

Acklen wrote, and then noted "Willie & I were setting out some little *Cedars* yesterday."<sup>89</sup> William was about three years old and the picture Acklen paints of time spent with her toddler son, planting seedlings around their Louisiana home, is an important one for she is often stereotypically cast as a wealthy, elite "Southern belle;" one who certainly had no time for her children. Acklen's warmth and compassion for children is also apparent in her discussions of her husband's niece, Sallie Acklen. "Sallie & Bud went fishing yesterday & brought home quite a nice string for supper,"<sup>90</sup> she wrote Lawrence in March of 1859. Sallie was the daughter of Joseph's brother, John R.H. Acklen, who died in 1846. At the death of his wife, Mary, in 1859, an orphaned Sallie came to live with Joseph and Adelia; she was probably in her mid-to-late teens at the time.<sup>91</sup> Sallie not only proved a good fishing partner for her young cousin, Bud, but a fine traveling companion for Adelia, who wrote Lawrence following a trip to New Orleans in February of 1859, "Sallie was thought to be the prettiest girl at the 'St Charles.'"<sup>92</sup> Acklen clearly enjoyed introducing her niece to New Orleans society.

While these letters provide a welcome glimpse into the Acklens' life on the plantations, this one, in particular, reveals a bit more about Acklen herself, and her faith: "As I have been sitting sometime in the door of my room, enjoying the fresh invigorating breeze, as it is wafted by;" she wrote Lawrence in April of 1860, days before the firing on Fort Sumter,

and looking out upon nature; now made so lovely, by the hand of God, I thought *how much* is provided for us by *his* goodness—*so many sources of enjoyment*, and how thankful we should be, and even if afflictions come, know that they are at the hand of God—and that we should not expect to have all the blessings of life, and none of its trials,—it would make this world, too delightful a dwelling place.<sup>93</sup>

The Acklens, as had the Franklins, left the heat and humidity of summertime Louisiana and spent those months in the cooler, and healthier, Tennessee. Adelia Acklen had purchased a home in Nashville in 1847, much closer to Rokeby and the rest of the Hayes family than far-off Sumner County, and also sold her interest in Fairvue to Isaac Franklin's brother, William, a trustee of the academy Isaac established in his will. She continued to purchase parcels of property in Nashville in the late 1840s, most of them adjacent to Rokeby, and on one of these she and Joseph Acklen built the magnificent Belmont.<sup>94</sup> Perched on a hill to survey the landscape, the house contained close to thirty rooms, Venetian glass, Carrara marble fireplaces, Corinthian columns, and was thought the most magnificent home in the antebellum South.<sup>95</sup> "It was my mother's custom to give a large ball once a year," William Ackland recalled:

The house was lighted from attic to cellar and the rooms profusely decorated



Shortly after her marriage to Joseph A.S. Acklen in 1849, Adelia Acklen challenged Isaac Franklin's will in the Louisiana courts. She was awarded the estate, including the cotton plantations of Panola, Belle View, Killarney, and Angola. (Detail from "Norman's Chart of the Lower Mississippi River," 1858, Library of Congress)