EXAMINING THE BATTLE HOUSE: THE GREEK REVIVAL, RELIGION, RACE
RELATIONS, AND SLAVERY JUSTIFICATIONS

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A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Art and Art History in the Graduate School of The University of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Birmingham

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2015
ABSTRACT

Reasons for the fervor in the United States for the Greek Revival style in architecture in the nineteenth century have been revived in recent years by Barksdale Maynard’s challenge of Talbot Hamlin’s widely accepted 1944 argument about the popularity of this architecture. However, little has been discussed regarding the genesis of the style beyond the basic arguments of fashion and democratic sentiment, especially regarding the heightened interest in the Greek Revival style among the Southern planter elite. I seek to reveal one more reason considering why those in the South, particularly in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, chose to use the Greek Revival style in the construction of their homes, and the effects it had on the builder and the community. Through study of Alfred Battle’s 1844 Greek Revival renovation to his Tuscaloosa townhouse I have identified a correlation in Southern domestic architecture between classical motifs and concepts of control and hierarchy. Applying a social history approach I demonstrate how the Battle estate acting as a program serves as one unique example of architecture’s regulative rule over slavery and race relations during the Antebellum period in Alabama. I demonstrate how Battle’s comprehensive plan acts as a visual symbol for concepts of race and morality as well as a hierarchical tool meant to dictate a more rigid sense of morality for the community, separate whites and blacks, and cement the patron as a commanding presence in Tuscaloosa society.
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Dr. Rachel Stephens. She has been a teacher, an editor, a listener, and a role model. This project would not exist without her tireless effort. Thank you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a great thank you to everyone who helped me and guided me through the process of creating this manuscript, in particular, my family for their support as well as Dr. Rachel Stephens for the invaluable advice. A great thanks is due to Dr. Heather McPherson for her editorial comments in this thesis as well as to Dr. Tanja Jones who has always supported me and continues to serve as a role model. Thank you to Dr. Cathy Pagani who has provided me with such wonderful opportunities in Art History and also to Dr. Lucy Curzon who served as my teacher and advisor through the years. Thank you to Ian Crawford at the Jemison Van de Graaff Mansion who acted as mentor and provided an abundance of resources for this project and was always so willing to help. Thanks to Tim Higgins and Lucy Murphy as well for their information on the project. Thanks to Dr. April Jehan Morris, Anna Dietz, and Dr. Andrew Dewar for their advice in academia and art history more broadly. Thank you to Dr. Shaw and Dr. Brasher of the History Department who helped to put me on the right track with the more historical components of this paper.
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Introduction

The Battle house (fig. 1), today known as the Battle-Friedman house, exists as more than just a former Tuscaloosa residence or a house museum. The 1844 Greek Revival Renovation of the Battle-Friedman estate in downtown Tuscaloosa, Alabama should be viewed as an artistic program designed by planter and businessman Alfred Battle to serve as a form of visual hierarchy within the Tuscaloosa community. Battle's beliefs regarding slavery and morality were readily expressed through the classically inspired renovation of his house as viewed in conjunction with shifting concepts of natural right and slavery justification inspired by religious revival movements in the Antebellum period. Because of his status as both as a benevolently minded slave owner and a Greek Revival home owner, Battle existed as an anomaly in the community. Through the renovation of his home, Battle’s urban estate served as visual precedence for his ideas on morality, while also operating as an illustrative justification for slavery in the community.

Alfred Battle, a planter and businessman, was one of the wealthiest men in Tuscaloosa, Alabama during the Antebellum period. Acting as both a businessman and a planter, his professional pursuits garnered him substantial wealth and
influence.¹ In addition to his career, Battle was an ardent Presbyterian and his devotion to his religion was further inspired by popular religious zeal brought on by the Great Awakening. Because of this he became active in Tuscaloosa’s benevolent movements that sought to better the community based on evangelical ideals. Battle owned several plantations outside of Tuscaloosa in nearby Hale County, one of which is known to have been at least 160 acres and located in Carthage, Alabama thirty miles from Tuscaloosa. In order to better facilitate business and social calls, Battle began construction on a townhouse for he and his family in Tuscaloosa in 1835. Located in the block immediately next to their church, the home was originally constructed in the waning Federal style, a carry over from the earlier Georgian style.

However, in 1844 just nine years after the initial construction of the building, Battle began the Greek Revival renovation of his urban estate. During this time, and in addition to Battle’s devotion to the Presbyterian Church and his dedication to the community’s benevolent movements, Battle quickly became one of the state’s largest slave owners. Simultaneously, rationalizations regarding slave ownership were shifting in the South from an argument that considered slavery a necessary evil to a concept that regarded slave holding as a positive good. With these ideas in mind, this thesis consider social history and utilizes archival evidence as well as art historical evaluation of the house and its contents in order to more fully understand the implications of employing a Greek Revival renovation to the façade of a rather

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new house and select out buildings. When juxtaposed with the vernacular style of those buildings on Battle's estate specifically inhabited and utilized by slaves, the Greek Revival structures stand in stark contrast and symbolize important ideas.

By linking Battle's interest in benevolent movements meant to better his community with the planter's mass accumulation of slaves, I argue it is the change in Southern slavery justification to a positive good argument, inspired by shifts in concepts of natural right based in classical philosophical thought, that motivated Battle's Greek Revival Renovation. Likewise, I insist that Battle enlisted classical motifs to publicly display for the community and for his own household a hierarchy of race and morality as it relates to concepts of benevolence in regards to local race relations and slavery. This 1844 Greek Revival renovation to Battle's Tuscaloosa home is one unique example of architecture's regulative rule over slavery and race relations during the Antebellum period in Alabama as well as a hierarchical tool meant to dictate a higher level of morality for the community and cement Battle as a commanding presence in Tuscaloosa society.

In this project I explore Battle and his beliefs in three chapters. Chapter one suggests the Battle estate be read as an artistic program, designed by Battle to be read as one cohesive message to express his beliefs regarding classical concepts of order and restraint to his household and the community. I explore the exterior and interior additions to the house, the conversion from I to T plan, the use of decorative arts inside, the treatment of dependencies, and the meticulous planning of a landscape garden to demonstrate that the 1844 renovation as a cohesive plan executed at one time following identical guidelines. Viewed together, the
architectural program designed by Battle further validated Battle’s objective. In chapter two, I explore Tuscaloosa’s benevolent societies and their relation to classical architecture, establishing a connection between Battle’s benevolent mindset and his Greek Revival home. Benevolent societies were prevalent in Tuscaloosa and Battle served as a prominent steward in his community on multiple committees dedicated to eradicating sin from the community. At the same time Battle was working towards a higher level of morality for the community, he was steadily growing his slave holdings, increasing his numbers each year. Consistently one of the largest slaveholders in Tuscaloosa County, Battle’s concept of morality and slave holding may appear incongruous. However, in this chapter I explain that, for most Tuscaloosans, slavery and benevolence were inexplicably tied together. It is through these concepts that Battle created his visual moral hierarchy for the community. Chapter three outlines a different hierarchy based on race. With a shift in concepts of natural right inspired by classicism, a change in slavery justification occurred. With this came the positive good theory, which used Aristotle’s *Politics* to defend slavery as a benevolent institution good for the slave, slave owner, and community. Battle employed this concept at his own estate with a visual juxtaposition of architecture that clearly designated white spaces from black, reinstating the racial hierarchy and further defending the institution of slavery. Through these chapters I establish how Battle’s Greek Revival renovation acts as a program to create a visual hierarchy based on Battle’s own beliefs.

Statement of the Literature
Architecture exists as an often underappreciated form of art. The architect’s intended message may not appear overt, as the viewer moves around and within the design of a structure. But just as painting and sculpture dictate a larger meaning, architecture is created according to particular concepts. No structure is created in a vacuum; each is embedded with fragments of inspiration from the patron, architect, time period, surrounding structures and more. It is this exposure to the world that allows architecture to outwardly project its defining characteristics. This is true even for the vernacular structure, for as will be seen, patrons have historically used architecture continuously as a way to exercise systems of beliefs, as form and function are focused to elicit specific emotions from the viewer and to impose an overarching message. In his architectural survey *American Architecture: A History* (2003) Leland M. Roth suggests that Western architecture adapts elements of historical styles to create associations in the mind of the user or observer in order to strengthen and enhance the functional purpose of the building.² The application of a particular historical style to impose upon the user and the viewer specific concepts as determined by the architect or patron will be thoroughly examined in this thesis through the Battle House of Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Greek Revival architecture has long been identified as the national style for the early American republic, as put forth by Talbot Hamlin in his book *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (1944).³ Hamlin’s sweeping view of the Greek Revival across the continental United States provides a necessarily broad overview of

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regional applications of the architectural style. He documents the Greek Revival in its many forms, both public and private. Hamlin’s theories attempt to trace how and why the Greek Revival became such a popular American architectural trend. His book has been the baseline of the academic study of Greek Revival since its publication. Arguing that visionaries like Thomas Jefferson employed the Greek Revival as a rejection of English norms after the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, Hamlin asserts that simultaneously a new American identity was developed. Hamlin further suggests that the selection of a Greco-Roman model lent itself easily to the new republic, creating a strong architectural foundation necessary for the new nation.

In his book American Buildings and their Architects Volume I: The Colonial and Neoclassical Styles, William H. Pierson, Jr. discusses colonial architecture, Palladianism and Greek Revival architecture, and he suggests that the Palladian style in America was heavily tied to the Georgian aesthetic of seventeenth-century English architect Christopher Wren. Only in the South did he find a more specific dedication to the Palladian style, especially in domestic architecture. In discussing Neoclassicism, Pierson notes that much of European architecture is based on Roman forms that reemerged during the Renaissance and the Baroque periods. He argues that America’s interest in the classical style of ancient Greece and Rome stems from several contemporaneous factors. First, he links the interest in archeological discoveries of Roman architecture and aesthetics at Pompeii and Herculaneum as well as other excavations in Italy to the influence on European and American

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aesthetics. These discoveries led to multiple publications offering further visual examples also of interest to Americans at the time. In addition, several archeological digs were simultaneously taking place in Greece. These excavations uncovered never before seen works and artifacts and inspired the distribution of printed and illustrated folios that allowed American builders far more historically specific examples of classical architecture. Pierson also points to the Greek War for Independence, fought between 1821 and 1832, as further evidence of inspiring America’s interest in Greek culture. Motivated in part by the American Revolution, the Greeks sought to cast off Ottoman rule in favor of independence. Americans rallied behind this sentiment and followed the outcome of the war with great interest until Greece’s victory.

The work of Hamlin and Pierson proved influential in the field and became widely accepted. However, more recently, scholars have taken issue with Hamlin’s theories. Particularly in opposition to Hamlin’s argument that asserted democracy and a new American identity as the reason for employment of the Greek Revival, Barksdale Maynard deemed fashion the true explanation for the enormous popularity of the Greek Revival style. He argued that the country’s interest in classical elements was inspired by contemporary events discussed by Pierson including the Greek Civil War and archeological digs, but also by European trends that favored Neo-Classicism. In his book *Architecture in the United States 1800-1850* (2002), Maynard suggests that there is not enough evidence supporting Hamlin’s claims and argues that for too long scholarship has blindly accepted his theories on
the Greek Revival. Disavowing Hamlin’s suggestion that the Greek Revival existed as a rejection of British trends, Maynard points to several European instances where classically inspired architecture remained popular during the nineteenth century and argues that America had been and would continue to be influenced by those styles across the Atlantic.

In terms of Alabama architecture specifically, Robert Gamble can be credited with the most comprehensive study of the state’s buildings. Historic Architecture in Alabama: A Guide to Styles and Types, 1810-1930 (2001), provides a thorough tutorial of the history of architecture in the state as well as a brief description of most of the Alabama structures listed on the Historic American Buildings Survey. The work serves as an outstanding record and guidebook but provides little context for its descriptive analysis. It does not address the reasons behind the Greek Revival's popularity in Alabama’s domestic architecture, instead relying on already accepted notions stated by previous scholarship.

Despite the many theories about the Greek Revival's genesis and continued popularity, particularly in domestic architecture, the concept of the style as a symbol of dominance and control as approached in this project has been overlooked. Likewise, the art and architecture of the South has been more generally ignored until recent years, and only now are more critical studies of Southern

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architecture beginning to emerge. Alabama specifically has received little attention in art historical literature and primarily remains unexplored. Consequently, virtually no scholarship has been dedicated to understanding the architectural history of Tuscaloosa. Thus, this study will work to remedy such oversights as it serves as the first of its kind in its exploration of the Battle House specifically. By providing new theoretical concepts for understanding the message conveyed through Greek Revival architecture in the South as well as deepening the study of Alabama art and architecture, I hope to fill a hole in the scholarship on this topic as well as illuminate a topic that deserves further study.

