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Freedmantown: The evolution of a black neighborhood in Houston, 1865–1880

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Freedmanton: The Evolution of a Black Neighborhood in Houston, 1865-1880

by

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ABSTRACT

Freedmantown: The Evolution of a Black Neighborhood in
Houston, 1865-1880

by

Mary Louise Passey

This thesis attempts to provide a better understanding of the urban black experience in the first decade and a half following the war by focusing on the development of a single black neighborhood called Freedmantown in Houston's Fourth Ward. In the post-Civil War period, the black population in Houston increased dramatically. Through blacks' efforts to establish themselves as property owners, Freedmantown developed into a stable, black residential neighborhood quickly after the war's end. Black residents of Freedmantown, however, did not form their own separate social community, nor did Freedmantown become the focus for the rest of the ward's black community institutions. Instead, the residents of Freedmantown remained actively involved in the larger black community of the Fourth Ward. As a result, Freedmantown's residents formed only one part of a multi-neighborhood black community, indicating that individual neighborhoods could develop and prosper without threatening the cohesiveness of the city's larger black community.
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Preface

The fall of the Confederacy precipitated a radical transformation in the legal status of southern blacks. With the South's defeat, formerly enslaved blacks were released from bondage and accorded an unprecedented degree of freedom. No longer legally bound to a master, former slaves seized the opportunity to exercise their newly won freedom, bringing significant—if somewhat limited—changes to the South. Blacks pushed against southern whites' postwar constraints and expectations often in small, but sometimes in dramatic ways. One of the most tangible and immediate ways blacks had of asserting their freedom was to exercise their right to move about freely. Although whites fought this movement, trying to keep blacks bound to plantation labor, thousands of blacks migrated to southern cities where they hoped to find greater opportunities and a better way of life for themselves and their families.

According to John Blassingame, this postwar urbanization of blacks "has been second only to slavery in the impact it has had on their [blacks'] lives."¹ Whether or not one agrees with the significance that Blassingame attaches to this postwar migration, one cannot dispute the fact that urbanization must have had a dramatic impact upon blacks' lives—especially southern blacks, most of whom had been previously confined to rural areas. The changes brought by emancipation afforded blacks the opportunity to build in southern cities the community infrastructure that had been denied them as slaves and as free blacks.
Most blacks admittedly remained in the South’s rural regions immediately following the war, but a significant number chose to leave the familiarity of the countryside for the unknown of the South’s urban centers. These “pioneer” blacks, though small in number when compared to those who remained behind in rural areas, paved the way for blacks’ later migration to southern cities and helped lay the foundations for southern urban development. Studying the experiences that these first postwar black migrants had in the South’s cities, therefore, is critical to understanding subsequent developments in southern urban race relations.

Several major works, most notably Howard Rabinowitz’s Race Relations in the Urban South, have attempted to document the process by which blacks established themselves in their new urban environments and strengthened their own communities during the immediate postwar period. Existing studies, however, cover only a narrow range of southern cities, leaving much research to be done before the process of urban black community formation can be fully understood. While in recent years there has been a heightened interest in the study of the urban South, early urban development in Texas remains a relatively neglected dimension of this field of study—and of the state’s history.

Perhaps scholars feel uncomfortable classifying Texas as a southern state. In fact, it is difficult to label Texas as either purely “southern” or purely “western,” since Texas shared in both the fever of the frontier movement and the conservative traditions of the cotton South. The city of Houston embodied these two disparate trends in the state’s development. David McComb asserts that Houston had all of the characteristics of a frontier city: it experienced rapid growth, was dominated by merchant leaders, and its primary focus was upon commercial development. Yet like other southern urban areas, much of Houston’s growth depended upon cotton cultivation, and slavery was a vital
force in white Houstonians' lives. More importantly, most of Houston's white population strongly supported the Confederacy during the Civil War. Houston may have differed from other southern urban areas in several respects, but in its economy and its support of slavery, Houston clearly was a city of the South. It therefore seems logical to study the postwar urban black experience in Houston within the context of and framework used in the analyses of other southern cities.⁴

The post-Civil War period proved to be particularly crucial to the development of Houston's black community because of the unusual characteristics of the city's prewar black population. There had always been a significant slave population in Houston, but in contrast to the downward trend that occurred in most southern cities, Houston's number of slaves continued to increase in the years prior to the war. Houston's antebellum black population also differed from others in its extremely small number of free blacks. This miniscule free black population meant that as Houston confronted the advent of Reconstruction, its white residents had little experience in dealing with free blacks on a daily basis.⁵ Therefore, not only did the city find itself in 1865 struggling to cope with the consequences of military defeat and the demands of Reconstruction, but also it was being forced to accommodate and interact with a previously negligible segment of the population--free blacks.

How the city's prewar circumstances impacted blacks' lives and how the black population coped with the postwar situation in Houston is the focus of this thesis. This analysis is limited to fifteen critical years following the Civil War, from 1865 to 1880, as blacks in Houston began to establish the foundations of their urban community. Two distinct aspects of the urban black experience in Houston are examined: the formation of black residential areas and the emergence of black community institutions.
In examining the first of these two elements—the formation of Houston’s postwar residential neighborhoods—it seems inadequate simply to determine where blacks settled in the city. One also must attempt to understand what motivated blacks to make their residential choices and what the consequences of those choices were. Thus in order to comprehend better why blacks settled in the particular neighborhoods that they did, this thesis examines both the actual physical settlement of blacks in Houston and the social and economic implications of blacks’ residential choices.

Blacks settled in virtually every part of Houston in the years following the war, but the largest number chose to settle in the city’s Fourth Ward. Especially attractive to blacks was the undeveloped land in the outlying regions of this ward. Although settlement in this area remained relatively sparse throughout the post-Civil War period, a significant number of blacks were able to purchase land and establish their homes in these outlying additions of the Fourth Ward—particularly in the Freedmantown or Hardcastle addition.

The development of this addition is particularly intriguing perhaps because of the historic connotations of the name “Freedmantown.” This name, in fact, has led historians of Houston (this one included) to all sorts of speculations about the area’s history—many of which have proven fallacious through the course of research for this thesis. The Freedmantown addition, nevertheless, did attract an unusually large proportion of black property owners when compared to the adjacent additions of the ward—hence Freedmantown’s long association with the city’s black community and its selection as the focus of this study.

Specifying Freedmantown as a distinct geographic entity, however, is a difficult task because of the myriad ways in which individuals have used the term “Freedmantown” to describe various neighborhoods of Houston’s old
Fourth Ward. The city’s 1840 charter defined the political division of the Fourth Ward to encompass a large section of the city, including many of its western-most neighborhoods such as Freedmantown and a significant portion of the city’s central business area. Yet many historic and popular sources use the terms “Fourth Ward” and “Freedmantown” interchangeably when collectively referring only to the predominantly black neighborhoods located in the western portion of the old Fourth Ward.⁶

“Freedmantown,” however, was a title initially used in the nineteenth century to refer to a much more narrowly defined region of the Fourth Ward than this common usage would suggest. According to official Harris County plat map records, in 1875 the name Freedmantown was given specifically to a twenty-eight block addition situated in the Fourth Ward directly on the southern banks of Buffalo Bayou, north of San Felipe Road, and west of the city’s center. The primarily black residential population and the large number of black property owners in Freedmantown set it apart from adjacent additions in the Fourth Ward—thus perhaps explaining its official designation as “Freedmantown” in 1875.⁷

Probably because of Freedmantown’s suggestive name and its long association with black inhabitants, many historians have assumed that Freedmantown became the focal point for the ward’s black community institutions. Although it seems logical that if Freedmantown had a larger percentage of black residents than other neighborhoods in the Fourth Ward then it also would have attracted most of the ward’s black community institutions, research has proven this assumption false. Contrary to popular perception, Freedmantown was not the focal point of the ward’s black community life. In fact, there was almost a complete lack of community institutions within Freedmantown itself. Discovering this inconsistency between the area with the
largest percentage of black property owners in the ward and the location of the ward's black community institutions led me to a deeper investigation of Freedmantown's role within the larger black community of the Fourth Ward--and more generally, to probe the meaning of and relationship between neighborhoods and communities.

Trying to understand the separate yet often interrelated development of "neighborhoods" and "communities" has underscored the importance of delineating clearly between these two constructs. The terms "neighborhood" and "community" are used in this thesis in highly specific ways. "Neighborhood" is used to refer to a strictly geographic or spatial relationship between individuals. People living in close proximity to one another, sharing the same physical environment, are considered as constituting a neighborhood. Beyond merely sharing the same physical space, however, residents of a neighborhood also may develop a sense of community among themselves based on their shared living environment. However, this sort of community formation does not necessarily occur among a neighborhood's inhabitants. It seems that this community formation is more likely to occur in instances where a large percentage of a neighborhood's residents own their own property and homes--as was the case in Freedmantown. A high rate of property ownership within a neighborhood tends to create a more stable environment, thus increasing the chances that neighborhood community bonds will develop among the residents.

A community, however, may also develop in a much larger context than this example of "neighborhood community formation" suggests. Although communities may develop among inhabitants of specific neighborhoods, they develop more commonly among individuals with no shared geographic associations--as in a church or scholarly community. Communities typically form among groups of people having common interests--political, religious,
social, economic, or academic—and therefore, generally extend beyond the geographic boundaries of a neighborhood. It is in this latter context that the term is used in this thesis. Thus, when one speaks of the black community in Houston, it is not confined to blacks in any specific area or section of the city.8

Sorting out the relationship between neighborhoods and communities in this broader sense prompted me to ask more specific questions about Freedmantown’s own development. Did the creation of Freedmantown—a stable, black residential neighborhood with a large number of homeowners—lead its residents to form their own separate social community? Or did its residents remain active in a larger black community that included blacks from across the Fourth Ward or across the city? Endeavoring to answer questions such as these has illuminated the interrelationship between Freedmantown—a geographically defined neighborhood—and the larger black community of which its residents were a part. It was in the process of exploring this relationship that the fascinating story of Freedmantown’s evolution as a black neighborhood unfolded.


2Richard Wade’s Slavery in the Cities may be regarded as the seminal work in the study of black urbanization. His work has been followed by a number of urban histories of the South, analyzing the effects of urban life upon the inhabitants of the South across a number of different time periods. See Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Among the more notable of these works that focus upon the nineteenth-century genesis of urbanization are Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (New York: Oxford UP, 1978); Don H. Doyle, New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile: 1869-1910, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990); John Blasingame, Black New Orleans (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

3David G. McComb, Houston, the Bayou City (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 53.

4For a discussion of the diversity of regions within the state of Texas and the assumption that the eastern two-fifths of the state may be considered as an integral part of the Old South, see Randolph B. Campbell and Richard G. Lowe, Wealth and Power in Antebellum Texas (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 12-17.
While there were several assertions in local newspapers that there were a number of blacks in Houston living away from their owners, this practice cannot be substantiated through other extant documents or records. Even if a significant number of slaves and/or free blacks were living within the city, I have discovered no way to determine where they were living; whether or not they were forming independent communities; or if they were able to establish the foundations for later black urban institutions. It seems that trying to make a sustainable argument as to the emergence of an independent, viable black community in Houston prior to the Civil War would yield few results. Thus the postwar period appears crucial in the formation of a black community in Houston. For discussion of the limited nature of antebellum black community organizations in Houston, see Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, eds. *Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1992), 18-19.

There are several contemporary examples of the misuse of the "Freedmantown" name. Marguerite Johnston identifies "Freedmen's Town" as the location of Antioch Baptist Church. The church, however, actually was located in a neighborhood to the south and east of Freedmantown. See Marguerite Johnston, *Houston: The Unknown City, 1836-1946* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1991), 101. Another example of this popular misidentification occurred in a photographic exhibition at the Houston Public Library, where a house owned by Ned Jones, located at 319 Robin Street, was identified as being part of "Freedmen's Town," an area that developed "as a residential haven for freed slaves."

"Caption" in *Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscape Houses Interiors, 1824-1914*, Julia Ideson Building, March 2 - June 30; Exhibit of historic photographs from the Junior League Component, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library (hereafter MRC).

The Fourth Ward was defined as all the land south of Congress and west of Main. For a definition of all of the wards' boundaries, see David G. McComb, *Houston, the Bayou City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 72.

Deed Records 1836-1904, Harris County, Harris County Courthouse, vol. 15: 22-23.

Further discussion of the importance of distinguishing between these two terms may be found in Gary Browne, review of *The Unbounded Community: Neighborhood Life and Social Structure in New York City, 1830-1875*, by Kenneth A. Scherzer, *Journal of the Early Republic* 12 (Winter 1992): 582.
1

Blacks in Houston, 1836-1865

On August 30, 1836, only four days after purchasing the land upon which they planned to establish the city of Houston, John K. and Augustus C. Allen made their first advertisement for the sale of lots in the city, boldly predicting that “when the rich lands of this country shall be settled, a trade will flow to it, making it, beyond all doubt, the great interior commercial emporium of Texas” (see Map A). The Allens had been lured from New York to Texas in 1832 by the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company’s enticing advertisements and sale of scrip.\(^1\) Recognizing the effectiveness of the Texas Land Company’s promotions, the Allens combined this company’s form of advertising with their own zeal and determination to make their settlement venture a success, bringing the campaign to settle Houston to new heights. Their desire for growth and success was quickly adopted by Houston’s other white settlers and set the tone for the city’s development.

Having decided upon the location of Houston as the site for their city, the Allens purchased in 1836 the south half of the lower league of land that John Austin had obtained from the Mexican government twelve years before. Negotiating with Austin’s widow, Elizabeth Parrott, the Allen brothers obtained the designated land for the consideration of $5,000.\(^2\) It was largely due to the Allen’s ambition and aggressive actions that construction in Houston proceeded as rapidly as it did. Before even a single house was built in the city, the Allen brothers managed to convince the new Republic’s Congress to designate Houston as its capital. The government promptly allotted $15,000
for the purpose of erecting buildings “suitable” for housing the new administration within the city. When the appropriated funds failed to come through, the Allens, unwilling to let their dreams for Houston’s future slip away, financed the capitol building themselves. Demonstrating their unwavering commitment to the city’s growth, they also donated land to Methodists and Presbyterians for the purpose of constructing churches.³

The Allen brothers’ efforts to attract settlers to Houston were aided by other policies of the Republic designed to draw settlers to the new nation. Hoping to encourage immigration, Texas’s leaders promised free land to any male family head of household, and a lesser amount to any single male, who settled in the Republic from 1836 to 1842.⁴ In addition, the ongoing promotional efforts of the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company continued to bring settlers to Texas. The company spread its advertisements for the issue of Texas land stock and the sale of scrip throughout the United States and Europe, particularly in Switzerland and Germany. The success of the company’s campaign to attract immigrants to Texas was evident in Houston’s own large foreign-born population.⁵

To convince prospective settlers to choose Houston as their destination rather than rival towns in the interior of Texas, the Allens emphasized the “ideal” location of their new city. Houston, they explained, was sited at the head tide on Buffalo Bayou, which flowed into Galveston Bay, forming a “commercial break”--a connection between two modes of transportation--that ensured Houston’s position as a major commercial hub. The promoters’ success in attracting newcomers to the city is illustrated by the rapid growth of Houston’s population, which more than quadrupled in two years, from 500 in 1837 to 2,073 in 1839.⁶ Even the removal of the capital to Austin in 1839,
although causing a temporary setback in the city’s growth and its civic pride, did not cripple Houston for long.

The city adopted a new charter in 1839 and a supplement in 1840 that defined the city limits to encompass nine square miles. Development, however, was limited to the area immediately surrounding the town center. Areas to the west of the city such as that which would later become Freedmantown remained undeveloped farm land throughout the city’s early history. The new charter placed the court house at the town center and provided for the city’s division into four wards, each of which would elect two aldermen to represent it. Using Main and Congress Streets as boundaries, the four wards were defined by the city government as follows: the First Ward encompassed all land north of Congress Street and west of Main Street; Second Ward, north of Congress and east of Main; Third Ward, south of Congress and east of Main; and the Fourth Ward contained all land south of Congress and west of Main.\(^7\) (See Map B). While created as political expedients, these divisions provided a ready means of identification for the various sections of and landmarks in the city.

This quick reference by ward became increasingly useful in Houston. By 1840 the city had grown precipitously, and cotton production was beginning to boom. Houston housed an arsenal, a court house, a jail, a market house, the president’s house, a capitol building, and a number of commercial establishments.\(^8\) The grand jurors of Harris County did their part to aid in the city’s expansion and to boost its moral and civic pride, issuing in December 1841 a sanguine assessment of the city’s character. “The citizens of Houston,” they claimed, “are a moral community, compared to what they were four years ago. . . .” The jurors pledged themselves to maintain and continue to improve upon the “moral reformation” taking place in the city.\(^9\) From
Map B
Ward Boundaries
Houston's origination, the city's leaders clearly had committed themselves to the expansion and prosperity of their settlement. They demonstrated early that they would undertake any steps necessary to ensure their city's success—an attitude they maintained in virtually every situation they confronted.

Houston's leaders' desire for growth and their zealous efforts to build a city attractive to new settlers, however, were limited by the fact that their invitations to establish residence in the city were reserved for white immigrants only. Houstonians shared with other southern urban dwellers of the mid-nineteenth century the idea that allowing too many blacks—especially free blacks—to reside within the city's limits would undermine the town's order and stability. As was the case with most other southern cities, however, Houston experienced only partial success in limiting its number of black residents. The leaders and white residents were unable—and perhaps unwilling because of their uncompromising desire for growth which necessitated the use of slave labor—to exclude completely all black inhabitants. The city government thus adopted the compromising response typical of nineteenth-century southern urban areas—attempting to restrict the activities and mobility of those blacks, slave and free, who did reside within the city.10

Other Texans joined Houstonians in their belief that the presence of free blacks was an ominous threat. Texas whites were convinced that free blacks exercised a "subversive" influence upon the resident slave population. In order to prevent what they viewed as a social crisis, the Republic's leaders felt it imperative to eliminate the threat posed by non-slave blacks. In 1836—the year in which the Republic was established—the Texas General Council passed an act that prohibited the immigration of any free black into the Republic.11

Prior to Texas independence in 1836, the Mexican government had readily accepted free black residents and shown hostility toward slavery.
While the Republic's resolution may seem exceedingly harsh against this backdrop, the new measure was not a dramatic break with tradition. In fact, it simply provided sanction for what had been popular practice in the former Mexican state for over a decade. The introduction of slaves into Texas had first been restricted, then finally forbidden, under Mexican rule, but Texas's Anglo-American immigrants had quickly discovered ways to avoid the full force of the law. Slaveowners changed the status of their bondsmen and women from slave to apprentice before coming to Texas and then stipulated that the blacks would become free only when they had paid off the debt incurred by the slaveholders in transporting the blacks to their new home—a debt made virtually impossible to settle by the machinations of the employers. By making the blacks apprentices, the slaveowners' actions were upheld under Mexico's system of debt peonage. Thus this superficial change in the blacks' status allowed slaveowners to comply legally with the law prohibiting slave importation, while subverting the authorities' true intentions for it.12

It took white slaveowners little time to realize that the vast size of the Mexican empire eliminated any possibility that the government might attempt to enforce the prohibition against slave importation. As the influx of Anglo-American immigrants--most of whom were drawn from other southern states and typically were supporters of slavery--into Texas increased, the Mexican law was rendered virtually impotent. As a result of the immigrants' successful subterfuge of the law, slaves in Texas outnumbered free blacks by the late 1820s. Thus, when the Republic of Texas passed the law prohibiting the immigration of free blacks in 1836, slavery was a well-established institution in Texas, and Mexican laws protecting the rights of the black population were ineffectual.13
By the time Texas achieved its independence from Mexico, living with an expanding slave population was not a new experience for most Texans. Experience, however, had not bred tolerance. The rapid growth of Texas’s slave population precipitated an escalation in white anxiety and apprehension. The increasing number of blacks seemed to antagonize the residents of both rural and urban areas. Although it did not house the large numbers of slaves found in some of Texas’s agricultural regions, Houston experienced significant growth in its own slave population during the 1830s and forties. Harris County, of which Houston was the county seat, witnessed a 66 percent increase in its slave population—growing from 236 in 1837 to 393 in 1840.14 In addition to the number of slaves in the city, an 1839 edition of the Morning Star, Houston’s local paper, estimated that there also were between thirty and forty free blacks residing within “the limits of the Corporation.” The newspaper complained that free blacks were “prowling about with ostensibly no means of subsistence; and as a necessary consequence, corrupting and rendering turbulent and dissatisfied the slaves among whom they associate.”15 Assuming that the opinions of the newspaper were representative of those of the majority of the city’s white residents, Houstonians, like slaveholders across the South, viewed the black inhabitants—slave and free—of their city as a potential and growing threat.

Actions taken by the city council reflected the anxiety of Houston’s white residents. In 1839, expanding upon the Republic’s existing laws banning free black immigrants, the council passed an ordinance requiring all “person[s] of African descent in whole or in part” in Houston to leave the city within thirty days.16 Since Houston’s residents continued to buy, sell, and hire-out slaves during 1839 and subsequent years it is clear that the city government’s chief concern was with eliminating the free black—not the slave—population.
Perhaps trying to heighten the citizens' awareness of and vigilance against potential trouble, the *Morning Star* issued incriminating attacks upon the city's free black population throughout the spring of 1839. All southerners, the newspaper felt certain, would agree that free blacks exerted a "baneful influence" upon the region's slaves. In August of the same year, the *Morning Star* congratulated the city council for an ordinance recently passed regarding free blacks--probably the ordinance passed by the council on August 6 that required city officers to apprehend all free blacks in the city who had emigrated to the Republic since its independence. The paper was optimistic about the city's ability to deal with its free black population, stating that "we have--fortunately for us--but a few of this class among us, perhaps not more than twenty or thirty in the whole Republic, the majority of whom are in this city, an example therefore can easily be made of these. . . ." Despite the paper's optimism, it shared the conviction of most white Houstonians that the presence of a free black population, no matter how small, would undermine the whites' authority over their slaves. In the whites' estimation, therefore, it was imperative that the opportunities for interaction between slaves and free blacks be eradicated.

The white community saw a direct correlation between "the free black problem" and disorder among its slaves. Whites' growing concern over the black population thus did not stop with free blacks, nor did its regulations. In 1839--the same year that restrictions were imposed upon free blacks--the city council passed laws that prohibited slaves from gambling, carrying weapons, and buying liquor; that required them to adhere to a strict 8:00 p.m. curfew; and that regulated their social and religious gatherings. It added its weight to the Republic's existing restrictions on the slave population by prohibiting any slave from hiring his or her own time--violation of which demanded a ten-
dollar-per-day penalty—and by requiring that all written contracts dealing with slaves be approved by their owners. Finally, it stipulated that all day laborers were always to spend the night on their owners’ premises. 19

The provisions of this regulation suggest that at this early date there were a number of slaves working and living apart from their owners. Moreover, the council’s actions imply that slave hiring and living out occurred to such an extent that the city aldermen found it necessary to regulate the practices. If this were the case, then one may argue that in the prewar period there may have been abundant opportunities for slaves and free blacks to mingle and to establish institutions vital to a functioning black community. Slaves undoubtedly did find ways to associate and gather together free from white supervision; however, several fragments of evidence suggest that these opportunities were limited and probably rarely involved free blacks. 20

City newspapers, which notoriously exaggerated problems with free blacks, continued to make relatively small estimations of the size of the free black population. In addition, the opportunities for slaves to meet “beyond the master’s eye,” as Richard Wade describes it, probably were limited, much as they were in other southern cities. The average slaveholding in Houston was relatively small—approximately 75 percent of all slaveowners held fewer than five slaves. Since Houston lacked large industrial and manufacturing enterprises, most of the town’s slaves worked either as domestics or in small commercial enterprises. Consequently, these scattered, small slaveholdings reduced the opportunities for regular interaction both among the city’s slaves and between slaves and free blacks. Slaves in Houston also suffered from the town’s small size and its sparse population. These factors reduced blacks’ “opportunity to submerge into secret rendezvous.” 21
In addition, one may also argue that the city council’s passage of regulations against free blacks and slaves in 1839 was precipitated more by extraneous circumstances than by local practices. Since the city had been founded only three years earlier, this may have been the earliest occasion for the council to establish city policies regarding the black population. In fact, while the Republic had passed laws regarding blacks prior to 1839, apparently none had been passed in Houston before this date. The 1830s, furthermore, were volatile years for the South as a whole. Regional fears of rebellion following the Nat Turner revolt of 1831 assumed a feverish pitch, as many southerners began to feel that the security of slavery was eroding.

In Houston, in particular, these fears probably were exacerbated by local events. The removal of the Texas capital to Austin in September 1839--the same month in which these regulations appeared--caused a temporary setback in civic pride and created a sense of retrenchment among Houston’s residents. Following the loss of the capital and its corresponding economic support and politicians, Houston suffered its first economic depression, lasting through 1839 and into the next year. In addition, the outbreak of a severe yellow fever epidemic earlier that summer had taken the lives of one-ninth of the city’s inhabitants. During these months of “grim tragedy,” as Marguerite Johnston describes them, Houston’s white population probably was in no mood to countenance any disorder or discord among its black population, no matter how far-fetched the idea of rebellion actually may have been.22

Although the anxiety and apprehension about the “uncontrollable” and “insolent” black population in Houston may seem irrational to the twentieth-century observer, especially given the city’s relatively small number of black inhabitants--fewer than 400--this is not how contemporary white residents of the town viewed it. The slave population in Harris County and in Houston
proper had been steadily increasing since independence and now, entirely free from Mexican regulation, showed no signs of abatement. Houston newspapers were filled with notices concerning runaway slaves—many of whom reportedly had formed themselves into large groups—who were believed to be seeking refuge in the town. Convinced that the fugitive slaves were hiding out in Houston, the white citizens’ alarm probably escalated as they saw many of the same runaway ads appear month after month, indicating that officials were experiencing grave difficulty in apprehending the fugitives. Throughout 1839 and the 1840s, moreover, the pages of the *Morning Star* were replete with advertisements for the hiring-out of slaves, a practice that many whites believed undermined the stability of slavery.23

In April 1839 the *Morning Star* openly admonished state and local officials for their lax enforcement of the ordinance prohibiting free blacks from remaining in the state. The paper asserted that the “rapidly growing evil of a free Negro population, particularly within this city,” made it imperative that the ordinance be effectively enforced. This warning suggested to the city’s white residents that the systems for controlling blacks in Houston were on the verge of collapse.24 To a population alert and sensitive to the threat posed by “subversive” members of the black community, these repeated discussions of the “free black problem” must have seemed adequate proof that the number of blacks at large in the city was spiraling out of control.

In the early 1840s uncertainty over the United States’s annexation of Texas as a slave state put all Texas slaveholders on edge. Local conditions in Houston—especially the steadily expanding slave population—would have redoubled white citizens’ sense of insecurity and instability. From Houston’s founding, its white residents had been aware of and uncomfortable with the growing number of blacks in their midst but seemed unable to curb the city’s
demand for slaves. Enacting local controls thus may have served as a panacea to the white residents, helping to convince them that they were capable of ensuring the immediate security of the peculiar institution in Houston.

Whites, however, experienced little success in halting the growing number of slaves in the city, despite their fears about the threat posed by an increasing black population. In fact, unlike the downward trend in many older southern cities, Houston’s slave population continued to grow throughout the 1850s during the height of the sectional crisis, more than doubling from 517 in 1850 to 1,069 in 1860. As Paul D. Lack explains, this growth appears to have been typical for newer southwestern towns such as Houston, which were experiencing steady growth throughout this period. As the towns’ white populations expanded, so too did the need for domestic servants and additional laborers. Houston's slave population therefore continued to increase along with that of the whites, regardless of whites’ fears about the consequences.25

Business considerations proved to be a major factor in the city’s growing demand for slaves. Recognizing that domination of the East Texas railways was the key to the city’s future, Houston businessmen began to compete for control of the state’s major lines early in the city’s history. Since some of the heaviest investors in the railroads were among the city’s most prosperous shipping merchants--several of whom were slave traders as well--it is not surprising that slave labor was used in railroad construction. Even in the late 1830s investors in Texas railroad companies had begun to solicit the cooperation of the city’s slaveowners, stating that they presumed that “owners of negroes, at seasons of the year when they have not much for their hands to do, would let them work on the road...” in exchange for railroad stock. In March 1840 Andrew Briscoe posted an ad in the Houston paper for sixty “Negro men” to work on the Harrisburg and Brazos railroad for anywhere
from six months to two years. During the 1850s railroad construction increased dramatically, and with the growth in activity came the need for an increased labor supply.

Construction in Houston, moreover, was not confined to the rail lines. Johnston notes that during 1848, in the impending fever of the Gold Rush years, numerous westward-bound adventurers passed through Houston only to find that there were no vacant houses in the city. The desire to accommodate these travelers and hopefully prolong their stay in Houston must have provided a tremendous boost to the building industry, as entrepreneurs rushed to erect adequate lodgings. The large foreign-born population in the city, many of whom were manual laborers, may have mitigated the use of slave labor in this construction boom, but it is probable that there were certain menial tasks considered suitable only for black laborers. Given the apparently small supply of free black labor in the city, slaves would have constituted the only viable labor force to fill these jobs.

Slaves also were needed to fill the myriad manual-labor positions created by the city’s growing commercial economy. Susan Jackson documents a sharp rise in Houston during the 1850s in the number of male slaves in their twenties. She concludes that the introduction of males of this age was caused by the growing need for slave labor in cotton warehouses and steamers. Finally, Houston’s slave population may have been augmented slightly by the illegal but lucrative importation of African and Caribbean slaves into Galveston. Several of Houston’s most prominent businessmen, such as Cornelius Ennis, engaged in this clandestine trade and may have aided in providing the city with its needed slave laborers. With all signs indicating that Houston was poised on the brink of commercial and economic success, it seems that the city leaders’ ardent desire for growth—despite the subsequent
need for slave labor that this growth generated--was too powerful to make practicable a limitation on the number of slaves in the city.31

Houston continued to struggle with its conscience during the 1850s over its steady demand for slave laborers and the expanding black population that this demand produced. Meanwhile, according to official enumerations the city government appeared to have been more successful in its crusade to rid the city of free blacks. Local sources' estimations of the free black population remained small--never exceeding forty--even in the late 1830s at the height of what historian Tamara Haygood calls the "free black panic" in Houston.32 Actions taken by the legislature of the Republic may have facilitated Houston's attempts to drive free blacks from its boundaries. Having previously granted a number of exemptions for free blacks currently residing in the state, the Texas legislature in 1845 finally made official its support for local efforts to eliminate the state's free black population. The legislature declared it illegal for any free black to remain in the state after the remission for free blacks already residing in Texas expired in 1845. Exceptions were to be granted only through legislative approval, but no black resident of Harris County ever received such an exemption. The legislature followed with a law in 1854 that permitted a slaveowner to manumit his or her slaves only if they were then sent out of the state.33

Evidently, the legislature was unable to establish an effective policy regarding non-slave blacks, for it wavered again in 1858, agreeing to permit free blacks to remain in the state only if they enslaved themselves to a white owner.34 While unable to eliminate free blacks completely, the legislature's regulations apparently prevented the state's free black population from expanding. According to the census returns of 1850, there were 397 free blacks in Texas, and in 1860, the number had fallen to 355.35 Houston,
meanwhile, reported only 7 free blacks in 1850, and 9 in 1860, suggesting that the city also had managed to control its free black population—albeit probably not to the extent reflected by the census count. Houston’s success in stunting the development of a free black community created an urban atmosphere different from most southern cities. The small number of free blacks prevented the establishment of formal black community institutions such as those that existed in older southern cities. The absence of these established institutions not only affected the lives of the city’s slaves but also reverberated into the postwar years.

Houston’s ability to limit its free black population—even if not to the degree the census indicates—may be largely attributable to the city’s late development compared to other urban centers in the South. In most cities where a large and prosperous free black population existed, the free black community had established itself at a much earlier date. This is particularly true of such cities as New Orleans, Charleston, and Mobile where an “urban elite” of free blacks existed. In 1820, almost two decades before Houston was founded, the free black population of New Orleans stood at 7,237; Charleston’s at 1,475; and the free black population of the much smaller city of Mobile measured 183. By 1830 the free black population in each of these cities had increased by 10 to 20 percent—in New Orleans it had risen to just over 8,000; in Charleston to 2,107; and in Mobile it had more than doubled to 372. In contrast, by the time that a free black population might have begun to develop and build its social and economic foundations in Houston, the anxiety over the sectional crisis was coming into focus, heightening whites’ anxiety and fears about free blacks. Across the Lower South, even in cities where free blacks had firmly established themselves, there was a steady erosion during the late antebellum period in the legal status of free blacks and
in their ability to become property owners. In Houston where the size of the free black population had been limited from the outset of the town’s development, this deterioration dashed any hopes free blacks may have had of establishing an effective social community.40

Census returns confirm free blacks’ inability to establish themselves in the city, but the returns must be used with caution. Visitor accounts and newspaper articles impart a different impression of the number of free blacks residing in Houston. The travel account of a German visitor to the city in 1849, W. Steinert, strongly suggests that there were free blacks residing in Houston and that they were well-tolerated—contrary to the indications of city policy. He recounted meeting an elegant and polished black man who served as the dancing teacher for “white people of rank” in both Houston and Galveston. He noted, moreover, that this man had purchased his own freedom for $1,000 and that of his wife for $800.41

In another instance, a black woman who had been freed in 1835 appears to have resided in Houston from 1838 until 1866, although denied permission by the Texas legislature to remain in the state. The woman reportedly engaged in several real estate transactions while living in the city.42 Furthermore, in September 1865 the Tri-Weekly Telegraph reported the death of “Uncle Ned Smith”—a black man who had been freed for faithful service, emigrated to Texas before the revolution, and had lived in the city “for a long time” on a lot and house given to him by Houston’s “liberal citizens.”43

That free blacks, even if few in number, had become a tolerated, if not accepted, part of Houston’s landscape also is suggested by an ordinance “Concerning Free Negroes” passed by the city council in 1855. This law permitted free blacks to rent rooms in the city after meeting the following
requirements: they had to receive a permit from the Board of Aldermen, obtain a $1,000 bond endorsed by two “responsible” citizens, and had to pay a monthly fee of $2.50 for the permit. Perhaps the most important condition of the ordinance was the demand that free blacks “bind themselves not to permit any slave to visit his or her premises.” The appearance of this regulation after almost two decades of supposed prohibition of free blacks in the city suggests that city officials recognized the ineffectiveness of their ban and the need for compromise. The council appeared to be trying to regulate a situation that had received de facto acceptance from the white population for many years. However, it is unclear if the council’s regulation was intended solely to provide legal sanction for an existing practice or if it demonstrated the city government’s sense of victory. One may argue that the council considered itself so successful in reducing the number of free blacks within the city’s limits that it finally felt confident enough to allow a limited number of free blacks to remain in the city as long as they agreed to certain restrictions.

The ordinance’s requirement that free blacks who received permission to stay in the city agree not to entertain slave visitors seems to express the primary motivations of the city council. Maintenance of order among the city’s slave population—not anxiety over an expanding free black population—arguably was the principal intention of the ordinance. Even if there were only a small number of free blacks in the city, the council obviously still regarded their presence as a direct threat to the city’s social fabric. The local newspaper claimed that this ordinance was “much needed,” and it asserted that it “should also apply to slaves who hire their own time”—a concern that seemed to be growing among Houston’s white inhabitants. If free blacks could not be effectively excluded from the city and if slaveowners were unwilling to renounce the practice of slave-hiring, then a compromise was
necessary. Slavery—a labor system whites deemed crucial to Houston’s growth—would be protected at all costs. Houstonians, meanwhile, continued to view black independence with hostility—a sentiment that would later infuse their attitudes toward emancipated blacks.46

Although the provisions of the 1855 ordinance suggest that there was some degree of interaction between free blacks and slaves in Houston, there is little other evidence to indicate that free blacks and slaves interacted on any sort of regular social or economic basis. City officials and newspapers continued to sound the familiar refrain that free blacks exerted a subversive influence upon the city’s slave population—a complaint heard across the South. No proof of these charges, however, can be found. It is more likely that free blacks in Houston, as in many southern cities, attempted to separate themselves from the slave population, hoping to protect their privileged status within the community.47 Newspaper accounts and observations about the black population in Houston tend to group slave and non-slave blacks together, offering little aid in determining the relationship between the two.

In 1857, for example, the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* stated that “the first thing that strikes an attentive observer on his arrival in Houston, is the immense latitude allowed to the negroes.”48 Steinert’s observations were equally nebulous during his visit. From his boarding house, Steinert noticed a restaurant and the dining rooms owned by a “black” man that were filled with “Negro” men and women. In addition, he noted the presence of a “humble little house” behind the white church where “the slaves, the Negroes” were singing and worshiping in their own church services (italics mine).49

The church gathering to which Steinert refers probably was one of the afternoon services held by the city’s First Methodist Church for the black members of its congregation. As in this particular case, most of Steinert’s
references to the city’s “Negroes” probably were applicable primarily to the slave population. This assumption seems even more likely considering the newspapers' consistently small estimations of the number of free blacks in the city and the whites' growing concern over the independence exhibited by slaves who hired out their time. As the number of slave hirelings—a group also associated with its tendency to undermine the exercise of white control over the rest of the city’s slave population—expanded, the city seemed to become as worried over the threat hired-out slaves posed as they were with that posed by the free black population. Throughout the prewar years, the city organized slave patrols to regulate and maintain order among slaves—a practice that had begun with the city’s founding.\textsuperscript{50} In 1856 the \textit{Tri-Weekly Telegraph} complained about the large number of slaves permitted to hire their own time and to live away from their owners. Although the 1860 census listed only 78 slaves—out of a total of 1,069—as being hired out, it is probable that the practice was significantly more widespread than indicated by the census returns.\textsuperscript{51} Travelers to the city often remarked upon the sizable number of “well-to-do” blacks who appeared to be roaming about the city, and newspaper accounts supported their observations. For instance, an 1856 issue of the \textit{Tri-Weekly Telegraph} complained that

\begin{quote}
No matter what time of night you pass through the streets you are sure to meet parties of negroes, who go where they please, unquestioned and irresponsible. Such thing as a “pass” is unheard of, and we doubt if they are even furnished. In certain quarters of the city there are large congregations of negroes, who hire their own time, and w[h]o live entirely free from the supervision of any white man.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

The city constantly contradicted itself in its professed desire to eradicate the practice of hiring-out. While condemning the pernicious effects of allowing slaves to be “hired-out” or to “hire out” their own time, the city was
unable to extirpate the system. Not only did the practice supply the city with needed laborers, but it apparently was also economically advantageous for those slaveowners involved. Even the anxiety and fear created by the "Texas Troubles"—a series of alleged attempts at slave insurrection during the summer of 1860—did not deter slaveowners from the practice. Slavery in Houston was a profitable business venture, and apprehensions aside, Houstonians depended upon it. Their reliance in turn meant that the city’s antebellum slave population increased steadily.

During the war years the city’s newspapers were filled with advertisements seeking slaves available for hire, indicating that neither the events of 1860 nor the turmoil of war had affected the city’s relentless demand for hired slave laborers. Many industries and merchants actually expanded production during the war years, leading the city’s merchants to call urgently for additional slaves. In 1863, the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* pleaded for spare slaves to be sent to Houston where they would be guaranteed “employment at good wages, and plenty to eat and wear. Labor is now very scarce in Houston,” the paper explained.

