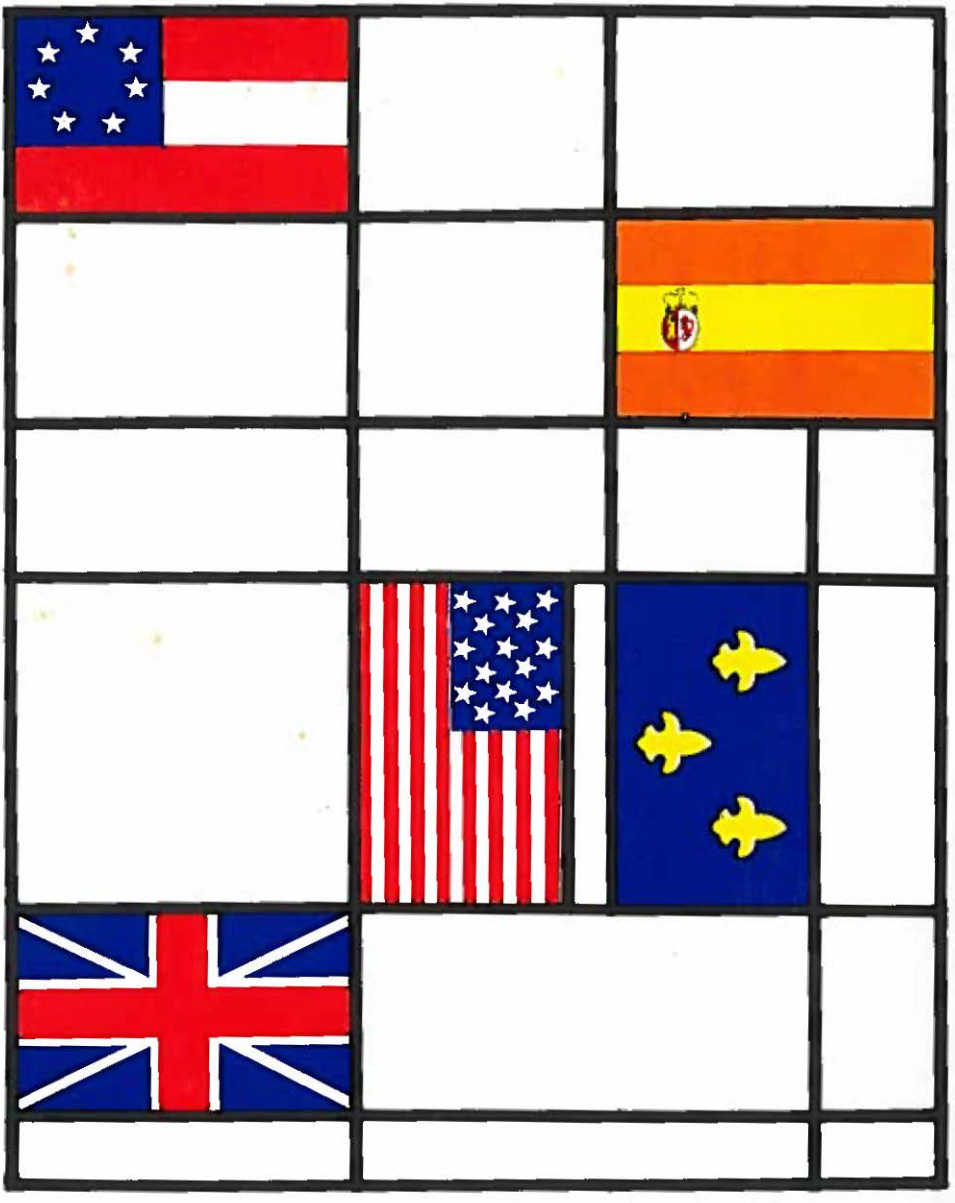
GCHR Gulf Coast Historical Review

Vol. 2 No. 1



GC HR Gulf Coast Historical Review

Vol. 2 Fall 1986 No. 1

Cover design by
Marilyn Thomason

The *Gulf Coast Historical Review* is published biannually in the Fall and Spring by the History Department of the University of South Alabama, Humanities 344, Mobile, AL 36688. The subscription price is $10.00 a year with payment to accompany order. Inquiries about subscriptions or submission of manuscripts and other material for future issues of the *GCHR* should be sent to the Managing Editor, *GCHR*, at the address above. The *Gulf Coast Historical Review* is not responsible for statements of opinion or fact made by its contributors.

From the Editors. . . .

This issue marks the beginning of the *Gulf Coast Historical Review*'s second year. We are grateful to the scholars who have contributed their work and to the subscribers who support our publication. In our first year we published several interesting articles and reviews and we look forward to an even stronger second year.

This issue contains articles which deal with subjects as diverse as the Roaring Twenties in Tallahassee, antebellum race relations in New Orleans, Public Health in Mississippi, and Reconstruction politics in Mobile. For the first time we are publishing an interview, both because it is a good example of oral history and because its subject matter, the history of Gulf Shores, Alabama, is fascinating. We also offer our readers an 1862 letter from Fort Gaines which provides an interesting vignette of garrison life at the mouth of Mobile Bay. The issue contains reviews of the best recent publications dealing with Gulf Coast history. There are the regular features such as "From the Archives" and a visit to a historic landmark, this time Mobile's Oakleigh Mansion at Christmas time.

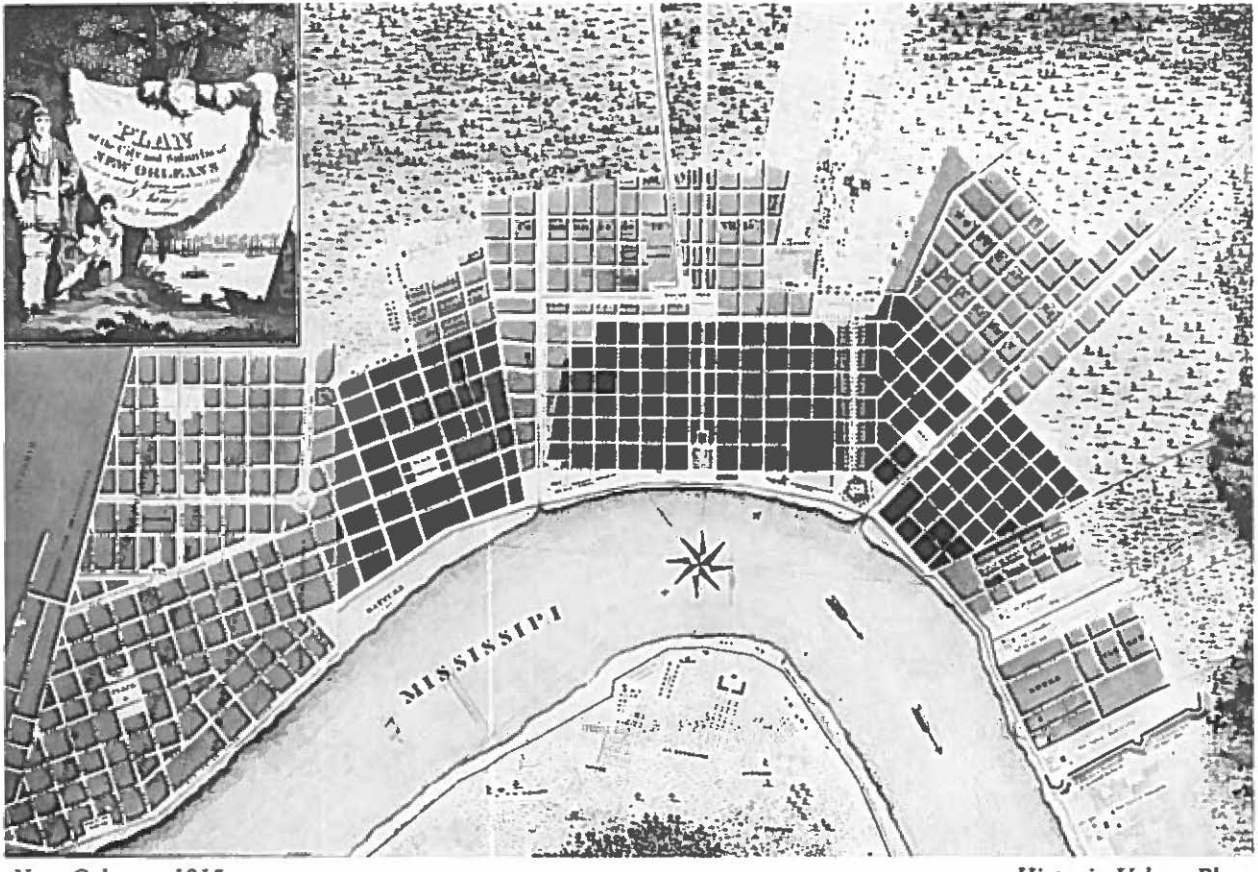
The regional focus of the *GCHR* helps both authors and readers see local subjects from a different angle. Just as Mississippi Public Health nurses in the twenties and thirties got exposure to professional practices in the North during their post-graduate training, so the regional historical approach helps the local scholar to see his subject from a larger perspective. This is essential to keep history from becoming merely antiquarianism. Also it's important to facilitate communication between the scholarly world and the layman. The *GCHR* has done this and will continue to do so in this and future issues.

The *Gulf Coast Historical Review* is mailed in the first week of October and April. If you do not receive your copy within a reasonable period of time, let us know and we will send you another.

We hope you enjoy this third issue and solicit your comments about it. We need to know what you like and what we need to change. Should we be doing something new? Don't hesitate to write or call if you have any comments on the *GCHR*; we'd love to hear from you.

EDITORIAL STAFF

TABLE OF CONTENTS



New Orleans, 1815

Le Liberateur: New Orleans' Free Negro Newspaper

Timothy F. Reilly

For a brief period between February and August 1830, a daily newspaper, *Le Liberateur*, appeared in the city of New Orleans. It vigorously proclaimed the full equality of Louisiana's free colored population. This was certainly startling and unusual, for the notion that any black man held a position even approximating a level of equality with whites often created as much controversy among Northern audiences as it did in the slaveholding South.

The newspaper was a unique piece of journalism as it appears to have been the only daily published inside the Deep South whose primary aim was the attainment of suffrage and all other rights of citizenship for free men of color. This short-lived publication and the controversy it engendered were only dimly remembered by a few historians by the end of the nineteenth century. Since no issues of *Le Liberateur* were extant, only vague speculations and inquiries trailed behind the newspaper's almost forgotten legacy. *Le Liberateur*'s editor, a gentleman known only as Milo Mower, was even more forgotten than his elusive publication.

It was not until 1865, at the close of the Civil War, that an off-hand reference was made about *Le Liberateur* in the New Orleans press. Thirty-five years after the newspaper's death, the *Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orleans* asked if any of their readers possessed copies of *Le Liberateur*. If so, would they "please bring them to the [*Tribune*] offices. . . and lend them to the editors for a few days." The *Tribune* misidentified *Le Liberateur*'s editor as "Milomower" and guessed that the newspaper had been published in New Orleans "about thirty years ago." [1]

The *Tribune*'s reference was indeed timely, for New Orleans was then under Union occupation and the city's black population was enjoying more liberty and equality than ever before. According to historian Edward Larocque Tinker, the *Tribune* was in pursuit of a very rare journalistic document. "As the 'Tribune' was a newspaper conducted by Negroes in the interest of Negroes, it can be deduced from the above that an anti-slavery newspaper, 'Le Liberateur,' was published clandestinely in New Orleans as early as 1835. If this supposition is correct it will prove the earliest anti-slavery paper in Louisiana and a great rarity. No copies found." [2]

Tinker's supposition proved to be only partly correct. First of all, *Le Liberateur* was published in 1830 — not in 1835. Secondly, the news-

paper's editorial criticism attacked the institution of slavery only obliquely. Its greater concern was that Louisiana's free colored have equal status with whites. The paper suggested that the Negro slave, on the other hand, should have the opportunity of gaining his freedom through self-purchase or meritorious conduct. At most, *Le Liberateur* offered a tentative proposal for individual manumission which only skirted the boundaries of abolitionism. The newspaper's primary goal was ultimately to eliminate the free colored caste by tearing down the racial barriers to social and political equality. *Le Liberateur* refused to acknowledge the factor of race as a legitimate criterion in establishing valid citizenship and individual rights under the American Constitution. Based on the date of the newspaper's publication, the location of its home office in New Orleans, and its discovery by the Northern abolitionist press, it perhaps ranks as one of the most daring and unusual French-language papers ever published in North America.

Information about *Le Liberateur* is available because of fortuitous incorporation of important extracts of the New Orleans paper in a leading abolitionist publication of the day, the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. The *Genius'* editor, Benjamin Lundy, had begun publication in 1821 in the hope of eradicating slavery through gradualist means. By the end of the decade, however, he had become an ardent proponent of immediate abolitionism. Furthermore, Lundy's philosophy of immediatism was instrumental in converting the mind of his close friend and partner William Lloyd Garrison — America's most famous abolitionist. Coincidentally, the two men actually collaborated in editing the *Genius* in Baltimore between the summer of

Benjamin Lundy
William Lloyd Garriosn, 1895-1879

William Lloyd Garrison
Brady-Hand Collection, Library of Congress

Department Francais.

LOUISIANE.

Du Liberal.

L'esprit d'intolérancé, avec tout ce qui l'accompagne, chassé de presque tous les autres Etats, s'est depuis longtemps refugié chez nous —Il y a établi un empire sur lequel sa volonté est comme les lois d'un pouvoir absolu. Il s'est erigé un trône sur notre sol, qui n'a d'autre appui que notre ignorance. Les préjugés nous ont charges de chaines qui nous empêchent d'avance : dans le chemin de la perfection. La torche de la barbarie a embrasé nos cocurs, et nous porte aux actes de cruauté et d'oppression.

Nous sommes fiers de pouvoir assurer que nous sommes les premiers entrés dans l'arène pour de couvrir et chassir loin de nous ces ennemis de l'humanité. Nous y sommes entrés armés du miroir de la vérité et de l'épée de la justice. Nous avons osé le faire pour le bien de notre pays et l'amour de nos semblables. Nous ne prétendons pas d'achever l'oeuvre entière de la réforme.

Nous donnerons seulement l'exemple ; premièrement nous tracerons le chemin, que nous suivrons ensuite avec une persevérance infatigable. Nous montrerons au petit nombre, les personnes bien intentionnées qui joignent leurs

Le Liberateur *extract in* Genius, *June 1830*

1829 and the spring of the following year. [3] They discovered *Le Liberateur* at this time and proceeded to reprint extracts of the publicaton in the *Genius*. It is possible that Mower, himself, sent them copies of his newspaper. Interestingly, the editor of the *Genius* introduced the New Orleans paper to Northern audiences in the exclamatory style associated with Garrison:

> I have received the first number [February 24, 1830] of a *Daily Paper*, recently established in New Orleans, by Milo Mower, entitled "The Liberalist." Surprising as it may seem to us of the more northern states, this work is *avowedly* an advocate of the *rights and interests of the people of color!* A disposition has manifested itself in the Legislature of Louisiana, *to follow the example of Ohio*, in expelling the free colored people from the State. The "Liberalist" boldly contests the justice and policy of the measure; and forcibly appeals to the wisdom and humanity of the Legislature, depicting at the same time, in glowing colors, the difficulty and danger, as well as the cruelty and misery, that would necessarily attend its execution. [4]

In the end, the Louisiana bill was seriously blunted by a series of amendments. Although it successfully passed through the Legislature, the final version did not apply to free colored persons who were married, who had children born in the state, and who could "give security for their good conduct." This rendered the bill almost totally ineffectual. *Le Liberateur* was ecstatic in its appraisal of the dramatic turnabout. Editor Mower even went so far as to claim that his small daily had played a crucial role in safeguarding the rights of free blacks. [5] Mower's claim appears to have been justified since, as if in answer to *Le Liberateur*, the Legislature followed up its mildly discriminatory law with another directed toward "the author, printer, or publisher of any written or printed paper...with intent to disturb the peace or security" of the free colored population:

> That whosoever shall write, print, publish or distribute, any thing having a tendency to produce discontent among the free colored population of the state, or insubordination among the slaves therein, shall on conviction thereof, before any court or competent jurisdiction, be sentenced to imprisonment at hard labour for life or suffer death, at the discretion of the court. [6]

Mower's preoccupation with the rights of Louisiana's free colored community strongly suggests that he was a free man of color. The *Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orleans* probably assumed as much when it published its 1865 inquiry concerning Mower and his mysterious daily. While Mower came to the United States directly from France, his

family may have moved there following a residence in the West Indies. The slave insurrection in St. Domingue, for example, forced the removal of free colored as well as white property holders. At any rate, Mower was a well educated young man whose knowledge of the French Revolution and the "natural rights of man" probably fortified his resolve to emigrate to French-speaking Louisiana at a critical time for the former colony's free colored inhabitants. They were facing a period of grave uncertainty about their rights to private property, hard-won social and political status, and even their right to continue to live in the state.

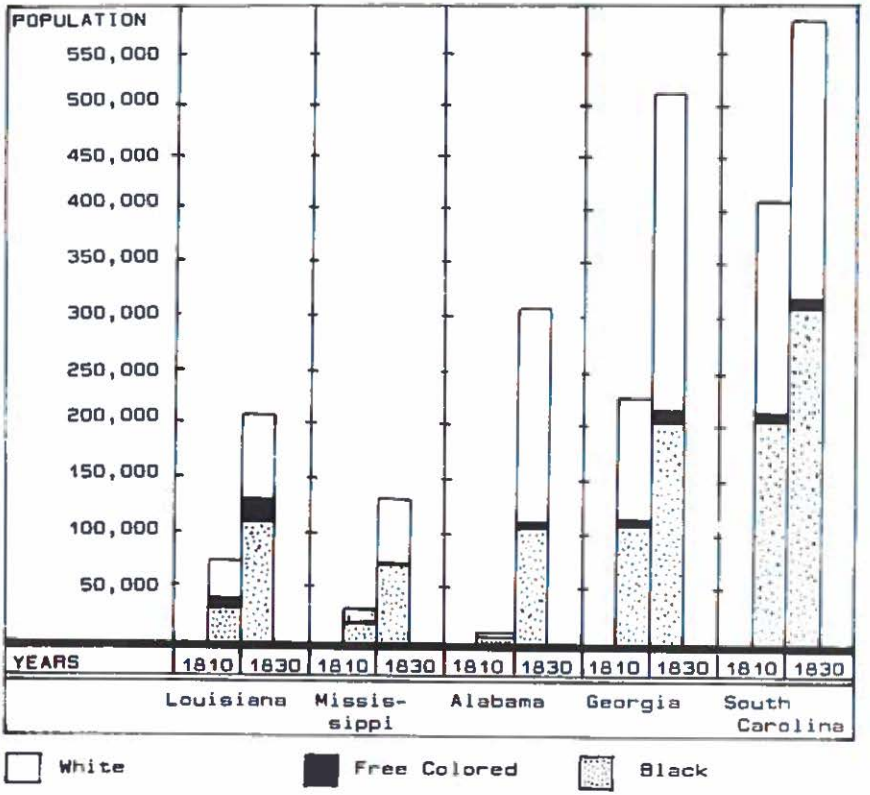
The intrepid Mower, age twenty-three, began a wintry voyage across the Atlantic in Bordeaux, where he embarked on the passenger vessel *Meridian*. Of the 27 passengers on board, Mower was one of the youngest. He traveled alone — without wife or children. In fact, most of the 24 male passengers appear to have been single Frenchmen on their way to New Orleans and a new life. The average age of the immigrants was 28. The official passenger list for the *Meridian* classified young Mower as a "merchant." [7] The characterization was apt, since he would manage to merchandise his ideas and his journalistic skills in the new world.

Mower succeeded in publishing his French-language newspaper a little more than a year after his vessel docked near the foot of Canal Street, probably on a shoestring budget. Apparently possessing no property and no regular income, his life in the South's leading slave metropolis must have been rather precarious. His success in eventually publishing a daily newspaper was a remarkable achievement—indeed, the *magnum opus* of his short-lived journalistic career. One can

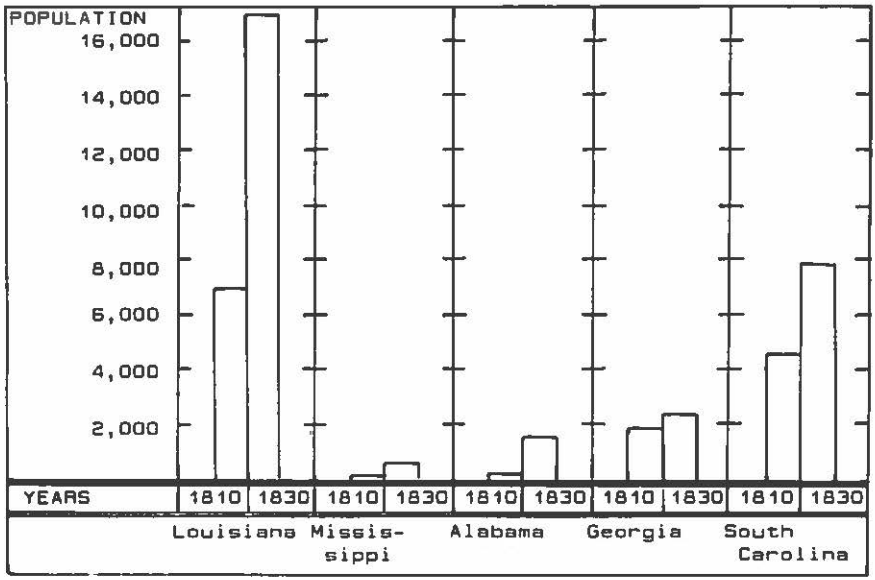
New Orleans river front — *Louisiana Collection, Tulane University Library*

imagine Mower alternately shivering and sweltering in small rented rooms, denying himself adequate food and clothing while he prepared for the day when he could launch his printing operation. *Le Liberateur* was never a commercial success. In fact, just before his newspaper ceased publication, the poverty-stricken editor was still desperately seeking new subscribers. [8]

Louisiana's free coloreds represented a unique stratum of black society. By 1830, there were almost 17,000 free people of color, but for every one there were at least six slaves and five whites. No other slave state in the lower South had as large a population of free colored people. While a sizable proportion of Louisiana's free colored inhabitants were literate, owned considerable property, and occupied the professions and skilled trades, free Negroes living elsewhere in the Deep South were usually less fortunate. Furthermore, some 13,000



Radical castes in Deep South in 1810 and 1830
Based on Don B. Dodd and Wynelle S. Dodd, Historical Statistics of the South, 1790-1970 *(University, AL, 1970)*

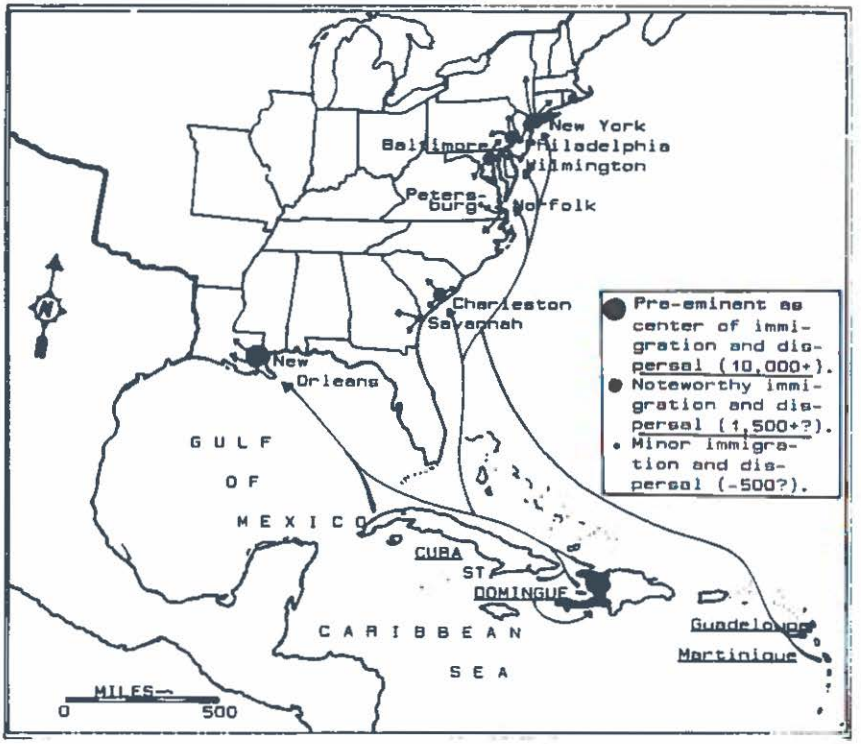


Growth of the Free Colored Population
Based on Don B. Dodd and Wynelle S. Dodd, Historical Statistics of the South, 1790-1970 *(University, AL, 1970)*

free blacks residing in nearby Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina enjoyed few, if any, of the political and social privileges normally granted to their counterparts in Louisiana. [9]

The long period of French and Spanish control over Louisiana had created a slave culture which contrasted with that of the Southern English colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. For example, a scarcity of white women had encouraged a greater degree of concubinage among the French and Spanish soldiery, planters, and merchants; the mulatto children born to such informal unions were often recognized by their white fathers and were normally manumitted by them at a young age. Furthermore, this new society was enlarged as a result of the 1791 slave insurrection in St. Domingue. Thousands of white and free colored refugees, frequently accompanied by their loyal slaves, eventually found their way to New Orleans where they settled permanently. Such immigration continued after the United States acquired Louisiana. [10]

The military valor of the free Negro soldier in the Battle of New Orleans gave strong testament to his American patriotism and helped reinforce his right to special privileges. It is noteworthy that the status of the free Negro markedly improved whenever the governing authorities of Louisiana found themselves in desperate straits. The Spanish,



Caribbean emigration of French-speaking peoples to U.S. between 1780 and 1830. (There were approximately equal numbers of whites, slaves and free colored immigrants.)

