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WOMEN'S CULTURE AND COMMUNITY:
RELIGION AND REFORM IN GALVESTON, 1880-1920

by

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Abstract

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Questioning why some white women in the South identified with Progressive reform movements, or became suffragists, provides the impetus for this case study based on women's organizations in Galveston, Texas. By employing the technology devised by urban historians to complement the already well-established methodologies of women's historians, this study explores two aspects of women's history — the roots of southern women's reform and the evolution of a Progressive era women's community stemming out of women's culture.

Unlike previous studies, which argue that women from evangelical churches and the Women's Christian Temperance Union fueled the movement toward woman suffrage in the South, evidence from Galveston shows that suffrage leaders did not stem from evangelical churches but from elitist Episcopal and Presbyterian churches. Women from these churches had gained their experience in church-based associations whose focus was community-wide and addressed the dislocations caused by urbanization. In nearly every case, class and privilege determined civic leadership among white women rather than evangelical zeal, and from the start their interest was in societal betterment rather than in winning converts.

The concept of women's culture and its evolution — the movement of women and their values, attitudes, and actions from home to church, to
benevolent institutions, to clubs, to civic reform groups – and the resulting transformations provides the framework for this study. Women's culture remained a great underlying foundation, upon which activist women stood when entering the public realm. By the Progressive Era women had formed an informal community of civic activists whose focus on improvement grew out of their own cultural and domestic world, out of the disastrous storm of 1900, out of their previous experience as community builders, and, most important for the development of woman suffrage, out of the state's increasing urbanization. The study of the development of this women's community, equivalent to cultural studies of black or European ethnic communities, is essential to understanding the animus behind southern women's reforming activities.
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Introduction

Every historian who has ever written a word of history has begun by asking questions about the subject at hand. Investigations into the reasons why events occurred as they did keep scholars occupied throughout entire lifetimes. It is no different with the study of women and their motives for action. Questioning why some white women in the southern (some might say southwestern) city of Galveston, Texas, identified with Progressive reform movements, or more radical still, became suffragists and campaigned openly in their communities for the right to vote, provides the impetus for this study. To understand how the women of Galveston moved from domestic circles to churches and then to more public realms requires observing them in groups. Although individual women will occasionally appear at center stage, reminding us that societies are really comprised of unique persons, the focus remains on organizations that women formed in Galveston between 1880 and 1920. By using Galveston as a case study and by employing the technology devised by urban historians to complement the already well-established gender-related methodologies of women's historians, I hope to answer four broad yet interrelated questions regarding the emergence of southern women into public life.

The first question explores the concept of women's culture. Perhaps no issue in women's history has been more earnestly debated or is more vital to the understanding of the motives for women's actions and activism. I believe firmly that the study of women's culture for its own sake is a worthwhile endeavor, increasing our compassion and tolerance for nineteenth-century behavior, which may seem at odds with our twentieth-
century sensibilities of woman's place in a modern society. This study, however, is not about culture alone, either southern or women's. It is about evolution — the movement of women and their values, attitudes, and actions from home to church, to benevolent institutions, to clubs, and to civic reform groups — and the resulting transformations. Women's culture remained a great underlying foundation, upon which benevolent ladies, clubwomen, and suffragists, each within their own generation, stood when entering the public realm.

The second question, raised both explicitly and implicitly by scholars, concerns the reform activities of conservative white southern women. Given the slaveowning legacy of the South, which prevented southern women from acquiring an abolitionist and feminist organizational past, how did they become involved in Progressive Era reform activities, especially suffrage? What moved white southern women in the postbellum years from the "enclosed garden" to the public dais? Historians give the Civil War credit for their movement initially, but in Galveston the emergence of women is discernable only in the postwar era and principally through women's church and synagogue societies. Evangelicalism and the temperance movement via such organizations as the Women's Christian Temperance Union is given credit for motivating southern women to seek the ballot. In Galveston, however, reforming impulses emerged through urban benevolence, not evangelical hopes for a better world. Clearly, the answers derived from this case study will differ from previous scholarship.

The third query ponders the role of white women vis a vis their male counterparts in community building. There is great need for gender-related activities to be evaluated not only through the theories of the separate

...
spheres but also in light of the total community. Women and men interacted with one another at all levels and in various organizations – churches, benevolent institutions, and in civic reform activities. Women often called upon men to help them form gender-specific organizations and to aid them in causes of interest to them. Finally, women asked men to grant them the right to vote. How they managed to work in a man's world from a woman's sphere is worth considering for the lessons it gives us in women's accommodation and resilience.

Finally, this study, using a data base of 370 activist women, asks detailed questions about the origins and composition of the women's organizations. Which churches and church societies served as forums for women's social activism? Did links exist between women's congregational societies and the asylums they founded, the literary clubs they initiated, or the progressive reform groups they created? What agents, agencies, or events helped women to organize? Who were these women, what was their economic status, and what experiences did they bring with them? How did women's reforming activities shape their attitudes toward other women and especially toward their expanding role in the public workplace? Perhaps most important to this study, after these questions have been explored, is to adumbrate the evolvement in Galveston of a women's community, an informal alliance of politically and socially active white women who motivated and sustained women's progressive activism. By focusing on this women's community, on the increasingly democratic nature of the three most important female Progressive era associations, and the urban environment from which they evolved, patterns will begin to emerge that
may shape our understanding of the path that led to the southern women's Progressive movement.

The origins of a woman's culture in the South began with the home and family. In every society, work and responsibility assignments are divided along gender lines. In the postbellum American South the portion of responsibility assigned to women — bearing and nurturing children, preparing food and clothing for the family, nursing ill family members and readying them for burial if necessary, teaching children the domestic tasks of life and the rudiments of education, setting the course for religious salvation, and if economically able, bringing cultural refinements to the family — were originally accomplished within the confines of a domestic environment. These assignments, though first imposed on women because of their procreative abilities, helped them to fashion a separate woman's culture from which they devised a system of personal values, beliefs in their moral superiority, and notions of sisterhood. Domestic tasks and changes in the family occasioned by the rise of industrial work patterns led to the creation of a separate sphere for women, a socially imposed arena in which women were allowed to perform their gender-specific tasks but which proved imprisoning for some, liberating for others. Institutions outside the family, many of them filled with females, assumed some of the tasks assigned to women within the family. Southern women responded to these institutions as facilitators for their own advancement into public life, and whenever possible worked to make them reflect the imperatives of a woman's culture.

The first and the most protean of these institutions to accommodate to the values of a woman's culture were the Protestant churches, hence this
study emphasizes the feminization that occurred within them and the resulting changes for women. While Protestant churches provided the most hospitable abode for women and their cultural concerns, they also were a sort of half-way house between the home and the society that provided for some women in the South an entre into semi-public life. Some churches were more liberal than others both in allowing women to domesticate the programmatic and physical structures of the church and in encouraging women's public and secular activism. This may be explained by sectarian differences that endured in southern regions, by the strength of patriarchy that existed in certain denominations, and by issues of ethnicity, class, and economic status within the denominations.

This brings us within range of our second question concerning the origins of women's reform in the South. Traditional explanations center on the recognition that the South was largely churched by the evangelical religious denominations (especially the Baptists and Methodists). According to the most recent available histories, women's evangelical church societies provided the door through which laywomen entered the semi-religious Women's Christian Temperance Union, the first national women's organization to take hold in the South in the 1880s. Once there, the influence of the WCTU encouraged these women to campaign openly for a society free from alcohol consumption - to save women and children from the abuses inflicted upon them by drunken menfolk and to reclaim the healing sanctity of the home. In addition, the WCTU advocated programs designed to move domestic issues, such as the establishment of kindergartens, to the public forum. With the aid of urbanization, post secondary education for women, club activities, and an increasing awareness
of the need to bring the New South out of its lethargy socially as well as economically, southern women moved toward reforming activities in the Progressive Era. Realizing that women's goals would not be safeguarded without the vote, the cap to this movement came with the formation of suffrage societies in every southern state.

One of the purposes of this study is to test this hypothesis in a state where the legislature ratified the Nineteenth Amendment. It is important to see whether the lock-step model from membership in an evangelical church to participation in the WCTU to organizing for suffrage holds up against the realities of women's organizational lives. To do this it is necessary to examine in detail over time the evolution of women from church societies to semi-religious and then to secular and reforming organizations within a single, middle-sized, economically prosperous community. The evidence collected thus far shows that the model does not account for the origins of women's reform in Galveston and perhaps should not be applied to all communities (especially coastal cities), nor perhaps to all regions of the South. Women's reforming activities in Galveston did not originate in evangelical church societies, nor were they advanced through the WCTU. Yet progressive women formed associations that worked for the betterment of the community and for the advancement of women. And a strong, supportive Galveston Equal Suffrage Association emerged that sent its local president on to become the state president from 1915 until the passage of the amendment. If evangelical women's societies and the WCTU were not responsible for mobilizing women, what then were the origins of women's reform in Galveston?
One explanation for this puzzlement lies in the city's geographic and economic base. Galveston (population 38,000 in 1900), one of the principal cotton export cities of the New South, supported an impressive urban elite accustomed to sophistications beyond the reach of most southerners. As we shall see, demographics shaped the contours of the reform impulse among Galveston women. Also, social class patterns contributed to religious preferences and thus helped to determine the type of congregational societies women would establish. Those societies that fostered work with the city in urban poor relief were more likely to inspire women to pursue community-related projects.

The foundations of women's reform in Galveston rested upon those women's church societies that had actively pursued community poor relief since 1875 and their successor organizations designed to care for the city's dependents, that is, orphans, widows, and children of the factory district. Episcopal and Presbyterian women in these years spent far more time and energy in directing aid to the local worthy poor outside their own churches than did women from the evangelical churches. Not only is this finding important in pinpointing which churches encouraged women to become community oriented, but it also provides a better picture of how private relief was organized in a southern city before the advent of public social services.

As Galveston grew ever more cosmopolitan, disparities between the economic classes became more acute, leaving a class of underprivileged or dependent residents without shelter or education. The laywomen who were most actively engaged in poor relief were among the first to realize the desperate need for institutions and asylums to protect the helpless. Protestant
and Jewish women, representatives from the various women's religious societies, between 1878 and 1894 built two orphanages, a home for elderly women, and the state's first free kindergarten for factory workers' children. These complemented the already existing St. Mary's Orphans' Asylum established by the Sisters of Charity in 1874. Each of the city's non-Catholic eleemosynary institutions were designed, built, and maintained by boards of lady managers, and the women filled the boards in the same manner as corporate businessmen – by self-perpetuating election. The women's involvement in institutional governance provided them unparalleled training in management and administration in these years before the Progressive Era.

The 1890s brought to Galveston a welter of men's and women's associations: patriotic-hereditary societies, social clubs, fraternal orders and their auxiliaries, literary clubs, and even short-lived chapters of the WCTU and the Texas Equal Suffrage Association. Despite preparation in developing women's leadership skills through church societies, boards of lady managers, and women's clubs, it still required a cataclysmic event, the hurricane of 1900, to provide both the need and the great opportunity for founding the city's first Progressive Era women's reform organization. The storm created the worst form of social disorder, and while destruction (6000 dead, two-thirds of the city destroyed) overwhelmed the community, within hours of the tragedy a Central Relief Committee was organized to administer emergency relief. Heretofore the role of women in the response has not been adequately recorded or analyzed, but women were appointed to a relief subcommittee and worked alongside the indomitable Clara Barton of the International Red Cross.
The best documented political result of the storm was the invention in 1901 of a city commission form of government, but several months before its installation, women survivors -- veteran organizers from the women's congregational societies, the benevolent institutions, and the literary clubs -- gathered to establish the Women's Health Protective Association (WHPA). Working closely with city hall, it became the city's premiere reform organization, tending first to the clean-up and proper burial following the storm, then to the revegetation of the island, and finally to the enforcement of the pure food and drug act, the establishment of public health programs, medical examinations for school children, public playgrounds, hot-lunch programs, and well-baby and tuberculosis clinics. The WHPA was the first democratic citywide women's association of the Progressive Era, and it heralded the formation of a progressive women's community in Galveston. Even though the WHPA established a good record of identifying municipal problems, seeking scientific advice, and working toward resolution, ultimately there was no way to escape politics and the realization that without the vote women were only partially effective.

Urbanization and the politicization of women's goals through women's civic clubs served as the most important catalyst for the southern suffrage movement. Thus in 1912, as the WHPA was launching its crusade for pure milk, some seventy women interested in equal political opportunity founded the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association (GESA). A majority of women suffrage leaders were officers of the WHPA, indicating a direct link between those organizations that had provided solutions to urban problems dating back to the 1870s. The suffragists of Galveston included not only elite white women who had been active in clubs and societies (and society) but
also women trained in the professions: doctors, pharmacists, teachers, and medical students. The fusion of women professionals with women volunteers who had long been prominent in civic improvement gave the GESA both a more democratic composition and a more strident feminist spirit. Conspicuously absent from the roll of officers were women from the local Women's Christian Temperance Union, which by 1912 was comprised almost entirely of members outside the community of women activists. Speeches, canvassing, parades, World War I rallies, and plays followed, and the majority of Galveston's elite endorsed votes for women; many of the men joined the association as well. Several of the suffragists gained administrative experience through the Galveston chapter, including Minnie Fisher Cunningham, who assumed presidency of the state suffrage association from 1915 until the passage of the amendment.

The last citywide organization formed by white women in the Progressive Era was the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). It filled the need for an organization that incorporated middle-class evangelical and working-class women alongside the traditional elite leaders of the women's community. In Galveston, as in other cities, the YWCA served as a cross-class advocacy agency for working women. In terms of numbers, the YWCA was the largest of all the city's progressive women's associations, and paradoxically the most democratic and the most restrictive. The majority of officers came from the executive ranks of the boards of lady managers, the WHPA, and the Equal Suffrage Association. Because of its decidedly Christian orientation 50 percent of its board of directors and 37 percent of the executive officers came from evangelical churches, which served to broaden and further democratize leadership. It excluded from its executive ranks,
However, Catholic and Jewish women. Still, it was the efforts of the YWCA officers and their supporters who actually built a structure for all white women wherein "physical culture" classes, business education, dormitory space, low-cost meals, and companionship were made available.

So it seems that women leaders in Galveston came around full circle in more ways than one. Having begun their collective lives in women's church societies ministering mostly to poor women, they completed the Progressive Era by creating a church-related women's association that sheltered underpaid working girls. Elite women from families and churches with wealth and power continued to lead in the secularization and politicization of women's cultural goals, while middle-class women from evangelical churches confined their civic activism to religiously oriented associations. Unlike northern cities, where competing groups of women and men vied for hegemony in the business of reform, Galveston women activist leaders and officers remained fairly uniform. Perhaps it is indicative of southern conservatism that the status of individual women officers varied so little over time and that dramatic efforts for reform came from women whose social positions were far from radical.

While the leadership may have remained consistently privileged, the membership of Progressive era associations underwent a significant change. For one thing, more women from different faiths and economic stations were working together to solve the dislocations created by urbanization and the great hurricane. Tasks that had been divided into sectarian and exclusive cliques before 1900 were shared: every white woman in the city who was of worthy character was asked to join the three women's organizations of the Progressive Era. The greatest changes came with the increasing
secularization of women's actions. Generations of women set out in the 1880s to transform their churches into homelike refuges; yet after 1900 they and their daughters employed domestic values in reconstructing the city through women's organizations. Feminism, which had flared up only fleetingly in groups and with individuals in the 1890s, moved diverse women to consider their own equality in the face of growing economic opportunities for women. Finally, after 1900 a broader community of politically and socially active women began to shape what may be described as a "movement culture" of women, exhibiting a solidarity in an urban setting that empowered them to do for their city and for themselves that which they were unable to do singly or in small groups.

Few studies of reform movements in the South have given much attention to urbanization as a catalyst, particularly for organized women. The movement for change by women in the South, however, was also an urban-based phenomenon. Southern women, who may have been slow to respond to national entreaties for a social gospel movement or a feminist revolution, were, nonetheless, stirred to action on behalf of their own communities. Provincial pride, a common theme in southern literature, motivated activist women in urban areas to display civic pride. Hence municipal improvement, whether for poor relief, asylum building, beautification, sanitation, even suffrage became the starting point for women's activism. This suggests that in a middle-sized southern community almost all of the activist women were community builders first and campaigners for national or statewide social or political issues second.

As early as the 1870s women began to view their organizations as agents to construct an urban environment that favored their interests and
that centered on subjects familiar to them through a woman's culture. Those national and state-level issues that most affected local residents were "selected" by women activists to be used in city campaigns, but local conditions provided the primary justification for involvement in reform. Suffrage was, of course, a national issue that Galvestonians adopted, but most campaigned for suffrage not as an abstract good but in order to be able to vote on the kinds of local regulations that they hoped would bring opportunity for themselves and order and stability to their city. In short, the study of women's social activism in a small southern city reveals much about how broader institutions such as churches, voluntary associations, clubs, and reforming organizations were adapted to bring about the kinds of changes women wanted to impose upon their immediate surroundings. National Progressive Era issues and organizations were employed when needed, but class, religion, gender, and the immediacy of the city environment shaped the choice of issues that Galveston women ultimately defended.


Chapter 1
The Island City

Safe upon the solid rock
The ugly houses stand.
Come and see my shining palace
Built upon the sand.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

The city of Galveston was the urbanized end of a long, slender, low-lying island off the coast of Texas. But Galveston had a history, an elegance, a style of life that set it apart from other Texas cities. "Galveston is primarily a seat of good living," noted Julian Ralph, a roving reporter for Harper's Weekly in 1895. 1 So tourists, visitors, and residents had been saying for years. Edward King made the same discovery more than twenty years earlier when on his grand tour of the postwar South he described Galveston as "a thriving city set down upon a brave little island which has fought its way out of the depths of the Gulf, and given to the United States her noblest beach, and to Texas an excellent harbor. ...It is a city in the sands; yet orange and myrtle, oleander and delicate rose, and all rich-hued blossoms of a tropic land shower their wealth about it. In the morning the air is heavy with the perfume of blossoms; in the evening the light ... is intense and enchanting."2

There were some detractions to be sure. Tropical storms, hurricanes, epidemics, and insects all plagued the island at one time or another. One visitor complained, "You have to tie yourself in bed at night to keep the cockroaches and other insects from carrying you off bodily. And I am told the 'skeeters' soon eat up a bar [mosquito net] trying to get at you. If you attempted to sleep without a bar, I can truly say, there would be nothing but
the bones of a person left in the morning." Bouts of yellow fever scourged the island from time to time; the last really nasty episode occurred in 1867. When Thomas Seargent penned these words, he had no idea they would be among his last: "The fever is getting pretty bad indeed — we had twenty-four buried [sic] on Saturday; about the same Sunday and today I fear it will be equally as fatal." Storms, of course, were an ever present danger, and Galveston's history is so closely tied to the great hurricane of 1900 that it inspired one author to write these lines: "Galveston has an implacable enemy. Like Torre Annunziata and Herculaneum, the great seaport lives in the shadow of possible destruction."3

Despite the dangers, Galveston found plenty of admirers, and the city grew even more charming in its recovery after the Civil War. Its attractiveness was built upon several foundations: a mild climate, white beaches, fertile soil, a good harbor, admirable mercantile prospects, and enterprising people for whom commerce was not the only pursuit in life.

The Gulf Coast city sported a "salubrious" and healthy climate, where sea breezes usually tempered the heat from the Texas interior in summer and warmed the island in winter. "The heat is never disagreeably intense in Galveston; a cool breeze blows over the island night and day...," reported Edward King to the nation's readers.4 He obviously had not experienced a humid 95-degree day in the middle of August, when most of the city's wealthier residents headed for the mountains of Virginia or for the northeast. Galveston had the advantage of gulf winds to help cool the air, but, like most southern towns close to the equator, the city could become unbearably hot in the summer.5

Thirty-one miles of white, sandy beaches, "laved by the restless waters"
flanked the island in the days before concrete seawalls and stone rip rap. "It is only a few steps from an oleander grove to the surf, the shell-strewn strand, and the dunes," wrote King. Leslie Brand informed his mother in Los Angeles that compared to the Pacific Ocean, the warm gulf waters provided splendid bathing. "The breakers roll in oftener and the water is much warmer. I remained in for an hour and enjoyed myself more than I ever did before in water. For I did not get cold. And then the numerous beaches make it exciting." Swimming was not the only recreation on the beaches. "From my window," wrote one island visitor, "I watch the sea all day, and in the afternoon I walk or drive on the finest beach in the United States." Horse and buggy rides and later excursions by car on the hard sand delighted tourists and residents alike.

Rich prairie soil for the sustenance of oleander groves, chinaberry trees, colorful gardens, and overarching oaks kept the city shaded and roseate. "On the whole it is a very pretty place, ... [with] large and beautiful lawns and lovely flowers and shrubbery. ... Oleanders can be seen bordering sidewalks nearly everywhere," noted one sojourner. Julian Ralph praised the "marvelous abundance of ... salt-cedar trees, ... oleanders, magnolias, gums, palms, huge laurels, and cloudlike water oaks and live-oaks." He ended by declaring "her gardens ... semi-tropical and gorgeous."

Physical amenities aside, Galveston boasted the best harbor in Texas. It was the only deep water port between New Orleans and Tampico, Mexico, and became the principal port of entry for Texas at a time when the state was becoming the premier cotton producer in the nation. In the postwar period, Galvestonians foresaw their city's dependence on shipping and began to look for ways to improve the entrance to the harbor, which at times was obstructed
by an annoying sandbar lurking twelve feet below the water's surface. In 1874 U.S. Army engineers began to build two jetties, extensions of the channel to the harbor, that jutted out into the Gulf of Mexico. The jetties were intended to help the tide and currents scour the channel of any sand, but the plan was not successful. Realizing that a massive project entailing federal funds would bring the necessary improvements, a Committee on Deep Water, comprised of leading Galveston entrepreneurs, petitioned both state and federal representatives for help in constructing a first-rate port. In 1890 Galveston citizens, led by Col. William L. Moody, who stood to gain a fortune in the cotton trade, secured $7,500,000 in federal aid for the construction of a deep water port. After that, large vessels frequented the city and required the improvement of the Galveston wharves. The Galveston Wharf Company, owned partly by private interests and partly by the city, extended its wharves, built new warehouses and elevators, and earned the reputation "of having the best wharves and warehouse accommodations of any city." This meant that with deep water and improved wharves Galveston by 1898 shipped 64 percent of the Texas cotton crop to world markets, and by 1900 "Galveston was the leading cotton port of the nation."9

Shipping required railroads and steamship lines, and Galveston already had both. The Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway, which ran to Houston, was built in 1858, and by 1876 was in the hands of John Sealy, who standardized the track guage, linking Galveston to the transcontinental railroads. Eventually the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway, financed in part by Galveston citizens, stretched from Kansas City to the Island City bringing grain, cattle, and cotton from the great Midwest. These were carried away in freighter vessels owned by various individuals
and companies, among them the Texas and New York Steamship Company, Harris and Morgan line, and the C. H. Mallory line, which served the city more than fifty years.\textsuperscript{10}

The harbor, railroads, and shipping lines provided excellent export-import prospects for enterprising capitalists, many of whom bestowed upon the city the fruits of their gains. Printers and lithographers, book binders, dry goods wholesalers and retailers, furniture dealers, jewelers, luggage purveyors, boot and shoe makers, not to mention the more commonly found butchers, grocers, cigar and tobacco venders, liquor sellers, coal dealers, dressmakers, grain dealers, and auctioneers all benefited from the city's premier trading position. With commercial opportunities flowing into town, the wholesale and retail business approximated $50,000,000 by 1885. Successful businesses, such as Clarke and Courts printers, and the Galveston Dry Goods Company, incorporated, adding to their capital stock, their facilities, and their prospects for trade in the greater South and Midwest. As Walter Grover reminisced, the "Strand [was] lined with next-door to next-door wholesale business houses that supplied not only all of Texas but the western part of Louisiana, Arkansas, Indian Territory, New Mexico and the Northern part of Old Mexico, with all the merchandise and commodities they needed." The result, he found, was that within fifteen years after the Civil War the city had become wealthy, "with more millionaires than any city of comparable size." Boosterism aside, statistics show that Galveston in 1915 (even after the hurricane destruction of 1900) exported nearly $230 million worth of cotton, cattle, grain, and crude oil while importing over $10 million in manufactured items and luxuries.\textsuperscript{11}

Cotton, of course, was the major export item, and as railroads began to
enter Texas, linking the interior of the state with cities to the north and east, Galveston exporters sought ways to keep cotton flowing through their hands rather than through mid-western cities. In 1873 twelve cotton factors gathered and formed the Galveston Cotton Exchange in order to adopt standards of classification, adjust controversies between members, and to maintain uniformity in rules, regulations, and usages, thereby through collective action aid Galveston's up-and-coming cotton brokers. Soon thereafter the exchange contracted with the Western Union Telegraph Company for service at a cost of $565 per month, thus the brokers were soon connected by telegraph to world cotton markets. An ornate, four-story building at the corner of 21st and Mechanic streets, erected by donations from wealthy citizens, was dedicated in 1879 with a formal ball, the society spectacle of the year. Brokerage firms prospered until "exports reached the 1 million bales mark in 1891." In 1889 the name was changed to Galveston Cotton Exchange and Board of Trade, indicating that the exchange had included a market for futures and had admitted wholesalers of grain, coffee, and produce. Out of the exchange developed the Galveston Maritime Association, a company of ship agents who inspected cotton for its uniformity. "It is an age of venture and recklessness," wrote one fellow working in a cotton brokerage on the Strand. "It requires a firm and fixed character to go safely through the strife and take the position of ... the 'golden rule.'" Whether acquired honestly or ruthlessly, fortunes were made through cotton and its related industries for a few enterprising Galvestonians: George Ball, J. H. Hutchings, John and George Sealy, Col. William Moody, P. J. Willis, Julius Runge, J. G. Goldthwaite, William F. Ladd, Bertrand Adoue, and Eustace Taylor to name a few. 12

Cotton factoring and brokering gave rise to another lucrative business:
compressing. Competition swelled in the postwar boom between cotton compressers, many of whom forged companies as newly invented mechanical devices improved the compression of bales. With the invention of the Taylor Press in 1876, vessels were able to carry 25 percent more cotton. By 1893, five major cotton presses worth over $1 million were able to handle 6000 bales a day, 300,000 bales a year, employ 550 men, and store cotton in warehouses that covered fourteen city blocks. Without exaggeration, in postwar Galveston, cotton was king.

Railroading, shipping, merchandising, and cotton factoring brought in enough capital for Galveston to become a banking center as well. The interdependence of commerce and banking dates to the antebellum period, when banks, especially those controlled outside the state, were looked upon with suspicion by Texas legislators. Banking houses in Texas' early years were more likely extensions of cotton factor and commission houses. By 1866, Galveston banking concerns were complying with the 1862 federal National Banking Act, and legitimate banking houses opened on the Strand, the city's main trading street. The First National Bank, founded in 1866, "commenced business with a cash capital of $200,000, with authority to increase to $500,000." In 1869 the directors elected to the bank presidency Henry Rosenberg, whose business acumen and enormous philanthropic gifts to the city are now legendary. The local but important Ball, Hutchings, & Company, later Hutchings, Sealy & Company, which opened as a banking enterprise in the 1850s, by 1885 was rated as "having greater resources than any bank in the South". It was responsible for taking the plans for the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railroad in hand in 1879 and seeing the road to completion; it continued its financial interests in the Galveston Wharf.
Company and handled accounts for cotton, grain, and other staple commodities in connection with shipping. Cotton and banking joined hands in the firms of W. L. Moody & Company; in City National Bank founded in 1907 by William L. Moody, Jr.; and in the Texas Bank and Trust Company, which later became United States National Bank under Isaac H. Kempner. The three principal families of wealth in twentieth-century Galveston — Sealy, Moody, and Kempner — were tied directly to banking. 14

Some of Galveston's wealth spilled over into industries and manufacturing, but the city never claimed manufacturing as one of its principal commercial pursuits. In 1880 Galveston ranked in the lowest 10 percent out of the top one hundred manufacturing cities in the nation; its net product was just over $1 million, its gross product reached almost $2.5 million. City manufacturing did increase in the years between 1880 and 1900 from 170 establishments to 295, and the additional manufactories more than doubled the labor force and the gross value of products. Galveston supported a brewery, a baggage and cordage company, a vinegar and pickle works, a candy factory, and ice and cold storage plants. Texas Star Flour and Rice Mills, which processed grains for shipment to the West Indies and Central America, became one of the largest food processing mills in the state. The Galveston Cotton Mill, a West End (of the island) manufacturing plant headed by Bertrand Adoue, George Sealy, Morris Lasker, Julius Runge, and several other local elites, provided employment for 550 textile workers, most of whom earned pitiful wages for long hours of tedious work. The fact that Galveston had so few of these textile sweat shops (and the Galveston Cotton Mill closed before 1898) added somewhat to the illusion that life in the city was pleasant for almost all of its citizens. Most manufacturers served the
local market by supplying the city with such necessities as boots, saddles and harnesses, clothing, bread and confections, furniture, guns and locks, smithing of all sorts, printing and publishing, carpentering, carriages and wagons, bottling works, cooperage, tombstones, lumber, and ironworks. 15

For skilled workmen Galveston offered multiple avenues of employment on ships, wharves, railroads, ironworks, and in carpentry, metalwork, and in lumber mills. The proliferation of trade unions towards the end of the century gives a clue to the diversity of the laboring population. Among the strongest and oldest were the Screwmen's Benevolent Associations, separate organizations for blacks and whites, which protected the interests of men who stowed bales of cotton in the holds of ships. Longshoremen, pilots, typesetters, tailors, painters, marine engineers, tinsmiths, mechanics, sheet iron and cornice workers, boilermakers, and barbers, to name a few, had formed some thirty trade unions in 1895. But most of the unskilled remained unorganized as manufactories increased in number. Industries employed 1,600 workers in 1890 and over 2,000 in 1900, among these were 333 women and 132 children. The average annual wages of the women were $235; the average salaries of the children were $171, compared to the 1,593 men who averaged $553 per annum. Over time the salaries decreased so that as more women entered the workforce, they did so at greatly reduced wages, which may help to explain why Galveston also had a thriving red light district. 16

Alongside Galveston's commercial base came law firms, insurance companies, newspapers, utility plants, water works, electric trolleys, hospitals, a public school system (1881), the University of Texas Medical School (1891). Small shops, dairies, fishing businesses, drayage and livery services,
mortuaries, and many more of the accoutrements of a thriving city provided income for hundreds of families. As a seaport Galveston attracted a good number of merchant seamen and sailors who came ashore looking for adventure and usually found it in the city's numerous "pleasure dens." In 1880 Galveston offered up more liquor saloons than any city of its size and more than any port on the Gulf Coast, including New Orleans. Although the evidence is difficult to acquire, the Island City probably had as many as fifty-five houses of prostitution. This high tolerance for vice is no doubt attributable to the profit that accrued from these establishments. Through whatever means, Galvestonians by 1891 boasted that theirs was "the wealthiest city in the world of its size." 

Galveston by 1900 supported an urban elite accustomed to sophistications beyond the reach of most southerners. Beneath this class of well-to-do merchants, cotton factors, bankers, lawyers, and factory owners labored a majority of the city's populace, approximately 40 percent of whom were German, Irish, and English immigrants or their descendants and 20 percent of whom were black. If elites comprised approximately 10 percent of the population, then middle- or working-class white native Americans constituted approximately 30 percent of the populace.

Travelers noted that the privileged classes were intent on making Galveston a city where living the good life southern style included honing talents for aggregating wealth with the pursuit of gracious leisure. Julian Ralph found members of the prestigious Aziola Club, "well-to-do- men of cosmopolitan tastes and experiences, gourmets, lovers of art and literature, music, and such ease as our best element gets in America, where every one works hard six days in the week." Leslie Brand thought he had the last word
on Galveston's denizens: "The place strikes one as a sleepy, old fashioned, lazy and easy going little city, whose inhabitants live for ease more than for money." Actually, educated Galvestonians worked long hours in order to acquire a standard of living that allowed them to seem at ease, affording them the appearance of cultured southern gentility. The point was to make money as rapidly as possible so one could enjoy its fruits, build architecturally interesting dwellings, travel, attend cultural events, invest in civic benevolence, and be at home in polite society.

Cultural entertainments, many of them locally produced, added to the city's image of refinement in this, "the most southern of all Texas cities." "There is a constant succession of attractions going on in Galveston – I think more than is good for the quiet and prosperity of the pleasure seekers," counseled John Downey to his sister back in North Carolina. "The theater goes on all the winter and the Rolling Scating rink near the Beach Hotel has been the cause for months and in the summer Ball play in the Beach Park is all the go and even Sunday does not conflict with many of these amusements." As the state's center of trade, finance, and culture, Galveston offered up theater at the Tremont Opera House just after the war and at the Grand Opera House after 1895. Performances by Lily Langtry and Sarah Bernhardt dazzled audiences. Variety shows, minstrels, troubadors, circuses, and traveling performers offered Galvestonians more excitement than did most southern towns. More frequently, however, the city's histrionic societies, glee clubs, quartettes, and orchestras helped entertain Galvestonians while giving voice to local performers.

The Island City had always provided spectacular palm tree and ocean vistas, but with the accumulation of wealth, its structural environment
became equally arresting. Howard Barnstone has categorized Galveston’s architecture into three distinct periods: classical antebellum, romantic, and Victorian Gothic, specifically under the imprint of Galveston architect, Nicholas J. Clayton. With war and depression behind them and with the cotton trade bringing in unimaginable sums, Galvestonians saw the architectural character of the city change after 1873. By then Clayton, a native of Ireland, had arrived to begin his career creating solid buildings lightened by the ebullience of stone tracery. He was the first professional architect to remain in Texas; his initial design, the Block-Oppenheimer Building on the Strand, began his long commitment to embellishing the city’s natural beauty. Over a period of thirty years he designed buildings for the mighty and the humble, from Hutching Sealy Bank building and the Gresham House (Bishop’s Palace) to the city’s poor farm. As architects added a touch of class to the commercial district, so too were common neighborhoods transformed. Elegant, fanciful, and thoroughly Victorian, the city’s residential sections took on the flavor of the era of carpenter gothic as wooden gingerbread ornaments adorned simple frame houses. Architectural historians identify a typical Galveston style that included variations of Victorian design combined with the practical necessities of sleeping porches and galleries (verandas) for the warm climate. With hundreds of these buildings in place by 1900, Galveston resembled a glistening jewel set precariously on the edge of a continent — a “shining palace built upon the sand.”

In September 1900 Galveston’s architectural, economic, and social supremacy received a near fatal blow from hurricane winds and thirty-foot waters. No amount of rebuilding, determination, or urban restructuring could win back the heady prosperity of the 1890s. But survivors who
remained in the city after the storm, despite the tragedy that had befallen them, became more determined than ever to bring back the city's economy, rebuild its smashed dwellings, restore community pride, and embrace the Progressive Era with urban reform, city beautification, and improved public health and safety. Their hard work won for them the admiration of the nation, but Texas cities competing for the lucrative trade took advantage of Galveston's lapse. Houston in 1914 dredged a port of its own and became the principal exporter of Texas's new-age commodity — oil. Galveston did not share in the spoils of the oil patch, instead citizens developed the city's coastal advantages to become the premier resort city on the Texas Gulf Coast. Tourism, a first-rate medical school, fishing, shipping, insurance companies, and military installations managed to save Galveston's economy, rendering it a slow-growing average middle-sized southern city of 62,000 by 1980. For the most part investment capital left the city for more lucrative opportunities in other parts of the state. A few families whose fortunes were made in the pre-storm era turned their wealth into twentieth-century foundations that aided the John Sealy Hospital, charities, medical research, and historic preservation.

* * *

Focusing on a trans-Mississippi seaport like Galveston for the purpose of studying women's organizations has certain advantages not found in a study of older southern seaboard cities. First, Texas offers fertile territory for the investigation of reform, particularly since the state produced Populist, Prohibitionist, and Progressive movements and concluded a successful woman suffrage campaign. Second, Galveston by 1880 had become the state's largest city, whose population of only 22,000 makes it a manageable site for study. It was also a dynamic city, and unlike other southern seaports,
such as Charleston and Mobile, did not decay between 1865 and 1900. Before
the hurricane of September 1900 the city had grown in population to nearly
38,000. True, by 1910 Galveston was no longer the largest city in the state, but
the sheer grit of its citizens in reconstructing their home suggests a certain
resilience that statistics alone cannot capture.23

Galveston, despite the peculiarities of its history presented here, was
part of a larger network of cities across the South. Culturally the Island City
belonged to the South; regionally it bordered on the West and on the Gulf
Coast. Urban historians have been mindful of the differences between
southern cities, in their growth rates, social organization, and cultural
values. Don Harrison Doyle argues that New South railway centers such as
Atlanta and Nashville attracted younger men into civic-commercial
leadership who differed from the more relaxed, liquor-imbibing businessmen
found in the seaport cities of Charleston and Mobile. In the interior cities
advancement to elite status was dependent upon achievement, but in the
older seaports an entrenched upper class stemming from antebellum days
dominated business and social life. Galveston, according to these criteria, falls
somewhere between the two types. In the area of economic vitality and
upward social mobility for enterprising individuals, it competed favorably up
to 1900 with such vibrant interior cities as Atlanta, Nashville, Louisville,
Memphis, Houston, and Dallas-Fort Worth. In terms of its religious
composition between 1880 and 1920, Galveston more nearly resembled the
coastal cities of Charleston, Mobile, and New Orleans.24

Doyle does not take religion into account in his study, but a
comparison of denominational preference in these four cities clearly presents
a pattern consistent with his claims of differences in social organization
between younger interior cities and older seaport cities. Atlanta, Nashville, and also Louisville, Memphis, Montgomery, Houston, and Dallas had greater numbers of Protestant communicants in the evangelical denominations than did the seaport cities of Charleston and Mobile, as well as New Orleans, and Galveston (see Tables 1: 1 and 1: 2).

According to Doyle, the inland cities seemed to allow greater upward social mobility; newcomers who ventured into the trades of wholesale produce, dry goods, lumber, iron, textile, and other manufacturing interests were given opportunities to rise to positions of commercial and civic leadership. Undoubtedly many of these young men and their wives belonged to the less prestigious but faster growing Baptist and Methodist churches. Despite the fact that in 1916, 92.4 percent of Baptists and 89.8 percent of Methodists still resided in the countryside, in cities that sprang up out of the farming hinterlands Baptists and Methodists flourished.

In each of the seaboard cities in 1906 the largest percentage of Protestants were Episcopalian, followed in three cities by Lutherans and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North). In all but Mobile, Baptists and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, were the least prevalent. Seaboard cities had higher percentages of Catholics, Germans, and other immigrant groups than did the interior cities (Kentucky and Texas excepted). A more tolerant attitude toward drinking prevailed in cities where seamen found recreation, and, on another level, where the habits of Europeans were easily assimilated. Moreover, status belonged to the more firmly entrenched social elites who were primarily of the nonevangelical denominations; in Protestant circles this usually meant Episcopalian.

This discussion of New South cities, male elites, and denominational
preference is relevant to the study of white southern urban women reformers, most of whom were wives, daughters, and sisters of men wielding commercial or political power. Before 1900 in those interior cities and towns where Baptists and Methodists predominated and their members achieved upper-middle and upper-class status, women of the evangelical missionary societies and the Women's Christian Temperance Union were accorded positions of leadership within women's secular voluntary associations. But in Galveston, and possibly in the other seaport cities, evangelical women were seldom afforded elite status and therefore did not generally participate in the leadership of the women's voluntary and reform organizations. Studies of the religious origins of women's reform movements in the South must take into consideration not only denominational predominance in cities but also geographic and economic factors, class structure, and opportunities for upward social mobility.

Unlike interior cities such as Atlanta, Nashville, Dallas and Fort Worth, Galveston's richly diversified population included a majority of Catholics, most of whom were German and Irish immigrants or their descendants. By 1906 Roman Catholics outnumbered Protestants three to one, but few Catholics achieved elite status. Of the city's Protestants, Episcopalians were the most numerous. Most of the socially elite families were either Episcopalians (for example, Sealy, Hutchings, League, and Rosenberg), Presbyterians (Trueheart, Austin), or Jews (Kempner, Lasker, Lovenberg, Kopperl, and Blum). In 1906, 44.1 percent of Protestants belonged to the more liturgical Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Lutheran churches. Baptists, Methodists, and members of other evangelical denominations comprised only 33.3 percent of Protestants, but among them may be found the
Ballingers and the Moodys. Because Galveston combined the dynamic elements of a young, rising New South city with the denominational and class structure of an older port city, it provides an opportunity to test and evaluate the origins of progressive women reformers whose attitudes were not informed or shaped by the evangelical churches.

The notion that Episcopal and Presbyterian women became the dominant force for civic activism is a concept at odds with accepted historical assumptions for the rise of women leaders in the New South. Historians have long reasoned that the origins of southern women's reform in the Progressive Era grew out of the "women's organizations of the Protestant churches." Anne F. Scott in her pioneering work discovered that by 1900 "the public life of virtually every Southern woman ... began in a church society"; the result, she wrote, was that women "essentially invented the welfare state." Accordingly, women's church societies of the 1870s and 1880s served as predecessors to the voluntary associations established by women for the purpose of social reform in the 1890s and in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Taking this concept a bit further in their studies of specific church and semireligious associations, Anne F. Scott and Jean E. Friedman assigned considerable importance to the links between evangelical foreign and home mission societies, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and the southern woman suffrage movement.

In the 1880s Frances Willard, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, toured the South and encouraged southern women, mostly from the evangelical churches, to form unions, creating an alliance for the first time with a national women's organization. Motivated to engage in public reforming activities through basic human compassion and
perfectionist theological tenets and, yet, frustrated over unresponsive legislatures, southern evangelical women found that they needed the vote to effect their plans. Historians have depicted evangelical women moving from the protected enclosures of Baptist and Methodist churches to the more worldly realm of public prohibition. Recognizing the difficulty of enacting reform by moral suasion and the unlikelihood of prohibition legislation passing without the vote, the WCTU endorsed woman suffrage as early as 1879. A number of WCTU members joined the ranks of the suffragists secure in the goal of perfecting the community and guarding the home. A lock-step model emerges of southern women issuing forth from evangelical societies to join the WCTU, and then marching toward membership in their state’s Equal Suffrage Association. 30

This structural model helps to explain how women from a religiously conservative South were able to foster women’s social reform movements that addressed the problems of intemperance, child labor, prison reform, early childhood education, and the white slave traffic without abandoning an evangelical heritage. It has the advantage of providing an ideological explanation for the coexistence of such diverse elements as foreign mission, prohibition, and suffrage societies. Through direct conversion experiences, belief in the perfectability of men and women, and hope of adoption of domestic values, evangelical women were encouraged to follow the path already outlined toward reform. This model may very well help to describe female reform activities at the state level, or in communities where Methodists and Baptists predominated, or where the WCTU was organized early and grew vigorously. But the South is not monolithic, and the model does not account for the origins of women’s activism and reform in some of
its urban areas, especially Galveston.\textsuperscript{31}

Patterns of social class and denominational membership shed considerable light on the strength of women's church (and synagogue) societies and the potential for women's emergence from them into the public realm. Catholic women, who outnumbered Protestant women two to one, suffered from a lower economic status that prevented the majority of them from assuming civic leadership. Like evangelical Protestant women, Catholic laywomen were impeded by theologies and church traditions that gave them little incentive to perform voluntary work outside the home or parish. Fewer in numbers and comprised of lower-middle and middle-class members, the Baptist and Methodist church societies were not hot beds of community activism either. Hence the evangelical churches and their women's groups did not significantly contribute to the making of a progressive women's community before 1914. Nor did women reformers find inspiration for civic improvement through the national agendas of the WCTU, which was very weak in Galveston.

Evangelical women's mission societies and the WCTU played virtually no role in the creation of a coterie of volunteer progressive female reformers in Galveston. The WCTU never enjoyed the popularity there that it did in interior Texas cities, in part because there were fewer members of evangelical denominations in Galveston, and because in this port city, saloons, as well as immigrants' drinking customs, were tolerated and too profitable to oppose. Moreover, Methodists and Baptists, who were largely of the middle and lower-middle classes, provided most of the membership of the WCTU, giving that organization a middle-class but not an elite status.

In Galveston the foundations of the women's reform movement
rested on those congregational women's societies that had actively pursued community relief for twenty years and their successor organizations, designed to care for the city's dependents, that is, orphans, widows, and children of the factory district. Reform in Galveston was engendered by elite women who responded first to the imperatives of a women's culture, nurtured in homes, churches, benevolent institutions, and in women's clubs across the city; and then to the urban conditions peculiar to that city between the 1870s and 1920. As we shall see, however, the development of a women's culture in church settings came before all reforming efforts.
### Table 1: Protestant Denominations by Inland City, 1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Atlanta (%)</th>
<th>Nashville (%)</th>
<th>Louisville (%)</th>
<th>Memphis (%)</th>
<th>Montgomery (%)</th>
<th>Houston (%)</th>
<th>Dallas (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.E.C.S.</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dis. Ch.</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pres. U.S.</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epis.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**

Protestant population 53,644 37,908 60,680 31,623 21,502 15,860 22,917

**TOTAL**

Catholic population 5,079 5,865 85,170 5,270 3,006 13,743 9,284


**NOTES:** Totals include black congregants; with the exception of the Episcopal Church, white communicants only are included in percentages. Protestant totals include members above age twelve; Catholic totals include members above age nine.

Baptist = Baptist-Southern Convention
M.E.C.S. = Methodist Episcopal Church, South
Dis. Ch. = Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ
Pres. U.S. = Presbyterian Church of the
U.S. Epis. = Protestant Episcopal Church
G.E. = German Evangelical Synod of North America
## Table 1:2 Protestant Denominations by Port City, 1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Charleston (%)</th>
<th>Mobile (%)</th>
<th>New Orleans (%)</th>
<th>Galveston (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.E.C.S.</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pres. U.S.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.E.C.</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>8.7(a)</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.6(b)</td>
<td>13.7(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epis</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**

Protestant population 20,030 19,451 36,875 5,504

**TOTAL**

Catholic population 7,602 13,579 148,579 14,872


**NOTES:** Totals include black congregants; with the exception of the Episcopal Church, white communicants only are included in percentages. Protestant totals include members above age twelve; Catholic totals include members above age nine.

Baptist = Baptists-Southern Convention
M.E.C.S. = Methodist Episcopal Church, South
Pres. U.S. = Presbyterian Church of the U.S.
M.E.C. = Methodist Episcopal Church, North
Lutheran = (a) United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South; (b) Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of America and Evangelical Joint Lutheran Synod of Ohio and Other States; (c) General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America and Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States.