The establishment in Houston of the Confederate headquarters for the district of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico contributed to the growing need for laborers. The Confederate army repeatedly advertised in the city’s newspapers to recruit slave laborers. Army officials quickly became frustrated at their inability to procure the necessary number of slaves through this traditional route of hiring and resorted to another solution. Receiving little response to its ads in the 1862 and 1863 issues of the *Tri-Weekly Times*, the army decided upon a policy of impressment to acquire the slaves that it needed. In December 1862 General John B. Magruder issued an order for slaveowners in Texas to send all of their able-bodied male slaves to the various
Confederate headquarters set up around the state. Realizing the backlash that this policy would elicit, General Kirby Smith remanded the order before it could take effect. Not to be denied his needed laborers, Magruder followed with an order in February 1863 demanding the impressment of slaves to work on fortifications. This time he realized the ineffectiveness of his order and within a matter of days reduced the number of slaves requested. Despite his warnings that any slaveholder who violated his orders would “be dealt with strictly according to military law,” Magruder continued to face fierce resistance. Throughout the war the demand and prices for slaves in Houston remained high, increasing the slaveowners’ reluctance to comply with Confederate requisitions. The unwillingness of the local white population to forfeit voluntarily their valuable slave laborers rendered impressment unenforceable, and the practice was short-lived.57

The city government worried and complained about its growing slave population throughout the war, but white Houstonians refused to relinquish their dependence on slave labor. In 1861 the Weekly Telegraph asserted that “three or four negroes on average are arrested nightly for being off the premises of their owners after hours without a pass.”58 Despite whites’ disapproval of such behavior, as the city’s economy grew, so did its demand for slaves. Since the state of Texas was never a primary theater of battle, many Texans remained relatively unaffected by the war. Several of Houston’s leading merchants profited from wartime conditions. Showing his ingenuity and resourcefulness J.P. Judson, for example, converted his carriage-building shop into an ambulance factory in 1862. William M. Rice also capitalized on the circumstances created by the war, reaping tremendous returns from blockade running.59 It was such success stories as these that kept the town’s demand for slaves high.
Not all Houston residents, however, experienced the economic success of these merchants. Many of the town’s inhabitants suffered from the shortage of supplies caused by the blockade at Galveston and complained about the large influx of people into Houston during the war years. The growing population placed enormous burdens on the city’s existing infrastructure. Soldiers, visitors, and refugees from Galveston and from other areas across the South flocked to the city. Many planters fleeing from Louisiana and Arkansas brought their slaves with them, thus adding to the residents’ apprehensions about the city’s burgeoning black population.\textsuperscript{60} Spiraling inflation, intensified by the blockade at Galveston, affected--for better or for worse--the lives of all Houstonians. The value of Confederate treasury notes in Texas dropped precipitously during the war. Crippled finances and shortage of supplies caused several businesses in Houston to close. In 1862 Alexander McGowan’s foundry, the largest manufacturing enterprise in Houston according to the census returns of 1850 and 1860, burned to the ground. His foundry had paid the highest wages for manual jobs of any manufacturing establishment in the town, and its closing created an economic downturn for a large number of Houston’s inhabitants.\textsuperscript{61}

Economic disaster for some meant good fortune and prosperity for others. Indicative of the mixed fortunes of Houston’s merchants and businesses was an escalation in the number of large auction sales immediately prior to and during the early years of the war—a trend that continued, though on a smaller scale, throughout the war. Many offered their personal property out of a desperate need for cash; others were able to capitalize upon their contemporaries’ misfortunes, buying goods at reduced prices.\textsuperscript{62} Houston’s economy experienced both boom and bust during the war, and this volatility kept its residents on edge.
Already apprehensive about the city’s fluctuating financial fortunes, Houstonians balked at the growing number of blacks in the city who had been taken prisoner by the Confederate army. Typical of their previous responses to non-slave blacks in the city, Houstonians believed that this group too would undermine their efforts to maintain control over the slave population. Whites' fears were exacerbated by the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*’s publication in 1862 of an article that had appeared previously in the *Chicago Times*. The article, entitled “The Emancipation of the Negroes - What Shall be Done with Them,” described a scheme attributed to a group of northerners to seize the states of Texas and Florida for the purposes of establishing “negro colonies” there.\(^6\) The steady arrival of blacks during the war years must have suggested to Houstonians that Texas already was falling into “enemy” hands.

Whites' concern over the impact that these black prisoners might have on their slaves did not subside. The *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* complained in August 1863 that although there had been *some* improvement in the demeanor of Houston’s slave population, the city continued to be “filled with the most impudent, loud-swearing, cigar-smoking, boisterous set of slaves, that it has ever been our misfortune to see.” The paper begged the city authorities to “increase the police, stating that “now that there are so many blacks from other States coming in our midst, [they must?] have a rigid and stringent set of regulations for this population.”\(^6\)

Fear of the subversive character of black Confederate prisoners heightened white anxiety to the point that Houston’s mayor wrote Confederate General Magruder in June 1864, demanding that the prisoners be put to work outside of the city.\(^6\)

Whites’ wartime complaints about the growing disorder among the urban slave population were not new in Houston. nor were they unique to the city. To whites across the South, it seemed that blacks crowding into urban
areas during the war were creating a “destitute and vagrant mass.” The residents of Houston, like those throughout the region, thus entered the postwar period on the defensive. On the eve of the Confederacy’s defeat, Houston found its economy in flux and its infrastructure overburdened. In addition, the town was confronted with a steadily increasing black population. Despite Houston’s recent experience with an expanding urban slave population—a phenomenon atypical of older southern cities—the town was ill prepared to deal with this growing black population. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Civil War, Houston’s white inhabitants found that the antebellum foundations of urban life had been transformed. No longer did incoming blacks wear the badge of slavery, nor were they required to answer to a master. Not only were blacks freed from bondage, but they now were proclaimed to be on “equal” footing with whites. The white residents’ inexperience in dealing with free blacks prior to the war probably made it even more difficult for them to accept blacks’ new postwar status.

Jesse A. Ziegler, a Houston resident, later recollected that blacks had come to the city in “quite large numbers” during the postwar years. Ziegler asserted that “with the post-Civil War period, came the Negro problem,” and many white Houstonians probably would have shared his assessment. Blacks migrating to Houston, however, undoubtedly interpreted their arrival in a much different way. Emancipation offered them the opportunity for a new way of life. No longer would blacks’ attempts to shape and define their lives be subject to the approval of the white population.

To what extent ex-slaves moving to Houston were able to assume the responsibility for restructuring their lives and for defining the terms of their new existence is difficult to determine. Historians have debated whether or not emancipation constituted a “social revolution” within the existing
framework of American society. As Willie Lee Rose argues, it seems indisputable that to the South’s black population, emancipation indeed was a revolutionary event. Rose asserts that “legally, the changes wrought by emancipation and the war amendments were colossal...” and to ignore the black population’s perception of these changes would “wrongly [outflank] the significance of emancipation for the freedmen themselves.” She admits that if one looks solely at the wording of the Emancipation Proclamation, the event hardly seems revolutionary. Yet she argues convincingly that if one focuses upon the ways in which previously enslaved blacks reacted to the Proclamation, one obtains a more radical picture of emancipation. Blacks across the South seized upon the opportunities made available to them through the Proclamation, demonstrating that for them the ending of slavery was a revolution of both “hope” and “expectation.” Eric Foner argues that “the Negro was the central figure and the most effective” agent in the movement to reconstruct the South.

The actions taken by southern blacks as they immediately seized upon opportunities to exercise their liberty confirm Foner’s assertion. In defiance of white intentions, thousands of blacks began to abandon the plantations, causing a dramatic transformation in the southern landscape. Having had their physical mobility restricted, many blacks found that moving about freely and independently was an effective means of expressing their freedom. As Leon Litwack asserts,

to look at the congested railroad depots, the makeshift camps along the tracks, the hastily constructed freedmen villages, and the stragglers crowding the country roads, bundles under their arms or slung over their shoulders, many of them hungry, sick, and barely clad, the impression conveyed was that of an entire people on the move.
Although many whites condemned this movement as "idle wandering," blacks obviously had clear reasons for undertaking their postwar journeys. Thousands moved in order to reunite the members of their dispersed families; to return to their former homelands; or simply to exercise their right to mobility.

Southern blacks' movement demonstrated their insistence on assuming responsibility for their lives. Another primary way in which they were able to show their commitment to freedom was by purchasing their own land. Owning land offered newly freed blacks the promise of establishing themselves as equal citizens with the same legal rights and privileges held by the nation's white population, although this promise was never fulfilled. Since white farmers and plantation owners across the South did all that they could to obstruct blacks' purchase of property in rural areas, for many blacks the greatest hope for land proprietorship rested in the city.

Numerous other features of urban life also attracted southern blacks in the postwar period. The notion that "freedom was free-er" in the city, long the popular perception among southern slaves, still held sway. Urban areas seemed to blacks to hold greater promises of autonomy, physical security, and prosperity than did the South's rural areas where whites were in a better position to assert control over their former bondsmen and women. The city thus created a strong undertow that propelled the South's black population toward it. Between 1865 and 1870 the number of blacks in the ten largest cities of the South doubled, and the increase in smaller southern towns such as Houston was even more dramatic. For many former slaves—albeit a relatively small proportion of the South's total black population—it was in southern cities that they would first test the waters of freedom.
As a relatively new and expanding town with a growing economy, Houston offered many opportunities and advantages to the black population, and blacks flocked to the city in the immediate postwar years. From across the South, blacks were drawn to the state of Texas where the average wage for a field hand in the rural areas of the state far exceeded that found in most areas of the South. Given Houston’s own growth during this era, one may assume that the demand for labor in the city also meant higher wages, thus making urban employment a competitive alternative to agricultural labor. Another circumstance that may have led blacks to choose life in Texas cities over the state’s rural areas was the fact that there were no abandoned farm lands in Texas to which the Union government might have laid claim—and had the freedmen’s dreams of confiscation been realized—to redistribute among the former slaves.  

Blacks moving to Texas in the postwar years also may have chosen urban over rural settlement because of the rural white population’s strong reluctance to accept the Confederacy’s defeat. Since Texas had been “relatively untouched by the ravages of the war and unscarred by the psychology of defeat, Texans carried into the post-Civil War era the idea that their state had never been subdued.” This open defiance of Union victory was particularly acute in the state’s rural regions. Anti-Union sentiment remained strong in rural places because these areas’ remoteness prevented federal officials from effectively penetrating them. The subsequently high incidence of white on black violence in these rural areas must have operated as a strong deterrent to black settlement.  

Lured to Texas by promises of higher wages, many black migrants probably found urban life, where they might have access to Union troops, preferable to life in the state’s rural regions. Protection offered by Union
officials was an important factor in blacks’ decisions to locate in cities across the postwar South. Eric Foner explains that in addition to the attraction of urban schools, churches, and fraternal societies, the presence of the Freedmen’s Bureau offered “protection from the violence so pervasive in much of the rural South”—a description that certainly fit the postwar situation of Houston.77

Houston presented postwar migrant blacks with a different set of circumstances than other southern cities. The relatively small size of the city’s antebellum free black population had prevented the establishment of formal black social, religious, and economic institutions such as those found in older cities.78 While one’s initial assumption may be that the lack of such institutions reduced Houston’s attractiveness to black migrants, it is possible that the absence of an antebellum free black population in Houston may have seemed like an asset to new black settlers. Many ex-slaves, whether moving from rural or urban areas, may have been aware that antebellum black social and religious institutions were often responsible for driving a wedge between free blacks and slaves, between rich and poor, and between light and dark-skinned blacks. During the postwar period in many southern cities, these conflicts between former free blacks and ex-slaves erupted anew within the black community.79 As former free blacks fought to protect their past privileges and elevated status, they came into direct confrontation with the aspirations of the newly freed population.

Spared the discord that might have surfaced because of the existence of an established free black population, Houston’s experience in developing this integrated black community may have occurred with less turmoil than in older southern cities. The exigencies of postwar economic and social conditions in the South, however, made it clear that the only way for the black population to
protect its culture and interests was the development of a community in which free blacks and former slaves worked together. Thrust into a situation that demanded conciliation, free blacks and ex-slaves were forced to combine their efforts--if only superficially--to secure their positions within the larger community. Eric Foner claims that former free blacks and ex-slaves across the South eventually cast their lot together, signaling the emergence of “a black community stratified by class rather than color.” However, the lack of an established free black community also meant that the development of black institutional life in Houston following the war was slowed somewhat. Lacking this former slave and free black coalition in Houston, the city's postwar black population had to construct its community from the “bottom up,” establishing completely new social, religious, and economic institutions. Whether this “frontier” aspect of Houston’s black community was an attraction or a deterrent to incoming blacks is impossible to know for certain, but the tremendous growth of the city’s postwar black population suggests that the lack of elaborate free-black social and religious networks did not deter blacks from settling in the city.

Between 1860 and 1870 Houston’s black population more than tripled, growing from 1,069 to 3,691 (see Figure A). According to Howard Beeth and Cary Wintz, many blacks came to Houston hoping to find a better way of life for themselves and their families, and others followed the rumors that “federal officials in Houston would provide assistance and protection,” supplying them with housing, food, and jobs. An August 1865 issue of the Tri-Weekly Telegraph asserted that many blacks believed that “the Yankees furnished all colored people with comfortable quarters and plenty of the best food the market afforded. They were not obliged to work, and even the Yankee soldiers waited upon them.” As the paper explained, however, the
**Figure A**
Houston’s Population, 1850-1870

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Type</th>
<th>1850 Census</th>
<th>1860 Census</th>
<th>1870 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>1,854</td>
<td>3,724</td>
<td>5,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave Population</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>1,069</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Black Population</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3,691</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data compiled from Susan Jackson, “Movin’ On: Mobility Through Houston in the 1850s,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 81 (January 1978): 251; ibid., “The People of Houston in the 1850s” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1975), 107.*
overwhelming number of blacks in Houston made such widespread
distribution of aid impossible, and the paper claimed that incoming blacks
would be sadly disappointed. Blacks were hopeful of Union assistance and
protection, but their expectations probably were not as high as the newspaper
claimed.

Blacks coming to Houston, however, did face a number of unexpected
hardships. In addition to the competition for housing and jobs caused by the
large number of black people pouring into the town following the war, blacks
confronted difficulties that arose from the slowness with which the
ramifications of freedom were addressed in Texas, even in its urban areas.
Freedom must have seemed bittersweet to blacks. Although slaves in cities
such as Houston had learned of their freedom much earlier than slaves in rural
regions of Texas, they were offered little protection in the exercise of their
newly won rights. In March 1865 Congress created the Bureau of Refugees,
Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, but an assistant commissioner for Texas
was not appointed until September of that year. In the interim, a military
commander was selected to oversee the state’s transition to freedom—an
appointment that required three months to take affect.

It was not until June 19, nearly two months after the war’s end, that
General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston to take charge of the district.
Upon his arrival, Granger made an official announcement confirming the
emancipation of all former bondsmen and women in Texas. However, his
message carried stern words to the black population concerning their freedom.
He made clear that blacks “would not be ‘allowed to collect at military posts’
nor would they be supported in ‘idleness either there or elsewhere’.” Travel
on public roads and assembly without an employer’s pass were strictly
forbidden to the state’s blacks. In addition, Union troops demonstrated their
intention to enforce the traditional southern urban black curfew of blacks and to uphold the city’s vagrancy laws. \textsuperscript{83} Exactly how blacks responded to Granger’s arrival and his pronouncements is unclear. However, that black Texans continue to celebrate “Juneteenth”—the date of Granger’s public announcement—as the day of emancipation indicates that his arrival represented an improvement over current conditions.

On the day following Granger’s announcement, troops of the Iowa and Ohio regiments assumed control of Houston, and by June 25 the local amnesty office of the provost marshal had opened its doors in the city. \textsuperscript{84} To the black population, this swift establishment of Union machinery must have brought a measure of relief, even if the army seemed somewhat ambivalent in its intentions. White Houstonians, however, made certain that the blacks understood their own interpretation of the blacks’ freedom. Following Granger’s address, the Chief Justice of Harris County, two city commissioners, the sheriff, and the city clerk assembled the black population in Market Square and informed them that “they must go to work; that they could not remain idle without becoming criminal; that they would get nothing more from the government at Christmas or any other time; and that if they disturbed the property of others, they would be severely punished.” \textsuperscript{85} The city officials were aided in their efforts to control the black population by the army’s reluctance to embroil itself in the struggle between blacks and whites over the social implications of emancipation.

A newspaper article thanking the Iowa regiments for their “gentlemanly conduct” as the troops began to withdraw from Houston suggests the extent to which the military had complied with the hopes and demands of the white population while the army was stationed in the city. Despite the military commanders’ tendency to side with Houston’s white population, blacks in
Houston still fared better than those who lived in the state’s rural regions. In late June 1865, however, the city’s local papers complained that there still existed the “utmost confusion” concerning the status of the freedmen. No one, they said, knew what to do, and they advised the blacks flocking into town to return to their homes.86

Military occupation apparently had not produced the results desired by either whites or blacks. On July 7, 1865, the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* complained of the city’s dire need for an officer of the Freedmen’s Bureau, indicating that the paper was less than satisfied with the city’s rule by military officials. Blacks and whites may have been dissatisfied with military rule, but this did not stop them from utilizing Union facilities. On the following day the paper reported that the office of the provost marshal was “daily thronged” by citizens and soldiers.87 The city government’s ambivalence toward the occupying troops and its confusion as to who was responsible for regulating affairs of the black population must have been intensified by the rapid evacuation of Union occupation troops in the summer of 1865—troops began to leave the city in August. By October the office of the provost marshal added to the residents’ complaints about the lack of troops and Freedmen’s Bureau agents in the city. In October the situation in Houston assumed a new direction as the office of the provost marshal finally relinquished its authority to the long-awaited local office of the Freedmen’s Bureau.88

The Freedmen’s Bureau gained a foothold in the state with the September arrival in Galveston of General Edgar M. Gregory. As head of the Bureau in Texas, Gregory’s primary duty was to oversee the administration of relief to the state’s refugees and freedmen. In addition, he was responsible for easing the state’s transition to a free-labor system.89 From the Bureau’s inception, however, its agents confronted difficult conditions across Texas.
They faced on one hand an anxious black population eager to exercise its newly won rights, and on the other, an obstinate white population hostile to any actions that might upset its traditional social and economic order. In Houston where whites had fought persistently before the war to eliminate free blacks, the prospect of outsiders being sent to protect blacks' rights to independence must have seemed preposterous.

Bureau agents also were handicapped by the fact that Congress saw the Bureau only as a temporary agency and appropriated no budget for it at the time of its creation in 1865. When the life of the Bureau was extended and a budget finally appropriated in 1866, the amount allocated proved inadequate for the Bureau's assigned tasks. The Bureau's success or failure in any given situation thus rested on the creativity and skill of its individual agents. The agents, no matter how skilled or creative, faced the insuperable task of trying to appease both blacks and whites, two groups with directly conflicting aims—hardly a formula that spelled success for the agent.

Implementation of Bureau policies in Houston, moreover, was delayed due to the absence of Union troops and Bureau agents in the city during the first days of Gregory's administration. Some time in the second or third week of October 1865 Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. DeGress, who then was serving as Houston's provost marshal, was appointed as the assistant commissioner of the local Bureau office. In one of his first reports to Gregory, DeGress reported that the "freedmen" in his district were self-supporting and of good disposition. He claimed that the "freedmen" showed a strong desire to receive an education and that they were eager to reunite their broken families. On a less enthusiastic note, he urged that they be ensured equitable treatment, implying that blacks were not receiving it at present. The majority of reports filed by DeGress and subsequent Houston agents were
of a similar nature—all generally praised the efforts of the city’s blacks, though poverty and illiteracy often thwarted their progress, and condemned the stubborn attitudes of local whites. In Houston the Bureau agents seemed to remain engaged in the affairs of the black community throughout the Bureau’s life in the city. Even a cursory glance at the correspondence of and reports filed by Houston’s agents reveals their commitment to maintaining peaceful relations between the city’s black and white populations.

Blacks in Houston took advantage of the Bureau agents’ accessibility, making use of Bureau assistance when it was needed and available. But perhaps more importantly, they also turned inward to their own community to cope with urban life. Former slaves “brought with them from slavery presumptions which included among other things, a desire for land, education, civil rights, a stable family life, security for their children, justice, and independence.” Houston blacks showed their own commitment to social, religious, economic, and political freedom by seizing whatever opportunities they could find to assert their right to equal citizenship. Often free of Bureau assistance, blacks took immediate action to begin building the infrastructure of their new urban communities—by buying land; building homes, churches, and schools; and establishing benevolent, social, and political organizations.

1Quote on Houston is found in Telegraph and Texas Register (Columbia, Texas), 30 August 1836, quoted in David G. McComb, Houston, the Bayou City (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 11. On the Texas Land Company, see Marguerite Johnston, Houston the Unknown City, 1836-1946 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press), 4. The Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company was a real estate promotion firm established in 1830 and composed of capitalists from New York and Boston. In their scheme to settle Texas, the company actually defrauded a number of people since the scrip that they sold was merely a permit to settle in Texas and conveyed no land. The company finally went out of business in the late 1840s. For a description of the company and its history, see Walter Prescott Webb and H. Bailey Carroll, eds., Handbook of Texas, vol. 1 (Texas State Historical Association: Austin, 1952), 663-664.
2 "Abstracts of Title Collection," RG C 3; "Abstract of Title to Lots #1 to 10, in Block #15, Hardcastle Addition to the City of Houston," No. 7648, compiled by Houston Abstract Co., Inc. for T.J. Basham, Esq., 3, MRC, Houston Public Library, 10.

3 Johnston, Unknown City, 10, 40-41. The Allen brothers' success in obtaining Congressional approval of Houston as the capital was due in large part to their willingness to offer the government free lots and to rent buildings to them on credit. See McComb, Bayou City, 16-17.

4 Johnston, Unknown City, 13.

5 For figures on the large number of immigrants in Houston, see Mary Susan Jackson, "Movin' On: Mobility Through Houston in the 1850s," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 81 (January 1978), 257; and "Harris County, Naturalization in (1857-67)," Minutes of the County Court of Harris County, Box 32, Andrew Forest Muir Papers, Woodson Research Center, Rice University, Houston, Texas (hereafter cited as Muir Papers). Galveston also had its share of foreign-born citizens, particularly Germans, see Earl Wesley Fornell, The Galveston Era, The Texas Crescent on the Eve of Secession (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), 125-139.

6 On Houston's geographic location, McComb, Bayou City, 13. On the city's foreign-born population, see Johnston, Unknown City, 18, 29.

7 On the city's new charter and the ward's boundaries, see McComb, Bayou City, 72; see also Vertical File H-Wards, Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, Houston, Texas (hereafter, MRC). It appears that the four wards remained the only ones in Houston until approximately 1866, when the city rewrote its city charter. Starting in the 1867-68 city directory, there were alderman listed in five wards. See Houston City Directory 1867-68, (Houston: Gray, Smallwood & Co., 1867). A sixth ward was also added to the city in the late 1860s--prior to the compiling of the 1869 Wood Map. See W.E. Wood, Map of Houston, Harris County, Texas, 1869, MRC, Houston Public Library.

8 Susan Jackson, "The People of Houston in the 1850s" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1975), 14.

9 Minutes District Court, County Clerk's Office, Harris County Courthouse, Book C, 152-155, in Leonard J. DeLange, comp., "District Court Records, Harris County," Work Projects Administration, MRC (hereafter cited as WPA Files).

10 The ambivalent attitude of southern whites toward the urban slave population and their attempts at controlling the urban black population is discussed in Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). For a discussion of the specific restraints placed upon the black population, see ibid., 80-110.

11 Andrew Forest Muir, "The Free Negro in Harris County, Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, 46 (1943): 220. That Texas and Houston were not completely successful in eradicating the presence of free blacks is evident both in the extant petitions filed by free blacks seeking permission to remain in Texas--all five filed by blacks in Harris County were approved. Muir, "Free Negro," 218.

13 On the origins of Houston's white population, see Jackson, "Houston People," 57-58. In both 1850 and 1860, 60 percent of the adult male population in Houston claimed southern roots. On the growth of Texas's slave population, see Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, eds. Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1992), 14.

14 Unfortunately, there is no way to determine exactly how many of these slaves were living in Houston proper. Although the estimations provided by Campbell of the slave population in Harris county would have been higher than those for Houston alone, they are probably fairly representative since the returns Campbell reports for each county are taken from annual tax records where slaveowners often failed to report fully their number of slaves. See Campbell, Empire for Slavery, 54-55, 264-267. Tamara Miner Haygood cites the estimated number of slaves in Harris County as 388—the figure presented by Gifford White in the 1840 Census of the Republic of Texas. See Tamara Miner Haygood, "Use and Distribution of Slave Labor in Harris County, Texas, 1836-60," in Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston, Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, eds. (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1992), 35.

15 Morning Star, 10 April 1839, quoted in Furner Grober, comp., "Harris County Newspaper Excerpts, (1839-1910), Allied Slave Material, WPA Files, MRC.

16 Morning Star, 10 April 1839, quoted in Grober, WPA Files, MRC.


18 Morning Star, 6, 13 August 1839, quoted in Grober, WPA Files, MRC. Muir claims that the newspaper probably overestimated the number of free blacks in Harris County. See Muir, "'Free Negro in Harris County," 216.

19 For provisions of the ordinance regulating slaves who hired their own time, see Morning Star, 19 September 1839. For a discussion of slave ordinances, see Beeth and Wintz, Black Dixie, 17; Haygood, "Slave Labor," 37.

20 That slaves did have an independent community life, despite the restraints of slavery, is suggested in the slave narrative of Lucy Barnes who was born a slave in Houston. She claims that on the night of General Magruder's funeral, "all de niggers slip out to de creek in de thicket" to celebrate and pray for freedom. Statement of Lucy Barnes in George P. Rawick, general ed., The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography (31 vols., Westport, Conn., 1972-1977) (Supplement, Series 2, Texas Narratives), 2.1, 178-179.

21 Close to one-half of all slaveowners in Houston in the 1850s owned 1-2 slaves. See Jackson, "Houston People," 191; Haygood, "Slave Labor," 35. For a discussion of the reduced opportunities for community and family building in urban settings where slaves remained under their owners' watchful eyes, see Campbell, Empire for Slavery, 153-54.

Small size and sparsely settled populations apparently were typical characteristics of southwestern towns. Paul Lack asserts that these conditions largely explain the relatively small free black populations found in southwestern towns. See Paul D. Lack, "Urban Slavery in the Southwest," Red River Valley Historical Review 6 (Spring, 1981): 15. Supporting Lack's
conclusions about the absence of free black communities in southwestern towns is not to deny the possible existence of a social and religious lives of an “extra-legal” nature among Houston’s slaves. Lack’s findings simply show that the opportunities to establish more formal associations and institutions—especially with the free black population—were lacking in Houston and other such towns.

22Johnston, Unknown City, 45-46. Kenneth Severens indicates that a similar sense of retrenchment occurred among Charleston’s inhabitants when the capital of South Carolina was relocated to Columbia in 1790; however, he does not discuss how the removal shaped white attitudes toward the city’s black population. See Kenneth Severens, Charleston: Antebellum Architecture and Civic Destiny (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 17.

23For runaway notices, see Morning Star, 10, 27 July; 17 October 1839; 11 November 1839; January 10, 1840. Numerous ads concerning slave runaways—spanning the entire period of the city’s history up until the Confederacy’s defeat—are reprinted in “Newspaper Excerpts, (1839-1911),” Allied Slave Material, WPA Files, MRC. For references on hiring-out, see Morning Star, 25 April; 8 May; 1, 10, 13 June; 24 July; 30 September, 1839. Numerous additional advertisements for slave hirelings are found in “Newspaper Excerpts,” WPA Files, MRC.

24Morning Star, 9 April 1839, in Grober, WPA Files, MRC.

25Jackson estimates that the slave population grew from 517 in 1850 to 1,061 in 1860 (others cite the 1860 population as 1,069). For estimates of the 1860 population, see Jackson, “Houston People,” 107. In contrast to the older southern cities, this growth seems to have been more typical of the newer southwestern cities. Information on southwestern demographic trends is found in Lack, “Urban Slavery in the Southwest,” 18-27. For information on demographic trends of the urban population in older southern cities during the 1850s, see Wade, Slavery in the Cities, 16-19, 325-330.

26Morning Star, 16 November 1839; and Ibid., 30 March 1840. For involvement of Cornelius Ennis, a prosperous Houston merchant, in the railroads, see Jesse A. Ziegler, Wave of the Gulf, (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1938), 315-16. For indications of the use of slave labor in railroad construction see McComb, Bayou City, 36; Dr. S.O. Young, A Thumb-Nail History of the City of Houston, Texas: From its Founding in 1836 to the Year 1912 (Houston: Rein & Sons Company, 1912), 64. Slaves, however, were not the sole source of labor in rail construction, and this construction boom cannot fully explain the rise in the city’s slave population. For reference to the use of Irish laborers in railroad construction, see Young, Thumb-Nail History, 69.

27Haygood supports Johnston’s findings, claiming that there was a building boom in the city around 1850. See Johnston, Unknown City, 51; and Haygood, “Slave Labor,” 45.

28For evidence of the number of foreign-born manual laborers in the city, see Jackson, “Houston People,” 172-173. Lack asserts that competition with white labor did little to reduce the continued preference for slave labor in most menial occupations. See Lack, “Urban Slavery in the Southwest,” 22-24.

29Jackson, “Houston People,” 107, 111.
30 Haygood cites a historian of the Caribbean slave trade as estimating that approximately 1,000 slaves entered Texas before 1836 through this illegal trade. Randolph Campbell claims that the extent to which this illegal slave trade operated in Texas has been overstated in the past and estimates that only about 2,000 slaves entered the state in this way between the entire period 1836 to 1861. However, the fact that a number of Houston merchants were participating in this trade suggests that Houston may have been a direct recipient of the small number who did enter the state. See Haygood, “Slave Labor,” 33; Campbell, Empire for Slavery, 53. For an alternative view that emphasizes the vital importance of this trade to the city’s slave population, see Formell, Galveston Era, 241-46.

31 Despite complaints from the white Houston Mechanics’ Association in 1858 about the use of “negro” mechanics and the willingness of employers to make contracts with them, the city failed to enact any legislation that would have regulated their employment in these positions—indicating the city’s overwhelming reliance on slave labor. See Jackson, “Houston People,” 117-118.

32 Estimations of the free black population tended to fall somewhere between fifteen and forty. See the Morning Star, 10 April; 3 May 1839.

33 The legislature had passed several provisions of this nature, always providing a remission period for free blacks already resident in the state. In 1845, however, all such remissions were to expire. The 1845 Texas law is discussed in Haygood, “Slave Labor,” 37; and Muir, “Free Negro in Harris County,” 218-220. On the 1854 law, see Campbell, Empire for Slavery, 112.

34 Campbell, Empire for Slavery, 112-113.


36 For 1850 estimate of the slave population, see Manuscript Census Returns, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Harris County, Texas, Schedule 1, Free Population, National Archives Microfilm Series, Roll 314; for 1860, see Ibid., Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Harris County, Texas, Schedule 1, Free Population, National Archives Microfilm Series, Roll 282. Muir counts only eight free blacks in 1860, but he appears to omit the name of a free black, Charlotte, listed as living with a white woman, Jane Dunn, in the Fourth Ward. The extent to which this number accurately reflects the number of free blacks in the city is questionable. A number of petitions by free slaves in Houston to the state legislature—names not found on the population schedules—seems to indicate that there may have been a larger free black population than the census indicates. See Muir, “Free Negro in Harris County,” 219-224.


38 Ira Berlin supports this explanation as the reason that Arkansas was so successful in ridding itself of free blacks. He claims that free blacks were too few to be of any economic importance, and too recently arrived to have developed lasting bonds with whites. While Texas’s free black population seems to have been larger than that of Arkansas, the state did
share with Arkansas the fact that the bonds between free blacks and whites would not have been as strong as those found in some of the older southern states. Ironically, it may have been the white—not the black—population who was too recently arrived in Texas to have established bonds with the free blacks who had lived in the state before their arrival. See Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 372-373, 380.


40On free blacks' deteriorating status, see Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 77-84. For a discussion of the economic and social standing of the free black population in the South prior to the Civil War and the small number of affluent free persons of color in Texas, see Schweninger, *Black Property Owners*, 44-51, 116. Lack shows that absence of an established free black community appears to have been typical of small southwestern towns, most of which were not established until the early- to mid-1830s, thus indicating the correlation between date of development and size and complexity of the free black community. Wade also claims that free blacks "gravitated toward the metropolis" largely because it was here that the black population might find "others of his own kind"—a necessary prerequisite, according to Wade, for building an active social life. See Lack, "Urban Slavery in the Southwest," 20-21; Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 248.

41Gilbert J. Jordan, trans, and ed., "W. Steinert's View of Texas in 1849," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 80 (April, 1977): 412-413. Steinert's observations, of course, must be used with caution. Steinert was one of a group of Germans who came to Texas and the United States to examine the conditions of life. Spending only two days in the city, his perspective of both the black and white inhabitants must have necessarily been highly impressionistic. Nevertheless, that he claims to have witnessed personally these occurrences suggests that they were in fact taking place in Houston, if not regularly, then at least sporadically. For a description of Steinert's background and his mission, see idem. "W. Steinert's View of Texas in 1849: May 22 to June 5," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 80 (July, 1976): 57-58.

42Muir, "Free Negro in Harris County," 219.

43*Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 6 September 1865.

44*Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 21 May 1855. Beeth and Wintz refer to this policy as an indication of the restrictive policies of the city council regarding free blacks. However, given the fact that free blacks were supposedly banned from the city, not to mention the state of Texas, this seems to be an indication of permissiveness, not strictness. See Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie*, 18.

45*Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 21 May 1855.
On whites' postwar hostility toward emancipated blacks, see Galveston Daily News, 27 June, 14 September 1865; ibid., 4 January 1866, quoted in Margaret, Lenox, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 24 January 1866.

This division between "free coloreds" and slaves was particularly acute in New Orleans, where the former enjoyed a markedly higher status than did the city's slaves. In this instance, the free coloreds saw much more at stake in protecting their "special status." See Blassingame, Black New Orleans, 21-22. Steinert's account of the free black man who served as the dance instructor for "whites of rank" suggests that this attempt by free blacks to dissociate themselves from the slave population may have been the pattern in Houston as well.


It is important to note that the services of the black congregation to which Steinert refers still were led by a white pastor--though one author claims that blacks were licensed as local preachers and often conducted religious services--until after the war. For a description of the church's history, see Houston: A History and Guide, WPA, comp. (Houston: Anson Jones Press, 1942), 248-250; Mrs. I.M.E. Blandin, History of Shearn Church: 1837-1907 (Houston, 1908), 218-219. Steinert's observations also suggest that the city's slaves carried on a relatively active social and religious life independent from the white community. See Jordan, "Steinert's View," 412-413. On the slave patrols, see "Harris County Commissioners' Court Minutes, 1846-1866, (Slave Patrols, etc.)," C.H. Smith, comp., WPA Files.

On the newspaper's complaint, see Kathryn MacDonald Baisley, "Houston, Texas, Goes to War, 1861-1865," (M.A. thesis, Rice University, 1976), 54. On the number of slaves hired out, see Haygood, "Slave Labor," 44. Although there was an increased concern with blacks hiring out their time, the threat whites felt due to the presence of free blacks certainly had not disappeared entirely. In 1861, the Confederate Constitution of Texas forbade the manumission of any slaves in Texas. As Muir claims, this law was not wholly enforced, and many ex-slaves simply continued to "appear" as slaves, although they had been freed by their owners. Muir, "Free Negro in Harris County," 224-25.

Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 7 April 1856, quoted in McComb, Bayou City, 83. The accounts of two visitors to Houston in the antebellum period are found in Beeth and Wintz, Black Dixie, 16.

Despite the fact that hiring-out occurred in direct violation of an 1846 state law prohibiting an owner from hiring out his slaves for more than one day a week, violation and lax enforcement of the prohibitions seem to have been widespread in Texas. See Campbell, Empire for Slavery, 129.

On profitability of slave hiring, see Ibid., 89-90. A description of the "Texas Troubles" and its effects upon surrounding cities in Texas is found in Ibid., 224. See also The Weekly Telegraph, 14 August 1860, quoted in Grober, "Newspaper Excerpts," WPA Files, MRC.

56Johnston, *Unknown City*, 65.

57For ads posted relating to the Confederate army’s need for labor, see Gillespie, “Slavery in Houston,” 47-51. For evidence of local opposition to the policy of conscription, see *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 5, 26 September 1862. Magruder’s February call for slave conscripts is found in the *Tri-Weekly News*, 10 February 1863, in Mary E. Liberato, comp., “Newspaper Excerpts, (1839-1911),” Allied Slave Material, WPA Files, MRC.

58*Weekly Telegraph*, 5 February 1861, in Grober, “Newspaper Excerpts,” WPA Files, MRC.


61In January, 1861 one treasury note stood at par with one dollar in gold; in January 1863 it had fallen to four treasury notes per dollar; and by July 1864, thirty-one Confederate treasury notes held equal value with one dollar in gold. See Edmund Thornton Miller, “The State Finances of Texas During the Civil War,” in *Collected Papers*, Rice Institute Library, 21-22. Reprint from *Texas State Historical Association Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, 1. On McGowan's foundry, see Baisley, “Houston Goes to War,” 107; Jackson, “Houston People,” 171.

62Advertisements for auction sales are found in *The Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 2 March 1859; 20 December 1860; 4 April; 8, 15, 19 September; 29 October 1862; 15 February; 15 April; 8 May 1863. Baisley claims specifically that there was an escalation in real estate sales during the summer of 1862. It seems, however, that real estate sales had been commonly advertised in Houston’s newspapers throughout the antebellum period. The number of real estate sales in 1862 appears not to have differed perceptibly from the city’s past history. In fact the number of sales seems to have decreased during the latter years of the war. However, it may be that the decreasing frequency of ads for real estate sales was a product of the shrinking size of the newspapers due to war shortages of paper and ink. See Baisley, “Houston Goes to War,” 100-102. For information about the shortages of paper, see ibid., 98, Johnston, *Unknown City*, 63.

63*Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 19 November 1862.

64*Houston Telegraph*, 25 August 1863. For discussion of wartime conditions in Houston, see Baisley, “Houston Goes to War,” 78-79.

65The large number of black prisoners in Houston was caused largely by the Confederacy’s recapture of Galveston. See Baisley, “Houston Goes to War,” 135-36. Baisley’s findings substantiate Leon Litwack’s claim that due to white suspicion, patrols in
urban areas operated on an increased basis during the war in order to control the slave population. Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 28.


67Ziegler, *Wave of the Gulf*, 5. Travel accounts such as Ziegler's are invaluable for gaining insight into the lifestyles of early Houstonians. Nevertheless, they must be used with caution, for they obviously reflect the writer's biases and prejudices. Ziegler was a cotton merchant and a member of the Sons of the Confederacy—a formula certain to render his views of the newly freed black population unsympathetic.