Based on Howard Mumford Jones, American and French Culture, 1750-1848 *(Chapel Hill, 1927); J. Thomas Scharf,* History of Maryland from the Earliest Period to the Present Day (Hatboro, PA, 1967); *George C. Rogers, Jr.,* Charleston in the Age of Pinckneys *(Norman, OK, 1969)*

for example, managed to strengthen their colonial government by currying favor among the free Negroes at a time when the white creole population was seeking the return of French rule. By the time of the American purchase of Louisiana in 1803, the free black society jealously guarded its traditional prerogatives and did not hesitate to challenge the new government's racial restrictions. Redeemed by their loyal martial spirit during local slave revolts and at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, the free Negroes continued to enjoy their quasi-citizenship until the heated sectional battles of the 1850s which led to the Civil War. [11]

There was, in fact, a three-caste society in Louisiana, similar in composition and purpose to the three-tier division which had helped to

Battle of New Orleans *USA Photo Archives*

destroy the slave regime in St. Domingue. At the top of the social order were the ruling whites, followed by the intermediate caste of free coloreds, and then the mudsill of Negro slaves. While the free blacks were allowed to prosper economically, strict racial barriers nevertheless effectively sealed them off from social and political interaction with the whites. They existed separately as a social buffer against the slaves, to be used at the beck and call of the white man whenever there was unrest or the threat of disorder among a "restless" slave population. [12]

Editor Mower was not the first public spokesman to defend the interests of the free Negroes, nor was he the last. Both General Andrew Jackson and Governor William Claiborne had taken special pains to defend the free Negro's interests. Jackson managed successfully to reward the free Negro with the same salary as his white counterpart for participation in the Battle of New Orleans. Claiborne had earlier encouraged Jackson to fully utilize the free colored soldiers in defending the city. "If we give them not our confidence," he said, "the enemy will be encouraged to intrigue and corrupt them." Afterward, Claiborne tended to ignore white demands for curbing the freedom of the free black militia, and instead helped the militiamen to retain — at least for a time — their privileged status. [13]

William Claiborne *USA Photo Archives*

In *Le Liberateur*, Mower attempted to allay white fears by insinuating that the troubles in St. Domingue had engendered a good deal of unnecessary hysteria. Following a succession of slave revolts and counter-attacks in the 1790s, the French colonial regime finally crumbled and was replaced by the new black republic of Haiti. The success of the revolution in St. Domingue rested in part on the role played by the island's free colored population. Though many were themselves slaveowners and the mulatto descendants of their French masters, the free colored were a crucial element in the successful war for independence. It was rumored in New Orleans that many of the free colored refugees entering the city had conspired in the bloody revolts of St. Domingue. This and recurrent rumors of impending slave uprisings on nearby plantations created a climate of fear among Louisiana's white minority. As in the case of St. Domingue, many whites perceived a danger that the free coloreds would lead the Negro

Street Scene, 1821 *The Historic New Orleans Collection, 533 Royal Street Acc. No. 1937.2.2*

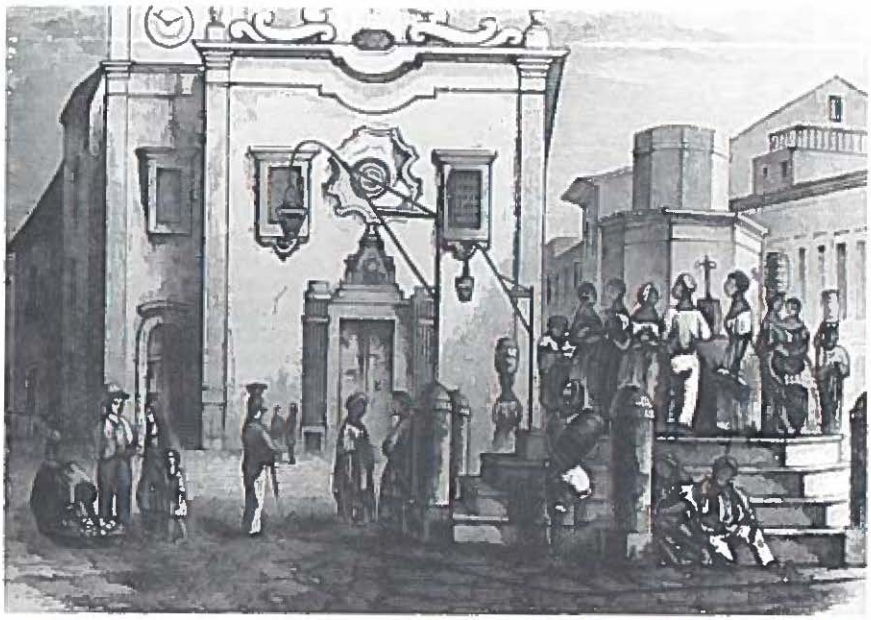
slaves in a black revolution. Outnumbered and truly isolated, Louisiana's white citizens feared the same bloody retribution which had occurred earlier in the embattled plantations and villages of a war-torn Caribbean sugar island. [14]

Mower apparently understood white Louisiana's undercurrent of racial paranoia, for he devoted much of his editorial space to reassuring the whites. The immigrant Frenchman advised that Louisiana's proper model of social order need not be the disastrous plantation slave culture of St. Domingue. Instead, he argued that Louisiana more logically resembled the placid slavocracy of Brazil, whose growth and evolution had not been marred by bloody genocide and mass emigration. Here, indeed, was a Latin slave society which offered social mobility in place of rigid caste barriers, interracial cooperation instead of a forlorn and unstable world of racial separation. [15]

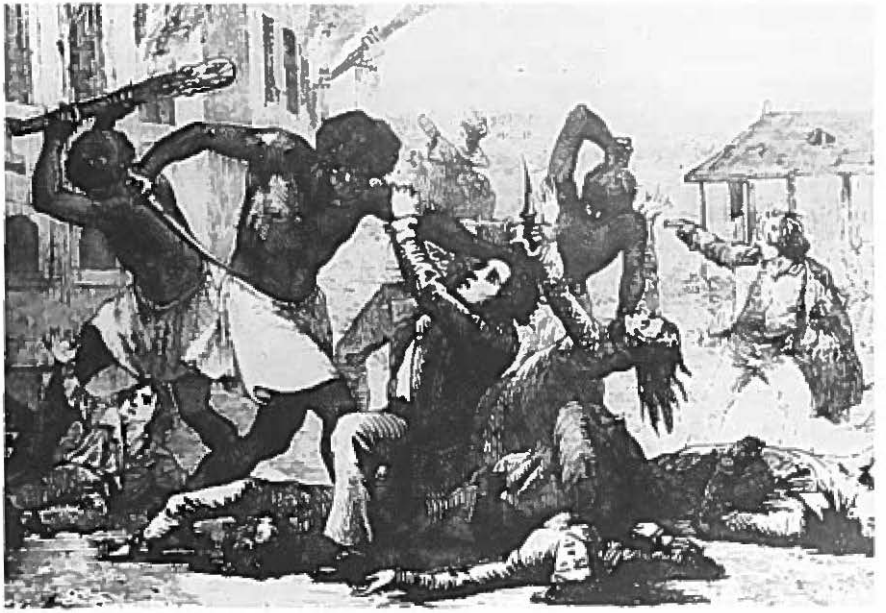
In July 1830, editor Mower explained that he recently obtained "a treatise on SLAVERY, by a 'Slave Holder,' an inhabitant of Florida," who fortuitously presented a concerned slave owner's rationale for needed reform in the South. What followed was a short cultural geography of Brazil written in both French and English; the editor of the entire compilation identified himself only as "Un Habitant de Barrataria," [*sic*] evidently a standard pseudonym used in Mower's more provocative editorials:

> [Brazil's] population consists of something less than one million of whites, something more than one million of free colored, and considerably over two million slaves. . . . It now ranks, as Empire of Brazil, perhaps the most extensive government in the world, and is now carrying on war with the free Republic of Buenos Aires; with its white free colored population, it has fitted out, manned, and sent to sea, nearly forty ships of war, and has raised or sent to the frontiers, near fifty thousand troops. It now affords the grand imposing spectacle of a slave-holding government, whose population preponderates in favor of color, at war with a free. . . republic. . . . The slaves maintain their obligation, and do their work peaceably as usual; furnishing produce and means not only to support the national credit, but to carry on the war. This trait of virtue and fidelity in the Brazilian slaves, is to be attributed to humane and just treatment. [16]

In the sad case of St. Domingue, a rigidly molded three-caste division of society had relentlessly fostered racial suspicion, hatred, and finally war, itself. By walling off its free mulatto society, a small white ruling class had denied itself a strategic ally by the time the insurrection began. Mower argued that any social order which fractured itself on the basis of color instead of individual merit was doomed to some sort of retribution. Brazil had adjusted the relationship between the master, the servant, and the free man of color by de-emphasizing color and gradations of color and recognizing the



Brazilian street scene Harper's New Monthly Magazine, *1855*



1790s Slave revolt in St. Dominique *Library of Congress*

inherent dignity and worth of all men. By allowing the free mulatto and others of mixed racial background a variety of means for continued social betterment, white Brazil had thereby helped to insure its own survival and prosperity. Mower also applauded Brazil's liberal manumission policy toward its slaves, a policy he no doubt hoped that Louisiana would some day adopt: [17]

> The door to liberty is open to every slave who can find the means of purchasing himself. It is true, few have the means, but hope creates a spirit of economy, industry and emulation to obtain merit by good behaviour, which has a general and beneficial effect. Slaves are also allowed to hold some kind of property under limitation — such as [live] stock. [18]

While the published treatise tried to lessen negrophobia among Louisiana's apprehensive whites, a number of the author's phrases probably had the opposite effect. For example, when he spoke of the military prowess of Brazil's unhyphenated amalgam of "white free colored population," some readers no doubt pictured a kind of melting pot whose bizarre alchemy was frightening and perhaps unintelligible from a North American perspective. Even a casual reference to a "slaveholding government, whose population preponderates in favor of color" could hardly have inspired feelings of confidence among white Louisianians. More galling still must have been the treatise's

gentle encouragement of "humane and just treatment" as a preventive measure against slave insurrection. By further alluding to manumission through self-purchase or good behavior, as well as an individual's right to own property, Mower's article surely raised further controversy, as would the author's proposal that slavery could best serve the interests of the white man by opening a nursery for those ambitious and gifted slaves seeking their eventual freedom.

The editor was echoing the free colored cause which had been expressed much earlier throughout much of the French-speaking world. In 1789, Julian Raimond began writing a series of pamphlets in France urging that equal rights be granted to the free mulattoes in the colonies. An octoroon himself, Raimond had been born free in St. Domingue. Having fought with 500 other free men of color — all of them members of the French Army during the American Revolution — Raimond was determined to destroy the color bar once and for all. During the 1790s, Raimond and several other mulatto colleagues published a variety of reform-minded pamphlets in France. Each writer believed himself to be the white man's equal in political and social matters, and each aspired to professional equality, as well. [19]

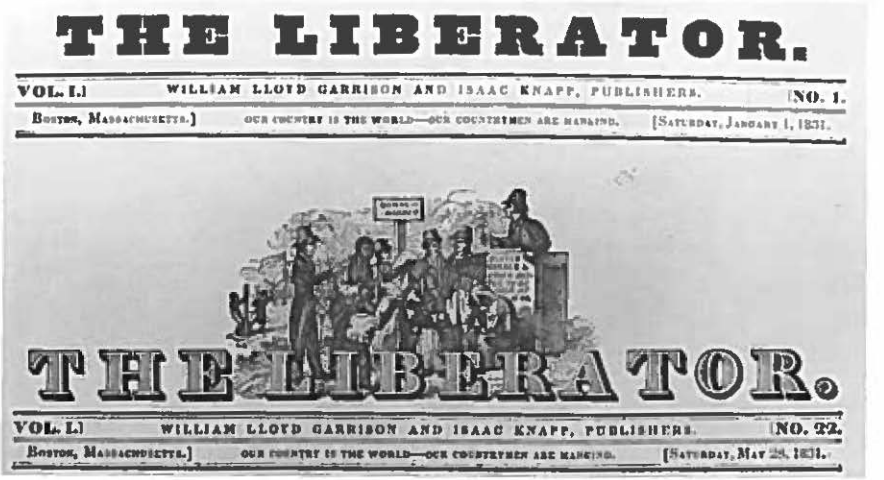
In a position which seems contradictory to a modern reader, Raimond did not espouse the cause of antislavery with much vigor. His wealth and social position in France were in part based on the productivity of his lands and the sweat of his own slaves in St. Domingue. Yet he castigated the white man, slaveholder or independent yeoman farmer, for his racial exclusivity and particularly for his discriminatory treatment of the African race. [20]

The literary debate continued for decades. While Milo Mower published *Le Liberateur* in New Orleans, Cyril Charles Auguste Bissette vented his reforming zeal on those who would usurp the natural-born rights of all free colored citizens in France or those living in overseas colonies. A wealthy native of Martinique, Bissette, like Raimond, was a free man of color. He spent much of his life in Paris where he wrote numerous brochures and articles pleading the cause of his mulatto brethren. Unlike his ambivalent predecessor, Julien Raimond, Bissette fought hard for the emancipation of Negro slaves. [21] It appears that Mower's New Orleans newspaper chose a middle path toward the goal of biracial accord — somewhere between the self-serving motives of a Raimond, and — at the other end of the liberal spectrum — the idealism of a Bissette.

All three individuals, based their liberal ideas of equality for free Negroes and the reform of slavery on French writings of the previous century. Among slavery's earliest critics were such luminaries of the

Enlightenment as Voltaire, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Abbé Raynal, and the Marquis de Condorcet. Indeed, Condorcet published several antislavery pamphlets in which he also specifically pleaded for the mulatto's freedom. However, most of these early critics wrote pamphlets which stressed a gradualist approach in altering the institution of slavery. Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and Benjamin S. Frossard opposed violent social upheaval and revolution. But of all the eighteenth-century writers, Hilliard d'Auberteuil offered reform proposals which most closely resembled those of his latter-day colleagues, Raimond, Bissette, and the immigrant Mower. As early as 1776, the French pamphleteer urged that all persons of mixed African and European descent be given legal equality. Clearly, this could have been the first step in the gradual demise of African Negro slavery. By removing the racial barrier and creating a "separate but equal" relationship between whites and free coloreds, race could never again become an ironclad determinant of an individual's freedom or his perpetual condition of servitude. [22]

Mower's presentation of the treatise on Brazil in a July issue of *Le Liberateur* occurred shortly before his newspaper was shut down by the local authorities. Like his fellow reformers in France whose writings had attacked the brutalities of slave ownership, Mower chided Louisiana's slave masters for their conduct toward all black folk. A major difference between Mower and his counterparts in Paris or even in Baltimore, for that matter, was the relative safety of the others from the threat of mob violence or legal reprisal. In Mower's case, the latter


THE LIBERATOR.

VOL. I.] WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON AND ISAAC KNAPP, PUBLISHERS. [NO. 1.

Boston, Massachusetts.] OUR COUNTRY IS THE WORLD—OUR COUNTRYMEN ARE MANKIND. [Saturday, January 1, 1831.

THE LIBERATOR.

VOL. I.] WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON AND ISAAC KNAPP, PUBLISHERS. [NO. 22.

Boston, Massachusetts.] OUR COUNTRY IS THE WORLD—OUR COUNTRYMEN ARE MANKIND. [Saturday, May 28, 1831.

The Liberator *Masthead*
May 28, 1831

William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879

threat did in fact materialize. In August he was apprehended by the local police while attempting to sell his newspaper on a door-to-door basis.

In Baltimore, the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* reacted to the death of *Le Liberateur* with bitter disappointment. The *Genius* fulminated that the spirit of the American people was weak and tremulous. It asserted that there were "not fifty righteous people in Sodom." This caustic allusion to Scripture referred not only to the city of New Orleans but also to the whole country. "With all their high profession of religion and freedom," the editor swore, "there is not a people upon earth more deeply sunken in the mire of avarice and injustice."

Later, the news that Milo Mower had been jailed proved even more distressing. In its farewell to *Le Liberateur*, the editor of the *Genius* wondered aloud if Mower, alone and helpless, had the courage and stamina to survive his vile inquisitors. Reflecting on the *Genius'* recurring legal prosecutions in Baltimore, the editor urged that bold defiance was poor Mower's only possible weapon:

> Not only has the philanthropic Mower been under the necessity of discontinuing his publications, for lack of the necessary support; but the red arm of persecution has also been made bare to punish him for his patriotic devotion to the sacred cause of justice! He has been recently *imprisoned*, on a charge of circulating what the slave tyrants of Louisiana please to term a "seditious and inflamatory handbill," among the colored people of New-Orleans. This handbill, we learn, was nothing more than an appeal to the people for their support of his publication, previous to its discontinuance. . . . Whether he will possess the *nerve* to meet the Negro *monocrats* of New Orleans. . . remains to be seen. It is to be hoped that he will ultimately triumph over the malice and tyranny of his persecutors. [23]

In New Orleans, itself, the last reference to Mower appeared in the Mayor's "Official Register of Criminal Cases," dated August 19, 1830. At that time, the mayor's office could direct special cases to the criminal court, or recommend that they be dismissed. The notation on Mower reads as follows:

> The State vs. Milo Mower
>
> Publishing and distributing certain writings having a tendency to produce discontent among the free colored population of this State. Committed until delivered by due course of law. [24]

Since there is no further reference in court records to Mower, it is possible that his status as a French-born alien allowed swift deporta-

tion back to France. Such an expulsion would also have lessened the amount of publicity in the local press and the possibility of future legal confrontations. It is interesting that the city's leading daily newspapers of that period made no mention of Mower or *Le Liberateur*. [25]

Whatever his final destiny, Milo Mower leaves behind a respectable liberal reformist legacy. In the years beginning with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and climaxing in the French Emancipation Act of 1848, reformers of various hues had fought either to end the slave trade, abolish slavery immediately or gradually, or elevate the *gens de colour* and later the African slave to full political and social equality. Among those few French writers who like Mower actually incorporated first-hand knowledge of slave culture into their published works were Abbé Raynal, Hilliard d'Auberteuil, Victor Schoelcher, and Alexis de Tocqueville. Both Raynal and d'Auberteuil wrote anti-slavery literature in the 1770s which may have provoked revolution in the colony of St. Domingue. Each of the two had lived for a time in the French West Indies and vigorously attacked both slavery and the slave trade. However, their writings were published in Europe and therefore reached the colonies indirectly if at all. [26]

Victor Schoelcher is generally recognized today as the leading French emancipator. Shortly after Mower's unhappy career in New Orleans, Schoelcher traveled through the American South where he made his own personal observations on the institution of slavery. He later joined the Society for the Abolition of Slavery and in 1848 headed a specially-appointed commission for the abolition of slavery. Alexis de Tocqueville also served on the commission. His earlier travels in the United States had also produced strong abolitionist sentiments. [27]

In the context of United States' culture, Mower's newspaper stands as a unique publication. *Le Liberateur* dared to voice its opinions inside the Deep South's slavocracy. Even Garrison and Lundy avoided such risky business. While Lundy once led a brief attack against slavery in the highlands of east Tennessee, Garrison certainly never considered moving his printing press south of the Potomac River. Following his departure from Baltimore, Garrison moved farther north to Boston, where he established his own paper *The Liberator* in 1831. In timeliness and choice of title, Garrison's world-famous antislavery publication, *The Liberator*, was surely inspired by Mower's controversial New Orleans daily.

How does one gauge the historical significance of *Le Liberateur* in terms of its own time, place, and impact? Perhaps this kind of evaluation must rely on the interpretations of the contemporary observers of American slavery and the abolitionist struggle. In

succinctly characterizing Mower's newspaper, editors Garrison and Lundy did not hesitate to praise it for "promulgating the doctrines of universal freedom and justice, without regard to class or color." [29] Such high praise is a fitting epitaph for Milo Mower's *Le Liberateur.*

Notes

[1] Edward Larocque Tinker, *Bibliography of the French Newspapers and Periodicals of Louisiana* (Worcester, 1933), 59.

[2] Ibid. Near the turn of the century, *Le Liberateur* was briefly mentioned. See Stephen B. Weeks, "Anti-slavery Sentiment in the South," *Southern Historican Association Publications,* II (April 1898): 93. Here, the newspaper editor's name was misidentified as "Miles Mowrer." His "Liberalist" was described as "a daild paper in New Orleans... which advocated the rights and interests of the negro."

[3] Merton L. Dillon, *Lundy and the Struggle for Negro Freedom* (Urbana and London, 1966), 45-46, 144, 161, 163.

[4] "The Liberalist," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, April 1830, 5. Hereafter cited as *Genius.*

[5] Ibid., 14-15; "Du 'Liberal,' 19 Mars," *Genius*, May 1830, 28-29, 32; "Du Liberal," *Genius*, June 1830, 45-46.

[6] *Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Ninth Legislature of the State of Louisiana* (Donaldsonville, 1830), 90, 92, 96.

[7] *Passenger List: Ships Entering Port of New Orleans 1813-1837*, "Passenger List, January — December 1829," (New Orleans, 19[?]), I, 145; "Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New Orleans, 1820-1902," January 6, 1829, [n.p.]. In the first source, immigrant Mower's name has been re-recorded as "Mr. Mowret." However, on the original passenger list (microfilm copy), Mower's name is handwritten and appears as "M. Mowrer" or perhaps "Mowre*h*." At any rate, the last letter does not resemble other small case handwritten "t's" sprinkled throughout the copy. The WPA recorder also appears to have mistaken "M." for "Mr."; other passenger names on the list are modified by first intials.

Other possibilities for Milo Mower's background have led to dead ends. For example, no one having a name even remotely resembling the name *Mower* or *Mowrer* appears to have been a member of New Orleans' free colored community. These names are uncommon in the history of the city. No information appears in antebellum press, city directories and registers, census records, property records, tax rolls, church records, obituary files, and mortality schedules. The best evidence in support of Mower's immigrant status is the fact that the vast majority of those journalists who founded French-language newspapers in the early 1800s were French-born. Interestingly, Mower's paper contained substantial English translations.

The surname *Mowrer* or *Mower* has its origin in the German Palatinate (Upper Rhine River region), so it is possible that Milo Mower was an Alsatian or was heir to the German-influenced province of Alsace. The names are Americanized English spellings of *Maurer*. The oldest settlers who bore that name located in eastern Pennsylvania between 1737 and 1753, thus contributing their small numbers to the

Pennsylvania "Dutch" culture. See Elsdon C. Smith, *New Dictionary of American Family Names* (New York, 1973), 362; P. William Filby and Mary K. Meyer, eds., *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index* II (Detroit, 1981), 1503; William John Hinke, ed., *Pennsylvania German Pioneers: A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrivals in the Port of Philadelphia from 1727 to 1808.* I (Baltimore, 1966), 194, 283-284, 581.

[8] "Liberalist," *Genius*, September 1830, 82-83.

[9] *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830* (Washington, 1832), 105-106; James E. Winston, "The Free Negro in New Orleans, 1803-1860," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXI (October 1938): 7-13.

[10] Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974), 108-118; H.E. Sterkx, *The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana* (Rutherford, NJ, 1972), 19, 33, 44-45, 62-66.

[11] Berlin, 120-129; There are references scattered throughout Roland C. McConnell, *Negro Troops in Antebellum Louisiana: A History of the Battalion of Free Men of Color* (Baton Rouge, 1968), 5-115.

[12] Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Dominigue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies," *Journal of Social History* (Summer 1970): 414-421, 424-425, 429-430.

[13] Berlin, 125-129; McConnell, 33-35, 39, 43, 60-70, 78-79, 95-97.

[14] Berlin, 35-38, 40, 58, 114-115, 119, 124, 128; Sterkx, 91-95.

