

Ingraham may be instructive here, for he visited the Forks of the Road slave market in the mid-1830s, and wrote about the people he observed there. It is likely the following remarks refer to Isaac Franklin:

Negro traders soon accumulate great wealth, from the immense profit they make on their merchandise... One of their number, who is the great southern slave-merchant, and who, for the last fifteen years, has supplied this country with two-thirds of the slaves brought into it, has amassed a fortune of more than a million of dollars by this traffic alone. He is a bachelor, and a man of gentlemanly address, as are many of these merchants, not the ferocious, Captain Kidd looking fellows, we Yankees have been apt to imagine them. Their admission into society, however, is not recognized. Planters associate with them freely enough, in the way of business, but notice them no further.⁴⁶

So, according to Ingraham, Franklin's physical appearance was not that of a scourge of society; his last comment, though, is particularly interesting and reflects the thoughts of many scholars concerning the relationships between slaveholders and other members of polite society, and slave traders. Others, though, rebut the idea of the slave trader as a societal outcast and maintain white Southerners were content, and not uncomfortable, with the trade or the trader.⁴⁷ This later suggestion, argued

by Michael Tadman and others, makes the Franklin-Hayes union, and particularly Oliver B. Hayes's approval of it, make much more sense.

Franklin and Armfield delivered a great deal of wealth to Isaac Franklin, of that there is no doubt, but it is also clear Franklin did not intend to remain in the trade indefinitely. By the mid-1830s he had purchased several hundred acres of land in Louisiana's West Feliciana Parish,⁴⁸ and by 1834 was living there for at least a portion of the year.⁴⁹ While Franklin does not state his reasons for divesting himself of his partnership interest and retiring from the trade, the economic downturn of 1837 certainly factored into the decision, and by the time of his marriage to Hayes in 1839, he was active only in collecting unpaid debts. By 1841, the partnership of Franklin and Armfield was dissolved,⁵⁰ and Franklin's time dedicated to that of full-time planter.

Throughout their married life, the Franklins split their time between Fairvue and the Louisiana plantations, summering in the former and wintering in the latter. The Louisiana residence was quite modest, not nearly as grand as Fairvue; a wood structure described at the time of Franklin's death as "old and the galleries somewhat decayed." Franklin intended to build a new and more spacious Louisiana home for his growing family, had selected the location and contracted with a carpenter to begin once his current project was completed.⁵¹ Time in Louisiana was not all spent on the plantations, though, and included extended



Adelia and Isaac Franklin had four children between 1840 and 1844. Washington B. Cooper completed this portrait of the three Franklin girls, Victoria, Adelia, and Emma, in 1845, only nine months before the death of the two older girls in 1846. (Belmont Mansion Association)

trips to New Orleans, dedicated to both business and pleasure. And despite the difference in their ages, the Franklin marriage was apparently a happy one, with children born in rather rapid succession: Victoria in the spring of 1840, Adelia in 1842, Julius, who lived just two days, in January of 1844, and Emma, in December of 1844. This idyllic family picture was not to last,

however, for in the spring of 1846, Franklin became ill with a stomach complaint, and on April 27, just a month prior to his fifty-seventh birthday, he died on the Louisiana plantation.⁵² Plans were immediately made to return his body to Sumner County, with Adelia Franklin, her father, and the children accompanying Franklin on his final journey home. This episode proved