3Leslie C. Brand to Mother, May 11, 1899, Galveston Vertical File (Rosenberg Library) (first quotation). Descriptions of the 1867 yellow fever epidemic may be found in the Amelia Barr Letters (Barker Texas History Center, Univ. of Texas at Austin); in Amelia Edith Barr, All the Days of My Life (New York: Appleton, 1913); and in Thomas Seargent to Annie M. Seargent, August 13, 1867, Thomas Seargent Letter (Rosenberg Library) (second quotation). Kathleen Davis, "Year of Crucifixion: Galveston, Texas," Texana, 8 (No. 2, 1970), 140-53; Peggy Hildreth, "The Howard Association of Galveston: The 1850s, Their Peak Years," East Texas Historical Journal, 17 (No. 2, 1979), 33-44. Mildred Cram, Old Seaport Towns of the South (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1917), 325 (third quotation).

4King, The Great South, 102.

5In 1880 the census office noted that the highest recorded summer temperature was 98 1/2 degrees; the lowest recorded 21 degrees fahrenheit. U.S. Census Office, Report on the Social Statistics of Cities. Part II. The Southern and Western States (Washington, D.C., 1887),318.

6King, The Great South, 102.


8Leslie C. Brand to Mother, May 11, 1899; Ralph, "A Recent Journey Through the West," 1064.


Success stories abound for Galveston entrepreneurs in the late nineteenth century. Clarke and Courts grew from a stationery and printing store in the postwar era to a million dollar annual income producer by the 1920s. Robert I. Cohen left his native England at age sixteen, entered Galveston in 1877, and began his own retail store in 1889. By 1915 it had become the largest in the city. Louis Block, founder of the Galveston Dry Goods Company, started his business in 1867, incorporated in 1893, and retired to New York a wealthy man. The company had three presidents before 1923, all of whom represent the elite of Galveston – Bertrand Adoue, Robert Weis, and W. L. Moody, Jr. Retail grocer Peter Gengler, son of German immigrant, began his business in 1851 as a peddler. By 1893 Peter Gengler Company occupied a handsome brick building on Market Street; in 1898 the company incorporated adding a bakery and a board of directors. Kaufman Meyers & Co., a furniture retailer began as an immigrant from Alsace-Lorraine; E. S. Levy and Co., clothing company, was founded in 1877 and incorporated in 1900. Galveston offered retail opportunities to those who were willing to work hard and who were clever enough to capitalize on the cotton-boom era:


17"Galveston and Deep Water," p. II (quotation). McComb, Galveston, 99, 108-109, 112. Lawrence H. Larsen, The Rise of the Urban South (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 140; and The Urban West at the End of the Frontier (Lawrence, Kan.: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978); 86-87. Larsen writes that the city with the greatest number of liquor saloons in the West was San Francisco with 8,694, but among southern cities Baltimore topped the list with 2,100. Whereas statistics are incomplete for the number of bordellos (they were illegal and therefore unlisted), New Orleans led among southern cities with 365;
Baltimore listed 300.

18 According to the 1900 census, of the general population including elites and blacks, 53 percent of Galvestonians were of native parentage; 47 percent were of foreign parentage; 17 percent were foreign born, and 22 percent were black. U.S. Census Office, Twelfth Census of the U. S. ...1900. Population, Pt. I (Washington, D.C., 1901), 643, 681.

19 Ralph, "A Recent Journey Through the West," 1064 (first quotation); Leslie C. Brand to Mother, May 11, 1899 (second quotation).

20 Richard Payne and Geoffrey Leavenworth, Historic Galveston (Houston: Herring Press, 1985), 20 (first quotation); John A. Downey to Ann Downey Davis, February 9, 1885, Samuel Smith Downey Papers (William R. Perkins Library, Duke University), thanks to Jane Turner Censer for this citation; McComb, Galveston, 106-107.


25 Doyle, "Urbanization and Southern Culture," 25. For a discussion of denominational


U. S. Census Office, Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, Part II: The Southern and Western States (Washington, 1887), 321; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States...1910. Vol. IX: Manufactures, 1909 (Washington, 1912), 1203. Galveston in 1906 held thirty-one Protestant churches with a total reported adult membership of 5,504. Of these, Southern Baptists comprised 534 (9.7 percent); Lutherans, 758 (13.7 percent), members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 681 (12.3 percent); members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 627 (11.3 percent); members of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 75 (1.3 percent); members of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., 400 (7.2 percent); and Episcopalians, 1,278 (23.1 percent). These figures exclude black churches and miscellaneous Protestant churches; Protestants above the age of 12 were enumerated. Membership in the Roman Catholic Church, which totaled 14,872, includes children above the age of nine. In Jewish congregations only heads of families were counted with no basis for an estimate of total membership. Galveston's synagogue membership included 220 heads of families. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1906, Pt. I: Summary and General Tables (Washington, D.C., 1910), 24.


31 Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden*, 112-18; Mrs. W. M. Baines, *A Story of Texas White Ribboners (WCTU)* (n.p., [1936]), 60-61; Grantham, *Southern Progressivism*, 202. Epstein in *The Politics of Domesticity*, 3, shows that the middling classes who were "neither wealthy or desperately poor" found in evangelicism and temperance "two of the central issues around which struggles over culture and ideology were conducted." Epstein offers a positive appraisal of the work of the WCTU in the Northeast, but she notes that "the WCTU stopped short of identification with feminism." (p. 147). Greater distance between suffragists and women prohibitionists is also found in the work of Jack S. Blocker, Jr., "Separate Paths: Suffragists and the Women's Temperance Crusade," *Signs*, 10 (Spring 1985), 460-76.
Chapter 2
Women's Culture and the Church

Draw us in the Spirit's Tether
For when humbly in Thy name
Two or three are met together
Thou art in the midst of them.

When Margaret Riddell McCullough entered the city of Galveston in spring of 1870 hers was a journey of despair. Widowed in January and left with nine children on a piece of ranchland in Caldwell County, Texas, south of Austin, she did the only thing she could do; she sought refuge in the island city at the hand of her brother, John Riddell. As with so many women of her generation, Margaret brought with her the fundamentals of a patriarchal Calvinist faith. From Pennsylvania Presbyterian stock, she and her family valued above all the teachings of the covenant and endeavored to live by them even in sorrow. Admonitions to keep the faith ran strong within her family; kinsman William McCullough freely offered her direction in the way of the Lord.

My dear Cousin, your loss and mine may seem hard but let us submit with Christian fortitude and be like our departed friend [Rev. McCullough], also ready. You can, if spared, bear testimony to your children that their father loved God and proclaimed the righteousness of Christ as the only hope of salvation, and it is hoped that they, even in the morning of life, will give their hearts to the Saviour. This charge God in his providence has placed upon you, and as He has promised to support the widow and fatherless, let me urge you to put your trust in Him, and He will never forsake you. . . . It will be your privilege and your duty to pray with and for your children, teaching them by precept and example to walk in the ways of holiness, and in all things to impress them with the thought that God's eye is upon them. . . . This is all we can do and if we are true and faithful, we shall have a crown of glory awaiting us when we shall come to stand before our Heavenly Father. 1
First things first; once Cousin William had defined Margaret's spiritual duties, he then concerned himself with her temporal well being. "I hope your brother will be faithful . . . and comfort and console you in your sore bereavement. Tell him for me that God will look to him to minister in your behalf, and that he would be unworthy of the name if he fails to assist you at all times and under all circumstances." 2

Heavy handed, laden with promises of heavenly rewards, tempered with family pride and guilt, William McCullough did his best to impart the cultural and religious values of his age. Although peppered with patriarchal language, there were also in William's words the hint of an acceptance of a larger role for women in leading children to a life of faith. He had firmly established that the most important element in life was the acceptance of Christ's saving grace, and nine souls were at stake. If indeed this mission — to bring a soul to salvation — took preeminence over every other aspect of life, then William had just informed Margaret that God had assigned her the most important task a person could fulfill.

These implications for women were enormous. As Mary Beth Norton has pointed out, the elders' stand on the importance of nurturing children in the faith made direct impact on the role, the responsibilities, and, ultimately, the elevation of women within the church. 3 Margaret McCullough lived up to these religious and familial expectations, and in the course of her forty-one years in Galveston found a much wider role for herself within the church than she or her cousin could have imagined in 1870. Fortunately, she had a safe harbor in a brother who willingly aided her and in a church that took her in as one of its own. Her late husband, the Reverend John McCullough, trained at Princeton Theological Seminary, had founded Galveston's First
Presbyterian Church in 1840, and though he was described by an early observer as "a young man with very moderate abilities," he, nonetheless, came to be revered by later congregants as a patriarch of the church. Margaret found a home and a church home for herself and her children; in return for this good fortune she set to work following the prescriptions of her faith.4

By 1878, reports to the Pennsylvania relatives stated that "Cousin Margaret is getting along very well." She was not the type of woman to remain dependent for long; her life experiences had supplied her with a fortitude common to many women who accompanied their husbands to the frontier. While looking after her nine children, who by 1880 ranged in age from ten to twenty-six, she kept (as many widows did) fifteen boarders at her home on the corner of 19th Street and Avenue M. Frugality probably prevented her from hiring any live-in servants, and, undoubtedly, hard work filled her days.5

Still, William's admonitions continued to follow her. "I imagine," he wrote, "her nine children all seated at table at once. ... I hope they are all healthy and good looking, and what is better, that they are all children of the covenant and growing wise in things belonging to their everlasting peace."7 Again, William placed the responsibility for their salvation squarely on Margaret's shoulders. "As a mother's teachings is the most potent agency in the training of children, I have no doubt she is making good use of her opportunity and pointing those whom God has committed to her care to the 'Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world'."6

Cousin William need not have worried. In addition to Margaret's teachings at home, the church rosters show all the McCullough children enrolled in Sunday School. Emma, the oldest, taught Sunday School in 1878,
a year in which 262 scholars passed through First Presbyterian's program. For several years Margaret and her daughter Lou spent Sunday afternoons giving Bible lessons to Chinese children. Although there are gaps in the Sunday School records, which means Margaret may have begun earlier, she is shown teaching Sunday School in 1895, the year her youngest child turned twenty-six. Not all of the McCullough children remained in Galveston, but for as long as they lived at home, they remained active in their church. At the very least, Margaret had been successful in "pointing [them] to the 'Lamb of God..." In return others within the church helped her raise her nine children, a task she chose to pursue without remarrying.

Perhaps out of a desire for female companionship or from her own sense of moral order, by 1883 Margaret had joined the church's Ladies Aid Society, an agency committed to relieving the poor of the city of their material distress. In 1890 she was elected president of this group, a position of honor and respect that she enjoyed until her death in 1911. Although Margaret began life in Galveston as a widow, dependent on male advice and succor, hers was not a life of dependency. As soon as she was able she became self supporting. When her children were nearly grown she began to associate with other women in weekly meetings where the misfortune of others was the chief concern. She spent the latter days of her life an independent woman, surrounded by the company of women. Margaret McCullough's biography provides but a glimpse of life for a single Galvestonian before the turn of the century, it hints at the existence of a women's culture in Galveston, and it illustrates the manner in which women wended their way through the two institutions most important to the lives of middle-class nineteenth-century women: the family and the church.
Family and home were, of course, central to the lives of southern women and of women who migrated to the South. Churches, on the other hand, provided a place of worship for the faithful, a haven for the stranger, and an essential enclave in society for families. As women's participation in church life increased, they brought to it attributes and characteristics of their domestic culture; consequently churches became more comfortable for women as they insisted upon programs complementary to their tastes, sensibilities, and needs. Sunday Schools and church youth leagues grew as greater emphasis was placed on children and families, an emphasis for which women were partly responsible. In the years between 1870 and 1920 churches changed from simple structures to elaborate complexes with churchyards, Sunday School rooms, nurseries, parlors, choir rooms, parsonages, offices, and meeting rooms. Women's groups within the church were most often the donors of these buildings, raising money through dinners, entertainments, bazaars, and fairs filled with goods that women had made. Churches began to resemble homes in more than just the term "church home" or "congregational family," terms dear to southerners even today. The domestication of southern churches was a direct consequence of the transference or extension of women's culture from the private home to the semi-public religious institution.

Much of what women brought to the church was reflective of woman's sphere, a sphere to which they had been consigned by societal convention, but out of which women had shaped a distinctive culture. Some of the most important aspects of women's culture that were transferred to churches
included their artistic tastes, their nurturing capacities, and their interest in and devotion to family and spiritual life. As women began to extend their special talents from home to church, the (mostly Protestant) churches shifted to accommodate the influx of females and the gifts peculiar to their sphere. Areas where women made significant modification in congregational life were found in church music, Sunday Schools, youth leagues, adult Bible classes, missions and outreach, fundraising, church architecture, interior decoration, memorial furnishings, and stained glass windows. Women even imparted their traditional affinity for family graveyards to church (and synagogue) cemeteries. As a result they considered church part of their domestic world, an institution distanced from home that accepted their ways, their values, their tastes, in short, their culture. The consequence was a transformation for churches before the turn of the century that was profound and lasting.

Domestication of the churches brought change for girls and women too, for the values and behavior conventionally attributed to men — competitiveness, striving for power, public recognition, and authority — were clearly present in congregations. Women's involvement in church life brought them into closer relationship with men outside the family, and with that came the opportunity for internalizing principles of so-called male assertiveness.

As churches encouraged their greater participation, some women found essential opportunities for broadening their lives to participate in the city's professional and volunteer activities. Young ladies and women who gained experience and training in church choirs or as organists often became equally active in city choruses or as professional musicians. Many women
missionaries, deaconesses, directors of church related schools and institutions, and adult Bible teachers undoubtedly first heard the call to Christian service in Sunday School or in youth missionary societies. The Sunday School system of education, which used a combination of hominess and competition, taught girls to assert themselves and to win. As single young women filled church classrooms as teachers, Sunday Schools provided practical experience for professional teaching careers.

Women who sought recognition within the church learned how to gain authority without challenging male concepts of woman's place. Women who had successfully planned money-raising drives to erect Sunday School classrooms and extensions to church buildings realized their talents in other areas—funding, planning, and constructing interdenominational or secular homes for the city's orphans and old women, replanting of the island after the 1900 hurricane, and creating and funding a Young Women's Christian Association building and program.

Concern for the preservation of the family plot and the church graveyard was the same concern that motivated women to form voluntary associations such as the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and the Women's Health Protective Association; their first projects were the preservation of heroes' graves and the decent burial of storm victims. If we continue to think of the church only as a constraining institution, as one that limited and proscribed women's roles, then we are missing the plain fact that for middle-class women like Margaret McCullough urban churches offered opportunities—in teaching, in women's societies, through music, or on committees—that allowed them to use their domestic and artistic skills or their education for broader service. Thus churches provided an opening, if women were willing
to take it, that would eventually lead them to wholly public roles.

The feminization of Protestant churches has been the subject of historical criticism for nearly fifteen years now. Much of the concern has been over the consequences for Protestant theology and liturgy. Ann Douglas argues forcefully for the capitulation of an intellectual theology when, with disestablishment of the churches, Protestant clergy allied with women to create sentimentality in religion. What is missing in her analysis is the concept that Protestant churches became more humane as a consequence of the involvement of women, more accepting of human needs, and more adaptive as programs and structures broadened to include families. Charitable outreach increased enormously in the nineteenth century as laywomen formed church-related benevolent societies. Sunday Schools, initially intended to bring literacy to working-class children, were staffed by women and broadened to include Bible study. Church structures expanded, largely through the fundraising of women, and became more inviting as church leaders attempted to accommodate to new programs and growing numbers of parishioners.9

What has been missing in this scholarship also is a description of the evolvement of a woman's world within the churches and its impact on the formation of a broader women's culture. In many respects Protestant churches supplied the nursery for the growing roles that upper- and middle-class women would play upon a public stage. We are not necessarily going to find in this nursery the seedlings of a feminist movement. In this respect, scholars who insist that "only through a study of women's culture can we assess nineteenth-century feminist consciousness and activity" will be disappointed in the knowledge that religious connections between
churchwomen and suffragists, for example, were tenuous at best. But if studying one of the institutions most important to women in the nineteenth century has merit to scholars, it is in understanding the way women shaped that institution to fit their values, transformed it according to their visions of piety, and added to it avenues for individual and collective activism; in short, it is in witnessing the creation of a women's world within an institution protected and managed by men. Then our understanding of how women shaped and molded a culture of their own outside the church, built upon many of the experiences developed within churches, will be enhanced.

If one accepts the idea that any attempt by women to act on their own values, or to transform an existing institution to reflect their standards, demonstrates resistance to male dominance (or, at least to male tastes and preferences), even devout churchwomen may be seen as challengers of patriarchal control. Although there may be few explicit connections between women's religious life and the emergence of feminism, in the end, our understanding of the origins of women's reform cannot continue without knowledge of women's unique culture, a part of which was created through the churches.

Historians of southern women, especially Anne Firor Scott, have always maintained that the roots of female evolution into public life began in church societies. Only recently, however, has the concept of a woman's culture, which is still in a developmental stage, been interwoven into the discussion.

Some historians writing about women's culture have chosen to follow a definition that depends upon notions of modernization. Jean E. Friedman, citing the works of Nancy Cott and Barbara Berg, describes women's culture as the sum of the interconnections between women who chose to associate
with other women of common interests. This was accomplished most frequently through women's associations in an urban setting where intercommunication was easier, family and kinship ties often were less binding, and through gender and sex role identification occasioned by the rise of separate spheres, itself the consequence of "a market system, which absorbed male labor and relegated women to household work...." 12

In other words, the rise of a women's culture depended upon forces of modernization that first assigned women to a separate sphere, which, in turn, led to the discovery among women of common gender-related interests and sisterhood. Because of these interests, shared female experiences, and the desire to act upon their newly found resources, women created their own associations, hence their own culture. Such associations, historians have explained, comprise the whole of a separate women's culture. 13

If historians define women's culture as arising only after the emergence of autonomous women's organizations, then they find themselves in the uncomfortable position of proclaiming the absence of women's culture in the South before such associations appeared. For some communities this could be as late as the 1870s. 14 Was there a woman's culture in the South before the advent of women's associations? That depends on how one defines women's culture. Through Suzanne Lebsock's study of the free women of Petersburg, Virginia, we have a much clearer understanding of an antebellum society that was not only antithetical to both abolition and women's political rights but that also saw the formation of few autonomous women's societies. Nonetheless, Lebsock describes a women's culture. Lebsock carefully chooses to define the parameters of her discussion of women's culture to a "distinctive women's value system" or "attitudes,
values, and some of the behavior that grew out of those attitudes and
values.15 According to Lebsock, women in this society valued
personalism, "a tendency to respond to the particular needs and merits of
individuals;" they were "more concerned with economic security" and with
"the needs and interests of other women," were more willing to contribute
to charity, and were more spiritual than men.16 The culture that Lebsock
portrays is basically a private one found among individual women and that
manifested itself publicly as group behavior when women first banded
together in 1813 to form a girls' orphanage. Fortunately, Lebsock sees in the
privitized lives of women the basis for a women's culture and does not
restrain that culture to the boundaries of voluntary associations. Although
she considers her definition of women's culture a limited one, it is actually
broader in anthropological terms than those of historians who base their
concept of culture on membership in voluntary associations.17

Why is it important to establish the analytic framework of a broader
women's culture, particularly in this study, which will deal exclusively with
postbellum women's associations? Because in each organization presented
here there will be seen threads of the basic, anthropological, gender-defined
women's culture. We cannot begin to understand why women made the
choices they did within their own autonomous organizations, or even why
they formed their associations, until we know the roots of their culture. For
this reason, acceptance of a concept of culture that includes values, behavior,
tastes, symbols, forms, and individual actions of women as a broader
classification will help in the interpretation and analysis of women's
organizations including protofeminist groups.18

The need to include a larger analytical framework for a women's
culture is especially important for the study of southern women. It would be convenient to assume that the study of an American women's culture would suffice for the nation as a whole. The South, however, with its own regional distinctiveness (and with many variations within the region) gave rise to a "culture" of its own. Women in the South, particularly in rural and mountain areas, held on to discrete patterns of life, some of which included a unique language as well as regional values regarding race relations, class structure, and gender differences. Interweaving the traits of the unique regional culture of the South with the culture of southern women is an entirely new field of scholarship, one that holds great promise for the further understanding of southern women.19

Church life is one aspect of southern culture that found ready acceptance among southern women. From the origins of the Great Revival to the creation of separate southern denominations, women flocked to churches in greater numbers than did men. 20 And in the years after the Civil War southern churches continued to grow, with women dominating the membership. In Galveston, Protestant church membership climbed from 4,000 communicants in 1890 to 12,000 in 1916. In 1906 Protestant women outnumbered men 3,200 to 2,000.21 Even with their disproportionate majorities, women still were offered very few avenues for leadership on a par with men. Denied admission to the pastorate, the diaconate, the vestry, or the boards of elders and stewards, women appear only occasionally in church minutes as "workers."

The beauty, sanctity, and fellowship of church life drew women within the Spirit's tether. The roles women played in churches -- as choir members and directors, organists, Sunday School teachers, philanthropists, and
members of those committees whose requirements fit well with the responsibilities of the women's sphere — comprise visible evidence not only of their piety but also of the growing presence of their culture within churches. Even more valuable to their independence and autonomy were women's church societies that were free of male dominance. 22 The emergence of women's cultural talents from home to church to the larger community is a theme that will be played throughout this chapter, and all of the areas that women filled within church life will be discussed in turn—church music, memorials, cemeteries, Sunday School teaching, independent Bible classes, and women's societies.

Church Music

For women, the performance of sacred music, appointment to parish choir directorships, and service on church music committees suggested a public acceptance of women's cultural and artistic talents. When women joined church choirs, worship was enhanced whether the service was a simple Baptist "divine worship" or an elaborate Episcopal mass. Not long after Martha Poole began attending Galveston's First Baptist Church in 1861 she was asked by the "leading ladies" to help create a choir. "Mrs. Guy Bryan asked me to help her form a choir; she to play the reed organ, I to sing soprano, and her German cook, alto. We had no bass, no tenor; the men all sang soprano. But we sang with hearts as well as voices, and so worshipped until the fall of [Fort] Sumpter." Because music was central to her life and since she "had been trained vocally, and loved to sing," she joined the Methodist choir while the Baptist church remained closed during the Civil War.23

One of the ideals of an educated young lady of the upper and middle
classes in the nineteenth century was the development of musical talents, principally piano playing and singing. Parlor skills long had entertained, amused, even impressed guests and suitors. In some cases these little performances served as auditions to the larger role of properly educated wife and mother. Although usually seen by modern-day historians as the ultimate trivialization of women's life within her "sphere," the development of musical talent was, in fact, an endeavor that women took seriously as their means of adding refinement to the home. It is only seen as trivial in its confinement to the parlor. Musical gifts upon the larger stage of life, in the theater or in worship services, were seldom mocked or trivialized by contemporaries. Small wonder that women of great talent sought the stage, while those of more modest gifts found fulfillment in the artful enhancement of worship.

By the 1880s in Galveston churches were offering women the chance to perform musically challenging pieces and to display their talents before public audiences. It no longer seemed strange to see an Episcopal choirloft, for example, filled with women and men singing the kyrie and the gloria in excelsis. Appreciation was spread out upon the pages of the Galveston Daily News in 1884 when it trumpeted:

The morning service was an artistic model of sacred music. Mrs. [Bertrand] Adoue, Mrs. [George] Sealy have been rarely heard to sing with the spirit of praise so perfectly realized as they did yesterday. With the rich contraltos of Mrs. [Walter]Ladd and Mrs. [John F.] Roeck... the service was uplifting to the realm of true art. When it is known that the choir is entirely a voluntary one, no one receiving a penny for the services rendered; or the contrary, sacrificing much to produce such results... one can but congratulate the congregation of Trinity Church, and
the city, in having a local prize wholly their own. 24

Choir directors continued to train women (and men) without cost to choir members. The exchange was a beneficial one to girls who might not have been able to afford private lessons and to wealthy ladies who needed a venue for their trained voices. The church, on the other hand, was the greater beneficiary, as more beautiful worship services created by a trained choir brought a dignity and elegance that Galvestonians seemed to enjoy. The church with the best choir was more likely to attract members; more members meant more tithes and a more generous church budget. A more generous budget could include a salary for an organist or choir director, positions that were sometimes filled by women.

The benefits for women did not end there. Choir members and soloists often took their church-trained gifts to the community, usually under the auspices of separate women's choirs, glee clubs, and ensembles. At a time when the only music heard was that performed live, the pleasure gained in hearing them sing was no small aesthetic contribution to the city. And, as so often occurred when women found a ready audience for their talents, they learned they could earn a profit either to further their group's musical ambitions or to benefit a cause. The trade-off for the very talented woman was exposure in church to a critical audience and a chance to further a career in music. Just how many Galveston women made musical debuts before their congregations cannot be determined, but one young talent, Etheldreda Aves, daughter of the rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, sang first to her father's parish congregation before signing a contract with the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York where she sang the lead roles in "Carmen" and "Aida." 25
Of course, the church's role in discovering and using musical talent was not unique to women. As Suzanne Lebsock might say, men had it better than women when it came to finding musical opportunities in the church. A boys' choir was organized that first performed at Trinity Episcopal in December 1878, but there was no equivalent girls' choir. Men singers, composers, and conductors found it easier to advance their musical careers in the workplace through churches than did women. When choosing musical leadership for the parish, the vestry of Trinity Episcopal Church nine times out of ten hired a male organist and choir director. 

In an age when conducting (and composing) was a field dominated by men, women had very few avenues through which to channel their talents. Often fine female conducting talent was first nurtured in church choirs; later, because their conducting talents were confined to working with all-female adult choirs, such women also succeeded in directing women's city choruses. Mary F. Beers, also a member of Trinity Episcopal Church, found that by exchanging her choir robe for the leadership of the Galveston Girls' Musical Club, she substantially advanced her credits in the community. Such was also the case for Louise Fowler Parker, who acted as music director of the Ladies' Musical Club of Galveston, one of the oldest performing groups in the city, while at the same time serving as music director and choir director of Trinity Episcopal Church. During her tenure at Trinity the music "reached the peak of excellence and the sacred concerts were eagerly attended by the music lovers of the city." 

Louise Parker, Trinity's first woman choir director, was clearly an exception to the long line of men directors hired by the vestry. While she chose a career as a professional musician, she also remained active in the
women's cultural life of Galveston—her affiliations extended to the
Wednesday Club, the city's most prestigious literary club—until the birth of
her son in 1904. Then she dropped her membership in the Wednesday Club
but continued as director of both choirs and as a private voice teacher. Her
actions implied a conscious choice concerning her professional life, for given
her family's position she did not have to work. On one side, her brother,
Charles Fowler, occupied officerships in no fewer than five city civic and
commercial enterprises and eleven philanthropic, social, and political
associations, in addition to his membership on the vestry. On the other side
was her older sister, Mary Fowler Bornefeld, an activist in the women's
cultural and literary world, whose interest in woman suffrage ultimately led
her to become the first president of the Galveston Equal Suffrage
Association.29 Louise Fowler Parker chose to remain true to her musical
talents, preferring salaried employment as Trinity's choir director and
voluntary directorship of the Ladies' Musical Club to membership in a
women's literary club.30 Her affiliation gives us some clue about the priorities
that she set for herself and the value she placed on using her talents.
Churches served as important conduits for women whose music would
eventually fill more than just the sanctuary.

Louise Parker was also the beneficiary of a network of women within
the church who supported her role as choir director and helped her win that
position. Her employment began at a time when laywomen were gaining
access to parish and vestry committees, a rare moment at Trinity before 1920.
At the same time, women had founded several critically acclaimed choirs in
Galveston, where their performances gave them public visibility. Talented
voices sang not only in Trinity's choir but also in the Girls' Musical Club and
the Ladies' Musical Association; many Trinity members were officers of these organizations and had proved their capacity to prepare and manage from one to four concerts a year, bring in professional talent from New York and Europe, and preside over a virtual city renaissance of choral music in the years between 1894 and 1920. Even though women's talents were displayed publicly, churchmen were slow to appoint women to positions of authority on music committees equal to their own. So in 1901, fifteen years after the founding of the first women's city chorus, Episcopal Rector C. M. Beckwith wrote to Mrs. Thomas J. Groce, also president of the Ladies' Musical Association, and Mrs. George Sealy, Kate Ebbert, Horace Nugent, and John Sealy that he had appointed them a committee "to take in charge all matters connected with the music of Trinity Church." The rector hoped they would "accept the responsibility as a privilege." "The choice of the Organist, subject to the salary allowed by the Vestry, shall be yours...." he counseled. Nine years later some of these same members were appointed to a vestry music committee comprised of four men and four women, one of the few vestry committees on which women were allowed to serve. In the years between 1904 and 1910, when Louise Parker began work as Trinity's first woman choir director, women also served on the vestry music committee. Clearly, the admission of women to the rector's and the vestry's music committees had been a significant factor in her employment.

Music belongs exclusively to neither a man's sphere nor a woman's sphere, but in Galveston at the turn of the century musical talent and musical performance were considered an important component of women's culture. Women with musical abilities and an interest in its performance made their talents available to the church, and choir leaders responded by training both
female and male voices for sophisticated enhancement of worship. The exchange of talent from church to community commenced when women formed musical organizations, brought concerts to the public, and kept alive interest in musical achievement. Then realizing women's administrative and professional talents, churchmen opened their committees to women artists, and gave women like Louise Parker space for development as professional musicians. The musical talents of women, long confined to family settings, became visible first through sacred service and later through women's choral organizations – an extension of their cultural gifts from home to church to community.

Memorials

As a few women in the 1880s and 1890s in Galveston began to inherit wealth from their successful merchant husbands, they sought ways, just as male philanthropists did, to benefit society with memorials and bequests. Rarely did they leave gifts to the city as men did in the form of outdoor monuments, drinking fountains, hospitals, or schools. Instead, especially in the decades before 1900, they spread their gifts and bequests throughout the island, some to women's charities but most to the churches and synagogues. In the years between 1880 and 1910 Protestant church sanctuaries in Galveston underwent dramatic changes from simple wooden structures to architect designed stone and brick edifices. Contractors, architects, and masons may have put the buildings in place, but they did not create the final touches; women did this by defining and delineating interior space on their own terms to meet their tastes and sensibilities. The combination of inherited wealth by women and the reconstruction and refurbishing of the island churches
combined to allow women to create a visual women's world within the city's churches.

Even though Suzanne Lebsock cheerfully announced that "Woman's sphere' was never a fixed space," the wealthier ladies of Galveston, who wanted to be remembered for their devotion to the church (if not for their piety), tried, indeed, to fix a place for women within and upon the church walls. Why individual women of means should choose to leave gifts to the church and not to the city is an interesting question. Possibly the boundaries of male and female spheres were as tightly drawn in the symbolic sense as they were in the areas of politics, economics, and the law. Places where women had virtually no roles to play as leaders would have been inappropriate loci for their endowments. By contrast churches presented an altogether suitable site for the gifts of individual women. Here they taught Sunday School, kept the cemeteries in repair, sang in choirs, played the organ, began mission schools that eventually became new churches, refurbished and financed the church structure, and most important, established their own societies and relief associations of benefit to themselves as leaders and to other women as supplicants. Besides the home, where else had women and their values been so liberally accepted? As the "angel in the home," she held a certain moral influence over the one institution to which she was "divinely suited." As the angel in the church parlor, she commanded a similar degree of respect and honor. In the continuing attempt to expand women's realm beyond their own houses, where their tastes and preferences were in evidence, women found in churches a repository for the symbols of their peculiar culture.

Testaments to this fact can be seen in church interiors via plaques, windows, furnishings, even whole structures, dedicated to the glory of God but
given in memory of women or in memory of those whom women loved. In the newly built First Methodist Church of 1901, eight of the fourteen Gothic lead glass memorial windows and the baptismal font, were given in memory of the "consecrated Christian" women who had served the church. One sanctuary window depicting a nurturing Christ with his lambs, was given to the church in memory of Etta Toothaker, who had been secretary of the Texas Conference of the Epworth Leagues but who had perished in the 1900 storm. Five of the ten stained glass windows of the First Presbyterian Church were donated as memorials to women. The pipe organ, a $7,000 gift from Sarah P. Ball, surrounded the communion table, chairs, and offering plates. These sacred adornments were carved with religious symbols from the New Testament in 1894 by Virginia Hutches Austin, wife of a Presbyterian minister, and sister-in-law to Ida Austin. Among the carvings were lillies, representing the resurrection; a loaf and a cup from the last supper; a crown of thorns; and a descending dove symbolic of the Holy Spirit. While the symbols represent events in the life of Christ, they are also illustrative of the domestic, sacrificing role of women. 34

In Trinity Episcopal Church's treasury of stained glass windows, nine of the sixteen memorialize women or girls who either served the church or who died young. The 1886 window in memory of Bessie Haden shows an angel serenading two saints below with a harp. Given by her grandmother, the memorial creates for the modern viewer a poignant reminder of the vulnerability of life in the nineteenth century, for while Bishop Alexander Gregg was confirming the fifteen-year-old girl, she passed away. Angels are in evidence in two other windows memorializing women, and Mary and the Christ child are represented in three more. The remaining windows in
memory of women show not only the three women at the tomb but also Jesus as a youth teaching in the synagogue, as the Good Shepherd, and teaching the little children -- all reminders of the self-denying, nurturing, encouraging, comforting Jesus, which were traits most often ascribed to and valued in women.

Few ladies had the means to spend sizable donations in remembrance of their loved ones, yet eleven of the sixteen stained glass windows in Trinity Episcopal Church were given by women consecrating the memory of husbands, daughters, parents, sisters, brothers, grandchildren, and grandparents. Furthermore, nearly three-fourths of the sanctuary furnishings and ornaments were presented by women or were presented by men in memory of women or female children. As family and close female friendships were considered important to women's culture, women, more than men, honored family and friends in the personal yet public environment of their churches. The gifts were, for the most part, objects that contributed to the beauty of the interior space -- portraits, candlesticks and candelabra, desks, lecterns, prayer books, Bible altars and altar hangings, altar vases, kneeling benches, and baptismal shells. Even the altar, the focal point of the ritual of the eucharist, was furnished in memory of Colonel and Mrs. William Stafford by their daughter Margaret. By the mid-twentieth century, when the window installation was completed, Trinity's sanctuary had been transformed with the artistic material evidence of women's participation in the church and with the visual reminders of a woman's culture memorialized in windows, furniture, and sacred adornments.35

Permanent memorials served another purpose, however--compensation. All the visual reminders of women's tastes, values, and
characteristics in the church lent symbolic but not actual power to women. In an institution where women were not allowed to preach, the windows spoke for them, compensating for their powerlessness. Dispensing with the harsh patriarchal attitudes of the Old Testament in favor of the liberating message of equality in Christ, the images upon the walls of the church translated the gospel into language understood by women. We have no record of what the men thought, other than the fact that they contributed to the visual effect. Perhaps, given the inegalitarian position of women in an institution based on the premise of spiritual equality, men encouraged all manner of symbolic grandisement for women. Better to let women adorn the walls in symbolic immurement than to allow them positions of real power on boards of vestry, stewards, elders, or deacons. Public, visible, recognition within the house of God solemnized and sanctified the great gifts of service, stewardship, and example that women had imparted without threatening male leadership.

Some might argue that the windows and sanctuary furnishings given in memory of loved ones represent yet another example of the Victorian female's fascination with death and conclude that women were no longer concerned with this world. On the other hand, gifts to the church in the form of memorials from individuals or families represent an all too worldly perspective — the display of privilege and wealth. There are elements of truth in each. Important to both perspectives is the notion that women of means had few arenas within the community tastefully but prominently to display evidences of their particular interpretation of religious life based on the personal values peculiar to a woman's culture. Men, by contrast, felt no such limitations.

Take, as a perfect example of the contrast between the giving of men and
women, the case of Henry and Mollie Rosenberg. Their story illustrates not only the power of money but also the manner in which members of the same family divided their gifts along gender lines.

Henry Rosenberg (1824-1893), born the son of a shoemaker in Bilten, Switzerland, came in 1843 to the primitive but potentially prosperous port of Galveston, where he joined another Swiss emigre in a dry goods business. In Horatio Alger fashion Henry advanced from clerk at eight dollars a month to owner of the store in a matter of three years. Diversifying his profits, he bought lots in the commercial section of Galveston, rented one to a young woman who wanted to open a millinery shop, found her charming, and in 1851 married her. Letitia Cooper Rosenberg became a diaphanous, shadowy figure in Henry's life; for more than twenty years she remained an invalid cared for by a young friend of the family, Mollie Macgill. By 1859 Henry's dry goods business was the largest in Texas. 36

Henry's vigor contrasted sharply with his wife's pallor. Serving as president of the Board of Harbor Improvements and director of the Galveston Wharf Company, he was in a prime position to move into railroading, banking, and politics. As the city had prospered him, so he returned the favor - first in 1882 to his church, Trinity Episcopal, with a gift of $10,000 to complete the funding begun by the Ladies Parochial Society for the construction of a chapel in memory of the church's first rector, Rev. Benjamin Eaton. Then in 1889 he gave $75,000 to the Board of School Trustees for an elementary school, which they named after him. 37

In 1888 Letitia died and the following year Henry married the no-longer-young Mollie Macgill. They enjoyed married life together for less than four years; Henry Rosenberg died in 1893. Although he had already donated funds
for the chapel and the school, the city was overwhelmed by the generosity found in the will. He bequeathed to Galveston $645,000, two-thirds of his entire estate. This legacy funded the charitable works of the Ladies Aid Society of the First Lutheran Church, the creation of a seventy-four-foot monument to the heroes of the Texas Revolution, seventeen city drinking fountains for "man and beast," and the erection of five structures — the Galveston Orphan's Home, the Old Woman's Home (renamed the Letitia Rosenberg Home for Women), the YMCA building, the Rosenberg Library, and, for our story, Grace Episcopal Church. Rosenberg's will read, "I desire to express in practical form my affection for the city of my adoption and for the people among whom I have lived for so many years...." He might just as well have stated that he wanted the bulk of his money to be invested in brick, stone, and concrete, for while the intent of his will cared for the lives of strangers, the substance of it demonstrably, overwhelmingly favored public buildings.

Mollie Macgill Rosenberg, by contrast, chose to use her legacy to embellish, decorate, and furnish the interior of Grace Episcopal, the little church that Henry Rosenberg's money had built. Rather than bestow her legacy upon the public domain, or upon the city that fostered her husband's success, she chose to create a lavish, intimate memorial, an internal gift of beauty and adornment, and a fitting, even feminine, embellishment to the white stone Gothic structure. Working with Silas McBee of New York, Mrs. Rosenberg commissioned him to install a hand-carved solid oak altar and reredos from Switzerland, her husband's native country. Described as "probably the richest that has ever been put into any church in the South," the Gothic-style reredos features a bronze centerpiece depicting the birth of Christ and above it Christ on the cross. Covering the reredos is a canopy that casts a
shadow on the picture of His suffering and humiliation. The brass plate at one end of the altar dedicates the furnishings to Henry Rosenberg; lest one forget the benefactress, a plate at the other end reads: "This altar and reredos are erected by Mollie R. Macgill Rosenberg, Anno Domini, 1895." 39

Mollie Rosenberg used Grace Church as a repository for the memorialization of the personal -- for her husband, her mother and father, her brother and sisters, Henry's mother and father, Letitia Rosenberg, and her friends-- but she used it to redeem women from their inferior position within church teachings as well.40 The three windows above the altar, given in memory of Mollie's father and two sisters, depict the three women at the tomb receiving from an angel the first news of Christ's resurrection. In the synoptic gospels there are but two supremely important scenes for the elevation of women: the magnification of Mary and the announcement of the resurrection to the women at the tomb. Mary's magnification was a singular event for a specially annointed woman. The choosing of Mary to be the mother of God was unique, impossible of being duplicated. 41 The gospels tell us Mary proclaimed her own apotheosis by announcing that all generations would call her blessed.

The women at the tomb did not share Mary's sacred, singular destiny. By contrast, the gospel of Luke portrays a group of ordinary women -- at least three, possibly more -- performing a domestic function, the preparation of the body with spices and ointments. At the moment they were about to commence their work, they experienced a special divine message from God, the first news of Christ's resurrection. While Mary would be forever blessed, the women at the tomb were disavowed of their knowledge of Christ's return by the disciples. In symbolic terms churchwomen were better able to identify with Christ's
followers, who in the performance of their gender-based duties had received a particular, albeit private, dispensation from God but who were denied credibility by men. Analogously, nineteenth-century women, who felt called by God to serve Him as the women at the tomb had done, were denied full parity of discipleship by men in the church. For women to see their circumstances reflected through the magnificence of stained glass, to understand that men might relegate them to inferior positions while God upheld them with a special call, no doubt provided them a redeeming and salvific satisfaction. What makes the choice of this window by Mollie Rosenberg even more demonstrative of her special intention to glorify faithful women was the fact that in most Episcopal churches the windows above the altar were reserved for the depiction of the celebration of the holy eucharist—usually the last supper—a communion of men and a closed male preserve that denied even symbolic representation to women. Through the scenes of the three women at the tomb, faithful women were reminded of their special importance in the body of Christ while being denied inclusion in the body politic.

The large window on the south side of the church, a memorial to Henry Rosenberg's parents, presents two scenes: first, a man shielding a youth, under which the inscription reads, "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," and, second, Phoebe distributing bread to the hungry, "full of good works and alms, deeds which she did." Clearly these two windows illustrate the lives of Henry and Mollie Rosenberg. Henry had served on the Board of Trustees for the Galveston Orphans' Home and had bequeathed funds in his will to build the orphans' home and the Letitia Rosenberg Home for Women. Mollie, who served as past president of the Grace Episcopal Ladies Aid Society,
had also sat on the Board of Lady Managers of the Galveston Orphans' Home and the Rosenberg Home for Women. 43 Although Mollie Rosenberg was the principal donor of the windows, carpeting, altar, and most of the church furnishings at the time of its dedication in 1895, other donors included two women who wished to memorialize loved ones. The only gifts not given solely by women were the rose window depicting Christ given in memory of Sarah Pearson by her friends, and the pipe organ donated by the congregation in memory of its benefactor Henry Rosenberg.

The opening of Grace Episcopal Church was a greatly anticipated event; the city felt itself enriched by the infusion of precious artwork and handcrafted religious objects. Silas McBee, creator of the church windows, spoke at length about the use of real materials and the honesty this represented in the church of Christ. "The bronze is bronze, the oak is oak, the carving is carving, the stone is stone, the stained glass windows are stained glass, the pine is pine — everything shows itself to be what it absolutely is." Lost in the eloquent description of materials and design was one important fact: Mollie Rosenberg had consciously chosen to depict in the most prominent places scenes from the New Testament that elevated women. If ever there should be a question of what a church would look like if furnished only by women, Grace Episcopal Church is a stunning example. 44

Cemeteries

Women have long been guardians and caretakers of our cultural traditions. In all of the important rituals surrounding the great events of life — birth, marriage, death — family and religion have been brought together to affirm, to celebrate, and to eulogize. As Mary S. Donovan has pointed out,
religious services attending these events in the antebellum period and into the late nineteenth century in the South were held in homes. Baptisms, weddings, and funerals by custom were the "special province of women" although presided over by male clergy. By destiny and biology women are linked in every case to birth and marriage and are therefore inextricable to the preservation of its rituals. But religious ceremonies attending death deny women equal participation with men—even in the death of a woman. In the hundreds of obituaries collected for this study, not one woman was appointed pallbearer or honorary pallbearer. The weight of the coffin prevented them from assuming this duty, one surmises. A three-hundred pound load divided among eight women would require each to carry about thirty-seven pounds, not an impossible task for a woman accustomed to lifting a two-year-old child, but not a ladylike one either. Given the fact that women had equal or stellar roles in the other two "events" of life, it seems odd that lifting a coffin from platform to hearse should prove to be the barrier to granting women equal honor in life's last ritual.

In the nineteenth century pallbearing was indeed an honor; it signified trust and friendship. Pallbearers' names were printed in the newspapers through the deceased's obituary. Depending on who that was, status and stature could be gained by appointment to the deceased's funeral entourage. Fraternal orders often conducted funeral ceremonies with a full cast of members decorated with the symbols of their order. The Masons were especially in evidence at Galveston funerals, as were other fraternal orders, immigrant protective societies, and labor unions. The Galveston Screwmen's Benevolent Association, a labor group vital to the transport of cotton, not only paid funeral expenses of deceased members but also ruled that all members
attend; absences were fined one dollar, drunkenness and disorderly behavior were fined ten dollars by the union.46 These were male ceremonies; women might watch, they might in some cases have control over who served as pallbearers, but they were not invited to become public participants.47

Women accepted this, it seems, and found other ways collectively to solemnize and mark the passage of life to death. Informally and often in family units women took on the care and maintenance of individual gravesites and family plots.48 As towns grew, church and synagogue cemeteries replaced private family gravesites. Because grave tending was seen as women's responsibility, and since churches and synagogues offered proper burial grounds, congregational graveyards then came under the care of women members, who served at first not in any official capacity but as interested guardians, cajolers of the church sexton, and later as cemetery committee members. Tending graves was not as prestigious a calling as pallbearing, but it fit in well with female traditions of honoring the family and caring for those within the family circle; it also meshed with the increasing domestication of church structure, function, and membership.