[15] "Le Liberal," *Genius*, April 1830, 13; "Nouvelle Orleans, 27 Mai," *Genius*, July 1830, 60-61.

[16] "Nouvelle Orleans, 27 Mai," *Genius*, July 1830, 61.

[17] Ibid. See also Foner, 417-418, 421, 424, 429-430. Unlike Mower, Foner sees a closer correlation between Louisiana and St. Domingue, and she perceives that both of these "three-caste societies" ultimately faced destruction and re-arrangement by having isolated the free Negro.

[18] "Nouvelle Orleans, 27 Mai," *Genius*, July 1830, 61.

[19] Shelby T. McCloy, *The Negro in France* (Lexington, 1961), 65- 67, 72-76, 79, 83, 91-92, 122, 159, 225; McCloy, *The Negro in the French West Indies* (Lexington, 1966), 72-73; Mercer Cook, *Five French Negro Authors* (Washington, 1943), 5-9, 14-17, 20-24.

[20] McCloy, *The Negro in France*, 72-76; Cook, 14-15, 22- 23.

[21] McCloy, *The Negro in France*, 136-140; McCloy, *The Negro in the French West Indies*, 136-139, 211-214, 268; Cook, 43-48, 51-57.

[22] Shelby T. McCloy, *The Humanitarian Movement in Eighteenth-Century France* (Lexington, 1957), 86-100, 105-109.

[23] "The Liberalist," *Genius*, September 1830, 82-83.

[24] Mayor's Office — Decisions of Mayor in Criminal Cases, "Committemens [*sic*] Recognizements, Criminal Courts [New Orleans] 1827-1832," City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, August 19th, 1830, [n.p.].

[25] No information on Milo Mower appears in the principal daily newspapers of the day, i.e., the *Louisiana Advertiser*, *Courier*, and the *New Orleans Bee*.

[26] McCloy, *The Humanitarian Movement*, 88-89, 105-106; McCloy, *The Negro in the French West Indies*, 71, 147-148, 210; McCloy, *The Negro in France*, 73, 139, 141, 143, 146, 180.

[27] Gaston-Martin, *Histoire de L'esclavage les Colonies Francaises* (Paris, 1948), 291-295; McCloy, *The Negro in the French West Indies*, 147-148; McCloy, *The Negro in France*, 141, 143, 146.

[28] Dillon, 48-49, 85, 181-183; Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison* (New York, 1885). 1: 219-226.
[29] "The Liberalist," *Genius*, September 1830, 82.

The author wishes to thank the following for their assistance in completing this article: Fr. Jules O. Daigle, Mary Alice Fontenot, Dr. Carl A. Brasseaux; Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio; City Archives, New Orleans Public Library; and Amistad Research Center, New Orleans.

Dr. Timothy F. Reilly is an Associate Professor of Historical Geography at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

Public Health Nurses in Mississippi: Good Work in Hard Times

Jack Rogers

For those Mississippians who remember the early part of this century, the delivery of babies was often the handiwork of the county nurse or the public health nurse; and if not in actual attendance, these nurses had often made home visits or conducted meetings for small groups of pregnant women to prepare them for the job of birthing the baby at home with little or no assistance. Nevertheless, in the Southern states before World War II the practice of untrained midwifery far outstripped medical delivery of babies. The practice, while reduced in many states, continued to thrive in others. [1]

Besides pre- and post-natal care many remember the public health nurse in connection with a vision of long lines of children, all waiting for "Lord-knows-what-terrible-thing-to-be-done" by that woman in white. She gave throat swabbings, vaccinations, inspections for lice, oral examinations, and stern lectures on washing hands, general body cleanliness, brushing teeth, and assorted other bits of information designed to help her young charges attain their majority in one piece and in good health.

The job of the county health nurse was extremely difficult. In Mississippi's piney woods, communities were small and scattered, and hospitals few and far between. In 1936 for example, Pike County, Mississippi had two small communities vying for economic dominance. Each had physicians but only one had a small clinic. South of that county lay the Florida parishes in Louisiana but not one hospital north of New Orleans. [2] Similar situations could be found in many sections over the entire Gulf states region. All the more reason, then, for an active public health program. But without local hospitals, where would nurses be trained?

There were twenty-one schools of nursing accredited by the Mississippi Board of Nurse Examiners at the end of 1917. The earliest had been established in 1900 at Vicksburg Sanatorium, and Natchez State Charity, where the earliest program to train nurses in Mississippi had begun in 1837. [3] There were a total of 1,058 beds in all the states' twenty-one hospitals. The population of Mississippi in 1920 was 1.7 million, which meant that there was one bed per 160,000 persons. The hospitals were not evenly distributed across Mississippi; they were located in twelve cities. On the west side of the state, there were hospitals in Greenwood, Greenville, Jackson, Vicksburg, Natchez,

Mississippi Public Health Nurses C. 1927 *Mississippi Department of Archives and History*

Public Health Nurse making a home visit
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

and McComb. The others were in Gulfport, Hattiesburg, Laurel, Meridian, and Newton. Thus, vast sections of the state were isolated from hospital service. [4] Although some doctors operated clinics, they were small and often poorly equipped. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the availability of medical facilities, the incidence of disease and the state's mortality rate were horrendous.

A nurse entering practice in the twenties faced an awesome challenge. Between 1920 and 1930, tuberculosis affected 35,000 persons and there were 900,000 reported cases of malaria. Over 500,000 Mississippians had influenza, 70,000 small pox, 1350,000 pneumonia, 25,000 typhoid, 125,000 whooping cough, and 23,000 diptheria and scarlet fever. The death rates were terrifying: 17,000 people died from TB, 10,000 from influenza, 5,000 from malaria, and an unknown number from whooping cough for which no records were kept. There is no way to determine the number of additional cases where no assistance was sought and thus no contact made with medical personnel. Nor are there records of the people who suffered nutritional deficiencies and their attendant health problems. There is one indicator: the high ratio of stillborn, neonatal and infant deaths, which was 87.7 per 1,000 among black families. [5] During this time Mississippi had a population of only 1.7 million. It is little wonder that nurses

sought assistance to improve their training and skills, for the job required strong people with determination and competence.

One source of assistance was the Commonwealth Fund. Mrs. Stephen W. Harkness, the wife of a partner of John D. Rockefeller, had created the fund in 1918 to improve public health care. State screening committees were established to approve nurses and other health care practitioners to receive advanced education and training. Dr. Felix Underwood, Mississippi State Health Officer, headed the state committee during his tenure. The files of the Commonwealth Fund are filled with recommendations, applications, and letters of support from head nurses, administrators, teachers, and friends who could address the qualifications of applicants to the Fund. The provisions for postgraduate scholarships offered by the Division of Public Health under the auspices of the Commonwealth Fund were as follows:

1. The nurse applying shall be eligible for membership in the American Nurses' Association and not be over 45 years of age.

2. She shall be in good physical condition as shown by the report of a general medical examination made within a year.

3. The course to be taken shall be subject to approval as to content, school, and character.

4. The course of study shall be for four months.

5. The scholarship shall include all travel expenses, tuition, and an allowance of $150.00 per month. [6]

What type of nurse applied for these Commonwealth Fund scholarships? Research into the files indicates a typical applicant had a high level of proficiency, a good grasp of nursing and an understanding of the problems in the field. But there was no typical profile. Recipients of Commonwealth Fund Scholarships came from many academic and training backgrounds, were in different fields of health care, came from all over the country, had performed a variety of tasks, and varied in age. But they did share some things in common: an interest in patient care, an awareness of the needs of public health, and a strong desire to educate through group or individual contact. Above all they appreciated the academic and professional opportunity that the Commonwealth Fund afforded them. Thumbnail sketches of some of the Mississippi nurses show the importance of the program for the state's public health program.

Lilith Carolyn Davenport of Mattie Hersee Hospital, Meridian, Mississippi, was recommended by the State Board of Health as a "real find" based on her post graduate work in pediatrics, in contagious diseases, and in eye, ear, and throat work. The Board considered her readily employable and planned to place her in the Pike County, Mississippi Health Department upon graduation.

Public Health Nurse examining child during a home visit
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Miss Davenport was thirty-one years old in 1931. Her education had been in Mississippi's small rural schools concluding at the Beeson Female Academy in Meridian. She had three years' training at Mattie Hersee State Hospital which was also in Meridian. She had then worked in Texas, Alabama, and at University Hospital, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her post-graduate work (meaning beyond the nursing program) was at the Manhattan Eye, Ear, Throat Hospital and Sydenham Hospital for Contagious Disease in Baltimore. She was indeed a real find. The Commonwealth fund granted her a four month course at Western Reserve University where she did very well. Returning to Pike County, she fulfilled her agreement's requirement of at least one full year's service after the scholarship grant. [7]

Some of the Mississippi Commonwealth scholars must have suffered terrific cultural shock when sent from the piney woods into New York's Harlem. For example, Mary Brooke Delas, thirty-five, born in Simpsonville, Kentucky, was educated in that town's small high school during the first World War, then trained at Norton Infirmary in Louisville and assigned as public health nurse in

Sunflower County, Mississippi. Along the way she also had four years of college at Peabody and the University of Louisville. Prior to coming to Mississippi her nursing experience had been with the Kentucky State Department of Health. In the short time she worked there she had found her niche as a teaching nurse. The selection committee was impressed by her experience in maternal and child hygiene and her two years of work in Kentucky's mountains. That experience had given her one kind of rural Southern patient; Sunflower County, Mississippi gave her another. When she made application for the Fund's assistance she was highly recommended on the basis of education, preliminary training, and nursing training. The committee wanted her to attend Columbia and work in its East Harlem Hospital beginning in September 1933.

In addition to class work, her East Harlem experience included 333 hours of field work. She spent seventy-two hours in health supervision and maternity visits, forty-seven hours in conference and demonstration with families of individuals, thirteen hours observing, thirty-six hours doing collateral reading, and only nine hours in meetings. [8]

When she returned to Sunflower County in 1934, she entered a predominantly rural region where nearly 60,000 persons lived, about 70% of whom were black. Indianola, the county seat, was a small community with a tiny clinic where tonsils were removed "in house" and the very modern practice of out-patient surgery had long been standard procedure. A child having his tonsils removed often remained in the clinic for a total of no more than six hours and then went home. The county was filled with tenant farmers; share-cropping was the financial backbone of the economic system and cash was almost non-existent. Hands were paid in tokens on many plantations and others used as little cash as possible and charged goods in plantation commissaries. The workers under this "furnish system" were constantly struggling to catch up and get out of debt. Few succeeded. [9] If these people got any health care it would have to be through the Public Health Service.

During Nurse Delas' training in Harlem a new record system had been initiated in Mississippi based on the "family folder," then in common use in the East but novel in Mississippi. Using the new system her work with families expanded as she put into practice the theories she had learned and used at East Harlem. She wrote, "I find considering the family as a whole a good way to use the situation as a teaching opportunity." In fact, she noted that she could "see more

Public Health Nurse giving dental examination
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

teaching opportunities in my work" than formerly and she was good at what she did. Her supervisor reported to the Fund that she excelled in group work in the county and with the families she served. He complimented her on her enthusiasm and willingness to take supervision well and her improved understanding of community problems. [10]

In another case, Gladys Kathleen Robuck entered Columbia and East Harlem from an urban area and afterward returned to her post at Meridian. Miss Robuck was age thirty when she became a Fund

scholar. Her education had been in the schools of Texas and her nursing training was completed at Charity Hospital in New Orleans. For a short time she had been the college nurse at Whitworth College in Brookhaven. Her evaluator at East Harlem noted she was a tireless worker, able and anxious to learn. These characteristics were reflected in Robuck's report to the Fund in which she remarked, "I have gained a new vision of what public health really means." She felt that studying parent-child relationships had been one of her most productive efforts. Her comments concerning "the whole child" are most unusual for the time and her observation on the variations in children from one environment to another are remarkable both for the period and for someone of her background. "The chance to see New York City meant much to me. The different nationalities and the way they live, the east side tenements, the push carts, the dark halls and stairs, and yet the cleanliness of the homes and children in most instances surprised me." In the short time between her return to Mississippi and the submission of her report to the Fund she noted that "so far I cannot see many improvements, and some things that worked in East Harlem just do not seem to work here." [11] Nevertheless, her Lauderdale County supervisor reported that she had shown marked improvement and was being recommended for supervisory training.

Not surprisingly, reactions to training in New York often varied with the nurse's age. Older women tended to be more reserved in their dealings with the Italian families, but many made excellent transitions

Rural home in the coastal plains region c. 1940
Harrison County Health Department

in their family contacts. One recipient noted that she could appreciate much more the involvement of Italian men in the advent of a new child in the family, appreciating their "animation" and active participation in a conference. This same nurse had been described as "shy and reserved, slow to warm to the families she served, but ultimately winning their approval and confidence." East Harlem affected each person differently. Another of the older nurses with a deep South rural background worked a Harlem case load of twelve families, never showed any interest in changing her approach to those she served, and generally was thought to have gained little from the experience. The evaluators offered her irregular early education and "a sheltered life" as explanation for her failure to profit from the experience. [13]

The Commonwealth Fund most frequently used Vanderbilt University and Columbia Teacher's College, although it sent nurses to Western Reserve University as well. Each of these schools had a field unit or units to which the students were assigned to put theory into practice. Columbia utilized the East Harlem Hospital and Health Service for field experience; Vanderbilt sent students to rural county health operations such as the program in Rutherford County or Gibson County, Tennessee; Western Reserve University worked in the urban setting with the Cleveland, Ohio Visiting Nurse Association, the Red Cross, the staff of Outpatient Baby Maternity hospital or the City's Board of Education. [14]

The rural hill country of Tennessee was a laboratory for many Fund nurses. In 1932, Seiverville, Blountville, and Murfreesboro had public health operations suitable for teaching scholarship nurses. A staff nurse with the Fund noted that Rutherford County's Health Department had a director, assistant director, supervising nurse, five staff nurses, one clerk, and an assistant epidemiologist engaged in the total program of public health and was best known for its venereal disease clinics held through the unit. In Tennessee doctors did the immunization, freeing nurses for home visits. The Fund nurse commented on the steady stream of visitors and students "coming and going." Seiverville, in rugged mountain country, was less well staffed and the approach to the mountain people was "much different" but "an interesting one." In Sullivan County (Blountville) the staff was similar to that of Murfreesboro and conducted three VD clinics in the county with "about ninety [patients] in each." [15]

A notable product of the Vanderbilt program, Estelle Maples Dinkins of Leakesville affords us a view from the piney woods of east Mississippi. Her early years were in Leakesville and she was graduated

from a three year high school in 1921. In her junior year she was an elementary supply teacher and spent one summer at State Teacher's College in Hattiesburg before deciding on nursing as a career. Her training was at Vicksburg Sanatorium from which she was graduated in 1931. Private duty was her only specialty and she decided in the year she graduated to continue with special courses in operating room and communicable diseases at Charity Hospital in New Orleans. This led her to the Mississippi County Health departments of Copiah, Yazoo, and Jones. She applied to the Commonwealth Fund from Jones County in 1934 and was sent to Vanderbilt for field work in Rutherford County where the venereal disease treatment program was a model for the Southeast. Her impressions of this experience are unique and very advanced for her day. Quoting from her report to the Fund:

> A more complete home visit can be made by admitting each person in the home to nursing service and post dating visits to those people so that they can be followed up... it's very important to have your county in districts and have an organized lay group in each district to help in the health program, therefore stimulating the work.... Group teaching is very effective and one nurse can render much more service by this method.... Cooperation with every agency serving the public and being familiar with the religion practiced by the people would be a great advantage in the methods of teaching and planning the program. [16]

Midwife training, Coahoma County, 1931
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Mrs. Dinkins must have made an impression on the Fund for its assistant director, Dr. Harry Handley, visited her in February 1935. In 1943 she was given a second scholarship and returned to Vanderbilt. On that occasion she was able to devote some time to nutrition and felt that her people would benefit from combining their garden produce with purchased items for better health and economy. She commented on how widespread pellagra, hookworm, parasites, scurvy, and conjunctivitis continued to be in Jones County despite efforts to deal with all five over the previous decade.

Her work at Vanderbilt and in Trenton in Gibson County seemed tailored to the needs of the piney woods: the care of dairy herds and the handling of milk, the treatment of syphillis, and safe childbirth infant-maternal care. The faculty of Vanderbilt Medical School delivered special lectures on the latter topic. Dinkins carried many ideas back to Jones County where she noted the similarity between her program and that of Gibson County. [17]

A marked change occurred in the kinds of courses and information provided in the decade of the thirties. Mental hygiene became a required course and Administration was a standard offering. Nutrition remained in the curriculum, but was greatly modified to include more pre- and post-natal information and more about infant care in general. The Gibson County demonstration program on delivery was quite popular with the Vanderbilt students. Helen Hodges called it the most interesting part of the course, even more so than the year of study at Vanderbilt. [18] On the other hand in 1931 Ethel Marsh had noted in her report that her time at Western Reserve University in Cleveland had netted her a great deal of good information but said, "... the South has

Immunization against Typhoid, Smallpox, and Diptheria, Taylors, Mississippi

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

many problems not common to the North and very little advice could be offered on how to handle those problems." [19] Nevertheless there were measurable results when Commonwealth students returned to their Mississippi posts. There was a general upgrading of public health through the two decades before 1940 and the statistics show the results.

Between 1920 and 1940 deaths from influenza decreased by 96%; pneumonia by 89.6%; malaria by 96%. Tuberculosis had become a nominal illness with only 1400 cases reported in 1940 and this represented a reduction of 54%. Smallpox, that dreaded killer and source of scarring, was reduced from nearly 7,000 to 22 cases — a drop of 99%.[20]

The enthusiasm of the Commonwealth Fund recipients filled their letters of thanks to the Fund and obviously spilled over into their work where the people of the piney woods, and indeed the entire South, became the beneficiaries of good health practices, health education, and the improved delivery of medical care. One cannot help but commend the nurses who put aside family and friends, strapped on a heavy load of education and field work, thrust themselves into strange surroundings among ethnic groups about whom they knew little or nothing, soaked up information like sponges, and then returned to Mississippi and put it all to use.

Public Health Nurse giving an injection
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Notes

[1] Manuscript Collection, Mississippi Nurses' Association, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS. File marked History Collection; hereafter cited as MNA Archive, with appropriate folder title.

[2] Ibid.

[3] F.M. Leyda, ed., *A List of Schools of Nursing Accredited by the State Boards of Nurse Examiners*, American Nurses Association (Chicago, 1918), 21.

[4] Ibid.

[5] The Commonwealth Fund Archive, State of Mississippi, Division of Public Health, Statistical Summaries, 1921-1945; hereafter cited as CFA, with appropriate folder title. The author acknowledges the permission to use these materials given by Margaret E. Mahoney, president, and the assistance of Madell Morgan, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[6] CFA, Division of Public Health, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships (applications, recommendations, evaluations and personal correspondence related to training and experiences.)

[7] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Lilith Carolyn Davenport.

[8] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Mary Brooke [Delas].

[9] R. Jack Rogers, "Plantation and Sawmill Money — Tokens, Brozines and Doogaloos," presented at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Folklore Society, April 1984, Jackson, MS.

[10] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Mary Brooke [Delas].

[11] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Gladys Kathleen Robuck.

[12] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Eulah Fay Miller.

[13] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarship, Mary F. Speed.

[14] An examination of the complete files of scholarships reveals the details of the programs in which recipients worked. Of particular interest were the narrative experience reports of Helen Hodges and Brooksie W. Peters, who studied at Vanderbilt and worked in rural Tennessee, Opal Regan at East Harlem, and Ethel B. Marsh at Western Reserve.

[15] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Brooksie W. Peters; see also Helen Hodges and Estelle Maples Dinkins. Commentaries may be found in CFA, Mississippi Health Education.

[16] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Estelle Maples Dinkins.

[17] Ibid.

[18] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Helen Hodges.

[19] CFA, Mississippi Undergraduate Scholarships, Ethel B. Marsh.

[20] CFA, Statistical Summaries 1921-1945.

Professor Jack Rogers is Associate Dean of the Evening College at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College, Jefferson Davis Campus.

Climate of Fear: Violence, Intimidation and Media Manipulation in Reconstruction Mobile, 1865-1876

Stephanie C. Hardin

Reconstruction in American History is a controversial subject on which scholars' views have changed since the days when William A. Dunning and Walter L. Fleming were considered its leading interpreters. In his classic work on Alabama Reconstruction, for example, Fleming took the news reports of papers such as the Mobile *Register* at face value, despite their obvious partisan bias. Viewed from a modern standpoint, however, the *Register* and other Democratic newspapers distorted the truth in order to manipulate and control public opinion. A primary casualty of this effort was the city's black populace, which the press portrayed as a major threat to the stability of the social order.

Mobile Tribune *cartoon satirizing delegates to the 1867 Reconstruction Convention, September, 1867. The text of the Radical Campaign song is printed with the notes.*

Archives, Historic Mobile Preservation Society

This essay focuses on the *Register's* effort to create a climate of fear in Alabama's port city during the Reconstruction period.

Mobile, Alabama in 1865 was a hotbed of anger, frustration and broken dreams as the South lay in ruins. The city did not suffer much direct damage from the war although its economy had declined as a result of the blockade and siege. Since rural blacks were on the lowest rung of the economic ladder, many moved into the city from surrounding areas looking for shelter, jobs, and the relief supplied by the Freedmen's Bureau. This influx of freed blacks created anxiety among the already apprehensive white populace. From 1860 to 1870 the black population of Mobile increased from 8,404 to 13,919, and blacks had a clear majority in two of the city's eight wards.

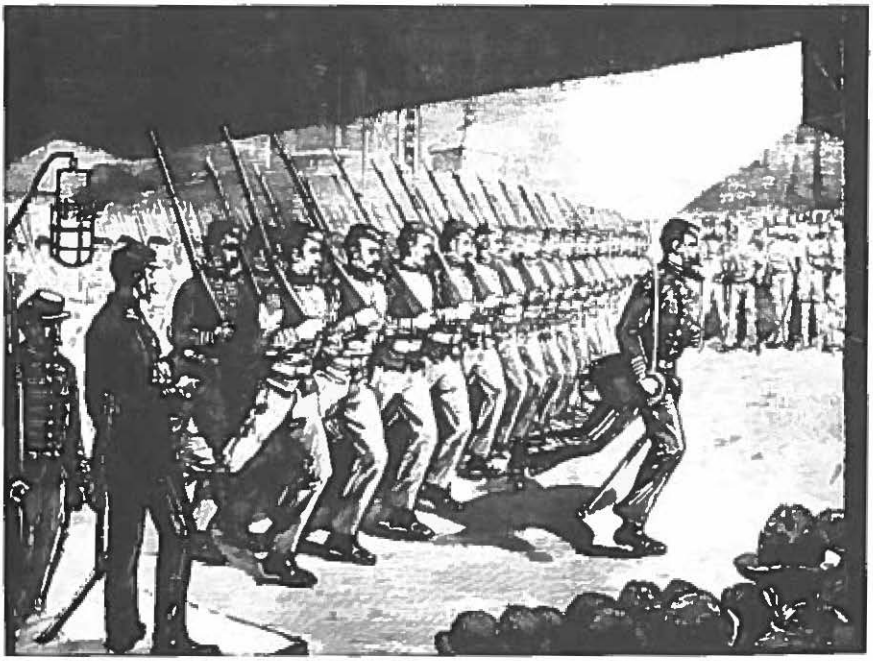
The leading local newspaper, the Democratic Mobile *Daily Register*, harangued incessantly against the Negro. The editors used various tactics to reinforce their grip on the Southern white vote. The Democrats never relinquished their efforts to gain Negro support while making the black an ineffectual and impotent member of Southern, i.e., white dominated society. Taking advantage of the chaotic conditions prevalent within the Republican government, Southern Democrats used violence, lies, rumors, and manipulation of public opinion to undermine Republican efforts to reconstruct civil government, and to protect the newly won civil rights for blacks.


The Mobile Daily Register.

SATURDAY MORNING, JULY 18, 1874.

Mobile Daily Register *masthead* *Museum of the City of Mobile*

With the decline of the old economic system based on slavery and a continuing trend toward urbanization, Southerners were confused as to what their role vis-à-vis blacks should be. According to historian Robert Gilmour, many whites believed that the black race would perish if not under the protection of slavery. "While to some extent this slavery-bred paternalism outlasted emancipation, many whites felt released from all obligations to their former chattels and jumped at the chance to relieve themselves of their 'burden' ". Emancipation also "released whites from the restraints against abusing valuable slave property — a situation which contributed to increasing violence against blacks," writes Gilmour. This decline in paternalism was "sharpened by continuing fears of a black rebellion, by resentment at the freedmen's desertion of their former households, and by indignation at the black alliance with radical politicians, and led toward a competitive system of race relations in Alabama." [1]



A Militia unit doing a night drill Harper's Weekly, *May 12, 1883*

It was through the printed media that the psychological war was fought. Whites were particularly apprehensive about the rights of blacks to bear arms and a white militia was organized to stem the threat of black rebellion. Many acts of violence against blacks were perpetuated by these militia units.

