1

VIRGINIA'S LEGACY

When eight-year-old Mal Goode left Virginia for Homestead, Pennsylvania, in 1916, he carried with him the distilled wisdom his family had acquired through two centuries of enslavement and a half century of freedom. Most of all, he brought deeply internalized beliefs about faith, family, and freedom aboard the train from Richmond. He never let go of them; nor did he ever forget his roots in rural Virginia.

Those roots were tangled by the contradictions and complexities of crop, class, and color. The South was more a hodgepodge of local agricultural economies than a unified and homogenous region. But by the turn of the century, the sons and daughters of a people emerging from slavery began streaming northward. Mal's mother, Mary Ellen Hunter, from Folly Farm in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and his father, William Goode, from the pinewood forests of Southside Virginia, were among them. They and other émigrés were the vanguard of a surge reconfiguring the geography and consciousness of Black America and, ultimately, that of the nation. They were swept up in the Great Migration that witnessed the relocation of six million African Americans from the South to the North and West. Mary Ellen and

William did not know each other in Virginia and experienced vastly different conditions while living in the same state, but their paths finally crossed in Pittsburgh. The Steel City offered them the chance for a better life. Like so many migrants, their journeys were neither linear nor permanent. They frequently returned to Virginia after their family settled in the North.[1]

Mary Hunter brought a commitment to education and uplift with her to Pittsburgh as well as the grit to walk into her children's classrooms and confront their teachers. William Goode hardly knew what the inside of a classroom looked like, but he was well schooled in the field and factory and climbed as high as an African American could at Andrew Carnegie's Homestead Steel Works. Their children were an amalgam of their experiences. So was Black Pittsburgh, where Mal Goode came of age. Its richness and diversity molded him in lifelong ways.

Mal was born on his paternal grandparents' farm in 1908 in White Plains, a tobacco-growing region in Virginia's Piedmont, where he lived sporadically until he was eight years old. "My father's parents were people with devoted and abiding faith in God," he wrote. "They sincerely believed that nobody had freed them from the chains and bonds of slavery but God Himself. They knew their freedom came not by the pen and will of Abraham Lincoln, but by the Almighty's hand of equality."[2]

Mal's grandparents, born in slavery, and his parents, who came of age during the aftermath of Reconstruction, imparted a sense of history that was rooted in their past. "The way of life my family made for me and my brothers and sisters was one deep in the roots of our African heritage," he testified. "My grandparents were privy to the wisdom of their parents who lived in 1820s America and knew that to raise a prosperous and successful family, there must be a viable, close-knit home base. They set out to prove such a dream could come true."[3]

Those African stories and ancestral wisdom were rarely written down, and no family griot can now retrieve them. But that culture was the foundation on which Mal's grandparents built the social capital they needed to find a way forward. Their faith helped them endure

the aftermath of African exodus, American bondage, and the collapse of Reconstruction. It would be tested again in the North but never wavered. Mal was a product of their convictions; forging freedom became his life work.

THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

In much of Virginia, enslaved families were routinely torn asunder by slavery. If their masters calculated that selling surplus labor to plantations in the Deep South was the most profitable way to dispose of them, the bill of sale was written with no regard for the families it destroyed. In northwestern Virginia, coffles of slaves handcuffed to each other by thick links of iron often passed by Folly Farm en route to the Mississippi Delta. Each one of them, an elder in the Brethren Church lamented, had just enough room to walk and lie down to sleep.[4] But in northwestern Virginia's Augusta County, a lucrative hiring out system meant that masters earned greater profit by maintaining ownership of their chattel. Consequently, Mary Hunter's forbears encountered a less familiar form of slavery. Her family remained together at Folly Farm and there's no record of family members condemned to gang labor on distant plantations. For Mary, that meant growing up surrounded by family, immersed in faith, and exposed to education.

When Mary left Folly Farm for Pittsburgh, she carried more than a satchel of clothes. She brought a degree of formal education and sophistication about the world that few African Americans in former slave states then possessed. Mary was literate and relatively well-informed about the world beyond Folly Farm. She and migrants from the Shenandoah Valley brought an unusual level of high culture to Pittsburgh. William, who had arrived in Pittsburgh a decade earlier, was not so worldly or well schooled. He could neither read nor write. The conditions of servitude in Virginia's Southside, where William grew up, hampered the establishment of autonomous Black organizations and offered far less to the generations that bridged the gap between slavery and the Great Migration.

Joseph Smith was a slave master and he, his granddaughter, and her husband loomed large in Mal Goode's life, even though they died before he was born. Smith shrewdly invested in enslaved people, including Mal's maternal ancestors, the Bowles and the Hunters, and built a diversified portfolio of farming, financial, and manufacturing operations by exploiting their labor. Mary Hunter's parents lived in brick cottages near Smith's Folly Farm manor. Each dwelling, measuring twenty by twenty-five feet, had a fireplace and a shared wall. Other enslaved men and women lived at the big house. They tended to fields and livestock, worked in Smith's mills, and were hired out to timber cutters. Unlike many held in enslavement, they were able to build families and shape institutions after emancipation. Mary never fully cut her ties to Folly Farm but did not want to live her life there. As a young single woman she searched for a better life and traveled to McKeesport, Pennsylvania, where she had relatives.

That's where Mary Hunter and William Goode met in 1902. But they returned to Folly Farm to wed. On October 5, 1904, William stood in front of the altar at Bright Hope Church, which Mary's family and neighbors had built in 1891. He was thirty-four years old; she thirty-one. Mary's brother, the Reverend James Hunter, stood alongside William as Mary walked down the aisle and a choir sang from the sanctuary's loft. The pews were filled with Mary's family, Folly Farm neighbors, and William's kin from White Plains, two hundred miles away by train.

