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Waterfront Workers of Galveston, Texas, 1838-1920

by

Robert Stuart Shelton

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Requirements for the Degree
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APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

John B. Boles, William P. Hobby Professor History, Director

Edward L. Cox, Associate Professor History

Chandler Davidson, Professor Sociology, Political Science

Houston, Texas

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ABSTRACT

Waterfront Workers of Galveston, Texas, 1838-1920

By

Robert Stuart Shelton

Although prevailing racial ideas in the nineteenth-century South severely limited cooperation between blacks and whites, unionized southern workers, such as the waterfront workers of Galveston, Texas, formed alliances across racial boundaries to combat efforts of employers to silence their political voices and restrict their economic power. The struggle to forge these alliances reveals how and why ideas about race were perpetuated and modified over time as they interacted with ideas about class, gender, and the political process and as Galveston emerged as one of the nation’s leading cotton ports. This study traces race relations between black and white waterfront workers in Galveston from the city's founding in 1838 through 1920, when employers and the state broke union power.

The first chapter outlines the historiographical arguments over the extent of interracial cooperation in the South in the nineteenth century. Chapter Two sets the stage by tracing Galveston's commercial and population growth from 1838 to 1920. Chapter Three focuses on antebellum
interaction between black slaves and white, mostly immigrant, wage earners and the responses of the city's slaveholding elite. Chapter Four examines the formation of racially exclusive white waterfront unions in Galveston and opposition to such exclusivity by black and white workers during strikes in 1877. Chapter Five traces the efforts of African-Americans to secure work on the docks during two major strikes among cotton screwmen and longshoremen in 1885 and 1886. Chapter Six focuses on the class solidarity across racial lines that was tested during the strike of 1898, in which three union men were killed and a half dozen were wounded. The epilogue examines relations between black and white unionists in the city in the first twenty years of the twentieth century.
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Chapter One
Interracial Cooperation
and the Southern Working Class:
An Introduction

In mid-March 1920 sixteen hundred longshoremen in Galveston, Texas, the state’s commercial hub and one of the largest ports on the Gulf of Mexico, walked off the docks as part of a nationwide strike called by the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) to force wage concessions from coastwise shipping companies. The Galveston strikers were confident of success in obtaining their demands for a 25 percent wage increase and for a guarantee that the closed shop, which allowed only ILA members to work the city’s docks, would continue. Public opinion was behind them, and they had the support of a majority of the city’s newly elected commissioners, who had campaigned as City Party candidates against a business community that had controlled municipal government for the last twenty years. The racial solidarity of the strikers also contributed to their confidence. Although whites and African-Americans maintained segregated locals, all belonged to the ILA and all enthusiastically had taken up the international’s strike call. Of the sixteen-hundred strikers, more than seven

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1 Coastwise shipping refers to the commerce between domestic ports; deep-sea shipping refers to international trade. By the 1920s separate coastwise and deep-sea locals existed in most ports.
hundred were African-Americans. White and black labor leaders pledged not to allow the employers to drive the wedge of race between them.²

African-American and white waterfront workers had over the last forty years forged a relationship that reflected both the possibilities and limits of interracial interaction in South. By the mid-1880s the longshoremen had established segregated locals but had agreed to a separate but equal division of work on the waterfront: whites worked almost exclusively on deep-sea shipping lines and for the coastwise Morgan Line, while African-Americans worked almost exclusively for coastwise shippers such as the New York-based Mallory Steamship Line.³ Furthermore, Galveston’s white waterfront labor organizations recognized the rights of black union workers to work on the docks and to earn the same wages as white workers. White and black workers also offered each other moral and financial support during several strikes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, with a few exceptions, consistently rebuffed


³ Maroney, 34.
the frequent attempts of employers to divide workers along racial lines. Although in a few instances white and African-American waterfront unions undercut one another by unilaterally capitulating to employers during labor conflicts, workers of both races believed that they shared a commonality of interests that transcended their racial differences, leading to a degree of racial solidarity unusual in the Jim Crow South.⁴

Almost immediately after the longshoremen’s strike began on 19 March 1920, this racial solidarity was put to the test. The Galveston agents of the Mallory line brought in white strikebreakers to replace black strikers, while the Morgan line’s agents brought in black strikebreakers to replace white strikers. The pro-business Galveston Daily News insisted that racial warfare was imminent, but the striking longshoremen denounced the transparent attempts to ignite a racial conflagration and swore they would not let racism subvert their union principles. Mainly by peaceful means, though the threat of violence certainly hovered over the docks and a few fights occurred, both African-American and white strikers attempted to dissuade members of their own races from replacing their allies across the racial

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divide. They were surprisingly successful. So successful in fact that by May goods awaiting shipment spilled out of the warehouses onto the city's streets, inland merchants complained of shortages, and the shipping companies threatened to relocate their terminals to Houston or other Gulf ports if Galveston's leaders could not regain control of the port and guarantee a compliant labor force.\(^5\) Representatives of business groups such as the Young Men's Progressive League, the Galveston Commercial Association, the Galveston Merchants' Association, and the Galveston Cotton Exchange warned that the strike might permanently cripple the city's prosperity, condemned the police force for not protecting strikebreakers, and urged the city commissioners to take action. The commissioners declined.\(^6\)

In the first week of May, meanwhile, the Galveston business community suffered a further setback when voters approved in a referendum reforms advocated by the pro-labor City Party. These reforms included a progressive municipal tax system that shifted more of the tax burden to business and the wealthy and a call for the revision of the city charter to replace the city commission, which was elected

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\(^5\) Ibid., 12, 15 May 1920; 2, 3, June 1920.

\(^6\) Ibid., Maroney, 35.
at-large, with a council elected from single-member districts. Feeling their control slipping, Galveston business leaders began to take a harder line. On 13 May they persuaded a reluctant Mayor H.O. Sappington to request that Governor William P. Hobby send a detachment of Texas Rangers to the port. The Rangers protected the strikebreakers not only from violence but also from any "contaminating" ideas by barring all contact with the strikers. At one point, Rangers drew their pistols to prevent strikers from distributing literature in a camp of replacement workers. Insulated from the strikers, workers began to take up their places on the docks. By 20 May Ranger Captain R. W. Aldrich reported to Hobby that quiet had been restored to the docks and that no one was attempting to interfere with the strikebreakers.\(^7\)

Yet the shipping companies were having trouble attracting enough workers to clear the backup of goods in Galveston warehouses or to handle the usual summer increase in commerce. Merchants as far away as Dallas demanded that the state do something to assure the free flow of commerce through the port. Galveston commercial groups, meanwhile, wanted to break the city's labor unions, which not only had

\(^7\) Galveston Daily News, 12, 14, 19, 21 May 1920.
disrupted commerce but also had played a crucial role in the victory of their political opponents. Having failed to pit white against black worker, the shipping companies turned to another marginalized people: Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, bringing in two hundred workers in early June. African-American and white strikers responded with threats and intimidation in an effort to keep the newcomers off the docks, but they insisted that their main opposition to the Hispanics was not their race but their status as non-unionized workers. City and state business leaders, however, exaggerated the extent of the harassment, warning of impending race riots and black workers running wild through the streets. On 4 June they urged the governor to take all means necessary, "even to the extent of putting the city under martial law," to protect strikebreakers and to keep the docks open. On 7 June, Hobby placed the city under martial law and sent one thousand militiamen, including two machine gun companies, to the city. The next day Galveston businessmen announced the formation of an open shop association.

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8 Ibid., 9, 3 June 1920.
9 Ibid., 8 June 1920.
Troops stayed in the city throughout the summer as Hobby suspended and restrained Galveston's mayor and city commission from "performing their official duties appertaining to their respective offices with respect to enforcement of penal laws of the State and the City of Galveston." The governor also suspended the entire Galveston police force inasmuch as its members demonstrated an intolerable sympathy for the strikers. Commissioners decried the political motivations behind these actions. The City Party's reform of the municipal tax system had added an extra $5.5 million to the city's revenues through assessments against "corporations, firms, and individuals which escaped taxation or were grossly under assessed" and had prompted Galveston's business leaders to seek redress from the state. Hobby, they argued, conspired with the shipping companies and Galveston's businessmen to bust the unions and preserve the "special privilege" of the city's elite through an illegal and unethical use of gubernatorial power.\(^\text{10}\)

The results of Hobby's actions seemed to confirm this interpretation. In October 1920 the governor restored the powers of the municipal officers but left local law

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\(^{10}\) Ibid., 16 June 1920.
enforcement under the supervision of the Texas Rangers until December. By then, the open shop movement in Galveston was unstoppable. From July 1920 through January 1921 five unions in various industries had failed to renegotiate contracts with their employers. In August the shipping companies refused to negotiate with the striking longshoremen. In December the racial solidarity of the longshoremen collapsed. The African-American longshoremen's locals capitulated and signed a contract with the Mallory line, accepting a 10 percent raise and agreeing that "no discrimination be made with respect to the employment of non-union workers" and that no union representation or even discussion of unionism would be allowed on the docks.\(^{11}\) Within a month the white unions agreed to the same contract with the Morgan lines. By that time the state legislature passed an Open Port Law that made it a crime for two or more people to "use physical violence or to threaten its use to interfere with or protest or harass any persons engaged in the work of loading, unloading, or transporting any commerce."\(^{12}\) Even the pro-labor policies of the New Deal

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 14, 15 December 1920.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 23 January 1921; H. P. N. Gammel (comp.), \textit{General Laws of the State of Texas Passed by the Fourth Called Session of the 36th Legislature} (Austin, 1920), 7-10. For the weakness of labor unions in Texas see George Norris Green, \textit{The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Year, 1938-1952} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979);
could not revive the union movement in Texas. In Galveston, the union defeat discredited the City Party, which soon disappeared as the local Democratic party regained control of municipal government, rolled back most of the tax reforms, and abandoned any effort to institute a single-member council.

The Galveston longshoremen’s strike of 1920 demonstrates that interracial alliances of workers posed a significant threat to the economic and political control of employers and other southern elites and the tactics these elites used to preserve their control. These alliances transcended the boundaries that delineated race relations, making them a threat not just to the prosperity of the upper classes but also to the very structure of southern society. This dissertation traces the struggle to forge these alliances from 1838 to the calamitous strike of 1920.

The relationship between class and race has generated considerable debate among historians, particularly regarding the extent and significance of interracial cooperation among the southern working class in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scholars working in the first half of the

twentieth century pointed out that interracial cooperation in the labor movement in the South offered a stark contrast to the racial segregation that pervaded other aspects of society but noted that even within racially integrated unions such as the United Mine Workers, African-Americans held few leadership positions and their concerns generated little but apathy if not outright hostility.\textsuperscript{13}

In the 1960s labor historians such as Herbert Gutman, David Brody, and David Montgomery pioneered a "new" labor history that widened the focus of scholarship from unions and their leaders to include a vision of the working class from the "bottom up."\textsuperscript{14} These historians looked at communities, ethnicity, and struggles on the workshop floor to understand class relations in America's past. Central to this approach was the notion of proletarianization: the transformation of artisans from independent producers into wage-earning dependent industrial workers. The new labor


historians found that workers contested their proletarianization at every turn, using traditional patterns of work, community relationships, customs, and republican political ideology to shape their experiences as industrial wage workers. Among Gutman's articles urging this "bottom up" approach was a long essay on the career of Richard L. Davis, an African-American leader in the United Mine Workers. Gutman emphasized the biracialism of the union and argued that racial antagonism among miners gave way to the reality of a class-based commonality of interests. Subsequent local studies and studies of other industries supported Gutman's contention.

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17 The following is a small selection of the work on white and African-American workers: Stephen Briers, "Interracial Organizing in the West Virginia Coal Industry: The Participation of Black Mine workers in the Knights of Labor and the United Mine Workers, 1880-1894," in Essays in Southern Labor History: Selected Papers, Southern Labor history
Not all historians accepted this interpretation, however. In 1988 Herbert Hill, in a scathing critique of Gutman's article, argued that Gutman and his followers had overstated the extent of interracial solidarity among southern workers. Gutman, argued Hill, had ignored and willfully misinterpreted evidence to exonerate the American labor movement of complicity in the treatment of African-Americans and other non-whites and to exaggerate class conflict in American history. Hill wrote:

Denial of the central role of race and the reduction of race consciousness to class consciousness in labor history has resulted in a representation and an interpretation of the black workers' experience with white organized labor that cannot be sustained by the historical record. The tendency to deny race as a crucial factor, to permit questions of class to subsume racial

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issues, is based on a perspective that ignores racism as a system of domination, as it ignores the role of racist ideology in working class history.\textsuperscript{18}

The result, Hill argued, was "a romanticized 'popular front'" leftism that became a major characteristic of the Gutman school. Hill's critique of Gutman was generally welcomed as a needed corrective,\textsuperscript{19} but other scholars preceded Hill in their insistence that racial consciousness played a far greater role than class consciousness in shaping the American working class.\textsuperscript{20} David Roediger and


Alexander Saxton, for example, have argued that "whiteness" was the central feature of Euro-American working class culture and politics from the 1830s through the California anti-Chinese movement. And Clarence Walker, in a critique of "neo-Marxist" scholars, declared that they had purposefully failed to acknowledge that "race is the fundamental division in American society" in their zealous commitment to material determinism.  

Although their argument that historians must more thoroughly investigate the racism of working class whites to understand America's labor history is certainly valid, Walker, Hill and others risk substituting a racial determinism for the economic determinism they claim to find in "neo-Marxists" such as Barbara J. Fields, Steven Hahn, and Jonathan Wiener. As Barbara J. Fields has warned, historians must be alert to the dangers of writing about race as "an observable physical fact, a thing, rather than a

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21 Roediger, Wages of Whiteness; Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy.


notion that is profoundly and its very essence ideological." To do so, Fields argued, was to give race a "transhistorical, almost metaphysical, status" that renders it all but impossible to analyze. Fields reminded her readers that the concept of race is socially constructed, rarely used currently by biologists or anthropologists, and derives its definition from its context. Numerous scholars took up the task of contextualizing race in the area of southern unionism. Eric Arneson, Daniel Rosenberg, Michael K. Honey, and others looked particularly at waterfront workers in the South and found significant evidence of interracial cooperation among dock workers in New Orleans and Memphis in the late

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25 Ibid.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, confirming Fields’s assertion of the contingency of race and supporting Gutman’s thesis.27

The debate over the primacy of class or race in the consciousness of American workers reflects what some scholars have called the crisis of labor history. This crisis stems from three interrelated causes. First, despite several calls for a synthesis of the findings of the new labor history, scholars have not been able to agree on a theoretical framework for such a synthesis or the need for one.28 Second, feminist scholars have rightly criticized


28 See, for example, David Brody, "The Old Labor History and the New: In Search of an American Working Class," Labor History 20 (Winter 1979), 123-126. For the difficulties of achieving a synthesis, see Alan
the new labor history for its gendered assumptions. Not only have labor historians ignored women workers for the most part, they have tended to see women's primary activities as wives, mothers, and daughters whereas male workers "have been examined primarily as workers, not as husbands, fathers, and sons." Labor historians typically assume that women are "transient members of the labor force, that women's family life, rather than their work experience, had the major impact on their behavior and consciousness, and that women's family role served as a conservative force on their behavior." In addition to proceeding as if the experiences of men were the norm, critics charged, labor historians often neglected the gendered assumptions of the male workers and the influence that women and families exerted on male workers' class identities. What is needed, many scholars argued, is an analytical tool that takes into consideration the multiple, and sometimes contradictory, identities individuals in the past created for themselves to deal with the circumstances of their lives. This

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"multipositional" methodological approach allows room for workers to see themselves as men, husbands, heads of households, as whites or blacks, and as workers.\textsuperscript{30}

The third factor contributing to the crisis in labor history arose from the feminist critique of the concept of class. This critique questions the assumptions of the "old" and "new" labor historians that class was transparent—that it clearly correlated to the socio-economic position of historical actors and that it therefore more closely represented reality than did artificial categories such as race or gender, which Leftist historians often considered as distractions from the historical materialism that lay at the heart of Marxist "reality." Instead, feminist scholars such as Joan Wallach Scott, Ava Barron, and Alice Kessler-Harris argued that workers in the past continually contested the meaning of class, just as they contested the meanings of race and gender, and that class consciousness shaped and was shaped by racial and gender consciousness.\textsuperscript{31}

Other historians have taken a more extreme stance, denying completely the material basis for class and consequently rejecting most of the scholarship not only of

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} See Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), particularly Part III and Part VI.
the last thirty years but also of the last century and a half. William Sewell, for example, argues, that the economy itself only tenuously relates to materialism. Money, Sewell points out is after all only a symbol, and advertising creates desire for possessions that have little to do with material survival. Joan Wallach Scott and Michael Sonenscher, meanwhile, have questioned the very notion of proletarianization that underpins much of the "new" labor history and women's labor history. Scott found in a study of French garment workers that representations of family and gender influenced their understanding of work as much as did their status as wage-earning proletarians. Sonenscher argues in his study of eighteenth-century French trades that market forces had supplanted custom and tradition in the organization of work long before industrialization, and thus proletarianization could not account for or explain the emergence of class conflict. Instead Sonenscher argued that the new discourse of individualism after the French Revolution forced workers to cast about for ways to make common complaint. For Sonenscher, Scott, and Sewell, class originates in political rhetoric, not in the relation of workers to the mode of production.\footnote{William H. Sewell, Jr. "Toward a Post-materialist Rhetoric for Labor History," in Rethinking Labor History: Essays on Discourse and}
thus arises from scholars' stubborn refusal to relinquish materialism.

The role of political discourse in the creation of class consciousness—the construction of class, to put it another way—certainly cannot be denied. To dismiss the material basis for this creation is mistaken, however. Class, unlike gender and race, does have a material reality that transcends language and signification. Gender identities, for example, are created as men and women, contest what it means to be a man or woman, masculine or feminine. Although slight biological differences exist between men and women, these do not inevitably lead to power inequalities. Such power inequalities arise from the contest over meaning. And though slight biological differences exist between groups of people that nineteenth-century scientists described as races, these differences do not lead inevitably to the power inequalities that arise from the contest over the meaning of black and white. The differences between employers and employees, between the

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wage earner and the wage payer, cannot be mitigated by contests over meaning. To be an employer means to wield power over an employee. Workers may contest in the political realm and at the workplace the extent of that power, but in a capitalist society they cannot contest the fundamental power imbalance that lies at the heart of class conflict. Yet workers’ ideas about themselves as members of a class, as feminist and post-modernist scholars discussed above suggest, are shaped by their ideas about race and gender. And class and political ideologies shape ideas about race and gender.  

Few scholars have traced the interplay of these ideas in the relationship between African-Americans and white workers from slavery, when the racial attitudes of an emerging working class in the American South were shaped, through the Civil War and Reconstruction, when black people joined the body politic and the workforce as free laborers,

and into the twentieth century.  

Such a time frame, employed in the current study, provides a clearer picture of how black and white workers adapted and responded to the changes wrought by emancipation, urbanization, and the increasing intrusion of the market in the southern economy. Furthermore, most works have concentrated on the largest and oldest urban centers in the South such as Richmond, Memphis, and New Orleans or mining regions.  

This study narrows the geographic focus by examining a smaller, yet important, southern city over a longer period of time to examine how and why an interracial labor movement could survive in a region committed to white supremacy for most of its history. Because of its relatively small size—about 30,000 people in 1920 and no more than 3,000 waterfront workers at anytime—Galveston can be studied in depth as can few other southern cities.

From its founding Galveston’s prosperity depended on its waterfront. Blessed with one of the Gulf’s superior

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35 For example, Rachleff in Black Labor in the South and Janiewski in Sisterhood Denied end their studies in the nineteenth century; Arneson, Waterfront Workers, deals only briefly with the antebellum period. Most scholars deal exclusively with the antebellum period, the post

36 Rachleff, Black Labor; Arneson, Waterfront Workers; Rosenberg, New Orleans Dockworkers; Trotter, Coal, Class; Calvin Winslow, ed., Waterfront Workers: New Perspectives on Race and Class (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).
harbors, Galveston Island attracted the attention of a group of entrepreneurs who recognized the potential of Texas as a cotton empire and Galveston as its commercial center. Obtaining the site for the city from the Republic of Texas in 1838, this group formed the Galveston City Company to sell land and manage the city's growth. When company-endorsed candidates for city and county offices were defeated in 1840, the directors of the company, with the approval of the Republic's government, invalidated the elections and rewrote the city charter to require property qualifications for voting. After its candidates captured all municipal offices in the subsequent election, this business elite during the next two decades directed Galveston's commercial life. In 1854 these businessmen succeeded in privatizing the city's wharves, thus eliminating democratic control of the waterfront—Galveston's economic engine—and signaling that any conflicts between waterfront workers and the shipping companies and railroads that employed them would go unmediated by municipal government.37

37 David G. McComb, Galveston: A History (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 44; Charles W. Hayes, Galveston: A History of the Island and City (Austin: Jenkins Garrett, 1974), 2:401-438. Hayes's two-volume history of the city was written in the 1870s and scheduled to be published in Cincinnati in 1879. A fire at the printers, however, destroyed all but the proofs that were in Hayes' possession at the time.
As a consequence of the commercial elite's tight control and of the still relatively small amount of shipping passing through the city before the Civil War, waterfront work was irregular and low paying and workers disorganized. The loading and unloading of ships generally represented an opportunity to earn extra money rather than a living and was often the first employment of recent immigrants to the city. While the majority of Galveston's slaves were women and children used as domestic servants, male slaves were often hired out to work on the docks, laboring side by side with the slaves of ship captains and with whites. During the war many white workers, most of whom had not supported secession, welcomed the temporary Federal occupation of Galveston and thus came into conflict with the city's southern-born elite, who fled with their slaves inland to Houston. The resulting tensions between elites and workers lasted through Reconstruction, when white laborers formed temporary and uneasy alliances with African-Americans.

The history includes interviews with many of Galveston's early residents who witnessed the events firsthand.

38 Hayes, 1:322-323.

and white Republicans to achieve and preserve democratic and economic gains.

Yet at the same time fears of competition from the ex-slaves who flocked to the city during Reconstruction prompted white waterfront workers to establish benevolent associations to secure their control of waterfront jobs. These white benevolent associations functioned as social clubs as much as unions, providing members with insurance, support during sickness, and recreational opportunities such as picnics, balls, and parades. The social function of these associations reinforced the determination of members to retain control of the docks and to allow African-Americans only irregular, low-paying jobs.

Immediately after the war through the 1880s this exclusionary policy on the waterfront was challenged by the African-American leaders George Ruby, a northern teacher who came to Galveston with the Freedmen’s Bureau, and Norris Wright Cuney, son of a slave and slaveholder. In two major strikes in the 1880s among longshoremen and cotton jammers, also called screwmen for the tools they used to compact cotton into the holds of ships, African-Americans broke the white control of the Galveston docks and organized themselves into unions. From 1885 onward, the relationship between African-American and white workers, though marked by
suspicion and instances of betrayal, was one of cooperation in the face of efforts by national shipping companies, railroads, and the city's commercial leaders to lower wages, to break union power, and to quiet the political voice of workers through reforms of the city charter. This uneasy alliance survived a severe test during a strike of black longshoremen in 1898, when the Mallory Steamship Line attempted to persuade white workers to replace the strikers. The white men refused and pledged support to the strikers instead. Only after the death of three unionists, including a white cotton screwman, and the imprisonment of one of the strike leaders for conspiracy and murder did the strike fall apart. Following the "Great Storm" of 1900, Galveston's commercial leaders succeeded in obtaining charter revisions that effectively disfranchised the city's workers through the institution of the commission form of city government.

As described above, in 1920 local businessmen blocked an effort by black and white workers to re-institute single-member wards and succeeded in imposing an open shop in Galveston with the help of the state's sympathetic governor.  

From the end of the Civil War through 1920, however, African-American and white workers forged a biracial alliance, though uneasy at times, that stood in stark contrast to the southern apartheid system erected at the turn of the century. Several factors made possible this always-fragile alliance. Private ownership of the docks hindered municipal mediation, thus giving workers greater incentive to seek allies across racial lines. By first replacing striking white workers and then forming their own unions, African-Americans forced white men to redefine their notions of class to include black workers.

The next chapter sets the stage by tracing Galveston's commercial and population growth from 1838 to 1920. Chapter Three focuses on antebellum interaction between black slaves and white, mostly immigrant, wage earners and the responses of the city's slaveholding elite. Chapter Four examines the formation of racially exclusive white waterfront unions in Galveston through two strikes in the 1870s. Chapter Five traces the efforts of African-Americans under the leadership of Norris Wright Cuney to secure work in the lucrative cotton screwing trade and in longshoring for the Mallory

Association, Minutes, 11 September 1866, I, I; 3 May 1869, I, 120 (Barker Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, Texas); these minutes will henceforth be referred to as SBA Minutes with appropriate date and, where available, page number.
Steamship Line. Chapter Six examines the strike of 1898 and its confirmation of interracial cooperation on the waterfront. A brief epilogue examines relations between black and white unionists in the city in the first twenty years of the twentieth century.
In 1837 a Texas newspaper editor wrote of the great future awaiting the small village located on the eastern tip of Galveston Island. With one of the best harbors on the Gulf of Mexico west of New Orleans, he wrote,

Galveston will undoubtedly, at no distant day, become the center of commerce rivaling in extent that of many of the first commercial cities of the world. The products of many millions of acres of the most fertile lands on the globe, and of many rich mines of gold, silver, and iron, will necessarily be wafted to this spot, rendering Galveston City the commercial emporium of Texas.\footnote{Houston Telegraph, 19 August 1837.}

Although gold and silver proved as elusive in Texas as they had in Virginia for the European settlers more than two hundred years before, the agricultural bounty of the Texas plains and Galveston's geographical situation indeed warranted such excited predictions. Galveston quickly became Texas' largest city and remained the state's most important commercial hub, providing on its waterfront more non-agricultural employment than could be found in any other Texas city in the nineteenth century. It was on these wharves that the drama of interracial conflict and
cooperation played out in the daily lives of waterfront workers. This chapter describes the setting for the interaction of these white and black workers by tracing Galveston's commercial and population growth to 1920.

Galveston Island, lying just off the coast of southeastern Texas approximately three hundred miles from New Orleans, acts as a barrier between the Gulf of Mexico and Galveston Bay, the large, shallow estuary of the Trinity, San Jacinto, and several other smaller rivers and bayous. The flow from the bay into the gulf scoured a channel just to the northeast of the island that, until the 1890s, varied between eight to twelve feet deep, making the natural harbor on the island's bay side one of the best from New Orleans to Vera Cruz, Mexico. In addition, the Brazos River empties into the Gulf of Mexico just ten miles south of the island and in the nineteenth century could be reached through the inland bay system by flat-bottomed boat. All of these waterways were shallow and frequently obstructed, and thus only shallow-draft vessels could navigate very deeply into the Texas hinterland. They did,
however, provide access for most of southeastern Texas to the rest of the world.²

Recognizing the importance of establishing a coastal port where produce, especially cotton, could be transferred from shallow-draft vessels suitable for the inland waterways to deep-draft seagoing vessels, Stephen F. Austin successfully lobbied the Mexican government in the late 1820s to establish a port of entry on the eastern tip of Galveston Island.³ Even with Mexican approval, however, permanent settlement did not occur until after Texas achieved its independence from Mexico in 1836. By early 1837, according to visitor John W. Audubon, a permanent if dreary settlement consisting of a few ramshackle houses and government buildings had arisen.⁴ The First Congress of the Republic of Texas issued in return for $50,000 a league and labor of land (4,605 acres) to Michel B. Menard and shareholders of the Galveston City Company for the development of a settlement.⁵ The company began selling


⁴ Quoted in Hayes, Galveston, 1: 264-265.

⁵ Hayes, Galveston, 1:256-263.
lots in 1838, and Texas issued the city its first charter in 1839. By the end of 1839 the population had grown to about three thousand people.\footnote{William Kennedy, Texas: The Rise, Progress, and Prospects of the Republic of Texas (Fort Worth: The Mclyneaux Craftsmen, Inc., 1925), 2:407-408.}

With an egress for agricultural products provided by the establishment of the port of Galveston, Texas's agricultural production—especially cotton production—expanded rapidly. By 1850 Texas grew about 2.4 percent of the United States' cotton crop, ranking ninth nationally in cotton production behind Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Arkansas. By 1860 Texas had climbed to fifth among cotton producing states. After the Civil War, the state remained the fifth most productive cotton-growing state but actually grew a greater share of the nation's cotton than in 1860 (8 percent in 1860; 11.6 in 1870).\footnote{William Kennedy, Texas: The Rise, Progress, and Prospects of the Republic of Texas (Fort Worth: The Mclyneaux Craftsmen, Inc., 1925), 2:407-408.} By 1880, thanks in large part to the invention of barbed wire, the removal of most of the Native American population, the emergence of various sharecropping schemes that encouraged farmers to plant the staple, and the proliferation of railroads, the state grew
to third in the nation in cotton production.\textsuperscript{8} In 1890 the state ranked first in cotton production. By 1900 Texas farmers grew 2.6 million 500-pound bales of cotton, more than one-quarter of all the cotton produced in the United States and more than all of the southern states that formed the Confederacy had grown in 1860 combined. The state's 1900 crop more than doubled that produced by Mississippi, the second-ranked state, and surpassed the crops of Alabama, Arkansas, and Florida combined. In 1900 the state also produced a significant portion of the nation's other crops, ranking third behind Illinois and Iowa in total value of farm products. The state ranked third in sorghum production, fifth in sugar cane, sixth in rice, eighth in corn, twelfth in oats, and eighteenth in wheat. Texas ranked tenth in production for all cereal crops and was the only former Confederate state and only state outside of the Midwest in the top ten. The state


also led the nation in cattle production and was second only to Iowa in value of all livestock produced.\textsuperscript{9}

As the primary port for Texas—and late in the nineteenth century for much of the Great Plains—Galveston's trade increased in proportion to the state's growing agricultural output. In addition to a steady increase that corresponded to population growth, rapid acceleration of trade occurred four times in the port's history: after the annexation of Texas to the United States in 1845; after the consolidation of the waterfront under the privately operated Galveston Wharf Company in 1854; as a consequence of railroad expansion and increased competition among shippers in the 1870s; and following the completion in 1896 of a federal project to deepen the harbor channel to accommodate large, steel-hulled ocean-going vessels.

