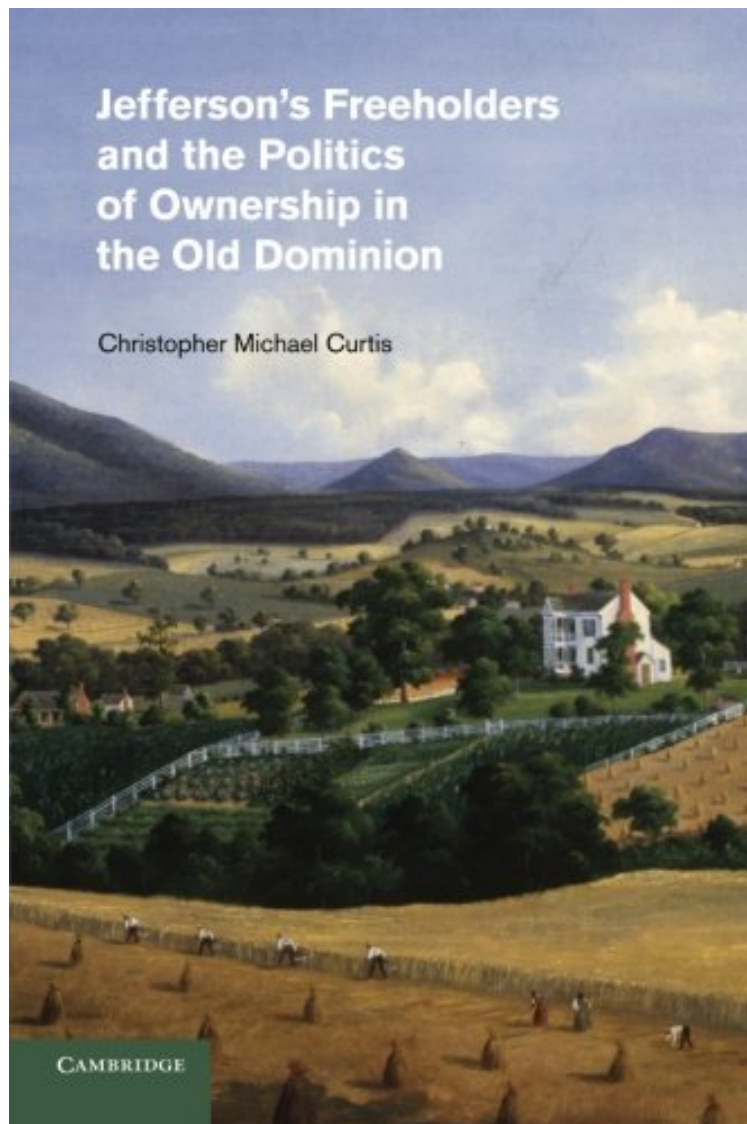


[Get free] Jefferson's Freeholders and the Politics of Ownership in the Old Dominion (Cambridge Studies on the American South)

## Jefferson's Freeholders and the Politics of Ownership in the Old Dominion (Cambridge Studies on the American South)

*Professor Christopher Michael Curtis*  
audiobook / \*ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#3289663 in Books 2014-05-01 2014-05-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.21 x .59 x 6.14l, .92 #File Name: 1107639670270 pages | File size: 26.Mb

**Professor Christopher Michael Curtis : Jefferson's Freeholders and the Politics of Ownership in the Old Dominion (Cambridge Studies on the American South)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jefferson's Freeholders and the Politics of Ownership in the Old Dominion (Cambridge Studies on the American South):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Thomas Jefferson, land legal reform, and the growth of suffrage in antebellum Virginia By Ronald H. Clark This is truly a remarkable example of outstanding historical scholarship. Particularly as to Jefferson, it highlights an aspect of his campaign for legal reform in Virginia that despite my extensive study of his activities I was not even aware of--and I am willing to bet I am not the only one. This topic is the subject of the "Renovatio" or shorter section of the book. The second and longer section ("Reformatio") focuses upon the post-Jefferson antebellum period during which Virginia was reviewing and revising its bases for voting and participating in state and local government, and in effect rejected TJ's concept of land tenure as the basis for citizenship. It is full of insights for students of Virginia history. The author provides a helpful introduction ("The Tragedy of Ownership") at the outset to orient the reader. This book is so rich in research and ideas that I can but suggest some general themes. We are fortunate, however, that this new paperback edition makes this store of research more easily available. During the revolutionary period, TJ fought an important battle regarding how land ownership should be conceptualized. He argued that Virginia was not governed by what he considered to be feudal concepts imposed upon English law as a result of the Norman conquest (the so-called "Norman Yoke"). This system created a feudal structure with the King at the top as the technical owner of all land, and able to impose conditions on those holding it. TJ rejected this and went back to the Anglo-Saxon period to argue for an "allodial" model which meant Virginians really owed their land and were free to dispose of it as they wished. TJ crossed intellectual swords with those opposing this interpretation, and it is remarkable to see how he and some other Virginians (such as Richard Bland) were able to out research and argue their British opponents. TJ also drew upon natural rights concepts articulated in the Scottish enlightenment. This concept of land ownership was obviously important to Jefferson given his desire to have a nation of independent farmers, owning their land, and able to hold government to proper limits. But this topic is ever more important, as the author explains: since the King was not the owner of colonial land, he did not have political authority over colonies like Virginia. So, TJ's research was employed in his constitutional arguments like "A Summary View of the Rights of British America" which played an important role in laying the foundation for the Revolution. Jefferson continued to argue for further reforms, including modifying inheritance practices and doing away with common law estates which allowed the dead to control dispersal of land long after they were gone. For TJ, land ownership vested political standing; without it, one was not a participating citizen. The second and longer section ("Reformatio") deals with the antebellum period after TJ's death. Here the issue became should TJ's concept of land as the basis for citizenship be replaced with a broader concept, especially given that slaves had become a major source of property and wealth which did not vest citizenship rights. What of those who had money but did not own land but leased it? This battle was fought in the Virginia constitutional convention of 1829 (which lasted four years) and in numerous legislative debates thereafter. Eventually, the impact of modern commercial society overrode the Jeffersonian concept of limiting citizenship to those who owned land. A desire to protect slavery as the Civil War approached also played an important role. The author goes into all this in great detail in 144 pages of analysis, which should be of great value to students of Virginia history and government. The research supporting the book is phenomenal. The extensive footnotes are an integral part of the analysis. Throughout, the author identifies valuable sources that can be employed for follow-up individual research. I found most of these sources (e.g., "Revolutionary Virginia: A Documentary History", the papers of Edmund Pendleton, and "Tucker's Blackstone") to be readily available and not particularly expensive. The author touches upon a wide variety of related issues (such as legal education; married women's property acts; and codification) that themselves are interesting; but he never loses his primary focus. So much material is packed into this volume that it requires much time (and at times patience) to absorb it. But I am not one to be unhappy when presented with an abundance of intellectual riches.