Bright Hope Church near Mint Spring overlooks a valley where generations of Hunters worked the land, first as Joseph Smith's property and eventually for themselves. Its weathered sides and tin roof are now covered with a jumble of ivy; tree trunks have melded into its pine planking. Inside, the pews are gone. Instead, the tiny church is cluttered with abandoned farm tools, discarded furnishings, and personal possessions. A worn pair of children's boots dangles from a rusty nail. Nobody has prayed here for over half a century, but this building once reverberated with psalms of joy and lamentations of sorrow. Congregants celebrated life's passages as they faced Reconstruction's broken promises. As W. E. B. Du Bois observed in his 1935

classic, *Black Reconstruction in America*: "The slave went free, stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery."[5] They cried from happiness and pain at Bright Hope but also engaged in hardheaded, practical debate about how to better their lives. Mary was a toddler when Reconstruction fully collapsed under the pressure of white supremacy. As a girl, she listened to her elders evaluate how freedom would unfold in a hostile nation; as a woman, Mary raised her voice alongside them.

Folly Farm belonged to Joseph Smith, whose estate sat outside Staunton, the Augusta County seat. Stretching diagonally through Virginia for two hundred miles, the Shenandoah Valley spans ten counties. Bounded by the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains and the James and Potomac Rivers, the valley reigned as the wheat kingdom of the South before the Civil War. Slavery shaped the region, but bondage here was different than in Virginia's Tidewater, where tobacco ruled, or on the rice plantations in South Carolina and the cotton fields of the Deep South. The latter were cash crop monocultures where enslaved gangs toiled under the lash of an overseer, churning out ever-greater quantities of tobacco, rice, or cotton for global markets.

Augusta County never fell into the trap of monoculture, blindly chasing the profits offered by a single crop. Nor was it a sleepy rural backwater. Slavery and capitalist modernity were joined at the hip, with planters embracing both un-free labor and the latest means of building wealth. Farmers, quick to diversify, invested in manufacturing. Their enterprise, slave labor, and the felicitous combination of land, water, and weather made the county one of Virginia's most developed and affluent.

Joseph Smith could attest to that. One of thirteen children from a landed family, he arrived in Staunton in the 1790s and bought two mills and land near Mint Spring. His property sat along the Great Wagon Road tying Philadelphia to the Cumberland Gap. A savvy entrepreneur who served in Virginia's House of Delegates, Smith abandoned Staunton to live near his mills, where he built one of the Valley's most impressive homes in 1818. Thomas Jefferson, with

whom he had more than a passing acquaintance, influenced its design, particularly a brick serpentine wall, a style Jefferson famously employed two years later at the University of Virginia. The winding wall amused locals, who derided the house as Smith's Folly. Smith, taken with the name, called his estate Folly Farm, and in time, the area became known as Folly Mills. His descendants and those of people he owned still live there.[6]

Wheat drove the Shenandoah Valley's economy and turned up as far away as California, where the forty-niners used it to make sourdough biscuits. Enslaved people grew most of the wheat (the region's cash crop) or corn (a staple for slaves and livestock that could also be made into liquor). Joseph Smith devoured news about crop prices, banking, and manufacturing, alert to the possibilities and perils of an industrializing America. In 1839 his neighbor Cyrus McCormick debuted his reaper on a field of oats Smith owned. But mechanization and innovation only hardened Smith's dependence and that of other farmers on enslaved labor.[7]

Although there were no large plantations, slavery became entrenched after Scots-Irish Presbyterians and Germans descended on the valley in the 1730s. Joseph Smith, with fifty adult slaves and twenty-five hundred acres of land, was one of the largest slaveholders in Augusta County, where most of the eight hundred slaveholders owned just one or two people. His vast holdings put him in a tiny and infamous group. Fewer than 1 percent of whites in slaveholding states owned more than fifty people.[8]

Augusta contrasted sharply with the Southside where Mal's father and grandparents grew up. Virginia's supply of enslaved people had long exceeded demand, and they were routinely sold if deemed surplus. Deep South planters, on the other hand, needed more labor. Unable to purchase slaves legally from abroad after the United States exited the international slave trade in 1808, they turned to Virginia, where profit-seeking slave owners preferred to sell men and women off at high prices rather than pay for their upkeep. By the early 1800s Virginia was exporting more enslaved people to the Deep South than any other state, almost three hundred thousand between 1830 and 1860.[9]

That practice was more common in the Southside, but African Americans in Augusta were not immune from greedy, opportunistic slavers. One speculator advertised weekly in the *Staunton Spectator*: "I wish to purchase one thousand LIKELY NEGROES, of both sexes for the Southern Market, for which I will give the highest cash prices."[10] Despite the number of those sold out of state, Virginia counted a robust population of half a million enslaved African Americans and another fifty thousand living free when the Emancipation Proclamation was declared on New Year's Day, 1863.[11]

Because the Shenandoah Valley's diversified, grain-based economy required less labor than tobacco, rice, and cotton, Joseph Smith didn't need to work his enslaved people in gangs to profit from their labor. White fear of Black insurrection prevailed in slave societies, but since African Americans comprised only one-fifth of Augusta County's population—half of the statewide average—they posed less of a threat to white security. In Brunswick County, Virginia, where Mal's father, William, grew up, African Americans represented almost two-thirds of the population. Enslaved people there were numerous enough to threaten white dominance, and slave patrols, brutality, and the auction block were more common terrors.

Joseph Smith preferred to hire out his surplus human chattel rather than sell them. This was a solid financial move and widespread in the Valley, where farms, mills, distilleries, and iron foundries needed labor.[12] The enslaved men and women of Folly Farm knew the pattern well; prospective leasers would arrive after Christmas each year to negotiate with their owner for their labor, typically setting on a price between $80 and $110 a person for fifty-one weeks. The leasers assured Smith that those people hired out would receive a factory-made blanket, a wool hat, and proper medical care. The enslaved people could generally count on returning to Folly Farm for the Christmas week but otherwise faced a year of sporadic contact with their families and community. But they were not irrevocably parted, and families remained hopeful they would reunite. There was no recourse, however, for any mistreatment unless owners who felt their property had been damaged sought redress, applying the codes that defined slavery.