Because cemetery maintenance brought to religious institutions one more aspect of their own culture, women often left provision in their wills for the founding or upkeep of a synagogue or church cemetery. The first evidence of such a gift came in the will of Rosanna Dyer Osterman. The Ostermans, of German-Jewish background, had emigrated to Galveston from in 1838 when the city was still unincorporated. A merchant of considerable skill, Joseph Osterman retired four years later a wealthy man. His death by accidental guncharge in 1861 left Rosanna with a sizable fortune. Her life had been taken up with routine domestic tasks, in nursing yellow fever victims in the great
epidemics that periodically scourged Galveston, and in nursing both Union and Confederate soldiers during the Civil War. Devoted to her faith as well as to the city of her adoption, she longed for the establishment in Galveston of a synagogue, regular worship services, a Hebrew benevolent society, education for poor Jewish children, a home for orphans, and, among other things, a Hebrew cemetery. After her own tragic and accidental death in 1866, her will provided money for these enterprises, including $1,000 for the expansion and upkeep of the Galveston Hebrew Cemetery. Her bequest was exceedingly timely, for, unfortunately, the worst yellow fever epidemic to plague Galveston hit in the summer of 1867, lasted five months, and carried away at least forty Jews. The original Hebrew cemetery proved too small to accommodate all of their burial needs. The following year, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, with Osterman funds, purchased a larger tract of land at Avenue K and 43rd Street and established the Hebrew Rest Cemetery. 49

Although no evidence remains to show that Christian women prepared the dead for burial, Jewish records indicate that the women of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, a synagogue organization that had its beginnings in 1868, continued to wash and anoint the dead for interment until the establishment of Jewish mortuaries. Functions common to the home and family became necessarily functions of the synagogue when religious services were invoked to sanctify important life events.50

The Episcopal cemetery, in contrast to the Hebrew, had its origins in 1844 without the direct involvement of women. Benjamin Eaton, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, accepted a donation from the Galveston City Company of a city block for the purposes of establishing a church cemetery, which was desperately needed. Prior to that time bodies had been covered over in the
sand hills south of the city. That first primitive cemetery as described by Francis Sheridan, merged into "a swamp & some of the graves in consequence [were] filled with & destroyed by water;' he also witnessed "several large Turkey Buzzards in close consultation round a grave that had just fallen in."51

Although Trinity Episcopal was fortunate in receiving its own burial space, caring for cemeteries was not a priority among churchmen, who, busy with the commerce of life, had little time to devote to the maintenance of last resting places. The Episcopal ladies admitted as much when they petitioned the vestry in 1878 for permission to form a "standing committee" to assume the care of Trinity's church cemetery. "We know that gentlemen have other duties to perform that their vocations do not admit of their devoting valuable time to the details of such affairs. While we ladies can spare the time and delight in being of some use in our small way, a speedy and favorable reply will much oblige."52

Vestry minutes indicate how appallingly churchmen kept up the graveyard; women acted out of a sense of urgency as storms and erosion in Galveston continually threatened the integrity of graves. The women who approached the vestry had already solicited $880 worth of subscriptions "for the purpose of improving the condition of the Episcopal Cemetery" and were asking that the vestry's cemetery committee cooperate with their standing committee. Although the petition sounded deferential, the women firmly stated that they would need money from the Cemetery Fund (which was granted) and cooperation from the cemetery committee to proceed "with the improvements we contemplate." Thus two cemetery committees within the church, an official one formed by the vestry and a voluntary one comprised of laywomen, worked together, the women taking on the greater share of
responsibility but without authority to act on their own. Vestryman W. H. Nichols was ardent in his praise of the "ladies," to whom "all honor is due" and who "accomplished in one week what your committee had hardly hoped to under twelve months...." Honor rather than power rewarded women workers. The dual committee system continued to function until 1884 when apparently the women's committee dissolved. The vestry, taking note that repairs were needed again, addressed the Sisterhood "asking their cooperation with the cemetery committee in having the cemetery kept in better condition." The women, this time in a much firmer organization, agreed to help with the maintenance of all church property. The vestrymen acted as though they were discovering the resources of an organized women's body anew and stated in 1886 that the treasury showed "a fair surplus owing principally to the good work of the Guild which came nobly to our relief at an opportune moment, and bids fair to prove a valuable acquisition to the board of managers in the near future." After the devastating storm of 1900, all church properties needed repairs; it took nearly one year for a new women's cemetery society to raise funds necessary to repair the cemetery, and another year before the work costing $768 was completed. By then women made the decision with the vestry's approval to select a sexton. Again in 1904 the ladies' cemetery association raised $745 by subscription to care for the cemetery; consequently the vestry granted "full power to act in the premises." Women all along had sought greater control over cemetery affairs. Their chance came briefly in 1911 when the vestry decided to invest "the management and control of the cemetery in Trinity Church Cemetery Association" headed by Mrs. Agnes F. Erhard, longtime member of Trinity, and two other Trinity women; five members of the vestry
served as ex-officio members. Cemeteries across the nation, however, were adopting "Forest Lawn" type perpetual-care arrangements that would alleviate volunteer efforts and maximize efficiency under an orderly business arrangement. The adoption of this concept by Trinity Episcopal Church served to move women out of the maintenance and control of cemetery upkeep, thus eliminating graveyard care from their cultural world within the church. 55

As early as 1907 bequests began to accumulate for the perpetual care fund; the first came from a woman, and over a period of forty-two years, twelve out of thirteen donors to the fund were women who gave a total of $8450 (the fund eventually reached $48,000 through the sale of lots). 56 Because the vestry never entirely relinquished its right to govern the cemetery, in 1913 it voted to issue perpetual care contracts "for the care of graves in the cemetery." The following year the Cemetery Fund was created from the sale of lots, which eliminated the need for fundraising to care for the cemetery. It seems that in the years before 1914 the sale of cemetery lots went directly into the parish treasury to be used for general parish expenses. This necessitated frequent appeals to the ladies' cemetery society to raise funds to keep the grounds in repair. Fortunately for the women, their role as fundraisers kept them active in the decisions regarding cemetery affairs. While they controlled the funds, they gradually gained more and more leverage in dealing with the vestry over graveyard concerns; eventually three women were appointed to head the Cemetery Association. But in 1914 when the vestry decided to use perpetual care contracts, the sale of lots, and bequests from individuals to form a cemetery fund, the women were no longer needed to raise money and they lost their advantage. After 1914 all power over cemetery matters was given to the vestry
cemetery committee and women were no longer consulted or asked to share in its maintenance.57

This example of cooperation with women followed by a closing off of their participation under the aegis of efficiency is a familiar tale to students of women's history. The vestry cemetery committee, like all other vestry committees (music was the one exception in the years before 1920), never appointed laywomen from the parish to its ranks. Although women clearly held a profound traditional and cultural interest in the affairs of the cemetery, perhaps the fact that the vestry controlled the ownership of church cemetery property made committee work in the eyes of its male guardians unsuitable legal terrain for women to traverse. When laywomen maintained their own separate cemetery association, one that they themselves insisted on forming as early as 1878, the vestry was more or less coerced into cooperating with them. As the ladies' fundraising became an everpresent necessity, vestrymen were obliged to consider them unequal partners. But as so often happened to women once the question of monetary upkeep was taken out of their hands, their involvement, even with its cultural heritage, was diminished and their efforts subsumed under a so-called integrated professional system. Although the women's sphere equivalent of a cemetery society was allowed to expire, there was no future for women in the integrated system in the 1920s. Sexism still prevented participation by women in affairs that had culturally and traditionally belonged to them. Perhaps this helps us to understand why the women's societies that remained independent of vestry interference were such valuable and important arenas for women's work within the church.

Sunday School Teachers
When women moved into church teaching positions, they found themselves in a vortex of change as religious institutions embraced Sunday Schools in an effort to stem the tide of secularism. Women changed too, assuming elevated roles either as guides to religious conversion or as leaders in church training. They recreated positions for themselves as nurterers of young children in Sunday Schools, as trainers of adolescents in youth leagues, and as religious and moral guardians of both in a rapidly changing world. All of these attributes they brought with them from the home, transferring their concern for the religious education of their own children to the children of others. The transition involved more than simply taking their skills to a new forum; women who taught Sunday School actually refashioned the church schoolroom into a more homelike environment. Women teachers believed that they held a special mission to lead the young into paths of righteousness, and they accomplished this by domesticating the Sunday School and by imparting that portion of southern women's culture central to the protection and edification of children. Teaching became a religious vocation for women, particularly in view of their denied opportunities for preaching or exhorting.

Churchmen, especially the clergy, aware of the talents, enthusiasm, and dedication that lay at their direction, often called upon women to spearhead the founding of missions. This meant offering to the unchurched, usually on the fringes of town, Sunday School classes, which if successful, would be followed by worship services conducted by male preachers or rectors. Consequently, women founded new churches. Although they brought a feminizing influence to the church through their teaching, women and their female students also gained "masculine" skills of competitiveness and
management, empowering them to tackle substantial church-related projects
and eventually to challenge male patriarchal attitudes.

Fortuitously for southern women, the institution of Sunday School
was beginning to take on new importance in the postwar years just as they
were entering the church volunteer workforce in sizable numbers. Of course,
for evangelical churches (Baptist and Methodist) the overriding purpose of
Sunday School in the postwar years was not really to study the Bible but to win
sinners to Christ. As Sunday School teachers, women, especially mothers,
were entrusted with the responsibility of bringing a child to the point of
conversion or profession, followed by joining the church body. Even if adult
scholars had already been converted, Sunday School became a vehicle for
encouraging a revitalization of faith or a movement of letter (membership)
from one church to another. In the last three decades of the nineteenth
century Sunday School stood at the critical juncture between sin and
salvation, and women teachers became the principal agents in the process of
conversion.\textsuperscript{58}

Sermons, both published and performed, revivals, and camp meetings
had served this purpose for the antebellum and Civil War period. In rural
areas of the antebellum South, where revivals lasted for days, people came
from miles around in wagons prepared for a religious encounter that would
"awaken hardened and indifferent sinners to the precariousness of their
unregenerate condition."\textsuperscript{59} After the Civil War in urban areas such as
Galveston, revivals and protracted meetings took on an institutional flavor
that, while not lacking in intensity, hardly resembled the communal
encampments of the rural South or held the immediacy of revivals in
southern military camps and communities on the edge of battlefields.
Revivals held in urban churches competed with all of the other distractions of city life. 60 By the 1880s, moreover, Protestants, including nonevangelical congregations, had begun to sense that they were losing ground in the contest with secular influences to determine the course of the nation. Even though churches continued to grow numerically in the South, fear of secular influences compelled southern Protestants to look to Christian education as the key to maintaining ecclesiastical hegemony. 61 Competition from rising public school systems (Galveston established its in 1881) only meant a corresponding decrease in denominational secondary schools, which had provided not only Bible study but also an antidote to secularism. 62 Clearly Sunday Schools and the rise of religious youth organizations in the 1890s—weekly lessons instead of seasonal revivals—came to assume a central position in the edification, conversion, and retention of young people within southern churches.

Astoundingly little has been written about Sunday Schools and even less about youth organizations in the New South. 63 Sally McMillen, investigating the Southern Baptist drive for universal Sunday Schools, found that fear of external worldliness, crime, poverty, Catholicism, and foreign influences all contributed to the point of view that the Sunday School should stand as an institution for moral reform. With an emphasis on reshaping individual behavior, Sunday Schools provided a source of hope that southern youth, through appropriate Christian education, would save the nation and "offset declining values." 64

By the 1890s church programs designed especially for youth—the Epworth League, Juvenile Missionary Society, Baptist Young Peoples' Union and its younger version, Sun Beam Society, Young People's Society of
Christian Endeavor, Luther League, Altar Guild, Daughters of the King, and the like—continued the work that children's Sabbath Schools had begun. Supervision for the Epworth League of the the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for example, came first through the Sunday Schools where women volunteers helped in their establishment. Symbolic of the importance of a woman's teachings, the Epworth League was named for the parsonage where John Wesley had received his mother's religious instructions. Epworth Leagues were organized to promote piety and loyalty to the church, to educate youths in the Bible, and in church history, and to encourage charity, but they also offered important training for young women, who later would challenge male authorities for positions of leadership within the church. 65

Galveston Protestants had no lack of interest in Sunday Schools. The Presbyterians, for example, claimed that Sabbath School "preceded the Church in point of age." By 1869 they were following a systematic curriculum outlined on a quarterly basis that included lessons, home readings, central thoughts, and topical analyses of scriptures. Teachers met monthly for lesson study and weekly for prayer and were encouraged to visit their scholars. In 1875 the Sunday School boasted nine male officers, eight male teachers, nineteen female teachers, and 137 scholars (73 females, 64 males). Although men dominated the leadership, women cared more about teaching Sunday School. There were twice as many women teachers as men; women were more often in attendance at the monthly meetings, and they were better at keeping up with the children outside of class. All teachers were expected to turn in written reports on the spiritual condition of their pupils—their attendance habits, promptness, and the quality of their responses to the lessons. This meant that only middle- and upper-class women with
educations were eligible to teach. Still, these women who sought a means of communicating their faith found in Sunday a fulfillment for their religious vocation. 66

The Baptists, who began their Sabbath School in the 1840s, supplied one-half the classrooms with women teachers as early as 1846. After the Civil War the church structure stood in disrepair, its former congregation of thirty whites reduced to eight. At its reopening meeting in March 1866, sixteen new members joined the church; by 1874 the congregation of over 120 supported a Sunday School of its own and another at their newly established East End Mission at 14th Street and Avenue K. 67

In both the Baptist Sunday School and the mission, which provided Sunday School but no church services, women were the principal motivators for their continuation. The board of deacons relied on churchwomen to provide the necessary equipment for the mission school, hence in January 1874 a committee of three, including Martha Poole, raised money to purchase new hymn books. The women's efforts allowed the mission school to become an independent operation based on tithes and contributions. Within three months the money for books had been raised, and by December the East End Mission was nearly solvent, having earned $1,336, just five dollars less than it had spent. 68 So successful was this enterprise educationally that in 1878 the board of deacons received a "communication" from three single churchwomen and one gentleman asking if they could pay $10 per month for the use of the East End Mission building as a schoolhouse during the week. Good reports on the Sunday School and the weekday school continued until 1881 when the congregation sold it to cover debts incurred in other areas. 69

Just at the point that the Baptists closed their East End Mission, the
Methodists began to consider evangelizing the poorer and more sparsely settled western end of the city. Where the Baptists had failed in 1881 to bring their mission to full church status, the Methodists succeeded, but only with the aid of the women. Acting as "spearheads" in the evangelizing process, experienced women Sunday School teachers were sent to unchurched areas to begin a new Sunday School. Only after the women had broken ground, both structurally and spiritually, and after a sufficient number of adults had begun to follow their children in desiring worship services, would a pastor from the home church come out and offer worship or prayer meetings. The significance of this cannot be understated; women who taught Sunday School and who were willing to perform mission duty formed new congregations. Had they been able to seek seminary training and ordination, they most assuredly would have pastored those congregations as well. But women founders, instead of power, settled for the knowledge that they had obeyed a call to servanthood, teaching instead of preaching which they were prohibited from doing. This was the case in 1885 when Mrs. Eliza Perkins, a teacher in St. James' Methodist Church, held the first mission Sunday School in her home in the city's West End. Both St. James' and St. John's Methodist churches supported the mission endeavor, but when Mrs. E. G. Foster, a teacher at St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church, South, joined Eliza Perkins, together they were able to raise $200 for a small classroom built on land owned by Mrs. Foster. Soon after the parents started to come, the pastor then blessed the infant congregation with prayer meetings, and by July 1888 a new church was established, which, of course, called a man to be its spiritual leader.

When women were not involved in the process of founding missions,
the results were less than satisfactory. The Lutherans, who were slow to gather strength in Galveston anyway, found it even more difficult to establish missions without the aid of its women congregants. The first efforts in this direction were headed by the Reverends J. S. and J.C. Roehm in 1895, who asked for a joint sponsorship of a West End Mission by the First Lutheran Church and the Texas Synod’s Mission Committee. The two organizations made arrangements for Pastor George Fritschel to teach Sunday School and conduct services at the mission on Sundays while teaching at the German Lutheran parochial school during the week. There is no evidence that Lutheran women helped in the project, offered classes, or organized fundraisers to support the mission, and the project died before 1920.

Most Protestant women were intensely interested in the establishment of missions and in working in Sunday Schools. There were excellent reasons for their concerns. Given moral legitimacy by churchmen, who praised their nurturing abilities, their central influence on children, and their tender Christ-like nature, women felt a special mission to reach the young and lead them to discipleship within the Christian community. But women went beyond simply taking themselves to the church, they brought with them the essentials of their domestic culture, broadening their domain and transforming austere church structures into comfortable homelike settings.

Before the Civil War, home and its domestic nostalgia took on a glorification that tended to elevate woman without releasing her from the separate sphere. Donald G. Mathews found that “the home supplanted the church as the essential Christian community...and offered [women] honor and respect equal to that of men.” In the postbellum period the image
intensified. Home was the "ideal spot for the creation of heaven on earth. It was a community whose purpose was the ordering of affection — a place where passions were tamed, emotions purified, and right feeling nurtured. In this spiritual sanctuary, woman's role was that of mediator between heaven and earth, a kind of secular angel." Probably one reason the home took on such importance as the arena for consistent Christian nurture was that just after the war southern churches were ill prepared to offer children anything approximating the comfort and consistency of a loving home presided over by an angelic mother. Sunday Schools were decentralized, notoriously underfunded, understaffed (even by women), and conducted in buildings that provided few delights for the child. Martha Poole, a teacher in Galveston's First Baptist Church Sunday School for at least forty-seven years, described her early teaching years in the 1870s.

The Sunday School was an unorganized body, with no adult members excepting the superintendent and the teachers, without song-books or literature. Scripture lessons were given and each teacher followed her own method of teaching. Dr. Howard [pastor] ...asked me to take charge of the little tots. Before that, however, Judge Cole brought me a simple song in a paper, and asked me if I could sing it, and then teach it to the school. So I had become music-teacher, and introduced the first Gospel Songs. There was a small house used as the pastor's study, for we had no parsonage. Into that I took my class, a bare room with no accessories whatever. I found my own subject matter, and taught my own way, and I was never happier than when with my little tots.... As Galveston passed from village to city, the classes increased in numbers until I needed an assistant.

Eventually Martha Poole divided her "Infant Class," which consisted of the Cradle Roll, Beginners, and Primary departments, into separate classes when she realized the advantages of a graded system. One student
remembered with affection that "each class had its separate corner or place in which to meet. At the tap of her bell all assembled to hear her give a summary of the lesson for that day. The Bible stories, so simply told by her, were taken in by small minds and the seeds of truth therein inplanted are now bringing forth fruit."  

The physical structure improved during Martha Poole's time; she eventually received her own classroom, which became a comfortable environment for her little learners.

Most important to the betterment in Sunday Schools was the change in atmosphere that women brought to it as they began to realize that home with all of its redemptive qualities could be recreated within the walls of the church. Whereas Donald Mathews claims that home, rather than church, represented the true Christian community, toward the end of the nineteenth century that began to turn around. Churches became more homelike: as women found more roles for themselves within the church they left a profound impact on its structure and program. Sunday School teaching, by bringing women a measure of organizing experience, emboldened them and allowed them to assert their claim to shape the environment for children. Churchmen acquiesced. Afterall, the sacrifices of women who left the comforts of a home church to found missions within the city earned them credits within the ecclesiastical community. In return women, especially teachers, took increasing responsibility for the design and furnishing of church interiors including Sunday School rooms, raising the money for Sunday School projects through bazaars and fairs (which, incidentally, brought the products of their domesticity to the church for sale). The result was a form of domestication of the church, which, even with its male hierarchy, provided women a supportive semi-public domain.
Men did not just walk away from their positions over women, however. They still superintended Sunday Schools, a role that could be either powerful or passive, depending on the personality of the individual. Superintendent Oscar Farish likened his role at Trinity Episcopal Church to that of a "general at the head of an army, his teachers his lieutenants, and the scholars his soldiers." But his imagery was misplaced, for in actuality he "never interfered with the School farther than occasionally visiting it, catechising the children, and delivering those pleasing and interesting addresses, always making the officers, teachers and scholars glad at his appearance and grateful by his recognition and encouragement." Farish took on the role of kindly father, benevolent, supportive, generous, but uninvolved, not unlike the perceived role of a father in the home. Equally uninvolved was the vestry which in the years before 1920 gave no money to the maintenance of the Sunday School. The school ran on its own resources, which meant the tithes of children and fundraisers promoted by the women were the only income granted to this important church institution. At one point the women complained to the board that this taught children to be selfish in that their tithe went primarily to benefit themselves. In that year the teachers insisted that a portion of the children's offerings go to missions.77

One might assume that because Episcopalians were not evangelical they would be less interested in Sunday School or in mission branches within the city. Such was not the case in Galveston; Trinity Episcopal Church sponsored a West End parochial mission several years before the Baptists or the Methodists formed their missions. Rector Stephen M. Bird, imagining a mission Sunday School, sent young Effie Raymond to head one up. In a schoolroom on 42nd Street and Broadway in 1874, she and an assistant opened
a Sunday afternoon class for seven scholars. Soon after, the all-male Trinity Guild bought a lot and built Trinity Chapel for the continuance of the mission Sunday School and the commencement of occasional services. Within a year Episcopal women had increased the Sunday School to 100 scholars and the chapel to fifty members. In this case as in the others, women had created a new parish. By January 1876, members of the congregation of Trinity Chapel petitioned for independent parish status with the Diocese of Texas under the name Grace Episcopal Church.

Members of evangelical churches, concerned with bringing the uncommitted to Christ in order to help them experience conversion saw Sunday School and missions (along with revivals and weekly preaching) as a means to this end. Sunday School and mission outreach for Episcopalians, on the other hand, fulfilled a different purpose—that of teaching children and potential communicants the "church system." Because many Texans were converts to the Episcopal church, the purpose of Sunday School was not so much to save souls as to inform, instruct, and catechise members, especially children, in church doctrine, discipline, and worship. This required a patient approach, as emotional exhortations from the pulpit or individual evangelizing had no place in the church's "orderly round of observances." Theoretically, as time went by, with consistent biblical and creedal teaching, and with instruction in the services, life, and "holy work of the Church—the living, mystical body of Christ," individually and collectively parishioners would bring forth the desired results, a church whose every member would grow up into "Him who is the Head." Training children and youths in the church system required not only weekly catechism but also teaching the use of Prayer Book for worship services; in short, Sunday School imparted
churchman(woman)ship to the uninitiated.

Clearly the roles Episcopal women assumed as Sunday School teachers differed from that within evangelical churches. Evangelical teachers, by virtue of their belief in original sin, were given the immense responsibility of leading to conversion a child who was considered unredeemed and, in the Baptist tradition, unsaved until submission, profession, baptism, and redemption. Episcopal women teachers took under their tutelage children who, because of infant baptism, had had the sin of Adam erased and who were ready to be trained through religious growth. The differences in these approaches — evangelism and church training — would eventually result in profound dissimilarities in the way churchwomen of different backgrounds addressed community outreach. But within the classroom, even though internally there were great differences in what Episcopal and evangelical women taught, the process of teaching, organizing, nurturing, and training was remarkably similar. Episcopal women were needed to nurture, love, and train up a child, and over time, the Episcopal Sunday School changed to reflect the increased role of women as teachers, as did most all of the larger churches on Galveston Island.

Trinity Episcopal Sunday School, founded in 1843, was probably the oldest among the island schools. Antebellum vestry minutes, which discuss mostly the finances of the parish, are absolutely silent on the subject of Sunday School and whether its teachers were men or women. Once the Civil War was behind them, "ladies of the Episcopal Church" put their domestic talents to work on a Sunday School fair and fundraiser at the courthouse. The only revenue that the Sunday School would see, besides the children's offerings, came from the efforts of "the ladies" who donated a "great variety of articles
which had been prepared by the needles of the girls and their mothers." Cakes and "viands," fishponds and fruit compote stands (complete with Gail Borden's condensed milk), and, finally, lotteries and auctions netted the Sunday School enough money to reorganize. By 1867 the Sunday School was in "an unusually flourishing condition." In contrast to the Baptists who had few books or Sunday School circulars, the Episcopalians boasted an excellent library, "comprising many standard works of elegant literature," available to all parish members. In the days before free libraries, a parish full of books offered communicants something more than sermons, ritual, and sacred music. As another example of the domestication process, private libraries, first introduced in homes, were replicated in churches in Galveston before the advent of a free library in 1879.82

Episcopal churchmen and women understood very early the necessity not only of training children for life in the church through Sunday School but also of creating an environment attractive to children. One way to do that was to promote a sense of family in a homelike environment, to emphasize Sunday School as a vitally important part of parish life, and to praise students and reward them with the kind of recognition that built self-esteem. To that end three annual festivities marked the traditional Sunday School calendar—a summer picnic, a Christmas party, and an awards ceremony and Easter processional. The whole Sunday School family celebrated the advent of summer as teacher/mothers and superintendent/fathers herded the children aboard the Galveston, Houston, and Henderson train to Dickinson Bayou on their annual summer picnics. There the children played croquet, roamed the woods, wandered up and down the bayou, and danced as a band played. The yearly Christmas party held in a rented hall included square dancing, feasting,
and game playing. But the Easter celebration, which was covered in detail by the city newspapers, displayed to the church and to the community the achievements of the little scholars in a stately atmosphere designed to impart dignity, pride, and honor.

On Easter Sunday afternoon in 1875 all 297 children, dressed in their Easter finery, lined up in thirty-three classes outside the rectory. Led by their teachers, division heads, and the superintendent, the children marched around the block and into Trinity's Gothic-style sanctuary to strains of Cujus Animam played on the organ. As the youngest division first entered the doors of the church and processed down the aisle, "hundreds of hearts swelled with emotions and the feelings of many parents were overcome with gladness." Following the Reverend Bird, each class and its teacher held a banner inscribed with such mottoes as "Rose Buds" for the thirteen six-year olds in Miss Walker's class, "Lambs of the Fold" for the seven boys and girls age nine in Miss Carrie Mott's class, and "Children of Grace" for Mrs. Redmond's older girls. When the children entered the nave they witnessed a church full of people waiting to congratulate the students, a pulpit platform and a four-foot cross decorated with "an ocean" of white roses and evergreens, and white cloths embossed in gold with harps and anchors symbolizing praise and hope upon the desk and pulpit. The school and choir marched and counter-marched down the aisles singing the processional anthem, followed by confession, absolution, the Lord's prayer, and the reading of the Creed. Then each class brought its floral tribute and offering to the front to give to the rector "until the sanctuary appeared as one immense collection of variegated flowers" and banners. The flowers, the evergreens, and the banners, reflective of the softer, homier images of a garden, were arranged and
presided over by a committee of churchwomen — evidence of the women's influence in what was basically an awards ceremony. 84

After the children's choirs and the congregation had sung, the rector read aloud the names of those students who were to receive honors and prizes for their performance in Sunday School. This was the true reason for the ostentatious ritual. Eighty-one honor roll recipients heard their names announced to the assembly. Prize winners went away with books, except for the two children who won the rector's prizes, which were two gold crosses. That year eight children were equally eligible for this highest award, but the prizes went to Annie Scoby, a "little orphan girl, from Trinity Church Sunday School," and Daisy Bell of Trinity Chapel Sunday School in the West End. Whatever else may be said of the Easter Sunday awards ceremony, it pleased the community because Sunday School enrollment increased to 400 by 1885 and to 667 by 1894 exceeding other Protestant Sunday Schools in the city. 85

The type of pageantry displayed on Easter was specifically designed to win the loyalty of children for the church and to impress upon their hearts the special symbolism of their new life in Christ on the day of His resurrection. Along with this spiritual message was another: hard work and constancy will be rewarded. In this highly commercial city, and in a church where the fruits of success in commerce were most clearly visible, the lessons of competition and reward were made applicable to the life of the church. It took little imagination to stretch the lesson and apply it to business. Although there are no records to indicate who planned the ceremony with its attendant awards, most likely competition was introduced because it had been found to be an acceptable incentive in the schools and because it fit well with concepts of advancement in the business world. By 1879 a point system had been
introduced, and the little scholars were graded on church attendance, Sunday School attendance, and lessons and deportment for the year. How mothers and teachers reacted to this is not known. They may have welcomed any incentive to keep scholars interested in material that was not inherently fascinating to children. Most likely, women accepted competition, even in Sunday School, as part of the general capitalist culture.

How the children responded to the use of competition in church life raises a host of questions, not the least of which is complicated by issues of gender. A number of little boys who passed on review in 1875 became community businessmen and civic leaders in adulthood. Could it be that most of what parents, elders, and schools taught children, including the lesson of competition in Sunday Schools, all contributed to the culture of capitalism? Did awards, ceremonies, point systems, and pageantry in childhood, intended to bring a sense of pride in self and in church work and greater spirituality, teach children lessons equally applicable to the world of commerce or politics? For boys, at least, the message imparted through Sunday Schools was redundant, complementary to the masculine dialogue of work, achievement, and advancement. Just as evangelicalism in northern churches had its message of respectability and time management for working-class men, the Episcopalian church system offered a corresponding message for upper-middle and upper-class boys destined to assume not only vestry duty but also the commercial and civic leadership of the town and state.

How did girls respond to the message that hard work, constancy, and competition brought rewards? The education of women before 1875 in Galveston and in the South had been reserved primarily for those families that could afford the expense of educating daughters. This limited group of
young women, through private schools and seminaries, were taught not so much to compete as to accommodate. Lessons in aesthetics, complementary to but opposite from the lessons in the disciplines for men, left women with few skills and little incentive to compete in the public realm. Theirs was an education designed to fill the home with refinement. Between 1875 and 1920 education for women went through a transition of great importance as public schools were adopted in cities across the South and as education became somewhat more equal for both sexes. Women's colleges in the Northeast and in the South, which a few Texas women attended, opened with the intention of granting an education as rigorous as the men's.

Public schools and the improved Episcopal Sunday School, both of which reinforced systems of work and rewards, were introduced to Galveston at about the same time. Perhaps the young women who heard this message felt some sense of confusion. How were they in their separate sphere to act on lessons that applied to a male ideal? Yet they too were learning these lessons as if they had similar access to public work. How young women dealt with the issue of aggressive competition, with public recognition, and with the consequences of educational opportunities is not easily sorted out. But the girls in the 1875 Easter Sunday processional had already imbibed the competitive spirit—forty-eight of the eighty-one scholars on the honor roll were girls and the two highest prizes went to girls. The years ahead for these young women would prove to be full of enormous change for the position of women in society. In looking over the list of girls and young women at least four names leap from the page as those who, twenty-five years later, would become some of the city's most active and activist leaders. Three also married and had children, the other remained single and became a school teacher.
Clearly some among the honorees chose to remain steadfast within the domestic realm, others apparently found accommodation with both the traditional women's sphere and a beckoning public life. As the Episcopal church opened itself up to increasing numbers of women it accepted domestication – that came with the women. But what also occurred within the church was an increased exposure and participation by women to patterns of "masculine" behavior, values reflective of those who must compete in a public forum.

Women Sunday School teachers, although undeniably under the supervision of men, gained self confidence in their abilities to act as agents of redemption or of the ecclesiastical order. The achieved their goals by incorporating the best of their domestic worlds with a sacred task – teaching children and establishing city missions. Ironically, just as women were bringing themselves and their culture ever more into churches, churchwomen were becoming more exposed to male patterns of independent, public works. It is the amalgamation of women's culture and the psychological acceptance of standards that traditionally applied to men that formed a more independent and assertive female body within the church. This was reflected most clearly in the autonomous women's societies, but it was also reflected, as we shall see, in the way individual women leaders created "powerful" roles for themselves in independent adult Bible classes.

Independent Bible Classes

Newspaper clippings from the 1920s and 1930s across the state attest to the fact that occasionally an adult Bible class within a Protestant church took on a life of its own. When this happened an institution within the church was
established that, while not superseding the authority of the Sunday School superintendent, in reality became more powerful than the superintendent’s office. Independent classes such as these were usually named after and taught by women.

Since female teachers in Protestant churches before the turn of century (and some well into the twentieth) were usually under the authority of male superintendents, they had little chance to exert leadership skills beyond the classroom. Seen as nurturers rather than administrators, women were seldom offered the opportunity to supervise Sunday Schools even though some worked as principals in elementary schools. A few very determined women with impeccable church credentials managed to earn places of honor and independence within their congregations by remaining primarily Sunday School teachers. In these cases the reward for service amounted to an independent class, a base of respect that could not be duplicated in the home, but which commanded the veneration of men and women within and outside of the church. There were several such Bible classes in Galveston, two of which are illustrated here.

The Martha Poole Bible class had become an independent institution in the First Baptist Church. She was never its teacher; rather it was named in her honor before she joined it. How did she come to have a class named for her that existed before she joined and continued long after her death? The answer lies in the extraordinary length of service and depth of commitment that she gave to her church at a time when it had undergone drastic changes.

Arriving in Galveston as a bride from New York on January 1, 1861, she and her husband, Valentine, attended church at the very first opportunity. She found a handful of "people worshiping in the simplest manner " singing "old
fashioned hymns of praise." Soon after their visit, the pastor and a contingent of ladies called on her to unite with their congregation. The women came to invite her to join them in their church home, an act of outreach and potential friendship for which members of evangelical denominations were well known. This was the sort of overture that strangers to a new community needed in order to integrate into town life. It was essential for wives, who, if they remained homemakers, had few formal organizational affiliations outside the home. For all women in the immediate postwar period, integration into a semi-public community of women also began with a congregation (church or synagogue).

For Martha Poole, church was the first, and arguably the most important, contact besides her family in this new city. Apparently, she alone held up the church-going traditions in the family, which may help explain her complete devotion to the Baptists. Perhaps the visitors invited her husband to seek fellowship with them as well, but Martha's reminiscences do not mention him again and the records do not indicate that he joined the church. For women with unsaved husbands the evangelical community offered the kind of environment that wives sought in their own homes but did not have. The "church family" in a sense liberated women from the confines of their houses, broadened their opportunities to perform creative fulfilling work, and rewarded them with praise and adulation if they gave themselves unselfishly to the congregation. Piety had a great deal to do with the initial search for such a community; Donald Mathews labels this a "fervent search for maturity." In a world dominated by institutions headed by men, women found in church a community that honored their religious commitments, and included, accepted, and encouraged them within the limits of their sphere.
The First Baptist Church minutes, carefully compiled first by Gail Borden, inventor of condensed milk, and later by Judge James P. Cole, indicate that Martha Poole came at a time when church membership was low (30 whites) and falling. White women outnumbered white men by two to one. Decreasing membership created serious institutional problems for the little church, depleting it of able leadership and denying adequate funds to hold a pastor. In 1856 pew rents had been raised 33 percent, but the subscriptions fell short of paying the pastor's salary. To make up the difference, the ladies Sewing Society contributed $300 to cover the deficit, and continued to fill in when subscriptions failed for several more years. The women's society, by baking, holding ice cream socials, and soliciting funds raised enough money to buy a lot for the parsonage, an act that they hoped would keep a pastor. Moreover, they, more than the men, kept Sunday School classes alive with children – the church's most valuable hope for the future. No church meeting was held without women in attendance, often in greater numbers than the men. On the eve of the Civil War, Baptist women literally rescued the church from demise. It was into this milieu that Martha Poole began her involvement.  

In her reminiscences Martha recalled that she began her association with other women through a small choir. No sooner had she done so when the Civil War closed the church doors, and members departed for the interior. Martha remained on the island for a time worshipping with the Methodists, singing in their choir, and making friends among the Methodist and Presbyterian women. Meanwhile she kept an eye on the Baptists' small clapboard church, which was used alternatively as a sanctuary for soldiers' services, a barracks, and a school for freedmen. She was responsible for making
the first overtures to the Union military commander for return of the church
to its congregants, but was unsuccessful until she and a committee of three
churchmen petitioned the Freedmen’s Bureau for repossession.92 "The
building was in a horrible condition, . . . carpets and cushions had been taken
by our own soldiers. Dirt and grease covered seats and floor. The roof was
worn out, and fences for the three lots gone," she wrote. "But we set ourselves
resolutely to work to restore our former place of worship. Every Saturday
afternoon, early, we sisters met there, and while one sat at the sewing-machine,
others cut and basted all manner of every-day wear until compelled to leave.
Each one took home work to be finished. We found ready sale, and at length
repairs were made...."93 Painting, repairing, and replacing window sashes fell
to the men; by using their domestic skills, all of the decorating, refurbishing,
and "domesticating" of the church interior and all the costs involved in the
restoration were handled by the women.

It also was in 1866 that Martha Poole began her long teaching career in
the Sunday School beginning with the "Infant Class" and leading in 1901 to her
superintendency of the "Junior Department," a position of authority few
women achieved. In 1913, when her younger Baptist sisters formed the
Martha Poole Bible Class for adult women, she wrote, "I appreciated the
unexpected honor, and occasionally said a few words to them. When my health
failed so I could no longer conduct my work as I felt it ought to be conducted, I
resigned, and of course, joined my class. ...It cheers many an hour that would
otherwise be lonely, while I wait for release from my worn-out body, and the
spiritual body that will again enable me to be an active servant of my Lord."94
She added importance to the class not only by her presence but also by choosing
the class song, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?"; the flower, white carnation; the
colors, white and green; and the motto, "Always Abounding" from I Corinthians 15:58. On her ninety-first birthday her portrait was hung in the room where her class met; she was given a party and "showered with beautiful flowers." One Sunday after her death in 1927, with her likeness printed upon the church bulletin, she was eulogized in worship service as one of the sainted ones and praised as the mother of the church Sunday School where she had trained most of its teachers. Deacon Charles Sherwood offered an address entitled, "Martha Poole: What Made Her Great," and pastor Thomas Harvey preached on "Heavenly Recognition." Spread across the church bulletin and the Baptist Standard were "Resolutions of Respect" by four class members, who wrote admiringly that their sister rested from her labors but her works would follow her. They also reminded themselves that the separation was for a little while before "Jesus will gather us all together with Him."95 By continuing the tradition of keeping the struggling Baptist church open, Martha Poole was honored as the most luminous of its devoted servants. At no time had anyone, man or woman, inspired such attention within the church.

The illustration of Martha Poole's unwavering sacrificial life raises questions regarding the place of women in the church relative to men. In denying equal authority to women and in perpetuating fundamental inequality of opportunity for women, churchmen formed a policy at odds with the notion of equality in Christ. But women remained in churches, even dominated them numerically, despite the asymmetry of authority. Why women should choose to belong to and support patriarchal institutions may be explained by a theology that awarded power to some and privilege to others. Men who practiced piety and service were rewarded positions of power within the church, but for women the same dedication, even sacrifice, more often brought
rewards of honor rather than authority. As meager as this compensation seems, this was, after all, one of the few areas where women found any public recognition at all. Of course, newspaper obituaries proclaimed Martha's earnest involvement in the Sunday School, and prior to her death journalists had recounted her many sacrifices. But if we are to believe the devotional literature of the time, women who followed the precepts of self-sacrifice in the name of the Lord were to take delight only in Him and not in earthly prizes such as power or money. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," spoke of material possessions, but everyone knew that Jesus' dictum included eschewing power in order to walk humbly with God. Love, sacrifice, and weakness were ideal Christian qualities ascribed to women, and which bound them to a subservient role in the temporal church while elevating them to a higher position within the theologically idealistic "body of Christ." Women adjusted to their status by accepting this dual position. They lived within a world of phenomena but aspired to and saw themselves rewarded through an ideal world. Of course, southern women probably knew little of philosophical idealism, but a theology based on power given to men in the temporal world and privilege given to women in the ideal realm was familiar to them as Christians who knew and understood their place in a dualistic system.

The authoritarian, patriarchal, and sometime Calvinistic position of southern evangelical churches constituted only one side of evangelical life; the reverse side was an understanding of the Resurrection in terms of Christ's overpowering, unlimited, unconditional love. Depicted as the weaker sex, sacrifices by women of the sort seen in churches across the South constituted the earthly manifestation of Christ's love, a love so encompassing that even death could not end it. To be Christlike was not only to be self-sacrificing but to
teach the gospel, to console the mournful, and accept those within the Christian community regardless of station or need. The qualities that attracted women, working class folk, and blacks (by the postbellum era in separate churches), to the evangelical denominations was not fear but love.97 Christians of both sexes were reminded that they should "make love their aim" but that "love is not ... arrogant" and "does not insist on its own way." [I Corinthians 14:1, 13:4]. Because women embodied love, a condition assigned to them as a component of their gender role, they saw themselves idealistically closer to a Christlike model than men. Out of weakness came honor; from sacrifice, privilege. Martha Poole, through her years of teaching, singing, and faithfulness created a position of respect for herself within the congregation. Her reward, however, came as a gift, unsought and unexpected. But what of women in churches who understood that rewards were possible and made the system of privilege work to bring them a measure of authority?

Ida Smith Austin was such a woman; she fashioned her rise in respectability through years of devotion and hard work within First Presbyterian Church, and thus, was able to take the system of reward and privilege about as far as a woman could go in the integrated (male and female) church community. The wife of Valery Austin, a prominent real estate dealer and city commissioner, she presents another picture of a Sunday School teacher whose class became an institution unto itself.

Born in 1858, in Lexington, Virginia, and educated at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Ida Smith came to Texas in 1881 to teach public school. Three years later she began her Sunday School teaching. When she married in 1885, she gave up public school teaching to set up housekeeping, but no one convinced her to give up the Sunday School class. Where it was difficult for
married women to keep their schoolhouse jobs, there was always room for
them in the Sunday School, which presumably took less time and occurred
when the teacher's children were at the church. One dedicated to the role of
teaching could make much or little out of a Sunday School position. Ida
Austin, who remained childless, transferred her enormous energies and
enthusiasm for teaching to the church. In 1884 she began with a class of five
girls; the next year five boys lost their teacher and asked to join her class. She
recalled that "there was some opposition in the minds of our church fathers as
to the propriety of allowing the goats and the sheep to graze in the same
spiritual pastures together." Acting out of good sense, rather than tradition, Ida
took a firm stand against the "fathers" in her quest for independence.
"Realizing that if unpresbyterian it was not unspiritual, [she] went on in the
even tenor of her way."98

Sometime in the years between 1884 and 1909, her students changed from
children to a mixture of young people and adults. At the end of that time the
class members "christened" it "The Ida Austin Bible Class," chose class colors
of maroon and gold, and gave it this motto: "With God everything, without
God nothing." In 1912 one of its members, Josephine English, gave in
memory of her husband enough funds to construct the English Memorial
Chapel for use as a classroom by the Ida Austin Bible Class. Women often
raised money for or dedicated funds toward a Sunday School building as part of
the domestication process of the church complex. Educating young people in
Sunday School by this time fell primarily to women, and churches depended
on women for the funds to build classrooms. But the single gift of one woman
to construct one Sunday School class, seems to have been unique in Galveston,
and may speak volumes about Ida Austin's prestige. The structure was
dedicated that same year before a "large gathering of God's people," including two of its original members. The "low gray building, its gothic lines and stained glass windows, with their rounded arches blending perfectly with the great church beside it," was a fully furnished classroom costing $3,500; it stood as concrete testimony to the perserverance of one woman in the Presbyterian church. A cornerstone bears the inscription, "Ida Austin Bible Class, 1884-1912"; by 1912 some 600 students had passed through the class (by 1936 the number reached 1,800), six church elders and seven deacons from among the class members had been ordained; twenty of the church's Sunday School teachers had been trained there, three others went to seminary to become ministers, and one young woman became a missionary nurse to Korea. Thousands of dollars gathered through the class went to missions. Eventually in 1932 the class was given a charter by the state legislature, "the first to be issued to any Bible Class." And in 1934, with an enrollment of 67, the class celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in the home of its teacher. Between 1909 and 1934, 5,000 visitors registered with the class secretary, and through the years the class elected nine presidents, seven secretaries, and existed through the terms of seven pastors. Ida Austin remained its teacher fifty-three years until her death in 1936.99

Obviously this class had a profound impact on its members who, the promotional literature proclaimed, went forth "well trained and grounded in the Faith of Our Fathers to spread the Gospel message and win souls for Christ." But what did such a class do for women within the church? First, it empowered Ida Austin in a manner that, one congregant remarked, "made us feel like we needed to curtsey before her."100 Denied access to the ministry, excluded from ordination as an elder or deacon, there were but two avenues a
woman seeking to proclaim the gospel could officially pursue — missionary service or Sunday School teaching.

Over time the class evolved into an adult class, giving Austin a position of substantial influence over men. She became the teacher of ministers and missionaries, deacons and elders, and was undoubtedly the most influential woman in the church. The tribute of one young member claimed "he felt that the foundation of his life and character, and its greatest influence was through the guidance of his Mother and Mrs. Austin's teachings." As young republican mothers had prepared their sons for citizenship at the end of the eighteenth century, Sunday School teachers at the end of the nineteenth trained young Christians for life in a more secular world. The importance of this role in the eyes of the Christian community should not be underestimated. 

Convinced of their mission to spread the gospel, and using Sunday School as a vehicle, women like Ida Austin found that time and perseverance were their best allies. As the numbers grew, as the coffers filled with offering funds, and as the reputation of the teaching spread, Austin's personal worth rose. Considerable effort went into the creation of a class esprit de corps — election of officers, pursuit of mission projects, selection of class colors and motto, compilation of scrapbooks, and, finally, the creation of their own endowed structure separate and apart from the church building. Assuming the aura of a minister, Austin created a separate enclave within the church, making herself indispensable and thereby untouchable to those who might challenge such a position for women within the church. Her stately rank was enhanced by wealth, her husband's political career, and her own involvement in a number of other voluntary associations outside of the church. She joined
the Wednesday Club, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Daughters of the War of 1812, and the Women's Health Protective Association; she served as president of the YMCA auxiliary for twenty years and president of the YWCA for two. In this important period of transition for women, Ida Smith Austin gathered to herself adherents, admirers, supporters, using her talents to build a powerful base within the church and expanding upon it into the community. She never strayed outside of the boundaries of the women's sphere, but she stretched them to include a potent role for herself in an institution that denied women professional standing. True to her calling, Austin left $5,000 to the Ida Austin Bible Class in her will; the class remembered her with these words, "Truly her mission has been to minister rather than be ministered unto."

Both Martha Poole and Ida Austin embodied the sacrificial nature of Christ in their willingness to devote years to teaching the gospel. Both were honored, but where one accepted honor almost passively, the other turned privilege into opportunities for authority. The differences between the two women may have been idiosyncratic, but class and a sense of power derived from status also played a role. Martha Poole's humility stemmed in part from her middle-class status in a city where elite Episcopalians and Presbyterians dominated polite society; Ida Austin's sense of importance came in part from her upper-class background and education. Although both churches were conservative with respect to the position of women, wealth and status helped elevate dedicated Christian women not only within the church but also in the community. Austin's many volunteer roles outside the church, in contrast to Martha Poole's few, were another indication of the enhancement gained through class position. For those with means, honor and privilege could be
used as a vehicle for assuming limited authority in the secular as well as the sacred world.

**Women's Church Societies**

For laywomen who came with their families to the outposts of the South's western frontier, churches provided one very important arena for gathering into their own societies. Although they were not the only places where women organized -- immigrant aid groups and Jewish synogogue societies offered equally valuable forums for women's interests -- churches were for the majority of Galveston women the first institutions outside the home that gave them a place to gather purposefully.

In the early days of Galveston's existence, just after its legal incorporation in 1839, Protestant women formed prayer groups and sewing societies. Records for this period are few, but glimpses of laywomen in society with one another appear in letters and in the Baptist church records, which survived the many storms and fires of the city's history. Once the Civil War had ended and the city was on the road to prosperity, churchwomen strengthened their commitments to serve their Master in womanly fellowship.

By the 1880s every Christian church had its women's society. It is important to realize, however, that these groups differed, each according to its stated purposes, intentions, and actions. Invariably there were six types of women's church societies in the postwar years: prayer groups and sodalities, altar guilds that prepared the chancel for worship, ladies' aid societies that helped the pastor or raised money for church improvements, home mission societies that usually raised money for denominational missions within the United States, foreign mission societies (often the two were combined), and
benevolent (poor relief) societies.