After the war, there was a major shift in white opinion toward the newly freed black. As slaves, they had been thought of as happy, docile, and loveable in spite of their faults. On the other hand whites considered freedmen to be suspicious, impudent, lazy, and dangerous. If overtly cruel masters were ostracized before the war, after the South's defeat freed blacks were often abused in what became acceptable behavior in white society. As historian Robert Gilmour writes, "To belittle an unintelligent slave had been a sign of pettiness and insecurity; to harass the freedmen became evidence of cleverness and masculinity."[2] Such mentality led many to support the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama. Writing in 1905 Walter Fleming cites many instances of strong support for the Klan in the white community during this period, as does Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins in her recent *Scalawag in Alabama Politics*.[3]

The Mobile *Daily Register* editorially deplored acts of violence against freedmen, but placed the responsibility for this violence on

"carpetbaggers" and "scalawags." Two separate incidents which occurred on September 15, 1868 in Mobile can be used to illustrate this point. In the first case Jonathan Coleman, a black man, was arrested for carrying concealed weapons, two pistols according to the newspaper. His bond was set at $200 and he was charged with disorderly conduct and fined $5 or five days in jail. On the same day, two black Democrats from New Orleans arrived in Mobile for the purpose of promoting the Democratic cause. They were followed by Republican blacks and, according to the Mobile *Daily Register*, heckled by the latter group. At one point, a black Democrat pulled a gun on the Republican group, whereupon the Democrats were escorted to safety by several white men. [4]

Thus, a black man carrying a weapon was arrested and fined a large sum of money, while whites aided black Democrats even though they were bearing, and threatening to use, such weapons. In another case a black man was bound over on $100 bond for carrying a concealed weapon. According to the newspaper, it was a "large bowie knife." The man was attending a Republican political procession. In September 1868 Henry Smith, a black rag picker, was accused of stealing two copper boilers. Although at the mayor's court it was determined that there was not enough evidence to have him bound over for trial, he was nevertheless fined $10 or 30 days in jail. The newspaper account did not specify what the fine was for or why a man who could not be proven guilty was fined at all.

The Mobile *Daily Register* carried numerous advertisements for Democratic clubs, rallies, and barbecues. The blacks were always invited to the barbecues apparently because whites believed they could appeal to blacks by offering food and comforts. Little understanding blacks' aspirations, whites were mystified as to why so many of the freedmen chose the ideas of the Republicans over the barbecued pork of the Democrats.

Especially distasteful to the whites in Mobile and throughout the South was the right of blacks to vote and hold office. In a typical editorial of the period, the *Register* stated that it was "for white men doing the voting and holding office, and none others." [5] The paper reinforced its attitude toward black political activity by routinely using racist and offensive language. An article written under the heading "Radical Demonstration" reported that "...after the haranguing, the crowd of semi-barbarians, yelling like savages, and observing no particular order of march, proceeded up Royal Street and soon disappeared." [6] The account claimed that about 1500 blacks had attended the Republican meeting.

PRICE TWO CENTS.

FROM MOBILE.

Effects of Davis' Release.

REBELS AGAIN RAMPANT.

Free Speech Denied in Mobile

ATTACK ON JUDGE WM. D. KELLEY.

The Meeting Broken Up by the Chivalry.

FIVE MEN KILLED AND MANY WOUNDED.

Col. Shepherd Orders Out His Troops

THE CITY IN POSSESSION OF HIS FORCES.

Special Despatch to the Inquirer.

MOBILE, Ala., May 14.—Judge Kelley arrived here this morning from New Orleans. Preparations were made for him to speak to-night in the open air at the corner of Government and Royal streets. The meet-

Philadelphia Inquirer, *May 14, 1867* *Museum of the City of Mobile*

One of the better known and still controversial events which took place in Mobile was the "Pig Iron" Kelley riot on May 14, 1867. Congressman William D. Kelley of Philadelphia toured the South in May 1867 with the intent of laying the foundations of the Republican Party in the former Confederate states. The rally began as a predominantly black crowd of approximately 4000 people listened to Congressman Kelley recount the events that had led to the Civil War. Early in his speech he was interrupted by a gang of whites. [7] A Mobile newspaper report downplayed the importance of this heckling and placed the blame on the blacks and Congressman Kelley for initiating the riot. The Chief of Police, Stephen Charpentier, attempted to arrest some of the hecklers and in so doing had to draw his pistol. There are conflicting accounts of what happened next; a New York *Herald* reporter seated on the platform heard someone cry "fire," and wrote that shots were fired at the speaker's platform. However, the Montgomery *Daily Mail* claimed that as the chief of police attempted to arrest a drunken citizen, a carriage and horses ran through the edge of the crowd causing panic among the spectators. As the crowd fled, some freedmen fired shots into the air. [8]

Whatever precipitated the riot, it left one white and one black man dead and twenty persons wounded. Congressman Kelley quickly retired into the Battle House and had a special boat take him from Mobile. Some Southerners asserted that he had instigated the whole affair to create a sensation in the North. But it should be noted that Congressman Kelley had spoken without incident in New Orleans and Memphis.

A grand jury investigation of the riot concluded that there was no evidence of a concerted effort by white men to attack the congressman or citizens at the meeting. The same jury also decided Congressman Kelley did not provoke the incident, but that the riot resulted from blacks openly wearing firearms. In the North the riot was reported in overblown and dramatized accounts, although the New York press was probably correct in placing much of the blame for the disturbance on the "Rebel press." [9] While the Mobile *Register* had not blatantly advocated violence, it did nevertheless provide a forum for expressions of racism and so deserves a share of responsibility for the riot. [10]

By 1870 Southern Democrats became more confident as the failures of Reconstruction were reported throughout the Southern press. In an attempt to fragment the black/Republican coalition, the Mobile *Daily Register* warned blacks that "the white citizens of the South can take care of themselves." The article continued, ominously

William D. "Pig Iron" Kelley, 1863 *Historical Society of Pennsylvania*

warned blacks that "...we said the other day that one more opportunity was now offered to the Negroes — the best, and probably the last they will ever have to correct the huge mistake they made when they joined with strangers to make war upon the interests and rights of their white neighbors." [11]

Another source of white bitterness was the role that black churches played in educating and organizing freedmen for the

Republican cause. The whites were especially vexed since many of these churches were funded with white, albeit Northern, funds. In a March 7, 1871 article castigating black political activity, the Mobile *Daily Register* warned, "If there is any difference between these [black] churches as hot-houses for political incendiarism and plots against the welfare of society in the matter of judicious and honest suffrage, the white people should find it out, and in their donations of funds to help build them up, a discrimination should be made." [12] Even Walter Fleming in his *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* maintained,

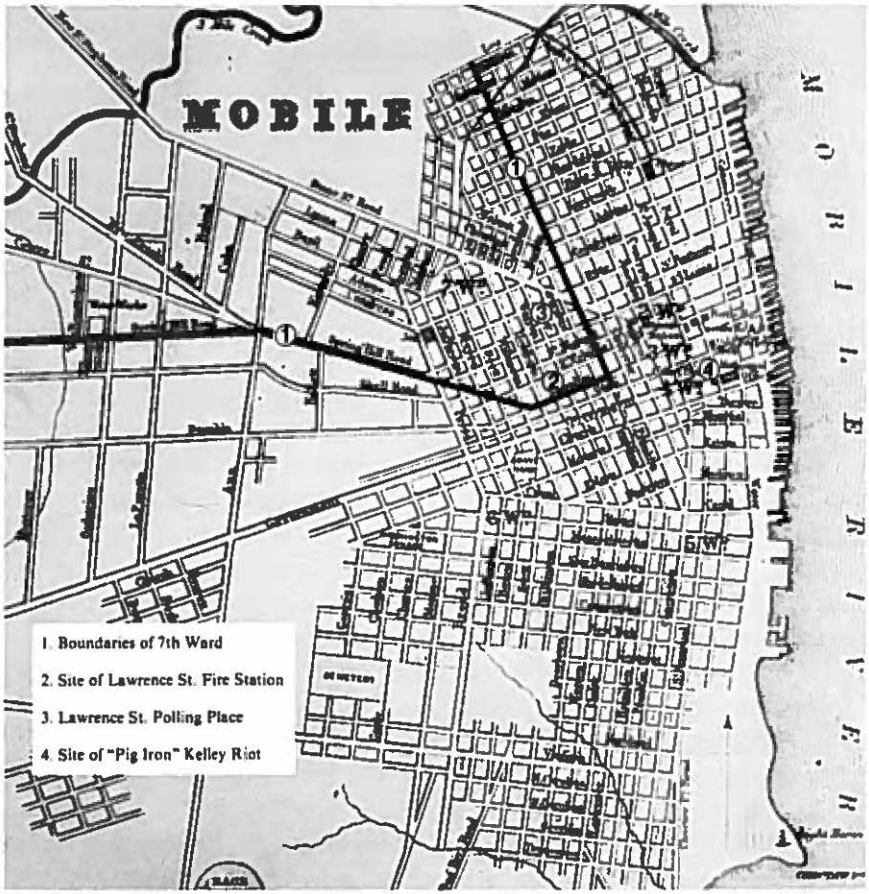
Lawrence Street firehouse, scene of 1869 canon incident

Local History Division, Mobile Public Library

"There was a solid South in church as well as in politics."[13] It was difficult for Mobile's whites to comprehend why "their" blacks chose to assume more direct control of their churches, schools, and lives, so they chose to use the Northerners and "scalawags" as scapegoats.

The 1870s saw continued turmoil in Mobile especially during city elections. For example, in the election of 1869 there were many voting irregularities. Many white voters voted in their own wards and then went to others to vote in the names of blacks, concluded one modern researcher in his testimony in a discrimination case. There were reports that whites resorted to threatening blacks with unemployment should they vote. The most remarkable incident of violence was reported by the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the House of Representatives.

> Without the least, or certainly without any justifiable provocation, oe organization known as "fire company" who had their engine



Mobile in 1874 *Local History Division, Mobile Public Library*

> house only about two and a half squares off from the place of voting, suddenly threw open the doors of their engine house and ran into the street a piece of artillery which had been concealed in said engine house, and actually loaded and trained it upon the crowd at said polls.

The committee report goes on to state that roughly one thousand people had gathered at the polls; with the cannon pointing at them, most fled. It was also documented that the ward total was one thousand votes below that of former elections as a result of the violence and intimidation. [14]

In 1874 the "Redemption" election took place in Alabama. The Mobile *Register* headline on November 4 of that year proclaimed: "White Supremacy Sustained. The White Men as a Unit." During this election one black person was killed, four were wounded, and scores were frightened away from the polls when white horsemen shot down blacks in the streets of the port city.

During this time there was also a political riot on Government Street

> in which three black men were killed and six police officers and six civilians (of whom three were black) were wounded. Radical Republican leaders charged that the riot was the responsibility of "Ku Klux Democrats" but Mayor Caleb Price wrote Governor Smith and claimed that his police force could preserve order in the city. However, Mayor Price proceeded to form a "Committee of Public Safety" consisting of Democrats to assist in preserving order. [15]

By 1875 the Democrats felt more confident of their power base. Republican weakness, corruption, and disunity also contributed to the collapse of Republican power. Everywhere the party members turned, they were attacked in the press as enemies of white supremacy. Southerners such as former Probate Judge Gustavus Horton, who testified that blacks had indeed been intimidated at the polls, were condemned in the press. Judge Horton had sworn before a congressional committee that "the colored men were intimidated," and estimated that "with a free unbiased election there would have been 1000 more votes polled in the county than were polled." The *Register* responded, by implying that Horton was a liar: "To say that we are surprised at the testimony of Mr. Gustavus Horton, late probate judge of this county, is to express oneself mildly." [16]

Questions of political power were not the only ones which divided the Democrats and Republicans. In an article concerning Pullman

Gustavus Horton
Museum of the City of Mobile

John Forsythe
Mobile Public Library

cars and civil rights, the Mobile *Register* made an appeal to the Pullman Company to the effect that:

> Mr. Pullman is a white man and made his money from the patronage of white men. Extreme Republican as he is, he must understand the antipathy of the races, especially in the South, and must sympathize with our white citizens who abhor the contact of the vulgar and filthy creatures who compose nineteen-twentieths of the negro race. [17]

These and other issues were used by the Democrats to gain political power. They also exploited deep-seated white fears of the violation by black males of white Southern womanhood. In the "Pullman Car" editorial cited above, the writer expressed this sentiment by stating that "no decent white citizen will hereafter patronize a man who permits his wife and daughter to be brought into contact with negroes."

There were instances when the black press attempted to respond to the Mobile *Daily Register*. That paper did print an excerpt from a black weekly, the Emerson Institute *Sentinel*, which effectively presented its views of the *Register's* editorial policy.

> No paper [The Mobile *Daily Register*] is an abler, or more widely acknowledged representative of the "Southern people." Its dislike of northern people, of colored people, and especially of northerners who have anything to do with the colored people, has become

> almost proverbial. The colored people have come to look upon the *Register* and the people whom it so fully represents, almost as enemies of their race and of any one who comes among them. [18]

The *Sentinel* article reprinted in the *Register* proclaimed no hatred for the whites and stated that the white and black races must cooperate in order to attain harmony. The *Register* did not answer the article directly. Instead it repeated its usual position that blacks were the victims of Northern "carpetbaggers." It concluded that since the deluded blacks were not willing to see reason, they should leave the colored problem alone, both editorially and politically. Although publication of the *Sentinel* article is somewhat surprising, the *Register*'s editors probably concluded that none of their readers would take the piece seriously.

A revealing editorial appeared in the Mobile paper on July 28, 1876 under the title "Race Relations in the South." In the article the author attempted to analyze the racial situation, but what emerged was a paradox. The writer was confused and hurt by black antipathy toward whites yet ruled out slavery as the reason since under the old regime "the negro and the white man dwelt together in perfect unity." He argued that the whites had made every effort to "go with them hand in hand in the construction and carrying out of measures in furtherance of the interest of both." The essay also claimed that blacks had equal rights with whites but that they were under the "baleful influence of the reckless and unprincipled element which has assumed the leadership of the negro population." [19]

White Southerners stubbornly clung to their rationalizations for treating the blacks as inferior beings. Either blacks were savage, lazy, and subhuman or they were simply misguided pawns of the Republicans. White leaders manipulated these images to suit their own ends, whether it was an appeal for votes or a call for turbulence and violence. But the Republicans also employed unscrupulous methods—using the blacks to achieve their own political ends.

As a result of the Civil War, white Southerners had experienced the trauma of defeat and the loss of slavery as an institution of social control. They turned to a mythological view of their antebellum culture as a defense against a new and frightening postwar world. Blacks were products of that same antebellum way of life, and also had to come to terms with rapid social change. In these circumstances a constructive editorial voice from the white community might have made possible an easier transition for both races. This was not to be, however, for the Democratic newspapers of Mobile chose a policy

aimed at dividing the city's populace along racial lines. Editor John Forsythe of the *Register* could conceive of social order only in terms of white supremacy, and "Redemption" ultimately guaranteed such a society. As far as most whites were concerned, blacks faded into the background, recast as docile friends and servants of the whites, without regard to their aims, aspirations, or abilities.

Notes

[1] Robert Arthur Gilmour, "The Other Emancipation: Studies in the Society and Economy of Alabama Whites During Reconstruction." PhD diss., John Hopkins University, 1982, 230-231.

[2] Ibid., p. 255.

[3] Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama.* (New York, 1905), 660-669. Sarah W. Wiggins, *The Scalawag in Alabama Politics, 1865-1881.* (University, AL, 1977).

[4] Mobile *Daily Register*, September 4, 1868.

[5] "Negro Suffrage," Mobile *Daily Register*, September 5, 1868.

[6] "Radical Demonstration," Mobile *Daily Register*, September 5, 1868.

[7] New York *Herald*, May 15, 1867.

[8] Montgomery *Daily Mail*, May 18, 1867.

[9] New York *Tribune*, May 15, 1867.

[10] Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, "The 'Pig-Iron' Kelley Riot in Mobile, May 14, 1867," *Alabama Review* (January 1970): 45-55.

[11] "Some Words to Colored Citizens," Mobile *Daily Register*, November 24, 1870.

[12] "The Election," Mobile *Daily Register*, March 7, 1871.

[13] Fleming, 652.

[14] Report of the Committee on Privileges and Elections, December 2, 1869, *Alabama State Journal*, December 4, 1869.

[15] "Proposed Findings of Fact...," Bolden v. City of Mobile 423 F.Supp. 384 (S.D. Ala. 1976), 32.

[16] "Judge Horton's Testimony," Mobile *Daily Register*, February 23, 1875.

[17] "The Civil Rights Act and the Pullman Sleeping Cars," Mobile *Daily Register*, March 25, 1875.

[18] "The Colored Man's Error," Mobile *Daily Register*, March 10, 1876.

[19] "Race Relations in the South," Mobile *Daily Register*, July 28, 1876.

Text of the "Radical Campaing Song" in Mobile *Tribune:*

O, we radicals are ruling,
Ruling and ruining the country as we know,
And the Constitution and the Union,
Straight to the devil let 'em go.

Chorus:
And its Glory, glory, hallelujah,
We'll ride the nigger, for his back is very strong,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
And we'll go marching along.

Come let us get up a Constitution
Where we'll tie the State so her pockets can be picked,
And let us take a pair of darkies,
Who from the back door shall be kicked.

For its glory, glory, hallelujah, &c.

What do we care for the white man?
With his starving family why let 'im go to h-ll,
Turn him off from work for the negro
To sleep and vote will do very well.

For its glory, glory, hallelujah, &c.

O, we're a jolly set of rascals,
Riding on this elephant and tramping on the right,
Mashing in the graves of the soldiers
Who once for the Union did fight.

For its glory, glory, hallelujah, &c.

O, we're a jolly set of rascals,
Poultice-eating fishers who for nigger votes do bob,
Mild-mannered widow hating scoundrels
Gloryfing God while we rob!

Then glory, glory, hallelujah, &c.

Stephanie Hardin is a graduate student in the History Department of the University of South Alabama.

Tallahassee: Florida's Capital in the "Roaring Twenties"

Barbara Gene Fisher

Three years after Tallahassee was established as the territorial capital of Florida, Judge Henry M. Brackenridge concluded a detailed survey of the country by stating:

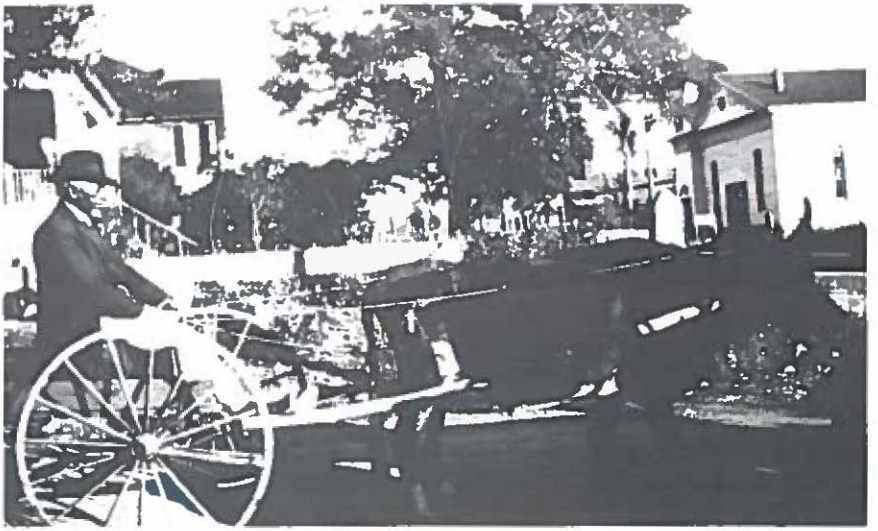
> The only regret I feel in contemplating this beautiful region is its very limited extent — an oasis which appears to have been formed by nature in one of her most sportive and fantastic humors.

Tallahassee was never more sportive or fantastic than it was a hundred years later in the decade after World War I when the Roaring Twenties, with its Jazz Age, Flaming Youth and Betty Boop came to town.

With the Great War over, citizen soldiers came back to the land, hopefully free of VD, back to the home of the brave with its moonshine, liberated women, land booms and real estate ballyhoo. Yankee Doodle Dandy strutted and danced through an era of peace, prohibition and cultural achievement, singing all the way: "Not much money, oh, but honey, ain't we got fun?"

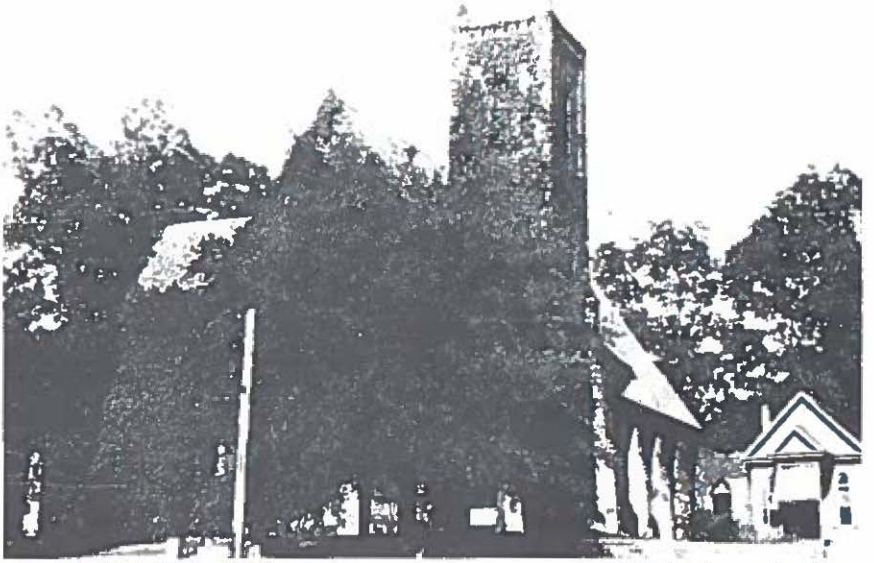
Monroe Street, Tallahassee, c. 1920 *Florida State Archives*

In Tallahassee the era began on Armistice Day 1918 with a bang of the old Capitol cannon and the wail of Fire Chief Tip Coe's siren. Despite the hub-bub, however, Florida's capital was still a sleepy town of 3,000 souls with mules in its stables, oxen in its streets and bats in its city-clock belfry. Slowly, as memories of war faded, people began to realize that the future of their town was linked, not to the continuance



Oxcart, College Avenue, c. 1920 *Florida State Archives*

of frontier traditions but to the development of the entire state of Florida. They also realized that if the beautiful capital retreated beneath the canopy of its antebellum heritage, it would wither away, a closed society. A town without a major rail terminal, seaport, navigable rivers, heavy industry or tourist trade, the citizens of Tallahassee woke up after the war to the reality of their vulnerable position in an increasingly competitive state and nation.

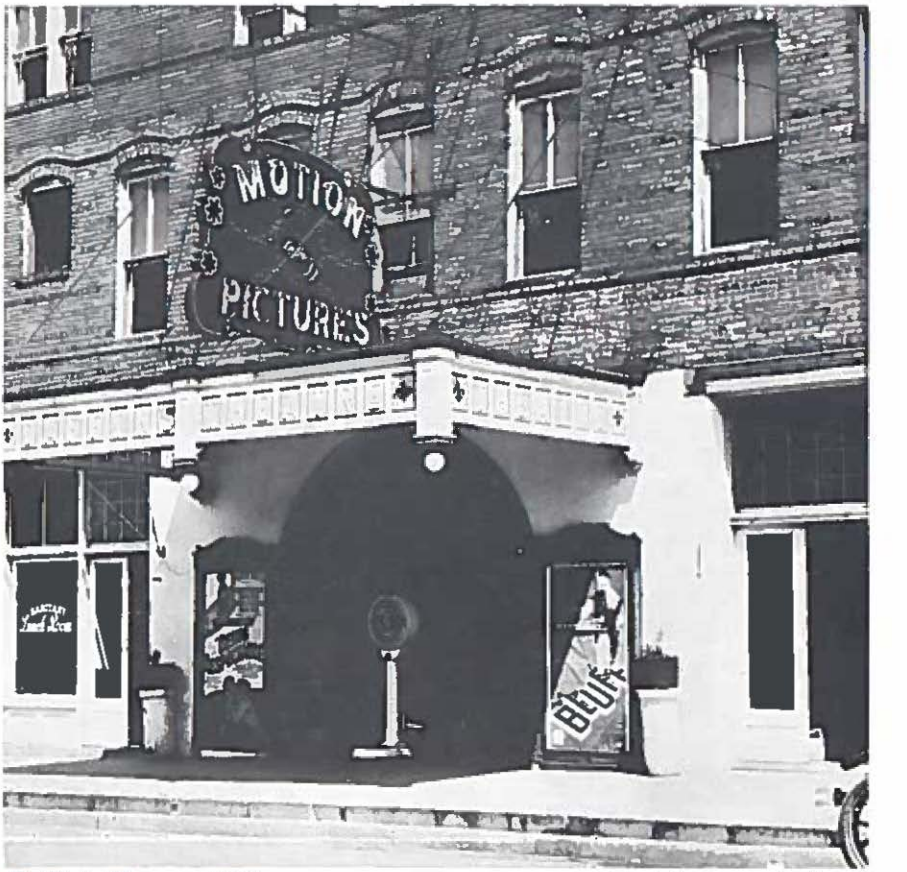


St. John's Episcopal Church *Florida State Archives*

First Baptist Church, c. 1918 *Florida State Archives*

The city was not without resources, however. Florida's capital was protected by stern guardians: the matriarchy of the Methodist Episcopal Women's Missionary Union, the Women's Baptist Union, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Epworth League. Church pastors Bunyan Stephens and Jeffrey Alfriend guarded the bastions of the First Baptist Church and St. John's Episcopal Church respectively. Conservative legislator Leo Stalnaker lashed out at sin in the cinema and on campus and became the first Florida judge to allow the use of a camera in the courtroom. In 1927 he was reprimanded by the Tampa city commission for hiring a photographer to cover trials in his court.