Although tonnage figures for shipping are incomplete for the republic period, remaining customhouse records indicate that in 1839, 228 vessels traded at the port, including forty-four steamers. The next year, about 350 vessels visited Galveston, including the first of what was to become regular traffic from Great Britain and France.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
By 1845, the last year of Texas' independence, the number of vessels trading at Galveston was 251 total vessels, including ten ships of approximately 230 tons apiece from Great Britain. (Fifty-three tons of ship's capacity equaled approximately the capacity of one railroad car.) For the entire period from 1838 through 1845, an average of 190 ships with an average of 60 tons apiece traded at the port each year. The value of imports for the period averaged $957,000, and the value of exports averaged $69,906 annually. Although figures for the cotton trade are rare for Galveston's early years, one estimate stated that approximately 4,000 bales of cotton passed through the port in 1840.10

10 The statistics used to trace the growth of Galveston's shipping and cotton in the following pages during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were compiled from Hayes, Galveston, 2:749-759; Gail Borden, Jr., "Galveston Custom House Record Book No. 2," Texana in the Rosenberg Library, microform, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas; Willard Richardson and D. Richardson, eds., Galveston Directory for 1859-60 (Galveston: Galveston News Book and Job Office, 1859), 82-83; Willard Richardson, ed., Galveston Directory for 1866-67 (Galveston: Galveston News Book and Job Office, 1866), 95-97; W. A. Fayman and T. W. Reilly, Galveston City Directory for 1875-76 (Galveston: Strickland & Clarke, Stationers, Printers and Lithographers, 1875), 3; Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Galveston City for 1881-82 (Galveston: M. Strickland & Co., Stationers, 1882), 14-20; Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Galveston, 1890-91 (Galveston: Morrison & Fourmy, 1890), 1-3; Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Galveston, 1891-92 (Galveston: Morrison & Fourmy, 1891), 3-5; Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Galveston, 1899-1900 (Galveston: Morrison & Fourmy, 1899), 2-4; Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Galveston, 1901-1902 (Galveston: Morrison & Fourmy, 1901), 3; Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1900, 463. United States
In the antebellum period the Morgan Steamship Line dominated Galveston's coastwise trade, offering regular service between Galveston and New Orleans. Regular service directly between Galveston and New York did not begin until after the Civil War.\textsuperscript{11} Founded by Charles Morgan of New York, the Morgan line inaugurated the first regular steamship service between Galveston and New Orleans in 1837 with the sixty-passenger \textit{Columbia}. The next year, the line had regular weekly service between the two Gulf ports.\textsuperscript{12} By 1848 it had initiated regular service between New Orleans and New York, thus giving Galveston an indirect link to cotton markets in the Northeast.\textsuperscript{13} Although small lines and tramp vessels carried on an irregular traffic between Galveston and major ports such as New Orleans, New

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\textsuperscript{11} For the Morgan Line and its chief rival, the Mallory Line, see James P. Baughman, \textit{Charles Morgan and the Development of Southern Transportation} (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968); James P. Baughman, \textit{The Mallorys of Mystic; Six Generations in American Maritime Enterprise} (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972).


\textsuperscript{13} Baughman, \textit{Morgan}, 57.
York, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston, the Morgan Line monopolized the domestic trade in Texas.¹⁴

Foreign imports and exports constituted about 43 percent of the value of trade at its height between annexation and secession. Beginning with the arrival of the British bark The Ambassador on 25 February 1839, commerce between Galveston and Europe became regular. British ships were most prevalent, but trade with France, Germany, and increasingly with Latin American and the Caribbean developed throughout the nineteenth century. The three dozen or so consignment agents, commission merchants, and cotton factors that operated in Galveston in the decade before and after the Civil War handled international shipping for foreign firms and ships' captains. The shipping firm J. Kauffman & Co., for example, acted as consignment agents for vessels from Bremen, Germany. Le Baron Drury & Son Tramp did the same for steamers from Liverpool, England. As consignment agents such firms performed a variety of services for the ship captains who regularly called at Galveston and for the import and export merchants who shipped freight internationally. For ship

¹⁴ Ibid., 33-35.
captains these services included securing wharf
privileges for docking and stevedoring contracts for
loading and unloading cargo. For merchants such services
included reserving ship-board and warehousing space.¹⁵ Like
the coastal shippers, European vessels came for cotton,
which was the primary export until well into the twentieth
century. Unlike coastwise vessels, however, foreign ships
did not always bring freight or passengers when calling at
Galveston. In fact, the value of imports arriving in the
port never constituted more than a fraction of the value of
exports. Many foreign vessels trading at Galveston
actually arrived in ballast—without cargo to unload. Of
the vessels entering the port in the post-war years 1874–
1875, for example, almost twice as many arrived in ballast
as arrived with cargoes. Although this was an extreme
disparity caused in part by the economic hard times
following the Panic of 1873, throughout the nineteenth
century more foreign ships entered Galveston empty than
laden with goods.¹⁶

¹⁵ Richardson, ed., Galveston Directory for 1866–67, 89–90; C. W.
Marston, ed., Galveston City Directory for 1868–1869 (Galveston: Shaw &
Blaylock, Publishers and Job Printers, 1868), 24; Baughman, Morgan, 55.

¹⁶ Hayes, Galveston, 2:750; Statistical Abstract of the United
States, 1900, 463; Galveston Directory for 1859–60, 82–83.
Coastwise shipping increased dramatically after Texas became part of the United States in 1846 since cotton planters, factors, and shippers no longer had to pay duties for exports to the United States. Exports to Europe declined as Galveston now competed with larger ports such as New Orleans and New York for European vessels, but trade between Galveston and the two American ports more than made up for the loss. Trade as a whole increased in part because the population of Texas swelled as annexation and the subsequent American victory in its war with Mexico brought stability to Texas and promised an economic bonanza for southern slaveholders seeking fertile new lands for cotton. The number of ships trading at the port in 1846 was 471, and the average for the period from 1846 through 1854 was 306 annually. The value of trade also increased, with exports averaging about $1.6 million per year from 1846 through 1854. The years after annexation marked the first time in which the value of exports exceeded imports. In fact, the value of exports almost doubled from previous years, rising to an annual average of $1.7 million for the
period. The mean number of bales of cotton exported annually through Galveston increased to 66,580.\(^{17}\)

The increased trade of these years, coupled with a growth in immigration through Galveston, prompted calls for better port facilities. In 1845 only eleven feet of water flowed over the sand bar at the mouth of Galveston Bay. Large vessels had to wait outside and be unloaded by lighter or longboat. Galveston only had three wharves extending over tidal flats along the bay shore to serve these lighters and vessels able to transverse the bar. The shortage of wharves forced most vessels to anchor in mid-channel, well away from Galveston's waterfront. To reach the shore visitors waded, rode the backs of sailors or slaves who waded out from town or, at low tide, walked on planks laid across the tidal flats. The construction of wharves from the city's waterside across the tidal flats to the harbor channel represented the most important improvement in the antebellum era. Since an owner collected fees on various commodities from the ships that loaded and unloaded cargo at his wharf, the debate over who had the right to construct wharves and collect these fees—

\(^{17}\) Hayes, Galveston, Richardson and Richardson, eds., Galveston Directory for 1859-60, 82-83
private individuals or the city—caused an ongoing controversy from the early 1850s to 1870.\textsuperscript{18}

When Michel Menard applied to the Republic of Texas for his land patent, he was in fact attempting to confirm a patent conveyed earlier by the Mexican government as part of the grant extended to impresario Juan Sequin. Menard's original grant had included the waterfront on Galveston's harbor side extending inland from the high-tide level—"la playa de la bahia," as the original grant stated. Galveston Representative Joseph Baker, one of Menard's partners in the City Company, introduced the bill confirming Menard's patent to Galveston in Congress. Baker's bill confirmed the original Mexican grant and extended Menard's claim to the low-tide level, which included the tidal flats out to the harbor. On this basis, Menard and his associates in the City Company gave away the flats or sold them at bargain prices to encourage the construction of wharves. By 1850 there were four wharves

\textsuperscript{18} Hayes, Galveston, 1:273; McComb, Galveston, 56-67; Charles Hooton, St. Louis' Isle or Texiana, with Additional Observations made in the United States and in Canada (London: Simmonds and Ward, 1847), 14; Galveston Wharf Company, Charter and By-Laws of the Galveston Wharf Company (Galveston: Civilian Book and Job Printing, 1861); Galveston Wharf Company, Galveston Wharf Company, A Brief History of the Galveston Wharf Company, Established 1854 (Galveston: Galveston Daily News Printing Office, 1927), 6.
serving the port—two dating from 1839-1840 and two
dating from the mid-forties. With the increase in trade
after annexation, however, it became apparent that more
wharves were needed. Thus by 1855, five more docks were
completed.\textsuperscript{19}

As plans for waterfront improvements began in the
early 1850s, many Galvestonians came to recognize what had
been given away by the Republic of Texas and began to
demand that the city attempt to reclaim its ownership of
the flats. The city lobbied the legislature to recover the
flats, claiming that they were public lands belonging to
the state as was all land below the high-tide mark. In
1851 the legislature passed an act awarding to the city the
right of user to these flats, the right to fill the flats
to create dry land, the right to extend streets to the
channel of the bay, the right to construct wharves at the
end of the streets, and the right to collect wharf fees.
These rights were not to interfere with any legal titles
previously conveyed. Two months later, after pressure from
Menard's supporters in the legislature, a supplementary act
was passed that declared that the first act should not be

\textsuperscript{19} Galveston Wharf Company, \textit{A Brief History}, 10. Richardson and
construed to alter or impair any of the rights previously granted to Michel B. Menard by patent nor to authorize the city to interfere with anyone who in good faith had constructed wharves at the ends of the city streets over the flats. The act also required the Galveston City Company to convey to the city of Galveston the north half of Block 682 and the land in front of it to the channel of the bay by May 1852. Failure of the company to do so would invalidate the supplementary act and favor the city's claim to all of the flats. The City Company promptly conveyed the property to the municipality.

The city then filed suit against Menard and A. P. Lufkin, claiming that they illegally claimed ownership and had built wharves on the waterfront. The Texas Supreme Court, which met in Galveston, ruled in favor of Lufkin on the grounds that he had possession of the property on which he had built his wharf for five years before the institution of the suit. The court ruled against Menard,

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however, stating that the wharf he had constructed at the foot of 21st Street—the Central Wharf—was built after the passage of the act of 1851. The court also ruled against his claim to the 22nd Street waterfront lot on the grounds that it was currently unoccupied and thus under the act of 1851 properly belonged to the city.  

In its ruling the court stated that although in common law, civil law, and legislative grant the owner of land adjacent to the water did not possess rights to the flats submerged at high tide, in this particular case the "necessary enjoyment of the land" and the intent of the legislative grant to Menard meant that the flats between the shore and the channel did indeed belong to the owner of the adjacent land. On these grounds the City Company in 1857 filed suit to recover the waterfront land deeded to the city. The city likewise filed a suit to recover all of the flats. Shortly after the Supplementary Act of 1852 was passed, the City Company and the city's wharf owners formed the Galveston Wharf and Cotton Compress Company.  


23 Ibid.
The consolidation of wharf ownership under the Galveston Wharf and Cotton Compress Company occurred with state authorization of incorporation in February 1854 under the leadership of the city founder Michel B. Menard, Ebenezer B. Nichols, Samuel M. Williams, Stacy B. Lewis and J. S. LeClere, Henry H. Williams, John Sealy, Henry Rosenberg, J. I. Darragh, Isadore Dyer, J. G. Duffield, C. G. Wells, Thomas Shearer, and within a few years, Robert Mills, Henri de St. Cyr, and A. F. James. Galveston attorney William Pitt Ballinger served as legal council for the company.\textsuperscript{24} The company was capitalized at $1 million. Its net revenues by 1860 were approximately $65,000 to $70,000 yearly, and increased throughout the rest of the century. However, despite accusations of monopolistic price-gouging, returns from the company never exceeded 7 percent annually and averaged only 4.55 percent from 1869 to 1926, when the city finally won control of the wharves and the company dissolved.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Fornell, \textit{Galveston Era}, 16-20.

\textsuperscript{25}City of Galveston, \textit{Proceedings of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen for the City of Galveston, 1849-1855}, Office of the City Secretary, City Hall, Galveston, Texas, 30 September 1851; hereinafter cited as \textit{Proceedings of the Mayor} with the appropriate meeting date; Fornell, \textit{Galveston Era}, 29; McCombs, \textit{Galveston}, 56.
The men who invested and managed the company were among the most prominent in the city and, of course, had financial interests in the commerce of the city. For example, Michel B. Menard, born near Montreal, Canada, in 1805, had founded the city in 1838 after having immigrated to Texas in 1829. He received the original patent to the land and headed up the Galveston City Company, which sold city lots. He served two terms in the Congress of the Republic of Texas and was a silent partner in the commission firm of Doswell, Hill and Company, which in effect went bankrupt in 1854 mainly due to the cotton speculation and poor business practices of Richard Doswell and Edward Hill. Menard, surprised by the failure of his business, used his personal fortune to cover the firm's debts. The business failure caused Menard's health to decline, and he died in 1856.  

Ebenezer Nichols, who served continuously as a Wharf Company director and periodically as president from 1854 through 1870, was born in Cooperstown, New York. He came to Texas in 1831 and had prospered in the dry goods business in Houston with William Marsh Rice before moving

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26 Hayes, Galveston, 2:811.
to Galveston in 1850. In Galveston he formed with Julius Frederick the commission firm E.B. Nichols and Company, which acted as a factor for Texas planters and represented the Pierce and Bacon shipping line out of Boston. The firm owned the Brick Wharf, so-called for the brick buildings that ran along each side. In 1860 he owned $20,000 in personal property and more than $100,000 in real estate. He also owned six slaves. Nichols served on the city council, as a delegate to the secession convention in 1860, and as mayor after the war. He founded the Bank of Galveston in 1866, which later became the National Bank of Texas. He also served as president of the Galveston City Company and helped form the Galveston Gas Company and the Galveston, Houston, and Henderson Railroad.27

Samuel M. and Henry H. Williams and Thomas McKinney operated the H. H. Williams and Company brokerage firm, which had taken over the business of the firm of McKinley and Williams. McKinney and Williams was one of the leading commission firms in the state and with its chief competitor—R. and D. G. Mills—had provided banking services for most businessmen during the period of the Republic,

27 Ibid., 2:855.
when banks were illegal, and had helped finance the Texas Rebellion against Mexico. Samuel and Henry Williams were born in Rhode Island. Henry maintained a prosperous mercantile company in Baltimore, Maryland, before moving to Galveston to assume ownership of McKinney and Williams. The firm owned the Palmetto Wharf, operated river steamers for conducting trade in interior Texas, and had at one time owned one-fifth of the property in Galveston.  

Robert Mills, known as the "duke of Brazoria," was one of the wealthiest men in Texas and the South during the antebellum period, having an estimated worth of between $3 million and $5 million. He owned more than 200,000 acres of land and several plantations in Brazoria County that regularly led the state in sugar and cotton production. He also owned more slaves than any other person in Texas, freeing 800 in 1865. Born in Kentucky, Mills and his brothers established a thriving commission business whose burro trains and ships traded throughout Mexico in the 1820s and early 1830s. Like Samuel May Williams, Mills helped finance the Texas Revolution, provided banking

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28 Margaret Swett Henson, Samuel May Williams: Early Texas Entrepreneur (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1976); Hayes, Galveston, 2:823, 969.
services during the Republic, and founded Texas's first fire insurance companies. He and his brother David opened the republic's first cotton compress at San Luis, a small port on the western tip of Galveston Island, and in 1849 he moved his businesses to Galveston city and took on as a partner John W. Jockusch, the Prussian consul. In addition to his firm R. and D.G. Mills, he was a partner in two commission and shipping firms—Mills, McDowell, and Company of New York and McDowell, Mills, and Company of New Orleans—whose ships carried cotton and sugar throughout the Americas and Europe. With Henri de St. Cyr, a French-born merchant, Mills constructed and operated the Western Wharf at the foot of 27th Street in Galveston before "donating" it to the Wharf Company.29

A native Pennsylvanian, John Sealy moved to Texas in 1846, becoming a successful merchant, commission agent, and banker in the firm of Ball, Hutchings and Company, which became Sealy—Hutchings Bank. He served as president of the Wharf Company in 1858 and after the Civil War owned the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway and the Houston Tap and Brazoria Railroad; he also served as president of

29Hayes, Galveston, 2:924.
the Galveston, Houston and Henderson Railroad and
the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway, which was owned by
his brother. Sealy's son and grandson served as presidents
of the corporation, which was eventually folded into the
Galveston Corporation in the 1920s along with various
cotton companies, the result of which was to give the Sealy
company virtual control of the cotton business and
waterfront in Galveston. 

Thus the company and the
waterfront remained under control of the descendants of the
original founders for almost a century.

As a semi-public corporation, the Wharf Company paid
no taxes and had legal control of the entire waterfront.
From the company's inception, the city challenged its right
to monopolize the waterfront on the grounds that the city
owned the tidal flats, and legal challenges continued until
1869, when the city and the company negotiated a
settlement. In that year, the city gained one-third
partnership in the company and non-voting representation on
the board of directors. By 1880 the dilution of the
capital stock of the company had reduced the city's

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30 "SEALY, JOHN." The Handbook of Texas Online.
http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/SS/fse2.html;
McComb, 166-67.
ownership to one-quarter, leaving the Wharf Company firmly in control of the waterfront. With the settlement, the entire waterfront came under the control of the Wharf Company until 1926.31

Initially, consolidation of the waterfront under the control of the Wharf Company caused trade to decline as shippers, suspicious of the company directors' motivation, found other avenues of access to Texas. The value of exports shipped through Galveston, for example, fell from $4.9 million in 1854 to $3.3 million in 1855 despite the fact that exports from the state as a whole suffered no such decline. The company, however, initiated a variety of projects to modernize the waterfront such as strengthening and extending the docks, constructing larger storage warehouses, and standardizing wharf rates and services.32 These improvements allayed somewhat the suspicions of shippers, and, coupled with the efficiency that came with the consolidation of management, trade rebounded. Between 1855 and 1860, an average of 857 ships per year with a mean


capacity of 430 tons traded at the port. The value of imports averaged $1.2 million per year, and exports climbed to a mean of $6.7 million annually. The number of cotton bales shipped through Galveston doubled in the five-year period, averaging 132,804 annually. By 1860 more than $12 million worth of goods passed over Galveston's wharves on their way to domestic and foreign destinations.33

While the Wharf Company contributed significantly to the increased trade and prosperity of the city through rationalization of waterfront management, the improvement of facilities, and the elimination of rate competition between wharves, it also eliminated democratic control of the municipality's waterfront. By privatizing the wharves and tidal flats, the company removed the waterfront—the main source of prosperity in the city—from city governance. Although the Wharf Company was a public-private enterprise managed by men who probably believed they were furthering the city's interests, the Wharf Company directors also believed that the city's interests were synonymous with their interests. The directors of the company often were cotton factors, commission agents, or representatives of

33Hayes, Galveston, 2:749-759; Richardson, Galveston Directory for 1866-67 (Galveston: W. Richardson & Co., 1866), 82-83, 96.
the shipping companies. It is not surprising that during labor disputes in the post-bellum years they sided with the shipping companies that employed Galveston's waterfront workers. By consolidating the wharves under the management of a private corporation, the directors effectively removed any threat from workers acting through the political process. The company's founding, in fact, coincided with rising fears of immigrants and increasing political activity by the state's Germans, including the Galveston Germans who with the slaves constituted a majority of the port's waterfront workers.

The decade before 1854 saw the greatest immigration to United States since the nation's founding, and in 1854 immigrants represented a greater proportion of the population than at any time before or since. Most of these immigrants were Irish fleeing the potato famine and Germans fleeing political turmoil. In their religion, culture, and language, these immigrants differed from the native Anglo-Americans, prompting on a national and state level the creation of the American Party. This political activity resulted in a surge of nativism nationally and statewide and in the election of a Know-Nothing candidate for mayor in Galveston after an election fraught with ethnic
tensions. Although the founders of the Wharf Company were motivated primarily by profit and never explicitly stated nativism as a reason for their actions, the timing of their efforts suggests another motivation.34 The majority of the waterfront workers in Galveston, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, were immigrants—mostly German-speaking immigrants. This fact, coupled with German political activism and rising nativism, certainly

raised the prospect of German workers, who often worked with slaves and the island's few free men of color, using the franchise and municipal jurisdiction over the waterfront as an avenue to redress any grievances that arose. It was possible that German and other immigrant workers, who constituted a large minority in the city, would ally with working-class native-whites to elect sympathetic city officials. Such a scenario threatened the livelihoods of the city's leading businessmen and could not be tolerated. Thus the Galveston Wharf and Cotton Compress Company's monopolization of the wharves effectively secured their commercial domination from threats posed by ethnic workers increasingly portrayed, accurately or not, as opponents of slavery and proponents of workers' rights.

During the Civil War, Galveston's trade came to a standstill because of Union blockade occupation by Federal troops, and the subsequent re-conquest by Confederate forces. Most of the leading citizens fled the city for Houston; and though blockade-runners did trade with the port, the exact figures for imports and exports during the war were lost when the customhouse was burned during the Federal occupation of the city. Following the war, trade resumed. In 1866 the value of exports to foreign ports
reached $1.2 million, and the customs collector reported total receipts for domestic and foreign exports as $23 million.\textsuperscript{35} From 1866 through 1869 an average of nearly three thousand ships visited the port annually with an average capacity of 348 tons. The mean value of imports for these years was $382,399 annually; the mean value of exports was $5.9 million; and the mean number of cotton bales exported through the port was 178,820 bales. Although the mean number of ships and cotton bales for these four years surpassed that of the six years before secession, the mean value of imports and exports did not.\textsuperscript{36}

Beginning in 1870, however, trade accelerated for the next decade owing to several factors. Texas' cotton production began to recover and approach prewar levels. In 1859 Texas produced 431,645 bales of cotton; in 1869 the state produced only 350,628 bales. By 1879, spurred by population growth, expansion of cultivation of the crop, and a spreading sharecropping and crop-lien system that

\textsuperscript{35} For Galveston during the Civil War, see Paeder Joel Hoovestol, "Galveston in the Civil War" (master's thesis, University of Houston, 1950); McComb, Galveston, 72-83; Hayes, Galveston, chapters XVIII-XXIII; for shipping statistics in the years immediately after the war see Hayes, Galveston, 658-693, 760-83; Richardson, Galveston City Directory for 1866-67, 95.

\textsuperscript{36} Richardson, Galveston City Directory for 1866-67, 95; Hayes, Galveston, 760-83.
encouraged overproduction, the state almost doubled its 1859 production with 805,284 bales.\textsuperscript{37} Part and parcel of the expansion of cotton cultivation was the expansion of the state’s railroad system. Before the Civil War railroads extended only along the southeastern coast and major river bottoms of Texas. After several failures during the days of the republic the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway began operation in 1850 between Harrisburg on Galveston Bay and the fertile Brazos River bottomlands. Railroad building accelerated during the decade before the war, and by 1861 nine railroads with 450 miles of track operated in the state. Three others opened during the war. Of the antebellum railroads, only the Galveston, Houston and Henderson Railroad, terminated in Galveston, and the bridge connecting the island to the mainland was not completed until 1860. Following the war, ten new roads were completed and existing roads were extended so that by 1879, 2,440 miles of track spanned mostly the eastern half of the state and a rail link with the national system through Dennison, Texas, was achieved. The next year a direct line linking Houston and New Orleans

\textsuperscript{37} Directory of the City of Galveston for 1881-82, 13-21; Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1900, 464.
was completed. These new railways introduced overland competition to commercial shipping in Galveston, forcing more shippers to lower prices and to emphasize direct shipping to New York, where cotton prices were higher, and to international markets. Indeed, exports of cotton to New York and to foreign destinations grew during the 1870s significantly. Because of the expanding role of railroads in the domestic cotton trade, as the century wore down foreign exports of cotton increased.

Increased competition during the 1870s also led to an increase in traffic through Galveston. During the antebellum years the Morgan Line dominated coastal shipping from Galveston and the state’s other ports. The year after the Civil War, however, this virtual monopoly was challenged by the C. H. Mallory and Company line operating out of New York City. George Ball, John H. Hutchings, and John and George Sealy—all of whom had interests in the Wharf Company and the Galveston, Houston and Henderson Railroad—arranged to strengthen the wharves to enable the extension of rail service dockside, thus reducing time and

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38 Baughman, Morgan, 155.

costs associated with transferring cargo between boxcar and ship. The Mallory company provided support and advice on the construction, and in 1870 the Wharf Company signed agreements with the Mallorys to ensure regular shipping between Galveston and New York. The Wharf Company agreed to finance one-quarter of the cost of the first four steamships on the line since Galveston’s sand bars required specially designed ships with shallow drafts yet ample cargo space. 40

In 1869 the Wharf Company also settled its longstanding dispute with the city over the tidal flats. The Wharf Company agreed to provide the city with 6,222 shares of the company, about one-third of the company’s stock and real property. Although the city gained representation on the Wharf Company’s board of directors, the agreement denied the city voting rights in the running of the company. Thus, as was noted by critics at the time, though the settlement provided the city of Galveston with revenues from the Wharf Company, it also eliminated one-third of Galveston’s major source of tax revenue—the

40 Ibid.; Baughman, Mallorys of Mystic.
wharves—and potentially committed the city’s taxpayers to fund improvements over which they had no say.

The Morgan line responded to these agreements between the Wharf Company and Mallory by initiating a rate war. The decreasing shipping costs spurred trade in the city but eventually prompted the city to offer wharfage discounts to Mallory to offset the lost revenues. The Wharf Company also discontinued the discounts it previously offered to Morgan. Thus spurned by the Wharf Company, Morgan began moving his operations to Houston and threatened to inaugurate a direct run between New York and Galveston. To compete with Galveston and Mallory, Morgan financed the dredging of a twelve-foot deep channel from Galveston Bay to Houston, the predecessor of the Houston Ship Channel, and began creating a rail empire that eventually merged with the Southern Pacific Railroad. In 1878 the competition cooled considerably when Morgan signed an agreement with Mallory and the smaller Cromwell Steamship Line to divide the Texas market. Henceforth, Morgan would not attempt to establish a New York to Galveston line, and
the Mallory and Cromwell lines would eliminate their Galveston to New Orleans lines.\textsuperscript{41}

Despite the agreement, the Wharf Company's actions had increased trade in Galveston. Cotton farmers and factors found they could get better prices for cotton from the New York market now made more accessible by the Mallory Line; better facilities on the Galveston wharves reduced costs and speeded delivery of goods; and shipping customers benefited from the rate wars of the decade lowered shipping costs.\textsuperscript{42} From 1866, when statistics for the port again became available, to 1870, the average number of ships trading at the port each year was 3,217 with a capacity of 432 tons. From 1871 through 1879, the average number of ships per year actually decreased to 1217 but the capacity of the ships skyrocketed to 775 tons annually. This increase came despite the economic downturn of the Panic of 1873. By 1880, 500,000 bales of cotton moved across the city's wharves, and Galveston was third in the nation for

\textsuperscript{41} The Morgan line finally established steamship service between New York and Galveston in 1902 when the Southern Pacific, its parent company, constructed a huge rail and dock facility on Galveston's western edge. Baughman, \textit{Mallorys of Mystic}, 154-155; Baughman, \textit{Morgan}, 192-193.

\textsuperscript{42} Baughman, \textit{Morgan}, 192-193.
cotton exports. In 1881, the *Galveston Daily News* stated that "The Wharf Company today is possibly in better condition than ever before in its history, while its tariff of charges, since first the News had occasion to direct attention thereto, has been scaled to an extent that leaves no room to grumble, by comparison with facilities afforded."  

The greatest expansion of the port's trade, however, occurred as a result of the deepening of the channel leading into the port in 1896 to allow large steel-hulled and steam-powered ocean-going vessels to cross the bars. The Galveston Deep Water Commission, organized in 1881 by members of the Cotton Exchange, sought federal support to deepen the channel and harbor at Galveston. Although its most vocal leader, William Moody, was an outspoken critic of the Galveston Wharf Company's management of the waterfront, the Deep Water Commission was in many ways an

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43 Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1900, 464; Directory of the City of Galveston for 1890-91, 2.

44 McComb, *Galveston*, 57.

The channel into Galveston Bay was forty feet deep, carved by the tides. Across this channel just outside the entrance to the bay stretched an outwardly curving sand bar twelve feet below the surface called the Outer Bar. A branch of the main channel immediately in back of Galveston Island that formed Galveston's harbor also had a depth of forty feet. In the 1840s Galvestonians began to notice that a new bar was forming at the junction of these two channels. By 1869 this inner bar had reduced the depth to eight feet, effectively blocking Galveston's harbor at low tide to all but the most shallow-draft vessels. Commercial leaders asked the military officials controlling the city during Reconstruction to impose a tax for clearing the bar, but the officials refused, arguing that such a tax benefited the few but penalized many. The city then created the Board of Harbor Improvements, which, under the direction of Henry Rosenberg, raised $15,000 through the sale of city bonds. With the funds, the board implemented a plan devised by Charles Fowler to sink piles on either
side of the channel to focus the tidal flow and thereby scour a deeper passage. The project, which finally received some federal assistance in the form of funds and engineering expertise, succeeded in 1873 in lowering the channel to a depth of twelve feet. Galveston’s business community, seeing the future of shipping in deep-draft steel-hulled ships, sought a channel twenty feet in depth.46

The federal government classified U.S. harbors according to depth. A first-class harbor had at least twenty-six feet at low tide; a second-class harbor, twenty to twenty-six feet; a third-class harbor, less than twenty feet. Galveston was one of two third-class harbors on the coast, the other being Mobile, Alabama. New Orleans, a third-class harbor until federally funded improvements, was the Gulf’s only first-class harbor.47

After several failed attempts by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, members of the Galveston Cotton Exchange formed the Deep Water Committee to lobby the federal government to fund a jetty project devised by Captain James B. Eads, who

46 Galveston Daily News, 23 February 1868; 25 April 1868, 4 March 1874; 16 August 1890.

had designed the improvements at New Orleans. The goal now was to make Galveston a first-class harbor with thirty feet of depth at low tide.\textsuperscript{48} Engineers estimated the project’s cost to be $7.75 million.

The first president of the committee was William L. Moody, one of the richest and most powerful men in the South in the last half of the nineteenth century. Moody was a harsh critic of the Wharf Company, complaining not so much about its monopoly of the wharves but about what he decided was mismanagement. The criticism suggests that Moody, a relative newcomer to Galveston, resented being left outside the loop. As a consequence, when he and other members of the Galveston Cotton Exchange proposed lobbying the federal government for deep water, the Wharf Company board of directors urged him to undertake the chairmanship of the committee, thus accommodating a wealthy and ambitious critic of the elite’s hegemony.\textsuperscript{49}

William Lewis Moody had been born in 1828 in Virginia. He attended law school at the University of Virginia,

\textsuperscript{48} For more on Eads see John M. Berry, \textit{Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

\textsuperscript{49} McComb, \textit{Galveston}, 59.
graduating in 1851. The next year he moved to Fairfield County, Texas, and practiced law for a time before opening a mercantile and cotton factorage with his brothers under the name W. L. Moody and Brothers. He owned two dozen slaves in 1860. Moody argued passionately for secession. He served in the Confederate Army, was captured at Fort Donelson in Tennessee and paroled, and then was severely wounded near Jackson, Mississippi, in 1863. He recuperated and served out the rest of the war in Texas, attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel. After the war, Moody moved to Galveston and operated a cotton factorage business called by various names until finally settling on W. L. Moody and Company in 1881. The firm eventually expanded its operations to include banking, and under the direction of his son William Lewis Moody, Jr., became one of the largest financial establishments in the state during the early twentieth century. W. L. Moody and Company was one of the major cotton firms in the state. His daughter, Mary Emily Moody, married Sealy Hutchings, a grandson of John Hutchings and John Sealy and a grandnephew of Robert Mills. In 1894 the company built the first dockside steam cotton compress in Texas, partially in an effort to undermine the strength of the powerful Screwmen's
Benevolent Association. By 1913 Moody had built a huge modern cotton press complex in the city.\textsuperscript{50} He died in 1920. There was a certain irony in the fact that a former fire-eating secessionist and un-Reconstructed Confederate led the lobbying campaign to obtain federal government intervention in the economic fortunes of a southern city. If he noted the irony, however, Moody never mentioned it.