The first two types of women's societies, as a rule, did not raise money except for the purchase of items related to worship; the other four groups depended on fundraising to accomplish their goals. Quite often, in the beginning of organized church life, a sole women's society fulfilled more than one of these functions. But as the opportunity for women's ministry expanded, greater "specialization" occurred and several different societies might coexist within a single church. As state or regional-level women's associations developed they requested membership at the local level, presenting opportunities for more societies. And as the next generation of young women entered into volunteer church life, many preferred to start their own societies in order to be with women their own age. Eventually, there grew to be so many societies, guilds, leagues, sodalities, auxiliaries, and unions that the Galveston city directory in 1914 stopped listing them all. And by the 1920s every denomination took steps toward consolidating the many groups that women had formed — some adopted the circle plan, others simply brought all women together under one rubric and called them the Women of the Church, and most eventually allied themselves with a denominational women's association that enabled them to affiliate with women beyond their single church.

Despite the variety, it is possible to understand how the societies expanded woman's culture within the churches and into public life. All served to help women create an environment within the church that reflected their culture and that gave them leave to consider the church a place of their own outside the home. No one could deny the value of prayer groups and sodalities in fostering a more spiritual environment, hence
women were made to feel useful to the church in solemnizing their faith through prayer and through regular assembly. Although men performed the celebration of the eucharist, women in altar guilds carved out ancillary roles for themselves in this ritual by attending to the implements surrounding communion, by decorating the site with flowers and embroidered coverings, and by making or mending the ministers' or priests' vestments. While non-liturgical churches often did not have altar guilds, women still purchased the communion chairs, made the communion bread and bought, distributed, and washed the communion sets before and after the Lord's supper.\textsuperscript{104}

Ladies' aid societies (and some Episcopal guilds fall into this category) shouldered heavy burdens because their tasks were manifold and the requests for funds many. As the Marthas of the church, these women took on such a variety of problems that it led one pundit to write:

\begin{quote}
The old church bell has long been cracked 
Its call was but a groan;
It seemed to sound a funeral-knell
With every broken tone.
'We need a bell', the brethren said,
'But taxes must be paid;
We have no money we can spend;
We'll ask the Ladies Aid'.
\end{quote}

Other verses followed — the need for shingles on the roof, carpets on the floor, and the pastor's salary, each case to be brought before the ladies' aid.\textsuperscript{105}

Once churchmen realized the value of these societies, the women became irreplaceable as ecclesiastical housekeepers. Members of the ladies' aid were asked to supervise the janitors or form housekeeping committees; they cooked church suppers, baked cakes for bazaars, fashioned fancy work for sale — much like wives who earned eggs and butter money, except the proceeds
from their fairs, teas, and "entertainments" brought in hundreds of dollars. When they were not earning money, they sewed garments for the poor or sheets and pillowcases for the hospitals. Becoming indispensable to a congregation could be both liberating and imprisoning for women. If they controlled their own funds absolutely, they chose the projects that interested them, and —the pleas of the pastor notwithstanding — were seldom subjected to outside interference. In fact, having money gave them a controlling edge when the all-male governing bodies responded too slowly to projects the women deemed important or did not take seriously the opinions of the women members. Without control over funds or with too many imposed projects, ladies' aid members could begin to feel that they were taken for granted. Sometimes they were. Yet it was with these societies that the potential existed for physically adapting the church structure to the needs of its women teachers, seamstresses, embroiderers, choir members, and decorators. Ladies' aid societies, or their equivalents, were often responsible for raising the money to build the Sunday School structures, parlor rooms, and chapels. As Suzanne Lebsock noted, women worked to build structures because these became lasting monuments to "the labor and values of women."

Women understood the Great Commission, or the spreading of the gospel to all the lands, in concrete terms. To aid home and foreign missions and missionaries women needed to raise money for those who worked in mission fields, to educate the congregation and especially children in mission work, and to pray for the support required for each of these endeavors. As women organized to carry out this complex work they gained confidence in their outreach abilities and hence in themselves as participants in world
events. The more involved women became in fields of service outside the
doors of their own church, the more educated they became in the ways of the
world and of its needs. Their own lives often changed as their concern for
the church's involvement in national and world events heightened. By
reaching out from their comfortable church parlors to Christians on the front
line of gospel work, women vicariously cast themselves upon the mission
field. But for some, sitting on the sidelines was not enough; many young
women, especially in the evangelical churches, volunteered for missionary
service and spent lives of sacrifice in Christian ministry—the closest women
could come to clerical status. 107

Involvement via the church in worldly affairs of a different kind
increased even more for women when they chose to feed, clothe, and shelter
the poor in their own city—not just the members of their congregations, but
strangers, travelers, and the unchurched. The difference for women between
foreign and home mission work and poor relief work was wide: raising
money to support missions that were in romantic sounding countries across
the world or for settlement houses in other cities did not require the same
personal involvement as estimating the needs of a poor neighbor or turning
away a supplicant because she drank. Benevolent or poor relief societies
required direct contact with the poor—visiting them, assessing their needs,
and acting in concert with city and county relief efforts. More will be said
about benevolent societies in the following chapter, but briefly,
churchwomen in poor relief turned Christ's message of "feed my sheep" into
a feminine commandment, for at the time of their ministry no comparable
men's groups existed to care for the unchurched. Women's benevolent
societies connected to churches rarely took the name "benevolent society,"

more often they were "disguised" by names that did not suggest the focus of their work: Trinity Church Guild, the Ladies' Aid Society of First Presbyterian Church, the Ladies' Aid Society of the First German Lutheran Church. This makes the historian's task more difficult, and requires assessing the purpose of each society based not only on what they said they would do in their constitutions, but also based on what they did week to week and month to month.

Recognizing these differences in societies gives us a picture, first, of the manner in which women labored to create a world for themselves inside the church, how they stretched the limits of their woman's sphere to issues and activities outside the church, and finally, how some women came to realize their own feminist aspirations with respect to church governance. Few women were inspired by their husbands to assume active roles in church life. In a statistical survey of 193 women active in church societies, only forty (20 percent) had husbands who were ministers, elders, deacons, stewards, or vestrymen. Viewing it from another perspective, 80 percent of women who joined with other women did not have husbands in positions of church leadership, suggesting a certain independence on the part of women congregants.

More should be said, perhaps, about denominational differences and class affiliations, because these altered and influenced the ways in which some women approached their churchwomanship and their relations to the world outside the church. But, to put it boldly, some denominations emphasized certain aspects of ministry and limited women to roles that did not encourage their worldly involvement or encouraged it only in certain directions. Then, too, wealth, or the lack of it, dictated choices. It is
commonly understood that denominations followed class lines, and that practices and customs among the different denominations influenced the routes women took within their societies. How women reacted to needs outside of the church and how they came to see themselves as potentially equal partners in church affairs, was in part determined by their economic status and their denominational choice. All of these forecast their involvement in future civic affairs.

An assessment of the women's groups in each denomination turns up some interesting patterns of commonality and differences. All churches, for example, encouraged spirituality and prayer as the foundation upon which a Christian life is built. Hence they sustained women's prayer circles, which met as informal bodies to pray for one another and for the concerns of the church. Protestant prayer groups were not listed in the city directories, but were often mentioned in church minutes. 108

Catholics, who heretofore have not been mentioned in this study, tended to formalize their prayer life into sodalities. Catholic sodalities for children in connection with St. Mary's Cathedral and the Society of the Sacred Heart were listed in city directories beginning in 1880 and 1883 respectively. By the following decade sodalities for women and young ladies and altar societies sprang up in connection with the cathedral, St. Patrick's Church, St. Joseph's German Catholic Church, and the Parish of the Sacred Heart.

The association of Catholic laywomen into church aid societies began in 1871 with the founding of the Society of the Sacred Heart, an association that primarily served the parish. By the 1890s, in addition to the women's sodalities, altar societies, and Christian mothers societies, there appeared Leagues of the Sacred Heart, St. Paula's Reading Circle, and a Benevolent
Society of Sacred Heart Church. Thirteen such church-related Catholic laywomen's societies existed in 1910. The first Catholic laywomen's organization founded outside a parish in Galveston was the Catholic Daughters of America, which was an auxiliary to the Knights of Columbus, and served social, literary, and charitable purposes. In 1916 laywomen formed a women's auxiliary to aid the Sisters of Charity in the work of caring for the children of St. Mary's Orphanage. On the whole, Catholic laywomen contributed to the life of the church through sodalities, altar guilds, primary parish care societies, and auxiliaries to Catholic men's associations or to women's religious orders. It seems that Catholic laywomen devoutly served these organizations and institutions but without forming their own women's societies free of ecclesiastical control.

When evaluating who stepped out of women's societies into public service, Catholic women had several obstacles in their way. First, their associations were tied to a church that valued parochial over secular institutions. For example, when free public schools opened in Galveston, Catholic children flocked to them. Alarmed over the loss of their schoolchildren and desiring to keep parishioners from secular influences, Bishop Nicholas A. Gallagher in 1883 announced that no child in public school would receive the sacraments of first communion or be confirmed; moreover, parents of children in public schools would receive no sacraments. In other words, attending public schools was a sin. Catholics set up institutions — hospitals, schools, cemeteries — to care for their own in every aspect of life, creating an insular community that needed little from the city beyond public services and freedom for businesses. Although Catholic families lived among non-Catholics, worked beside them, and tendered care
to non-Catholics in times of crisis, they kept to themselves, a fact that was reflected in the women's parish societies.

Other impediments remained to discourage Catholic women's involvement in secular women's activities outside the parish. Laywomen were supposed to raise large families and, short of that, to support Catholic institutions, but they were not encouraged to seek wider fields of service in the same way that women religious were. Moreover, Catholic families, though outnumbering Protestants sometimes two to one, were largely of working-class and/or immigrant origins, a fact that impeded the access of women into socially elite semi-secular clubs and boards of lady managers for benevolent institutions. Then too, although Galvestonians professed a liberal tolerance and have lived in harmony with whites of varying ethnicity, the dominant Protestant/Jewish elite still discriminated socially against members of the lower classes and especially against Catholics. Social acceptability, that is, a combination of economic well being, education in the refinements of society, and inclusion in certain congregations became important criteria for the admission of women into clubwork or benevolent institutions. A few Catholic women transcended the barriers and entered into Galveston's women's civic community after 1900, when secular women's organizations became somewhat more democratic. But out of 370 women who were active in all types of civic affairs from 1880 to 1920, only 21 or 5.67 percent were identified as Catholic, well below their numerical representation in the city (See Table 2:1). Alongside discrimination, it is probable that Catholic insularity, discouragement on the part of the clerics, and few experiences in directing their own choices tended to inhibit the movement of Catholic laywomen into secular civic and reforming
activities.\textsuperscript{111}

Women from evangelical churches, which in Galveston comprised the Southern Baptists, Methodists, and later (1889) the Disciples of Christ, experienced similar obstacles. The women in these churches first formed ladies' aid societies that met once or twice a month and were extensions of the old sewing circles. In 1881 First Baptist and the Methodists of St. James and St. John's churches formed missionary societies with memberships of about thirty women that met monthly for the purpose of helping missionaries financially.

Although Baptist women shared equally strong commitments to foreign missions, on the whole they were not in as favorable an economic position as the Methodists and were unable to sustain both a ladies' aid and a missionary society. In 1892 they combined the two, which meant that Baptist women, true workers of the faith, were called upon to divide themselves between ladies' aid duties -- fundraising (bake sales, bazaars, and "entertainments") for buildings, furnishings, and parlor renovations; visiting the sick; providing for the congregational poor; organizing church directories -- and mission support.\textsuperscript{112} Tied as they were to church housekeeping, they still managed in 1885 to raise $50 for missions and in 1904 to raise $170 for missionaries in China. By 1918 Baptist women reorganized into the Woman's Auxiliary "to work along the lines of the Woman's Missionary Union," a convention-wide women's organization whose main goals, support of foreign and home missions, were achieved through personal service, mission study, and literary programs.\textsuperscript{113} With this organization, First Baptist women were released from church domestic duties to follow their interests each week— to sing old-time hymns, to call on shut-ins, to send
flowers, to pray for missions, to make garments for the poor, to sew bed sheets for the Baptist Sanatorium in Houston, to present music to the inmates at the Woman's Home, to take food and presents to the children of the city's Protestant orphans' homes, and to learn. They studied Brazil, Ecuador, China, Baptist missions in the South, Italian city missions, mountain schools, medical missions, the Bible, and, in keeping with the times, they urged one another to take more interest in the WCTU and -- after they won the right to vote -- to pay their poll taxes "in order to rid the country of liquor."114

Methodist women did not have to wait so long to devote themselves entirely to missions, in fact, in the 1890s they were already recruiting young women into mission work. The St. John's "Light Bearers" Young Ladies Missionary Society, organized in 1891, sent two young women to the mission field, Edith Park and Mary Minor Tarrant. Edith Park, born in Galveston and raised in the Methodist church, attended Laredo Seminary, which, according to the Galveston Methodist chronicler, had been founded by her grandmother, Mrs. S. S. Park. She chose as her field of mission work Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1896, but later went on to Saltillo, Mexico, where she ministered for thirty-five years until her retirement. Mary Tarrant, who also grew up in St. John's Methodist Church, enrolled at Scarlett Bible and Training School and graduated in 1898. In 1900 she sailed to Shanghai, and later became principal of the Atkinson Academy for boys in Soochow, China, until well into the 1940s. 115 With two graduates in the foreign mission field Galveston Methodist women maintained a strong incentive to continue supporting foreign missions almost exclusively.

The emphasis on foreign and home missions in the evangelical denominations cut two ways for women. On the one hand, missions were
the logical extension of an evangelizing process that concentrated on salvation and conversion. Sending the gospel into all the earth was a mandate that called to women as well as to men. Foreign mission societies elevated women above the rather confining duties of primary parish care and allowed them to assume responsibility for enterprises beyond the realm of their everyday existence. In this sense, foreign mission work provided evangelical women with a vocation that was church-related yet did not threaten the custom of male authority. On the other hand foreign mission work precluded an equally deep involvement in the problems of their own city. Home mission work, which could have gone in the direction of city activism, did not in Galveston because women donated money and clothing instead to statewide Methodist institutions and programs in other cities. Not until 1905 did Galveston Methodist women begin a project of their own within the community by forming a Wesley House, or daycare center for children of families from the factory district. This program to help factory children came ten years after the formation of a similar kindergarten founded by non-evangelical women.

The overall emphasis on evangelizing foreign continents was not conducive to bringing Methodist and Baptist women into secular civic reform activities in great numbers in the years between 1880 and 1920. With the Baptists, moreover, opposition by men to women's organizing in general tended to inhibit their activism both in church and without. This is evident when looking at the statistics. Of all the women (370) active in organizations outside of churches, Baptists numbered 21 (5.67 percent) and Methodists 39 (10.54 percent), which, although within range of their numerical representation in the city, did not, as in the case of the
Presbyterians and Episcopalians, exceed it. Perhaps economic reasons, along with foreign mission emphasis, explain the mediocre showing. Baptist and Methodist women, for the most part, were not among the elite members of Galveston society. Their families filled the ranks of the middle and lower middle classes, and only occasionally do we find wealthy Baptists or Methodists entering into civic reform.

Lutherans organized a Ladies Aid Society in 1882 that served multiple roles. Its primary function was to act as a poor relief society, and its secondary purpose was to lend aid to the pastor and raise money for structural and domestic improvements. Lutheran women devoted their energies almost exclusively to supporting poor relief efforts until the storm of 1900 when church repairs claimed their attention. In 1916 a group of younger Lutheran women formed a Ladies' Auxiliary that at first took on the responsibility of raising money for a new church and helping Lutheran soldiers stationed in the Galveston area during World War I. Later, in 1921, the auxiliary voted to study missionary activities of the American Lutheran Church as well as that of their own church. In a sense the Lutheran church, which conducted its services in German until 1892, acted as an immigrant association; the majority of its congregants were native Germans. The fact that the women of the church were engaged in bringing "spiritual comfort and material assistance to the needy in the name of the Lord and his church...." (and that they continued to speak German in their meetings until 1924), was a response to the special needs of the German community. Interest by women in missionary activities followed much later when established German churches had the means to invest in missions abroad. Lutheran women, unlike Catholic women many of whom also were immigrants from Ireland and
Germany, were not tied solely to supporting religious institutional structures, but they may have been limited from entering secular women's groups by their immigrant status. Only seven (1.89 percent) of 370 activist women were Lutherans, making them the most underrepresented of all the Protestants in women's activities outside the church. (See Table 2:1.)

Presbyterian women organized the First Presbyterian Ladies Aid Society soon after the war in 1869, and reorganized it in 1880. Records show that the forty members of this group wore four hats: they served the church and its pastor in the traditional ladies aid manner, they supported a missionary family in China, they raised money for a mission in the West End of the island and later for a parsonage, and they met weekly to sew and distribute aid to the poor. Availability of most of the minutes for this society from 1890 until 1915 presents an opportunity for an indepth appraisal of the way churchwomen ran their own organization, responded to the needs of the church versus their own goals, and interacted with the pastor and the elders.

In a typical meeting in 1890 they discussed the fact that their tea, a fundraiser for foreign missions, had netted $170. Events of this type were no small affair. Missionary teas required 600 sandwiches, twenty-three cakes, eight dozen crullers, four dozen cinnamon "sticks" to be washed down with a pound of tea, six gallons of coffee accompanied by a dozen lemons, nine pounds of sugar, and a gallon and a half of milk. People paid for the privilege of sampling the ladies' fine delicacies. Since the tea was pronounced a success, the pastor met them with another appeal for money, this time to build a West End mission chapel. The women promised to consider his "offer" before turning to the work at hand. Then they devoted themselves to poor relief by deciding to furnish two needy women with shoes
at $2 a pair, to pay the house rent of another, and to provide a place in the woman's home to "a poor old German woman." Finally, the ladies welcomed a new member and reported the collection of dues (at $1 per year) and sales receipts. Nothing out of the ordinary occurred that day for the thirteen members present, but a considerable amount had been accomplished. Members of this multi-purpose society took appeals for aid in their stride, but by 1890 they had become sensible businesswomen who trucked no nonsense when it came to requests for money.

Pleas for funds to build the West End Mission is a good case in point. At a meeting in April 1890 the recording secretary reported that

Mrs. [Sarah] Ball suggested that as Mrs. Trueheart had given a valuable lot for the purpose of establishing a mission in the West end, it would be desirable to do our part of this work, which might be to furnish the interior of a building after erection. She thought it advisable to have a committee appointed to confer with the Business Committee of the church, ascertaining what their plans were, and when we should be called on for aid. She proposed the furnishing of the chapel, provided the gentlemen completed the building free of debt. This proposition, being put into the form of a motion... money now in the treasury should be used as a nest egg towards this object[,] was carried. ... the right to make use of our money for other worthy objects coming before us, was reserved.  

The ladies were happy to donate funds to the decorating of the mission, a domestic task that women were often called on to perform. But they were willing only so long as they felt their pledge would be matched by other funds (a building free of debt) and so long as the elders held up their end of the work. This brings up the all-important issue of discretion over funds and the
choices women were able to make with control over it. Perhaps because they had handled money successfully for poor relief, raising it themselves and carefully distributing it, the Presbyterian ladies displayed an uncommon independence when it came to funding projects for the laity.

In 1891, tired of waiting for the West End Mission chapel to be built, the ladies voted "with a hearty unanimity" to "advise the gentlemen that if nothing was accomplished in this direction by the end of the year, that this society would feel privileged to devote their work to some other cause." The secretary was "directed to write a strong letter which would 'stir the gentlemen up.' We want that church building to go up now, and show that the Presbyterians are alive." The chairman of the Business Committee replied that building delays were caused by "the stringency of the times." Still, by January 1892 no building had been erected and the elders were again soliciting money for a building fund. Naturally, the women were annoyed and dug their heels in further by stating that their members should not be solicited as they had agreed to furnish the building, "when it should be completed, free of debt." Eventually the ladies gave in at the behest of their pastor and donated $600 to the building fund and $400 to the interior (or 34 percent of the total costs for the chapel), probably out of a conviction that the mission chapel was more important than the stand against the elders.

Nonetheless, in the matter of money, when women had control over it their power increased along with their choices. In a limited world where women were restricted on many other fronts, there was might in having their own income even if it did go to charitable causes. A sense of self-respect and a certainty that projects could be accomplished, outreach administered, and lives saved spiritually and physically were the result of this fiduciary
Presbyterian women were more active in women's groups outside of churches than women from most other denominations. They comprised 54 (14.59 percent) of the 370 women found active in other organizations, or were five times more active than their numerical presence in the city would suggest. The economic status of Presbyterian women and their families seemed to range from middle to upper class, indicating that women who wanted to move out into the world, even in circumscribed fashion, found it easier to do when combined with financial independence and advantaged social position. (See Table 2:1.)

Episcopal women in Galveston were undoubtedly the most privileged of all churchwomen in terms of status and economic security. Out of the 370 activist women already mentioned, 136 Episcopalians (36.75 percent) were involved in other women's organizations. Their entrance into civic affairs was nearly eight times greater than their denominational strength, which averaged 4.7 percent of all faiths in the years 1890, 1906, and 1916. (See Table 2:1.) If we only count Protestants active in civic affairs, the percentage of Episcopal women involved jumps to 43 percent, or put another way, nearly half the Protestant women engaged in women's civic affairs were Episcopalian. Surely class, status, and privilege worked in favor of these women, but so too did the structure, the emphasis, and the opportunities offered by the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The first recorded organized efforts of Episcopal women came in 1867 when the women of Trinity Episcopal Church gathered to fund a "chapel," or structure that would encompass the domestic functions of church life – Sunday school classrooms, meeting rooms for the guilds, and a parlor in
which to entertain and socialize. Named the Ladies Parochial Society by their rector, Benjamin Eaton, the women worked to raise funds to build the chapel, continuing even after Eaton's death in 1871. But ten years later they had raised only about one-half the funds needed. Henry Rosenberg came to their rescue with $10,000 to complete the project, and together they called it Eaton Memorial Chapel — the first evidence of structural domestication to occur to old Trinity Church. The women were justly proud of their long-awaited accomplishment and in February 1882 brought this statement to the vestry:

Gentlemen,
With pleasure the Ladies of the "Parochial Society" announce that the Eaton Memorial Chapel for which they have labored to obtain funds for its erection for the past ten years is now about ready to be given into the hands of the Vestry of Trinity Church. They can but look at the completion of their work with a feeling of pride and gratitude to those who have so generously assisted them in this great enterprise. . . . they are justly the Stewards of this beautiful building and answerable to those kind donors. . . . The ladies of the Parochial Society feel that their beautiful edifice should be preserved in its present perfect condition. . . .

The announcement was signed by sixteen ladies with the request that they be allowed to rent the schoolroom and parlor in order to pay the insurance, janitor, and to make repairs. Obviously, the women felt a strong sense of proprietorship over the building even as they symbolically handed it over to the vestrymen. But the reality of their accomplishment was just beginning to hit home. If the vestry had not yet understood the value and energy of its women parishioners, it could not miss the point now, and it is tempting to assume that with an investment of this magnitude the women of the parish were awarded more powerful positions. But, in fact, women gained strength at Trinity (as was true with other churches) not by insisting
on serving on "men's" boards but by continuing to gather in women's societies, developing and exercising leadership potential among themselves, and by occasionally challenging the vestry with a refusal to cooperate if their conditions were not met. Domesticating the church through structural changes was just the beginning. What follows is the history of a growing awareness of power in solidarity among Episcopal women.

Of course Episcopal women still gathered into prayer circles and service guilds; women formed the Guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1887, later known as the Altar Guild. The guild trained young women in the "history, observance, and meaning of the church building itself." In giving them charge over the altar, the chancel, and the sacred implements needed for the eucharist, the clergy allowed women a role in preparing this sacred celebration, a ritual originally limited to the disciples and traditionally presided over by men. 125

Perhaps nowhere was the presence of women felt more strongly than with the forming of the Sisterhood in 1875, an auxiliary of Trinity Church Guild, which had been originally organized by the men in 1873. Both associations worked to benefit the parish, provide poor relief, and support missions. But the men soon gave up all rights to the guild and in 1885 Trinity Church Guild became a women's organization. Their major project, like that of the Presbyterian women, was to provide systematic charity to the urban poor, but they also acted as primary parish caretakers and "agreed to help in maintenance of church property," from the cemetery to the church bell tower.

Not long after the takeover of the Guild by the ladies, the vestrymen congratulated themselves on the quality of the women workers. "Our exchequer ... shows a fair surplus owing principally to the good work of the
Guild which came nobly to our relief at an opportune moment, and bids fair
to prove a valuable acquisition to the board of managers in the near
future." Indeed, only four years later the vestry was again gloating that the
Guild had given them $2,300 to clear the church debt; by the next year the debt
was reduced by one-half, thanks to the Guild. In the next round with the
vestry in 1893 the women were not quite as free with their gifts. They let the
men know that they had $1,200 for church improvements, but they chided
the vestry into forming a building committee to get on with the plans for a
new church. Unfortunately, the storm of 1900 ended talk of a new church; it
was all they could do to repair the one they had.

For years poor relief had been the first priority among the guild
members, but after the hurricane of 1900 the women divided their time
between charity and church repairs — patching up the carpet, repaneling the
chancel and the choir stalls, providing a new altar for the sanctuary,
undertaking interior decorating, restoring the rectory, and repairing the
cemetery. This required not only choosing the materials but also, "after
estimates were read and carefully discussed," awarding a contract to the best
crews. Subscriptions helped, but the main profits for these projects came
from a unique idea — the women held a cooking school taught by a nationally
known gourmet. Guild members continued to build, repair, and
refurbish: in 1903 they paid for electric wiring in the church, in 1904 they
made the choir robes, in 1905 they fitted up the Guild room, in 1906 they built
a green house in order to have flowers for the sanctuary, in 1907 they repaired
the Sunday School rooms; they fixed the rectory in 1909, in 1912 they
underwrote the organ fund, they again repaired the sanctuary after the 1915
storm with $1,156 raised through a bazaar and subscriptions, and during the
war years they provided a resting place for servicemen stationed on the Gulf Coast. Last but not least, they assumed responsibility for collecting Trinity's share of the Bishop's stipend.\textsuperscript{130}

Because the women took on extensive projects for the church in a separate women's organization, they, actually constituted a parallel "vestry." Although not recognized as such, the women, nonetheless, understood the potential influence, even power, that they exercised in conjunction with the all-male governing body. They may not have been sufficiently subversive to challenge the sovereignty of the vestry, but they did require its accountability. An illustration of this came in February 1915. Senior Warden Fred Catterall called a meeting of the vestry and relayed a complaint that the women had put to him: they were "dissatisfied with the present administration of the Vestry; this dissatisfaction seemed to be centered in two or three particular matters ... namely, the notable absence of vestrymen from church services, the seeming inability of the vestry to have regular meetings, and the poor showing of the parish in financial matters that lie without the home circle." Embarrassing as this must have been for the gentlemen, they resolved to study their duty toward the parish and to forthwith expand the "envelope system," a means of bringing in the tithe, and explain the need for systematic giving in a letter to the parish. Finally, they commissioned the Senior Warden to "see to it that two vestrymen are present at every regular Sunday service."\textsuperscript{131}

Tensions between vestrymen and guild members, or in the case of the Presbyterians between ladies and elders, were signs of the very real progress that women had begun to make in asserting themselves into church politics. It seems that women in societies had very few complaints about their pastors;
in fact, they felt in alliance with him and he with them. The trouble came with the Episcopal vestrymen and Presbyterian elders; they did not visit with the women in their meetings, affirming and applauding them as pastors did, nor did they always act in such a way as to give the women confidence in male governing abilities. We can almost hear women thinking that with the guidance of the pastor they could run the church better themselves; they had the interest, the motivation, the time, and increasingly the education and talent. Trinity Episcopal and First Presbyterian were not the only churches where tensions existed; similar developments were also taking place at Grace Episcopal Church.

The women of Grace Episcopal Church established their Ladies' Aid Society sometime in the 1880s. Averaging a membership of thirty, the women raised money for the church by making and sewing dolls, aprons, and other fancy work and holding an annual doll show that included candy, cakes, ice cream -- the usual domestic items for sale. They also developed a strategy for raising money that had been used by several male benevolent societies; they owned a rental house and used the $216 annual rent, which comprised one-third of their income, to lend aid to the parish. It was truly a woman's project. The rental property on Broadway had been bequeathed to the Ladies' Aid from Sarah Pearson, one of its members, and owning it required acquiring a certain business acumen — collecting rent, paying taxes, ordering repairs, housecleaning, and contracting for paving the sidewalk. In return, or really out of good will to their benefactress, the ladies continued to pay the family's pew rent and made sure that the woman's grave was well tended. Their revenue was never as large as that of Trinity Guild, and while they did try to do poor relief in the 1890s, in the period after the 1900
storm the women acted as primary parish caretakers, holding fairs, bazaars, and the ubiquitous oyster roast (a traditional dinner among Galvestonians) in order to keep the parish afloat. Beginning in 1907 Grace Episcopal Church experienced a serious decline; between 1908 and 1926 there were occasional years when the parish had no priest. The Ladies' Aid, especially after the 1915 storm, came to play a critical role in raising funds, but they too felt that they could not afford to buy anything new for the parish until "the church was free from debt." In 1917 their wealthy benefactress Mollie M. Rosenberg died, yet the women carried on. 134

To illustrate how seriously the women in these societies took their responsibilities, and the importance they attached to their opinions, one need only look to the case of Miss Irene Saunders and the selection of a new rector. Having endured four intermittent years without a priest, the vestry finally chose in 1917 to call the Reverend Gaynor Banks whom the ladies endorsed with their signatures. Apparently, the vestrymen changed their minds without informing the members of the Ladies' Aid and decided at the last minute to call another candidate, the Reverend S. G. Porter. Needless to say there was consternation in the Society the following week. President Saunders and one other member tendered their resignations because "the vestry had shown little regard for the opinion and labour of the women of the Church, by totally ignoring them in their selection of a rector."135 This was particularly galling since the ladies had disbursed to the vestry $300, one-half of their income for 1917.136 It may have been an unwise move on the part of the vestry — akin to killing the goose — for after December 1917 the minutes end and there is no evidence that the Ladies' Aid continued; six years later the parish reverted to mission status.137
Resigning from office in a women's church society in protest over the actions of the men's governing board constituted radical action. Criticizing or complaining about the actions of male church leaders was more common, and grew even more frequent in the years when a viable and strident woman's suffrage movement overtook the city and influenced women in the direction of equal rights. As one might expect, these altercations between the ladies and the gentlemen occurred in those churches where women had become indispensable to the solvency of the church treasury.

This brings us back to the all-important point about women controlling their own money and making decisions based on their own priorities. Where women had invested heavily in the maintenance of church structures, grounds, and programs, they were more likely to expect in return a form of partnership, if not equality, in the way things were run. This was not necessarily true with churches where women emphasized missions — the money was sent out to causes beyond the church budget. In the case of the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians, however, where their funds were critical to church revenue, they chose to confront the men on issues of accountability — putting up their fair share for a West End chapel, attending to basic churchmanship, and consulting the women before imposing a rector upon them. Underlying each confrontation was a hidden issue — the power of the purse. That is not to say that women used money instead of piety to gain influence, but they knew that their earnings provided them leverage, if only to move the men to hear and act on their complaints. Not surprisingly, these women were also the most active in women's societies outside the church; the majority of suffragists also came from these churches. Probably their involvement in secular organizations lent them the courage or
experience to stand firm in their own congregations, just as solidarity in
church life gave women the desire and confidence to enact reform through
secular women's groups.

A more promising development for women's laity rights percolated
upward to the next level. Male delegates to the Diocesan Council in 1919,
sensing the need to affirm women's rights, moved to endorse woman's
suffrage. The motion failed, but three years later delegates felt they owed
women representation, and voted "for changing the constitution to permit
women to be delegates to the [Diocesan] Council..." It must have seemed an
unusually unfair blow when this was vetoed by Bishop George H.
Kinsolving, ending for the time being hope of women's representation to
decision making at the diocesan level. Despite the setback, the time
would come when churchwomen would vote in parish meetings and serve
as vestry members, but not within the lifetimes of the women who repaired
the parish after the storm of 1900.

By way of an epilogue, it should be noted that in 1903 Trinity Church
women created a Woman's Auxiliary to the Board of Missions, presided over
in its early years by Mrs. Charles Aves, the rector's wife. This group
coordinated with the national church efforts to spread the gospel worldwide,
and included every woman on the roster, making this organization a
predecessor to the Women of the Church, an overarching organization
designed to consolidate parish women's groups. The most important facet of
the Woman's Auxiliary was its link to the women's arm of the national
church, which had been developing since the 1870s. As an ambitious and
energetic national women's parallel church developed, Episcopal women at
the parish level soon benefited from the concepts of a national women's
churchwide movement. The eventual outcome of affiliation with this parallel movement was integration by women into church governing systems at the General Conference and the eventual ordination of women priests. But that is another long chapter in the history of women in the church.

From the city's earliest frontier beginnings women had been active in church life, teaching, singing, praying, donating, and finally organizing among themselves. By their presence, women made profound changes in church structures, furnishings, programs, and patterns of decision making. They brought their cultural values to a forum that although firm in patriarchal governmental construct, was yet malleable under the influences of woman's domestic nature. As the nineteenth century ended and the new age began, churches reflected the nearly century-long influence of woman's artistic, nurturing, and domestic cultural contributions.

Women who joined in the cultural transmission were changed too, but none more so than those who invested in the financial and physical improvement of the buildings, grounds, and programs of their churches. As society modernized and became more open to women in areas outside the home, so women's aspirations for a more equal partnership in church affairs increased. At the local level this led to conflict that only resulted in a reevaluation of old customs. Whereas women made questionable gains in areas of church governance, they took tremendous strides in advancing their vision of a more caring church. When they found no avenue of advancement into positions of parish leadership, they instead looked to other women to broaden and strengthen their power within the denomination. Rather than finding alliance with men, they sought and gained common
purpose with women across the state and at the regional and national levels. In every denomination a parallel women's church evolved to unite those who found few opportunities for integration and policy making.

For some, unifying with other churchwomen was not the only answer to women's limited participation in positions of authority; becoming an officer in a church society was the beginning step in a journey toward greater community activism. The now-familiar phrase penned by Anne Firor Scott and repeated in Chapter 1, that by 1900 "the public life of nearly every Southern woman leader ... began in a church society" is indicative of the common assumption that participation in church societies led to community activism. While this has the ring of truth to it, there are qualifications and adjustments that need explaining. In Galveston the aphorism was only half true; 193, or 52 percent, out of 370 women who were officers of women's secular clubs and societies, were also members and officers of a church society. Moreover, for those women who did advance from church society to civic life, it depended on the church, the society, and the individual. Some laywomen's associations were more conducive to integrating women into secular life than others. Women from Catholic, Lutheran, and evangelical church societies were far more likely to remain outside the realm of women's secular activism as evidenced by the fact that 25.6 percent of the 193 women active in both secular and church societies belonged to or were officers of those church groups. The figure is even smaller when based on the total 370 women activists, equaling 13.3 percent for Catholic, Lutheran, and evangelical women. (See Table 2:2.) Those from the Episcopal and Presbyterian women's societies tended to dominate women's clubs and associations. Nearly one-half (44 percent) of all women active in church and secular
societies came from the Episcopal churches (34.6 percent from Trinity Church Guild alone). This figure constitutes 22.9 percent of all activist women. Presbyterian women accounted for 16.5 percent of women active in church societies and 8.6 percent of overall active women. The remainder belonged to Jewish and Swedenborgian congregational groups.

The church societies that seemed to encourage women to form public associations were those that afforded them the best opportunity to experience first hand the enormous problems of urban life. Pressing in upon them in the late-nineteenth century were distressing glimpses of poverty and destitution caused by industrialization. All of this contrasted sharply with the wealth created by a growing commercialism. Women with means, especially from churches, responded to the disparity in conditions in a variety of ways. As we shall see, Trinity Church Guild and the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid Society functioned not only as parish caretakers and housekeepers but also as relief societies for the poor; their members, who did not care if the supplicants were of their faith, were most likely to enter the secular world of women's civic responsibilities.

Conclusion

Southern women found a more abundant life within their churches. The sacred beauty of worship service, the enjoyment of fellowship, and the opportunities for service drew women within the Spirit's tether. There they served their Master by lifting voices in harmony, by showering the sanctuary with memorial gifts, by taking their places on church committees, by teaching little ones and adults the essentials of a Christian life, and by aiding the church in all-woman societies. Their roles as choir members and directors,
organists, donors, committee members, Sunday School and adult Bible teachers, and as laywomen volunteers signify the increasing responsibilities that women shared in church affairs. Denied access to positions of ecclesiastical authority, women, nonetheless, shaped a world for themselves within church walls, a world that resembled their domestic culture.

Almost every aspect of women's life within home and church became replicated in their own semi-religious or secular associations. Women found voice in women's choruses, artistic expression in art leagues, gravetending in patriotic and civic societies, teaching in literary clubs, children's work in benevolent institutions, and youth work in the WCTU and the YWCA. They transferred their culture to worlds beyond the home and church, and in the process were changed by it. Most valuable of all to women's independence and autonomy were women's church societies that were free of male dominance. The steps women took toward reform in the city began in women's church societies. How they fashioned these societies, bending them to serve their goals of poor relief within the city, is the subject of the next chapter.
Table 2:1  White Church Membership and Activist Women By Denominations in Galveston

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>No. % 1890</th>
<th>No. % 1906</th>
<th>No. % 1916</th>
<th>No. % Activist Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>734 (5.3)</td>
<td>534 (2.5)</td>
<td>1,220 (5.2)</td>
<td>21 (5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic#</td>
<td>8,200 (55.1)</td>
<td>14,872 (70.2)</td>
<td>11,299 (48.6)</td>
<td>21 (5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dis. of Christ</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>379 (1.6)</td>
<td>3 (.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal#</td>
<td>670 (4.8)</td>
<td>1,278 (6.0)</td>
<td>815 (3.5)</td>
<td>136 (36.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>650 (4.7)</td>
<td>200*</td>
<td>1,000 (4.3)</td>
<td>36 (9.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>787 (5.2)</td>
<td>758 (3.5)</td>
<td>1,152 (4.9)</td>
<td>7 (1.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist **</td>
<td>1,280 (9.3)</td>
<td>1,308 (6.1)</td>
<td>2,098 (9.0)</td>
<td>39 (10.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian**</td>
<td>485 (3.5)</td>
<td>475 (2.2)</td>
<td>617 (2.6)</td>
<td>54 (14.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49 (13.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other #</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>1,932</td>
<td>4,642</td>
<td>4 (1.0)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total All</td>
<td>13,748</td>
<td>21,157</td>
<td>23,222</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#Includes black congregants  * Heads of families only. ** Northern and Southern.
*** Christian Science =1 and Swedenborgian =3.
Table 2:2   Activist Women in Congregational Women’s Societies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>No. Women in Congregational Societies</th>
<th>Percent Women in Cong. Societies</th>
<th>Percent Total Women Activists N= 370</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Baptist</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadway Baptist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Heart</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary’s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Patrick’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples of Christ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Christian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>44.04</td>
<td>22.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>37.30</td>
<td>19.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple B’Nai Israel</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Lutheran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.43</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John’s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Methodist</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West End</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedenborgian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Church</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16.58</td>
<td>8.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16.06</td>
<td>8.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>193</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>99.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
1 William McCullough to Mrs. Margaret Jane McCullough, August 3, 1870, in William Wallace McCullough, Jr., "John McCullough 'Grandfather,' 1805-1870: Pioneer Presbyterian Missionary and Teacher in the Republic of Texas"; hereinafter cited as McCullough Biography, typescript, Subject Files (Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas; hereinafter cited as Rosenberg Library).

2 Ibid.


4 Lucy P. Shaw to Mrs. Jane N. Weston, March 1, 1840, Lucy P. Shaw Papers (Rosenberg Library) (quotation); Texas Presbyterian, June 9, 1876; Galveston Daily News, January 1, 1939; Galveston Tribune, April 14, 1936; Echoes from the Past: A Brochure of Brief Historical Sketches Connected with Presbyterianism in the South and its God-given Work in the World (Galveston: Presbytery of Brazos, 1936), 11-13.

5 William McCullough to John W. Riddell, June 8, 1878, McCullough Biography (quotation). Manuscript Census Returns, Galveston Co., 1880; Galveston City Directory, 1880.

6 William McCullough to John W. Riddell, June 8, 1878, McCullough Biography.

7 Sunday School Records, 1877-79, 1895-99, First Presbyterian Church Records, Galveston (Rosenberg Library); hereinafter cited as FPC Records; Echoes from the Past, 15.

8 By 1900 Margaret no longer took in boarders, she lived in the same home with her youngest daughter and a woman friend. Manuscript Census Returns, Galveston County, 1900.


12 Friedman, The Enclosed Garden, xii (quotation); and Friedman, "Women's History and Revision of Southern History," in Joanne V. Hawks and Sheila L. Skemp, eds., Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1983), 6. Nancy
F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1977) early on, showed that a separate female world, while limited by its very separateness, gave strength to women who alone, isolated into family units, would not have found common identity with other women, and therefore would not have been empowered to move beyond their purely domestic lives to a public arena. See also Barbara Berg, The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978).

Implicit in this concept is the notion that women's sphere and women's culture are two different, yet related, phenomena. Again, Lerner provides the rationale to distinguish between the two. "'Woman's sphere' is a nineteenth-century term, denoting those aspects of activity and function men determined appropriate to women. . . . If one speaks of women's activities and goals from a woman-centered point of view, one calls that which women do and the way in which they do it, woman's culture. . . ." or, more succinctly, "'woman's culture' is women's redefinition in their own terms." She goes on to point out that women are not confined to their sphere or their cultural world, but live a "duality - as members of the general culture and as partakers of women's culture." Lerner, "Politics and Culture in Women's History," 52.

For the most succinct study of women's sphere as seen through prescriptive literature see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," American Quarterly, 18 (Summer 1966), 151-74.

In Galveston women's sewing societies within churches were formed shortly before the town's incorporation in 1839. Catherine Clinton, for example, notes that "northern women created their own female culture, a counterculture undermined patriarchal oppression," but she suggests that antebellum southern women lacked such a culture because of physical isolation and the demands of a plantation economy. Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 10-11; Friedman also supports this view in "Women's History and Revision of Southern History," 6; as well as in The Enclosed Garded, xii-xiii.


Ibid. xix.

This is more akin to that version of culture offered by Gerda Lerner as "the familial and friendship networks of women, their affective ties, their rituals." Although Lerner speaks of a women's culture in terms of sisterhood and communality, she leaves open the possibility that culture was not necessarily created solely from women's associations independent of family and kinship. Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 242. Lebsock goes beyond this by claiming that individual women displayed behavior unique to women as a group regardless of their affiliation with one another, and that these sensibilities to the misfortunes of others, or to the economic insecurity of other women, or to the breakup of slave families were based on personal experiences as women within an inequitarian, gendered society. Some feminist anthropologists see societies in general organized around gender systems and seek to find answers to the position of women by analyzing

18 In the broader field of anthropology Clifford Geertz advises that "frameworks are the very stuff of cultural anthropology, which is mostly engaged in trying to determine what this people or that take to be the point of what they are doing...." Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 4. Perhaps it is best to describe women's clubs and societies as part of a broader women's culture but refer to it as women's associational culture. Darlene Roth has coined the term "matronage" to describe women's associational culture in Atlanta; Darlene Rebecca Roth, "Matronage: Patterns in Women's Organizations, Atlanta, Georgia, 1890-1940 (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington Univ., 1978). For a defense of the study of women's culture see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Politics and Culture in Women's History;" and Ellen Carol DuBois, Gail Paradise Kelly, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, Carolyn W. Korsmeyer, and Lillian S. Robinson, Feminist Scholarship: Kindling in the Groves of Academe (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1987), 56-57, 66-67.

19 Cita Cook's dissertation-in-progress, "Growing Up White, Genteel, and Female in the South" (University of California at Berkeley) will discuss the distinctive aspects of southern women's culture for upper-class southern women. See also Steven Stowe, Power and Intimacy in the Old South: Rituals in the Lives of the Planters (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987); and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill and London: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988).

20 John B. Boles, The Great Revival: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1972); and Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 47-49. Mathews estimates that 27 percent of the white adult population were church members, most were Evangelicals, and "southern women outnumbered men in the churches (65:35), though men outnumbered women in the general population (51.5:48.5). p47, 102-105.


22 For a description of the woman's sphere within the Methodist church see Rosemary Skinner Keller, "Creating a Sphere for Women," in Hilah F. Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds., Women in New Worlds, I, 246-260. Women's church societies will be discussed in Chapter 3.

23 "Reminiscences of Mrs. Martha H. Poole," May 14, 1925, typescript, Subject Files (Rosenberg Library).
24Galveston Daily News, December 26, 1884 quoted in William Manning Morgan, 
Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church, Galveston, Texas, 1841-1953 (Galveston and Houston: The 
Anson Jones Press, 1954), 482-83; hereinafter cited as Morgan, TEC with appropriate page 
number.

25See "Etheldreda Aves," Subject Files (Rosenberg Library, Galveston); Galveston 
Daily News, April 18, 1942.

26Morgan, TEC, 478; The Methodists, on the other hand, retained the same woman 
organist for thirty-two years. Mrs. J. E. Murphy, "The History of Methodism in Galveston, 
1839-1942," p. 28, typescript (Moody Memorial Methodist Church, Galveston).

27Morgan, TEC, 478; Galveston Daily News, March 1, 1914, November 14, 1925; "Mrs. 
William Francis Beers," typescript, Beers Family Papers (Rosenberg Library, Galveston).

28Although the records are unclear when Louise F. Parker was hired as choir director of 
Trinity Church, the date was probably before or close to January 1904. Morgan, TEC, 111, 235 
(quotation), 443; Records for the Ladies' Musical Club do not predate 1899; Louise Parker was 
music director at that time. Programs, Ladies Musical Club of Galveston, 1899-1905, Subject 
Files, Rosenberg Library. The club was founded in 1886 or 1888.


30We cannot be sure about the state of Louise Parker's feminism because she died in 1910 
before a permanent suffrage society was formed in Galveston. All the Fowlers were supporters 
of women's suffrage, however. By choosing paid work in a field where talent and training 
mattered, she may have been pioneering the path she felt women should take.

31Minutes, TEC, April 22, 1901 (quotation) April 12, 1910. The other vestry committees 
included finance, pew, envelope (stewardship), and church property. Women were not vestry 
members at this time.

32The exceptions were memorials to fallen war heroes and storm victims raised by 
women's groups such as the Daughters of the Republic of Texas or the Women's Health 
Protective Association. Even so, many of these monuments were placed in cemeteries, places 
that had traditionally been part of women's domestic sphere.

33Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg, 198. Bequests and gifts by women changed over 
time to include structures specifically for women's organizations and the poor. See chapter four.