Therefore, the intention of this project is not to discredit previous scholarship regarding Greek Revival architecture. Instead, I seek to illustrate additional reasons that have been overlooked concerning why some in the Antebellum South, particularly Alfred Battle in Tuscaloosa, chose to use the Greek Revival in the construction of their homes. Additionally, I will explore the intention of this trend by the builder and its effect on the community. Through study of the Greek Revival I have identified a correlation in Southern domestic architecture between classical motifs and concepts of control and hierarchy. In examining this parallel, I have found in Tuscaloosa a prime example of one Southerner's employment of a classical aesthetic that when read alongside classical philosophy,

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demanded dominance in the community in a range of areas, including race as well as religion. In addition to concepts of democracy and fashion, I demonstrate how the 1844 Greek Revival renovation of Alfred Battle’s urban estate in Tuscaloosa serves as an artistic program meant to be viewed together as an example of architecture’s regulative rule over slavery and race relations during the Antebellum period in Alabama. I also argue that the planter and businessman designed the home as a hierarchical tool meant to dictate a higher level of morality for the community to cement Battle as a commanding presence in Tuscaloosa society.

Tuscaloosa was one of the most prominent cities in Alabama during the Antebellem period. From its settlement in 1819, the community continued to grow and by 1860 it was the third largest city in the state behind Mobile and Montgomery, doubling in size from a population of 1,949 in 1840 to 3,989 in 1860.9 Tuscaloosa served as the capitol of Alabama between 1826 and 1847. It was also an important trading center, partly due to its access to and control of the Black Warrior River as it shipped crops, mainly cotton, to and from larger Southern ports like Mobile and New Orleans. It was this access that afforded Battle his mass accumulation of wealth, demonstrated both in his home and in his slave ownership. It was this wealth that allowed Battle the means to create a space that broadly communicated his ideas of morality and race to his household and the Tuscaloosa community. The 1844 renovation to Alfred Battle’s urban Tuscaloosa estate operated as an artistic program that combined architecture, landscape, and interior furnishings in order to

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9 Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, as Obtained at the Department of State, from the Returns of the Sixth Census (Washington, 1841), 54; Population of the United States in 1860 (Washington, 1864), 9; James B. Sellers, History of the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama, 1953), 581.
communicate a larger message that connected the Greek Revival style through its sober and dominating simplicity with a hierarchy formed on concepts of morality and race and inspired by classical philosophy and changing forms of slavery justification.
Chapter One - Alfred Battle and His House

The 1844 renovation to planter and businessman Alfred Battle’s urban townhouse was undertaken to implement an artistic program including the main house, as well as interior furnishings, dependencies, and landscape. The elements of this program were all implemented according to tenets of order and clarity and reference the classical style. As my study suggests, Battle used the Greek aesthetic to effectively communicate his beliefs regarding hierarchies of morality and race to the Tuscaloosa community. The original house, built beginning in 1835, existed as a typical symmetrically faced Federal style structure (fig. 2). In 1844 Battle began renovating his estate. This renovation altered the original property by modifying and refining the front facade of the existing house, changing the plan of the structure by adding additional rooms, disposing of the interior Federal style furnishings in favor of classically inspired pieces, amending the front facing garden shed and green house to match the main house, and devising a linear and symmetrical landscape garden to encompass the grounds. This was all completed in a similar fashion, inspired by strong, clean lines and using the Greek aesthetic. This program of architecture, landscaping, and decorative arts implemented for Battle a program that illustrated a visual model of control to instruct his household as well as the Tuscaloosa community.
Alfred Battle was born in Nashville, North Carolina in 1801 to Captain William and Mary Ann Williams Battle. The Battles were a distinguished family in Halifax County, North Carolina, and Alfred was the eighth of nine children. His father had served in the Revolutionary War against the British, and his grandfather, also named William Battle, was a commissioned officer in the Revolutionary War. Alfred Battle was the great-grandson of Joseph and Martha (Drake) Williams, a direct descendent of Richard Drake and Sir Francis Drake, both important men in England ostensibly connected with Queen Elizabeth during her reign. Battle married Millicent Bradley Bealle on January 10, 1822. Millicent was originally from Georgia, but her family later moved to Tuscaloosa where she and Battle presumably met. After settling in their early marriage on Battle’s plantation lands in neighboring Hale County, the couple eventually moved to the city of Tuscaloosa to build their urban townhouse. Battle quickly developed important commercial interests in the city. He served as stockholder and board member of the North East South West Railroad that stretched from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Meridian, Mississippi. He also operated a dry goods store in Tuscaloosa along with his business partner and fellow Tuscaloosan Thomas Miller that offered luxurious items such as ostrich feathers and the like.

Despite his business interests, Battle consistently described himself on his census records as a “planter,” which suggests his plantations were his most

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10 Richard Drake served as a Member of Parliament and Justice of the Peace under Queen Elizabeth as well as Equerry for the royal stables. Sir Francis Drake was a navigator, slaver, and privateer as well as being celebrated as the second person to circumnavigate the globe in a single trip from 1577-1580.
11 Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, December 18 and 25, 1844.
significant enterprise. Having grown up the son of a planter and slave owner in North Carolina, Battle began purchasing what Sydnie Keene Smyth documented in her 1929 master's thesis as “excessive plantations,” where he expanded his investment in agriculture once in Alabama. On his several plantations outside the city in Hale County, located just a day’s travel to the south of Tuscaloosa, he produced mostly corn and cotton, as was typical of most Alabama planters. The majority of Battle’s slaves were held at these large plantations, though at least seven and as many as sixteen slaves lived and worked at his house in Tuscaloosa. Some suggest that Battle brought slaves from North Carolina that his father had given him, with him to Alabama. The planter and businessman owned many slaves and in the decades before the Civil War, that number was continuously growing. According to census records Battle owned 34 slaves in 1830, 96 slaves in 1840, 134 by 1850, and 190 slaves in 1860. These numbers cement him as one of the largest slaveholders in western Alabama.

The architect for the original 1835 structure and the subsequent 1844 renovation of the Battle house are unknown, however, evidence suggests Battle himself may have been the designer of his estate, specifically the classically inspired renovation. Battle had a large workforce of slaves, many of them skilled and considering that most of the work on the house was done by skilled enslaved

12 Little is known of Battle’s plantations today as none of them have been preserved. What is known comes from a mix of sources that do not agree upon how many plantations Battle actually owned. Sydnie Keene Smyth, “Architecture of Tuscaloosa” (Masters thesis. University of Alabama, 1929).
craftsmen, it is logical that they were Battle’s slaves. While no books remain of the Battle library that might reveal interest in pattern books or architecture more generally, the level of detail in the home as well as Battle’s need for control and order suggest that he may have been the designer of the space. Millicent Battle has been identified as the designer of the Battle’s landscape gardens, despite the use of a landscape architect and it is possible that like the garden, they designed the estate to fit their ideals.

The Battle-Friedman house (as it is known today) was erected in 1835 by Alfred and Millicent Battle as a Federal style townhouse located on Market Street (today Greensboro Avenue). The home is situated in section 22 of the city plan, a central location as can be seen from the early map in figure 3 and 4. The house and its outbuildings occupied an entire city block and still today the house is situated in the block immediately adjacent to the Presbyterian Church the family attended in the downtown area. The house was originally built as a symmetrically faced two-story red brick house, and records show that the house was built of locally made brick. It was constructed according to an I-plan opening onto two connected parlors, one on either side with two upstairs bedrooms linked by a hallway. Figure 5 and 6 illustrate the original layout of the house as it appeared in 1835 as well as its subsequent renovations. The exterior of the home boasted a single bay double portico emphasizing the central doorway topped on the second level with a painted white wood pediment to match the two square columns and trim work (fig.7). Records show that the house was built with, “nine over nine windows, [and] federal style panel doors with an elegant sidelight and transom,” as well as wide plank hard
pine floors. The house still maintains its original wood floors, but in Battle’s day they would have been carpeted or covered in ornamental rugs.\textsuperscript{14} As was also typical of the period, fine plasterwork was added to the parlor rooms to decorate the space (fig.8). Vegetal patterns painted white to match the trim were possibly created by a skilled enslaved worker, this detailing added a refined touch to the interior of the house (fig.9).

Although the residence did not operate the same as a large plantation house would have, it did serve as the main house in relation to many outbuildings located on the one-acre estate. In addition to the main house, the property included a detached kitchen connected by a breezeway with slave quarters above, as well as stables, a garden shed, and a well. Figure 10 illustrates the exterior of the extant slave quarters and kitchen, which measure 5.5 by 13.5 meters. Today this structure has been renovated and converted to an apartment available to rent. These structures were built in a vernacular style in locally made red brick and were located behind the main house.

In 1844, less than nine years after the completion of the grand home, the Battle’s renovated their townhouse following the popular Greek Revival style. The original red brick façade was covered in tinted stucco and scored to appear like rose marble. This faux marble technique proved less expensive then applying costly marble that would have needed to be shipped in from afar. This money-saving technique speaks to Battle’s practicality, while still acting as a fashionable reference to the exterior of ancient Greek temples, which were traditionally constructed of

marble. However, the addition of this revetment covers only the front façade of the house and does not extend around the sides or the back of the building. Figure 11 demonstrates this in a detailed view of the façade and right side of the house meeting at the corner. Instead Battle chose to concentrate his efforts on the front of his house, select dependencies, and the interior.

In the renovation the initial double portico that was confined just to the central bay was extended with a flat roof that covered the entire façade of the house to create a monumental tetrastyle Doric portico across the front, with a centrally focused cantilevered gallery under the portico on the second level (fig. 12 and 13). The base of the porch, like the rest of the house, was constructed of locally made brick, but was clearly added in the 1844 renovation as revealed in the distinctive mortar lines as can be seen in figure 11. The porch maintains the original wooden railing and was designed in what is called “sheath of wheat” or “crows feet” railing. This railing was painted a dark French gray in order to give the appearance of wrought iron, another faux technique then popular in Tuscaloosa. Great care was taken in covering the brick façade and adding the dramatic front porch, and these additions completely changed the house’s appearance, placing more emphasis on the horizontality of the structure.

In addition, Battle added six monumental white-boxed Doric columns made of wood paired with matching white trim to the portico thereby more fully implementing the Greek Revival style. This addition also provided a classically inspired symmetry to the house that spoke simultaneously to the city of Tuscaloosa. Figure 7 illustrates the simple elegance of the Battle columns where each of the four
paneled sides were crafted individually. The columns, despite their square nature, reflect a Greek Doric aesthetic and are one of the most visually compelling Greek elements of the renovated home. These boxed columns or piers are a distinctive example of the high vernacular style in Tuscaloosa and can be seen in many Greek Revival houses built during the Antebellum period in the city. The majority of the master builders capable of the more typical rounded columns were occupied with large scale building projects at the nearby University of Alabama, which was under construction at the time. The paneled boxed columns like those at the Battle house proved simpler to create for less advanced builders, possibly some of Battle’s slaves as he owned several skilled craftsmen, while also serving as a popular vernacular fashion particular to the city of Tuscaloosa. Considering the vast number of houses in Tuscaloosa that employed the boxed column type, the style can be considered a unique regional trend.

While the main Battle residence received a Greek Revival face lift, portions of the house maintained its earlier Federal style, for instance the Federal style fan light and side lights on the front door. However, the Battle family’s attention to detail as well as the addition of such obvious Greek elements as an applied Doric order and monumental columns reveal that their shift to a classically inspired home created the desired effect of harmony, proportion, and restraint.

Beyond the street-facing façade, Battle also altered the plan of his house in the 1844 renovation, providing additional space for his family while continuing the strong simple lines that reflected the Greek aesthetic Battle so admired. The

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15 The University Masonic Club, JT Searcy House, Minor-Searcy-Owens House, Foster-Murfee-Caples House, and the Davis Scott/Moody-Warren house are all fitted with Tuscaloosa’s boxed columns.
renovation to the Battle house included an update to the interior as well as the
grounds. The house was converted from an I-plan to a T-plan in 1844 with the
addition of a formal dining room at the rear (west) of the house. The structure was
also fitted with a summer basement as well as a dressing room or third bedroom
over the dining room on the second floor. Both the 1835 plan and the renovated
1844 plan reflect a level of simplicity. There are no rambling hallways or extraneous
rooms. Instead, the house is clearly planned according to concepts of simplicity,
sobriety, and order.

In addition to the structural changes, the home’s federal style furniture was
moved out at the time of the renovation, presumably to another of Battle’s
residences located in Hale County. To replace it, the Battles filled the house with
Empire style furniture crafted in the Neoclassical fashion. The strong lines and
heavy massing of the furnishings mimicked the Greek inspired outer façade. Two
original Battle pieces exist today from the 1844 classical redesign. The first is a
Neoclassical sideboard. The piece (fig. 15) is indicative of the Late Empire period
circa 1830-1840. Constructed of mahogany, the sideboard is a massive rectangular
shape measuring 73.5” wide and from counter top to the floor stands 42” tall. A
13.5” wooden backboard rests on the counter. The sideboard is decorated with two
round wooden columns and four smaller engaged columns attached to the
backboard, all with Doric capitals. The piece is divided into three sections, two of
which swell or bow out, while the central panel remains flat. Each section has a
drawer below the counter measuring 21” in length and below each drawer is a
cabinet. The round wooden pulls further emphasize the simplicity and heaviness of
the Battle’s own tastes, accentuating the sobriety of the aesthetic as expressed with
the monolithic size and restrained grandeur that characterize the piece. The second
extant piece added in the 1844 renovation is a wooden Neoclassical four poster bed.
Massive in size and exquisite in detail, the bed was presumably where Alfred and
Millicent slept. With its simple and sober lines, the piece, as illustrated in figure 16,
is Neoclassical in style. The existence of these two original pieces of furniture in the
Battle house today is not only remarkable, but they reveal the desire on Battle’s part
to create an artistic program beyond the exterior renovation.