Moody's first attempts at securing legislation authorizing the improvements failed because of staunch opposition by the Army Corps of Engineers, which did not want to surrender control to the civilian Eads, and lobbyists from Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York, who feared increased competition from another first-class harbor.\textsuperscript{51} The committee did not give up, however. Committee representatives traveled throughout Texas and the Southwest to drum up support for the improvements, and though they met with some resistance from Texans who suspected the monopoly power of the Wharf Company, the representatives achieved their goal. A Texas deep-water


\textsuperscript{51} Galveston Daily News, 11 June 1884, 28 January 1885; 4 February 1885; 6, 13, 29 March 1885; 7, 11, 29 December 1885; McCombs, Galveston, 57-61.
convention met in July 1888 in Fort Worth and pledged support. Representatives of nine western states met in Denver, Colorado, in September 1888 and adopted the so-called Galveston Resolution calling for the construction of a first-class harbor on the Texas coast. The governor of Colorado, John Evans, also pushed successfully for the construction of a rail line linking Denver with Galveston.

A second round of conventions in 1889, the continued lobbying in Washington by the Deep Water Committee's representative, now railroad lawyer Walter Gresham, and the support of Democratic President Grover Cleveland, who no doubt wished to secure Democratic loyalty in a key southern state at a time of agrarian unrest, eventually led to federal approval of the Galveston Harbor Bill in 1890. The project began later that year and was completed by 1895 at a cost of $8.7 million. Engineers designed and workers—both black and white—built a rail trestle over the water and dropped huge sandstone blocks for the base of the jetties. These were topped by ten-ton granite squares standing five feet above the water at high tide. The new
jetties succeeded in scouring nearly 30 feet of water through the sandbars. 52

The commission with support from businessmen from North Texas, Kansas City, Missouri, and Denver, Colorado, succeeded in procuring federal funds, and jetties were built on either side of the channel to force the natural tides to scour a deeper passage into Galveston Bay. The project, begun in 1890, cost $8,700,000 and took six years to complete. By 1896 sufficiently deep water existed for the largest cargo vessel in the world at the time, the Algoa—with a draft of 21 feet, to dock on the Galveston wharves. Galveston immediately saw an increase in trade. In 1897, for example, 64 percent of Texas's cotton crop passed through the city compared to 22 percent a decade before. Overall, exports increased 55 percent in the years after deep water was obtained; imports increased 37 percent, and the size of vessels using the port increased 24 percent. By 1900 Galveston seemed destined to fulfill its promise as the New York of Texas.53


53 Directory of the City of Galveston for 1901-1902, 3-4.
The Great Storm of 8 September 1900 dashed that promise, however. Estimates put the death toll from the Great Storm at approximately 6,000 in the city, whose population was about 34,000, and perhaps as many as 8,000 for the island and mainland together. The great loss of life completely overwhelmed the city, forcing on-the-spot cremation at bonfires that burned for months. The Gulf side of the city was utterly destroyed, and the wreckage of bathhouses, churches, 3,600 homes, and other structures created a tall "seawall" of debris down the middle of Galveston that probably saved the government and business section on the harbor side from destruction. Steamers tied at the wharves were swept away. Estimated damage was $30 million.\textsuperscript{54} In the storm's aftermath, leading citizens instituted a commission form of government, with approval by the working class of the city, to deal with the emergency. The commission form allowed the mayor to appoint a leading citizen to manage a particular area of government such as the police and fire departments, hospitals, etc. Eventually the system, with some modifications, was made the official form of government in

\textsuperscript{54} Directory of the City of Galveston for 1901-1902, 3-4; Statistical Abstract of the United States for 1910, 376.
the city, replacing the more democratic single-
member wards of the nineteenth-century. Dissatisfaction
with the elitist nature of the commission form of
government grew and contributed to the coming of the
longshoreman's strike of 1920 and the institution of
martial law.

Despite the devastation, within three weeks, even as
the cleanup continued, cotton again began to flow over the
wharves, and by the next year trade had recovered to pre-
storm levels. Despite this destruction, Galveston remained
the second port in the nation after New Orleans in cotton
exports, with export receipts for $86,376,486. The port
handled 75 percent of the state's cotton crop in 1899-1900
and 60 percent in 1900-1901 after the storm. The port also
remained second nationally in wheat exports in 1900-1901,
seventh in corn exports, and sixth in cattle exports.55

55Ibid.; Earle B. Young, Galveston and the Great West (College
Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 196. For the storm of 1900
and its aftermath see, Erik Larson, Isaac's Storm: A Man, a Time, and
the Deadliest Hurricane in History (New York: Crown Publishers, 1999);
and Stephen P. Kretzmann, "A House Built Upon the Sand: Race, Class,
Gender, and the Galveston Hurricane of 1900" (Ph.D. diss., University
of Wisconsin, 1995); Patricia Bells Bixel and Elizabeth Hayes Turner,
Galveston and the 1900 Storm: Catastrophe and Catalyst (Austin :
University of Texas Press, 2000); Elizabeth Hayes Turner, Women,
Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880-1920
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); John Edward Weems, A Weekend
in September (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1980).
To move the massive bulk of agricultural goods off of the wagons, boats, and railcars and to pack them into oceangoing vessels that would take them to distant ports required workers. Until the introduction after World War II of wheel-less boxcar cargo containers that could be quickly transferred from ship to train by crane, waterfront workers performed the manual labor of loading and unloading goods. The work entailed in this labor varied with the technology of the time. In the antebellum period, for example, lighters handled cargo from ships unable to cross Galveston's bars. The lighter captains and a four- or five-man crew transferred cargo in small boats to and from ships anchored in the deep water of Galveston harbor, in the bay, or beyond the outer bar in the Gulf of Mexico. After the construction of long wharves extending to the deeper water of the channel in the 1850s and especially after the acquisition of deep water, lighters were no longer necessary and disappeared. Similarly, in the 1870s the expansion of warehouses served by railroad tracks and the extension of those tracks onto the wharves themselves eliminated the need for draymen to haul cargo in horse-drawn wagons. With the coming of the railcars to the wharves, the occupation of longshoring became far more
important; and waterfront workers who made their living handling cargo began to call themselves longshoremen rather than just "common laborers" and began to form unions. Another group of workers whose fortunes changed with technology was the cotton screwmen, also called cotton jammers. These workers used large jackscrews to further compress cotton bales into the hulls of oceangoing ships, increasing the amount of cotton that could be carried by more than a quarter. Since a certain degree of skill and strength were required to operate the screws safely, the cotton screwmen became the elite of the waterfront, forming the first unions, segregating themselves from other workers, and after resistance taking the lead in labor activism on the wharves. With the advent of steel-hulled vessels and with the continued improvement of hydraulic cotton presses, the work of the screwmen became obsolete and they joined the ranks of less skilled, lesser paid longshoremen. It was among the cotton screwmen that racial conflict first flared, and they ultimately worked out a limited degree of interracial cooperation unusual in the South in the late nineteenth century.

The growth of trade through Galveston, and the corresponding growth of waterfront occupations, reflected
not only Texas's increasing agricultural production but also its surging population. During the last sixty years of the nineteenth century, Texas grew from a sparsely populated "frontier" to one of the largest states in the nation. Natural increase accounted for much of the growth, but immigration from other parts of the United States and directly from Europe also figured prominently in Texas's growth. The origins of immigrants during the period of the Republic of Texas cannot be quantified with certainty, yet it is clear from first federal census conducted in Texas in 1850 that the majority of people entering Texas during the preceding two decades consisted primarily of southerners and Europeans. Fleeing economic hardship caused by the Panic of 1837, many southerners sought a new start in the Republic of Texas, marking their doors with the words "gone to Texas" or simply "GTT." These migrants traveled overland through Natchitoches, Louisiana, to San Augustine and Nacogdoches, Texas, crossing the Sabine River on the Texas border at Gaines Ferry. River steamers also carried immigrants into Texas by way of the Mississippi to the Red River into Shreveport and even into Red River County in the northeast part of the state. Southerners also came by sea, embarking from New Orleans. A variety of small vessels
plied the waters semiregularly to Galveston, and other landings on the Texas coast. The first regular steamship line began in 1837, when Charles Morgan launched the first of many ships in regular service from New Orleans to Galveston with the sailing of the Columbia. Transportation from New York to Galveston was also available beginning in the 1840s.

Table 1. Population of Texas by Nativity, 1850-1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Native Born</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>212,592</td>
<td>58,558</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>136,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>604,215</td>
<td>182,921</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>377,893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>818,479</td>
<td>253,475</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>502,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1,591,749</td>
<td>393,384</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1,083,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>2,235,523</td>
<td>488,171</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>1,594,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>3,048,710</td>
<td>620,722</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2,249,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3,896,542</td>
<td>690,049</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2,964,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4,663,228</td>
<td>741,694</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3,557,646</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seventh through Fourteenth U.S. Federal Census

Between 1835 and 1846, Texas' population more than quadrupled. In 1835 the population stood at approximately 30,000, including 4,000 slaves but not including many poor Hispanics. According to a census by the state in 1847, the population had grown to 142,000, including 39,000 slaves and 300 free African-Americans. The 1850 federal census, the first in the Texas, found a population of 212,000, including 58,000 slaves and 400 free people of color.
Approximately 43,500 residents, about 30 percent of the free population, were born in Texas. Of the remaining free residents, 63,700 or about 41 percent of all Texans were born in the other southern states of the union, bringing the total of southern-born free residents of Texas to 71 percent. About 17,700 Texans (11.5 percent of the free population) were of foreign birth, 12,000 from Germany. About 29,000 (10,000 in 1850 according to Jordan) Texans, 18.9 percent were born in the northern states. Although the census enumerators did not record the birthplaces of the slaves, most, except for the oldest and those who had been smuggled into America after the end of the slave trade, were also southern-born.\(^\text{56}\)

In 1860 the number of southerners as a proportion of the state's population grew slightly. The state's total population grew to 604,215, including 182,566 slaves. The population of free people of color declined to 355 following legislature's passage of a requirement that all

\(^{56}\) Hogan, The Republic of Texas, 10; Terry G. Jordan, "The Imprint of the Upper and Lower South on Mid-Nineteenth Century Texas," Annals of the American Association of Geographers, LVII (December 1967): 667-690; United States Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, 1:505; a detailed study of heads of households by Randolph B. Campbell and Richard G. Lowe found that 14.2 percent were foreign born and that 76 percent had been born in the South; Randolph B. Campbell and Richard G. Lowe, Wealth and Power in Antebellum Texas (Texas A&M Press, 1977.)
free black people register with the state and pay a
bond or face re-enslavement. The total free population was
thus about 421,600. Of the free population, 378,200, 89.7
percent of all free people, had been born in the United
States, and approximately 43,400 (about 10.3 percent) were
of foreign birth. One study estimated 76.1 percent of the
heads of households in the state in 1860 were born in the
southern states, including Texas, 14.5 percent were
foreign-born, and 8.1 percent had been born in the non-
slave states.\textsuperscript{57}

The Civil War brought a halt to immigration from the
northern United States and from abroad. The only
immigrants into the state came as refugees fleeing from
war-torn areas of the Confederacy; many were wealthy
planters who feared the loss of their slave property. The
refugees settled mainly in the eastern and central parts of
the state, which most resembled the South they had fled.
After the war, immigration resumed, though fewer
northerners came South than had before the war. The
proportion of African-Americans in the state peaked in 1870

\textsuperscript{57}Population figures for Texas and Galveston were compiled from
the manuscript returns of the Seventh Census through Twelfth Census of
at 31 percent of the total population, up from 30 percent in 1860. Slaves "refugeed" by their owners during the war and the immigration of African-Americans seeking cheap land in Texas during the early years of Reconstruction accounted for the slight increase. Following Reconstruction, the evolution of sharecropping and the re-emergence of Democratic control of the state government and the subsequent reassertion of white supremacy ended immigration of African Americans to the state and actually sparked a slowly accelerating exodus of former slaves out of the state. Immigration from abroad resumed and actually increased from pre-war levels during Reconstruction. The demise of slavery helped fuel this increased immigration, since emancipation eliminated a source of competition for European laborers and since the planter-controlled state legislature actively encouraged immigration from Europe to help provide an abundant, and thus tractable, labor supply. By 1870, 8 percent of

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Texans were foreign born. The state's percentage of residents born in Europe or with at least one parent born in Europe constituted 11 percent of the population by 1890 and continued at or near that level for the next eighty years.⁵⁹

Among whites, immigrants from the northern states declined for some of the same reasons that the number of African-Americans declined. Pervasive hostility to carpetbaggers, racial and political repression, and a stagnating agricultural economy based on cotton dissuaded northerners from settling in the state. The proportion of white southerners who moved to Texas, however, increased. In 1870, 48 percent of the state's residents were born in the South. By 1880 the proportion had increased to 55 percent and peaked at 60 percent in 1890. From that point forward, immigration from the North, Europe, Asia, and, especially, Mexico diluted the proportion of southern-born whites.⁶⁰

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⁵⁹Jordan, "Imprint of the Upper and Lower South," 418.

⁶⁰Ibid., 420; Seventh Census through Twelfth Census.
As befitting the state's commercial center, Galveston increased in population as more and more people immigrated to Texas. During the antebellum years, the town—along with San Antonio—was one of two urban centers in the state. Its population doubled from 1840 to 1850 and almost doubled again the decade before the Civil War. Because of planter needs for agricultural laborers and Galveston leaders' fears of the corroding effects of the city on slave discipline—reasons that will be explored more fully in the next chapter—the African-American population of antebellum Galveston remained lower proportionally that that of the state as a whole. Following the war, however, Galveston's black population increased. In 1870 the proportion of African-Americans in Galveston increased to 22 percent, and in the next decade the proportion increased until almost one of every four Galvestonians was of African ancestry. The proportion declined to 23 percent of the population in 1890 and to 22 percent during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The increase and stability of the African-American population point to the superior economic and social opportunities that existed for black people in urban areas such as Galveston compared to the economic stagnation and social repression in the
countryside as sharecropping and Jim Crow emerged. African-American residents of Galveston also benefited from relatively powerful leaders such as Norris Wright Cuney, who provided jobs and a political voice for the community and helped black workers forge economic and political alliances with European-American residents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>European-Americans</th>
<th>African-Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>4,177</td>
<td>109%</td>
<td>3,469</td>
<td>708*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>7,307</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>6,127</td>
<td>1,180**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>13,818</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>10,810</td>
<td>3,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>22,248</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>16,884</td>
<td>5,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>29,084</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22,319</td>
<td>6,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>37,789</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29,430</td>
<td>8,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>36,981</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>28,895</td>
<td>8,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>44,255</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34,318</td>
<td>9,888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hays, 1:366, Seventh through Fourteenth censuses of the United States
*Consisting of 678 slaves and 30 free people of color.
**Consisting of 1,178 slaves and 2 free people of color.

Galveston's white population, like the white populations of all of Texas' large antebellum towns, was much more diverse than the white population of the state as a whole. Residents born in the non-slaveholding states and in foreign countries represented a far greater proportion of the Galveston's population as a whole than they did in the state. In 1850 immigrants from the non-slaveholding
states constituted almost 24 percent of Galveston's free population for whom a place of birth was recorded. Southern-born Galvestonians represented about 30 percent of the free residents. Foreign-born Galvestonians, mainly immigrants from Germany and Ireland, made up approximately 46 percent of the free population. Only thirty free people of color, all but two of whom had been born in the southern United States, lived in Galveston in 1850. During the 1850s sectional strife intensified, and the cotton-slave economy spread deeper into the state. Consequently, by 1860, the number of southerners in Galveston, as in the state as whole, increased significantly. The 1860 census reveals that the percentage of free residents of Galveston who were born in the northern United States had fallen to 18 percent while those born in the South climbed to 38 percent. The proportion of foreign-born Galvestonians fell to 44 percent. The number of free blacks fell to two as the state and the city passed increasingly strict laws regulating the lives of free people of color.

Although the Civil War reduced Galveston's population severely as mainly native-born residents fled inland to Houston, the city's population growth quickly revived. By 1870 Galveston's population increased by almost 90 percent.
It grew by 61 percent from 1870 to 1880. During the
next decade, population growth slowed to 31 percent
primarily owing to the growth of inland urban areas now
linked by rail to other parts of the nation. Despite being
eclipsed by cities such as San Antonio, Fort Worth, and
Houston in population, Galveston still enjoyed a population
growth of 30 percent during the last decade of the century.

Table 3. Nativity of White Galvestonians, 1850-1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Native-Born Whites</th>
<th>Foreign-Born Whites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1,876</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>3,429</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>7,197</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>11,854</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>16,574</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>23,274</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>22,731</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>27,426</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seventh through Fourteenth censuses of the United States

After the war, Galveston continued to be a place with
a diverse population, though the percentage of foreign-born
whites fell as the population grew. Immigration, primarily
from Germany and northern Europe, actually surpassed
immigration during the pre-war years. Immigrants from
outside the United States constituted 23 percent of the
population in 1880 and remained above 20 percent of the
population until 1900. The percentage of residents who
were foreign born or had at least one parent who were foreign-born remained near 50 percent in 1870 and 1880. It fell to 46 percent in 1890, and to 43 percent and 37 percent for 1910 and 1920.

Southerners continued to make up the bulk of native-born residents. By 1870 southern-born residents constituted 55 percent of the population; over the next decade the proportion increased to 69 percent and peaked at 75 percent of the population in 1900. This figure, of course, includes Texas-born children of foreign immigrants. Northern-born residents declined relative to the rest of Galveston's population from their ante-bellum high. In 1870 the northern-born residents constituted 19 percent of the population; during the decade of "redemption" the proportion of northerners declined to only 12 percent of the city's residents, and remained around 10 percent for the remainder of the period.\(^{61}\)

From its founding to 1920, the city of Galveston had been controlled commercially by an elite who periodically came together to institute measures to assure their and the port's continued prosperity. Members and directors of the

Galveston City Company and its institutional descendants, the Galveston Wharf Company and Deep Water Committee, had worked to modernize the city's port technologically and administratively. The consolidation of the wharves by the City Company under the Wharf Company had streamlined operations and reduced competition among wharf owners as well as reduced democratic control of Galveston economic engine. The Deep Water Committee obtained deep water for the port and warded off challenges to the city's commercial supremacy from rivals such as Houston and the railroads. These men and their allies in city government formed an elite distinguished not only by their business interests but also, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, by their ethnicity. During the fifty-five years after the end of the Civil War, they largely succeeded in resisting the efforts of other wage-earning Galvestonians to gain a greater share of the city's prosperity and greater control of their work lives. The efforts by Galveston's black and white cotton screwmen and longshoremen, and the challenges to the prevailing racial structure that such efforts required, constitute the second
half of this study. First, however, it is necessary to examine the relationship of workers, black and white, before the Civil War.
Chapter Three
Slaves, Masters, and Laborers
In Antebellum Galveston

During the summer of 1854 the editor of the Austin, Texas, State Gazette wrote in anguish that dances attended by blacks and working-class whites were common in the state’s larger cities and that anyone observing such an event “almost imagines himself in the land of amalgamation, abolition meetings, and women’s rights conventions.”¹ Two years later, the editor of the Galveston Weekly News bemoaned the ill-discipline of that city’s slaves. The illegal but common practice of allowing them to hire out their own labor and find their own housing, the editor complained, had led Galveston slaves to “impudence” and the taking up of such alarming habits as smoking, gambling, drinking, and carousing with “low, unprincipled white” men and women. The editor then urged the city board of aldermen to enact stricter ordinances to control the behavior of slaves—and of “low, unprincipled” whites.² As both writers suggested in their editorials, the antebellum southern city presented a challenge not only to the social control of slaveholders but also to the strict boundaries

¹ Austin State Gazette, 21 August 1854.
² Galveston Daily News, 4 June 1854.
of racial exclusion. The city became the site where African-American bondsmen, through their network of associations with free people of color, other slaves, and workers of European descent—particularly unskilled laborers such as those who worked on the waterfront—challenged the constraints of slavery and contested the prevailing meanings of race.

Much of the scholarship on the antebellum urban South has concentrated on the question of whether slavery was or was not compatible with the city environment or on the everyday experiences of the slaves to understand how African-Americans shaped and were shaped by city life.  

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Because of its subject matter, this scholarship tended to emphasize the hostility between white artisans and slaves and to under-emphasize or ignore the extent of interaction between white unskilled workers and slaves. Such an examination, however, is crucial to understanding the glue that bound slave society together—namely, the idea of race. This racial ideology, which as Oscar and Mary Handlin, Edmund Morgan, Barbara Fields, David Roediger, and Theodore Allen have suggested, originated from the needs of a slaveholding minority to establish a buffer between themselves and the workers they enslaved. In other slaveholding areas such as the Caribbean, free persons of mixed heritage served this role, obtaining certain rights in exchange for helping to maintain control of the slaves. On the North American mainland poor, non-slaveholding whites filled this need. According to this argument, race

the institution of slavery by hiring themselves out, finding their own accommodations, controlling their own time.

elevated the most impoverished, least educated European-American above the most prosperous and educated African-American solely by virtue of skin color and the supposed constitution of the blood. "Whiteness" bestowed upon European-Americans material advantages, primarily the presumption of liberty and the rights of citizenship, including the right to vote, and, for workers, higher wages than those earned by free people of color employed in the same occupations. Psychologically, this argument goes, membership in the "white race" provided distinction from the lowest class: regardless of how bad life was, a white person knew he or she was free and "white" and thus better than a person who was "black" and enslaved.

In studying slavery and the relations between people of different "races," scholars have stood on its head Ulrich B. Phillips's idea that the existence of "races" made slavery necessary as a means of social control. Instead, these scholars argue in essence that the existence of slavery made the idea of "race" necessary as a means of social control—a necessary complement to the physical and


5 Allen, Invention of the White Race, 184
legal threats that maintained the system. As Richard C. Wade and Barbara J. Fields have shown, the city undermined the social control function of slavery as an institution by providing slaves an opportunity to hire their own time, find their own dwellings, possess property, accumulate wealth, and associate with other slaves and free persons of color. Furthermore, even a small southern city such as Galveston provided opportunities for interracial interaction, and these opportunities served to undermine the social control function of the idea of race. This chapter examines the extent of interaction between black slaves and white workers in antebellum Galveston and the reasons why such interaction was possible.

Table 4 shows that in the first years after the city’s incorporation, the number of slaves in the county increased quickly despite the effects of the Panic of 1837, which depressed cotton prices and land prices but were not felt in Texas until the early forties. By 1845—the last year of the Republic—the depression had forced cotton prices in the

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state down to 5.6 cents per pound from 10.1 cents at the city’s incorporation in 1838 and the average price for a slave to $345 (from $629 in 1838). Nevertheless, the opportunities offered by the Republic and the promise of annexation to the United States brought a flood of immigrants and slaves in 1845. The table also shows that the slave population in the county experienced significant growth in 1845 and 1854 followed by periods of decline.

Table 4.  
Slave Population of Galveston County and Texas, 1837-1860.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population, Galveston</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>Population, Texas</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4,212</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4,212</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>800.00%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>188.89%</td>
<td>12,570</td>
<td>198% 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>80.77%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>19.86%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>-13.61%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>19.86%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>59.43%</td>
<td>27,555</td>
<td>119% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>-10.93%</td>
<td>30,505</td>
<td>10.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>11.67%</td>
<td>39,056</td>
<td>28.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>6.49%</td>
<td>40,308</td>
<td>3.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>-22.50%</td>
<td>42,759</td>
<td>6.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>-0.44%</td>
<td>48,145</td>
<td>12.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>11.62%</td>
<td>58,740</td>
<td>22.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>13.36%</td>
<td>68,584</td>
<td>16.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>-4.68%</td>
<td>78,306</td>
<td>14.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>37.45%</td>
<td>90,003</td>
<td>14.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>105,186</td>
<td>16.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>-9.07%</td>
<td>113,139</td>
<td>7.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>13.58%</td>
<td>124,782</td>
<td>10.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>25.45%</td>
<td>133,737</td>
<td>7.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>1,174</td>
<td>19.07%</td>
<td>146,370</td>
<td>9.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>1,509</td>
<td>28.53%</td>
<td>160,467</td>
<td>9.63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Galveston County Tax Rolls, 1837-1860, Seventh Census and Eighth Census of the United States, slave schedules.

1Calculated from 1837-1840.
2Calculated from 1840-1845.
As Wade suggested, these fits and starts probably occurred as slaveholders and traders brought slaves in for sale and as these slaves were purchased and removed to the countryside.\(^7\) However, after 1856 the slave population of the county doubled, from 692 in 1856 to 1,509 in 1860.

Census records for 1850 and 1860 also show that the city of Galveston’s slave growth rate lagged just behind the state’s during the 1850s. According to federal census records, from 1850 to 1860 the number of enslaved African-Americans in Texas grew from 48,145 slaves in 1850 to 160,467 in 1860—a growth rate of 233 percent. The city’s slave segment grew at 231 percent during the same period. Galveston's slave population also grew at a much greater rate than older southern cities such as Savannah, whose slave population grew by 24 percent from 1850 to 1860.\(^8\) Compared to other cities on the cotton frontier, however, Galveston’s growth seemed mediocre. Over the same decade, for example, the slave population of Austin, Texas, increased by 330 percent (from 226 to 973), and the number

\(^7\) Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 19.

\(^8\) Goldin, *Urban Slavery*, Table 13, 52.
of slaves in Shreveport, Louisiana, increased by 179.7 percent (from 597 to 1,670).\(^9\)

The growth rate of the city's slave population probably would have been even greater had not the booming agricultural region surrounding Galveston created a demand for labor drew slaves out of the town. Within this region lay five of the six largest cotton-producing and slaveholding counties in the state. Brazoria and Matagorda lay on the coast, flanking the Brazos River's practically unnavigable mouth and containing the small settlements of Quintana and Velasco. Austin, Colorado, and Fort Bend Counties lay inland long the river's banks. All contained rich bottomland that produced a large share of the state's cotton and almost all of its sugar and rice.\(^{10}\) Each of these counties had twice as many slaves as Galveston, a

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\(^9\) Paul D. Lack, "Urban Slavery in the Southwest," (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1973), 18. Lack examined slavery in five southwestern cities using census data primarily. He concluded that slavery was hanging on despite the factors cited by Wade for its demise and fostered an early black urge toward separatism. Space constraints, however, did not allow him to focus quantitatively on any single city. Furthermore, he does not address the reasons why Galveston's growth showed slower growth than Austin or Shreveport. The relative youth of those cities and their small slave populations in 1850, however, probably played a large part. Galveston's slave population also displayed a phenomenal growth rate in its early days; see Table 2.

\(^{10}\) Campbell, Empire for Slavery, 57.
higher proportion of slaves in the population, and a higher ratio of male-to-female slaves.

As in other urban areas in the South, females outnumbered males in Galveston's slave population, though the predominance of females became less pronounced during the decade before the Civil War.\(^{11}\) In 1850 females made up 54.4 percent of the slave population; in 1860, 52.8 percent. Conversely, males predominated in the agricultural counties of Austin, Brazoria, Colorado, Fort Bend, and Matagorda in 1860, suggesting that at least some of the male slaves in Galveston in 1850 by 1860 found themselves on plantations along the Brazos River. The inverse ratio of females to males in Galveston and in the surrounding counties underscores the relationship the two shared since in the state as a whole the slave population split fairly closely between female (50.1 percent) and male (49.9 percent). The gender imbalance of slaves in Galveston resulted from the fact that large numbers of free male workers performed heavier labor, thus allowing owners to sell male slaves to the countryside where they could be used more profitably. When cotton and slave prices rose,

as they did in the 1850s, rural Texans outbid
Galvestonians for male bondsmen.

Why would planters, always desperate for laborers, not
purchase women slaves when males were in short supply?
Women generally cost less than men, and even if women field
hands were less productive than men—if indeed they were—
then economics alone cannot account for the reduction in
the female population in Galveston. The female share of
the population fell slightly during the decade but remained
high (52.8 percent) in 1860. Perhaps the answer lies in
the large imbalance between females and males in the white
population. In 1850 women constituted only 47.4 percent of
the city’s white population. In 1860 this disparity had
become even more pronounced—56 percent male to 44 percent
female. This is only slightly less lopsided than for the
state as a whole, where women constituted only 47.4 percent
of the white population in 1850 and only 45.7 percent in
1850. Since the city’s white population contained
relatively few women, there existed fewer alternatives to
domestic slave labor. Whereas those in Galveston who would
buy bondsmen could turn to white labor when prices made
slave labor unprofitable, those who would buy bondswomen
for domestic service had no alternative since the city
contained so few white women. Of course, many male slaves also worked as domestic servants, as is evidenced by the number advertisements for male cooks, coachmen, and body servants for hire that appeared in the city's newspapers during the 1840s and 1850s.

Thus slaves and white immigrants found themselves working and sometimes living side by side as domestic servants. Slaves and white servants not only mingled while performing such tasks as shopping at the markets and groceries but also occasionally lived with one another in the same house and sometimes even the same quarters. The 1850 and 1860 census shows that approximately one-quarter of the households of native-born residents had a young immigrant man or women living in them. None were described as servants in either census, but other evidence suggests that at least some of them performed domestic duties in return for room and board. William Pitt Ballinger, for example, owned six slaves in 1850 and seven in 1860. As an attorney who managed property for a number of people in the

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12 Galveston Weekly News, 11 January 1853; Galveston Civilian, 9 August 1865.

13 See for example, Galveston Weekly News, 12 December 1857; Galveston Civilian, 24 June 1846. Also see Hayes, Galveston, 1:342-343.
city and the surrounding counties, he also managed several slaves who hired their time out in various jobs. Ballinger, however, also employed a young Irish woman in 1850 and a young German woman in 1860 to perform domestic duties. Though the white women lived in a small room at the back of the house and the slaves lived in detached quarters, all were under the direct supervision of Ballinger's wife and performed roughly the same duties.  

Slaves, free women of color, and white women also lived and worked under the same roof in the city's few houses of prostitution. On the city's east and west sides and in the alleys a few blocks off the waterfront there existed several houses of prostitution whose "fancy girls," as the census takers called them, were slaves, free women of color, and white women. According to the Galveston Weekly News, the brothels catered to "the rougher element" of men of all colors, who could drink alcohol, gamble, and "carouse loudly throughout the night," as well as indulge

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14 Manuscript returns of the Seventh Census and Eighth Census of the United States, Galveston County, Schedule I, Free Inhabitants, Schedule II, Slave Inhabitants, 1850 and 1860 (microfilm, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas); henceforth cited as Seventh Census or Eighth Census with appropriate schedule. William Pitt Ballinger, Diary, manuscript, 77-78, Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.
in the specialty of the house.\textsuperscript{15} The city in 1857 restricted the operation of houses of prostitution to the far western end of the city among the cotton presses and warehouses. White men or women operating a brothel anywhere else in the city faced a $100 fine and fifteen days in jail; free women of color risked being hired out for six months to the highest bidder; free men of color, six months hard labor working under the direction of the city marshal.\textsuperscript{16}

The work performed by male slaves did not receive such condemnation. Male slaves and white workers also worked side by side at a variety of jobs in Galveston. On the waterfront visitors often commented on the number of slaves and white men who waded out to vessels to carry back to shore on their shoulders visitors too impatient to wait for space at the wharves. In 1854 a visitor to the city noted that slaves joined whites lightering cargo from ships

\textsuperscript{15} Galveston Weekly News, 18 April 1855; Charter and Revised Code of Ordinances of the City of Galveston, 1856-1857, Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas, 83.