Tallahassee theater magnate C.E. Daffin censored the movies by not showing those he found unacceptable. Presbyterian elder I. A. Tatum scrutinized library shelves for dangerous new books that could excite women toward trial marriage, psychotherapy, and most terrible of all, miscegenation. In tabernacle tents and on street corners, evangelists Bob Jones, Karl Wittman, Charlie Butler, Healer McCoy, Machine-Gun Fogleman and 15-year old Catherine Harrell took on



Daffin's Theater, 1929 *Florida State Archives*

Satan, jazz and old demon rum with the ardor of that bombastic preacher, Baseball Billy Sunday.

Tallahassee did not produce jazz artists equal to those who danced up and down Broadway to the syncopation of the "Black Bottom," but its people did enjoy the music of Albert Shine and his orchestra, Happy Cope and his banjo, the Florida Nighthawk Band, Slim Smith's Blue Gator Band and George Armes and his Georgians. They loved their own Capitol City Band as it ruffled and flourished downtown in the gazebo on Park Avenue. And when the "Moanin' Saxaphone Rag" started up on the stage of Daffin's movie house, it set every foot tappin'. The hottest things in Tallahassee during the Roaring Twenties, however, were the fires that roared through buildings on the campus of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College and through the historic Leon Hotel in October 1925.

Older Tallahasseeans flailed away at the new-fangled flappers. Collective brows scowled at the sight of girls in knickers, girls who

went to the city's black neighborhood in Frenchtown to have their hair bobbed at Cason's barber shop and girls who read Freud in the library of the Florida State College for Women (since 1947, Florida State University). Many men were fed up with the recently enfranchised woman. On April 19, 1922 a disgruntled male wrote this scathing indictment:

> The cause of the next war struts up Fifth Avenue today and her sister on Main Street apes her. The flapper will bring about this country's downfall, just as surely as Delilah caused Samson's. Every great war has been traced to the depravity of women and

Farmer's Exchange Bank, 1927 *Florida State Archives*

they never were as bad as they are today. When a woman shows her knee you can see her finish and that of nations as well. Girls think more of their eye lashes and nude hosiery than they do decency; home life is broken up; respect for law goes with it, wholesale iniquity follows, then war. We cussed the Kaiser for starting the last war, but pet the cause of the next. The modern girl is 100 times worse than the girls of the last century, and the country girl is just as bad as her city cousins. Once upon a time country girls were pure but gasoline spoiled that. We have closed our red light districts and put them on rubber tires. Women smoking are indecent. The spark from a woman's cigarette is going to touch off a conflagration that will destroy this country within 50 years.

Proprieties and moral watchdogs notwithstanding, the city had its share of daredevils and eccentrics. Human fly Bill Stother climbed up the dome of the Capitol in 1919. In 1928 another human fly climbed the face of Tallahassee's new six-story skyscraper, the Farmers' Exchange Bank building.

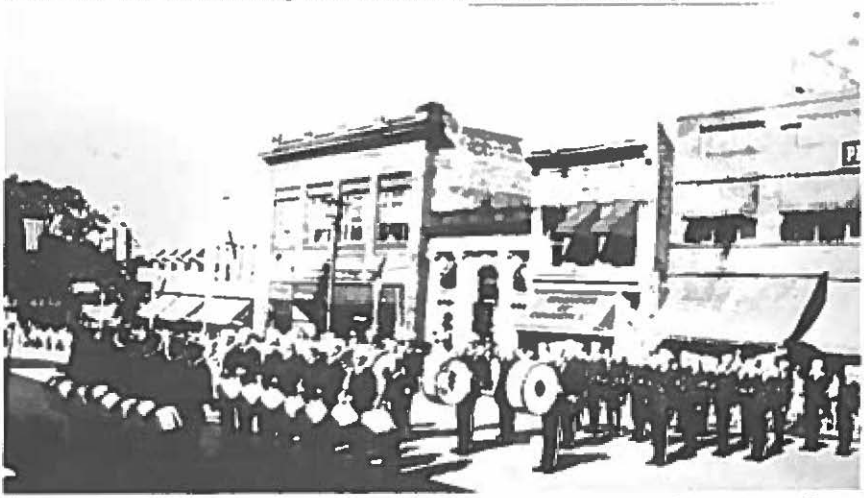
Among the more colorful local characters were Gustave Sigwalt, a Holiness preacher who had advocated draft evasion during the war and was finally dragged out of the Apalachicola forest only to be granted amnesty for his crime. W. S. Stroman claimed on one day that he was hit by molten metal raining from the sky and on another that his crops were devoured by giant bugs. He also swore that he had not been sipping the "still waters" of one of Leon County's many moonshine distilleries. William Lee Popham, self-proclaimed oyster king of

Col. Thomas Jefferson Appleyard(center) at airfield on old St. Augustine Road, c. 1926 — Florida State Archives

Apalachicola and St. George Island, busily pursued his project of selling sea-bottoms to willing Tallahassee investors. But what might have been an amusing shellgame to speculators turned out to be a landmark case in the state's continuing struggle to determine ownership of Florida's submerged lands. Col. Thomas Jefferson Appleyard, Confederate veteran and state printer, urged Tallahassee boosters to look to the capitalists of the midwest while at the same time he irked some with his Old-South righteousness. Appleyard also was a journalist, publisher, legislative candidate, and candidate for governor. Grosvenor Dawe, transplanted Chicagoan who had come to Tallahassee to help with the city's Centennial celebration of 1924, urged Tallahasseeans to pay more attention to muck farms and banana plantations and less to the real estate boom of 1925. Leon County had quail reserves, hog farms, dairy farms, Torreya trees and oil from the Chinese tung tree, but no bananas.

The capital city also had its share of protest movements, some serious and many a little odd. In 1920 many joined the national "Don-the-Denim" campaign to cut the high cost of clothing by wearing blue jeans and overalls in such unlikely places as the courts and the Capitol. Others gladly subscribed to the cheery National Order of Gloom Chasers (NOGC) of 1921, the No Longer Skirts League (NLSL) and merchants' Wednesday bargain sales designed to fight the High Cost of Living (HCL).

On the eve of its 100th anniversary in 1924, Tallahassee turned to the more serious business of the Centennial celebration. Frank Woodward set the tone for this occasion with a song whose lyrics reflected the commonly held racial attitudes of his day.



Centennial Parade, Monroe Street, 1924 *Florida State Archives*

In ole Tallahassee on de red clay hills,
We's a-puttin' on some kind o' extry frills.
For we's got a birfday party on han'
And we's invitin' evahbody in de lan'.
For jes' erbout a hundred years or so
We kep' mighty quiet an' just laid low.
We didn't wanter get too fer ahead,
So we jes' tried 'akeepin' still instead.

Centennial bursts of energy included Company M's machine-gun tracer bullet demonstration and the shrieking of Big George, the city's factory whistle, during the week-long event. The occasion led to a remarkable boom in area construction. The Leon County courthouse was remodeled, the state motor vehicle building, later Tallahassee City Hall went up, and the Seminole, Cherokee and Hotel Floridan opened. Unfortunately, the twenties' expectations of permanance were not borne out by the reality of municipal growth. All of the structures were eventually demolished.

The twenties also saw construction of the Lake Talquin hydro-electric dam and Gorrie bridge connection between Eastpoint and Apalachicola begin. A Tallahassee civic center to replace the wind-riven Redpath Chautauqua tent was proposed. A plan to build a memorial "white way" of street lights and arches to honor Leon County's war veterans was also on the drawing board. Scheduled to open before the end of the decade, Dale Mabry airfield was Tallahassee's first official airport. It replaced the old Magnolia Heights

Leon County Courthouse, c. 1924 *Florida State Archives*

Hotel Floridian, c. 1930 *Florida State Archives*

landing field. The roar of all this activity, however, did not drown out the rumbling of rumors nor did it alter the fact that Tallahassee was still an "almost" town.

Nearby Wakulla Springs was "almost" added to the new national park system. President Calvin Coolidge "almost" came to Tallahassee to open the Centennial. Humorist Will Rogers got only as far as the Rose theater in Thomasville, Georgia. Rumor had it that wartime draft dodger Grover Bergdoll "almost" made it to Tallahassee. Some believed that Aimee Semple McPherson was on her way to Tallahassee to escape the turbulent wake of her charismatic evangelism, or that Henry Ford was coming to the capitol city to establish his aviation industry. Charles "Lucky" Lindbergh, America's lone eagle, "almost landed" on a rut-filled cornfield out Old St. Augustine Road while on his triumphal tour of Florida.

On the other hand, Al Smith, on his nationwide campaign tour in 1928, actually stopped at the Seaboard Railroad Depot for 20 minutes. Other notables made it to the town, arriving, performing and returning many times: John Phillip Sousa, the famous bandmaster, Frieda Hempel, a German soprano, and Monte Blue the movie actor who, as one skeptical Tallahasseean was quick to note, turned out to be considerably shorter and fatter than his film image. Popular national touring minstrel companies — Coburn's, Al G. Fields', 'Lasses White — marched on Monroe Street at noon, performed at Daffin's at night and literally owned the city for their three-day stands.

Captain Dale Mabry *Florida State Archives*

If the town's claim to national fame was dubious, there was nothing tentative about the tragedies that visited Tallahassee in the twenties. The body of Claude Sauls, Tallahassee's hero of the World War, was brought home from a grave in France to be buried. In 1922, Dale Mabry, hero of the skies, went down in flames while piloting America's new Italian-made dirigible, "Roma." A month later Emma Boyd, beloved music teacher at the Florida State College for Women,

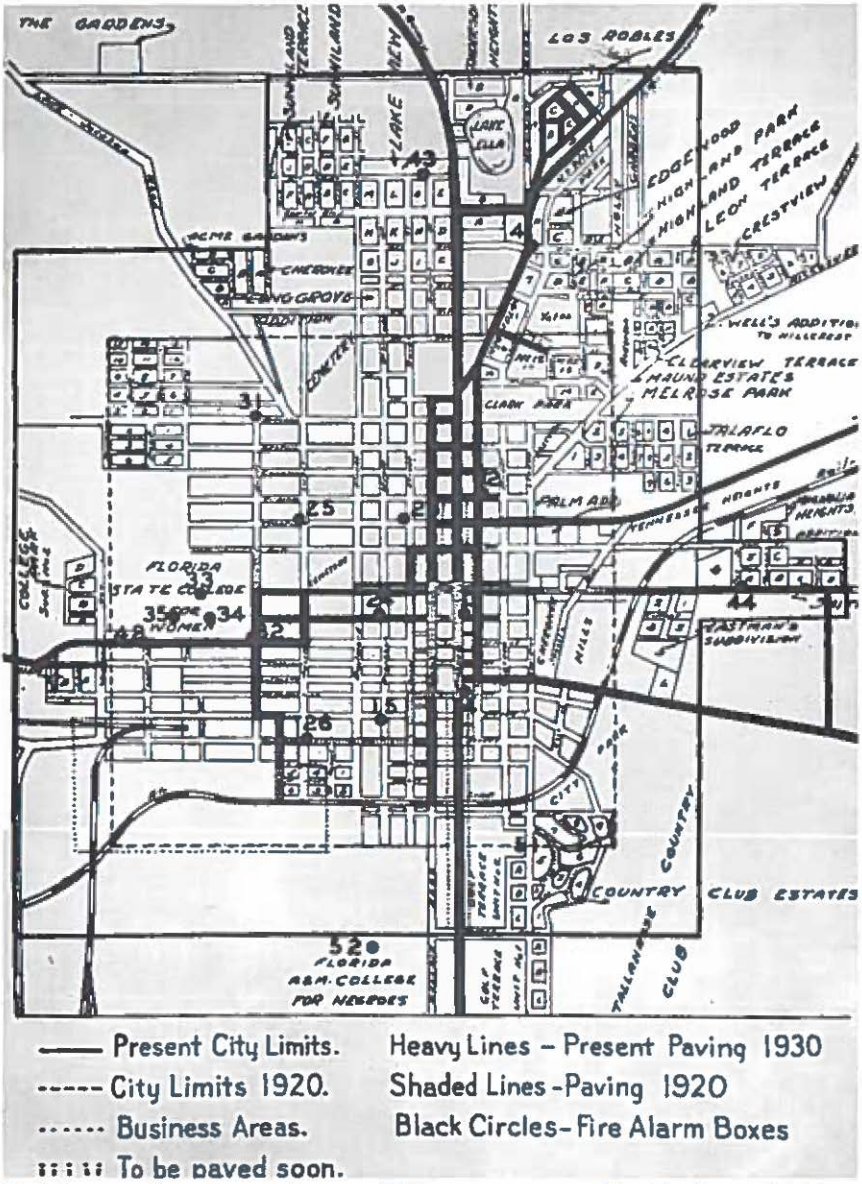
was killed under tons of earth while visiting an archaeological dig at Lake Jackson Indian Mound.

Martin Tabert, a North Dakota railroad hobo, was arrested for vagrancy in Tallahassee and subsequently whipped to death by a guard at the Putnam Lumber convict camp near Cross City. In 1923 after his body was disinterred, the whole nation read about the evils of the Florida lease-lash prison system responsible for his death. The Leon County sheriff and circuit judge were pilloried in the press for conspiracy to collect kickbacks for the delivery of prisoners to camp operators and for common drunkenness. The story unfolded in almost every issue of the Tallahassee *Democrat* from February to November 1923.

Tallahassee Democrat *Office, c. 1920* *Florida State Archives*

Disasters and the absence of both roaring triumphs and flamboyant progress did not mean that there was no movement toward the dream of a greater Tallahassee. The area-wide Chamber of Commerce was formed in January 1919. The city-manager-commission form of government was established in 1920, with J.W. Greer as first city manager. Annexation of neighboring subdivisions was authorized and the population grew to almost 15,000 by 1927. The status of downtown, split historically between state and city ownership, was clarified.

In 1875 Sidney Lanier had described Tallahassee as "an invalid's paradise, a green leafage of rests and balms and salutary influences, a



Tallahassee after annexations, c. 1935 *Florida State Archives*

city with a great wealth of leaf where the people are poor and the dwellings need paint." Fifty years later, Milton Smith, who had moved from Anniston, Alabama to become editor of the Tallahassee *Democrat* in 1908, was ecstatic about the city's wealth of leaf and fresh coat of Centennial paint. He was so buoyed up by the progress he had witnessed in the twenties, he proposed a new mythology. Florida is the handle of the United States, he proclaimed. "She became so in the

mythological days when Atlas found it expedient to take hold in order to keep the world from rolling off his shoulders. His knuckles and fingers formed the Gulf of Mexico and his hand held Florida." Though a pragmatist and a staunch Methodist, Smith got a little carried away by his own rhetoric in 1921:

> Tallahassee is inviting, it is charming. Its atmosphere is one of refinement and culture. It is rich in tradition and history. . . in Tallahassee is blended happily the new and the old, the veneration for things sacred, ancient and traditional with the spirit which is rapidly transforming this community into one of the garden spots of God's great universe. Tallahassee is a city of suprises. And the very first surprise to one who visits it for the first time is the fact that it is set among the hills — real hills which remind one of the foothills of some great mountain range. Indeed, Tallahassee is like Rome.

Seventy-eight year old Col. Appleyard, unlike editor Smith, had little patience with mythology and absolutely no interest in superlatives. Indeed, at the moment of Smith's euphoric boosterism, the old veteran of the Civil War and Florida's political wars was out of town on a honeymoon with his new bride.

By the late twenties, the people of Tallahassee had good reasons to be joyful. They had made some progress and after all, Herbert

Aerial view of Tallahassee, c. 1929 *Florida State Archives*

Hoover was about to become president of the United States. Milton Smith hailed the moment: "Florida faces 1929 with heads up, hearts singing and banners flying!"

Little did people dream that by the early thirties they would be wrapping themselves in old copies of the *Democrat* which they nicknamed "Hoover blankets," hauling firewood in mule-drawn disabled automobiles they nicknamed "Hoover wagons," or hunting for armadillos at the foot of South Monroe Street they ingloriously nicknamed "Hoover Hogs." Thus the Roaring Twenties ended, its promise largely unfulfilled, though the decade had seen the beginning of important changes in the old town.

Notes

The primary source used for this article is the microfilm edition of the Tallahassee *Democrat*. Scope and style owe much to Preston W. Slosson's *The Great Crusade and After* (Chicago, 1958).

For the pre-Civil War period in Tallahassee, see Bertram H. Groene, *Ante-Bellum Tallahassee*, (Tallahassee, 1981), or John Lee Williams, *A View of West Florida*, (Gainesville, 1976).

For the post-Civil War period in Tallahassee, see Sidney Lanier's *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate and History*. Facsimile of 1875 edition, (Gainesville, 1973).

For insights into the facts and folklore of the Tallahassee-Leon County region see Gloria Jahoda's *The Other Florida*, (Newton, 1967), reprint by Valentine Books, 1978, and her *Florida: A Bicentennial History* (New York, 1976).

All the photographs supplied courtesy of the Florida State Archives, Tallahassee.

For a photographic history of Tallahassee, also see Hampton Dunn's *Yesterday's Tallahassee*, (Miami, 1974).

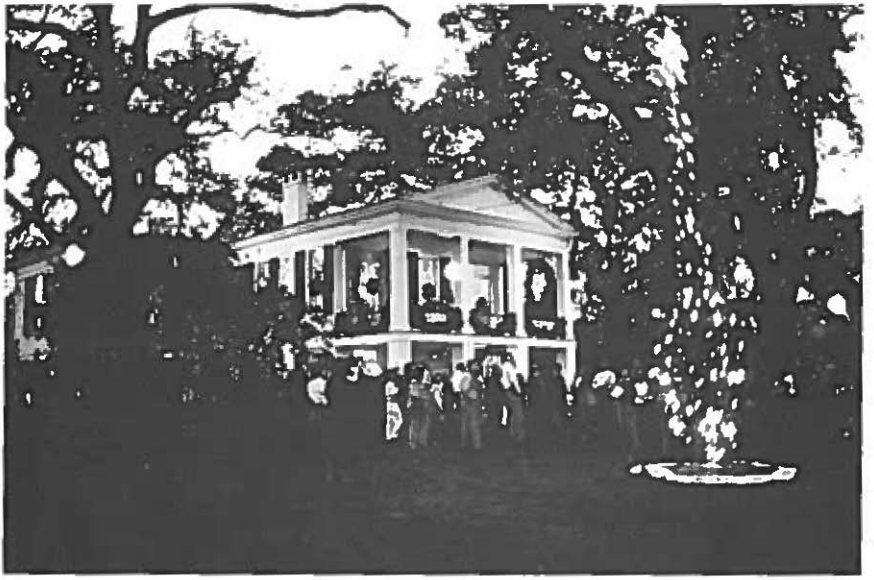
The following publications contain articles on particular subjects: *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Tallahassee Historical Society's *Annual* (until 1939) and afterwards its *Apalachee* magazine.

Barbara Gene Fisher has recently retired after a long career as a librarian, most recently with the Tallahassee *Democrat*. She is the author of *Meridian Markers*, a collection of her newspaper columns, and is currently preparing a history of Tallahassee after World War I.

Candlelight Christmas at Oakleigh

Michael Thomason

On Christmas day 1855, the Mobile Rifle Company paraded past the residence of General T.K. Irwin, stopped and presented a basket of flowers to Miss Daisey Irwin, the company's sponsor. That antebellum event, as reported in Mobile's *Daily Register*, has been reenacted each year since 1971 as the opening ceremony of Candlelight Christmas at Oakleigh. You see, it all happened at the house, now known as Oakleigh, that Christmas in Mobile's "Golden Fifties." So each year a new Miss Daisy, chosen from the fifteen year old daughters and granddaughters of the Society's members, receives her flowers. Thus, the Christmas season officially begins in Alabama's port city.



Lighting the Christmas tree on Oakleigh's front lawn

In many Southern towns historic homes are open and decorated for Christmas. Not to be outdone by the likes of Demopolis' Bluff Hall or Birmingham's Arlington, and to raise money for the expenses of the Historic Mobile Preservation Society, Oakleigh is romantically done up in all her antebellum yuletide finery. Thousands of people come to hear choirs sing, taste the Candlelight Christmas punch (it's made with Tang), see the beautifully decorated trees, and enjoy a bit of nostalgia. The Preservation Pantry and the Society's gift shop are always popular, but the best part is the candlelight rooms of the old house and

Bell ringers from Dauphin Way United Methodist Church

the candle-lined sidewalks, which really do seem to belong to another era.

When Oakleigh was built in 1833 by James Roper, it was well outside the municipal boundaries but now it is surrounded by the later 19th century homes in what has become the city's garden district. The

area around Oakleigh is, in fact, Mobile's oldest historic district and a showplace for the town's restoration efforts. The city acquired Oakleigh in 1955 and it has been home to the Historic Mobile Preservation Society ever since. A visitor to Oakleigh may also tour the 1850 Cox-Deasey house, the recently constructed Archives building, or just stroll around the grounds letting the imagination go. The house and its carefully selected furnishings are interesting at any time, but especially so during Candlelight Christmas. If you cannot feel even the least bit of nostalgia for the days of antebellum plantation society then, you never will. If you can do so, arrange to visit the house at dusk, just as the candles are being lit. There will probably be at least the hint of an early winter's chill in the air. Listen to the music, have a bit of punch, maybe select a small Christmas gift or two, wander through the candle-lit house and see if that doesn't bolster your Christmas spirits.

While one may be permitted to wonder how much the celebration romanticizes the Old South, it's hard not to be impressed with the dedication and skill of the army of volunteers who make it all work so beautifully. Thanks to the work of so many people over the years, Oakleigh, the Historic Preservation Society, and Candlelight Christmas are prospering, and new generations get a taste of mid-Victorian life at its finest.

A Candlelit sidewalk leading to Oakleigh

The decorated trees appeal to all ages *Thigpen photo*

Oakleigh's 15th annual Candlelight Christmas will be held on December 6 and 7, 1986. The hours will be noon until 8:00 p.m.; tickets are $3.00 in advance and $3.50 at the door. This is the society's only fundraiser and proceeds go to support its many projects throughout the year. The city's official Christmas tree is on Oakleigh's front lawn and it will be lighted, just after "Miss Daisy" receives her flowers on Saturday evening.

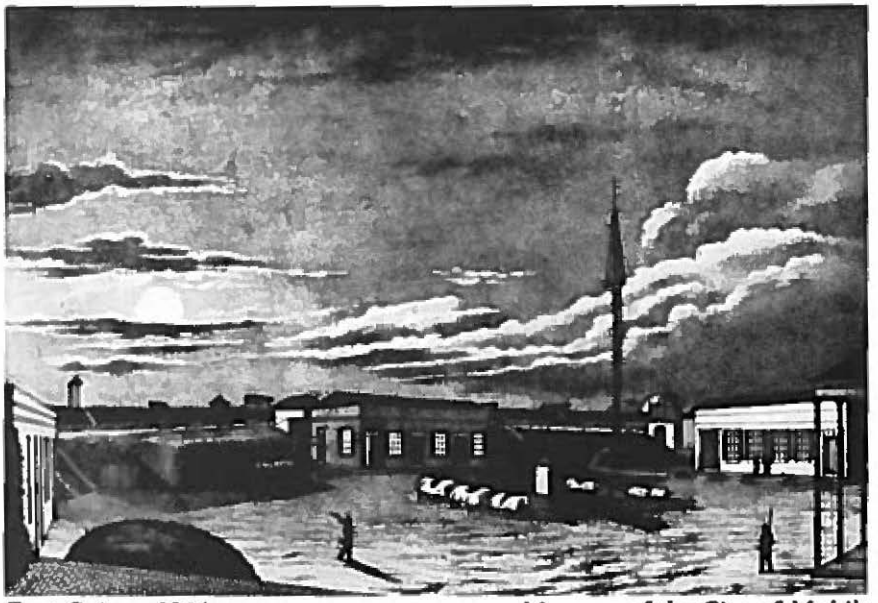
The house is easily reached from either I-65 or I-10. It is two blocks south of Government Street between Broad and Ann Streets. There is ample free parking available. For more information about this year's celebration or the activities of the Historic Mobile Preservation Society in general, call (205) 432-1281.