Beyond the additional structures erected during the renovation, Millicent
Battle put considerable effort into creating the well-planned landscape gardens that
further reflected the Battle’s interest in maintaining order on their estate (fig. 17).
The portion of the gardens that remain today exist as the only extant Antebellum
gardens in the state. In 1844, upon completion of the house renovation, Millicent
hired a landscape architect to design her gardens that occupied the areas between
the residence and the street. These wrapped around the sides of the main building
to the north and south (fig. 18). Designed by an English architect, the gardens
reflect the return to a more formal approach to landscape gardening in England
during the nineteenth century as opposed to the eighteenth century British taste for
an unplanned appearance and a meandering landscape. Like the renovation to the
main house, the stately landscaped gardens were meticulously planned. Millicent
oversaw the implementation of a symmetrical and controlled composition of

16 Hannah Brown, “The Battle-Friedman House and Gardens,” Tuscaloosa Preservation Society,
historictuscaloosa.org.
17 George Shorter, Investigating the Gardens at the Battle-Friedman House, (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The
interlocking diamond shaped flower and plant beds intersected by white gravel paths. These beds existed in a series of three and were angled at forty-five degrees to the main axis placed symmetrically north and south of the central walkway that led to the front door of the main house.\textsuperscript{18} Only a portion of these paths remain today as the garden that originally covered an area of about 30 meters by 80 meters and contained over 575 meters of walkway in total. While no plant material remains, surveys suggest that specific trees including hollies, dogwoods, and a single crepe myrtle, date to the nineteenth century and may be part of the original 1844 gardens. Despite the lack of planting evidence, the remaining beds and walkways are a testament to the fact that the gardens were painstakingly designed, strictly constructed, and methodically maintained. They also served as a popular site during the period, as Millicent frequently entertained visitors who wished to peruse the grounds. The intense attention to order and symmetry in this extensive outdoor space reflects the desire for strict regulation in the Battle’s Tuscaloosa life as the tidy design reflected the restraint of the Battle home and extended to their life in general.

Also renovated in 1844 was a greenhouse and garden shed constructed of locally made red brick that was finished in the same faux marble exterior applied to the main house (fig. 19). The structure is small, just 3.65 meters by 5.0 meters and is a semi-subterranean building located to the south of the main structure. A 1997 archeological investigation by George Shorter revealed that the brick in the porch of the main house is different, in both color and size, than the bricks used to construct

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 6.
the garden shed. Shorter thus suggests that the shed predates the 1844 addition.
However, during the renovation the small structure was finished with plaster that
was painted a rose color and scored to look like marble similar to the main house
and was situated to face the main street as a small appendage to the larger matching
house. The greenhouse and shed served as a “cold frame” that supported the growth
of both annual and perennial seeds during the winter in preparation for spring. This
was presumably intended to meet the growing needs of such a large garden,
especially considering that a structure this size could accommodate a large number
of seedlings. It is also of note that the garden pathway system leads directly to and
from the small structure on a north-south axis, lining up with the doorways of the
greenhouse shed.

Despite the attention to the front facing garden shed and green house,
structures specifically associated with the enslaved remained hidden behind the
house and were not treated to such finery as the scored and painted revetment.
Instead, the kitchen and slave quarters, a two-story structure constructed of a
mixture of wood plank and locally made red brick remained in its vernacular state.
Despite the extensive overhaul to the rest of the estate, these buildings were not
refinished with the faux marble stucco technique, nor were they affixed with any
other classical detailing. While it is true that these structures existed behind the
house and comparatively were not as visually prominent from the street as the front
facing garden shed and green house, visitors to the Battle’s extensive gardens would
have viewed the structures easily. The juxtaposition of vernacular slave quarters
and a refined big house deserves further exploration and will be discussed in chapter three.

The Greek Revival style proved popular in the South and specifically in Tuscaloosa. While the Battle house is the focus of this study, Alfred Battle's residence is just one of the many Greek inspired structures to be built in Tuscaloosa during the Antebellum period. The William G. Cochrane house constructed by James H. Dearing of Tuscaloosa in 1840 exists as one example (fig. 20). The so-called executive mansion for later governor Arthur P. Basby is another (fig. 21). It was also constructed by Dearing in 1835, as was the Greek inspired Carson House for Thomas Lynch Carson in 1838 (fig. 22), and the Dearing-Swaim house for Alexander B. Dearing in 1842 (fig. 23). Other prominent examples of the Greek Revival style include: the 1841 University of Alabama President's Mansion (fig. 24), the University Masonic club of 1855 (fig. 25), the Hemphill house from the 1830s on University Avenue (fig. 26), the Davis Scott/Moody-Waren home located on Eighth Street and Twentieth Avenue (fig. 27), the Jonathan Thomas Searcy house built in 1839 (fig. 28), the Minor-Searcy house from 1826 (fig. 29), the Rosenau house built by Dr. Sim Eddins in 1845 (fig. 30), and the Foster-Murfee-Caples house built in 1838 (fig. 31). All of these houses were built according to a Greek Revival style and their sheer quantity reveals the popularity of the style in the construction of private homes in Tuscaloosa during the Antebellum period.

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In part, the Battle home must have been inspired by William Nichols, an English-born architect who became famous in the United States for his use of the Greek Revival and Neoclassical styles. Nichols served as state architect of Alabama while Tuscaloosa was the capitol. During this time, he designed several Greco-Roman structures including the state capitol building in Tuscaloosa and the University of Alabama campus. These buildings helped underscore the popularity of the classical style in Tuscaloosa. The Alabama state capitol was moved from its first location at Cahaba to nearby Tuscaloosa in 1826, where it remained until it was relocated to Montgomery in 1847. Designed and completed between 1827 and 1829, the Old State Capitol as it is known was built in Nichols’ typical Neoclassical style using all local materials. The three-story masonry building boasted a Roman style hemispherical dome at the center.

As the University of Alabama's architect from 1827 to 1832, Nichols’ design for the early campus was directly inspired by Thomas Jefferson’s application of classical Greek and Roman styles at the University of Virginia. In fact, Nichols based his plan for the University of Alabama’s library rotunda directly on Jefferson's own Pantheon inspired rotunda. Yet, Nichols took the historical specificity one step further, constructing the University rotunda at Alabama to be exactly one-half the scale of the Pantheon in Rome.20 Although the campus and the city center are less than one mile apart, during the University’s early years (and still today) the city of Tuscaloosa and the campus existed as separate entities. In most cases they were regarded as independent, though neighboring communities despite the close

proximity. Despite this separation, surely the classically inspired architectural plan for the University, as well as the capitol, only a few blocks down from his home played some role in influencing Battle's renovation.

The Battle home's Greek Revival renovation was not only implemented to be fashionable, however. Note, for instance, the short time frame between initial construction of the building and its subsequent renovation. Considering that construction on the house began in 1835, and that Battle made Tuscaloosa his primary residence in 1837, it is reasonable to assume that this was the date construction was completed.21 Following this 1837 completion date, the house sat in its original state as a Federal style house for only seven years before the overhaul to the exterior façade was taken up as well as the revamping of the interior furniture. While some additions were made to the main house that may have warranted this quickly timed renovation, including the summer dining room and third bedroom, the change in the exterior, as well as the furniture, seem to suggest a more personal than practical motive. While the Greek Revival was clearly fashionable during this period in Tuscaloosa, I suggest that the reason for Battle's application of the Greek Revival, as well as other contemporaneous implementations of the aesthetic in the community, is two-fold. First, Battle's renovation was inspired by changing justifications for slavery as tied to Greek concepts of natural right and Antebellum interest in benevolence. Second, Battle's use of Greek motifs acted as a billboard for his own beliefs regarding race and religion, developing for the city a visual hierarchy

through architecture on which to judge the merits of race and morality. His application of the Greek Revival thus allowed Battle to situate himself as part of the urban elite.

The idea that Battle’s house existed as a propagandistic message regarding concepts of race and religion may appear to those unfamiliar with architectural history as a strange concept. However, architecture has long been used to tell a story or provide a message. This idea was regularly applied during the Italian Renaissance where the austere facades of aristocratic palazzos served as a testament to ruling families’ strength and sovereignty in the community. Homes offer a public statement to one’s personal affinities, especially considering the amount of capital a personal dwelling represents. Likewise, the Battle house served as an important investment for the businessman and planter and he used the house as a substitute for himself while he was away from the city, as he often was, tending to his plantations to the south. The house reminded those in the Tuscaloosa community, as well as his own household, of the importance of order and hierarchy in regards to both race and religion, for as we will see, for Battle, the two are inextricably linked.

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Chapter Two - Benevolent Societies and the Greek Revival

The 1844 Greek Revival renovation to the Battle house offers a visual ode to order and refined simplicity that further reflected Battle’s personal need for control. This manifested itself through concepts of benevolence and morality popular during the period. During the nineteenth century, it was important that individuals maintain their station in life through display and it was acceptable for the wealthy to showcase their wealth to cement their position, though in moderation. During this time popular religious sentiment encouraged a level of refinement in restraint. Individuals were intended to live within the order assigned to them by nature and they were to do so while maintaining a level of obedience and sobriety. A home could be well decorated and aesthetically pleasing, but in an evangelical sense it should not be overly ornate. Alfred Battle was born a wealthy man and he furthered his alleged naturally ordained station by continuing to acquire wealth through his plantations and business pursuits. He was also devoutly religious and concerned with the morality of the community as a member of Tuscaloosa’s benevolent community. In this way the Battle house acted as a visual reflection of its patron’s beliefs. As this chapter details, it was a combination of Battle’s work with local benevolence movements combined with the classically inspired renovation of his

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estate and his growing slave holdings that established for him a moral hierarchy in Tuscaloosa.

After the 1844 renovation, Battle’s estate was unified under the tenets of order, simplicity, and restraint that were valued both in Greek design and in contemporary Antebellum concepts of morality. The main house stood as a symmetrically faced Greek inspired structure with strong lines and an interest in geometry. The house was stately, but not ostentatious. This was especially true when compared to those around it, for instance the Dearing-Swaim house, built by fellow planter and slave owner Alexander Dearing between 1831 and 1842 (fig. 23). Built using skilled slave labor, the Dearing-Swaim house is considered to be the finest example of temple type Greek Revival architecture in Tuscaloosa. In comparison, the Battle house, even taking the 1844 renovation into consideration, was more restrained. The main house at the Battle estate and its front facing garden shed and green house were decorated, but not lavishly as can be seen with the use of the faux marble techniques and boxed columns. The Dearing-Swain house, by comparison, utilized monumental Ionic columns in the round. Choosing to score and paint the stuccoed exterior in lieu of importing costly marble revetment suggests Battle’s conservative nature. This technique acted as a strong example of the restrained use of refinement popular among the morally conscious society of which Battle was a leader. Likewise, this faux marble technique did not extend around the entire house, nor to the other more hidden dependencies. Instead, Battle prudently reserved the faux finish for the front façade of the house. He also refinished only the front facing dependency, leaving the others, namely the kitchen and slave quarters,
in their vernacular wood plank and red brick state. The ordered nature of the renovated estate paralleled the tenets of sobriety, order, discipline, and control that Battle himself most valued. It is through the Greek Revival program created at the estate that Battle was able to communicate to his household and the community his ideals concerning benevolence and morality.

During the nineteenth century, trends based in social reform movements interested in further Christianizing the nation swept the country as part of the initiation of the national social movement. This is generally known as the Great Awakening. There are several waves that characterize the Great Awakening, but this project refers most specifically to the period in America from 1830-1860. During this phase, action was concentrated to those of the social elite who using reform programs worked to remedy sins of the self and the community. These elite evangelicals were inspired by religion to create organizations dedicated to purifying society and further elevating the morality of their communities by isolating and eliminating sinful behavior. In comparison with eighteenth-century reform, nineteenth-century groups proved decisively more organized and nationalized, and employed more sustainable avenues of reform.

The growing national interest in social modification formed more around religious affiliation than in connection with the state or government. While religious institutions appear to have mediated these movements, their messages, formed around moral commitment, fellowship, and identity, were driven by the cultural and

political struggles of the day. Known broadly as benevolence movements, these groups, comprised of Protestant reformers sought to heighten America’s moral character through reform action. Members believed that their actions would inspire the community to rid itself of vice and poverty and in return create a better democracy based on concepts of obedience. These national social reform societies acted through collective struggle and protest to impact the community’s patterns of obligation and interaction across a range of topics. Specialized benevolence agencies were inclined to promote specific areas for reform during this time, focusing on moral commitments, community, and identity. Some reform groups encouraged distribution of the gospels; others denounced gambling, though the largest of these Northern assemblages focused on temperance and abolition.