Smith generally contracted the same people to the same employers each year and pocketed as much as $967 per annum for their labors, which was a sizable sum for the times.[13]

The fragility of nineteenth-century life loomed large for those enslaved at Folly Farm. They watched the Big House intently, knowing changes there inevitably rippled to the slave quarters. Joseph Smith's first wife succumbed giving birth, and their son-in-law died after their daughter conceived a child, Elizabeth Brooke, in 1833. Elizabeth and her mother returned to Folly Farm, where in 1856, Elizabeth married James Cochran, twenty-six, from a prominent Charlottesville family. They lived at Folly Farm, where Cochran helped Smith run the estate and the lucrative practice of hiring out the people he had subjugated. Before long, Cochran was in charge. Smith died in 1863 at the age of seventy-eight, after falling from his mule and breaking a leg. His estate was worth three hundred thousand dollars, an enormous sum in 1863, and was divided between Elizabeth and her sister. His will stipulated that those he had "owned" were to be divided with "regard to family ties existing among them."[14] By then, slavery had entered its death spiral, and the enslaved set their sights on freedom.

Augusta was spared the carnage that savaged Virginia early in the war. But in the summer of 1864, Commander Ulysses Grant ordered Union cavalry to "leave the Valley a barren waste." They overperformed. "I have devastated the Valley from Staunton down to Mount Crawford and will continue," General Philip Sheridan reported. If a crow were to cross the Valley, he chortled, the bird would need to carry his own rations. Anything of value—bridges, rail, and telegraph lines—was demolished.[15] Crops were destroyed, livestock driven off, and Virginia's richest farming county left desolate.[16]

Many in Augusta, including James Cochran, had been conflicted about slavery. Some harbored misgivings on religious grounds. Far more were concerned about their personal security, especially after Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion left hundreds dead less than two hundred miles away from Staunton. Fearing "the bloody monster which threat-

ens us," Augusta women petitioned Virginia's General Assembly to end slavery immediately. They were willing to sacrifice its economic benefits to restore their sense of security.[17] When the countryside settled down, their trepidation faded.

Still, they did not want to secede, and Augusta's twenty-one thousand white residents adamantly opposed secession. In the 1860 election, two-thirds of county voters chose candidates who supported staying in the Union while also maintaining slavery.[18] Consequently, Augusta's delegates to the state convention voted overwhelmingly against secession. But when Lincoln issued a Proclamation of Insurrection after the attack on Fort Sumter and called for seventy-five thousand troops to quash the rebellion, Virginians swiftly reversed course. Augusta County, long a Unionist bastion, voted 3,130 to 10 to secede. In the end, historians William Thomas and Edward Ayers concluded, the county was paradoxically "the last to secede and the most dedicated to the cause."[19]

When war erupted, Augusta whites responded with fervor and six thousand men—almost every male not too young or too old to fight, including James Cochran—rallied to the Confederacy.[20] By the battle of Gettysburg in the summer of 1863, Cochran was a colonel in the Churchville Cavalry, which he led until weeks before Lee surrendered at Appomattox.[21] By then, the number of African Americans in Augusta had dropped by almost 20 percent, with fewer than five thousand remaining. Some fled to Union lines during the fighting and left with Northern troops. A few hired out to timber operators disappeared into West Virginia, which had seceded from Virginia and cast its lot with the Union. But the Hunters, the Bowles, and most people at Folly Farm stayed on.

Augusta rebounded faster than much of the Confederacy, its comeback facilitated by the hiring out system, which provided labor to rebuild. Many resumed working on the same basis as before their liberation.[22] But there were critical differences. Although labor contracts yielded roughly the same money as during slavery, those signing them now pocketed the entire sum. They negotiated directly with employers, without masters profiting from their labor. Landowners

and merchants alike tried to exploit these newly freed people, but as the latter gained a better understanding of capital, labor, and market conditions, they navigated freedom with greater assurance.

Mary's parents, William and Martha Bowles, hired themselves out to Thomas Eskridge, an illiterate white farmer living nearby. Eskridge, who often hired out more than half of Smith's enslaved people, cared for his livestock. Their partnership extended beyond business; Smith left an annuity for Eskridge's daughter in his will. He did not, however, bequeath anything to the Hunters, the Bowles, or other families whose labor he had exploited. If not for Smith's daughter and son-in-law, they would have had neither savings, education, nor readily employable skills to tap as they sought security, education, and political power after the war. The last of these would be the hardest to achieve.[23]

When freedom came, regions with African American majorities were particularly volatile. Staunton's freed African Americans worked quickly to establish institutions that signaled their freedom and served as the backbone of their communities. They focused on building schools and churches and turned to the Freedmen's Bureau, a short-lived federal effort, to ease their transition to freedom. The bureau stressed education, which parents wanted for their children. But only a few poorly funded schools were built.[24] African Americans were more successful in creating churches. Abandoning white congregations, most embraced Baptist congregations like Bright Hope, which encouraged demonstrative preaching and a soulful response from the pews. A minister earned his qualifications by responding to a spiritual call to preach, not at any seminary. Bright Hope Baptist might have been a small dwelling, but it was a forum for collective action. The Hunters and the Bowles remained its familial and spiritual core until the 1940s, when it closed. Mary Hunter renewed that Baptist affiliation in Homestead.[25]

Newly freed people's focus on schools and churches was tied to the resistance they faced seeking political power. The specter of upheaval triggered dread in the minds of many whites, who often responded with force. In Augusta, where African Americans were a minority, a

poll tax limited the number who could vote. They posed little political threat to the postwar order, which might explain why there was less violence and the Ku Klux Klan did not take hold there. But the specter of violence was ever present. Freedmen's Bureau Supervisor Lt. George Cook observed that Augusta County's African Americans, tolerated "small inconveniences in order to live peaceably [realizing that] shows of impertinence, or independence, in too many instances leads to blows on the part of the whites."[26]