\textsuperscript{16} Charter and Revised Codes, 81,
anchored outside the sandbar that prevented the deepest draught vessels from entering the harbor.\textsuperscript{17}

Another dangerous task shared by slaves and poor whites involved salvage operations. The cargoes of ships grounded on Galveston Bay's numerous sandbars or sunk by storms were retrieved by slaves or poor whites hired by the ships' owners or the commission house responsible for the cargo.\textsuperscript{18} In 1848, for example, four slaves belonging to Joseph Bates traveled down island to help dislodge a grounded steamship. On their way home, unaccompanied by any whites, they were forced by a Thomas J. Lewis to work for three days hauling wood for the steam ferry he operated between western end of Galveston Island and the mainland. During this time they worked with several white immigrants also working for Lewis. The slaves shared tents with the immigrants and, much to Lewis's disgust, caroused with the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{17} Hayes, Galveston, 1:322-323.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
white men to such excess that they all proved worthless the next day, at which time Bates arrived to claim his slaves.\textsuperscript{19}

Slaves hiring their own time or hired out by their masters also often worked with white men on various jobs for the city. In 1851, for example, the city paid John S. Sydnor, who grew produce for city residents on several large farms on the outskirts of town, to fill in low spots throughout Galveston. Sydnor billed the city $1.25 per day for use of a slave and $1.50 for a "German." In 1849 E. O. Lynch, one of the largest slaveholders in the state, billed the city for repairing streets and digging a cistern. His bill for the work showed that he had employed his own slaves and numerous white men. In 1853 the city paid "two negroes and a white" man money for a wagonload of seashells collected for the city streets. The city paid all three men the same amount—$2.50—suggesting that the white man worked on equal terms with the slaves, not as an overseer or supervisor. At construction sites slaves and poor

\textsuperscript{19}Galveston County Court Records, Thomas J. Lewis v. Joseph Bates, 1848, Galveston County Courthouse, Galveston, Texas.
whites also worked together as common laborers.\textsuperscript{20}
In a lawsuit filed in 1848 Sydnor sought remuneration for
the hire of a slave and white man for helping a white
carpenter build shelving in a grocery store. Court records
from the 1840s and 1850s are replete with law suits that
mention whites and slaves working together to perform such
tasks as moving outbuildings, cutting firewood, pressing
cotton, constructing buildings, filling land, digging
ditches, and draying goods from warehouse to wharf. Black
and white men both worked as draymen, usually for the
Southern Cotton Compress and Manufacturing Company, which
by 1858 had a monopoly on cotton pressing, or the Galveston
Wharf Company.\textsuperscript{21}

The city's response to the carousing at brothels
demonstrates that Galveston's slaveholding elite intended
to prevent interracial association outside the workplace—in
brothels, saloons, pool halls, grog shops, alleys, and
private homes. As Tim Lockley has demonstrated in his

\textsuperscript{20}Proceedings of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen for the City of
Galveston, 1849-1855, City Secretary's Office, City Hall, Galveston,
Texas, 30 September 1851; 3 February 1849; 6 October 1853.

\textsuperscript{21}John Sydnor v. C.C. Moore, et al., 1849; for examples of various
suits that see LePert and Dyer v. David S. Kelsey, et al., 1849; Thomas
Lewis v. Elanor Spann, 1853; Robert Mills and David Mills v. Isidore S.
LeClerc, 1848; Thomas P. Anderson v. Phineas G. Merritt, 1850; Charles
Schaeffer v. Elisha O. Lynch, 1852.
work, illegal associations between slaves and poor whites occurred frequently. Unfortunately, grand jury records, of which Lockley makes such good use for Savannah, Georgia, do not survive for Galveston.22

Other sources, however, demonstrate that legal and illegal associations between slaves and white workers occurred frequently. In Galveston, biracial social interaction often occurred because slaves who lived apart from their owners often lived in the neighborhoods where they dwelled most of the city's casual laborers. On the west side of the city they lay near the cotton presses and warehouses; on the east side, beyond one of the main markets. A third neighborhood ran along Market Street and Avenue E and the alleys behind these streets. Together these neighborhoods formed a flattened U shape around the

commercial center of town on the waterfront. The Galveston City Company, which had title to all the unsold land in the city, owned many small houses in these neighborhoods that were rented to laborers, to slaves or slaveholders, or to free persons of color. Ramshackle boarding houses that catered to recent laborers also could be found here. Some laborers owned small houses, most of which were valued at less than a quarter of even the least-valued homes in other portions of the city. 23 Most of the white casual laborers in the city were immigrants from Europe. Tax assessors for the county in the late 1840s, shortly after the city's immigrant population began to expand, regularly failed to record the names of people living in this part of town since most residents rented houses or lots on which they erected shacks. One assessor often entered a Germanic name on the top line of the assessment form and ditto marks on subsequent lines to indicate the occupants as German or other northern Europeans who spoke little English. Interspersed among the immigrants were slaves and the city's few free people.

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23 Reports of the Comptroller of Public Accounts, Ad Valorem Tax Division, Galveston County Real and Personal Property Tax Rolls, 1837-1888, Texas Room, Houston Public Library, Houston, Texas, 1855-60; henceforth referred to as Tax Rolls with appropriate year.
of color.\textsuperscript{24} The slaves in these areas lived apart from their owners, who usually resided in the more upscale portions of town. In 1851 Henry Bigham, the affluent owner of six slaves and a broker for slaveholders who sent their slaves into the city to be hired out, paid taxes on a small house at block 618 in the First Ward. The neighborhood consisted of German immigrants, grog shops, grocery stores, and pool halls, and a few other slaves living on their own or renting sheds tacked on to the houses of the immigrants.\textsuperscript{25}

Most slaves, of course, lived with their owners, or rather behind their owners, in the numerous slave houses that lined the city's alleyways in the more prosperous Second Ward. Yet even slaves who lived on their masters' premises frequented the saloons and shops in the less reputable neighborhoods. As one observer noted, the slaves of Galveston could be seen in all parts of the city going on various errands for their masters or at their leisure. The city's newspapers repeatedly expressed dismay at the number of slaves and "poorer sorts" of whites who

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25} Tax Rolls, 1849; Seventh Census, Free Inhabitants, Slave Inhabitants; Marshall Diary, vol. 4, 86, vol. 6, 35.
congregated around grog shops, groceries, gambling tents in the alleys, and pool halls. The city council, at the urging of Galveston slaveholders, repeatedly increased the severity of punishments for slaves buying liquor or whites selling liquor to slaves. In 1857 the city increased the licensing fees for the operation of groceries, beer halls, grog shops, and saloons and increased the fines and jail time for anyone operating one without a permit. At the same time the city council increased the penalties for white people who allowed slaves to drink or gamble in private homes, enacted harsher measures against slaves who hired their own time or found their own living arrangements, and raised the fines for slaveholders who permitted their slaves to do so and for anyone who rented or hired a slave without the permission of his or her owner.26

Dances, as noted in the newspaper quotes above, also occurred fairly regularly and were of great concern to slaveholders. In 1849 separate celebrations of May Day by the city's slaves and "laboring men" merged and resulted in

26 For editorials against the selling of liquor to slaves, see Galveston Civilian, 9 April 1856; Galveston Daily News, 21 March 1857; 7 November 1859; Revised Ordinances, 23.
a "night of debauchery," as a small newspaper story noted a week later. In 1852 the slaves of Joseph Bates held a ball that was attended by "negros finely turned out" and a smattering of less well appointed white people.\(^{27}\) Slave balls attended by "common whites" occurred fairly frequently, prompting the city council in 1854 to require slaveholders to obtain permission from the city council before holding any sort of entertainment for groups of five or more slaves. The same ordinance increased the punishment from ten to thirty-nine lashes for slaves who congregated without their masters' permission and provided for jail time for whites who allowed slaves to congregate in their homes without the permission of the slaves' owners.\(^{28}\)

The waterfront also provided slaves and laborers who worked along it opportunities for socializing. Visitors in the 1840s and 1850s noted that slaves and whites together frolicked on the beach, "making the air sound with their songs and shouts of revelry." Other visitors noted that even on the wharves during the summer men of both colors

\(^{27}\) Galveston Civilian, 7 May 1849; 12 November 1852.

\(^{28}\) Revised Ordinances, 26, 57, 83.
could be seen swimming, diving, and horse-playing together in the harbor with what one observer called a "disgraceful lack of decorum and an obscene lack of dress." In 1857 the city passed several ordinances proscribing this activity, making it illegal for men or women to "divest themselves of their clothing for the purpose of, or under the pretense of, bathing" on the beaches of the bay or gulf or along the wharves. The wording—"under the pretense of bathing"—suggests that perhaps more than skinny-dipping was occurring. 29

By 1861 the city had enacted a rigorous slave code that prohibited slaves from hiring their own time, finding their own dwellings, buying or drinking liquor, gambling, congregating in groups of five or more without permission, holding dances without permission, and going about on their own after sunset without a pass from their owners. All of these ordinances provided for fines and jail time for whites inducing slaves to break these laws as well as for breaking the various ordinances mentioned above. The city also enacted in the late 1850s a strict vagrancy law that

made it a crime to be unemployed and not looking for work. Men and women found loitering on the sidewalks were to be arrested and put to work on the city's streets under the direction of the marshal. This law was so successful that the *Galveston Daily News*, the voice of conservatism in the city, recommended an amendment to it to relieve overcrowding in the city jail by inmates who "would work when work was at hand." The ordinance, however, remained in place until the end of the Civil War.\(^{30}\)

Living in proximity to one another and the necessity of working together at various tasks only partially explain the easy familiarity between many white workers and slaves in Galveston. Another factor that contributed to the subversion of the accepted racial hierarchy was ethnicity.

A sample of heads of households and residents with occupations listed in the 1850 and 1860 censuses reveals that American-born residents, whether born in the North or South, dominated the professions and commerce. Tables 5 and 6 illustrate this preponderance. Native-born residents constituted 64 percent of all professional occupations and 51 percent of mercantile professions. Excluding small
shopkeepers and restaurateurs, the percentage of native-born residents in the mercantile occupations swells to 65 percent. Among the native born, residents born in the free states outnumbered those born in the slave states in both the mercantile and professional classes, 32 percent to 19 percent in mercantile occupations and 36 percent to 30 percent in professional occupations. Again, excluding small shopkeepers and restaurateurs increases the percentage of northern-born residents in the mercantile class to 48 percent to 17 percent. Southern-born residents did dominate in three occupational classes—among those claiming no occupation or claiming "gentleman" or "planter" as their occupation. In 1850, residents born in the slave states represented 100 percent of the "gentlemen," 100 percent of the "planters", 69 percent of those with no occupation, which included no doubt a number of individuals who were unemployed involuntarily. Foreign-born residents, though they represented less than 50 percent of the population, constituted the majority of skilled and unskilled workers. Foreigners made up 66 percent of the skilled and 85 percent of the unskilled labor force. Many

30 Revised Ordinances, 79-85; 45; Galveston Daily News, 12 July
of these foreign-born unskilled laborers—recent arrivals who spoke little English and were not practiced in the racial customs of the slave South—worked side-by-side with slave laborers. Among native-born heads of households and the employed, only 11 percent of those from the slave states worked at skilled trades, and only 7 percent performed unskilled manual labor.

In 1860 the percentage of native-born Galvestonians in the mercantile occupations increased to 71 percent. Although both northern- and southern-born residents displaced foreigners in these occupations, residents from the slave states showed the most significant increase, from 19 percent to 34 percent. As in 1850, foreign-born residents constituted the majority of small shopkeepers, grocers, etc., about 69 percent of all residents with these occupations, but represented less than one-quarter of merchants, cotton factors, shippers, land agents, and similar prestigious occupations. Among the professions, too, the foreign-born declined to only 22 percent of the class as a whole. In 1860 there were five foreign-born attorneys and six foreign-born physicians. The one

1859.
occupation that foreign-born residents entered for
the first time in 1860 was "gentlemen," four of whom
claimed nativity outside the United States. Native-born
residents also displaced some foreign-born Galvestonians in
the skilled trades, rising from 33 percent of all workers
in this category to almost 41 percent. Among carpenters
and machinists especially, foreign-born residents lost
ground. Carpenters born outside the United States had
represented 54 percent of all carpenters in the city in
1850; by 1860 they represented just over 30 percent. A
similar percentage decline occurred among blacksmiths and
wrights. Although some southern- and northern-born whites
moved into these occupations, at least some of the
competition that forced skilled workers to move inland
where their services were in greater demand arose from
slaves hired out by their masters. Immigrants to Galveston
from abroad found their opportunities shrinking in the
skilled trades, the professions, and the mercantile
occupations. By 1860 immigrants constituted 89 percent of
laborers and 95 percent of draymen in Galveston. Thus it
is clear that at the time of secession, most immigrants in
Galveston worked at low-paying, unskilled occupations such
as general construction laborers, shell shovelers on the
city streets, or waterfront workers—jobs also
frequently worked by the city's slaves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Slave States</th>
<th>Free States</th>
<th>Total U.S.</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mercantile</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Labor</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled Labor</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine &amp; Waterfront</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Slave States</th>
<th>Free States</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>36%</td>
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<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skilled Labor</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled Labor</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine &amp; Waterfront</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mercantile occupations include cotton factors, shippers, bankers, land agents, grocers, shopkeepers, restaurateurs, etc.
Professional occupations include attorneys, physicians, teachers, clergy, etc.
Skilled labor includes blacksmith, machinists, carpenters, wrights, etc.
Unskilled labor includes laborers, draymen, etc.
Marine occupations include stevedores, ship's captains, officers, seamen, deckhands, boatmen, etc.

Just as immigrants born outside the United States performed most of the physical labor in Galveston, they also performed most of the labor on its watery periphery. Men who worked in the marine industry came overwhelmingly from outside the United States. In 1850, 50 percent of the ship's captains and officers, 51 percent of sailors, and 74 percent of carpenters, riggers, and sailmakers were born abroad. In 1860, 47 percent of ship's captains and
officers were foreign-born, while 65 percent of sailors were. Just as in other occupations, native-born residents slowly began to displace the foreign-born in higher paying, more prestigious work. Foreign-born workers slipped downward in the workplace.

What of the men who worked on the docks? Until 1880 few Galvestonians identified their employment specifically as waterfront work either to federal census enumerators or to the authors of the city's directories. Until the 1870s sailors often worked alongside dockhands unloading and loading ships. Most men who worked on the docks considered themselves laborers rather than dockhands, longshoremen, or cotton screwmen. Cotton screwmen, or cotton jammers, used large jackscrews to further compress cotton bales into the holds of the wooden ships that carried the bulk of the cotton crop away from Galveston. The task required a certain amount of skill, and screwmen were the first waterfront workers to unionize. Yet even as late as 1870, few identified themselves as screwmen, stating their occupations as laborers. Even in the 1870 city directory during this period, fewer than a dozen men identified themselves as screwmen despite the fact that the Screwmen's Benevolent Association had more than seventy men on its
rolls in 1870 and more than four hundred in 1875-76. In 1850, 1860, and 1870 sailors, deckhands, and, perhaps, draymen spent all or a significant portion of their time loading and unloading vessels. It is thus impossible to say with certainty who worked on the docks. Certainly, the ten men identified as stevedores in the 1860 census worked on the docks in that capacity.31 The fact that there were ten stevedores in 1860 indicates that there was fairly regular employment on the wharves. Stevedores at this time were independent businessmen who contracted with the shipping companies or ship's captains to load and unload cargo. They hired draymen, longshoremen (though not yet called longshoremen), and cotton screwmen. For incoming ships, longshoremen, including at least some slaves, did the bulk of the work, entering the hold and unloading cargo, cotton bales in the case of cotton-laden coastal vessels, to the ship's deck, to the wharf, and then onto drays.32 Wooden ships at the time carried from one thousand to three thousand bales of cotton, and fifty to seventy-five longshoremen and perhaps a dozen or so draymen

31Eighth Census, Free Inhabitants.

32Galveston Civilian, 6 June 1856
required one to three days to unload a typical ship of 450 tons calling at the port in the late antebellum period. Draymen then took the cargo to warehouses, to other ships, or to railroad cars.

As noted in Chapter Two, most ships calling at Galveston came for cotton. The loading of these vessels required a slightly different work force and took slightly more time. Draymen brought the cotton from storehouse to ship or from one ship to another. Longshoremen and draymen unloaded the cotton from dray to dock. Fewer longshoremen were needed for loading when the cotton cargo was to be screwed or jammed into the ship's hold. Once the cotton was on the wharf, the cotton screwmen took over. They worked in five-man gangs, usually about nine to ten gangs to an averaged-sized antebellum ship. The outside gang loaded the cotton into the ship's deck; another gang deposited the bales into the holds; in each hold inside gangs would go about using large jackscrews to further compress the bales to jam as many as possible in the hold. It took an extra two days or so to load a ship using the jamming method, but it has been estimated that screwing increased the ship's capacity by 15 percent, thus offsetting in quantity what was lost in time. Sailors occasionally helped in the
loading and unloading of the vessels. For ships that could not clear the outer or inner bars blocking entrance to the bay and harbor, longboats or lighters were used for loading and unloading. These boats were small shallow-draft vessels powered by sail and oar. Longshoremen and cotton screwers loaded the longboats and transported the cargo to and from the moored cargo ships. With these vessels, loading and unloading time undoubtedly increased considerably.

Perhaps as many as one hundred men might work for a stevedore to unload or load a typical ship calling at Galveston. Thus in 1860 perhaps as many as one thousand men worked regularly on the docks as draymen, longshoremen, or screwmen. The work depended on the cotton year and was thus highly seasonal, the busy months lasting from September through April or May and seriously tapering off in July and August. Yet with 850 ships calling per year at Galveston during the last years of the 1850, certainly a large number of men found work on the docks. No record of wages for the antebellum wharf workers exist. Day laborers made approximately $2 per day without board and $1 with board in 1860; carpenters earned $2.50 per day without
board, an amount that probably is close to that made by the skilled cotton screwmen.\(^{33}\)

Although they were not identified as longshoremen or screwmen, it is reasonable to assume that some of laborers listed in the 1860 census worked on the wharves. Evidence suggests that this was the case. In the 1860 census, for example, Alfred Munn, a 38-year-old Englishman, stated his occupation as laborer. In 1866, however, he was among the charter members of the Screwmen's Benevolent Association (SBA), a social organization formed in 1866 of the most highly skilled of all the waterfront workers. In all, thirteen men listed on the rolls of the SBA, which was Galveston's earliest waterfront organization, also appear in the 1860 census as laborers. Another six members were listed as seamen in the census and another three were listed as draymen.

Thus it is probably safe to assume that many of the laborers worked on the docks at least part of each year. And as demonstrated above, the vast majority of these men were of foreign-birth. Most of the founders and early members of the SBA, in fact, were of foreign birth. These
men, many of whom spoke little English, did not readily absorb the racial ideology prevailing among native-born white southerners. Observers in the 1850s noted that most immigrants tended to keep to themselves and mingled more with other immigrants and with the slaves than with native-born whites.\textsuperscript{34} A Minnesotan seeking work in 1859-1860, for example, noted a lack of racial animosity among day laborers and ascribed it to the ethnicity of the workers. "When an Irishman, & a Dutchman & a Negro work together the Negro touches his hat to the Irishman & regards the Dutchman as a companion & equal."\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, the city's slaveholders suspected many of the immigrants of harboring abolitionist sympathies. During times of heightened sectional conflict, these suspicions flowered. In 1854, for example, a convention of Germans met in San Antonio to discuss the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the growing sectional conflict. The resulting platform called for the end of slavery and the better treatment of free persons of


\textsuperscript{34} Fornell, \textit{Galveston Era}, 134-136; Marshall Diary, 18 December 1859, 6:2-3.

\textsuperscript{35} Marshall Diary, 18 December 1859, 6:1-2.
color as well as various reforms for the benefit of the working classes in the state. As a consequence, the American Party in the 1854 elections won numerous state and local elections, including the mayoralty and two city council seats in Galveston, mainly on the strength of voting by native-born artisans who saw immigrants as economic competitors and slaveholders who saw immigrants as a threat to slavery.  

Not all immigrants, of course, rejected the South's peculiar institution. Many workers, especially skilled workers, sought to assimilate as rapidly as possible. City political leaders and the city's news editors, for instance, praised the city's highly skilled artisans as more industrious, more reliable, better educated, cleaner, and generally more civilized than the native-born working class whites. It cannot be stated with certainty the motives behind such praise. No doubt leaders believed it about at least some immigrant workers. Perhaps they also

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sought to encourage such behavior among foreign-born artisans, recognized the city's reliance on immigrant skilled laborers, or sought the political support of the large non-native population.\textsuperscript{37} From their arrival the Germans and other immigrants began displacing native whites, slaves, and free blacks as artisans.\textsuperscript{38} These artisans frequently saw skilled slaves as their chief competitors, and during the 1850s they and native-born artisans petitioned the city to prevent slaves from hiring their own time or practicing certain skilled trades. Shortly after the state convention of Germans in 1854, Die

\textsuperscript{37}Fornell, Galveston Era, 132. In 1983 Ira Berlin and Herbert Gutman urged scholars to progress beyond the debate over slavery's viability in cities and to look instead at the "character of the urban work force and the relations between slaves and free workers" [Ira Berlin and Herbert Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum South," American Historical Review 88 (December 1983), 1175-1200]. The authors argued that even though in 1860 only 6 percent of the South's free population were foreign born—up from 5 percent in 1850—foreign-born whites in six Southern cities came to dominate the free male working populations as native-born whites gravitated to less physical and therefore more socially acceptable occupations in medicine, law, and business. These immigrants, though many adopted the racial ideas of the slave regime, often proved hostile to slavery from fears of labor competition, from commitment to a free-labor ideology, and from their conceptions of the nature of republican society. As sectional tension heightened over slavery in the late antebellum years these immigrants came to be viewed with increasing suspicion by the native white elites. Thus the foreign born "had a profound influence on class and racial relations throughout Southern society,", p. 1195. See also Randall M. Miller, "The Enemy Within: Some Effects of Foreign Immigrants on Antebellum Southern Cities", Southern Studies, 24 (1985): 30-53.

\textsuperscript{38}Fornell, Galveston Era, 131.
Union, the city's German-language paper, published testimonials from Galveston Germans stating their support for slavery. Letters written by Germans to the Galveston Weekly News during the secession crisis opposed secession but pledged loyalty to the state and the "social system of the South" if a majority of citizens of Texas voted to separate from the Union. Germans and other immigrants also owned slaves, hired slaves, and certainly benefited from the slave economy. Immigrant artisans and businessmen also seemed more inclined to adopt the prevailing racial ideology. Foreign born residents, furthermore, increased as a percentage of Galveston's slaveholders in the antebellum period, growing from 17 percent in 1850 to 24 percent in 1860 (at the same time, incidentally, that the number of slaveholders from the northern United States fell from 39 percent to 28 percent).

The willingness of some artisans and leading German's such as Ferdinand Flake to embrace the South and its

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39 Die Union, June 15 1854.
40 Galveston Weekly News, 3 January 1861, 10 January 1861.
41 Seventh Census, Free Inhabitants; Eighth Census, Free Inhabitants.
peculiar institution underscores the fact that
ethnicity alone cannot account for the willingness of some
immigrants to ignore prescribed racial behavior. Class
stratification in Galveston's white society also
contributed significantly to racial interaction. Native-
born residents controlled not only most of the professional
and mercantile occupations, they also held most of the
city's real wealth—property—and personal wealth—mostly
slaves. They also dominated municipal government, holding
most elective and appointive governmental offices.
Displaced from the higher-paying skilled occupations,
possessing little wealth compared to the white elite, and
excluded from officeholding and even from voting at times,
white immigrants remained outside the circle of "whiteness"
in ways that native whites were not. 42 The stratification
of Galveston's society can be demonstrated most clearly by
examining the distribution of slaveholding, wealth, and
municipal offices during the antebellum period.

42 For the concept of herrenvolk democracy and the uses of white
unity, see Pierre van den Berghe, Race and Racism: A Comparative
Perspective (New York: Wiley, 1967); and George M. Fredrickson, The
Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character
and Destiny, 1817-1914 (Middletown, Connecticut: Weslyan University
Press, 1971), Chapter 2; Allen, Invention of the White Race, vol. 1;
Theodore W. Allen, , The Invention of the White Race, Volume 2: The
Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America Control (New York: Verso,
1997).
Galveston's most prosperous and powerful citizens were its slaveholders. Slaveholders represented only 4 percent of the total white population in 1850 and only 3.9 percent in 1860. In 1850, 120 out of 682 families held slaves (17.5 percent). In 1860, 212 out of 1,382 held slaves (15.3 percent). In Texas as a whole 30.1 percent of the heads of families owned slaves in 1850; in 1860, 27.3.\textsuperscript{43} Despite their relatively small numbers in the Galveston, slaveholders controlled a disproportionate amount of the city's real and personal property. A study of Austin, Galveston, Houston, and San Antonio found that though urban slaveholders constituted only 15.9 percent of the family heads of these towns, they controlled 67.6 percent of the real property.\textsuperscript{44} By 1860 this concentration was even more pronounced—only 11.7 percent of the cities' residents owned slaves, but they owned at least 57.4 percent of the cities' real property.\textsuperscript{45} Furthermore, by 1860 these slaveholders owned 59.1 percent of all the cities' property—real and

\textsuperscript{43}Seventh Census, Slave Inhabitants; Eighth Census, Slave Inhabitants.


\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., 100.
personal. In Galveston, slaveholders owned 51 percent of all real property in 1850 and 64 percent in 1860. Slaveholders' share of personal property, which included slaves, was even greater—77 percent in 1860. Thus it is clear that slaveholders owned most of the property in the city—real estate and personal property as well as slaves. More importantly, the slaveholding elite gained a greater share of the city's wealth as the years passed, increasing the divide between the wealthy and the poor. For slaveowners dependent on the cooperation of poor, non-slaveholding whites to maintain the institution of slavery, such disparities in wealth did not bode well for the future, especially considering the ethnic differences between the elite and most of those non-slaveholders.

In addition to ownership of human beings and most of the city's wealth, Galveston's slaveholders also shared for the most part a common nativity. In 1850 native-born whites constituted 82 percent of the slaveholding heads of

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46Ibid., 100. Real property is land. Personal property comprised a wide variety of items such as watches, jewelry, livestock, horses, farm implements, firearms, slaves, and even cash.

47Wealthholding figures for Galveston derive from Campbell and Lowe and from samples from the 1850 and 1860 federal population census.
households. The city's founders and early business leaders, with the notable exception of Canadian Michel Menard, were almost all from the United States. Like the city's southern-born leaders such as Charles Sydnor, native-born men participated in and profited from slavery. In 1850 an equal number of slaveholding heads of households—41 percent each—came from the southern and northern United States. By contrast, only 18 percent of the slaveholding heads of households were of foreign birth. Slaveholders born in England constituted 4 percent of the slaveholding family heads; Irish- and German-born slaveholders, 3 percent.\textsuperscript{48} By 1860, however, the proportion of foreign-born slaveholders in Galveston had increased to 25 percent as wealthy immigrants sought to confirm their assimilation by acquiring the most visible sign of thereof: slaves. The proportion of slaveholding heads of households born in the slaveholding states had risen to 45 percent, while the proportion born in the non-slaveholding states fell to 29 percent. Although the proportion of southern-born slaveholders increased in Galveston during the 1850s, overall the slaveholding class was more diverse in 1860.
Despite this diversity, the vast majority of slaveholders were native-born Americans.49

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7. Value of Real Estate, Heads of Households, 1850</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
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Source: Seventh Census of the United States

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<th>Table 8. Value of Real Estate, Heads of Households, 1860</th>
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<tr>
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Source: Eighth Census of the United States

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. Value of Personal Estate, Heads of Households, 1860</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Source: Eighth Census of the United States

48 Seventh Census, Free Inhabitants, Slave Inhabitants; Eighth Census, Free Inhabitants, Slave Inhabitants.

49 Seventh Census, Free Inhabitants
The concentration of slaveholding among a native-born elite corresponds to a similar distribution of all wealth in the city, as demonstrated in Tables 10-13. In 1850, 45 percent of the city's families possessed no real property. Another 14 percent owned between $1 and $499 worth of real estate. Eleven percent owned between $500 and $999 worth of property. Twenty-five percent owned between $1,000 and $9,999 worth of property. Slightly over one-third of these owned property valued at $2,000 or less, the value of a middling-size house and lot. Five percent of heads of families possessed more than $10,000 worth of real estate. In 1850 the wealthiest 4 percent of heads of households—those with more than $10,000 in real estate holdings—owned 59 percent of all real estate in the town. Like its slaveholders, the town's wealthiest antebellum citizens also came predominantly from the United States. Of the top 5 percent, 57 percent were born in the United States, 30 percent in the slaveholding states, and 27 percent in the non-slaveholding states. Another 30 percent were born in England, Ireland, or Canada. Seven percent were born in Ireland. At the other end of the economic spectrum, of those owning no property, 25 percent were born in the United States and 75 percent were born in foreign
countries. Of the landless, foreign-born heads of households in Galveston 54 percent were Germans, followed in declining proportion by the English, Irish, French, Swiss, Scotch, Dutch, Italians, Scandinavians, Latin Americans, and West Indians.\textsuperscript{50} In sum, in 1850 the ownership of wealth was concentrated not just in the hands of a relatively small elite, but in the hands of a relatively small, ethnically exclusive elite.

By 1860 this concentration became more pronounced. More families had had a chance to accumulate property, but the distribution of property had become more concentrated in favor of the wealthiest residents. Forty percent possessed no property, 3 percent owned between $1 and $499 in property, and 6 percent owned $500 to $999 worth of property. Thus Galveston's poorest residents actually owned slightly less property as the decade passed: 50 percent had owned less than $1,000 in real property in 1850. In 1860 the percentage had fallen to 49 percent. The percentage of Galvestonians owning between $1,000 and $9,999 rose by 5 percent during the decade, from 25 percent to 30 percent. As in 1850, this in part reflected an

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
increase in home ownership—20 percent of people in this group owned property valued at under $4,999 worth of property. The number of families with property valued at more than $10,000 increased to 20 percent, all but 1 percent of which owned less than $50,000 worth or property. The number of people with more than $50,000 increased from four in 1850 to twenty-four in 1860. What these figures reveal is a greater concentration of wealth. The top 20 percent, those with $10,000 or more worth of real property, owned 87 percent of the value of real property in the city. The concentration of wealth was also apparent in terms of personal property listed in the 1860 census. More than 55 percent of Galveston heads of households owned no personal property of value in 1860. One percent owned between $1 and $499. Two percent owned between $500 and $999. Thirty-two percent owned $1,000 to $9,999 worth of personal property, and 10 percent owned more than $10,000. Of those owning between $1,000 and $9,999, more than one-third owned $2,000 or less. The top 10 percent, those with personal
property valued at $10,000 and above, owned 70 percent of all personal property wealth in Galveston.\textsuperscript{51}

By 1860 the percentage of heads of households with real estate valued at $10,000 or more who were born in the United States increased from 57 in 1850 to 77 percent in 1860. Thirty-two percent of these American-born heads of households were born in the slaveholding states, mostly in Virginia, 48 percent were born in the non-slaveholding states, mostly New York. Of the foreign-born with real estate valued at more than $10,000, 6 percent were from Ireland, 6 percent were from Great Britain or Canada, and 5 percent were from Germany, followed by men from France, Holland, Switzerland, and the West Indies.