34Murphy,"The History of Methodism in Galveston," 31-39. The windows of the First 
Presbyterian Church memorialize Sarah Perry Ball, one of the first to be baptized in the 
church, president of the Ladies Aid Society, and benefactress of a charitable fund; Sarah 
Parker Perry, Sarah Ball's mother; Anne T. Trueheart, organizer of the West End mission 
church; Agnes Davie Killough; and Nellie Pitt. The remaining five windows were not 
memorialized." A Brief Historical Introduction to the First Presbyterian Church, Galveston, 
Texas," brochure, FPC Papers.
Women's societies sewed the choir vestments, embroidered the altar cloths and kneeling pads.


Henry Rosenberg, 17-21.

To his wife, Mollie, he left the family home and $150,000 in bonds. The remainder of his estate he divided among his family in Switzerland and friends and executors in Galveston. Will of Henry R. Rosenberg, May 31, 1892, Rosenberg Family Papers.

Grace Episcopal Church is located at 36th Street and Avenue L. Galveston Daily News, September 2, 1895; Galveston Daily News, November, 1895, clipping (Grace Episcopal Church, Galveston), (quotation); Henry Rosenberg, 109-111. Grace Episcopal Church: A Hundred Years of Grace (Galveston: Limited Edition printed for Grace Church, 1974), 6-10. The reredos and altar cost $4,000. Silas McBee to Mrs. Henry Rosenberg, December 23, 1895, Rosenberg Family Papers (Rosenberg Library). Mollie Rosenberg spent approximately $20,000 on the interior furnishings. Galveston Tribune, November 17, 1926.

The angel lectern was a gift in memory of Letitia Rosenberg; the chancel rail, clergy stalls, credence table, and bishop's chair were given in memory of her brother, William D. Macgill; the bronze pulpit was given in memory of another brother, Richard Ragan Macgill; and the windows were given in memory of her father, sisters, aunts, Henry's parents, and childhood friends.

The magnificat also glorifies the function of female reproduction, and has been interpreted by followers at different times in church history as an sanctification of motherhood. Mollie Rosenberg had no children and may have felt a greater sense of identification with the women at the tomb.

I am indebted to Joan Gundersen for this insight.

Rosenberg Family Papers; City Directory, 1898, Minutes of the Woman's Home, 1894; Minutes of Galveston Orphans' Home (Rosenberg Library).

Galveston Daily News, September 2, 1895.


For the funeral of Peter Peterson, 210 screwmen marched in procession from the union hall to the church to the cemetery and back to the hall at 2:30 p.m. on February 27, 1881. The union paid $60 for funeral expenses and $30 for a band. After 1888 only the union’s relief committee was required to attend funerals. Galveston Screwmen's Benevolent Association


This was particularly true in the rural South where family plots were often maintained on some secluded part of the farm or plantation and where maintenance of graves was performed by the womenfolk. For an example of the ritual of women kinfolk traveling together to tend the graves and remark over the deceased as a part of growing up female in the South see Shirley Abbot, *Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1983), 1-3. For a discussion of southern folk cemeteries but without mention of women as caretakers see Terry G. Jordan, *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 13-40.

Rosanna Dyer Osterman died in the explosion of the steamship W.R. Carter on the Mississippi River near Vicksburg. Her estate, valued at $204,000, was divided among charities in Galveston, Houston, New Orleans, Cincinnati, and New York. Charles W. Hayes, *History of the Island and the City of Galveston* (2 vols., Cincinnati, 1879), II, 892; Henry Cohen, David Lefkowitz, Ephraim Frisch, *One Hundred Years of Jewry in Texas* (Dallas, 1936), 9-10; Record Ledger of Association Secretary, 1854-1882, May 6, 1867, Howard Association of Galveston Records (Rosenberg Library, Galveston); Rosanna Dyer Osterman's will, filed March 26, 1866, Will Book 2, pp. 229-44, Galveston County Courthouse; Rosanna Dyer Osterman's inventory, Inventories Book I, pp 405-11, Galveston County Courthouse; *Galveston Tri-Weekly News*, February 14, 1866; A. Stanley Dreyfus, "Hebrew Cemetery No.1 of Galveston," typescript, A Stanley Dreyfus Papers (Rosenberg Library).


*ibid.*

Minutes, *TEC*, June 6, 1881, July 8, 1884(first quotation), April 5, 1885, April 6, 1886 (second quotation).


Boles, The Great Revival, 91 (quotation); Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 49-50, 243-45.


Rufus B. Spain, At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptist, 1865-1900 (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 1961), vii-x.

Spain, At Ease in Zion, vii-x.


Kenneth K. Bailey, Rufus B. Spain, and John Eighmy, author of Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1972), are all silent on the subject of Sunday Schools even though they often mention sectarian secondary and higher education. State denominational histories provide better coverage of Sunday Schools and youth organizations; see, for example, Walter N. Vernon, et al., The Methodist Excitement in Texas, 176-180.


Vernon, et al., The Methodist Excitement, 178.

Echoes of the Past, 16; "Lessons of the First Presbyterian Church Sabbath School of Galveston, April 4 to June 27, 1869 ; Sunday School Reports, July 8, 1875; April 28, 1877, all in FPC Papers. The best source of statistical information on Sunday Schools in Galveston comes from the U.S. Census, Religious Bodies, 1906, pp. 442-43; and 1916, pp. 405-07. Few reliable figures are available for preceding years. Figures below are for white churches only.

Church Minutes, First Baptist Church, Galveston, July 10, 1842, April 19, 1846, August 3, 1860, March 6, 1863, January 29, 1874. First Baptist Church Papers; hereinafter cited as Minutes, FBC; James P. Cole to Gail Borden, March 11, 1855, Gail Borden Papers, both in
Minutes, FBC, January 29, April 30, December 3, 1874.

Ibid., January 3, 1878, March 3, 1881; First Baptist Church had experienced a painful division in its congregation from 1878 to 1881 caused, apparently, by pastoral mismanagement. Once the pastor had moved on, the congregation reunited but not without significant financial sacrifice.

A. Branch Norman, "History of Central Methodist Episcopal, South of Galveston, Texas," pamphlet, Subject Files (Rosenberg Library). The church's name began as West End Methodist Church, South until 1914, then became Thirty-Third Street Methodist Episcopal Church, South until 1927, when the name was finalized with Central Methodist Church, South. The church also changed ministers nineteen times before 1927, Galveston Daily News, September 2, 1929. Although the church location and name was changed three times before 1927, the small but active congregation decided to support its own mission even further to the west of the city in 1904. Again, a Methodist woman initiated the program by holding Sunday School in her home until a building was erected at 41st Street and Avenue Q. Named the Crockett Mission, it became Crockett Place Methodist Church in 1929 after relocating to 51st Street and Avenue R. See also Mrs. J. E. Murphy, "The History of Methodism in Galveston," 12-13; Galveston Daily News, April 13, 1941. The Central Methodist Church, which evolved in 1927, should not be confused with the Central Methodist Church that existed for a time in the early 1900s as a continuation of the combined St. John's and St. James's churches. It later was renamed First Methodist Church. In the antebellum period Methodists had sponsored a black congregation and had welcomed the establishment of a German Methodist congregation in 1850. Scandinavian Methodists formed a congregation in the early 1880s, which later became known as St. James Methodist Church. Vernon, et al., Methodist Excitement, 104-6.

The First German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Galveston was established by a small band of German residents in the city. They were assisted by missionaries from St. Chrischona, Switzerland, in 1850. The Reverend H. Wendt, among the missionaries, remained to establish a parochial school for German students at a time when no public schools existed. Galveston Tribune, September 24, 1915; A Brief Review of the Past and Survey of the Present of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Galveston (Galveston, 1925). 4-7, 17; Glen E. Lich, The German Texans (San Antonio: University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, 1981), 125-26. Terry G. Jordan places the German population in Galveston in 1850 and 1860 at 1,088 and 1,673 respectively, or about one-quarter to one-third of the city's population. Jordan, German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 53. See also Ralph A. Wooster, "Foreigners in the Principal Towns of Antebellum Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 66 (1962-63), 209-210.

H. C. Ziebe, A Centennial Story of the Lutheran Church (2 vols. in 1; Seguin, Texas: South Texas Printing Co., 1951), II, 147-48; Minutes [Protokoll-Buch], First Evangelical German Lutheran Church, January 1893 to 1912 (Rosenberg Library); microfilm.

Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 112; Gillespie, "The Domestic Sun." See also James L. Leloudis, II, "Subversion of the Feminine Ideal," in Keller, Queen, and Thomas, eds.,
Women in New Worlds, II, 60-75.


75 "Martha Poole's Reminiscences,"

76 Sunday Bulletin, First Baptist Church, Galveston, February 13, 1927, First Baptist Church Papers.

77 Morgan, TEC, 451 (quotation), 465.

78 A Hundred Years of Grace, 5-15. In 1971, nearly 100 years after its inception by Miss Effie Raymond, two laywomen were elected to the vestry of Grace Church. Morgan, TEC, 654-77. Two other missions for whites, St. Andrew's and St. Michael's, began in 1880 and 1884 with teachers from Trinity Church, but they did not survive the 1900 storm. St. Augustine's, the city's only black Episcopal church began as a mission in 1884. There is no indication that Trinity women taught Sunday School there; the mission building did not survive the storm, but the congregants were given space to worship in Eaton Chapel, a part of Trinity Church complex, until the congregation built its own structure in 1902. Why Trinity women did not teach the black children remains a puzzlement. Racism must be considered as a possible explanation, but Lawrence Brown suggests that there may have been resistance to white intrusion on the part of St. Augustine's congregants, who were Jamaican immigrants, members of the Church of England, and who were accustomed to autonomous parishes governed by black parish officers and clergymen. For a full explanation of Texas Episcopal ministries to blacks see Lawrence L. Brown, The Episcopal Church in Texas: The Diocese of Texas, 1875-1965 (Austin, Eakin Press, 1985), 9-11.


80 Trinity Episcopal Protestant Church Sunday School apparently began with the English-born Reverend Benjamin Eaton in 1843. Vestry minutes before 1852 did not survive the many storms that ravaged the island, but a letter to the Foreign Committee on the Board of Missions indicated that there were six teachers and thirty scholars at the time. By 1850 the school had increased to eight teachers and forty pupils. After "thorough organization" the school leapt ahead in 1858 to thirty-two officers and teachers and 104 pupils. Morgan, TEC, 450-51.
Minutes, TEC, 1852-1893.

Morgan, TEC, 451-52. By 1904 Galveston had the state’s finest public library, the generous gift of Henry Rosenberg, a member of Trinity Episcopal.

Ibid., 458-59, quoting the Galveston Daily News, May 1, 1875, January 3, 1877.


Ibid. In the 1875 Easter parade 297 children in thirty-three classes, were led by twenty-six women teachers (twenty-two of whom were single) and seven men. In 1885 Sunday School enrollment reached 400 with twenty-four classes. Minutes, TEC, October 6, 1885. Trinity and its two city missions reached their peak Sunday School enrollment in 1894 with 667 students and forty-one teachers (thirty-six were women, twenty-two were single women). After 1895 a slight decline set in, which accelerated with the 1900 storm, as the parish as a whole suffered. By 1911, however, in keeping with the increasing feminization of the teaching staff, all twenty-two teachers were women, eighteen of them single. Ibid., 453-65.

Ibid., 461, quoting the Galveston Daily News, April 15, 1879.


Peter G. Filene states that between 1890 and 1910 female enrollment in colleges increased threefold and by 1900, 40 percent of all undergraduates were women. Him/Her/Self; Sex Roles in Modern America (2d edition, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 26. See also Rosalind Rosenberg, Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 4, 18.

Minutes, FBC, February 1, 1861; “Martha Poole’s Reminiscences”.

Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 109.

The early antebellum First Baptist Church of Galveston was biracial, but blacks and whites after 1846 worshipped in separate structures. The black First Baptist Church had fifty members. In the years 1840 to 1861, 102 white women (60 percent) and 68 white men (40 percent) joined the church. Because of continual outmigration, church membership never appeared very high in any one year, although the church reached a peak in 1851 with 64 white and 54 black members. By 1860 the membership for whites had dropped by one-half with a proportionate decrease in male leadership. Membership declined due to four years of yellow fever epidemics, outmigration, and pastoral failure to attract new members. Information for the antebellum Baptist church was extracted from Minutes, FBC, 1850-1861. See also Elizabeth H. Turner, Spiritual Equality and Social Inequality: The Emergence of Black and Female Autonomy in the First Baptist Church of Galveston, 1840-1861,” paper presented to the Southwest Social Science
meeting, March, 1985.

92 Minutes, FBC, March 6, 11, 1866; Vernon E. Bennett, *An Informal History of the First Baptist Church, Galveston, Texas* (Galveston: Privately Printed), 36; "Martha Poole's Reminiscences."

93 Martha Poole's Reminiscences; Bennett, *An Informal History*, 36.

94 "Martha Poole's Reminiscences".

95 Church bulletin, FBC, February 13, 1927, FBC Papers.

96 I am grateful to Margaret M. Miles of Harvard Divinity School for her theological insights regarding power and privilege. *Galveston Tribune*, May 12, 1926 (first quotation); January 19, 1927; *Galveston Daily News*, January 19, 1927; Church bulletin, FBC, February 13, 1927.


99 *Echoes from the Past*, 16-17; *Galveston Daily News*, December 28, 1912. "Fiftieth Anniversary, Ida Austin Bible Class of the Sunday School of the First Presbyterian Church, Galveston, Texas, March 2, 1934," bulletin, FPC Papers; Austin, "Story of the Ida Austin Bible Class."

100 "Fiftieth Anniversary, Ida Austin Bible Class"; Interview with Rita Lou Weber, historian First Presbyterian Church of Galveston, October, 1988.


102 *Galveston Daily News*, August 7, 1938; Will of Ida Austin, FPC Papers; "Fiftieth Anniversary."

103 Thirty-four church-related women's societies were listed in the 1913 Galveston city directory.

104 "In 1910 the [Baptist Young Ladies] Guild purchased an Individual Lord's Supper Service. . . . Mrs. Chas. Scrimgeour had been appointed on the Lord's Supper Committee." "Women's Work in the First Baptist Church, Galveston, Texas," typescript, p. 8 (First Baptist Church, Galveston). Minutes, Ladies Aid Society First Presbyterian Church, October 23, 1890, FPC Records; hereinafter LASFPC.

105 Ziehe, *The Lutheran Church in Texas*, II, 323.
Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg, 223.


The best evidence of this may be seen throughout the minutes of the First Baptist Church.

City Directories, 1880-1910; Galveston Daily News, February 26, April 2, 1922.

Sheila Hackett, Dominican Women in Texas: From Ohio to Galveston and Beyond (Houston: Sacred Heart Convent of Houston, Texas, 1986), 65.


FBC minutes, May 3, 1886; "Women's Work in the FBC," p. 8; Minutes of the Woman's Auxiliary of the First Baptist Church, Galveston, Texas, December 2, 1918 to January 7, 1924 (quotation from December 2, 1918) (First Baptist Church, Galveston). For a history of the Women's Missionary Union in Texas see Martin, "Hidden Work: Baptist Women in Texas, 1880-1920," 103-57; and Mrs. W. J. J. Smith, A Centennial History of the Baptist Women of Texas, 1830-1930 (Dallas: Woman's Missionary Union of Texas, 1933).
Minutes of the Woman's Auxiliary, FBC, December 9, 1918, January 6, 13, 20 (quotation), February 10, March 17, 24, 30, May 5, July 21, October 27, December 15, December 29, 1919.

City Directories, 1880-1900; Murphy, "History of the Woman's Missionary Society of First Methodist Church South," [3-5]. For a description of Laredo Seminary in Laredo, Texas, the Saltillo school for children and Normal School, Virginia Atkinson's mission work in Soochow, China, and Scarritt College see Haskin, Women and Missions in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 53-55, 136-44, Chap. 11; and Tatum, A Crown of Service, 84-88, Chap. 18. On home missions see Virginia A. Shadron, "Out of Our Homes: The Woman's Rights Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1890-1918" (M.A. Thesis, Emory University, 1976); Elaine Magalis, Conduct Becoming to a Woman: Bolted Doors and Bourgeoning Missions (Nashville: United Methodist Church, 1973); and McDowell, The Social Gospel in the South.

Baptist and Methodist women made up the majority of members in the WCTU, and half the officers of the YWCA. These semi-religious organizations for women organized permanently in Galveston in the twentieth century but are not the same type of secular organizations as the Women's Health Protective Association and the Equal Suffrage Association in which few Methodists and even fewer Baptists participated. For information regarding North Carolina Methodist women that defines the priorities of churchwomen and clubwomen see Anastasia Sims, "Sisterhoods of Service," in Keller, Queen, and Thomas, eds., Women in New Worlds, II, 196-210.

Patricia Martin, in "Hidden Work" argues that "resistance to women's organizing, even to fill a traditional supportive role, continued in Texas until the 1890s and in the S[Bap]tist C[onvention] well into the twentieth century" (p. 107-108). See also Beaver, American Protestant Women, 100-104, for a description of men's opposition to women's ministries and the church as "the bastion of male arrogance and power" (p. 104).

One Hundredth Anniversary of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church (Galveston, 1950), 55-59 (quotation on p. 55); A Brief Review of the Past and Survey of the Present of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Galveston (Galveston, 1925), 19; Ziehe, A Centennial Story of the Lutheran Church in Texas, II, 325-26.

The description of the annual missionary tea came from Minutes, Ladies Aid Society First Presbyterian Church, February 23, 1893. Ice cream socials were almost as laborious, needing five gallons of ice cream (made with a crank and hard-to-procure ice) and eight cakes. For a general description of the activities of Presbyterian women see Ernest Thrice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South (3 vols.; Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1973), III, Chap. 15; and Lois A. Boyd and Douglas Brackenridge, Presbyterian Women in America: Two Centuries of a Quest for Status (Westport Conn: Greenwood Press, 1983), Chap. 13.

Minutes, LASFPC, March 27, 1890.

Minutes, LASFPC, April 24, 1890.

Minutes, LASFPC, March 12, 1891. Italic in the original.
Minutes, LASFPC, May 7, 1891 (quotation), January 28, February 4, 11, March 3, 1892.

Vestry minutes, TEC, February 16, 1882. Italics not in the original.

Morgan, Trinity Episcopal, 540.

Vestry minutes, TEC, May 5, 1885 (first quotation), April 6, 1886 (second quotation).

Ibid., March 4, 1890, June 6, 1891.

Trinity Church Guild minutes, June 1, 1902, TEC Records; hereinafter cited as TCG minutes. Vestry minutes, TEC, June, August, 1901, September 2, 1902.

TCG minutes, February 3, 1902. Of course this meant that the money, which the members controlled, came mostly from other women, or rather from their husbands, who attended the school. In 1902 the "Guild voted [to] be the custodian of its own funds."

Morgan, Trinity Episcopal, 567. TCG minutes, March 2, December 7, 1903, December 5, 1904, January 10, 1905, March 19, November 12, 1906, June 3, 1907 (there was some grumbling about the rectory: "Several thought it was the place of the Vestry to shoulder the responsibility and the Guild's to help them carry out their plans." December 20, 1915, December 3, 1917. See also Vestry minutes, TEC, February 3, 1916, September 1918.

Vestry minutes, TEC, February 17, 1915.

Minutes, Ladies Aid Society Grace Episcopal Church, June 1, December 7, 1915, January 11, October 10, December 3, 1916, January 15, 22, April 17, 1917 (Grace Episcopal Church, Galveston); hereinafter cited as Minutes, LASGEC.

Minutes, LASGEC, April 23, September 24, 1917.

Minutes, LASGEC, November 9, 1915; One Hundred Years of Grace, 9. Invoices for the Ladies Aid Society, Grace Episcopal Church, undated and 1896, File 10, Box 3, Rosenberg Family Papers.

Minutes, LASGEC, September 24, 1917.

Minutes, LASGEC, April 17, 1917.

To add injury to insult, in the 1920s a rector sold the rental house owned by the ladies aid and used the money to pay for a family trip to Europe. Aunt Ida to Mrs. L. Fox, February 11, 1949 (Grace Episcopal Church); One Hundred Years of Grace, 12-13.

Vestry minutes, TEC, February 13, 1919, February 3, 1921.

Donovan, A Different Call, Chap. 6, 173-75.

Scott, Southern Lady, 141. The figure includes Jewish women who comprised 25, or 13 percent, of women in church societies.
In July 1893 a Mrs. Brown appealed to the Ladies' Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church for help. She had suffered an unwarranted fate; her husband had abandoned her without any resources for herself or her three small children. Ironically Margaret McCullough, who also had been in desperate straits twenty-three years earlier when left a widow with nine children, pleaded Mrs. Brown's case before the society. "Having been a telegraph operator before her marriage," she began encouragingly," this woman is now trying to again fit herself for a position in a telegraph office...." The ladies discussed the case, as they did those of all supplicants who came for aid, and decided that because "she shows her willingness to help herself" they would pay her rent and provide her with necessities until she "can earn a support for herself and her little ones." Members of the Ladies' Aid Society strove to bring the victims of life's vicissitudes back to independence and, therefore, dignity. It did not always work out as they hoped, especially during the depression years of 1893 to 1895, but they, better than most women of privilege, knew the uncertainties that befell hapless women like Mrs. Brown.2

One month later the case came up again, and this time the ladies enlisted the support of another benevolent society, Trinity Church Guild. "Mrs. Brown, who is courageously fighting life's hard battle and trying to fit herself to provide for herself and her little ones as it is impossible to do this and take care of the children at the same time, the ladies agreed to help to
take care of the little ones for two months . . . . "3 The society arranged to pay for child care with a trusted woman in the community, and Trinity Guild promised $10 toward her expenses. But Mrs. Brown's problems did not disappear. By November she had once again sought the good offices of the ladies when she asked them to provide money to allow her to go to Fort Worth to put her children in the orphanage there.

So it had come to this. Mothers without means and with little chance for earning immediately were at times forced to make the greatest sacrifices of all. The only hopeful sign in this dreadful tale was the plan that Mrs. Brown determined to follow and the aid she received from those who knew the full sorrow of her situation. A loan for a three month "college education in telegraphy" at a school in Waco and money to outfit her were provided by the Ladies' Aid Society. All of this was complicated by the fact that she sought and obtained a divorce from her runaway husband, yet needed character references for admission to the school. The ladies gave her the needed recommendations with a notation in the minutes that read, "she has the sympathy of all of our ladies in her severe trials and it is thought best to see her through...."4 Three months later the Galveston ladies heard that Mrs. Brown had been unable to keep her children and had given her two little girls away to a couple in Waco "relinquishing all maternal rights upon her children...." 5

The ultimate fate of Mrs. Brown, unlike that of her supporter Margaret McCullough, is unknown, as her name does not reappear in the society's minutes. We may wonder if she ever reclaimed her children and started life anew as a wage-earning woman. Actually, McCullough's straits in 1870 had been far more desperate, with nine children and no livelihood
beyond housekeeping. Except for the fact that widowhood proved more respectable than abandonment, she had one thing that Mrs. Brown did not – kin on which to rely in Galveston. Support from kinship or neighborhood networks could make the difference in a family's survival as a unit. By the 1880s Galveston was experiencing an increasing influx of wayfarers, travelers, jobbers, and transients. As traditional kinship networks declined, the need for support groups rose. A host of benevolent societies had long taken care of their own, but it was the women of several churches who first realized the need for support of the unattached and unconnected, the abandoned, or the wayfarer – strangers in their midst. By organizing women's benevolent societies and by assuming the task of urban poor relief, southern white middle- and upper-class ladies took their first lessons in civic responsibility.

* * *

In an underinstitutionalized society, as the Southwest was in the years before the Civil War, relief came primarily from fraternal orders, synagogues, immigrant societies, labor organizations, and sometimes churches, but only for their own members. By looking into the charitable aims of these associations, many of which were formed first by men as a hedge against future uncertainties, we shall begin to discern patterns of benevolence including the importance of women's contributions. For comparative purposes and for a better understanding of the role of gender in aiding the city's poor, this chapter begins with the earliest forms of organized benevolence, the fraternal orders.
Even before Galveston had been legally incorporated in 1839 the Masons had formed two associations, and they were soon followed by the International Order of Odd Fellows. The post-Civil War period saw the formation of several more chapters of Masons and Odd Fellows as well as Knights of Pythias, Druids, and Knights of Honor and Chosen Friends, which served primarily as an insurance organization. By 1892 some twenty-three chapters of the secret and fraternal orders and six chapters of Chosen Friends stood solidly in place, evidence of the city's growing business and professional life. 7

Fraternal orders gave to their Protestant and Jewish male members certification of individual respectability and provided an arena for ritual and pageantry within a liberal religious context. Middle-class men, and women in sister organizations, saw Masonry as a refuge from the rapid changes of the late-nineteenth century and as a force for good. Masons were also a type of secularized church set apart from the increasingly feminized regular churches. But Masonry, because of its reliance on the bonds between "brothers," also served as a vehicle for its members' well-being, success, and security. In this way it contributed to middle-class community stability. A Mason's chances for success in the commercial life of the city were enhanced by his fraternal membership, which by opening doors for trade made possible a decent standard of living, thereby preventing destitution that could drain community resources. Should a member fall prey to illness, bad fortune, even death, the fraternal organizations provided "nurses to wait upon the sick..." relief "not exceeding ten dollars..." and "necessary arrangements for burial of the dead...." 8 One historian has labeled fraternal orders "predecessors of modern life insurance agencies." 9 By forming
associations that took care of their own members in time of need, these secret societies set the pattern of relief in Galveston for thirty years.

Just as fraternal associations provided a safe haven for middle-class Americans, so ethnic benevolent societies created for foreign immigrants life-sustaining enclaves within the larger city. Hostility, ignorance, and prejudice by native Americans often reduced ethnic families' opportunities for gaining a toehold on economic security. By gathering together in mutual association men and their families found friendships and a common cultural understanding, as well as business, labor and professional contacts. The associations intended to preserve traditional cultural values for each immigrant group, but they also furthered the process of adaptation by providing a community where children would gain "the strength to go out into the dominant society." Some associations helped newcomers find jobs and homes, and most provided sickness and death benefits. By 1876 at least five Galveston immigrant groups had formed societies for mutual association and for the purpose of benevolence. The French Benevolent Society's charter, for example, stated that its goals and purposes were to bring French-speaking people together regardless of nationality or religion, and "to aid and assist its members in case of need or sickness and to perform the funeral duties in case of their death...." Every year since its founding in 1860, the Society elected one of its own to serve as Physician "to attend to the members in case of sickness..." and a pharmacist to fill drug orders. There must not have been a great run on this particular society's relief fund because money not used specifically for needy members was invested first in rental property and later in bonds.
Black citizens of Galveston organized early and profusely after the Civil War. By 1883 they had formed at least twenty-one separate organizations for relief, fraternity, and culture — two separate Masonic lodges in 1870 and 1880 with a combined membership of sixty-five in 1881, two Odd Fellows lodges in 1879 and 1880 with 130 members, and several organizations both secular and religious to aid those in need. Black organizations were instrumental in helping freed men and women adjust not only to freedom but to a society that was becoming increasingly concerned with separate and segregated institutions. Whereas immigrant groups held onto cultural traditions with the expectation that eventually assimilation into the mainstream would occur, the future held no such promise for blacks. Separate organizations before 1920 became for blacks critical alliances to withstand the ever increasing reality of racial separation and inequality.

Labor, too, had its own benevolent associations. From 1860 to 1895 no fewer than seven workers' benevolent associations, mostly connected with the city's shipping industry, were formed to protect workmen from the worst bouts of unemployment and illness. One of the oldest of these, the Screwmen's Benevolent Association, began operation in 1866 with twenty-three members who paid $5, or a day's wages, to join together for mutual benefit.

In the beginning the Screwmen voted not to extend relief benefits for the first year, but when "Brother" L. Austenburgh became ill, the men decided to provide him a large donation of $25. The first funeral the following year cost the group $44, paid for by the members out of their own pockets. As time went on the Screwmen, so-called because they compressed
(screwed) cotton bales more compactly into ship holds, doubled their annual dues and became better organized, forming a relief committee that "waited upon" sick members, and using dues, fines, and the proceeds from rental property owned by the association, relieved sick members and paid for funerals. Quarterly reports show that in 1879 the association paid out $483 in benefits, but the men still had $1,200 cash on hand. With growing capital and an assessment of $2 per year they could afford to hire a doctor and a druggist to treat patients without charge to the member. To lessen their risks after 1879, the members required applicants to the Screwmen's Benevolent Association to "go before the association physician and be examined as to his health and condition . . . before being balloted." Every quarter the reports showed that Dr. Hamilton West had made bedside visits and prescribed drugs. In 1880 when the membership reached 224, he made 96 visits, wrote 110 prescriptions, and charged the association $112 for his services in the fourth quarter of the year.16

At the end of the century the Screwmen had amassed $45,000 in assets, allowing them to continue to grant on average $25 to each member in sick benefits. Even more important, in the worst moments after the 1900 storm, which took the lives of forty of its members, the association was able to appropriate $10,000 for the relief of its members. Skilled working men and their families were fortunate when mutual benefit societies provided for their members and eased the burden of financial insecurity. But not everyone had the safety of a well-run beneficence agency. Most workers were uninsured and unprotected. What agents or agencies provided for them?
Clearly churches and synagogues played a role in aiding those who had no formal connections to fraternal, ethnic, insurance, or labor organizations. In fact, the most important departure from those groups that protected their own members occurred when church pastors or religious laymen formed charitable agencies within their congregations. Although pastors, priests, and rabbis often had solicited monies for the poor from their congregations through special charity offerings, parish or congregational organizations founded by the laity to relieve suffering arose in the post-Civil War period. Initially men from several religious organizations created societies designed to help those in need from among their ranks.

In 1866 Jewish men, even before organizing and incorporating Congregation B'Nai Israel, founded the Hebrew Benevolent Society with $1,000 bequeathed for that purpose by Rosanna Dyer Osterman. By 1868, when the synagogue was chartered, 105 Jewish families had become permanent residents of Galveston in time to help with the overwhelming influx of Jews from Germany, Alsace, Poland, and Russia. Osterman's will provided fifty shares of stock in the Galveston Wharves to be used, "for the support of indigent Israelites, if any there be, if not, of any other denomination residing in Galveston." This was the first hint that funds may have been used for persons other than those of the Jewish faith. The Hebrew Benevolent Society did not meet but once a quarter, its business presumably handled by subcommittees on a more frequent basis. By 1900 the society numbered 153 members comprising nearly all the men in the congregation. Other Jewish organizations also provided relief — a chapter of B'Nai Brith formed in 1875, and with immigrants from eastern Europe
arriving toward the end of the century, a Hebrew Orthodox Benevolent Society was organized in 1897. The Catholic men founded two St. Vincent de Paul societies in 1872 and 1873. The more successful of the two was formed by the men of St. Joseph's German Catholic Church and had fifty members in 1895. Episcopal men created Trinity Church Guild in 1873 to aid the rector, to support missions, and to serve "the sick, the poor, and the afflicted...." Both denominations sponsored and gave aid to respective members but left open the possibility of occasionally rendering aid to indigents outside their own denominations. The first suggestion that benevolence might reach beyond cultural, class, and ethnic boundaries came from these religious groups.

Although few records exist for the Galveston Methodists, similar relief societies may be found among the Baptists. Pastor William Howard, concerned over the influx of newcomers to the First Baptist Church in 1869, appointed a relief committee of two men and two women "whose duty it shall be to attend to all cases requiring material aid from the church." The next year women on the committee outnumbered men four to three, and while mention of the relief committee continued thereafter, the appointment of women to it did not. Poor relief, however, was not a major consideration among the evangelicals who held to a theology that emphasized individual salvation and conversion experiences over other aspects of ministry. While strongly identifying with one another in community, they tended to look toward a person's "soul" worth, refraining from assessing the material condition of the unsaved. Consequently, poor relief was not a major component of the work of Baptists or Methodists until the twentieth century, when evangelicals themselves had acquired a
measure of wealth. Inspiration for benevolence from Texas Baptists was also minimal; the first program for relief within the Baptist General Convention of Texas was the creation of a Committee on Christian Beneficence in 1883, which took no action other than to direct pastors and laity "to practice the benevolent spirit in dealing with those in need of Christian sympathy and helpfulness." Actually Baptists (and Methodists, too), were more interested in foreign and home missions than in poor relief, as shown in the 1888 budget for the First Baptist Church, which allocated $335 for missions and $10 for the poor fund.

Against this background of multivariated private responses to the problems of economic insecurity, infirmity, poverty, and destitution were city and county governments, which also shared responsibility for those unable to maintain themselves. There were few provisions for indigents in the city ordinances, just the usual vagrancy laws providing for the arrest and fine of persons "likely to become chargeable to the city as paupers...," and allowance for the establishment of one or more workhouses or houses of correction "where vagrants, stragglers, idle, suspicious and disorderly persons ... may... be kept therein, subject to labor and confinement." With the demise of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1868, care of the impoverished under Texas law fell to the county commissioners, who benefited only those who had been residents of Texas one year and of Galveston County for six months. Short term residents, recent arrivals, or those whom the county court did not find "so indigent, so infirm, sick, or disabled as to become an object of public care and support...." were ineligible for county relief. Most who sought aid were not interested in public support, for the county could
offer them only a pitance in outdoor relief or a humiliating existence within the almshouses and then, after 1887, on the county poor farm.

Nationally public attitudes toward the poor were hardening between 1870 and 1900, and like government officials to the north, Galveston county commissioners demonstrated their hostility to public assistance. The county commissioners' minutes present a grim picture of financial calculation toward the impoverished. Indigents who were eligible for public assistance either petitioned the commissioners directly for aid or their cases were presented to the commissioners court (board) by the county charity committee. Either way, the commissioners disbursed funds in dribbles of from $3 to $10 per month, always "during the pleasure of this Court." These supplicants were aided with outdoor relief but with no assistance in housing or clothing. Commissioners gave away just enough to keep sufferers from starving in hopes that they would find other means of support. True paupers, unable to sustain themselves except through the grace of the court, lived in two almshouses owned by the county and operated by hired caretakers, Antone Mantzell and Henry Hurlbut. The unfortunate inmates, many of whom were aged or infirm, were given no money but were supplied food and clothing at the request of the caretakers.

Almshouses of this type were typical relief institutions in the late eighteenth century and into the 1840s, but some were replaced in the northeast by the harsher and more controlling system of indoor relief known as workhouses. The Texas Constitution of 1876 allowed for each county to provide "a manual labor poor house and farm for taking care of, managing, employing and supplying the wants of the indigent and poor inhabitants." By December 1886 the Galveston County commissioners
were ready to move to the workhouse-asylum-farm concept for all county dependents—not only for county indigents but for criminals, the insane, and the dependent sick as well.

The commissioners began the process by discussing the possibility of buying a farm across Galveston Bay on the mainland, a train's ride away from the city. Removing the paupers, the criminals, the insane, and the ambulatory sick to the poor farm would consolidate the county's indoor relief and correction efforts and render the inmates invisible to the good citizens of Galveston. The commissioners undoubtedly hoped to save money by moving these charity cases and criminals to an income-producing farm owned by the county. The sisters who managed St. Mary's Infirmary charged the county $.60 per charity patient per day in the 1880s. Because many of the patients were chronically ill with tuberculosis or were helpless cripples, they stayed in the hospital for months until recovery or death. One month's bill for eight county charity patients reached $113 for 189 days of hospitalization. Keeping prisoners in the county jail was even more expensive, requiring $1.00 a day for food. Although no prolonged discussion of the reasons for the decision to buy a farm and move the county dependents to it inform the pages of the commissioners' minutes, clearly financial efficiency was a factor. One year after the poor farm had been in operation, the commissioners requested a subcommittee to file a report comparing the costs of maintaining the paupers before and after the purchase of the farm.33

For several months in early 1887 commissioners considered the offers of farms for sale on the mainland. By late March they decided to buy for $2,600 a farmhouse, farming implements, and 213 acres of farm land near
Clear Creek. Thereafter they began provisioning the farm with equipment — "two horses, a double set of harnesses, ... a covered spring board wagon," mules, cows, pigs, and 200 cedar fence posts — needed to make it a money-making operation. 34 They hired a superintendent and manager at a salary of $75 per month, and they called for bids from contractors to build a dormitory for white paupers, "colored" paupers, the insane, and convicts. Plans for the buildings were drawn up by Galveston's most famous architect, Nicholas Clayton, and were built at a cost of close to $6,000. 35 A committee of commissioners traveled to other counties to see how poor farms were run. Finally by September the almshouses were emptied of their paupers who were sent to the farm. The commissioners instructed county judges "to have committed to the poor farm all persons fined by the Justice's Court, or fined and imprisoned by the Criminal District Court; and all patients at St. Mary's Infirmary "at the charge of the county" who "can be properly moved to the Poor Farm" to be "moved at once." 36 By March 1888 the poor farm inventory showed the acquisition of four mules, three cows, six hogs, ten paupers, and nineteen convicts.

In the beginning the farm may have been an improvement over the almshouses. An informal inspector from the Ladies Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church, who wanted to know if the farm was suitable for the poor, reported that the buildings were "clean and comfortable. The occupants were cheerful and contented, being well cared for particularly in sickness. The food given them was good and plentiful, the same as the attendants were supplied with. When in good health, they were expected to help with the work. The men and women had separate buildings, really comfortable, nice homes for the helpless." 37
The darker side of the operation was also evident, however. In the short time that the farm had held its inmates, twenty-four convicts had been released, indicating that the farm may have served as a half-way station for convicts from the county jail. It was a convenient way to get them out of town before their release. For those convicts who would help themselves to freedom, however, the commissioners fortified the farm by sending out three guards and two bloodhounds. They charged the convicts for any medical treatment received, and for the expense of recapturing them if they ran away. They ordered the superintendent to alter the asylum house "in such a manner as to fit it for a work house," where among other forms of labor, the inmates' clothes (uniforms to identify them as convicts or paupers) were to be made. The commissioners required the manager to supply a list of paupers not useful on the farm so that they could be hired out, and to hire convicts out to other persons "residing in the neighborhood...." Small wonder that those who could walked away from the place — approximately one-third of the paupers left the farm in the first year.

Judging by the reports filed to the board of commissioners by the farm superintendent, the most important priorities were the crops. The first part of each report began with a farming account: "During the early part of the past month," the January 1890 report began, the weather was very favorable for plowing, and I kept all hands and teams busy preparing land for the next crop. Also planted six acres in oats which have come up and look very promising, and have picked more cotton, and have some yet in the field. I have also cut 200 oak posts and a large quantity of firewood. ... recommend the planting of 200 Peach trees on the high land between
the jail and the creek. ... All livestock on the Farm are in very good condition. Houses and fences in very good repair, and the health of all the inmates, both Paupers and Prisoners has been remarkably good.41

Livestock before inmates and economy first; these were the mandates ordered by the commissioners. Mr. Snowball, in his petition for reelection to the post of farm superintendent, assured the board that "it has always been my aim to conduct the farm in an economic and business like manner. I have raised as far as possible crops that were needed at home as vegetables, potatoes, feed for stock and hogs." In the interests of economy the superintendent reported that his wife had "devoted her entire time to overseeing the household duties of the institution and caring for the sick."42 The county's concept of an ideal environment for the poor became a combination workhouse, infirmary, convict labor farm, and insane asylum. But within the first year the farm's crops, which had been planted and tended by inmates, brought in nearly $4,000.43 Efficiency had triumphed over humanity.44

Considering the treatment afforded the poor at the hands of the government, private relief organizations served as essential alternatives for those struggling to maintain independence. Men's organizations within fraternal orders and labor organizations, the most exclusive of such agencies, provided benefits for the family only through its male members. Ethnic or immigrant aid societies benefited those of their own race or native culture. Churches and synagogues, led by the spirit of charity, were more apt to benefit those of their own faith except in emergencies such as storms, fires, or epidemics. In each of these endeavors, women as benefactors were either non-existent or were ancillary to the actions of men. But many, arguably
most, of those who needed aid were women. In this age of separate spheres for men and women, how did women respond to those of their own and of the opposite sex who were in need? What societies did they develop and when? What was their role, function, and place in the plethora of agencies and societies that helped relieve suffering? And, last, which women joined the ranks of charitable benefactors?

The history of benevolence imparted by southern women most often begins with the Civil War. But Galveston appears unlike older cities in the South where women formed what may be called emergency organizations—collectives that brought the women into homefront action on behalf of soldiers and that, in some cases, continued into the postwar period. Instead accounts of individual heroism mark the pages of Galveston's Civil War days: Rosanna Dyer Osterman remained on the island, turned her home into a hospital, and nursed the soldiers on both sides of the conflict. The Ursuline Sisters, educators rather than nurses, also stayed and opened their academy to the wounded. Probably one-half of the town's residents, on the other hand, fled to the interior when news spread that Galveston faced a Union blockade. Whole families moved to Houston for the duration of the war, and were wise to do so, for Galveston experienced the occupation of first Union soldiers, and, after the Battle of Galveston in 1863, occupation by the Confederates. Undisciplined soldiers of both stripes vandalized property and disrupted the peace. Bread riots broke out in the later years of the war and were quelled only by marshal law. The civilian population sank to 2,500 in 1864 from a peak of 7,000 in 1860. Finally after defeat, the occupation forces allowed some semblence of order to return. With hopes for a Confederate nation gone, Galveston families began returning to resume
the business of export and import. As the city's residents returned, so did the amenities of social culture. Citizens sponsored a benefit for returning soldiers in 1865, and the proceeds went to a committee of women, who were collecting clothing for needy veterans. By 1868 the city began to show signs of recovery and in 1870 the population climbed to 13,800. Life began over again for the returnees.47

Apparently no women's organizations from the war years survived to continue charitable deeds; rather, the first female benevolent societies organized in the booming 1870s were women's immigrant relief societies. The oldest association was the Ladies' German Benevolent Society founded in 1874. Not much is known about this society except that it met once a month in the Episcopal Eaton Chapel, included both Christian and Jewish women, and had an average of about forty members, peaking in 1895 with eighty-two members. Agnes F. Erhard, a widow of German descent but of Episcopalian upbringing, presided over the society from 1898 until the 1920s. Apparently the ladies aided primarily German speaking persons and their descendants, but, as with many societies in times of crisis, the German ladies at such times sent out appeals to the city for clothing to distribute to the needy.48

Jewish women formed the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1870, which ostensibly acted as an auxiliary to the men's benevolent society, but was in reality quite separate and rendered the kind of personal aid to women that no male association could offer. It too served as an aid to immigrant women. Jewish ladies either acted as midwives or procured midwives for Jewish immigrant newcomers to Texas; they cared for "indigent, infirm or sick Jewesses," and "upon the death of a Jewess"
prepared "the body for burial according to Jewish custom." Like the gentlemen's society, the ladies met once every quarter. But committees concerning membership, visiting ("the sick women of the Jewish faith"), employment, and distributing (clothing among the poor) occupied the women between meetings. They limited their donations to the poor to $20 a person, except in special cases. There is no way of knowing how many or in what varied ways Jewish women were helped by the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society, but we can learn something about the members and the course the society took.

There was an element of exclusivity about the society; applicants were voted upon by members and were allowed entrance if no more than two contrary votes were cast. Judging from the membership, this society was composed of about fifty women from the more prosperous economic echelons of Galveston society. The dues were somewhat steep at $.50 a month, and no doubt helped to defray the expenses of their charity. In 1881 the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society had accumulated $487, but they decided to spend $200 of it for a fence around the cemetery. As in the case of other women's societies, they held fundraisers to continue their charity, for example, a picnic given in April 1885 replenished the treasury and enabled them to make a $50 donation to the Jewish Orphans' Home in New Orleans. Although women resigned and were replaced by new members throughout the years before 1900, the period between December 1889 and February 1894 brought few new members to the society. Three times in a row the women had no quorum (10) for a meeting, which meant the society did not meet as a whole for nine months. Then in 1894 a quarrel erupted over initiation costs and was finally resolved by reducing initiation fees for older applicants and
by eliminating them entirely for young women. The result in 1898 was a flood of thirty new members to carry on the work of the society. Fortunately the influx of new blood came before the 1900 storm when the society was needed to form relief and burial committees for the homeless and the dead.

It could have been that there was more competition for women's involvement during the doldrum years. A Ladies' Auxiliary Society, which met twice a month with seventy members, had been organized in 1882 to help with Temple affairs. Then, too, many Jewish women served on the boards of lady managers for the orphanages and the old woman's home, and some were active in literary and culture clubs that began to form in the 1890s. The variety of choices available to Jewish women of leisure had greatly increased by the turn of the century. This was a problem for churchwomen's societies as well, but could be alleviated with dynamic leadership. In the case of the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society it had elected the same president, Caroline Block, a widow, from 1872 until her death in 1902. Thereafter, with new leadership at the helm in 1903, with a bequest of $1,000 from Isabella Dyer Kopperl in 1902, and with eighty-one members there was a marked increase in the society's involvement in community benevolence.