Folly Farm's Black families explored freedom's contours with some help from the Cochrans. While never letting go of his anger over slavery, Mal Goode reckoned that his grandparents' enslavers had some sense of decency. "At the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, they gave their slaves a little more than the stipulated 40 acres and a mule." Although Union General William Tecumseh Sherman issued orders during the Civil War to allot plots of forty acres and a mule to freed families, Andrew Johnson rescinded these provisions after he assumed the presidency following Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Mal believed that the Cochrans had fulfilled this pledge. They gave land to the families once enslaved at Folly Farm and provided funds to purchase seed and plows to till the soil and prepare for independence. Until he could no longer get around, Mal wrote, "Mr. Cochran used to ride out on a dusty, dirt road and visit my grandparents in his horse-drawn buggy." Mal excoriated slavery his entire life but credited the Cochrans for making land and education accessible. His maternal grandparents, the Hunters and the Bowles, remained at Folly Farm, living on their own land in their own home on a street named Hunter Road.[27]

Many African Americans fled during the war, but most at Folly Farm stayed on, building homes on land they came to own. In 1889 they pooled their resources and, for a nominal amount (forty dollars), bought an acre of land from the Cochrans adjoining the land Mary's grandparents had acquired in the 1870s. They built Bright Hope church and a burial yard on it. The church's trustees included mem-

bers on both sides of Mary's family. Her brother James was Bright Hope's first pastor, her brother Emanuel a deacon, and her sister Martha a congregant. Emanuel and Martha were the congregation's last active members when it closed half a century later.[28]

James and Elizabeth Cochran defied the caricature of slave owners as indolent and mired in the past. Innovative and progressive for the times, they sent their daughter as well as their sons to college. The paternalism and "decency" that Mal noted were evident when they built a classroom in the basement of the Folly manse where the children of formerly enslaved people and their farmworkers did lessons on black-painted oilskins affixed to the walls. Mary Hunter was too old to be a pupil there, but not to be the teacher.[29]

The Hunters had come of age during the backlash to Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion when increasingly punitive slave codes criminalized teaching slaves to read or write. But their daughter Mary, born in 1873, could do more than acquire the rudiments of literacy. "My mother was educated at West Virginia Collegiate Institute (now West Virginia State College) with some of the funds set aside before she was born," Mal explained.[30] Earning a high school education and certification to teach Black children, Mary taught at Folly Farm and then a one-room school in nearby Mt. Sidney, before leaving for McKeesport.

The Commonwealth of Virginia adopted public education in 1870, but the system was segregated and poorly funded, especially for African Americans. Their school year lasted five months while white students attended classes for six. Most Black schools consisted of a single room, with all ages and grades present. That was the sort of education Mary received. While most white schools were soon more than one-room affairs and expanded their curriculum, Mary, who received twenty-one dollars a month in salary during the school year, could only dream of similar circumstances.[31]

Mary was also exposed to Willis Carter, a fiery leader who emboldened the Black community. Carter arrived in Staunton in 1881 after a nomadic quest for education that led him to Wayland Seminary, the Baptist institution for freedmen in Washington, DC, where Booker T. Washington studied. Carter taught in the district encompassing Folly

Farm; it's possible that Mary was his student. She encountered him frequently during his decades as a principal, president of the Augusta County Teachers Association, and editor of the *Staunton Tribune*, the African American newspaper, or at the Colored Teachers Institute training programs he promoted during the summer.[32]

Carter, a Republican Party activist and a robust voice for Black rights, was allied with James Cochran. His advocacy affected Mary, who lived close to town by train. She read Carter's *Staunton Tribune*, whose motto was "Justice for All," and followed its coverage of Lawrence Spiller, a local man hung after a jury took three minutes to convict him of raping and murdering a white girl in 1894. Mary saw Carter back his rhetoric with action, mounting protests after a race riot in Danville led to the death of several African Americans in 1883, campaigning to prevent disenfranchisement, and refusing to let slavery's history be forgotten in the Valley.

Mary first read Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" speech in 1896 in the *Staunton Tribune*.[33] Washington implored African Americans to "cast down your buckets where you are" and to emphasize educational, vocational, and entrepreneurial efforts rather than directly confront social segregation and political disenfranchisement in the South.[34] Shaped by Carter and Washington, Mary in turn molded Mal's sense of racial politics. She made sure her children knew about Washington, the Tuskegee Institute president that Mal grew up calling "the leader." But Mal would just as soon joust with authority as cast down his bucket.

African Americans at Folly Farm left no accounts revealing how they felt about their "masters," but there are glimpses of the paternalistic lens that showed how white people thought they felt. The *Staunton Spectator* correspondent at the Cochrans' silver wedding anniversary in 1881 wrote: "A marked feature of the celebration was the presence of all the old servants of the family who had been specially Invited, and also all the colored tenants. . . . They came in great numbers, from all directions and for miles around, and when assembled around

the well-ladened table spread in the kitchen, were as happy a lot as could be well imagined." That Blacks attended says something, but the account smacks of condescension. That they were in the kitchen says it all.[35]

Later generations of Cochrans go further. Douglas Cochran, who grew up at Folly Farm decades later, recalled that his neighbors included descendants of those enslaved there. "The families, including my own, were part of a loose farming community that routinely helped each other when needed," he recalled. Whether getting the hay in, repairing a tractor, or pitching in on the farm, the neighbors stuck together. He remembered racial differences as muted and ascribed that sense of community to what the Cochrans fostered after the war.[36]

Joseph Smith's papers reflect attention to medical care and cash gifts to enslaved Black workers at Christmas and harvest, and Cochran family lore casts James as someone who welcomed emancipation and kept in touch with former slaves, helping when he could.[37] That begs the question as to why he did not emancipate them earlier. Running as a Republican (not the easiest path to office in the South at the time), James Cochran was elected to the Virginia Legislature in 1897. As the *Staunton Spectator* observed, this was a case of the office seeking the man, not the man the office. But Cochran did not serve in the legislature. He died suddenly on election day. The *Spectator* remembered him "as free from unreasoning prejudice" and willing to advance "politics which differed from those maintained by a majority of his people." The local citizenry found him down-to-earth with "democratic intuitions . . . accommodating the less favored of fortune . . . without evoking a humiliating dependence."[38] Those who labored for Cochran during slavery and lived on Folly Farm afterward left no record of how they viewed him.

