

Acklen wrote from the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans of the goings-on that winter season. The St. Charles was the Acklens' favorite lodging place in New Orleans, and the guest register confirms their visits to the city and the hotel—for business and pleasure—were frequent.⁷³ In this letter, Acklen also revealed, "Mr A seems better contented away from the plantation now he has such an excellent Agent."⁷⁴ Joseph Acklen had proved a very talented plantation manager since taking on the responsibility at their marriage, and increased both the family's holdings in Louisiana, and their productivity, but at a personal cost. In order to realize these economic successes, Acklen spent the majority of his time at the plantations, so much so, that in recalling his relationship with his father, William Acklen wrote, "My recollections of my father are vague.... Duty compelled him to look after the welfare of his dependents and he was desirous of showing the world the better side of slavery in an ideal plantation life."⁷⁵ Acklen refers here to his father's "Rules in the Management of a Southern Estate," which caught the attention of the larger planter society, and was published at least in part in the very popular *DeBow's Review*.⁷⁶

By November of 1857, Adelia Acklen had spent the summer in Tennessee and was once again in Louisiana, and wrote Lawrence, "I am now getting to feel settled again, and things moving on in the usual way."⁷⁷ The Acklen plantations were located some distance from the nearest towns, Bayou Sara and St. Francisville,⁷⁸ and while

both Isaac Franklin and Joseph Acklen frequently attended to business matters in Bayou Sara, it does not appear Adelia visited either town very often, if at all. Their Angola Landing, however, saw a great deal of traffic and brought the Acklens not only welcomed company, but news and information as well. "The steamer James Johnson will stop here every trip," Adelia wrote in this same November letter, "so if you have at any time a letter ready or any especial message, it will be a grand opportunity *provided she ever gets to Nashville*,"⁷⁹ referring here to the frequent fires and accidents that plagued steamships—and steamship travel.

In late 1858, Acklen suffered yet another significant loss with the death of her father, Oliver B. Hayes.⁸⁰ After a long and prosperous life of seventy-five years, an ordained minister in his later years, Hayes died quietly at Rokeby. Hal Hayes communicated the news to his brother, Oliver, Jr., at home in Williamson County, Tennessee, and perhaps sent a similar message to Adelia at Angola. "It is my painful duty to communicate the sad intelligence that our dear father is dead—he has just departed this life apparently with little suffering,"⁸¹ he wrote. Personal letters and communication between Acklen and her father have not survived, but in what appeared a very close and loving relationship, Hayes's death must have struck her particularly hard. It seems Acklen learned her business savvy and acumen, displayed during the Civil War and forward, from her father. He acted as her advisor, represented her interests and

Emma's in managing and administering Franklin's estate, assisted in her eventual challenge of Franklin's will, and the two likely engaged in many conversations concerning the business and financial health of Adelia Franklin Acklen's properties and holdings over the years. She faced the Christmas following his death without the gaiety and merriment typical of the season, and wrote Lawrence, "another '*Christmas*' has been 'buried in the past'... we passed the day very quietly... which was more in accordance with my feelings—for sad reflections would come up."⁸²

Reading between the lines is the only avenue available to appreciate and understand this father-daughter bond—the strain Acklen felt in her relationship with her mother, however, is apparent, and clearly revealed in letters to Lawrence. "I should think Ma might *find time* now to write," Acklen wrote from Angola in November of 1857, a year before her father passed, "no one but her & Pa at home."⁸³ And in February of 1859, on receiving news her mother had canceled a planned visit to Louisiana, Acklen wrote, "that 'disappointment sinks the heart' is true—and to add to others is the intelligence that Ma had altogether given out the idea of coming down, as she promised—and too, without any excuse... But I suppose she is happier with those she thinks more of, & feels most interest in, and I should not wish it."⁸⁴ These suggestions that Sarah Hightower Hayes preferred the company of her younger daughters Laura and Corinne to Adelia's are made in many

of the surviving letters, and point to what was likely a life-long tension between these two strong-willed women.

Although raised in an urban environment, Adelia Acklen, and the Acklens generally, seemed to truly enjoy the relative tranquility of rural life in Louisiana. "We found we had a most beautiful day & bright sun to welcome us,"⁸⁵ she wrote Lawrence in November of 1857, upon returning to the Angola plantation following a trip to New Orleans; and in February of 1858 reported, "some of the peach trees have a few flowers on them, plenty of flowers in bloom I often wish you had some of them."⁸⁶ The Acklen property was bordered on the west and south, at Tunica Bend, by the Mississippi River, located just a short distance from the Mississippi state border to the north, in sight of the Tunica Hills to the east, and included, eventually, six unique plantations: Bellevue, Lake Killarney, Lochlomond, Angola, Loango, and Panola.⁸⁷ In addition to the beauty of the landscape, as Acklen described it, the expansive holdings, totaling just about ten thousand acres, provided the Acklen children with plenty of opportunities for adventure. "Bud says he must write to Uncle Willie to tell him about his & Willie's beautiful little *Welch ponies*,"⁸⁸ Acklen wrote in February of 1858; "Uncle Willie" was Corinne's husband, William L.B. Lawrence. The Acklens' third son, Claude, is first mentioned in a letter to Lawrence, probably from spring of 1858 when he was about eight months old; "little 'Claude' grows more interesting every day,"