The first successful concentrated efforts towards abolition began in 1833 with the American Anti-Slavery Society. While other groups before it like the American Colonization Society had discussed possible remedies regarding the institution of slavery, the American Anti-Slavery Society, started by abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan and located in New York City, called for the immediate abolition of all slaves with no terms. While earlier institutions looked for more practical and appeasing remedies for slavery, such as colonization and monetary compensation, the American Anti-Slavery Society denounced slave owners as the ultimate sinners, and although the group’s members declared

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themselves pacifists, they were also called to die as martyrs for the cause if necessary.\textsuperscript{27}

While the society’s dramatic declaration clearly threatened those who supported slavery in the South, it did not keep Southerners from participating in their own form of benevolence movements. Because slavery was so intrinsically tied to social concepts of the Antebellum South and because many benevolence groups of the period aligned their doctrine with the abolition of slavery, there has been little scholarly consideration of benevolent movements in the South until recent years.\textsuperscript{28} Recent research has uncovered that while some white Southerners viewed benevolent agencies in conjunction with radical abolitionists like Garrison and Tappan, there are actually many instances of benevolent reform movements in the South. More specifically, scholars like John Quist note that although early Southern reaction against benevolence movements saw the organizations as “dangerous Yankee importations,” by the mid-1830s benevolent societies became a prevalent part of Alabama communities.\textsuperscript{29}

In Tuscaloosa, benevolence movements were popular and reached a high point of activity from the 1840s until the end of the Civil War. Societies like the Tuscaloosa chapter of the American Bible Society documented record growth in bible distribution during the 1840s, a peak period for slave owning in Tuscaloosa as


\textsuperscript{28} John Quist’s research explores the unexamined nature of Southern benevolent movements and specifically looks at Tuscaloosa in comparison with Northern counterparts.

The American Bible Society served as Alabama’s first statewide benevolence group. It was initially organized in 1824 in the state’s capital at the time, Cahaba. The organization aimed to arm each white family in the state with a copy of the bible. This was to ensure a morally sound and well-ordered community governed by self-control and devout in scripture. Upon the state capital’s shift to Tuscaloosa, the site of the society’s meetings moved as well. While the American Bible Society and its Tuscaloosa auxiliary initially reported low levels of interest, in 1837 and again in 1844 a commitment to the society’s goal was rekindled. Focusing its efforts specifically on arming children and the younger generation with bibles, as opposed to whole families paired with a rising economy from the 1840’s onward allowed the organization to grow. By the mid-1850s nearly seventy auxiliaries of the American Bible Society existed in the state and by 1862 the newly named Tuscaloosa Bible Society had donated over $7,700 to the American Bible Society headquarters.

Alfred Battle himself was deeply involved in Tuscaloosa’s benevolence movements. He was actively anti-gambling, held bible studies at his home, and worked as a member of the Executive Committee of the Tuscaloosa Society for the Promotion of Temperance from 1829-1835. He then served on the Tuscaloosa Chapter of the American Bible Society’s board as the Vice President in 1837 and later as the treasurer from 1838 to 1845. In support of the organization, Battle donated the money necessary to build the American Bible Society’s bible repository in Tuscaloosa. Battle’s stewardship allowed the community to quickly construct the

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30 Ibid., 480.
31 Ibid., 479.
structure meant to hold the bibles to be distributed throughout the county. Battle donated the funds in February of 1837 and the construction was complete by July of the same year. In 1839, his commitment to Christian stewardship was further demonstrated when Battle acted as a founding member of the Cextenary Institute, an evangelically driven college for men and women situated outside of Tuscaloosa.

Just as in the North, Battle and others in these benevolent societies believed that a society based in scripture was a more morally sound one and that circulation of the bible would advance public good. In 1844 Alabama State Senator Samuel C. Oliver of nearby Montgomery County praised the Bible's influence in "moralizing the people and rendering them submissive to the laws, and [making] them happy members of the community." Many of the state's most well known men were actively involved in benevolence movements, especially the Tuscaloosa Bible Society, and supported these claims. Future governor (1849-1853) and Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court (1837-1849) Henry W. Collier served as president of the society. Joseph Phelan, a future Speaker of the House (1839-1840) served as secretary, while the President of the nearby University of Alabama (1837-1855), Basil Manly, regularly attended meetings and provided sermons dedicated to the cause.

It is important to note that Southern benevolent societies, unlike their Northern counterparts, existed without ties to abolitionist movements. In

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32 Tuscaloosa Flag of the Union, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, February 26 and July 26, 1837.
33 Thomas and Marie Owen, History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography Volume 1 (Chicago: Clarke, 1921), 64.
34 Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, December 25, 1844.
Tuscaloosa specifically, benevolence movements operated alongside slavery with no abolitionist sentiment whatsoever. While Battle was establishing himself in Tuscaloosa as a benevolent member of the community through his philanthropic efforts he was also a major slaveholder. Despite movements in the North that revolved around abolitionist interests, the Southern reform impulse during the Antebellum period was not incompatible with chattel slavery. In fact, slaveholding was more widespread among Tuscaloosans who were active in benevolent enterprises than among the white population at large. Although the moral activists came mostly from households with fewer than ten slaves, the participation of individuals from plantation households like Battle’s was not uncommon. Even a few slave traders such as John Meek and James M. Norment were active in some of these causes.36

The majority of the individuals who participated in Tuscaloosa’s benevolent societies were wealthy, Southern-born, slave-owning men of local significance.37 Battle, like other benevolent society members, was an active slaveholder and his holdings increased substantially between 1830 and 1860, the same years he was active in Tuscaloosa’s benevolent organizations. In all the benevolent societies of the county, forty-seven Tuscaloosans were identifiable, only seven of whom were women. Of these forty-seven, thirty-five were slaveholders according to the 1830, 1840, and 1850 census records.38 In reviewing the slave ownership of the white

36 Ibid., 491.
38 Ibid., 484.
males who made up Tuscaloosa’s benevolence societies, Justice Collier (1849-1853),

president of the Alabama Bible Society in 1837 and 1844, and president of the
Tuscaloosa Bible Society from 1854 to 1855, owned 88 slaves in 1850; the Rev.
Robert M. Cunningham, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa, and
vice president of the Alabama Bible Society in 1831, possessed 22 slaves in 1830;
Baptist Pastor Basil Manly, the University of Alabama President (1837-1855), was
also a slave owner, while Alexander Perry Hogan, corresponding secretary of the
Tuscaloosa Bible Society from 1856 until secession, owned 17 slaves in 1850. Battle
consistently had some of the largest slave holdings in the county with 34 slaves in
1830, 96 slaves in 1840, 134 slaves in 1850, and 190 slaves in 1860 while still
remaining active in the city’s largest benevolent societies.39

Not only was slavery not incompatible with Southern benevolence
movements, during the Antebellum period, slavery was actually considered by many
to be a benevolent institution. For many, the concept of a benevolent slaveholder
may present itself as an inconsistency in ideology. However, for slave owners of the
time, and Battle specifically, the institution of slavery fell easily into the concept of a
benevolent society. Following this theory of benevolent slavery, Battle’s position as
a slaveholder would not have conflicted with his ethical stance as a morally minded
individual. Protestants in the South argued that the sin of slavery lay not in the

39 Fifth Census, or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, 1830 (Washington, 1832);
Compendium of the Enumeration for the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States . . . from the
Returns of the Sixth Census (Washington, 1841); The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850
(Washington, 1853); Population of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the
Eighth Census . . . (Washington, 1864).
holding of slaves, but in the mistreatment of slaves. If slaves were treated well and under the care of what Southerners considered a benevolent slave master, it was argued the institution could be a positive one. In his 1857 book *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters*, George Fitzhugh of Virginia suggested, “Southern slavery [had] become a benign and protective institution,” and further maintained that black slaves in the United States were “confessedly better off than any free laboring population in the world.” Fitzhugh’s sentiments were echoed around the South and extended through Alabama as further justification for slavery along the lines of morality. This was especially true for Tuscaloosa considering the many religiously minded individuals who also owned slaves.

Southern evangelicals believed that the slave operated as a part of the family, albeit at a much lower station than other members. While this concept may appear self-serving, the efforts of evangelicals to reconcile the institution of slavery with Christianity is important to understand in regard to Battle’s concept of morality. What made a household pious was adherence to benevolence and order so that each person in the house performed the duties to which Providence had assigned them and did so following a benevolent Christian mindset. They called the institution of slavery a “great blessing” for slaves. Most Southern evangelicals believed that if motivated by proper attitudes and behaviors, the institution of slavery could be the

40 George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters* (Richmond, VA: A. Morris Publisher, 1857) 201.
basis for a stable and moral social order following the principles of benevolence and obedience. They argued that slavery was a benevolent institution. Thus, masters should be paternal and instructive, while slaves should remain attentive and hard working so that earthly obedience equaled heavenly reward.

Protestant ministers in the South defended slavery, stating that all people who serve God should operate within the natural order of life. They argued that each individual should live a Christian life by following the duties ordained to she or he by God, in “whatever state of life it hath pleased Providence to place us.” Many cited the bible as a source for justifying slavery, citing the 1 Corinthians: “the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” Evangelicals argued that God had placed humans in such an order and subservience to one another, creating a natural and divinely ordained hierarchy to be observed and respected by those of the Christian faith, and for Southerners, this included slaves. Many Southern Evangelicals viewed slavery as just another example of order set by providence that should be respected, according to Christian principles of discipline and obedience. Southerners often pointed to specific examples of slavery in the bible as further justification for the institution.

Presbyterian Minister Devereaux Jarratt of Virginia suggested that slaveholders were:

> Warranted in their practice by the example of Abraham, Isaac, and all the ancient people of God; and not only those, but by the writings of the apostles, whose directions and extortions to bound and free incline them to believe that such stations and relations were to exist under the Gospel, otherwise

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45 1 Corinthians 12:21.
thirty or forty verses might as well be blotted out of the New Testament as being of no practical use.\textsuperscript{46}

Jarratt also argued in defense of slavery stating that, “to say there is evil in any institution, is only to say that it is human,” as all humans sin.\textsuperscript{47} It was considered the duty of Christians to work to mitigate sin within a sinful world, and therefore it was the responsibility of a slaveholder to be a benevolent master.\textsuperscript{48} Thus, Battle, and others in Tuscaloosa, found no inconsistency in participating in both slave holding and the maintenance of a benevolent society. In fact, most argued that the two reflected one another. Slavery provided the necessary delineation between those Christian (white) and Pagan (black) cultures. Slave owners saw it as their duty to educate and Christianize their slaves according to scripture. In doing so, they believed they would provide a better-suited slave, one that would respect and perform within the station of slavery to which nature ordained them.

Of a sound benevolent mindset, I suggest that Battle, through his own interest in dominating moral standards, perceived himself as one of these benevolent masters. Battle regarded slavery and his own slave holdings as maintaining the social order as God had ordained. The planter and businessman followed the tenets of order and obedience in his own life by emphasizing control in his daily activities. Illustrative of Battle’s stringency is the memoir of Virginia Tunstall Clay-Clopton (1825-1915), who became the wife of Senator Clement Clay Jr., and lived with the Battle family during her formative years at one of the Battle’s

\textsuperscript{46} Letter from Jarratt to Dromgoole, March 22, 1788, Dromgoole Papers, microfilm, reel 1, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

\textsuperscript{47} William Harper, “Memoir on Slavery,” in \textit{The Pro-Slavery Argument as Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States} (Charleston, SC: Walker Richards, 1852), 9.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 9.
plantations in Hale County and also at the townhouse in Tuscaloosa. Hoping to instill virtue in his young niece, Battle and his wife strictly limited the activities of Virginia as well as their own children. For instance, Battle’s son William (1823-1909) was denied the leisure of piano playing, while Virginia was not permitted to dance, despite her invitation to several balls. When, on one occasion, she was invited to a ball in Mobile, her father, who made short appearances in her life, accompanied her and purchased for her a dress of which she wrote extensively, noting its luxuriousness next to the “brown Holland gowns” she was made to wear by her “prudent aunt, Mrs. Battle.” In her memoir Virginia refers to her aunt Millicent as “a woman of marked domestic tastes” and a “domestic woman” and her uncle Alfred a “famous business man,” stating that they disapproved of dancing specifically among “other worldly pleasures.”

Beyond Clay-Clopton’s writings, Battle and his wife Millicent were adamant reformers in the city. The Battle’s followed the tenets of the Great Awakening as they worked to mitigate sin in the community working towards a more rigid social moral conscious. Tuscaloosa’s newspapers frequently described the Battle’s benevolent work. As part of Tuscaloosa’s Vigilance Committee in 1835, Battle worked to “decide measures against vagrants and violators of the law,” specifically those who drank or gambled, as stated in the *Alabama Intelligencer.* Likewise, his work as the vice president, and later the long standing treasurer of Tuscaloosa’s Bible Society, suggests his interest in positively influencing the community by

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supplying each family with a copy of the scriptures and single handedly providing the money to quickly erect a bible repository for the city in which to hold the bibles meant for distribution.\textsuperscript{51}

It was widely believed during the nineteenth century that a populace dedicated to virtue best served a democratic republic.\textsuperscript{52} Battle, and others in Alabama, echoed this principle in their belief that adherence to the scriptures would establish a more ordered society. Isaac Croom, a Whig legislator and plantation owner from Greene County, located just west of Tuscaloosa, proclaimed "the benefits to mankind which resulted from a knowledge of the Bible, wherever that blessed book was read, it elevated the morals of the people and made them better in all the relations of life, social and political."\textsuperscript{53} Alabama State Senator Samuel C. Oliver of neighboring Montgomery County, also a Whig, similarly praised the Bible’s influence in "moralizing the people and rendering them submissive to the laws, and [making] them happy members of the community."\textsuperscript{54} According to Oliver, one could see the consequences of disbelief in the Bible by merely studying the French Revolution, where atheism abounded with lawlessness. As these Bible proponents understood their world, religion and belief in God were important in keeping society orderly and law-abiding.