The promise of equality did not materialize for African Americans, particularly after Reconstruction crumbled. Nor was Augusta County, though better off than most of Virginia, immune to the prolonged

depression that devastated farmers in the 1870s. When competition with growers at home and abroad slashed commodity prices, few Black farmers had the wherewithal to survive. They embraced populist protest like white farmers but were rejected by many of those white agrarian radicals who could not reconcile making common cause with them.[39]

Making matters worse, African Americans throughout southern states were systematically prevented from voting through a series of laws, policies, and state constitutions after the collapse of Reconstruction. In Virginia, against a backdrop of racial violence, they were purged from the voting rolls after the 1902 convention revised literacy requirements. A Black man needed to satisfy a white official as to his understanding of the new state constitution, something fewer than one-seventh of the state's 147,000 eligible Black voters could do. That was not surprising, given that white officials were the ones deciding their competency to vote. And more than half of the 21,000 who passed the literacy test were disqualified because they could not pay their poll taxes.

At the 1902 convention, a jubilant Carter Glass, an anti-Black delegate who had blasted "negro enfranchisement [as] a crime to begin with," crowed: "This plan will eliminate the *darkey* as a political factor in this State in less than five years." It did just that, and the Black vote remained inconsequential until the 1965 Voting Rights Act.[40] Mary Hunter followed coverage of the state convention, where Willis Carter castigated disenfranchisement and led a last-gasp effort to retain voting rights and equal education. But he could not prevent the storm from breaking. Lynching, disenfranchisement, the Supreme Court's disastrous *Plessy vs. Ferguso*n's "separate but equal" ruling, and Jim Crow made life ever more treacherous.[41] Mary made sure her children knew about those times.

James and Jane Hunter held on at Folly Farm but encouraged their children to explore what the North might offer. In 1902 three of them left for McKeesport, an industrial enclave up the Monongahela River from Pittsburgh where the family had relatives. They weren't the only ones to leave. Augusta's Black population dropped by one-third

between 1880 and 1920. Conditions were even worse in Brunswick County, where William Goode, Mal's father, had already joined the migration northward.

THE SOUTHSIDE

Slavery's aftermath was bleaker in the Piedmont than in the Shenandoah Valley. Food shortages and falling tobacco prices after the war hurled freed people and landless whites alike into tenancy, sharecropping, or debt. Night riders swearing allegiance to the Cross Key Blues and the Ku Klux Klan held kangaroo courts, administering terror at the end of a rope. Survival was challenging, acquiring land and education difficult.[42] Mal's mother, Mary, had grown up with some economic security, education, and access to the world beyond Folly Farm, but his father, William, forged ahead with none of those assets.

Mal wrote that his grandparents had been given the land on which he was born in White Plains, Brunswick County, by their "master." If so, Thomas Goode and his wife, Margaret Moore, were not able to hold on to it for long.[43] Both had been born in slavery in Mecklenburg County near the Meherrin River in 1848. They were seventeen years old when freed, twenty-one when wed, and twenty-two when their oldest child, William, was born in 1870. The boundaries of their lives during bondage were likely set by the Goodes of Virginia, a white clan with inescapable power.[44] Those Goodes had benefited from the labor of people like Thomas and Margaret and influenced their destinies long after slavery ended.

Driven from England because of his loyalty to King Charles, who lost the throne and then his head in 1649, John Goode sailed to Barbados. A decade later, he left Barbados for Virginia and established a plantation by the falls of the James River. Amassing considerable wealth and status, he cultivated tobacco with slave labor.[45] Goode's thirteen children begat a sprawling number of offspring, who numbered six thousand families seven generations later. Most were Caucasian, some multiracial. Many, but not all, were slaveholders. Hundreds fought—and more than fifty died—in clashes with the French and Native

Americans, the American Revolution, War of 1812, and the Mexican War. Another seventy-five died fighting for the Confederacy, while two fell defending the Union. The Black Goodes also multiplied, but their stories went unrecorded. Nobody counted how many perished as slaves or stood on the auction block. Neither did the slave-owning Goodes' wealth trickle down to those working their fields.

By the Civil War, African Americans—some of whom were free—comprised two-thirds of the population in Mecklenburg County where Thomas and Margaret were born, and Brunswick, where they settled after emancipation.[46] While most white Goodes were literate and owned property, a greater number of Black Goodes were designated in county deed books as "colored" illiterates with no discernible stake in society. It is likely that Thomas and Margaret were the human property of this white clan, whose territorial footprint covered the Piedmont.[47]

The counties were part of the Southside, an isolated region east of the Blue Ridge Mountains and south of the James River, where conservative cultural ways became entrenched.[48] Its acidic soil—a mix of sandy loam and clay—was not as fertile as that of the Shenandoah Valley, but it was suitable for tobacco. Tobacco, however, has never been particularly good for the soil, those working the fields, or those consuming it. Once its forests were razed, the land lost fertility, and the Southside spiraled downward.