The first Christian women's relief society came about through the Episcopal Church. When in 1873 the vestrymen formed Trinity Church Guild, they were well aware of their sisters' capabilities as fundraisers. As early as 1867 the Ladies' Parochial Society had launched a project to raise funds for a larger church structure that eventually resulted in the erection of Eaton Memorial Chapel. So, in 1874, the men of Trinity Church Guild invited the ladies to join them in building a mission chapel on the island's
west end. The ladies gave an "entertainment," held other fundraisers, and by the end of the year saw the completion of the chapel that would become Grace Episcopal Church. Perhaps no separate women's guild would have formed after the mission project, but in 1875 a terrific September storm battered the city leaving its victims in need of food, money, and clothing, and giving the women a chance to demonstrate their usefulness not only to the parish but to the community. 54

Although residents remembered storms ravaging the city in 1837, 1842, 1854, 1867, 1871, and 1874, they commented that "the water was never so high as it was ... Friday morning, the 17th" of September, 1875. 55 The storm of seventy hours duration brought eighty-mile-an-hour winds, dropped 10.53 inches of rain, and flooded the city mostly with sea water; "breakers ... were rolling into the city from the Gulf," and the tide covered the island to the level of a horse's "arched back." 56 In the aftermath a reporter from the Galveston Daily News walked up and down the wharves and the avenues estimating the monetary loss to citizens. The hurricane left $21,000 worth of damage to the city's cotton presses and an estimated $200,000 to ships and property. The east end of the island, which had been covered with "shanties by the negroes and poor whites, were all gone, and the place where they had stood was one sheet of water...." These people lost everything they owned including their clothing — "all washed out to sea." 57 Few lives were lost, but Dr. George W. Peete, the city's health and quarantine officer and his grandson were drowned while at the quarantine station on Bolivar Point across the entrance to the bay. 58

The first relief for storm victims in Galveston and along the Gulf Coast came from private groups. A meeting in the African Methodist
Episcopal Church on East Broadway resulted in the creation of a relief society with plans to coordinate efforts among the city's black pastors and congregations. Simultaneously, at the Cotton Exchange white citizens called an emergency meeting to aid in the relief of storm victims in Indianola, Velasco, Matagorda, and other towns to the southwest of Galveston. The German Ladies' Benevolent Society pleaded for clothing for storm victims so that their relief committee could "faithfully attend to their distribution among the families who need aid." Baptist pastor William Howard "personally attended to the distribution of over five hundred changes of apparel, principally to women and children." The Louisiana Relief Committee sent $2,500 for the purchase of blankets and groceries, while the citizens of Boston gave $5,000 for the Gulf Coast victims. 59

The Galveston Board of Aldermen five days after the storm still had not yet risen to the emergency. The mayor had been out of town, and the remaining aldermen saw no need to move hastily to relieve suffering. A Galveston Daily News editorial excoriated the public officials for being "either unprepared or incompetent to do anything in reasonable keeping with the emergency" and for adjourning "without any definite provision for the destitute and suffering poor, without any action towards the protection of the city on the Gulf shore, and without any measure of disinfection and purification with reference to a horrible miscellany of carrion and offal left by the subsidence of the flood." The News editors found the officials "a hopeless embodiment of incapacity for any good whatever."60

Soon after, talk of erecting a "permanent seawall" filled the columns of the News. Again the editors challenged the City Council to give it their
immediate attention. When the city's representatives took the matter to Austin, state legislators refused to aid with the construction of a breakwater. Instead of a seawall, the city planted salt cedars along the shore line. Several years later a Deep Water Committee of city entrepreneurs successfully petitioned the federal government for funds to build two strong jetties as entrances to the harbor and to dredge the bay for a deep water port. Protection of the island would have to take a back seat to the advancement of commerce. This meant that the relief efforts from the storm of 1875 would serve as a rehearsal for a greater and more lasting disaster in 1900.61

In this city of sand and insecurities caused by tropical storms and tropical diseases, women learned the value of responding swiftly and effectively in groups to the existing crises. As the men prepared donations and gifts of supplies to the destitute in Galveston and cities along the coast, all the while hailing the continuance of trade and commerce, women took lessons in how to mobilize for a citywide emergency. Most southern women who lived in cities learned these organizational techniques in response to the privations and sufferings caused by the Civil War. In Galveston, weather and disease set the course for their involvement.

Among the more effective emergency relief agencies in 1875 was Trinity Church Guild, which organized by collecting clothing, food, and money and distributing them from a temporary headquarters at the courthouse. The members divided the city into four districts with a committee in charge of each, a technique that would be repeated by the women for consistent aid to the poor in less trying times. 62 Working together, the men and women of Trinity Episcopal were capable of
accomplishing a great deal more in the way of charity than had been possible before.

Having benefited from the experience of organized emergency relief, thirty-three ladies decided to form their own organization as an auxiliary to the guild. The Sisterhood of Trinity Church Guild met weekly for the dispensing of regular, systematic charity. They disbursed funds to dozens of "destitute widows and orphans ... every month."63 The annual report of their activities five years later (1880) credits the women with $569 "disbursed in provisions applied to the poor" and shows the extent to which the women had reached out into the community beyond the walls of their own church.

The Sisterhood have visited and relieved not less than 260 indigent families, given away 483 garments to the worthy poor, supplied work to sewing women and furnished many suffering and needy with fuel and shoes, also material for work. The Industrial School held every Saturday in the Mission is attended by 30 scholars.... The object is to teach little girls to sew and make their own clothing and to supply needy children with materials for dresses.64

The laity apparently had full faith in their sisters' accomplishments because by 1885 the men's guild ceased to exist and the women took over the name Trinity Church Guild. In short, the church had turned over to its women the entire task of charity and benevolence, tapping the energies of capable Christian upper- and middle-class women for the benefit of the community. It seems that Trinity's vestrymen had come to accept the fact that women could and should be raising and distributing money for the sake of the poor, and the women, too, found a vocation for their interest in
community welfare. In the critical 1870s, most Galvestonians were beginning to see that a "woman's sphere" could extend into the public domain without harm to hearth and home.

Women who chose relief of the urban poor as part of their mission formed at least two other religious societies in the late 1870s and early 1880s: the Ladies’ Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church and the Ladies’ Aid Society of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church. The charters for the three benevolent societies were remarkably similar in breadth of purpose: the Lutherans determined "to help poor and sick people when in need, to assist in church and mission work"; the Presbyterians wanted "to help aid and encourage charitable work according to their judgment..."; and the Episcopalians desired "to help on Church work ... in serving the sick, the poor, and the afflicted."65

In every case, these were the first permanent women's church societies to form in the postwar era, and consequently, they served more than one function. In addition to their promise to help the poor, each committed to aid their minister in his work and to serve the church either in encouraging reverential worship or in raising funds to maintain and erect new buildings. Each also gave its support to missions. Benevolence then, was but one part of their ministry, and it was entirely up to the women how much of their funds and time would be spent in aid to the poor.

With the Lutheran women it is difficult to know in those years exactly how much time and money they spent on poor relief; no records exist for their society. But we know from secondary histories that their main "sphere of activity" was in "the ministry of mercy, helping the poor and unfortunate, visiting of the sick and suffering, offering them aid and comfort."66
For Episcopal and Presbyterian women, the years between 1880 and 1900 were the most important for emphasizing poor relief over fundraisers for church buildings or for foreign missions, hence much of what follows will be drawn from their experiences. After the 1900 storm, all women's societies for a time were pulled away from poor relief to primary parish care, that is, helping the church to recover and to raise money for repairs and refurnishing. Later, in the second decade of the twentieth century, other agencies coopted their roles as early social welfare workers. But in the years prior to 1900 poor relief constituted the main object of their ministry.

Churches and synagogues were absolutely crucial in the second half of the nineteenth century for pushing southern women out into community life. But without developments in their urban dwelling place, the opportunity for community benevolence might not have presented itself. Churches, synagogues, and cities in the South were important concomitants to the process of female advancement into the public sphere. Fifty years earlier their sisters in northern cities had discovered this too and sought effective conduits for their energy and piety in women's benevolent work. Urged on by the forces of modernization that helped to create class strata, economic differences, and an unending stream of working poor, women in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and the towns emerging along the Erie Canal felt compelled to aid the poor, and they did so largely through the auspices of their most viable institutions, their churches and synagogues.

In many ways, Galveston in the 1880s resembled a northern city of the 1830s. The city's youthfulness, its rapid urbanization in the postwar years, the influx of immigrants, the creation of manufacturing concerns that attracted laboring families, all contributed to the increase in the class of
Because Galveston remained a walking city where all types of people lived in integrated neighborhoods, the have-nots were never out of sight of the haves. Those who had the means to help viewed those in need not as distant problems but as neighbors. As Kathleen D. McCarthy has pointed out, "wealth was inextricably linked to public service from the outset...." The awakening of moral stewardship—in Boston as well as in Galveston—arose under just such conditions.

The forces of feminine benevolence stemmed not only from witnessing scenes of distressing poverty, but also from individual religious conviction. Whereas Old Testament commandments for ethical behavior, moral concern, and social justice moved Jewish women to perform acts of charity, Christians found inspiration in the words of Matthew 25:40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The ladies of the First Presbyterian Church echoed these sentiments when they recorded that their pastor, Dr. William Scott, "asked a blessing upon our labors for the coming year...that we in ministering to the needy and suffering might through our sympathy with them be brought into closer kinship with Him whose earthly life was passed amid scenes of sorrow and suffering, thereby leading both us and them to a higher spiritual life." They drew hope from Christ's example and prayed that by their deeds He would lead them and their wards closer to the spiritual throne. Hence out of a sense of moral stewardship rather than a desire to exert religious authority over individual sinners, Presbyterian and Episcopal women broadened their charity to include even the unchurched and unaffiliated.
Episcopal women also gained approval for their charity through the admonitions of their clergymen. When the Reverend Stephen Moylan Bird rendered a memorial sermon to Trinity Church after twenty years as its rector, he gave special praise to the laywomen, singling out three by name and calling attention to the Ladies' Parochial Society for the building of Eaton Chapel. Then he went on to prophesy that a "faithful Christian woman will found ... another memorial work for the benefit of the factory neighborhood...."73 As if to drive home the point to the parish men he asked, "What part are you taking, my dear brothers, in promoting the Master's Kingdom, and advancing this labor of love?"74 The tenor of the sermon spoke throughout of deeds and organizations -- baptisms, Sunday schools, guilds, brotherhoods. For the Reverend Bird all "have made our Parish a sweet savour and blessing to many hearts and homes of the poor -- where the orphan has been tended, and the widow's heart made to sing...." Last, he prayed that "All this and more than this, possibly the Great Bishop and Shepherd of Souls will accept ... Thus what has been sown in tears ... may be gathered in joy, the ripened sheaves of garnered grain for the store house of God."75 Any woman worker hearing this sermon would have understood the clerical emphasis placed on helping the poor and would have had the means to translate that message into a personal commandment. 76

Edgar Gardner Murphy, the reform-minded southern Episcopal priest, who long has been heralded as a great theologian and modernist spokesman for the South, believed that "to be fully human is to be in community"; blessings of habit and service were best expressed through the "institutions of human community: church, family, corporation, and voluntary service."
Service and sacrifice to the community good were ideals to which those who belonged to the privileged classes or "wealth-worthy" should give priority. He believed that philanthropy should be personal, an ecclesiastical form of the gospel of wealth that did not necessarily challenge the hierarchy of the social classes but called for a caring distribution of resources to ameliorate suffering. How much of Murphy's theology found its way to the hearts and minds of Episcopal women in Galveston is difficult to determine, but as a spokesman for the church, his theology fit well with southerners' conservative notions of social concern.

Episcopal women in the South relied on their connection to a national church for inspiration, guidance, and for models of progressive action with regard to urban problems. Mary Donovan has pointed to the fact that Episcopal women created models for ministry in urban settings that both offered them "a broader range of activities than in most other denominations" and provided examples for their southern sisters. Episcopal doctrine that emphasized good works and responsibility for the poor, particularly in the context of community, encouraged women to minister to those in need. The establishment of varied ministries allowed many more openings for women in church-related service — religious orders for Episcopal women founded hospitals, children's homes, and schools; the creation of a Woman's Auxiliary to Foreign Missions in 1872 permitted every laywoman to invest in the church's missionary efforts; and with the office of deaconess devised in the 1870s women were finally given official wage-earning status within parishes to serve as caretakers to widows, orphans, the sick, and the destitute. Donovan has also pointed to the fact that Episcopal women shared a "unique attitude toward social service," wherein laywomen
assumed active servanthood following Christ's commandment to minister to the poor and suffering. Evangelism leading to conversion and possible membership was not their primary concern. And witnessing, so popular among evangelical sects, was left to the priests. Women educated others, organized, and served, only later insisting on theological training to carry on that side of ministry.  

It is hard to know just how these examples may have influenced the Episcopal women of Galveston. Did they receive stimuli from their northern sisters? The answer must be a qualified yes, based on circumstantial rather than direct evidence. But like their northern co-religionists, Galveston churchwomen were probably inspired more by the conditions at their doorstep, and by the call of local rectors to remember their sacrificial duty to the poor, than by pronouncements of distant theologians for a social gospel or by examples of charity in other cities.  

Religious motives and emergency relief efforts were not the only reasons that some women plunged themselves into charity work. Most felt that helping the poor was decidedly a function of woman's nurturing role and therefore an extension of woman's culture. Since women were "naturally" more tender hearted, more caring, and more concerned with the well being of their own sex and children, they were better suited to serve those in poverty, especially widows and women and children. The notion of woman's moral superiority complemented nineteenth-century concepts of ennobled womanhood, which both men and women believed, wrote about, and acted upon. Women who served in benevolent societies believed that they fulfilled a feminine ideal of Christ-like self-sacrifice and were thus memorialized at death with eulogies to their womanly virtues. "Her life, so
full of good deeds will ever be memorable to us for the sweetness and
tenderness of her nature, for manifold duties faithfully performed, for her
earnestness and readiness in all good work and for her unselfishness, and her
many charitable deeds to the poor and unfortunate," wrote Margaret
McCullough when Helen Thurmond, a member of the Presbyterian society,
died. Similar sentiments were expressed by members of the Ladies' Hebrew
Benevolent Society when Mrs. Jake Cohen departed in 1908: "Heaven is
enriched by her noble and kindly spirit and to this extent has our, and
similar organizations, been impoverished. Her life...so bright, vivid and
beautiful [will] be forever engraven on our hearts."

The concept that women were special, morally superior, yet fragile,
worked to the advantage of some of the societies' supplicants, as well.
Widows who petitioned for aid were given characteristic sympathy by the
ladies as it was thought that women, especially mothers, who had spent their
days in toil were robbed by poverty of the respect and dignity they deserved.
Despite differences in class, churchwomen often thought that mothers,
regardless of station (unless too vicious for redemption) shared the noble
values of self-sacrifice toward their children. Poor mothers trying to raise
children as best they could deserved help from their betters because they
shared through motherhood values common to women.

Little better illustrates the notion of the nobility of motherhood
regardless of class than the case of Eleanor (Nellie) Roeck Thompson.
Nellie was raised in an elite Galveston home where she and her brother
received affection tempered with discipline. When Nellie was almost
seventeen her mother, Kate Waters Roeck, died, and Nellie's bereft father
wrote an aunt that the death of his wife "left a void in this community, that
is not easily filled. She took a prominent part in all charitable and church work, and not the least touching incident of the two days, during which she lay before interment, was the influx of the many poor people whom she had helped & cared for, and who have lost in her a friend that cannot be replaced."83 Nellie thereafter took on the role of little mother to her nine-year-old brother and assumed the duties of mistress of the house. In her young years she learned the vicissitudes of motherhood and housekeeping but still did not lose sight of the ideal of a woman's higher spirit. A short story written by her in 1892 and accepted for publication in The Youth's Companion illustrates the enduring notions of enobled motherhood.

The story entitled "Nino" is set in the coastal mountains of northern Italy and describes a peasant mother, Tessa, and her only child, Nino, a blind boy of about ten. The boy is described in overly sentimental tones as patient, pathetic, beautiful, and yet ailing. The mother, however, is the true heroine of the story. "She was only a simple, ignorant, hard worked peasant woman, but she was a mother, and would gladly have borne her child's infirmity always, if by so doing, she could give him a glimpse of the sunlight he so often talked of...." Nellie went on to point out that the mother's "own life had not been happy, it was too full of grinding poverty to admit of much happiness, and at thirty she was quite wrinkled and withered and brown, from toil and exposure." Because the local sage had told Tessa that her boy could be made whole again in sight and body by a doctor in the city, she labors for an entire year to earn fifty lire to pay for the doctor's cure. The day arrives for their trip to the city, and the mother takes the boy on an arduous journey to see the physician, who, as it turns out, can do nothing for a boy
blind from birth. Devastated, she carries Nino up the hills to their peasant cottage, where the child breathes his last.

Aside from the maudlin theme so typical of nineteenth-century fiction, the point here is that a well-placed young southern woman idealized a peasant mother and acted on the belief that women, especially mothers, were morally superior creatures. On the strength of that identification Eleanor Roeck Thompson went on to become a mother of eight herself and one of the city's greatest workers in defense of the underprivileged. Soon after her marriage to Dr. James Thompson in 1896, she joined Trinity Church Guild, assuming the presidency from 1915 to 1918. Following her mother's example of investment in the community, and among many other commitments, she became in 1917 the first woman elected to the Galveston School Board, enabling her to influence directly children's lives through education. 84

White genteel southern women regarded the poor as objects for their religious and humanitarian sensibilities, and the poor desperately needed them. By 1885 the city needed more relief agencies as a great fire in that year devastated the business section of the city, creating requests for aid beyond the norm. Those who petitioned the Protestant women's societies for assistance were for the most part persons who had no connection to any of the other benevolent associations in the city and were ineligible or unwilling to go to the county commissioners for support. This included stranded travelers, temporarily disabled working-class men and women, abandoned women with children, sick mothers with small children, working girls, and widows without family or funds -- in other words, the worthy poor for whom existing private agencies provided no relief.
Among the worthy poor (those who had not succumbed to vices such as drink, gambling, or prostitution) who petitioned the ladies' aid societies, the largest group of those helped were poor women. The records of the First Presbyterian Ladies' Aid Society show that over an eleven-year period between 1890 and 1901, over 80 percent of the supplicants aided were females and less than 20 percent were males (See Table 3:1). Of all society's needy, women had the fewest connections to private charity. If a woman was not a member of an ethnic community or church, or if her husband, brother, or father had not been a member of a fraternal order or a labor union, there was only one other possible source available before succumbing to public aid – the women's benevolent societies. Fortunately, the societies did not insist upon church membership for receiving aid. In a city where the economic station of nearly every woman bordered on dependency, middle- and upper-class women cut across class barriers to support and help others of their sex. Thus, the role filled by female benevolent societies was not that of just another charitable group but was that of an essential safety-net for poor women and for the city's unattached and unconnected.

Admittedly, the overall safety-net worked best for white women. On average nearly 75 percent of those helped were white women, while less than 10 percent were black women. In fact more white men (15 percent) were aided than black men and women combined (10.6 percent). (See Table 3:1.) Although blacks made up 20 percent of the population in Galveston, they were given aid in numbers far below their actual representation. This obvious discrepancy is compounded when realizing that undoubtedly more black than white Galvestonians were in dire need. Racism on the part of the
ladies is the most obvious answer, but not necessarily the only one. It may have been that blacks hesitated to ask for aid from white women, finding it less difficult to seek aid from black benevolent societies. Perhaps the records did not include every supplicant's race, although those who were recorded as other than white were usually mentioned in the minutes by race, sex, ethnicity, and sometimes approximate age. "A poor old German woman applied for aid..." read one entry, and "found a woman (who is colored) at the corner of 18th and Mechanic ... She was sick in bed, and attended by a Catholic priest. ...who said that the church had no fund which he could use in such a case," read another. Black supplicants were usually not turned away as undeserving, although plenty of whites were. In fact, blacks were treated with a form of paternalistic patience, hinting that there may have existed a need between the two races as potential employer and employee. Conscious contempt for blacks simply does not come out through the minutes, though it may have existed. What is obvious is that white Protestant benevolent ladies harbored a disdain for loafers and were less inclined to help Catholics. When Mrs. Pippo applied for aid and was given groceries, she was sent away with nothing more because, the ladies wrote, "in this case... the Pippo woman is a Catholic."86

Even "fallen women" were given an unusual degree of sympathy as the ladies heard from board members of the Woman's Home in Fort Worth and the Bethesda Door of Hope in Galveston, both rescue homes for "fallen and distressed women."87 One of the greatest problems of all in the eyes of respectable women was first economic (or sexual) ruination and then prostitution. Young women of the factory district who had no family and worked at low wages were at greatest risk. "Mrs. [Sarah] Ball reported the
case of a young girl named Mary Ferris who is in our city alone and unprotected and who wished to go to her mother in Kentucky. As we all recognize the temptations that a friendless young woman without strength of character is exposed to, it was decided to send her back to her mother under whose protecting care she will be kept from all harm." Mary Ferris at least escaped the fate of Lizzie Mckeskie, who the ladies described as "a sad case ... who had been ruined by a married man in Bolivar and whose infant was sick." They voted to pay for the board of her child while the woman worked. When a woman of fallen virtue did apply for aid ("Mrs. Lawson's case came up ... it was found her life was not what it should be...") the ladies referred her to Mrs. Nichols of the Bethesda Door of Hope.88

Women deemed worthy were helped in ways other than direct relief. Episcopal and Presbyterian ladies held teas for factory girls and nursing students. They subsidized training for working women, set up "industrial schools" to teach girls sewing or other domestic skills, and, as in the case of Mrs. Brown, they supported working women who chose to divorce runaway husbands. This type of activity differed from direct relief to the needy and constituted an advancement in upper-class perceptions of women and the world of public work. Rather than ignoring the reality of women working in industry, as most other societies had done, benevolent ladies served as useful employment facilitators. 89

In order to lend a hand to those in distress, the ladies themselves had to work and, in fact, considered themselves among "the ranks of working Christian women."90 This might be viewed as a step forward into public life for middle- and upper-class women except for the fact that the kind of work they did — sewing, selling their fancy work, giving teas, lawn parties,
oyster roasts, and chrysanthemum shows—were extensions of domesticity brought to the semi-public forum of church parlors and social halls. Even calling on the poor in their homes was not unlike visiting a sick relative or neighbor. Orders to the druggist, woodman, clothier, and grocerer on behalf of the poor were skills all homemakers possessed. The differences between the purely domestic work that women practiced in the home and the associational benevolence proferred through churches and the synagogue were organizational technique and control over their own money. The women themselves seemed to prefer organizational over domestic work. As one member proudly noted, "our society has kept every pledge, met every call for funds, paid all its bills promptly, has had money flowing into its treasury steadily all summer and that without being compelled to give one lawn party."91

Raising and handling their own funds constituted a form of independence for married women seldom found in the home. The ladies were adamant about money. Trinity Guild members "voted the Guild be the custodian of its own funds." And the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid Society became quite huffy when it was suggested that the male Trustees handle their savings: "we [are] 'neither infants nor invalids[,]' that while we [are] glad of any advice or suggestions from the Trustees it [is] advisable that our securities be allowed to remain in [the] charge of the Society." Members of the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolence Society were sufficiently adept at financial matters to produce an increase in their endowment for the years between 1911 and 1916, all the while contributing funds to the needy.92 As important as the care of the poor was to the women, the experience in money management remained valuable for the sense of independence and
confidence it gave them in their own abilities. All this would seem to suggest that women who helped the poor materially and saw their work as social service, considered themselves in a career commitment to the community, presaging the day of the career social worker or the "professional altruist."

Whether women borrowed the system of organized relief from local men's groups or from charities in other cities is not clear. Probably the organizational concepts introduced in the 1820s and 1830s by Thomas Chalmers, an Englishman, and Joseph Tuckerman, a Bostonian, came to be adopted in Galveston through the influence of charities in the northeast. Tuckerman's main contribution to organized charity was to absolve the poor from having their poverty blamed on their own sinfulness and instead seeing it as a consequence of the social order. He also encouraged systematizing relief, visiting the poor, and when necessary, using institutions such as homes for the aged, orphanages, and almshouses.

The women of the First Presbyterian Ladies' Aid Society applied Tuckerman's organizational strategies by writing their own constitution and by-laws, and by electing officials, including the position of First Directress, who oversaw the sewing work and sales. They met weekly for two hours, the first hour for sewing and socializing, the second for business and social work. The officers appointed seventeen women out of forty-five in 1883 to "charity committees" and divided the city into three parts. Those who applied for aid were "investigated" by a member of the petitioner's district committee. Home visits were common to evaluate need as well as to establish worthiness. Those who drank, who led "immoral" lives, or who were not willing to work though healthy were deemed unworthy and were
denied aid primarily because the chances of reintegrating them into society as useful citizens were, in the ladies’ opinion, very slim. The records of Trinity Church Guild for the years before 1902 are no longer extant, but in that year the women of the church reorganized the guild, and they too created a charity committee comprised of fifteen women and divided the city into four sections with a committee over each. Not satisfied with only a charity committee, one month later they appointed a Committee on Attention to Strangers, a Committee for Application for Clothing, and a Committee for Visiting the Sick. With these rather cumbersome and antiquated sounding titles, the women of the guild subdivided the responsibilities for their charitable charges.

Relief was not usually given in money but in kind: fuel, shoes, groceries, clothing, linens, furniture, stoves, medical assistance, and the payment of rent and hospital bills. Exceptions were made for former members, however, who occasionally would fall on hard times and need assistance. When the ladies found such a case, they invariably provided the former member with a healthy monetary outlay, often $25 at a time. Although the worthy poor were trusted to use the items given them to improve their condition, apparently the women did not feel safe giving them money directly, or in such quantity. Former members, on the other hand, perhaps out of a sense of class loyalty, were allowed discretion, making service in a women’s aid society something of an insurance policy against an uncertain future.

Between February 1893 and March 1896, the Presbyterian women dispersed $2,751.00 in aid. Unlike most ladies’ aid societies, the Presbyterians had three funds from which to work: The Ladies’ Aid Fund,
which came from members' dues and missionary teas, was used to support 'their missionary family ($150 a year), and church incidentals like fixing the organ and remodeling the manse; the Charity Fund, which came from the sale of items sewn by the members, was used to support charity cases; and the [George] Ball Charity Fund (Sarah Ball was a member), which was a charitable trust set up to aid the poor through various relief agencies including Trinity Church Guild. The Ball Fund distributed $500 each year to the benevolent societies that helped the deserving poor. 97

Money and supplies were not the only services provided by benevolent ladies. Like the French Benevolent Society, the Ladies' Aid commissioned a physician (a female!) to attend the sick and a druggist to fill orders. Occasionally, an elderly white woman would be judged incapable of living alone and was recommended for admission to the Old Woman's Home. Elderly men and blacks were advised to go to the poor farm, the only institution that accepted both races and sexes. Orphans and half orphans were urged upon the privately endowed Galveston Orphans' Home or the Home for Homeless Children; children of sick, disabled, or abandoned women were provided a nurse who went to the house at the request of the society, or the children were sent to boarding houses where temporary care was provided. The ladies sought out treatment centers for otherwise respectable women who were addicted to morphine. 98 No one was coerced; the society merely facilitated these transactions. These institutions, although judged clean and hospitable by the ladies, were seen as asylums of last resort. Keeping families together, giving temporary relief, and returning people to their former positions of independence were the society's first goals. In short, the ladies practiced a combination of outdoor
(aid directly to the supplicant) and non-coerced indoor (placing individuals in asylums) relief.

The ladies knew that they held positions of responsibility, as indicated in their minutes. "It is pleasant and delightful to know that we have it in our power, through the beneficence of one who loved his fellow men... to help those who wish to help themselves." At that time few other voluntary institutions in Galveston gave middle- and upper-class women the opportunity to learn sound organizational techniques and to develop methods of raising and dispersing funds without the direction of men. While acknowledging Christ's hand in their endeavors, power belonged to them, and it was exhilarating to the women to be able to wield it.

Perhaps that explains why so many widows carried on their work for decades as presidents of benevolent societies. In the German Ladies' Benevolent Society, the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society, and the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid Society, Presidents Agnes Erhard, Caroline Block, and Margaret McCullough were widows who occupied their posts for over twenty years. What was it about widowhood and charity that brought the two together? Fellowship and a sense of duty borne of religious conviction of course played a part. But the fact that so few occupations were open to "respectable" women, meant that charity work filled a void for women who needed to feel useful. It gave widows a position of power and authority in the community after their roles as wives and mothers ended.

The authority to lend assistance, however, was not the power to control. The ladies sought to return the displaced to a functional position in the community and the elderly and dependent to a more secure place. This constitutes concern with social welfare, rather than the demand for the
submission of one class by a dominant class. In this respect arguments, such as those advanced by Paul Boyer, that varying approaches to charity were a part of a larger scheme toward moral and or social control, tend to view men's and women's charity work as stemming from the same motives. It is more likely that women approached charity (as they did politics) differently than men, and while their class and economic status may have been the same, women's reasons for involvement in charity were not based on issues of efficiency and control, but of nurture, amelioration, protection of the disadvantaged, and the desire for their independence.101

This does not mean that middle- and upper-class ladies did not perceive and react to class differences among their "clients" or recognize fraud when it came to them in tears. The emphasis of the society was on aid, not social acceptance. Sisterhood existed only among the members. When one woman petitioned the Presbyterian Ladies Aid Society for ten dollars to return to Natchez, the recorder carped, "she was dissolved in tears, but ... tears with that class of people was not to have too much weight as it is the usual concomitant of appeals for money. Indeed we ought to bear this in mind having had so many examples; there seems to be no bar to the deep water of their eyes when they have a petition to float in."102

Annoyance with "persistant beggars" actually led to an improvement in the ladies' system of benevolence. In 1891 a Presbyterian woman suggested exchanging lists of aid recipients with the members of Trinity Church Guild so as to uncover fraud.103 Two years later three church-sponsored female benevolent societies were meeting on a monthly basis in addition to their own weekly meetings. Ecumenism, however, had existed from the beginning. Any woman with dues and time to spare was
welcomed within the various women's church societies. Although it is difficult to know how much cross-fertilization occurred among the societies, with Protestant women denominational barriers were lowered for the sake of relief, presaging a time when women would work together in a "women's community" for civic benefit. Meanwhile, women who really wanted to help the poor could make the semi-public life of female benevolence a full-time career.

By 1893 the need for systematic aid and cooperation between benevolent societies was greater than it had ever been before with the advent of the depression. Early in February 1894 Rabbi Henry Cohen of Temple B'Nai Israel asked the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid for twenty dollars to buy 200 meals for unemployed mechanics. In December of that year, as the cases mounted and monies dwindled, the Presbyterian ladies eagerly awaited the Ball Charity Fund gift of $500 to be parcelled out in drops of from three to five dollars for each petitioner. In 1895 the recession dragged on; employees of the cotton factory applied for assistance and were helped on an individual basis. Things got so bad that when the pastor asked the ladies to take charge of the janitor, they replied that they "could not undertake any more work in connection with the church...." Their days were filled with raising money to feed the unemployed. A second plea from the deacons asking the ladies to supervise the sexton was again turned down. Finally, in 1897 the ladies lamented that times were so hard and honest work so difficult to find that absolutely no charity cases would be refused. The depression of 1893-97 may well have been the benevolent societies' best years of service to the community.
The devastating storm of September 1900 that took 6,000 lives and destroyed nearly two-thirds of the city was a blow that substantially affected the women's charities. Approximately one-half of the surviving residents left the city; some never returned. At first few individuals reported to the various women's charities, because a Central Relief Committee created in the wake of the disaster, the Red Cross, and donations from around the world supplied the homeless. The minutes of the various societies appear spotty even months after the disaster as the ladies tended to their own problems. Then, too, with the destruction to many of the churches and the synagogue, the women concentrated on rebuilding their damaged structures and refurbishing congregational interiors. 110

The momentum for poor relief among women's benevolent societies had been severely impaired by the overpowering currents of the disaster. Hundreds were without homes, food, and clothing. No catastrophe of that magnitude had afflicted the island before, and the women's benevolent societies, attached as they were to the care and upkeep of their churches as well as poor relief, were simply overwhelmed by the need. Moreover, the kind of fundraising the women did to earn money for charity -- sewing dainty items for sale, holding teas and bazaars -- could not be sustained in a community coping with massive debris removal and homeless camps on the edge of town. Fortunately, emergency relief agencies, spawned in the wake of the disaster, carried the city's homeless through the worst part of the recovery.

Still, after 1901 all of the women's benevolent societies continued some form of poor relief, but either their methods of fundraising became more labor saving or they sought distance from the subjects of their charity.
Rather than come together for sewing, Lutheran women bought two rental houses on Winnie Avenue, the income from which went toward aiding the needy and earning money for missions work. Jewish women quickened their activities to accommodate the needs of charitable organizations of Jewish origin or that cared for Jewish children rather than deal directly with the Jewish poor. They continued to give $50 at a time to the New Orleans Orphans' Home, donated $250 to the Jewish Kindergarten begun by the Council of Jewish Women in 1914, and contributed monthly charitable allotments to the Lasker Home for Homeless Children to help poor Jewish children therein. Mrs. Joe Bonart, a tireless worker on behalf of the poor, who apparently resented the shift away from direct relief, revived the old charity committee, which had been inactive, and reported at every meeting the pressing needs among Jewish women and children in Galveston. In 1915 Mrs. Abe Blum suggested reinstituting a sewing society to make garments for the poor, indicating that the society had long ago abandoned that kind of work.

Trinity Church Guild members were persuaded to reorganize their charitable pursuits, creating charity subcommittees and hiring a professional "investigator" to check on the worthiness of recipients. But they were not able to continue systematic charity to the poor. Rather, in 1912, they turned their attention to making garments to be given away by other agencies — to patients in the tubercular and in John Sealy hospitals, and to the poor through United Charities, which formed in 1914.

As the war years approached, Trinity Church Guild began donations to the Red Cross and bought Liberty Bonds, but they ran out of money and, finally, members "The Guild find they cannot possibly get up a sale of work
or do anything to make money at present, there are so few members who can work, so decided to ask the members to pay their dues for 1918." The problem of carrying on the charitable work of the parish, that is, of visiting the sick, assisting in the Sunday School, and setting an example for those women not in the guild, could be aided, said Mrs. George Sealy, if the parish would call (hire) a deaconess for $1,200 a year with funds raised by the women. Mrs. Sealy offered to give the first $250. When the matter of a deaconess was taken before the vestry, they voted against it, and the women tabled the idea. Although many Episcopal parishes did hire deaconesses to perform parish tasks, thus freeing laywomen up for charity work, the vestrymen preferred to save the money and allow poor relief to languish.  

The Presbyterian Ladies Aid Society suffered a slow decline in the years between 1900 and 1920. In the first months after the storm of 1900 few women managed to come to the meetings and even fewer supplicants asked for aid. Assembling at times with only eleven members in 1911, the women spent more time and money on foreign mission work than on home missions or poor relief, although they did contribute $75 to Austin College in Sherman, Texas. The treasurer's report for 1911 shows no line item expense for charity and the subsequent years' reports show decreasing membership and little activity. Finally, in 1923 a group of younger women, the daughters and granddaughters of many of the original members of the Ladies' Aid Society, called for a revitalization of the apparently defunct society.  

Ironically, as the older benevolent societies moved away from poor relief, members of the Women's Missionary Society of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who earlier had not ventured into poor relief, in 1906 opened a Wesley House, or a religious settlement house, for factory
workers on the island's West End. Mothers were invited to leave their children under the care of a Methodist deaconess who taught them "Christian ideals." Located across the street from the old brewery, the Wesley House for several years provided daycare in an age when the city lacked such necessities for working mothers. One of the few evidences of any organized attempt to improve race relations came with this society when it appointed five members (three of whom were active in other women's organizations) to a "Negro and Immigration Committee." Methodist women also stretched their activism to include religious services for inmates of the county jail and the clothing of several children at the Home for Homeless Children. The sixty-three-year old widow and matron at the county jail, Susan C. Russell, was also president of the Ladies Aid Society of St. John's Methodist Church in 1900 and no doubt paved the way for the introduction of Methodist ministries there. Baptist women from the Ladies Aid and Missionary Society organized chiefly to serve their church, but in 1903 they did donate slightly more than 10 percent of their earnings "for the poor."117

As time went on Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Jewish women (with singular exceptions) distanced themselves from actual contact with the poor, and relied instead on monetary donations and the making and distributing of garments through other institutions. The reasons for the shift were many and varied. Kathleen D. McCarthy's example of Chicago women moving away from direct and personal involvement in poor relief offers lessons for understanding a similar phenomenon among Galveston women. McCarthy attributes the decline in direct relief to problems of sprawling slums filled with immigrants that were no longer manageable by
teams of charity ladies. For Galveston the problem was not city growth, in fact it had lost population, rather the crisis had created needs beyond their abilities. The storm of 1900 overwhelmed the benevolent societies, which although able to function adequately in normal times with approximately forty members per society, were not equal to the task of modern emergency relief on a par with the Red Cross. Moreover, churches and the synagogues were in some cases totally destroyed, requiring herculean efforts by the benevolent societies, which still served as congregational housekeepers, refurbishers, and decorators.

Equally important was the fact that women's benevolent societies had traditionally given assistance to the poor at a time when there were fewer options available to women of means, talent, and incentive. By 1900 a plethora of other women's associations existed taking volunteer time and resources away from benevolence. Those women most likely to enter into civic reform activities after 1900 came from the churches that had directly served the poor. Poor relief had given them exposure to community activism, but the very women most likely to engage in poor relief were those who chose more comprehensive and progressive women's associations that addressed needs of the larger community. Essentially they gave up benevolence for civic reform, leaving the women's poor relief societies in the hands of older members whose principal volunteer careers had been devoted to charity. In every case after 1910 the societies show evidence of aging despite attempts to interest younger women in poor relief. And as McCarthy points out the newer generation of women entered into other avenues of community improvement, where more public visible roles
allowed reforming women to shine. Public exposure replaced private sacrifices as a means for well-intentioned women to gain self-esteem.119

Perhaps the most important underlying reason that benevolent societies declined after 1910 (and even before) was the rise of secular organized charity organizations that took away the need for women's personal relief efforts. The United Charities, organized in 1914, originated as a clearing house for relief work. Its creators were men active in the commercial life of the city, but its first board of directors, representing various denominations, was composed of five men and two women from the community. The two women, Margaret Sealy Burton and Sally Trueheart Williams, were members of the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches respectively. Soon after its organization, the United Charities hired a secretary, Mary E. Wood, who as an experienced social worker took charge of city relief work. She coordinated the efforts of at least twelve church benevolent societies and petitioned the county commissioners for aid to individuals in need. In 1916 the United Charities disbursed $10,680 in aid and found work for 150 unemployed. In the two years between 1914 and 1916 it helped 2,300 transients and 984 family cases. These charitable gifts went far beyond the means of the women's benevolent societies.120

Two years after its initiation, the United Charities saw more women appointed to positions of administrative power. Miss Mary Martin, a Catholic, was advanced to the Board of Directors and four women and one man of different faiths comprised the advisory board. Although community relief was now taken over by bureaucracy, it was still in the hands of women, many of whom learned their first lessons in civic responsibility in women's benevolent associations.121 Complete separation between welfare services
and churches did not occur before 1920. In fact, an appeal sent out by the United Charities' secretary to the congregations sounded very much like the goals advanced by the women's benevolent societies. It announced that the new organization strived for "a united effort to relieve the unfortunates who have been submerged in life's struggle, and [to] give them another opportunity for gaining independence, self-respect and usefulness." 122 In effect, organized secular benevolence that coordinated the efforts of a host of poor relief societies coopted the work of benevolent ladies. A bureaucracy, with hired administrators, handled the needs of the poor in an efficient businesslike manner, making sure that idlers and "duplicators" (beggers who managed to get aid from more than one society) were drummed out of the rolls while the truly needy received the care they deserved.

* * * * *

Poor relief in Galveston evolved from early efforts by men's fraternal organizations, labor unions and their predecessors, and men's ethnic and religious societies to care for their own members. This was followed by women's ethnic societies that again ministered to the needs of their own kind. Although government agencies existed for the care of the poor and indigent, most agreed that the poor farm was an institution of last resort for the ambulatory poor in financial distress. Episcopal and Presbyterian women's benevolent societies that served the worthy poor beyond the doors of their own church did not try to evangelize or proselitize the supplicants, rather they sought to assert an example of Christian charity while meeting the needs of the disadvantaged. Women's benevolent societies among these churches evolved as urban and industrial conditions, including
decreasing wages particularly for working women, created greater hardships for the working poor.

The rise of women's benevolence in Galveston should be viewed as an organizational effort that returned to the community as productive members those who might otherwise have fallen into permanent destitution. As an integrating force, female benevolent societies strengthened the link between individual and community, both for society ladies and for the poor. True, there were shortcomings to the women's system. It did not adequately address the source of the problems or attempt to rearrange the social order better to accommodate the working poor. And it did little to alleviate the great discrepancy in wealth and social acceptance between the races. But in terms of women of privilege, the creation of women's benevolent societies provided an advancement toward public life for women whose lives had previously been privatized in a woman's sphere.

Most women who joined the benevolent societies grew old within them and never ventured into areas of public life. A few women boldly "graduated" from church-related societies to the managing boards of semi-religious benevolent institutions -- orphanages, a home for elderly women, and a kindergarten -- and to women's clubs, civic groups, and reforming associations. Although a description of this process will supply the subject for the next chapters, suffice it to say that a female voluntary hierarchy was being developed in Galveston for women who were both charitably, socially, and, some might say, politically ambitious.

There are historians who would call women's benevolence a branch of the social gospel movement and attempt to link women's interests in
community charity to the social gospellers' concern for the problems of the urban environment and for efforts to effect change for the sake of its victims. But Samuel S. Hill concludes that southern churches did not involve themselves in the social gospel movement as it was known in the North, except for their strong advocacy of prohibition. Galveston, however, differed from the rural South; urban problems pushed quickly to the fore after the Civil War and were first met in the 1870s not by members of the major southern evangelical denominations but by immigrant women and by Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Jewish women who formed congregational benevolent societies.  

Still, there is little or no evidence that these Galveston women viewed their charitable deeds as scientific or effective in eradicating pauperism. And no vision of the northern brand of the social gospel — the transformation of society to relieve conditions that created poverty — graced the pages of their ledgers. Southern benevolent ladies coveted no grand designs for overturning the social order, they were too much a part of that order. Historians who would label their efforts "social gospel" have done a disservice to those women who sat week after week, year after year sewing in order to raise money to feed and clothe their charges. Their acts of charity, whether it was German immigrant groups aiding ethnic kinfolk, German Jewish settlers aiding transient newcomers from Russia and Poland, or Protestant women confronting the age-old problem of the poor at their doorsteps, arose out of their own sense of personal involvement in the community, from religious convictions that demanded social action, and from the imperatives of a woman's culture that portrayed women as gentle caretakers.
Beneficence by women in the urban South predated the northern social gospel movement, and to suggest that southern women took their charitable ideas from men such as Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch is to deny the long tradition of benevolence supported by their own societies in synagogues, churches, and independent ethnic organizations. Benevolent ladies of the late nineteenth century may have seen no solutions to the end of poverty before them, but their work, nonetheless, presaged that of Progressive era social workers who heralded the creation of an overarching city-wide benevolent organization, the United Charities and later Community Chest.

There is no doubt that most women who joined the benevolent societies acted out of piety and were clearly moved by scenes of suffering and destitution. But they never lost their patronizing air, nor did they openly criticize an economic system that left women underpaid – and such a critique was at the heart of the northern social gospel movement. Instead they helped working women to adapt to the realities of the workplace, providing a safety-net for employees at a time when sick pay and unemployment compensation did not exist. For the dependent young and aged they made temporary and permanent arrangements for their care. They developed the case system of social welfare in Galveston long before the advent of professional social workers, and they crossed denominational lines to establish a city-wide women’s ecumenical charity system. To say, as Anne Scott did, that women invented the welfare state may be only a slight exaggeration.
Table 3:1 – Recipients of Aid from the First Presbyterian Ladies Aid Society, 1890-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Black Men</th>
<th>Black Women</th>
<th>White Men</th>
<th>White Women</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
<td>19 (76%)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (16.7%)</td>
<td>4 (22%)</td>
<td>11 (61%)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>8 (80%)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (10.5%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>12 (63%)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>44 (88%)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>19 (25%)</td>
<td>54 (71%)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>1 (1.6%)</td>
<td>7 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (6.8%)</td>
<td>47 (79.6%)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (7.5%)</td>
<td>11 (20.7%)</td>
<td>38 (71.7%)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2 (5.4%)</td>
<td>8 (21.6%)</td>
<td>2 (5.4%)</td>
<td>25 (67.6%)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (1.4%)</td>
<td>32 (9.22%)</td>
<td>52 (14.9%)</td>
<td>258 (74.3%)</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean per yr. 2.1% 9.6% 15.1% 73.1% 38.5%

Black and white women total average = 83.5%
Sources: Minutes of the Ladies Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church, Galveston, 1890-1900.
1Minutes of the Ladies Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church, Galveston, October 1, 1891, First Presbyterian Church Records (Rosenberg Library); hereinafter cited as LASFPC.

2LASFPC, July 6, 1893. Even the Ladies Aid Society apparently could not prevent the separation of a mother from her children due to economic exigencies. Their best hope was that the separation was temporary.

3LASFPC, August 3, 1893.

4Ibid., November 2, 23 (quotation), 1893.

5Ibid., January 25, 1894.

6The Howard Association was a notable exception. In existence since 1845 and incorporated in 1854, it gave aid to all victims of yellow fever, nursing them and burying the indigent dead. Record Ledger of Association Secretary, 1854-1882, Howard Association of Galveston Records (Rosenberg Library). See Peggy Hildreth, "The Howard Association of Galveston: the 1850s, Their Peak Years," *East Texas Historical Journal* 17 (Spring 1979), 33-44; Kathleen Davis, "Year of Crucifixion: Galveston, Texas," *Texana*, 8 (No. 2, 1970), 140-153; and Charles W. Hayes, *Galveston: History of the Island and the City* (2 vols.; Austin: Jenkins Garrett Press, 1974) II, 705, writes, "All nationalities in Galveston have their benevolent associations, which are organized and maintained for the purpose of extending aid and relief to their fellow countrymen when sick or destitute. Prominent among these are the French, German, Spanish, Italian, Caledonian, Hibernian and B'Nai Brith, besides the colored people, who have well organized benevolent associations. Each church has its Gild, for the dispensation of charities, while the secret orders are largely represented in this city, and are active in all humane efforts to alleviate distress."


9Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community*, 188.


13 City Directories, 1881-82, 1882-83. The 1880-81 city directory was for whites only, and as if to emphasize segregation, after 1884 city directories listed black churches but no black organizations. The best source for discussing postbellum black organizations is Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1866-1890 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

14 City Directories, 1871-1895. This does not include the forty-seven chapters of labor organizations and unions that also may have used dues for workers' relief.

15 Screwmen were skilled laborers who through teamwork loaded the ships with cotton, adroitly packing the bales into the holds and then using a jackscrew to squeeze the bales tight. Shippers employed screwmen in order to increase the shipload by as much as 15 percent. After 1910 and the invention of cotton compresses, which through high density pressure reduced a 500 pound bale from 22 to 15 cubic feet, the need for screwmen declined and the labor organization died. See Allen Clayton Taylor, "A History of the Screwmen's Benevolent Association from 1866 to 1924" (M.A. Thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1968), 109.

16 Galveston Screwmen's Benevolent Association Records, Vol I, 1866-1889; Vol II, 1890-1900; Vol III, 1900. Vol I - September 11, 26, October 5, December, 1866, June 7, 1867, February 28, 1868, July 9, 1875, July 25, 1879 (quotation), April 9, 1879, January 14, 1880; Vol II - January 9, 1891, February 24, 1899; Vol III - September 11, 1900 (Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas, Austin); Taylor, "A History of the Screwmen's Benevolent Association," 30, 49.

17 For example, Episcopal Rector Benjamin Eaton reserved a portion of the offering for individual relief. Records between 1865 and 1868 indicate that he was generous with his donations: $10 for a sick painter, $30 over a three month period for Mrs. Mellon whose husband was sick, $5 for passage of a poor man to Houston. Records of Trinity Episcopal Church, Galveston, Texas, December 4, 1865- April 9, 1871, typescript, TEC Records. One of the most generous religious leaders on the island was Temple B'Nai Israel's Rabbi Henry Cohen, who remained at his post for fifty years before retirement.

18 Rosanna Dyer Osterman died in 1866 leaving in her will $5,000 for a synagogue, $1,000 for a Jewish school, $1,000 for a cemetery as already noted, in addition to the benevolent society. A. Stanley Dreyfus, "The Hebrew Benevolent Society: A Saga of Service," manuscript, A. Stanley Dreyfus Papers (Rosenberg Library) (quotation p. 9); Rosanna Dyer Osterman's will, filed March 26, 1866, Will Book 2, pp. 229-44, Galveston County Courthouse.