A Letter from Fort Gaines

The author of this 1862 letter was an Alabama physician and plantation owner, Charles Malone Howard (1824-1887). He is writing to his wife, Catherine Sorsby. Dr. Howard was born and spent his life in Autauga County, Alabama. By the time he was twenty-one he had completed his training at the Charleston Medical College in South Carolina and had returned home to practice.

In 1862 Dr. Howard responded to a call for volunteers issued by Governor Thomas Watts, raised a company of men, and was posted to Ft. Gaines, on Dauphin Island in lower Mobile Bay. As a physician he was exempt from military service, but nevertheless chose to go to the defense of his state. The Confederates feared an imminent assault by the federal fleet on the forts which kept Mobile Bay open to blocade runners. After the fall of New Orleans, Mobile was the Confederacy's only deep-water Gulf Coast port and its defense was essential. Dr. Howard served the term of his enlistment (90 days) and once the immediate danger of attack had passed he returned home to attend to his business and medical affairs.

Dr. Howard's letter, written shortly after his arrival, gives a detailed description of the forts and their surroundings and garrison life in general. While the letter gives insights into the Confederate position and the attitudes of soldiers with whom he served, there is also



Fort Gaines, 1864 *Museum of the City of Mobile*

a certain timelessness in Dr. Howard's account. Here was a civilian trying to cope with unfamiliar and unpleasant military routine, nonetheless convinced that he was doing his duty. He promised his wife that he would "bear with becoming character, the privations and denials which duty imposes." Even the hackneyed phrase "no place like home" has a sincere ring to it in the context of this citizen-soldier's letter.

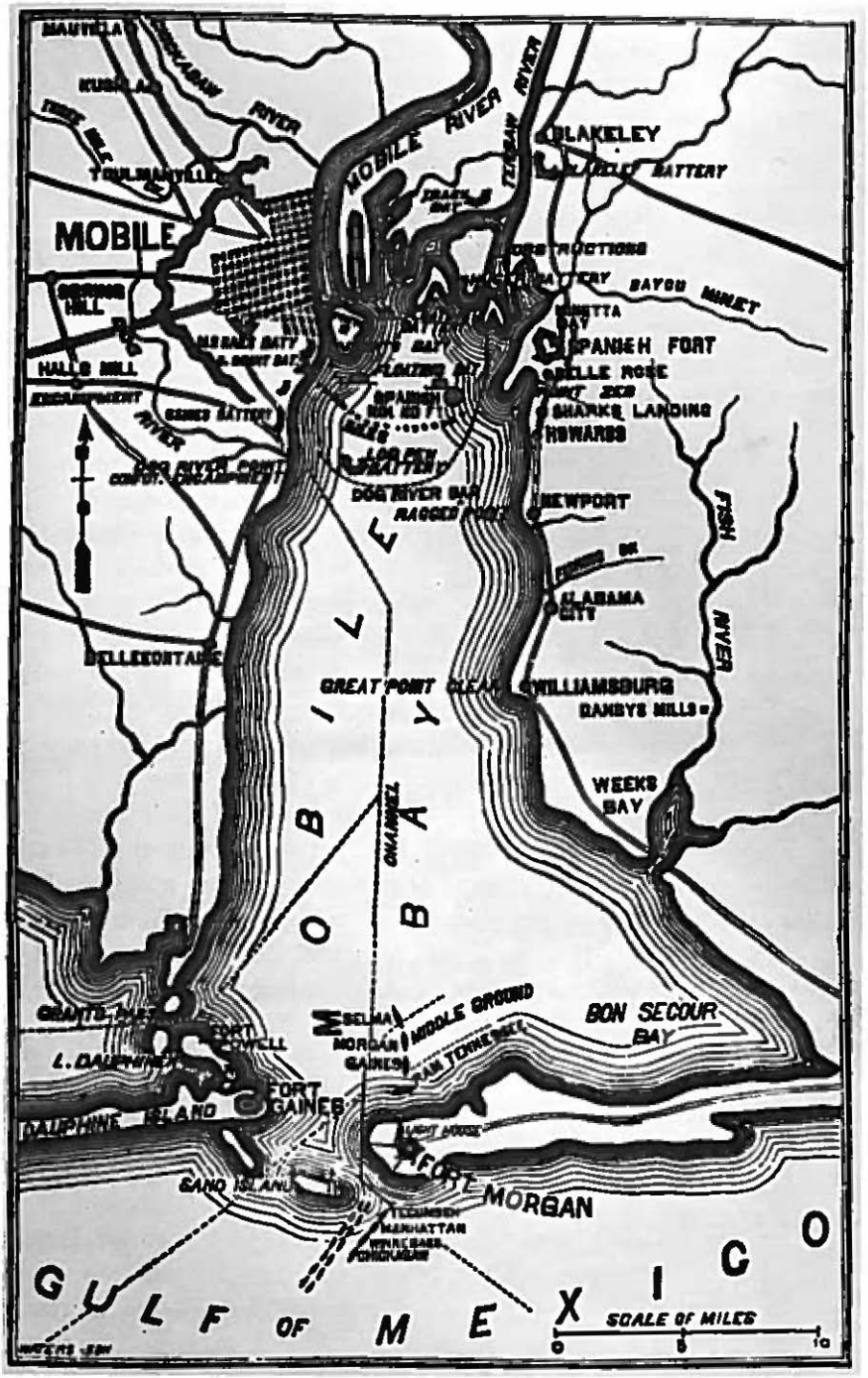
Indeed, Dr. Howard was remembered throughout his life as a gentleman of the old school who always wore a coat in the presence of a lady. This letter shows that he was also a perceptive, if homesick, observer of garrison life at the mouth of Mobile Bay. However, his assertion that Fort Gaines could not be taken by "an attack by water, until Fort Morgan is captured" later proved incorrect. Fort Gaines surrendered immediately after the battle of Mobile Bay in August 1864, two weeks before Fort Morgan finally capitulated. The reasons for Fort Gaines' early surrender remain clouded to this day.

The *Gulf Coast Historical Review* wishes to thank Dr. John Howard, grandson of the letter's author, for allowing its publication and Dr. Samuel Eichold for bringing it to our attention and preparing the introduction for it.

Ft. Gaines, April 6th 1862

Dear Kate,

I wrote to you a week ago detailing my *adventures* so far as I had then realized them. I again write you in order to keep you advised of my whereabouts. We got on quite smoothly at "Camp Shorter" until Thursday morning when orders came to us to get ready to proceed here. Not thinking that we would leave before Saturday, I went up to Mobile, but was ordered to return immediately and on reaching camp found the company gone. I visited a sick man who was left with the mumps (Grainger) and then set out to join my command at the river with several others. We remained at the river all night but next morning by sunup, we were aboard the "Dixie" bound down Dog River. At the Bay we were transfered to another boat and soon came in sight of the flag waiving [*sic*] over these headquarters and were assigned cabins somewhat similar to those we occupied at "Camp Shorter" but not by any means so clean or pleasant. I have not had time to visit all the surroundings of the Fort but from what I have seen am rather more favorably impressed with the means of defense than I expected. The guns of the ft. are what is know as *en barbettes*, that is mounted on top. There are some smaller ones in casimates [*sic*] designed to be used upon the enemy in the event they get possession of



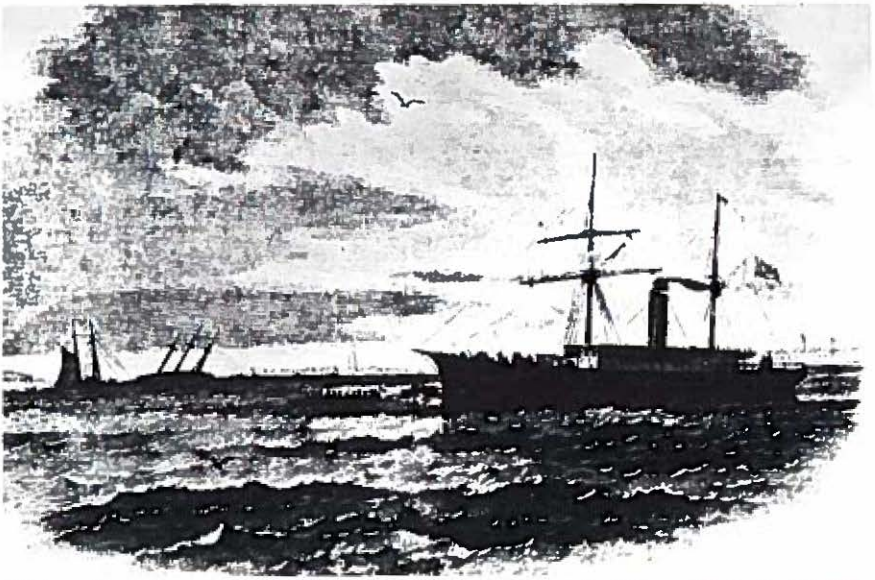
Mobile Bay defenses *Museum of the City of Mobile*

Fort Gaines c. 1900 *Erik Overbey/ Mobile Public Library Collection USA Photo Archives*

the outer embankment. The main wall is of brick about 20 ft. high 4 or 5 thick pierced for musketry and is protected by the outer wall which is of dirt. The guns are mounted on embankments in the rear of the inner wall. Their number is, I think, 40. The garrison is composed of about 4 companies of artillery and 4 with small arms. Immediately East of us is Ft. Morgan 4½ miles distant mounting about 120 guns, 70 of which is [*sic*] fronting the channel and some of them capable of throwing shell

Fort Morgan *Museum of the City of Mobile*

entirely over our post here. We are on Dauphin Island, which is 8 to 10 miles long, one to two wide. To the north of us is Cedar point 6 miles off, between which, and us, is what is known as Grant's pass through which boats run to New Orleans. To the S.E. 3 miles is Pelican Island, a sand bank which prevents the enemy from approaching us near enough to do execution. South of us is the Mobile lighthouse 3 or 4 miles off which is, I think, disputed property, too near to Ft. Morgan for the enemy to occupy and too near the blockading vessels for us to hold. The fleet to reach Mobile Bay must pass to the east of the lighthouse, between it and Ft. Morgan and we cannot be damaged by an attack by water, until Ft. Morgan is captured. A land attack might take our position were the enemy to land a large force upon the west end of the island. But this is protected by the guns on the fort which front in that direction say one third the whole number, while the trees are felled for a mile or so to retard their motion with light artillery. The blockaders can be seen 6 or 8 miles off in a S.E. direction and our gunboats go out occasionally to give them a salutation. Guns are heard every day in the direction of N. Orleans or Pensacola and a sight of the enemy's fleet tends to dignify the character of the soldier by enforcing upon him the responsibility of his position, at least I am more impressed with the duties of my position than I did [*sic*] at Camp Shorter. Here we will have to fight should we be attacked for there is but little chance for escape. No one is anticipating an attack and I fear such a belief may create a neglect that may prove fatal. I am not as yet, at all desponding but many of the boys are. My only objection here is the association imposed upon me with the artillery companies which appear to be of a degraded character, their cabins are filthy, their characters black and their association disgusting. Our boys want to get back to Camp Shorter but I can see no chance for them. Three companies came down with our Maj. and he thinks we will have to stay. He is a nice Christian gentleman of 45 years of age and his association I have cultivated and made profitable. Some of the company are desponding and would gladly return home. For one, I enlisted for the 90 days and think I shall bear with becoming character, the privations and denials which duty imposes. Men who feel self important have to be humbled here. We all lose our individuality and go at others calls. I must obey orders from my superiors and to do it, have to exact obedience from my men. Some, nearly all indeed, cheerfully acquiesce but 'tis hard for me to command as well as for them to obey. Yet we will all have to come to the requirements of the camp. This post is commanded by Col. Smith of Ga., a cross-grained unaccommodating sort of man. We are hourly under control of Ft.



Union blocade vessels in action off Fort Morgan, Harper's Weekly, *June 5, 1861.*

Archives, Historic Mobile Preservation Society

Morgan where Col. Powell commands. I have met several acquaintances here. Charles G. Gunter & T. A. Powell of Montgomery who are at work on the fortifications with negroes, also Leut. Bond called to see me this morning formerly of Autaugaville.

I wrote you to send me down at your convenience some nick-nacks. I don't want cakes, sweetmeats etc. so much as the substantials. We get Beef from Mobile every other day but the weather is so hot that it will not keep. We get 5 Rations Beef & two of Pork weekly. The supplies we brought from home are not yet exhausted. Send me a small ham or two, a medium-sized midlings to be used in part as lard. Butter, pickle, catsup, etc. will be acceptable. We get Rice in our weekly rations also molasses, sugar, coffee, pepper, vinegar, etc., tho [*sic*] some of the articles are quite inferior. We will not live here as well as at Camp Shorter, for there vegetables were in the market regularly. In sending down you can pack such articles as you want to send and inform Mrs. Cory, Mrs. Shivers, Mrs. Steele etc. who can send it to our mess in one package. Rice and Britton Lee are also with us. Should I have any dark summer pants, I would like to have them sent, or coats. I want nothing light colored as it will soil in a few hours here. Say to Dickinson to make me a light pair of shoes for summer wear similar to those usually made for soldiers, I want them light for drilling when the weather is hot. I fear I have nothing dark

The Cuba *going through Grant's Pass* — *Mrs. Carter C. Smith Collection*

among my clothes and if none I don't want you to send them — I can get in Mobile. I told Frank Johnson since I left home to get me 5 to 800 lbs. of Bacon and I wish you would remind Lonny to see that it is obtained. If it is not procured, use scantily your present supply or we will have none in the fall. I sent the sword back which Lonny sent me in care of F. L. Johnson & Co., Selma, where I wish someone would get it and return it to Mrs. Dickson with my thanks. The sash I have kept as I had none and it is worn daily in dress parade. I had my coat altered & bought a cap which makes me look quite military so Mr. Cory says.

As I know not when I shall go to Mobile again if you could get me some dark cottonade and make me 2 pr pants and send I would be glad. I find it usually hard to get pants ready made to fit me. I wrote you to send me Nelson or some other boy down and you might send me a little starch & smoothing iron if you have them to spare. We need such articles unless we had laundresses to do this work for us. The overshirts tho [*sic*] light are too hot and I shall have to get me some hickory shirts or wear linen. You can do the best you can about these things and I shall be content. I would relieve you of such troubles, if I had remained at Camp Shorter but I am here where facilities are not so good. I wish to be economical and this place is better in that respect than at Camp Shorter where there is more show and uniform among the officers. I have written you difficultly and perhaps unintelligibly. I am so surrounded that my thoughts cannot be concentrated long at a time. I hope you will get on smoothely [*sic*] with all your affairs and not allow yourself any trouble or anxiety on my account. I am as much pained at our separation as you are, but hope we will again see each other even before my time of service expires. There is indeed no place

like home. It has a thousand charms never appreciated until one feels their absence, and I am sad whenever I seat myself to dwell on the loved ones there. May Heaven protect you from all harm and may we soon be reunited never again to know the sadness of the parting hour. Kiss the baby a dozen times and also the children. My warmest regards to your ma and all the family connection.

Affectionately,
Chas. M. Howard

The Development of Gulf Shores, Alabama: An Interview with Erie Hall Meyer

Patricia G. Harrison

The oral history interview is an important part of the historical record which can now be preserved using cassette audio tapes. Many people will never write their memoirs, never have biographies written about them, or leave diaries for future generations to read and analyze. The oral history interview provides for the preservation of the experiences and recollections of these people who would not otherwise leave a lasting record of their lives and experiences. Because we think our readers will enjoy them, the *Gulf Coast Historical Review* is planning to include interviews from time to time in future issues. There are several oral history collections at institutions along the Gulf Coast including Spring Hill College, the Mobile Public Library, the University of Southern Mississippi, and the University of West Florida. What follows was excerpted from a two hour interview with Erie Hall Meyer of Gulf Shores, Alabama. Her husband, George Charles Meyer (1878-1959), was an early developer of Gulf Shores. Indeed, it was he who gave the name, Gulf Shores, to the area. The son of German immigrant

Gulf Shores Section

THE ONLOOKER

COVERS BALDWIN COUNTY LIKE THE SUNSHINE

FORTY-SECOND YEAR JUNE 30, 1949 FOLEY, ALABAMA, THURSDAY MORNING, JUNE 30, 1949 SINGLE COPY FIVE CENTS

Gulf Shores Nation's No. 1 Play Area

ALABAMA'S GULF BEACH SAID ONE OF MOST BEAUTIFUL

So You Want To Spend Vacation At Gulf Shores

The Onlooker, *June 30, 1949* *Erie H. Meyer*

parents, Meyer's life truly symbolizes what many have called "the American Dream." He married Erie Hall Meyer, who grew up in what she describes as a "good little town" with emphasis on church, school, and families. The interview provides a very important insight into their partnership and their vision of Gulf Shores as a place where families, homes, schools, churches, and parks were important. Erie Meyer states in the interview that "one of the things that drew us together as much as anything else — was my interest in civic development and his profound interest in it — and my appreciation of what he was trying to do and the little help that he had had." The Meyers have been closely associated with the growth and development of Gulf Shores and their work continues through the Meyer Foundation which has made many contributions to Gulf Shores and the surrounding area.

The interview is printed in the traditional oral history style.

Patricia G. Harrison interviewing Erie H. Meyer, December 10, 1985 *Thomason photo*

Harrison: This is Tuesday, December 10, 1985. This is Patricia Harrison. I'm interviewing Mrs. Erie Meyer in her office at Wade Ward Real Estate in Gulf Shores, Alabama. Michael Thomason is assisting with the interview. Mrs. Meyer, thank you for talking to us and to begin, would you just state for the record your full name and date of birth.

Meyer: Erie Hall Meyer. I was born February 8, 1908.

Harrison: Where were you born?

Meyer: I was born in a little, rural community out from McCullough, Alabama, in Escambia County.

Harrison: What was your mother's maiden name?

Meyer: Lena Belle Wicker. I think it's a lovely name.

Harrison: Where was she from? Where was she born?

Meyer: She was born, as my father, outside of Troy. They moved into this section, her family and his family when they were, my mother was about seven years old. My father was six years older than she.

Harrison: So they grew up then in the same area?

Meyer: They grew up in the same community.

Harrison: When she was an adult and after she married what was her occupation?

Meyer: Mother and a housewife.

Harrison: What was your father's full name?

Meyer: Charles William. Charles William Hall.

Harrison: And he was born near Troy?

Meyer: Yes, he was born in Dale County, my mother was born in Crenshaw County. But both were born in small communities very near Troy.

Harrison: I guess then they met as children?

Meyer: Oh yes. They knew each other as children. Both my mother and my father lived on large farms and the farms were not far apart, and they went to school together and later married.

Harrison: When did they marry?

Meyer: It was 1906.

Harrison: And your father, what was his occupation?

Meyer: My father, when asked what he did for a living, said, "I do other things for a living, but I farm for pleasure." He loved farming. He was a livestock dealer and he dealt in farm machinery too. But farming was his love always.

Harrison: Where was the family farm?

Meyer: The family farm is where Holman Prison is now, in Escambia County, about six or eight miles from Atmore.

Harrison: Is that where you lived as a child?

Meyer: Well, that's where I lived as a child until I started school, [then] they had to move into town for me to go to school. So from then on we always kept a home in town and my father went out each morning and came back each evening.

Harrison: What are some of your memories of your parents?

Meyer: Those memories are lovely memories. I have a younger sister and she was not well as a child. My mother spent a great deal of time with her. I was left more or less alone to explore, which I loved. I loved the outdoors. I explored. There wasn't a tree anywhere near, I would say within a mile of our home, that I hadn't climbed. I knew every bird nest, often to the distress of the mother birds. I spent a lot of time with my father. When he'd come home in the afternoon from his day's work — he rode beautiful horses, he was an excellent rider and he loved livestock. I rode with him a lot. I fished with him a lot. We maintained that relationship all our lives, and after my husband was gone in '59, my father came and spent the rest of his time with me. My father passed away in '69, but we had lots of good times together. My mother died much earlier, so I didn't have as much time with her as I did with father. One of the pleasures of my childhood was reading. It was a good time because I read. I think when a child is left to himself there's a time of introspection and thought and study, but also a little danger there because books became real to me — too real. And it was a different world entirely — from the real world.

Erie H. Meyer during interview
December 10, 1985

Harrison: And may have had some influence on your later career?

Meyer: Oh, I'm sure it did. It prepared me for all the years that I have lived alone. I know that. It makes for independence. And it makes for — well, I like to think that it is prone to help the thinking. I know it creates a love for the outdoors, because I was there so much. I loved it.

Harrison: You had a younger sister then?

Meyer: I have a younger sister, she is the mother of Wade [Ward]. Myrtle Hall Ward. We now are living together.

Harrison: You may have already answered this, but when you think about your favorite place as a child, did you have a certain favorite place?

Meyer: Outside, just outside. . . or a corner with a book. Do you know I always remember that was the prize. Oh, just get a corner with a book and let no one bother you.

Harrison: What elementary school did you attend?

Meyer: I went to the elementary school in Atmore — Atmore Elementary School.

Harrison: What are some of your memories of being in elementary school or of the school?

Meyer: Fine. I missed my free time. I had to become accustomed to that. But it was good. It was excellent. I went in the time when there was the old seven/five division. I remember I just skipped the last one. The principal let me go from the six on up to high school. I'd take the exams, but then that didn't bother me moving into a new group, because these children I'd never grown up with. I can see where it would have made a great deal of difference had I grown up with that group, but I didn't, so I didn't mind moving on up.

Harrison: Did most of the children in the school know each other?

Meyer: Oh yes. It was an excellent relationship.

Harrison: And what high school did you attend?

Meyer: The Escambia County High School which was just two or three blocks away from this one. Of course, I knew all the children. And today I can't, I'm afraid I couldn't remember the exact group I graduated with, or the other group because we have been associated so long. There aren't a great number of us left anymore, but there are some of us and we still have reunions.

Harrison: That's great. Did you have, say a teacher or a couple of teachers at the high school whom you remember vividly or may have helped you in some way, or who would stand out in your mind?

Meyer: Well, I think we always do have that. Yes. Miss Hodnette in English, who was the sister of the principal. She has influenced hundreds of students in that school. She gave her services there all of her years until she retired.

Harrison: I'd like to ask you if you could describe Atmore when you were a child or a teenager. What was the town like at that time?

Meyer: A little, small country town — three or four thousand people. Two main churches, of course, Methodist and Baptist. We had an Episcopalian church but it was small. We also had a small Presbyterian church. When I'm saying churches I'm getting people as I go along. We had two families of Lebanese. They were excellent citizens. But I think we make such a great mistake with children. We knew they were Lebanese and we were not. Yet, they liked us, we liked them. I don't think that differences should ever be made. We had a few Catholics in school, I mean in town. We had a typical little, Southern town. Most everybody went to church on Sunday. The ladies sat on the front porch in the afternoon, sewed, had their lemonade. Children played. I don't know that we ever locked any doors. Most of the streets were not paved. Everyone went to town on Saturday night. Chautauqua came two weeks out of each year. That was the big event. The programs were excellent. I suppose they were. We thought they were. And I know as a rule they usually are. We had the usual things. Chautauqua two weeks out of the year, then we had the circus. We always had a fair. Life predominantly would be church and school, families tending to their children and their children's needs. Very, very little bitterness in the town. We were about fifty percent colored, fifty percent white. Never any problem. Later on, the last three years I taught, I taught at home. And I thought, "How wonderful this situation is!" We had a good little town.

Harrison: Since you lived in Atmore, do you remember anything about Gulf Shores or Baldwin County when you were a child or a teenager? Did you come to the beach?

Meyer: No, oh no. Not as a child. Later on. As a young adult, of course we did. Our family vacation was usually two weeks at the

beach. But then, most of us went to Ft. Walton. And now, as far as Baldwin County was concerned, I was very familiar with Baldwin County in this respect. My father had accounts all over Baldwin County and [had] trading activities, but it was, [more] northern Baldwin County [I knew].

Harrison: What college did you attend?

Meyer: Judson.

Harrison: Why did you choose that particular school?

