



"Fear God and Walk Humbly": The Agricultural Journal of James Mallory, 1843-1877

James Mallory



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James Mallory was an uncommon Southerner. Most inhabitants of the Old South, especially the plain folk, devoted more time to leisurely activities--drinking, gambling, hunting, fishing, and just loafing--than did Mallory, a workaholic agriculturalist, who experimented with new plants, orchards, and manures, as well as the latest farming equipment and techniques. A Whig and a Unionist, a temperance man and a peace lover, ambitious yet caring, business-minded and progressive, he supported railroad construction as well as formal education, even for girls. His cotton production--four bales per field hand in 1850, nearly twice the average for the best cotton lands in southern Alabama and Georgia--tells more about Mallory's steady work habits than about his class status.

But his most obvious eccentricity--what gave him reason to be remembered--was that nearly every day from 1843 until his death in 1877, Mallory kept a detailed journal of local, national, and often foreign news, agricultural activities, the weather, and especially events involving his family, relatives, slaves, and neighbors in Talladega County, Alabama.

Mallory's journal spans three major periods of the South's history--the boom years before the Civil War, the rise and collapse of the Confederacy, and the period of Reconstruction after the Civil War. He owned slaves and raised cotton, but Mallory was never more than a hardworking farmer, who described agriculture in poetical language as "the greatest [interest] of all."



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