For census returns for the population in Houston, see Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie*, 89. It is difficult to determine whether the bulk of this increase occurred during or after the war years. It is evident that a number of slaveholders were moving with or selling their slaves into Texas during the Civil War. Houston's 1870 census returns reveal that most of the city's blacks were born out of the state; however, only 67 of the 1,203 registered black male voters in Houston in 1869 had come to Texas after the war—301 had migrated to the state during the conflict and the remaining 835 had resided in Texas prior to 1865. In addition, 497 of the 1,203 registered voters had come to Harris County after the Civil War. In contrast, 315 had moved to the county during the war, and 393 had come there prior to the war’s outbreak. The WPA history for Harris County claims that many of the blacks brought to the county during the war to aid in construction remained there after emancipation. Litwack also discusses the increase in the number of slaves in Texas during the war. While the voter registers suggest that most of Houston's blacks had been prewar residents of Texas, it is also possible that only the more "stable" members of the black community had registered to vote, thus underrepresenting the number who were newcomers to the state. See Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 30-31, 113; and Harris County History, (Pre-Final Copy), Chapter," Harris County WPA History, Box 45, Muir Papers; *Voter Register of 1867-1869, Hardin - Kinney County*, Reel 4, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

68Willie Lee Rose, "Jubilee and Beyond: What Was Freedom?" in David G. Sansing, ed., *What Was Freedom's Price?* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), 3-20. Throughout this essay, Rose argues against interpretations of emancipation that claim that the event actually held little significance since so many of its ideals and aspirations were unrealized. See ibid., 3, 5, 19.


70Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 305.

71Rose, "Jubilee and Beyond," 8-9.

72Although officials of the Freedmen's Bureau and white urban residents tried to discourage blacks from coming to the cities, legal restrictions against urban settlement seem to have been uncommon. Litwack mentions a law in Louisiana that prohibited any freedman from renting or keeping a house within the city or even residing in the town unless employed by a white person who would assume responsibility for his or her conduct. While whites obviously wanted to keep blacks out of urban areas and on the plantations, this example of legal
restrictions on black property ownership in urban areas is the only one I have encountered. See Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 368. Much more common were the measures adopted in many areas of the South that prevented blacks from acquiring land in rural regions. In Mississippi, a law passed in 1865—and overturned in 1867—prohibited "any freedman, free negro or mulatto from renting any land or tenements" if not within the limits of an incorporated title or town. See Schweninger, *Black Property Owners*, 145-148. For further discussion of rural whites’ attempts to obstruct black ownership of land and the resultant rise of share cropping, see Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1983), 43-45. On rural white Texans’ efforts to keep blacks from moving to the state’s urban areas, see Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 33-34.


74Foner, *Reconstruction*, 81-82.


77Foner, *Reconstruction*, 81.

78According to travel accounts and local histories, there obviously were some black institutions—primarily for the city’s slaves—in Houston prior to the war. However, they seem to have been so few in number as to have been inadequate to support the large influx of blacks in the postwar era. Moreover, there is nothing to indicate the existence of free black institutions during the antebellum period. See Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie*, 18-19.

79Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 297, 298. Berlin claims that these conflicts were particularly common in the “Lower South,” a category in which Berlin places the state of Texas.

80In many instances, the free blacks’ previous experience in dealing with the white population may have helped in moderating between the new urban community of former slaves and the white population. Eric Foner emphasizes that the nature of interaction and relations between these two segments of the black community differed over time and place. While some former free blacks served as intermediaries between ex-slaves and members of the white population such as officials of the Freedmen’s Bureau, others tried to maintain the separate, elite status of free blacks in the South. Litwack emphasizes the conflict between the two groups. See Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 17, 315. Berlin, too, stresses the persistent divisions within the black population; although, he does admit that at the same time a new sense of black community was forced into existence by the economic necessities of Reconstruction. See Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 384-392. For examples of leadership by former free blacks in the postwar period, see Blassingame, *Black New Orleans*, 56-57. Foner gives the most balanced view of this process of community building, see Foner, *Reconstruction*, 100-102.

81Conflict may still have surfaced between Houston’s blacks; however, the phenomenon of “home rule” exhibited by free blacks in other cities would not have been the
issue that it was in other cities. If there was hostility towards new black arrivals to the city, it probably came from the blacks who had lived in Houston as slaves prior to the war. A newspaper article in 1865 suggests that some sort of conflict existed within the postwar black community; however, it is unclear from the text what the basis for this conflict was—class, color, birthplace, etc. See Galveston News, 22 August 1865.

82 On Houston's postwar population growth, see Beeth and Wintz, Black Dixie, 89. See also "Harris County History," Muir Papers. On blacks' expectations, see Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 18 August 1865.

83 For a discussion of Granger's orders, see Barry A. Crouch, "Black Dreams and White Justice," Prologue (Winter 1974): 256. Evidence of the enforcement of vagrancy and curfew laws is found in Galveston News, 24 June 1865. In addition, an article in the Tri-Weekly Telegraph in June announced that a large number of blacks "flocking into town" had been taken under the charge of Colonel Clark and put to work upon the "ditches, etc." of the city. See Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 30 June 1865.

84 Johnston, Unknown City, 72.

85 "Harris County History," Muir Papers.

86 Expressions of thanks are found in Galveston Daily News, 15, 16 August 1865. For other indications of white approval of Union army actions, see Ibid., 24 June 1865. For further discussion of the military's compliance with white demands, Stephen Franklin Shannon, "Galvestonians and Military Reconstruction, 1865-67," (M.A. thesis, Rice University, 1975), 101. For discussion of army's noninvolvement in social affairs of black population, see Crouch, Freedmen's Bureau, 14; and for a discussion of its absence in rural areas, see Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, 173, 184. On the paper's statement regarding the confusion over the status of the black population, see Galveston News, 24 June 1865. For message to the black population advising them to return to the countryside, see Ibid. 30 June 1865.

87 Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 7, 8 July 1865.

88 For farewell message to troops of the 34th Iowa regiment, see Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 15 August 1865. For complaint of the provost marshal, see [J.C. DeGress?] to Brig. Gen. Gregory, 19 Oct. 1865, Letters Sent, Office of the Provost Marshal District of East Texas, vol. 1, #3716, Asst. Commissioner's Records for the State of Texas, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105, National Archives Building. Unless otherwise stated, all records cited below are in this record group. The exact date upon which the office of the Provost closed is unclear. An August announcement in the Galveston Daily News proclaimed its joy at the closing of the office, claiming that the city had no need for it. However, an October letter from the Office of the provost marshal in Houston to General Gregory indicates that the office was still in operation at this point. McComb cites November 22 as the date on which the office closed; however, the newspaper which he cites as his source appears to contain no announcement of this nature. See Galveston News, 22 August; 22 November 1865; McComb, Bayou City, 77.

89 In other states, the Bureau also was responsible for overseeing the distribution of abandoned lands; however, agents in Texas were relieved from this duty since the state had no
abandoned lands. For a description of the duties of the agents of the Freedmen's Bureau; see Foner, Reconstruction, 142-144.

90Ibid., 168-169.

91Crouch, Freedmen's Bureau, 2-3; Foner, Reconstruction, 68. On the policies and personalities of the individuals who served as Texas's assistant commissioners, see Crouch, Freedmen's Bureau, 15, 21-24, 27-36.


94On black self-help, see Crouch, "Black Dreams," 257; Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 84-95. The Bureau's inability to adequately meet the black community's needs for food and shelter further necessitated the community's turning inward to meet the needs of its members. See Crouch, "Hidden Sources," 214.
The Development of Black Residential Neighborhoods

Houston whites generally were unsupportive of the black community's efforts at self-help. Illustrative of southern whites' long refusal to recognize blacks' ability to take responsibility for themselves and their families—an attitude formulated and disseminated during the era of slavery—the Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph predicted in February 1865 that with the abolition of slavery the black population in the South would decline precipitously. The newspaper assured Houston's white citizens that once blacks were freed and deprived of the guidance and instruction they had received as slaves, blacks "would be utterly lost sight of from the face of society." The Tri-Weekly Telegraph, however, could not have speculated more inaccurately about the positions blacks would assume in the South and in Houston in the postwar years.

Rather than disappear, blacks demonstrated their determination to receive recognition as active participants in American life. One of the first steps many blacks took to assert and protect their newly won freedom and to ensure their community's survival, was to establish themselves as property owners. Barry Crouch states that land ownership was one of the "premier aspirations" of black Texans. The initiative taken by Houston's blacks to fulfill this aspiration confirms Crouch's assessment. White citizens may have claimed that blacks clung to the belief that there was going to be a major land redistribution of which they would be the beneficiaries, but blacks actually
wasted little time waiting for government action and instead began acquiring real property.3

Blacks in Houston had greater success in obtaining land than did blacks in rural areas of the state where whites often prevented their purchase of land. Reports filed by local officials of the Freedmen’s Bureau stationed in the state’s urban areas confirm that blacks in Galveston, Austin, and Houston enjoyed a higher standard of living than did blacks in rural areas. According to an August 1866 report of Byron Porter, the local agent in Houston, the freedmen4 in the city had constructed 125 houses, costing between $50 and $500. He estimated that 100 building lots had been purchased at amounts ranging from $30 to $250 and that approximately 40 lots had been leased with the option to purchase.5

Given white Houstonians’ traditional fears about allowing blacks to live independently in the city, the blacks’ success in purchasing land so quickly after the war is remarkable. One wonders what might have prompted Houston’s white property owners to willingly sell property to blacks in the immediate postwar years. Cary Wintz and Howard Beeth suggest that due to the economic collapse that accompanied the war, white Houstonians were desperate for cash. When they began to recognize the profitability of subdividing their property into small lots and selling them to blacks, few were willing to forego the anticipated economic profits simply to ease other whites’ anxiety. This desire for profit, moreover, was not confined to the ranks of businessmen and real estate agents. Since many Reconstruction governments, Texas’s included, recognized only a small portion of the debt due to creditors of the Confederacy, a large number of southerners saw their fortunes disappear following the South's defeat.6 Selling property to blacks in urban
areas was one means by which whites could regain at least a portion of their prewar wealth.

Selling land in the postwar years, however, was not always a lucrative venture since property values in most cities remained below prewar levels. Nevertheless, whites across the South demonstrated their desperate financial situation by showing a clear willingness to sell property located in urban areas to blacks—even at reduced prices. The nationwide depression that rocked Houston in the early 1870s sustained the capital shortage among the city's whites, aiding blacks in their efforts to purchase land. The combination of economic hard times in Houston and white resistance to black property ownership in rural areas of the state increased the advantage the city's blacks had in acquiring real estate—an advantage shared by urban blacks across the South.7

Considering the enhanced possibilities for land ownership in southern cities, it is not surprising that blacks were drawn to urban areas in the immediate postwar years. But blacks—regardless of urban whites' eagerness to dispose of their property and the blacks' desire to purchase it—still faced the problem of obtaining the funds necessary to enter into real estate transactions. Individual white property owners in Houston frequently facilitated blacks' attempts to purchase property by agreeing to sell land to them on credit.8 Blacks also were aided by the fact that much of Houston's undeveloped land was located on the edge of the city, a factor that reduced its value to the city's whites, and consequently its cost. Without an effective system of mass transportation in operation throughout the early 1870s, this outlying land continued to hold little attraction as a residential site to the city's white population.9 Blacks hoping to purchase land in Houston thus were aided somewhat by local conditions. There was a good deal of low-cost land
available for development, and many whites were in dire need of cash and thus willing to sell blacks this "second-rate" land. Blacks, however, still faced a number of disadvantages in the postwar period due to the years of oppression they had suffered under slavery. Most blacks had been denied a formal education and the means to acquire and accumulate capital. Many whites, moreover, simply would not recognize blacks as equal citizens and refused to sell them property. Those blacks who were able to establish themselves as landowners in the period immediately following the war thus showed their strength and determination to enter the "mainstream" of American life.\textsuperscript{10}

Although it is evident that Houston's blacks quickly set themselves to the task of acquiring land, it is less clear why they chose to settle in the particular areas of the city that they did. Blacks' choices were the product of a number of factors--many of which were outside of their control. Howard Rabinowitz explains that the growth of black neighborhoods in the postwar urban South was the result of both voluntary action on the part of southern blacks and the opposition of many whites to residential intermixture. In Houston as well, the patterns of black settlement during the postwar period illustrated a combination of the deliberate choices made by members of the black community and the whites' attitudes toward black property ownership and the development of autonomous black neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{11}

For many blacks, simply trying to locate adequate shelter was a challenge. Postwar newspapers in Houston complained that blacks were moving into the city in such volume and with such rapidity that a serious shortage of adequate housing was developing. Blacks, they claimed, packed into abandoned warehouses, stables, or any other vacant buildings they could find, causing overcrowding throughout the city. The old Confederate shoe shop located in the Fourth Ward apparently was a popular gathering place
among newly arrived blacks. According to the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, there was a large "gang" of blacks of all ages and sexes seeking quarters there. In July 1865 the newspaper reported that many citizens were complaining about the "great crowds of negroes" who were using the city's vacant buildings as "sleeping apartments."\(^{12}\) Many blacks exercised little choice in locating their living quarters; they took what they could find.

One citizen informed the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* that although a black family of four had rented a house in his neighborhood, there actually were fifteen people sleeping there nightly. According to the newspaper, this sort of living arrangement created a serious health hazard for the city since "negrodom" and "filth" were synonymous. The paper justified its indictment of black living habits by proclaiming that similar complaints concerning the "filth, want, sickness, and wretchedness" of the urban black population had appeared in a Shreveport paper. Wherever blacks crowded into towns and cities, Houston's newspaper concluded, there was a correspondent rise in urban ills.\(^{13}\)

The *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*’s prejudicial remarks about the presence of blacks in urban areas demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of the hardships and obstacles that blacks faced as they moved to the city, but the paper’s assessment of the living conditions that most blacks confronted is probably fairly accurate. The newspaper’s statement, moreover, clearly reflects the perceptions held by southern whites concerning the growing presence of blacks in urban areas. Across the South, whites decried the establishment of "shantytowns" and "tent cities" on the outskirts of their municipalities. In Houston, the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* led the city’s crusade, urging white citizens to take action to ensure that these "negro dens" would be "effectually cleaned out."\(^{14}\)
The tremendous increase in the number of black inhabitants in Houston immediately following the war may have produced overcrowding due to the initial shortage of accommodations; however, many blacks moving into the city did acquire property and build their own houses—an accomplishment whites rarely were willing to recognize. Complaining about the unreliability of black house servants in the postwar months, the Galveston News asserted that “nearly all the freemen and women of Houston and Galveston are living by themselves.” The paper, however, made this statement not in praise of the black community’s efforts but as proof positive of the need to employ white servants in their stead.15 Similarly, the newspapers rarely commented on the state of black housing except to condemn the filthy living conditions of blacks.

In a complete assessment of the building efforts in the city since the war, the Daily Telegraph in late 1866 remarked that in contrast to the number of respectable houses erected by the city’s whites, the “others [were] merely huts built by planking and waste timber. These,” it explained, “are occupied by Negroes, of whom there is unfortunately a superfluity in Houston, and there are sometimes twenty or thirty congregated in a little hovel not over 10 square feet. There are, however, a few Negroes who have bought lots and erected some very nice cottages. These negroes,” the newspaper claimed, however, were “not numerous.”16 Other than relating the fact that some blacks were living in “hovels” while others occupied “very nice cottages,” the paper’s account reveals little—and assuredly exaggerates much. Where, for example, were both types of houses located? Were they in the same or different neighborhoods? Who were their owners? Answering these questions is crucial to understanding the evolution of black residential neighborhoods—a vital element in the black urban experience—in Houston.
John Kellogg’s study of the growth of black neighborhoods in cities across the South during the postwar period indicates that the land available to blacks typically was located on the edge of town and often was situated in locations undesirable as residential areas to the majority of the city’s white inhabitants. This pattern clearly was replicated in the heavy settlement of blacks along Houston’s periphery. As Kellogg emphasizes, however, the resulting pattern of black and white land ownership in southern cities was not perfectly concentric with whites at the center and blacks on the fringe.\textsuperscript{17}

Houston’s newspapers, for example, complained on several occasions about the presence of black “shantytowns” situated adjacent to the city’s central business area. In October 1868 the \textit{Houston Daily Times} reported a fire in “Hanna’s Nest—the miserable nest of wooden shanties fronting on Main Street, and backing its dirty stern into the rear of the Hutchins House, where Hanna & Co. used to run their ‘chebang’ of a bogus freedmen’s bureau. . . .” Hutchins House was the preeminent hotel in Houston at this time and was located on one of the major thoroughfares in the town, yet "wooden shanties" surrounded it. Again in 1869 the paper described another fire among a group of wooden shanties occupied primarily by freedmen and located on Fannin between Preston and Prairie--another neighborhood near the town center in which these shanties, according to the newspaper, were an eyesore.\textsuperscript{18} Clearly, whites alone did not occupy Houston's central neighborhoods, and not all blacks lived on the outskirts of town.

Kellogg confirms that factors other than proximity to the city center were important to whites in choosing their residential neighborhoods. Wealthy whites, he claims, exhibited a proclivity for living on the large, important streets of the city; they tended to congregate around parks and churches and to shun the areas near jails, cemeteries, railroads, and other such
institutions; and they showed a clear distaste for areas that were flood prone. Accordingly, blacks were left with the city’s "unfit" property—often but not always located on the outskirts of the city—that whites had rejected. It seems, however, that wherever blacks settled—on the outskirts of the city or in the heart of the central business area—their presence incited the disdain of the white community.

Although blacks in Houston did not locate exclusively on the town’s periphery, this was the prevailing rule in the city. The *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* explained in August 1865 that “in almost every part of this city, but especially in the suburbs, there are miserable hovels, or shanties, which are crowded with lazy thriftless negroes. . . .” The areas in which blacks found access to land may not have been in the most desirable locations of the city, but the fact that many blacks were able to establish their residences in areas removed from white settlement marked a significant change from prewar conditions. Prior to the Civil War, in cities where free blacks and a number of slaves were living apart from their white owners’ residences, municipal officials had made every effort to keep black residential concentrations to a minimum. The growth of independent black enclaves was viewed as a distinct threat to social order. Even in Houston, where few free blacks resided, this perception of free blacks’ subversiveness prevailed. The housing ordinance passed by the City Council in 1855 to prevent free blacks from sharing their houses with slaves demonstrates that regardless of the size of the city’s free black population, whites feared that free blacks would harbor slaves and runaways, thus undermining the city’s social fabric.

In the postwar years whites continued to view black residential development as detrimental to the stability of the city and complained of the filth, profanity, and disorder that it generated. Whites, however, seemed less
willing--and less able--to mount an assault on the growth of these black residential areas. In June 1865 the Galveston Daily News--a paper printed in Houston since the early 1860s--reprimanded Houston's white citizens for their willingness to rent houses to blacks. The newspaper warned whites of the problems that would arise and reminded them that "our past experience has shown that the good order of the city required that negroes, whether free or slaves, should not live separate and apart from their owners or agents or employers. . . ."22

It seems, however, that with the end of the war and the abolition of slavery, urban whites in Houston and elsewhere were shifting their emphasis from maintenance of their legal superiority over blacks to the enforced physical and social separation of the races in order to maintain their privileged status. Ira Berlin claims that whites felt threatened by blacks who began to improve their socioeconomic positions in the postwar period and thus began to widen the physical distance between themselves and these blacks. This physical separation, however, was not enforced by legal mechanisms during the immediate postwar period; and though it began to occur in a number of southern cities, it remained flexible and sporadic. While whites may have considered forced separation evidence of their continued power over the black population, blacks may have viewed the growth of independent black neighborhoods as a positive development--a chance for blacks to assert their independence from the white community. As Rabinowitz asserts, "for most blacks the discomforts of poor living conditions were mitigated by the freedom which they enjoyed," since spatial separation brought increased autonomy for blacks.23

Whether these predominantly black neighborhoods emerged in the South in the immediate postwar years or were the product of later legislation
is a matter of dispute among historians. The debate continues over when racial residential segregation first appeared in the South, but most now agree that it emerged initially in the region's urban centers. C. Vann Woodward and Ira Berlin concur on this point and also claim that the decisive factor in the early emergence of segregation in cities was the prewar presence of free blacks. "The slave states came nearest to foreshadowing segregation" in their treatment of the free black population, Woodward claims, suggesting that the cities' prewar efforts to control free blacks prepared them for the postwar situation. Berlin comes to a similar conclusion, stating that it was the urban whites' "long experience in dealing with blacks who were free" that provided them with the necessary experience to cope with the postwar increase in the urban black population. Both Berlin and Woodward, however, emphasize that the type of segregation that arose in the postwar period developed primarily by the voluntary actions of both whites and blacks. This initial segregation, moreover, was not as rigid and harsh as that which appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As commonsensical as these scholars' explanations appear, they seem inadequate when put to the test in a variety of cities across the South. Whether or not residential separation by race occurred in a particular city immediately after the war--and if it did to what extent--was dictated by a variety of local circumstances. John Blassingame adds another element to the Berlin-Woodward explanation. He emphasizes that the city's current stage of development as well as the size of its antebellum free black population determined when residential separation occurred. In an expanding, rapidly rebuilding city such as Atlanta where city officials and real estate agents could exercise some control over the development of residential areas, Blassingame claims that segregation by race appeared almost immediately. Conversely, he
shows that in Savannah, a more established city with a somewhat larger antebellum population of free blacks, the racially mixed residential neighborhoods of the prewar years persisted long afterwards. According to Blassingame, it was not simply the presence of an antebellum free black population—though this still was an influential factor—but also the age of the city that determined when segregation emerged. Residential separation by race could occur where there had been few free blacks prior to the war, and conversely racially mixed housing patterns could persist where the antebellum free black population had been sizable.  

Trying to trace the emergence of racially segregated neighborhoods in Houston defies all such attempts at generalization. Houston simply fits none of the patterns outlined by previous scholars. As in antebellum Atlanta, the census identified only a handful of free blacks in Houston prior to the Civil War—only twenty-five in 1860 in Atlanta and only nine in Houston. Since both Houston and Atlanta were expanding rapidly in the postwar years, one might expect the two cities to have followed similar postwar patterns of residential development. Yet the residential segregation by race that occurred in Atlanta in the immediate aftermath of the war did not develop in Houston. Postwar residential growth in Houston demonstrates that there were factors other than previous experience with a free black population or a city’s age that were instrumental in determining the development of residential segregation. In fact, Houston’s experience shows that there was a more immediate basis to the development of residential neighborhoods—contemporary decisions made by both blacks and whites helped shape postwar housing patterns.

As blacks poured into Houston in the months following the war, they settled in virtually every area of the city. They congregated, however, in the Third and especially the Fourth Wards—a trend that one might expect since
these two wards historically had been Houston's most heavily populated. In addition, movement into the outlying sections of the Third and Fourth Wards was facilitated by the liberal provisions of the 1840 supplement to the city charter which had defined the city limits generously enough to accommodate later expansion within the corporate limits. (See Map C).

Lack of capital necessarily limited blacks' choices of residential location, but a number of other factors influenced blacks' decisions of where to settle in the city. Proximity to place of employment, to friends and family members, and to social and religious institutions all mattered deeply to incoming blacks. Because of Houston's lack of well-developed antebellum black social and religious institutions, proximity to them would have played virtually no role in the choices of residence made by those blacks coming to the city in the war's immediate aftermath. However, an additional factor weighed heavily upon the choices made by blacks migrating to Houston. Already confined to areas where land and housing were cheap, blacks must have been sensitive to the different opportunities for land purchase in these areas of the city. While blacks undoubtedly could find "cheap" living accommodations scattered throughout Houston, one reason that they may have found the Third and Fourth Wards so appealing was the wide availability of undeveloped land in their limits. Whether or not the ability to purchase land in these wards was a primary motivation behind black settlement in them is unclear. Deed records indicate, however, that at least on the outskirts of the Fourth Ward, blacks were quite successful in purchasing property. The large number of blacks settling in the Fourth Ward—a significant number of whom became landowners—suggests that the ability to purchase land was central to blacks' residential choices. (See Figure B).

Map C  
Corporate Limits of Houston, 1836-1917
Figure B
Houston's Population by Ward, 1870-1880

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*Statistics on Houston Population in 1870 taken from Cary D. Wintz, "The Emergence of a Black Neighborhood: Houston's Fourth Ward," in *Urban Texas: Politics and Development*, ed. Char Miller and Heywood T. Sanders (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1990). The population figures for 1880 are taken from the Manuscript Census Returns, 1880. There was one enumeration district in the census that combined all of the residents of the First Ward with a portion of those in the Fourth. Since there was no way to delineate the residents of these two wards from one another, for the purposes of this paper I have simply eliminated this enumeration district from my calculations. Thus in addition to eliminating data for the First Ward, the figures for the population of the Fourth Ward in 1880 slightly underrepresent the total number of people residing in the ward.*
Determining precisely how many blacks settled in the Fourth Ward in the years immediately following the war is difficult since during this period neither the city nor the county kept any records that provided a picture of the demographic composition of the wards. The earliest composite picture of the Fourth Ward is found in the 1870 manuscript census, a document that provides a static image of Houston's population a full five years after the war's end. Since the census enumerators grouped the city's inhabitants by ward, however, it provides a more complete picture of the ward than does any other document of this early date. An analysis of the census manuscripts for the Fourth Ward reveals that in almost all sections of the ward, blacks and whites were living in close proximity, sharing the same streets and residential neighborhoods. Approximately 50 percent of the ward's black inhabitants were living next door to whites.

Although none of the areas where blacks settled in the Fourth Ward during the postwar years was completely segregated—a characteristic Cary Wintz notes in his analysis of the ward—there clearly were certain pockets (often single streets, and less frequently whole neighborhoods) that were inhabited almost exclusively by either whites or blacks. Newspaper articles further confirm the existence of several predominantly black neighborhoods in the city. Early in September 1865 the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* reported that the military authorities in Houston had “declared war” against the city’s black neighborhoods. “If the darkies must keep house,” the newspaper proclaimed, “they will have to keep orderly ones and not have them harbors for negro thieves and burglars.” In the same year the city also passed a health ordinance expressly to enforce sanitation in the “Negro districts.” These contemporary references to black “districts” and “neighborhoods” imply that such concentrations of black inhabitants did exist.
It seems certain, however, that whites exaggerated the prevalence of these black neighborhoods. Given white fears of rebellion and lawlessness among the black population, whites probably tended to see every grouping of blacks as a “den of iniquity.” The census of 1870 indicates that a few areas of black concentration did exist, but they were not the norm for the Fourth Ward. Most areas were inhabited by blacks and whites. One may only speculate about the level of interaction that occurred between black and white residents of the neighborhoods where racially mixed housing patterns were present. But the way in which the residential blocks in most of the ward’s subdivisions were divided—ten to twelve lots directly abutting each other at the rear, with no alleys in between or behind them—meant that blacks and whites living next door to or behind one another shared a lot line. This arrangement mandated a degree of physical interaction between neighboring households. Two people did not have to be next-door neighbors to have direct contact with each other.

Since Houston in 1870 also was still predominantly a pedestrian city, the black and white residents of a particular residential area had to walk the same streets to work and to market. Their children also probably shared the streets and yards of the neighborhood as their playgrounds. In short, blacks and whites in the same neighborhoods probably passed by one another’s homes on a multitude of occasions. Since streetcar service did not reach the outer sections of the Fourth Ward until the late 1870s at the very earliest, even in pockets where there was a nearly complete concentration of whites or blacks, the occupants of these neighborhoods probably had to pass through more integrated areas of the ward to get into other parts of the city. The very fact that whites and blacks were residents and even homeowners in the same neighborhoods of the Fourth Ward marks a clear departure from the prewar
restrictions on the presence of free blacks in Houston and from the decidedly rigid and unyielding patterns of segregation that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.36

The creation of racially mixed residential areas in the Fourth Ward may be explained partly by the attraction of undeveloped land in these areas to the city's newcomers--black and white. Not all of the ward's postwar inhabitants, however, were newcomers. The decision to settle in these racially mixed areas of the ward, at least among many white occupants, predated the Civil War and emancipation. The Fourth Ward, in fact, always had had a majority of white inhabitants.37 Having established their homes in these neighborhoods of the ward, some white residents may have been reluctant to move, despite the increasing presence of black immigrants. As one moves farther away from the central business area and into the western-most edges of the ward, this explanation for the prevalence of mixed black and white housing loses some of its persuasiveness. Even though most of the outlying residential areas of the Fourth Ward--Freedmantown included--were only "about one mile above the City of Houston" and still "within its corporate limits," they remained largely undeveloped prior to the war. They simply were too far removed from the city's center to attract settlement as long as other inexpensive land that was closer to the central business area could satisfy the city's residential needs. From the 1866 map of Houston it is clear that although some of the land to the west of the city had been platted and was ready for development, most of the property remained uninhabited.38 (See Map D).

If the land located in the outlying areas of the ward was previously uninhabited by whites because it was, as Kellogg suggests, substandard due to
its distance from the city's center and its proximity to the flood-prone bayou, then economic considerations may have been the basis for the simultaneous settlement of blacks and whites in the same residential areas of the ward. Poverty may have driven poor blacks and whites into areas where they could find affordable land. If this were the case, one would expect to find black and white residents in these racially mixed areas working in similar low-paying semi- or unskilled occupations. In addition, if blacks and whites were working in the same jobs, they may have been thrown together in the same neighborhoods out of sheer practicality—both may have sought to establish their homes in close proximity to their places of employment.

Data gathered for the ward from the 1870 census manuscript, however, dispels this idea. There were a number of extremely wealthy white residents in the Fourth Ward, including several prominent merchants such as Thomas House, B.A. Shepherd, August Bering, and Mitchell Westheimer. These individuals, although they all seemed to live in close proximity to the city center, apparently did not segregate themselves as a group within the ward. Their names were not listed sequentially in the census manuscript and frequently were preceded or followed by black households, indicating both the merchants' dispersal throughout much of the ward and their proximity to black neighbors. The presence of these wealthy men, however, was an exception in the ward. Most of the black and white residents held unskilled or semi-skilled positions.39

While many blacks and whites in the Fourth Ward held the same "genre" of occupations, and thus probably were attracted by the cheap land available in the ward, they were not working in the same occupations. Although 34 percent of the black heads of household were engaged in service-related jobs, working as porters, washers, cooks, and domestic servants, only
5 percent of the white population held such occupations. Jobs involving manual labor drew 32 percent of the ward’s black workers, but they employed only 5 percent of the white working population. By contrast, 25 percent of the white population were engaged in such commercial occupations as storekeeping and manufacturing but only 5 percent of the black population found employment in such jobs. And while 14 percent of the white population were employed as tradesmen, only 4 percent of the black population held jobs in this category. The only occupational group ranked above that of unskilled labor in which black and white workers were more nearly balanced was that of craftsmen, including such trades as carpentry, blacksmithing, and masonry-trades that required skills many blacks may have learned as slaves. For the most part, however, blacks and whites in the ward were not heavily employed in the same occupations.40

It appears instead that there was a reciprocal basis to the occupations of the ward’s residents—blacks served in occupations that filled the needs of the white community and vice-versa. For instance, there were only four black grocers in the entire ward compared to twenty-two white grocers. With a total black population in the ward of well over 1,000, many blacks obviously were regular patrons of the establishments of the white grocers. White individuals also were the primary owners of retail and wholesale shops in the ward, thus ensuring that blacks would have to depend on them for most of their store-bought goods. Conversely, since blacks comprised the majority of laborers, servants, and draymen in the ward, white residents must have had to rely upon them for these types of service.41 In March 1867 the Daily and Sunday Telegraph complained that the cold weather had driven the freedmen indoors, leaving the rest of the city without any way to get manual labor performed. It was impossible, the paper lamented, “even to get a dray.”42
In addition, the census suggests that a number of blacks living in predominantly white neighborhoods of the ward probably had located there in order to be close to white families for whom they worked as domestic servants. While these examples indicate that black and white workers did not occupy equal footing in their "business relationships," they do show that there must have been some degree of interdependence among the ward’s black and white residents. These findings also dispel the idea that blacks and whites were attracted to the same neighborhoods of the ward because they were similarly employed. If there was an occupational basis to blacks’ and whites’ attraction to the Fourth Ward, it more likely was founded upon their ability to capitalize upon each other’s needs.

Perhaps the racial intermixture in the ward can be explained by social rather than economic similarities among the inhabitants. Approximately 60 percent of the white heads of household in the ward were of foreign birth, compared to only 17 percent for the city as a whole. This high incidence of foreign-born whites living among predominantly black neighbors was, according to Rabinowitz, common throughout the South's urban areas. An overwhelming number of the foreign-born in the ward indicated their place of birth as Prussia or Germany. There were two specific instances in the census manuscripts for the ward where the enumerator apparently first marked the race of the members of a Prussian-born family as "mulatto," and then changed the designation to "white." 43 The census taker may have mistaken the family's race because of their dark skin color—a mistake others also may have made—but the error clearly reveals something about the census enumerator's perceptions of this group of foreigners.

It is possible that blacks and foreign whites may have been “driven” to settle in the same sections of the Fourth Ward because of the discrimination--
subtle and blatant—they faced from Houston’s white community. However, even if blacks and foreign whites shared similar treatment from Houston's other white citizens, it is doubtful that they shared a similar perception of their “rank” in society. Given the competition with blacks for housing and even in some cases for employment that foreign whites in Houston increasingly encountered, they more likely felt growing animosity toward the black population.44 It is apparent, nonetheless, that both were drawn into the Fourth Ward’s neighborhoods in large numbers.

Within the fairly interracial environment of the Fourth Ward in 1870, the racial and ethnic composition found in Freedmantown—an area that remained completely undeveloped prior to the war—differed dramatically from the ward as a whole. Freedmantown came close to invalidating Wintz’s observation that none of the residential areas of the Fourth Ward was completely segregated in the immediate aftermath of the war. Although Freedmantown was not very densely settled, its population—in contrast to that in surrounding residential areas—contained an extremely high proportion of blacks. While only 43 percent of the residents in the entire ward were black, the percentage in Freedmantown stood at a phenomenal 94 percent. Among the 53 separate households in Freedmantown, only 4 were headed by whites.45 Of the white heads of household, one was a retail grocer, the only one who was of foreign birth; one a railroad clerk; one a carpenter; and the fourth claimed her occupation as “Easy Virtue,” or prostitution. The census suggests that the grocer was not living in Freedmantown out of economic hardship, since he listed $500 worth of real property. As for the other three, the census made no indication of their economic situations. Property records for Freedmantown, however, show that John Murchison, the white railroad clerk, had purchased a number of lots in the neighborhood.46 His economic
situation hardly could have been desperate. The economic positions of the other two are uncertain, but it would be erroneous to conclude that the whites who had chosen Freedmantown as their home did so because of their poverty-stricken status.

Whether or not poverty drove the black inhabitants of Freedmantown to settle there is more difficult to determine. The occupations held by blacks in Freedmantown, however, were similar to those held by blacks in the rest of the ward. In fact, when there was a disparity between the occupations of the two groups, the positions held by the inhabitants of Freedmantown tended to be superior. There were fewer black individuals engaged in manual labor occupations and a higher percentage working as craftsmen in Freedmantown than there were in the surrounding areas of the ward. There was only one black individual employed in a commercial occupation within Freedmantown, but overall, the majority of the neighborhood's black inhabitants held positions that "outranked" those held by the rest of the ward's blacks. Blacks in Freedmantown certainly were in no worse economic situation—if not in a better one—than were blacks living in the adjacent areas of the ward.

Since the economic status of both black and white residents in Freedmantown in 1870 was not substandard compared to the rest of the ward, it seems unlikely, at least at this point in the neighborhood's development, that its inhabitants chose to live there over adjacent subdivisions out of economic duress. In fact, a comparison of the size and composition of the households in Freedmantown reveals that its residents actually may have enjoyed a higher standard of living than was average for other inhabitants of the ward. Wintz finds that overcrowding was a ubiquitous problem among the households of the Fourth Ward. Only one in four households, or 25 percent, were single-family households. The average number of persons in each, according to
Wintz, was 5.07. In Freedmantown, on the other hand, out of 53 households, 95 percent were occupied by single families. In addition, the average number of persons per household was only 3.5. The physical living conditions of the inhabitants of Freedmantown, at least on the surface, were not inferior to those in the rest of the ward.49

If the patterns of settlement in Freedmantown had been an anomaly among the ward's neighborhoods in 1870, they were no longer one by the decade's end. By 1880 the predominantly black population previously unique to Freedmantown was beginning to spread to surrounding neighborhoods in the western section of the ward. The entire area south of San Felipe Road and adjacent to Freedmantown was giving way to black settlement. Within the residential areas adjoining Freedmantown, the number of black inhabitants having white neighbors had fallen from 50 percent in 1870 to 32 percent in 1880. The census reveals that there were now large areas of the ward occupied almost wholly by black residents. The racially mixed housing patterns found in the ward in 1870 had all but disappeared. An occasional white household—at most four or five in a row—appeared interspersed among the dwellings occupied by blacks, but these occurrences were rare. Blacks comprised 68 percent of the total population in this area of the ward, and the percentage of households headed by blacks stood at 70 percent. In contrast, the percentage of the population in the whole Fourth Ward that was black had risen only to 49 percent.50

The proportion of whites living in the additions adjacent to Freedmantown who were of foreign birth had increased similarly, rising to 73 percent.51 While the demographic composition of the entire Fourth Ward had remained fairly static, that of its western sections had undergone a distinct transformation, becoming simultaneously more black and more foreign born.
This western area of the Fourth Ward still was not densely populated nor was it inhabited exclusively by blacks, but by 1880 these neighborhoods near Freedmantown were delineated clearly from the more centrally located areas of the ward. It appears that with the passage of time residential separation by race was becoming more widespread and more distinct.52

As the black-white composition of these western neighborhoods of the ward underwent a noticeable transformation during the 1870s, so too did the occupational status of their inhabitants. Blacks and whites in these neighborhoods had suffered a reduction in their wage-earning ability. For both, the percentage of household heads engaged in service-related jobs had increased. In addition, the percentage of blacks engaged as tradesmen and as manual laborers had decreased slightly. Among the ward’s white inhabitants, there was a slightly higher percentage engaged in manual labor occupations than there had been in 1870. However, the white population appeared to be increasing its participation in the commercial occupations, while the percentage of blacks involved remained steady. By and large, both blacks and whites in these western residential areas were engaged in less desirable occupations than they had been in previous years.53

The black occupants of Freedmantown in 1880 shared a similar wage-earning fate with the residents of adjacent neighborhoods, witnessing few substantial gains in their occupational positions over the decade. There had been, for example, a significant drop in the percentage working as craftsmen.54 The most significant change occurred in the number of female household heads who reported their occupations as “at home” or “keeping house.” Whereas only one individual identified herself in this way in 1870, seven did in 1880. The meaning of this increase, however, is ambiguous. Perhaps these individuals no longer had to work outside of the home to
maintain their economic well-being and had voluntarily withdrawn themselves from the labor market. The reverse explanation, however, is equally convincing—they may have been unable to find gainful employment outside of the home and either were doing odd jobs or were altogether without employment. Deciding which of these explanations is correct would have a decisive impact on the overall assessment of occupational mobility of blacks in Freedmantown, since 10 percent of the blacks living there in 1880 fell into this category.55

As for the rest of the blacks in the neighborhood, most were in a worse economic position in 1880 than they had been in 1870. White inhabitants in Freedmantown likewise saw a reduction in their occupational status over the decade. Forty percent of the neighborhood’s white inhabitants in 1880 were employed in service-related jobs, a category none had occupied in 1870. However, the whites still comprised only a minute proportion of Freedmantown’s total labor force. The white and black residents of Freedmantown had shared in the same fate as other black inhabitants of the ward—all were affected to some degree by the deteriorating economic circumstances of the depression-ridden seventies, but they did not seem to have suffered more severely. The average number of individuals per household in Freedmantown remained relatively low, and the number of blacks purchasing property remained high, suggesting that economic hard times had not completely disrupted life in the neighborhood.56

The most striking difference between the situation of the residents of Freedmantown and those of the surrounding neighborhoods originated not from occupational structure but from Freedmantown’s physical development over the decade. Despite the growing concentration of blacks in the neighborhoods adjacent to Freedmantown, the housing patterns within
Freedmantown remained distinguishable by the almost total absence of white residents. Only 12 percent of the black households in Freedmantown were situated next door to whites in comparison to 32 percent for the neighboring areas. The gap between Freedmantown and the adjacent neighborhoods was narrowing, but Freedmantown still stood out among them. It continued to possess a uniquely high concentration, 93 percent, of blacks.57

There have been a number of attempts to explain why so many blacks and so few whites chose to live in Freedmantown over the adjoining neighborhoods—all of which were located on the outskirts of the Fourth Ward. Historian Howard Jones explains that “this area, begun right after the Civil War, was land that was formerly a ‘truck gardening’ region and was sold by white farmers to the former slaves.” He even pinpoints the area’s foundation to the specific date of January 24, 1866.58 The deed records for property situated in Freedmantown contradict Jones’s explanation, showing that there was only one owner of land in Freedmantown, G. S. Hardcastle, in 1866. Hardcastle was neither a farmer, nor was he selling land to his former slaves. According to the 1860 census, he owned only one slave.59 There simply is no indication of an organized, collective effort among the city’s white residents to establish Freedmantown as a black neighborhood.

