James Pace, the town tailor, had difficulty collecting what was owed to him. Inserting a notice in the town newspaper in 1806, headed “Help the Needy,” he added, “The Subscriber only asks for that he has earned.” As this plea did not seem to awaken the consciences of his debtors, six months later he published this reminder: “I Find it High Time to Speak Plain. For the last time, I sincerely request my debtors to make the most speedy payment, . . . as I am determined to give no longer indulgence.”

Outside of Petersburg and yet not very far away were several kinds of extractive industries, in addition to plantations, which secured their power from the Broad and Savannah rivers and from their many small tributaries. Grist mills were early coming into prominence, especially to grind wheat for the neighborhoods, any surplus being sent down to Petersburg and Augusta. According to a law passed in 1786 the toll exacted from customers bringing their grain to be ground for their own use was one eighth “and no more,” and the miller was required to grind as much as five bushels out of every lot brought, in the order received. Since most mills ground flour also on their own account it was necessary to buy the grain from wheat farmers. A miller on Broad River near Petersburg was advertising in the Petersburg paper in 1805 an offer of $1.25 a bushel. Another mill on Broad River, five miles above Petersburg, was advertising its flour as “not to be equalled or excelled.” The minimum daily grinding capacity for the ordinary grist mill was 150 bushels a day.

The political philosophy of the day in Georgia required gov-
Enforcement inspection and regulation of any important manufactured and processed article which reached the market for sale. In 1801 Petersburg was made an inspection point where flour was to be graded into first, second, and third qualities, with the number marked on every barrel by an inspector, who was to be paid twenty-five cents a barrel by the owner of the flour.\textsuperscript{72}

For the inspection of flour, in December, 1811, the legislature passed a much more elaborate act which was to go into effect six months later and to apply only to Petersburg and four other towns—Savannah, Augusta, Darien, and Milledgeville. As these were the main towns where flour was received in extensive trade and also used for exportation, the flour intended for all the rest of the state was presumably to be free from inspection—thus relieving flour for toll customers from this burden since it was for their own consumption. Also the inspection did not apply to the flour which the many mills scattered over the state were producing for sale elsewhere than in the inspection towns. According to this act the Inferior Court in each county concerned should appoint "a person of good repute, and who is a skilful judge of the quality of flour." To be merchantable all flour should be "bolted wheat flour . . . and of due fineness, and without any mixture of coarser flour, or the flour of any other grain than wheat." The flour should be packed in barrels and half-barrels of 27 inches in length and bound with at least 10 hoops, weighing 196 and 98 pounds respectively—specified fines being charged against the miller for any shortages. The inspector should bore into each barrel "from head to head, with an instrument of not more than three quarter inch in diameter." He should plug the hole and mark on the barrel with the name of the inspection town and the quality of the flour, as "Superfine, Fine, Middling, and Ship stuff." Before sending the barrels to the inspection town, the miller must "brand his name on each and every barrel."\textsuperscript{73}

The legislature had a difficult time making up its collective mind on the inspection of flour, for the act had been in effect only six months when this body, finding the act did not "answer the purposes for which it was intended," repealed it in December, 1812.\textsuperscript{74} But the next year (November 22, 1814) stating that "experience has shown that the establishment of flour inspections, under proper regulations, will advance and promote the interest of this state," the legislature repassed the original act with almost identical provisions, except that it applied only to Petersburg, Augusta, and Savannah.\textsuperscript{75} Later Darien was added.\textsuperscript{76}
As early as 1813 Shaler Hillyer became interested in the manufacture of flour, having already as a merchant been engaged in the flour trade. This year, he sought a contract to deliver 500 barrels in Augusta by Christmas. He was soon inquiring in Augusta for the necessary machinery for setting up “a merchant mill” on Broad River near his plantation home, agreeing to swap cotton for it. Two years later (in 1815), as has been previously noted, he induced the legislature to grant him permission to build a dam across the river at Muckle’s Ferry Shoals. By the middle of the next year, he had constructed his dam, built his mill, and had it in operation, shipping “real Superfine” flour down to Augusta. During the first winter and spring after he had constructed his dam it had withstood all the floods and freshets customary for that time, but an unusual freshet in May washed away his dam and put a total stop to his grinding. Since he needed his slaves in the fields about this time he did not replace the dam for a month. By 1818 his dam and mill had cost him about $8,000.

The other extractive industry which was of importance to Petersburg was lumbering. True to its ever-watchful eye over the good name of Georgia products, the legislature early provided for the inspection of lumber. Wherever there was waterpower, it was easy to set up sawmills, and soon many were buzzing and humming on the streams around Petersburg. As inspection of lumber was intended primarily for that which was being exported, Petersburg was only an assembling point for lumber being shipped down the Savannah River. After specifying that all scantlings and boards must have square edges and be “free from worm or knot holes,” the law gave greatest attention to staves used in making barrels, hogsheads, and pipes, which were a standard article of export to the West Indies to be used in the rum and molasses trade.

An extractive industry, no unit of which was likely operated in Petersburg but which thrived on most plantations up the Broad and Savannah River valleys, was the distillation of whiskey and apple and peach brandies. Before the end of the eighteenth century stills could be had in Augusta in sizes from thirty to seventy gallons. Later they could be had for larger capacities. When Hillyer moved out of Petersburg to his Broad River plantation he secured an eighty gallon still, which he operated to produce whiskey for the Petersburg and the Augusta market. He produced also peach brandy for markets as far away as Boston, sending there in 1813 by the first vessel possible (these being war times) “one
quarter cask of Peach brandy of an excellent quality.\textsuperscript{84} This was one of the few industries which the Georgia legislature neither inspected nor regulated because little or none was sent abroad, and its quality could be considered good. The planter and his family and neighbors relied upon it for conviviality and they would be satisfied with none but the best.

Although Petersburg for some years was one of the three or four most active trading centers in the state, it did not have a bank; but neither did any other town in Georgia until 1807, when the Planter's Bank of the State of Georgia was incorporated, to be set up in Savannah. As an indication of the financial standing of Petersburg, it was allotted 600 shares to be subscribed under the supervision of LeRoy Pope, Thomas Bibb, and John Watkins. All other towns were allotted fewer shares excepting Savannah, Augusta, and Washington.\textsuperscript{85}