Decline was evident by the 1830s. As agriculture's center of gravity shifted southwest toward the Mississippi Delta, where cotton became king, planters sold off slaves. Some even bred them for sale.[49] Thomas was likely the property of either Elizabeth Goode or John C. Goode, the only Goodes owning plantations near Mecklenburg's border with Brunswick, where Thomas and Margaret were born.[50] Elizabeth owned a small plantation and enslaved thirty people on her property outside White Plains, where Thomas and Margaret later acquired land. She was unable to pay freed people to work for her after the war, and the plantation fell apart. Unmarried and deemed unable to manage her own affairs Elizabeth, aged eighty-one, was declared insane shortly before she died.

John C. Goode fared better. A West Point grad and an attorney who fought in the frontier wars, Goode owned plantations, a ferry, tavern, and more than one hundred people on Flat Creek. During the war, he rose up the Confederate chain of command. Afterward, he represented newly freed people in court. The 1880 census listed Thomas and his family as farm laborers, residing among a group of African Americans near John Goode's property on Flat Creek. Thomas was in jail for a felony at the time but soon regained his freedom.[51]

Goode's plantation, spanning a thousand acres, sat downstream from property belonging to Peter Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson's uncle. Goode's estate, with a library, a smoking room, and live-in servants, was a self-sufficient enclave that included a foundry, a blacksmithing shop, a cooperage, a carpentry workshop, an icehouse, stables, barns, slave quarters, and a racetrack.[52] Enslaved men and women cooked, cleaned, and cared for Goode's children, tended his gardens and livestock, and worked his fields. They made soap, milled grains, preserved fruit, distilled liquor, and butchered animals, smoking and curing the meat.[53]

When Thomas and Margaret were children, their parents received a quart of cornmeal and half a pound of salt pork a day. Children's rations were smaller. They augmented their diets by planting gardens, hunting and fishing, gathering wild fruit and nuts, and eating "chitlins" (pig intestines) and the parts of slaughtered animals that their masters rejected. They made clothes from burlap; if laboring outside in the winter, they received shoes. No family tales described them running away, but if they had, packs of dogs would have chased after them. At night, patrols apprehended those without papers. Masters had considerable leeway to penalize slaves, with little interference from the courts, and overseers used the lash as punishment for insolence or for pilfering food. Enslaved people hardly interacted with masters in Mecklenburg and Brunswick, where African Americans made up two-thirds of the population. Farms were bigger and had more laborers, widening the distance between the white owners and the Black laborers and reinforcing the former's views of the latter as

subhuman and stirring their fears of insurrection, knowing they were outnumbered.[54]

The war left 360,000 African Americans in Virginia homeless, mostly in the hard-hit eastern part of the state. Food was scarce, and many had nothing but the clothes they wore. The Freedmen's Bureau offered some relief, but efforts to distribute land—forty acres and a mule—collapsed after Andrew Johnson succeeded Abraham Lincoln as president. With the Southside in turmoil, skirmishes flared over control of property. If African Americans could find unoccupied land and shelter, they moved in. Union troops were inclined to accommodate them, bestowing land to former slaves on abandoned plantations as "freedom dues."[55] When former Confederates tried to remove those squatting on plantation land, some families stood their ground, picking up guns to defend themselves. If Federal troops nearby were led by officers with a radical vision of Reconstruction, they backed the freed men, but when five hundred African Americans near Richmond, "armed and drawn up in line of battle," defied orders to surrender land they had seized, Union troops drove them off and torched their homes.[56]

Whites still held most of the land but were embittered. They felt victimized by Yankee interlopers and worried about retaliation from those they had enslaved. "Defeat brought poverty and Reconstruction brought humiliation," Edith Rathbun Bell and William Lightfoot Heartwell Jr. wrote in the 1950s, a time when the civil rights struggle began placing apologists of the old social order on the defensive. "Conditions in the Old Dominion after the war were worse than in any other Southern state," they claimed, "and in no area of the state was there such misery and poverty as in Brunswick County." Fields were abandoned, plantations reduced to charred rubble. The slaves, they lamented, became "a mass of bewildered and ignorant freedmen, with the doctrine of 'no work' firmly entrenched in the new confusion of their minds." Whites felt abused, and their anger over losing power smoldered. When Union troops withdrew, vigilantes rushed to reassert white rule and avenged their sense of grievance by abusing African Americans.[57]

Mal Goode was horrified by stories of that era. "You need to understand," he declared, "that it was nothing for blacks to be lynched every year, particularly in the South and as far north as Indiana. . . . If a Negro was charged with something, raping a white woman or breaking into somebody's home, he could be lynched right in the street. And nobody ever went to trial for it. That happened over and over again. It was one of the reasons for the formation of the NAACP—to stop lynching."[58]

Defenders of the Old South portrayed the lynching of Black men as a heroic act of white male chivalry to protect their women from Black sexual predators. Ida B. Wells, who began investigating lynching in 1892, and others debunked this "rape myth." Lynching, they showed, was an arbitrary act designed to terrorize Black communities and shore up white supremacy. The "festival of violence" that often accompanied lynching was a ritualistic and sadistic display intended to suppress African Americans. Thousands of murders stained the collapse of Reconstruction, including about one hundred documented cases in Virginia between 1880 and 1926. News of lynching ripped through Black homes; details of horrific torture were spoken of in hushed and quaking tones as adults impressed on children the dangers of ignoring racial taboos.[59] Mal was haunted by the horror of self-proclaimed vigilantes publicly dismembering and burning African Americans to ash in the wake of a real or imagined offense. That lynchings often were executed in the presence of large audiences of men, women, and children led NAACP field secretary James Weldon Johnson to conclude that "the race question involves the saving of black America's body and white America's soul."[60] Lynching underscored how deeply racist oppression had seeped into every nook of southern society, and Mal Goode never shook off its horrors.