19 City Directories, 1875-76, 1881-82, 1898, 1899-1900.

20 City Directory, 1895-96.

21 Dreyfus, "The Hebrew Benevolent Society"; Morgan, Trinity Episcopal Church, 563 (quotation); City Directories, 1870, 1879.

22 Although Anne C. Loveland found that southern evangelicals in the antebellum period participated in "benevolent schemes" that included helping the urban poor, in
Galveston, the Baptists at first struggled just to keep a pastor. Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 162 (quotation), 167-71.

23 FBC minutes, December 2, 1869 (quotation), February 3, 1870, May 8, 1873, April 15, 1880, February 5, 1888.

24 Baptist Texas General Convention, Centennial Story of Texas Baptists (Dallas: Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1936), 173

25 FBC minutes, February 5, August 12, 1888.

26 Charter of the City of Galveston with the Amendments thereto and the Revised Ordinances, Art. 386 (Galveston: Clarke and Courts, Stationers, 1888) (first quotation); ibid., 1893, Art. 67 (second quotation).


29 This phrase was used consistently by the commissioners when giving aid to indigents on an ad hoc basis. The quotation may be found throughout the commissioners minutes. See, for example, Minutes, County Commissioners Court, Galveston, Texas, December 13, 1886, December 14, 1916; hereinafter cited as Commissioners minutes. County commissioners provided outdoor relief, that is money given directly to the poor, in order to maintain themselves throughout the period studied between 1880 and 1920. The commissioners used a combination of outdoor relief for the poor and indoor or institutional relief for the destitute. Philip Klein, in From Philanthropy to Social Welfare: An American Cultural Perspective (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1968), 15-18, defines destitution as the "lack of material resources sufficient to assure survival in organized society, where the various forms of familial and related structures no longer provide that assurance" (p. 15-16), and poverty as "existence on an economic level above destitution but imposing on the individual concerned a living standard not deemed acceptable to, or characteristic of, the culture of his nation . . . " (p. 17). State statutes concerning relief for the poor did not stipulate if the county should give outdoor or indoor relief; in the case of Galveston County both were tried. Helen Evans, "Provisions for Public Relief in Texas, 1846-1937" (M.S. Thesis, Tulane University School of Social Work, 1941), 23.

30 Commissioners minutes, June 28, 1887.


32 Texas Constitution, 1876, General Provisions, Sec. 9.

33 Commissioners minutes, December 14, 1886, July 9, August 15, 1888 (a search for the comparative report in the uncatalogued commissioners' court papers in the Houston Metropolitan Archives was unsuccessful); Report and Account of County Patients at St. Mary's Infirmary, December, 1887, uncatalogued county records (Houston Metropolitan Archives,
Houston, Texas); Report of Sheriff of Galveston County for the Feeding and Keeping of County Prisoners, June 1875, ibid.

34 Commissioners' minutes, January 15, March 26, June 22, 28 (quotation), July 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, August 9, 1887.

35 Ibid., June 28, July 14, 19, 20, 27, 1887.

36 Ibid., August 9, September 14, 1887 (quotations).

37 LASFPc, April 3, 1890.

38 Commissioners' minutes, March 12, 1888. Provisioning the farm for habitation by the inmates required an initial outlay that may have exceeded the commissioners expectations of savings. A list of items for purchase drawn up by the superintendent in January 1888 gives a glimpse of the enormity of the project. "Flour, rice, sugar, starch, blueing, corn meal, bacon, pepper, salt, navy beans, black eyed peas, Babbitts Soap, molasses, spice, Irish potatoes, coal oil, vinegar, tea, matches, coffee, baking powder, soda, condensed lye, 3 hoop buckets, dried apples, wheat, oats, bran, washboard, wash tubs, tin dinner plates, tin soup plates, tin cups, tin table spoons, white sugar dishes, callico (best) hose, shoes, all wool undershirts, all wool blankets domestic (best), canton flannel, marble oil cloths, Pecal shirting, white linen towels, all wool jerseys, red flannel all-wool, suspenders, combs, bed ticking, hair pins, fine combs, needles, pins, thread, black and white horn buttons, Humbolt jeans (all wool), pocket handkerchiefs, hats, caps, boots, drawers, smoking and chewing tobacco. Joe Meyers, Superintendent County Farm, to the Honorable Judge and Board of Commissioners, January 6, 1888, uncatagolued county records (Houston Metropolitan Archives).

39 Commissioners minutes, December 13, 1887, January 9, February 13, 14 (quotations), 1888 , March 11, 1889.

40 Ibid., May 14, June 11, 1888.

41 Report of J. C. Snowball, Superintendent of the County Farm to the Hon. Commissioners Court of Galveston County, Texas, January 13, 1890, uncatagolued county records (Houston Metropolitan Archives).

42 Petition, J.C. Snowball to the Hon. Commissioners Court of Galveston County, Texas, November 26, 1892, ibid.

43 Commissioners minutes, July 9, 1888.

44 The county poor farm was closed in 1913. "The nine men and one woman, aged, and heirs to the ills that beset old age, will leave the squalor and dirt of the antiquated farm quarters" for the "clean and comfortable quarters at St. Mary's Infirmary, where they may receive the care and attention that should surround persons advanced in age." announced the Galveston Daily News, May 1, 1913. The farm was subsequently turned into a county park. "Walter Hall Park Dedication Program," October 18, 1985, Subject Files (Rosenberg Library). In 1925 the Texas Eleemosynary Commission found poor houses and farms in deplorable condition with few able-bodied inmates. It recommended closing these places and striving to identify each person's problem in order to treat the cause. Storing diseased, aged, infirm, or insane
individuals in poor houses without adequate treatment was deemed medieval and, more important to taxpayers, a waste of money. Evans, "Public Relief in Texas," 27.


48City Directories, 1878-79, 1893-94, 1895-96, 1901-10, 1903-04, 1905, 1908, 1911-12, 1913, 1914, 1919, 1921; Galveston Daily News, September 22, 1875; Morgan, Trinity Episcopal Church, 737.

49Constitution and By-Laws of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society of Galveston, Texas (Galveston, 1903), p. 9 (Temple B'Nai Israel, Galveston)

50Ibid., 7, (quotation), 9

51Minutes, Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society (later renamed Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society), May 5, 1881, May 5, 1883, March 10, April 30, 1885, February 11, 1886, November 15, 1888 to November 8, 1893, February 7, June 7, 1894, February 18, 1897, December 21, 1898 (Temple B'Nai Israel, Galveston).

52Ibid., 1903. Isabella Dyer Kopperl was the niece of Rosanna Dyer Osterman who had bequeathed in her will of 1866 funds to form the Galveston and Houston synagogues, a Jewish cemetery, school, and benevolent society. The tradition of benevolence was passed from aunt to niece; Mrs. Kopperl was also instrumental in the building of the Galveston Orphans' Home.

53Morgan, Trinity Episcopal, 558, 563.
The twenty-three women's religious societies formed in this period, only the three mentioned appear to have chosen poor relief as their principal activity.

A Brief Review of the Past and Survey of the Present of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Galveston (Galveston, 1925), 19.


United States Census Office, Report on the Manufactures of the United States at the Tenth Census, 1880 (Washington, D.C., 1883), 403; Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890
In 1880 there were 170 manufacturing establishments with 684 employees, earning an average of $730 a year. In 1890 there were 190 manufacturing establishments with 1,932 employees earning $642.50 average a year. Although this is a brief sketch of a complex phenomenon, it indicates that factories, especially garment industries that increased by twenty-four in the decade, were hiring more people at lower wages, thus creating a larger population of working poor.

United States Census Office, Compendium of the Eleventh Census, 1890, Part I, 556. A compilation of Galveston by its twelve wards in 1890 indicate that there were no overwhelmingly black or ethnic neighborhoods.

McCarthy, Noblesse Oblige, 3.

LASFPC, October 1, 1891.

Mary S. Donovan, in A Different Call, argues that Episcopal women were far more likely to be "social servants" out of a sense of noblesse oblige. They had the means to hire domestic servants, and the education to teach those with fewer advantages. But because of the church's episcopal governmental and theological structure, Episcopal women did not feel that they were given priestly authority or were qualified to effect conversions among the poor. "Education rather than evangelism was the primary focus" (p. 16).

Reverend S. M. Bird, Twenty Years in Trinity Parish (Galveston: Press of J. W. Burson, Co., 1891), 25. It is unclear just what the Reverend Bird had in mind, however, in 1894, Johanna Runge organized the first free kindergarten for children in the factory district.

Ibid.

Ibid., 27.

After the Reverend Bird's death, members of St. Augustine's Episcopal Church remembered him as "one of the first men of God in this city who could be moved to speak for the bettering of the condition of the poor of all nationalities; therefore, he was most eminently the people's man ... it is especially as the friend of the poor and oppressed and unfortunate that he will be best remembered." Reverend Benjamin A. Rogers, Memorial Sermon on the Rev. Stephen Moylan Bird, D. D. (Galveston, 1894), 13-14.


Donovan, A Different Call, 5,9.

Ibid., Chap. 4, 66, 93-95.
210

80Ibid., 16.

81LASFPC, Memorial to Mrs. Helen Thurmond, October 7, 1897.

82Minutes, Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, June 11, 1908.


84Nellie Roeck, "Nino," manuscript, Waters-Roeck-Thompson Papers; Editors, The Youth's Companion, to Nellie W. Roeck, December 1, 1892, ibid.; Morgan, Trinity Episcopal, 570; Minutes, Trinity Church Guild, 1902-1920, TEC Records; hereinafter cited as Minutes, TCG.

85LASFPC, 1890-97, 1900.

86LASFPC, March 27, 1890 (first quotation), March 19, 1891 (second quotation), October 26, 1893 (third quotation).

87LASFPC, March 24, 1892 (quotation), April 23, 1896. City Directories, 1898-1900.

88LASFPC, March 23, 1893 (first quotation), October 4, 1894 (second quotation), April 23, 1896 (third quotation).

89Morgan, Trinity Episcopal, 563-65; LASFPC, May 1, 1890, July 6, August 3, November 2, 1893. The Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society also tried to find employment for workers.

90LASFPC, October 6, 1892.

91Ibid.

92Minutes, TCG, February 3, 1902; LASFPC, December 20, 1906; minutes, HLBS, November 1911 to February 16, 1916; their endowment grew from $1,500 to $2,272.


95Aid to alcoholics, derelicts, and prostitutes was not available in Galveston before a branch of the Salvation Army was organized in 1896.

96Minutes of Trinity Church Guild, February 2, March 30, 1902; hereinafter cited as Minutes, TCG with appropriate date.


The society continued on its course without undue variance, maintaining a membership of between sixty and seventy members. When asked to "amalgamate" with the Council of Jewish Women, despite the strong endorsements of their president, Mrs. Isaac Kempner and of Rabbi Cohen, who thought the ladies "would be brought in closer touch with things in general," the members voted to remain independent. Minutes, HLBS, November 29 (quotation), December 1918.

Minutes, TCG, February 1, 1904. Indicative of the reduced emphasis on aiding the poor, the guild spent less than 10 percent of its earnings on charity. Minutes, TCG, May 1909. Minutes, February 5, 1912, January, February 26, March, December 1913, March, December 1915, January 3, April 1916. The treasurer's report for 1916 showed the amount spent on charity equaled $51, while the total expenses were $1,421. The only item larger than charity was $1,150 for church repairs, but it was twenty-two times larger.

Minutes, TCG, January 3, 1918, December 1918 (quotation), January 6, 13, 1919.


Murphy, "The History of Methodism in Galveston," p. 24; Galveston Tribune, November 29, 1916; Olin W. Nail, History of Texas Methodism, 1900-1960 (Austin: Capital Printing Co., 1961), 275. City Directory, 1900; Manuscript census returns, Galveston County, 1900 (the county jail in 1900 housed 18 women, 11 black and 8 white; and 45 men, 20 black, 25 white); "Women's Work in the First Baptist Church, Galveston, Texas," typescript, p. 6, First Baptist Church Records (First Baptist Church, Galveston).

McCarthy, Noblesse Oblige, 28-29.

Ibid., 30-31.


Constitution, United Charities of Galveston, Morgan Family Papers (Rosenberg Library); Mary E. Wood to Jean S. Morgan, November 4, 1916, ibid.

Circular sent to all clergymen in the city, United Charities, Morgan Family Papers.

For an excellent overview and bibliography of the extensive writings of the social gospel see Ronald C. White, Jr., and C. Howard Hopkins, The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America (Philadelphia, 1976), xi-xix. Three historians of religion in the South have assumed different positions on southern churches' involvement in the social gospel movement. Samuel S. Hill in The South and North in American Religion (Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1980), 130-31, states that while southern churches were aware of social problems and the need to take action, "yet by no stretch of the imagination can it be said that a strong Social Gospel tradition lived as an element in regional religious life." (p. 130). Kenneth Bailey, in Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), notes that, "although the social gospel movement was much weaker in the South than in the North, yet social concern
was more manifest among southern religious leaders than has been generally recognized." (p. 43n). By contrast, John Patrick McDowell in The Social Gospel in the South: The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939 (Baton Rouge and London: LSU Press, 1982), 4 (quotation) challenges these positions by arguing vehemently for the existence of a social gospel movement within the Methodist church. He sees ethically and socially responsible Methodist women advancing a "concern for social reform" (p. 2) through the agency of the Woman's Home Mission Society. To be sure, older histories of the social gospel movement have neglected to take into account the myriad charitable activities performed by women. But does the women's home mission program in the South comprise a segment of the national social gospel movement? This is a question of supreme importance to the study of women and the churches. The history of church women's considerable activities is just now being brought into better focus, and their influence and role in mission outreach is surprising even to religious historians, but to tag this activity social gospel may confuse and distort what seems to have been a truly female or gender-related manifestation of the churches' long-held tradition of charitable works.


117Scott, "Historians Construct the Southern Woman," in Joanne V. Hawks and Sheila Skemp, eds., Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1983), 107
Chapter 4
Benevolent Institutions and Their Lady Managers

Every man who has reached middle age begins to realize that women will take hold of and accomplish by labor what men would never dream of. ... Animated by a desire to do good, they take hold of it and possess greater force than the men.

Colonel Marcus F. Mott

We can do nothing without cooperation.

Johanna Runge

By 1880 the women's benevolent societies were firmly in place, dispensing aid on a regular basis and filling the community's need for poor relief. They served a critical need as proto-welfare agencies in an underinstitutionalized period of the city's history. By ministering to the worthy poor, however, benevolent ladies came to understand the degree of dependency that had been created by increased industrialization and the growth of the city. The answer to the problems of orphans and the aged poor nationwide came through the creation of benevolent institutions, homes, or asylums. In order to care for Protestant and Jewish dependents, Galveston citizens, mostly women, created their own benevolent institutions; thus began a new chapter in Galveston's history of poor relief. Individual women's church and synagogue societies chose not to sponsor these asylums for the city's dependents. Instead, elite women from various congregations
formed an interfaith female force by binding the energies of the city's most affluent women to the task of institution building. Thus for the first time women moved from the safe and sanctioned enclosures of church and synagogue, to the larger secular world, transferring women's cultural concerns for dependents from home to church to city. The importance of this shift cannot be overstated, because by moving into the public sector women with means created an opening for themselves that would continue through the twentieth century.

Drawing upon their experience with congregational societies, elite Protestant and Jewish women between 1878 and 1894 founded or helped to found four permanent benevolent institutions that were administered by boards of lady managers. Two orphanages, the Galveston Orphans' Home (1880) and the Lasker Home for Children (1894); a home for aged women, the Letitia Rosenberg Home for Women (1888); and the state's first free kindergarten, the Johanna Runge Free Kindergarten (1893),\(^2\) were added to the already existing St. Mary's Catholic Orphan Asylum and the County Poor Farm.

Members of the Protestant and Jewish communities were not the first to build benevolent institutions in Galveston; the Catholic women's religious orders were. Very early in the city's history Ursuline nuns accompanied Bishop John Mary Odin to Galveston and formed the Ursuline Academy and convent. These sisters, although educators, acted as nurses while yellow fever epidemics raged, and during the Civil War they converted their convent to a military hospital. After the war Bishop Claude Marie DuBuis of Galveston summoned three Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word from France to establish an infirmary and an orphanage in Galveston. In 1867 St.
Mary's Infirmary became the first Catholic hospital in Texas; in its infancy it also housed twenty orphans. Finally, in 1874 St. Mary's Orphan Asylum became a separate institution managed and cared for by the Sisters of Charity.

The Catholic orders, missionaries to the southwest, established institutions in the city before there was a substantial population to support them, and the struggle to maintain their schools, hospital, and orphans' home was heroic given the few resources available to them.

A brighter period came with the 1880s, and the rise in institution building at that time is attributable to the increase in population and prosperity on the island. In the twenty years before 1900 the population steadily climbed from 22,248 to 37,789. More important was the tremendous rise in commercial activity leading boosters to point with pride to the fact that Galveston by 1880 was the third largest cotton export center and fourth largest coffee market in the United States. Fortunes were being made in cotton merchandising, railroading, banking, manufacturing, and real estate. As capital accumulated, men with investment instincts sought to improve the city by creating institutions worthy of the island's growing prosperity and increasing population.

In these years public institutions with state and city funding accepted private donations by wealthy citizens. In fact private investments were often used to induce state or local governmental appropriations. The public school system, opened in 1881, was helped substantially when Henry Rosenberg paid for the construction of Rosenberg School, or when George Ball gave funds for the erection of Ball High School, and when Isadore Lovenberg bequeathed money to build Lovenberg School. In the same manner John Sealy offered $50,000 for the construction in 1890 of a charity hospital with the strict proviso
that the state open the University of Texas Medical Branch and use John Sealy Hospital to train student doctors and nurses. The city in turn made an annual appropriation of about $40,000 to the hospital, which did not cover its costs. The deficit was made up by John Sealy's son and daughter, who also expanded the hospital and eventually created a foundation for the care of patients.⁵

Other institutions to benefit the public founded in these years were private and were established or were substantially aided by men of wealth. A free public library had been the goal of Henry Rosenberg when he died in 1893. In the tradition of the "Gospel of Wealth" espoused by Andrew Carnegie, Rosenberg left $400,000, the bulk of his estate, to the erection of a public library in hopes that succeeding generations would be morally and intellectually uplifted. The YMCA struggled to maintain itself in the years before and after the Civil War, but it remained underfunded until 1884 when a permanent organization took root. Then Henry Rosenberg left $65,000 to construct a YMCA building, which, when completed in 1898, ensured its success.⁶ University Hall, a dormitory for women students at the Medical Branch, was built in 1897 with a gift from San Antonio's George W. Breckenridge. There were other societies that, with the help of generous donors, after 1900 became established institutions — the Adoue Seamen's Bethel and the YWCA are two notable examples.⁷

With funds readily available for the aggrandizement of the city through institutions for the public benefit, Galveston's middle- and upper-class women sought to capitalize on the wave of pride and donations to build institutions of their own — for children and old women. Remaining within their sphere by offering "homes" to orphaned children and elderly women
and a kindergarten to the children of factory workers, privileged white women avoided challenging the common assumptions about woman's proper place or her duties as homemaker. After all, women in church and synagogue societies benefited the poor without offense to conventional notions of woman's place. Moreover, women had gained experience in handling poor relief, and it was evident that relief could not adequately compensate for lack of wages for single mothers whose children were suffering privations. Rather than address the issue of decent wages for working women, elite women and men followed the path of nineteenth-century child-saving experts who recommended institutions to save children from poverty, viciousness, and lack of skills. The elderly too came to be seen in these years as different from the ordinary poor. Because of their helplessness, inability to earn their way, or poor health, they were perceived as needing special institutional protection. In the minds of many citizens the city needed decent asylums for homeless waifs and the elderly, and the women, by offering sanctuary to the victims of capitalism's iron laws, contributed to the redistribution of resources without challenging either male egos or bourgeois sensibilities. Elite women in return gained a foothold in the public sphere that eventually led them to initiate women's civic reform movements.  

The road to public independence for women was not straight, however. Whereas women mobilized themselves behind nearly every effort to care for dependent children and the aged, men, in the beginning, still felt the need to be in charge. Later on that would change as women gained confidence and experience in the business of raising money and managing institutions. Rescuing orphans at first was an integrated affair. In the case of
the orphans' home, a man and a woman, both interested in the relief of suffering, combined forces to found a temporary refuge. George B. Dealey, a Baptist tea merchant who lived in the city from 1870 to 1889, took the commandment for servanthood seriously. He served on the church communion committee, taught Sunday School at the Baptist East End mission, and often visited the hospital where he read to the patients, conducted religious services, and distributed religious tracts. There he met Mrs. E. M. Arnold, one of the matrons of the City Hospital, and together they devised a plan to found an orphanage. The reports are vague on the particulars of the arrangement, but it would appear that Dealey convinced Mrs. Arnold to take charge of the home while he acted as corresponding secretary, rented the house, provided for the children, and, presumably, paid her salary.

They opened a home at Eighth Street and Broadway Boulevard in October 1878, but later, because the landlord objected to the orphans, moved it to a more hospitable abode at Eleventh and Market streets. No information exists today on how the orphans were brought in, but a year later twenty boys and girls occupied the home. They survived the first year on donations gathered from merchants and businessmen "one of the first being ... Henry Rosenberg who indorsed [sic] warmly the effort." The founders then realized the need for wider community support and sought a regularly organized, albeit temporary, board of directors. The first overtures were to men prominent in the community who would help with the legal and financial matters.

In May 1880 the board of directors procured a charter for their orphanage, which they named the Island City Protestant and Israelitish
Orphans' Home. In July at the home of George and Sarah Ball the directors elected a permanent board of thirteen trustees, which acted in a supervisory capacity by handling the legalities of adoptions and nonpayments but which otherwise had little involvement with the children. Most important to this study, the directors also elected twenty-eight women to the board of lady managers and named as governess Mrs. William Pitt Ballinger, wife of a notable jurist, and as vice-governess Sarah Ball, prominent in charitable work, with Mrs. Clara Ritter as matron (no mention of Mrs. Arnold). It seems that Galveston was ready for the home, for in a matter of two years, the orphans' home had grown from a house run by a couple of well meaning individuals to a community-funded, congregation-supported, trustee-supervised, and woman-managed affair.

This combination of wealthy citizens quickly raised the necessary $3,600 to buy the "Bolton Place" in a respectable location at 21st Street and Avenue M; then they put in another $3,350 for improvements. In 1883 Moritz Kopperl, president of the board of trustees, died leaving $1,000 to the home, to which his wife added another $1,000 for an infirmary. Between 1886 and 1894 various patrons donated $15,325 to the orphanage. Six years later the board purchased for $4,000 another piece of land expanding the property to encompass the entire block. Henry Rosenberg filled the position of president of the trustees, and upon his death bequeathed $30,000 for the building of a larger orphans' home. That structure, a two-story brick gothic mansion 104 feet by 94 feet, stood completed in 1895. The children and managers enjoyed five years in their new abode when the hurricane of 1900 hit the island. The orphans' home sheltered the children and hundreds of refugees from the ravages of the storm, but after the children had been safely removed to Dallas
and an inspection made of the grounds and building, the relatively new
asylum was declared profoundly damaged and needed to be replaced.

The orphanage underwent several name changes before it settled on
the Galveston Orphans' Home in 1898. It had remained the Island City
Protestant and Israelitish Orphans' Home for several years until 1895 when,
without explanation, it dropped the Israelitish. Apparently there was no
disagreement between the Protestant and Jewish members of the boards of
trustees and lady managers, for the two remained integrated and, as already
mentioned, the Kopperls, who were Jewish, continued to give the home their
wholehearted support. In fact a legacy of Jewish support for community
enterprises continued through Isabella Dyer Kopperl, who was Rosanna Dyer
Osterman's niece. Isabella lived with her aunt for years before Rosanna's
untimely death in 1866. Rosanna Osterman left a legacy not only for the
Jewish communities of Galveston and Houston but also for the widows and
orphans of her adopted city. Income from the Osterman Building, valuable
commercial property at the Strand and 22nd Street bequeathed to Isabella and
two other women, was to be transferred upon their deaths to a trust for the
erection of a non-sectarian widows' and orphans' home. By the time Isabella
Kopperl died in 1902, homes for widows and orphans in Galveston had been
built, so the trustees of the Osterman Widows' and Orphans' Home Fund
divided the income between the three orphanages and the woman's home.
Undoubtedly Isabella Kopperl was an inheritor not only of her aunt's fortune
but of her boundless good will and philanthropy toward the island city.16

The duties of the board of trustees and the board of lady managers for
the home in the 1880s and 1890s fit the rigidly defined roles for men and
women in their separate spheres. The men assumed responsibility over the
"financial affairs, property, and business of this corporation," invested the funds, supervised the property, handled the legalities of adoptions, and met four times a year. The lady managers were assigned tasks related to the "internal and domestic affairs," making rules, admitting and disciplining children, hiring and firing employees, supplying the home with food, clothing, and fuel, inspecting both the home and potential inmates, arranging for schooling, choosing adoptive parents, and raising money. They met twice a month as a board, and as often as needed in committees. The women ran the orphanage much the same way a genteel lady would orchestrate the management of a large home and family. Children and servants were under her supervision, subject to her discipline, her rules, her inspections for a clean and tidy dwelling, and her provisioning. The men graced the home as would a paternalistic father, who handled the finances and legal arrangements but distanced himself from domestic entanglements in a posture of benign neglect. Lady managers ran the home; trustees remained aloof.

The Charter and Bylaws incorporating the Galveston Orphan's Home as a "permanent, benevolent, non-sectarian institution" were authorized by the state of Texas and by lawmakers and trustees whose vision of the duties of men and women was limited by the conventional notions of separate spheres. Consequently, the actions of the lady managers of the Galveson Orphans' Home, because they operated with a state charter that rigidly defined their roles according to a set of guidelines based on gender differences, were far more circumscribed in their choice of action than women in church societies, women's clubs, or even benevolent institutions established later where just the usual conventional expectations guided the women's
As with most households, the amount of work put into keeping a family well-fed, housed, clothed, disciplined, and educated divided along severely disproportioned lines. Men oversaw, while women did the work. It was no different with the orphanage. The lady managers met more often, took more pains with their decisions, and watched more closely over the residents of the home. In the "woman's work is never done" category, the lady managers divided themselves into committees for Ways and Means, Furnishing, House, and Children. Reports were due at every meeting by the chairperson who had sent members of her committee to attend to their assigned tasks. In addition weekly inspections by appointed "visitors" meant that every manager at least twice a year ran a white glove over the entire house. Most visitors reported favorably that everything was in order, but not always. "The floors were dirty and needed scrubbing," read one uncomplimentary report in the middle of winter. "The house was dirty and cold. The weather was so bad that the matron claimed she could not keep the place clean. Mrs. Lytle [visitor] had never before thought the House looked like an orphan asylum, but on this occasion of her visit it did — unmistakably." The stove had gone out in the hall and in the nursery and the flues needed cleaning. An endless litany of "needs" cropped up over the years — a new water closet for the girls, a repaired cistern, a new window blind, new beds, mattresses, sheets, and mosquito bars, drain pipes for the back yard, repairs of leaky pipes and falling plaster. These complaints were referred to the House Committee, but often the ladies prevailed upon the trustees for the repairs; in a sense forcing the men's involvement when the women could have called the repairmen themselves.
The two furnishing committees took care of all of the food, fuel, and clothing needs of the home and children. Expenditures for shoes, stationary, dry goods, groceries, meat, bread, milk, vegetables, kerosene, coal, oil, and wood amounted to $1,075 for 1884. House committee members reported expenses of $952 for the salaries of the matron, assistant matron, nurse, cook, laundresses, and miscellaneous repairs. The matron earned $300 that year and the nurse less than half that amount for living in the home, watching, supervising, and caring for children on a twenty-four-hour basis with only a short annual vacation. Matrons were hard to keep; the low salary and demanding work were undoubtedly the cause. The managers had little choice but to keep looking for suitable matrons at low wages, because the costs of running a home kept them all scrambling for extra funds.

Whereas caring for the needs of the home and paying the bills fell under the rubric of general housekeeping by the managers, admitting children constituted at once a more sensitive and a more elevated task. Members of the children’s committee held more powerful roles than women in benevolent societies, who may have denied aid to the undeserving poor, but who did not in that decision determine the life course of an individual. Not so with the lady managers; their determinations were critical to the lives of the children and to the families that requested admittance of children. Perhaps because the decisions to admit, not to admit, to adopt out, or to apprentice children settled the fate of a child or of a family without recourse to grievance, lady managers labored under the solemnity of their position. No one could say that they took their jobs lightly or frivolously squandered their time while children’s lives hung in the balance. In fact, the ladies showed such seriousness at times that their conversations allowed none of
the levity and humor that women often displayed in benevolent societies. Responsibilities of this nature went beyond normal housekeeping routines or the supervision of servants; lady managers acted as proto-welfare agents, commanding respect for their important offices and wresting power for themselves in areas outside their own homes and the church.

The orphans' home was established for white full orphans and half orphans only, and on these points the managers based their decision for admittance. In the years before 1900 a parent paid $5 a month for the care of the child, and was allowed to have the child at home only with the permission of the lady managers, usually twice a month. Parents could remove their children at any time with the approval of the managers, except in those rare cases where parents allowed the home to adopt their child. Parents who summarily removed children because of displeasure could not return them without special permission. Charity cases were considered by the lady managers and accepted only after a thorough investigation as to the impoverished condition of the parent, or the complete indigency of the orphan. At times the parents of charity cases were asked to work for the home in order to make some kind of payment. About forty children occupied the pre-1900 home; on average twenty children a year were admitted, three or four were lost to death, about ten were removed by relatives, four were adopted out and about three were dismissed each year due to bad behavior or graduation.20

Once admitted, the child fell under the control of the lady managers, who saw to their needs, hired qualified matrons, nurses, and cooks, made sure that they were sheltered, fed, clothed, educated, and trained, allowed free choice of worship, and gave special celebrations or outings at holidays.
Sometimes a board member even took a "problem" child into her own home. In the early years lady managers worked tirelessly to see to the needs of the home. In return they expected the children to learn good work habits, self-discipline, cleanliness, and tidiness. Pleasure with the children was usually expressed in connection with the fulfillment of these expectations. When the house was "clean and nice," the visitor, a manager assigned to inspect the home weekly, would often comment that the children had also been working. "Some girls busy with patch work," read one entry, or "girls were ironing," "children were sewing," "the girls were scrubbing the dining room." "The boys were cheerfully chopping and sawing wood," commented one weekly inspector. Praise for the children was rare but always accompanied tasks that they had performed well. When the boys helped clean the cistern in order to repair the leak, they were rewarded with a trip to the beach and a picnic. Keeping children busy and teaching them "habits of industry" was part of the psychology of asylum management. It was also the role assumed by a diligent housekeeper and mother who understood it as her duty to raise children to become self-supporting citizens. Lady managers projected the cultural expectations of their roles as mothers and insisted on good deportment by the orphans. The fact the most of the children came from underprivileged classes meant that, in the minds of the managers, training was even more essential to keep these future citizens from falling back into impoverishment. While the institution had these children, the ladies would do everything they could to teach usefulness, order, and self-discipline.

Adolescent girls who were old enough to help with the younger children and who prepared themselves for independence after release from
the orphanage were the best at living up to the ladies' expectations. Nellie Waters practiced teaching the little ones in the home; and Kate Thompson went so far in her preparations for a career in education that the managers prevailed upon the trustees to lobby among the members of the board of education to obtain a position for her in the public school system. Annie Drier, although fourteen when the managers decided girls should stop attending school, was allowed to remain in the home and go to school because she was promised a teaching position at Hitchcock school if she remained another year. 25

More frustrating for the managers was the lack of success they experienced in adopting out full orphans and in placing adolescents in apprenticeships. In the years between 1884 and 1886 only eight children were given out for adoption or apprenticeship. The managers would not allow a child to go to a Catholic, and too often the children came back, rejected by Protestant or Jewish guardians. "Mrs. Jenkins wishes a boy to raise as her own and is somewhat exacting in her demands," read one entry. But only two boys were available at that time, and neither was appropriate. In another instance, Nellie Whittaker had been sent out to one woman who "does not want to adopt her." The board reasoned that as Texas then had no laws of indenture, the woman should take out proper letters of guardianship. When the managers sent young Pat Newport by himself to Austin on trial with a Mrs. L. C. Rease, it also failed and Pat returned the next year. His sister, Myra, shuttled from home to home seemingly always on trial. When the girl protested leaving her last assignment, she was told that she had to leave as the woman she was with would not take out guardianship papers. With two adoptees sent back in one week, the managers finally admitted "the matter of
permanently replacing our orphans seems hedged with difficulty, and requires... reform. These episodes of rejection could be devastating for the children and represented frustration for the lady managers. Volunteering for service on the board of an orphanage required dedication and stamina. 26

Teaching self-sufficiency leading to independence was uppermost among the goals of the managers. But when lessons in self-discipline failed, the women resorted to punishment. Although the managers did not administer the punishment — the matron usually did — they still authorized it. Here the concept of ennobled motherhood lost some of its dignity. Often the troublemakers were the older boys and girls, between twelve and fourteen, who upon entering adolescence were of an age to assume a skilled apprenticeship. This meant that the boy or girl left the home, took up life much as an indentured servant would, and learned a trade. Apprenticeships were difficult to obtain in Texas in the 1880s and undoubtedly no little anxiety was felt by the youths about their future as they waited for an assignment. By then, too, the necessary regimen of an orphan's agenda — studying, obeying, doing chores — were all frustratingly familiar. For those youths ready for the world but afraid of the rejections awaiting them there, the orphanage proved authoritarian and limiting, more an institutional prison than a home.

When the youngsters rebelled, the managers responded with surprising harshness. Pat Newport ran away after not learning his lessons. The matron, Mrs. Delano, had threatened to punish him if he did not study. Interviewing the matron but not the child, the managers decided to call both the parties before the board to inform Pat that Mrs. Delano had the "authority to punish."27 Pat was asked to apologize, which he did. But troubles with this young man were not over, and the ladies were unable to find a suitable
apprenticeship for him.

The problem with one boy who showed his independence was that it often led others to follow. Two months later four boys ran away, and Mrs. Delano threatened to quit if "something is not done to control unruly boys." Immediately apprenticeship was brought forward as a solution, but with no prospects in sight. Two weeks after the incident the managers were still debating what should they have done. Some wanted the boys whipped by the police, but fortunately the policeman said that no law permitted him to do so. He could send an officer out to frighten them, came the helpful suggestion, and he could "compel the newsdealers to enforce a regulation among the newsboys in no way to entice or assist the boys at the Home to run away."²⁸

The boys' rebelliousness was not over. In June the minutes reveal that the matron had to whip sixteen boys for throwing chunks of dried mud at a neighbors' house and hitting her child. With community favor at stake, those in authority could take no chances of a repeated outbreak of high spirits. One parent, embarrassed by her sons' outburst, gave them a licking. But not all parents agreed with the action. "Mrs. Hearst who had two children in the Home without charge, vexed that they should be whipped, removed them," an action that would lose her the chance of readmittance.²⁹ Girls could behave badly, too. When the matron complained that several large girls had tried to set the house afire, the managers separated the girls, gave them different tasks, and informed the parents. They did not remove them, perhaps because girls were treated more leniently than boys.³⁰

Minor infractions brought banishment to the closet where air holes had been drilled. When all attempts to correct and train were at a loss, the
managers expelled those with a living parent or relative. "John Kelly has become very profane and vile in his language," and was not allowed to return. In September 1886 when Pat Newport came back to the home after being rejected by the woman who had given him sanctuary for over a year, he along with four other boys ran away again, and this time the managers lost patience. Three boys were sent to their relatives, Pat Newport was kicked out, and John Whittaker was apprenticed to a baker, this after the lad had endured an operation on his foot to straighten it. But John was one of their successes, for within five years he was able to support his orphan sister who also had been in the home.

The discipline may have been harsher in this orphanage because corporal punishment was accepted as a part of southern upbringing. And while whippings do not seem consistent with the image of women as gentle, pure, and nurturing, violence as a method for maintaining order was endemic to the South. To smother the question of the managers' attitudes toward orphans under the theoretical blanket of social control also does not shed light on the subject. Ninety-four percent of the children in the orphans' home had one living parent whose relationship with their offspring was in some cases harsher and less nurturing than that of the managers. Certainly the ladies felt concern for the children, and in many ways provided a more congenial environment than the fabled orphanage warehouses of the northeast. Each child was given an identity, mentioned by the managers by name, not required to wear uniforms, and provided education either through the orphanage kindergarten and through the public schools. For many the punishments meted out in the home were the same for the managers' own children. Most elite children in Galveston in the 1890s were
held to a standard of behavior that honored authority and allowed few avenues for independence. Dr. James Thompson wrote his fiance that her younger brother, Fred, who had endured punishment in his younger years, was "one of the nicest and best mannered boys I have ever met. . . . [but] take my advice, don't curb him too much. . . . He is rather too much inclined to petition whether he may do this or that; and does not seem yet to know instinctively what he may do and what he may not." 34

Discipline aside, lady managers made sure that charity cases were given equal consideration with paying parents. It is difficult to know exactly how many charity cases there were, because with the largest category (44 percent) of children admitted there was no mention of either payment or charity. In a count of applicants between 1887 and 1893 a total of 104 children were admitted by fifty-five parents. (See Table 4:1.) Thirty-two children were admitted by nineteen mothers without indication if they were paying or charity cases. Men who accepted aid comprised but 7 percent of the fifty-five parents seeking admission for their children. The managers gave an extra hand to mothers and female children regardless of class differences. As in the case of the benevolent societies, those who were most often helped by benevolent institutions managed by women were women: 18 percent of parents admitting their children were women who were given some form of charity by the managers. In a southern city where few jobs with decent pay for married women existed, widowed mothers from middle to working classes became a segment of society at risk. A more telling statistic gives a glimpse of the lengths to which the managers went to help impoverished women. Of all those receiving charity, women were aided two and a half times more often than men in order for their children to stay in the home.
Moreover of the ninety-seven children admitted by parents, 60 percent belonged to women.  

Calculating the costs of admitting charity cases, most of whom belonged to women, went beyond simple acceptance. Charity cases required more work, principally in fundraising by the women managers. Thus their decision to admit in overwhelming numbers children of poor women was a conscious effort on their part to aright society's wrongs of economic discrimination toward women, even if it meant greater labor on their part. Finally, in the annual reports of the board of managers, girls nearly always outnumbered boys as residents of the home. In the end the managers favored rescuing underprivileged parents and children of their own sex.

A sad irony attended their efforts, however. Most of the orphans in the home could have remained with their own parent if a decent wage scale had been introduced for working women or if governmental aid to dependent children had existed. Because only 6 percent of the children admitted between 1887 and 1893 were full orphans, the orphanage, in fact, acted to aid single parents in raising their children. No crisis of children without parents existed, but a crisis of single mothers without adequate wages did. The increase in need stemmed, therefore, not from a sudden rise in the deaths of fathers, but in the acceleration of numbers of working poor brought on by manufacturing jobs with low wages and discrimination toward women who sought advancement opportunities. Southern conservatism, trust in the system of laissez-faire economics, belief in the iron law of wages, and allegiance to unfettered individualism prevented a revolution in the wage-earning capacity of women. Lady managers would have considered it unthinkable to involve themselves in wage and labor problems; they were
there to ameliorate, not to reform the economic system.

Without rationalizing the role of the lady managers and without apologizing for their actions, it seems that they acted in the best interests of children using the same philosophy adopted by the benevolent societies—that the purpose of charity was to return to self-sufficiency those who had become dependent. Barbara Bellows in comparing orphanages in antebellum Charleston run by men and by women found that the women managers "encouraged the poor to become self-sufficient," while male managers, upholding a patriarchal order, encouraged obedience leading to dependence.37 Galveston lady managers, then, were subverting the patriarchal system of dependency by insisting on self-sufficiency and by running the orphanages themselves, thereby proving their own independence. In the case of the orphans, gaining self-reliance required educating them until age fourteen, providing them with a skilled livelihood, and caring for them until they were able to support themselves (or until they became intractable). A few talented girls were given encouragement to continue their studies until certified to teach.

The usual criticism that historians level at managers and women of leisure who invested time and energy in benevolence is that they expected children of charity to remain blue-collar workers, and by helping the youngsters they were in fact reinforcing old codes of social snobbery and control.38 Education is the fulcrum upon which this interpretation rests. By not allowing children to finish high school or encouraging them to continue to higher levels of study, the critics claim, the managers were assuring their lack of social mobility. But these criticisms would unfairly censure the lady managers at that time, for education in the South in the 1880s was still the
province of those who could afford private education or the leisure to allow their child to finish school before going to work for the family. Galveston had no public school system until 1881, a year after the orphanage was chartered. After that time, however, connections between poor relief, child-saving institutions, and public education became quite strong. At least those were the intentions of the philanthropists and the lady managers. George Ball, generous benefactor and provider of a $50,000 charitable fund for poor relief, also—as we have seen—gave $75,000 for the construction of a high school in 1883. His wife, Sarah Perry Ball, directresses of the Presbyterian Ladies Aid Society, and president of the Board of Lady Managers for the Galveston Orphans’ Home, also contributed funds to the high school. The first public high school, Ball High, built for a total of $100,000 did not come into existence until 1884. As soon as they could, the lady managers made sure that their charges were afforded a secondary education at the public high school.39

Whereas much of what has been said pertains to the duties of the managers of the Galveston Orphans’ Home and the orphans and their parents, we need to ask who the managers were, what their connection to the women’s benevolent societies were, and how their service on the board influenced the acceptance of public activities for women? Of a total of eighty-five women with known religious affiliation who served on the self-elected board of managers from its inception in 1880 until 1920, thirty-seven (44 percent) were Episcopalian, sixteen (19 percent) were Presbyterian, twelve (14 percent) were Jewish, nine (11 percent) were Baptist, eight (9 percent) were Methodist, and three (4 percent) were Lutheran.40 Ideally the twenty-six or so members every year represented equally each Protestant church and
Congregation B’Nai Israel. Yet overall the greatest number still came from the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches. The trend toward heavier involvement by these two denominations changed over time. In its early years, between 1880 and 1890, slightly more Jewish women served on the board than did Episcopal women, followed by Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and Lutherans. But in later years Episcopal women predominated. Whether this implies greater turnover on the part of Episcopal women or greater representation is not entirely clear. Other changes occurred as each decade passed; the average age of the women on the board increased, indicating not only the aging of the board but also the conservatism of a membership that was unable to yield control to younger women.

The board held elections every year, and an incumbent board reelected itself unless someone resigned. To become a member, a woman was chosen by the board either because she had served her time working in her own church or synagogue, or she was accorded the right to sit on the board by virtue of her station as wife of one of the city’s elites. Usually, even wealthy ladies "earned" their place by first serving the church or synagogue. It is clear, however, that this body of women comprised an elite segment of society, and the board grew more prestigious over time.

The number of women who served on the board of lady managers who were also members of women’s church and synagogue societies totaled forty over the years. Despite the fact that less than half of the managers came from the church societies, the connection between managers and societies constituted an important network for benevolent-minded women and the supplicants they served. There is no doubt that the managers depended on
their peers in the women's societies to support their efforts in maintaining orphans through various benefits and entertainments and in acting as investigative or referral agents in specific cases. In fact, those church societies whose primary mission was poor relief -- Trinity Church Guild and the Presbyterian Ladies Aid -- were the very societies that most filled the ranks of managers and who were called on more frequently for aid. To a lesser extent the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, the Lutheran Ladies Aid Society, the Baptist Ladies Aid Society, and the Methodist Home Mission Society were also asked to lend a hand. Indeed, each denominational society on a rotating basis provided the orphans their Thanksgiving dinner. In this manner reciprocal relationships developed between societies that favored charity for the urban poor and boards of managers that sheltered this same constituency. Between the representatives of the various denominations there also developed friendships and a breakdown of sectarian barriers. Although elite and possibly exclusive, a woman's charitable network outside the churches was beginning to form based not on the agendas of a national women's organization but on needs within their own city.

Just as Kathleen D. McCarthy found that Chicago women after several decades separated themselves from the day to day management of their orphanages in favor of charity fundraisers, so too did Galveston lady managers tend to step away from the detailed management of the home. Eventually quarterly reports by the matron begin to fill the minute books, suggesting that more and more of the detail work for the orphanage was left up to the matron and her assistants. Problems were still handled by the various committees, but by hiring more workers under the matron's
supervision, the managers relieved themselves for the task of ways and means.

Once they hit upon the idea of an annual charity ball as their principal fundraiser in 1890, the managers began to invest a great deal more time and energy in this grand “society” event. As a point of prestige, Miss Bettie Brown, daughter of railroad magnate John Moreau Brown, donated a tapestry painting to be raffled at the ball. Despite the low admission price—tickets, supper, and cake cost only $2—the charity ball brought in $1,225 in 1892. By the next century the ball had grown to enormous proportions requiring teams of people preparing for weeks to bring to the hall Japanese lanterns, a candy stand resembling a flower shop, wisteria bowers, a bazaar, a series of seven tableaux preceding the ball itself, and the usual orchestra, dance cards, ball gowns, and debutantes—all enjoying elaborate press coverage in the next-day news. Connections to high society in New York City were evident when in October 1900 William Randolph Hearst, after hearing of the structural damage to the orphanage, organized a benefit bazaar at the Waldorf Astoria “for the homeless orphans of Galveston,” and raised over $50,000 for a new home. The bazaar lasted three days, was opened with Texas Governor Joseph B. Sayers as the principal speaker and was closed by novelist Mark Twain. Most of New York’s elite, among them Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, Mrs. Joseph Choate, and Mrs. John Jacob Astor, were in attendance. National attention and a circle of well-established philanthropists brought to Galveston a new orphans’ home dedicated March 30, 1902, but they also brought a moment of glory to the Galveston women who served as managers and who had begun to think of themselves as among Galveston’s finest.
The results of working on the board of lady managers led to a surprising amount of public approbation; the names for the entire board were spread out across the city directory in a three-inch entry. Moreover, the board provided women the opportunity to "advance" in a semi-public arena parallel to their husband's positions in the world of commerce. In time the board constituted a privilege afforded only to women of wealth or civic prominence; a position on the Galveston Orphans' Home board held the highest prestige value of all the benevolent institutions.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the lady managers to the public actions of women came with the demonstration of their abilities to run an institution. Each benevolent institution that was founded after the Galveston Orphans' Home was created and organized by women alone, with only the incidental help of male friends. This was an extremely important turn of events, as it challenges the prevailing assumptions that beyond church life southern women hardly lifted a hand for purposeful activity until motivated to do so by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which is commonly understood to be the first national women's organization in the South. In Galveston, a chapter of the WCTU did not open until 1888, and then lingered weakly for a few years. The benevolent institutions founded solely by women dated from 1880 to 1894. True, these institutions had no formal connections to a national organization, but the local institutions founded by women were viable into the 1970s; the same cannot be said for the WCTU.