Others have assumed as fact popular myths about the neighborhood’s development. Compilers of the Works Projects Administration’s Houston: A History and Guide recount the legend that one of the city’s slaveowners and a resident of the Second Ward, Charles S. Longcope, called his slaves together in June 1865, “and, as he stood in his front door, read to them the proclamation that gave them their freedom. He then offered each of his former slaves a building lot in the Fourth Ward” (emphasis mine). The WPA states that Longcope owned a “dozen Negroes who had long been a part of the
household." According to the 1860 census, however, Longcope was the owner of only three slaves, two females ages 40 and 18 employed as domestic servants and one male, age 8. Even if Longcope provided each of these three with property in the Fourth Ward, his actions hardly could be credited with starting a settlement boom in this region of the ward.60

It also is tempting to seize upon the connotations of the name "Freedmantown" to explain the growth of this area as a black neighborhood. Howard Rabinowitz, for example, explains that in many southern cities black neighborhoods emerged in locations where Union army and Freedmen's Bureau camps had been established during and just after the war. Former slaves were drawn to these areas in hopes of receiving protection. When the government hastily closed these camps in the war's aftermath, blacks who had moved into their vicinity often decided to remain rather than to return to their previous homes. In this manner, a number of black neighborhoods, or so-called "freedmen's towns," were established on the fringes of cities across the South.61 This scenario, however, does not explain the establishment of Houston's Freedmantown. Official records of the War Department indicate that while federal troops were stationed in Houston for a time, the principal camps that they used were former Confederate camps located in Harrisburg, a town situated 8 miles east of Houston on Buffalo Bayou. In addition, the local office of the Freedmen's Bureau, when it finally was established in Houston in November 1865, was located on Commerce Street between Main and Fannin, in the city's central business area.62 Apparently, there was no connection between the blacks' choice of Freedmantown as a residential area and their access to the local office of the Freedmen's Bureau or to federal encampments.

Explanations more specific to the geographic features of Houston's Fourth Ward also have been set forth in attempts to explain the predominance
of black residents in Freedmanton town. Some have suggested that since many blacks entered Houston from plantations on the Brazos River "by way of the old San Felipe Road"—a major thoroughfare for the city—some probably stopped at the first vacant areas they encountered within proximity of the city's center. Freedmanton would have been one such area.63 Circumstances such as this may have contributed to Freedmanton's development, yet the most obvious explanation for its growth as a black neighborhood remains, as Rabinowitz asserts, poverty among the black population. Without qualification, however, this statement may be misleading when applied to blacks in Freedmanton. In comparison to most of the white residents of Houston, Freedmanton's blacks assuredly were impoverished. Compared to the rest of the Fourth Ward's black inhabitants, however, their economic situation was no worse. Nonetheless, blacks settled in Freedmanton in a much higher concentration than they did elsewhere in the ward.64 It seems that Kellogg's explanation for the growth of urban black clusters of settlement—that they emerged in the most undesirable areas of the city where land was cheap—is the one that applies to the growth of Freedmanton. Situated directly on Buffalo Bayou, the property in Freedmanton likely was subject to regular flooding, and due to poor drainage, probably fostered a high rate of disease.65 The neighborhood also abutted two cemeteries and land that had been set aside for a city hospital. On several occasions in 1871, the newspapers carried articles concerning the "most neglected and dilapidated" condition of the cemetery adjacent to Freedmanton. Kellogg labels these geographic disincentives to settlement "locational mechanisms" and explains that throughout the urban South they discouraged white settlement in certain areas of the city. Blacks thus usually
were confined to areas that whites had deemed unsuitable sites for their own homes. Kellogg asserts that “by far the most common sites for these new Negro settlements were the bottomlands near the 1865 urban boundary.”

Following Kellogg's conclusion, it seems that blacks may have chosen to settle in Freedmantown over adjacent neighborhoods—despite Freedmantown’s physical shortcomings—because they found improved opportunities for land and home ownership there. Since blacks viewed land ownership as essential to their independence in the postwar years, it seems perfectly natural that they would have sacrificed living in more desirable residential locations in order to purchase land. In 1865 a Nashville reporter wrote that for that city’s blacks "to get a house, no matter how small a scale, elevates them to a dignity and position and entitles them to be looked up to and venerated accordingly. They therefore sacrifice everything in the way of good homes as servants to encompass this end"—a statement that apparently would have fit Houston's blacks as well.

In Houston during the postwar years, blacks' desire for land ownership was fueled by the exorbitant rents being charged in the city. In a survey of black property owners made by the local office of the Freedmen's Bureau, the agent reported that most blacks were trying to buy their own property because rents were so high. It cost as much, the report stated, to rent lodging for a year as it did to buy a lot and build a house. Another local agent even had suggested that the bureau's office be set up in tents on the vacant lots on Main Street due to the high rents charged, indicating that blacks were not the only ones affected by this situation. The prospect of having to pay what probably amounted to a significant portion of their salaries—the common laborer reportedly made only $1 a day—to a landlord assuredly made less
wealthy blacks and whites more intent upon purchasing their own lots of land and constructing their own dwellings.  

Since land in the less appealing, outlying areas of the Fourth Ward probably was cheaper than that more centrally located in the city, it is easily understandable why so many blacks—many newly freed from slavery and lacking significant capital—chose to settle in this area. As Kellogg explains, “owing to the lack of modern transportation systems, lots within easy walking distance to the Central Business District (CBD) were prohibitively expensive for the poor negro migrant.”  

Marguerite Johnston’s observations confirm the applicability of this statement to Houston. She notes that there still were a number of wealthy white individuals in the 1870s whose homes were located directly on Court House Square, suggesting that it was lots located in the central city that were the most desirable residential sites for whites. 

Purchasing land near the town's center clearly would not have been an option for most of Houston’s blacks. Instead, their best opportunities for land purchase remained in the less centrally located, low-lying areas of the city. The unusually high concentration of blacks in Freedmantown suggests that the opportunity to buy land may have been greater in this than in surrounding neighborhoods.

If Freedmantown attracted more black residents because its land was judged inferior to that found even in the surrounding areas, then one would expect the price of land in Freedmantown to be lower and the incidence of land ownership among the black residents to be higher than that found in adjacent neighborhoods. In addition to Freedmantown, there were four adjoining additions in the western-most portion of the Fourth Ward where blacks successfully established themselves as property owners—the Baker, Castanie, Senechal, and Hopson additions. All were located in close proximity
to Freedmantown and all appeared to attract a substantial number of black residents, particularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Blacks were able to purchase property in all of these additions, confirming that blacks had ready access to land in this area of the Fourth Ward. Property ownership by blacks, however, differed among these five subdivisions, with the highest rate—in both absolute and relative terms—being recorded in Freedmantown.

In the first months following the war, Freedmantown itself had not yet been platted by its owner, Garrett S. Hardcastle. When Hardcastle purchased the land from William R. Baker in 1855, the area that later would be known as Freedmantown had developed no specific identity or association with any particular group—racial or ethnic—of the city’s residents, nor had it become recognizable by its relative location to any of the city’s landmarks. The deed of sale executed on July 14, 1855 transferring ownership to Hardcastle merely identified the purchased land as being “more or less bounded West by said Hardcastle lands, South by J. Castanie, East by the Hopson Place and North by Buffalo Bayou.” This loose wording and the fact that the surrounding property also had no readily identifiable landmarks and was recognized only by its property owners suggests that the entire area surrounding Freedmantown was largely undeveloped on the eve of the Civil War.

In 1866, even though he had not completed his payments on the property nor had he removed Baker’s lien on it, Hardcastle began to subdivide the land and sell small plots. By the time that the official plat map for this neighborhood was filed in 1875, the neighborhood had assumed a distinct identity. Upon the official copy of the plat map, the county clerk wrote, “Known as Freedmantown,” even though the formal identification for the property was “Hardcastle Addition.”
In contrast to Freedmantown’s relatively late official recognition as a subdivision of the city, the plat maps for the Baker, Castanie, Senechal, and Hopson additions all were filed with the county clerk’s office at earlier dates. The maps for the Senechal and Castanie additions were filed with the county in March and April 1848, respectively, while those for the Hopson and Baker additions were filed in January 1860 and in June 1861. Each of the additions, while all located in the same part of the Fourth Ward, differed in several subtle respects.

Both the Hardcastle and the Hopson subdivisions directly bordered Buffalo Bayou, making them more prone to flooding than the others. The Castanie and Baker additions both occupied land directly opposite Freedmantown, on the south side of San Felipe Road. Like the Freedmantown addition, several blocks in the Castanie subdivision directly abutted the city and the Jewish cemeteries, making these blocks less desirable areas for residential settlement. The Castanie Addition’s 12-block-long east-west axis, however, placed its eastern-most blocks closer to Houston’s downtown area, adding to their attractiveness as a residential site when compared to the addition’s western-most blocks. The Senechal addition probably was the most “prestigious” among these subdivisions of the Fourth Ward, since it was located closest to the city’s center and farthest from the bayou and the ward’s two cemeteries. Freedmantown and the western edges of the Castanie and Baker subdivisions, on the other hand, were the most remote areas within the ward. As late as 1892, they still stood at the edge of the city’s westward settlement south of the bayou. Although all five of these additions were located in the same general area of the city, each had its own unique history and character.
The tendency for the wealthy white population to shun most of the areas within these additions as unacceptable homesites helped make the land more affordable to Houston's less affluent population. Blacks succeeded in purchasing property in these subdivisions relatively quickly after the war, confirming blacks' ardent desire for land ownership. The rates of black property ownership in these five additions, however, differed markedly. Understanding what factors contributed to blacks' success in purchasing property in each of these additions would also help explain why blacks were attracted to the specific neighborhoods in which they ultimately settled. It appears that both cost of the land and previous development in each of the additions determined blacks' ability to purchase land. Although the land-rent topography of Houston generally favored the city's outlying land—a characteristic all of the additions held in common—as the most affordable, there were clear differences in the prevalence of black property ownership within each of the additions. Typically, where blacks were best able to purchase land, they settled in larger numbers, indicating that land ownership was a primary motivation behind the blacks' choices of residential neighborhoods.

Since the Hardcastle subdivision, unlike the others, had not been developed before 1865, blacks moving to the city after emancipation had no previous residents to contend with in attempting to purchase property in this neighborhood. In marked contrast, all of the lots in the Senechal addition had been purchased by 1865 by various private owners. About one-third of the land contained in both the Baker and Castanie additions also had been transferred into the hands of individual proprietors. Improvements upon the purchased property in all of the subdivisions were relatively limited at this early date. However, it is impossible to form a fully accurate picture of the
development in any of these subdivisions in the first months following the war because of the limited detailing on the 1866 Wood map. The map indicates only the principal public buildings in the city, all of which were located in the city’s central business area.78

The 1869 Wood map provides more detail than the earlier one, but it too appears to have underrepresented the amount of development in the Fourth Ward. It does indicate that by this date, the majority of the land in the Baker and Castanie additions also had been purchased by individual proprietors. Residential development in these additions, however, was limited primarily to their eastern sections. Even the Senechal addition, the eastern-most addition of this area of the ward, had only several scattered dwellings according to the 1869 map. A majority of the land in the Senechal addition, however, was identified as having passed from the hands of the original owner to other individuals. The 1869 map shows a surprising amount of development in the Hardcastle addition at this early date, even though the first property transaction had occurred only three years before. Each of these five additions remained relatively sparsely settled, but both the 1869 and the later 1873 maps indicate that development was proceeding apace in all but the Hopson addition.79 (See Maps F & G).

While city maps provide some indication of the amount and the patterns of development in these additions of the ward, the maps provide little information about the actual proprietors and inhabitants of them. According to Harris County deed and tax records, there was not a single black proprietor prior to 1865 in any of the additions under consideration.80 In several of the additions, one or two white individuals had established themselves in the prewar period as the principal property owners. Cornelius Ennis, a wealthy merchant in Houston, owned the majority of land in the Senechal addition. In
the Baker addition, most of the land sold prior to the war also was held by a single proprietor, W. Harrall. Harrall also was a Houston merchant, and like Ennis and many other affluent Houstonians, maintained his residence during the postwar years in close proximity to the city’s central business area.81

The Castanie addition differed from the Baker and Senechal additions in that very little of the land sold before the war was concentrated in the hands of any single person. A number of individuals owned small amounts of land in the addition. In 1865, Pierre Lawrence amassed a tremendous amount of property, but because he was never listed in the city directory, his identity is uncertain. These real estate entrepreneurs’ intentions for the land they had purchased are unclear; however, much of the land that they held remained unimproved. On the eve of the Confederacy’s defeat, most of the land in the Baker and Castanie additions was still in the hands of the original owner—a description that applied to all of the property in the Hardcastle addition. Thus in all of the areas under consideration, there still was abundant land available for development in the postwar years, and blacks immediately seized upon the opportunity to purchase this unimproved land.82

As one might expect, given the Senechal addition’s proximity to the older neighborhoods of Houston, it had the lowest incidence of black property ownership over the entire period, 1865 to 1880, of the five subdivisions. Interestingly, the years when blacks appeared most successful in obtaining property in this neighborhood were during the early 1870s—precisely when Houston was suffering most severely from the effects of economic depression—suggesting that the white owners were selling their land for financial reasons. From 1872 to 1874 more blacks purchased property in the Senechal addition than in all of the other years combined.83 Despite the temporary increase in the incidence of black property ownership in the subdivision, the Senechal
addition remained fairly impervious to black property ownership up to 1880. Over the fifteen year period, only 26 percent—16 individuals—of those purchasing property in the Senechal addition were black; 62 percent, in contrast, were white. A large portion of the land in the subdivision remained concentrated in the hands of a few owners, mostly wealthy businessmen in the city. Whether the owners kept this land vacant or constructed rental properties upon it is uncertain. The deed records, however, do indicate that the owners were not leasing the land itself to another party. Thus there were few blacks living in the Senechal addition who could claim themselves as property owners.

The Baker addition came closest to replicating the patterns of ownership found in the Senechal addition. Here too, relatively few blacks purchased property over the fifteen year period, and it also was during the early 1870s that the largest volume of transactions involving blacks occurred. Only in 1871, however, did blacks outnumber whites in the purchase of property. Ownership in the Baker subdivision was somewhat more fluid than in the Senechal addition, with a larger number of small, individual proprietors, but there continued to be several individuals who amassed relatively large holdings of land.

That this concentrated ownership of land made it difficult for blacks to purchase property is apparent. The owners of the land clearly were not occupying all of their holdings, but neither were they selling the land to blacks. Perhaps the individuals with large quantities of land were unwilling to sell to blacks; the prices charged for lots in the subdivision may have been prohibitively high for many blacks; or the attractiveness of other areas in the ward where there were larger numbers of black property owners may have led blacks to favor these other neighborhoods over the Baker and Senechal
additions. White property owners also may have been amassing land in these additions as investments or may have been planning to build rental housing on their land at some future date. Whatever the reason, blacks made few inroads into property ownership in these two additions. The percentage of black individuals who had purchased property in the Baker addition over the 15-year span remained relatively low. Only 27 blacks—or 25 percent of the total number of property owners—purchased land, barely surpassing the percentage of blacks purchasing land in the Senechal addition. 86

Fortunately for the black residents of the Fourth Ward, the opportunities for property ownership in its other western additions were not as limited as they proved to be in the Baker and Senechal additions. Property ownership in the Castanie addition, for example, was much more accessible to blacks during this same period. The number of blacks purchasing property in this addition from 1865 to 1880 nearly matched that of white property owners. Unlike the isolated increase in black property ownership during the early 1870s that occurred in the Baker and Senechal additions, the volume of transactions made to blacks in Castanie remained fairly steady throughout the fifteen year period, beginning to decline only in the mid-seventies—perhaps a reaction to the overthrow of Reconstruction government in Houston. Property ownership in the addition remained concentrated in 1865 and 1866 in the hands of one or two individuals, but there already were signs of what would become the predominant pattern of ownership in this area—a steadily expanding number of small independent proprietors of whom a significant proportion were black. 87

Why blacks were more successful in purchasing land in the Castanie subdivision than they were in the Baker or Senechal additions is difficult to ascertain. It is quite likely that the closeness of a number of the addition’s lots
to the city cemetery reduced their attractiveness to the white population. In addition, when a few blacks, especially community leaders, began purchasing land in the area, others in the community were encouraged to follow suit. For example, Jack Yates, the pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, one of the most prominent churches within the black community, urged others to follow his example by purchasing property. According to his descendants, he actively sought to establish an all-black neighborhood within the section of the Castanie addition where he had purchased land. They claim that Yates believed that “the best way to avoid the frequency of unpleasant relationships between the two races was to have his group [the city’s blacks] buy property and dwell more remotely to themselves.”

Quite a few blacks did purchase property in the vicinity of Yates’s home, but the neighborhood continued to be shared by blacks and whites. Throughout the fifteen year period, white interest in owning property within this addition remained steady, although a majority of whites purchased property in the eastern sections of the addition where there were fewer black residents. By 1880 the percentage of blacks who had purchased property over the preceding fifteen years stood at 42 percent--representing 73 individual purchasers, while the percentage of white property owners measured a close 48 percent. The Castanie addition contained a nearly equal balance between black and white property owners throughout the postwar period.

The highest percentage of black property owners in any of the western additions of the Fourth Ward over this 15-year period occurred in the Hardcastle or Freedmantown addition. Although property sales did not begin in the subdivision until 1866, they stayed fairly constant for the remainder of the decade and through the next. Property sales to blacks were highest in 1866 and 1867, but the largest total number of transactions to both blacks and
whites occurred in 1875. Why blacks had so much more success buying property in this particular subdivision is unclear. Perhaps Hardcastle was more willing than other property owners in the ward to sell real estate to blacks, but this is speculation. Instead, blacks probably were better able to purchase land in Freedmantown due to its location near the flood-prone bayou, the hospital lands, and the cemeteries. Freedmantown, however, possessed a major geographical asset that should have offset some of these negative features. It lay just off one of the major thoroughfares to the city, San Felipe Road. It seems that property in Freedmantown would have been ideally situated for commercial development and lodging establishments. While this locational attribute did lead a few white businessmen to establish stores in the area, most white Houstonians found this incentive insufficient to attract them to the area. Only 24 percent of the individuals purchasing property in Freedmantown from 1865 to 1880 were white--a total of 32 individuals. In contrast, 65 percent were black--representing 88 purchasers--a noticeable deviance from the percentages found in the surrounding subdivisions of the ward.

Directly east of Freedmantown and also situated on the banks of the bayou lay the Hopson addition. This area differed substantially from all of the other western additions in the ward. According to the 1869 map, there appeared to be only five lots of property in the entire addition that showed any signs of improvement. One of the few buildings erected in the addition was a white-owned store situated directly on San Felipe Road--an obvious attempt to capture the intercity traffic. Despite the Hopson addition’s proximity to Freedmantown, black property ownership in this neighborhood differed markedly. In the Hopson addition, only 36 percent of the property owners--
17 individuals—from 1865 to 1880 were black, while 55 percent—26 individuals—were white.93

Why, one wonders, would black property ownership have occurred so much less frequently in the Hopson addition, an area with geographical features so similar to those of Freedmantown? Granted Freedmantown was a bit farther removed from the central business area of the city and was marginally closer to the cemeteries and the hospital lands, but it is difficult to believe that these factors could have decreased the value of the land in Freedmantown enough to have produced these dramatic differences in blacks' property ownership. According to county tax records, there appeared to be some variation in land values among the different subdivisions, with land in the Senechal and Hopson additions being the most valuable, but the values showed great fluctuation and hardly seem to be accurate assessments. It seems certain that other factors were in operation as well, prompting blacks to purchase land in Freedmantown over surrounding areas.94 Clearly, blacks either were unable or unwilling to buy land in certain of these subdivisions or in certain sections of them.

One factor that may have been influential in blacks' decisions to purchase property and settle in Freedmantown over other areas was their desire to settle among other blacks. If, as Jack Yates advocated, blacks hoped to build independent residential communities, then they would have been attracted to areas where the concentration of black occupants was high. Building the autonomous black communities that Yates wanted to create would have been accomplished most easily in neighborhoods with a large number of blacks and few whites. The desire to establish independent black communities may have been fueled in the 1870s by the “redemption” of state and local government from Republican rule. It is possible that blacks no longer were
receiving the protection they had under Republican government and hoped to insulate themselves from white persecution by separating themselves into independent residential neighborhoods. Likewise, whites may have felt more secure about allowing black residential areas to develop now that they had resumed control over their state and local governments. The high number of black property owners and black residents in Freedmantown lends support to this explanation. It seems quite likely that the desire to settle among other blacks, free from white surveillance, is what prompted so many blacks to choose Freedmantown as their home.

Neither the deed nor the census records taken alone, however, give a clear indication as to whether or not those owning property within Freedmantown or any of these additions also were residents there. Determining how many individuals also lived on the property they owned in each of these additions is essential for assessing the degree to which blacks were attempting to construct autonomous neighborhoods in the ward and how successful they were in doing so. Blacks’ ability to establish themselves as homeowners in these areas would have made their neighborhoods more stable than those comprised of a large amount of rental property. Considering how ardently blacks desired to become property owners in the postwar years, the neighborhood pride in areas where blacks formed a significant portion of the home owners would have been particularly strong. If a large number of blacks were both owning and living in homes in a specific neighborhood, it seems probable that the neighborhood’s establishment was accomplished by a concerted effort among the members of the black population to create a stable black neighborhood, independent of white interference.

A complete count of the resident-property owners in any of the additions is impossible to obtain, but it appears that the greatest number
occurred in Freedmantown. This discovery is hardly surprising given the high degree of concentrated land ownership among white individuals in the other subdivisions. When one individual held title to four or five blocks of property, he or she obviously reduced the opportunities for others to purchase their own lots of land in the addition. Many of the black residents in the additions where the incidence of concentrated ownership was high must have been forced to occupy rental dwellings. In the additions of the Fourth Ward where this type of concentration occurred, the individuals who owned large amounts of property typically did not reside in the neighborhood, thus increasing the rate of absentee ownership.

The subdivision in which absentee ownership of land was most prevalent was the Senechal addition. Although the number of small, independent landowners increased over the decade of the seventies, there remained only a small number of owners who also were residents in the neighborhood. Cornelius Ennis, the major landowner in the area for much of the decade, was replaced by William M. Rice as the individual with the greatest concentration of land by 1880. These two men held in common their livelihood as wealthy merchants in Houston and neither lived in the Fourth Ward.

Not all of the owners of property in the Senechal addition followed the examples of Rice and Ennis. There were others who both owned land and were residents of the area, but their number was small. The number of black property owners who fell into this category represented at most half of the entire group. At no time during the period from 1865 to 1880 was the Senechal addition a neighborhood of black property owners. Nearly all of the blacks who had purchased property in the area at some time prior to 1880—eight of the ten—had chosen to buy lots located in the same block. One may interpret this pattern as indicating either their preference for black neighbors
or their inability to buy land that was not situated next to other blacks. Although blacks did make headway in purchasing property over the period, they remained a small minority of the land owners in the area. According to the 1880 census, blacks comprised a much larger percentage of the residential population than of the property owners in the area, indicating that many blacks were leasing dwellings in the addition.100

In both the Castanie and particularly the Baker additions, there also were a few individuals who remained owners of a substantial amount of property throughout the fifteen year period. As was the case with the Senechal addition, all of the individuals who held multiple lots of property in both subdivisions appeared to be absentee owners. In the Castanie survey, two individuals, Fanny Dooley and Will Powars, remained major land proprietors over the entire period studied. Both were prominent citizens—Fanny Dooley was the wife of H.H. Dooley, the assessor and collector for Harris County; and Will Powars was a civil engineer and surveyor with the Houston Ship Channel Company.101

It is interesting to note that among the white owners of large amounts of property in all five of these additions, there appeared to be numerous business and social connections. Several of the owners served at one time as county officials—either as clerks who witnessed all of the county’s deed transactions or as the county assessor and collector of taxes on real property. Their employment in these positions obviously would have made them privy to information concerning the city’s real estate. In addition, several of them were prominent merchants in town; a number served on the boards of directors of the city’s banks; and many served as senior wardens of Christ Church. One can imagine them sharing tips and inside information regarding property in the city with each other. These interconnections among them may
help explain their mutual interest in investing in property in these additions of the ward.

In addition to these real estate "magnates" in the Castanie and Baker additions, there were a number of other white individuals who held smaller amounts of property. The landholding interests of this group tended to be of two varieties: there were a number of people who held several adjacent lots of land and apparently resided upon all of them; there also were several individuals who held a number of lots in one location of the subdivision but then also owned lots in a completely different area of the addition. Among this second group, the individuals frequently appeared to be living on some of the property that they owned, though they obviously were not residing upon all of their holdings. These individuals were not absentee proprietors, but it is likely that they were renting some portion of their property.

Despite a number of similarities in the patterns of ownership and residence in the Castanie and Baker additions, the Castanie addition differed in one major respect—there was a marked growth in the number of small, independent proprietors who established their homes on the property they owned. The individuals who comprised this group of resident landowners in the Castanie addition were predominantly black. By 1880 a growing proportion of the land in the addition was owned by black residents. Although the black and white residents remained fairly dispersed throughout the addition in 1880, the number of black property owners concentrated in the western portion of the subdivision near the city cemetery had increased dramatically. This pattern, however, was not replicated in the Baker addition, where the incidence of absentee ownership remained fairly high, and the relatively small number of black property owners generally remained scattered throughout the addition.
The patterns of development in the Hopson addition fit none of those found elsewhere. Because the number of property owners in the subdivision at any of the given five-year intervals—1870, 1875, and 1880—remained so small, it is difficult to draw any hard conclusions about the correlation between ownership and residence in the area. A large proportion of the land appeared to remain undeveloped in the hands of the original owner, Sarah Hopson. Those who did purchase property in the subdivision, however, tended to congregate in a six-block section. By 1880 the number of black property owners had jumped significantly from the single black proprietor found there in 1870, but still numbered only ten. On the other hand, blacks comprised not only the largest proportion of property owners in the subdivision in 1880 but also the majority of resident proprietors as well. Nevertheless, their numbers remained so small and there was so much undeveloped land in the subdivision that the inhabited area never had the appearance of a well-defined neighborhood.\textsuperscript{105}

Settlement in the Hardcastle addition proceeded in a most unusual manner when compared to the other additions. In the first five years after the war, only two white individuals—compared to thirty-four blacks—purchased land in the neighborhood, and neither amassed holdings on the scale that occurred in the other additions. John Murchison was the largest landholder in Freedmantown in 1870, owning seven lots of property all of which were located in the same block. As indicated by the 1870 census, Murchison was a resident of the neighborhood, not an absentee owner. The other white owner of property, J. Coryell, owned only half a lot, and although he was not listed in the 1870 census as a resident of the area, the 1869 map indicated his ownership of a dwelling on the property. Thus, either he lived on the
property himself and simply was omitted by the census taker in 1870, or he was renting to a third party.\textsuperscript{106}

John Murchison's choice of residence in Freedmantown--possibly the only white individual living there at this time--is suggested by the 1870 and 1880 census records. While Murchison and his entire family were identified as being "white" in the 1870 census, in 1880 although \textit{his} race still was identified as "white," his children's race was indicated as "mulatto" (his wife apparently had died or divorced him). In addition, in the 1879-80 city directory for Houston, Murchison was identified as "col'd"--the usual designation given to Houston's blacks. It is likely that Murchison actually was black but had been able to "pass" as white. Even if Murchison were white, however, the ostracism he probably felt from the white community because of his children's mixed race may have led him to choose a residential location removed from areas of largely white settlement. Whatever Murchison's reason for choosing to live in Freedmantown, he clearly had opted to locate in an almost exclusively black neighborhood and continued to live there throughout the decade. Residing in Freedmantown in the 1870s meant choosing to live among blacks, for they remained the overwhelming majority of the addition's inhabitants.\textsuperscript{107}

While development in Freedmantown, like that of the Hopson addition, also remained concentrated in a small radius, nearly every lot within the area of settlement was held by a black owner who also resided on his or her property. The trend toward blacks purchasing property and settling upon it continued throughout the 1870s, firmly establishing Freedmantown as a neighborhood in which black property owners comprised the majority of the residents. On the other hand, there also was a marked increase during the fifteen-year period in the degree of concentrated land ownership--particularly
within the more remote areas of the addition—held by white absentee proprietors. Several of these individuals had acquired their property in Freedmantown due to Hardcastle’s default on notes due them. As for the others, perhaps they viewed this neighborhood as an expanding and vital part of Houston’s black community and hoped to “cash in” on its development.108 What these absentee owners intended to do or did with their land during this period is difficult to ascertain. The census records indicate a number of individuals as residents of Freedmantown who were not identified as landowners in the deed records. It stands to reason that these residents were renting their land from someone in the neighborhood—probably one of the white absentee proprietors. There were one or two blacks who appeared to have amassed rather substantial holdings; however, most owned only a single lot of land. The 1869 map also indicates that few of the blacks owning property had subdivided their land further—though some clearly did—to allow for extra tenants.109

Although there was an increase in the number of residents in Freedmantown who were renting their houses and in the number of absentee owners, Freedmantown remained by and large a neighborhood of black property owners—a pattern not duplicated elsewhere in the western additions of the ward. The establishment of the Freedmantown neighborhood marked a tremendous accomplishment on the part of the black community in Houston. Given the fact that the Freedmen's Bureau rarely if ever involved itself in the attainment of personal property or the construction of private dwellings among members of the black community, the blacks in Freedmantown demonstrated an exceptional degree of self-determination in achieving the degree of property ownership that they did. They had limited or no access to credit sources—save the willingness of individual owners to sell property to
them on credit--and many had to overcome the destitute economic positions in which slavery had left them. To create in Freedmantown, as they did, an independent black neighborhood in so short a time was a remarkable feat.\textsuperscript{110}

Freedmantown's creation suggests that blacks engaged actively in the creation of autonomous black residential areas, for the patterns of development that emerged in Freedmantown differed markedly from those found in the surrounding additions of the Fourth Ward. In the Baker, Senechal, Hopson, and to a lesser extent in the Castanie additions blacks remained a minority of the property owners. Several blacks frequently purchased property in the same or adjacent blocks in these additions, but these "enclaves" of black residents remained scattered throughout the neighborhoods of the subdivisions. It appears that blacks may have chosen to live in Freedmantown over these surrounding areas because the neighborhood offered them an unparalleled opportunity to purchase property and live among blacks. As blacks began to lose their political power and protection from northern officials during the 1870s, the role of black residential neighborhoods such as Freedmantown became increasingly important. One wonders, then: if Freedmantown in fact was the one uniquely "black neighborhood" in the ward during the 1870s, did this mean that it also was or became the social focus of the ward's black community? By all indications Freedmantown was a relatively stable residential neighborhood, but whether or not this meant that it became the natural site for the black social and religious institutions of the Fourth Ward is another matter.

\textsuperscript{1}Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 10 February 1865.

\textsuperscript{2}Barry A. Crouch, "Hidden Sources of Black History: The Texas Freedmen's Bureau Records as a Case Study," \textit{Southwestern Historical Quarterly} 83 (January, 1980): 216, 218-219. Schweninger emphasizes that American blacks' desire to obtain land marked a significant reversal from traditional African custom where land was held in common, and there was little emphasis upon private ownership. This shift in attitude demonstrates not only American
blacks' removal from African customs and traditions, but also their realization—if not their complete acceptance—of the importance of land ownership in a primarily agricultural society. See Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 10.

3It is true that most blacks in the Fourth Ward of Houston did not begin to purchase land until early in 1866—after the alleged land redistribution of Christmas 1865—but this probably was due more to their lack of capital in the first months after the war than their hope for a major land redistribution—especially given the absence of abandoned lands in the state. On whites' perceptions of blacks' misplaced hopes of a redistribution of land shortly after Christmas 1865, see Galveston *News*, 14 September 1865. Whites' ridicule of blacks' expectations is even more ludicrous given whites' own persistent hopes that blacks would be reenslaved. See James M. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair: Black Texans During Reconstruction* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1981), 31.

4Contemporary accounts written by whites in Houston often referred indiscriminately to all blacks in the city either as "freedmen" or "freedwomen." Clearly in using the term "freedmen," the whites were not referring exclusively to that portion of the black population who actually had been slaves prior to the war. "Freedmen," it seems, encompassed former slaves and former free blacks. Because of its imprecision, this term will be employed only when in a direct quotation or when the source of information cited specifically states that the data or examples given pertain to "freedmen"—as in this particular case—making it impossible to determine to whom the information applies. In other cases, the term will be avoided.

5For a comparison of the ease of property ownership in urban areas versus rural, see Crouch, "Sources," 219. For Houston's report, see Byron Porter to Bvt. Col. William H. Sinclair, 1 September 1866, Report for the Month Ending August 31, 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Records, Letters Sent, vol. 1, #5716, Record Group 105, National Archives. Unless otherwise stated, all records cited below are in this record group.


7On the economic depression, see David G. McComb, *Houston, the Bayou City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 81; See also, Harold L. Platt, *City Building in the New South* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 48. Schweninger estimates that blacks in urban areas of the South purchased property at a rate three and one-half times faster than did rural blacks. He also suggests that in addition to lower land costs, blacks may have been aided in their attempts to purchase land by the reduction in the number of white males in the South as a result of wartime casualties—a factor that would have worked in favor or rural and urban blacks. Schweninger, *Black Property Owners*, 147.

8That this was a common practice is clear from a survey of the city's deed records. Houston blacks had little access to credit other than through individual property owners because of the limited nature of the city's banking institutions. Most of Houston's banks were privately owned and operated—the first private bank being chartered in 1847. The city's first national bank did not open until 1866 and quickly ran into financial difficulties. On banks in Houston, see Margaret Swett Henson, introduction to *Houston's Forgotten Heritage*.
Landscape, Houses, Interiors, 1824-1914, eds. Dorothy Knox Howe Houghton, et al. (Houston: Rice University Press, 1991), 9; Marguerite Johnston, Houston the Unknown City, 1836-1946 (College Station: Texas A & M UP), 51, 87. Within the Fourth Ward itself, there were frequent occasions upon which white property owners repossessed land that had been sold to blacks with a lien upon it—a common condition in the sale of land to blacks. Also see Beeth and Wintz, Black Dixie, 22.

9 The first horse-drawn street car was not put into operation until 1868 and only ran up and down Main Street. By April, wooden rails had been placed along McKinney for the streetcar service. It was not until 1874 that the service was expanded, running eight cars with turn-about at the Fairgrounds near Main and McGowen, at the Market House, on Main Street, and at the Union and Central depots. In addition, in November 1874, the Houston Daily Telegraph announced the opening of the streetcar line to San Felipe road, traveling within 150 yards of the old cemetery—approximately to the eastern edge of Freedmantown. This expansion clearly made land located in the western section of the ward more accessible to the city’s population, but by this point a large number of blacks already had purchased land in Freedmantown and the adjacent neighborhoods. On the expansion of the streetcar line to San Felipe road, see Houston Daily Telegraph, 11 November 1874, quoted in Ann Wellington, comp., WPA Files. For description of the turn-about see Johnston, Unknown City, 79, 87; For a more concise history of the streetcar system, see Platt, City Building, 32-33, 92-93; Vertical File H-Streetcars, MRC, Houston Public Library.

10 The favorable situation of blacks wishing to purchase land in Houston was replicated in a number of the “newer” southern cities. Over the postwar period, particularly during the 1870s and eighties, blacks found increasing opportunities for land purchase in Atlanta, Birmingham, Jacksonville, as well as in Houston. In contrast, blacks in older cities like Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans, and Mobile found fewer such opportunities. See Schweninger, Black Property Owners, 167.

11 Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (New York: Oxford UP, 1978), 103. It is important to reiterate the different usages of the terms "neighborhood" and "community" in this work. Neighborhood is used to refer specifically to a spatial entity. A neighborhood is considered to be a group of streets and blocks located together so as to precipitate physical contact between the residents.

In contrast to the spatial definition of a "neighborhood," the term "community" is seen as more of an associational bond between individuals. As used in this work, a "community" is considered to be based upon a spirit of mutuality that arises among a group of people from their shared interests or associations.

12 On blacks’ movement into Houston, see Beeth and Wintz, Black Dixie, 20. On the Confederate shoe shop, see Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 1 December 1865. There is no indication of where this shoe shop was located, although it probably was located somewhere along the banks of the Bayou so as to facilitate transport of the goods produced. On problems with "negro dens," see Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 19 July 1865. Additional references to the city’s problems with "negro dens" are found in the Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 25, 28 August 1865.

13 For the report about the crowded house in Houston, see Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 19 July 1865. On connection between "negrodom" and "filth," see ibid., 26 July 1865. For comments about the article in the Shreveport News, see Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 21 August 1865.
Opposition to black areas of settlement is expressed in from *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 7, 26 July; 21 August 1865. For descriptions of urban living conditions of the South’s black population, see John Blassingame, “Before the Ghetto: The Making of the Black Community in Savannah, Georgia, 1865-1880,” *Journal of Social History*, VI (Summer, 1973), 469; and Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 116. In their study of the economic situation of blacks in the postwar South, Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch assert that the trend for blacks to settle in urban areas in the aftermath of the war was the most troubling aspect of black mobility to white contemporaries. See Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 62.

Galveston News, 19 September 1865.

The Houston *Daily Telegraph*, 24 September 1866, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., “Newspaper Clippings,” Houston, Texas, WPA Files, MRC.