In addition to his work with the community’s benevolent societies, in 1839 Battle helped to form the Cextenary Institute. This school was described as a

\textsuperscript{51} Flag of the Union, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, February 26 and July 26, 1837.
\textsuperscript{53} Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, December 18, 1844.
\textsuperscript{54} Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, December 25, 1844.
“denominational college for the education of boys and girls located at Summerfield, Dallas County,” only seven miles east of Tuscaloosa. Controlled by the Alabama Conference Methodist Episcopal Church through a group of benevolently minded Alabamians, the school was constructed and supervised in order to further Christian servitude in the community.55 The school was notably erected in “gratitude to God for his beneficent providence, abundant grace, and expanded kingdom.”56 It intended to educated young men and women through an Evangelical teaching program that would follow a Christian mindset. For instance, in true Battle fashion, it was made unlawful “to retail or vend ardent or intoxicating liquors within two miles of said institution,” in order to maintain a disciplined Evangelical place.57

It is sufficient to suggest that the addition of money and time put forth by Battle supports his dedication to benevolence in the community and that for him, virtue and morality implied a general maintenance of self through order and obedience. The planter and businessman lived his life based on creating and conforming to the norms of society with an added level of moral conviction. Battle was vehemently against any vice, be it gambling, drinking, dancing, or even music playing in some instances.58 His stringent guidelines were widely known throughout the community. He believed that a virtuous person should lead their life according to tenants of reason, honor, sobriety, and dignity and that each had their own duty to society as well as to God. It was this strict state of benevolent mind that drove

55 Thomas and Marie Owen, History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography Volume 1 (Chicago: Clarke, 1921), 64.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
Battle toward his goal of establishing a moral hierarchy through the renovation of his estate.

The Tuscaloosa estate Battle created served as a stand in for Battle himself, reinforcing his concern for order and discipline. As noted, Battle held several plantations outside of Tuscaloosa in Hale County, but his business with the North East South West Railroad brought him to Tuscaloosa frequently. While little is known about Battle’s rural plantation homes, his residence in Tuscaloosa served as a place for business and social interactions in the city and as a place for respite and entertainment while in Tuscaloosa. Because he owned several plantations, Battle would not have been stationary at one particular location for any significant period of time. Instead, he would have traveled frequently between his many plantations and his townhome in Tuscaloosa. The Tuscaloosa residence proved important to Battle’s significance in the community as a member of benevolent organizations. Battle chose his urban Tuscaloosa home to present to the Tuscaloosa community his ideas about politics and religion.

While Battle was establishing himself as a benevolent citizen, he used his home as a way to augment control and visually project a dominating perspective on the community. Specifically Battle used his Tuscaloosa estate to display his virtuous character and to create for the community a visual hierarchy on which to judge various levels of morality. Battle’s house was in the center of town situated on the affluent Market Street (now Greensboro Avenue), as can be seen in figure 3, and immediately next to the Presbyterian church where the Battles were active members of the congregation. The Battle house served as an architectural staple in
the community and existed as the central axis point for Battle and his beliefs as it
projected outwardly to the community his concepts of race and morality. This same
interest in social position was characterized by Battle’s awareness of outward
perceptions. Caught up in the complexities of societal hierarchy in Tuscaloosa, Battle
applied concepts of social awareness to his religious devotion. He utilized visual
symbols of dress, art, and architecture as indicators not just of social status, but of
an individual’s moral compass. The Battle estate acted as a visual hierarchy for the
community where Battle put out a controlled perception of order as related to
morality. Battle carefully crafted his public persona, creating a virtuous public face
through his actions as well as through his aesthetic choices.

The nineteenth-century need to maintain one’s predetermined station in life
through display without over indulgence proved to be a balancing act at which
Battle excelled. Nineteenth-century American society generally deemed that the
wealthy would and should display their wealth, but with restraint.59 Known as one
of the wealthiest men in Tuscaloosa County and Alabama’s blackbelt, the plantation
region of Alabama, Battle maintained his status at the top of the economic hierarchy,
but did so with the utmost restraint, consciously avoiding ostentation. Battle’s home
was stately, however he did not use extravagant means to demonstrate his wealth.
The house for instance, while fine in its faux marble revetment and Greek detailing,
was in no way flamboyant. Instead, the classical lines recall the order and harmony
so valued by the Greeks and by Battle. And unlike other houses, like the nearby
Dearing-Swain House, which used the faux marble technique around the house in its

59 Joseph Manca, George Washington’s Eye: Landscape, Architecture, and Design at Mount Vernon
entirety to create a temple like structure, Battle’s decision to cover only the front facing façade and the forward facing dependency in the scored and painted stucco are suggestive of his interest in sobriety. The facade of the house provided a place for Battle to present his ideas to the community and the use of the classical orders afforded the structure a sense of subdued strength and sobriety. This same classical interest in order and restraint was carried into the home with the classically inspired furniture brought in during the 1844 renovation. Instead of opting for more elaborate pieces, Battle chose furniture to mimic the house in its strong simplicity. Even the plan of the house maintained an essential level of clarity and order with the symmetrically laid T-plan Battle constructed. This added extra space in the dining area and second floor dressing room, but did not over indulge in superfluous rooms or excessive space, keeping the design attractive, but restrained. The same sense of order was applied in the gardens where interlocking diamond shaped beds where sharply permeated with straight gravel walkways that led the visitor from one precise axis to the next, carrying the idea of order and simplicity from the interior to the exterior.

This balancing act of demonstrating both wealth and sobriety, applied both literally and figuratively, was central to Battle’s view of life and to his aesthetic choices, despite, or perhaps even because of, his wealth. The Tuscaloosa-based shop that Battle owned specialized in selling luxurious items imported from larger Southern port cities like Mobile and New Orleans. While this may appear to have worked against his moral code, Battle very much believed in the Evangelical dogma that each individual was granted a specific station in life by God, which she or he
was to pursue to her or his utmost ability. In this sense, Battle was born a wealthy white male and through diligence and obedience he maintained this position. Therefore, it was not unseemly for Battle to partake in the pursuits of the wealthy class to which he belonged, so long as he maintained order and obedience. The construction and renovation of his estate was Battle’s way of demonstrating this.

Battle existed as somewhat of an anomaly as a benevolent society member, slave owner, and Greek Revival home owner. His choice to utilize Greek Revival architecture is important to understanding his unique situation. Indeed, most Greek Revival home owners in Tuscaloosa during this period were slave owners. The style was almost synonymous with slave owning in the area. Meanwhile, the majority of those individuals participating in benevolent societies in Tuscaloosa were also slave owners. However, as far as can be traced, none of these morally conscious individuals who actively participated in Tuscaloosa’s benevolent societies lived in Greek Revival homes, with the exception of Battle. So while Battle, and other slave owners lived in Greek Revival houses, none of the benevolently active Tuscaloosans, albeit slave owners, lived in Greek Revival homes. Battle existed as an inconsistency in Tuscaloosa, both a benevolent member and a Greek Revival home owner. And thus the vernacular Greek Revival renovation to his home would have communicated quite specific ideas about Battle’s belief system.

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60 Note that the classically inspired University President’s Mansion was constructed under the supervision of Basil Manly, Baptist minister and University of Alabama president from 1837-1855. Manly was the first to live in the President’s mansion and was also an owner of a small number of slaves that he leased to individuals in the community. However, this was not his primary residence, and there is no record of the style of his primary residence.
Considering Battle’s status as a benevolently minded slave owner who constructed and occupied a Greek Revival home, I argue that Battle used his classically inspired estate to create a visual hierarchy of morality. Clearly, Battle was actively involved in Tuscaloosa’s benevolent movements and sought to mitigate sin in the community. He also practiced a rigid level of morality in his own life. Battle employed restraint in his life as well as in his home, exercising control through moderation. It was his desire to achieve for himself a higher moral status, and this influenced his Greek Revival renovation. He sought to create a public face for himself in Tuscaloosa through these nineteenth-century concepts of morality, situating his home as a social symbol for himself in the community. The Greek Revival estate established a clear distinction of moral superiority based upon concepts of order that mitigated Protestant belief. In the renovation he used fine materials, or in the case of the façade an illusion to fine materials, and an ordered composition recalling the fashionable and well-respected culture of Greece. This controlled level of artistic application was important for displaying Battle’s message of hierarchy and was easily suited to the Greek Revival style. The strict order present in the structure subtly suggested the order of nature.

As an artistic program, the Battle estate worked to maintain and secure Battle’s position within Tuscaloosa’s social hierarchy. The hierarchy put in place by Tuscaloosa’s urban elite was not merely a construct of the aristocracy, but according to their beliefs it was an innate part of God’s plan for humanity. This theory, constructed by the social elite, conveniently situated Battle among the select privileged few based on his heightened level of morality and station as a wealthy
white male. The inherent symmetry, balance, and attention to geometry present in the Greek style reflects Battle’s attention to the order and obedience he took from his religion and applied more generally to his life. His home proved to be an architectural canvas on which to exercise the control he so desired. This work of art was displayed on a public scale, facing outward in the community, on one of its most well traversed streets, and located just next to his church, and just blocks from the state’s capitol. The Battle home and gardens were routinely used as a meeting space for members of the high society in Tuscaloosa. Memoirs reveal that Battle used his estate for business meetings while Millicent and Battle received social calls there as well.61 Clearly the great majority of the public would have seen and admired Battle’s house and its Greek Revival renovation, noting the emphasis on symmetry and sobriety, and thus aligned Battle and his family with these characteristics. In this way, Battle’s estate becomes an artistic program for Battle to communicate publically his conceptual hierarchy.

The public façade of the main house was clear in its use of the Greek Revival to provide a sense of order for the community at large, but the interior would have been accessible only to a specific set of individuals invited into the Battle home, creating a tangible division of space between differing levels of morality and status. Battle was acutely aware of his position in the city, and he used art as well as his architecture to reflect a proper image of he and his family. The interior of the home continues the use of order with its symmetrical T plan. Likewise, the new classically inspired furniture suggests the role that the Battle home played in the creation of a

virtuous identity for Battle and his family. The strong lines of the Empire style present in the Battle home demonstrated the refinement of the upper class necessary for situating the house and family at the top of the established hierarchy, maintaining the heavy massing and ordered composition reflected in the Greek Revival exterior. The furniture, like the architecture, suggested the Greek influence of order, harmony, and idealism that fueled Battle’s pursuits in the community. Likewise, the classical elements implied a subtle dominance, steeped in classical philosophy that revered an innate hierarchy designed by nature, as the next chapter explores. In this way the furniture brought into Battle’s townhouse served as pairing pieces that when viewed alongside the newly renovated architecture helped to extend the message of dominance and hierarchy from exterior to interior.

Extending the message of restrained wealth, the Battle house interior was extensively decorated with locally made plasterwork (fig. 8 and 9.). While the exterior of the structure communicated to the outside world a strict adherence to order and obedience, the inside, open only to the most morally sound of the social elite, those whom Battle considered friends, added yet another rung to the hierarchy. The delicate plaster molding inside the Battle house depicting vegetal motifs is a softened addition to the austere façade and is suggestive of the hierarchy as well. The strong outer façade erects a barrier between the morally heightened Battle family and the rest of Tuscaloosa society. Once inside the structure, the aesthetic is softened. The decorative plasterwork works to alleviate the severity of the space for those allowed into the home who were already morally superior. While the plasterwork softens the interior, it is in no way ostentatious. Instead, the
vegetal motif works to further the balance between wealth and order, refinement and restraint. Through the totality of his designed artistic program and utilization of the ordered classical style, Battle was able to visually situate himself as an integral part of the morally and socially elite class in Tuscaloosa, creating a balancing act and fixing himself at the top of the hierarchy.
Chapter Three - The Battle House, Slavery Justification, and the Development of a Racial Hierarchy

While the Battle house acted as a visual symbol of morality through its adherence to order and clarity in the Greek Revival renovation, Alfred Battle also used his house to send a message regarding race. As noted in chapter 2, Battle was an anomaly in Tuscaloosa as a benevolently minded slave owner living in a Greek Revival home. His use of classical architecture suggested an alliance between Greek philosophy and the classical justifications that could be applied to defend an institution faltering under questionable support from the Union. The Greek motifs at the Battle house worked to present slavery as a natural, even benevolent, institution. In support of changing natural right theory in the South as well as shifting justifications for slavery, the Battle house stood as testament to Battle’s slave owning interests while maintaining his concern with order and clarity as it visibly separated the black and white races. It is my suggestion that the Battle house, through its Greek Revival renovation, worked to defend the Battle’s interests by establishing slavery as a benevolent institution and creating a hierarchy of race in the Tuscaloosa community.

