

The eight-room manor was built by slaves who made the bricks in the Sweetwater Creek nearby. The house still stands and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. Over the past decades, the plantation grounds around the house have been divided up into subdivisions. Weedon Heights was one of the first, dating to the early 20th century. The neighborhood is named for John D. Weeden, Jr., the grandson of Robert Patton. When the neighborhood was developed, 23 small slave cabins from the old Sweetwater Plantation, known as the “slave village,” were still standing, just north of present-day Broadway Recreation Center and facing a community square. There is also supposed to be a slave cemetery nearby, possibly in the woods between the mansion and the neighborhood. Weeden Heights is mapped on the 1936 USGS/TVA topographic map, but the slave cabins or houses in their configuration do not appear to be a part of subdivision.

The historical marker for Weeden Heights states that the Patton family gifted a 25-acre farm to a former slave named Edmund Patton in 1871 “in consideration of his faithfulness and fidelity.” A man

(Above) A Hand-Colored Postcard of Sweetwater Mansion (Florence-Lauderdale Public Library, Courtesy Robert Whitten)



30 ■ ■ Wilson Plantation* and Slave Cemetery

The cemetery known as Wilson Family Cemetery is located northwest of Florence in the center of a triangle created by Old Jackson Highway, Gresham Road, and Middle Road. Today, it is in the southwest corner of a new neighborhood and golf course. In the early 19th century, this land was part

THE NAME	ACRES OF LAND				FARM VALUES			FENCES	LABOR				GRASS LANDS															
	OWNER	IMPROVED	UNIMPROVED		OF FARMS, INCLUDING LAND, FENCES, AND BUILDINGS	OF FARMING IMPLEMENTS AND MACHINERY	OF LIVE STOCK		CUT OF BUILDING AND REPAIRING TO 1875	CUT OF FERTILIZERS PURCHASED IN 1875	AMOUNT PAID FOR WAGES FOR LABOR DURING 1875, INCLUDING VALUE OF BOARD	WEEKS' WORTH LABOR IN 1875 UPON FARM (AND DAIRY EXCLUDING HOME-WORK)	ESTIMATED VALUE OF ALL FARM PRODUCTIONS (CASH, COMMERCIAL, OR ON HAND) FOR 1875	COWS AND CALVES		HORSES		PULLED HORSES		HORSES OF ALL AGES ON HAND JAN. 1, 1875	MARES AND AMONG ALL AGES ON HAND JAN. 1, 1875							
			PERMANENT PASTURES, ORCHARDS, VINEYARDS	WOODLAND AND PASTURE										OTHER UNIMPROVED, INCLUDING "OLD FIELDS" NOT GROWING WOOD	DOLLARS	DOLLARS	DOLLARS	DOLLARS	DOLLARS			WORTH	COURSES	ACRES	ACRES	TONS	BUSHELS	BUSHELS
			NO.	NO.										NO.	9	10	11	12	13			14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1 Patton Pa Gov R M	1	100	30	50	250	4000	250	500	100		500	52	52	250	25	20	3			6	1							
2 Moore	1	45	45	20		500	10	100					340								1							
3 Walker	1	25	25	20		400	6	70					31								1							
4 R. H. Linn	1	23	23	20		350	20	114					140								1							
5 Key John	1	35		20		425	25	129					220								1							
6																					6							
7 W. H. W. Williams	1	40		20	10	1000	25	109					300								1							
8																					8							
9 Patton Edmund	1	20	1	2	4	250	10	36			9		6	125							1							

(Above) 1880 Agricultural Census Showing Edmund Patton's Land Use and Ownership (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com)

named Edmund Patton is enumerated on the 1870 census as a 45-year-old black man living and farming in the Florence area with his wife, Francis. The 1880 agricultural census lists an Edmund Patton owning 21 improved acres and 6 unimproved acres. He grew corn, oats, wheat, cotton, potatoes, apples, and peaches, and had cattle and chickens.

of the plantations owned by John, Matthew, and Samuel Wilson, brothers from Virginia who came to Lauderdale in 1818. The brothers and other members of the family are buried in the cemetery.

Adjacent to the Wilson Family Cemetery is a slave cemetery. There were at least 160 slaves on two of the Wilson's plantations in the mid-19th century. None of the graves are marked, but it is believed that Christopher Brewer and his wife, the grandparents of W.C. Handy, are buried here. Brewer was a freeman by the time of the Civil War; however, he continued to work for the Wilson family.