I can find no other reference to Hanna & Co.’s “freedmen’s bureau” to which the newspaper article cited refers. However, the local office of the United States Freedmen’s Bureau was located close to the area described. See *Houston Daily Times*, 1 October 1868; ibid., 16 January 1869, quoted in Ruth Denny, comp., “Newspaper Clippings,” Houston, Texas, WPA Files, MRC. For an additional reference to a group of shanties located “downtown,” see ibid., 18 September 1868, quoted in Leonard J. Fohn, comp., “Newspaper Clippings,” Houston, Texas, WPA Files, MRC. For a description of the Hutchins House and its location in the city, see S. O. Young, *Thumbnail History*, 50-51.


*Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 18 August 1865.


Rabinowitz succinctly summarizes the lines of debate surrounding this issue in the “Epilogue” to *Race Relations*, 331-332.

26Blassingame also shows that in New Orleans, which had a tremendous free black population, integrated housing patterns persisted into the postwar years. The wide range of residential development in southern cities is further illustrated by John Kellogg's study of Lexington, Richmond, Atlanta, and Durham. He shows that in all of these cities, despite their different histories, the same segregated patterns of development, or "urban clusters" as he calls them, developed in each. See Blassingame, "Before the Ghetto," 481, 484; idem, Black New Orleans (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 208; Kellogg, "Urban Clusters," 314-317.

27On the number of free blacks in Atlanta, see James Michael Russell, Atlanta, 1847-1890: City Building in the Old South and the New (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 70. On Houston's free black population, see Manuscript Census Returns, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Harris County, Texas, Schedule 1, Free Population, National Archives Microfilm Series, Roll 282.

28A newspaper article in June 1875 estimated the Fourth Ward's population at 9,095. Whether the population had declined or whether the census enumerator in 1880 underestimated the population is uncertain, but it seems likely that the smaller count in 1880 reflected a combination of these two factors. On the 1875 population, see Daily Houston Telegraph, 4 June 1875.

29The Reconstruction government in Houston attempted in the early 1870s to expand the current limits of the city, but the changes made were reversed within two years. Therefore, the limits defined by the 1839 charter and its 1840 supplement in fact remained in effect until the early twentieth century. See Young, Thumbnail History, 11; City Planning Commission, 1929, Report of the City Planning Commission, Houston, Texas, 23.

30Rabinowitz, Race Relations, 98.


32Deed Records 1836-1904, Harris County, Harris County Court House.

33City directories of the 1860s gave very imprecise address information for blacks, when it was provided at all. The early directories appear to have omitted names sporadically, and black listings often were underrepresented. Thus the census provides a better indication of the housing patterns of blacks and whites. Using the census as a window into the demographic composition of the Fourth Ward, however, is complicated by the fact that the census obviously reflects the ward's inhabitants only at one specific point in time. Moreover, it is probable that the 1870 census takers undercounted the number of inhabitants in Houston, as they did across the South. These cautions aside, in using the census, I have made the assumption that the census enumerator proceeded in an orderly fashion through the ward, going house to house or crossing the street at regular intervals. Based on this assumption, one may presume that the census actually provides a fairly accurate depiction of the occupants of a certain street or a certain neighborhood in the city. See Manuscript Census Returns, Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, Texas, Vol. 9, Guadalupe, Hamilton, Hardin and Harris Counties, National Archives Microfilm Publications (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1965). For a description of the problems with the 1870 census, see Rabinowitz, Race
Relations, 19 n.2. On the 1870 and other censuses, see Schweninger, Black Property Owners, 371-374;

34Manuscript Census Returns, 1870, This is of course assuming that the census taker proceeded in a logical manner, going house-to-house. It is probable that in some cases, rather than living next door to each other, black and white dwellings were located across the street, or simply on the same block. It is also impossible to know whether or not there were vacant lots between the homes listed next to each other in the census. Because the city directories at this time listed street addresses for only a small number of the city's inhabitants, it is impossible to cross-check the census listings for precise residential location. Nevertheless, it seems apparent that there were a number of areas where blacks and whites were living in close proximity.

35Wintz, "Black Neighborhood," 103-104. Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 8 September 1865; Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration (WPA), Houston: A History and Guide, (Houston: Anson Jones Press, 1942), 81. The ordinance as presented in the city directory authorized the board of health to set restrictions on the number of people allowed in any particular house. For the full text of the ordinance, see Houston City Directory 1866, (Dallas: R.L. Polk & Co., 1866), 66.

36This interaction would have occurred unless all whites lived in the eastern portion of the ward, while all blacks lived in the western part. This living pattern would have made it virtually unnecessary for whites to venture through neighborhoods where a number of blacks were resident. While blacks did tend to locate in the more remote regions of the Fourth Ward, this trend was not absolute. On free blacks in the prewar period, see Muir, "Free Negro," 214-215; on the emergence of postwar segregation, see Wintz, "The Emergence of a Black Neighborhood," 103-105; and on segregation in Houston during the twentieth century, see Robert D. Bullard, Invisible Houston: The Black Experience in Boom and Bust (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987), 216.

37Jackson, "Houston People," 89-92.

38For a description of Freedmantown's location, see Deed Records 1836-1904, Harris County, Harris County Court House, vol. 3, 525. W.E. Wood, Map of Houston, Harris County, Texas, 15 January 1866, MRC, Houston Public Library.

39Admittedly, blacks living around white households often were listed as servants, but this was not always the case. While several of the wealthier individuals were found on the same page of the manuscript, there were others listed in completely different places. The Fourth Ward, however, apparently was not the central location for the wealthy residents of Houston. Of the 72 men listed in the 1870-71 city directory as "prominent business men" in Houston, only 6 were listed in the 1870 census as residents of the Fourth Ward. See Manuscript Census Returns, 1870; Houston City Directory 1870-71, (Houston: William Murray, 1870).

40John Blasingame also suggests the connection between skills learned during slavery and postwar occupations of Savannah blacks. On blacks in Savannah, see Blasingame, "Before the Ghetto," 465-466. It is unclear when blacks began to be pushed out of these occupations, but the attraction of cheap labor obviously led many whites to continue hiring them. On the occupations of Fourth Ward residents, see Manuscript Census, 1870. See Appendix 1 for a full occupational listing for the heads of household in the Fourth Ward.
Newspaper accounts reveal that blacks throughout the city were concentrated in these low-status jobs, and thus that the occupational split between blacks and whites was replicated throughout the city. Nevertheless, the division of the city into wards on strictly geographical terms ensured that blacks and whites would turn more often to others in their own wards, to the local grocer or merchant or to local washerwomen, seamstresses, and draymen, to fulfill their daily and business needs.

There seemed to be no direct correlation between foreign-born residents of the ward and specific occupations. Foreigners served in almost every occupation held by Fourth Ward whites. There were, however, no foreign-born residents to hold county or local office—probably due to citizenship requirements. In addition, there were relatively few professionals, although this was true for all whites throughout the ward. Foreign-born whites were slightly overrepresented in craft-related and commercial occupations. They comprised, for example, the majority of wholesale and retail merchants (79% of the total). However, foreign-born whites for the most part showed a notable variety in their occupations. See Manuscript Census Returns, 1870.

*Daily and Sunday Telegraph*, 16 March 1867, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., "Newspaper Clippings," WPA Files, MRC. This announcement appeared despite the fact that in 1865 the paper had applauded whites’ replacement of blacks as drivers of most of the city’s drays. See *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 10, 12 July 1865, quoted in Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 29.

For foreign-born population in the Fourth Ward, see Manuscript Census Returns, 1870; For foreign-born population in Houston as a whole, see Houghton et al., *Houston’s Forgotten Heritage*, 12; McComb, *Bayou City*, 52. The foreign-born population in Harris County was a slightly higher 37 percent. On the foreign-born in Harris County, see Francis A. Walker, *A Compendium of the Ninth Census, June 1, 1870* (Government Printing Office: Washington, 1872), 436. Rabinowitz discusses the prevalence of foreign-born whites in black neighborhoods, see Rabinowitz, *Race Relations*, 112.

A contemporary view of the conflicts between black and white laborers is found in the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 22 December 1865. For a discussion of the growing animosity between black and white workers and black exclusion from trade unions, see Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie*, 91-92.

By cross-referencing the names of property owners in Freedmantown with the manuscript census it is possible, since so many of the property owners were residents of the area, to delineate with a relatively high degree of specificity that area encompassed by this addition. By separate households, I am referring to individual dwellings. When a second family was living under another’s roof, its family head was not counted in this tabulation. See Manuscript Census Returns, 1870; Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie*, 22-23.

Manuscript Census Returns, 1870. Deed Records 1836-1904, Harris County, Harris County Courthouse. While the grocer, Charles Voss, may have underestimated his property holdings because he believed that it would enable him to escape taxation, there would have been little reason for him to overestimate his holdings. This woman’s identification as a prostitute was the only indication found in the census or otherwise during this period that there might be any connection between the Freedmantown neighborhood and prostitution. However, the neighborhood became directly associated with vice when the city council elected to establish a legal red light district over much of the Hardcastle addition. For the history of Houston’s "Reservation," see Thomas Clyde Mackey, "Red Lights Out: A Legal History of
Prostitution, Disorderly Houses, and Vice Districts, 1870-1917," (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1984), 192-222.

47 The census records for Harris County in 1870 and 1880 appear to have noted real and personal property holdings of the inhabitants only sporadically—this was especially true for blacks. This omission no doubt arose because of the manner in which amounts of property were assessed by the census takers. The enumerator simply was instructed to ask the individual how much personal and real property he possessed. Thus, the accuracy of the data reported depended purely on the individual's honest disclosure of his assets and the census taker's accurate recording of his or her response. For a copy of the instructions given to the census enumerators in 1860—presumably those in 1870 were similar—see Lee Soltow, Men and Wealth in the United States, 1850-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 1. See Manuscript Census Returns, 1870.

48 Presumably this gave blacks in Freedmantown an advantage in the labor market, but there is a major difficulty in using occupational status as an indicator of economic well-being. It is impossible to ascertain from the occupational data derived from the census how successful blacks were in obtaining gainful employment and what level of wages they were able to command. Nevertheless, since making this determination for blacks throughout the ward would be equally difficult, one may assume that the opportunities for blacks in any given occupation were basically the same in each of the additions of the ward. See Manuscript Census, 1870.

49 While there were only 3 households with more than one family, there were several in which a number of children of different family names were living. These children may have been orphans or extended family members. See Manuscript Census Returns, 1870. For information on the Fourth Ward as a whole, see Wintz, "Black Neighborhood," 101-102.

50 There is some difficulty in comparing the census returns for 1870 and 1880, since the 1870 census divided areas of the city by ward for enumeration purposes. In contrast, the 1880 census identified areas of the city according to enumeration district and then offered a cross-reference by ward. The 1880 census also added street names down the left hand side of each of the pages, facilitating the attempt to locate residents in certain areas of the city. The problem arises that many of the outlying residential areas in the Fourth Ward apparently had no recognized street names. Areas within Freedmantown, for instance, are identified only as being "Between San Felipe and the Bayou." Likewise, the streets in surrounding subdivisions often simply were assigned the names of the streets of the central business area of which they could have been extensions. Nevertheless, it is possible using old maps and matching names from deed records to identify parts of enumeration districts (ED) #85 and #76 as the ones that would have covered most of the subdivisions immediately surrounding Freedmantown. Freedmantown itself appeared to be located in part of ED #76.

In so narrowing the area of study with the 1880 census, the relevant portion of the census manuscript is much more clearly defined and limited than the one used in the analysis of the same neighborhoods in 1870. Compared to the 608 households studied from the 1870 census, only 337 are examined from the 1880. Since it is so much easier to narrow the area of focus using the 1880 census, the statistics cited for this year are more accurate and certainly more descriptive of the area of the Fourth Ward that comprised the five subdivisions examined in this thesis. However, the statistics cited for 1880 make those for 1870 appear somewhat distorted, since those for 1870 represent the entire ward, not just the western-most additions. This said, the reader should also remember that the ward was less well-developed and thus significantly smaller in 1870 than in 1880, helping to reduce the margin of error. The reader
also should keep in mind that when statistics are cited for the entire Fourth Ward, they exclude
the residents of Freedmantown.

Figures for the population of the Fourth Ward in 1880 slightly underestimate the total
number of people residing in the ward. There was one enumeration district in the census that
combined all of the residents of the First Ward with a portion of those in the Fourth. Since
there was no way to delineate the residents of these two wards from one another—many of the
street names listed in the census spanned the two wards—for the purposes of this paper I have
simply eliminated this enumeration district from my calculations. However, since the area of
the Fourth Ward that was eliminated was north of Buffalo Bayou, there probably was only
limited interaction between the residents of this area and the portion of the Fourth Ward on the
south side of the Bayou. See Manuscript Census Returns, *Tenth Census of the United States:
1880, Texas, Harris County*, National Archives Microfilm Publications (Washington, D.C.:
National Archives, 1965).

51Ibid. Among the white residents of the enumeration districts 85 and 76, the 1880
census indicated one instance of interracial marriage. Given the South’s traditional disdain of
such liaisons, it is quite likely that this couple chose or was urged to choose a residence outside
of a neighborhood where white residents predominated.

52Manuscript Census Returns, 1880.

53Ibid.

54There were 3 percent fewer in service-related occupations, 5 percent fewer in craft-
related industries, and 6 percent fewer in commercial occupations. See Manuscript Census
Returns, 1880.

55As noted earlier, despite Freedmantown’s later association with prostitution and its
designation as a legal vice district, there was nothing to indicate that at this early date their were
any houses of ill repute in the neighborhood. Thus while it is possible that these women who
listed their occupations as “at home” were running houses of prostitution, there is no evidence
to suggest that this was the case. On the neighborhood’s later development as a vice district,
see Mackey, “Red Lights Out,” 193, 234.

56Manuscript Census Returns, 1880. The average number of occupants per household
had increased only slightly to 3.9. It is important to keep in mind that there probably was a
decrease in the economic status of all inhabitants of the city—black and white—due to the
economic depression of the early 1870s. That blacks in Freedmantown were not more severely
and perhaps not as severely affected by the depression is illustrated by the fact that property
transactions involving black individuals reached a peak in Freedmantown during this period.

57Ibid. It is difficult to tell the actual number of residents in each of these additions,
but the growth in the number of property owners in this section of the ward shows that the
entire area was becoming more densely settled. See Appendix 2 for maps showing number of
property owners and residents.

58Howard Jones, *The Red Diary: A Chronological History of Black Americans in
Houston and Some Neighboring Harris County Communities* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1991),
37, 30.
Hardcastle's one slave was a male, age 42. See Manuscript Census Returns, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Harris County, Texas, Schedule 2, Slave Population, National Archives Microfilm Series, Roll 286, p.20 (hereafter referred to as "Slave Population, 1860").


Rabinowitz, Race Relations, 100.

For a description of Harrisburg's location, see McComb, Bayou City, 14. For a description of the confederate camps, see Bill Winsor, Texas in the Confederacy, 1861-1865: Military Installations, Economy, and People, (Hillsboro: Hill Junior College Press, 1978), 19, 23, 24, 35. On the location of the Freedmen's Bureau office, see Houston City Directory 1867-68, (Houston: Gray, Smallwood & Co., 1867). The Bureau's office was located just across the street from the settlement earlier identified as Hanna's Nest, indicating that some of the ward's blacks may have located their residences so as to have easy access to the local agents.

Wintz, "Black Neighborhood," 100.

It is difficult to make a relative comparison of the number of blacks settling in each of the additions because the additions differed so much in size. There were 251 total lots available for sale in the Hardcastle addition, 310 in the Castanie, 330 in the Baker and only 144 in the Hopson and 90 in the Senechal additions. Since it is impossible to delineate specific additions other than Freedmantown within the 1870 and 1880 censuses, the only way to compare the number of blacks in each is through the deed records. Since most blacks who were property owners in these additions also appeared as residents, this method of comparison probably is fairly accurate. The largest absolute number of blacks appeared in Freedmantown, though the number in the Castanie addition measured a close second. See Appendix 3 for comparison of the total numbers purchasing property in each addition.

Epidemics of yellow fever had been frequent and severe in the city's history, erupting in 1839, 1844, 1847, 1848, 1854, 1855, 1858, 1859, 1862, and 1867. During the 1867 outbreak the Galveston Daily News reported that the epidemic had grown worse during the recent hot spell, particularly within the Fourth Ward. See McComb, Bayou City, 88 and Galveston Daily News, 27 September 1867. For a description of a storm that created a "perfect flood" from the bayou, see Daily Telegraph, 6 June 1871, quoted in J. Therrien, comp., WPA Files. There was no direct evidence that there was a hospital in operation on this land adjacent to Freedmantown, but in 1872 a newspaper article reported a proposal to relocate the city hospital from Rusk Street to a ten acre spot, "near the old graveyard and adjoining the bayou. It was formerly the site of the old hospital, and belongs to the city." See Daily Telegraph, 23 July 1872, quoted in Ruth Denny, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

Kellogg, "Urban Clusters," 311, 313. The city eventually decided to close the cemetery as of June 1871 and paid to have it refenced, but the white inhabitants of the city continued to view it as a "disgrace to the city." For contemporary newspaper articles concerning the unsanitary and unsightly nature of the city's cemetery, see Daily Houston
Telegraph 31 January 1871, quoted in Thelma Harris, WPA Files; Daily Telegraph 26 March, 15 December 1871, quoted in J. Therrien and William Dillard, comps., WPA Files.

67 Nashville Republican Banner, 2 January 1872, quoted in Rabinowitz, Urban Race Relations, 119.

68 On the Bureau’s report, see Crouch, "Sources," 219. For complaints about the rents being charged, see Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 9 October 1865; The Weekly Telegraph, 14 May 1867, in Franklin; Daily and Sunday Telegraph, 19 May 1867, in Franklin, WPA Files, MRC. This situation, moreover, seems to have persisted into the 1870s, see Galveston Daily News, 7 July 1871, quoted in Margaret Lenox, comp., WPA Files; Daily Houston Telegraph, 24 January 1871, quoted in Thelma Harris, comp., WPA Files.


70 In 1872 the Daily Telegraph reported average daily wages for a number of occupations. The following wages were reported: Railway engineers, $3.33 1/3; Railway conductors, $4.16 2/3; Railway brakemen, $2.00; Printers (average), $4.00; Bricklayers, $5.00; Plasterers, $4.00; Carpenters, $3.50; Draymen, $3.00; Barbers, $2.50; Clerks, mercantile, $3.00; Clerk, railway, steamboat, etc., $5.00; Day laborers at wharves, $3.00; Mortar carriers, $1.30; Hackmen, $1.50; Stone masons, $5.00; Editors and reporters, $2.30; Common laborers, $1.00. See Daily Telegraph, 14 June 1872, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

71 Kellogg, “Urban Clusters,” 312. The fact that this land was located outside of the city's fire limits also probably reduced its value. However according to a newspaper account, it was difficult to find "desirable tenements even in the suburbs." See Daily Houston Telegraph 24 January, 1871. See n.94 below.

72 The popularity of lots located in the central city no doubt meant that they were extremely expensive as well. A newspaper article in July 1875 advertised the sale of lots on Milam, Travis, and Louisiana streets for $1200 to $2000 a block—apparently a good deal more expensive than the land in the western additions of the ward. See Houston Daily Telegraph, 23 July 1875, quoted in Johnnie Therrien, comp., WPA Files; Johnston, Houston, 86. Although Quality Hill, the first prestigious suburb in Houston, was developed at this time, it still was centrally located—on Congress near Jackson and Crawford—in comparison to the western subdivisions of the Fourth Ward. Moreover, this neighborhood attracted only the elite of Houston, what Ziegler calls Houston's "four hundred" of that period. See Ziegler, Wave, 35. A newspaper announced in 1872 that one of the city's "mercantile men" had moved his home "clear out of the city limits to avoid the increasing taxation on city real estate," indicating the burden all property owners in the city faced. See Daily Telegraph, 18 October 1872, quoted in Ruth Denney, comp., WPA Files.

73 There is another basis for choosing these five additions for study. The area that today is popularly referred to as Houston’s “fourth ward”—home to a predominantly black residential population—encompasses primarily the land located in these five additions. Throughout the 1870s much of this area probably remained sparsely settled, but this began to change toward the end of the nineteenth century. On the increasing number of blacks in this section of the Fourth Ward see Wintz, “Black Neighborhood,” 100-104.
Deed Records 1836-1904, Harris County, Harris County Court House; vol. P, 570.

Index to Real Property Register, Harris County, Harris County Court House, G.S. Hardcastle Property, recorded July 10, 1875; vol. 15: 22. The exact origins of the name “Freedmantown” are unclear. Whether this was a term developed and used exclusively by the white population of Houston, or whether blacks too referred to this area as Freedmantown is uncertain. The county used the designation “Hardcastle Addition” almost exclusively in the registers for the deed records. However, in the actual text of the deeds, there were at least three instances prior to 1875 where the clerk identified the property as being located in “Freedmanville.” The use of this term before Hardcastle’s filing of the plat map with the county suggests that there was a popular perception of this area as the domain of the city’s black residents. In addition, a newspaper article in 1871 stated that “nearly the whole population” surrounding the old City Cemetery was black. For cases where area is referred to as “Freedmanville,” see Deed Records 1836-1904, Harris County, Harris County Court House, vol. 9B: 531; ibid., vol. 10: 533; ibid., vol. 29: 91. For the newspaper reference, see Daily Telegraph, 15 December 1871, quoted in William Dillard, comp., WPA Files, MRC.


Pocket Map showing the railroads, street railways, manufacturers, deep water connections, blocks and subdivisions, City of Houston, 1892, Meredith H. James, Jr., M.A.I. and M.H. James, Sr., M.A.I., Realtors-Appraisers.


Wood, Map of Houston, 1869. The maps' incomplete depictions are made apparent by the 1870 census which lists the number of households visited. Assuming that the census taker did not “invent” the presence of houses in the ward, there clearly were more residential dwellings in the Fourth Ward than those shown on the map.

Tax Assessment Rolls 1837-72, Reel 1; 1872-1881, Reel 2, Harris County, Harris County Court House; Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company. The tax records present a problem in trying to identify all of the property owners in a specific addition because they appeared to frequently omit several of the proprietors in an addition. There was a great deal of property that escaped assessment, as is indicated by the numerous suits brought against property owners in later years for their failure to pay the appropriate taxes. In addition, there was a change in the law concerning property registration with the county in April 1861. According to the new law, a non-resident property owner was permitted to file land for taxation either in the county in which it was situated or in the county of which the owner was a resident. This apparently allowed for a large amount of property to escape assessment. See Miller, Collected Papers, 7. Both tax and deed records have been used in attempting to reconstruct property ownership patterns, so as to reduce the margin of error caused by such omissions.

Clearly, it is possible, as Muir indicates in his study of free blacks in Harris County prior to the war, that land actually owned by black individuals prior to the war was being held for them by white citizens. However, one would expect that if this were the case, then following emancipation the property would have been transferred into the hands of the black owner. Only in the Castanie and Hardcastle additions were there a number of purchases made
by blacks in 1866. In the Castanie addition, every one of these transactions was made with a single individual, Pierre Lawrence. Likewise, all of the transactions in the Hardcastle addition were made with G. S. Hardcastle himself. It seems highly unlikely that either of these two men were standing as a proxy in the prewar years for all of the black individuals who purchased land immediately following the war. Thus if there were incidences of land ownership by free blacks in Houston within this area of the Fourth Ward, they were extremely rare—if they occurred at all.

81Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company. On Harrall, see Houston City Directory 1866; On Ennis, see Houghton et al., Houston’s Forgotten Heritage, 116.

82Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company. See Appendix 2 for maps of the subdivisions showing property ownership.

83The way in which deeds were recorded in the registers—simply listing the consideration given, a rather arbitrary sum probably decided upon by the two individuals involved—makes it impossible to determine whether or not the actual price of land declined during this period. Since I have employed only compilations of these registers, maintained by employees of Stewart Title Company, I had access only to the monetary information copied from these registers. See Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company.

It is ironic to note as well that this increase occurred precisely at the time that Republicans were beginning to lose their power state-wide. Perhaps blacks were becoming more eager and whites more willing to allow blacks to segregate themselves. See Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 154-157.

84“Senechal Addition,” Subdivision Books. Blacks’ success in purchasing property in the addition during these years suggests that blacks were not as hard hit by the city’s depressed economy. In addition to black individuals purchasing property in the addition during the 1870s, the trustees of Antioch Baptist Church also secured land in this addition for the site of their church. There were an additional twelve percent of those purchasing property within the subdivision who could not be located either in city directories or in the census manuscripts for Houston.

To arrive at these figures, individuals were counted each time that they made a deed transaction only if the individual deeds were for different pieces of property, located in different blocks. There were occasions when a specific transaction would be listed twice in the register, presumably in order to record an additional receipt of money or some other change in the status of the property. These cases were counted only once. In addition, I have counted husband and wife as two separate transactions only when they appeared individually in the deed registers. For instance, when Hardcastle sold property to Haywood and Elizabeth Oats, this was seen as one transaction, involving one couple. However, if he made transactions individually with both Haywood and Elizabeth, both were included in the count of individual transactions.

It also should be noted that the registers compiled by Stewart Title Company used in these calculations contained numerous misspellings of names and even misidentifications. Usually these errors could be caught by tracing the individual through several years of transactions in the register. However, when this method did not suffice, I simply have had to rely on intuition. For example, the register for the Castanie addition indicated that property was sold to John Soran, but I never could locate this individual in the tax records or the city directories for Houston. I did, however, find that a John Loran owned property in the Castanie addition at roughly the same time period. I therefore have assumed that the clerk for Stewart Title who transcribed the transactions from the Harris County deed books into the registers for Stewart Title simply misread the name. When I did not feel certain that I could
accurately identify the person listed in the register, I listed the person’s sex and/or race as "unknown."


86bid.

87It was in 1874 that the state of Texas was “redeemed” from Reconstruction government. Whether or not this had anything to do with this decline is uncertain. Certainly in the Hardcastle addition this occurrence had no bearing on the frequency with which blacks purchased property. In the other additions, the number of transactions made with blacks either remained steady over the late seventies or declined slightly. For description of the establishment of “Redeemer government” in Houston, see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 549; Carl H. Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas,* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 191-195. On property transactions, see "Castanie Addition," Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company.


89"Castanie Addition," Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company.

90“Hardcastle Addition,” Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company. 1875 was the year in which Garrett Hardcastle defaulted on a number of outstanding notes—an occurrence that no doubt was precipitated by the city’s own financial crisis. Hardcastle, it seems, had entered into a number of bond transactions with the city, and their own defaults during the early seventies created financial problems for their creditors like Hardcastle. This caused him to lose title to several lots of his property and also probably made him more willing to sell his land to obtain cash. He also transferred title to a large number of lots to his sister, Marion, presumably hoping to avoid loss of them in case of bankruptcy. For description of the city’s defaulting on debts, see McComb, *Bayou City,* 125. For references to Hardcastle’s economic losses, see “Abstracts of Title Collection,” 78-80, 82.

91The location of black residential areas such as Freedmantown on a major thoroughfare was peculiar in comparison to other southern cities. Kellogg claims that the “cluster settlements” of blacks in the urban South tended to appear where no major streets existed. They developed in the interiors of blocks where new streets and alleys had to be constructed. See Kellogg, “Lexington,” 33. The number of white property owners—many of whom were leading figures in Houston—did increase in the Hardcastle addition during the 1870s, but few appear to have purchased the land with the intent of establishing commercial enterprises.

92"Hardcastle Addition," Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company. There were an additional four blocks in the Hardcastle addition that although included on the area’s original plat map did not “fit” with the rest of the addition. They were located on the eastern edge of the addition next to the Hopson addition. Hardcastle did not begin selling lots in these blocks until 1875 and almost all were sold to white individuals. Because of their late and seemingly unrelated development, they have not been counted in the calculations for Freedmantown. When they are factored in, the proportion of blacks purchasing property drops and the percentage of whites increases.
93"Hopson Addition," Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company.

94Since the register to the deed records for Harris County does not indicate full purchase price, the assessed value of the land provided by county tax records is the only means by which one can attempt to determine variations in the land's worth. However, the tax records surveyed—1870, 1875, and 1880—indicate an extremely haphazard method of land valuation. In the Castanie addition, for example, one property owner listed the value of 62 lots that he owned as $500, while another individual indicated that 2 lots were worth $1000. Similar cases appeared in all of the additions' tax records. These values, moreover, do not seem to correlate with the location of the property within the subdivision or with the identity of the owner. Thus drawing any conclusions as to comparative land values is hazardous at best. It is clear, however, that land in all but the Baker addition (where land clearly was undervalued in the earlier assessments) declined during the decade. While this drop in value in 1875 may be explained by the repercussions of the nationwide depression of 1873, this explanation does not suffice for the values in 1880. Perhaps it was devalued due to the development of more "attractive" residential areas. Even though a number of wealthy individuals continued to live in the ward, they increasingly located outside of these western additions, suggesting that they had been left largely to blacks and the city's economic unfortunates. See Appendix 4 for a comparison of average lot values in these subdivisions.

95Whites also probably did not want to live in Freedmowntown because of its rapidly growing association with the black community. None of the historians who have written previously about the development of housing patterns in Houston have suggested the connection between the fall of Reconstruction government and the growth of segregation in the city, but the correlation seems implicit. McComb, for example, claims that by 1875 segregation in Houston was entrenched. Later he suggests that 1875 may have been the year of origin for segregation in the city, claiming that "included in the societal changes from 1875 to 1930 was also the increased estrangement of the white and black races." In a study of the demographic changes of a small town in South Carolina, Orville Vernon Burton shows that a similar reaction to post-Reconstruction circumstances occurred. However, since town life for blacks was more limited than that offered in a city the size of Houston, blacks chose to leave the town altogether in their search of autonomy and freedom. It seems probable that blacks living in a city could remove themselves fairly successfully from white surveillance without having to abandon the city altogether. The way in which Freedmowntown developed, with black residential concentration remaining high throughout the 1870s, and the way that the surrounding neighborhoods became increasingly settled by blacks during the 1870s suggest the applicability of this explanation to the post-Reconstruction situation in Houston. See McComb, Bayou City, 86, 157; Orville Vernon Burton, "The Rise and Fall of Afro-American Town Life: Town and Country in Reconstruction Edgefield, South Carolina," in Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr. (eds.), Toward a New South? Studies in Post-Civil War Southern Communities (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982), 177-180, 185-186.

96Jackson, "Movin On," 266. The large number of property owners in Freedmowntown may also have helped develop a sense of "neighborhood community" among the residents.

97On the importance of home-ownership to Americans, see Kenneth T. Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 50-51. On the importance of home ownership to blacks in the South, see Schweninger, Black Property Owners, 169-170. Homeownership also was probably easier in the western-most subdivisions of the Fourth Ward since an ordinance passed by the city council in September 1874 prohibited the future construction of any wooden buildings within
the fire limits of the city. These limits, however, were quite narrow, leaving a large portion of the city unaffected by the ordinance. Thus, while this explains why blacks may have chosen not to live in the central section of the city, it does not explain why so many chose Freedmantown in particular. On the fire limits of the city, see Houston City Directory 1880-81, (Houston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1880); for an illustration of the city’s fire limits in 1880—the same ones remained in 1885—see Appendix 5.

Combining deed and census data is a difficult task given the irregularity of listings in each source. To determine whether or not someone was both a property owner and a resident, the following method was used. A list of all the property owners in each of the subdivisions was compiled. This list then was checked against the census records of 1870 and 1880 to determine whether or not the individuals appeared to be living in the place in which they owned property. Because a large majority of the names did not appear in the census records and it was often difficult to determine their precise residential location even when they did appear, a thorough search also was made of the city directories during the fifteen year period to obtain a more complete listing of addresses. In addition, fragments of information obtained from various secondary sources such as travel accounts and histories of specific institutions in Houston helped draw a clearer picture of the individuals who owned property or lived in the area. Needless to say, there were a number of individuals who could not be located through any of the resources listed above. Their identification awaits future research, and they simply have been relegated to the list of “uncertainties” surrounding the development of this area of the ward. A correlation between proprietors and inhabitants within each subdivision was extremely difficult to make for the reasons listed above. Therefore, I have attempted to reduce the distorting affects of using the available sources by looking at property ownership and actual residence in an area as two separate factors.

In 1871 Ennis finally abandoned his home in the central business area of the city to move to the “first fashionable residential district” in the city, Quality Hill. Quality Hill was located on the banks of Buffalo Bayou, bounded north by the Bayou, east by Crawford, south by Congress, and west by Austin. Perhaps Ennis had tired of “city life” or wanted more open land around his home. Whatever the reason, it is highly suggestive that although he owned a great deal of land in the Senechal subdivision, he chose not to make it his place of residence. Clearly, his propertied interest in the area was solely financial. That this also was the case with Rice is probable, for Rice had never lived outside of the central business area while in Houston, and had moved to New York in 1867. On Quality Hill, see Ziegler, Wave, 35; On Ennis's home, see Houghton et al., Houston’s Forgotten Heritage, 116. Rice’s house was located at San Jacinto and Franklin. On Rice’s home, see Ziegler, Wave, 65; Johnston, Unknown City, 99.

Since the 1880 census records merely indicate street names down the side of the page, it is difficult to know precisely where the dwellings were located. By locating together in the census manuscript several of the names of property owners in the subdivision, however, I have concluded that the area described must be at least a portion of the Senechal addition. For the area that appeared to correspond to the Senechal addition, the census taker merely noted that the streets were not named or numbered. Therefore, it is impossible to determine conclusively where the residences were located. Within this area, there were more black residents than appeared in the deed records as owners of property, leading me to the conclusion that many were occupying rental property. See Manuscript Census Returns, 1880.

“Senechal Addition,” Subdivision Books. Fanny Dooley’s ownership of this property may have been prompted by the Texas law excluding land owned by women from
their husband’s liabilities. Dooley would have been in a better position than any other person to understand the legal intricacies and liabilities of property ownership and taxation. That his wife held all of their property in her name may confirm Suzanne Lebsock’s explanation for the motivations of men in allowing their wives to hold property. For a discussion of the property law and exemptions of property held by men’s wives during this period in Texas, see Suzanne D. Lebsock, “Radical Reconstruction and the Property Rights of Southern Women,” Journal of Southern History, XLIII, (May 1977), 196, 202. The largest proprietor in the Baker addition was James A. Chandler. Chandler sold all of his property to F.W. Chandler, either his son or his brother, in 1872, but the family remained the largest property owners in the addition. See Subdivision Books, “Baker Addition,” Stewart Title Company. On Dooley, see Houston City Directory 1866. On Powars, see Houston’s Forgotten Heritage, 119.

102 For a list of those serving as wardens of Christ Church, see Marguerite Johnston, Happy Worldly Abode: Christ Church Cathedral, 1839–1964 (Houston: Cathedral Press, 1964), 234; For a description of the professions and residential locations of a number of these men, see Ziegler, Wave, 36-40.

103 “Castanie Addition,” “Baker Addition,” Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company. See Appendix 2 for maps indicating the owner-resident ratio in each subdivision.

104 In December 1871, the newspaper reported that blacks "constitute[d] nearly the whole population immediately surrounding the cemetery"—a statement that would have applied to areas within both the Castanie and Hardcastle additions. See Daily Telegraph 15 December 1871, quoted in William Dillard, comp., WPA Files.


106 While there were a total of 34 blacks purchasing property, 27 still owned land there in 1870. See “Hardcastle Addition,” Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company.

107 John Murchison was the first individual to purchase property in Freedmantown in 1866. Perhaps he did not realize that this area would blossom into a black neighborhood, but this explanation does not indicate why he chose to stay in the area even after the number of blacks living there increased—a situation that occurred almost immediately. See Census Manuscripts, 1870 and 1880. Although Murchison appeared in the 1879-80 city directory as "col’d," in the only other issue in which his name appeared, that of 1873, his race was not noted, indicating that he was white. See Houston City Directory 1873, (Houston: Tracy and Baker, 1873); ibid., 1879–1880, (Houston: C.D. Morrison & Co., 1879), 166.

108 Rabinowitz claims that white real estate agents in the South quickly saw the profit involved in selling to blacks, although the example he gives dates from the late 1880s. Whether or not whites initiated the same efforts to form distinctly black neighborhoods as early as the 1870s is uncertain. However, it is puzzling that Hardcastle chose to designate his subdivision as Freedmantown—a name that hardly would have attracted white settlers to the area—unless he believed that his best, or only, prospect for developing the land was as a black residential neighborhood. See Rabinowitz, Race Relations, 103.

109 The descriptions of the lots in the deed records clearly show that owners occasionally did divide their land and sell a small portion to another individual. Maps for the area indicate that when this did occur, additional dwellings often were added to the back of the lot. This same practice obviously could have been applied to rental housing as well, but if the
deed records may be used as a gauge as to the frequency of this practice, then it seems to have happened infrequently prior to 1880. Undoubtedly as rental property became increasingly common in the addition, this practice probably became more widespread. See Wood, *Map of Houston, 1869*, Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company; The dimensions for the lots in each of the blocks are found on the plat maps. See Deed Records 1836-1904, Harris County, Harris County Courthouse, Hopson plat map, vol. W: 426; Senechal, vol. M: 475; Baker, vol. Y: 351; Castanie vol. M: 571; and Hardcastle, vol. 15: 22-23.

110 On obstacles to property ownership faced by blacks across the South, see Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, 81. For limited involvement of Freedmen’s Bureau, see Crouch, “Hidden Sources,” 218. On the high cost of real estate in Houston during the 1870s, see *Houston Daily Union*, 7 March 1871, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files. In other areas of the South such as the community of Hampton, Virginia the rise in the number of black property owners seems to have been facilitated greatly by the efforts of Rev. George Whipple and the AMA. This, however, clearly was not the case in Houston. See Edward H. Bonekemper, III, “Negro Ownership of Real Property in Hampton and Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1860-1870,” *Journal of Negro History*, LV (July 1970): 178.
Neighborhood and Community in the Black Experience

Establishing independent residential neighborhoods such as Freedmantown was one of the steps that blacks took in the postwar years toward creating a stable and relatively secure community. Strengthening familial ties, seizing educational and political opportunities, and maintaining active religious and social lives were other mechanisms that blacks used to help them ensure that their community would survive the rigors of urban life. This newly created black community infrastructure became especially important as northern protection and assistance began to fade from Houston in the 1870s. Blacks quickly recognized that they would not be given access to the white community’s institutions and that to strengthen and sustain the black community they would have to establish their own separate social, religious, economic, and educational institutions.¹ How the city's blacks went about this community building; how inclusive this process was; and where the geographic focus of black community life developed largely determined the character of the urban experience for blacks throughout Houston.

According to the Houston Daily Telegraph there were numerous signs of community building in the predominantly black neighborhood of Freedmantown by 1875. In December the newspaper praised Freedmantown’s residents for becoming homeowners and for establishing an impressive array of community institutions. The paper reported “many evidences of thrift and prosperity in Freedmantown. New houses have been built, and still others [are] in course of construction. The stores out there,” the reporter claimed,
“do a good business, schools are well attended, everything is serene . . . ”2 From the Daily Telegraph's description, it appears that Freedmantown had become a prosperous, self-sufficient community by 1875. According to the paper, Freedmantown’s residents owned their own homes and businesses and possessed their own schools. They apparently could work, shop, and educate their children without having to leave their own residential neighborhood.