By the time William was born in 1870, his parents were working either as tenants or as sharecroppers on former plantation land.[61] Without land reform, agricultural workers were trapped in a system with dismal prospects. Plantation owners who had reclaimed their land after the war no longer controlled a workforce while African

Americans needed a way to support themselves. As a result, freed people negotiated the terms of their labor, exchanging it for use of land, for which they gave landlords a share of the crop or rental fee. A smaller number hired themselves out.[62] They had minimal leverage, but as historian Leon Litwack observed: "Even as they toiled in the same fields, performed the familiar tasks, and returned at dusk to the same cabins, scores of freemen refused to resign themselves to the permanent status of a landless agricultural working class." They sought to fashion their own lives on their own terms. Many realized that was more likely to happen in the North.[63]

Little is known about the Goodes but that they worked the land, growing tobacco and other crops. Whether they were sharecroppers splitting their crop with a landowner who also profited by advancing them money for seeds, fertilizer, and other essentials, or tenants renting land, or subsistence farmers on their own plot, growing tobacco was backbreaking, financially sketchy, work. Planting and weeding meant repeatedly stooping down to care for thousands of plants. Moreover, tobacco cultivation debilitated the soil. Those with large holdings could leave land fallow to restore its fertility, but for smaller growers such as the Goodes, survival was a losing battle.[64]

The Southside was the epicenter of tobacco production, producing three-quarters of Virginia's forty-million-pound crop in 1860. No other state grew more tobacco. After the war, planters doubled down on its cultivation, which, for most, was a desperate, unsuccessful gamble. Cash-poor farmers, white and Black, borrowed from merchants before the planting season, using anticipated harvests as collateral. But with prices dropping, interest due on loans, and merchants cooking the books when they settled accounts after the harvest, many farmers sank deeper in debt.[65] Tenancy and sharecropping offered at best a way to make it to the next growing season. At worst, it meant falling into debt peonage and despair.

Unable to escape the vicious downward pull of tobacco, Thomas and Margaret tended their fields and borrowed money to make it through

each year. They twice hocked livestock to cover debts. In the spring of 1889, the Goodes delivered a cow to J. W. Malone as security for a seventeen-dollar debt. If able to pay Malone by October, they would get their cow back. There is no record they ever did. A year later, the Goodes were indebted to W. S. Purdy for sixty-five dollars and signed over six head of cattle, a horse mule named Charles, and a mule called Rody. This time, they got their cattle, Charles, and Rody back, likely with William's help. He was working in Pittsburgh by then, sending money home. In each transaction, the Goodes made their mark with an X.[66] William, the oldest of eight children, knew work at an early age. Mal Goode reflected:

> My father was a dedicated man, loyal to his wife and children. He was brown skinned, about 5 feet, eleven inches tall, and had no formal school education. My mother taught him how to read and write after they got married in 1904. She taught him so he could read the newspaper and write letters to his folks back in Virginia. There was good reason for my father's lack of education. His mother and father, once free, had to fend for themselves, which was hard for some emancipated slaves, but much easier for those who were tough, smart, and possessed plain common sense. During slavery, many slaves had for the most part run their master's farm for him and knew how to operate the plantation far better than any white owner ever could.[67]

Mal's take on Reconstruction celebrated the Black achievements that flourished when white supremacy was briefly suppressed. "In fact, I would go even further to say that was one reason the so-called 'Southern gentleman' slaveholder fared so badly when the U.S. Army took their cities and farms, looting, pillaging, and burning them to the ground. These slave masters never did a good day's work in their lives; they dished all of the work out to the African American slave. It was only natural when the Confederacy lost the war and the time came to rebuild, the Negro was the only one who could do it."[68]

Most whites, including Pattie Buford, saw matters differently. They bought into the myth of the Lost Cause that took hold after

Reconstruction ended. It depicted the Confederacy as a noble and heroic effort that had little to do with slavery. Although she was compassionate toward African Americans, Buford could not shake off her deeply entrenched assumptions about the proper "place" for African Americans. The granddaughter of a former North Carolina governor and daughter of a well-connected attorney, Buford was born into the Southside's elite. As a girl, she held Sunday school classes for slave children on her father's plantation and later made her own plantation a refuge to educate and care for Black people. She enlisted women from her Episcopal Church to create a school for Black children, opened an asylum for Blacks who had been crippled by infirmity, disease, and poverty, and supported James Solomon Russell's efforts to build the Saint Paul's Normal and Industrial School in Lawrenceville.[69]

For Buford, an entrepreneurial evangelical who saw her endeavors as Christian mission, there were good "colored folks" and irredeemable ones. She was full of praise for former house servants who "idolized their masters and mistresses" and in turn "were loved and cared for by them." These relationships reflected the "poetic, beautiful side" of what she called patriarchal slavery. "Plantation negroes" were another matter. "Left to the tender mercies of an ignorant, often brutal, hired overseer," she wrote, "these creatures were a separate distinct race. Even the house servants looked down on them with ineffable contempt." In her eyes, this forgotten "class of negroes" lived in squalor, diseased with "cancer or some of those fearful scrofulous diseases to which the whole race are peculiarly subject." Helpless, they lacked the capacity to change.[70]

"Alas," she wrote, "The better class of negroes nearly all emigrated," leaving "immense hordes of plantation negroes," who regarded "freedom as immunity from labor" and lived in the backwoods, suffering, stealing, starving, and dying. Making matters worse, in Buford's estimation, a Black majority briefly controlled Brunswick politics after the war. She blamed political tricksters and false prophets for provoking unwarranted bitterness toward former masters.[71]

There was no place in her narrative for the Goodes. Thomas and Margaret were not house servants, could not read or write, and lived

in the forest. But they survived in the backwoods, acquired land, and lived without contracting "fearful scrofulous diseases." Disciplined and tenacious, they were healthy, and their children lived considerably longer than most Americans did at the turn of the century. Their son William was almost ninety when he died. But he was a cipher to Buford and white Southsiders.[72]