Residents born in the United States also owned most of Galveston’s personal property in 1860. Of the 10 percent of the heads of households who owned more than $10,000 worth of personal property, 82 percent were born in the United States, 51 percent in the slaveholding states and 31 percent in the non-slaveholding states. Of the 55 percent of heads of households who owned no personal property in 1860, only 14.6 percent were born in the United States; 5
percent were born in the slave states; 10 percent were born in the free states. The overwhelming majority of those with no property, 54 percent, were from Germany. Eleven percent of the property-less heads of households were from Ireland, and 10 percent were from England. The rest were born in Canada, Denmark, France, Poland, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Of those owning between $1 and $499 worth of personal property, 35 percent were born in the United States (17 from the slave states, 18 from the free states); and 65 percent were of foreign birth. Of the foreign-born, 75 percent were from Germany. Fifty percent of the heads of households with between $500 and $999 worth of personal property were born in the United States (25 percent from each section). Of the foreign-born, 38 percent were from Germany. Seventy-two percent of residents who owned between $1,000 and $9,999 came from the United States (26 percent from the free states and 46 percent from the slave states). Twenty-eight percent came from foreign lands, the majority from Germany (8 percent from Germany, 7 percent from England, and 6 percent from France as well as natives of Mexico, Scotland, and

\[\text{Seventh Census, Free Inhabitants, Slave Inhabitants; Eighth}\]
Switzerland). Thus it is clear that though some immigrants did manage to purchase homes or otherwise accumulate wealth during the 1850s, the vast majority of foreign-born residents continued to own little or no property or personal property. Meanwhile, Galvestonians born in the United States controlled a disproportionate share of the town's real and personal property. By 1860 the richest of these native-born residents owned almost 90 percent of all wealth in the city. As with high-paying occupations and slaveholding, immigrants occupied the bottom of white society.

Politics, another avenue of opportunity that had opened for working men during the Jacksonian period, was not available in Galveston.\textsuperscript{52} Not only did Galveston's native-born, slaveholding elite control the city economically, they also controlled it politically.

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Census, Free Inhabitants, Slave Inhabitants; Tax Rolls, 1840.

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disproportionately holding most elective and appointive offices in municipal government in the 1840s and 1850s.

During the antebellum period, for example, there were 403 terms of office in municipal government, including 244 elective office terms. These included 22 mayoral terms, 229 terms of aldermen, as well as appointive positions such as secretary, treasurer, harbor master, port warden, and others. Only 175 men filled all of the municipal offices during the twenty-two years before the Civil War. Often men served repeated terms, such as James Allen, who served as mayor from mid-1839 through 1845. Others served for a time in one elective office, such as alderman, then moved into the mayorship, or to an appointed office such as treasurer, secretary, port warden, or harbor master. Lent Hitchcock, for example, served as alderman, harbormaster, and treasurer from 1839 through 1852 and was succeeded as treasurer by his son, Frank Hitchcock. Frank Hitchcock served as treasurer or port warden, an office with responsibility for examining ships for signs of disease, free black sailors, and runaway slaves, for almost a decade during the antebellum period.
Of the 175 men who served in Galveston’s municipal government, 142 could be located in the 1840 county tax rolls or in the 1850 or 1860 censuses. Eighty-seven of the men were slaveholders (62 percent) in 1840, 1850, or 1860. Of the men found in the 1850 census, 42 percent were slaveholders, compared to 20 percent of all household heads. Of the elected officials found in the 1860 census, 96 percent owned slaves compared to 17 percent of all families. Clearly, political power was becoming concentrated in the hands of slaveholders before the Civil War. Furthermore, in the late antebellum period, the slaveholders who occupied office in Galveston possessed more slaves than non-officeholding slaveholders. The mean number of slaves owned by elected Galveston officials in 1840, for example, was 3.2 per holding compared to 2.9 per holding for all slaveholders. In 1860 the mean number of slaves per holding for officials had increased to 6.5 compared to 4.9 for all slaveholders.53

Officeholders in Galveston before the war were overwhelmingly native-born, but wealthy foreign-born

53 Richardson and Richardson, Galveston Directory for 1859-1860, 33-35; Seventh Census of the United States, Slave Schedules; Eighth Census of the United States, Slave Schedules.
citizens, especially men of German births, did attain elected office, though not nearly in proportion to the percentage represented by foreign-born heads of households in the city. Of the 142 men holding office before the Civil War for whom a place of birth could be determined, 70 percent were born in the United States. Most of these, 44 percent, were born in the northern states, mostly from New York (15 percent), Massachusetts, (9 percent) and Connecticut (7 percent). Thirty percent were of foreign birth, mostly from Germany (10 percent) and Ireland (6 percent). Only 27 percent of the officeholders had been born in the southern states, a figure that corresponded to their proportion of heads of households. Ten percent were from Virginia, 6 percent from Maryland, and 3 percent from Kentucky. Of elected officials native-born men constituted 69 percent of officeholders; 29 percent were from the South, and 40 percent were from the North. Foreign-born men constituted 32 percent of elected officeholders. The percentages of elected office holders from individual states remained constant: New Yorkers (15 percent), Germans (10 percent), and Virginians (10 percent). Northern-born residents represented an even greater percentage of men appointed to offices such as
treasurer, recorder, port warden, harbor master, etc. Just over 55 percent of these men were northern born; 24 percent were foreign born; 21 percent were born in the South. Again, New Yorkers predominated, constituting 12 percent of appointed officeholders; Virginians, Germans, and Irishmen each constituted 3 percent. Thus political opportunities for foreign-born men were as infrequent as economic opportunities.

The preponderance of native-born men among the officeholders of Galveston related directly to their wealth, for the founders of Galveston—the men who drew up its first charter—and subsequent leaders envisioned a community ruled by its wealthiest members. For example, the town's first charter, which applied to Houston, Galveston, and other towns in the new republic of Texas, was approved by the Texas legislature in 1839. Directors of the Galveston City Company, which was created by the dozen men upon whom Texas had conferred title to all lands on Galveston Island, contributed to its writing. The charter, approved by the Republic of Texas Congress on 28 January 1839, provided for a city council of eight aldermen, a mayor, and a recorder. The aldermen and mayor were to be elected by free, white males, twenty-one years
of age and older. The first charter required aldermen and the mayor to possess at least $500 worth real estate within the corporate limits. The city council was responsible for, among other things, implementing a system

... Of inspection over the conduct of slaves ... to regulate every thing which relates to bakers, butchers, tavern keepers or of grog ships, and other persons keeping public houses, draymen, horse drivers, water carriers and slaves employed as day laborers, to fix the salaries of said draymen, horse drivers, water carriers and day laborers.

The council was not empowered to fix the price of any article sold in the market or other places, however. Labor, but not other commodities, could be regulated by the municipal government.54

On 5 February 1840 the legislature approved a new charter that created three wards in Galveston and provided for the election of three aldermen from each ward. The mayor was to be elected at large. The charter required that voters be white males, at least twenty-one years of age, who had been residents of the city for at least twelve months previous to the election and had paid poll tax. Voters also were required to own at least $500 worth of
real estate or to have paid $100 in rent in the preceding year. No property requirements were placed on officeholding in the new charter, but the charter did not specifically abrogate the previous charter's requirements for officeholding. Furthermore, it noted that the new charter repealed all previous laws governing the city that contravened those in the new charter, suggesting that the older requirements were still in place with regards to officeholding requirements.\(^5^5\) A charter revision in February 1844 eliminated the property qualifications for voting, but instituted a $1,000 property requirement for aldermen. After annexation the charter of 1844 remained in effect with no changes except rewordings to recognize Texas' statehood.\(^5^6\)

In 1856 the charter was amended again. The number of wards was increased to four and the number of aldermen was increased to twelve. Two-year terms were instituted for aldermen. White males twenty-one and older who had rented


\(^{56}\) Ibid.
at least twelve months previous to the day of the
election and paid all poll taxes could vote. Property
requirements for office holding remained $1,000 for mayor
and aldermen.\textsuperscript{57} Galveston's controlling elite, German and
Anglo, also won at this time a ruling from the Texas
Supreme Court giving the city government the right to grant
citizenship to immigrants, thus allowing Galveston's
politicians to control the number of foreign voters.\textsuperscript{58}

In the midst of the Civil War, Galveston reinstituted
a property qualifications for voting. In December 1863
Texas's legislature approved a fourth charter revision.
This revision restored property requirements for voting for
white males twenty-one years and older. White males
twenty-one years of age or older could vote only if they
owned $300 worth of real estate in the city or had "served
in the army or navy of the Confederate States, or in the
State Troops, and have been honorably discharged."\textsuperscript{59}

Furthermore, the new charter stated that

\textsuperscript{57} H.P.N. Gammel, comp., \textit{Special Laws of the State of Texas}, 10

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Houston Telegraph}, 10 March 1856; District Court of Galveston,
Minutes, 1856-59, 84-90; Fornell, \textit{Galveston Era}, 135.

\textsuperscript{59} Gammel, \textit{Special Laws of State Of Texas}, (Austin: The Gammel
... As it is eminently just and proper that those who levy the taxes and expend the money of the people, should be themselves of those who pay the taxes; therefore, to encourage economy in the administration of the affairs of said City, no person shall be eligible to the office of Mayor, Recorder, or Aldermen ... unless, in addition to his being qualified to be a voter therein, he be possessed, in his own right of real estate within the limits of said City, to the value of three thousand dollars. ... \(^{60}\)

In consequence of the property requirements, in 1840 only about 35 of Galveston's 3,000 residents possessed sufficient property to qualify for office.\(^{61}\) In 1850, 20 percent of the white males twenty-one years or older possessed sufficient property to hold office. In 1860, the percent of white adult males eligible for office had increased to 36 percent of all white males twenty-one years old or older. Coincidentally approximately 36 percent of Galveston eligible residents actually voted in the 1861 secession referendum, which passed Galveston County 765 to 33, perhaps indicating a citizenry habituated to avoiding political affairs.\(^{62}\)

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 5:7.

\(^{61}\) Tax Rolls, 1840.

Thus Galveston during the antebellum period represents something of a closed society at odds with the Jacksonian ideal of a white yeomen's democracy. Skilled labor and the professions were increasingly dominated by native-born residents. Native-born residents also owned most of the city's slaves and most of its wealth and held most municipal offices. White immigrants, who constituted the bulk of Galveston's laborers, thus had few opportunities left to them. With officeholding closed to them, with the highest paying, most prestigious jobs closed to them, with prospects in skilled jobs dimming, and with the suspicions and distrust of the native-born elite bubbling not far below the thin crust of white unity, many immigrants no doubt thought of themselves as outsiders in Galveston. These immigrants worked with slaves at arduous, dangerous, and poorly paid jobs for hours and days at a time and often continued their associations beyond the workplace. Among many immigrants a natural if uneasy affinity arose with the slaves with whom they worked, lived, and caroused. The slaves, practiced at maintaining wary relations with white folk, nevertheless probably enjoyed the acceptance and respect implied in their interactions with white workers and recognized that such
relationships could prove beneficial in their struggle with slavery. The slaveholders and more prosperous segments of Galveston's population correctly feared that these associations threatened the racial glue that held slavery together. By the actions of the city to carefully control the hiring of slaves, to proscribe social interaction between slaves and casual laborers, and to disfranchise poor white men, one can surmise that these European-Americans were the men whom slaveholders feared would join a southern abolitionist party in the aftermath of Lincoln's election. Their solution—secession—launched the Civil War that destroyed slavery. Ironically, the freeing of Galveston's black workers almost destroyed the fragile racial affinities and uneasy alliances built up by shared hardship during the days of slavery.⁶³

Chapter Four
White Unions, White Docks

In the evening of 11 September 1866, twenty-three men gathered in Galveston's Washington Fire Company meeting hall and, after discussing the need for "mutual protection and benevolence," voted to incorporate themselves as the Screwmen's Benevolent Association. The men elected officers and appointed one committee to draft a constitution and another to find a permanent meeting hall. They established a $5 entrance fee—raised to $10 at the next meeting—and monthly dues of 50 cents. They then adjourned until the following week.¹ At the next meeting, the organization, now with thirty-four members, adopted a constitution and by-laws based on that of a similar group in New Orleans.²

Although their focus centered on mutual aid—assistance in times of illness, disease, and death—they also considered work rules to control entry into their occupation and to maintain wages. To this end, within three years of its founding, the SBA's members had adopted

¹ Screwmen's Benevolent Association, Minutes, 11 September 1866 (Barker Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, Texas), I, 1; these minutes will henceforth be referred to as SBA Minutes with appropriate date and, where available, page number.

rules setting wages at $5 per day, limiting workdays to nine hours (seven on Sunday or at night), and warning that "no member of this Association shall work with or for any person ... who shall employ to work on Shipboard, persons of Color; under penalty of expulsion from this Association." Following the SBA's lead, the Longshoremen's Benevolent Association, incorporated in 1875, and the Longshoremen's Benevolent Union, incorporated in 1882, also barred black members and sought to exclude African-American competitors from wharves on which its members worked.3

Seemingly, the promise of interracial cooperation growing from the similar class experiences of white and black workers in the antebellum period had withered in the harsh soil of postbellum realities.

This chapter examines the creation of all-white waterfront unions after the war and the resistance of black workers, and some white workers, to the attempts by these unions to exclude blacks from waterfront jobs. These all-white unions arose because the emancipation of the slaves led many white workers to see African-Americans for the first time as equals and thus economic and political

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3 SBA Minutes, 3 May 1869, I, 120; Directory of the City of Galveston for 1890-91, 60.
competitors. Consequently, these workers sought to distinguish themselves from the former slaves by forming all-white unions and attempting to exclude black men from waterfront occupations. Yet the legacy of antebellum economic cooperation did not completely disappear. During the 1870s African-Americans continued to find work on the docks, and white and black workers voiced support for one another, most notably during strikes by longshoremen and day laborers in 1877.

In the years after the Civil War, Galveston's waterfront workers organized themselves into associations representing the two major occupational groups on the docks: screwmen and longshoremen. The screwmen organized first, forming the SBA in 1866, and remained Galveston's most powerful organization and the most influential among other white unions. As noted in the previous chapter, cotton screwmen wielded 200-pound jackscrews to compress cotton bales into the hulls of ships. This job required skill, experience, and strength, and since their labor increased the amount of cotton a ship could carry by 15 to 20 percent, they had considerable leverage with stevedores
and shipping lines.\(^4\) They used this leverage to maintain workplace control and to extend their influence on the docks. In 1872, for example, the SBA defined all cotton loading as screwing whether it was stored aboard ship by hand—meaning the bales were simply stacked as is in the holds of ships—or by jackscrews.\(^5\) Only regular SBA gangs working for the established rate of $6 per day could load cotton cargo onto ships in Galveston, though some shippers resisted and hired from the small reservoir of non-union workers. Consequently, black and white workers who had taken the lower-paying, hand-loading jobs (about $5 per day) now were forced either to join the SBA, an option denied black workers, or forsake a significant source of income. Black workers, and white workers who could not or would not join the SBA, now were left with the common longshoring jobs—moving cotton to and from warehouse and dock and unloading cargo. For this work they earned 30 cents per hour in the 1860s—at $3 per day for a full 10-hour day—half what a screwman made for a nine-hour day.\(^6\) By

\(^4\) The best description cotton screwing and the profits it produced is Taylor, "Screwmen's Benevolent Association," Chapter I.

\(^5\) SBA Minutes, 25 October 1872, I, 79.

\(^6\) Galveston Daily News, 28 July 1877, 4.
the mid-1880s, the white SBA's occupational control had been broken and the loading of vessels by longshoremen again became more common, especially on ships bound for domestic ports. Nevertheless, the SBA remained the leading union among white waterfront workers.

At the same time, the SBA's influence spread into the newly formed longshoremen's unions. Since the SBA frequently could not provide enough men to meet the demand for screwmen during particularly busy periods, they allowed stevedores and foremen to hire non-members. To secure these lucrative openings, white longshoremen complied with SBA rules, and it seems likely that SBA foremen would look favorably on longshoremen who shared their views on working with African-Americans. Moreover, at least some, and perhaps many, screwmen also belonged to the longshoremen's associations. The Longshoremen's Benevolent Union, the city's largest with a membership that varied between one hundred and three hundred men in the late-nineteenth century, had significant numbers of SBA men on its rolls, and many of the LBU's officers were members of the SBA. Julius Schilke, for example, served as financial secretary
and treasurer for both organizations in 1899–1900.\textsuperscript{7} Galveston's other longshoremen's union, the Longshoremen's Benevolent Association, also included screwmen among its members, though the lack of records from that organization makes it impossible to determine if they also belonged to the SBA. Although the LBU's records for the period have been lost, roll books dating from the merger suggest that the structure and many work rules and by-laws of the two associations were the same. Both organizations levied identical fines for similar work rule infractions and for unacceptable behaviors such as drunkenness, promiscuity, and outspoken political activism.\textsuperscript{8} Furthermore, the LBU and the SBA—both affiliates of the International Longshoremen's Association—merged in 1924 to form Local 307 of the ILA.\textsuperscript{9}

Thus the SBA wielded an enormous influence over other white waterfront unions. The SBA's decision in 1869 to

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\textsuperscript{7} SBA Minutes, 23 June 1868, I, 30; International Longshoremen's Association (Screwmen's Benevolent Association), Locals 317, 310, and 307, Roll Books, 1876–1900, (Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas), henceforth cited as ILA Roll Books; Directory of the City of Galveston for 1890–91, 60.

\textsuperscript{8} ILA Roll Books; General Directory of the City of Galveston for 1890–91, 60.

\textsuperscript{9} Taylor, "Screwmen's Benevolent Association," 127.
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punish workers who worked with black men was, therefore, important not only for future relations between white and black screwmen but also for all men who worked on the wharves in Galveston. Although most of the men who founded the SBA were immigrants, they differed from casual laborers of the antebellum period in their ethnicity. Of the thirty-four original members of the SBA, only five were native-born residents—two from New York, two from Philadelphia, and one from Boston. Of the rest, eleven were from Ireland, ten from England, six from Scandinavia, one from Scotland, and one from Germany.\(^\text{10}\) The percentages did not change much during the rest of the century. Of the 931 men who belonged to the SBA sometime from 1866 to 1901, 876 were listed with place of birth in the roll books. Of these 876, 78 percent were of foreign birth. Of the foreign-born, 44 percent came from Great Britain (including Ireland), 31 percent from Scandinavia, 17 percent from German-speaking countries, and 8 percent from other European nations, Mexico, and the West Indies. Of the 22 percent of the members who were born in the United States, 69 percent were born in the former slave states; 25 percent

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in the antebellum free states, and 7 percent in non-specified parts of the United States.\textsuperscript{11} The earliest native-born members were northern-born; the SBA did not admit its first southerner until 1871. The proportion of southerners among the native-born did not exceed the northern-born members until the late 1880s and 1890s when the number of Texas-born members increased—and many of those were first-generation men whose parents had been born outside the United States. Men born in states with important seaport cities—such as Louisiana, Alabama, New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts—were heavily represented among the native-born, as men from nations with long seafaring histories were among the foreign-born. Thus the SBA members, like antebellum laborers, were preponderantly of foreign birth. The difference, which may have been crucial in their approach to dealing with African-Americans, was that the majority of the foreign-born screwmen, unlike the antebellum laborers who performed much of the waterfront work, had been born in Great Britain rather than in German-speaking nations. The British and the Irish, as historians such as Ted Allen, David Roediger, 

\textsuperscript{11} Figures may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
Thomas Holt, and others have noted, shared many of the same attitudes about African-Americans with their Anglo-American cousins. Consequently, they may have been more inclined to exclude black men.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to the ethnicity of the membership, the felt need of white screwmen to distance themselves from the former slaves for political, economic, and psychological reasons also contributed to the decision to exclude black workers from the union and occupation. Given prevailing racial attitudes, the increasing number of black workers in the city after the Civil War seemed to pose a threat to white screwmen. After the war, the presence of the United States Army and the Freedmen's Bureau in Galveston attracted a number of African-Americans who had grievances against former owners and current employers or who feared retribution by ex-Confederates who had not accepted defeat.

\textsuperscript{12} Figures for places of birth were compiled from ILA Roll Books. For British and Irish attitudes about race, see George M. Fredrickson, \textit{The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914} (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); David Roediger, \textit{Wages of Whiteness, Theodore Allen, The Invention of the White Race}; Thomas C. Holt, \textit{The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). Very little scholarship exists on the racial attitudes of Scandinavians in America, and it is not possible from the minutes to determine who opposed and who supported the move to exclude African-Americans. Thus it is not possible to determine the effect of the large Scandinavian membership on SBA policies.
Texas after the war experienced near anarchic conditions as Confederate and Unionists returned home and freed people fled the plantations. Atrocities against the former slaves were not uncommon, and crime in general was rampant. Thus it is not surprising that many black men and women sought refuge in a city with a strong federal presence. Furthermore, many former slaves sought a means to earn money so that they could eventually afford to purchase land. Many also simply wanted to experience life in a city—even one of Galveston's size. Consequently, the number of black people in Galveston increased dramatically in 1865-66 before declining again in 1869.\textsuperscript{13} Thus screwmen no doubt believed that association offered protection from this increasing competition from black men. In all likelihood, any dramatic increase in the population of

laborers in Galveston would have sparked efforts among screwmen to protect their economic livelihood. That these laborers were black men recently freed only compounded matters.

The screwmen also perceived the ex-slaves as a potential threat politically. Although the association itself forbade members from political activism as representatives of the association, the individuals who belonged to the organization were to enjoy during Reconstruction greater political opportunities than ever before—ironically, because of federal efforts to ensure political access to the former slaves. In 1866 the city council asked for and received a charter revision that eliminated property requirements for voting that had been instituted during the war. The new charter, however, limited the franchise to white men. It also retained a $3,000 property requirement for officeholders.\textsuperscript{14} The institution of military Reconstruction in Texas by General Phil Sheridan in March 1867 overturned this charter. Brevet Major General Charles Griffin, appointed military commander of the District of Texas in December 1866, suspended the

charter and began the registration of freedmen for new elections without property qualifications for office holding or racial restrictions on voting. In 1871 the state approved a new charter incorporating this more democratic government.\(^\text{15}\) This charter, which survived with no modifications to its franchise provisions until the turn of the century, broke the commercial elite's hold on municipal government and for the first time allowed men of limited means to aspire to office. Consequently, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, working class men—including African-American men such as Norris Wright Cuney, Thomas Baker, and John DeBruhl—repeatedly won election from the city's wards populated by black and whites of the working class.\(^\text{16}\)

This opening of the political system to formerly marginalized workers gave white laboring men a stake in "whiteness" that they had previously lacked. White workers now shared in political equality with the white elite. The "herrenvolk democracy" that had never fully developed in

\(^{15}\) Gammel, \textit{Laws of Texas} 7:343-388; Shannon, 175-185.

\(^{16}\) Directory of the City of Galveston for 1882-1883, 67; Galveston City Directory for 1875-76; Maud Cuney Hare, \textit{Norris Wright Cuney: A Tribune of the Black People} (Austin: Steck-Vaughn Company, reproduction, 1968), 16-23, 64-78.
Galveston before the war because of the elitist nature of local government now had ground in which to thrive. Leading citizens who had not previously catered to workers now were forced to do so. Barbecues, parties, dances for political reasons—which had not been a common feature of municipal campaigns before the war—now became standard.\(^7\) By 1868 newly enfranchised black men were competing with white workers' candidates for office. In several elections, labor candidates supported by white workers competed with African-American candidates for seats. The mayoral race of 1873, for example, pitted C. L. Sweeney—the brother of a well-known stevedore—against C. W. Hurley, an ally of Richard Nelson and Wright Cuneo. Hurley won.\(^8\) Thus white workers believed their newfound political power was threatened by African-American men.

This political competition, like economic competition, fed a desire on the part of white workers to differentiate themselves from the recently freed slaves. Despite informally socializing, working with slaves, and sharing some class affinities with black men on the waterfront

\(^7\) *Galveston Daily News*, 22 February 1868, 4; 3 March 1869, 4; 10 March 1870, 6;.

\(^8\) *Galveston Daily News*, 5 March 1873, 1.
before the war, white workers after the war saw
their relationship with African-Americans in a new light.
Black men were no longer slaves. Before the war, the
competition of black men on the waterfront was subsumed by
their status as slaves—the slaveholder as much or more than
the slave represented the threat. The slave-demeaned by
slavery—could be an object of sympathy for a foreign-born
worker who also felt oppressed and had not been reared on
American racism. After the war, the freed black man now
was a potential equal politically, economically, and
socially. Suddenly, the white worker—who saw great
opportunity in a postwar world without lordly
slaveholders—feared he could be reduced to the same status
as black men, who were scorned by the white majority. Thus
white workers wanted to distinguish themselves from
African-Americans who, through war and reconstruction, had
become their equals and hence their rivals. For men who
often spent up to fourteen hours a day at work, defining a
distinct identity as skilled, exclusive workers made
perfect sense. Consequently, once they formed their
association, it is not surprising that they sought to exclude the former slaves from their profession.\textsuperscript{19}

Of course, the benevolent and social functions also contributed to the exclusion of black men from the union itself. However much antebellum laborers may have worked with and socialized informally across racial lines, they had not socialized in formal institutions and, given the factors outlined above, white workers were not likely to do so after the war.\textsuperscript{20} And the social and benevolent functions of the SBA were of paramount importance to its founding members. The association's original members consisted mainly of stevedores and older experienced screwmen (the average age was 33 years old) who cited mutual aid and protection as their reasons for organizing, and mutual aid did indeed remain a focus of the association during its early years. For example, the association paid $6 per week to a member who could not work because of disabling injury or illness—the money coming from the 50 cent monthly dues

\textsuperscript{19} Practically any issue of any Texas newspaper carried stories scornful of the former slaves. Among many examples, see Galveston Daily News, 3 September 1866, 4; 23 January 1867, 2.

\textsuperscript{20} The records of the SBA, which later became a local of the International Longshoremen's Association, are the only that remain from the nineteenth century for Galveston waterfront unions.
paid by the membership. A three-man sickness committee appointed at each quarter visited the ill and attended to the benefit payments. In 1869 the SBA levied a $2-per-year assessment in order to hire a physician to attend to sick members and to examine applicants to the association. Upon the death of a member, the SBA assessed each member $1 to provide the screwman's survivors $40 for funeral expenses. If a member's spouse died, he received $25 for expenses—raised by a 50-cent assessment of the membership. Until the mid-1880s, men were fined $5 for failing to attend the funeral of a member or his wife. The SBA also provided a social outlet for screwmen, holding annual dances and picnics beginning in the early 1870s. The events were so well attended by Galveston's residents that the SBA began making a substantial profit each year from ticket sales. African-Americans were not invited, except to perform as entertainers. In the 1880s the picnics were moved from June to Labor Day. They remained white-only affairs, and African-American workers held their own separate picnics, but the parades that preceded them included black as well as white labor organizations.21 If

21 Screwmen's Benevolent Association, Constitution and By-Laws, Article XV, XVII, 20-21 (Center for American History, Austin, Texas);
Galveston workers accepted a measure of equality on the job, they did not accept "social equality"—the interaction of black and white people in social situations, particularly in situations in which the black men might mingle with white women.²² Thus the SBA, which served in its early years as a social organization as much as a union, remained steadfastly all-white to prevent any notion that it condoned such "social equality."

Despite the efforts of the SBA and other unions, however, racial exclusion never completely prevailed on the docks, and some black and white workers opposed it. African-Americans, of course, resisted efforts to exclude them from waterfront work, and by 1870 black longshoremen had secured permanent employment unloading cargo for the Morgan line, which connected Galveston and New Orleans and docked regularly at the Central Wharf, also called the Morgan wharf.²³ At some point in the early 1870s a strike by white workers for higher wages had resulted in the use

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²² For the role of "social equality" in southern unionism see Letwin, The Challenge of Interracial Unionism.

of black strikebreakers by the Morgan line, though no accounts of this strike remain. In 1876 the men who worked the Morgan wharf formed the Colored Longshoremen's Benevolent Association—the first union of black workers in the state. No records of its founding members, officers, or minutes survive, but it is likely that men of the CLBA worked the Morgan line and were the ones who struck for higher wages in 1877.²⁴

On 27 July 1877, while the rest of the nation watched anxiously the spread of the Great Upheaval on railroads throughout the country, Morgan’s wharf came “alive with strikers.” This wharf—officially called the Central Wharf—was at the foot of 21st Street in the heart of the waterfront. A crowd of “white men and colored, thickly interspersed with police officers, was seen moving in and out of the warehouse used by the Morgan steamers for storing freight.” The police attempted to clear a way through the mass of men in the warehouse for the two or three laborers who continued to engaged in moving freight.

²⁴ Ibid., Directory for the City of Galveston for 1890-91, 60.
The crowd moved from one gangway to the other to block any effort to work by those who had not joined their ranks.  

Captain Charles Fowler, the Galveston agent of the Morgan Steamship Line, said he knew nothing of what was going on. Fowler went aboard the ship and was told by the African-American hands inside the hold that they were ready to work but "that some white men were endeavoring to terrify the colored men employed by the Morgan line, so as to prevent them from working." The chief of police promised to protect the men if they wanted to work. At this moment John Morrison, the white stevedore who contracted to load and unload vessels for the Morgan Steamship Line at the Central Wharf, ordered the black men to begin work. They began unloading cargo for about ten minutes, but then a cheer went up from the biracial crowd in the warehouse signaling a new effort to block the

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gangways. The striking workers then moved to the agent's office at the foot of the wharf, where Fowler told them that he would meet their demands, raising their wages from 30 cents to 40 cents per hour.  

Only African-Americans worked the Morgan wharf, having retained a monopoly since Reconstruction. The rumor held that whites who worked on the "upper wharves" were the ones responsible for inducing the Morgan hands to strike. The president of the white Longshoremen's Benevolent Association, however, "stated emphatically" that they had nothing whatever to do with the strike among the African-Americans but were on the wharf simply as spectators. They also insisted that they were not interested in taking the work of the black longshoremen. The white men said, however, that thirty cents an hour was not reasonable compensation for the sort of work required of the black men, and that since whites were earning forty cents an hour, they thought it but just that African-American laborers should receive the same. The affair lasted only about an hour, and when the wages were raised the men went back to work and "everything assumed the appearance that

prevailed before strikes became the order of the day."\textsuperscript{28} Having been replaced by African-Americans who had taken the work on the Morgan wharf for less money, it was in the interests of white longshoremen to support higher wages for the black workers to protect their own wage scale from the threat of lower-paid workers.

Following the short strike on the Morgan wharf, rumors swirled that the white workers on the Mallory Wharf–New York Steamship Company–would go on strike for higher wages. Capt. J. N. Sawyer, the agent for the Mallory line, denied the speculation, saying that the line paid forty cents per hour for day work and sixty per hour for night. He insisted that these were the highest in the country and that the Mallory laborers were content. Outside "incendiary agitators will make all the trouble they can," however.\textsuperscript{29} No strike occurred.