Other evidence, however, suggests that the newspaper may have exaggerated the rate of Freedmantown’s development. A reporter for the same paper conveyed a very different image of the neighborhood when he described his “ramble into Freedmantown” less than a year later. According to him, it was “lank dogs, ill fed swine, and scattered sheds” that marked his entrance into Freedmantown. The houses described by the second reporter were decaying rapidly; construction of new homes hardly seemed the order of the day. In contrast to the first reporter, he noted only “a few cornfields, sick cottages, and unhealthy looking ponds” before gladly retracing his steps back into the city’s central business area.3

Determining which of these two articles provides the more accurate description of Freedmantown in the mid-1870s is difficult. It seems likely that both authors exaggerated the conditions they observed in the neighborhood. The second author’s description of Freedmantown’s deterioration contradicts evidence from Harris County deed records that indicates that residential development in Freedmantown was proceeding steadily during the 1870s. On the other hand, the first author’s favorable report probably pertained to a larger portion of the Fourth Ward than Freedmantown itself comprised. There were, for instance, no schools within Freedmantown, but the paper claimed that Freedmantown’s schools were well attended. Given the imprecision with which the term “freedmen” was used in the postwar South to
refer to all blacks, the newspaper probably was using the term
"Freedmantown" to refer to all the largely black neighborhoods within the
western portion of the Fourth Ward, not just the Hardcastle Addition.4

The two reports, despite their different perspectives on
"Freedmantown," converged on one detail—both drew attention to the number
of homes and businesses that had been constructed in the neighborhood they
were describing. The author of the second article emphasized the battered
state of the buildings he observed as further proof of Freedmantown's
deterioration. In contrast, the first reporter did not comment on the
buildings' physical condition and simply saw them as evidence of the
community's prosperity. By their shared recognition of the existence of these
structures, however, both articles imply that at least a portion of the Fourth
Ward's black population—whether they actually resided in Freedmantown or
not—had succeeded in establishing some elements of an autonomous
community by the mid-1870s.

The articles' physical descriptions of "Freedmantown," however, are
extremely narrow and indicate nothing about the process by which the
community institutions in the neighborhood took shape. Neither article,
moreover, clearly or accurately places Freedmantown in the context of the
rest of the ward. Many questions remain unanswered about Freedmantown's
own development and its relationship to the larger Fourth Ward. Where, for
example, was the hub of the ward's black business and social activity located?
Was Freedmantown the ward's center of black community life? Available
evidence suggests not. While Freedmantown had distinguished itself from the
rest of the ward as a residential neighborhood with an unusually high
proportion of black property owners, it had not become a separate social
community nor had it become a center within the ward for the black
community's churches, schools, and organizational headquarters. Freedmantown was not, as historian Robert Bullard has claimed, the city's "center of black social, cultural, political, and economic life."5 Evidence indicates that rather than separate themselves from the larger black community of the Fourth Ward, Freedmantown's residents--like those throughout the ward--remained actively involved in a trans-neighborhood community network. The incongruity between the areas of densest black residential settlement--such as Freedmantown and its adjacent neighborhoods--and the location of black educational, religious, social, and economic institutions apparently was common throughout the postwar urban South. John Kellogg finds that in Lexington, Kentucky, black community institutions usually were concentrated in the city's central business area, outside of the largest areas of black settlement. He concludes that black community life was "present only on a city-wide scale and was centered on the Negro main street in the central business area."6

In Houston, as in Lexington, black community life was not limited to a specific residential neighborhood, but instead, appeared to exist on a ward- and city-wide scale. Many black religious, political, educational, and social organizations did develop within the Fourth Ward--reflecting the large number of blacks living there--but most were established in a relatively central area of the ward, not in the outlying additions where many blacks had located their residences. As a result, Freedmantown's residents formed only one part of a multi-neighborhood black community, indicating that individual black neighborhoods could develop and prosper without threatening the cohesiveness of the larger black community.

Houston city maps and records indicate that there were relatively few black-owned businesses in Freedmantown or in the Fourth Ward as a whole.
According to the census, there were only four black grocers living in the Fourth Ward in 1870, while twenty-two whites held similar positions. Only one of the four blacks, Jonas Parsons, resided in the Freedmantown neighborhood. The listings of these official sources, however, probably were incomplete. The descriptions of Freedmantown found in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1875 and 1876 mentioned several small stores in the neighborhood. In the second, and more detailed, of the two articles the *Telegraph*’s reporter described a rickety old house that “was unfortunately supported in its old age by an immense sign, which spoke of repairs to wagons, carriages, etc.” Nearby was “a rough looking little store painted in red” with “a reckless sign announc[ing] that “HOMILY” [was] sold within.” The reporter noted several other stores, all of which were small, dilapidated retail and repair shops. While the reporter may have overstated the ramshackle condition of these establishments, his identification of the kinds of businesses found in and around Freedmantown probably was accurate.

As in other southern cities, there appeared to be few black businesses in Houston. For those blacks who were successful in establishing their own businesses, the range of opportunity was limited. White competition often stifled blacks’ aspirations and left most to engage in service industries and “marginal concerns.” The 1877-78 city directory identified only fourteen black-owned businesses in Houston, and the small grocery store owned by Parsons remained the only establishment listed in Freedmantown proper.

In July 1865 the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* reported that a number of blacks were trying to establish their own businesses. The paper announced that a number of freedmen had opened shoemaker’s shops in the city. Later that year, the same paper reported that there were many “negro barrooms,” but the paper doubted if many of the proprietors had obtained the licenses
necessary for their operation. Houston’s papers’ limited coverage of black business enterprises and the sparse listings of them in the city directories may have underrepresented the number of black-owned businesses, but their number undoubtedly was disproportionately small.\textsuperscript{10}

Few blacks had sufficient capital to establish their own economic enterprises in the immediate postwar years. Had a local branch of the Freedmen’s Savings and Trust Company been successfully established in the city as anticipated by the Freedmen's Bureau and by the \textit{Evening Star} in the summer of 1866, the business climate for blacks might have been more favorable. Without the financial help of this institution, blacks had few means of obtaining the credit necessary to open their own businesses, since banks even for Houston’s white citizens generally were small, privately owned and operated institutions.\textsuperscript{11}

When blacks were able to start their own businesses, the blacks’ limited financial status usually required that they open small shops that needed little initial capital investment. Black-owned grocery stores whose appeal was limited to neighboring households such as those identified in Freedmantown by the reporter of the \textit{Daily Houston Telegraph} probably were the most common type of black business enterprise across the city. These neighborhood-based businesses presumably were scattered throughout the residential areas of the Fourth Ward, and there is no reason to doubt that Freedmantown itself housed a number of such small stores.

Business enterprises such as shoemaker and barber shops, in contrast, appeared to be located in a more central area of the city, clustered primarily around the intersection of Travis and Congress Streets. The downtown location of these shops made them accessible to blacks and whites from all areas of the ward and even from all areas of the city.\textsuperscript{12} These shops’
livelihood depended on a more diverse group of patrons, and they were located accordingly. Freedmantown's more remote location would have precluded the establishment of such specialized shops within the neighborhood and also prevented it from becoming the ward's center of economic activity. As a result, blacks in Freedmantown and surrounding neighborhoods had to go into other sections of the ward to meet many of their household needs. This necessitated constant interaction and association among blacks living in different neighborhoods of the ward and reinforced a larger sense of community among them.

Involvement in Houston's political as well as its economic life broadened the associations among the city's blacks, bringing them together on both a ward-centered and a city-wide basis. In Houston and across the South during the postwar years, blacks rapidly recognized that the key to receiving more equitable treatment and improving their standard of living lay in obtaining the right to vote. Southern blacks did not always agree on the best way to achieve political power or on the political party to which they should pledge their support, but they generally were united in their commitment to make their political voice heard. Southern whites' opposition to blacks' political rights, however, grew exponentially with blacks' political involvement. Blacks in Houston remained steadfast in their determination to vote in spite of white resistance.13

Following Congressional approval of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866, blacks began to push for the amendment's passage in Texas. Blacks refused to be deterred from their political aspirations despite the state's lengthy delay--close to four years--in ratifying the amendment. Between 1867 and 1869 approximately 1,200 blacks--compared to just over 800 whites--registered to vote in Houston, making them a formidable force in the city's
political life. In April 1867 the *Weekly Telegraph* reported that "secret meetings of the negroes [were] held almost every night." The paper claimed that the primary reason for the meetings was to ensure that blacks would vote for the Radical candidates—a thought southern whites dreaded.

Recognizing black voters' numerical superiority, white newspapers did everything in their power to keep blacks from falling under "northern, radical" influence. The *Weekly Telegraph* cautioned blacks in 1867 not to be deceived by the hollow promises made by the "agents from Washington City." In October 1868 it followed with a direct appeal attempting to convince blacks that it was southern—not northern—whites who had the blacks' best interests at heart. In a typically paternalistic voice—an attitude toward blacks held over from slavery—the *Weekly Telegraph* informed blacks that they could never "hold the right to vote contrary to the wishes of the white people of the South." It explained that blacks simply were not qualified to vote because slavery had deprived them of the opportunities for learning. The paper thus concluded, "we think you [the city’s blacks] should neither expect or desire to vote."

Despite such admonitions, Democrats and Republicans realized that winning black votes was crucial to their success since blacks comprised the largest portion of Houston's registered voters due to the government's disfranchisement of many of the state's white citizens. The Republican party, however, was much more successful in attracting black support. In 1867 the Republican party held its first state-wide organizational meeting in Houston. A majority of the 600 delegates sent to the meeting were black. Likewise, the 1868 election to vote upon the proposed constitutional convention attracted a tremendous number of black voters to the polls despite real and threatened violence from many white Texans. During the election, Republicans in
Houston provided temporary housing for blacks who came from the surrounding countryside to cast their votes. Election returns indicate that almost 82 percent of the state's registered black voters participated in the election, and most voted in favor of a constitutional convention. In his study of Republicanism in Texas, Carl Moneyhon states that this election "solidified the union between blacks and the Republican party."17

Democrats refused to be deterred by the Republican party's apparent success with blacks, and despite Democrats' own opposition to the principle of black voting, they campaigned heavily for black votes throughout the 1868 campaign. In August 1868 a notice directed to "all citizens of the Fourth Ward, who are opposed to Radicalism" appeared in the Daily Houston Telegraph. The advertisement notified residents of the ward of an upcoming meeting to be held in the Council Chamber to organize a Democratic Club. The notice carefully included the statement that "Colored persons are invited to attend." During the same summer a group of the city's blacks led by Calvin Bannister and Henry Love founded their own Colored Democratic Club. Bannister and Love successfully enlisted thirty-seven blacks in the organization and claimed that there were many others present at their meeting who wished to join.18 Democrats knew that they needed black votes to win an election and probably courted black support across the city. The fact that the two organizers of the Colored Democratic Club resided in different wards confirms that the party was encouraging membership in different and probably all sections of the city. An August edition of the Daily Houston Telegraph estimated that there were approximately 3,000 members at a previous meeting of the city's Democrats--black and white--where Calvin Bannister had been one of the speakers. Another meeting of the Democrats took place in the fall of 1868 in Market Square, at the center of Houston's
central business area, drawing a "large crowd of blacks, but an even larger crowd of whites."19

The Democrats had little success in attracting a significant number of black voters in spite of their own campaigning and the internal cleavages in the Republican party. By and large, blacks believed that their greatest opportunity for political power lay with the Republicans; and as Reconstruction in Houston progressed, blacks assumed an even more active role in the Republican party. In March 1869 Houston blacks helped form the biracial Harris County Republican Club. Blacks served as the vice president and secretary of the organization, and two blacks served on the five-member executive committee.20 In May 1869 the Daily Houston Telegraph reported that a meeting of the Republican Club had taken place during the previous week to re-elect James G. Tracy—a well-known radical according to the paper—as president. The meeting, the paper reported, was held in the concrete building located on the corner of Commerce and Fannin Streets with over 200 blacks and only "about 2" white members in attendance. Similarly in June, the Times reported that there had been 80 black women and 150 black men in attendance at the latest "Radical" meeting.21 Although the paper may have exaggerated the number of blacks in attendance, there obviously was a clear connection in whites' minds as to blacks' widespread participation in the Republican party.

In October the city's more conservative papers focused their attacks on the Republican party's upcoming "Radical Convention" to be held in Houston. The convention's purpose was to nominate candidates for the legislature and for county offices. To the paper's chagrin, it speculated that Richard Allen, a black resident of Houston's Fourth Ward who had served on the board of registration in Harris County and who had supported disfranchisement, would
be nominated for the state senate. The paper later wagered that either Norris Wright Cuney—a prominent black politician in Galveston—or Richard Allen would be nominated by the radicals for sheriff. The prospect of black officeholders obviously displease a number of white Houstonians—Democrats as well as conservative Republicans. With the governor’s appointment of Thomas H. Scanlan as Houston’s mayor in 1869, however, Republican control in Houston was temporarily solidified.22

Blacks shared in the Republicans’ victory, receiving appointments to the city council and to other local offices—albeit in numbers disproportionately small compared to their percentage of the population. Richard Allen, who had been appointed the assistant superintendent of schools by the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1867, was elected as a state representative from Harris County in 1869—a position in which he served again in 1873 along with another black from Harris County, E. Anderson. Blacks also were appointed as aldermen in 1870 and 1871, and elected to the positions in 1872. A black street commissioner also was elected by the city council in 1872. Although the number of black officeholders was relatively small, blacks served in greater numbers during the Reconstruction government’s control of the state than they did in later years.23

Black political leaders and officeholders came from all sections of the city—their place of residence having little bearing on their appointment to office. Similarly, in city elections, it appears that blacks from no single ward fared better than others. Because blacks were scattered throughout the city during the Reconstruction period, those seeking election to office in any of the wards were handicapped. Elections were conducted on a ward-centered basis, and in the postwar years blacks formed a majority in none but the Fifth Ward.24 The fact that blacks comprised the majority of the eligible voters in
the city increased their overall political power, but it did not secure blacks' chances of winning office in a ward-based election. In 1872, for example, the Second and Fourth Wards—the latter having the city's highest proportion of black residents—were the only wards not to elect black aldermen to represent them. The political interaction of blacks from a wide range of neighborhoods prevented Freedmantown—and the Fourth Ward—from obtaining an exclusive lease on Houston's black political life. Black political power, instead, clearly came from city-wide voter participation, and black political leaders arose from all sections of the city. Blacks from all neighborhoods who were interested in protecting their political and civil rights thus turned to a trans-neighborhood network to voice their concerns.25

Blacks fought in concert to secure their educational opportunities as well as their political rights. Confronted by white indifference and frequent hostility toward the idea of black education, blacks across the city had to unite in an aggressive effort to defend their right to attend school. Whites' greatest fear was that northern instructors would infuse blacks with "radical" ideas. The city's blacks, however, were not easily deterred from their educational goals. Realizing blacks' determination to receive at least a basic education, many whites conceded blacks' right to establish their own schools and turned their attention to achieving some degree of control over the blacks' institutions.26

Ensuring that blacks' schools remained separate from whites' and that blacks were taught by southern rather than northern instructors was crucial to white Houstonians. The Tri-Weekly Telegraph reported in August 1865 that a newly constructed "freedmen's school" was the "latest novelty" in the city. The paper approved of the school's establishment as long as poor whites were not neglected in the process of educating blacks. By October 1868 the
newspaper evidently had done a complete "about-face" concerning its view on black education. Now it not only accepted the existence of black schools but even encouraged blacks to attend school. The Weekly Telegraph advised Houston's blacks that it should be their primary aim to educate themselves and their children. All of the blacks' money and energies, the paper stated, should be devoted to this goal. The paper reassured blacks that white people were becoming "more and more awake to the importance of providing for your [the blacks'] education, and ere long, liberal public provision will be made for schools for your benefit, not to mix you up with the whites, but separate schools intended for you alone."27

Whites' acceptance and support of black schools may not have been as widespread as Houston's newspapers zealously claimed. The monthly reports filed by instructors in the "freedmen's schools" and by local agents of the Freedmen's Bureau painted a different picture of white sentiment concerning the education of the city's blacks. Two 1868 reports, one filed in February and the other in October, stated that public sentiment toward the education of blacks remained "perfectly indifferent."28

Further evidence, in fact, suggests that many whites continued to show outright hostility toward the education of blacks. Northern teachers took the brunt of the whites' wrath. In November 1866 R. J. Fleming, a teacher hired by the Freedmen's Bureau, complained that he had been harassed on his way to Houston by the policemen on his train. According to Fleming, the policemen had called him "a damned Yankee son of a bitch and a nigger teacher..." This hostility to northern teachers was not uncommon in other parts of the South. Southern whites everywhere were convinced that northern teachers had come South solely with the intention of turning blacks against their former owners.29
In July 1868 the Daily Houston Telegraph printed an article regarding an educational convention of Texas teachers held in the city two years earlier. Of utmost importance, according to the paper, was the resolution that the "Young men and Women of Texas ought to become their [the blacks'] teachers"; otherwise, northerners would "import to them sentiments at variance with our ideas, and such as would prejudice them against their former owners ...." D.T. Allen, the assistant superintendent of education in Houston, reported to E.M. Wheelock in 1867 that he was having grave difficulty boarding teachers even in colored homes. The added cost of taking in a teacher was probably more than many black households could bear, but blacks also probably feared retribution from the city's whites if they agreed to house a northern white teacher.

Despite their opposition to northern teachers, whites had little choice but to accept the teachers employed by the Freedmen's Bureau as long as the Bureau remained in control of the city's schools. In May 1869 the Daily Houston Telegraph reported that four single women had been sent by the American Missionary Association (AMA) to staff Houston's schools—all four came from the North. Temporary acceptance of the Bureau's teachers, however, did not translate into a permanent change of whites' attitudes toward blacks' education. Joseph Welch, the superintendent of education in Texas, was well aware of the ongoing obstacles blacks faced in their struggle for equal educational opportunity. He expressed his concern in his semi-annual report for 1869. "From my experience and observation," he explained, "I am convinced that it will be a tedious and difficult undertaking to harmonize the conflicting prejudice of the people so as to obtain a school system that will be equal and uniform in its operation toward the two races here."
Blacks confronted strong resistance to their desire to establish schools, but they refused to succumb to white hostility. Instead, blacks joined together on a ward- and city-wide basis to defend their right to attend school. Like blacks across the South, Houston’s blacks considered education the key to economic, social, and political mobility. Blacks needed no prodding from northern whites or missionaries as to the importance of securing an education, but blacks clearly needed outside financial assistance to obtain their educational goals. Aided by the Freedmen’s Bureau and the AMA, Houston’s blacks were able to establish schools quickly.34

On December 1, 1865—little more than a month after the Bureau’s establishment in Houston—Henry W. Stuart, a Bureau teacher, reported to Edgar M. Gregory, the acting sub-assistant commissioner, that his “freedmen’s school” in Houston was a success. Since the school’s opening on November 7, Mr. Stuart boasted an enrollment of 130 students and claimed that this number was increasing steadily. The local paper concurred with Mr. Stuart’s report, stating that the “colored school” was quite prosperous and that the students used Webster’s spellers, slates, and pencils.35 Writing to Wheelock in February 1866, Chaplain George W. Honey, the assistant superintendent of schools in Texas, reported that there were four schools presently in operation in Houston—three of which were taught by black residents of the city. The alacrity with which blacks enrolled in Houston’s schools—by February 1867 there were 747 students registered, with an average daily attendance of 479—confirmed their commitment to education.36

Through their support of the schools established by agents of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the AMA, the city’s black community proved that they were willing to take the risks necessary to ensure their access to educational institutions. Correspondence from M. O’Regan, a Bureau teacher in Houston,
suggests that the city’s blacks had reason to distrust the motives of some of the northern educators. It seems that “Mr. Stewart” (presumably the same Mr. Stuart previously mentioned) had defrauded the city’s black citizens—enrolling their children in his school, collecting their tuition fees, and then disappearing from the city. O’Regan reported that

the operations of Mr. Stewart have done an incalculable amount of mischief. The people whose confidence he won and abused now regard every teacher, and even the entire arrangement of the schools, with suspicion and mistrust. They think the only object of the teachers is to get all the money they can into their pockets, and then leave.

O’Regan speculated that overcoming this mistrust would be the greatest obstacle that he would face.37

Blacks, however, understood that reliance on Bureau and AMA assistance was necessary to maintain the operation of their schools and thus accepted these organizations’ aid.38 Before it relinquished control of Houston’s black schools in 1872, the Bureau played a dominant role in the education of the city’s blacks. It was largely responsible for staffing, repairing, furnishing, and in some instances renting the buildings in which the blacks’ schools were held. The Bureau’s schools in Texas, however, were free for only a brief period, thus requiring the black community to shoulder much of the burden of financing their schools. In 1869 Superintendent Welch reported to Alvord that the "freedmen" in Texas had paid approximately $3,700 in tuition for the rent of schoolhouses and for the salaries of their teachers.39

Although blacks provided the funds to employ the Bureau’s teachers, they had little voice in their selection. Of the thirteen teachers hired by the Bureau or supplied by the AMA to serve in Houston from October 1865 to February 1868, only three were black. Even fewer blacks were appointed to
administrative positions within the educational system. Richard Allen, who served as the assistant superintendent of schools in Houston during 1867, and Erastus Carter, who was named the supervisor of education for Harris County in 1871, were the only two Houston blacks appointed to administrative office. Both men were appointed by agents of the Freedmen’s Bureau during the period of Reconstruction. As local Texans regained control of their own governmental machinery, even such infrequent appointments diminished.  

In addition to paying tuition, blacks also were largely responsible for providing the buildings to house Bureau schools. During the first few years following the war, the Bureau in Houston and elsewhere in the South relied primarily upon the use of black churches to conduct their schools. Between 1865 and 1867 Bureau schools were established in three of Houston’s churches: Mount Zion--located in the Second Ward--and Antioch Baptist and Trinity Methodist Episcopal--both located in the Fourth Ward. In addition, O’Regan reported in 1866 that there was a “very small school” of ten to twelve pupils conducted by Mr. Riden, a black resident of Houston, though O’Regan did not indicate where the school was located.  

Finding suitable buildings for the Bureau’s schools was not always an easy task. In 1867 Assistant Superintendent of Education Richard Allen reported that there was no prospect of opening a new school in the city in the immediate future. He explained that the Methodist church was the only black church with a fireplace but that the building was in the midst of being repaired. The Baptist church, while more centrally located, had no windows. When the Mt. Zion church burned in the spring of 1867, school attendance plummeted because the Bureau had trouble securing another location for the school.
As the Bureau became more firmly established in the city, it also tried to rent private buildings for blacks’ schools when necessary. In February 1870 the Bureau reported that in addition to its use of black churches, it had rented school buildings from five individuals over the past year. Of these five, at least three were black residents of the Fourth Ward, but none owned property in any of its western-most neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{43} Since most of the black community’s churches used for schools were located in a central area of the Fourth Ward, it seems probable that the Bureau also rented buildings there so that its schools would be accessible to a larger portion of the city’s black population. Bureau correspondence confirms that most of the black schools were located near to the city’s center, not in the ward’s western sections.\textsuperscript{44}

The placement of bureau schools in this section of the Fourth Ward also recognized that blacks’ desire for schooling was not limited simply to residential neighborhoods where large numbers of blacks lived. Instead, the Bureau realized that blacks from across the city—the largest number probably from the Fourth Ward because of its sizable black population—were involved and interested in receiving an education and thus that its schools should be available to as many blacks as possible.

Discontent over the inadequacy of the Bureau’s school buildings, however, surfaced quickly. As early as 1866 O’Regan had reported to Wheelock that blacks hoped that the government would assume the responsibility of building schoolhouses for them and had inquired about the prospects of this.\textsuperscript{45} Apparently the Bureau dragged its feet on the matter for many years. In Sub-assistant Commissioner W.B. Pease’s April 1867 report, he complained that the city needed another school in a location "remote from the present buildings." In October he was still pressing the issue and recommended that white teachers willing to teach colored schools in Houston
be aided in getting deeds "for some lots of ground and erecting thereon suitable buildings for school houses."\textsuperscript{46}

Finally in October 1868 Sub-assistant Commissioner M.E. Davis held a meeting of Houston's blacks at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in the Second Ward and announced the government's intention to erect a substantial school building, provided the blacks could appoint a board of trustees and have them secure a suitable plot of ground. Within a week, a board of trustees had been appointed. The blacks chosen to serve on the board--Richard Allen, Sandy Parker, Elias Dibble, William Waff, and Peter Noble--came from neighborhoods across Houston, confirming the widespread commitment of the city's blacks to education. Regarding the selection of a suitable site for the school, the board announced that it had decided upon a plot of land 240 by 500 feet located in the Fourth Ward. By December the school's trustees had secured a deed from Melissa Ammerman for the designated school lot.\textsuperscript{47} The board's selection of a lot in the Fourth ward reflected the large concentration of blacks living there; however, the trustees' decision to place the school in a relatively central portion of the ward--outside of the neighborhoods such as Freedmantown with the heaviest black residential settlement--demonstrated their belief that the school would serve black children from a variety of neighborhoods and sections of the ward.

In addition to securing their lot, the trustees reportedly had raised $1,500 in gold, mostly from the city's whites, for the building's erection. The board had made clear its intention to erect a brick building for the new schoolhouse, even if this meant raising more money. Confusion over the collection of pledges for the new school, however, arose shortly after the trustees' land purchase, and all discussion of building the school ceased temporarily.\textsuperscript{48} In July 1869 in a report of school buildings owned, there still
was only one structure listed for Houston, the owners of which were
“freedmen.” According to the report, the schoolhouse was a wooden building
that measured 40 by 60 feet, was worth $2,000, and occupied land worth
$400. No mention was made in the report of the previously proposed school
building.49

By this date, however, discontent over the lack of adequate facilities had
reached new heights. James Burke, a white citizen who claimed to be zealously
committed to the improvement of the blacks' religious and moral condition,
complained to Texas Superintendent of Education Joseph Welch in May 1869
that the blacks' churches had been used long enough for the accommodation of
schools. Even the assistant superintendent of education in Galveston
complained about the overcrowding in Houston’s schools and urged the
construction of another building.50

This time the Bureau heeded the call. On July 1, 1869, Superintendent
Welch wrote to General O.O. Howard in Washington asking for approval of a
contract with C.H. Bering to construct a schoolhouse in Houston at the cost of
$6,400. Welch informed Howard that the lot on which the school would sit
had been purchased by the city's blacks. The lot had been deeded to a board
of trustees and was valued at $400.51 The proposed site for the school was at
the corner of Louisiana and Jefferson Streets, readily accessible to most of the
Fourth Ward’s black residents.

Blacks undoubtedly were pleased with the idea of receiving this new
centrally located schoolhouse, but the selection of a contractor precipitated a
conflict between the trustees and the Bureau. On July 30 Joseph Welch
instructed Louis Stevenson, the assistant superintendent of education, to call
together the school’s trustees and explain to them Welch's basis of selection
for the contractor. If they would not accept the Bureau’s decision to hire
Bering, Welch commanded that another site be obtained so that construction could proceed immediately.\textsuperscript{52} After meeting with the board of trustees, Stevenson relayed to Welch that the board’s discontent stemmed from the selection of an outside contractor over the chairman of their own board, Richard Allen--also an architect and builder in Houston. The board members complained that Welch had not consulted with them prior to contracting with Bering, nor had he requested their approval of his choice. Stevenson, however, quickly informed the board that the government “exercised supreme control over their lot, and only used their name as means to secure the title for their benefit. . . .” Perhaps realizing their impotence to establish such a prestigious--and badly needed--school without the Bureau’s help, the board acquiesced to the Bureau’s plans despite their hopes that Allen, a member of their own community, would be awarded the contract. Building commenced on the Bureau’s terms.\textsuperscript{53}

In September 1869, shortly after this confrontation, Richard Allen informed Stevenson on behalf of the trustees that his “favor suggesting that our schoolhouse be called the ‘Gregory Institute’” had been unanimously approved by the board, indicating at least the board’s superficial reconciliation with the Bureau.\textsuperscript{54} Throughout the Gregory School’s construction during the fall of 1869, only one minor setback occurred. In mid-October one of the walls of the new building fell, “taking down one half of the roof.” Stewart Norton, the supervisor of the Bureau’s teachers, explained that blacks believed that its collapse was caused by the lack of lime in the mortar. Richard Allen confirmed Norton’s report, stating that the “upper part of it [the schoolhouse] being build [sic] of very bad material of course could not stand.” The black community’s apparent dissatisfaction with the quality of Bering’s work revealed both their enduring discontent over Bering’s selection as the school’s
contractor and their powerlessness to direct the construction of the school. The problem, however, was repaired quickly, and by December the final touches were being added to the building and the furniture set in place. On January 14, 1870, the *Daily Houston Telegraph* announced that the school would be open for inspection on the following day and that a dedication service would take place afterwards.55

The opening of the Gregory Institute was postponed for two days due to inclement weather, but the school received immediate approval from both the white and black community. The dedication of the school was quite a fanfare. Reverend Welch delivered an address on the purpose and goals of the new institute. General Parsons, Judge D.J. Baldwin, Mayor J.R. Morris, Reverend Stewart Norton, the new principal of the school, and trustees Sandy Parker and Elias Dibble addressed the audience.56

The new two-story brick schoolhouse measured 32 by 55 feet and was valued at $7,500. The *Daily Houston Telegraph* boasted that “the school rooms, in arrangement and furnishing, are second to none in Texas.” Several of the blacks’ other schools were abolished, and all pupils were sent to the Gregory Institute, which had seats and desks for 230 students. The newspapers reported that a common school would be taught on the school’s first floor, and a school of higher grades would occupy the second, thus making Gregory Institute Houston’s first graded school for blacks.57

The school quickly became a landmark for the black citizens of the Fourth Ward. According to the *Telegraph*, Gregory Institute was “a monument of the munificence of the general government towards the nation’s wards.” In 1871 it asserted that the “great school--par excellence--for the freedmen--is Gregory Institute.”58 When the city finally instituted free public schools for white and black children in 1871 the Gregory School became “the
colored institution for the Fourth Ward.” The school was expected to house 170 children, ranging from first to seventh grade. In comparison, only 72 black students were to attend the “colored school” in the Third Ward—thus reflecting the Fourth Ward’s larger black population. The size of Gregory Institute meant that it would draw students from a large area surrounding the school, extending the bonds of community that united the black residents of the Fourth Ward.59

The active role played by the city’s blacks in Gregory Institute’s construction demonstrated the black community’s commitment to education—a battle blacks would continue to fight in the years ahead.60 Limited funds and dwindling Bureau influence in the South meant that when the Bureau ceased operation of its schools in 1872, education still remained available to only a portion of Houston’s black population. Whites continued the Bureau’s practice of hiring the faculties for the blacks’ schools and reduced blacks’ role in overseeing the operation of their educational institutions.61 The further exclusion of blacks from the administration of their schools increased the symbolic importance of Gregory Institute. The school stood as a tangible achievement of blacks’ postwar efforts to secure their right to an education—an achievement not limited to any single group or neighborhood of black residents. To blacks throughout the Fourth Ward, the Gregory Institute reminded them of their community’s unity and strength in overcoming the hardships that blacks faced in the postwar years.

Nowhere was the sense of community among Houston’s blacks reinforced more solidly than in their churches. Unlike other black institutions such as political organizations and schools where Bureau agents and other whites played active roles, the church was the “only institution over which the blacks exercised effective control.” Participation in church life empowered
blacks in their spiritual as well as their secular lives. When blacks were struggling to establish a stable and secure community immediately following emancipation, church life provided a forum in which they could address directly their own race's needs and concerns. This participation became especially important to blacks in Reconstruction's aftermath, allowing them to assert the political power they had begun to lose in local, state, and national governments. Because of the sense of power and autonomy blacks felt in their churches—both during and after Reconstruction—they became the hub of black community life. The black church functioned not only as a place of worship, but also as a school, a lecture hall, a meeting house, and an entertainment center.62

In 1866 an AMA teacher in Houston reported to the Freedmen's Bureau that he could secure neither the Methodist nor the Baptist church because both were being used by the city's blacks "every evening in the week."63 Unfortunately, there is little first-hand information available as to the kinds of activities that were held in black churches—perhaps because so few whites had intimate knowledge of the churches' daily affairs. Occasionally, however, Houston's white-owned newspapers did report on the events sponsored by the local black churches. In December 1870 the Daily Houston Telegraph reported that the "Farmer's Convention of colored people" recently had convened at Antioch Baptist Church with the purpose of encouraging blacks to purchase land for themselves as quickly as possible. In addition, the Harris County Republican Club apparently held its initial meetings at Antioch as well. But reports on the black congregations' activities were infrequent. The lack of news coverage by whites and the absence of a black-run newspaper in Houston meant that few public records of the churches' daily affairs were made. It seems likely, however, that as in other
southern cities, Houston blacks used their churches to hold a variety of political, social, and religious functions.64

According to the *Daily Houston Telegraph*, there were seven “organized colored churches” in the city in February 1870 with a total of 650 black parishioners. The paper reported that five of the city’s black congregations owned their buildings, but it did not cite their locations. Howard Beeth and Cary Wintz state that two of the Fourth Ward’s black churches, both in existence at this date, stand out as the most important ones in black Houstonians’ history—Trinity Methodist Episcopal and Antioch Baptist—the latter, according to them, being the more prestigious of the two. The prominence of these two churches and the fact that both maintained their locations within the city’s Fourth Ward until the mid-twentieth century—Antioch still remains located in the Fourth Ward today—demonstrates the centrality of this ward to the city’s blacks.65

The specific story of Antioch’s construction illuminates the pivotal role blacks played in their churches and provides rare insight into some of the issues blacks faced when deciding where to establish their religious institutions. Nineteen blacks and a black minister, I.S. Campbell, joined Reverend William C. Crane, a white pastor in Houston, in January 1866 to form Antioch Baptist Church. Initially the congregation met at a brush arbor on the banks of Buffalo Bayou and then conducted services in neighboring white churches while their own church building was being constructed. In 1868 they moved into their new building on the corner of Rusk and Bagby Streets in the Fourth Ward, taking with them a new minister, Reverend Jack Yates.66

Like other southern black ministers, Yates became a leader not only within his own congregation but within the black community at large. Yates
purchased a lot within the western-most section of the Castanie addition for the construction of his home and encouraged other blacks to follow his example, aiding them when he could. Yates clearly was influential in the black community, for many blacks purchased property in the area surrounding Yates's home in the ensuing years. A significant number, however— including many of Antioch's leaders—chose to settle elsewhere in the city. The fact that the church building itself remained outside of Yates's own residential neighborhood may have deterred Antioch's parishioners from settling exclusively around his home or in a single section of the ward. Deed records confirm that blacks continued to purchase land in other areas of the Fourth Ward— particularly in the Freedmantown addition. Church membership, although vital to the urban black experience, did not seem to be the controlling factor in blacks' residential settlement.

It is apparent from Antioch's history that blacks did not base their choice of residence solely on proximity to their churches, nor did church leaders limit the location of their religious institutions to neighborhoods with the largest number of black residents. In September 1871 Garrett Hardcastle gave Antioch two lots of land in the Freedmantown addition free of charge. Since the church had just moved to its present location on Rusk Street, it is understandable that the trustees took no immediate action to use the land given them. However, less than a year later Antioch purchased two lots of land for the consideration of $400 for the construction of a new church in the Senechal addition located to the south and east of Freedmantown. The actions of the church trustees demonstrated their feeling that the plot of land given them by Hardcastle was an unsuitable site for their church's location. They elected instead to purchase the same amount of land in a neighborhood in which the
number and proportion of black property owners was much smaller than that in Freedmantown.69

There are several possible explanations for the trustees’ decision not to build in Freedmantown. Historian Howard Rabinowitz explains that “because of their symbolic value, the [black] churches became a testament not only to the religious faith of the Negroes but to their material progress.” He states that moving a church to a larger and more attractive building was a way for blacks to see tangible proof of their progress and to articulate their aspirations.70 Relocating Antioch Baptist Church on Robin Street in the Senechal addition—a more “prestigious” location than Freedmantown because of its proximity to the city-center and its greater distance from the flood-prone banks of the Bayou—may have been a means for the black parish to assert its progress. In addition, since the church previously had been located on Rusk Street in a relatively central area of the ward, moving into the more remote neighborhood of Freedmantown probably would have been a burden on parishioners living closer to the city center.

Placing Antioch in a more central location than Freedmantown also improved the church’s prospects of attracting members from across the ward and thus of increasing the size of its congregation. Having a sizable congregation was important for financial as well as spiritual reasons. Increasing church membership may have enhanced the congregation’s pride, and it also hopefully meant more money in the collection plate. Blacks were not the only supporters of southern urban black churches; whites also occasionally gave them money. In the Senechal addition, where a number of whites owned property and where proximity to the city’s center ensured a greater degree of contact with whites living elsewhere, Antioch’s chances of receiving funds from white sources were much improved.71
Little was lost by the move to Robin Street since the new location still was in easy walking distance from Freedmantown and from the ward’s other western-most neighborhoods—the Castanie, Hopson, and Baker additions. Siting Antioch in the Senechal addition, farther from the bayou and closer to the town center than Freedmantown, made good sense to the church leaders for three reasons: the land probably was less flood-prone; church membership may have increased; and the church’s financial status may have improved. The actions of Antioch’s leaders demonstrated their priorities: they maintained their church’s location in the Fourth Ward where most of the city’s blacks resided, but they chose not to locate in Freedmantown—the ward’s neighborhood with the highest proportion of blacks.

Antioch’s move to a neighborhood where blacks may have aspired to live also could have been a strategic move on the part of its leaders. Rabinowitz states that black churches became both the “magnets for” and the “anchors of” the black community. In other words, by locating Antioch in the Senechal addition the trustees may have been expressing their own hopes for the expansion of black residential neighborhoods into the less flood-prone, more centrally located sections of the ward. The centrality of the church to blacks’ lives ensured that Antioch’s members would travel into and gather in the Senechal addition on a daily basis.72

Had Antioch been sited in Freedmantown, its religious community might have been limited to a much narrower geographic base, confining itself largely to the ward’s outer limits. Instead, the new church’s more central location made it accessible to residents from all neighborhoods of the Fourth Ward. Blacks involved in Antioch’s religious life thus probably were drawn together from all sections of the ward, not just its outer-most neighborhoods. Since Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church also had established its new building
in this more central area of the ward, one may assume that it too attracted members from a wide range of the ward's--if not the city's--neighborhoods. Using Trinity and Antioch as windows into black religious life in Houston--since they were according to Beeth and Wintz the most influential churches in the city--it appears that participation in church life strengthened the associations that united the residential neighborhoods of the Fourth Ward and reinforced the blacks' larger sense of community.

