

The following article was written in DeBow's Review in January 1855

THE RICHEST MAN IN VIRGINIA

Samuel Hairston, of Pittsylvania, says the Richmond Whig, was, a year or two ago, the owner of between 1600 and 1700 slaves, in his own right, having but a little while ago taken a census. He also has a prospective right to about 1000 slaves more, which are now owned by his mother-in-law, Mrs. R. Hairston, he having married her only child. He now has the management of them, which makes the number of his slaves near three thousand. They increase at the rate of near 100 every year; he has to purchase a large plantation each year to settle them on. A large number of his plantations are in Henry and Patrick Counties, Virginia. He has large estates in North Carolina. His landed property in Stokes alone is assessed at \$600,000.00. His wealth is differently estimated at from \$3,000,000 to \$5,000,000, and I should think, nearer the latter. You think he has a hard lot, but I assure you Mr. Hairston manages all his matters as easy as most persons would an estate of \$10,000. He has overseers who are compelled to give him a written statement of what has been made and spent on each plantation, and his negroes are all clothed and fed from his on domestic manufacture; and raising his own tobacco crop, which is immensely large as so much clear gain every year besides his increase in negroes, which is a fortune in itself.

And now for his residence. I have travelled over fiftieth states in this Union and have never seen anything comparable to his yard and garden except some of them in the Mississippi delta and none of them equal to it Mr. Hairston has been beautifying it for years; and a good old minister, in preaching near the place and describing Paradise said "It was as beautiful as Mrs. Hairston's" or a friend who visited Washington City for the time remarked that "the public grounds were nearly as handsome as Samuel Hairston's". He is a plain, unassuming gentleman, and has never made any noise in the world though he could vie with Bruce's, the McDonough's and Astor's; and it is strange that while their wealth is co-extensive with the Union, he is not known a hundred miles from home. I believe he is now the wealthiest man in the Union. As William B. Astor is only worth about \$4,000,000, and the estates of many city people are vastly overrated, while Mr. Hairston can show the property that will bring cash at any moment.

Mr. Hairston was raised within a few miles of where he now lives, in Henry County. He has several brothers who are pretty well-to-do, in the world. One of them Marshall Hairston, of Henry, owns more than 700 negroes; Robert Hairston, who now lives in Mississippi, near a 1,000 and Harden Hairston who has also moved to Mississippi about 600 slaves. George Hairston of Henry has given most all of his property to his children, reserving only about 150 slaves for his on use. This I believe is a correct statement of the circumstances of the Hairston family.

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NOTE:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Bow's_Review

DeBow's Review was a widely circulated magazine^[1] of "agricultural, commercial, and industrial progress and resource" in the *American South* during the upper middle of the 19th century, from 1846 until 1884.^[1] It bore the name of its first editor, **James Dunwoody Brownson DeBow** (J. D. B. DeBow, 1820–1867) who wrote much in the early issues; however, there were several various writers over the years (see below: *Contributors*). R. G. Barnwell and Edwin Q. Bell, of Charleston, appeared as editors in March 1867, after DeBow's death,^[2] and W. M. Burwell was editor from March 1868–Dec. 1879.^[1]