Meyer: Well, Judson had always meant a great deal to me. My great grandmother, Grandmother Shiver, had gone to Judson when it was an academy. Judson was established in 1836. And she had gone in '38 and had gone until '43, as I recall, when her family, her mother, passed away. In '43 [1843] my granny's mother passed away and she had to go home and take care of the children. And then in the years in between, I have no record of any other of our people going there, and I realized and my people realized, fortunately, that as restricted a life as I had led, I'd be much better in a girl's school, and I was. When I got to the Judson campus I thought the whole world was open to me there. There was that library with all those books. There were tennis courts that I could go out and play anytime and a swimming pool. Those were activities that I had only been allowed occasionally. So, I did go to Judson, I enjoyed Judson. Judson was good for me.

Harrison: What years were you there?

Meyer: I went, let's see that was the fall before I was seventeen. I went in '25 and '26 and I graduated in '29.

Harrison: What was your occupation or profession?

Meyer: Teaching. I loved teaching.

Harrison: And what did you teach?

Meyer: History and economics.

Harrison: Could you tell me about that period in your life and where you taught?

Meyer: Well, my first year of teaching was with Mr. John C. Lewis and he was principal here at Foley. That was the year that I met my husband, my first year out of school. Mr. Lewis had been here several years at Foley. He taught — he was principal in several schools of the state. I taught fifteen years. One of the longest times was in Cullman. I said I was so fortunate in this respect,

to teach in two of the most interesting counties, I thought, in the state. Baldwin, then, you cannot believe. We had French students. The French were from Saskatchewan in Canada. And their people, when they came down here to farm, couldn't believe we had this long growing period. Their tractors ran all night during the planting season — which is entirely unlike the Alabamians. We had people from Czechoslovakia. I wish I had kept my roll of students. It was amazing. We had people from Lithuania. We had, of course, predominantly Germans. I had a little boy who was born in London and one little boy who was born in Mexico. But mainly Germans, the French, a few Polish, Lithuanian and I don't remember the other group, but it was interesting. I had several students in class who were older than I. I had two young men who walked seventeen miles each morning and each night to go to school, they were coming against their father's wishes. He allowed them, but he said he wouldn't help them. Excellent. And I've known them both since I came back here. They have made such wonderful men, people in the community. I taught in Enterprise. I taught in Luverne. Cullman four years. Then my last three years my mother was ill, so I resigned. I said I was going to go stay with her. My old principal, Mr. Hodnette, was still there. He said, "No, you're coming right up here to teach." He still thought I was about this high. So I taught and enjoyed it thoroughly. It's been very, very interesting, and especially when you find your students scattered everywhere. It always makes one feel good

to know that somebody whose life you may have touched a little bit is happy and doing something, whatever it is.

Harrison: What was your husband's full name?

Meyer: George Charles Meyer.

Harrison: Where was he born?

Meyer: He was born in New Prague, Minnesota, on a large wheat farm and his parents came from Germany, and at home they spoke German. So many interesting things evolved out of our conversations about the difference in their home life and ours. I know when the Christmas season would come on, I'd always be so surprised to hear my husband (he had a beautiful voice) humming these perfectly beautiful things from opera. And I said, "George, I didn't realize some of these were tunes to some of those lovely old opera things." and he said, "Oh yes, and something else I haven't told you. When we were rocked to sleep as babies our mother sang these little opera things to us." He said, "We knew nothing of this outside music." And that love he kept all of his life. He made several trips back to Europe. I made one with him. I loved it very much.

Harrison: Where in Germany were his parents from?

Meyer: I should remember that, but I don't. He said he had made two trips alone over there in years before and had tried to find his people and he couldn't find any of them. But he does have a number of nieces and nephews up in the Dakotas, North and South Dakota, Minnesota and California. They settled in that area. In their home, George was the youngest child. His father died when he was twelve, and as is the custom in the old German families, the eldest son became the head of the family. George said he should have been a kaiser, he was an autocrat. Anyway, he wouldn't let George finish school. That was the thing that hurt him so. When he was eighteen though, he said, "I left and went to St. Paul and enrolled in the St. Paul School for Boys." He finished at St. Paul and then he went from there to the state of Washington to the university. He worked in the summers in the Rocky Mountains helping engineers survey. That's where he got his first taste of land. He worked with them part of the time and the other time he worked in the wheat fields. But he said he found out there was money to be made in real estate and, so much to his regret now, or then, he stepped out of it. But he never lost his love for learning. And he taught

himself engineering. He was an excellent engineer — had all the equipment. He also taught himself abstract making. He had his own abstract company in the state of Washington. In fact, we made our own abstracts in Mobile, up until his death.

Harrison: I understand he was an accomplished tennis player.

Meyer: Oh, I tell you. . .

Harrison: Well, where did he learn to play? Tell me a little bit about that.

Meyer: He learned in San Francisco. He had never had a tennis racquet in his hands until he was twenty-eight years old. He got to San Francisco and was a member of a club or two and he said, "I saw what fun it was," so he signed up for lessons, and was very adept at it and liked it very much. Then when he got down in this area there was so little being done down here. No one thought this would amount to anything, of course — that he would do some work here during the summer, do what he could, sell a few lots, then he'd go to Miami so he could play on those indoor courts during the winter. He said, as a member of the racquet club down there, he could practice and play. Also knowing land, he would buy a lot or two and do you know he yet had some property down there when we married, and later sold it, even that late. He said you could pick those lots up in Coconut Grove (he had several then) and he had gotten them for just a few hundred dollars each. He would sell them along just enough to make it go. He started playing on this eastern circuit. He worked himself up until he was next to number one player on the eastern circuit but was defeated the last game. But he'd always laugh and he said, "I'm a little proud of this, I did get to play at the Biltmore." He was invited to play at the Biltmore. He said, "I did get to play there." But it was a game he loved.

Harrison: I wanted you to tell me about what brought him to the Gulf Coast. How in the world did he get from. . .

Meyer: It's an interesting story, I think. He said while he was in San Francisco he had heard about these big land developments or the opportunity to own land in Brazil. He was always an adventurer, an entrepreneur, and the idea of doing something oneself appealed to him and so he said, "I just picked up and I came." He came to New Orleans and I have no idea what ship it was he was going on, but anyway there was several weeks'

delay before the ship got back. He said, "I bought my ticket. I was booked, looking around there in New Orleans. . . .I met Mr. Carl Martin from Mobile and he said he was in the oil business." He was buying up leases. Zeke [Carl Martin] said, "It slowed me up so to have to check the records in the courthouse and be out in the field getting the leases. I need help." George said, "Well, suppose I help you." So that's what they did. George was familiar with courthouses, so George worked it up in the courthouse and Zeke...Mr. Martin went out on the field, and they were buying up oil leases then. Zeke was telling him about Mobile and this beautiful Gulf Coast down here. But he wasn't interested in it. Of course, George couldn't understand that, having known the California Coast and what it meant. He said, "Well I think I'll go down and take a look at it." [Zeke] said, "Well, you can go take a look, but I don't think you'll care too much for it." But he did. He came to Mobile and rented a car and came over here and I could show you the exact spot down here. Mr. Mack Shelby owned a little point here on the lagoon. There was no way you could get to the Gulf at that time without going by boat. And George asked Mr. Mack Shelby who was one of the fishermen, "Would you carry me across the Gulf there? I'll pay you." He said, "Why sure." And so he carried him, and George said when he looked at that beautiful stretch of land, that white beach, he said, "I couldn't believe my eyes. And I said, 'Mr. Shelby, who owns this land?'" Mr. Shelby laughed and said, "Who would want it? Nobody wants it." He said, "What do you mean nobody wants it?" [Mr. Shelby] said, "Well, the state owns a lot of it. Some big estates in Chicago own a lot. I don't know who else owns it." George said, "Well in the morning, Mr. Shelby, I'm going to be in Montgomery and I'm going to file a homestead claim on a hundred and sixty acres." He said, "Now if you'll pick out a hundred and sixty for yourself, I'll file for you." Mr. Shelby said, "Mr. Meyer, I don't want it. Why pay taxes on something that you can't grow anything on?" [George] said, "Well, I don't want to grow anything on it. I want people to enjoy it." [Mr. Shelby] said, "No, I don't want it." And later on, during the first years when I was down here, so many of the people couldn't believe a grown man would be foolish enough to waste his time and his effort and his money — 'cause it was hard — it was hard to develop a piece of land that nothing

George C. Meyer at his desk *Erie H. Meyer*

would grow on. So George filed a claim for his first one hundred and sixty acres and he called Zeke and he told him, "Now Zeke, you get here and you file claim on a hundred and sixty acres." Mr. Martin said, "Why George, I'm not going to do any such thing. There's no point in it. I don't want the land." [George] said, "Get over here and file on a hundred and sixty acres. It won't cost you but $75 and you put a little house on it that you stay in so many nights a year for three years. And you pay the $75 over three years." And so finally, very reluctantly, Mr. Martin came over and did file for a hundred and sixty. That's that beautiful stretch over there now that has Gulf frontage, north and south lagoon frontage, and he filed on three quarters of a mile for $75. He built a small house. Mr. Martin married and he and his wife spent their honeymoon over here. He said, "Well, I'll get that many nights staying over here out of that for that." And so that's the way it started. Then George started putting what money he had in it. Then [he] tried to get these big estates — the Penney Estate, in Chicago, owned a lot. He finally got it and he got the Anderson tract from Chicago. The Chicago people were the ones who had just bought up these big tracts and they had no intention of coming down. It was just buying. That was it, more or less. And then George got a lot by scrip [from the government]. At one time

he had about ten thousand acres. Well, at one time he really had the whole, what is now the island, owned or under option. Of course, it wasn't an island then. But he said, "I had to pick out what I wanted to keep," because he couldn't keep all of it. So he kept this area across here. But he did actually own about ten thousand acres.

Harrison: How and when did you meet your husband?

Meyer: I met him when I was teaching school in Foley in my first year out.

Harrison: When was that?

Meyer: It must have been '31. I was fascinated with what he was doing. We had seventeen little bridges to get to the Gulf. He had to build that many. We often visited various teachers and he would come and get us for dinner and bring us down to the Gulf. I met him and we were friends for many years before we married. But off and on I would hear from him and know what he was doing. He was always working, always developing this, doing a little here, doing a little there. I think one of the most difficult things he ever did, was getting the legislature to make a state park out here. They couldn't understand why. George said the day will come when you will understand. He lobbied a whole year up there during that time and he wouldn't mind my telling you this because he would laugh and tell it, he said, "In fact, money was so scarce then because I'd spend it for land. I traded a hotel manager (a Mr. Peebles from Mobile who was then at one of the hotels in Montgomery) a lot for the room and board at the hotel for me to stay up there." He said, "It was so essential for the state to keep that land — to get it." George gave part of it and part they bought from other individuals. And I think here within the last ten years they've bought a tract. I don't know what they paid for it, but it was a great deal more. But I think that the most George ever got for any of his that he sold to them and the McGowins — Mr. McGowin had a lot there, the McGowin estate — I think was about $15 a front foot on the Gulf. You can imagine what it is now. But George did give part of it. He said, "If the state can just realize what they have there." They have a state park here now of over six thousand acres, and it's the only state park in the state that makes money.

Harrison: It's a beautiful park.

Construction of pier at the *Erie H. Meyer*
State Park, c. 1967

Meyer: It's beautiful. Yes. With those three lakes, Shelby Lake and Middle Lake and Little Lake.

Harrison: I wonder why they were so long in saying. . .

Meyer: They didn't know. Do you know here within the last ten years we've had senators and legislators come down here that have never been to the Gulf? That's the reason they started every year or two inviting them all down. They say they had no idea what it was like. Everybody thinks of the Gulf as Florida, Destin, Panama City, Ft. Walton. And here we have that 32 or 34 miles besides Dauphin Island and that's all we have.

Harrison: And beautiful white sand.

Meyer: It is a beautiful place.

Harrison: When did you all marry?

Meyer: We married in '54.

Harrison: Where did you live after you married? Did you move down here?

Meyer: Here. Oh yes, we lived here permanently.

Harrison: Okay. You were living in Foley and then. . .

Meyer: No, I was living in Mobile.

Harrison: Okay. Then after you married you all came down here and he was living here in Gulf Shores?

Meyer: Yes. Well, he had always maintained a residence in Mobile as well as here because at that time, in '45, let me see if I can tell you how remote this area was, it was impossible to get an ice cream cone closer than Foley.

Harrison: And this is back in '45?

Meyer: That's right. And every afternoon about four o'clock in the summer you would hear a tremendous sound. You would think you were out West. We had no stock law, it was open ranching down here, and these natives had huge herds of cattle. They had gone to the Gulf during the day to get away from those horrible flies that pestered the stock and humans here in Baldwin County and any coastal area for a short while in the fall. It was one of the strangest things to me when I first saw dozens of cows with nothing but their noses sticking up. They looked like alligators. They had to do it to get away from the flies. Of course, the flies weren't out every day, but most days they were. Right about four, for the cows it was time to go home, and they would come thundering down this main street, and you just had to get out of the way. They really did. I also remember about '47 or '48, somewhere along there, one night I had a telephone call, it was George and he said, "Well, we drew a record today." I said, "Well, what happened?" And he said (it was a Sunday), "Well, I sat on the front doorsteps with my time-keeper thing and I counted 100 cars went by today." Now that was the late '40s. Now that gives you an indication. Then, in the meantime I had started working with the real estate firms in '45. We had permanent offices in the annex of the First National Bank Building and we had his old office down here at Gulf Shores, which is now that building right on the other side of the Lagoon Bridge, that little bridge across the lagoon, in the Bayou Village, that long building there. We had fourteen people on our telephone line. Of course, we didn't have much business, but if we had any we couldn't conduct it — fourteen people on the line. So you see about our telephone service. On the weekend when the families came down and everybody [was] using water and lights, our water would come to a dribble, and our lights would go out. We knew to expect that on Saturday night.

Harrison: Where did people stay? Were there already motels?

Meyer: Oh, there was a big old hotel which George had built — the big, old Gulf Shores Hotel. He had built that in '28.

Harrison: And where was it?

Meyer: Down on the beach about, let's see, third or fourth block west of the intersection down there.

Harrison: And what happened to it?

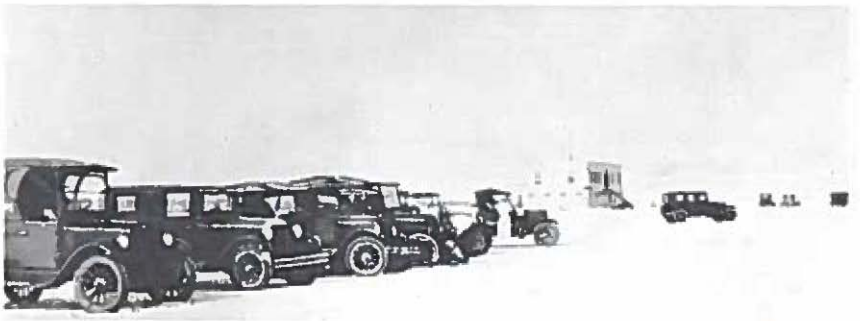
Meyer: It burned [1960]. The storms had earlier damaged it. Oh the storms came and filled a lot of floors. They cleaned it out.

Harrison: How did Gulf Shores get its name?

Meyer: George had been to Miami year after year. Miami Shores had just started. He had admired the name in the beginning and he had said, "I see no reason for this not being Gulf Shores." He said, "I like that name." And he named it Gulf Shores.

Harrison: And so he just started calling it Gulf Shores?

Meyer: Oh well, I don't know what kind of procedure one goes through, but there is a procedure. I remember well this now, I saw this. He opened up a Rand McNally map and, of course, immediately looked down there, and for Gulf Shores they had "Foley Beach." I don't think I had ever seen him angry before, and I found that the angrier he got, the quieter he became and the lower his voice was. Absolute control. But I could tell that something's got to give here fast, and he went and immediately called Rand McNally and he informed them that that was not the Foley Beach, it was Gulf Shores, properly named and authenticated, and that he would appreciate it if the correction would be made immediately. And it was! I don't think it's ever been questioned since.



Foley Beach, c. 1920 *Doris Rich Collection, USA Photo Archives*

Harrison: Well, it's a delightful name and. . .

Meyer: Well, Gulf Shores. It really is. I mean it is what it states.

Harrison: That's right. Did you and your husband have any particular view or idea of what the town might become like? Did you want certain buildings like stores and schools? What did you have in mind — in the early period?

Meyer: I think that was one of the things that drew us together as much as anything else — my interest in civic development and his profound interest in it — and my appreciation of what he was trying to do and the little help that he had and what he wished. He had this thing planned. His wish was that it be enjoyed by as many people as possible. He said, "It's too beautiful to be owned and kept by one person." He said, "I think it can be developed so that there is plenty of room for beach development to support other things, and homes, too." Well, we both recognized the fact that there could be no homes unless there are schools, churches, a police force. One of the first things that he did was to offer land to any established church that wished to come in the area. And we are very, very proud of our churches today. Then next were parks. It took us over twenty years to get our school — most difficult. The contention was always that there were not enough children for a school. Some of our children came the seventeen miles from Fort Morgan all the way to Gulf Shores and then eleven to Foley and back. It was just too far. Well, it took that length of time but we finally got it, and the first year we had an overrun. We've had to limit it. Well, we had to limit it that first year, just a certain distance north of this canal, and people have to live on the island for the children to go to this school. The second year we had to enlarge it, put new rooms there, and this past summer and this fall, I have no idea how many rooms we've added. When we gave the land for the school we gave enough for a middle school and a high school. The first time when we offered it, we offered the very best land we had. They could have had sixty or eighty acres, it wouldn't have mattered because to my way of thinking a school is the heart of the community. By the time they finally would accept it, we were restricted to the amount they could have, but they do have a twenty acre tract there. It's the most modern school in Baldwin County — with all the modern features. It was air conditioned from start to finish and it's equipped for the little tiny ones on

up, with all of their little needs taken care of. Their library, their lunchroom, I think the kitchen looks more like a Morrison's with the equipment that it has. We're completely overcrowded and the plan now is, the county will build a high school halfway between Gulf Shores and Foley. I don't know if they've acquired the land yet. We have none in that area. But there are large tracts up there and I understand that a large high school will be built there. And, of course, I know you know the interest we have in the University of South Alabama. That's what we're really after! What that will mean to this area is beyond the conception of so many people.

Harrison: Well, why don't we talk about that, because first of all, I'd like for you to tell me about the foundation itself.

Gulf Shores Park groundbreaking *Mobile* Press-Register
June 6, 1974

Meyer: Well, I really can't, I can't do it justice. I've turned all that over to [Wade]. He is really the leader of it. But I believe it was in '52 that a foundation was organized. [George] called it the Meyer Foundation. And it is for the express purpose to enrich the lives of the people of this area, and in that concept we have kept it. It's not a large foundation, but it has done so much good work. We have been able to help the town when it needed to do something so desperately and it didn't have the money. Well, we could do that and I think you know many, many things we have given. We have given parks. We have given, for instance, this land for the college. We've just done all kinds of things like that, even to things such as giving the uniforms for the Foley band one year, and other things like air conditioning a school. We branch out in all of those things. But we try predominantly to help the big projects so they can do it. Not that we can do it, but so that they will be able to sponsor it and go ahead with that work.

Harrison: And many times it's in the form of land?

Meyer: Many times it's in the form of land. Sometimes it's cash. Now the foundation is funding one-half of the expense of this big new civic center over here. It's very, very modern. It will be able to take care of the New Orleans' Symphony. It has two kitchens, it can serve food inside and out. They can have boat shows. They can have all kinds of interesting things that we haven't had a place for. We just have not. Now we give cash for things like that. Of course, the land was given by. . . I don't know whether I gave the land for that or whether Wade and his partner gave the land for that. We just take turns doing that. But the foundation will give half of that, which is I believe, considerably over a half million, or something in that respect. It's been a pleasure. If you two know anything about foundations, they are nightmares, but what they can accomplish is good.

Harrison: Well, would you tell me then about the plans of the foundation and the University of South Alabama? What is planned here? What do you envision being here?

Meyer: There again, I should let Wade do that because he truly knows it because he was in on it from the first. He had met with Jim Bradley, who is the head of the Chamber of Commerce, trying to decide what would be the best thing in that line to go by. Wade said "Let's get a university down here." Then some other

people heard about it and Wade, Dr. Norton [mayor], and Jim got interested and Dr. Whiddon was very much interested. I believe we're giving three hundred and fifty acres of prime land there, which will enable them to do so much and I believe extra will be given for a golf course. There will be an eighteen hole golf course.

Harrison: Well, I suppose then all kinds of things would come out of that.

Meyer: It could evolve into so many, many things.

Harrison: You had mentioned earlier on Mr. Martin, I was wondering if there were some other people, particularly from that early period when he was working that we might want to think about?

Meyer: He couldn't interest any of them in it. Now, Mr. McGowin was a faithful friend. Mr. McGowin was from the family of McGowins up at Chapman. Excellent business man. He didn't get involved with too many people. But he and George became very good friends. And they together, I think Mr. McGowin financed it and George did the work, got the seventeen bridges built. They also, where the lagoon ran into the gulf, built a bridge over that. The first storm wiped it out. The things I've learned from hearing [George] talk and seeing the work, when I see the state down here doing things I almost know right then if it's going to work or not, because unless a person knows this treacherous sand and these tides, it just isn't going to work. Now George was never put out by what happened. There was no road to Fort Morgan. That didn't stop him at all. He was using a Chevrolet sedan then. He'd let the air out to fifteen pounds and watch the tide. When the tide went out, here we'd shoot to Fort Morgan. I learned what a sandwich is because there's nothing in the world down there but the gulls and those deserted old houses. And then we would wait until it was right to come back. If you didn't, you would just bog down and stay there. You would stay till the tide came back again and made its change. But he said, "All you have to do is work with nature, but you can't work against it." I think that's true of any development.

Harrison: What about storms that you remember? What was the worst hurricane that you remember?

Hurricane Frederick damage at Gulf Shores, September 1979 — *US Army Corps of Engineers Collection, USA Photo Archives*

Meyer: Frederic. Well, then I wasn't here. Sister and I were in Nassau. I had taken Wade's place at a real estate convention. Well, Sister and I were in Nassau when that thing struck. Immediately we made preparations for coming home. And it was terrible. My yard down there [on the Lagoon], if you go by that house there you'll see one side of it is devoid of trees. The other side still has a big oak and some pines. But I lost two hundred and thirty tall trees in it. It was unbelievable.

Harrison: How did it affect the community and the area as a whole?

Meyer: Complete devastation. It looked like the area had been bombed. But all of the old-timers, we all knew it'd come back stronger than ever. It had to. George had always said, "Now Erie, sometime, one of these days, a storm is going to hit." He said, "Now don't be dismayed by it, because the weaker things will go, the strong will stay, and you'll find a different mode of building coming back." And it did. Immediately we were flooded with people from other areas, and telephone calls: What do you have real cheap? What are people trying to get rid of? They thought it would all go. Most everybody stood fast. All who could, I think, did. Then, of course, the insurance came in and it made new building. Then is when we tried to strengthen our building code, and urge people to build back,

and do all the things that so many of them had not done before.

Harrison: I was going to ask you about the hurricane and the new people who were coming in. What has been the attitude of the people who have lived here for a long time and then all of these newcomers who are coming in? When did people start living here all year round? There are two questions, but how about those changes?

Meyer: Let's see, let me work that one up a little bit. A little activity started in the selling of lots about '43 — a little bit. Then by the '50s it was better, but it was still cheap — a hundred foot lot on the Gulf — $1500. But it was selling. It wasn't a rush business, but some lots were selling. And then I just don't know what year. . . I would say along in the '60s a lot of Northerners, Midwesterners started coming down, and spending five to six months of the winter. Their claim was they could stay here that length of time for what their gas or fuel bill would be at home. And truly the tremendous movement has been since Frederic, since '79.

Harrison: And what about the people who had been here longer? Did they welcome the newcomers?

Meyer: Some of them do and some of them do not. Now there are some of the natives — unless you were born here, you're always a foreigner — I am, I'm a foreigner to a lot of them, and it doesn't matter that I would do most anything to protect every grain of soil down here. But they'll say, "But you weren't born to it." And I understand that, that's all right. I can see their feeling. But there aren't too many of them, and see, the new generations, they filter that feeling. And it gets better. It gets a lot better. Now today, we have so many, many people. I know hardly anybody. I used to know everybody on this island.

Harrison: You were on the Gulf Shores Planning Commission — Zoning Commission?

Meyer: Yes.

Harrison: And I can see why you would be on that.

Meyer: Well, a lot of people would much rather that I wouldn't be.

Harrison: I would think you would want to protect what you all envisioned though.