Work defined Thomas and Margaret's lives and those of their children, in freedom as it had in slavery. The legacy of servitude, coupled with wretched economic and agricultural realities, squelched the development of vital autonomous Black institutions that would foster community strength. Even though William's education ended before it really began, Mal considered his father wise and world-savvy. "I did not realize until well into manhood," Mal told the Conference of Black Mayors when he was eighty, "the power, the influence, the mother-wit and basic intelligence that he had. He did tell me once about his limited education, pointing out that his father felt even at six and seven years of age, that he was too big to be in school. He was needed on the farm, where crops needed tending. Finally, shortly after he reached his eighth year in September 1878, my one-time slave grandmother put her foot down, insisting that 'William has to get some learning.'" Thomas relented but admonished Margaret that William would have to leave school if the harvest got heavy. And just three weeks after William began attending a country school in White Plains, the harvest got heavy, and William's formal education ended. "My grandfather took dad out of school; he needed every available hand he could get," Mal explained.[73] William never returned to the classroom. He was not the only Black child denied the opportunity. In 1885 only half of Brunswick's Black children were enrolled for the five-month term and fewer than one in four came to school each day.[74]

Thomas and Margaret realized that to build lives on their own terms they needed to send William to the North. But until he was twenty, it seemed as if he would never leave the Piedmont. "My father worked ever since he was tall enough to do the job right," Mal declared. For a plow, the Goodes nailed spikes into a heavy beam that a mule dragged through the field to create furrows. William

plowed, seeded, hoed, and weeded from sunup to sunset. He was soon country strong, wiry and muscled, and only got stronger laboring in Pittsburgh's mills. When his grandchildren stepped out of line and William grabbed them with one hand, they could not escape what they called his "Indian death grip."[75]

William finally broke free of Brunswick in 1890. By then, plummeting crop prices, pressure from tobacco trusts, floods, and populism's failure to forge cross-racial alliances revealed the handwriting on the wall. There was little chance the Goodes would ever gain land unless a family member sought better-paying work elsewhere and accumulated enough money to buy it. It's possible that William found his first job in a Petersburg tobacco factory, more likely that he went to Richmond to work at the Tredegar Iron Works. Even before the war, Richmond lured Blacks from the countryside. No Southern city had developed its economy more or was better connected by canals, rail lines, and sea to the rest of the South. African Americans worked in its tobacco factories, producing plug and twist that were chewed, not smoked. Others were construction workers, teamsters, or quarrymen. Richmond offered a glimpse of what African Americans would build for themselves. An aura of mystery surrounded its secret societies, so-called because they had kept membership rolls confidential during slavery. These groups, like the Secret Sons of Love and the Rising Daughters of Liberty, underlay a web of mutual aid, trade union, and social organizations.[76]

The Tredegar Iron Works, where one thousand African Americans labored during the war, was probably William's ticket to Pittsburgh. His first job in the city was as a cinder pitman, shoveling waste out of open hearth furnaces at the Black Diamond mill in Lawrenceville, a blue-collar Pittsburgh neighborhood by the Allegheny River. Black Diamond had imported Black workers from Richmond to break a strike a few years before William arrived in 1890. These men had moved up the workplace hierarchy, helping migrants like William secure work and lodging.

William sent money home, enabling his parents to buy land. In January 1899 Thomas and Margaret made their marks on a deed

with Dr. W. S. and Annetta Purdy, paying them five hundred dollars for one hundred acres south of the Meherrin River. They had borrowed from the Purdys before and might have been their tenants or sharecroppers. Mal thought highly of Dr. Purdy. "They had no black doctors in Brunswick County then," he explained, and "if somebody got sick in the middle of the night, you got on horseback and rode two miles to Dr. Purdy's and he said, 'All right, I'll be there as soon as I get dressed.'"[77]

Their land was in White Plains, which a century later is an unincorporated stretch of black-topped road with a post office, scattered homes, farmland, and forest. Even with the money William sent home after arriving in Pittsburgh in 1890, Mary and Thomas needed to borrow $230 of the purchase price from the Purdys. But they held on to the property, and five years later, William's brother Ashton bought the adjoining almost seventy-two acres for $900.[78]

William did not return to White Plains to live, but his wife and children did. William and Mary's first two children, James and William, were born in Homestead, Pennsylvania, and Mal was born on the farm in White Plains in 1908.[79] The boys and Mary, who might have been teaching school in White Plains or Lawrenceville, lived there intermittently until 1916. William visited when the Steel Works banked its furnaces and laid men off, which happened most summers.[80]

Mal respected his father and Booker T. Washington, but he came of age during the great migration when the "New Negro," who disdained segregation, made the scene in northern cities. "My father believed blacks had everything to gain and nothing to lose," Mal reflected, "but I disagreed with him. I couldn't follow on this point. . . . He never admitted how his people, including himself, were being hurt by prejudice and aloofness on the part of our oppressors, all within the guise of so-called democracy. My father knew he was a victim of discrimination, yet he painstakingly rolled with the punches."[81] Growing up when and where he did, William had little choice but to accept racial realities he could not openly confront. He would argue his case years later around the crowded dinner table when his children, especially Mal, challenged his approach.

Thomas and Margaret Goode, as well as James and Jane Hunter, never left the South. But William Goode and Mary Hunter did, along with more than a million African Americans from the 1890s through the 1920s. These men and women changed their lives as they moved into neighborhoods in Chicago, New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. Coming together in "the promised land," they commenced the slow, herky-jerky struggle to transform America. Novelist Richard Wright, born in the same year as Mal, wrote that, while he was leaving the South and flinging himself into the unknown, he "was taking a part of the South to transplant in alien soil, to see if it could grow differently, if it could drink of new and cool rains, bend in strange winds, respond to the warmth of other suns and, perhaps, to bloom." Although Mal was born on his grandparents' farm in White Plains, his future lay in the North. But he, too, brought part of the South with him, and he would always keep a watchful eye on it.[82]