Similar to the establishment of enduring black churches during the postwar years, the profusion of black social organizations in the city testifies to the larger black community's unity and strength. Following emancipation, blacks wasted no time in forming and joining social organizations to demonstrate their commitment to one another and to the advancement of their race. In August 1865--even before the Freedmen's Bureau had established its local office in the city--the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* reported that a "colored man" had announced his plans to establish a "Freedman's Aid Society" in Houston. The paper claimed that such an organization would be unnecessary if blacks simply would "go to work at honest employment," but blacks obviously disagreed with the paper's assessment and proceeded with their plans. In October the paper reported that a number of the city's black residents had "formed themselves into a Mutual Aid Society." Each member was required to pay an initiation fee of $2.50 and weekly dues of 25 cents. By the time of the paper's report in October, the society held $80 in its treasury. Demonstrating the organization's success the society's president, Reverend Elias Dibble, obtained in 1867 a lot of land located at the corner of Milam and Clay Streets in the Fourth Ward for the organization's use.73

Houston's newspapers suggest that blacks across the city shared in the black community's efforts at self-help. In October 1865 the *Tri-Weekly*
Telegraph reported that the city’s blacks had held three fairs on the previous Saturday in different parts of the city. They sold cakes and candies in order to raise money—a goal at which they apparently were quite successful. A week later the paper concluded that “colored fairs” were held almost every night in some part of the city.74 Balls apparently also were a common occurrence in the black community, and the newspaper complained that “colored ladies” were becoming “quite fashionable,” dressing better than some whites.75

Such quips about the “pretentious” affairs of the city’s black community illustrated whites’ own fears and insecurities about the advancement of southern blacks. Blacks maintained an active social life throughout the postwar years in spite of these comments. In 1866 the city’s blacks boasted a Debating Society, a Free and Easy Club, a Thespian Society, a Base Ball Club—later dubbed the Six Shooter Jims, a Freedmen’s Mutual Aid Society, and a Baptist Mutual Aid Society.76 Apparently, blacks also had organized a colored Orphan Society by 1867. In 1871 the list of organizations had grown to include a colored militia, a brass band, a draymen’s club, a beneficial club, and an organization known as “Grant’s Flower.”77 The precise activities of these associations is unknown, for the newspapers generally referred to them only in a secondary manner—simply acknowledging their existence when describing ”Juneteenth”—the black community’s annual celebration of emancipation.

The festivities associated with “Juneteenth” were the only black social events upon which Houston’s white newspapers regularly reported during the postwar years. In late May 1866 the Evening Star made its initial announcement of the blacks’ plans to celebrate the first anniversary of their freedom. On June 13 the paper advertised an upcoming commemorative barbecue and reported that tickets selling at one dollar apiece would be
available to both blacks and whites. On the day following the celebration the
paper ran a lengthy article describing the affair and those in attendance.78
There were an estimated 4,000 people present at the celebration—all of whom
conducted themselves with "much harmony" and "unanimity of feeling and
sentiment." The day's activities included a parade, numerous speeches, a
dinner, and concluded with a ball. In subsequent years, the festivities were of
a similar nature, but the papers' coverage of the event dwindled.79

Even the limited and irregular newspaper reports of the black
community's social events and organizational meetings during the decade and a
half following the war showed that Houston's black community remained
active both during and after Reconstruction. By 1877--three years after
Reconstruction's end in the city--blacks had added to their list of organizations
the Young Men's St. Paul's Association, the Navasota Beneficials, the Baptist
Benevolent Aid Society, the Union Guiding Stars, the Universal Benevolents,
the Draymen's Saving Club, a Colored Cemetery Association, and a Colored
Fire Company. Occasionally the paper covered the activities of these
associations, as in 1874 when it reported that the "Colored People's Festival
Association," led by Richard Allen, had purchased ten acres of land near State
Fair park, located off of Main Street on the outskirts of town, for the purpose
of establishing a festival ground. In 1875 the paper announced that the black
community's cemetery association also had managed to purchase a piece of
land to establish its own burial grounds. And in April 1879 it reported that
the Union Guiding Stars recently had held a picnic excursion to the San Jacinto
River.80

Scattered evidence gathered from newspaper notices and city directory
listings indicates that the majority of the blacks' community organizations met
in buildings located near the town center. Most of these buildings, however,
were situated within the Fourth Ward, reflecting the concentration of blacks living there. Blacks’ preference for centrally located meeting places in the ward undoubtedly arose from the need to accommodate members from a wide range of neighborhoods. Clearly, the Fourth Ward was establishing itself as a major center for the city’s black community life, but within the ward itself the social focus remained broad, bringing together blacks from a number of different residential neighborhoods. The accessibility of the black community’s meeting places probably helped to unify the ward’s black population by bringing together blacks from all neighborhoods of the ward.

The leaders of the city’s black community institutions came from diverse backgrounds, confirming the assertion that no single neighborhood or group of blacks in the Fourth Ward stood out as the most important or influential. Of the eighty-three individuals identified as leaders of political, social, educational, or religious organizations, only twenty-nine had registered to vote by 1869. Only six of those registered were literate. Among the twenty-nine, thirteen had moved to Harris County before the war, ten had moved during the conflict, and six had migrated there after emancipation. Four of the six leaders who came to Houston following the Civil War, however, had been residents in the state prior to secession—the other two had moved to Texas during the war. Houston’s black leaders thus were not newcomers to Texas, though a small proportion were new to the city. Only postwar migrants from other states were absent from the list of leaders who were registered voters, indicating that they perhaps were the least influential group in the black community. Among the blacks who had lived in Texas for several years, length of residence in the city appeared to play only a minor role in establishing them in leadership positions. It appears that the city’s lack of an established antebellum free black community widened blacks' postwar
opportunities of securing leadership positions. Prewar roots in Houston had little effect on who was chosen to lead the black community.82

Black leaders came from a broad range of backgrounds, and few shared similar contemporary lifestyles. Among the city’s black leaders were several shop owners, common laborers, craftsmen, and three pastors.83 Leadership positions were not limited to blacks in any single occupational group, nor were they limited to residents of one particular section of the city. Only thirteen of the eighty-three leaders identified were owners of property in any of the western-most neighborhoods of the Fourth Ward: three each owned land in the Freedmantown, Castanie, and Hopson additions, and four held property in the Baker addition. The Senechal addition was the only neighborhood in which none of the leaders of the Fourth Ward’s black community owned land. For those leaders whose addresses could be identified, the majority lived in the Third and Fourth Wards but in a variety of neighborhoods. Leadership in the city’s black community life apparently was limited neither to blacks from Freedmantown nor any other particular addition of the Fourth Ward.84 Since black leaders were scattered across the city and held a variety of occupations, they were in an ideal position to encourage organizational membership among blacks living in a variety of sections in the city. This broad-based membership, in turn, probably reinforced the trans-neighborhood network that functioned within the city’s black community.

Freedmantown’s residents clearly remained linked to a larger black community, as they continued to participate in the social, religious, educational, political, and economic institutions that served blacks throughout the ward and the city. According to John Kellogg, the growth of a larger, city-wide black community like the one of which Freedmantown was a part
occurred at the expense of smaller, geographically based neighborhood communities. He asserts that the absence of black gathering places such as organizational headquarters, stores, and churches within the areas of heaviest black residential settlement—such as Freedmantown—precluded the formation of "neighborhood community awareness" within these areas. Kellogg's conclusions imply that the residents of Freedmantown could not have formed a distinct "neighborhood community" because Freedmantown itself housed only one church and a scattering of small shops and its residents were actively involved in community institutions located elsewhere in the ward.

Evidence confirms that the distinct and active black community traditionally associated with Houston's old Fourth Ward was not confined to the geographic limits of Freedmantown, but it seems hasty—despite Kellogg's conclusions—to rule out the possibility that a strong neighborhood community may have developed within Freedmantown itself. The large concentration of blacks living and owning property in Freedmantown would suggest that blacks living there did feel a strong sense of unity based on their residence in a predominantly black neighborhood. Acknowledging the possible existence of this "neighborhood awareness"—an awareness that probably was nurtured and strengthened by regular interaction on the blacks' front porches, in their yards, and in the streets—does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the residents of Freedmantown developed a separate social community. Nor does it mean that Freedmantown became the social and religious center for other blacks in the ward. The bonds that may have developed among Freedmantown's residents out of their shared living conditions did not preclude their membership in other social, religious, or educational communities. Residential neighborhoods were not the only or the primary basis for black community life.
The existence of Freedmantown—a predominantly black neighborhood—and its residents' continued interaction with the inhabitants of the more racially mixed neighborhoods of the Fourth Ward also illustrate that blacks' housing patterns were not the central or controlling factor in their urban experience. As historian John Blassingame states, "housing patterns may be . . . ancillary rather than central to that experience." Minimizing the role that housing played in Houston's black community formation does not deny the significance of Freedmantown. Freedmantown deserves recognition as a stable, independent black residential neighborhood. Blacks demonstrated their remarkable strength and determination to purchase land by establishing themselves rapidly as homeowners in Freedmantown. Nowhere else in Houston's Fourth Ward were blacks as successful in purchasing property and establishing their homes. Blacks living in Freedmantown thus may have felt a common bond because of their neighborhood's distinctly large proportion of black property owners in comparison to adjacent additions; however, this association did not lead the black residents of Freedmantown to form their own separate social community. Instead, Freedmantown and its residents remained an integral part of the larger black community in Houston's Fourth Ward.

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1On blacks' efforts to strengthen and sustain their communities, see Barry A. Crouch, "Hidden Sources of Black History: The Texas Freedmen's Bureau Records as a Case Study," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 83 (January, 1980): 225. Stating that blacks formed their own community institutions because of their exclusion from white institutions is not meant to imply that blacks would have preferred to share the whites' institutions in all cases. As can be seen from blacks' rapid desertion of southern white churches, they often wanted to establish their own community institutions. On blacks' exodus from white churches, see John B. Boles, *Black Southerners, 1619-1869* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 201-202; Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Oxford UP, 1978), 196, 203; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 88-92. On the exclusion of blacks from white community institutions, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 196-197.
2 Houston Daily Telegraph, 21 December 1875, quoted in Johnnie Therrien, "Newspaper Clippings," WPA Files, Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, Houston, Texas (hereafter MRC).

3 Daily Houston Telegraph, 1 July 1876. This article gives the most complete description, albeit overly derogatory, of Freedmantown during Reconstruction.

4 For evidence of the growth of Freedmantown during the 1870s and its lack of schools and other institutions, see "Hardcastle Addition," Subdivision Books, Compilation of the Indexes to Real Property Registers for Harris County, Stewart Title Company, Houston, Texas. Also see Appendix 3 for table indicating the growth of Freedmantown during the 1870s.

5 On the misuses of the Freedmantown name and claims regarding its centrality to the city's black community life, see Robert D. Bullard, "Housing Problems and Prospects in Contemporary Houston," in Black Dixie, Beeth and Wintz, eds., 236. See also Freedmen's Town Historic District, National Register Department, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, 1984, Item #8.

One of the greatest problems in studying the formation of black community organizations is that even though we may be able to document their existence, it is difficult to determine how these organizations were formed. It is unclear who was responsible for this community building—former free blacks, ex-slaves, white missionaries or white political leaders. For a discussion of these problems in the case of Memphis, see Armstead Robinson, "Plans Dat Comed From God: Institution Building and the Emergence of Black Leadership in Reconstruction Memphis," in Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr., eds., Towards a New South? Studies in Post-Civil War Southern Communities (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), 71-102.


7 Manuscript Census Returns, Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, Texas, Vol. 9, Guadalupe, Hamilton, Hardin and Harris Counties, National Archives Microfilm Publications (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1965). The census figures may be misleading about the number of businesses actually located in the Fourth Ward since the census data gives no indication as to where these groceries were located. Parsons, however, also was a property owner in the Freedmantown addition, and according to the 1877-78 city directory, maintained his grocery at his place of residence in Freedmantown. It is difficult, however, to determine precisely when the store was established on his property. Parsons had purchased two and one-half lots of property in 1866 and identified himself in the census as a grocer in 1870, but his grocery was not identified until 1877. I have assumed, nonetheless, that Parsons probably established his grocery store by 1870 since he identifies himself as a grocer in the census. In addition, since the city directory provided no address for his grocery—other then "Freedmantown"—I have simply identified it as existing on his corner lot only on the map indicating owner-residents. See Houston City Directory 1877-78, (Houston: Mooney & Morrison, 1877), 5; Appendix 2 for map indicating property ownership in Freedmantown.

8 Daily Houston Telegraph, 1 July 1876. Presumably many such small businesses would not have appeared in city directories or on maps of the area, thus making it difficult to confirm their existence.

Most of Houston's black businesses identified in the 1877-78 city directory (the one during this time period that gave the most complete listing of black residents) were small one- or two-owner businesses. There was one saloon keeper identified, one restaurateur, one keeper of a combination saloon/restaurant, one wagon maker, one blacksmith, one boarding house keeper, one ice cream dealer, two grocers, and five barbers. See *Houston City Directory 1877-78*.

10 *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* 12 July; 24 November 1865. Blassingame reports that in Savannah, there were 66 blacks operating 27 different kinds of businesses in the city in 1870, and this had increased to 253 blacks in 41 different kinds of businesses in 1880. Available data for Houston suggests that the existence of black business in Houston was nowhere near as extensive. See Blassingame, "Before the Ghetto," 466; see Appendix 1 for statistics citing the occupations of residents of the Fourth Ward.

11 Houston *Evening Star*, 22 June 1866, 3a, quoted in Box 45, Andrew Forest Muir Papers, Woodson Research Center, Rice University, Houston, Texas (hereafter Muir Papers). Byron Porter to Brevet Col. William H. Sinclair, 1 September 1866. "Report for the Month Ending August 31, 1866," vol.1. Porter claimed that a branch of the bank already had been established in the city. Although it had received no large deposits yet, he stated that there were high expectations for it. The only other indication that there was to be a local branch of the bank occurred in the 1867-68 edition of the Houston City Directory. William R. Fayle listed his occupation in the directory as a cashier for the National Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company, located on Preston between Main and Travis Streets. However, there was no separate listing for the bank in this or any other city directory. In the 1870-71 directory, the next one to be published, William Fayle listed his occupation as a "reverend." There is no indication in the national records of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company itself that there was ever any intention of opening a branch of the institution in Houston. Thus, it seems likely that Fayle was trying to establish some hybrid, local equivalent of the national bank. Fayle was labeled as a "Radical" by the city's newspapers for his affiliation with the Reconstruction government in the city. He was appointed as an alderman for the Fourth Ward by J.J. Reynolds in November 1867 but was voted ineligible to assume the office. Fayle also was reported to have helped the city's blacks form a Freedman's Mutual Aid Society. On his involvement with this society, see *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 6 October 1865. On Fayle's political career, see Marion Merseberger, "A Political History of Houston, Texas, During the Reconstruction Period as Recorded by the Press: 1868-1873," (M.A. Thesis, Rice Institute, 1950), 2-3. On his involvement with the Freedmen's Savings and Trust, see *Houston City Directory 1867-68*, (Houston: Gray, Smallwood & Co., 1867); and ibid., 1870-71, (Houston: William Murray, 1870). In his history of Reconstruction in Texas, Smallwood also states that there was a branch of the bank established in Houston. See James M. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair: Black Texans During Reconstruction* (Port Washington: Kenmikat Press, 1981), 48.

As with the sale of property to blacks, the most readily available source of credit for blacks interested in starting their own businesses was through a private party. Private banks had a long history in Houston, the first chartered bank being opened in 1847. However, the first national bank in Houston did not open until 1866, and it quickly suffered financial difficulties. Private banks remained an important factor in the city's financial transactions since state-chartered banks were permitted only briefly from 1869 to 1875. See Margaret Swett Henson, introduction to *Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors*, 1824-
12 Business addresses were compiled from *Houston City Directory 1877-78*. On the opening of one black barber shop in Houston in 1865, see *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 6 October 1865. However, that there were few such shops in Houston as a whole is confirmed by a black citizen of Houston, C.H. Drake. Drake claimed that when he moved to the city in 1888 and set up a barber shop, there were only one or two in operation. Although this figure may be an exaggeration, Drake’s perception of the black business climate in Houston probably was fairly accurate. See Statement of C.H. Drake in George P. Rawick, general ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (31 vols., Westport, Conn., 1972-1977) (Supplement, Series 2, Texas Narratives), 3.2, 705.

13 Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 262, 293-95. In later years, blacks became less unified in their commitment to exercising political power. Some members of the community began to stress educational and economic goals over political ones. See ibid., 292-293.

14 Under the Second Reconstruction Act, former Confederate states were ordered to hold a new registration of voters and new elections. The act specified that any man who had held office prior to February 1861 was to be disqualified from voting. In Texas, General Charles Griffin gave this provision a broad interpretation, defining a state office to include every position from governor to cemetery sexton, thus disfranchising a large portion of the white population. On Texas’s implementation of the Second Reconstruction Act, see Carl H. Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 70-71; on the general provisions of the act, see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 272-278. Houston’s Blacks’ high rate of registration is still more impressive when one considers that the overwhelming majority of those registering were illiterate. See *Voter Register of 1867-1869, Hardin - Kinney County*, Reel 4, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. There reportedly were 2,038 blacks in Harris County who had registered to vote, demonstrating that Houston’s blacks formed the majority of black voters. See Merseberger, “Political History,” 73.

Texas actually was the last state to ratify the Fourteenth amendment on February 18, 1870—almost two years after it had been made part of the constitution. See Horace Edgar Flack, Ph.D., *The Adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1908), 191. Despite the state’s intransigence, 98 percent of the state’s adult male black population registered to vote. See Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Texas*, 71.

15 *Weekly Telegraph*, 23 April 1867, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC. On white southerners’ fears of black political gatherings, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 261.

16 *Weekly Telegraph*, 23 April 1867, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC. *Weekly Telegraph*, 1 October 1868, quoted in Charles Franklin comp., WPA Files, MRC. For other examples of Democrats’ references to the hidden motives of the Republicans, see Galveston *Daily News*, 20 October 1869, quoted in Margaret Lenox, comp., WPA Files, MRC; *Daily Houston Telegraph*, 24 August 1873, quoted in Lorraine McRight, comp., WPA Files, MRC. According to Rabinowitz, Democrats across the South exhibited “schizophrenic” behavior in trying to attract blacks. They preached black inferiority yet tried to convince blacks that they would receive equal treatment if they pledged support to the party. See Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 305-311.
17 In the 1868 election over the proposed convention, only 2 of the 3,024 blacks voting in Galveston, Harris, and Travis counties opposed the convention. Despite blacks' support of the Republicans, they comprised a disproportionate number of officeholders. Among the 83 delegates to the 1868 Constitutional Convention, for example, only 10 were black. On the first Republican meeting in Houston in 1867, see Moneyhon, Republicanism in Texas, 65; on the 1868 referendum, see ibid., 78-79; on black support of the Republican party in Texas in general and the disfranchisement of many of the state's whites, see ibid., 61-81. For a list of the delegates to the 1868 Constitutional Convention, see ibid., 236-247.

18 Daily Houston Telegraph, 11 August 1868, quoted in Willie Cumber, WPA Files, MRC. Across the South, the Democratic Party made a heavy appeal to southern blacks during the 1868 campaign. Beeth and Wintz claim that Houston's blacks initially supported the Democratic Party, stating as evidence the formation of a Colored Democratic Club in 1868.

On the details of the “colored” party’s formation, see Merseberger, "Political History of Houston," 24. Calvin Bannister—alternately spelled with one and two “Ns”—lived on Liberty Road, east of White Oak Bayou in the city's Fifth Ward. Love lived on the corner of Edwards and Colorado Streets—the dividing line between the First and Fourth Wards. Thus, it is uncertain in which ward he was a resident. On Calvin Bannister's address, see Houston City Directory 1870-71; on Henry Love's see Houston City Directory 1880-81, (Houston: C.D. Morrison & Co., 1880).

It seems unlikely that a significant number of Houston's blacks really supported the Democrats, contrary to Love and Bannister’s assertion. Beeth and Wintz concur with the two leaders’ estimation, but another Texas historian suggests that no other members were added to the club’s roster before its disbandment shortly thereafter. Rabinowitz also agrees that few southern blacks were actually “won over” by the party’s promises. It seems likely that as was the case elsewhere in the South, most blacks remained loyal to the Republicans. See Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, eds. Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1992), 27; Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 141; Rabinowitz, Race Relations, 300-308.

The Council Chamber was the room in which the city council convened. Presumably it was in City Hall which was located in the block bounded by Congress, Milam, Preston, and Travis Streets. See Wood, Map of Houston 1869.

19 On Calvin Bannister's speech, see Daily Houston Telegraph, 2 August 1868, quoted in Willie Cumber, WPA Files, MRC. On the second Democratic meeting, see Houston Daily Times, 1 October 1868, quoted in Charles Franklin, WPA Files, MRC.

20 The Republican party’s limited activity before 1869 probably stemmed from the fact that its members strongly suspected that the state would be prohibited from taking place in the upcoming election. The Republicans turned their attention to strengthening the Loyal League—the activities of which little is known. On the Republican Party’s operation in the city, see Merseberger, "Political History of Houston," 29-30. On the formation of the Harris County Republican Club, see Beeth and Wintz, Black Dixie, 27; Merseberger, "Political History of Houston,” 57.

21 Galveston Daily News, 7 May 1869, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC. On the June meeting, see Merseberger, "Political History of Houston," 56. Tracy, the editor of the Houston Telegraph and later the owner of the Houston Union, was close friends with the Republican Governor E.J. Davis and was instrumental in forming the Republican club of Houston. On Tracy and Allen’s relationship with him, see Merline Pitre, “Richard Allen: The Chequered Career of Houston’s First Black Legislator,” in Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston, Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, eds. (College
Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 76-77. The concrete building was built in 1860 for W.D. Cleveland and served as a cotton brokerage. It was located close to the local office of the Freedmen's Bureau, and this may explain its use by blacks for their social meetings. The location and history of the concrete house was obtained through a meeting with Stephen Fox, February, 1993. On the building's location, also see Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for the City of Houston, Texas (Chicago: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1885).

It was typical for the Democrats to organize ward-based clubs, but it appears that most of their larger meetings were held in the central city. See Merseberger, "Political History of Houston," 25-27.

22 Galveston Daily News 17, 20 October 1869, quoted in Margaret R. Lenox, comp., WPA Files, MRC. In fact, blacks were elected to none of these positions. A. B. Hall was elected as candidate for sheriff and W.H. Parsons received the nomination for state senator. Richard Allen did, however, receive nomination for state representative. Why the paper believed that a resident of Galveston would be elected as sheriff is unclear. On the election of white officials, see Merseberger, "Political History of Houston," 63-64. For information on the political career of Norris Wright Cuney, see Maud Cuney Hare, Norris Wright Cuney: A Tribune of the Black People (Austin: Steck- Vaughn Company, 1968). On the Republicans' control of the city, see Merseberger, "Political History of Houston," 45, 78, 100-101.

23 Beeth and Wintz, Black Dixie, 27. For a discussion of the appointment of the black aldermen in 1870, see Merseberger, "Political History of Houston," 101-103. For a list of those appointed, see ibid., 105, n29.

C.W. Bryant, a black resident of Harris County, also served as delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1868-69, but it is uncertain whether or not he was a resident of Houston. On the service of Bryant, see "Register of Negro Legislators of Texas, Constitutional Convention of 1868-69," in Afro-American Resources, Texas State Archives. On the election of Richard Allen, see Daily Houston Telegraph, 1 January 1870, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, WPA Files, MRC. There were reportedly 817 votes cast in the election, 132 white and 685 black. See Houston Daily Times, 1 December 1869 for the voter count. For a summary of the black aldermen who served in Houston, see Houston City Directory 1877-1878. On the appointment of Richard Allen as Assistant Superintendent, see United States Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. District of Texas. Roster of officers and civilians on duty in the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, State of Texas, xerox pamphlet in Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. On Allen and Anderson's terms in the thirteenth legislature in 1873, see Afro-American Resources, Texas State Archives. For a more detailed look at Allen's political career, see Pitre, "Richard Allen," in Black Dixie, 74, 77.

On blacks' concern over their waning political power as the Reconstruction government began to fade from the South and the implications of this, see The Age, 11 June 1873, quoted in Lawton R. McFarland, comp., WPA Files, MRC. In comparison to the number of blacks elected in the urban areas studied by Rabinowitz, the number of blacks elected to serve in Houston appears relatively small. See Rabinowitz, Urban Race Relations, 263-66.

24 Elections continued to be ward-based throughout the nineteenth century, but blacks began to lose even their city-wide political power through election fraud and intimidation once the Democrats "redeemed" the state. On the racial distribution in the wards and its influence on elections, see David G. McComb, Houston, the Bayou City, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 85. On blacks' loss of political power in the state, see Smallwood, Time of Hope, 163.
Black aldermen began to disappear from the election returns in the 1870s even though Houston's wards--unlike many southern cities--remained unaffected by gerrymandering throughout the nineteenth century. The Fifth and Sixth wards were added to the city after the Civil War, but there appears to have been no racial motivation in their construction. On the history of Houston's wards and their abolition in 1904, see Vertical File H-Wards, MRC, Houston Public Library. For examples of gerrymandering in other cities, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 271-272.

Throughout Reconstruction and in its aftermath blacks in Houston remained politically active in the Republican Party in spite of white opposition and their own diminishing influence. Richard Allen, for example, served as a delegate to every Republican State Convention between 1870 and 1896. On Allen's continued political participation, see Pitre, "Richard Allen," 77. For evidence of blacks' continued political participation during Reconstruction, see Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie*, 27; *Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1871; *Weekly Telegraph*, 1 October 1868, quoted in Charles Franklin, WPA Files, MRC; *Daily Houston Telegraph*, 1 June 1870, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, WPA Files, MRC; *Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 1871, quoted in J. Therrien, WPA Files, MRC; *Daily Houston Telegraph*, 24 August 1873, quoted in Lorraine McRight, WPA Files, MRC; *The Age*, 11 June 1873, quoted in Lawton R. McFarland, WPA Files, MRC.

Obviously some blacks turned their political allegiance away from the Republican party in the ensuing years. In July 1878, the Houston *Daily Telegram* reported that the Colored Greenbacks of the Third Ward had organized a club and elected officers. On the colored greenbacks, see *Houston Daily Telegram*, 31 July 1878, quoted in Charles Franklin, WPA Files, MRC; and Pitre, "Richard Allen," 79. On blacks' dissatisfaction within the Republican party, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 282.

*On southern whites' reactions to northern instruction of blacks, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 153-156; also see Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977), 24-25. Whites attempts to control blacks' education is clearly demonstrated in the later struggle between blacks and whites over the control of public schools. See ibid., 166-171.*

*On white Texans' opposition to black schooling, see Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 76. Reports made by Houston bureau agents throughout the 1870s complained that whites in Houston showed little support for the education of the freedmen. Two possible reasons for the papers' encouragement of black education are: one, that the papers hoped that blacks' commitment to education would deter them from actively pursuing their political interests--an assertion Smallwood supports; or two, that the papers wanted blacks to spend their own money on black education, leaving public money--presumably federal funds since there were no state-supported public schools at this time--to white schools. On motives for white support of black schools, see ibid., 78. Also see M.E. Davis to Lieutenant Charles A. Simon (AAAG), 31 August 1868, "Monthly Report for August 1868," Letters Sent, vol. 5, #3716; W.B. Pease to William G. Kirkman, 1 April 1867, "Monthly Report for March," Roll 4 "Letters Received," *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Texas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870* (1973), M-822; Van Horne to Lieutenant J.P.*
Richardson, AAAG, 31 October 1867, Roll 4 "Letters Received." Unless otherwise indicated all microfilm references for the Freedman's Bureau will be to M-822.

29R.J. Fleming to J.C. DeGress, 11 November 1866, Register 2, 1868-1870; Roll 5. On white Texans' opposition to northern teachers, see Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 78-84.

30Daily Houston Telegraph, 28 July 1868, quoted in Willie Cumber, comp., WPA Files, MRC. For more on the convention and white attempts to control the black school system through southern teachers, see Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 77. In January 1867, the paper reported an altercation between a white Houstonian and a "Nigger Schoolmaster." From the wording of the article, it is difficult to determine whether the teacher involved was white or black. See the Daily and Sunday Telegraph, 12 January 1867, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

31D.T. Allen (Assistant Superintendent) to E.M. Wheelock, 2 January 1867, "Letters Received," Register 1, Roll 3. In 1866 the newspaper expressed its disapproval of a white school mistress living in the boarding house run by two blacks. See Evening Star, 18 June 1866, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC. In January 1869, the Daily Houston Telegraph reiterated its disapproval of "mixed" schools, stating that "both races desire to see the colored race have separate schools and the best facilities for their education." See Daily Houston Telegraph, 24 January 1869, quoted in Etta Williamson, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

32On the origin of the teachers sent by the AMA in 1869, see Daily Houston Telegraph, 23 May 1869, quoted in Etta Williamson, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

33Joseph Welch to J.Y. Alvord, 6 January 1870, Semi-Annual Report, Target 2, Roll 1, "Letters and Endorsements."

34Smallwood reports that the first school opened in Houston in September 1865—before the Bureau's arrival—through the recruiting efforts of the African Methodists. The role of the AMA and the Freedmen's Bureau, however, were particularly critical in Houston since a number of other educational and benevolent associations that functioned elsewhere in the South to advance black schooling refused to spread their missionary efforts to Texas due to the high rate of violence. See Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 74-75.


36Honey gives the location of only one of these schools—Mt. Zion Baptist Church. On the location of Mt. Zion in Houston's Second Ward in Frost Town, see The Red Book of Houston: A Compendium of Social, Professional, Religious, Educational, and Industrial Interest of Houston's Colored Population (Houston: Sotex Publishing Co., 19157), 10. See George W. Honey to E.M. Wheelock, 9 February 1866, Roll 19, Unregistered Letters Received. According to another Bureau record, there were 2 Bureau schools in operation in January 1866 in addition to those taught by Houston blacks. See "Record of Schools" January 1866-September 1869, Roll 18, Target 9. A later report by J.D. O'Connell stated that there were four Bureau schools in Houston and 4 private schools taught by blacks. See J.D.
O'Connell to Wheelock, 26 July and 10 September 1867, Roll 4 "Letters Received." On the number of black scholars enrolled in the Bureau schools, see W.B. Pease to William G. Kirkman, [17] February 1867, "Letters Sent," vol. 2, #3716.

37 M. O'Regan to E.M. Wheelock, 27 October 1866; 6 November 1866, Roll 4. In another letter to Wheelock, Honey claimed that Mr. Stuart, a teacher at Parson Alick's school in the colored Mt. Zion Baptist Church, abused the children. It is likely that the "Mr. Stewart" of which O'Regan speaks is the same Henry W. Stuart who reported to Gregory in 1865 and the Mr. Stuart of whom Honey speaks. See G.W. Honey to E.M. Wheelock, 9 February 1866, Roll 19 "Unregistered Letters Received."

38 Limited Bureau funds and personnel meant that much of the work of establishing schools actually was placed on the black community itself—an inevitable circumstance that may have helped Houston blacks overcome their misgivings about working with outsiders after their experience with Mr. Stewart. In April 1867, Pease reported to Kirkman that the freedpeople were doing all that they could to further their education, but they were financially strapped. See Pease to Kirkman, 1 April 1867, "Letters Sent," vol. 2, #3716.

39 For information on the Bureau's involvement in the educational life of the city's blacks, see "School Houses Rented and Repaired," "List of Houses Rented May 1869-June 1870," "Record of Schools," January 1866-September 1869," "Records of Teachers," Roll 18; "Monthly Reports of Persons and Articles Hired, May 1869-June 1870," "Report of School Buildings Owned, July 1869-April 1870," Roll 17. In 1867, the freedmen's schools also switched from free to pay. On the declining school attendance due to the change see W.B. Pease to W.G. Kirkman, 4 April 1867, Roll 4 "Letters Received." On the tuition paid by Texas's blacks, see Joseph Welch to Rev. J.Y. Alvord, 15 July 1869, Target 2, Roll 1 "Letters and Endorsements;" see also Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 87.


On blacks' dwindling influence, see Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 93. However, after the Reconstruction government was removed from the city, blacks apparently were allowed to serve as teachers in their own schools, although they rarely received appointments to administrative positions. See Ira Babington Bryant, The Development of Houston Negro Schools (Houston: Informer Pub. Co., 1935), 9.

41 See Bryant, Houston's Negro Schools, 8. The use of black churches by the Freedmen's Bureau for its schools was common throughout the South, see Rabinowitz, Race Relations, 156. It is unclear whether or not the Bureau paid the churches rent for the use of their buildings as school houses. In December 1866 O'Regan reported to Wheelock that a church had agreed to rent its building for a school at $20 a month, payable to the church's trustees. See O'Regan to Wheelock, 11 December 1866, Roll 4 "Letters Received." However, in May 1867, Pease reported to Kirkman that there was a school being held in a church for which the Bureau did not pay rent but had paid $48.60 for repairs. See Pease to Kirkman 27 May 1867, Roll 4 "Letters Received." In January 1868, Pease recommended to Richardson that two church buildings be rented for freedmen's schools. One was to receive $15 per month, and the other was to get payment for repairs and a stove. See Pease to Richardson, 27 January 1868, "Letters Sent," vol. 4, #3716.
Whether there were three or four schools in operation by the Bureau is unclear. In January 1867 the Bureau announced that schools had opened on the tenth of the month in the "Colored Methodist Episcopal Church," the "Second Colored Methodist Episcopal Church," the "Mt. Zion Church," and the "Baptist Church." See Mr. D.T. Allen to Wheelock, 10 January 1867, Roll 3, Letters Received.

On Mr. Riden's School, see M. O'Regan to E.M. Wheelock, 27 October 1866, Roll 4 "Letters Received." Mr. Riden was identified in a later city directory as a teacher in Houston, indicating the success of his educational efforts. See Houston City Directory 1877-78.

42See Richard Allen to E.M. Wheelock, 2 January 1867, Register 1, Roll 3, "Letters Received 1866-67." On the problems with school attendance due to lack of facilities caused by Mt. Zion's burning, see W.B. Pease to William G. Kirkman, 3 April 1867, "Letters Sent," vol. 2, #3716. Pease even recommended that the Bureau not provide funds for the building's repair since the church members did not have a lease on the land and reportedly still owed Sheriff hall for the lumber used in the building's construction. Also see W.B. Pease to ?, 10 September 1868, "Letters Sent," vol. 4, #3716. On blacks' difficulty finding suitable buildings for their schools, see Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 74, 80.

43The five individuals listed were Frank Vance, Sandy Parker, G.B. Mitchell, Johnson Rice, and J.T. Zealy. When the Bureau could find acceptable facilities, it generally paid $15 to $35 in monthly rent. The amounts listed in the reports apparently indicated the total amount of rent paid to the individual over the eleven month period. See "Report of School Buildings Owned, July 1869-April 1870," Roll 17. On average rent paid, see "Monthly Report of Persons and Articles Hired," May 1867-June 1870, Target 2, Roll 17.

44The educational personnel of the Bureau tried to move their residence to a more central location to be close to the schools. See Julia B. Nelson to Captain L.W. Stevenson, 6 November 1869, vol. [?], Letters Received; Warren Norton to Captain L. W. Stevenson, 4 November 1869, vol. [?], Letters Received; "List of Houses Rented and Teachers Employed: May 1869-June 1870," Target 8, Roll 18. There is evidence too that the Bureau helped individuals recover land that had been seized by the Confederate Government so that they in turn could rent it to the Bureau for the purpose of establishing schools. See W.B. Pease to W.G. Kirkman, 18 February 1867; 19 February 1867, in "Letters Sent," vol. 2, #3716; First Lieutenant W.M. Van Horne to [?], Receipt for rental of school house, vol. 1; 20 March 1867, contract with J.W. Johnston for use of building, Roll 18; "Report of School Buildings Owned, July 1869-April 1870," Roll 17; "List of Houses Rented and Teachers Employed," May 1869-June 1870, Target 8, Roll 18.

45There also appeared to be some confusion on the part of the agents themselves, as O'Regan inquired whether or not the Bureau would cover the expense of his renting a building and outfitting it for a school. See M. O'Regan to E.M. Wheelock, 6 November 1866, Roll 4 "Letters Received."


47M.E. Davis to Captain C.S. Roberts, 26 October 1868, "Letters Sent," vol. 4, #3716. For a report on the meeting held by the black community, see Houston Daily Times, 30 October 1868, quoted in Leonard J. Fohn, comp., quoted in WPA Files, MRC.
Melissa Ammerman refused to deed the land to a board of trustees for the purpose of erecting a "colored school," so the trustees contracted individually with her. After receiving title to the land, they in turn executed a deed to themselves as trustees of the school, stating that the land was to be used for no purpose other than educational. Among the members of the proposed board of trustees for the institution were several notable black citizens. Allen was an architect and had served in several political offices. Elias Dibble was the pastor of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, and Sandy Parker was one of the first pastors of Antioch Baptist Church. Both Dibble and Parker served as aldermen during the 1870s. On Ammerman's deed of the land, see M.E. Davis to Captain C.S. Roberts, 4 December 1868, "Letters Sent," vol. 5, #3716. On Dibble and Parker's religious involvement, see Red Book of Houston, 21-22.

48 When one of the board members lost the list of subscribers—with only a small portion of the money collected—other whites began backing out of their agreements. They claimed that they had agreed to fund the school only if it were built in "such a place and built according to their ideas or plans." Others claimed that they had agreed to pay only upon completion of the structure. See M.E. Davis to C.S. Roberts, 4 December 1868, "Letters Sent," vol. 4, #3716.


50 James Burke to Welch, 28 May 1869, Register 2, "Letters Received 1868-70," Roll 5. According to the city directories and to the voter registers, Burke was a white bookseller and stationer in Houston. See Voter Register 1867-1869; Houston City Directory 1877-1878. Burke, however, corresponded with the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association several times during the late 1860s and early 1870s regarding the state of the "freedmen" in Houston. Burke urged both organizations to increase their efforts at moral and educational instruction for the city's blacks. See James Burke to Reverend George Whipple, 22 December 1868; James Burke to General O.O. Howard, 14 December 1870, American Missionary Association Collection, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. For the Assistant Superintendent's complaint, see William H. Sinclair to Captain C.S. Roberts, 4 March 1869, "Letters Sent, Office of the Assistant Superintendent of Education, Galveston 1869-1870," vol. [?], #3708.

51 Joseph Welch to O.O. Howard, 1 July, 1869. On the value of the land on which the school was sited, see "October Report of School Buildings Owned, July 1869-April 1870," Roll 17.

52 C.H. Bering also wrote to Welch about the ill feelings on the part of the black community. He feared that they would obstruct his attempts to begin construction on the school. See Joseph Welch to Louis W. Stevenson, 30 July 1869, vol. [?]; C.H. Bering to "Rev. J. Welsh," Recorded 31 July 1869, "Letters Received," Roll 5.

53 Louis W. Stevenson (Assistant Superintendent of Education) to Joseph Welch, 8 August 1869, Roll 8.

54 On the naming of the school see, Richard Allen for Trustees to L.W. Stevenson, 7 September 1869, vol ( ).
Bureau Headquarters was informed of the accident at the school by the contractor, the Bureau’s teachers, and by Richard Allen, the chairman of the trustees. Allen’s immediate notification of the incident demonstrated that the trustees actively followed in the school’s construction even if they had little power to oversee it. Mr. Norton corresponded regularly with Welch concerning school matters in Houston, often writing on behalf of the other teachers. Presumably he held some authoritative position over the teachers in Houston.