Early on the following Monday, 30 July 1877, another strike did break out, however, involving mostly African-American day laborers. Although the strike did not involve waterfront workers directly, several white dockworkers did

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 28 July 1877, 4; Directory of the City of Galveston for 1890–91, 60.

\textsuperscript{29} Galveston Daily News, 29 July 1877, 4.
emerge as advocates for black day laborers demanding higher wages. The strike also brought public attention to Norris Wright Cuney, an African-American leader who would become one of the most powerful black political and labor leaders in Texas. The strike began among fifty African-American day laborers repairing Market Street. The strikers marched through the city, trailed by police, exhorting day laborers to stop work until city contractors and other employers agreed to restore the $2-per-day wage that had prevailed in the city until a few years before, when the depression of 1873 had prompted many employers to cut the rate of pay for casual labor to $1.50 per day. After visits to various building construction sites, the narrow-gauge railway linking the city's wharves with the railroad trunk lines, the Stump & Lewis lumber mill, the terminal yard of the Galveston, Houston, and Henderson railroad, and the Texas Cotton Press Company, the crowd numbered close to three hundred men.

Following draymen who refused to join them (the draymen were employed by Mr. George Lee, who operated a dray stables and did not pay $2 per hour) to the Cotton Factor's Press on Avenue F, the strikers flooded the
company's loading yard, demanding that the draymen and cotton handlers cease work. The superintendent of the press, Captain A. P. Lufkin, ordered the protesters to leave, saying that he had already agreed to pay such a wage to his men. The crowd refused. Lufkin then jumped aboard a dray and called to his drivers and other employees to follow him. Although Lufkin and several of the cotton press workers made it out of the loading yard, the strikers seized the reins of the remaining six drays, demanding that the reluctant drivers and cotton handlers get down and stop work. Two policemen then waded in with clubs, bludgeoning their way toward the men restraining the dray horses. Before the policemen had gone far into the crowd, however, the enraged crowd turned on them, pulling them to the ground and beating them. At this moment nine more police arrived, followed by armed "citizens" whose numbers quickly reached nearly eight hundred. Confronted by a larger and armed force, the strikers left the cotton press and headed

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30 Ibid. Lufkin, a director of the Galveston Wharf Company, founded the Southern Cotton Press and Manufacturing Company in 1859, consolidating it with others in town owned by other directors of the Galveston Wharf Company. The Southern Cotton Press practically monopolized cotton pressing and warehousing in Galveston. Lufkin, a native of Maine, had come to Galveston in 1845 with a wealthy relative. The two began the cotton compress industry in Galveston in that year. Hayes, Galveston, II:920-921.
for the courthouse, followed by the white civilians and police. The two policemen were not seriously injured; the only other injury was a welt on Lufkin's scalp where a dray stick had struck him as he attempted to lead the draymen out of the yard.\footnote{Galveston Daily News, 31 July 1877, 3. New York Times, 31 July 1877, 5.}

At the courthouse, strikers spilled out of the courtroom into the street. The workers inside called for a speech from Michael Burns (sometimes spelled Byrnes), a part-time longshoremen and screwman who had been temporarily expelled from the Screwmen's Benevolent Association a decade earlier for criticizing the association for its moderation.\footnote{SBA Minutes, 2 November 1866, I, 7; 16 November 1866, I, 9.} Burns claimed that Galveston labor leaders had forsaken the city's unskilled workers and praised the strikers for keeping true to the principles of unionism. He urged the workers to avoid violence but assured them that he and other white workers sympathized with their demands. A black day laborer, Gilbert Baker, then introduced four resolutions. The first renounced the use of violence by workers. The second declared that the strike was "but the popular manner of
expressing our condemnation of the oppressions to
which we have been subjected in the reduction of the prices
paid for our labor." 33 The third reiterated the intention
of the strikers to obey the law and exhaust all "peaceable
means to vindicate their claims for wages sufficient to
meet the ordinary wants of life" and called for the
appointment of a committee of five workers to ask municipal
authorities "not only for the advice but their aid" in
obtaining a "fairer schedule in the price of honest labor."
The fourth resolution declared that "so long as the price
of rents ... and the cost of the necessary elements of
subsistence" remained at their current level, $2 per day
for manual labor was a rate affordable to business and fair
to workers. 34

Alderman George P. Finlay then urged the workers to
obey the law. He told them that they had the right to
strike for higher wages, but that they could not prevent
anyone else from working for less. He also admonished the
workers to stop their marches and protests because all over
the city "women and children were suffering all the terrors

33 Galveston Daily News, 31 July 1877, 3.
34 Ibid.
of intense fear over the demonstrations of the day, and which Galveston had witnessed for the first time in its history." He told them that their demonstration was wrong, and instead of resulting in higher wages it was likely to cause the strikers to "come out with the little end of the horn." Strikes, he said, had never resulted in any good for the strikers, employers, or society. He concluded by assuring the men that "the white people were taking no part in the strike, and did not intend to do so, and that the best thing they could do would be to emulate the example set them by the white laborers of the city, and return to peaceful avocations." 35

Burns addressed the crowd again, assuring the workers that Galveston's white laborers "would never go back on the movement." William Ferrier, a white laborer, mounted the courthouse steps and also assured the striking black men of the support of whites. Burns then nominated a biracial committee, which the strikers approved by acclamation, to meet with the city's board of aldermen. The strikers then appointed a committee to visit the homes of workers throughout the city to urge them to stay at home until

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wages were increased. The strikers broke up and returned to their homes.

The next morning, 31 July 1877, about sixty black men and a dozen white men gathered at the county courthouse. The police chief, on crutches from the confrontation at the cotton press on Monday, told them they must refrain from "such demonstrations" as had occurred the day before. He vowed to preserve the order and peace of the city and reminded them that it was a violation of the law for men to band together and parade through the streets. He further stated that he would use every man in the city to protect workers who refused to strike, if need be. The strikers discussed the propriety of including "colored women and children" in the strike. They thought the rate for washers should be fixed by the city at $2 per day and for cooks, at $20 per month. Finally, Burns argued that committees should be appointed to visit contractors and employers of the city asking them to set wages at $2 per day. He told the men that "soldiers had been engaged all night with guns on their shoulders, guarding property" and patrolling the city. A voice from the crowd exclaimed, "D—n their guns!

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We can whip them and their guns, too, soon enough when we start for them." Burns then urged the men to go quietly to their homes and turn out again at 7 p.m. to hear the results. The meeting then adjourned.

At 5:30 p.m., the unrest burst into violence. A white man and an African-American had an "altercation" on Market Street. The police arrested the white man, and on the way to the station were followed by a crowd of black men who demanded the police turn the prisoner over to them for a lynching. The crowd surged forward, and the police fired at them. A black man named Beauregard was hit in the leg. Three others were arrested. The police then asserted that Beauregard had fired on the chief of police the day before. During the unrest, the bells of the Episcopal Church rang out to call the city's militia companies. More than 200 men, including a number of former Confederate "Colonels" and a special squad of deputized citizens, turned out at Artillery Hall.37

About 250 strikers, mostly African-American men, met that night in front of the courthouse. A few white men were scattered through the crowd. Men in the crowd

37 Ibid., 2 August 1877, 4.
expressed their indignation over the shooting of the black man on the wharf, and several calls went up to seize the shooter and take revenge. Burns mounted the steps and spoke. He said he regretted that one of the strikers had been shot and "deplored the fact that one of those who are entrusted with authority and charged with the protection of the public peace, had been the aggressor." He argued that policemen were appointed not to club honest men on the head and to shoot them simply because they were trying to get their rights. He said that this country belonged to the citizens, and that the citizens of the country came from every habitable part of the globe. "This country had been built up by the Irishman, the negro and the mule," and deserving of a fair wage. He told the crowd that he had called on various men who contracted for city work and asked them if they would pay $2 per day. Most said that they could not pay more under their current contracts but that they would consider it in the future.

Louis Griffin, a black railroad worker, spoke to the crowd next, advising the men not to do anything that was

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
contrary to law but insisting that they had the right to a living wage. He proposed that a committee of five be appointed to wait on the Chief of Police and see that the policeman who had shot the innocent "colored man" on Market Street be arrested for the offense.

At this point, black political leader Norris Wright Cuney spoke. Cuney, the U.S. Custom's Inspector for the port of Galveston and president of the Galveston Union League, warned the men against vigilante violence directed toward the policeman and against continuing their demonstrations. He said that if a warrant was sued out for the arrest of the officer, it would be executed and that justice would be fairly and impartially measured out. He said that for the past forty-eight hours the strikers "had been parading the streets of the city, creating all sorts of discord and stirring up all sorts of bad blood, which had culminated in the shooting affair on Market street."

He further noted that the strikers had never mustered more than three hundred men out of the fifteen hundred laborers in the city and that without the support of more of the laboring class, the strikers would accomplish nothing "except riots and bloodshed, and the destruction of their
own best interests." He then warned them that there were "over 700 armed men—trained soldiers in the city, who would annihilate them all in an hour: and if the could not, he said that in the city of Houston there were 1000 men under arms who could be brought to this city in two hours to accomplish that bloody work." 40

Cuneo argued that the black strikers were not supported by white men, "nor by the full strength of their own color." He stated that the strikers would be "sufferers in the end for the foolishness of which they had already been guilty in a vain attempt to revolutionize the industrial interests of the city." He then urged them to disperse and to return to work and negotiate peacefully with their employers for higher wages. A moderate African-American leader, Cuneo's views on labor conflict reflected those of many Americans. He believed that workers and employers shared a commonality of interests in working for prosperity. He thought that confrontations were thus not only futile but also harmful. He also recognized the risks

40 Ibid.
African-American men took by demonstrating in a southern community such as Galveston.\textsuperscript{41} Although Cuney later won renown as a champion of the state's African-Americans, on this day he was treated with contempt by the crowd. Cuney was already suspected of being too close to Galveston's commercial elite and had been criticized the previous year for supporting a Democratic centrist ticket—the People's Party—for municipal government instead of the Republican ticket.\textsuperscript{42} Most of the crowd of men shouted him down, calling him a traitor to his race and his class, and dismissing his warnings.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} Virginia Neal Hinze, "Norris Wright Cuney," (master's thesis, Rice University, Houston, Texas, 1965), 23-25; Unidentified newspaper clipping, Large Scrapbook, 89, 53, 47, Cuney Papers, Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina. The Cuney Papers at Bennett College consist of newspaper clippings collected by Cuney's daughter and biographer, Maud Hare Cuney, and letters. The letters mainly concern patronage requests made to Cuney by various Republicans during the last decades of the nineteenth century. As one of the ranking Republicans in Texas—as U.S. Custom's Inspector in the 1870s and U.S. Custom's Collector for Galveston—gave him enormous influence with Republican administrations in dispensing patronage for federal offices in the state.

\textsuperscript{42} Galveston Daily News, 7 March 1877, 4; the People's Party of 1877 in Galveston had little to do with the Populists Party of later years. This People's Party campaigned on a platform emphasizing municipal spending for commercial improvements and reforming the city government to eliminate waste and corruption.

\textsuperscript{43} Galveston Daily News, 31 July 1877, 3; 2 August 1877, 4. Biographers of Cuney often state that Cuney calmed the crowd and that his persuasiveness induced them to return to their homes. See Maud Cuney Hare, Norris Wright Cuney, Tribune of the Black People; and Hinze, "Norris Wright Cuney," 35-53.
Cunev was followed by Anthony Perryman, a black laborer, who insisted that $1.50 a day cheated laboring men.

Colored ... Irish, Dutch, Chinese, and all who earned for rich men, who when spring time came, dressed their families up fine and ... rode to the Hot Springs, where they had good times, leaving us here sweating. ... If we will stand up for our rights we will get them. ... United we stand, divided we fall.44

Finally, after several more speakers, including other black leaders who urged the crowd to go home and return to work the next day, the crowd broke up.

The next morning, after another night during which the police and armed white citizens patrolled the city, the authorities made sure that the strike would not resume. Special "police representatives" visited Freedmen's Hall and other places "usually frequented by the colored people." From the black people, they encountered they elicited promises that the strikers would refrain from further demonstrations of "a violent and revolutionary character" and would return to work as soon as they could find any. The police also urged African-Americans to cease parading in the streets or following "fanatical leaders."
Instead of such demonstrations, the police reported, black workers would henceforth depend upon the goodwill of the employers to pay a wage they can live on. The police patrolled the city throughout the day; wherever they encountered groups of black people they order them to disperse on pain of arrest. The intimidation worked, and no further protests by black workers occurred.\textsuperscript{45}

Two days later, however, a group of predominantly white day laborers engaged in repaving Stand Street walked off their jobs to demand $2 per day. The contractor, like the contractors who had hired the black workers, paid $1.50. The employer had raised the amount to $2 because of the strike, even though the workers had not left their jobs. He was making no money, he said, and turned the job over to another contractor, who refused to pay more than $1.50. The men met that night at the courthouse and discussed the situation. The next day, after negotiations involving the mayor, aldermen, and the new contractor, the men returned to work for $2 per day.\textsuperscript{46} Soon, the city

\textsuperscript{44} Galveston Daily News, 2 August 1877, 4.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 4 August 1877, 4.
council mandated wages of $2 per day for all day laborers doing work for the city, and it was expected that private employers would do the same.47

Galveston's most powerful waterfront union—the Screwmen's Benevolent Association—succeeded in excluding black men from cotton screwing. The screwmen, unlike many of the Germans who worked as longshoremen before and after the war, were of Irish and British birth and often shared the racial ideology of native-born, Anglo-American southerners. After emancipation, many of these white workers came to see the former slaves as economic and political competitors. The number of African-Americans in Galveston grew as former slaves came to town for recreation, for protection from the United States Army, and most importantly, for jobs. This led many white men to see the former slaves as competitors for waterfront work. Furthermore, the Army's orders to democratize municipal government gave white workers a voice in government for the first time. When black men also gained the right to vote and fielded their own candidates, white workers came to

47 Galveston Daily News, 3 September 1877; Galveston, City Council Minute Book, MS, Office of the City Clerk, Galveston, Texas, 2 September 1877, IV, 228.
view them as political competitors. Finally, the SBA was formed at least in part as a social organization. Even white men who might have accepted equality with black men at the workplace would not accept "social equality" and thus sought to exclude African-Americans from their association. The influence of the SBA led other waterfront workers to create all-white organizations and to exclude black men from the docks. Yet as the strikes of 1877 demonstrate, such efforts were not completely successful.

The strikes by the longshoremen and day laborers marked the first time that blacks and whites workers had cooperated against employers in Galveston. In both cases, the workers succeeded in part because of their cooperation across racial lines. For the black longshoremen, white expressions of sympathy at the outset of the strike extinguished rumors that they would take over the work on the Morgan wharf. In the case of the day laborers, the strike's initiation by black men certainly inspired the strike by white workers two days later. And the walk off by white workers pushed the city council, which was now considering the wage issue, to quickly decree higher wages throughout the city. Furthermore, the participation of
part-time white longshoremen in the strike of black workers reflected a willingness among at least some waterfront workers to consider black men as potential allies. The strikes thus demonstrated that the principle of white supremacy on the docks was not universally accepted by all workers. It also showed that employers were willing to play upon fears of racial competition to wring wage concessions from workers. In the 1880s, Norris Wright Cuney took advantage of this willingness and broke the white unions' monopoly on Galveston's waterfront work.
Chapter Five  
Norris Wright Cuney  
And African-American Workers  
on the Galveston Waterfront  

The strike by day laborers in 1877 revealed that vulnerability of the doctrine of white supremacy on the docks. The strike also brought greater public attention to Norris Wright Cuney. At the time of the strike and for days afterward, Cuney endured rebukes from many black Galvestonians just as he received praise from the white elite. A man proud of his political efforts to aid African-Americans—he had served as the U.S. Customs Inspector for Galveston, as a page in the state's Reconstruction legislature, and on the city's board of aldermen—Cuney may well have been stung by the criticism and thus determined to extend his efforts to helping black workers gain more work on Galveston's docks.48 During the 1880s, as this chapter explains, Cuney led the effort by black cotton jammers to obtain work in the lucrative cotton screwing trade and by black longshoremen on the wharves of the Mallory Steamship Line. Cuney's efforts, whether

48 Galveston Daily News, 4 September 1877, 4; Hare, Norris Wright Cuney, 16-41.
influenced by his experiences in 1877 or not, proved crucial in redefining the place of black workers on the waterfront and forcing white workers to redefine their notions of class solidarity and unionism.

Wright Cuney was born on 12 May 1846 on the Sunnyside plantation near Hempstead in Waller County. He was the fourth of eight children of Adeline Stuart, a slave on Sunnyside, and Philip Cuney, the owner of the plantation and its 105 slaves. Wright Cuney was the third generation in his family with such a parentage. Adeline Stuart and her mother, Hester Neale Stuart of Virginia, were also the offspring of slave-master unions. As a result, Wright and his brothers possessed relatively light skin, a characteristic that was frequently noted throughout his life by his race-conscious contemporaries. His mother was a house slave at Sunnyside, and, in addition to catering to the sexual appetites of her master, took care of the household. Her children, too, were assigned duties as house slaves, but Wright and his siblings seemed to have had a light workload and received an education that was denied all but a very few slaves in the South. Cuney was probably taught the basics of reading and writing and
learned at a young age to play the violin from one of the older Cuney slaves. In 1853, when Wright was seven, Philip Cuney moved the household to Houston and freed two of his slave sons and sent them off to the Wylie Street Public School for free blacks in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1859 Wright Cuney, then 13, gained his freedom and joined his brothers at school in the east. When Civil War broke out in 1861, Wright’s brothers left school. Joseph left with the 63rd Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers to fight for the Union. Wright remained at school until 1863, when at age seventeen he signed on as a crewman on the Gray Eagle, a steamship that plied the Mississippi between Cincinnati and New Orleans after the Union army seized control of the Mississippi. During his steamboating days Wright Cuney became acquainted with life on the waterfront.\textsuperscript{49}

After the war, Cuney returned to Texas, settling in Galveston. He chose the city, most likely, because he hoped his father’s pre-war business connections with leaders such as William Pitt Ballinger would prove valuable. And Galveston’s position as the state’s

\textsuperscript{49} Hare, Norris Wright Cuney, 8.
commercial capital and chief port certainly
provided abundant opportunity to an intelligent and
ambitious man with experience in the ways of the
waterfront. In 1867 Wright Cuneay persuaded all but two
members of his family, including his maternal grandmother,
to join him. Four years later Cuneay married Adelina
Dowdie, originally of Woodville, Mississippi, and began a
family. He eventually had two children (Maud and Loyd
Garrison Cuney). The Cuneay families all lived in the east
end of the city near the beach within three blocks of one
another.⁵⁰

In 1869, at the age of twenty-three, Wright Cuney made
his first foray into politics, receiving an appointment as
Sergeant-at-Arms to the Twelfth Texas Legislature. From
that time forward he was active politically on the local,
state, and national level.⁵¹ He ran unsuccessfully for
mayor in 1875 but befriended his white opponent, Robert L.
Fulton, and became Fulton's trusted advisor during his
twelve years as mayor, helping bring in the black vote that
kept Fulton in office. In 1882 he ran unsuccessfully for

⁵⁰ Ibid., 79-83.

⁵¹ Ibid., 127-142
the state legislature from District 66, which encompassed Galveston and surrounding counties. In March 1883 Cuney won election as alderman for Galveston’s 12th.\textsuperscript{52} He served two two-year terms. As alderman Cuney demonstrated a commitment to the city’s commercial development, voting for improving streets, contracting for a water system, working to amend the city charter, improving the city’s port facilities. Cuney and his allies, however, proved somewhat more conscientious than most when it came to managing the city’s finances; he constantly criticized the city leaders for their lack of thrift and for corruption. He also opposed efforts to silence the political voices of blacks and working-class whites, denouncing a charter amendment, favored by many in the business community, that would have replaced the single-member wards with an at-large election system that would have effectively disfranchised minority groups. \textsuperscript{53}

Respected even by his political enemies for his scruples and honesty, Cuney expected no less from his fellow aldermen; he repeatedly became embroiled in

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. 64-68; Hinze, \textit{Cuney}, Chapter III.

\textsuperscript{53} Hare, \textit{Norris Wright Cuney}, 64-69.
confrontations over corruption, abuses of power, and irresponsible spending. A confrontation with the city gas company, whose board comprised many of Galveston's prominent citizens, over what he considered excessive charges for lighting city buildings helped bring about his defeat as alderman in 1887. Despite his defeat, Cuney continued to serve the city as a commissioner of the waterworks project to bring drinking water to the island from the mainland.\(^{54}\)

Cuney was also very active in state and national politics, staunchly supporting the Republican party and becoming one the leading Republicans in the state and the South. He served as a delegate to the state and national conventions in 1876, 1880, and 1884. In 1886 he cemented his leadership of the state party when he was elected permanent state party chairman and national committeeman from Texas; as a committeeman he helped draft the national Republican platform, direct party strategy, and award patronage. With the Republican victory in 1888, Cuney emerged as the most powerful Republican politicians in Texas, and he was soon deluged with requests for federal

\(^{54}\) Hinze, Cuney, 43-47.
appointments in the state. In a day when the White House appointed post masters, customhouse officers, government printers, and all other local federal employees, the power of dispensing patronage was considerable. He himself was appointed to what was probably the most important position in Texas and one of the most important on the entire Gulf coast—collector of customs of Galveston.  

Cuney was not unopposed in the state party, however. He soon came under attack by a faction in the party that he labeled the lily-white Republicans. This faction comprised whites who believed that the party could grow only by reducing the influence of African-Americans such as Cuney. This "Negro domination," as they called it, cost Republicans the votes of whites in the state who would otherwise be sympathetic to the party's platform. Cuney maintained his control of the party until 1896, but in that year he alienated Mark Hanna, the national Republican kingmaker, by failing to support the presidential nomination of William McKinley. At the national convention that year Hanna turned away Cuney's delegation in favor of

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55 Hare, Norris Wright Cuney, 23-41.
a rival lily-white delegation from Texas. McKinley's victory gave the lily-whites control of patronage in the state and thus control of the party. Cunez loyally campaigned for the party during the fall before retiring to San Antonio, where he hoped the dry weather would help the lung problem that a lifetime of constant cigar smoking had caused. His health continued to fail. On 4 March 1898, in the company of his family, he uttered his last words — "My work is done" — and passed away. His remains were transported back to Galveston where, after a funeral attended by more than 2,000 people, they were laid to rest in Lakeview Cemetery.\textsuperscript{56}

In his public career Cunez struggled ceaselessly for African-American equality and against encroachments on their civil rights. In 1877, for example, he delivered a ringing speech at a rally of African-Americans protesting the leniency with which a theater owner was dealt after violating the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited discrimination in public places. The speech was reported throughout the state. Following a political conflict in Fort Bend County, in which white supremacists threw out

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 204-230.
black county office holders and threatened others
with lynching, Cuney courageously traveled to the county to
denounce the perpetrators and then helped the ousted black
officials find federal employment elsewhere. He encouraged
a federal lawsuit against the Fort Bend white supremacists
that resulted in fines of $10,000. In 1889 he vehemently
but unsuccessfully fought a state law requiring railroads
to provide segregated passenger cars. He also fought
against the establishment of the white primary; again,
unsuccessfully.  

Most importantly, however, Cuney struggled to carve
out a safe harbor in which African-Americans could maintain
their economic independence, integrity, and a measure of
equality during the furious segregationist assaults
launched against them at the turn of the century. This
safe harbor was on the Galveston waterfront. In 1879,
Galveston's black screwmen—perhaps at Cuney's
suggestion—had formed the Screwmen's Benevolent Association

57 Hare, Norris Wright Cuney, 23-41, 135-166. Ruth Allen, Chapters
in the History of Organized Labor in Texas, (Austin: University of
Texas Publication, No. 4143, 15 November 1941), 137. For more on the
troubles in Fort Bend County, commonly called the Jaybird-Woodpecker
War, see Leslie Anne Lovett, "The Jaybird-Woodpecker War:
Reconstruction and Redemption in Fort Bend County, Texas, 1869-1889"
(master's thesis, Rice University, Houston, Texas, 1994).
No. 2 (sometimes called the Cotton Jammers Association). In that year they and the black longshoremen's union applied for membership in the short-lived Galveston Trades Assembly. The all-white trade's assembly rejected the applications and soon thereafter dissolved, mainly because of the refusal of the white SBA to join.  

For three years the screwmen bided their time as Cuney worked to find employment for them. Many white businessmen in the late 1870s and early 1880s derided the "exorbitant" costs of cotton screwing. White waterfront organizations were denounced as "composed of the scum and irresponsible working class." The SBA, however, shared responsibility for maintaining the white monopoly on screwing that kept wages and costs high by a monopoly in the stevedoring, lightering, and ship brokering business. During the late 1870s four firms—Irvine & Beissner; Moller; Vaughan; and Adoe and Lobit—joined together to set rates for loading and unloading tramp steamers that called at Galveston. The SBA and the white Longshoremen's Benevolent Association

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59 Galveston Daily News, 24 January 1879, 4; SBA Minutes, 11 April 1884, I, 517-518.
supported the monopoly and its wage scale; in return the unions acted as virtual hiring halls for the stevedores and brokers. In 1881 this monopoly was successfully broken by Cotton Exchange member Samson Heidenheimer, who purchased his own lighters and hired his own men to work the docks and on ships lying outside the harbor. Once the monopoly was broken, the door opened for other firms to enter the business. It also signaled an opportunity for SBA No. 2 to attempt to assert the rights of black workers to jobs on the waterfront.  

On 27 November 1882 stevedore Gus Lewis put members of SBA No. 2 to work unloading a vessel. The white SBA called a special meeting that evening and resolved "that the members of this Assn. observe and take a General Holiday Nov. 28 and that all members will observe the same for a good reason." The next day a delegation of screwmen visited the African-American workers, telling them to cease work immediately, which the black men did. According to Lewis, the SBA approached him and demanded that he stop using black workers and that he retire from the stevedoring

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60 Galveston Daily News, 4 April 1883, 4.

business. Lewis claimed that he had not been in the business long and that he had recently purchased $2,500 worth of tools for screwing but would be willing to quit stevedoring if the SBA bought him out. They ultimately did not buy him out, but Lewis did cease operating as a stevedore. He complained that he had hired the African-American workers because he could not find enough white labor and that the SBA's demands were unreasonable. Although the strike occurred at the end of the season, several ships along the docks and anchored outside the bars lay empty and awaiting loading, "under expense," during the "holiday." The SBA resumed work on 1 December and at a special meeting that night discussed the "ways and means of getting more gangs" to meet the demand so as to prevent stevedores from hiring African-American's and other non-members. The membership came to no resolution on the matter, a result that allowed black men to enter the profession the next year. By denying African-Americans a place on the docks as workers, the white SBA had forsaken

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62 Directory For the City of Galveston for 1887, 95.
63 Galveston Daily News, 30 November 1882, 4; SBA, Minutes, 27 November 1882, I, 446.
class solidarity and gave employers a powerful weapon in conflicts with labor.

Denied access to the waterfront jobs by white workers, black laborers sought to find work on the wharves by whatever means necessary. On 16 March 1883 Cuney, now president of SBA No. 2, sent a letter to William Moody, president of the Galveston Cotton Exchange, seeking work for his cotton jammers. He explained that he had the tools—he had purchased $2,500 worth of tools for jamming cotton—and the men—members of the Screwmen’s Benevolent Association No. 2. Cuney argued that Galveston’s commerce suffered from the shortage of skilled labor to load cotton into the ships. He guaranteed satisfaction for work performed and asked Moody and the exchange to extend him aid in breaking the hold of the white unions. As one would expect of a businessman always seeking to cut costs, Moody replied that the Exchange was delighted at the turn of events and had unanimously resolved that the increased business at the port demanded a larger labor force. The Exchange members thus "heartily" welcomed the association and wished them success. On 2 April 1883 Cuney’s men began their first job, jamming cotton into the hold of the Albion
on the Lufkin Wharf, located at the foot of 25th Street just west of the Mallory wharf.  

The white screwmen immediately walked off the job. The next day representatives of the white SBA, the black SBA No. 2, and the Cotton Exchange met. John Cotter, president of the SBA, refused to make any statement, having no authority from the membership to negotiate or even discuss the matter. Cuney stated that he had gone into the stevedoring business to make an honest living and to provide income for his people. He asked for no special consideration, only the right to earn "a fair day's pay for a fair day's labor." Some members objected to the Cotton Exchange becoming involved, but ultimately the members voted to appoint a committee to study the matter.  

The SBA appointed a committee to meet with the Cotton Exchange committee. The SBA representatives stated that the labor shortages that had occurred during the cotton season just concluding had been an anomaly. The bumper crop of cotton had been unexpected, and all southern ports had reported shortages of men. They stated that it was not

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64 Galveston Daily News, 16 March 1883, 2; 3 April 1883, 4.

65 Ibid., 4 April 1883, 4.
necessary to hire non-SBA men (i.e., black screwmen), especially now when the season was ending, and that to do so would leave a substantial number of SBA men without work. The Cotton Exchange committee reported their findings to the membership as a whole and proposed resolutions calling the SBA demands unfair—"they were simply unwilling to compete with colored labor." The Exchange then appropriated $10,000 "for the protection of our commerce." What the "protection of our commerce" meant or what the $10,000 was for, the resolution did not say. Presumably, it was to buy cotton jackscrews and other tools and to hire non-union screwmen if the SBA continued its strike into the busy season.66

The SBA responded to the Exchange's resolution with vows to continue to oppose the hiring of black screwmen. They noted that the wages they received were fair considering that they had to make enough to live on for a year in six-month's time. Furthermore, they resolved that since "unskilled workmen have usurped the places of the members of this association," the SBA would appropriate

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66 Ibid., 5 April 1883, 2
$5,000 to pay strike benefits to any member hurt by the work stoppage.\(^{67}\)

The strike dragged on through the summer. Since it was the slow time of year, the SBA No. 2 easily handled all cotton screwing in the port. The white screwmen placed notices in newspapers in New Orleans, Mobile, Charleston, Norfolk, and Pensacola telling screwmen in those cities of the strike and warning them against recruiters seeking strikebreakers. The association also appointed a committee to try to recruit non-union waterfront workers into the SBA and had some success.\(^{68}\) The SBA debated throughout the idle season how best to deal with situation—some urged the association to purchase tools and bid on ships themselves, thus bypassing brokers and stevedores. Others urged the association to return to work but only for stevedores who refused to hire African-American screwmen. In any case, the members refused work throughout the summer.

Eventually, however, with the arrival of August and the beginnings of the cotton season, the strike came to a

\(^{67}\) SBA Minutes, 4 April 1883, I, 459; Galveston Daily News, 5 April 1883, 4.