In order to understand the Battle house and its renovation fully, it is important to view Battle’s home as an extension of his belief system and thus as a means of control. The planter and businessman constructed his home in the heart of
the city as a representation of himself when he was away and as a public symbol to speak to the community at large. While the Greek Revival was popular in Tuscaloosa, there is no indication that any other individuals active in benevolent movements utilized Greek motifs in their architectural pursuits besides Battle. Instead, the Gothic and Italianate styles proved more popular among those participants in benevolent societies. Battle’s interest in the Greek Revival sets him apart as a benevolently minded slave owner interested in preserving the institution of slavery and intent on employing architecture as a tool in defense of a questionable practice.

Battle was a defender of slavery, but also would have been adamantly opposed to secession. He was a businessman and practically minded. His success in planting as well as other business ventures relied on Northern demand. Even without Northern patrons, the city of Tuscaloosa operated as a major shipping port between the Deep South and places farther North. Based more on commerce than on planting, Tuscaloosa relied financially upon a secure state of the Union. The need to justify the institution of slavery proved ever more important as the tension in the country between the North and South continued to rise. Those who wished to remain as one country while still maintaining slavery faced a difficult battle in comparison to those Southerners less interested in preserving the Union. For Battle his estate proved vital in the defense of his moral convictions, slavery, as well as his business pursuits and general welfare.

To better understand how Battle’s house acted out a visual racial hierarchy, the classical motifs employed in the 1844 renovation must be fully examined. The
inherent symmetry, balance, and attention to geometric design present in the Greek style suggests his attention to the order and obedience he gleaned from his religion and applied more generally to his life. The heavy massing applied to the exterior of the Battle house as well as its strong emphasis on horizontality, imply the intended dominance of the space as it literally overpowers the landscape and the public’s view from the street. The combination of this heavy massing and horizontality with the severe lines of the façade project Battle’s strong presence and the intended message of his renovated house. Likewise, the structure’s inherent symmetry is suggestive of the control Battle sought in his daily life. There are no superfluous details. The house was renovated according to a rational mindset, employing strong lines and a repetition of classical architectural motifs in order to create a harmonious and regimented structure that suggested the concept of control to the community. This symmetry reflects the Greek need for order, both in their structures and in philosophy. In this way classical architecture and texts are tied together through the concepts of logic and dominance. Aristotle, student of Plato, lectured on both of these principles extensively and they are clearly present in classical as well as Greek Revival architecture. In employing the Greek Revival style, Battle was able to comment on the necessity of obedience and order that more broadly related to slavery and race relations in Tuscaloosa as related to classical ideals.

It is no surprise that Battle’s 1844 renovation mimicked these Greek temple forms, stressing the classical emphasis on order. The Greek Revival style was prevalent in Tuscaloosa in statehouses, university buildings, and private homes.
However, Battle created for himself a slightly different connection with Greek
inspired design. Cognizant of the religious connection with order, obedience, and
divine providence, Battle applied this classical harmonic balance to his Antebellum
home in order to visually substantiate his views on race and religion for the
community and for himself. Battle used his house and the Greek Revival renovation
as a way to visually exercise control. He was well aware that the public would
admire his house and its Greek Revival renovation considering its prime location on
one of the wealthiest streets in the area and situated next door to his church. Battle
intended for the community to note the emphasis on symmetry and sobriety as it
was part of the public landscape in the center of Tuscaloosa and to be instructed by
it.

With order, harmony, and ideal proportions as tenets of the classical style.
Battle, as well as other Tuscaloosans, would have been aware of this Greek
adherence to order and symmetry and its connection to classical thought. New
research was constantly published in regard to contemporaneous archeological digs
of ancient classical areas. These digs unearthed previously hidden material that gave
further insight to classical building tradition and sparked a fad of pamphlets and
building guides for home owners to mimic in their own structures. Because of this,
Greek culture was immensely popular during the Antebellum period, especially in
the South. Southerners, while interested in what was fashionable, would have
picked up on the subtle messages of Battle's Greek Revival renovation.

In ancient Greece, temples were constructed using a strict 2:1 ratio in order
to ensure perfect proportions centered on order and symmetry. The distance
between the columns would be used to determine the length and width of the
temple stylobate for example, creating a modular system so that one module or unit
of measure could determine the correct and ideal proportions of the entire
building. The Temple of Zeus, constructed in the Doric order by Libion at Olympia
(c. 470-457 BCE) employs this set of proportions. The axes of the columns are each
sixteen feet apart, which determines the width between triglyphs at eight feet apart,
the headspouts four feet in distance, and the tiles, which are two feet apart. Iktinos
and Kallikrates’ famous Parthenon from the Athenian Acropolis (c. 447-438 BCE)
employed a different set of proportions to achieve an unprecedented level of
perfection. At the Parthenon, the ratio strays from the typical 2:1 relationship in
order to create a more elongated structure. The new module existed according to
the formula x=2y+1. Using this formula, the temple boasts eight columns on the
façade and seventeen on the side, instead of the normal sixteen that would have
correlated with the earlier 2:1 ratio. Although the Pantheon varied the modular
canon, both temples employed specific formulas based on measurements to create
the ideal Greek space.

Effectively, through the use of architecture, Battle was able to use these sense
of the classical ideal to clearly articulate separate spaces for the black race and
white culture. While those white individuals interacting within the Greek inspired
structure represented the moral elite, a clear separation was created along the lines
of race and superiority both in Tuscaloosa and at the Battle estate. It was in his

63 Ibid, 29.
home that he entertained and received business calls, but while the house existed as a part of white society, it was also the workspace for Battle’s slaves who would have served inside the house. While members of the black race did participate intimately in the function of the Battle household, they did so at a significantly lesser station. Particularly, pious white upper-class individuals were awarded the luxury of meeting inside the house, yet the black population existed inside the walls only to serve those deemed morally and racially superior to themselves. This hierarchy was most visually reinforced through the juxtaposition of the refined faux marble revetment of the main house with the more vulgar vernacular wooden structures meant for slave work and inhabitation.

While on one hand the slave quarters are located behind the house (fig. 10), while the finely finished garden shed and green house face the street (fig. 19), there seems to be more ideas at play. The gardens for instance wrap around the entirety of the estate with well-planned gravel paths circumventing the property even on to the backside. Visitors who would have visited the gardens would have seen the structures and easily made the distinction between the nicer, newer, and classically inspired structures in comparison to the unrenovated and plain slave quarters and kitchen. Surely the structures would have stuck out among the wash of meticulously planned greenery and the faux marble stuccoed structures. The simple construction of the strictly black spaces seen alongside the magnificent dwelling in which those enslaved persons served, created a sharp contrast meant to send a message.

Intimately linked with the inferior spaces that were reserved for them, the individuals Battle enslaved would have been reminded visually each day of their
subservient status upon entering the big house. This juxtaposition of materials worked to instill a level of inherent black inferiority at the estate. The difference in the structures visually suggested that the black individuals serving Battle were subservient in status when compared to the elevated station of Battle and others in his elite position. This created a hierarchical system that employed architecture as a visual tool meant to remind everyone, white and black, of the supposed natural and ordained subservient status of black people, situating Battle morally and racially at the top of the hierarchy.

In this way the architecture served as a clear hierarchical tool for Battle. Consider the sophistication of the main house, furniture, and gardens that black slaves were forced to constantly admire, and upkeep, but not enjoy. A slave might be instructed to dust, tend to, or even build aspects of the refined Greek Revival estate, but would never reap the benefit of the well maintained property. These racial lines may appear subtle or glossed over today, but when considering the constant interaction between the slave population and all they were kept from, the art and architecture commissioned by Battle served as a clear visual reminder for those in his house of the stark differences not just in levels of morality, but between blacks and whites as well. The ordered and rigid grandeur of the Greek Revival style when compared to the vernacular structures occupied by Battle’s slaves delivers a poignant message. It served both as a literal and figural separation between the races and as a purposeful and visible delineation. Architecture was the tool separating white and black, situating white Western culture in a place of power and control over the visibly subservient slaves.
The classical style complemented Battle’s beliefs as it explicitly tied together concepts of slavery justification, benevolence, and natural right, all with regard to classical thought and practice. Intrinsic to understanding slavery and nineteenth-century concepts of race are the types of justifications put forth by those in favor of the institution of slavery. The defense of slavery in America took many forms, however, historians point to the 1830s as the point at which a clear shift from one type of justification to another took place. The change in slavery defense is marked by a shift from the idea of slavery as a necessary, but evil institution to the defense of it as a positive good. The concept of slavery as a necessary evil was central to the idea of slavery as an essential part of American life. With this defense, supporters argued that while they believed the enslavement of Africans to be a sinful practice, they found no convenient alternative to slavery. Therefore, many in the South saw abolition as an impossibility.

Popular in the mid-nineteenth century, an alternative theory suggested that slavery was not wrong. Instead, slavery was supported as part of a natural scheme that was benevolent in nature known as the positive good theory. This shift from one justification to another occurred in the 1830s following abolitionists’ push for full emancipation that spurred Southerners to merge all defenses of slavery under the single theory of the positive good. Inspired by early Northern benevolent movements that sought to raise a community’s collective morality, Southerners keenly applied popular progressive sentiment to their justifications for slavery, making a case for it as a positive and morally beneficial institution that benefited the

slave, slaveholder, and white community in multiple ways. With this argument, the justification clearly shifted from slavery as an evil construct, to a positive and naturally occurring institution. Southerners shed any connection between slavery and evil during and after this 1830s shift, promoting the institution as one ordained by the Lord as a natural phenomenon that should be upheld to promote the morality of the community in the best interest of all concerned parties.

The theory of a shift in slavery justification has been well established in scholarship about the Antebellum period, however arguments remain as to why this shift occurred. Scholars have recently reasoned that the shift in slavery justification stemmed from a simultaneous shift in natural right theory.65 In this premise, Antebellum Southerners abandoned modern egalitarian concepts of natural right coined by John Locke and promoted by Thomas Jefferson in favor of a return to classical natural right supported by ancient Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and most adherently, Aristotle. Those defending slavery in the South in the 1830’s and beyond began to abandon concepts of modern natural right, just as they abandoned justifications of slavery as a necessary evil, and instead applied classical natural right theory to facilitate the new argument for a positive good slavery defense.

Natural law exists as a form of higher law, emanating from nature or a higher power that mitigates the framework for society, laws, and a collective morality. According to the classical theory of natural right, human nature is a social and political animal that can gain happiness only when virtue of mind and character are attained. This develops through honing the self, seeking to elevate oneself to the

65 Ibid.,19.
supreme ideal of happiness. On the other hand, egalitarian natural right coined by Thomas Hobbes, expounded upon by John Locke and demonstrated by Thomas Jefferson, rejects the classical natural right and revolves most importantly around the concept of self-preservation, and the idea that human beings create social contracts in order to self-preserve. As Hobbes stated, the point of social justice was “not a duty but a right ... the fundamental and inalienable right of self-preservation.”  

Hobbes argued that concepts of natural right as they were known in the classical world were vain, that human beings were actually selfish creatures who could never agree on what constituted proper wisdom, virtue or character. Instead, he argued that, “every man is desirous of what is good for him, and shuns what is evil, but chiefly the chiefest of natural evils which is death.” From there Hobbes concluded that no man should be elevated above another, that all men die and thus fear death, so that all men are created equal. It was from this concept that theories of modern natural right flow, and upon which men like Locke and Jefferson expounded.

In connection with slavery, the concept of modern natural right, with its emphasis on self-preservation, worked alongside the idea of slavery as a necessary evil. Following Jefferson’s own argument, many argued that slavery should be defended in order to preserve white society. Jefferson’s desire for preservation went so far as for him to compare the possible emancipation of slavery to the expulsion of

67 Ibid.
the Moors from Spain, where upon facing a war between the races, Jefferson feared the white population would be wiped out.68 This concept of slavery as a form of self-preservation formed according to modern natural right theories and gave precedence for America's defense of slavery as an indispensable institution, albeit a necessary evil.

However, following the Great Awakening, and the progressive benevolent movements it produced, slavery became a strictly Southern issue, that could no longer be defended along the lines of self-preservation.69 Realizing the changing culture of the nation and its increasingly negative regard toward slavery, Southern defenders began rejecting Hobbes's theories of modern natural right in favor of the ancient classical paradigm. Focusing on the classical natural right instituted by Socrates and expounded upon by Plato and Aristotle, defenders of slavery relied on these classical philosophers' understanding of natural right to propel the positive good defense for slavery justification. In contrast to Hobbes notion that man was a selfish entity, classical philosophers deemed human nature as one that ultimately sought happiness, which could be found only in attaining a full understanding of life within society. Three main points made up the understanding of classical natural right: first, that nature bestows the hierarchy - it is natural and not artificially constructed. Second, the hierarchy of humankind is based upon each individual's intellect, virtue and character. Lastly, wisdom is indicative of superiority in human

69 While there are several phases or waves that characterize the Great Awakening, this thesis refers most specifically to the period in America from 1830-1860 where those of the social elite acted through reform programs to remedy the sins of the self and the community.
nature and that the wise should rule those inferior to them. It is important to note that in classical philosophy, wisdom reigned supreme over brute strength, so that the wise should always rule even the strongest whose intellect was inferior.\footnote{Chad Vanderford, “Proslavery Professors: Classic Natural Right and the Positive Good Argument in Antebellum Virginia,” \textit{Civil War History} 55 (2009): 31.}

Of these philosophers, Aristotle appears to have been the most influential on Southern defenders of slavery. Aristotle based the premise of his philosophical arguments on the \textit{telos}, the essential Greek goal for the flourishing of mankind, which worked toward the perfection of human nature. It is in finding and fulfilling the \textit{telos} that Aristotle believed human nature could achieve full happiness, and this was accomplished through an individual’s development of wisdom, virtue, and character. Many in the South relied on Aristotelian philosophy as a new branch that replaced egalitarian natural right. Southerners exchanged Hobbes fear of death and need for self-preservation with a collective goal, a \textit{telos} for human kind.