On construction of the Gregory Institute, see Joseph Welch to L.W. Stevenson, 13 August 1869; Warren Norton to L.W. Stevenson, 5 October 1869; C.H. Bering to L.W. Stevenson, 12 October 1869; On the collapse of the building, see Warren Norton to L.W. Stevenson, 15 October 1869; and Richard Allen to Louis W. Stevenson, 15 October 1869 (volumes unknown). On the final stages of construction, see W. Norton to L.W. Stevenson, 23 December 1869; C.H. Bering to L.W. Stevenson, 24 December 1869; C.H. Bering to L.W. Stevenson, 30 December 1869; Joseph Welch to C.H. Bering, 20 August 1869, all on Roll 18. In 1870 Richard Allen was allotted $155 with which to erect a fence around the Institute and to make any necessary repairs. On the fencing of the school, see E.C. Bartholomew (Superintendent of Education) to Richard Allen, 31 October 1870, Roll [?]. For the announcement of the school’s opening, see Daily Houston Telegraph, 14 January 1870, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

On the dedication of the Gregory Institute, see Daily Houston Telegraph, 16 January 1870, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, comp., WPA Files, MRC. No other reference to Judge Baldwin could be located in Houston’s city records; although, there was an attorney, D.J. Baldwin, listed in the 1870-71 city directory. In addition, Carl Moneyhon mentions a Judge D.J. Baldwin of the U.S. District Court at Galveston. The “General Parsons” mentioned in the article may have been William H. Parsons, a famous war hero in Texas who fought in the Mexican War and later organized a Confederate cavalry, Parsons’ Brigade. On Baldwin, see Houston City Directory 1870-71; Moneyhon, Republicanism in Texas, 64. On Parsons, see Walter Prescott Webb and H. Bailey Carroll, eds., Handbook of Texas, vol. II (Texas State Historical Association: Austin, 1952), 342.

According to the local paper, there were still four other “freedman’s week-day schools” in operation besides the Gregory, although in his history of Houston’s black schools, Ira Bryant claims that all of the other Bureau schools were closed. See Daily Houston Telegraph, 20 February 1870, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Bryant, Houston Negro Schools, 8.

Houston Telegraph, 26 September 1872, quoted in J. Therrien, comp., WPA Files, MRC. See also Daily Telegraph, 28 June 1871, quoted in J. Therrien, comp., WPA Files, MRC. On the prominence of the Gregory Institute relative to the rest of the state’s schools, see Smallwood, Time of Hope, Time of Despair, 92.

Although there had been public schools in Texas prior to 1871, there had never been a free school system. On the Bureau’s formation of free public schools in Texas, see C.E. Evans, The Story of Texas Schools, (Austin: The Steck Company, 1955), 83-86. These schools, however, were closed with the Republicans’ demise in Texas and replaced under a new system in 1876. On the later school law of 1876 that reorganized Texas’s public school system, see ibid., 93-99; Johnston, Unknown City, 88-89. The number of students attending the Gregory Institute far exceeded that found in any of the other black or white schools in Houston. This may have been due partly to the school’s size; however, it is probable that the school also was somewhat overcrowded by the city officials. See Houston Morning Age, 2 October 1877, quoted in Lorraine McRight, comp., WPA Files, MRC.
In 1893, Houston blacks showed their continued commitment to education by petitioning the state government for the establishment of "a branch of the state university for colored youths." See "Petition from Colored Citizens of Harris County," 30 January 1893; "Petition to Create a Branch University for Colored Youths of Texas," 6 November 1893; RG 100-410, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

Although the Bureau recognized the need for a normal school in Texas, an institution it hoped to construct in Houston, the Bureau's available funds were insufficient for the task. On the plans to establish a normal school, see Welch to Alvord, 6 January 1870, M822, Target 2, Roll 1; on insufficiency of funds, see Stevenson to Hurd, 12 March 1870, Target 2, Roll 1.

On blacks' "uphill battle" to secure educational opportunities in Texas, see Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 90-93.

On the Bureau's employment of white teachers, see "Records of Teachers" (19) October 1865-February 1868, Target 4; Roll 18. In May 1867, Pease reported that Nathan Boyle, a black man, had applied to teach in a "colored school." While Pease stated that he found him capable, there is no further evidence that he was ever hired by the Bureau. There may have been, however, more schools taught by blacks than Bureau headquarters received notice of. See Pease to Kirkman, 27 May 1867, Roll 4 "Letters Received."

Ira Bryant states that Houston whites finally agreed to blacks' demands for the employment of instructors of their own race. Blacks across the South fought to enlist members of their own race as teachers in their schools. They finally met with limited success, but only after many long years of protest. See Bryant, *Houston Negro Schools*, 9. The whites' seeming concession to blacks in this matter may also have been due to their desire to pay smaller salaries for staffing the blacks' schools—something they were able to accomplish by hiring blacks. See Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 172-178, Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 87-88, 93.

On the importance of the black church, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 198, 206, 223. For evidence of the ancillary activities in Houston's black churches, see Houston *Daily Age*, 20 June 1874, quoted in Lorraine McRight, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Houston *Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1869, quoted in Ann Wellington, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

M. O'Regan to E.M. Wheelock, 6 November 1866, Roll 4, "Letters Received."

The lack of information regarding blacks' churches is compounded by the fact that there are no extant records for Houston's black churches from this date. In May 1875, the *Houston Daily Telegraph* reported that there would be a laying of the cornerstone of the new Antioch Baptist Church to which all "Free and Accepted Masons throughout the world" were invited to attend. *Houston Daily Telegraph*, 15 May 1875, quoted in Johnnie Therrien, comp., WPA Files, MRC. On the Colored Farmer's Convention, see *Daily Houston Telegraph*, 31 December 1870, quoted in Ann Wellington, comp., WPA Files, MRC. On the Republican Club, see Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie*, 27. For a "typical" news story that emphasized the divisions within Houston's black churches, see *Daily and Sunday Telegraph*, 27 January 1867, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC. For information on the uses of black southerners' churches, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 210-212.

On the number of black churches in Houston, see *Daily Houston Telegraph*, 20 February 1870, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, comp., WPA Files, MRC. On the importance of the Methodist and Baptist churches in Houston, see Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie*, 24-25. Apparently the black Methodists had been permitted to worship in their own building located on the white church's property since the early 1850s. However, they were not given title to the building or full control of their church until 1867. See ibid., 18. The importance of these two
denominations in Houston mirrored the situation across the South. The Methodists and
Baptists attracted the largest number of black parishioners. See Leon Litwack, *Been in the

66 *Antioch: Historic Highlights, The Antioch Baptist Church* (Antioch Community
24.

67 Typical of the “first generation” of black ministers in the South, Yates was a former
slave. See Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 212-213; On Yates’ influence in the black
community, see Rutherford B.H. Yates, Sr. and Paul L. Yates, *The Life and Efforts of Jack

68 Only three of the nineteen blacks who were “charter members” of Antioch chose to
purchase property in the western additions of the Fourth Ward. All 3 settled in Freedmanto.
Of the five church trustees during the 1870s, one owned land in Freedmanto, and none of
the others owned property in any of the five western additions of the Fourth Ward. On the
names of the trustees, see Harris County Deed Records, vol. 10: 22. On the names of the
founding members, see *Antioch: Historic Highlights*, 1. It is difficult to say where the
parishioners of Antioch settled since there are no extant church records from the this period.
However, judging from the settlement patterns of the trustees, proximity to the church was not
a primary factor in residential settlement.

69 On Hardcastle’s donation of land, see Deed Records 1836-1904, Harris County,
Harris County Court House; vol. 10: 22. On the trustees’ purchase of land in the Senechal
addition, see Deed Records 1836-1904, vol. 12: 411. It is uncertain the exact amount the
trustees paid for the land since the deed registers customarily only listed the amount of
“consideration” given for the property—an amount presumably smaller than the full purchase
price. On the laying of the cornerstone for the new church in 1875, see Houston *Daily
Telegraph*, 15 April 1875. The congregation held on to the property in Freedmanto until
1910, but there is no indication of how that property was used. The 1869 Wood Map depicts a
church at this location, but it is uncertain whether this merely indicated ownership by Antioch
or its actual use. No church listing in the city directory ever correlated with this location. See
W.E. Wood, *Map of Houston, Harris County, Texas, 1869*, MRC, Houston Public Library.
On the sale of the land in Freedmanto by Antioch in 1910, see Deed Records 1836-1904,
Harris County, Harris County Court House; vol. 64: 683.

70 Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 204. The “colored Methodist church” in
Houston also changed location and was remodeled shortly after the war. When the black
community held its first annual celebration of emancipation several weeks later, the procession
commenced at the site of the new Methodist Church on Travis Street. See *Evening Star*, 28
May, 20 June 1866.

71 On black and white support of churches, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*,
205. Since there are no extant records from this period for the city’s black churches, it is
difficult to state with certainty that whites gave financial aid to them. However in 1870, there
was a report in the newspaper that J.G. Tracy, a leader of the Republican Party, had given a
melodeme to the “colored Methodist church” in return for political support. See Merseberger,
“Political History of Houston,” 97.
On the location of black churches in other cities, see Rabinowitz, *Urban Race Relations*, 224.

*Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 25 August; 6 October 1865. On the transfer of the deed to the Houston Mutual Aid Society, see "Harris County Deed Records, 1837-46, 1857-68," Box 32, Muir Papers, Rice University. (From Harris County Deed Records, Harris County, vol. 3: 771-72). In the October article, the paper identified the society's officers as: Rev. Elias Dibble, President; Shade Croome, Secretary; Peter Jackson, Treasurer. Blacks believed that they helped unify and strengthen the community's members—as indicated by the by-laws of the Mutual Aid Society in Houston. The by-laws stated that "What individuals cannot do singly, by associating together they may readily accomplish . . . . Having been heretofore as servants, shut out from the blessings of education and associated effort . . . . we feel that we have especial need of every help that can be delivered from virtuous principles . . . ." For a copy of the preamble to the by-laws, see *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 6 October 1865.

According to the paper, one had been held a few nights ago in the Fourth Ward. *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 11, 18 October 1865.

In July and August 1865 the paper reported that it had not heard of a "colored ball" in a long time—a indication that they usually occurred on a regular basis. See ibid., 12, 19 July; 18 October 1865. On the alleged pretensions of black women, see ibid., 1 November 1865; also see ibid., 22 September 1865. For examples of the whites' mocking of black attempts to hold social and cultural gatherings, see *Evening Star*, 24 May 1866, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; *Daily Telegraph*, 27 October 1866, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; *Houston Daily Times*, 27 November 1868, quoted in Ruth Denny, comp., WPA Files, MRC; *Daily Times*, 17 September 1869, quoted in Ruth Denny, comp., WPA Files, MRC; *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, 21 January 1870, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

For references to these organizations, see *Daily Telegraph*, 27 October 1866, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; *Evening Star*, 20 June 1866. On later naming of the baseball club, see *Daily Houston Telegraph*, 14 July 1868, quoted in Willie Cumber, comp., WPA Files, MRC. It is likely that the organizations identified in local newspapers represented an incomplete listing of the blacks' organizations. They had to rely on the interest of white newspaper reporters to receive acknowledgment of their activities and organizations. On the orphan society, see Orphan Society (col'd) vs. Octavia Williams (freedwoman) 10 June 1867, Register of Complaints, Harris and Montgomery Counties, vol. 2, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.

On the colored militia, see *Daily Houston Telegraph*, 9 October 1870, quoted in Frances Carey, comp., WPA Files, MRC. For list of organizations in 1871, see *Daily Telegraph*, 20 June 1871, quoted in J. Therrien, comp., WPA Files, MRC. In the late 1870s a group identified as the "Draymen's Savings Club" purchased a lot of property in the Senegal addition next to Antioch Baptist Church. While it is uncertain through the deed records whether or not this was a black organization, I have assumed that it was since the overwhelming majority of the city's draymen were black. See Appendix 2 for the Senegal subdivision map indicating the club's ownership of this property.

*Evening Star*, 29 May; 13, 20 June 1866, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC.
Houston newspapers gave greatest attention to this event in the first year following the war. As Reconstruction in Houston ended, the reporting of this annual event became less frequent and less detailed. According to the WPA's files, there was no reporting of the event from 1875 to 1879. In 1879, only a small article appeared. See Daily Houston Telegraph, 22 June 1870, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Daily Telegraph, 20 June 1871, quoted in J. Therrien, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Daily Telegraph, 20 June 1872 quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Houston Daily Age, 20 June 1874, quoted in Lorraine McRight, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Daily Telegraph, 20 June 1875, quoted in Johnnie Therrien, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Weekly Telegraph, 20 June 1879, quoted in Ruth Denny, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

For lists of the blacks' organizations, see Houston Daily Age, 20 June 1874, quoted in Lorraine McRight, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Weekly Telegraph, 20 June 1874; Daily Telegraph, 23 November 1875; Daily Telegraph, 13 January 1877. The paper made the same announcement regarding the purchase of festival grounds in 1872, making the exact date of purchase uncertain. Perhaps the second notice was indication that the association had succeeded in paying off the note that it owed on the land, originally purchased in 1872. In the second article, however, the paper stated that the land purchased was located on the southeastern limits of the city. Presumably this was a misprint, for the state fair grounds were located off of Main Street near the city's southwestern limits. On the location of the state fair grounds, see McComb, Bayou City, 62. Prior to the blacks' purchase of their Festival Grounds, most of their celebrations took place at the State Fair Grounds, although on one occasion they celebrated emancipation at an area near Freedmantown called "Hangman's Grove." Undoubtedly, the connotations of the name "Hangman's Grove" must have made it an unattractive meeting place for blacks. It is interesting, moreover, that it was located directly adjacent to Freedmantown, the ward's neighborhood with the largest concentration of blacks. On the uses of "Hangman's Grove," see Daily Houston Telegraph, 22 June 1870, quoted in Ava Jo Nowlin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; ibid., 4 April 1868, quoted in Willie Cumbie, comp., WPA Files, MRC. Future celebrations of the black community usually took place at the newly purchased festival grounds. See Daily Telegraph, 21 July 1872; ibid., 11 June 1874, quoted in Frances Carey, comp., WPA Files, MRC; ibid., 20 June 1875. Ownership of festival grounds by blacks appears to have been common in the South in the postwar period, see Rabinowitz, Urban Race Relations, 190. On the picnic excursion, see Daily Telegram, 11 April 1879, quoted in Frances Carey, comp., WPA Files, MRC.

On the meeting places of Houston's black organizations, see Evening Star, 20 June 1866, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Daily Telegraph, 17 September 1869, quoted in Ruth Denny, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 21 January 1870, quoted in Charles Franklin, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Daily Telegraph, 10 June 1871, quoted in J. Therrien, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Daily Telegraph, 4 August 1871, quoted in J. Therrien, comp., WPA Files, MRC; Houston City Directory 1880-81.

Voter Registers, 1867-1869. On the basis of research conducted thus far, there is no way to determine whether or not these leaders had been free or enslaved prior to the war. Blassingame claims that whether one was free or slave prior to 1865 actually mattered little in New Orleans's postwar circumstances. He states that education was a more important criterion for leadership positions. See Blassingame, Black New Orleans, 152-158.

Of the 81 leaders identified in newspaper articles, city directories, Freedmen Bureau records, and other secondary sources, only 30 had their occupations listed in Houston's city directories. (In addition to this number there were several individuals whose residences were listed in the directory, but their occupations were not.) Among the 30 listed, there were 5
barbers, 5 blacksmiths, 4 carpenters, 4 laborers, 3 pastors, 2 boiler makers—1 was a helper, and 1 of each of the following: brick mason, drayman, mechanic, moulder, cotton sampler, and ice cream dealer. Two of the blacksmiths and one of the barbers owned their own shops. See Houston City Directory 1877–78; ibid., 1870–71; ibid., 1880–81.

84 A list of the leaders of black organizations was compiled and then addresses for those listed in the city directories were added to the list. According to this method, it appears that organizational leaders came from all of the city’s wards. The greatest number came from the Fourth Ward, but they did not come from any particular neighborhood within the ward. Since no rosters of the members of these organizations exists, it is impossible to know for certain whether or not the members followed the same residential patterns as their leaders, but it seems likely that they did. Of the leaders identified at least two were female, preventing them from registering to vote. To determine the leaders’ length of residence in Houston, they were cross-referenced with voter registers, and to determine their ownership of land, they were compared with data from deed records. See Voter Register 1867–69; “Hardcastle Addition,” “Castanie Addition,” “Baker Addition,” “Hopson Addition,” and “Senechal Addition.” Subdivision Books, Compilations of the Indexes to Real Property Registers for Harris County, Stewart Title Company, Houston, Texas. On the leaders’ places of residence, see Houston City Directory 1866; ibid., 1870–71; ibid., 1880–81; ibid., 1877–78.

85 Kellogg, "Lexington, Kentucky," 49. Fundamental to my disagreement with Kellogg’s conclusion is his use of the term “neighborhood community.” In this thesis, I have separated the terms “neighborhood” and “community”—the former being representative of a geographical entity and the latter describing a grouping based on common bonds or shared interests, a more intangible association. Thus my definition of a “neighborhood community” would be a group of inhabitants of a particular geographic area who have formed a mutual association based on their residence in the same neighborhood. Accordingly, organizational headquarters, churches, and schools are not necessary to the development of this community awareness. Sharing the same physical space is an association sufficient enough to produce this community awareness. For another discussion of the importance in separating neighborhood from community, see Gary Browne, review of The Unbounded Community: Neighborhood Life and Social Structure in New York City, 1830–1875, by Kenneth A. Scherzer, Journal of the Early Republic 12 (Winter 1992): 582.

86 According to deed records for the Hardcastle Addition, a Methodist Episcopal Church purchased land in Freedmantown in 1871. This, however, was the only church to locate in this neighborhood. See “Hardcastle Addition,” Subdivision Books, Stewart Title Company, Block 7.

87 On the importance of homeownership to a neighborhood’s stability in Houston, see Mary Susan Jackson, “Movin’ On: Mobility Through Houston in the 1850s,” Southwestern Historical Quarterly 81 (January 1978): 266–270. The National Register’s report on Freedmen’s Town Historic District highlights the importance of the porch to the homes it identifies. Although the majority of homes in the area described in this report were built after the time period considered in this thesis—and were located in a separate residential neighborhood, one may assume that the porch held a similar importance—though somewhat diminished due to the wider availability of vacant land—in black neighborhoods across the city in the years immediately following emancipation. See Freedmen’s Town Historic District, National Register Department, Item #7: 5; Item #8: 7.

88 Blassingame’s central point is that blacks from all cities, regardless of their housing patterns, faced similar urban hardships and problems. I would stress as well that this meant
that blacks from all neighborhoods and sections within the city also were able to enjoy the benefits of community life. See Blassingame, “Before the Ghetto,” 484-485.
Conclusion

Freedmantown's evolution as a black residential neighborhood illustrated the remarkable strides Houston blacks made in building a relatively stable and secure community in the decade and a half following the Civil War. By 1880, the city's blacks could boast a sizable number of property owners—a large proportion of whom owned land in Freedmantown—several black schools and churches, and numerous social and political organizations. Establishing this community infrastructure was not easy, however, and blacks still lacked many crucial institutions. There was, for example, no black-run newspaper in Houston as late as 1880. Schooling was available to only a limited number of children, and the number of black businesses—though increasing—remained small. Blacks, nevertheless, showed great determination and strength in overcoming white hostility and resistance to the exercise of their newly won freedom in order to establish the residential neighborhoods and community institutions that they did.

As blacks moved to Houston in the immediate postwar years, they confronted a somewhat unusual situation when compared to the rest of the South's urban areas. Houston's prewar "success" in limiting its free black population had prevented the growth of an established free black community upon which the postwar migrants might have been able to build. In fact, there were few existing formal black institutions—slave or free—in Houston prior to the Confederacy's defeat.

Not only did the city's postwar black population face a lack of formal black institutions, but they also found few established black residential areas.
Although newspapers frequently had complained about the number of slaves living away from their owners in the antebellum period, there is little other evidence of black areas of settlement in the city prior to the Civil War. According to the 1860 census, only seventy-eight slaves were hired out by their owners, and it seems likely that some of these continued to live on their owners’ premises. A few free blacks managed to purchase property before 1865, but their number was so small that they could not have formed a significant black residential neighborhood. The absence of established black institutions and residential areas perhaps left blacks migrating to the city after the war and those who had been living there prior to 1865 less constrained in their choices of residential settlement. There were no established patterns into which these blacks were expected to fit. Instead, they could choose from among the sections where cheap land was available in the city, thus creating their own residential neighborhoods.

Freedmantown’s rapid postwar development into a virtually all-black neighborhood confirms blacks’ eagerness to take advantage of the circumstances Houston offered them to establish their own residential neighborhoods. In all of the western-most additions of the Fourth Ward there appeared to be an abundance of cheap, unimproved land. Several of these additions, moreover, offered a more attractive physical environment than Freedmantown. Freedmantown, in fact, contained a number of geographic disincentives to settlement—it directly bordered the flood-prone banks of Buffalo Bayou, and it was situated next to two cemeteries and lands designated for a city hospital. Nevertheless, Freedmantown attracted a greater number of black property owners—both in absolute and relative terms—than the adjacent additions of the ward. Blacks may have chosen to settle in Freedmantown over surrounding additions because it offered them both a greater opportunity to
establish themselves as homeowners and an unparalleled opportunity to live among other blacks.

Freedmantown’s growth as a black neighborhood so quickly after the war illustrates one of the ways in which Houston blacks took control of their lives in the postwar period. Another way in which blacks demonstrated their commitment to the prosperity and security of their community was in their establishment of community institutions. Immediately following the Confederacy’s defeat, blacks across the city joined together to form political, religious, social, educational, and economic organizations to protect their right to equal citizenship. The process of building this new community infrastructure was not limited to a specific group of blacks nor was it confined to the areas of heaviest black residential settlement. Instead, blacks throughout the city were engaged in its development.

In forming these separate black organizations, blacks simultaneously benefitted and suffered from Houston’s lack of an established antebellum free black community. To blacks' advantage, leadership--and presumably membership--in social, economic, educational, and religious organizations was not limited to an “elite” group of blacks, as it often was in older southern cities. Those who rose to the forefront of Houston’s black community life were a heterogeneous group, reflecting the diversity within the city’s black population. Among the leaders of the black community, there were some who were registered to vote, and others who were not. The black leaders held a wide variety of occupations and lived in various sections of the city. Although it is uncertain how many were slaves and how many were free prior to the war, it is clear that a large number had lived in Texas before 1865. Most, however, appeared to be newcomers to Houston.
The lack of an established antebellum free black community in Houston appears also to have had negative repercussions for the city’s postwar black community. It seems that blacks’ community infrastructure may have developed more slowly than it did in other southern cities. The blacks’ postwar institutions were of the most basic type—there was no black institution of higher learning; no black library; no formal black banking or lending institution; and there were even very few black-owned businesses.

Houston blacks’ postwar urban experience, therefore, was both one of advancement and opportunity and one of limitation and restraint. Blacks served in a larger number of local and state offices during the postwar period than in previous or in future years. But the number of officeholders continued to be small—even during Reconstruction—when compared to blacks’ proportion of the city’s population. A number of black schools were constructed with the help of the Freedmen’s Bureau—most notably the Gregory Institute—but they still reached only a small portion of the black population. Whites, moreover, remained in control of black schools, setting blacks’ curriculum and hiring their instructors. Blacks established themselves as homeowners across the city, especially in Freedmantown and its adjacent neighborhoods, but blacks were confined—both by their own poverty and by whites’ racism—to areas where land was cheap.

Blacks, nonetheless, seized whatever opportunities they could find—much as they had done in slavery—to begin building the foundations for an enduring and vital black urban culture. The history of Freedmantown’s development stands as a powerful illustration of blacks’ determination to make the most of what was available to them in the postwar years. Although the land in Freedmantown may not have been the most desirable in the city, blacks took
advantage of the opportunity to purchase land in the neighborhood and to establish a stable residential community.

Perhaps recognizing that the larger black community's survival depended upon the support and involvement of blacks from across the city, blacks in Freedmantown--and in other largely black residential areas--appeared to maintain a broad communal focus. Religious, economic, educational, and social life involved blacks from across the city, thus creating a trans-neighborhood black community. Blacks from all neighborhoods and backgrounds joined force to strengthen their community and to ensure its ability to withstand the rigors of urban life. Within the framework of this larger black community, however, individual residential neighborhoods such as Freedmantown existed--and thrived.

In the immediate postwar years more blacks purchased property in Freedmantown than in any of the surrounding additions, making Freedmantown an outstanding illustration of a stable, black residential neighborhood. Despite Freedmantown’s rapid evolution as a black neighborhood, its residents’ continued to interact with the black inhabitants of the ward's more racially mixed neighborhoods, thus establishing an enduring link between Freedmantown and the larger black community of the Fourth Ward.
Epilogue

Freedmantown had originated as a neighborhood of black property owners in 1866 and it remained largely one in 1880. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, while the Fourth Ward solidified its hold on the city’s black community life, Freedmantown simultaneously began to lose its uniquely high concentration of black property owners. Although the majority of land owners in Freedmantown continued to be drawn from the black community, an increasing number of whites began to invest in the area’s real estate—a trend that had begun in the late 1870s and accelerated in later years. Only one of these white investors, however, was listed in the census returns as a resident of Freedmantown. An increasing number of the black property owners in Freedmantown also were absentee proprietors, but the majority continued to live in the neighborhood on the land that they owned. Nevertheless, real estate speculation in Freedmantown evidently was becoming increasingly popular among the city’s residents—both black and particularly white—and absentee ownership was becoming more common within the addition.¹

Between 1880 and 1900, the pace of change in Freedmantown quickened as the demographic composition of the neighborhood's property owners underwent a dramatic alteration. Hardcastle’s own property transactions in the addition slowed to a snail’s pace—eight transactions were conducted during the 1880s, and only two in the 1890s. Transactions by resident property owners also appeared to occur rarely. The number of individuals who were both land owners and residents of the addition declined precipitously, indicating an accelerated incidence of absentee ownership. It is virtually impossible to
reconstruct the resident population of Freedmantown in 1890, since the census returns for that year are no longer extant. In addition, the 1890 city directory no longer used the label “Freedmantown,” as it had in the late seventies to designate residence in this addition. Perhaps the best source of information for the addition at this date is the 1891 bird’s-eye map of Houston. This map shows that Freedmantown had become more densely settled—approximately eighty dwellings were depicted on the map—but it seems likely that this was merely a continuation of the same type of residential growth that had begun in the 1870s.²

By 1900 Freedmantown clearly had been transformed. The census returns for this year are much more comprehensive and thus provide more accurate information about the character of the area. Both the census and deed records indicate that the number of the property owners in the addition who also were residents was decreasing. The tax records for 1900 reveal that several of the individuals who had purchased land in Freedmantown shortly after the war continued to own property in the addition, but the total number of black owners had declined precipitously.³ Of the small number of blacks who appeared as resident-property owners in 1900, most had lived and owned property in the area since the early to mid-1870s, a testament to the initial stability of this black residential neighborhood. Despite this degree of continuity, the majority—sixty-one percent—of the all of the residents in Freedmantown in 1900 were no longer homeowners. The difference between the rates of homeownership among the black and white residents in Freedmantown was barely perceptible, with thirty-three percent of the black households owning their homes and a slighter higher thirty-six percent among the white households.

The number of blacks owning land in Freedmantown may have declined over the last decades of the nineteenth century, but blacks still comprised the
largest segment of the population. In 1880 eighty-eight percent of the neighborhood's residents were black and in 1900 this percentage had increased to ninety. Freedmantown in 1900, moreover, appeared even more segregated than it had been in 1880. Occasional pockets of white residents did exist, seventy percent of whom were German or Italian immigrants. Most of these whites appeared to reside somewhere in the southwestern quadrant of the neighborhood, listing their addresses either on San Felipe Road or in the surrounding streets. Few whites, however, appeared to live next door to one another and were usually surrounded by black residents. Freedmantown was no longer the neighborhood of black property owners that it had been in previous years, but it was by 1900 more populous. Except for the areas immediately to the south of and bordering on Buffalo Bayou, the region had shed its sparsely settled character.

The late-nineteenth-century alterations in Freedmantown's patterns of land ownership, however, appear minor when compared to the transformations that occurred as a result of the events of the first decade of the twentieth century. As part of a movement sweeping cities across the nation, the Houston City Council decided in 1907 to adopt an official policy regarding the city's prostitutes. Like New Orleans, Houston's solution lay in establishing a legal vice district where it could segregate its bawdy houses. The committee reporting to the council recommended that the vice district be established within the city's corporate limits, but outside of the central business area. It suggested an area up Buffalo Bayou to the west of the city--directly upon the site of the Freedmantown addition. According to the report of the ordinance committee, the site chosen was,

the best selection that could have been made. The property is of little value and would be increased rather than diminished in value
by the ordinance. No public school is situated in or near it, nor is there any occasion for school children to pass through it in going to school; it is not situated in any public thoroughfare in general use, and largely the land is vacant and unoccupied by residences and is of little value situated in the bends of the Bayou, and cut up by gullies.5

Given the expanding residential development in Freedmantown, the committee's description of this area was clearly incompatible with the addition's actual character. The precise section of the addition where the council intended to place the vice district--called "The Reservation"--encompassed some of Freedmantown's most densely settled blocks (see Map H). It appears that much of the land in the northern portion of the proposed Reservation was vacant, but this northern portion constituted less than half of the proposed district's total area. Nevertheless, the Houston Chronicle expressed its approval of the committee's decision, stating that "the spot allotted to the fallen women is barren of houses, with the exception of a few scattered negro huts. . . ."6 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and tax records for 1907 contradict such statements about Freedmantown's scarcity of residents.7 The land in and around Freedmantown did appear to be less valuable than much of the other property in the city. Most of the homes were small, wooden-frame structures, but they were neither as scattered nor as dilapidated as the newspaper's description would suggest.8 Despite the disparity between the city's claims and the actual characteristics of Freedmantown, the council's ordinance was passed, and the city agreed to locate the Reservation in Freedmantown.

Between 1907 and 1909 following the city's decision, the property taxes in Freedmantown showed a marked increase, and land consolidation occurred rapidly. A sizable number of the new owners established themselves as absentee-landlords. The 1910 census returns indicate a total of fifty-five bawdy houses and two hundred and thirty-nine women located within the entire
Map H
Boundaries of Houston's "Reservation"
Reservation, most of which fell within the boundaries of Freedmantown. Few families remained in the addition, probably feeling the same threats to their neighborhood that whites near "Happy Hollow"—the location of the city's previously unsanctioned vice district—had complained of only three years earlier. By 1910, eighty-eight percent of the households within Freedmantown occupied rental property. It is evident from the city directories in the early 1900s that most of the individuals who owned sizable portions of property in the district, such as B.W. Whisenant, were white real estate agents who had invested in land in Freedmantown but lived outside of the neighborhood. Others holding large landed-interests in the area, such as Joe Sam, were attorneys or public notaries, also non-residents. Gone from Freedmantown was the established and stable black neighborhood of earlier decades.

Following the Reservation's demise, there was great uncertainty over what would become of the area the vice district had occupied. The Houston Post claimed that owners of property in Freedmantown had "substantial structures with comfortable rooms and modern equipment," but no inhabitants. The paper explained that there had been "talk of renting the houses to negroes . . . and it is probable that this will be done." According to these sources, black residents returning to Freedmantown after 1917 would have received tangible benefits from the Reservation's existence, as the neighborhood's new living accommodations showed marked improvements. However, even the newspaper admitted that few respectable families would have wanted to move into a district so recently acquainted with the "evil of prostitution." Although whites probably would not have understood it at the time, this stigma also must have tainted the black community's view of this neighborhood. In addition, the council's 1907 decision to establish the Reservation clearly demonstrated to the residents of Freedmantown that the city held little esteem for their
neighborhood and it would offer little protection for their rights as residents of the addition. Whether or not blacks chose to put aside Freedmantown’s short brush with vice and embrace their former community anew is a question yet to be answered. Perhaps they did, and perhaps this area resumed its former identification with a stable, black community. It is possible, on the other hand, that former black residents of Freedmantown abandoned their connections to this neighborhood. In fact, it may have been during the years following the Reservation's demise that a number of Sicilian families--later the most populous group of property owners in Freedmantown--began to buy land in the addition at low costs, claiming the former black neighborhood for their own community.11

Whatever the immediate fate of Freedmantown, the city later sealed its demise both with the creation of a major thoroughfare through the neighborhood and more importantly with the decision to construct Allen Parkway Village--a low-income housing complex of the 1940s--directly on the site of the Freedmantown addition. Despite the physical destruction of Freedmantown, the symbolic importance of the neighborhood lives on in the present-day usage of the name. In 1984, a portion of the Castanie Addition, located adjacent to Freedmantown on the south side of San Felipe Road, was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the "Freedmen Town's Historic District." Although this historic area was not encompassed by the original Freedmantown addition, it too was strongly associated with the Fourth Ward's black community--particularly during the early twentieth century. The adoption and adaptation of the "Freedmantown" name originally given to the small addition located on the banks of Buffalo Bayou indicates the symbolic meaning of this name. Clearly it stands today for a larger sense of community among the ward's black population. 12
The naming of another area within the Fourth Ward as "Freedmen's Town Historic District," however, has led to confusion over the origins of Freedmantown. Few Houstonians, it seems, understand or recognize the evolution of the original Hardcastle or Freedmantown addition. In order to preserve Houston's black heritage, it is imperative to recognize that Freedmantown, as the name originally was used, encompassed only the twenty-eight block addition south of Buffalo Bayou owned and developed by G.S. Hardcastle. It is this specific addition that deserves recognition for evolving into a stable, independent black residential neighborhood so shortly after the Civil War. Only when others recognize the historic distinction between Freedmantown and the other adjacent additions of the Fourth Ward will Freedmantown's significance as a black residential neighborhood and its role in the evolution of the larger black community within the old Fourth Ward be accurately understood.


2Bird's Eye View of the City of Houston, 1891, Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.


4Again, problems arise in comparing the statistics from these different census returns, since it is difficult to determine the exact location of certain residents listed on San Felipe, Howard, and Valentine streets, for instance. Best estimates show that in 1880, 337 out of the area's 385 residents were black, while 513 out of the 568 residents in 1900 were black. Reconstructing exact housing patterns is difficult since no addresses were given for those enumerated. It is necessary to assume that the census counters went from house to house in a logical manner, listing neighboring households consecutively. See Census of the Population: 1900. Tax Assessment Rolls 1900, Harris County, Harris County Court House.

5For years, an area "downtown around the old city hall and the Market Square area of town" known as "Happy Hollow" had informally housed the city's drinking and prostitution houses. However, this location was no longer deemed acceptable, and when Houston revised
its disorderly house statute in 1907, it set the stage for change by placing directly into the citizens' hands the power to initiate actions against these houses. Emboldened by their new legal power, citizens in the area adjacent to the district began to voice complaints about the Hollow's encroachment upon their "respectable neighborhoods." An ordinance committee, formed to explore the alternatives available to the city in dealing with its prostitution problem, came out in favor of segregating the city's bawdy houses into one district. The subsequent problem that they faced was an obvious one: where could they locate such a district without provoking further protest from the city's residents? Thomas Clyde Mackey, "Red Lights Out: A Legal History of Prostitution, Disorderly Houses, and Vice Districts, 1870-1917," (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1984), 193, 234.

6Houston Chronicle, 31 March 1908; quoted in Mackey, 206.

7Wintz, 100-101. Tax Assessment Rolls 1907, Harris County, Harris County Court House. The Sanborn map for 1907 shows only the buildings in Freedmantown that were situated directly along San Felipe Road, so it is difficult to get a complete picture of the addition at this time. However, it is interesting to note that almost all of the land in the Castanie, Baker, Senechal, and Hopson additions was covered by the limits of the map. See Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for the City of Houston, Texas (Chicago: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1907).

8Freedmen's Town Historic District, National Register Department, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, 1984, Item #7, 1.

9Tax Assessment Rolls 1907, 1908, 1909, Harris County, Harris County Court House; Thirteenth Census of the Population: 1910, Texas, Harris County, National Archives Microfilm Series, Enumeration District 70, 4th Ward.

10Houston Post, June 16, 1917, 7; quoted in Mackey, 253.

11The fact that Taylor claims that these immigrants bought land from the "original families" in the area suggests that blacks had moved back into Freedmantown, but this conclusion is mere speculation. Rives Taylor, "Fourth Ward and the Siege of Allen Parkway Village," Cite 25, Fall 1990, 11. It is possible that the blacks who had lived in Freedmantown chose to settle south of San Felipe Road, for this neighborhood was becoming increasingly occupied by blacks. Moreover, it is likely that these western-most additions of the ward which had been home to a significant number of blacks over the preceding decades had begun to merge into a "large contiguous mass of predominantly Negro housing"—such as that identified by Kellogg in Lexington, Kentucky. According to Kellogg, this emergence of several "recognized clusters" also occurred in other southern cities. See John Kellogg, "The Formation of Black Residential Areas in Lexington, Kentucky, 1865-1887," The Journal of Southern History, XLVIII, (February 1982), 35.

12On the naming of the historic district, see Freedmen's Town Historic District. According to city maps it appears that Buffalo Drive was created between 1921 and 1924. The city annexed approximately a quarter of the Freedmantown addition—all in the northern portion of the addition—to create this street. In addition, it appears that Buffalo Bayou was rechanneled between 1948 and 1950, further reducing the size of the neighborhood. See Map of Houston 1924, compiled by Harris County City Engineering Department, MRC; Ashburn's Houston City Map 1948, compiled by J. Foster Ashburn, MRC; Gulf's Houston Street Map 1950, compiled by Rand McNally Company, MRC.
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Appendix 1  
Occupations 1870 & 1880

Table 1.1 Occupations-1870 (Fourth Ward-excluding Freedmantown)

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<thead>
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<th>Service</th>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>21</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>porter</td>
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Manual Labor

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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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Agricultural Labor

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Craftsmen

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Table B.1. Occupations-1870 (Fourth Ward-excluding Freedmantown--continued)

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Appendix 2:
Maps--Fourth Ward Additions

For each of the years surveyed--1866, 1870, 1875 and 1880--there are two maps for each addition. One map indicates all those who owned property in the addition, while the second depicts only those who both owned property and resided in the addition.
W. R. Baker Addition
1866

Legend: Map Showing Owner-Residents
- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
W. R. Baker Addition
1870

Legend: Map Showing Property Owners
- - white property owners
- - black property owners
• - race unknown
- - black businesses
- - white businesses
- - black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
W. R. Baker Addition
1870

Legend: Map Showing Owner-Residents

- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
W. R. Baker Addition
1880

Legend: Map Showing Property Owners
- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
W. R. Baker Addition
1880

Legend: Map Showing Owner-Residents
- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Justin Castanie Addition
1875

San Felipe Road

City Cemetery

Justin Castanie Reserve

Legend: Map Showing Property Owners

- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Justin Castanie Addition
1880

San Felipe Road

City Cemetery

Justin Castanie Reserve

Legend: Map Showing Property Owners
- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Justin Castanie Addition
1880

Legend: Map Showing Owner-Residents
- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Legend: Map Showing Owner-Residents
- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Legend: Map Showing Property Owners

- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.

Hopson Addition
1875
Legend: Map Showing Property Owners

- White property owners
- Black property owners
- Race unknown
- Black businesses
- White businesses
- Black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Hopson Addition
1880

Legend: Map Showing Owner-Residents

- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Seneschal (Senechal) Addition
1866

Legend: Map Showing Owner-Residents
- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Seneschal (Senechal) Addition
1870

Legend: Map Showing Owner-Residents
- white property owners
- black property owners
- race unknown
- black businesses
- white businesses
- black churches

Note: Street names given in parentheses indicate those assigned at a later date.
Appendix 3
Property Ownership: Fourth Ward Additions
1865-1880

Table 3.1. Comparison of Additions

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<th>Total # Individual Purchasers</th>
<th>Total # Black Purchasers</th>
<th>% Black Purchasers</th>
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<td># Blocks</td>
<td>% Black</td>
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