\(^{68}\) SBA Minutes, 13 April 1883, I 461; SBA Minutes 2 May 1883, I 465; 11 May 1883, I, 467; 8 June 1883, I, 472; 26 October 1883, I, 498; 11 May 1883, I, 466.
conclusion. The end came with the arrival of the steamer *Timsah* in the outer roads of the harbor on 27 August 1883. The captain of the ship requested bids for loading the vessel from the city's stevedores. C. C. Sweeney & Co., owned by a former member of the SBA, won the bidding and immediately offered the ship—and all future work for him—to the white screwmen. After some heated discussion, the SBA membership narrowly voted to accept the offer and return to work. The strike had been defeated, and black screwmen continued to work on the wharves. The SBA tried during the remainder of the 1880s to limit the opportunities for its rivals by ensuring an adequate supply of white screwmen. To this end the association allowed gang foremen to hire one non-union man if all SBA members were employed. It also inaugurated an apprenticeship system in 1885 to bring non-union workers under its purview.\(^69\) The strike had given black men access to the most lucrative jobs on the waterfront. After twelve years of grudgingly accepting the presence of black screwmen, the SBA in 1895 finally entered an official agreement with the SBA No. 2 to share work and adhere to a standard wage

\(^{69}\) SBA Minutes, 24 September 1886, I, 622; 14 August 1885, I, 561.
scale. The strike ultimately resulted in reduced wages for both black and white screwmen, as the Cotton Exchange had of course foreseen. The competition for work forced wages down from $6.20 per day to $5 per day by 1885. Employers successfully took advantage of the racial exclusivism of the white waterfront workers to maintain a tractable workforce. Once the black screwmen gained a foothold on the wharves, white screwmen recognized the rights of black men to work. They also recognized that their best interests were served by allying with the black screwmen and denying employers the wedge of race. Thus they entered work-sharing and wage-scale agreements. As in the antebellum period, repression by the elite, as well as resistance by African-Americans, had forced white laborers to redefine their notions of "skilled worker" and "unionist."

Two years after the screwmen succeeded in obtaining work on the docks, black longshoremen took advantage of a strike by white waterfront workers to gain access to more regular jobs on the Mallory wharf. The strike lasted from

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1885 through early 1886 and evolved into a general strike by 1,500 to 2,000 Galveston members of the Knights of Labor. An agreement to share work between white and black longshoremen on the Mallory line ended the general strike, but when the white longshoremen complained that the Mallory agent had refused to comply with the agreement, a boycott by the Knights was declared throughout the state. The failure of the boycott, coming at the same time as the Knights' feud with Jay Gould, contributed to the organization's decline. Although some white longshoremen regained work on the Mallory line after the end of the boycott, for the most part the Mallory wharf became the sole province of black longshoremen.

The strike began on Saturday, 10 October 1885. Because of the economic downturn of the early 1880s, the non-union white longshoremen who worked for the Mallory New York and Texas Steamship Company had in the previous May of 1885 accepted a pay cut—from 40 cents per hour for day work and 60 cents per hour for night work and Sundays (overtime, essentially) to 40 cents per hour for all work. The agent for the Mallory line, J. N. Sawyer, agreed that when the cotton season began in September, he would restore the old
scale. After September had come and gone and Sawyer failed to restore wages, the men refused to unload the steamer Comal and demanded a return to the old wages. Sawyer was at the time out of town, and in his stead his assistants offered the men 50 cents for all work. The men then went back to work on the understanding that the new scale was temporary pending approval by Sawyer. When Sawyer returned on Thursday, he refused to honor the agreement. Instead, he offered the men the old scale. The longshoremen refused, figuring that the company would hire more men rather than pay them overtime. As these negotiations were under way, the Mallory steamer State of Texas arrived from New York. The longshoremen declined to unload it. Black longshoremen working on the Morgan wharf refused offers to take the work, citing satisfaction with a recent restoration of the wage scale on that wharf, as did white workers on other wharves in the city.\footnote{Galveston Daily News, 17 October 1885, 4.}

The next day, however, the white longshoremen told Agent Sawyer that they would return to work for the previous scale: 40 cents per hour for day work, 60 cents for night work. Sawyer, however, refused. By the time of
the offer, he had contacted Cuney and asked him to supply longshoremen for the line. Cuney agreed to do so on condition that the men would be hired permanently—not just as temporary strikebreakers—and that in the future no preference would be given to white men but to all equally. In other words, Cuney did not insist on work exclusively for black workers. Sawyer readily agreed, and that afternoon 120 or so black men and nine white men—none union members—were at work unloading the State of Texas. The Mallory line paid them the old wage scale of 40 cents for day work and 50 cents for overtime—ten cents less for overtime than the line had offered the white workers but the same wage paid to black workers by the Morgan line. That night, the white strikers—hitherto a non-unionized group of men—met and voted to join the Knights of Labor.

Two weeks later, after the Mallory line rebuffed several attempts at negotiations, the Knights of Labor ordered a general strike. Between 1,500 and 2,000 black and white laborers in Galveston, including railroad workers, cotton pressmen, longshoremen, and screwmen, walked off their jobs. P. H. Golden, chairmen of the

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73 Ibid., 18 October 1885, 4.
Knights' executive board in Galveston, stated that the strike was aimed at the Mallory line not because of its hiring of black longshoremen but because the line was "discriminating against this order by discharging and refusing to allow" Knights to work. The Knights demanded that the Mallory line rehire the white workers and afford equal representation upon the wharf to union as well as non-union men. In other words, the Knights, like Cuneo, demanded that in the future no preference should be given to black men but to all equally. Sawyer, however, recognized the value of maintaining a mostly racially exclusive workforce and refused. He said that though he knew that the black strikebreakers and the white strikers had agreed to share labor in the future, he was under a moral obligation to keep the recently hired black longshoremen employed as long as there was work and they performed it well.  

That night, the Knights of Labor met again and declared the strike to be general throughout the state and also imposed a statewide boycott of Galveston freight. The Knights of Labor were relatively new to Texas. The first

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74 Ibid., 4 November 1885, 8; New York Times, 5 November 1885, 4.
local was formed in 1882. In 1885 District Assembly 78 was chartered; its area was defined as the State of Texas. The first state meeting of the Texas Knights of Labor occurred in Dallas on 1 September 1885 with 104 delegates—8 of whom were black men—in attendance. The group elected Galveston's Patrick Golden as its first Master Workman (president). It has been estimated that membership in the Knights in Texas was between seven thousand and eight thousand men. Newspaper reports claimed that as many as thirty thousand men belonged to the organization, but that probably included farmers who belonged to farm groups affiliated with the Knights. Regardless of the exact numbers, the threat of a statewide strike, coming on the heels of the Knights victory over Jay Gould in the spring, excited much comment in the state's press.\textsuperscript{75}

Trade and transportation in the city came to a standstill. The trains of the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe and the Missouri Pacific–Galveston's two main railroads—remained motionless. The five-hundred men employed by the city's two dozen cotton presses stayed at home. The docks were deserted. In Houston, Temple, Fort Worth, and other cities industry—particularly transportation industries—also ground to a halt. During the next week, papers across Texas and the nation decried the "pirating" of the public highways by the Knights. The Mallory line, however, refused to negotiate.  

On Monday, 8 November, the general strike finally came to a conclusion. A committee of citizens met with the Knights' executive committee and agreed to arbitrate the differences between the union and the Mallory line in exchange for a lifting of the general strike and boycott against all Galveston freight. The Knights agreed to focus

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Notes:

76 *Galveston Daily News*, 5 November 1885, 8; 6, 7, 9 November 1885, 8; *New York Times*, 4 November 1885, 4; 5 November 1885, 4; 6 November 1885, 5; 7 November 1885, 1; 8 November 1885, 1; 9 November 1885, 5; 10 November 1885, 1; 11 November 1885, 1; 13 November 1885, 1. In New York, headquarters of the Mallory line and site of a recent longshoremen's strike, papers covered the strike extensively. See Baughman, *Mallory's of Mystic*, 167-168.
the boycott on Mallory freight and cotton exclusively, pending the outcome of the arbitration. If the Mallory line refused to arbitrate or rejected the findings of the arbitration committee, the general strike and boycott would be renewed. This essentially drew the business segment of the city into the struggle on the side of the union. The main factor that forced the Knights to agree to arbitration was the threat of federal intervention. The day before calling off the strike, the United States District Attorney for Texas offered his offices to protect private property and the free movement of goods in Galveston and the state. Once the Knights agreed to arbitration, however, the matter was dropped. 77

Agent Sawyer met with representatives of the Knights (which included two African-American men who served on the executive committee) and the arbitration committee the next day. Negotiations continued for the next several days, until on 10 November 1885 Sawyer agreed that the Mallory line would re-hire former employees who had gone out on strike when openings occurred. In return, the Knights called off the strike and boycott of the Mallory line. The

77 Galveston Daily News, 10 November 1885, 8; New York Times, 10 November 1885.
agreement was met with suspicion by Cuney, who argued that if the principle of job sharing was to prevail on the Mallory dock, it should prevail everywhere that black workers were barred such as in the cotton presses of the city. His objections were ignored. The strike ended, and with the resumption of trade, the black longshoremen went back to work on the Mallory wharf. The displaced white workers found other jobs on the docks but continued to apply for work with the Mallory line. 78 Matters did not end there, however.

In January 1886 Patrick Golden again ordered a boycott by the Knights of Mallory freight. The white longshoremen complained that the Mallory line had refused to hire any of the former workers and that other non-union men had been hired. Thus Sawyer had violated the agreement of the previous November. Sawyer denied the allegation, saying that the letter of the agreement had been adhered to: no openings for longshoremen had materialized and thus none of the old workers had been hired. He noted that the agreement did not require him to fire any of his current workforce in order to make room for the Knights and that he

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78 Ibid., 11 November 1885, 8; 12 November 1885, 4; New York Times, 11 November 1885, 1.
was morally restrained from doing so had he been so inclined. Golden agreed with the white longshoremen and called the Knights into action once again.\textsuperscript{79}

The boycott of early 1886, however, failed utterly. The order for the boycott, apparently, had been issued prematurely by someone in the Galveston office while Golden was out of town. There was, therefore, little communication among the state chapters, and even in Galveston no one seemed to have known of the boycott until reading of it in the papers. Consequently, for days after the notice of the boycott appeared, work continued in all industries in the city. Only one or two Galveston merchants agreed to boycott the Mallory line, and even workers seemed reluctant to participate. For example, except for a few isolated cases, workers at the cotton presses continued to press cotton into bales even when they knew that the cotton was bound for Mallory ships. Those who did comply were fired and others hired in their places; police protected the replacements. The lack of enthusiasm, even among its own working members, and the determined response of employers foreshadowed the failure of the

\textsuperscript{79} Galveston Daily News, 28 January 1886, 8; New York Times, 29 January 1886, 1.
Knights' efforts in the coming weeks and, perhaps, their ultimate demise.80

Although few workers in Galveston participated in the boycott, workers throughout the state were becoming involved in the Great Southwest Strike against Jay Gould's Texas Pacific Railroad, from which the Knights had wrung concessions the previous year. The initial cause of the strike was the firing of a Texas Pacific foreman in Marshall, Texas. When the railroad's agents refused to reinstate the man, a general strike spread along the railroad throughout the southwest. Violence erupted along the lines and public opinion began to turn against the workers as the strike dragged on. Eventually, Gould's use of strikebreakers protected by Pinkerton men, Texas Rangers, and the state militia broke the back of the strike. Membership in the Knights plummeted, and the organization never recovered. By the mid-1890s only a few local assemblies remained active in Texas. The New York Evening Post traced the cause of the Great Southwest Strike to the Mallory boycott, declaring that the success of the

80 Galveston Daily News, 5 February 1886, 8; 6 February 1886, 8; 7 February 1886, 8; 4 March 1886, 4; 6 March 1886, 1; New York Times, 6 March 1886, 5; 29 March 1886, 1; 29 April 1886, 1.
general strike of 1885 and the resumption of a
general boycott in 1886 planted a rebellious sentiment in
the minds of workers. Consequently, they were eager to
strike over the least offense. This view overly simplifies
the causes of the Great Southwest Strike and certainly
ignores Gould's own efforts to destroy the union, yet the
Mallory troubles in 1886 did result in a number of rail
workers hindering railroad traffic throughout Texas before
the Southwest Strike began. And certainly in the public
mind and the press, the general boycott against Mallory
freight became indistinguishable with the strike against
Gould's Texas Pacific.81

The strike against the Gould railroad officially ended
on 29 March 1886. With that collapse, the Mallory boycott,
though still technically in place, also came to an end.
The Knights could not succeed with state authorities
protecting strikebreakers throughout the state and with
public opinion turning against the strikers because of
widespread violence. In Galveston, workers' failure to

81 New York Evening Post, 20 March 1886, 1. Also see Ruth Allen,
The Great Southwest Strike (Austin: University of Texas, 1942) Chapter
1; Jeremy Brecher, Strike! (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972),
34-36; Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States Volume
2, 50-53, 80-86.
unanimously enforce the boycott contributed to its failure. Several railroad and cotton press workers who did attempt to boycott Mallory goods were fired or ignored by their fellow workers, for example, thus making compliance with the boycott piecemeal and inconsistent. By the end of March, the dispute over labor on the Mallory wharf had been unilaterally resolved. The Mallory line continued to employ only non-union, mostly black longshoremen, and in the early 1890s cut their wages from 40 cents per hour for day work and 50 cents for nights and Sundays to 30 cents per hour for day work and 40 cents for overtime. The longshoremen made no protest.\textsuperscript{82}

The defeat of the Knights and the white longshoremen signaled a turn in labor relations in Galveston. Under Wright Cuney’s leadership, African-Americans had successfully broken the white Screwmen's Benevolent Association’s monopoly on cotton screwing jobs. By rejecting black workers as potential allies and equals on the job, white workers almost guaranteed that African-Americans would seize the opportunity offered by employers to break the white stranglehold on dock work in Galveston.

\footnote{\textit{Galveston Daily News}, 31 August 1898, 10.}
And though African-Americans had secured employment on the docks, employers quickly took advantage of black workers' fears of being replaced by whites and cut wages. Thus during the next few years white and black waterfront groups forged an uneasy alliance, founding a new Labor Council that included the black and white screwmen and longshoremen's unions. In 1895 black and white screwmen agreed to share work in the port and agreed to a uniform scale of wages. Galveston's laborers seemed to have learned from the strikes of the 1880s that competition between black and white workers gave employers an insurmountable advantage in disputes over wages and working conditions. The lessons about interracial cooperation were driven home in 1898.

Chapter Six
The Strike of 1898

In late August 1898, hundreds of African-American longshoremen-members of the recently formed Colored Labor Protective Association-swarmed the Mallory wharf in Galveston to prevent the unloading of the steamship Colorado by non-union, black workers imported from Houston. The union men vowed not to allow any Mallory ship to unload until the Mallory's raised wages and agreed not to hire seasonal workers on their wharf. During the next two weeks confrontations between the union men and the shipping company, a citizen's militia, local police, state troopers, and the replacement workers twice erupted into violence, leaving three unionists dead and at least a half-dozen injured. The arrest of many of the strikers on charges of charges of conspiracy and murder eventually broke the strike and led to the union's defeat. Nevertheless, the strike of 1898 confirmed the commitment of black and white unionists to mutual support in the face of efforts by employers and Galveston's business elite to use race as a wedge to break up working class solidarity. Despite the ultimate defeat of the Colored Labor Protective
Association, the confrontation laid the foundation for further biracial cooperation and demonstrated that even as segregation was becoming codified into law throughout the South, biracial cooperation was a possibility.

The 1898 strike of African-American longshoremen against the Mallory New York and Texas Steamship Company resulted from the continued wage disparity between black and white longshoremen, cutthroat competition among shippers, and the use of non-union workers by the Mallory and other lines during the busiest part of the year. By 1898 coastwise shippers such as the Mallory line employed mostly black longshoremen, though some whites worked on the wharf as well.\textsuperscript{84} These men earned 30 cents per hour for day work and 40 cents per hour for night work in Galveston. On the other hand, international shippers, called deep-sea lines or blue water lines, hired mostly white longshoremen. These men earned 40 cents per hour for day work and 60 cents for night work. Shipping companies rationalized the disparity as a result of the kinds of cargo coastwise and deep-sea ships carried. Coastwise cargo generally consisted of specialty produce and manufactured goods that,

\textsuperscript{84} Galveston Daily News, 31 August 1898, 10.
according to the shipping lines, required more time and effort to unload than did the bulk goods such as cotton, cotton seed, cement, etc., that constituted the bulk of international cargo. Consequently, shippers insisted that it cost less per ton to unload international ships than it did coastwise ships.

Furthermore, shippers argued that international steamers visited Galveston less regularly than did domestic lines, and thus coastwise longshoremen enjoyed more reliable employment than did their higher-paid counterparts. The minimum hours required to load and unload one of its steamers was thirty-six hours for a crew of around 150 men. The maximum was fifty hours per week. During the busy season, when two ships called at Galveston per week, longshoremen could expect a minimum of sixty hours a week and a maximum of ninety.\(^85\) Thus, argued James B. Dennison, Mallory's Galveston agent, workers could earn a steady salary throughout the year rather than only in the busy cotton season. These arguments had some merit but ignored the fact that a decade before, white longshoremen earned 50 cents for day work and 60 cents for night work on

\(^{85}\) Ibid.
the Mallory and Morgan lines. Only after the 1885 strike did the shipping firms lower wages and develop the rationale for paying lower wages for coastwise longshoremen. Additionally, the Mallory ships carried cotton on the return voyage to New York. Furthermore, by 1898, domestic shipping companies such as the Mallory line hired their longshoremen as employees of the firm rather than as contract laborers. International lines, on the other hand, continued to contract for labor through stevedores. Although some stevedores hired black longshoremen, for the most part contract work was reserved for whites. Consequently, in the last decade of the century, black longshoremen had come to outnumber white longshoremen on the Galveston waterfront. Yet they continued to be paid less than white men for essentially the same work. The strike of 1898 was an attempt to redress that imbalance. 86

The Mallory line, which had been the pre-eminent shipper in Galveston since the Galveston Wharf Company began favoring it over the Morgan line in the 1870s, faced stiff competition in the late 1890s. By 1883, the Southern

86 Ibid.
Pacific Transportation Company—founded in California by Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Leland Stanford, and Charles Crocker—had acquired Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Railroad and Steamship Company. With the acquisition, the Southern Pacific stretched from the Pacific Ocean to Galveston, New Orleans, and the Gulf. By 1898 the Southern Pacific had purchased almost 4,000 feet of waterfront on Galveston's undeveloped western end for the construction of a huge rail and wharf facility would be half as large as the existing port. In addition to the potential threat of the Southern Pacific, the Mallory line also faced direct competition from the Lone Star Line out of New York, which had begun service between New York and Galveston in January 1898. Furthermore, the number and tonnage of ships calling at Galveston doubled from 1896 to 1897 with completion of the federal dredging project to deepen the harbor's channel to the Gulf, yet the Mallory line continued to operate only one steamer per week during the summer and early fall and two ships per week during the peak of the cotton season despite its favored status on the docks. As a consequence of this increased competition,

87 Baughman, Morgan, 193-196.
Mallory dropped their shipping rates by nearly one-third on a wide variety of commodities during the 1890s. Freight charges for cotton, for example, fell from a high of $4.50 per hundred pounds in the late 1880s to $1.75 per hundred pounds in 1898.\textsuperscript{88} Although faster and bigger ships offset this price decrease somewhat, the line soon sought ways to cut costs. Consequently for the black longshoremen who had replaced white strikers on the Mallory wharf in 1885, wages fell in early 1892 or 1893 from 40 cents per hour for day work and 50 cents per hour for night work to 30 cents and 40 cents. As the Spanish-American War concluded in the summer of 1898 and the Mallory resumed its service to Galveston after a four-month hiatus, African-Americans waterfront workers in Galveston vowed to force the company to re-institute the higher wages.\textsuperscript{89}

The strike began with the arrival of the Colorado, one of the regular steamers in the Mallory line, on Tuesday, 30 August 1898. The ship docked at Pier 24, commonly known as the Mallory wharf. In 1898 Galveston's wharves were separated from the city by several lines of railroad track.

\textsuperscript{88} Galveston Daily News, 31 August 1898, 10.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
The Mallory pier itself extended from 23rd to 25th Streets in a sort of crescent. A railroad spur extended onto the wharf. On the either side of the spur, two long barrack-like sheds provided temporary warehouse space for incoming or outgoing cargo. These sheds served as the focal point of the confrontation in the days to come. Access to the wharf was from Avenue A, which ran roughly east to west along the waterfront, and from 24th Street, which ended directly across Avenue A and the railroad tracks from the pier.90

African-American members of the Colored Labor Protective Association, formed the previous month, greeted the Colorado when it arrived at 1 p.m., forming a cordon that blocked all access to the wharf-side shed. The union men refused to go to work unloading the Colorado, and when a few non-union longshoremen who had worked on the Mallory wharf before the war attempted to go to work, the union men pushed them back and threatened them with billets of wood. The strikers insisted that only union men would work on the Mallory wharf henceforth and that they would be paid 40 cents for day work and 50 cents for night work. These

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wages, union leaders insisted, were comparable to what white workers were being paid on other wharves. "We are the men who will unload that ship, and we will get union wages for it," declared a man to the Galveston Daily News. 91

Two of the prominent leaders of the strikers were the brothers Harvey and George Patrick. Harvey Patrick was the brother-in-law of the late Wright Cuney, having married Cuney's wife's sister. He worked at Galveston's post office and was a longtime resident of Galveston who had worked for the Mallory line in the early 1890s. He had been treasurer of the Colored Longshoremen's Association, No. 1, which was founded in 1881 but had since become inactive. He was now president of the Colored Laborers' Protective Union, having been instrumental in its formation. He had in fact discussed founding the union with Cuney twelve years before. Cuney had talked him out of it, saying it would damage Cuney politically with politically conservative white Republicans. Patrick, out of respect for his prominent relative, did not act. 92

91 Galveston Daily News, 31 August 1898, 10; 5 September 1898, 8.
92 Ibid., 25 September 1898, 5.
After Cuney's death in 1898, however, Patrick resurrected the idea and started the union as a benevolent association for all of Galveston's black workers. After a few months, it became apparent to Patrick that since so many men earned their living on the waterfront, wages there should be increased. The targeting of the Mallory line was pure coincidence—it was the first line employing mostly black workers to resume shipping after the Spanish-American War. Harvey Patrick's brother, George Patrick, was a screwman and member of Screwmen's Benevolent Society No. 2, the black screwmen's union. George Patrick served on the Colored Labor Union's executive committee and also served as a leader of the strikers.

After an hour or so of confrontation at the foot of the Mallory wharf, Harvey Patrick mounted a barrel and addressed the crowd. He told the men that he was talking to every man white or black who had a family to support.

We are not farmers; we cannot get out and raise that on which we have to subsist, it requires spot cash. ... The Mallory line steamer is here offering reduced wages upon which we cannot live. Now the Mallory line is charging the merchants of

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93 Ibid., 5 September 1898, 8.
94 Ibid., 25 September 1898, 5.
this town 85 cents per hundred for freight, and they refuse to pay us 40 cents an hour for unloading that freight. They charge the merchants 45 cents a hundred on sugar, and we pay $1 for eighteen pounds of sugar yet they will not pay us living wages. We have not come here to prevent the Mallory line from working but to ask them to pay us what we pay them through our merchants. ... We simply ask them for liberal wages upon which a laborer can subsist. We mean to say that scab labor from the country, which comes here for three or four months every year after making a cotton crop to gobble our work and make a stake for Christmas, should not be employed at reduced wages. We stay here all the year round. We simply ask the co-operation of our white brethren.  

Low wages represented more than a means of making a living, however. Like many workers in nineteenth-century America, low wages threatened idealized notions of masculinity. Screwmen—both white and black—and other skilled workers earned enough money to support their families. Their wives did not have to work outside the home, though many did take in sewing, sold vegetables at the city market, or engaged in other household production.

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95 Ibid.

96 The scholarship on gender identity among workers has blossomed in recent years. A good introduction to the literature can be found in Ava Baron, ed., Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

97 Examples of wives of screwmen who worked outside the home can be found by tracing names found in the IILA Roll Book for the year 1900 in the Manuscript Returns of the Twelfth Census of the United States,
Black longshoremen, however, could not support their families on wages of 30 cents per hour. Most of their wives and even their children thus had little choice but to work as domestic servants, washerwomen (who had their own AFL-affiliated union) and cooks. Black longshoremen fighting for higher wages not only sought to improve their standard of living but to preserve their manhood. As Harvey Patrick stated, just before violence erupted on the wharves,

We are fighting for our home. We want a larger scale of wages so we can take our women from the washtubs and cook kitchens. We want more money for our work so we can educate and save our daughters from prostitution. The white man will not respect you as long as you live as we are compelled to do.\textsuperscript{98}

Living in houses that were not their own, watching their women go to work for others, unable to educate their children, black longshoremen viewed themselves as failing to live up to the prevailing masculine ideal of provider and protector. Such failure, they believed, precluded acceptance and respect from the white community. Thus at

\textsuperscript{98} Galveston Daily News, 1 September 1898, 1.

Galveston County, Population Schedule, 1900 (microfilm, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas)
the end of the century, when the political and legal status of black men was coming under attack throughout the South, the labor conflict on the Mallory wharf in Galveston resonated with notions of gender as well as race and class.

At the time of the strike it was rumored that the white and black screwmen's unions had encouraged if not initiated the strike in order to raise wages. According to the rumors, the screwmen, who occasionally took work as longshoremen when cotton screwing was slow, wanted to see wages increased in that occupation. A spokesman for the black screwmen, who had stopped working the Mallory wharf after the line cut wages in 1893, denied the involvement of SBA No. 2. More likely was the speculation in the *Galveston Daily News* that the white and black longshoremen's unions sought higher wages on the Mallory line to prevent other shipping firms and wharf agents from reducing their pay scale to match that paid to Mallory's non-union workers. None of the white or black unions, however, admitted any involvement in initiating the strike
except to state that they thought the workers' demands were just.\textsuperscript{99}

The Mallorys and their agent, James B. Dennison, considered longshoring to be an unskilled job that could be filled by any number of men. In Galveston, however, labor shortages—which often occurred even when sharecroppers from the countryside came to the city during peak season to find work—kept wages higher than in other ports served by the Mallory line.\textsuperscript{100} In New York, for example, the large pool of available labor suppressed wages, and longshoremen there earned only 25 cents per hour for day work. Dennison absolutely refused to consider raising the wage scale and insisted on the right to work whomever he liked on the Mallory ships. He claimed that the "old men" who had worked on the wharf before the suspension of shipping due to the war wanted to return to work and were not involved in the strike. He called upon the mayor to provide police protection for workers, and about the middle of the

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} For more on the employment of men from rural areas on the waterfront, see "'Men of the Lumber Camps Come to Town': New York Longshoremen in the Strike of 1907" in Calvin Winslow, ed., \textit{Waterfront Workers: New Perspectives on Race and Class} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press): 62-96.
afternoon a squad of policemen arrived on the dock to disperse the crowd. The police drove the crowd back onto 24th Street, where the men remained until late afternoon, fearful that if they left someone would begin unloading the Colorado. Dennison, however, expressed his dissatisfaction with the police effort, claiming that the crowd continued to intimidate and prevent potential workers from coming onto the wharf. The agent informed Deputy Chief of Police August Amundsen that he would not attempt to have the ship unloaded until the next morning and demanded that the police prevent a crowd from forming the next day. Amundsen told the strikers that their assembly was an unlawful one and that they would be arrested if they gathered on the dock again in the morning. Amundsen's words had the desired effect, and the men dispersed and returned to their homes.\(^{101}\)

Despite the police warnings, the crowd of strikers returned early on Wednesday morning. Around 7 A.M. Sergeant Paul Delaya, heading a squad of eleven policemen, told Harvey Patrick that the men violated the laws by congregating on the "public highways" and they must

\(^{101}\) *Galveston Daily News*, 1 September 1898, 1.
disperse. Patrick spoke to the strikers, urging them to disperse but as individuals to

    go to the appointed stations and see that no scabs work. But you must not use violence. ... We want a larger scale of wages so we can take our women from the washtubs and the cook kitchens. We want more money for our work so we can educate and save our daughters from prostitution. The white man will not respect you as long as you live as we are compelled to do.\textsuperscript{102}

With the police pushing them along, the men scattered along Avenue A for several blocks, gathered in small knots of three or four.

At this point, Galveston Mayor Ashley Wilson Fly, a surgeon elected to office on a platform of cleaning up municipal corruption, arrived on the scene and, after mounting a dray, told the strikers that they must respect private property and allow to pass any man who wished to work. He also blamed the confrontation on "trifling white men, too indolent to work ... has caused all this trouble among you colored people for political reasons, and I am sorry your intelligence has not enabled you to discover its full meaning." The cryptic reference to white instigators went unexplained. The men again dispersed into small

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 1 September 1898, 1-2.
groups along Avenue A. In the meantime, the thirty men who made up the crew of the Colorado slowly unloaded the ship's cargo. No one from the city moved to help them. About 3:30 p.m., however, a switch engine pulling one train car arrived on the dock carrying about thirty-five African-American strikebreakers from Houston. The Houston men, called Mudcats by the strikers, disembarked and filed into the sheds, into which the Colorado's cargo was to be unloaded. When they realized who the men were, the strikers surged across the railroad tracks onto the wharf and tried to enter the sheds containing the Mudcats in order to persuade them to join the strike. Mayor Fly, flanked by about twenty policemen, faced the strikers on a raised platform along the city-side shed. He told the men to get off the wharf and that failure to do so would result in the arrest of the strike leaders.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Patrick brothers at this point came to the edge of the platform and asked the mayor if he would receive a committee of strikers to discuss the situation. Fly later stated that he refused the proposition, again told the men to leave, and threatened to open fire if the crowd came any
closer. The Patrick brothers stated later that Fly agreed to the proposal, and they therefore sent a small delegation toward the authorities while the rest of the men stood their ground, cheering, some twenty feet away.\textsuperscript{104} Regardless of whether the crowd surged forward or only the delegation approached the police line, the mayor and police charged the strikers with clubs, seeking to drive them back. The crowd did not yield, however, and the mayor opened fire and ordered his men to follow suit. The bulk of the crowd retreated across the railroad tracks to Avenue A. One man—a white screwman named Thomas Baker—lay dead on the wharf. The police tried to arrest some of the strikers lingering on the wharf. One African-American longshoreman named Manuel "Frank" Robinson resisted, knocking a policemen down with a club. The mayor shot him in the side. The wound proved fatal, and Robinson died the next day.\textsuperscript{105}

Ten minutes later, the strikers surged forward again, yet showed considerable restraint—neither trying to enter

\textsuperscript{104} During the inquest into the death of Thomas Baker, Patrick stated that Fly agreed to listen to a strike committee. Fly denied he had made any agreement. See, \textit{Galveston Daily News}, 8 September 1898, 5.