The fact that Galveston women preferred to invest their volunteer energies in benevolent institutions, structures that stood as testimonials to women's organizing power, challenges another common assumption
regarding women's organized activities in the South. Most suppose that women from evangelical churches, fired with enthusiasm for moral reform, ventured into semi-public forums such as the WCTU in order to perfect an imperfect, sin-ridden world. Even if such visions seemed too broad for the timid, at least reform could begin with the drunkard, the gambler, and the profligate. In Galveston few evangelical women ventured into public women's activities, and those who did were not especially interested in the business of moral reform. They, like their non-evangelical sisters, were more concerned with safeguarding dependents from the ravages of an unalterable economic system.

Those who channeled city resources into charity and relief called up images of the poor that evoked pathos, not fear. Such was the case with the alarming numbers of widows and single aged women who applied for relief from the women's charitable societies. "It is a sad enough sight to see an old man tottering down the rugged mountain path of life under such adverse conditions, but how infinitely more touching it is to see a dear old woman, bereft of home, of kindred and of friends, sinking down upon the stony path, crushed by the weight of years of sorrow, of misfortune. ... it is ... a picture that must cause your hearts to throb ... with loving sympathy." Although spoken by a man, he expressed the thoughts of hundreds of women, who saw their own sex in old age at risk in an urban area where kinship networks were rapidly breaking down. In postwar Galveston families remained the primary caretakers of the aged. But for those without family (and this included the foreign born especially), unable to care for themselves, and without resources to hire help there remained only the county poor farm, an alternative that, as we have seen, combined criminals, the poor, and the
insane in inaccessible surroundings.

The rationale for founding a home for aged women differed from the justification for creating orphanages. Orphans were expected to become self-reliant, but contemporary medical theories assumed that with increasing senility the aged never would. The problem of rising senescence and mental and physical debilitation forced many hospitals to refuse admission to aged, senile patients who suffered no treatable illness. Poor farms were inappropriate for those who no longer were able to work. Forming homes for the elderly, then, required a different rationale, namely that of affording a place of rest for the aged rather than a home for teaching independence.46

When it became obvious that old women were suffering in the same way that orphans had in the years before 1880, benevolent ladies hurried to the rescue and established a home for aged white women. The Old Woman's Home or Woman's Home, a practical if not attractive title, was conceived in 1888 by a set of privileged women who, for the most part, differed from those who had founded the orphans' home. 47 In the first year of the home's organization a roster of seventeen directors was drawn up composed entirely of women, only two or three of whom, Isabella Kopperl among them, sat on both boards. They rented a house at 31st Street and Avenue I for $25 a month; within a year, twenty-three elderly women lived there. Payment for bills came from subscriptions of the women who comprised the board of directors. By donations, small legacies, and through the help of friends, the home survived without a permanent endowment. Finally, Henry Rosenberg bequeathed to the board a gift of $30,000 for the "building and furnishing of a woman's home." As Rosenberg decided "how he should divide his money so as to do the greatest good he investigated
thoroughly every detail and satisfied himself of the permanency of the institutions which he wished to help. He gave only to those institutions which he saw would be a success."

Even with this enormous legacy, however, fundraising was a constant and nagging worry for the lady managers. In 1894, at each bi-weekly meeting ideas and suggestions for earning money were considered. A series of teas brought in barely enough to pay for postage. Donations from individuals helped some; the ever generous Sarah Ball donated $50, Trinity Church Guild gave $10, and Julia B. Southwick left $2,000 to the home in her will. The Galveston Tribune ran a series of human interest stories on the "inmates" of the home and thus advertised their appeal for donations from citizens. The newspaper cooperated by offering to contribute a percentage on each new advertisement taken out in the Tribune and on each new subscription. Baby shows sponsored by the managers brought in both good publicity and extra funds. Eventually the women hit on an idea that Galvestonians found quite popular and which catapulted women into the commercial section of the city as visible and aggressive solicitors. They instituted Tag Day. Several of the charities united by sending out teams of ladies to "tag" passersby in the downtown area for donations. A tagged person, or donor, sported a badge that demonstrated support for the cause and allowed a respite from the constant feminine harrassment. By taking their campaign to the Strand, lady managers created a visible advertisement for themselves as fundraisers and for the cause they served.

By January 21, 1896, the elderly women moved into a three-story Victorian gothic stone structure 80 by 120 feet on Rosenberg Avenue not far from the Gulf. Renamed the Letitia Rosenberg Home for Women after
Henry Rosenberg's first wife, the asylum was home to at least fifty-one elderly women between the years 1896 and 1917. Their average age was sixty-five, their average length of stay four years. Of the fifty-one inmates, thirty-nine were widows, eleven were single women, and one was married. More striking is the fact that thirty-six (70 percent) of the women were charity cases, while ten (20 percent) made some sort of payment for board according to their means. The percentage of aid for elderly women was twice as high as aid for orphans and half orphans. Elderly women without resources were in some ways more needy than half orphans whose one parent could help support them. Widows comprised a larger percentage of charity cases than did single women. Of thirty-six women receiving charity, thirty (63 percent) were widows. But of the ten who were paying for their keep, half of them were single despite the fact that single women comprised but 22 percent of the total inmate population. (See Table 4:2.) It is tempting to speculate that marriage and subsequent widowhood provided little financial security for a good proportion of the female population. Single women, who all of their lives needed either to become wage-earning women or to safeguard their legacies, were more apt to remain solvent into old age.

Then too, women of foreign birth were the most apt to be living in the home in their old age. Of forty-seven women with known birthplaces, better than half were not native Americans, while foreign population citywide was 22 percent. Moreover, twenty of the foreign women were charity cases, most from Ireland and Germany. These women constituted 55 percent of all those who received charity and 74 percent of foreign inmates in general. What does this signify? Were family ties too far away to be of help in an
immigrant's golden years? Or was the struggle for a better life in this country for some in vain? It certainly suggests that Galveston was the home of many more indigent foreign women, who in old age were unable to call on family for help. It is clear too that the native white American board members, who had control over admissions, did not discriminate against charity cases or foreign women when they were aware of the distress level of this group.

Separated as middle-class white board members were from long-term contact with those outside their social circles, the woman's home represented an opening in cross-class association. Raising money for the home, interviewing the applicants, and visiting immigrant inmates regularly constituted a form of sustained charity work across class lines that fundamentally opened the avenue for a more sympathetic attitude toward foreign-born and Catholic disadvantaged. Benevolent institutions founded in the 1890s and managed by women would not put up these kind of barriers. Liberalized attitudes of acceptance on the part of elite volunteers culminated in the founding of another cross-class institution in 1914 – the Young Women's Christian Association. Yet conservatism still reigned as few Catholic or foreign-born women were included in the circles of female management.

For the lady managers there was always the possibility that the home would be a refuge for them if they needed it. Carrie Finlay, the home's first president and wife of a lawyer who also served on the board of directors, knew this first hand. She maintained an abiding interest in the home, and in 1905, when she could no longer afford to volunteer her services as president of the board of managers, she applied for and was accepted as the
home's matron, where she worked until 1914. When failing health prevented her from laboring at all, she and her husband were allowed a "room [in the home] that a grateful board of lady managers and of directors had dedicated to her use forever during the term of her natural life."51

Perhaps too much may be interpreted from these glimpses of life for women inside a sanctuary for the elderly, but it would appear that this was no warehouse with impersonal caretakers and faceless inmates. Emerging from the lifeless pages of the minute books and register is a picture of a true community of women supported in large part by a sympathetic, even grateful, city willing to support the home if not for charitable reasons, at least for personal ones. As Colonel Mott said in the keynote address for the opening of the new home, "our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters may some day knock at the gate of the Letitia Rosenberg home for women, and God grant that they may not knock in vain."52

Benevolent institutions founded in Galveston in the 1890s differed significantly from those chartered in the 1880s and consequently led to changes in the way elite women approached community activism. First, the earlier homes had much greater male participation in the founding; male boards of trustees held positions of authority denied to the lady managers. The later institutions were conceived and established entirely by women with help from men supporters. From one decade to the next benevolent ladies had grown confident and experienced in their abilities to found and manage institutions for dependents. Second, the orphanage and kindergarten formed after 1890 were much more child-centered, focusing on the needs of children rather than on the moral propriety of the parents. Lady
managers of the later institutions were more concerned about keeping the family unit together, and set rules to allow parents greater access to their children or devised programs to bring parents into the institutional fold with instruction and moral support. Attitudes of inclusiveness toward the working classes foreshadowed more democratic tendencies in women's organizations. Third, the older institutions presented a fortress-like mentality, separating orphans and elderly women from their families and the larger community in great stone structures. The later institutional buildings were more modest, less imposing, and more like the dwellings of the clients they served. The overriding philosophy of training children to be self-reliant, preparing them for reintegration into society, remained. But the lessons were administered with greater understanding for the needs of families, and, after 1900, with a progressive spirit. Modern philosophies of child-saving improved substantially institutional life for children and brought greater awareness to lady managers of the potential for a more inclusive women's community that would serve the whole city and all of its citizens.

At the close of the 1880s it became clear that the city needed another orphanage. This time women alone filled the requirement by chartering in 1894 a Society for the Help of Homeless Children whose object was "to provide a temporary home for [white] homeless children until suitable arrangements can be made for the welfare of such children, and to establish a day nursery." Well in advance of anything Galveston had seen up to that time, the initial board of nine women began a new enterprise—a day nursery to tend babies and toddlers and a home for children who needed shelter from sick, negligent, or abusive parents. 54
Because the trustees of the Galveston Orphans' Home had decided in 1880 not to admit a child whose parent had deserted the family, and because they required proof of marriage, there were many children unable to enter the home. Looking back to the sad tale of Mrs. Brown, the abandoned mother of three children who applied for help from the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid Society, we see that in 1893 the Galveston Orphans' Home would not take her children even on a short-term basis while she sought employment. Unable to endure the economic pressures, she eventually gave up her children through adoption to another family. Hardships such as these, abounded; in 1885 over eighty applicants were rejected by the lady managers of the Galveston Orphans' Home largely because they did not fall strictly under the charter guidelines. With the creation of a second orphanage the city received an institution more relaxed in its admission policies. 55

Whereas the Galveston Orphans' Home was created by a male board of directors, the opposite was true of the Society for the Help of Homeless Children. Here women were in charge. First, a board of nine women directors secured a charter and incorporated the association; then they elected thirty women to serve on a board of managers; last they elected "twelve gentlemen, to be called an Advisory Board." Article after article in the home's constitution indicated that women ran the corporation -- from admitting children to investing funds. The president was to "sign all certificates, papers and legal instruments in behalf of the Society," while eight standing committees carried on the management of the home. 56

Fourteen years after the founding of the first orphans' home, women had advanced to the level of founding, running, and chartering their own benevolent institutions.
Probably one reason that the society from its inception was a woman's enterprise was the fact that Rebecca Henry Hayes stood among the original nine directors who chartered the society. Best known for her feminism before the South was ready for such a thing, Hayes, a professional journalist, remained president of the Texas Equal Suffrage Society from 1893 to 1895, coinciding with the founding of the orphan society. She also organized one of two mutual benefit associations exclusively for Galveston women with a capital stock of $3,000 in 1897. Her fiery speeches and determined efforts toward achieving women's rights to full political equality and financial independence, found practical expression in the constitution of the Society for the Help of Homeless Children. 57

The institution at 37th Street and Avenue R came to be known as the Home for Homeless Children and was unique in that it took in three classes of children totaling as many as seventy before 1900: the first constituted children whose bill was paid in full by relatives; the second, usually children of widows and abandoned wives, remitted a portion of their bill; and the third, destitute children often received from the foundling hospital or from the streets, were supported minimally by the county commissioners. In the first two classes, the parents were required to obtain an agreement from their employers to assume responsibility for payment should the parent default. In this way the home protected itself while requiring a certain amount of accountability from capitalists upon whom parents depended for their wages. In the third class the home took in children that the Galveston Orphans' Home refused and who were technically wards of the county.58

After the storm of 1900 the board of lady managers struggled to regroup their efforts. Although they had lost their building and many of the
children, the managers through the assistance of the city and county
governments bought property for the construction of another home at 16th
Street and Avenue K., which they planned to expand and improve. Even
disaster could not stem the enthusiasm for adding "progressive" programs.
Rebecca H. Hayes, in petitioning the mayor and county commissioners in
1904 for the deed to the property, stated that the lady managers desired "to
establish a kindergarten in the home and also provide for a common school
literary education supplemented with industrial training."  

Rebuilding, expanding the grounds and admitting more children
required a substantial outlay of funds, and while women could found,
manage, and improve their institutions, the economic discrepancy between
the sexes limited their abilities to fund them. With no endowment the
managers were dependent on the community's good will for their recovery.
Damage to the city was so great that it was years before their dreams would be
realized. In the meantime, the women invented ways to keep from sinking
financially. Tag Day, first used by supporters of the Woman's Home, became
their means of raising money also, and it did not require long hours of
sewing, baking, or creating entertainment. Managers of benevolent
institutions across the city were beginning to find ways to raise money while
cutting back on intensive domestic labor.

By joining with the Johanna Runge Free Kindergarten, the lady
managers of both institutions in 1908 chose a sunny day in April to canvass
the downtown streets, soliciting donations and rewarding donors with a tag
that read, "I Am Tagged to Help the Children of Galveston." The Galveston
Daily News reported inaccurately that this was "the first trial in this city of
this novel and highly successful method of raising money for charity."
Noting the difference in bazaars or other sales for charitable purposes, the writer simply stated, "what you gave you gave... what you got in return was the pleasure of knowing that you were giving to a cause as worthy as any that exists -- the feeding, clothing, housing and education of poor and homeless children." The results were effective: the amount collected in one day came to $1,909. Solicitations of this nature represented a decided departure from women selling homemade items and foreshadowed future large-scale community fund drives. Still, the home needed a philanthropist, who, like Henry Rosenberg, would contribute a substantial sum for improving their structure.

The man who came to the rescue was Morris Lasker. Of East German Jewish descent, Lasker emigrated to the United States in 1856 at the age of sixteen, and literally peddled his way across the South to Texas on a one-eyed horse. After service in the Confederate Army, he recouped his business by setting up trading posts across Texas. He then came to Galveston in 1867 where, after working for the wholesale grocers Marx and Kempner, he formed the Lasker Real Estate Company, ventured into banking, and in 1906 became owner of the Texas Star Flour And Rice Mills. As an indication of his stature in the community, he was elected to the Texas legislature in 1895 and to the Galveston School Board for twenty-seven years, where he learned of the need for manual training schools in the city. Along with Bertrand Adoue, he provided $30,000 for the establishment of the first "manual training and domestic science" classes in the public schools, including in the segregated schools for blacks. In 1912 Lasker gave to the home $15,000 for the expansion and renovation they sought. In return the managers renamed it the Lasker Home for Homeless Children. Patterns of dependence on
philanthropists such as Henry Rosenberg and Morris Lasker was one aspect of institution management that did not change for women. Economic realities barred their homes from becoming entirely self-supporting.64

The last major benevolent institution founded by women in the nineteenth century was the Johanna Runge Free Kindergarten. In keeping with current theories of child development, Galveston mothers sought the establishment of kindergartens in the city. These advances in education coincided with women's increasing confidence in their abilities to manage child-centered institutions and in their interest in uplift among working-class and immigrant families. No longer content to take the indigent child from its impoverished surroundings and place it in an orphanage to teach it self-reliance, the benevolent ladies of the 1890s saw the entire family at risk and hoped through kindergartens to sensitize children and their parents to middle-class values.

Although not a home or an asylum, the Johanna Runge Free Kindergarten was an institution, nonetheless, inspired and originated by women interested in the quality of early education for the children of factory workers. Its founder, Johanna Runge, of German Lutheran ancestry and wife of cotton magnate Julius Runge, conceived of a school for underprivileged pre-schoolers when in 1892 she enrolled her own child in a private kindergarten. Impressed by the beautiful environment, the songs, games, and delights for children, she determined to create a charity kindergarten. Probably Johanna Runge had thought little of the implications of this type of social outreach either for the community or for herself; she admitted that "up to that time (1892), I never had entered into any public life, although belonging to the different aid societies, had never taken an active
part, but devoted all my time to my home and children."65

Most women entered into such projects after years of experience in organizations, but naivete wrapped in enthusiasm plunged Johanna Runge into the factory district, reputedly the poorest in the city. Since no other benevolent society or institution at that time centered its project in the midst of the working poor, Johanna Runge, simulated the actions of settlement house workers by offering for three hours a day kindergarten classes to the children of working mothers. In a city where charity was conservatively managed and distributed from the safety of church parlors or from "the well-ordered asylum," and where lady investigators seeking the truth about a supplicant's poverty stayed but a few minutes in the homes of the poor, Johanna Runge's venture into the lives of the working class constituted a radical departure. Of course as the wife of one of the directors of the Galveston Cotton Mill, where the parents worked, she fit the image of a lady bountiful rather than a Jane Addams.66

She was not alone. She convinced eight "influential ladies" to serve as a board of directors, and hold a money-raising drive. They netted $1,300 — enough to buy an upright piano, tables, and chairs and to sustain the school for four years. Beginning with a trip to the factory district at the northwest end of the city, she and her husband, who supported this venture with affirmation and funds, obtained permission to use a church for their kindergarten; the mill where the parents worked agreed to buy the fuel for heat. As she recounted, "Before opening the kindergarten my friend, Miss Wilkens, and myself had gone from house to house to visit the families, ask about their children, and see whether they would care for it." Having met with the approval of the parents, they opened the kindergarten January 1,
1893. Fifty children showed up.67

The women who came to teach that day were not prepared for the encounter. The children presented a stereotypical image to the women of working-class urchins – "unkempt and dirty" and "needing much attention after coming there." The helpers gave the children clothing, aprons, handkerchiefs, but disillusionment persisted. Johanna Runge recalled, "I took home nineteen of the most neglected in sets of two and three at a time to our home, and they always responded with beaming faces when asked to run home and get their parents' permission. The nurse gladly bathed and combed these poor children and after dinner the house girl took them home again."68

What the parents thought of these incursions into their lives will never be known, for stories such as this are always told by the donors, not by the recipients. They responded, according to Johanna Runge, by making "every effort to improve the physical condition of the children." To her credit, she did not blame the poor for their condition, rather she saw them heroically struggling to meet the demands of industrialists. "These poor mothers working day by day in the factories came home at night exhausted. A mother's heart is ever the purest reflection of divine love, and these mothers no doubt thought many times of the threefold development – mental, moral, and physical – of their children, but using all their strength to get the bare necessities they could not give to their children the attention they wished."69 Here it was again, ennobled womanhood and divine motherhood creating commonalities between capitalists' wives and factory mothers.

Even with the advent of the 1893 depression, the kindergarten grew
and they needed more space. The women received word that two adjoining
cottages owned by the cotton mill would be available to them if the lady
directors bore the expense of connecting them, which was accepted. This
allowed the enrollment to increase to seventy-five children on the books,
age three to six, with an average attendance of sixty. The unmistakable
philosophy of progressive education pervaded — "the games of children are
their most serious occupations. In the employment of games, the children
imitate the parts they themselves will have to fill in after years." The
children were given materials to stimulate their "power of doing, inventing,
and creating." Music, rhythm, stories, "chatting" encouraged children "to
think." Teachers became increasingly sophisticated as they took summer
training classes in Grand Rapids, Michigan, paid for by Morris Lasker.

In 1893 when the Runge Free Kindergarten opened there were but two
other private kindergartens. By 1898 women had started eight kindergartens
in the city, including those opened by the Home for Homeless Children and
the Galveston Orphans' Home. It was the direct result of Johanna Runge's
influence that a kindergarten opened at the Home for Homeless Children.
One of her own pupils was sent to the home for treatment, and when Runge
entered the institution she saw at once the need for a kindergarten there.
With the help of Isabella Kopperl, she managed to convince the board of its
usefulness; money was raised and a school begun for the fourteen pre-
schoolers in the home. Johanna Runge's kindergarten remained one of the
only free pre-schools in the city until the establishment of the Jewish Free
Kindergarten in 1913. After the disaster in 1900 damaged the kindergarten
cottages, the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs made it possible for the
school to reopen in December of that year. In 1911 a new schoolhouse went
up, and in 1921 the kindergarten merged with the Galveston Public School system in advance of the establishment of kindergartens in all of the elementary schools in the city.71

Kindergartens, first envisioned by Friedrich Froebel as enchanting gardens for eager but privileged little learners, became something more to middle-class American women reformers. If they could catch underprivileged children early enough, teach them in kindergartens habits of cleanliness and industry and channel their innate curiosity into wholesome learning, educators would be "saving" the next generation of working-class citizens. No longer were underprivileged children seen as innately inferior; their surroundings were to blame for their poverty. Create a beautiful environment early enough and children would be transformed by the beauty and "truth" of nature's garden. Whether in factory districts, orphanages, or settlement houses, kindergartens were considered not just educational experiments for the young but the first battleground in winning the child to the progressive middle-class perception of life. Claims for kindergarten at the close of the Progressive Era were weighty; the Runge Free Kindergarten "became a leaven for bettering conditions in the west end," counseled one observer. "Kindergartens minimize the need of juvenile courts, peace officers, and reformatories," went another. Teachers went beyond the classroom in their efforts: "visiting the homes, organizing mother's clubs to meet in the school building and in every way working long and devotedly for the uplift of the needy."72 Whereas Johanna Runge (and women like her) was unable to raise wages in her husband's factory or lessen the hours for working mothers, she could provide a free kindergarten for the children, ameliorating somewhat the harshness of their dismal
surroundings. With grand philosophies suggesting that kindergartens could alter the lives of the working poor, women sympathizers believed that they were instituting momentous changes and had found a cure for urban poverty. Perceptions such as these were slow to change; slower even than the rise in industrial wages. Rather than fault such benevolent ladies for putting patches on a ragged industrial system, we should perhaps see them as idealists hoping to bring into the middle classes those who would imbibe their message of uplift.

"Uplift," of course, was a term used consistently in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by more privileged classes toward the working-poor and recently arrived immigrants. The members of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society convened a special meeting in May 1913 to discuss plans for a Jewish Free Kindergarten "for the uplifting of the Orthodox children." The records, unfortunately, do not give details of the "lively discussion" that followed, but the society voted to donate $100 the first year. The kindergarten was the project of the Jewish Council of Women, which had formed a chapter in Galveston in 1910. Following the model of the national organization founded in 1893 for aid to immigrant women arriving by the thousands to Ellis Island, the Galveston chapter responded to the recent arrival of orthodox Jews to their city.

The kindergarten "for orphans of the Jewish faith" opened in October 1913 in the rooms and yard of Temple B'Nai Israel with only eight children. It soon grew to forty pupils with an average attendance of thirty. Mrs. Harris Kempner furnished most of the equipment, while a committee of three oversaw the operation and hired the teachers. The purpose of the kindergarten, explained the teacher, is "to give each child the environment
that is needed most for his development and growth...." She went on to say that through social interaction and play children learned to cooperate. "Each game has its laws, which must be obeyed, and the child soon learns to love fair play. Kindergarten is a child['s] world of small citizens learning the true meaning of citizenship." 75 Had the teacher substituted "Americanization" for citizenship, the true meaning of her speech would become evident, for, in fact, Americans feared that the influx of immigrants, even in small cities like Galveston, would somehow change the character of the nation. Kindergartens for immigrant children gave "Americanizers" a means by which to teach foreign children national values, habits, customs, and language.

In both the Runge Free Kindergarten and the Jewish Free Kindergarten, children were taught values and habits of a class or group other than their own. Reaching beyond the children to their families, managers of the the Jewish kindergarten organized clubs for older children, where they learned arts and trades through crafts. Mothers, who suffered the greatest isolation from the language and customs of the new country, could then be reached through the children, as the young led the way in adapting to the values of the middle classes or of older immigrant groups. Mothers' clubs for the parents of the kindergartners were intended "to bring the mothers and kindergarten into closer relationship; that the mother may be more in sympathy with the child's work...." Programs were planned around "child welfare work," where they learned, for example, the fundamentals of hygiene given by the local feminist physician, Dr. Ethel Lyon Heard. 76

Families, not just pre-schoolers, were targeted for classes,
acculturation, and uplift. From the perspective of the teachers and benefactors, their efforts were intended to turn the kindergarten into a community center, where those families, and particularly the women whose status effectively isolated them from the larger city, could find common ground with each other and with purveyors of a better life. In effect, the women's movement to establish kindergartens in underprivileged neighborhoods was an attempt to modify the habits of the poor through education, example, and encouragement and to bring middle-class dreams of a more beautiful city with happier families to the outcast. Although that sounds meager, it was a far sight more progressive than having the poor travel across town to the rich for aid, or having destitute mothers give up their children to an asylum.

The kindergarten movement influenced elite women as well, for it invited them to think in terms of the total community, not just their privileged neighborhoods. This would eventually culminate in a Progressive era civic league whose primary goal was to beautify the total city environment for uplift just as the beautiful kindergarten uplifted disadvantaged children. More immediately the establishment of kindergartens in Galveston paralleled activities sponsored by the women's club movement, which by the 1890s had spread across the South like wildfire. Indeed Johanna Runge's observations on forming a free kindergarten were presented to a meeting of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs in 1899.

Just as benevolent women were beginning to construct pre-schools for little learners, so were they developing schools of their own through literary clubs. Beyond kindergartens and women's clubs, however, the elite women of Galveston were beginning to shape a woman's community borne of
women's nurturing culture.

* * * *

The creation of a woman's community in Galveston evolved over time through various institutions and organizations beginning with churches and benevolent societies, proceeding to the benevolent institutions, to be followed later by women's clubs. The connections between the women's benevolent societies, the Galveston Orphans' Home, the Woman's Home, the Home for Homeless Children, and the Johanna Runge Free Kindergarten existed on at least two levels. On one level, women's benevolent societies acted as important referral agencies for the needy seeking asylum in one of the homes. To be referred, even subsidized, by a benevolent society virtually assured the applicant's acceptance. The societies, then, constituted an initial channel for the feeble or the helpless to find a more permanent form of aid. Cooperation between societies and institutions ensured more than just nodding support for the inmates. Women in church and synagogue societies took turns providing services and special care for the children and elderly women. Each denominational society provided thanksgiving dinner at the orphans' home. Jewish women subsidized indigent Jewish children who were staying at the Lasker Home for Homeless Children. Their aid to this orphanage increased substantially once Morris Lasker had contributed to the building fund and after Mrs. A. Frenkel, also a member of Temple B’Nai Israel, became president of the home in 1916. Baptist women sent Easter eggs to the Johanna Runge kindergartners, sandwiches to the children of the Lasker Home, Christmas presents to the children of the Orphans' Home, and brought music to the
inmates of the Woman's Home. Methodist women clothed several children at the Lasker Home for years. Episcopal women sent most of their aid to the hospitals, including a newly built childrens' hospital, but their minutes show that they also sent treats to the children of the Lasker Home. Presbyterian women subsidized women who otherwise would have been unable to remain in the Woman's Home. Of supreme importance was the fact that Jewish and Protestant men and women acted in concert in creating benevolent institutions. This climate of interfaith cooperation continued into the twentieth century.

On another level, the benevolent societies acted as stepping stones for elite women with ambitions beyond home and church; those who sought public approval advanced to the boards of managers of the benevolent institutions. Those most likely to serve on the boards of lady managers were from the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and to a lesser degree Jewish congregations — those congregations where the women's benevolent societies had specialized in city poor relief — indicating of continuum of purpose by community-oriented women. The boards of the four benevolent institutions became self-perpetuating; new members were recruited by the presiding managers from the Protestant churches and the synagogue. In order to become a board member of the older institutions, a woman had to be actively engaged in church or temple work or belong to an elite family that had long practiced philanthropy. Boards of lady managers constituted a female hierarchy, a religious voluntary elite where status was as important as piety. The members' responsibilities as caretakers of orphans, aged women, and children from the factory district were commensurate with their stature within the community, and though they may have used the boards for their own social
purposes, there is no doubt that they also advanced their own roles as semi-public servants while allowing broader application of women's domestic values.

Alongside these common qualities, however, there were important differences between the early institutions and the later ones, which resulted in important distinctions for the women who administered them. The Orphan's Home and the Old Woman's Home, the earliest institutions outside the home managed by women, most resembled homes in the conventional sense. The lady managers were given responsibilities that accompanied their parallel roles in the home. The guidelines for male trustees and women managers more nearly approximated traditional work roles for men and women. Moreover, in the orphans' home, the managers preferred to adopt children and therefore have total control over the child as a parent would (in loco parentis). Children were carefully isolated from their parents in hopes of creating a new family or a better family within the orphan home. And parents were never given much in the way of encouragement. The women tried to keep their charity charges from returning to the poverty from which they had come even if it meant limiting contact with the family. Insulated from poorer neighborhoods, the lady managers prevented the orphans from interacting with poorer types whom the managers felt subverted the goals of the home. Children of women who were unmarried or divorced or abandoned (presumably these were immoral circumstances) had no access to the Galveston Orphans' Home, whose constitution written in the 1880s still had not changed by the 1930s. Exclusive rules and elitist assumptions manifested in carefully prescribed sex roles for the managers resulted in an institution out of step with the changing times, always
accommodating fewer children than its spacious halls would allow and managed by an increasingly older group of women. This cream of Galveston society practiced a lofty approach to benevolence with charity ball fundraisers and connections to New York "society." Their intentions were sincere, but their methods were elitist, never caring much for improving the plight of the parents or the neighborhood from which these children came.

By contrast the Lasker Home for Homeless Children and the Johanna Runge Free Kindergarten, both conceived in the 1890s, emerged as undertows of the progressive spirit pulling women toward a greater sense of civic and community responsibility. The institutions themselves, although homelike, were not intended to replace the child's home. They were temporary abodes or shelters for children whose families were in turmoil or unable to offer an education. These institutions started off in neighborhoods where poor parents could reach them. Parents were welcome to leave their children in the day nursery or kindergarten and pick them up again. Children of divorced, unmarried, and abandoned women were not turned away from the Lasker home nor was the poorest child of a factory worker denied access to the free kindergarten. The women who managed these institutions cared little for stereotypical sex roles and did what needed to be done without male supervision or circumscription. Even their fundraising methods were more democratic, taking to the streets rather than to the ballroom. Tagging everyone who worked in the commercial sector brought in about as much as the elaborate fancy gatherings of the older homes. And like the Sunday School missions that preceded them by a decade or two, the kindergarten movement hoped, through the children, to win over parents and families to the new gospel of community-centered progressive improvement and uplift.
The later benevolent institutions arrived on the cusp of changing philosophies with respect to child saving: families were now the target of their self-help designs. This included less control over the child and more help for the parents in their own homes and communities. The founders and managers of the later institutions represented a more modern-thinking segment of Galveston society. Unafraid to associate with the poor in their own environment or to help the whole family, these women heralded the civic leagues of the next century as well as change for the future of the city and for themselves.
Table 4:1 Charity and Non-Charity Orphans and Half Orphans Admitted to the Galveston Orphans' Home, 1887 to 1893

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Orphans</th>
<th>Full Charity</th>
<th>Some Charity</th>
<th>Full Payment</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total No. Children Admitted =104
Total Known Charity Children = 39
Total Women admitting children = 58
Total Men admitting children = 39

Each number indicates a separate admission of from one to four children by either a male or female relative under conditions of full payment, full charity, or partial charity. No indication of sex of relatives was given for full orphans.

Source: Minutes, Galveston Orphans' Home, Galveston Orphan's Home Records (Rosenberg Library).
Table 4:2  Women Inmates of the Letitia Rosenberg Home for Women

Total Inmates = 51  Widows = 39, Single = 11, Married = 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Charity cases</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown payment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity widows</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying widows</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity singles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying singles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown payment widows</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown payment single</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>65.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest age</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest age</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nativity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North (New York)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Nativity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average length of stay in the Home = 4.76 years
Shortest stay = 1 month Longest stay = 20 years.

How left?  25 died, 14 left voluntarily, 6 were asked to leave, 6 unknown

Source: Register of the Letitia Rosenberg Home for Women 1899-1917, Letitia Rosenberg Women's Home Records (Rosenberg Library).
This is not uncommon as churches in the South, the Catholic church excepted, were reluctant to build and sponsor benevolent institutions. Southern states, with the exception of Louisiana with its large Catholic population, had the lowest number of such institutions under church management of any part of the nation. The region with the highest proportion of institutions run by churches was the West. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Benevolent Institutions, 1904 (Washington, D.C., 1905), 14.

The four institutions featured here were both permanent and non-sectarian. One other institution founded by women will be mentioned in this chapter: the Jewish Free Kindergarten (1913), which was a wholly sectarian enterprise.

Although Catholics formed an important segment of the community there are two reasons why a more detailed study of their activities has not been presented here. First, charitable work in the fields of education, hospitals, and asylums were almost entirely in the hands of the female religious orders. Therefore opportunities for Catholic laywomen to become involved in benevolent institution building (an important first step to civic involvement) was almost nonexistent. Until 1914 Catholic laywomen performed only primary parochial duties for their parish churches. Second, it is clear that Protestant and Jewish women did not encourage Catholic laywomen to join them in managing their orphanages, kindergarten, and old-age home; only a handful ended up on the board of lady managers of the non-Catholic institutions. Consequently very few Catholic women were found in the post-1900 secular civic leadership. It is difficult to conclude, therefore, that Catholic laywomen advanced from their church societies to the secular world as Protestant and Jewish women did. History of the Diocese of Galveston and St. Mary’s Cathedral (Galveston, [1922]), 102, 110; Carlos E. Castaneda, Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936. (7 vols.; Austin, 1958), VII, 285, 361-65; Catholic Youth Organization, Centennial: The Story of the Development of the... Diocese of Galveston (Houston, 1947), 159, 163; Graham, Galveston Community Book, 20-21; Galveston Daily News, February 26, April 2, 1922; John O’Grady, Catholic Charities in the United States: History and Problems (Washington, D. C., 1930), 405-6; and Jay P. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present (Garden City, N.Y.,1985), 324,328.


Ibid., 115,122; Sam B. Graham, Galveston Community Book: A Historical and Biographical Record of Galveston and Galveston County (Galveston: Arthur H. Cawston, 1945), 144. “Henry Rosenberg: Benefactor,” June 1943, pamphlet, Subject Files (Rosenberg Library). Hopkins, History of the YMCA in North America. In 1883 twelve Baptist men opened a news boys’ home and admitted thirteen youngsters who had formerly been living on the streets. It did not last, however, as it was thought that news boys preferred independence to institutionalization. FBC minutes, January 28, February 2, 1883; The Union Baptist Association Centennial History, 1840-1940 (Brenham, TX: Banner-Press, Inc., 1940), 167.

The Adoue Seamen’s Bethel organized in 1899 and gained a structure in 1913; the
YWCA organized in 1914 and obtained their own structure (they rented at first) in 1924. Galveston Tribune, September 10, 1927, October 25, 1930; Galveston News, March 12, 1918, March 17, 1924. Griffin, History of Galveston, 118-19, 122-23. According to the 1904 census report on benevolent institutions, Texas ranked a surprising fifth after New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio in the number of institutions per population, even though the state ranked fourteenth in the absolute number of institutions (83 as compared to New York’s 659, Pennsylvania’s 409, Illinois’s 257, and Ohio’s 267). Texas, however, ranked thirty-fifth out of fifty states and territories in the number of inmates (125.2) per 100,000 population in benevolent institutions. This fell below the average of 347 per 100,000 nationally, indicating both the conservatism of expenditure on welfare to dependents and possibly the relatively undeveloped commercialism and manufacturing of the state as a whole. It seems that institutions were available in Texas, but resources to keep people in them may have been lacking. By 1904 Galveston, Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas each had three orphanages. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Benevolent Institutions, 1904, 14,15,122.


9Minutes, First Baptist Church, April 15, 1880, July 6, 1882, February 7, 1884; hereinafter FBC minutes; Galveston Daily News, September 23, 1894, November 22, 1925; Galveston Tribune, September 28, 1925, November 5, 1926, November 14, 1928.

10Galveston Daily News, September 23, 1894 (quotation), April 21, 1897.

11At this point, another version of the founding enters the story. According to a different source, the orphanage originated with Mrs. Clara Ritter, who began taking care of orphan children in her own home at 17th Street and Avenue F. Her work drew the interest of the same group of men who supported George Dealey’s home. Possibly the two were combined and a new organization adopted. Ibid., November 13, 1921.

12Ibid., April 21, 1897, Galveston Tribune, October 30, 1926. City Directory, 1884-1885. The first board of directors consisted of Judge Charles L. Cleveland, president; Rabbi Abraham Blum, vice-president; J.S. Montgomery, secretary; and members: Col, Leander Cannon, Dr. Ashley W. Fly, S. T. Blessing, Rev. George Waverly Briggs (St. James Methodist), and The board of trustees elected by this body included: Moritz Kopperl, president; Judge Charles Cleveland, vice-president; George Sealy, treasurer; J. S. Montgomery, secretary; members, George Sealy, Leander Cannon, Henry. M. Trueheart, George W. Briggs, John Hendrick, William H. Stewart, F. W. Brittingham, A. W. Fly, S. T. Blessing, Abraham Fly. This was an ecumenical body representing the various denominations, excepting Lutheran and Catholic.


14Between 1886 and 1894 J. M. Wortham gave $200, Captain J. J. Hendley gave $8,000 in Gulf Coast and Santa Fe Railroad bonds, Isidore Dyer $5,000, Leon Blum $1,000 James B. Shaw
$126, and Margaret Wright $1,000. In the years between 1894 and 1900 Henry Rosenberg gave $30,000, Rosetta Craycroft $500, Julia B. Southwick $2,000, Sarah P. Ball $5,000. Between 1900 and 1919, William R. Hearst and the New York Bazaar donated $50,000, the Central Relief Committee after the 1900 storm gave $1,225, Isabella Kopperl bequeathed $2,000 in 1902, Sarah P. Ball bequeathed $15,000 in 1904, Catherine Garland gave $200, Mrs. Harris Kempner gave $1,000, Mrs. Anna Migel $100, and Charles C. Adams $5,000. Annual Report of Galveston Orphans' Home, January 1931, Galveston Orphan's Home Records (Rosenberg Library).

15Galveston Daily News, April 21, 1897, November 13, 1921.

16The Osterman Widows' and Orphans' Home Fund of Galveston was established May 7, 1889. The Osterman building in 1905 began yielding to St. Mary's Orphan Asylum, Lasker Home for Homeless Children, the Galveston Orphans' Home, and the Letitia Rosenberg Home for Women about $400 a year until 1951 when the building was sold and the proceeds, $23,020, were divided among the four institutions. Rosanna Dyer Osterman's will, filed March 26, 1866, Will Book 2, pp. 229-44, Galveston County Courthouse. Accounts, Osterman Widows and Orphans Home Fund of Galveston Records (Rosenberg Library).


18Minutes, Board of Managers Galveston Orphans' Home, January 14, 28 (first and second quotations), February 11, April 22, July 29, December 30, 1885, March 10, 1886, April 21, 1891, Galveston Orphan's Home Records; hereinafter cited as Minutes, GOH.

19Minutes, GOH, January 14, 1885; Women teachers earned about $30 a month. Report of the Board of Trustees, Galveston Public Schools, 1897, uncatalogued county records (Houston Metropolitan Archives).

20Annual Reports, January 14, 1885, January 13, 1886, January 8, 1890, Minutes Board of Managers, Galveston Orphan's Home Records.

21Minutes, GOH, June 3 (first quotation), March 25 (second quotation), April 8 (third quotation), August 12 (fourth quotation), 1885.

22Minutes, GOH, July 15, 1885.

23Minutes, GOH, October 7, 1885.


25Minutes, GOH, May 6, June 17, July 29, September 23, 1885, July 27, October 5, 19, 1887, June 12, 1889, November 13, 1890, September 28, 1892.
Priscella Ferguson Clement in her article "Children and Charity: Orphanages in New Orleans, 1817-1914," *Louisiana History*, 27 (Fall 1986), 337-53, explains that managers often refused to admit older children because they were more frequent runaways. She also found that children ran away "only after they had been punished for other offenses" (p. 343).


James E. Thompson to Eleanor Waters Roeck, July 13, 1895, Waters-Roeck-Thompson Papers.

Not until a constitutional amendment was passed in 1937 allowing Texas to claim aid to dependent children through the Federal Security Act, did the state authorize aid directly to indigent children. Before that the only aid allowed was in the form of institutional care at the state's three institutions: the State Orphan's Home in Corsicana, the State Colored Orphan's Home at Gilmer, and the Home for Dependent and Neglected Children at Waco. No state institution for orphans existed before 1887, however, making the Galveston Orphans' Home one of the early few in the state. Mothers' Pension laws, passed by the legislature in 1917 relieved poor mothers of institutionalizing their children and suggests that childcare proponents recognized the damage done to children by separating them from their mothers on account of poverty alone. Unfortunately, the law provided that the funding and distribution of the mothers' pensions should come through the county commissioners, who in Galveston were notoriously stingy. Helen Evans, "Provisions for Public Relief in Texas, 1846-1937" (M.S. thesis, Tulane Univ. School of Social Work, 1941), 52-61.
1983), 886-909.

39 Griffin, History of Galveston, 313; McComb, Galveston, 92; "George Ball," typescript, Ball Family Papers (Rosenberg Library); "Complete Roster of Alumnae and Alumni of Ball High School," Historical Mounts (Rosenberg Library); Charter and By-laws of the Galveston Orphans' Home, 1930, Galveston Orphan's Home Records.

40 Listings came from the minutes and the city directories. In an earlier and smaller sample of some thirty-one officers of the Galveston Orphans' Home, serving between 1880 and 1900, 52 percent were Episcopalian; 19 percent, Presbyterian; 16 percent, Jewish; 10 percent, Baptist; and 3 percent, Methodist. Moreover, 45 percent of the officers were members of the two community-oriented women's church societies, Trinity Guild and the Ladies Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church.

41 The Ladies Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church was instrumental in admitting at least four children between 1891 and 1896. Minutes, Ladies Aid Society First Presbyterian Church, April 9, 1891, January 18, 1894, February 6, 1896, First Presbyterian Church Records (Rosenberg Library).


44 Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Galveston, 1899-1900 (Galveston, 1900), 285.

45 Unidentified clipping, 1896, Minutes, Board of Lady Managers, 1894-1896, Letitia Rosenberg Women's Home Records (Rosenberg Library); hereinafter Minutes, Woman's Home.

46 Haber, Beyond Sixty-Five, 90-93.

47 Galveston Daily News, December 5, 1926. For that matter charitable institutions were springing up all over the state. A Woman's Home in Dallas and similar institutions in Fort Worth, Palestine, and Waco, Texas all appeared in the years between 1886 and 1902. Seven rescue homes, fourteen orphanages and thirty-two hospitals in other Texas cities also went up between 1866 and 1902. U. S. Bureau of the Census, Benevolent Institutions, 1904, pp. 122, 210, 292.


49 Finally, the home became a beneficiary of the community chest, successor organization to the United Charities. Minutes, Woman's Home, March 9, 19, 29, 1894; Charles Fowler to the Executrix of the Estate of Julia B. Southwick, July 23, 1896, Rosenberg Family Papers; Galveston Tribune, March, April 1895 (clippings in Minutes, Woman's Home), May 8, 1896; Galveston Daily News, August 2, 1925, December 5, 1926.

50 Too many of the women were in the home in the first place because there was no one to
care for them or to help defray their expenses. Occasionally one of the women's benevolent societies paid partial board for one or two women who had petitioned for their aid.

51 Galveston Daily News, August 2, 1925 (quotation); City Directories, 1889 to 1921.

52 Unidentified clipping, 1896, Minutes.


55 Annual Reports, January 13, 1886, Minutes Board of Managers, Galveston Orphan's Home Records.

56 Constitution... Society...for Homeless Children. The standing committees were: Investigating (each case before admission), Employment (of staff), Finance, Collecting (money owed), Nursery, House, Clothing, and School.


58 Galveston Daily News, October 8, 1904. A total of thirty-nine children were living there the day the 1900 census taker came by. Six employees staffed the home: a matron, age fifty-two; an assistant matron, age forty; a head nurse, age forty-six; an assistant nurse, age nineteen; a cook, age forty-six; and a laundress, age forty-five — all white. The children ranged in age from less than one year to thirteen years. Only one baby was in the nursery but there were fourteen children between one and five years, and nineteen children over the age of six. Five of the children had no ages recorded. Manuscript Census Returns, Galveston County, 1900, Population.


60 Galveston Daily News, April 15, 1908.

61 Ibid., April 10, 1910. The efficacy of this means of fundraising lost its novelty, and subsequent years saw declining receipts of $1,700 and $1,400.


63 Lasker's charitable donations list all of the major city institutions; he served on the board of trustees for the Woman's Home and gave funds for teacher training for the Free Kindergarten. Nettie, his wife served on the board of directors for the Galveston Orphans' Home. Of his six children, the three sons became ardent entrepreneurs and the three daughters
became active social reformers. Morris Lasker along with his children joined the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association, and after his death in 1916 his family (the daughters all received training in social welfare work from the New York School of Philanthropy) continued to remember Galveston with gifts to the Morris Lasker Playground and to the Home for Homeless Children. Galveston Tribune, February 20, 1915; Galveston Daily News, January 23, 1909, March 15, 1912, October 1, 1921, August 9, 1936, March 25, 1961. Nettie Davis Lasker, Morris' wife, bequeathed $5,000 to the Lasker Home for Homeless Children, and $2,500 to the Lasker Playground in 1930. Their son Edward equipped and improved Lasker Playground as a tribute to his father. Galveston Tribune, June 19, 1930.

64 Lasker Home for Children Records.


68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., October 4, 1904.


72 Ibid., June 16, 1921. A very similar note was sounded by the directors of the Home for Homeless Children, who in 1904 lectured the county commissioners on the need for more aid. "If they can aid the county, they say, in making good citizens of these children the county will not have to take care of them fifteen or sixteen years from now in the penal institutions." Galveston Daily News, October 8, 1904.

73 HLBS, May 2, 1913. On June 15, 1917 the ladies gave an additional $150 to the Jewish Free Kindergarten.


75 Galveston Daily News, October 18, 1914.

76 Ibid., October 18, 1914, November 12, 1916 (quotation).

77 HLBS minutes, November 11, 1916, December 1917, March 1, June, November 1918; Minutes, FBC Woman's Auxiliary, April 21, May 5, November 24, December 29, 1919; Murphy, "
History of Methodism in Galveston," 24; Minutes, TCG, January 6, 1908, December 1913, April 1916, May 3, November 1, 1915; LASFPC, November 1, December 6, 1894.