Through the application of classical philosophy the positive good theory was able to spread in the South as a justification of slavery. With a common \textit{telos} for mankind, based upon nature’s providence, Aristotle’s philosophy of natural right based on classical paradigms suggested a level of morality necessary for society. While Hobbes’ modern natural right saw humans as inherently selfish creatures who created social contracts only to avoid death, classical thought promoted a notion of natural law that complemented the benevolent interests of the Antebellum era. This interest in the \textit{telos} coupled with concepts of a higher natural law reinforced the same benevolent ideas spawned by the Great Awakening in which
Southern slave owners like Battle were invested. Just as Aristotle believed in a perfect society achieved through attainment of the *telos*, those benevolently conscious individuals of the South’s religious revival movements created societies bent on perfecting the community by remedying vice. Likewise, Aristotle’s attention to honing the self through development of wisdom, virtue, and character is reflected in Southerners’ interest in bettering the self and the community as they created institutions meant to remedy sin in order to ensure more obedient and morally sound members of the collective community.

The positive good justification for slavery rested on the claim that slavery was natural and designated by a higher power, just as Aristotle had suggested. In this vein, slavery was considered not only natural, but just and beneficial for the slave as well as the slave owner and the community at large, because for the ancients, the wise should lead those of inferior intelligence, as only the former held the wisdom necessary to obtain for the latter their *telos*. Aristotle argued that having achieved their *telos*, the wisest members of society were to rule the inferior, stating, “nature has clearly designed some men for freedom and others for slavery: and with respect to the latter, slavery is both just and beneficial.” This short quotation from Aristotle neatly ties classical thought to Antebellum slavery justification through a benevolently minded positive good argument.

The key to the positive good justification for slavery was the concept that the institution positively promoted the interests of the slave, the slave owner, and the community simultaneously, so that each faction was accounted for in the argument.

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for slavery as a part of the larger benevolent movement. In writings and speeches during the late Antebellum period, Southerners applied this theory of Classical natural right in their defense of slavery.\textsuperscript{72} In Aristotle’s opinion, slaves and slave owners operated in a form of “despotic partnership” where each entity helped the other achieve a larger goal; the slave owner was granted the leisure to pursue higher-minded goals, and the slave would benefit from the benevolence of the master to achieve the \textit{telos}.\textsuperscript{73} Aristotle explained this by stating:

That which can foresee with the mind is the naturally ruling and the naturally mastering element, while that which can do these things with the body is the naturally ruled and slave; hence the same thing is advantageous for the master and slave.\textsuperscript{74}

Regarding the concept of inferiority among people, it is difficult to understand how Aristotle might have characterized those unfit to rule themselves. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a Christian philosopher interested in the classical theory proposed by philosophers like Aristotle suggested that Aristotle’s text referred to “those who are barbarians absolutely,” as the only form of just and natural slavery and considered the enslavement of any non barbaric people an unnatural phenomenon.\textsuperscript{75} Therefore, the insistence upon an inferior black race proved essential to the argument for slavery as a benevolent institution following classical ideology.

\textsuperscript{73} Aristotle, \textit{Politics} I.5, 645a29 trans. Benjamin Joett.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 645a29.
In order to justify slavery in benevolent and classical terms, Southerners had to promote the institution as positive for the slave. To do this, Southerners sought to prove the inferiority of the black race. Many Southerners turned to the concept of religion to denote levels of civility between the races. Steeped in the concept of the black race as inferior and comforted by their own stewardship, Southerners baptized their slaves in order to elevate in their mind the morality of a pagan and barbaric people. Pointing to the slave as pagan, slave owners could argue that their benevolent mission to Christianize their slaves was part of their Christian duty, thus continuing the idea of slavery as a positive good. While the benevolent slave master of the late nineteenth century was inclined to Christianize his slaves, this had not always been the case. In earlier years slave owners did not baptize their slaves and in some cases forbid slaves from attending church, fearing that with the “Christianizing of the negro, by proffering to him even meager crumbs of religious instruction, which were prerequisite to baptism, the colonist was making the negro just so much like himself.”

However, following the Great Awakening, Southerners moved by the religious zeal and progressivism of the time began to Christianize their slaves. For Southerners, the Christianizing of slaves and the benevolent institution of slavery denied the early eighteenth-century connection between slavery and sin and instead suggested a dedication to the ideals of Christian duty.

Some theologians concerned with the dichotomy between slavery and the concept of divine brotherhood attempted to resolve possible contradictions by noting that the institution was an enslavement of the body and not the soul.

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Following this moralizing concept, slave owners used the bible itself as justification for the continued presence of slavery. In order to illustrate the benevolence of chattel slavery in the South, Southerners worked to legitimize the institution by inculcating Christian principles in both masters and slaves. Using biblical sanctions and examples they promoted slavery as an institution that was benevolent, natural, and supported by God. Referencing the Hebrews as a prime example, they pointed out the fact that Abraham owned slaves of another race and suggested that because of this blacks were of an inferior race, and therefore under the “curse of slavery.”  

Southerners argued that God had intentionally set different Orders and Degrees of Men in the World and that any inclination of equality sought to invert the Order that God had set. This Christian defense of slavery further enforced the classical concept of slavery as a natural institution that was ordained by a higher power.

So, while Alfred Battle’s dedication to benevolence movements and commitment to contributing to an elevated level of morality in his community appears to have conflicted with his mass accumulation of slaves, Reverend Amos Phelps noted that, “the bondsman was inwardly free and spiritually equal to his master, but in the external he was mere chattel,” because, the spirit of all individuals were in union with God, however, the body was able to sin and therefore was susceptible to the sins of slavery. 

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78 Idib., 20.
Fundamentally based on the supposed natural inferiority of the black race, the positive good argument justified for Southerners the idea that slaves required direction and guidance to ensure their own morality and helped situate slavery as a positive good for those the institution enslaved. To do this, Southern supporters pointed to the alleged inherent ignorance of the slave as a justification for slavery as a positive good. Considering Southerners’ conception about people of African descent as a barbarous and morally and intellectually unfit for freedom, a case according to the classics could easily be made. Dr. Josiah Nott (1804-1873), a nineteenth-century Alabama physician and surgeon, worked to establish the inferiority of those with black skin. An important figure in Alabama who helped to bring the medical program to the University of Alabama as well as secure a cure for yellow fever associating the insect as a vector for the disease, Nott was also a strong promoter and practitioner of polygenesis, the concept of whites and blacks as separate species. Nott argued in his research that blacks and whites were classified not just as different races, but as two distinct species separate from one another and that the human brain was an organ that could be perfected through specialized eugenics. Seeking such perfection, he believed that there were certain faults that deemed the black brain inferior in all aspects, particularly morally and intellectually. Nott suggested that the Caucasian race had always been superior and that the inferiority of those with black skin would eventually die out, arguing that:

The brain of the negro, as I have stated, is, according to the positive measurements, smaller than the Caucasian by a full tenth; and this deficiency exists particularly in the anterior portion of the brain, which is thought to be the seat of the higher faculties. History and observation both teach that in accordance with this defective organization, the Mongol, the Malay, the
Indian and the Negro are now and have been in all ages and all places, inferior to the Caucasian.80

In addition to his role at the University, Nott was also a slaveholder in his own right, and through his research he sought to establish the idea of slavery as a positive good in accordance with classical concepts of intellectual superiority as validation for enslavement of a presumed lesser people. He believed that people with black skin were endowed by nature “with an inferior organization, and all the power of earth can not elevate them above their destiny.”81 Nott’s research helped to cement the notion of black inferiority and therefore enabled white Southerners, especially local Tuscaloosans, to make arguments for the positive effect of slavery for a race that was deemed naturally inferior. Curiously enough, on the University of Alabama campus today, Nott’s name appears on his own building, Nott Hall, dedicated to his efforts in the medical field.

With this concept of black inferiority in place, white slavery supporters further promoted the institution for its ability to elevate the subsidiary slave out of a barbaric state. In 1848 South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun argued before the Senate in the defense of slavery in regard to the enslavement of Africans that, “never before [had] the black race of Central Africa from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually.”82 Southerners who promoted this defense claimed

81 Ibid., 91.
respect for the humanity of those they saw as inferior. Further perpetuating the notion of the black slave as inferior to ruling white society, some Southerners argued that slaves should be thankful to those who had delivered them from what was deemed a less civilized lifestyle in Africa where they were subject to lust and passion. Many Southerners felt Southern slavery had brought Africans out of a “state of brutality, wretchedness, and misery,” and referred to the South as the “land of light, humanity and Christian knowledge.” They called the institution of slavery a “great blessing” for slaves.

Slave owners also argued not just for slavery’s work in the advancement of the slave, but also for their general happiness within the institution and many slavery supporters pointed to growing birth rates in slave populations as signs of their satisfaction with enslavement. Despite the official banishment of the slave trade in 1809, slave trading continued illegally, however, after the Revolutionary War it was estimated that only twenty percent of the black population in the United States was born in Africa and by 1860 that number dropped to one percent. With the United States importing lower numbers of slaves from Africa, but still maintaining large slave populations, reproduction and a growing birth rate among the enslaved kept numbers high. In fact, the birth rate of enslaved people in the United States was comparatively higher than other countries that imported a majority of their slaves. Southerners used this high birth rate as indication that

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slaves were happy with their station in life, noting that “this people are so
domesticated, or so kindly treated by their masters, and their situations so
improved, that an entire host of abolitionists can not excite one among twenty to
insurrection." Others like Alabama Senator William Smith stated, “there were few
people so very happy, hearty, and well satisfied with their condition, as the Southern
negro,” in order to further perpetuate the notion of slavery as beneficial for the
slave.\(^{85}\)

Southerners also argued that in comparison to Northern or European wage
labor, slavery was preferable. Challenging opposition from abolitionists in the
North, they argued that with the institution of slavery, operating as a benevolent
movement that elevated the slave morally and physically, slave labor was far better
in comparison to wage labor in the North, which offered abysmal conditions and
wages that were inefficient to sustain life. In comparison, supporters of the
institution argued that slaves were fed, clothed, given medical treatment, treated
kindly, and were happier than those working in the industrial North. Southerners
also contested the European abolitionists who called for Southern emancipation,
stating that the “unlaboring people of Europe” were inclined to be against any kind
of labor system, and that the benevolent institution encouraged a morality based
labor that would eliminate the “utter enervation, sluggishness, and shame of body
and mind alike” that characterized those from Europe.\(^{86}\)

Most Southern evangelicals believed that if motivated by proper attitudes

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 481-483.
and behavior, the institution of slavery could serve as the basis for a stable and moral social order following the principles of benevolence and obedience. A pious household hinged on adherence to discipline. Family members were to perform the duties to which Providence had assigned them while following a benevolent Christian mindset. Thus in this benevolent model, slave masters were to be paternal and instructive, while slaves remained attentive and hard working so that earthly obedience equaled heavenly reward. Reinforcing the concept of benevolence and slavery, Minister Stith Mead preached for “servants to be obedient to the men who are your master; and ye masters do the same things unto them who are your servants forbearing threatening knowing there is one who is your Master in Heaven.”

Thus according to the mindset of the day, each faction worked according to their place in society, fulfilling their duty through order and obedience.

In order to further this concept of a supposed benevolent institution that claimed to support the interest of the slave, slave owner, and community, the addition of a paternal slave master was introduced as a way to further substantiate the institution as positive, and Battle certainly considered himself in this regard. Southerners put forth the idea of a benevolent and paternal slave master who treated the supposedly ignorant slave as a child to be taught. The slave master, the positive good defense argued, was to be like a father to a child, so that as one South Carolina planter claimed, “a master may be in an important sense the guardian and

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even the father of his slaves.” In this sense, Southerners denounced the negative images typically conjured when imagining a slave owner, instead promoting slavery as something positive in the life of a slave, where the enslaved individual was taken care of by morally conscious slave owners. In this positive good model the slave master provided medical care, food, and clothing for the slave and in some Southerner’s opinions, “no better security has ever yet been devised by man for the safety of man, and for the proper observance of humane laws by the citizen, than that given by the Southern slave holder, in the continual presence of their leading interest.” As Southerners argued, a slave owner was benevolent for the slave’s sake, but also in a logical and economical sense that protected his own interests and investments.