Meyer: Of course we did. They have a very, very good zoning code now. I think it is most essential. People forget, or maybe they

don't look far enough into it, none of us own anything, we're only custodians. And what we're doing is trying to protect for the future. It isn't something to gobble up now and enjoy and be gone. Because when you've lived your life more or less in an area and you intend to continue there, you aren't going to do anything to hurt the area. You'd like to plan for the future. So I say as long as any area can get people who understand the need of good planning and zoning, pass it around. Let the younger ones take over, and let them work it out. They'll have some fights, but they come out the better for it, I think.

Harrison: Do you think that Gulf Shores is developing as your husband envisioned? When you all thought about how it was going to be.... do you think it is turning out that way — that it is like you had envisioned?

Meyer: Oh, let me temper my remarks a little bit here. It's much slower than we ever thought it would be, which is good; rather be slow than too fast. It has had some things that have pushed it in areas. I think he thought it would be done much faster. But otherwise, I think it's coming along very much as he thought it would be, because he never considered it anything other than a place for people who really enjoy the beach. Families to live here. So often when people came in with small children,

Gulf Shores showing Gulf Shores Hotel, 1949 *Erie H. Meyer*

George would say, "Now they'll never forget that. They'll be back." In fact, we had a little couple come in on their honeymoon, they were ready to leave and they said, "Mr. Meyer, we want a little piece of Gulf Shores. Just a little piece. We are on our honeymoon and we want a little place to come back to." Now that was certainly right around the early '50s. He said, "Well, son, what do you think you can manage?" He said, "Well, I've got," I believe he said, "I've got $15 dollars left on me." I believe it was something like that. George said, "Well, let's find you a piece of land." They selected a lot on the Gulf. He sold it to them for $1500, and he allowed them to pay $15 a month. That was all. He said, "Now if something comes up, you can't make the payment, just let us know." That was it. And interest was so low — 5 or 6%. I forgot what it was. And do you know, that couple called me last year. Now you can see how many years that's been. And they asked me if I remembered that incident. I said, "Why surely I do." They still live up North somewhere, in Illinois somewhere. They said, "Well, we're going to sell that precious piece of land now, but we're going to buy something else." There was a project on then to take it in with something and they were getting a fabulous price. I said, "Well, I am so glad that you held on to it so long." That has been the thing that I think has come along. As for developing of churches, parks, and schools,. . . all that has come

Erie H. Meyer Civic Center, Gulf Shores *Thomason photo*

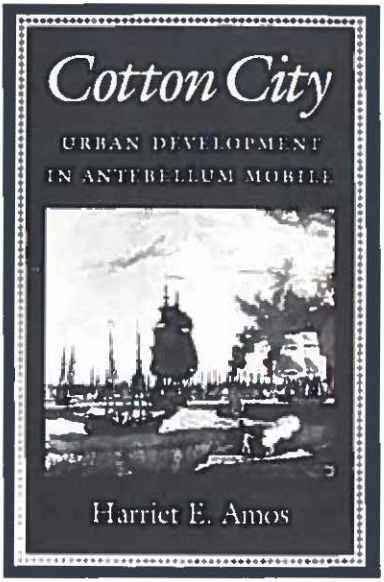
along. Schools were slower that we ever though they would be; and a way for people to make a living, now that has been very difficult. We need something to give people — jobs. Here for a number of years we had two tremendous needs: something for young people to do, to work; you couldn't ask them to come work if you couldn't give them a school for the children. We got the schools and then we do need some kind of industries or an industry that will not pollute the area, yet will give sustenance to the people.

This interview was conducted by Patricia G. Harrison with Michael Thomason assisting. Harrison, a member of the history faculty at Spring Hill College and the University of South Alabama, teaches a course in oral history at Spring Hill College. Thomason, a member of the history faculty at the University of South Alabama, is Director of the USA Photo Archives.

Book Reviews

Harriet E. Amos. *Cotton City: Urban Development in Antebellum Mobile.* University: University of Alabama Press, 1985, pp. 320. $34.50.

Harriet Amos has succeeded admirably in delineating the economic and municipal development of Mobile in the first half of the nineteenth century. She presents a study of Mobile's urban growth that serves as a remedy for the relative lack of such studies of Southern cities. In analyzing the bases for the city's growth, Amos also explores the North-South economic relationship in microcosm. Mobile is seen to be, despite real growth, in a very dependent, even colonial relationship with the North, especially New York City. Cotton, the great crop that made some prosperity possible in the Gulf port city, also limited development to the degree that promoters of Mobile's commercial potential had sought. Lack of diversification was the essential factor in keeping Mobile in a colonial relationship within the same "family" of states.



Amos demonstrates a very thorough approach in her study of antebellum Mobile. Her research is extremely detailed and her "essay on sources" should provide the basis for any study of Mobile's economic development of the period for some time to come. *Cotton City* is tightly written. The style is straightforward and suitably careful, though a bit prosaic in its overall impact. Flights of rhetorical embellishment are neither appropriate nor necessary to the subject, however. Amos' work is very solid. It can stand as not only a fine, scholarly economic history of antebellum Mobile but also, and more significantly, as a model for any study of Southern urban development in this period.

Cotton City is a study of commerce and its pervasive influence on city life. Commerce was the single dominant force in Mobile's municipal development. Amos presents it as the primary determinant for her identification of the real urban leaders in the city. Though her work does not focus for long on any particular individuals as major

factors in determining Mobile's directions of growth, Amos is especially successful in her establishment of criteria for identifying Mobile's most influential citizens. Her urban leaders were primarily businessmen but with a diverse range of business associations and a variety of geographic origins. Many leaders were non-Southerners, their states of origin being less significant, until the decade preceding the War, than their commercial clout. Because of Mobile's location and its emphasis and dependency on commerce, it remained somewhat broader in its political orientation than comparable Southern cities. Moderation and less zeal for the disruptive effects of secession were present in Mobile and were molded by its commercial ties.

Amos identifies and analyzes the appropriate components of Mobile's economic life and urban growth. Her treatment of railroads, for example, and their relative lack of significant impact on Mobile's commercial stature is well emphasized. The development of an embryonic public school system and the impact of banking capital (in Mobile's case, the lack of it) are two themes, important to the nation as a whole in this first half of the century, that she appropriately addresses. The quality of judgment and scholarship exhibited in these examples are evident throughout the volume. Antebellum Mobile's economic life is presented to the reader with rigorous and admirable precision.

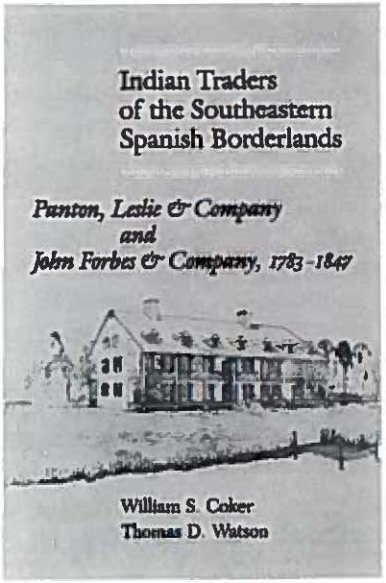
Vaughan Stanley

duPont Library
Stratford Hall Plantation

William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson. *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783- 1847.* Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1986, pp. 428. $30.00.

Historians, especially those document-starved students of early America, have long recognized that business records constitute one of the most varied and useful bodies of sources available to researchers. The variety comes from the fact that businessmen not only had to keep the cold figures that represented losses and gains, but that they also found it necessary to know what their clients thought and did apart from their economic endeavors. This latter need generated a wealth of correspondence that touched on politics, society, and personalities,

and it is particularly useful since those involved usually kept accounts of both sides of a transaction. As a result, business records, when compiled and catalogued, not only present as complete a picture of what was taking place as one can hope to find, but also offer researchers insights into aspects of the larger world in which businessmen lived and worked. This is why *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands* is such a valuable aid to the understanding of the development of that region during the half-century after the American Revolution. The result of a remarkable effort to collect the records of the companies involved, it clarifies the complex conditions these operations faced, and in the process, opens the way for more specialized studies of Indian-Spanish-American society, politics, diplomacy, and, of course, economics.



Though the story actually begins before the Revolution and highlights the involvement of Scottish merchants in the Indian trade during that era, it is after American independence forced these British Loyalist businessmen to work out an arrangement with the Spanish, who now held Florida, that the significance of Panton, Leslie & Company becomes apparent. Reaching an agreement with the region's new owners gave the firm advantages in the Indian trade and thus limited the involvement of greedy Georgians and Carolinians. Company agents thus not only turned a profit but helped thwart initial American attempts to influence the region. Furthermore, by working with Alexander McGillivray (who was briefly a silent partner) the company played no small part in keeping the Creeks independent enough to enable McGillivray to carry out policies that frustrated his expansionist neighbors to the east. This is the first, but not the only instance of how the story of Panton, Leslie & Company, and its successor, John Forbes & Company, were involved in much more than commerce. A truly international operation, how the company conducted its affairs could serve as a model for modern corporations, especially those dealing with Third World nations. Indeed, one of the remarkable things about this story is its contemporary application.

After 1792, with the death of some of its more anti-American partners, the company was increasingly able to establish friendly relations with the new United States, though it still recognized that Spanish goodwill was essential to its success. With trading houses stretching, at various times, from St. Augustine to Memphis (plus an operation in the Bahamas), by necessity they needed to be aware of the shifts in European alliances, and to be ready to act when those shifts affected relations in the Southeast. Thus the story of the company's evolution continued on two levels — local and international. During the years covered by this book, the region in which Panton, Leslie/John Forbes operated was at various times under the domain of England, France, Spain, and the United States (and generally more than one of the four), plus the Indian nations whose authority had to be recognized and respected.

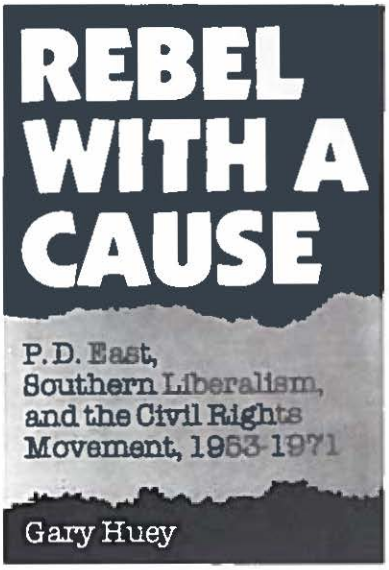
What is perhaps most remarkable about this book is the authors' ability to turn this multileveled story into a narrative that is both interesting and informative. No single review can do justice to the wealth of material contained in this study, or to the insights into the men and motives that shaped the Indian trade in the American Southeast. It is the story of national ambitions — Indian, European, and American, but more than anything else it is the tale of a remarkable group of businessmen who, with their eye on the balance sheet, helped shape the history of the Southeast and the United States of America.

Harvey H. Jackson — Clayton State College

Gary Huey, *Rebel With A Cause: P.D. East, Southern Liberalism, and the Civil Rights Movement, 1953-1971.* Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Incorporated, 1985, pp. 232. $24.95.

Rebel With A Cause is the biography of Percy Dale East, editor of *The Petal Paper* of Petal, Mississippi, and a racial liberal during the civil rights struggle of the 1950s and 1960s. East, a product of a lower class environment, antagonized white Mississippians with his support of the *Brown* decision (1954) and his calls for acceptance of federally dictated procedures for ending segregation. Using humor as his major weapon, East attacked the ultrasegregationist White Citizens Councils and the Mississippi politicians who bowed to the demands of this organization and granted it quasi-official status as a branch of the state government.

Although a mediocre writer at best, East's championing of the acceptance of integration gave him an importance that he would never have enjoyed without this issue. For his supporters, who were primarily outside Mississippi, the critical element of his journalistic endeavors was what he had to say, not how he said it. For the last several years of his career as an editor, these "outsiders" constituted the bulk of his financial and philosophical supporters. His espousal of the rights of blacks in Mississippi resulted in tremendous personal losses for East — his business, two wives, his career, and his health.



The most interesting aspect of East's biography is trying to fathom the reasons why a white Mississippian, a product of the lower class, would sacrifice a career with the potential for providing entry into the middle class. A careful reading of *Rebel With A Cause* provides some clues to this mystery. First, despite Huey's portrayal of East as a man with a burning passion for justice, East emerges as a man who was a "professional outsider." Given up by his natural mother for adoption, East spent his childhood under the domination of an aggressive foster mother, an experience he shared with a submissive foster father. The resulting loss of "self-worth" that came with the discovery that he was adopted was heightened by a constant exposure to the "fire and brimstone" fundamentalism of the rural Methodist churches the family attended. His insecurities and identity problems were further intensified by the kind of life his family lived, moving from logging camp to logging camp in rural Mississippi. Attending numerous schools for short periods of time, East became a perpetual outsider, ostracized and lampooned by other children because of his inability to fit in. As a result, East's childhood conditioned him to be combative and to rely on confrontation as a means of resolving problems he faced. In addition, his childhood experience left him with a cynical rejection of the values of the more stable middle class.

Second, East carried over the psychological baggage of his childhood to adulthood. His lackluster military career was ended

because of his inability to adjust to the discipline of the army, and his subsequent career with the Southern Railroad ended as a result of his failure to conform to railroad policies and his difficulty with accepting success. This pattern was to be repeated again and again with East.

The culmination of East's career came when he established *The Petal Paper*. Assured of the support of local merchants and accepted into the social life of Petal, East conformed to the norms of society until his rejection of the values of this culture resulted in the alienation of the community. Following quickly on the heels of his problems with local merchants, East moved into the arena of race relations in Mississippi. Calling for compliance with the court decisions which followed *Brown*, East attacked the whole of Mississippi society. As white Mississippians became more and more adamant in their refusal to accept integration, East's self-imposed ostracism grew more and more intense. From 1954 to 1963, East labored to carry his message of acceptance to Mississippians who didn't want to hear it. As the civil rights struggle accelerated, East found himself addressing a constituency that was primarily located outside the state. Finally in 1963, fearing for his life and experiencing a number of physical ailments, East retired to the safety of Fairhope, Alabama. In 1971, East succumbed to illness.

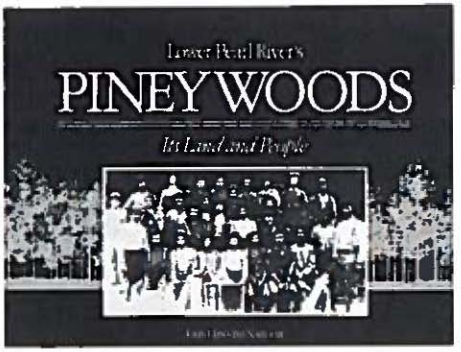
Gary Huey has done a remarkable job in presenting the story of Percy Dale East. *Rebel With A Cause* offers an unusual look at the trials and tribulations of a lower class white, who, for whatever the reasons, took a stance against the racist efforts of other Southerners to defy the federal government and to continue to subordinate Negroes to segregation. As a "shaker and mover" in the civil rights movement, East counted for nought. As a representative of a small and isolated segment of Southern society, East's life encompassed all of the mental, financial, and physical difficulties these "rebels" faced.

Rebel With A Cause suffers from two minor flaws. First, Huey's title suffers from "cutesiness," and, second, the placement of notes at the end of the chapters distracts from the flow of the text. These are minor flaws that reflect the personal bias of the reviewer. *Rebel With A Cause* has a useful and important place in any examination of the civil rights struggle in the South.

Lewis N. Wynne University of South Florida

John Hawkins Napier III. *Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods: Its Land and People*. University: The University of Mississippi Center for the Study of Southern Culture, 1985, pp. 227. $50.00.

In the preface to his *Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods: Its Land and People*, John H. Napier III tells the story of a friend of his, a very literate native of Pearl River County, Mississippi, who once lamented that he seemed "to have grown up in a historyless backwash of the South." The place of the friend's birth, amusingly named Picayune (after the New Orleans newspaper), seemed, perhaps like the County, to have fallen through the cracks of Southern history and culture. Napier readily acknowledges that the area "is neither Natchez nor Tara," and doesn't even dispute that it is a backwash. "But I hope," he says, with clear reference to the completion of his book, "that now we are a Southern backwash *with* history" (p. 13).



Napier's stellar display of local history amply demonstrates that the lower Pearl's piney woods, backwash or not, possesses a remarkable heritage worthy of recording, and occasionally emulating. Pearl River County, in the second tier of counties above New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, was carved out of Hancock and Marion Counties in 1890, and experienced all the vicissitudes of an oft-impoverished people who repeatedly reached for the economic brass ring. In modern times, it sent Theodore G. "The Man" Bilbo into political life and exhibited the contrast of the New South (Picayune) with the Old (Poplarville). As part of the lower Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast regions, the piney woods of the lower Pearl were the object of international rivalries in the eighteenth century and yeoman migration in the early nineteenth. But the subsistence farmers and animal herders soon lost population and political power to the newly-opened cotton areas to the north. "South Mississippi, which had been emerging from frontier," notes Napier, "reverted to frontier" (p. 44).

Napier shows how the area's culture was shaped by the river and the forest. But efforts to improve navigation on the Pearl by shortening its course resulted in flooding and erosion ("the law of unintended effects," p. 12), and navigation problems and the coming of the railroad undermined steamboating and river culture. Napier suggests that

an industrial economy awaited the development of the region's chief natural resource, longleaf yellow pine. Having exploited yankeeland of its white pine in the nineteenth century, northern timber barons cast longing eyes on the virgin forests of the South. While yankee dollars boosted the economic life of the region, it was an ephemeral relationship, complicated by Mississippi's short-sighted populist-style taxation policies. Metaphors abound. The Pine Belt sold its birthright for pottage and Pearl River County was no exception. Axes yielded to band-saws and the rape was complete with the employment of the skidder, a brutally efficient piece of technology that denuded the land and destroyed natural regeneration.

But Napier engages in little or no timber-baron bashing. He notes that while the party lasted, before the timber tycoons moved on to the Northwest, Pearl River County improved roads and produced a "Model School County" (p. 143). But devastating economic blows came in pairs: first with the virtual exhaustion of the longleaf pine and the Great Depression, and then, forty years later, with the destruction of the post-pine tung oil industry and the decline of America's space program which had, in the 1960s, infused federal dollars into the local economy with the creation of a rocket test site in adjacent Hancock County.

With longleaf timber gone, stumps and dead towns littered the South Mississippi landscape. But if Napier's account is about deprivation and exhaustion, it is also about survival. Among those who helped Pearl River County survive was a timber baron who stayed on when the trees began to play out, Lucius Olen Crosby. Crosby and his three able sons became not only chief employers with diversified forest and chemical products, but also became community benefactors in other ways. So much of what was good in civic life — church, education, health care, culture — the Crosby family contributed to it; they gave capitalism a good name.

While the author springs from some of Pearl River's pioneer stock, this book is no mere celebration of prominence (something which delights the genealogist but bores the plebian). Informed by four decades of maturing personal interest, Napier, a historian with a distinguished military career, employed a wide variety of primary and secondary sources (including some work of an earlier scholar whose role in the project aborted). Further, the book boasts a handsome format and is lavishly illustrated. The author has managed to cut through some local folklore and, while the project significantly benefited from Crosby-Gammill funding, he has produced an inde-

pendent piece of scholarship. Napier takes Pearl River culture on its own terms. He neither celebrates the isolation and ignorance of the past nor embraces what amounts to homogenized tawdriness of modern civilization.

In the end, Napier argues that Pearl River culture will not survive the onslaught of modernization, ironically what many boosters wanted for so long. "This little corner of the Deep South," he says, "mirrors a problem about which some thoughtful Southerners worry: How do we embrace the benefits of modern society without surrendering our identity and our old bonds of place, blood, religion, custom, tradition, valor, and memory? The problem is by no means confined to the South,. . ." (p. 195). Part of the answer is in Napier's book itself, a magnificent achievement in local history with significant implications for all of American life.

Lawrence J. Nelson University of North Alabama

Michael V.R. Thomason. *Trying Times: Alabama Photographs, 1917-1945*. University: University of Alabama Press, 1985, pp. 320. $39.50.

Several years ago, the University of Georgia Press published *Vanishing Georgia*, a photographic essay documenting the acquiescence of a rural, agricultural society to the invading forces of technology, urbanization, and industrial development. *Trying Times* is a more focused effort, concentrated on the years from American entry into World War I to the end of World War II. These years, 1917-1945, conform roughly to what a host of historians are now pointing to as the crucial "turning period" during which the New South actually started becoming "new."

Mechanization and consolidation of agriculture, industrial development, urbanization and a growing interaction with and dependence on the federal government are the dominant themes that emerge from these photographs. *Trying Times* succeeds admirably in capturing the excitement and the anxiety that gripped on Alabama described by Clarence Cason

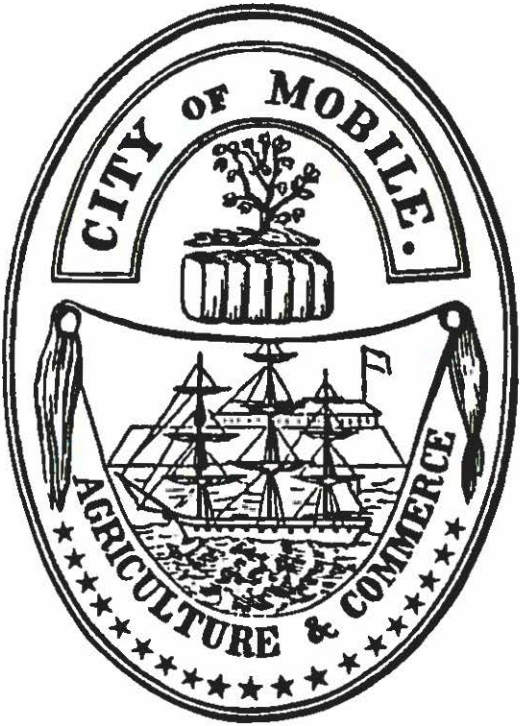
in 1930 as hanging "undecided between farm and factory."

The pictures used in *Trying Times* were selected and organized with care. The availability of photographs from rich archives in Mobile and Birmingham insured excellent coverage of the changes that came to those cities. On the other hand, the cultural and economic inertia that only reluctantly loosened its grip on rural and small town Alabama, although not ignored, is less well represented in this volume. As is invariably (and understandably) the case, there are fewer photographs of blacks in situations and circumstances not under white control than one would like. Finally, a good introductory essay lacks only an extra paragraph or two linking more closely the "trying times" of 1917-1945 with the four ensuing decades of tumult that would provide wonderful material for a sequel to this volume.

Professor Thomason and the University of Alabama Press deserve the thanks of students and teachers of Alabama history for this fine book. With Georgia and Alabama leading the way, southern university press photographic studies may soon escape the clutches (and coffee tables) of those who insist on an airbrushed version of their region's history.

James C. Cobb University of Mississippi

A GUIDE TO THE MOBILE MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES



BY
CLIFTON DALE FOSTER
TRACEY J. BEREZANSKY
E. FRANK ROBERTS

Mobile Municipal Archives
Mobile, Alabama, 1986

From the Archives. . .
A Key To The Past: *A Guide To The Mobile Municipal Archives*

A Guide to the Mobile Municipal Archives by Clifton Dale Foster, Tracey J. Berezansky, and E. Frank Roberts is the result of a year-long archival project funded, in part, by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The basic purpose of the project, which began in September 1985, was to organize and describe the vast collection of municipal records held in the Archives.

The Mobile Municipal Archives was established in May 1984. It contains a collection of 3,400 cubic feet of historical records created in the day-to-day operations of Mobile's various municipal governments and associated departments. The records date from 1815, or one year after Mobile was incorporated as a town by the Mississippi territorial legislature, to 1985. They tell a great deal about the six forms of government the city has experienced since its incorporation as well as the social and economic changes it has undergone over the years. They reveal much about local politics and the activities of some of Mobile's most influential citizens.

The guide describes a virtual treasure-trove of historical documentation concerning the City of Mobile. Among the more interesting records found were passenger lists for ships arriving in Mobile from 1838 to 1863. A substantial amount of death and burial records from the City Sexton were found which date 1848-1962. An almost complete set of minute books for the Board of Aldermen, Board of Common Council, Police Board, General Council, and Board of Commissioners have survived. A sizable collection of tax books dating 1829-1954 are available as well.

The accompanying illustration is a reproduction of the cover to the guide. The design shown is the seal of the City of Mobile used from 1819-1889. It signifies the city's close ties with overseas commerce and the cotton trade. The fort in the background, presumably Fort Conde, later renamed Fort Charlotte, represents Mobile's long history and its importance as a strategic military outpost.

Copies of the guide are available at major libraries along the Gulf Coast. A limited number of copies are available to interested researchers. For more information contact The Mobile Municipal Archives, P.O. Box 1827, Mobile, Alabama 36633-1827. The Archives is currently located in the Brookley Industrial Complex on the second floor of Building 11 and is open to the public weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Clifton Dale Foster