Jefferson's Freeholders explores the historical processes by which Virginia was transformed from a British colony into a Southern slave state. It focuses on changing conceptualizations of ownership and emphasizes the persistent influence of the English common law on Virginia's postcolonial political culture. The book explains how the traditional characteristics of land tenure became subverted by the dynamic contractual relations of a commercial economy and assesses the political consequences of the law reforms that were necessitated by these developments. Nineteenth-century reforms seeking to reconcile the common law with modern commercial practices embraced new democratic expressions about the economic and political power of labor, and thereby encouraged the idea that slavery was an essential element in sustaining republican government in Virginia. By the 1850s, the ownership of human property had replaced the ownership of land as the distinguishing basis for political power with tragic consequences for the Old Dominion.

"Christopher Curtis's book is a remarkable and welcome hybrid, its research meticulous and exhaustive. Curtis's judgments about the evidence are judicious and balanced. His arguments and conclusions are important and portable, for he demonstrates how the cultural and legal effects of commercial developments remapped Virginians' understanding of the justification of popular political participation, and even of political legitimacy. The concluding chapter on a 'new jurisprudence' is a tour de force. Jefferson's Freeholders is a book for many seasons." Gerard V.

Bradley, University of Notre Dame Law School "In recent decades a number of talented scholars have greatly enriched our understanding of both the political and the legal history of the antebellum South. Most of these scholars, however, have concentrated on either the political or the legal rather than weaving together developments in both realms. Chris Curtis's new book, *Jefferson's Freeholders and the Politics of Ownership in the Old Dominion*, is the exception to the rule. In this rigorously argued study, Curtis details the manner in which changing conceptions of property and changes in the legal system at once underpinned and reinforced changes in politics and the political order in one key southern state. Curtis's estimable scholarship will compel all students of southern history to rethink the material and moral bases upon which the region was grounded." Peter A. Coclanis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill "Christopher Michael Curtis's *Jefferson's Freeholders and the Politics of Ownership in the Old Dominion* is nothing short of seminal. It will compel the re-study of development of slave society not only in Virginia, but, with appropriate adjustments, for the Old South. Rarely do we find legal, intellectual, and economic history so well integrated and graced by such penetrating insight. The implications of the shift in the nature of property relations illuminate the evolution of the yeomanry as readily as they do that of the planters." Eugene D. Genovese, co-author with Elizabeth Fox-Genovese of *The Mind of the Master Class, Slavery in White and Black, and Fatal Self-Deception* "This book is impressive from various perspectives. Chris Curtis has written an engaging historical treatise on Virginian property relations and law from colonial days to the ante-bellum era. He adroitly demonstrates how local legal history provides a window into law and legal change regionally, nationally and internationally, in the Common Law world. Moreover, by tapping political, economic and social records he has produced a rich narrative of the changing imperatives of political thought and action and economic realities that influenced the development of local law in this slave holding jurisdiction, and explain its inner contradictions. This book merits a broad readership." John McLaren, University of Victoria "Christopher Curtis's provocative new book is a welcome addition to the literature on Revolutionary and antebellum Virginia. Focusing on land law, *Jefferson's Freeholders* charts the Old Dominion's progress from the agrarian commonwealth Jefferson envisioned in 1776 to the slave-based democracy of the 1851 state constitution. White manhood suffrage marked both the triumph of democracy in Virginia and Virginia's emergence as a slave state committed to the peculiar institution's perpetuation. Curtis's smart and original study deserves a wide readership." Peter S. Onuf, University of Virginia, author of *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* "Essential." *Choice* "The great strength of this book derives from its interwoven analysis of statutes, litigation, politics, and political theory." Turk McCleskey, *Virginia Magazine* "Curtis offers an erudite study of the legal basis of property ownership in Virginia between the American Revolution and the 1850s." *The Journal of American History* "In his doggedly intelligent study of the legal culture of possession in late colonial and antebellum Virginia, Christopher Michael Curtis shows that the abundance of scholarship on Thomas Jefferson has a point beyond the hagiographic: Jefferson remains an important point of departure for understanding the early south." Christopher Tomlins, *Journal of Southern History* About the Author Christopher Michael Curtis serves as the Department Head for the Department of History at Armstrong State University, Georgia. He is a former Marine Infantry Officer.