Likewise, an argument based on the Evangelical principles of order and obedience suggested that the relationship between a master and his slave was a familial matter, much like the relationship between a husband and wife or parent and child where each faction is expected to perform “the duties of their several stations...diligently and faithfully.” In fact, it was very common for the slave to be referred to as part of the family in the nineteenth century. A prayer found in the Virginia Religious Magazine called A Prayer for Family read, “we beseech thee to bless us as a family; whether we preside over it, or belong to it as children, sojourners, or servants, may we all be found in faithful discharge of our duty to thee,

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89 Ibid., 9.
and to each other!" Thus slaves were easily compared to children and seen as individuals who could not look after themselves. In defense of slavery Southerners would often apply this child like defense suggesting that it would be a violation to emancipate slaves with out means of prospect for their support, noting that it would be little short of driving young children away to fend for themselves. Like children, slaves had to be guided and disciplined, and in fact Evangelicals believed that a good master should chastise as well as reward. Masters who punished their slaves according to just measures were seen as teachers who were demonstrating their obedience to God.

In the face of rising abolitionist movements, Battle and those like him were forced to convince the North of the merits of slavery, and in Battle’s case the previously mentioned three-part strategy was used for justification. With biblical and paternalistic arguments situating slavery as beneficial to the slave through comparisons of slaves with children coupled with their lack of Christianity, the first tenet of the three-pronged strategy was fulfilled. In order to satisfy the second principle, it was argued that slavery was good for the slave owner, and that like the Greeks, through slavery the Southerner slaveholder was afforded the leisure to achieve a higher telos and thus dedicate himself to further perfecting himself and society. Thirdly, slavery was positioned as a positive for those in the community as Tuscaloosa particularly struggled with race relations during the Antebellum period.

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91 “The Virginia Religious Magazine,” 1 no. 2 (1805): 11.
92 Minutes of the Roanoak [sic] District Association (Pittsylvania County), June, 1790 (Hillborough, VA: Printed by R. Ferguson), 39.
93 John A. Auping, Religion and Social Justice: The Case of Christianity and the Abolition of Slavery in America (Austin, TX: The University of Texas, 1994), 23.
This third and final tenet of the three-part argument was communicated in light of a
general fear of a free black race, according to social stratification and with
comparisons of slavery and wage labor.

Fear of a free black population motivated Tuscaloosans and other
Southerners to continue to promote slavery as a positive institution. During the
early part of the nineteenth century, the city of Tuscaloosa tolerated a fair amount in
the way of religion, drinking, gambling and even opinions on slavery. However,
beginning in the late 1820’s and until the Civil War, the city began to take a more
conservative stance in comparison to earlier years. This followed a regional trend in
the South regarding slavery specifically.94 As anti-slavery sentiment increased
nationally, the South began to develop new ways of controlling race relations and
defending the institution of slavery. In the 1820’s, newspapers began to run more
stories of disobedient slaves including arrests and runaways.95 In 1827 prominent
white members of Tuscaloosa society met to protest idle slaves in the community.96
These protesters complained that they were “annoyed” that slaves were seen on
their own time while being leased out by their masters. Following a meeting to
discuss the matter, town authorities began requiring citizens and slaveholders to be
diligent in reporting any slave “going at large or hiring his or her own time.”97

94 John Quist, “Slaveholding Operative of the Benevolent Empire: Bible, Tract, and Sunday School
95 Tuscaloosa Chronicle, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, October 20, 1827.
96 Ibid.
97 John Quist, “Slaveholding Operative of the Benevolent Empire: Bible, Tract, and Sunday School
In the following years, laws related to slaves’ lives in the Tuscaloosa community continued to tighten. For example, in 1831 a law was passed prohibiting the sale of intoxicants to slaves without consent from the slave master. A fine of twenty dollars would be inflicted on the merchant and a penalty of “not less than fifteen stripes across the bare back” would meet the slave in question. The following year the law was bolstered by an additional five lashes and an overnight stay in the guardhouse coupled with the loss of a liquor license for the merchant. In response to fears of insurgence and conspiracy following slave revolts led by individuals like Denmark Vessey in 1822 and Nat Turner in 1831, Tuscaloosa ordered further restrictions due to increased fear of something similar in the local community. In 1831, Tuscaloosa made a law stating that no free black was to trade with any slave. The punishment would result in “thirty-nine lashes well laid on” for the participating unenslaved party. In 1836 slave codes were tightened in Tuscaloosa. A 9:00 p.m. curfew was set for slaves following a ringing bell. Any slave found wandering without written permission from his or her master would receive “any number of lashings not exceeding ten,” although this number rose to twenty and then thirty in subsequent years. In 1839, Tuscaloosa formed a patrol of able bodied white men in the community who would guard “unlawful traffic of slaves” as well as “visit all negro quarters, all places suspected of entertaining unlawful assemblies of slaves, or other disorderly persons.” Laws regarding slavery

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98 Ibid., 484.
100 Flag of the Union, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, April 2, 1836.
101 Flag of the Union, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, August 28, 1839.
continued to tighten as slave debates raged around the country in the decades before the Civil War.

The rising tensions regarding race relations in the South were attributed to the massive traction gained by abolitionists during the 1830’s, located especially in the North. With the 1833 creation of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia, abolition sentiment began to grow. In 1835 co-founder of the society, William Lloyd Garrison, began a mass mailing campaign of abolitionist propaganda to the South. This mail campaign, known as the Mail Crisis, further alarmed Southerners. Just following the chaotic Southampton Insurrection in Virginia where under the leadership of Nat Turner, slaves murdered a multitude of whites, the abolitionists of the North spread propaganda in favor of slaves.

Southerners were fearful of slave revolts and abolitionists alike, assuming a connection between the two. In response to the 1835 Mail Crisis, a vigilante committee of fifty-four members, of which Battle was one, formed to protest in Tuscaloosa.102 Battle and his fellow Tuscaloosans were convinced that the abolitionist literature would inspire slaves to revolt. According to Tuscaloosa Mayor John Owen the pamphlets would, “excite insurrections destructive of the good order of our society, involving consequences shocking to contemplate, in the destruction of property and life, with the accompanying brutalities which have heretofore marked such outrages.”103 The committee proclaimed that any person participating in the distribution of such abolitionist literature was an enemy to the state and ordered that postmasters were to distribute “all papers of an insurrectionary

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102 Flag of the Union, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, September 25, 1835.
103 Flag of the Union, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, April 29, 1835.
character” only to those in the committee, in order to limit the spread of any abolitionist messages. Following these guidelines, on September 25, 1835 Tuscaloosa charged Ransom G. Williams of the New York City *Emancipator* with “circulating within our State, pamphlets and papers of a seditious and incendiary character, and tending, by gross misrepresentation, and illicit appeals to the passions, to excite to insurrection and murder, our slave population.”  

Furthermore in 1844, an election year in Tuscaloosa, slavery and Southern rights were discussed incessantly as the two parties worked to paint the Northern faction of their opposing party as “deluded and unholy fanatics” who labored under a “mental hallucination in regard to slavery,” and would upset the social order of the South if said party were elected.  

Growing antislavery sentiment required Southerners to more forcefully defend slavery. Transitioning from the necessary but evil argument toward a view of slavery as a positive good for the country, writers like John C. Calhoun summed up the new concept of slavery justification stating:

> But let me not be understood as admitting, even by implication, that the existing relations between the two races in the slaveholding States is an evil: - far otherwise; I hold it to be a good, as it has thus far proved itself to be both, and will continue to prove so if not disturbed by the fell spirit of abolition.  

Calhoun was clear in his defense of slavery as a positive good. He, and others, based this theory on concepts of superior and inferior races, biblical and benevolent support, as well as classical ideology.

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104 *Flag of the Union*, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, October 3, 1835.
In fact, Southerners argued that slavery benefitted white society by keeping whites on an equal field, above the inferior slave position. During the Missouri Compromise, Calhoun summarized these ideas in 1848 at the end of his speech noting that in the presence of Southern slavery, “the two great divisions of society are not the rich and poor, but white and black; and all the former, the poor as well as the rich, belong to the upper class, and are respected and treated as equals.” So that while in the North, Calhoun argued, there became a division between the classes, in the South, whites of all monetary levels were offered greater advancement in the hierarchy with even the poorest of white citizens elevated above the enslaved black race. Citing classical support for a naturally occurring and benevolent enslavement of Africans, and following religious advice as well as so called medical theories from Dr. Nott and others, Southerners, and Tuscaloosans specifically, created for themselves a hierarchy of race where whites clearly reigned over an inferior black race.

With classical philosophy supporting the positive good theory, Battle’s Tuscaloosa estate also maintained the three tenets of the theory in its 1844 renovation. The house showcased the benefits of slavery for the slave, slave owner, and community by applying Greek inspired architecture along side Greek philosophy to define slavery as a natural part of life that benefited all three parties. The application of Greek inspired architecture at the Battle house served as a visual example of Aristotle’s classical teachings, demonstrating to the Tuscaloosa community, as well as to outsiders, the state of race relations and offering a defense

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of slavery through architecture. While the Battle house clearly articulated a justification for slavery to the white community, it also created a visual hierarchy that cemented the black race as inferior. Battle’s decision to affix the faux marble revetment and other classical touches to some, but not all of his outbuildings, is telling. While the main house and front facing structures reflected the classical aesthetic, those structures associated with the enslaved blacks living and working at Battle’s estate were untouched during the renovation, and left in their vernacular state. This clearly define the white and black spaces on the Battle estate according to a hierarchy, situating the enslaved population as visibly inferior and Battle ostensibly as an elite member of society.
Conclusion

As a slave owner with a benevolent mindset and a Greek Revival estate, Battle proved to be different from others in his community. This difference sets up the imposed hierarchy based on issues of morality and race most important to Battle. His Greek Revival renovation acted as a visual reminder to the Battle household and the community, standing in Battle’s stead to reaffirm his beliefs. Inspired by classical philosophy, Battle employed classical architecture in order to reaffirm ancient concepts in the fight to defend slavery. Pairing together classical thought and classical architecture the structures themselves created a tangible racial divide between refined classically inspired buildings and their vernacular counterparts. Meanwhile, the sobriety of the façade, landscape gardens, and furnishings paralleled Battle’s need for order and control in his life. Inspired by the Great Awakening where the morally conscious sought to eradicate sin in the community, Battle used the classical aesthetic to create a visual reminder of a moral hierarchy in Tuscaloosa, thus using his constructed program as a tangible example of his beliefs.

Considering the classical elements specifically, the Battle house prompts larger questions regarding the Greek Revival. Of course the popular classical style in Tuscaloosa proved fashionable and was most likely inspired by contemporaneous
events surrounding findings in the ancient classical world. However, this project suggests further analysis of this classical line of thinking and seeks to further understand why and how homes like Battle’s were constructed in the Greek Revival style. Inspired by classical theory and tied up in slave culture and its Antebellum justification, the Battle house offers a new way of viewing the popular Greek Revival style.

The Battle house served its place in time and today is a reminder of what Tuscaloosa once was. After the 1844 renovation minor updates were made to the house and the grounds, however the house remained more or less unchanged after the 1844 renovation under the Battles care. The Tuscaloosa estate remained in the Battle’s possession until 1865 when it was sold to the Friedman family, hence the name Battle-Friedman given to the building today. After the Civil War and following his wife Millicent’s death in 1872, Battle left Tuscaloosa to retire at his plantation home in Carthage, Alabama. This is where he remained until his death, January 4, 1877. Despite the loss of parts of the estate in the out buildings, partial furnishings and the back gardens, Battle’s house still stands today and its architecture is a testament to a building’s ability to tell a story as well as the need to understand it.
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FIGURES

Figure 1 Battle House. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.


Figure 4 Detail Early Tuscaloosa map. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.

Figure 5 Battle House Plan First Floor. Author’s own photograph, March 20, 2016.
Figure 6 Battle House Plan Second Floor. Author’s own photograph, March 20, 2016.

Figure 7 Boxed Columns. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.
Figure 8 Corner Plasterwork. Author’s own photograph, March 20, 2016.

Figure 9 Medallion Plasterwork. Author’s own photograph, March 20, 2016.

Figure 10 Extant Slave Quarters and Kitchen. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.
Figure 11 Detail Shot of Battle Friedman Façade. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.

Figure 13 Battle House East Elevation 1844. Author’s own photograph, March 20, 2016.

Figure 14 Sheath of Wheat Railing. Author's own photograph, March 1, 2016.
Figure 15 Battle Sideboard. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.

Figure 16 Battle Bed. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.

Figure 17 Battle Gardens. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.
Figure 18 Plan of Battle Gardens. Author’s own photograph, March 20, 2016.

Figure 19 Greenhouse and Garden Shed. Author’s own photograph, March 1, 2016.

Figure 21 Executive Mansion. Tuscaloosa Area Virtual Museum, https://tavm.omeka.net. (Accessed May 9, 2015).

Figure 22 Carson House. Tuscaloosa Area Virtual Museum, https://tavm.omeka.net. (Accessed May 9, 2015).
Figure 23 Dearing-Swaim House. Tuscaloosa Area Virtual Museum, https://tavm.omeka.net. (Accessed May 9, 2015).

Figure 24 Rosenau House


Figure 26 Hopson Owens House


Figure 27 Davis Scott/ Moody-Waren Home. Tuscaloosa Area Virtual Museum, https://tavm.omeka.net. (Accessed May 9, 2015).

Figure 29 Minor-Searcy-Owens House. Tuscaloosa Area Virtual Museum, https://tavm.omeka.net. (Accessed May 9, 2015).