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Galveston Daily News}, 1 September 1898, 1-2.
the sheds or attacking the police. The mayor called for a police wagon, which was driven into the midst of the crowd. The police then proceeded to arrest several of strikers and tried to put them into the wagon. At this point, the crowd's temper broke and men began hurling bricks, stones, and railroad coupling pins. The officers in the crowd were hit, and the strikers began throwing their missiles at the platform on which stood the mayor and remaining police. Fly again drew his gun and opened fire over the heads of the strikers. When they failed to retreat, the authorities again fired into the mass of men. At least two of the strikers discharged guns, one of which was taken off a policemen. After the main group of strikers had fled back across the tracks, one longshoreman stood alone as the officers continued their fire and emptied his six-shooter at the mayor, missing completely.\textsuperscript{106}

During a lull after the retreat of the striking men, the Galveston fire department and a group of leading citizens arrived on the wharf to offer assistance to the authorities. The fire department brought a pumper truck and fire hoses to turn on the strikers if they approached

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.; \textit{New Orleans Daily Picayune}, 1 September 1898.
again. The mayor deputized nearly thirty men and armed them with rifles and pistols to help protect the strikebreakers. They were among Galveston's most powerful citizens. Walter Gresham, a wealthy railroad lawyer, had chaired the Deep Water Committee of the Cotton Exchange and had been instrumental in securing federal harbor improvements. ¹⁰⁷ John Sealy owned and operated the First National Bank. ¹⁰⁸ As the police, firemen, and deputies set about fortifying the wharf with cotton bales against further attack, a heavy rain began. Increasingly wet, mostly unarmed, and facing a heavily armed and entrenching force, the strikers dispersed. The confrontation on the wharf ended for the day. ¹⁰⁹

Meeting later at the union hall, union leaders urged the strikers to persist in their efforts to prevent the unloading of cargo on the Mallory wharf but also cautioned against the use of violence lest the authorities again open fire on unarmed civilians. Other labor groups also met


¹⁰⁸ Galveston Daily News, 1 September 1898, 1-2; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 1 September 1898.

¹⁰⁹ Galveston Daily News, 1 September 1898.
throughout the city. Both the black and white screwmen held special meetings. Both groups denounced the violence and denied any part in encouraging the strike. They both also refused to disavow the Colored Labor Union or their strike. The Galveston Labor Council also met, but its members refused to comment on the affray until more facts had been gathered.\footnote{Ibid.}

For his part, the mayor wired Governor C. A. Culberson, asking for him to send the state militia and to request federal troops. The governor refused to ask the McKinley administration for assistance but did dispatch two battalions of the First Texas Artillery from Houston. The twenty-six men arrived that evening by train, bringing with them two Gatling guns capable of firing 1,400 rounds per minute.\footnote{Ibid., 2 September 1998, 8.} The mayor insisted that he had acted properly and that since the men had gathered on the wharf in an unlawful assembly—apparently a capital offense in the mayor's eyes—his order to open fire was justified. The Galveston Daily News and leading citizens of the city and
state agreed and applauded his actions in subsequent days.\textsuperscript{112}

Two men had been killed in the shooting and at least six others wounded—one retired screwman, two white longshoreman, and three black longshoremen.\textsuperscript{113} The police suffered several bruises from thrown objects, but none were seriously injured. In the days after the "riot," the police and mayor accused the strikers of firing first and of firing the shots that killed and wounded their own men. The coroner conducted an inquest into the causes of death of Thomas Baker and Frank Robinson. Both inquests were delayed by a week in light of "the excited state of mind of the strikers."\textsuperscript{114} Robinson's inquest was handled quickly. Witnesses consisted of police officers only. They said the mayor had fired at Robinson after the longshoreman had clubbed a policeman to the ground and was threatening to club him again. The inquiry lasted less than one afternoon, and the results stated that the killing was

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 4 September 1998, 10; \textit{New Orleans Daily Picayune}, 4 September 1898.

\textsuperscript{113} Galveston Daily News, 1 September 1898, 1.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 2 September 1898, 10.
justified since the African-American was "clearly threatening the life" of a police officer.\textsuperscript{115}

The inquest of Thomas H. Baker—the white screwmen—proved trickier for the city's leaders. The man had belonged to the SBA, the most powerful union in Galveston. He was on the wharf with several other screwmen in an unofficial capacity but seemed to have been involved in the strike. Most significantly, however, Baker was the first white man killed in labor unrest in Galveston. And he had been killed by the mayor of the city. Consequently, the coroner postponed the inquest into Baker's death for over a week. When the inquiry finally convened on 8-9 September, nearly two dozen witnesses were called. The first police witnesses insisted that they had no idea who killed Baker and suggested that the shot came from the crowd of strikers. After several civilians—union men, African-American strikers, and onlookers—testified that they clearly saw Officer John Pither take aim and shoot Baker, the subsequent police witnesses insisted that the officer was actually shooting at a group of African-Americans who were throwing objects from behind Baker. Baker's shooting,

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 8 September 1898, 5.
the police witnesses said in essence, was an unfortunate accident.\textsuperscript{116} Presumably, had the black men behind Baker been killed, no such explanations would have been necessary. The coroner's findings eventually exonerated the officer by simply stating the cause of death was a gunshot in the side without indicating who shot the screwman.\textsuperscript{117}

On Thursday, 1 September, the wharves remained quiet. The crew of the Colorado and the Houston men began unloading the vessel at 7 a.m. and continued working until past midnight; the ship was expected to sail the following day. The deputies, the police, and the militia continued to man the cotton barricades against the strikers, occasionally target shooting over the waters of the port toward Pelican Island and testing the fire rate of the Gatling guns. The strikebreakers and their guards took their meals and rest within the sheds.\textsuperscript{118} In the meantime, the police arrested four of the strike leaders: Harvey and

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 10 September 1898, 10.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 8 September 1898, 5; 9 September 1898, 10; \textit{New Orleans Daily Picayune}, 9 September 1898; \textit{Southwestern Christian Advocate}, 8 September 1898.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Galveston Daily News} 2 September 1898, 8, 10.
George Patrick, Lucas Luke, and Frank Dennis. Luke and Dennis worked as longshoremen. The four men were charged with unlawful assembly and inciting a riot and released on bond.  

Only about 100 strikers gathered along Avenue A during the day. They were visited by Police Chief Walter Jones, who had been out of town during the altercation the two days previously. The strikers complained of the actions of the mayor and police and reiterated reports that the strikebreakers had attempted to abandon their work after learning of the strike but were not allowed to leave by the Mallory officials. On their way out of town, many of the strikebreakers did indeed pledge not to return and apologized to the strikers for having taken their jobs.  

Jones warned the strikers against violence and stated that the shootings had been justified. It was, in fact, to be expected when African-Americans tested the patience of the authorities.

You have been treated well by the people of Galveston; in no other city in the country has the negro been treated as fairly and given as many rights and privileges as in this city. ...

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119 Ibid.

120 Ibid., 3 September 1998, 10.
But for a mob of 2,000 men to forcibly intrude upon private property ... it was to be expected that you meant violence and it became the duty of the police and good citizens to resist ... the blame rests upon yourselves.\textsuperscript{121}

Aside from the small contingent across from the pier, the strikers did not appear at the wharf that day, but they maintained a vigilant watch for the arrival of other strikebreakers. The night watchmen for the Mallory wharf, mistaken for a strikebreaker, was beaten by white screwmen and black longshoremen after leaving work early in the morning, and one black man from Houston was chased on suspicion that he had come to the city to find work on the Mallory wharf.\textsuperscript{122} That night, about a thousand of the strikers met at an empty warehouse of the Texas Cotton Press, one of the few buildings large enough to hold such a great body of men. At the meeting Harvey Patrick discussed the compromise that had been carried to Dennison, the Mallory agent, by intermediaries from the Galveston Cotton Exchange. A strike committee asked the Exchange members to intercede on their behalf. They agreed, and J. D. Skinner, Robert Bornefeld, D. R. Henderson, and Ike Kempner called

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 2 September 1998, 8.
on Dennison to discuss arbitration. The proposal called for the Mallory line to hire only union men and to pay them 40 cents for day and for night work, rather than 50 cents for night work as the strikers had previously demanded. Dennison refused, stating that "there are plenty of men who are willing to work for thirty and forty cents an hour if they are left to the work. ... If we can not get men in Galveston we shall get them some place else." The Exchange committee left and reported their failure to the strikers.\(^{123}\)

Patrick also told the union members that the Colored Labor Union had joined the American Federation of Labor, making it the first waterfront union in Galveston to affiliate with a national organization. Patrick also urged the men to sign the official roll of the new union to officially join the organization. Throughout the night, two thousand men filed through the building to sign up. White union activists among the crowd outside talked of the benefits of union to the large crowds outside, urging them to join and to keep the "scabs" off the docks. To comply with the AFL's policies, the union dropped "colored" from

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 2 September 1998, 8.
its name and became Federal Union No. 7174. Since it did not belong to any national union, it joined the AFL as a full member rather than as an affiliate. Patrick told the Galveston Daily News that the union had applied to the AFL for membership in mid-August and had only that day received word. The union's new status, Patrick said, reaffirmed the resolution of Local 7174 to stick to the strike and "stick to the scale of wages we asked for and to hold the union to its duty to aid us. We are members of the American Federation of labor. Oh, we will stick!"\footnote{Ibid.}

With membership in the AFL, No. 7174 gained the official support of AFL organizations in the city. These did not include the white Longshoremen's Benevolent Union, the Longshoremen's Benevolent Association, the Screwmen's Benevolent Association, or the black Screwmen's Benevolent Association, No. 2. By 1898, however, at least twenty-two Galveston labor unions representing almost two thousand workers had affiliated with the AFL.\footnote{Ibid., Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 2: From the Founding of the A. F. of L. to the Emergence of American Imperialism (New York: International Publishers, 1955), 357-58.} Moreover, the Galveston Labor Council, also an AFL affiliate, now lent
assistance to Union No. 7147 in the form of advice and some financial assistance. With the 2,200 men of Union No. 7147, therefore, the Galveston Labor Council could have called on more than four thousand AFL union members and the almost certain support of another one thousand screwmen and longshoremen had it authorized a general strike in sympathy with No. 7147. Such a strike most likely would have brought concessions from the Mallory line, yet the Labor Council refused to launch a general strike in the city. McConn stated that it was not the policy of the AFL at this time to call sympathy strikes or boycotts and that the Labor Council would therefore not do so in Galveston. Without the threat of a general strike or a sympathy strike by other waterfront unions, the men of Local 7174 faced a daunting task in breaking the Mallory's opposition to an increased wage scale.  

On Sunday afternoon, as the strikebreakers returned to Houston, the bodies of Baker and Robinson were buried. Robinson's body was shipped to Thompson's Switch, a small community forty-five miles west of Galveston, where he had family. The union and the Galveston Labor Council sent

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representatives to accompany the body. Baker's
funeral took place in Galveston. It was, according to one
report, "an unusual one, the like of which has never before
been seen in Galveston." The amazement of the press
stemmed mostly from the biracial nature of the funeral
procession. The procession began at the SBA hall on
Twenty-First and Mechanic Streets. Two bands led, followed
by the hearse carrying Baker's remains. Then came five
hundred white SBA members, the Galveston Labor Council,
members of the white longshoremen's unions, and then the
black SBA No. 2, the members of Local 7174. In all, nearly
two thousand union men marched through the city's business
district and its most affluent neighborhoods to Lakeview
Cemetery. It was the largest biracial demonstration in the
city to that time, even eclipsing the burial of Norris
Wright CuneY the previous March.\(^\text{127}\)

The effect of this display of interracial solidarity
seemed to galvanize the Mallory line. That evening Agent
Dennison offered the strikers their jobs back at the old
wage scale. If they refused, he would fire them and offer

\(^{127}\) CuneY's funeral attracted about two-thousand people, but the
funeral procession itself comprised only a hundred or so individuals,
Hinze, *CuneY*, 133.
the work to white longshoremen. If he was to pay white wages, he said, he would pay them to white men. The white longshoremen, however, refused to consider taking the work on the Mallory line even for their regular pay scale.128

During the next two weeks, the First Texas and its Gatling guns returned to Houston, three more Mallory ships came and went, and still the Mallory line employed Houston strikebreakers—now in sufficient quantities to obviate the use of ship's crew from Houston. The strikers maintained a presence across from the wharf and tried to persuade the "scabs" to join them, but no violence occurred even after the departure of the battery. Several meetings between a committee of union representatives and William McConn, member of the local typographical union and head of the Galveston Labor Council, and the Mallory agent failed to reach any conclusion. Both sides refused to compromise to meet with Agent Dennison. During the impasse, the union circulated a petition among the city's retail merchants calling for arbitration of the strike. All but a handful of Galveston's ninety-odd retailers signed on. A meeting

of the union and merchants on 12 September resulted in the formation of a committee of retailers to draft resolutions for arbitration. Unlike the businessmen who had manned the fortifications on the Mallory wharf on 1 September, the merchants' committee comprised mostly foreign-born men or first-generation Americans.¹²⁹

The resolutions called the union demand for a higher wage scale "fair and reasonable and not out of proportion to that received by other labor, and that that scale is only reasonable compensation for the character of work performed." The merchants also argued that the continued strike and the importation of strikebreakers from Houston harmed the city and the retail merchants by depriving Galveston's working men of wages that would have gone to purchases at their stores. Furthermore, they cited the high rates the Mallory line charged for shipping as sufficient to meet the union requests without harming the company's profits. Finally, they urged the firm to find some way to settle the dispute as quickly as possible.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 14 September 1898, 7; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 14 September 1898.
Given tentative approval by Local 7147 to attempt to arbitrate a settlement, the merchant committee called on Dennison on 17 September. Local 7147 leaders and a committee from the labor council—McConn, a representative from the motorman's union, and August Schoenburg of the Longshoremen's Benevolent Union—accompanied the merchants. Together, they presented the merchants' petition and resolutions. Denison stated, however, that none of his old employees ever filed a grievance with him, and thus he could not properly pass on their demands to the Mallory headquarters in New York. If and when the employees did so, Dennison stated, it would take three weeks for the correspondence to bring the dispute to resolution. The merchants, fearing correctly that the strike would fall apart in that time, offered to pay the cost of conducting negotiations with New York by telegraph. Dennison made no firm commitment. The falsity of Dennison's delaying tactic was revealed the next day, when in an interview in New York, owners Henry, Charles, and Robert Mallory said that Dennison had always had full authority to negotiate for the line. The same day this interview appeared in the paper, Dennison issued a statement vowing to pay no more than the
established rate but agreeing to hire Galveston longshoremen over out-of-towners in the future. The union rejected the offer.\textsuperscript{131} There matters stood until, five days later, violence again erupted on the wharf.

On Thursday, 22 September, at 11:15 p.m., a group of forty to fifty African-Americans wearing white bandanas over their faces forced their way past two police guards into the Mallory shed housing the strikebreakers from Houston. The men opened fire, hitting the roof and walls of the shed and the merchandise recently unloaded from steamer \textit{San Marcos}. One of the Houston men received a minor scalp wound, but no one else was killed. Police estimated that 150 shots were fired. The police who had been bypassed outside had by this time called for reinforcements, and the masked men fled the building and ran westward from the wharf. Police fired after them but did not pursue. During a patrol of the wharf a few minutes later, the officers found one of the Galveston men—identified as Fait Staten—dying of a gunshot wound. As the police widened their search for the raiders, they found bloody trails and eyewitnesses who testified that several

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Galveston Daily News} 19 September 1898, 6; 20 September 1898, 7.
other strikers had been shot. They also arrested several African-Americans whom they claimed were acting suspiciously and possessed white handkerchiefs. The police again fortified the wharf with cotton bales and stood guard through the night. The Houston strikebreakers moved aboard the San Marcos for the duration of the night and left early the next day. The San Marcos set sail for New York early the next morning as well.\textsuperscript{132}

The police again attempted to blame the strikebreakers for killing one of their own, stating that the shots that had struck the dead man had come from the shed during the melee. At the urging of labor leaders, however, reporters found that none of the bullets fired in the shed had pierced the west wall, indicating that indeed the dead man had been shot by the police as they fired on the retreating raiders. Furthermore, Harvey Patrick and William McConn, while denouncing the violence, argued that the masked men most likely did not intend to kill anyone. Otherwise, they pointed out, how could fifty men firing 150 to 200 rounds completely fail to hit an equally large group of men even in a large warehouse. Most of the bullet holes, 

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 23 September 1898, 10; 24 September 1898, 10.
furthermore, were high in the walls or roof or hit merchandise stacked fairly high in the warehouse. The intent, they argued, was to terrorize the strikebreakers but not to kill them.\textsuperscript{133}

The city authorities again exonerated the police for the death. Instead they arrested George Patrick, Harvey's brother and a member of the executive board of Union No. 7147, on charges of conspiring to commit murder and of murdering Fait Staten. Eventually found not guilty of murder, Patrick served five years in prison after being convicted of conspiracy to murder.\textsuperscript{134} No one testified that George Patrick had orchestrated the raid, had been involved in it, or had shot Staten, but the effect of the charges against him and several other union members had the intended effect of intimidating the striking dock workers. Three days after Patrick's arrest, the union—urged to end the dispute by city leaders, members of the Cotton Exchange, and even by the previously sympathetic Merchant's Committee—voted to maintain the strike but vowed not to interfere with any of its members or any non-member from

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 25 September 1898, 5; 26 September 1898, 6

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 25 November 1898, 10.
Galveston who wanted to return to the Mallory wharf at the old wage scale.135

During the 1898 strike, the biracial agreements worked out during the 1880s and early 1890s were sorely tested. White and black workers held to their pledges of support and fidelity during employer efforts to divide them along racial lines. Nevertheless, the temper of the times and the persistent racial wariness of white union leaders prevented them from using the most powerful tool at their disposal—the general strike. Without that weapon, the Mallory strikers were doomed to failure.

The business elite of Galveston took advantage of the racial divisions created by white waterfront workers in the aftermath of the Civil War. By excluding black workers from waterfront occupations, white workers created a group of potential competitors. When white laborers confronted employers over wage issues, the employers turned to black men who desperately wanted the opportunity for the steady jobs and higher pay afforded by waterfront work. The exclusion of blacks from the white unions also stunted the development of a strong union movement among African-

135 Ibid., 27 September 1898, 10; September 28, 10.
Americans. Though black men created waterfront
unions, many of them did not last more than a few years.\footnote{Galveston directories for the late nineteenth century list black unions only intermittently most likely because of the racism of the publishers. The black screwmen's union, for example, remained active from its founding in the 1880s but rarely showed up in directories listings of labor unions in the city. Nevertheless, African-American unions often dissolved through inactivity. See Directory of the City of Galveston for 1890-91, 60; and Eric Arneson, "Biracial Waterfront Unionism in the Age of Segregation" in Calvin Winslow, ed., Waterfront Workers: New Perspectives on Race and Class (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 32-37.} Consequently, black workers, excluded from jobs by white
union men, felt no particular class affinity for white
workers preaching unionism and the brotherhood of all
workers. Once African-American men formed their own unions
to protect themselves both from white workers and
employers, class affinity across racial boundaries did
indeed develop. And once black unionists forced white
unionists to accept them as fellow workers, class
solidarity—even of a limited nature—was possible, as was
exemplified by the 1898 longshoremen's strike. Despite
some setbacks, this nascent solidarity grew stronger in the
twentieth century.
Chapter Seven
Epilogue and Conclusion:
Galveston Waterfront Workers, 1900-1920

The defeat of the African-American longshoremen in 1898 despite the active support of all of Galveston's laboring men weakened the local unions. Other factors also undermined their strength. Technological innovations reduced shippers' reliance on cotton screwing. The death of as many as two-thirds of the union men in the city in the Great Storm of 1900 and the institution of the commission form of government in the storm's aftermath reduced the political involvement of workers in municipal government. Consequently, in the early years of the twentieth century Galveston's previously independent locals affiliated with national unions and made a more concerted effort to officially ally across racial lines.

The Great Storm that struck Galveston in 1900 killed at least six thousand people on the island. The unions of the city also lost significant numbers of men. The SBA's membership fell by from one-third to one-half owing to death from the storm.\(^1\) Although trade resumed quickly—even before the dead had been disposed of—screwmen and longshoremen found themselves working with a number of non-union

\(^{1}\) SBA Roll Book, VIII.
workers.² Perhaps more significantly, the destruction of the storm left the municipal government in shambles. The mayor as a result called on the leading members of the city to form commissions to deal with various aspects of municipal services. This commission form of government saw the city through the crisis, and was eventually made a permanent feature of the city's government. During its first year in operation, the mayor was elected at large, and then he appointed the commissioners. Protests over the undemocratic nature of this aspect of the system resulted in revisions that allowed for the direct election of the commissioners. By eliminating single-member districts, however, the commission form of government essentially disfranchised black and white workers who had in the single-member wards been able to elect men to look after their interests to the city council. Thus workers lost their political voice in the aftermath of the storm. Dissatisfaction with the commission form of government helped precipitate the 1920 strike on wharves.³

² Taylor, 106.
Technological innovations further reduced the influence of cotton screwmen after the turn of the century. The second generation of iron-hulled steamships appeared early in the century. They were bigger and faster than their predecessors, able to hold more cotton and to complete voyages more quickly. The speed of the new ships led many shippers to eschew cotton screwing. The extra cargo capacity afforded by screwing the cotton no longer offset the time it took to do so. The loss of cargo space was more than made up for by the quick turnaround time. Accelerating this trend was refinement of the hydraulic high-density cotton press. The new press reduced the size of the standard cotton bale by one-third, and the bale was so tightly compressed as to make screwing it into the hold of a ship pointless. By 1917 few shippers accepted anything but high-density bales; about the same time, cotton screwmen functioned only on occasion as anything more than longshoremen. The Southern Pacific had begun using electric-powered conveyor belts to move cargo directly between ship and train in the late 1890s, reducing the number of longshoremen needed per ship. Thus by 1900, it was apparent that screwmen and longshoremen in Galveston faced

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4 Taylor, 106-110; Galveston Daily News, 14 September 1898, 7.
challenging times ahead. This realization led both groups to affiliate with the International Longshoremen's Association.

The International Longshoremen, Marine, and Transportworkers' Association, as it was called initially, was founded by Dan Keefe, a tugboat worker, in 1877 in Chicago. By 1892 Keefe had organized workers in ten other Great Lakes ports. Representatives of these unions met in convention in that year and formed the International Longshoremen's Union. By 1905 the ILM&TA had affiliated with the AFL, had spread to the Gulf Coast, and had a national membership of 100,000.\(^5\) In 1900 the white Longshoremen's Benevolent Union, which some years before had absorbed the Longshoremen's Benevolent Association, became the first Galveston local to affiliate with the ILM&TA. The longshoremen became ILM&TA Local No. 310. The next year, AFL Federal Union No. 7147—which had been formed by black longshoremen in 1898—joined the ILA to form ILM&TA Local 851. In 1902 the white screwmen joined, affiliating as Independent Local 317. Galveston's black screwmen and remaining longshoremen's union, which had merged early in

the 1900s, joined by 1910, forming Local No. 329. In total, by 1910, 2,500 men worked on the waterfront. Between 1,000 to 1,500 belonged to the ILM&TA.⁶

Membership in the ILM&TA, which shortened its name to the International Longshoremen's Association in 1908, did not end labor strife in Galveston, of course, but Galveston's waterfront workers continued the limited interracial cooperation demonstrated during the 1898 strike. In 1907 Southern Pacific workers went on strike, demanding higher ages. The Southern Pacific (the old Morgan line) offered the work to the two black waterfront unions. Both declined and pledged to help keep strikebreakers of all colors away from the docks. The Southern Pacific workers lost their strike. Following the strike, Galveston waterfront workers created the Dock and Marine Council to coordinate union activities among waterfront workers. The council was never very powerful, but it represented the first official affiliation of black and white groups in the city.⁷

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Nevertheless, racial distrust continued to plague Galveston's workers. In June 1912, ILA Local No. 317, the former white screwmen's union, and Local No. 329, the former black screwmen's union, agreed to merge. Two weeks after the merger, the white screwmen backed out. Five stevedores, responding to the notion of an interracial union, sent Local No. 317 a letter offering a three-year contract to hire only white workers. The white screwmen rejected the offer.\(^8\) Although they failed to merge, the two unions agreed to share work—employers were to hire a workforce composed half of black men and half of white men. The wages were to be the same for all.\(^9\)

The next year, however, the white screwmen repudiated the agreement, which was about to expire, and signed a four-year contract with four stevedores who agreed to hire only white workers. Part of the reason for this repudiation was the explosive growth of the black union over the past year from 200 to 450 men. Another reason was the failure of ILA Local No. 329 to merge with a non-ILA union of black longshoremen and screwmen. The non-union men who refused to join cited their suspicions of the agreement with white men:

\(^8\) Taylor, 117.

\(^9\) Arneson, "Biracial Unionism," 35.
"white men may stand with you about one season and then blow up."  

The actions of Local No. 317 led the black screwmen to file charges against the white local with the ILA. ILA president T. V. O'Connor visited Galveston to try to settle the dispute and uphold the merger agreement. He said that "the stevedores are at their old tricks of using the white man against the black man today, and the black man against the white man tomorrow. You know, every man in the South knows, that the ship agent would not give a snap of their fingers if they could get those colored men to screw that cotton" for less that what the white men were making. The white screwmen refused to cancel the contract, and O'Connor revoked their ILA charter. As non-union workers, the screwmen became the object of ILA boycotts. Longshoremen refused to work any ship or wharf employing the screwmen. After a week, the longshoremen returned to pending negotiations. When the talks resulted in no agreement, O'Connor ordered all longshoremen in Galveston, Texas City, and Port Arthur on strike. He also ordered New Orleans and New York locals to refuse to unload any ship that had been

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10 Ibid., 36.
11 Ibid., 36, 55.
loaded by Local 317. The white screwmen finally abandoned the racially exclusive contract. The holdout black local affiliated with the ILA, and the white and black unions went back to the arrangement that had prevailed before their "half-and-half" agreement of the year before. Essentially, they remained in segregated locals, sharing jobs and earning standard wages but working separately. All future contracts, however, included all of the ILA unions in the port.\textsuperscript{12}

These contracts, however, were becoming leaner in terms of pay. Inflation during the war years and shipping slowdowns due to the war reduced the earnings of waterfront workers. After the war Galveston longshoremen attempted to make up for the lost earnings, but the city's stevedores refused the wages proposed by the unions. Consequently, the longshoremen walked out. The strike that resulted retarded the labor movement in Texas for the next thirteen years.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 37.

\textsuperscript{13} See Chapter One.
Conclusions

Herbert Hill asserted in his debate with Herbert Gutman that unions in the South served as little more than hiring halls that propped up white supremacy. His supporters, furthermore, argued that race represented the most significant division in American society and that scholars who found examples of interracial cooperation were exaggerating their findings in the name of neo-Marxist doctrine. The evidence from Galveston suggests that these assertions do not encompass the extent of interracial cooperation that existed among nineteenth-century working men. For though black and white workers on the Galveston docks never completely trusted each other and never created integrated unions, they did become uneasy allies in their struggles against shipping firms, stevedores, and an entrenched, conservative white elite.

During the antebellum period, black slaves and white immigrants shared longshoring work and mingled informally in the surrounding neighborhoods and shops. The familiarity was borne of a certain class affinity and, on the part of many white immigrants, a rejection of the racial ideology of the slaveholding elite. This state of affairs worried the white leaders of the city, who did what they could to eliminate fraternization between the races. Yet such
interaction depended to a large degree on the status of blacks as slaves and white immigrants as something less than fully accepted whites. The antebellum poverty of immigrant whites, the disparity of wealth within the white community, and the relegation of immigrants to the most menial tasks—slave work—alienated them and provided life experiences that were to a slight degree similar to that experienced by slaves. This familiarity and affinity suggested the possibility of interracial class cooperation once slavery was abolished.

Such possibilities, however, failed to materialize in the post-war period. During this period, race did indeed seem to matter more than any other social division in society, mainly because new opportunities for white waterfront workers led them to believe that they needed to distance themselves from the former slaves. Increasing economic opportunities, a new more democratic political climate that gave white immigrants a voice they previously lacked, and the intense anti-black sentiment of native-born whites during Reconstruction convinced many white waterfront workers that familiarity with the former slaves was not in their best interests. Furthermore, the Screwmen's Benevolent Association—founded mainly by English- and Irish-born immigrants who perhaps shared the racial presumptions
of native-born southerners in Galveston—grew into a powerful union that influenced the policies of other white unions on the waterfront. The SBA's ban on black members and black competitors on the waterfront severely reduced the possibility of interracial cooperation.

Yet the idea of "race," as Barbara Fields and Eric Arneson have argued, varied with time and circumstances. In Galveston the idea of race served various needs among all segments of Galveston's waterfront society. Employers wielded race as an instrument to divide workers; white workers relied on racial solidarity to obtain and preserve psychological and material advantages; and black workers used race as defensive rallying point in their struggle for economic and social justice. Yet racial divisions did not obliterate other divisions. Indeed, as Arneson and others have argued, class, race, and gender ideas all constituted part of a worker's identity. This intersection of identities among Galveston's waterfront workers emerged most clearly in the demands of black workers for a "living wage." Nineteenth-century definitions of masculinity—definitions formulated by white men—required males to provide and protect their wives and children. A successful male earned enough to allow his wife and children to stay at home rather than to work. Galveston's white waterfront workers earned
this "living wage." Thus when black waterfront workers' demanded a similar "living wage," they sought to make themselves equal not only as men who performed the same work but also as males who successfully fulfilled their gender roles. Thus the demands involved issues of racial equality, gender identity, and class concerns.

Another example of the intersection of racial and class identities was black workers' refusal to be banned from waterfront jobs in the 1870s and 1880s. During these decades African-Americans unionized and, under the leadership of men like Wright Cuney, forced their way onto the docks. Beginning on the Morgan wharf sometime in the 1870s, black longshoremen established a presence on the waterfront by accepting wages rejected by striking white workers. They used racial identity as a rallying point and sought to improve their lot by taking advantage of both the racial consciousness of white workers and the class-consciousness of employers, who wanted to break the white unions. In 1883 African-Americans obtained work in cotton screwing and, two years later, on a wharf that previously employed nothing but whites. In each case the unwillingness of white men to recognize the commonality of experiences shared with black men forced African-Americans to undercut white workers in order to obtain work. In each case,
Galveston employers benefited from the competition between the two groups. Once black men became screwmen and longshoremen, white men were forced to broaden their ideas about what it meant to be a working man and union man. They reworked their definitions of worker and unionist by dissociating these ideas from the idea of "whiteness."

When a limited degree of interracial solidarity emerged after 1886, manifesting itself most clearly in the 1898 strike, employers and their allies in municipal government did not hesitate to use deadly force to keep workers in check. Thus the broadening of class consciousness among Galveston's white and black waterfront workers supports the contention of Joan Wallach Scott, Michael Sonenscher, William Sewell, and others that class identity is a social construction that stems from political rhetoric. Black and white men recognized that a common class identity would help them survive assaults by the city's economic and political powers. Nevertheless, the material bases for this strategy was a real concern, not just rhetoric. The conflicts that forced black and white workers to ally arose from the desires of shipping companies to keep wages as low as possible and of workers to earn wages sufficient to live on.

A writer for the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, a black New Orleans newspaper, observed in 1898:
The strike indicates what it would be the country over if the Negro and white laborers were related throughout the North and South as they are in Galveston. The white laborer of that city discovered through a sad experience some time ago that the only way to control the situation there was to control the Negro labor. To do this, he say they had to become brethren, and this they proceeded to do. ... [Black worker] and white stood together, are standing still yet.\footnote{Southwestern Christian Advocate, 22 September 1898.}

Black and white waterfront workers did indeed stand together to confront employers. Their solidarity was not complete nor permanent and did not rise to the level found among workers in New Orleans by Eric Arneson.\footnote{See Arneson, "Biracial Unionism."} Through their cooperation across racial lines, however, the waterfront workers of Galveston displayed a sense of shared experience and common humanity lacking in much of the South during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.
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